

Witchcraft in "The Ballad of Three Witches" and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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Abstract

No topic in folklore, part from culture has caused more argument than witchcraft. And fear of it permeates folklore of all periods. Actually, many studies are carried out by folklorists and anthropologists on this topic and even many people in western and central Africa and in some of eastern countries state that witchcraft existed physically as a substance in the bodies of witches whose changing shapes were possible. So witchcraft is, in some ways, conceived of as a form of power which runs between the body of the witch and her victim.

Interestingly, exploring the nature of the witch and her effect on her victim does not capture the attention of the anthropologists only; rather it occupies the minds of the artists of various cultures and has become a recurrent theme in their works across the literary ages.

Actually, this study has the same goal; it is devoted to explore the nature and the role of witchcraft in "The Ballad of Three Witches"(450A.D.), anonymous genuine piece of Arabic folk poetry that is related to pre-Islamic poetry and *Macbeth* (1606), the shortest tragedy that was written by the prominent English playwright William Shakespeare.

In fact, in both texts, the recipient is invited to have a journey with the hero who meets on his way three witches prophesize his future. In this journey, the recipient will experience the wonderful sense of heroism that mixes reality with supernaturalism whether with the national Arabian hero, the Himyarite king Tubba' As'ad Kamil who was the first to clothe Al-kea'ba or with Macbeth, who has a unique position among all other Shakespeare's tragic heroes.

In short, this intertextual study aims at following up the analogies between "The Ballad of Three Witches" and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the employment of witchcraft and its major tool the witch. In other words, it is meant to be a detailed study of both texts by drawing a comparison between their witchcrafts to see whether "The Ballad of Three Witches" can be regarded as one of the possible sources of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Eventually, the study ends with the conclusion that sums up the major findings.

الخلاصة

لا يوجد موضوع في الفلكلور، أثار جدلاً مثل موضوع: العِرافة، وقد استوطن بحوث الكثير من المختصين بالفلكلور أو الأنثروبولوجيا. فضلاً على أن الخوفَ من العِرافة تخلل الفلكلور في كلِّ الحقب- مراحلها أو تطوراتها.

و لا بد من ذكر أن العديد من الناس سواء اكانوا في بلدان الغرب، أم أواسط افريقيا أم في البلدان الشرقية يؤمنوا بأن العِرافة قد تجسدت ماديا في أجساد العِرافات، اللائي عرفن بتغيير اشكالهن لدى العديد من الحضارات لذا فُهمت العِرافة في بعض جوانبها أنها الطاقة التي تتدفق من جسد العِرافة الى ضحيتها. إن الكشف عن ماهية العِرافة و تأثيرها على ضحيتها لم تقتصر على علماء الانثروبولوجيا فقط، بل نالت اهتمام الادباء في الحضارات المختلفة، وأصبح الموضوع متكررا في اعمالهم على مدى العصور الادبية.

وملاحظ آخر أن هذا الاهتمام حمل السمات نفسها، إذ إنها كُرست للكشف عن طبيعة و دور العزافة في كل من قصيدة العزافات الثلاث (٤٥٠ م)، قصيدة حقيقية مجهولة الكاتب من تراث الشعر العربي الفلكلوري تعود للحقبة الحميرية و ماكبيث (١٦٠٦) تُعد أقصر تراجمها كتبها الكاتب الانكليزي المشهور وليم شكسبير . وفي الحقيقة أنّ في كلا النصين يكون المتلقي مدعو للذهاب في رحلة مع البطل الذي يلتقي في طريقه بثلاث عزافات تنتبأ له بالمستقبل .

إنّ المتلقي سوف يحسّ احساساً رائعاً بالبطولة التي تمزج الحقيقة مع ما وراء الطبيعة، سواء اكان البطل عربياً-الملك الحميري، تبع أسعد كامل الذي يعد أول من كسى الكعبة- ام ماكبيث- البطل الخالد الذي له مكانة منفردة بين ابطال شكسبير .

وهذه الدراسة تهدف الى تتبع التشابه بين (قصيدة العزافات الثلاث) و مسرحية (ماكبيث) لشكسبير، في توظيف العزافة و عنصرها الرئيس العزافة، بعبارة اخرى نأمل ان تكون هذه الدراسة مفصلة لكلا النصين من خلال اجراء موازنة بين العزافة لديهم، لنرى فيما لو كانت (قصيدة العزافات الثلاث) يمكن عدّها إحدى المصادر المحتمل تأثيرها على شكسبير في تأليفه (ماكبيث).

