

A STUDY OF SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ARABIC AND YORUBA PROVERBS IN THE WORK OF MUNIR BA'AL BAKI ENTITLED "MASABIHUAL-TAJRIBAH" (THE LAMPS OF EXPERIENCE)

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Abstract

This study examined the similarities between Arabic and Yoruba Proverbs. An attempt is made to compare some of the Proverbs in the two languages by giving examples of those ones that are exactly having the same meaning in usage. The impact is observed in the Yoruba proverbs traceable to Arabic language with the same meaning and usage which gives an impression of establishing the historical belief that the Yoruba race originated from the Arab. To explain this, similarities in the use of proverbs in both languages are analyzed and meaning of the proverbs are given. Conclusion is there drawn to point out the significance of Arabic and Yoruba proverbs. The work of Munir Ba'al Baki entitled: The lamps of experience is employed. The methodology employed is qualitative research method whereby simple examples are given to demystify a theory.

Keywords: *Arabic, Comparison Language Proverbs Yoruba.*

Introduction

Every language has its origin. The origin may emanate from where the language is being spoken or close to it. The origin of the language being spoken may change but still there must be elements, rudiments and traces of this origin in it that will indicate the emergent structure of this language from the main source.

This occurred in Arabic and Yoruba proverbs either by historical connection, meaning and usage. On historical connection, Yoruba language have been so much influenced by Arabic through various linguistic loanwords that one can be allured to accept as true the inference that Yoruba migrated from Makkah. Another theory explains that before the first settlers of Yoruba population at Ile-Ife led by Oduduwa, there was a black tribe known as Negro which was later dominated by the emigrants (Yoruba) with their language because of the insignificant number of the black tribe.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this work is to compare between Arabic and Yoruba proverbs by using the work of Munir Ba'al Baki entitled: Masaabihu 'Al-Tajribah(The lamps of Experience). This is with a view to uncovering the similarities between the two languages- Arabic and Yoruba and especially their proverbs. The study established the myth which traces the origin of Yoruba to the ancient Egypt and the assertion of Adam Al- Olori, a Nigerian prolific Arabic writer, which affirms

that Yoruba people were made up of Arab and other three tribes as mentioned in this research work.

Proverbs and their Usage

Proverbs is a universal phenomenon. For its invaluable worth, it means a lot to different people. The Arabs give it an appellation, the lamp of speech (Misbahu al-Kalaam) as it has also been described by Munir Ba'al Baki as Masabihu Al-Tajribah (The lamps of Experience). The Yoruba people call it the horse of Speech (Esin Oro)! In essence, all nations around the world have means and ways of protecting their proverbs from one generation to the other.ⁱ

In this consideration, the Arabs and Yoruba are not left out. The work of Munir Ba'al Baki is used to draw samples as it adds to the mastery and beauty of the users' language. In this paper, it is observed that almost all the proverbs in the lamps of experience have their equivalent in Yoruba language which shows how rich proverbs are in language. All over the world, people perpetuate their proverbs for posterity in both poetry and prose, whether written or spoken. Proverb manifests itself exceptionally in the writings and conversation of wise men. Admonitions from Clergies are enriched by proverbs either to impress or expatiate and adorn their speech.

Uncovering proverbs in both Arabic prose and poetry requires wisdom. When a reader or listener comes across proverbs in a speech, it behoves him to stop by a while in order to grasp the real meaning of the proverb in such context.

Proverbs have been put into different use in the Yoruba society to elaborate a point, to assert authority to what is uttered and to educate the young ones within the society.ⁱⁱ

It can also serve as a means of persuasion which enhances one's image as a good speaker with creativity p. It is used to warn someone of an imminent danger, pride, greediness, immorality and generally to counsel one about life. It is also used to settle quarrel, feud amongst warring parties, to summarize a long speech which is used to display with ostentation our rich cultural heritage.ⁱⁱⁱ It is often used to communicate complex human experience, to make a discussion stand out and emotionalize listeners in order to advise, persuade, encourage them and instill trust. Proverb is described as a literary device which adorns a writer's language. They are also inevitable tools in the hands of musicians in order to moralize and educate the listeners. Other aphoristic expressions and proverbs serve as an indirect way of adding imagery to the lyric of the music and making statements in a clarity form.

