

Civilizational Development in Andalusia in the Writings of Orientalists in the French Orientalist School Gustave Le Bon as A Model

Mayson Najem Obaid¹ and Mariam Alwai Fahed²

Abstract

This study intends to present the cultural development in Andalusia and indicates the most prominent writings of French Orientalists regarding this civilization, as well as their appreciation for Arab culture. In this sense, the French Orientalist Gustave Le Bon is a role model. Among the most well-known philosophers in the West, he has shown justice to the Arab people and Islamic culture. This research therefore centers on his writings, which are full of references to the contributions that Arabs and the Arab Islamic nation have made to the West. He wrote the important work "La Civilisation des Arabes" ("The Civilization of the Arabs"), which offers insightful details on Arab civilization, and he accepted that Muslims were the ones who brought civilization to Europe. Additionally, the study seeks to expose the genuine character of Western Orientalists by differentiating between those who are sympathetic to Arab Muslims and those who are hostile to both Islam and Arabs. It demonstrates how the Arabs taught the West about civilization and advancement in many spheres of life. There are three sections to the research. The history, growth, and current status of the French Orientalist School are covered in the first section. The biography, writings, and methods of French Orientalist Gustave Le Bon are the main subjects of the second half. The final segment looks at Andalusia's cultural evolution. In writing this research, I have relied on both Arab and foreign sources, and I hope it will meet the reader's approval.

Keywords: Civilizational Development, Andalusia, Writings of Orientalists, School Gustave Le Bon.

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.

In my research entitled “Civilizational Development in Andalusia in the Writings of Orientalists in the French Orientalist School, Gustave Le Bon as a model”, which is an important topic in the history of Andalusia to know the opinion of European countries and the extent to which they recognize the cultural achievements of Arabs in all aspects of life. Also, to be familiar with their opinion on Arab writings, their response to them, and whether the conquering Arabs have an impact on Andalusia. The writings of French Orientalists were a research model, and Orientalist Gustave Le Bon as a sample for the French.

In fact, I have faced some difficulties in collecting main resources that address the orientalists and their writings about Arab. Hence, I used secondary resources and foreign references. The research is divided into three topics: the first addressed the French orientalist school, its goals, features, the fair and unfair orientalists of it, also the writings of these orientalists about the Andalusia studies.

The second topic addresses the French orientalist Gustave Le Bon, his biography and methodology.

While the third and last topic addressed all the aspects about Andalusia which Gustave Le Bon wrote in his books.

As for references, the book (La civilização Árabe) “The Civilization of the Arabs” by Gustave Le Bon among other books were used.

¹ College of Islamic Sciences/ University of Baghdad, Email: maisoon.n@cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq

² College of Islamic Sciences/ University of Baghdad, Email: Maryam.a@cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq

First Topic

The French Orientalist School, its Origins, and Stages of Development

The Origin and Development

Orientalist school in French is one of the most prominent Orientalist schools, the richest in thoughts, the highest production and most clear among other schools. This is due to the close relationship that connects France to the Arab Islamic world, both past and present. France was united in most European relations with the Arabs in times of peace and war. The Arabs reached the borders of France and frightened it. France had a close relationship with the Abbasid Caliphate in the days of Charlemagne and Al-Rashid. It participated in the Crusades and aspired to occupy parts of the Arab world. Napoleon invaded Egypt and established strong relations with the Arab states on political and economic levels. Also, France occupied the Maghreb, Syria and Lebanon.

The Arab-Islamic contact with France began in the second century AH, when Arab military activity began to penetrate Europe from Andalusia, and one of the most prominent manifestations of this contact was the Battle of (Land of the Martyrs) in Ramadan in the year 114 AH, which was a turning point for the advance northward. This defeat prevented them from going further to invade Europe or the Great Land, as it was called. Muslims, hence, stopped their conquests forward, and were content with preserving what they had of the lands, working to fortify them and deliver the seeds of civilization to those lands .

