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## Possible Role of Archaeology in Deeper Understanding of the Scripture: The Holy Bible and the Glorious Qur'an

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<b>Article History</b> Published Online: _Published_	Archaeology has a great contribution in unearthing the culture and history of past nations and can open many hidden layers by providing tangible scientific evidences for the references of the religious Scriptures. The same is true about the Holy Qur'an.
<b>Keywords:</b> Archaeology, Holy Books, Biblical Archaeology, Quran, Historical Geography, Israelites.	Like other Scriptures, a big portion of the Qur'an consists of verses related to the history of the previous nations. Here the Science of Archaeology can be of great help. Archaeology is a well-known and reliable science that can reveal some hidden angles of the Qur'anic meanings and answer various doubts. The present paper is an introduction to the necessity and limitations of the archaeological study of the Holy Quran. The aim is to explore utilization of the science



of Archaeology in the scientific interpretation of the Qur'an and providing academic resources and University textbooks.

The main question posed by this research is: why and how we should utilize Archaeological researches to explain the Qur'an, especially the Qur'anic stories (*Qisas al Qur'an*)

The Jews and Christians have taken great steps, to benefit from the knowledge of Archaeology in proving the truths of the Scripture. In the Islamic world, , no significant work has been done. There have been many works exploring relationship of Archaeology and the Bible, but there is no serious work in the Islamic world in respect of exploring relationship of the archaeological research with the Holy Qur'an, and it is necessary to address it.

It is Imperative to develop the discipline of the Quranic Archaeology, and specialized Academies and Departments may be established for this purpose. This will both enrich the Science and strengthen the 'faith.

The research method in this study is exploratory and comparative method and library and documentary tools have been used.

## Introduction

Archaeology is the science of recognizing the cultures of the past historical periods based on the study of artifacts, material remains, buildings, utensils and tools, usually through excavations. (Fagan, 2003, vol. 2: 670).



Like History, Archaeology is also concerned with the study of the 'past, but unlike History which can rely on the written sources , Archaeology unearths the direct remains of history and can go to a much remote past. Archaeological research covers a long period of time, that is, almost more than a hundred times of the period that is covered by the historical research. (Masoumi, 2016: 6). In Archaeology, the study of works, tools and artifacts of different eras becomes a means of getting acquainted with primitive and ancient cultures and civilizations (ibid, 7). Archaeology can directly observe and 'feel' the remote past and provides means for the study of the collective heritage of mankind that is independent of theory. (Fagan, 2003, vol. 1: 26). According to Fagan, Archaeology accounts for about 99% of the major source of human history, and written history accounts for less than one-tenth of one percent of studies (ibid.:51).

However, Archaeology is related with History and assists it.. It assists the historian, by illuminates the dark aspects of the knowledge about the past, and fills the gap in the knowledge based on sources, and gives it a solid ground. The purpose of this science is to find which is not yet known about history, to illuminate the darkness, and to answer the unanswered questions about the past. (Masoumi, 2016: 5). With the help of Archaeology, we can solve the puzzles of history. Archaeology enables us to find out how primitive and ancient men encountered the society and the environment; how they behaved and what were their achievements or shortcomings. (Fagan: 1382, Vol. 1, 34)

The great contribution of Archaeology is that it opens many hidden layers of the culture and the history of past nations. Fagan



says: "New Archaeology is far more than a collection of methods; it not only explores, organizes, and explains data about the past, but also interprets and justifies the effects and evidence discovered from Earth, through excavations.

In terms of content, we define Archaeology as a part of Anthropology and History in terms of content (**ibid: 17**). Binford and his followers identified modern Archaeology as a fundamental change from the past and new and better ways of understanding remote past.(**Trigger, 2015: 460**). He considered the goal of Archaeology as traditional Anthropology, to describe the similarities and differences in cultural behavior."

He also believed that Archaeological data were useful for examining changes that have taken place over a long period of time. To explain this idea, he published an article entitled "Archaeology as Anthropology" (**ibid: 491**). The greatest attribute and privilege of Archaeology was the intensification and refinement of the sense of connection with the past provided by material objects (**ibid : 354**).

Before the nineteenth century, Archaeology was mainly directed towards antique collection and profitability, excavations for finding hidden treasures and riches; the goal of the explorers was exclusively material gain, From the nineteenth century onwards this trend changed). Archaeologists made it their goal to reconstruct the oldest human habitats and the way of living. (**Fagan, 2003, vol. 1: 8**). Emergence of 'Old world Archaeology started with the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mesopotamian cuniform and Egyptians burials. Fagan says that since the early years of the twentieth century, the archaeologists shifted their focus



to the reconstruction of the primitive and ancient history. (*ibid.*, Vol. 2: 670). Archaeologists also tried to trace the cultural change and cultural evolution, cultural development and the cultural processes of the remote past (*ibid.*, Vol. 1: 63).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two new branches of Archaeology emerged; they were; Religious Archaeology and 'the Archaeology of Scriptures. Archaeology of Religions employs ideas and methods of Archaeology to study religions. The origin and history of religious beliefs and rituals can be traced through study of the artifacts, temples, shrines, images discovered through excavations. The beliefs of primitive and ancient man about God, soul and his rituals for dead can be gauged through the study of excavated artifacts, ruins of human settlements, human remains and burials. We can find total world view of extinct communities in vivid form. Material traces of rituals can well-documented through Archaeology by studying religious iconography.. All this constitute the Archaeology of Religions. Origin and nature of the religion of ancient India, China, Mesopotamia, Ur, Uruk Nimrud and Ninevah in Assyria as well as of Egypt, was better understood with tablets and scrolls and artifacts unearthed during excavations.

