

Are novels written by Kurdish novelists in Arabic, Persian and Turkish considered Kurdish products in terms of content?

Kürt romancılar tarafından Arapça, Farsça ve Türkçe kaleme alınan romanlar içerik bakımından Kürtçe eserler olarak kabul edilir mi?

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Abstract

We cannot deny the fact that any independent nation is a product of a group of writers. These writers, through their works, have asked and later obtained a nation and an identity. Also, there are many factors which impede having a nation with an identity including, most importantly, the political and economic ones. Kurdish nation is a good example in this case. Kurds (in all parts: Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq even though the ones in Iraq have a semi-autonomous rule), as they have no full spectrum of political and economic independency, have been attempting so hard to reach to the world in many ways especially through literature. The Kurdish writers, even though when are forced to write in other dominant languages, they still refer to the Kurdish culture in terms of the content.

Keywords: Culture-based content, Literary Works, Writers make Nations, Reflection of Language, Political Issues.

Özet

Herhangi bir bağımsız ulusun bir grup yazarların bir ürünü olduğu gerçeği inkar edilemez. Bu yazarlar, eserleri vasıtasıyla istedi ve daha sonra bir ulus ve bir kimlik aldılar. Ayrıca, en önemlisi, siyasi ve ekonomik olanları da dahil olmak üzere bir kimlikle bir ulus olmayı engelleyen birçok faktör vardır. Kürt ulusu, bu durumda iyi bir örnektir. Kürtler (her bölgede: Türkiye, Suriye, İran ve Irak'ta olanları yarı özerk bir yönetim olsa bile Kuzey Irak) siyasi ve ekonomik bağımsızlık gibi hiçbirini tam spektrum olduğu gibi, birçok yolla olduğu gibi özellikle edebiyat yoluyla dünyaya ulaşması çok zor teşebbüs edilmiştir. Kürt yazarlar, hatta başka bir egemen dilde yazmak zorunda olduğunda, hala içerik açısından Kürt kültürüne bakmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültür-tabanlı içerik, Edebi Çalışmalar, Ulus yapan Yazarlar, Dil Yansıması, Siyasi Konular

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INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that literature, as a general aspect of the nation, has a great role in building a nation. People could distinguish a nation from another through literature. Literature itself is able to be a factor of socio-cultural cohesion in the society. For instance, Even-Zohar (1996,pp.42-43) indicates that it is extremely important to know that literature plays a great role in socio-cultural unity in society. In some cases, people cannot speak about some nations and countries without referring to their literature and culture in spite of having no standard and well defined language .German experience is a good example in this case. Even-Zohar (1996,p.52) literally confirms, “It is by now widely accepted that there would have been no German nation without the German literature, which could not, in its turn, have become unified without a well- defined and standardized language”.

This is true for many nations and countries. But for some other nations; such as Kurds, whose poets contributed a lot to build a nation and state like *Ahmed Khani and Haji Qadire koye who* are good examples in this perspective. Having an independent state and nation has not been obtained yet. Ahmadzadeh (2003,p.15) says that “the Kurds are considered a nation-as-people”. This is because they are deprived of their own rights (cultural rights is one of them) in their homeland- Great Kurdistan- which is formally divided between four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Currently, Kurds cannot speak in their mother tongue in some parts of Kurdistan. Thus, their neighbours did not know enough information about Kurds’ society, language, culture, and other aspects of the Kurds life. If some of them do know about Kurds, their knowledge is so vague and little. Some of the Kurdish writers, by writing in other languages, conveyed their culture and other aspects of their life into other cultures and languages-mainly official and dominant languages- due to some reasons including the prohibition of Kurdish language. Nowadays, some critics say that those works refer to the Kurdish nation while others say that the works refer to those languages which have been written in dominant Arabic, for example. Even though such works have been written in official and dominant languages, say Persian, they are different from the ones written by the native Persian writers. This essay will discuss this issue and will identify the main reasons behind the writing in official and dominant languages in these countries: Turkey, Iran, and Syria. And it will show the differences that the works hold with those which have been written by Turkish, Persian and Arabic native writers, with an evaluation of the novel “Jurists Of the darkness,” written by the Kurdish novelist, Salim Barakat in Syria.