وفي النهاية تختم الدراسة بأهمّ النتائج التي خلص اليها البحث.

Witchcraft and the supernatural world had remained an often-morbid fascination for generations. The practices and beliefs that have been termed "witchcraft" are not peculiar to a single identifiable religion, since they are found in a wide variety of cultures, both present and past. However, these beliefs do generally involve religious elements dealing with spirits or deities and magic or rituals. According to some religious doctrines, all forms of magic are labeled witchcraft and either proscribed or treated as superstitious.

The word "witchcraft" derives from Saxon Wicca, sometimes translated as "wise person" but more accurately derived from an Indo-European root, "weik" that produced words in various western languages related to magic, religion and divination.¹ The term witchcraft and witch derives from old English wiccecraft: from Wicca(masculine) or wicce (feminine), pronounced "witchah" and "witchuh" respectively, denoting someone who practices sorcery; and from craeft which means "craft" or skill.²Witchcraft can be roughly defined as the exercise or invocation of alleged supernatural powers that control people or events, practices typically involving sorcery or magic. And it is also defined as the power of a person to do harm or influence nature through occult means. As a matter of fact, witchcraft is defined differently in various historical and cultural contexts. For example, in the west, witchcraft has often been seen as the work of crones who meet secretly at night, indulge in cannibalism and orgiastic rites with the devil, and perform black magic.³

The belief in witchcraft has a long history and has constituted for many cultures a viable explanation of evil in the world.⁴ As a fact, the intensity of the belief in witchcraft is best represented by the European witch-hunts of the 14th to 18th century. In this period witchcraft and its associated ideas are closer to the popular consciousness particularly, after the publication and the translation of The Bible. In the latter, the words witchcraft, divination, enchantments, mediums, and sorcery as practices are condemned in the strongest terms⁵. According to the Eastern culture, the beliefs in the witchcraft and its entire connotations like Light Magic, Dark Magic and Sihr are also condemned in Holly Quran and have been elucidated by the messengers and prophets as sorcery.

Actually, not only the religious books have tackled the concept of witchcraft and its practitioner, rather many others of various branches of knowledge but also(as it is documented) none of them gives quiet sure answer for the old traditional question that inquire about the definition of witchcraft and the existence of the witches? In fact, the answer depends upon the individual belief and definition. The open answer makes the witchcraft occupy the center of many studies, cinematic films, and literary works as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1906), the play whose storyline is built round the prophecies of witches.

In *Macbeth*, the witches appear as a physical embodiment of evil like other supernatural elements and this is a common belief that is broadened in the Shakespearean Age.⁵ This play shows all what have been explained or revealed in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* about the power and the behavior of witches.⁶ Actually, the witches are introduced right at the beginning of the play to foretell Macbeth about his future. They deliver to him three prophecies: that Macbeth will be the Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawder and king hereafter.

1witch: All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

2witch: All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

3witch: All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter.⁷

The power of witches that is explained by Burton and employed by Shakespeare is also manipulated in "The Ballad of the Three Witches" (450A.D.). The latter is an anonymous ballad of the national South Arabian hero, The Tubba' As'ad K'amil, who is called Abu Karib. This ballad is a fragment of genuine Arabic folk poetry of pre-Islamic period. This ballad is not a mere record of the heroism of this Arabian hero, rather it reflects the belief that was spread at that time. In other words, the employment of witches in this ballad enacts the life of Arab at Al-Ja'hiliyya.⁸

"The Ballad of Three Witches" documents the meeting of the Arabian hero, The Tubba' with the three witches. Tubba' As'ad Kami'l⁹ was born in Khamir at 370 A.D and brought up in Hano'm mountain in Hamadin land. He ruled Al-Yemen from the end of fourth century until the beginning of the fifth one. During As'ad's reign Al-Himyarite Empire became at the peak of supremacy to the extent that his age was called the golden age.¹⁰

"The Ballad of Three Witches" which reveals a marvelous tale of the power of witches, starts with the doubt in the strictness of fate and such beginning can affect the reader's pondering of the moral lesson that the Ballad is built to put across. So the following introductory lines of "The Ballad of Three Witches" must not be understood as a matter of caution.