Yoruba People and their language

The origin of the Yoruba people remains obscure and indistinct that no unquestionable knowledge has been discovered. Folorunsho expatiates that the general trends of theories on it are basically on Yoruba myth that of a possible origin in the East especially from the Arab. Another side of the history is that Yoruba People came from Egypt because of the resemblance of Culture, religious rites, works of arts and interment between the ancient Egypt and the Yoruba race. The assertion

that Yoruba people migrated from the Upper Nile of Egypt is apposite here. In tracing the origin of Yoruba people, two prominent stories have been widely circulated. One is a story of migration which has been previously mentioned and the other is the Yoruba cosmology which explains the origin or creation of man. According to the Yoruba cosmogony, Oduduwa who was the father of Yoruba descended from heaven and established the first settlement at Ile-Ife.^{iv} This myth further says that after the descending of the father and his unite from heaven his sons and descendants spread to the world with white, black and Yellow complexion. This is not true in the opinion of Sheikh Adam Al-Ilori.^v This statement was referred to Samuel Johnson by further explanation on Sultan Bello's submission from Muhammad Masari in his book titled Azharur-Ruba fi AkhbariBilaadi Yoruba.^{vi}

Al-Ilori affirms that Yoruba people were made up of Arab, Barbers, Nubians and Negroes. Among the four tribes, the first three tribes have dwelled in Egypt, took from their cultures and travelled with them to Yorubaland. He explains that as we have Arabic words in Berber and Nubian languages, some Arabic words which are almost one-third also remained in Yoruba till today. It can be established from the foregoing discussion that part of Yoruba language seems to have affinity with Arabic than any other languages.

However, the African population has many different tribal and linguistic groups that are speaking different languages with different religions and diverse customs and manner. Little is known about the origin of Yoruba as their ancestors did not leave behind written records or monuments but fragmentary myth and legend intermingle their traditions and thereby contradictory. It is believed that the people of Yoruba originated from the residue of the Canaan's children who were of Namrud's tribe (Nimrod) also known as Lamurudu in Yoruba language and migrated to Ile-Ife as a result of being expatriated out of Arabia by the son of Qahtan called Yaa-Rooba. Along the way, they left their remnants at any place they passed and had a stop-over. It is a general belief that Sudanese tribes originated from them Burns concludes that no matter what their origin is, there is the likelihood that they originated from Negro blood. Another tradition states that the Yoruba came from Upper Egypt because of some carved stones that were found in Ile-Ife, the way in which their deceased were shrouded for burial including the cloth they used for this objective are indications of an Egyptian source.

Arabs and their language

Arabs are the people that speak Arabic which is one of the Semitic languages as their native language. They originated from Semitic languages as their native language. They originated from Semitic race who lived in Euphrates, the land between two rivers (Tigris and Euphrates).^{vii} Discomfort in the ancient city led to their severance throughout the world while the Arabs established their dwelling place at the Peninsula which has been attributed to them. Their language along with Hebrew, forms the large part of Semitic languages.^{viii}

The Semitic language are:

1. Al-Arabiyyah (Arabic)

2. Al-Habbashiyyah (Ethiopian)
3. Al-Finiqiyyah (Phoenician)
4. Al-Aramiyyah (Phoenician)
5. Al-Himyariyyah (Himyaritic)
6. Al-Ibrahniyyah (Hebrew)
7. Al-Babiliyyah and Al-Ashriyyah (babylonian and Assyrian).^{ix}

Arabic is the language of Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) though it was neither the language of his father, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) nor that of his mother who was an Egyptian. Their own languages were Chaldean (Kildaaniyyah) and Hebrew (Ibraniyyah) respectively. There are two opinions as regards Ismail's language. Firstly, that Arabic language was the language of Ya'rub son of Qahtan who was known as the Father of the Arab and derived his name from the place called 'Araba' from the dwellers of the cities among the Arab tribes (Arab'al-Musta'rribah) who lived in Yemen and mingled with other people.