Another related branch which developed more rapidly was, Archaeology of Scriptures, especially Biblical Archaeology. It implies taking clues from the scriptures, to embark on Archaeological study of certain lands and places mentioned. Or tracing the tribes or communities named in the Scripture. Also verifying the stories mentioned in the Scripture through Archaeological methods and excavations, and investigation of



everything that can illuminate what is mentioned in the Sacred Texts.

The first branch of study which emerged was the Biblical Archaeology. Then it was employed in India in respect of Veda and the Vedic Archaeology emerged. In Muslim countries some work was done in the Quranic Archaeology, which will be survey in this Paper.

### **A Historical Survey of Archaeology of the Scripture in Christian, Jewish World:**

Archaeology of the Scripture was first used by the Jews and Christians and they developed the Biblical Archaeology. Hope says: "The main purpose of application of Archaeology and development of Biblical Archaeology is to recreate the world through the Holy books," For this purpose, Archaeology employs the historical data of the people who lived at that time or the Bible has mentioned them. (Hoppe, 1999: 15).

"Biblical Archaeology" was a reaction to the approach of ignoring religion and marginalizing Christianity, propagated by Voltaire, Vico, August Comte, and others. They were suggesting that the Bible was a collection of myths and legends with no historical basis. Thus, it should not be considered based on the word of God, but a written collection of past anecdotes which are fictitious, and contradictory. (Jalali, 1373:156). With the emergence of new science, and non-compliance of some of the teachings of the Torah and the Bible with the scientific researches, reinforced the



notion of the mythical nature of Biblical stories and the Scripture lost its authenticity and importance for the positivist generation. The main motive of the Jews and Christians to develop the Biblical Archaeology was to stem this tide and prove historical nature of Biblical statements. When Archaeologists first unearthed cities and places that were mentioned in the Bible, and reconstructed their history to show its accord with Biblical narrative, it was a step toward vindicating the historical nature of the Biblical narrative and dispel the doubts that it was all myth. (*ibid* : 157).

There was an added motive in the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> Century to develop the Biblical Archaeology. Jews wanted to claim Palestine. In the Christian and Jewish worlds, they used this Archaeological knowledge to build their case, consolidate their position and legitimize their presence in the land of Palestine. The Jew and Christian archaeologists, formed groups for voluntary excavation in the land of Palestine and have written a series of books. For example, John Currid produced a book entitled "Archaeological Activities in the Land of the Holy Book". This book teaches volunteers the principles and methods of digging in the Holy Land (**Currid, 1999**). In the Jewish world, Biblical Archaeology became imperative when the formation of an independent state called Israel had to provide evidence so that both Jews could be motivated to defend themselves and the world community may be convinced. For example, we can refer to the book "Archaeology of Jews and Ancient Palestine" written by Levine. He says: "Areas that make up the current state of Israel and the emerging Palestinian state have yielded very good Archaeological evidence,". For example, the inscriptions of the Dead Sea, found in a cave in



1947 by a Bedouin looking for his missing sheep, contain the remains of a Roman camp (and prove that Roman occupied this land). Levin also introduces eighteen ancient cities such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other lesser-known ones, traced in the excavations (**Lewin, 2005**). In the Christian world also we witness a scientific movement for excavations and archaeological study in the Holy lands to vindicate the narrative of the Bible.

Due to these twin reasons, in the world of Christianity and Judaism, , they have done extensive work in the field of Biblical Archaeology and this field developed rapidly. There was an attempt for critical evaluation of the content of the Holy book, in the light of archaeological data. (**Joseph &Howard 1969**)

Independent organizations were founded for archaeological research and geographical knowledge to respond to the waves of skepticism (about authenticity of Biblical narratives).. For example, the Biblical Archaeological Association's for information, was founded in 1974 as an educational and research organization (**BAS, 1974**), It declared that our archive contains more than 7,000 articles -related to the Biblical Archaeology which have been collected during last forty years (**BASI, 2019**) In addition, hundreds of books have been written as monographs about the stories of the prophets, the historical sites of the Bible or about the Archaeology of the Bible (**BAL, 1975**). Information centers have also been set up to respond to students and researchers and even ordinary people about the ambiguities and archaeological critiques of the Bible (**TBA, 2019**). Other Research centers are devoted for discussing the archaeological thought of the Bible (**BAR, 1974**).

Another active organization in this field is the Biblical Studies Association (**ABR, 2017**), whose major field of study is Biblical





Archaeology. The extensive research and methodology in the field of Biblical Archaeology, can be classified in two major categories, in each of which hundreds of books and articles have been produced: The first category of studies consists of: books written about ‘Biblical places’ in the light of the knowledge of ancient Geography and history, on the subject of. Using photographs and diagrams, these works have tried to ascertain the different places, mentioned in the Bible. At the beginning of the book "The World of the Holy Bible" while defending the authenticity and legitimacy of the Bible, it is stated: "Surely there is a real mountain, and there is the Sea of Galilee, the plateau of Abraham and mountain caves that are mentioned in the Bible.