Time brings to pass full many a wonder

Whereof the lesson thou must ponder.

Whilst all to the seems ordered fair,

Lo, Fate hath wrought confusion there.

Against a thing foredoomed to be

Nor cunning nor caution helpeth thee.

Now a marvelous tale will I recite;

Trust me to know and tell it aright!¹¹

"Trust me to know and tell it aright!", by this line the author requests the reader to believe in the reality of the meeting of As'ad Kamil with the trio of witches at Hinwam Hill in Al-Jaziratu Al-Arab. Moreover, the anonymous Arabic ballad poet tries to make the reader imagine the fear that the hero feels in his meeting with the three witches whose unpleasant images are incorporated with the unpleasant setting to create horrific atmosphere. The same target is achieved by Shakespeare when he

opens *Macbeth* with the witches' speech of how they can meet when and where they like. They can choose any weather condition to meet in:

1witch: When shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lighting or in rain?

3Witch: That will be ere the set of sun.

All: Paddock calls.-Anon!-
Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.
(I, i, 1-10)

Abu Karib is terrified by the fearful appearances of the witches that are disguised with strange bestial shapes out of their magical power. (O the fear that fell on his heart when he / Saw beside him the witches three!) (L: 24 -25)

The eldest witch that has a bloody image gives As'ad a bloody cup of hue (one kind of wine), so he predicts something good will happen. But so soon As'ad's positive expectation is shattered by his own recognition of the mixture of the wine with blood. This makes As'ad assume that celebration of wine may depend on the bloodshed of certain people. in other words, As'ad's mind is puzzled by the introducing of the bloody wine that refers to dual contrastive ends: victory and defeat.

O the fear that fell on his heart when he
Saw beside him the witches three!
The eldest came with many a brew----
In some was blood, blood-dark their hue,
'Give me the cup!' cried she, but he shouted bold;
'Hold, hold!' cried she, but he would not hold.
She gave him the cup, nor he did shrink
Tho' he reeled as he drained the magic drink.(24-31)

Actually, As'ad becomes angry like a lion and his anger is simply recognized by the second brutal witch. The latter does step towards As'ad and does ask him to ride even if they are worst of steeds to ride in order to go to remote place. As'ad's refusal sounds nothing and he is forced to answer this demand, but this causes him much pain.

Then the second yelled at him. Her he faced
Like a lion with anger in his breast.
'These be our steeds, come mount,' she cried,
'For asses are worst of steeds to ride.'
'Tis sooth', he answered, and slipped his flank
O'er a hyena lean and lank,
But the brute so fiercely flung him away,
With deep, deep wounds on the earth he lay.(31-38)

As it is denoted by the second witch, As'ad will experience a long painful journey. However, the latter will be ended by a rest as it is apprehended from the request of the youngest witch that asks him to sleep on a soft bed.

Then came the youngest and tended him
On a soft bed, while her eyes did swim
In tears; but he averted his face
And sought a rougher resting-place: (32-35)

The coming of witches in various strange shapes and their asking for awful demands make Abu Karib more anxious than usual unlike Macbeth who ignores the evil nature of the witches and follows their prophecies blindly.

Effectively, both texts, "The Ballad of Three Witches" and *Macbeth* are built round the foreshadowing technique whose main source (in these texts) is the three witches. It can be defined as "a sign of something to come and it is indicated or suggested beforehand; and also it is employed to prefigure and presage".¹² Logically, both authors use this technique to give the recipient (audience or reader) a sense of what is to come or what exactly is going to happen to the character. And sometimes this technique can not be noticed till the end of the text, as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare uses the prophecies of the witches to foreshadow the future of Macbeth, but he does not pay attention to them as in the opening scene of the play, when the witches specify their meeting with Macbeth saying: "when the battle's lost and win" (I,i,4) And then they yell together, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I,i,10) These two examples foreshadow the dual contrastive ends of the battle. Moreover, these lines suggest a great battle will happen between good and evil. In other words, the audience gets the sign of threat and smell the taste of evilness that is foreshadowed. It seems that Macbeth fails to understand what the witches try to foreshadow whether in their speeches or shapes, unlike Tubba', As'ad Kamil who thinks the shape and the behavior of the witch enact her aim and prophecy.