Secondly, that Arabic was acquired by Ismail from his neighbours living in Yemen from Amalik tribe who resided with him beside the spring of Zamzam in Makkah and he later entered into conjugal with one of them.^x

In view of the above, the language of Ismail originated from Yemen. Another opinion is that he inherited both Hebraic and Chaldeanite languages from his parents and later spread to Arabian Peninsula with various pronunciations. Nevertheless, Arabic is one of the first languages in anthropogeny. There are salient traditions that suggest that the name of ancestor of all human beings, Adam, was invented from an Arabic word.^{xi} There is no gainsaying the fact that the language was already in vogue in 2500 BC. according to archeological discovery. However, Az-Zayat observed that it is a herculean task for a researcher to arrogate to himself the knowledge of the origin, stages and development of Arabic language.^{xii} Arabs are categorized into three: Al-ArabulBa'idah, Al-ArabulAribah and Al-Arabul-Musta'ribah. These are the perished Arabs that are described in the Qur'an (Q22:42), the Arabs who lived in the Republic of Yemen and Southern part of Saudi-Arabia and the Arabized Arabs who are Arabs by adoption respectively. It is notable that Arabism is no more restricted to the three categories mentioned earlier on. Various tribes who were not Arabs in the past have been fully incorporated into the race through Islam.

Some Elements of Arabic words in Yoruba Language.

Besides the borrowed words from Hausa to Yoruba language like 'Gaani' which means to see correctly: "Kai" which means "leave the place" and "Magaji" which is leader/ Head of Family" etc., there are numerous words with Arabic origin which are not the major focus of this paper. How and when those words found their way into Yoruba Language are still in obscurity. It is also stated that aside the fact that Yoruba emanated from Upper Egypt or from the descendants of Namrud, the word Yoruba appears to have come from the earlier mentioned Ya'rub (Yaa-Rooba), the son of Qahtan.^{xiii} One of the characteristic features of Yoruba language is the struggle to vowelize all Arabic words or discontinue the pronunciation because it is alien to Yoruba to stop on consonant (Arabic null vowel 'Sukuun'), else, they end the word on vowel always. For

example, 'Muslim' in Arabic "Musulumi" in Yoruba, "Mumin" in Arabic "Mumini" in Yoruba and "Qalam" as "Kalamu" "Quran as Kurani" "Kaafir" as "Keferi" "Munaafiq" as "Munafiki" etc. This is also visible in their attempt to pronounce some Arabic names like Ibrahim in Arabic but Yoruba calls it Buraimo, Jalilat as Jelilatu, Thaabit as Saabitu, Luqman as Lukumonu, Qamar as Kamoru, Ma'ruf as Morufu etc.

Furthermore, if we consider the angle of grammatical and etymological bases and structures of the word, it will be discovered that local grammatical bases have effect on the student of Arabic language. In an attempt to pronounce it, the student commits an error either etymology or grammar in direction of articulation.^{xiv}

Selected proverbs in the work of MunirBa'alBaki titled: " Massabihual – Tajribah" (The lamps of experience).

MunirBa'alBaki (1918-1998) is regarded as the giant in the field of Arabic language and is nicknamed the 'guru' of translators in the modern era by fellow translators. His translation had become the original of the original by virtue of constituting itself as a new Canon with translation studies in Arabic. MunirBa'alBaki studied Arabic literature and Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and pursued further postgraduate studies in Baghdad where he also taught and acquainted himself with Pan-Arabism.

