

PREFACE

The Muslims have always been deeply attached to the personality of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), and have therefore recorded the minutest details of his life, not contending themselves with accounts of his wars and struggles with the unbelievers but have given accounts of his personal life which present to us a complete picture of what the Prophet (S.A.W.) was. After the Prophet's death when his successors undertook the conquest of the neighbouring lands, the Arabs preserved the memories of these wars and conquests though they did not reduce them to writing as the art of writing was only rarely practised among them. But after the lapse of a century the history of the early wars and conquests by the Muslims were recorded and studied with keen interest, and it was thus that a number of historians rose and produced works on Islamic history. The earliest extant book which may be called a full fledged work on Islamic history in Arabic is *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Life of the Prophet) by Muhammad b-Ishāq. This book has come down to us in the recension of Ibn Hishām and is popularly known as *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*. The art of Islamic historiography reached its zenith under Ibn Khaldūn, the famous propounder of the philosophy of history in the 14th Century.

The Muslims passed on the taste for history to all the people with whom they came in contact or who embraced their religion. Thus, we find that most of the historians who rose under Islam were of Persian origin as the Persians were already acquainted with the art of history writing. Now that art coupled with the taste for history created by the Muslims, reached a high climax in Persia. For some

time indeed Persian historians wrote their works in Arabic but it was not long that they applied themselves to producing historical works in their own languages.

In India Muslim historiography is indebted for its inception to the Persian speaking peoples, the Iranians or the Persianized Turks and the Afghans, who had inherited the taste for history from the Arabs. These peoples recorded the history of Muslim conquests and produced works on traditional lines, dealing mainly with wars and campaigns of their patrons and rulers. They hardly made any effort to analyse the causes and effects of events and throw light on the cultural achievements of the Muslims. It was with the advent of the British to India and the introduction of Western education therein that the Indian Muslims got acquainted, among other things, with the modern concept of history which had developed in the West and according to which history was no longer a mere record of past events but was an effort to find out "how the present has come out of the past". This brought about a profound change in the outlook of Muslim historiographers, and they began to produce historical works along modern scientific lines. Among those who adopted Western methodology in the treatment of historical subjects Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) stands supreme. In his "Essays on the Life of Muhammad" better known as "Khutbat-i-Ahmadiyyah" published in 1870, "the growing westernism of his mind in handling historical subjects can best be seen". This illustrious work served as the starting point of modern historiography of Islam in India and more particularly in North India. He was followed by others like Maulavi Cheragh Ali, Shibli, Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi and others and a large number of works on

ic history were produced between 1870 and 1947.

In the present thesis an attempt has been made to evaluate the copious contribution of North India to the study of Islamic history during the said period. The thesis consists of four chapters besides introduction and conclusion.

The introduction discusses the origin of the term "tarīkh" as well as the definition of History. An attempt has first been made to trace the origin of the term "tarīkh" on which opinions are divided. And in the end it has been tried to prove on the authority of two Muslim traditions that it is of South Arabic origin. Besides, it has also been shown that the term "tarīkh" was first used in Arabic literature in the sense of assigning the date in letters and documents and, then, it acquired the meaning of "historical work" in the second century of the Hijra (the eight century A.D.) and that of "History" in the third century of the Hijra (the ninth century A.D.).

Then, an account of the definition of tarikh or history has been taken. In the light of the definitions made by various scholars such as al-Kāfījī, al-Sakhāwī, Ibn Khaldūn, C.B. Webster, J. Burckhardt, Sir Charles Fifth, Shibli, etc., History has been briefly defined thus: "History is a branch of knowledge which investigates the past events, recording their dates and analyzing their causes and effects".

The first chapter is devoted to a detailed study of the historical consciousness of the ancient Arabs. It has first been

shown that though the South Arabs paid no particular attention to recording their history, which might throw abundant light on their socio-political life, the inscriptions first discovered by Carsten Niebuhr in 1772, serve to indicate, though very little, the existence of historical consciousness among them and that other branches of knowledge which are of historical importance include geneology, stories and the calendar system of the Himyarites.

Then it has been tried to show that the North Arabs were also history minded. One of the important branches of literature which provides clue to the historical consciousness among them is their poetry popularly called "the public register of the Arabs". It gives us a true and fairly clear picture of the social, moral and intellectual life of the Arabs.

Among other branches of knowledge of the North Arabs of the pre-Islamic times which are akin to History are the battle day narratives of the Arabs, commonly known as "Ayyām al-ʿArab". These narratives which were preserved by oral transmission contain the narratives of the wars between rival tribes like the war of Basūs, Dahis, al-Ghabrā, etc., which describe the chivalrous deeds of the heroes who fought in the battles, magnanimity and nobility of the descent of their forefathers. Some of them comprise the tales of their deities whereas others throw light on their religious and socio-political activities. Besides, they do reveal, to some extent, socio-political relations between the Arabs and the neighbouring countries like Persia and Rome. They also tell us about their intercommunal behaviour of Qahtanis and Adnqnins or list the names of their tribes,

clans, families, their pre-eminent personalities, dwellings, achievements, activities, etc.