Really, one of the witch's abilities that is reflected in "The Ballad of Three Witches" and then in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is the ability to come in any shape that she wants, which is naturally a fearful and unpleasant one that echoes her evil aim. The three witches that met Tubba' with various unpleasant bestial images also frighten Macbeth with their terrified shapes and unusual colors. Each witch has a "familiar spirit" that waits on her and does as she commands. In *Macbeth*, The first witch has the spirit of a cat, the second has that of hedgehog and the third has the spirit of a harprier, which is a monster half woman and half bird.

1witch: Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

2witch: Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined.

3witch: Harprier cries, 't is time, 't is time.

(IV, I, 1-4)

Actually, Macbeth unlike Tubba becomes busy only with how to achieve his ambition and ignores the bestial spirits of the witches and their riddles whose clues can be concluded from their appearances, the weather and the atmosphere of the situation. By the use of riddles, the witches try to make Macbeth learn three more prophecies that foreshadow his a future life to come. These prophecies are an armed head, a bloody child and the third is a child crowned with a tree in his hand and they respectively tell Macbeth the following:

Thunder. First Apparition, an armed head.

1witch: He knows thy thought:

Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

1Apparition: Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff;

Beware the Thane of Fife.- Dismiss me.- Enough.

Thunder. Second Apparition, a bloody child.

2Apparition: Be bloody, bold and resolute: laugh to scorn

The power of man, for none of woman born

Shall harm Macbeth.

Thunder. Third Apparition, a child crowned,

A tree in his hand.

All: Listen, but speak not to 't.

3Apparition: Be line-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until
Great Birnam wood to high dunsinane hill
Shall come against him. (IV, I, 70-94)

The armed head predicts Macbeth's death by his foe Macduff in a certain battle. Then the bloody child is the vision, which probably stands for a baby who, has not been born by a woman. And this assures again that Macduff is the one who kills Macbeth. Since it is later revealed that Macduff was not born in a natural birth. While the third prophecy tells Macbeth that he will never vanquish until, "Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him". This prophecy gives the impression to Macbeth as something impossible to happen. Dramatically, this is employed by Shakespeare to foreshadow the troops of Malcom using the boughs of the trees of Birnam wood to camouflage them while they are in range to attack.

Actually, the prophecies that foresee war with the foe and facing death of the hero during the meeting with the troops who come using the boughs of the trees were not firstly experienced by Macbeth, because the same situation was much earlier experienced by Tubba' As'ad Kamil when he listened to the prophecies of the three witches that met him at Hinwam Hill at the early beginning of fifth century.

In fact, the three witches tell Abu Karib that he will meet a foe and his bloody sword is victorious. Moreover, they add that in this battle he will see that the trees transfer from one land to another, and this in particular will be significant in the battle. In addition, the three witches not only prophesize war and its end rather also its details. They told Abu Karib to be careful in his going to Zafa'r, because the foe will know and see his coming before his arrival. This means that a certain accident will happen which makes them look forward to his coming. Then the witches ask Abu Karib not to suspect their prophecies since later on he will find the proof.

Thy sword and spear the foe shall rue
When his gashes let the daylight through;
And blood shall flow on every hand
What time thou marchest from land to land
By us be counseled: stay not within
Khamir, but go to Zafa'r and win!
To thee shall dalliance ne'er be dear,
Thy foes shall see thee before they hear.
Desire moved to encounter thee,
Noble prince, us witches three.
Not jest, but earnest on thee we tried,
And well didst thou the proof abide'.(43-54)

Really, all what the witches foreshadow were experienced by Abu Karib . Once upon a time, an old woman of Medina came to Abu Karib and did beseech him to avenge her victimizers. Therefore, Abu Karib collected an innumerable army to seek revenge. As it is expected Abu Karib routed his enemies and then returned to Zafa'r in triumph. Aftar that Tubba', Abu Karib had persuaded by a single Tasmite, Riba'h b. Murra who made his escape and took refuge with him, to lead an outing against the murderers. Now Ribah's sister, who named Zarqa' ul-Yama'ma had married a man of Jadis. This lady, the blue-eyed woman of Yamama, had such piercing sight that she was able to see an army thirty miles away.¹³ Therefore, Abu Karib ordered his horsemen hold boughs of the trees. They advanced thus hidden, and towards evening,

when they had come within a day's journey, Zarqa' said to her people "I see that the trees are marching". No one believed her until it was too late. Next morning the brave hero fell upon them and put the whole tribe to the sword.

