

Acceptance Speech by
Cairo Arabic Language Academy
Winner of the 2013 (1434H)
King Faisal International Prize
for Arabic Language and Literature

35th Ceremony
Saturday 30/3/2013 – 18/5/1434H

Praise be to Allah and Peace and Prayers be upon the Seal of the Prophets

Your Royal Highness Prince Salman Bin Abd Al-Aziz
Crown Prince, Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense
Your Royal Highnesses,
Distinguished Guests,

In these holy lands was born the Arabic language, a noble and gallant language whose cradle was chosen by Allah to be in the Arabian Peninsula, at the blessed center of the world where the first House assigned for worshippers stands, *"The first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakka. Full of blessing and of guidance for all of the worlds. In it are signs manifest (such as) the Station of Abraham. Whoever enters it attains security."*

Soon after its advent, the Arabic language spread rapidly northward into Syria and *al-Jazira* and westward across the Red Sea into east Africa where it had a significant influence or sustained partial presence. An example of this is Egypt where Saini and the eastern desert were proven by researchers to have hosted Arabic-speaking tribes even before the Islamic conquest. According to Herodotus (425 B.C.), the city of Qus in Upper Egypt was a half-Arabic city. From Saini, Allah chose Hajir to be Abraham's wife and the mother of his son Ishmael and of the Arabs. That was the collective womb which the Prophet Mohammad, peace and prayers be upon him, meant when he told his companions: "You are going to open Egypt. If you did, treat her people kindly for they have a right of kinship upon you."

Allah blessed the noble Arabic tongue with grace and suppleness, beauty and tranquility of rhythm, an advanced alphabet - considered by scholars to be the oldest written alphabet in history, sophisticated, original symbols and - Praise be to Allah - a vastly rich heritage of poetry, spanning 18 centuries, such that no other language could match.

Your Royal Highness,
Distinguished Guests,

The Arabic language has reached its zenith of maturity and prominence when Allah chose it as the language of revelation of the Holy Quran: *"It is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. The Honest Spirit came down with it. Upon your heart, that you may be one of the warners. In a clear Arabic tongue."* From that date, this superb tongue carried an eternal divine message to all mankind, and bequeathed pride and nobility upon its

speakers: *"It is a message for you, and for our people; and you will be questioned."*

Your Royal Highness,
Distinguished Guests,

This noble language, with its heritage, place in history and prestige, deserves - in today's world - to be served in many ways such as facilitation of its grammar, modernization of its dictionaries, tying younger Arab generations, and attracting non-Arabic speakers, to it, enabling it to accommodate and keep pace with the fast international scientific movement and defending it against rivals, including some of its own speakers, These are the tasks of Arabic Language academies and other concerned circles, including the Cairo Arabic Language Academy which, with Allah's grace, has been shouldering this responsibility for eighty years while nurturing the Union of Arabic Language Academies.

On this splendid occasion, I am honored to receive this distinguished Prize in the name of the Cairo Arabic Language Academy. I would also like to express thanks to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in the name of people who devoted their lives to these services, especially in the field of lexicography, which is honored tonight by a great international institution, bearing the name of a great man, Faisal bin Abd Al-Azuz, may Allah have mercy upon his soul and reward him with paradise.

I pledge to you and to the esteemed Prize committee that this award shall be utilized primarily to complete the most comprehensive dictionary the Arabic language has ever known within five years instead of forty years as was originally estimated for its completion. It is a huge dictionary, of which eight volumes have so far been produced. We shall also be working, in collaboration with our colleagues in the Union of Arabic Language Academies to produce the historical dictionary which all Arabic language scholars, Arabs and non-Arabs, are looking forward to.

Our best witness is Allah and the conclusion of our prayers is: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.