All of this is based on recently discovered writings of Biblical period that explain the intertwined histories of the world's two great faiths (Judaism and Christianity) (**Editors of Life, 2007**). Also, Mr. Jean Pierre in his book “The World of the Bible”, has tried to take a trans-religious pose by using the latest discovered ancient texts and archaeological evidence. He has tried to prove authenticity of the places mentioned in the Bible, by presenting more than 50 new maps and hundreds of archeological-photographs and findings. He has tried to trace the story of the evolution of Judaism from Abraham to the ancient Kingdom of Israelites. It also describes the rise of Christianity in the context of Roman Greek civilization and identifies the unique conditions that prevailed at the time of the rise of Islam. The Author of this book has, in addition, evaluated the similarities and differences between the three Abrahamic religions and has followed developments in the Holy Lands and producing comprehensive and unique atlas (**Isbouts, 2007**).



The second category is a collection of writings-books, papers, articles that deal directly with the Archaeology of the Bible. In this regard, we can refer to the three-volume book "Archaeology of the Preachers of the Bible" by John Argobrit. At the outset he says: "One of the first questions people have is, 'Can I really trust the Bible?' Have you ever heard people say that the Bible is just a collection of stories? In these three volumes of the book, the author has tried to prove the authenticity and reality of the teachings and stories of the Bible by using ancient history and archeological knowledge and providing a lot of evidence (**Argubright, 2013**). Another book is The Archaeology of the Bible by James Hoffmeier. As a renowned archaeologist, he has tried to highlight the role of Archaeology in understanding the biblical text by presenting his field experience (**Hoffmeier, 2008**). Another title is The Book of Archaeology and the New Testament by John McCray, one of the leading figures in the field of Archaeology. The book includes maps, diagrams, glossaries of terms, and more than 150 photographs that show the pervasive impact of society, architecture, and religion on first-century peoples and the in the period of New Testament. He says: "Modern Archaeology, which began in the mid-1800s, has transformed our knowledge of the ancient world,". Many archaeological discoveries are directly related to the Bible and confirm the historical validity of the statements of the Bible. New discoveries provide an interesting context for biblical narratives. If people become aware of these discoveries, the Bible will suddenly come to life and the study of the Bible will become more interesting and meaningful (**McCray, 2005**).

In addition to what is stated about the English sources, a limited number of books related to Biblical Archaeology have been produced or translated into Persian or Arabic. Such is: the book "Archaeology of the Bible" written by "John Alder" translated by Soheil Azari. This



book has a good introduction. In that preface, the philosophy of dealing with the Archaeology of the Bible is stated and in 15 sections, it explains the valuable information yielded by modern archeological researches which validates or throw light on Biblical narratives. **(Alder, 1335)**

Also, *The Archaeology of the Bible, A New Look at the History of the Jewish People and the Origins of the Holy Books*, written by two Jewish scholars, Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asherisilberman, and as was not allowed in the Israeli. It was published in the United States and translated and published by Saied Karimpour in Farsi. The book, the result of eight years of effort by two Jewish archaeologists, has been hailed as the most controversial archaeological book of the last century in proving distorted nature and unreliability of the Torah statements. The two authors claim that we can reconstruct the history of the Jewish people without resorting to the Torah, using archaeological findings and remove distortions from the Torah, reconstructing a completely different history. They emphasize that the book of the Torah in its current form, cannot be considered a revelatory text and that the stories told about Solomon and David cannot be defended historically **(IQNA, 2017)**.

Apart from these, several books have been written in Arabic. Such as the book "Atlas of the Holy Book and the History of Christianity" (Group of Authors, 2007), the book "Atlas of researchers for the Holy Book" published by Dar Al-Kitab Al-Moqaddas in Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, the book "Atlas of the Holy Book" written by Rasmus which has been published by the Lebanese Cultural Center **(Abtahi, 1374: 156)** and the book "Atlas of the Holy Book" by "H.H. Rolly "and published in Arabic in the Dar al-Ma'daniyah in Lebanon **(Rolly, 1983)**.



## THE SCOPE AND NECESSITY OF THE QUR'ANIC ARCHAEOLOGY

A large part of the Holy Qur'an has been devoted to reference to the beginning of the creation of the world and man, and lessons that we can take from the history of the previous nations, the ancient prophets and kings (Daftar, 2001: 75). The Qur'an has also recommended travelling the earth, observing surrounding environment, studying the documented history and unwritten record. This is exactly the field of Archaeology (Jalālī, 1373: 161).

The importance of recognizing "historical Geography" and "Archeological knowledge" becomes clear when we know that in the past, due to ignorance of the historical geography of the Qur'an and lack of archeological knowledge, and under the influence of Israeli stories in Islamic culture, commentators and historians have mentioned places for Qur'anic stories state that do not correspond to the verses of the Qur'an. (Tabātabāi, vol. 2: 306).

This has strengthened the suspicion that the Qur'anic anecdotes, stories, and allusions are mythology and not history, and thus, undermined the authenticity of the Holy Book

In Christian world people started considering the stories of the Bible as myths and thus, the religious faith of the new educated generation weakened. It is imperative that this may not happen in Islamic world. This can be done by proving authentic historical nature of the anecdotes recorded in the Qur'an. Therefore, Archaeology can be a great help in achieving the goal of the Holy Quran, which is, to guide the society through the observation and study of past civilizations.