1. *The Kurds- nation and literature*

Kurds are a nation. They live in Mesopotamia area. Their existence has been denied since the Battle of Jalderan in 1514. McDowall (2004,p.xi) says, “the Kurds inhabit a marginal zone between the power centres of the Mesopotamian plain and the Iranian and Anatolian plateaux”. This had a huge impact on all aspects of their life. Kreyenbroek and Allison (1996,p.1) confirm that the land of more than twenty five million Kurds has been divided between these countries: Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and the republics of the former Soviet Union. They continue, referring to the fact that due to some harsh condition on Kurds, a big number of them fled to exile somewhere else. . Some of them searched for somewhere

to live safely, to enjoy life peacefully. While others pushed out from their homeland and they are waiting to Incubate at their original homeland. Sweetnam (2004,p.xiii) assures, “Kurds- an ancient people with ancient ties to their land, now uprooted, pushed out, pulled out- have come to the West”.

In all parts of the world, they are working on getting their national rights. These rights include political rights, economical rights, geographical rights, cultural and educational rights. Even their national identity has been ignored in some countries such as Syria, Turkey and Iran. This had a big influence on all other aspects of their life.

In terms of Kurdish literature; likewise, other aspects of the Kurdish life have been ignored by Turks, Arabs and the Persians. However, Kurdish poetry especially (Oral tradition) tried to remain as an essential genre of Kurdish literature between Kurds. It had an important role in the protection and the expansion of Kurdish cultural identity because the Kurdish language was prohibited for much of the last century in many areas (Kreyenbroek and Allison, 1996). Kheznedar (2005) argues that the emergence of the Kurdish literary productions started with poetry, lasting until the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century the Kurdish prose was developed and many literary productions were produced such as, story, novel, drama and prose poetry. However, these literary productions were dominated by the poetry. Thus, the poetry was the most prevailing literary productions in that time.

The literary productions are very important for the nation. Novel as an important genre of literature has a great role in human life. It had an essential influence on making borders between communities especially in Europe. Kedourie argues that nationalism is an ideology created in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century (cited in Ahmadzadeh,2003). Huxley (1959, p.50) clearly shows his support to this idea and says novelists and poets are “to a very large extend the inventors of their nations”. This shows that the novel has its own importance to these nations because they build their own states depending on what can novelists and nationalists contribute to state-building. In Kurdish case, some Kurdish nationalists believe that *Mem û Zîn*, written by the Kurdish poet and Muslim scholar Ehmedî Xanî more than three centuries ago, is their national epic (Bruinessen,2003). But the Kurds did not use their novels (*Mem û Zîn*) in particular to represent as an active nationalist literature. This makes the Kurdish case, in terms of novel, different from that of the western countries.

2. Minority literature:

The minority literature has been used here according to the Deleuze and Guattari definition. It says, ‘minority literature’ is a literature which is written by a minority in the language of the majority, not their own mother tongue (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p.24). This definition is applicable in the Kurdish case because there are many Kurdish writers, who write their works in the majority (official) language in the countries which govern the Kurds. For example, *Salîm Berekat* writes in Arabic language, *Elî Eşref Derwîşîyan* writes in Persian and *Yaşar Kemal* writes in Turkish. There are many different views about their works. In

other words, there are different evaluations to their works. Some critics consider their works as an Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. Whereas many others say that their literary products refer to the Kurdish nation and consider them as Kurdish literature.

In fact, for classifying the literary products of these writers either as Kurdish or foreign literature is determined in two emphasises. One of these emphasises is the theme of the works and other is the language of the works.

