



## The book “Two Centuries of Silence” expresses that **Why did the Persians refuse to merge with the Arabs into one identity?**

The appearance of the book “Two Centuries of Silence” by the Persian Abdul Hussein Zarin Kobe at the end of the fifties of the last century was not an exception in the Iranian anti-Arab literature, but was a real extension of it and a declaration of what is going on behind the scenes of the Iranian elites, and even the popular culture in which the hostility has been rooted for centuries towards everything that belongs to the Arabs.

The book considered that Iran entered a state of silence during the first two centuries of Islam, which is an unfair accusation to those two centuries which the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, praised, saying: “The best of centuries is this century and the next”. The Persians, who hated everything belongs to the Arabs, describe them as the two centuries that followed the defeat of the Sassanid Persian Empire by the Muslims in the Battle of Nahavand (Nahawand). In his book, Abdul Hussein condemns Iran's conversion to Islam and accuses Arab leaders and rulers of suppressing Persian culture and obliterating its sources.

The book “Two Centuries of Silence” excluded the Abbasid era from that when it announced the end of the “Age of Silence” with the end of the era of Harun Al-Rashid and the victory of Caliph Al-Ma'mun and his Persian supporters over his brother Al-Amin, and then the rise of the Persians to high positions in the army and the Abbasid palace. Thus, Persian nationalism began to rise again. Indeed, Abdul Hussein Zarin Kobe describes the Abbasid civilization as a purely Persian civilization.

Many Persians believe that the Abbasid era brought about a change in the course of history in their favour. This theory is based on a dark view in which they judge the first two centuries of Islamic history with cruelty and racism, and portray them as years of silence and isolation that prevailed in Persian culture and only it was liberated when the Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun came to power after defeating his brother Al-Amin. Two centuries of cultural isolation that was imposed by force on Persia, as they claim, and was called in the writings of many of them, two centuries of silence.

### **The Persians refused to integrate into Islam**

The Persians only found a way to resist Islam through Persian cultural isolation and remain on alert until they could restore it with all its religious myths and Sassanid dreams. They were able to achieve this with the beginning of the Abbasid era when they infiltrated the Palace of rule and were able to do so. In a research published in the Lebanese newspaper Annahar under the title “The Arabs and The Persians between Integration and conflict”, Mahmoud Al-Zibawi asserts that Abdul Hussein Zarin Kobe, in his book “Two Centuries of Silence”, embodies the racist Iranian nationalist trend and the Persian pride that makes the Islamic civilization just a Persian civilization. This book was published at the end of the fifties of the last century and achieved wide public success, in which the author sought to highlight the silence of Iran during the two centuries that followed the Islamic conquest of Iran following the defeat of the Sassanid Empire in the Battle of Nahavand. The writer condemns the Islamic conquest of Iran, and accuses the Arab leaders and rulers of suppressing the local Persian culture and obliterating its sources. On the other hand, the Persian author adopts the orientalist saying that makes the Umayyad rule an Arab rule and the Abbasid rule a Persian rule and makes the Abbasid civilization a purely Persian civilization.

### **Why do the Persians consider the Abbasid era a Persian era?**

Abdul Hussein Zarin believes that the Abbasid era, especially since the rule of Al-Ma'mun, is the beginning of liberation from the ages of silence that hindered the Persian civilization, according to his opinion. This is because the Persians penetrated the structure of the Abbasid regime and took control of it despite the presence of the Caliph Al-Ma'mun, and they were able to penetrate the state's facilities after that. In a research published by Khaled Bashir on Hafryat website, he says: At the level of intellectual and literary movement, the new stage witnessed the emergence of the trend known as populism, which is the trend that tried to refute the superiority of the Arabs, which was considered a reaction to the Arab nationalist theses that spread and prevailed throughout the Umayyad era.

The populist movement cherished the Persian heritage, called for its revival, and raised the slogan of the superiority of other peoples over the Arabs in response to the Arab tendency that sees the Arabs as the best of nations. There are populists who have gone beyond that. In his book “The Misers”, Al-Jahiz talks about a group of populists called “Azadmurds” who hated the Arabs and saw that they had no preference over the non-Arabs. He says about them: “They are the most fanatic of the Persians”.

### **The image of the Arab in the mind of the Persian**

In her book “The Image of the Arabs in Modern Persian Literature”, Joya Blondel Saad says about the Arabs in Persian literature: “The image of the Arabs appears as part of the answer to the question of the Iranian identity, as the concept of Iranianism formed a literary concern, rather a political and social problem that was reflected in literature as a problem of searching for historical, cultural and national identity. The writers of modern Iranian Persian literature resorted to portraying Iran as one nation by defining the Arab as the other, which is an inverted definition of the Iranian as being the origin in terms of race and language sometimes, and from the perspective of the other using the expressions of religion, history and culture at other times. It is a pattern that formed an aspect of Iranian nationalism in the last twentieth century”.

