

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY

The origin of Muslim historiography may be traced as back as the Prophet, Muḥammad's own time. Endowed with a strong sense of history, he would relate to his followers the stories of the people of earlier ages, thus arousing their interest in the history of the past. Besides, the study of the holy Qurān in which historical elements are easily traceable, also whetted their interest in history by describing it as a source of human knowledge and experience.

(1) Historical Value of the Qurān and Hadīth:

The Qurān is full of references to accounts of the creation of Heaven and Earth, creation of man as well as to the stories of Ād and Thamūd, the people of Nūḥ (A.S.), Ibrāhīm (A.S.), Mūsā (A.S.) and ʿIsā (A.S.). It also throws light on the life of Muḥammad (S.A.W.) and other important events of the history of Islam such as the battle of Badr, battle of Uhud, battle of Banū Nadīr, battle of the Trench, Truce of Ḥudaibiya, the conquest of Makka etc. That apart, reference to contemporary world history is also found though only once i.e. when a prediction is made about the outcome of the struggle between the Byzantines and the Persians.

Hadīth, too, has references to the ancient nations, prophets and important events of the past. It throws a flood of light on the various aspects of the life of Muḥammad (S.A.W.) and at the same time highlights the virtues of his companions such as Abū Bakr (R.A.), ʿUmar (R.A.), Uthmān (R.A.), ʿAlī (R.A.), Salīmān al-Fārisī (R.A.), etc.

The science of geneology is also one of the sources of historical literature. The Qurān has approved it as a source of knowledge by declaring : "Indeed we created you in tribes and clans so that you may recognize each other." It is to be noted that though this science was approved by the Qurān and though the Prophet (S.A.W.) evinced his interest in it by once informing 'Uqba b-ʿAmir of the latter's geneology pride on nobility and ancestral glory was forbidden by the former in the following terms : "Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allāh is he who is most pious among you," and by the latter in these emphatic words : "Henceforward no Arab would claim superiority over a non-Arab only by reason of his being an Arab. All of you are descendants of Ādam, and Ādam was created of clay and dust."

In this context, the historical value of the record of the public census ordered by the Prophet (S.A.W.) can also not be neglected. The record handed over to him contained the names of 1500 believers.

(2) Concept of History during the Orthodox Caliphate:

The Muslims belonging to the orthodox Caliphate were more eager to know the details of the Prophet's life and the wars fought by him and his companions than their predecessors. Hence they took to the study of the Qurān, full of historical data, and Hadīth in which consciousness of history is distinctly perceptible. They also cultivated another science called Tafsīr. The science of Tafsīr, a component of Hadīth, also had references, among other things, to the nations and Prophets preceding the Prophet, Muḥammad (S.A.W.). Thus

like the Qurān and Hadīth, it, too, aroused the interest of the Muslims in history. The Tafsīr literature of this period may be divided into two main categories - one dealing with the *raison d'être* of the Quranic verses and the other providing information about the Jews and the Christians and their prophets. The companions belonging to the first category included 'Umar (R.A.), 'Alī (R.A.), 'Uthmān (R.A.), Ubayy-b-Kab, Mu'adh b-Jabal, Zaid b-Thābit, 'Abdallāh b-Masūd, Abū-Mūsā al-Ashārī and 'Abdallāh b-'Abbās. The second was represented by Tamīm al-Dārī, an Arab convert from Christianity, who was well-versed in the Old and New Testaments and the history of the Jews and the Christians.

Side by side with the study of the Qurān, Hadīth and Tafsīr, history also emerged as a branch of knowledge in a comparatively developed form. The historical literature of this period may be classified as follows : (1) History of the Prophet (Sirat), (2) History of the Companions, (3) History of the Pre-Islamic Arabs.