Consequently, the army that comes hiding their heads by the branches of trees achieves victory and proves the prophecy of the trio of witches in both texts, but this does not mean both heroes be victorious at the end, since the end is negative for Macbeth who regards the prophecies of witches not as facts, rather as predictions that might come true or not. Moreover, he regards the last three predictions that he learns at act four as evidence that support his everlasting victory and also as a sign of safety. So Macbeth is blinded by his ambition which makes him no more able to understand the facts or realize the stretch of evil within his psyche. Hence, this hero faces his downfall that the witches foreshadow at the early beginning of the play.

While the three witches foresee the positive end for Abu Karib who returns with his army to commemorate with his folk astuteness and victory. In the same way the hero of the army of trees, who overcome Macbeth, returns to his home, Scotland to celebrate his triumph, crown, wisdom and fortune.

As'ad went home and told his folk
What he had seen, but no heed they took.
On the tenth day he set out again
And fared to Zafa'r with thoughts in his brain.
There fortune raised him to high renown:
None swifter to strike ever wore a crown.(55-60)
(The Ballad of Three Witches)

Macduff: Hail, King! For so thou art. Behold, where stands
Th' usurper's cursed head: the time is free.
I see thee compassed with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine,-
Hail, King of Scotland!

All: Hail, King of Scotland!
(*Macbeth* V, ix, 20-26)

Being still within the realm of victory of Abu Karib and that of Macduff, one can not overlook the defeat of Macbeth, but the latter fails to realize this fact whenever there is victory there is also defeat on the other side. This matter is just like the two halves of the earth: one is in light and the other in dark. In point of fact, such natural dual expectation has been foreshadowed by the witches from the early beginning of the play when they greet Macbeth saying: "when the hurly-burly's done, / when the battle's lost and won." (I,I,3-4). In these lines the second witch proposes to meet again when the battle that is now in progress will finish, and suggests that Macbeth has to think of both ends: the negative and the positive. In other words, the witch warns Macbeth to be careful whether to follow them or not, to go to this battle or not. So the witches offer the free will of choice to Macbeth whose ambition and desire for greatness are the essential causes behind his downfall. The latter is a final station for the tragic hero of the Shakespearean drama, which is called the drama of human greatness and the drama of free will.

Macbeth decides to set for the battle and thinks the witches presage for him that there is some sort of evil will come and he will possibly be unable to recognize the good from the bad because of the influence of the evil. But unfortunately Macbeth never becomes conscious of actual meanings of their words:

All: Paddock calls.- Anon! –
Fair is foul, and foul is fair.
Hover through the fog and filthy air.
(I, i, 9-11)

As the witches control Macbeth's mind, Shakespeare, dramatically, controls *Macbeth's* plot with the theme of victory and defeat that is run under the blanket of "evilmic". The evilness destroys Macbeth's mind and psych and then leads to his defeat, while Abu Karib does his best to heal the misery of humankind by his intelligent mind and stern sword.

Now when they had marked his mien so bold,
Victory in all things they foretold.
'The wars, O As'ad, waged by thee
Shall heal mankind of misery. (47-50)

The other point that creates an analogy between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and "The Ballad of Three Witches" is the imagery of blood. Blood that is an essential factor to every human survival appears in both texts to be an essential symbol and motif. It is employed to transmit the vital idea of the text and to form its specific atmosphere of horror.¹⁴

Significantly, the blood in both texts is employed to symbolize a forewarning of events but it is used in two ways as its natural contrastive representations: life and death. In fact, death and its dreadful sense are created at the early beginning of "the Ballad of Three Witches" out of the bloody cup that is given to Abu Karib by the eldest witch:

The eldest came with many a brew-
In some was blood, blood dark their hue

She gave him the cup, nor he did shrink
Tho' he reeled as he drained the magic drink.(31-36)

In fact, in this first employment of the blood image, the reader as well as Abu Karib himself imagines that it foreshadows something ominous and awful. In other words, the blood here connects with the sense of evil, guilt, terror and with the sense of defeat that the hero expects to face. But this connection is so soon replaced by the opposite one when the image of blood comes out once more at another part of the ballad. Actually, the second reference of the blood image is employed to foreshadow the victory of the hero. The latter makes the blood flow on every hand of his foe.