The Orientalists who came to the East through the Crusades, trips, or embassies benefited from the Arabs scientifically and socially. On the one hand, they also observed their civilization as superior to theirs and that they had conditions unlike theirs. Many of them have learned the Arabic language, and some French commanders and princes were famous for their knowledge of the Arabic language. The first French orientalist was (De Ozbac), who sat on the papal throne in the period (389 - 393 AH). He came to Andalusia in his youth and studied in Cordoba and Seville at the hands of Arab mathematicians and astronomers.

The Features of the Orientalist School

The features of French orientalist school can be summarized as follows:

France's leadership (of the Crusades), its embrace of Catholicism and the recovery of Jerusalem from Muslims are reflected in the souls of the French. The French Orientalist school has sought to remove religion from their account a few or more on the grounds that these nationalists do not see religion as a component of political life.

French Orientalists played a key role in preparing studies on the Arab-Islamic heritage. In the Renaissance era, we believe that the position of French Orientalists was to deny Arabs and their traditional role in classical Greek heritage.

One of the characteristics of modern French Orientalism is the global political developments and the rise of the national and regional liberation movement in the Arab region. French Orientalism has come with the colonial phase of the country, and the French were able to match power and knowledge.

The French Orientalist School has taken the field of investigating and publishing manuscripts or translating them into different foreign languages in order to focus on a specific specialty. Most of them specialized in investigating, studying, or translating manuscripts related to Syria and North Africa.

The increasing interest of French Orientalism in race and Islamic doctrines in the period following the Second World Crusades.

French Orientalism has a special interest in the studies of Islamic cities. If we count the books and research that have been written about Arab cities, we will find that French studies represent a high percentage of them the goals of French orientalism:

The main goal of French Orientalism in the East during the 5th and 6th centuries AH was characterized by religious evangelism and serving the policies of the Frankish Empire. It remained successful because it was not based on an organized scientific basis. This is what we see in Dumas' statement about the monk Peter when he refuted the Qur'an after it. He commissioned someone to translate it into Latin to fight it, and he complained of the neglect of those who did not know their language. On this basis, Europe was languishing in darkness. No study had yet been conducted that distinguished disbelief and paganism, nor had any counterarguments been established that could be refuted. This was the behavior of the Church, which did not allow the public to discuss these topics because of the bad results left behind by the medieval Church.

It can be said that the beginning of the French attempt to benefit from Muslim sciences until the caliphate of Abd al-Rahman (300 - 350 AH), when the Arab Islamic civilization in Andalusia reached the peak of its prosperity and high levels, and the difference between it and the neighboring and distant European countries was clear. In the fifth and sixth centuries AH, the features of the French Orientalist school became evident. This is due to the Intelligentsia, and even the leaders of the church began to call for replacing the approach of war on Islam to searching for the reasons for the renaissance of Muslims and their achievement of such glory.

Thus, they began to study their sciences and languages in the hope that they might achieve something to stop this new trend or gain from their knowledge what would benefit them and save them from their backwardness and ignorance. One of the essential aspects that best expressed the characteristics of this transformation was based on knowing Islam and learning the Arabic language was what Peter, whose name called for church. He used the translator's school in Toledo, where two have been accepted, to help him exchange a certain amount of money.

French Orientalism in Andalusian Studies

French Orientalism has started since the Islamic Middle Ages, when Muslim Arabs ruled many parts of the Iberian Peninsula (Andalusia, Spain, and Portugal). The French Interest in Arab civilization has increased in an organized scientific manner when it started sending scientific missions to Andalusia to study science, arts, and industries.

Second Topic

The Orientalist Gustave Le Bon, Biography, Writings, And Approach

Biography

He is one of the French Orientalists. He is a physician, sociologist, psychologist, and philosopher. He was born in the town of Nogan-les-Les, France, on May 7, 1841, AD, and died at the age of ninety years on December 13, 1931, AD, in the French city of Marines-les-Coquit.