Archaeology can be a great help to Qur'anic commentators. Its effectiveness makes it potent to prove correctness of the Quranic narratives about the stories and events which are mentioned as a mean of guidance for man, by taking lessons from History. It increases the importance of the study of ancient Qur'anic places and events with the help of Archeological knowledge; it can be effective in achieving the main goal of the Qur'an, which is to guide the people.

### **Doubts about Mythological Character of Quranic Stories and Anecdotes**

The notion that stories of the Qur'an have mythological character is not a new notion. This doubt was aired at the very time of the revelation of the Qur'an by the Pagan adversaries. At nine places , the Qur'an mentions that the Pagans allege that these stories are primitive myths (*asātīr al awwalī*) The Pagans alleged that the stories and tales of the Qur'an are not true, but the, meaningless and imaginary stories of 'olden days' (the Holy Qur'an, 23: 83; 27: 68; 68: 15; 15). ; 64: 17; 15:24; 8:31; 6:25; 25: 5; 83:13.

This idea has been prevalent among adversaries since the beginning of Islam and has always been expressed in different. In the modern period, this notion was propagated by the Orientalists (Zamānī, 2009: 133) and this trend reached to a point where it was presented by people like Salman Rushdie in his notorious book *The Devi's Verses* as a conspiracy of Islamophobia.

The idea of mythological character of the stories of the Qur'an also penetrated among a section of contemporary Muslim intellectuals. An example is: graduates of the two schools of Al-



Bayaniya and Al-Umna in Egypt. Following in the footsteps of their teacher, Amin al-Khūlī, this group advocated the theory of "allegorical and literary interpretation of the stories of the Qur'an," and considered some of the stories of the Qur'an to be mythical and imaginary (Qābel, 1996: 30). Though, they do not believe that the Prophet weaved invented them, but believe that this kind of expression is based on the artistic method of telling the story (ibid. : 31). Continuing the path of Amin al-Khūlī, Dr. Mohammad Ahmad Khalafullāh has reinforced this theory and says: Nine times in the Qur'an it is mentioned that the Pagans allege these (anecdotes of the prophets) are myths. The Quran has not only not refuted it, but seems to confirm in some cases." Many scholars have refuted the views of Khalafullāh and have stated reasons for rejecting his views (TayebHussaini, 2010: 153). Also, "Omar Mohammad has emphasized the mythological nature of the stories of the Qur'an and does not consider this contrary to the authenticity or revelatory nature of the Holy Book. They are parables, allegories artistic expression (Qābil, 1996: 31).

Dr. Ahmadi says: "It has been heard from some university elders that these stories and anecdotes of the Qur'an are myths and are only means of conveying some moral and spiritual guidance. This view that the anecdotes of the Qur'an are not history but mythology, is repeated by Westerners for a long time and has resonated in the social media and cyberspace lately, Our academics and students hear and some of them come to believe that these stories are myths, and as a result, the credibility and greatness of the Qur'an is diluted in their minds.(Ahmadi, 2015).



In the book "Introduction to Archaeology of the Holy Scripture", Dr. John Alder says: "One of the reasons for the lack of Faith of the American people at that time was that most people did not believe in the accuracy of the contents of the Bible," says. Many educated people, under the influence of skeptical French writers, considered the Bible to be a collection of myths and legends without a historical basis, and thought that the days the Holy Book ruled the minds of the people was over. Historians and scholars were unaware of the ancient civilizations of Babylon, Nineveh, and Tire. He says that the archeological research of the Bible reduced the gap between scientists and the followers of the Bible (Alder, 1335: 7).

### **The Relationship between Archaeology and Quran**

The purpose of the Qur'an is to guide man, especially those who seek the truth (Qur'an 2: 2). To this end, it has provided examples and parables of the tribes, civilizations, and nations of the past, and has asked its audience to be aware of the history and culture of the previous tribes (ibid., 18: 54); and to take lessons from their fate (ibid., 12: 111 and 59: 2).

This part of the Qur'an which covers more than a thousand verses (Shoqi, Foreword on Kermani, 1392: 6), is incomprehensible and unacceptable to the contemporary empiricist minded generation. This problem has arisen for the Christianity in respect of the Torah and the Bible, and is happening in the case of the West oriented Muslims intellectuals, which considers itself a scientific book (Jalali, 1373: 161).



## A Survey of the Studies in the Quranic Archaeology in the Islamic World.

Some great commentators of the Qur'an like Syūṭī, Zarkashī, Tantāvī and Rashīd Raza have focused on the interpretation and study of the verses of the Qur'an in the light of modern sciences. Other commentators of the Qur'an, like Muhammad Izzah Darūza, have focused on the context of the revelation (*shāne Nuzūl*); thus have dwelled on geographical and historical context and references in the Holy Qur'an.

In his monumental Tafsīr, Allāma Tabātabāī has made an endeavour to gather information about geographical references, places and events mentioned in the Qur'an, as much as it was possible. However, as is quoted by the late scholar Dr Ahmad Ahmadi, who was disciple of Allāma Tabātabāī, he used to say, it is not possible for a single individual to collect all the information. (Ahmadi, 1394)

In spite of this, in his Tafsīr, Allama Tabātabāī has studied more than 500 cases of geographical contexts and historical events, the stories of the prophets and the account of the culture and civilization of their time. He has collected the references and traditions, narrated from the Holy Prophets and Imāms. Therefore, we can consider the Tafsīr al-Mizān, as an important source of the Archaeology of the Qur'an.

