

The Reflection of Iraq's Political Status after World War I in the Poems of Marouf al-Rusafi

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Colonialism is a phenomenon that has always been alongside human beings during the course of history. Primarily, the word was used to describe the notion of a government's dominance on another land. Now, such dominance incorporates the entire political, economic, cultural and social dimensions. As a result, since colonialism has been in fact alongside human beings during the entire course of history, its origins must be explored within human beings themselves rather than searching through the nature of governments and systems of the present age. The main principles concerning the presence of colonialism in human history can be found in the humans' talents for a number of traits such as rebelliousness, enslavement, selfishness, and the exploitation of others in order to reach their goals. The main feature of colonialism lies within the fact that the colonialists can use the power and assets of their colonies to their own favor in order to reach their own purposes, while the colonized would remain deprived of any benefits. In other words, the phenomenon of colonialism is a win-lose game.

2. Theoretical Framework

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Arab world in general and Iraq in particular, have been witnessing numerous ups and downs in political and social fields. Even after enduring the injustices of the Ottoman Sultans, this land fell to the hands of Western colonialists and was forced to live through oppression, invasion, distress, and degradation, whilst dreaming of their ancestors' greatness. Consequently, not only the literature of this country was susceptible to such crises, but also was heavily influenced by them. In this regard and as one of the strongest and liveliest literary movements of the cotemporary Arab world and Iraq in particular, political poetry was formed as a response to the increasing cruelty and tyranny of colonialist governments with the ultimate purpose of struggle and resistance

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against colonialism. These poems are reflective of the pains and sufferings, battles, stability, and freedom of people in different human societies; many poets such as Rusafi are considered as the real advocates of this cause. Through his ideology and poetry, Rusafi began his fight against the tyrant governments of his age, criticizing the weakness and humility of people against tyrannical rulers and encouraging them to stand against domestic authorities as well as foreign colonialists. Through the fire and fury of his poetry, he attempted to burn down the destructive corruption of colonialism and strived to abolish the dreams of the advocates of injustice and discrimination.

3. Methodology

By any means, Rusafi attempted to transfer poetry that was born of a certain, particular culture and environment to the lives of people and used it as a way of expressing the problems and difficulties of the time. Interestingly, his stance in poetry regarding political and national issues inspired a sense of patriotism in Iraq as well as other Arab countries.

The purpose of conducting the present study is to describe and analyze the views in Rusafi's poetry concerning Iraq's struggle against oppression and political crisis after World War I using the literary-historical research method; in this way, the role of this famous poet in awakening Iraqi people to fight against colonialism can be indicated.

The results of the study show that by writing political and social poems, Rusafi attempted to unite the people of his country by influencing their minds; furthermore, he strived to stand against domestic and foreign tyrants through culture. Consequently, he attempted to strengthen the sense of patriotism which is of considerable importance.

4. Discussion

Ultimately, Rusafi lived in an era during which many political developments were taking place in the society. He experienced three political periods in his life time. The first stage of his literary life was influenced by the Ottoman Empire, consisting of the authorities' cruel tyranny upon people. In the second stage of his life, Arab countries became separated from the governance of the Ottoman Empire following World War I along with the U.K.'s occupation of Iraq. In the third stage, Iraq was acknowledged by the League of Nations mandate by the U.K. which brought about a sense of liberalism and independence among the Iraqi people.

5. Conclusion

Meanwhile, Rusafi had had ventured beyond the small circle of Arabic and Islamic lands; as if he was deeply concerned with the oppressed nations and their people, suffering from tyranny. For instance, as the leader of India, Muhammad Ali, arrived in Baghdad in 1928, Rusafi expressed his deep sorrow for the fate and suffering imposed by the U.K. on Iraq. Then, he wrote the poem Elephant and lamb (Al-fil va alhamal) and spoke of the common pains of both countries in the east, which demonstrated his vast scope of thinking. Consequently, he was a poet with the spirit of advocacy of the East against the West, calling them to rise against Westerners.

In conclusion, the themes in his poems are very extensive and do not solely include the dire social situation of Iraq at that time. His intention was to unite all Muslims with the

Iraqi people in order to restore safety and independence to Islamic lands. In this regard, Maruf al-Rusafi's poems were, to some extent, a valuable cultural struggle.

Keywords: Rusafi, Iraq, Ottoman Empire, Political Poetry, Struggle against Oppression.

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