Thy sword and spear the foe shall rue
When his gashes let the daylight through;
And blood shall flow on every hand.(51-53)

Interestingly, William Shakespeare in *Macbeth* also uses the reference to the victory of the hero through the employment of the blood imagery. Dramatically, in this play the image of blood is taken up in contrastive views: good and evil. At the beginning, this blood is shown as honor, bravery and as victory since Macbeth's sword is saturated with blood, and this portrays him as a brave hero. Therefore, he returns victorious and is described as a bloody man (what a bloody man is that!) (I,ii,1) by all including Duncan, the king. This bloody man and the brave hero is rewarded by the title of Thane of Cawder, with help of the current one being executed for treason.

The word blood which at the beginning of the play earns Macbeth's respect and honor is the same that towards the end is shown as guilt, bad, evil, horror and defeat.

Really, the imagery of blood is the thing that makes the predictions of the weird sisters comes true, as it was earlier with Abu Karib.

It is true that the motif of blood plays an important factor in the framework of the theme of both texts, "The Ballad of Three Witches" and *Macbeth*. It is employed to be as a methodical approach to uncover the true meaning of the hero's story, but it is also true that in "The Ballad of Three Witches", Abu Karib achieves his victory and proves the positive connotation of the blood imagery which is understood to be as negative at the beginning of the text. In other words, Shakespeare follows the same strategy in the creation of the duality of the image of the blood, but he reveres its positivism.

As a matter of fact, the motif of blood in both texts symbolizes the efforts which the hero go through to achieve his aim, as Abu Karib tried to avenge the old woman who asked his help. In the same way it symbolizes the efforts of the Macbeths to hide their offensive accomplishments. The Macbeths imagine the blood never leaves their hands and the guilt of crime never leaves their minds. In addition, there is certain truth that Macbeth's witches redeem the gap among the ages and destroy the boundaries of the various cultures through their analogy with Abu Karib's witches. Nevertheless can people, regardless their cultural and racial background, believe in the speech and prophecy of witches as Abu Karib and Macbeth.

Actually, what makes both heroes believe in the speech of the witches and follow them is their own desire for power, fame and greatness. Abu Karib achieves his desire and his victory is spread all over Jazi'rat al-'Arab.

Desire moved to encounter thee,
Noble prince, us witches three.
Not jest, but earnest on thee we tried,
And well didst thou the proof abide.(59-62)

But the proof for Macbeth's greatness and power is demolished at the end of the play when Macbeth's identity of a brave warrior and his strong manhood are lost by his wife's desire of male characteristics.¹⁵ Lady Macbeth's longing for masculine potency is companioned by Macbeth's ambition to be the real reason that leads to Macbeth's downfall. Macbeth who says "I dare do all that may become a man/ who dare do more is none"(I, vii, 46-47) becomes as weak as a rat out of following his wife's desires for power, crown, wealth and prosperity. In brief, Abu Karib achieves victory since it is based on noble desire unlike Macbeth who hopes that darkness will hide his evil deep desire," let not light see my black and deep desires"(I,iv,57-58). Macbeth cannot change the reality of his inner psych because he disregards his reason.

Desire and reason have important correlation and together they formulate the main theme in both texts. Abu Karib is a wise man who is able to control his low animal desire as when the youngest witch tries to seduce him for sexuality, but as a fact, his reason was more powerful than her magic spell.

Then came the youngest and tended him
On a soft bed, while her eyes did swim
In tears; but he averted his face
And sought a rougher resting-place: (40-43)

While Macbeth and his lady ignore reason and the first warning of the witches "when the battle's lost and won"(I, i, 4) and become eager only to know how the prophecies of the witches come true. Lady Macbeth admits that saying "I burned in desire to question them further".(I, v, 3) So both Macbeth and his lady use reason to describe a thought process that justifies their desires. Their brains are completely passive and this is assured by Lady Macbeth's words "where our desire is got without content". In

addition, Macbeth becomes a symbol for loss instead of victory and his head that is filled up by ambition is so easily cut off by Macduff who attains the real victory. At that time, Macduff and Malcolm restore from Macbeth the honor and the crown. Along with this great victory, they do great celebration and do praise God for this triumph.