His financially well-off, quiet life and his dedication to science affected his academic achievement and the abundance of his scientific production. His basic education was in medicine. He began travelling to various European countries, North Africa, and Asia. During the War of 1870 AD, he was assigned to the position of chief of military transport doctors. In 1884 AD, the French government sent him on an archaeological mission to India, where he studied the architecture of Buddhist monuments. He also travelled to many countries in the Islamic world.

In his thirties, Le Bon's interest changed radically, and he began to be interested in various topics at the same time, starting with writing on social psychology, as well as writing on physiology, chemistry, physics, and education. He also wrote about historical problems and events such as the French Revolution and others.

His Writings

(Biography of the Development of Nations) He wrote this book in 1894 AD, in which he presented the moral and mental qualities that influence the development of nations. In his view, these qualities are the salvation of the nations and the legacy of their ancestors.

(The Crowd), which is one of the books he wrote that left a wide resonance in the Arab world. He wrote it in 1895 AD. In this book, which is concerned with collective psychology, he states that when an individual merges with the crowd, he/ she becomes a different person.

The spirit of sociology: he showed in this book the influence of groups on the behaviour of individuals and their impact on political movements and factors that drive the groups. He also wrote about how leaders use the spirit of groups to achieve their own goals.

Psychology of People Evolution: His most famous book, was printed twelve times due to the large demand for it. He wrote it in the year 1898 AD, and it is a summary of the basic instructions that he arrived at concerning social development. He explained the overwhelming influence of our ancestors, century after century, in shaping our thoughts and feelings.

Life of Truth: which is written about religious beliefs, their emergence and development.

The French Revolution and the Spirit of Revolution: which he wrote in 1913 AD, in which he emphasized the irrational factors in interpreting historical events.

Finally, Le Bon wrote several books on civilization, the first of which is (The Civilization of the Arabs) in 1884 AD, the book (The Civilization of India), and the book of (Introduction to Civilization) in 1889 AD, the civilization of Babylon and Assyria, the Egyptian civilization, and the Jews in the history of the first civilizations.

He also wrote the books: Memoirs on Nature, The Evolution of Matter, The Antiquities of India, A Trip to the Thasas Mountains, Yesterday and Tomorrow, Tobacco Smoke (Chemical Research), Death Phenomenon, Life Physiologically 1872 AD, Photographic Planning, The Spirit of Politics 1910 AD, and Modern inclusive of speech.

Gustave justified this great diversity in his scientific production by saying: "The coincidences of life led me to the various branches of pure science, such as sociology, psychology, and history, and to study the scientific methods by which humans reach knowledge."

The Methodology of Gustave Le Bon

The approach followed by the orientalist Gustave Le Bon was contrary to the approach of European historians, which was based on denying the superiority of Islam over the Western world. In his writings, Le Bon relied on what he observed and saw during the trips he made to many countries, and he based his approach on genius, innovation, and freedom of thought as well.

Criticism Directed At Le Bon

Historians said that Le Bon was one of the most important and famous philosophers of the West who was fair to Arab and Islamic civilization, and many critics praised Gustav's style, as they said about him that he was stripped of all the principles on which previous scholars have depended.

Historian Adel Zuaier mentions that: "In both books, Le Bon is free of all social doctrines and arrives at results that are contrary to the principles and opinions written by scholars, and he is truly considered a scholar of psychology and sociology". As for the criticism directed at him, some scholars criticized the absence of many issues from him, as Adel Zuaier says about him: Where Adel Zuaier says about him: "It cannot be said that we share all of Dr. Le Bon's thoughts and ideas, for in our opinion, the truth is absent from him in many issues, especially in the issue of monotheism and polytheism, and we would have liked to comment, but it is left to the reader, and limited our work in translation only" .

An Opinion About Le Bon

It is clear that the historian Gustave Le Bon is one of the best people to study the history of the Arabs and the entire East in general. It is noticed that he is fair to our religion (Islam) and the history of our Islamic nation. Where he worked to convey the truth and avoid deception or falsification.

He showed that he was an open-minded and broad-minded person. He always depends on logic and not only the predecessors' legacy. Where he thought of the necessity of considering the differences of various times.