Apart from the books of Tafsīr (exegesis of the Qur'an and many articles and Papers which we referred , some exclusive books have also written by Arab Muslim scholars about Archaeology of the Qur'an.. Here we refer to a few of them:





Mostly, these books are of the nature of Geographical Atlas of the lands and places mentioned in the Qur'an. And also deal with the historical events. Archeological researches have been also availed but these scholars.

Among the distinguished works in Arabic, we can mention Atlas al-Quran (Atlas of the Qur'an) by Dr. Shouqī Abū Khalīl. This work is translated by Mohammad Kermani in the Persian language. This is one of the best books in this field published in Arabic. It provides very useful information about places, communities and persons, which have been referred in the Qur'an.

Shouqī has pointed out at the outset, that this book is an Atlas, and not a book of Quranic Commentary or history. It presents a number of maps, diagrams and pictures along with explanation. (Shouqī, 1391, 9) The author has tried to give present names and locations of the places, along with their old historical names.

The data of this book is organized according to chronological order of the events, as referred in the Qur'an. It begins with Adam and ends on Prophet Muhammad. The events of Prophets period are also described according to chronological order. All verses of the Qur'an about every event are collected at one place from different sūras of the Qur'an. More than one thousands Qur'anic verses are presented. (Shouqī, 1391, Translator's Foreword)

Another book published lately in Arabic is Atlas al-amākin fi al-Quran al-Karīm- (Atlas of the Places in the Glorious Qur'an). The author is Sāmī 'Abdullāh al-Maghlūs. This book has been published in the year 1436 in Riyād, Saudi Arabia.

In this book, the places referred in the Quran are arranged alphabetically, beginning with *Ahqāf* and ending with *alīm* in 80



entries. The author has tried to discover the present location of these places, and described their geography and history with the help of beautiful pictures, maps and diagrams. There are more than 93 pictures and 117 maps and diagrams. In each case, the evidence has been cited from the work of Archaeologists, as the main source.

The author has referred to the works of archaeology and history, apart from reference to the Old and New Testament (Torah and the Gospel) the Quran and *ahādīth* (Prophet's traditions), and books of Tafsīr, in m82 cases (al-Maghlūth, 1436)

Another book is: *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyyah min al-Qur'an al-Karīm* (Historical Studies from the Holy Quran). The author of this book is Dr. Muhammad Biyūmī Mihrān, professor of Alexandria University, Egypt.

The author has made geographical classification of the historical references of the Qur'an. All references which pertain to one geographical region are described in one volume. The author believes that overlooking the Qur'an by the scholars of ancient history has made their studies deficient. They fail to avail the most authentic source.

Biyūmī says: The Qur'an, through its stories, has provided important and first hand information about pre-Islamic history and ancient states. This information has been verified by the modern archaeological researches and discoveries. The Qur'an is the only source that refers to some ancient Arab nations, like 'Ād and Thamūd. (Biyūmī, 1383)

Another book in Arabic is *al-Āthār w al-Tārīkh*, which is the 1<sup>st</sup> volume of Collected Books with the title of *wamzāt al-Ijāzīyyah min al-Qur'an w al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah*. Author of this work is Khālid



Fāiq al-'Ubaidī. The author seeks to describe miraculous nature of the Qur'an in respect of its historical and archaeological. He refers to the arc of Noah, community of Lūt, Pharaoh, *ashāb al-Kahf*, etc, to prove miraculous nature of the Qur'an in its exact scientific information.

The author has compared the Quranic description of events, like the storm of Noah's period and Noah's ark and its final destination, with that of the Old and New Testament. He explains the miraculous nature of Quran's exact description that tallies with laws archaeological discoveries. Same is the case with the Quranic description of the community of Lūt, their evil habits and how they incurred the Divine punishment and were destroyed. He refers to the discoveries of archaeologists confirming the Quranic description. (al-'Ubaidī,1426)

Another very important book is entitled: *al-Isrāīlīyāt w al-Moudū'āt fī kutub al-Tafāsīr Qadīman w Jadīdan* (The Jewish stories and Concoctions the classical and Modern books of Tafsīr). This book is work of Sa'd Yūsuf Mahmūd Abū 'Azīz. The topic of this work is, 'study of Jewish stories in the books of Tafsīr, and the correct view.

In the Introduction he says: "One of the causes of infiltration of Jewish narratives in the corpus of Tafsīr is easy going, non critical approach of the commentators of the Qur'an. They had not exercise caution and their critical judgments while accepting stories and narratives floated around or written by earlier generations. Secondly, the habit of shortening chain of transmitters (especially by historian and *mufassirs*) made them vulnerable to concocted



Jewish narratives. This opened the door for infiltration of foreign elements and mixing up of right and wrong, true and false.

Abū 'Azīz surveys contents of twelve commentaries of the Qur'an and traces the Jewish and false concocted stories and deviant viewpoints, at the end of the first part.