The author believes that Iranian nationalism is a clear value in modern Persian literature that we capture by describing social and local history, customs, dialects, and other things. Nationalism means loyalty and devotion to the nation. According to “Shahrokh Maskoub”, since the advent of Islam to Iran, the Iranian national consciousness has been based on the Persian language and on pre-Islamic history, given the factors of history and language. Accordingly, Iran was defined as a nation through the common language and history, but the reality indicates that Iran is a country of great ethnic diversity, there are Persians, Kurds and Arabs.

### **How did they describe the Arabs?**

Joya Saad adds: “With the onset of modern national consciousness in Iran, secular thinkers sought to establish a new definition of the concept of “Iranianism” based on its pre-Islamic past. Some of them portrayed Iran as the Sassanid and Achaemenid empire which civilization was destroyed by the savage Bedouins”. The Iranian Mirza Agha Kermani sees Islam as a strange religion that was imposed on the noble Aryan nation (the Iranians) by a group of lizard eaters, barefoot and naked Bedouins living in the desert, describing them as the savage Arabs.

### **History does not tell lies**

The relationship of the Arabs with Persia was going on two different paths. The Arabs dealt with the Persians as part of the Islamic nation, regardless of their character, and this prevailed with the Romans, Copts, Sindh, Afghans and other races that merged with the Muslim Arabs to form one nation. On the other hand, the Persians or some of them remained lamenting over Khosrau and his state, which had collapsed in the Great Battle of Al-Qadisiyyah. This incident remained an obstacle to their integration into the great nation, and many of those tried to remain Persian to this day.

In a deep study published by the Levant Writers Association on the image of the Arab Muslim in Iranian school curricula, we find that it does not differ from the context of Persian hostility and arrogance that is prevalent in most literature, prose or poetry. They imagine that the Arabs are responsible for the failure of Persian civilization. The truth is that this is not because of the Arab Muslims, as they claim, but the historical truth confirms that the Persians do not have the tools of civilization that should enable them to build their civilizational reputation away from Islam.

This Persian attitude against the Arab culture is not only scattered in the school curricula, but is also the attitude of the great writers of the ancient Persian heritage. The Shahnameh, the famous epic of Al-Ferdowsi, ends with sadness because of the advent of the Muslim Arabs and the elimination and occupation of the Sassanid state, in which the Arabs were portrayed as less civil than the Persians.

On this basis, Al-Ferdowsi composed his epic, which is devoid of any poetic sense, and he called it the Shahnameh meaning the king of books, using most of it in insulting the Arabs and glorifying the Persians and their kings. The Persian racists began teaching these hostile poems to their children.

### **The clash of civilizations began with the message of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to Khosrau.**

Dr. Nabil Al-Atoum says: “The Persians did not accept the Arabs in the past. How can they accept them after Allah assigned them to call for Islam? Therefore, we find that when the Prophet Muhammad sent a message to Khosrau inviting him to Islam, he became enraged and tore up the message. That happened when he heard the first words in the message where the name of the Prophet Muhammad was mentioned before his name, so he got angry and tore the message and said: A slave from my followers mentions his name before my name!”.

Only a few years passed until the Muslim armies were able to eradicate the myth of the Persian state during the era of the Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. Since this defeat, Persian populism against the Arabs began and reached its climax when Abu Lu'lu'a assassinated Caliph Umar, who laid the foundation of the Arab Islamic state. The Persians still make pilgrimages to the shrine of Abu Lu'lu'a in Iran, and they call him “Bābā Shujā al-Dīn” because he avenged the Persians after the defeat of Al-Qadisiyyah by killing Umar Ibn Al-Khattab.

**Khosrau's attitude towards the message of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the first populist expression in which they rejected the Arabs with arrogance**

With the advent of Islam to Iran, the Persians stubbornly adhered to their Persian culture and language and placed their nationalism parallel to and perhaps above their religion. This is what clearly reveals the phenomenon of hostility inherent in the structure of the Persian-Iranian mind against the Arabs, even though this historical conflict was supposed to end after the two parties entered under the banner of the Islamic religion. The Muslim conquest of Persia formed a profound impact on the psyche and mentality of the Persian Magians, which in turn formed a painful psychological complex that is the eternal glory of the Persians. Until that date, the Persians considered themselves the masters of the world. Since ancient times, the Persian mentality has been associated with the desire for absolute control and political influence over the lands of Iran, Iraq, the eastern Gulf and some western parts of it, and Yemen. This created what could be called the Persian arrogant view over all peoples, including the Arabs.

The truth is that the Persians, from the first moment until now, have refused to fully integrate into the comprehensive Islamic identity and have always sought and still seek to avenge their historical defeat by the Arabs. That is why they rushed quickly to adopt the Safavid call, which transformed Iran from a Sunni state into the first Shiite state in Islamic history. Their aggressive behavior has continued throughout time regardless of the nature of the rule in Persia.



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