The Third Topic

Cultural development in the writings of Gustave Le Bon in the history of Andalusia

The Cultural Development of Andalusia

On the cultural aspect, Le Bon says: "Muslims started to establish a superior civilization that made Spain the most beautiful and richest European country, where they build large and prosperous cities that were unparalleled on earth. These cities were planned by knowledgeable engineers and built by skilled builders. Cordoba, the capital of Andalusia, became the center of culture for all European countries. The streets of the capital were more than ten miles long. They were paved and lights were installed in them, while the streets of London and Paris were dirt and citizens were making their way during the night in the dark with difficulty and diving deep into mud after the rains".

As for the Arab buildings in Seville, Gustave mentions that most of Seville's Arab houses were built based on the Arabic style:

The tower called La Giralda (Air Game Tower) is the oldest Arab building in Seville. It is a beautiful square building built of pink bricks.

The outer faces of the La Giralda tower are covered by a network of carved inscriptions and arched windows, some of which are made in the shape of a horse's sole. On top of this tower, a statue was placed as a symbol of faith.

Sevilla Palace: It is an ancient Arab palace that dates to different periods. Its construction started in the thirteenth century and was built by the Arabs during the reign of the tyrant Matra. Then, Sharkin tried to decorate it and added Greek-Roman decoration to it.

The Christian kings used Seville Palace as their home. It worth mentioning that Seville is the most vibrant and civilized Spanish city.

As for the buildings in Granada:

The Alhambra Palace

It was built in the fourteenth century AD. It was built on the slope of Mount Schiller, which overlooks the city of Granada, and on the wide lush meadows. It is impossible to describe the Alhambra Palace in an accurate manner. Only the pen can do so because of its beautiful beauty. Everything in the palace is amazing and its walls are decorated with Arabic inscriptions. The Alhambra Palace is not like the palaces of Europe at all. It has no luxurious, boring, and cold object like the European palaces.

Cordoba Mosque

It is one of the famous mosques in Andalusia, which was established by Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil in the year 780 AD. It is considered by Muslims to be the focus of attention of the Arabs. Kunde said: This comprehensive mosque was built at the end of the eighth century AD by the order and supervision of Caliph Abd al-Rahman I. It was narrated that Abd al-Rahman I wanted to make it similar to a mosque. Damascus on a large scale, reminding people with its abundant decorations, of the wonders of the glorious Temple of Solomon the Holy, which was demolished by the Romans.

The Mosque of Cordoba surpassed all the temples of the East in their grandeur and splendor.

Its minarets can be seen clearly at forty cubits high. Furthermore, its slender domes can also be observed standing on joists of carved wood and resting on 1,093 columns made of various marbles in the shape of a checkerboard. As for the mihrab of the Mosque of Cordoba, we mention Gerol Dobranger: "You will not see anything better than its decoration and construction in any similar ancient or modern monument".

The charming Al-Zahra Palace

It is the palace built by Abd al-Rahman in the tenth century, a few leagues away from Cordoba. Gerol Dubranger described it saying that "That palace was decorated with 4,300 columns of precious, fully made marble, and its lobby was paved with pieces of marble that is skillfully carved in a thousand shapes. The walls of this lobby were covered with marble and decorated with friezes of dazzling colors, and its ceilings were decorated with tangled golden-Lapis patterns". This palace is one of the Arab buildings in Toledo that are mentioned by Gustave Le Bon.

The ancient Toledo presently represents an honest image of what European cities were like in the Middle Ages, and what is present in it now, including the luxurious cathedral and the Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes, are enough for its fame. If these two monuments were excluded, every step of this city could reveal a clue that helps to study the influence of the Arabs in the nations that replaced them.

Gustave Le Bon reminds us that Arab forts and towers surround Toledo and mentions some of its ancient gates: Bab Bizaghara, Bab Shaqra, and Bab Al-Shams.

The inscriptions and decorations seen on Toledo's buildings came to Arab workers before the Arabs were evacuated from Spain by the Christians. The information provided by historian Le Bon led to the conclusion that the Arabs had a great influence on the urban civilization.

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