In the second part which, constitutes the bulk (3 quarters) of the work, he describes the Jewish or concocted narratives that have infiltrated these books, evaluates them. (Sa'd Yūsuf, without date)

There is another Arabic book entitled: *I'jāz al Qur'anī fī al-'Ulūm al-Jughrāfiyāi* (The miracle of the Qur'an in Geographical Sciences) This book consists of three chapters and Conclusion, In the third Chapter, he has dealt with the Historical Geography. In this chapter he has referred to Archaeology and historical geography of the events referred in the Qur'an.

This book is written by Muhammaad Mukhtār 'Arafāt ('Arafāt, 1424)

Finally, the 5th Chapter of the book *Shubhāt w Rudūd Houl al-Qur'an*, which is work of Allāma Ma'rifat in Arabic language, is devote to archaeological study of the references of the Qur'an. (Ma'rifat, 1423)

In the Persian language, we can name three books that directly deal with the subject of archaeology of the Qur'an to some extent.

The book "Archaeology and Historical Geography of Qur'anic Stories" is a work by Dr. Abdul Karīm Bīāzār Shīrāzī. Has studied the Qur'anic stories from the perspective of archaeology and historical geography.

This book consists of ten chapters. In addition to Archaeology of Quranic stories, it deals with the historical and geographical



knowledge of places along with colored maps (Bīāzār Shirāzī, 2003).

Another book that has been written on this subject is entitled 'The Qur'an and Archaeology. Its author is Engineer Ahmad Rahbarī, a faculty member of the University of Fine Arts, which was published in March 2014 by the Publishing Office of the University of Fine Arts (Dānishgāh e Hunar).

The author's motivation and goal in compiling this book is to prove inseparability of scientific and religious issues. He believes availing the Quranic information and the discoveries of modern Sciences; we can form hypotheses and further embark on field studies and perfect the existing knowledge.

This proves, and may further prove, that the scientific issues are inseparable from religion (**Rahbari, 2013**).

Another book, is the book "Illustrated Archaeology of the Quran." his is the result of many years of efforts of Professor Mir Abolghasemī in the field of Quranic Archaeology, which is half-finished, and not yet published.(**Mir Abolghasemi, 2009**)

There are also scattered works by Dr. Karīmiyān Sardashtī, but it has not been published as a known work

In view of what has been said, the Christian and Jewish worlds have made extensive efforts to establish as much as possible the relationship between archaeological knowledge and the Bible with the goal of defending the Bible and proving its historical authenticity. They have created various scientific institutions and Academies for such studies.



In the Islamic world, in the field of Arabic, little effort has been made in the Arab countries, that also in the limited sphere of historical geography. Unfortunately in the Persian language, except for three works, no other work has been done and a serious gap in the archaeological research of the Qur'an is evident.

With this background, it is not possible to take full advantage of the Archaeology in understanding the historical references of the Quran. There is a need for comprehensive and extensive work in this field. But achieving the goal of research is not an easy task and faces disadvantages and limitations which we are going to enumerate.

### **Difficulties in Developing the Quranic Archaeology**

Archaeological study of religion and Sacred Texts, especially the Holy Quran, has obstacles and limitations. "Timothy Insoll says in this regard: The archaeological study of religion is inherently a vast subject. There cannot be any simple and elaborate introduction to this theme. (Insoll, 1391: 27).

This indicates the difficulty of research in the field of religious Archaeology. As Dr. Mullā Salehī says in the introduction to the book of Insoll: This branch of archaeological research of religion, in spite of its charm and attraction, is the most vulnerable and delicate subject and is subject to misinterpretations and abuses (Ibid: 24). ).

AllāmaTabātabāi says: although history has a very high value, but is extremely vulnerable (to misinterpretations and mixing of falsehood) that make it difficult to trust. The first vulnerability is interference of governments and powers in recording of history



and pressure on historians to write things that satisfy those in power.

Secondly: difficulty is the interference of the feelings, prejudices and views of the historian that usually influence the writing of history. He considers the Qur'an as a valuable source for history and believes that the histories and stories in the Testament are not safe from the two aforementioned dangers, but the Qur'an is the word of God and revelation that has not changed; thus it is a reliable source. (Tabātabāī, 1390, vol. 2: 306)

Tabātabāī emphasizes that the Qur'an is not a history book that wants to state all events in detail, but has referred to some cases for their moral lessons and for conveying its eternal guidance. (Ibid: 308).

In addition to the above general limitations which exist in the field of religious Archaeology, research in the Archaeology of Quranic narratives, faces some specific difficulties and some other limitations:

**Firstly:** The Holy Qur'an does not go into detail about the historical events of previous nations, like we find in some other Sacred Texts, but only refers to events and places in passing. Therefore, we cannot get all the needed information directly (Jalālī, 1373: 160). Can we develop a Quranic Archaeology, like the Jews and Christians developed the Biblical Archaeology? In his article, Jalali cites examples of discoveries made over the past century that have illuminated some of the hidden layers of biblical anecdotes and myths. He also poses the question: Is it possible for us to employ this archaeological method to study and validate the Quran and its



historical narratives? In response to this question, he says: The dominant method employed in studying the stories of the Qur'an and the history of the prophets has been descriptive and phenomenological. This method is common with the dominant Biblical method. But the problem is that the Quranic data is not as detailed as the stories of the Torah and the Bible, In the Quran we find references only to events, tribes and ancient and historical places, and not detailed stories; so we must look for another way (**Jalali, 1373 : 160**).