Malcolm: That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,
We will perform in measure, time and place.
So thanks to all at once, and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.

(v, ix, 38-41)

Dramatically, Shakespeare closes the play with a religious flavor of praising God "The grace of Grace" again which makes the reader be closer to "The Ballad of Three Witches" that is also ended with the praise of God.

Praise be to God who liveth aye,
The glorious to whom all men pray! (71-72)

In short, this intertextual study can be scheduled with the other studies that diagnose the origin of weird sisters and seek the source that have affected the creation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and in particular the origin of its witchcraft. As it is stated, the origin of Macbeth's witches lies in *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1587), a history of the British Isles. Moreover, the other possible sources that are thought to influence their creation include British folklore, Scandinavian legends of Norms, Greek and Roman Myths, and the Bard's own imagination.¹⁶ Now "The Ballad of Three Witches", a piece of Arab folk poetry, can be added to these sources.

It is well known that Shakespeare did gain knowledge about the history of various nations, and this was part of his study in The Grammar School and also out of his self interest. Moreover, his drama is characterized as being the drama that is based on a borrowed tale. Now after being familiar with the story of the meeting of the three witches with Tubba' As'ad Kamil, Abu Karib, the national Arabian hero who occupies the memory of generations, one can regard "The Ballad of Three Witches" as one of the possible sources that are thought to influence the creation of witchcraft in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Conclusion

The witchcraft and all its forms: witches, folk magic and sorcery exist within many cultures, with widely varying practices. It is a universal phenomenon and people all over the world, regardless the period, believe in it and admire its being as a core of various studies of different trends of knowledge and its being a recurrent theme in their literary works. Therefore, neither Abu Karib nor Macbeth is unique in his belief of witches' prophecies, but they are unique in being much alike in their adventure with the trio of witches.

The anonymous Arabic ballad poet and Shakespeare break the boundaries of time and enclose the wide gap that separates their various cultures by their analogical treatment of witchcraft in "The Ballad of three witches" and *Macbeth* respectively.

Witchcraft plays an incredibly important part in both texts, particularly as its purpose was partly to attract the interest of the recipient. Whether the Arabs in Himyarite period (Pre-Islamic or Pre- Mohammedan period) (300 B.C. – 622 A.D.) or the English in the seventeenth century believed strongly in the presence of witchcraft. Therefore it was an extremely controversial subject that was very prevalent at the time.

In fact, the analogy in the employment of the witchcraft is introduced in making the witches and their prophecies play a major part in the storyline of both texts. Moreover, the witches that are introduced right at the beginning can be understood as the agents of fate since they can predict things but have no ability to reverse the natural order of things. The three witches (number three has certain connotation with magic spell as it is revealed in various traditions) foretell the heroes' future, add temptation and offer great enticement. Interestingly, the three witches offer both heroes the openness of choice, to follow their prophecies or not because the witch cannot control man's destiny.

Actually, both texts whose actions are gushed forward with great speed have many good examples of imagery, specially the brutal one that is created out of the disguise of witches in brutal and bestial shapes. In addition to the use of imagery, both texts reflect many motifs, like that of power, desire and blood. And the latter is the most ubiquitous one that is taken up to reflect the atmosphere of the action, to foreshadow the end of the hero and to symbolize the forewarning of events.

It is quite obvious that both texts show the employment of the same techniques such as that of foreshadowing and disguise, a reflection of similar themes: victory and defeat, life and death, honesty and dishonesty, sexuality, violence, fame and war. Moreover, as both texts are started with the introducing of the three witches right at the beginning, both are ended with the introducing of thanks to God.

In brief, Macbeth's witches resemble Abu Karib's in their nature (being agents of fate), ability (foretell man's destiny but not control it), number (being three), imagery (brutal and bestial ones), language (speak in riddles), creation of horrific atmosphere and the inviting of the hero for practicing sexuality. However, the prominent point that really makes the two texts come closer to each other is the reference to the transferring of the boughs of the trees from one land to another.