He and his friend, BaheejOthman co-founder publishing house Dar El-IlmLimalaayiin (House of publishing for Millions)which has continued to publish his English-Arabic dictionary (Al-Mawrid) in different formats (complete, concise, bilingual, pocket, middle sized etc.). He translated more than a hundred books from English, including History of the Arabs by P. Hitti, The story of my experiments with truth by M.Ghandi, A tale of two cities by Dickens, The snows of Kilimanjaro by Heminger to mention but a few.

Some of his Proverbs and their meaning are the following:

	Arabic	English	Yoruba	Meaning
1	لا يوقع الثعلب في الشرك نفسه مرتين	A fox is not taken twice in the same snare	Ina Esisi kii joni leemeji	One should not allow himself to commit the same error twice. There is no excuse for such a person who falls in the pit of the same mistake twice.

2	صديقك الحق هو الصديق الذي يقف إلى جانبك في الشدائد	A friend in need is a friend indeed.	Igba iponju laa more.	He that is your friend indeed will help you in need. A person who helps you at the difficult time is a person who you can rely on.
3	الرجل الجوعان رجل غضبان	A hungry man is an angry man.	Eni ebinpa, kogbo yago.	Hungry men are angry because hunger can kill.
4	العلم القليل (أو المعرفة القليلة) شيء خطر	A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.	Aabo eko a maa jeni niya.	Little knowledge can leads to destruction.
5	الجواب الرقيق يسكت الغضب	A soft answer turns away wrath.	Oro rere nii yo obi lapo, oro buruku nii yo ofa lapo.	Good talk brings kolanut out of the pocket, provocative talk draws the arrow out of the quiver. (Judicious language defuses problems while thoughtless talk aggravates them)
6	ليس في مقدار المرء أن يخدم سيدين اثنين	A man cannot serve two masters.	Eru kan ko le sin oga meji.	There is no way one can serve two masters at a time with the same level of loyalty and commitment. A man cannot serve God with total faith and submission and serve money concurrently. To divide one's attention, efforts, loyalty between more than one profession, goal, pursuit etc, will result in none of them being done properly.
7	المرء يعرف بأقرانه	A man is known by the company he keeps.	F'ore re hanmi, kin so iru eniyan too je.	A person tends to associate with people who are like him. If you want to know what kind of person a man is, look at his friends. People with like minds

				and habits tend to stick to each other.
8	بيت المرء قصره	A man's house is his castle.	Naani naani naani, oun ani laa naani.	No matter how one's house looks like, it is the place of refuge and safety for the person and must be guarded jealously.
9	لا يعدم النبي آيات التشریف إلا في وطنه	A Prophet is not without honour save his own country.	Ojise kan kii niyi ninu ilu re.	A person's gift and talents are rarely appreciated by those close to him. This is used for anyone whose talent and accomplishments are highly regarded except those at home.
10	إنما تعرف الشجرة من ثمرها	A tree is known by its fruits.	Nipa eeso won laa fi mo won.	A person's or groups character or worth is determined by others based on their actions or the results thereof.
11	حسب الحكيم كلمة واحدة	A word to a wise man is enough.	Oro die to f'ologbon. Aabo orolaa so fun omoluabi, to ba de'nure, a di odidi.	A very brief warning or explanation is enough for an intelligent person.
12	ما كل ما يلمع ذهباً	All is not gold that glitters.	Gbogbo oun ti on dan koni wura.	The attractive external appearance of something is not a reliable indication of its true nature. Do not be deceived by looks because a person may look innocent but he is not.
13	شيطان تعرفه خير من شيطان تجهله	Better a devil you know than a devil you don't know.	Esu ti a timo lati ojo to pe, o san ju	It is better to deal with a difficult person or situation one knows than with a new person