**Secondly:** The outside interpretations and details which are added in the books of the Quranic exegesis, makes correct understanding difficult. These collections, which are known as *Isrā'īlīyāt* (Jewish stories) have extensively entered in the corpus of Tafāsīr and are practically included in the Qur'anic interpretations and it is difficult to distinguish them (**Shaq, 2012: 8**).

*Isrā'īlīyāt* is the term used for all superstitions, stories, false narrations and storytelling that have entered Islamic culture through alien opponents of Islam. Many of them do not even exist in the previous scriptures (Ghaasemi, 1999: 177 and Abu Shohba, without date,: 13). )

These *Isrā'īlīyāt* entered Islam mainly by those who disguised themselves as Muslims. People such as Ka'b Ahbār, Tamīm Dāri, Wahab Ibn Munbah, Nasr Ibn Hārith, Abdullāh Ibn Salām, Tabī' Ibn Āmir and others (**Ebrāhīmī, 1397: 165 and Ghāsemī, 1378: 178**).

By infiltrating inside Islamic fold, they were able to gain a proper social status and even organized their storytelling sessions





with the Jewish or Christian elements, even in the Prophet's Mosque (**ibid, 186**).

These groups took full advantage of the little historical information of the Muslims in Madīna and Mecca and their great interest in hearing historical stories, and made good use of the absence of the Ahl al-Bayt and lack of deeper Islamic perspective of the rulers of the Umayyad. They provided many misinformation and wrong interpretations of the Quranic allusion to the events and places.

For example, the Qur'an refers to the staff of Moses. They concocted lengthy stories about its length and the highlight of Moses, which cannot be found even in Jewish Scripture. Same is true about the size of its turning into dragon and other fascinating but completely imaginary characteristics. Likewise, they invented many details about Noah's ark, none of which can be found even in Torah or Gospels. They are nowhere mentioned by the Qur'an, but today they exist in Qur'anic commentaries (Ibid: 178).

Abu Shuhbaha mentioned forty cases of *Isrāīlīyāt* that has entered in the corpus of *Tafāsīr* of the Qur'an about historical events says: "Except for a few books of *Tafsīr*, none of *Tafāsīrs* are immune from *Isrāīlīyāt* and concocted stories or weak traditions. (**Abū Shuhba, without date : 147**)

This evil is one of the major obstacles in the correct understanding of the Archaeology of Quranic works. Therefore, we can do archaeological research in the Qur'anic works when we get rid of these dangerous additions and find relative certainty that these details about events and places are really stated in the Qur'an.



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Otherwise, our endeavour will be in the direction of proving details of events and places that are not in the Qur'an and its source is nothing but storytelling of some enemies of Islam.

**Thirdly:** the unlimited nature of archaeological discoveries is a big problem; because there always remains a possibility that a new excavation may discover something which may invalidate the previous hypotheses. On the other hand, some of the analysis provided by archaeologists is based on their speculation, which is vulnerable to subjective biases.

Therefore, it is not possible to base the interpretation of the Qur'an on those fleeting views. However, these theories can be availed by the scholars of Tafsīr as a confirmation of what the Quran says or for refutation of any critics of the historical authenticity. But they cannot form basis of our understanding of the Quran, because these theories may be changing.

**Fourthly:** Due to the conflict between the church and the science in the West, the Fathers of the Church and faithful Christian scholars Judaism tried to overcome criticism of historical narratives of the Bible through archaeological knowledge. Therefore, they utilized Archaeology with the approach of defending the teachings of the church and the synagogue. They also achieved some successes.

Although these efforts are very valuable and there method can be utilized by the Quranic scholars, but considering the orientations, goals and the type of view governing those searches, it is difficult to use them in Quranic researches.



Fifthly: as mentioned previously, like the Christians, the Jews also, have made many excavations archaeological studies around Jerusalem in the last hundred years, to prove the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Jewish people over the land of Jerusalem, and Palestine. Due to Zionist occupation, it is difficult for Muslim archaeologists to carry researches around al-Aqsa mosque and other holy lands which lie in the heart of Quranic Archaeology also.

**Sixthly:** Most of the places mentioned in the Qur'an are located in lands such as Palestine, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, etc., where in the current situation, it is not possible to undertake excavations or access archaeological records and (Abtahi, 1374: 155).

**Seventh:** Due to the lack of resources and documents, in the Islamic world, achieving a specific scientific result requires long-term and organized efforts, and it is necessary to establish specialized centers and academies for this work, which in the current situation is unlikely to be possible.

## **Review of the Literature about the Quranic Archaeology**

With regard to what has been said, it becomes clear that the interaction of the Holy Quran and the knowledge of Archaeology can have effects and benefits for the development of science and faith both, in society. The Holy Quran is authentic ancient text and contains many historical and geographical allusions, which can serve as a pointer to a researcher and archaeologist can go on excavating and studying those places which will help development of scientific knowledge and human culture in the present age.



On the other hand, archaeological knowledge can validate and give a scientific explanation of events, and places mentioned in the Scriptures, thus authenticate it for the doubting minds.

Archaeological knowledge can tell us: What was history of "Adam and Eve" and where on earth did they descend? In what region was Ishmael (as) sacrificed by Abraham (as)? As stated in Sūrah Hūd, where is Judy? Is it the same as Mount Ararat? Where is the "oven" mentioned in Sūrah Hūd?