In terms of the theme of the work ,there are many Kurdish critics who emphasize on the content of the language that they use. Berwari (2012), in an interview I made with him says that “It is more acceptable to consider the literary products of those writers ,who are originally Kurdish but write in other languages, as Kurdish literature”. In his concern, he only emphasizes on the theme of the works. In other words, Berwari (2012) assumes that it is true that these writers write in foreign languages such as Arabic, Persian and Turkish, but the content of their works is the reflection of the Kurdish life, and they deal with the Kurdish culture and Kurdish milieu. The literary products can be evaluated not only depending on the content but also by depending on others characteristics of the works. In this point Berawri (2012) adds that not only the content of the works reflects the Kurdish life, but also the characters of the works, written by Kurdish writes, are Kurds. Mehmed Uzun (1995, p.76) has the same opinion concerning this subject. He confirms that “the works of those Kurdish writers who write in another language than their own, i.e. Kurdish, can be considered as Kurdish national literature”. In his view, he compares the Kurdish writers with African writers. But Ahmadzadeh (2003) argues over this view as he says that African writers, who write in other languages other than theirs, are different from the Kurdish writers who either have no abilities to write in Kurdish or are not permitted doing so.

Some of Kurdish critics who emphasize on the language of the literary products which have not been written in Kurdish by the Kurdish ethnic, and classify them as a foreign literature such as Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. In fact there are many reasons behind not writing in Kurdish. The political condition is one of the most important reasons because the Kurdish became a targeting subject of at least four states governing the Kurds. They deny the Kurdish national rights. Ahmadzadeh (2003,p.131) says that “the Kurdish question has been treated differently in the various countries they inhabit and this has influenced the development of Kurdish literature differently”. In Turkey the Kurdish language has been dominated by Turkish language. Kheznedar (2006) confirms that despite of many Kurdish movements through the modern history of Turkey, the word of ‘Kurd’ has been a crime against the Turkish law. In fact the Kurdish situation in both Iran and Syria is not quite different from Turkey. The opportunity has never been given to them to rule themselves. They have no right to be educated in Kurdish or study Kurdish as their mother tongue language. For instance, in Syria, the government denies the existence of Kurds as a nation in the country. But the situation of Kurds in Iraq is quite different from other parts. Ahmadzadeh (2003,p.131) says, “because of the particular situation of being ruled by the British mandate system during the formation of Iraqi state, the question of Kurdish identity has from the beginning had a completely different nature from the same Kurdish question in the other parts of Kurdistan”. This factor has a great impact on other aspects of the Kurdish life. The lack of

social relationships, the lack of practising cultural, and economical activities is noticeable in the Kurdish nation in those countries.

This clearly shows that not writing in Kurdish language in those countries is not because Kurdish writers prefer to write in the foreign dominant language, but it is because they are not allowed to write in their mother tongue language. Berwari (2012) assumes that they cannot write in Kurdish because they are educated in a foreign language. But Nehayî, a prominent Kurdish novelist from Kurdistan of Iran, finds another reason why those writers don't write in Kurdish and says "there would be no opportunity to distribute their works if they had written them in Kurdish" (cited in Ahmadzadah,2003,p.137).

The literary products which have been written in Arabic, Persian and Turkish by the Kurdish ethnic writers are not written in Kurdish language, still they reflect the Kurdish milieu, Kurdish pains, Kurdish culture and Kurdish society. In this case, language could be considered a tool to transform the experiences from one society to other societies. Ashcroft et al.(1989,p.39) define the language and say, "language is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences". Berwari (2012) introduces those Kurdish writers who did not write in Kurdish, but they referred to the Kurdish culture in their writing, as the Kurdish nationalists. He says that their role is crucial for the Kurdish nation and they are the Kurdish nationalists. First, he confirms that they try to introduce the Kurdish society to other people in the world. Second, their works can be considered humanity products because these works serve humanity. Berwari (2012) confirms that only through the content that the language holds inside we know that the product is Kurdish. If they are written in another language and reflect the Kurdish life, it would be a Kurdish literary product.