In short, this intertextual study aims at adding "The Ballad of Three Witches" to the other possible sources that are thought to have the original image of the witchcraft and its weird sisters that are manipulated in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Notes

¹Margaret A. Murray, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*, (Oxford Univ. Press, 1921), p.52

²Renald Hulton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. (Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), p.37

³Ibid, p.43

⁴John Rivels "Witches in Popular Cultures" www.witches.kj122cultures.com accessed on 22-11-2008.

⁵William Hazlitt "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays" www.Shakespeare_studies.com accessed on 22-1-2009.

⁶D.Valiente. *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (Londn:Robert Hale, 1989), pp.35- 62.

⁷Willim Shakespeare, *Macbeth* ed. By Bernard Lott, (London: Longman Group Limited 1958) (I, iii, 46-50) All the textual references of this play are related to this edition.

⁸R.A.Nicholson, *A Literary History of The Arabs* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, n.d.), p.19.

⁹As'ad Kami'l, the talented poet held the longest lofty and sublime royal name in the history of Yemen, he is the king of Saba, Thi Rayadin, Hather mout, Yemen and Arabs in Too'd and Tuhama'. He was known by various surnames such as

Tubba' As'ad, Tubba' Al-'osat, Al-Tubba' Al-Yameni, Al-Tubba' Al-R'ad and As'ad Al-Kami'l.¹

As'ad Kamil united Al-Yemen and restored his father reign and then established the state of Kinda. Actually, this heroic figure had not only a great role in unifying the people of Al-Yemen politically, rather he tried to unite them under the religion of monotheism. As'ad Kamil was against the wicked Hudhalities, who tried to stimulate him to attack Al-Ke'aba and against his atheist folk whose disbelief is mentioned in The Holly Quran:²

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 (أَمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمٌ تَتَّبِعُ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ) (سورة الدخان \ ٣٧)

In The Name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

((What! Are they better than the people of Tubba' and those who were before them? We destroyed them because they were guilty of sin.)) Surah Al Dukhan \37 (The Smoke), p.1288³

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 (وَاصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ وَ قَوْمٌ تَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ كَذِّبٍ أَلْزَسَلِ فَحَقَّ وَعِيدِ) (سورة ق \ ١٤)

In The Name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

((The Companions of the wood, and the people of Tubba'; each one(of them) rejected the Messengers, and My warning was duly fulfilled(in them).)) Surah Qaf \14, p.1348

The Tubba' As'ad Ka'mil did resist the cruelty and the distrust of his folk and went to Mecca where he made the circuit of the temple and clothed Al-Ke'aba. He followed the creed of Abraham(peace be upon him) and tried to spread the monotheism. Furthermore, seven hundred-years before the prophecy of Mohammed(God's blessing and peace be upon him),As'ad in his poetry predicted Mohammed's mission.⁴ So as a religious figure, As'ad had been praised in the prophetic tradition. Prophet Mohammad (God's blessing and peace be upon him) Said that: "do not insult Tubba' since he was the first believer who had clothed Al-Ke'aba."⁵ . As a fact, Abu Karib's goodness is clearly reflected in the literary works that show his own adventures, as in "The Ballad of Three Witches".

¹Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia s.v. "Tubba' As'ad Kamil Al-Himayi".

²"The Tale of Tubba' Abu Karib with the People of Al-Medina" www.arab-history.com accessed on 2-3-2009.

³Abdulla Yusuf Ali tras. And ed. The Meaning of The Holy Quran (New Edition with Revised Translation, Commentary of Newly Compiled Comprehensive index. Tenth Edition (Maryland: Amana Publication,1999),p.1288. the other verse that is illustrated in this explanatory note is also related to this edition.

⁴Ahamed Kamil Zaki, The Legends: Cultural Comparative Study (Al-A'sateer: Derisa Hatariya Moqarina), (Beurit: 1979), pp.99-102.

⁵"The Story of Tubba' People" (Qassat Qoum Tubba') in *The Stories of Arab Tribes* (Qassas Al-Qaba'l Al-Arabiya) by Sa'eed Ibn Jabear (Beurit:1953), p.58

¹⁰A'dil Mauhi Al-Deen Al-Aloussi, " The Character of Al-Tubb' Al-Himyari" (Univ. of Thamir, 1994), www.tales-araba.com ccessed on 18-3-2009.

¹¹Nicholson, p.19. All other textual references for this ballad are related to this source.

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