How did the people of Lūt, 'Ād, and Thamūd carved houses in the mountains and does any remain of that be found now in southern Jordan? Is the valley of Sinai the present Sinai desert? Has it become extinct or still is there? Is the place where Ibrahim (AS) was set on fire in Iraq? Who was Nimrod and where and when he lived? Archaeology can help in understanding the issue of the Great Flood of Noah, the place where the ark of the Prophet (pbuh) came ashore, the extent of the land on which the flood of Noah took place, etc, How and where was it? Likewise Archaeology can throw light on the events associated with Hadrat Mūsā (Moses which are mentioned in 32 places of the?

Archaeology can also determine the places of the events of the time of the Prophet of Islam, just as the Badr Uhad, Khandaq, Tabūk, Ghadīr, etc., where did they happen?

There are doubts sown in the minds of the young generation about the historical validity of the events and places in the Quran due to reasons we have mentioned. Even the pagans of the Prophet's time alleged that these are myths and mere stories; this pagan viewpoint has appeared in new 'scientific' garb in the writings of orientlists and some modernists.



It has damaged the effectiveness of the purpose of guidance, which are the main purposes of the Qur'an in mentioning these historical events.

This formidable challenge was faced by Christianity and Judaism after the Renaissance, and for this reason, they took recourse to the science of Archaeology for providing tangible historical evidence to authenticate the stories of the Bible. They made big endeavors in this field.

They established large centers, and academies, gathered information data, and produced numerous articles and books in authenticating, interpreted and adopted statements of the Holy Books, using the knowledge of history, geography, and Archaeology.

But for whatever reason, in the Islamic world, limited efforts have been made in Arab countries, but there is significant poverty of work in other lands.. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct extensive and interdisciplinary research using global experience and using experts in the field of Quran and Hadith, archaeological knowledge, history of religions, history of Islam, historical geography and other related fields, and compile comprehensive sources and textbooks.

It is worth mentioning that, on the one hand, more than a thousand verses of the Qur'an are related with the reference to past nations and tribes, and most of it is told in the form of stories and anecdotes, on the other hand, due to the limitations and obstacles that were mentioned, there is lack of enough work convincing and scientific explanation of these references.



Now, either all these cases must be accepted as a matter of 'faith' and 'dogma', and passed over without thinking or reasoning, or efforts must be made to utilize the scientific -and rational methods, to explain these anecdotes, making them tangible and acceptable even to non-believers.

Different sciences can help commentators in this regard. First is the science of history, which can corroborate and explain some parts of these references.

But we do not have written history about all as some may be related to the pre-historical period about communities not mentioned in written history.

In addition, according to Allāma Tabātabāī, although history is of great value, it has many drawbacks that make it difficult to trust. moreover some references are beyond its scope. It is here that the science of Historical Geography can help in tracing geographical and topographical references. This will probably be more effective than the historical method.

But this method also faces a serious problem with the infiltration of concocted tradition and Jewish stories (Isrāīliyāt in the tafāsīr. We can look for the location of an event only when the authenticity of that event is not in doubt. The third way, which is stronger and more reliable than the previous two ways, is the science of Archaeology, which, if it comes to the aid of the commentators of the Qur'an, is able to illuminate a large part of the dark corners and explain and validate the Quranic references.

If Archaeology may clarify some historical references, it will open the way for a more scientific and accurate analysis of Qur'anic anecdotes.



This method is in accordance with the approach of the Qur'an, which commands contemplation in the verses of the Qur'an and invites believers to travel on earth to unearth past civilizations.

This approach and directives of the Qur'an, in fact, shun the approach of way to the devotional acceptance of Qur'anic stories, accepting the Quranic narratives as a matter of 'faith' and 'dogma' without trying to understand and prove them. The Quran itself directs that one should ponder and reflect on the Qur'an and use scientific-rational methods, to understand them. To take help of Archaeology is in accordance with this approach.

Thus the Archaeology should be employed and a serious attempt should be made to develop the Quranic Archaeology. Academies and Departments may be created and field work should be undertaken on a vast scale to study and corroborate Quranic historical and geographical references, based on the Science of Archaeology

## **Conclusion**

Like other Scriptures, a big part of the Qur'an consists of verses related to the history of the previous nations. However, as pointed out due to infiltration of false details in the books of Tafsir, this major portion of the Quran is considered as based on myths by non-believers, and even by modernized new generations.

The writings of Orientalists and Westernized intellectuals have spread much confusion.

The science of History and Geography has helped a lot to dispel doubts, capacity of History and Geography is limited. They cannot



produce objective and tangible evidence of remote past. Here the Science of Archaeology can be of great help.

Because, as stated: Archaeology has a great contribution in unearthing the culture and history of past nations and can open many hidden layers. By providing tangible scientific evidences for the references of the Qur'an, it can increase the influence of the Qur'an on the contemporary generation. The Jews and Christians have taken great steps, to benefit from the knowledge of Archaeology in proving the truths of the Scripture. In the Islamic world, especially in Persian language, no significant work has been done.

In order to do an effective scientific research, there are limitations and drawbacks for archaeologists; so it is necessary to create the necessary mechanism to overcome these. This will both enrich the Science and strengthen the 'faith.

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