Geneology is yet another form of the pre-Islamic literature which serves as the indicative of the existence of historical sense of the ancient Arabs of the northern region. This branch of knowledge constitutes an essential part of the pre-Islamic poetry and battle-day narratives which are often rich in geneological information.

Historical elements are also found in the prose narratives used by the rhapsodists to introduce and set forth plainly the matter of their songs, and in the orally transmitted legends and stories like the story of the advent of Ismā'īl (A.S.) to Makka, the construction of the Kāba, the history of the Kāba upto the time of Qusayy b-Kilāb, the story of 'Amr b-Luhayy (Lahy) and the deities of the north Arabs, the narrative of Hilf al-Fudūl etc.

Besides, inscriptions are also one of the sources of historical material about the northerners. One of the inscriptions, found in Hawrān, is that of Imru al-Qais, the king of Hīra, which dates from 328 A.D. The other that of Sharahīl, dates from 560 A.D. and refers to a destruction of Khaybar which had taken place a year before. Both the inscriptions belong to the north-western fringe of Arabia.

The custom of counting years, i.e., the calendar system of the Quraishites in pre-Islamic times, may also be regarded as an indicative of the historical consciousness of the North Arabs.

The second chapter deals with "the origin and development of Muslim Historiography" under six different headings:

(1) Historical value of the Qurān and Hadīth, (2) Concept of History during the Orthodox Caliphate, (3) Muslim Historiography during the Umayyad period, (4) Muslim Historiography during the Abbasid period, (5) Muslim Historiography during the Mamluk period, (6) Muslim Historiography in Spain.

The third chapter concentrates on historiography in Muslim India. In India Muslim historiography is indebted for its inception to the Persian speaking peoples, the Iranians or the Persianized Turks and the Afghans, who had inherited the taste for history from the Arabs. These peoples recorded the history of Muslim conquests in India. The historical works of the Muslim India has been divided into two categories : historical writings produced during the saltanate period and those composed during the Mughal period.

The last chapter is a detailed study of Islamic historiography in North India from 1870 to 1947. An attempt has been made to discuss the lives of prominent historians of this period together the assessment of their contribution to the study of Islamic history. For convenience of study the historians of this period have been divided into three groups; the historians of the Ālīgarh school, the historians of the Azamgarh school and general historians.

The most prominent historians of the Ālīgarh school were Sayyid Ahmad Khān and Maulavī Cherāgh Ālī.

The Azamgarh school was represented by Shiblī, Sayyid Sulaymān Nadvī, Ābd al-Salām Nadvī, Abū Zafar Nadvī, Hājī Muīn Uddīn Nadvī, Saīd Ahmad Anṣarī, Shāh Muīn Uddīn Ahmad Nadvī, and Riyāsat Ālī Nadvī.

Among general historians were Abd al-Halim Sharar, Maulavi Fath Muhammad, Zahir Ahmad Shah Zahirī, S. Dhakir Husain Jafar, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadī, Abd-al-Razzaq Kanpurī, Habib al-Rahman Khan Shervani, Muhammad Aslam Jairajpurī, etc.

The literature of Islamic history of the period under study has chiefly been classified as follows :

- i) The maghāzī or Sirat literature
- ii) Biographies
- iii) General History of Islam
- iv) Essays on various subjects relating to Islam.

At last, the approach of the above historians particularly the historians of the 'Aligarh and Azamgarh schools to historiography and the methodology adopted by them in their historical writings have been discussed. It is noteworthy that though the writers of both the schools undertook their works with a common object - to refute the charges made against Islam by orientalisists and Christian missionaries - they differed in their approach to Islamic historiography. Sir Sayyid and his friends tried to integrate religion with modern science and philosophy. This aroused the resentment of the Muslims of India, who could not agree with his peculiar bend of faith and reason. However, as the founder and inspirer of the 'Aligarh movement which influenced a number of Muslim writers like Cheragh 'Alī and others, Sir Sayyid may rightly be regarded as the master trend setter.

On the other hand, Shibli and his followers who were well versed in Islamic sciences endeavoured to interpret Islamic history

in its true perspective. Though Shibli laid equal stress on what he calls Dirayat, the application of common sense and reason in assessing the sources, he reaffirmed the value of Hadith as an essential source of history.

It is also worth mentioning here that the major drawback with most of these historians was their unacquaintance with foreign languages like Greek, Roman and even English. A knowledge of foreign languages on their part would have surely enhanced the value and readability of their works.

I avail myself of this opportunity to record my sincere gratitude to my guide, Dr M.H. Siddiqi, Head, Deptt of Persian, Arabic and Urdu, M.S. University, Baroda, for his kind guidance in the preparation of this thesis.

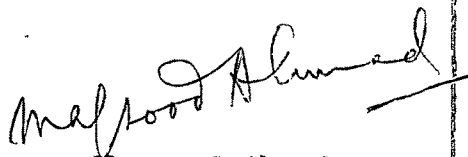
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Magsood Ahmad