Although they have written their works in the foreign languages, their language is different from native languages of Arabs, Persians and Turks. They use many Kurdish terms, expressions, names, places, issues, historical events in their works, but the native Arabs, Persians, Turks do not use these Kurdish characteristics, either they do not know or they do not care about. These features are only connected to Kurdish. The well known Kurdish novelist Salim Barakat, introducing himself as a Kurd confirms that he writes to express the pains that the Kurds have in the Middle East" (Barakat,2000,B4). Berwari (2012) confirms that Ahmed Shawqi is Kurdish and from Diyarbakir and wrote his poems in Arabic because his works are not relevant to the Kurdish life. Thus, the Kurds cannot consider him a Kurdish poet. It seems that both the theme and language are crucial for the literary products. These two aspects of the Kurdish writers who have written in the foreign languages serve the Kurdish nation. Their language serves the Kurdish issues and it is different from those of native Arabs, Persians and Turks.

3. *The Evaluation of the "Jurists Of the Darkness":*

The "Jurists of the Darkness", is Salim Barakat's first work. its accidents spin in "Qamishli", a city, a few meters away from the Turkish border, surrounded by a wire fence and land mines to prevent smugglers, at least, of the challenge of infiltrating across its borders, to and from. The Author's lists, marks and sometimes exaggerates, addresses the

movements of those men who were brave. The legends, probably, covered people in conversations from generation to generation, are so stable in awareness of the writer, since his childhood. This novel, which was mixed, as a writer's creativity, the realistic side next to the metaphysical, a dreamer hopes in the future of the Savoie; reflected realism, also, additional lights in this direction. It reminds one of the biography of our author, self, as we read in his works "grasshopper Iron" and "following Aliye". In the latter, we have seen how the teacher partisan strange, tyrannical, persecuting students and insulted their mothers, they are Kurds. But not soon with the fall of the regime then, be thrown fate tough on the hands of this course mothers, kicks his ego and racism while in the novel "jurists Of the darkness" offers author another picture of the teacher, strange; this young enlightened, who is trying to publish belief Progressive among his students. However, in turn, receive no less cruel fate at the hands of the people, and this time because of his contempt for the ethnic beliefs and traditions, to be a reward by fingers, and then expelled outside their region. That society also paid a price for that act, described, including receives from the torment of conscience.

Tale "jurists Of the darkness", can be summarized in a few lines: "*Mela Bênav*", man , kicking a baby boy Male, a supernatural nature; give him the name "*Bêkes*" The latter, grows amusingly, do not spend the day on the first day, the witness of his birth, but sacrificing a complete man, mature; extent that it required the father bride for himself... Thus the novelist *Salim Barakat* creates an atmosphere of fantasy from the reality of life for the Kurdish community and used many other Kurdish names and places in his novel such as *Koçerî, Brîna Evdî, Girzo, Xatê, Sînem, Bavê ciwanê, Osê, Bedirxan, Baran, Serbest, Gegerxîn,...*

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the nation and the literature are two interrelated elements. The national state could provide the nation's literature and the literature also could play an essential role in defining the national identity. The literature role is different from one nation to another nation. In some Western countries the novelists successfully determined the borders between their communities. But in Kurdistan, despite the role of some Kurdish poets and novelists in defining the Kurdish identity, they did not achieve their target until now in terms of building their own country and state. And their country which is Kurdistan is divided between four states. Each state has a different case.

The literary products of those Kurdish writers who have written their works in other languages is because of some political, cultural and educational reasons. Their literary products can be considered Kurdish literature. Therefore, the literary works are written in some other foreign languages (and not Kurdish) but they imply themes related to Kurdish life . In these cases their works serve the Kurdish nation and all its aspects rather than those official and dominant languages which they have written in.

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