			angeli ti a kotii gburo e.	or situation that could be worse.
14	الطيور ذوات الريش اللمتثابه يألف بعضها بعضا	Birds of a feather flock together.	Egbe eiye ni eiye n woo to.	People of the same sort or with the same tastes and interests will be found together.
15	لا تقل في وصف أيما أمرئ إنه سعيد إلا بعد أن يموت	Call no man happy until he is dead (or dies).	Eniti ko tiiku, ko le tii mo iku to maa pa oun.	You cannot say that a person's life has been happy on the whole until the person's life has been terminated, no matter how happy someone is now, something may happen to destroy his happiness.
16	الإحسان يبدأ بالأسرة (أو بالعشيرة)	Charity begins at Home.	Ile laa ti ko eso r'ode.	A person's first responsibility is for the needs of his own family and friends. People should therefore deal with the needs of people close to them before they think about helping others.
17	الموت هو المسوى العظيم بين الناس	Death is the grand leveler.	Gbogbo wa laa dagbada iku.	Death makes everyone equal, because it does not spare anyone, not even the wealthy, famous, or talented. It comes to man the same as to everyone else.
18	الأمراض العضالة تقتضى علاجات يائسة	Extreme diseases need desperate remedies	Omo ina laa ran si'na.	Extreme and undesirable circumstances or situations can only be resolved by resorting to equally extreme actions.
19.	الكلب لا يأكل (أو لا يعض) كلبا	Dog does not eat dog	Adie kiije'fun ara won.	One disreputable person will not harm other disreputable person.

20.	لا تعد فراحك قبل أن تفقس	Do not count your chickens before they are hatched	A kii gbo kuku ojo da omi agbada nu.	Someone should not depend on something hoped for until he knows or ascertains that it will happen. Don't make plan based on a good thing happening before it has actually happened.
21.	مهما شرقت أو غربت فلن تجد خيرا من الوطن	East or West home is the best.	Ile labo sinmi oko.	No matter how exhilarating travels are, one will always be thrilled to come home.
22.	ما يكسب بسهولة يضيع سهولة	Easy come, easy go	Oun ti a koba jiya fun kii pe lowo eni.	A possession acquired without effort may be abandoned or lost without regret. something that is achieved easily is also lost easily.
23.	أربعة أعين ترى أكثر (أو أحسن) من عينين اثنتين	Four eyes see more (or better) than two.	Isin woo, kokoro woo,oun ti a ba dijowo, gigun nii gun.	Observation by two people is better than by one.
24.	أجمع براعم الورد ما دمت قادرا على ذلك	Gather your rose-buds while you may.	Igba ara laabura, enikan kii bu Sango leerun.	Act and enjoy yourself now before your situation changes. Make the most of the opportunities you get, in the limited time that is available to you.
25.	النمر لا يستطيع أن يغير رقطه	The Leopard cannot change its spots.	Kosi bi a se maa se ebolo ti koni run'gbe.	People cannot change their basic personalities, habits, etc. It is impossible for one to change his character, even if he will try very hard. ^{xv}

Conclusion

It has been established in this work, how proverbs are being kept for posterity among people of the same descent using Yoruba and Arabic Proverbs as examples. It is often said that a person who

knows proverbs has the last word in dispute and therefore, there is no authority like proverbial authority. The proverbs used in this paper from the work of Munir Ba'al Baki with their equivalents in Yoruba language undoubtedly make the proverbs survive till date. To maintain this frequency, Arabic speakers and writers should endeavor to copy the likes of Munir Ba'al Baki whose work: Masabihu 'al-Tajribah has made proverbs interesting and educative. The Yoruba speakers should as well make use of proverbs in their speech to make their language a delightful one.

Guardians and Parents are also enjoined to encourage their wards/children to make use of proverbs in order to promote our cultural values rather than dissipating energy and time to listen to musical works that are alien to Yoruba culture. All hands must be on deck by the Government to live up to expectation in promoting Yoruba values to preserve our inheritance.

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