The history of the Prophet (S.A.W.) consisted of accounts of his tribe, his family, his early life, his mono-theistic bent of mind, his journey to Syria, his campaign against idolatry and other evils, his persecution by the Quraishites, his migration to Madīna, his relations with the Jews, his wars with the Quraishites and other hostile tribes, his ultimate victory and his efforts to spread Islam in and outside Arabia.⁹

The outlines of the history of the companions were : accounts of the Muhājir and the Ansār Arabs and the role they played in the

⁹ See Fāriq, K.H.; History of Arabic Literature Vol.I, Delhi, 1972, p.148.

life of the Prophet in establishing Islam and in consolidating it in Arabia after him and in the wars of conquest in the neighbouring lands.¹⁰

The history of the Pre-Islamic Arabs comprised accounts of influential men before Islam together with the social, intellectual and tribal life of Arabia.¹¹

To begin with, history was a component of Hadith. But sometimes later, it was studied as an independent discipline. One of the companions who was keenly interested in history, particularly Pre-Islamic history, was 'Aqīl, the brother of the Caliph, 'Alī (K.W.). He was an authority on Arab geneology, battles and social life. It is reported that after the death of 'Umar (R.A.), he used to sit at the congregational mosque of Madīna and discourse on these topics before a circle of enthusiasts.

Abū Bakr was also one of the most prominent geneologists. He was expert in the geneology of the Quraish, the Muḍar and other outstanding tribes of al-Hijāz. Among others who had specialized in the geneological knowledge were 'Abdullah b Abbās, Jūbayr b Muṭīm and Makhrama b Naufal.

The Diwan which was prepared during the Caliphate of 'Umar (R.A.) and which contained the geneological data of the companions of the Prophet is also important from historical point of view.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

(3) Muslim Historiography during the Umayyad Period:

Date

The art of historiography owes its actual development to the Umayyad period when special and serious attention was paid to it by providing it state patronage. Keenly interested in history, Mu'awiyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, used to devote a considerable part of his night to the history of the Arabs and their famous battles; the history of foreign peoples, their kings and their government; the biographies of monarchs, including their wars and diplomacies and methods of rule; and other matters connected with Ancient History. He sent for 'Abid b Sharya from Yemen to inform the former of the early kings of the Arabians and their races. He is reported to have composed a number of works, one being Kitāb al-Mulūk wa Akhbār al-Mādīn. Next to him was Wahb ibn Munabbih (d 728) who also hailed from South Arabia. One of his works entitled "Al-Tijan fi Mutūk Himyar was published in Haydarābād, India, in 1347 A.H.(1928/9) with a supplement (pp. 331-489) entitled "Akhbāru 'Abid" by 'Abid b-Sharya, just mentioned. Other works of this period are Kitāb Khudā-i-Nāma, Kitāb Āin Nāma, Kitāb al-Tāj and Kitāb Mazdak, all were translated by Ibn al Muqaffa' from Old Persian.

In this period special attention was directed to the geneological science as well. As a result, there arose a number of outstanding geneologists like Daghfal b Hanzala, who went to the Court of Mu'awiyah and narrated in his presence the geneological data of the Arabian tribes, Suhar b 'Abbās 'Abdi, 'Umar b Dandam, Subh al-Hanafi, Ibn Kayyis al-Namiri, al-Bakri, Waraqa b-al-Ashar, Ibn al-Kawwa al-Yashkuri, Mujali b Sa'id b 'Umair al-Hamadani (d 144 A.H./761 A.D.), 'Isa b Yazid b Dab, Muhammad b Ubaidullah al-Utbi, Hisham b-Muhammad

b al-Sāib al-Kalbi (d 146 A.H./763 A.D.), etc. One of the incentives for the interest in geneology was to prove the purity of blood and nobility of race.

Among those who played a vital role in the development of history writing were the akhbar reporters. Most distinguished among them were 'Awāna b al-Hakam (d 147 A.H./764 A.D.), Abū Mikhnaḥ al-Azdi (d 157 A.H./774 A.D.), Saif b Umar (d 180 A.H./796 A.D.).

'Awāna b al-Hakam hailed from the tribe of the "Kalb" which was one of the clients of Banū Umayya. He had developed a keen interest in history - more precisely in akhbar. He wrote two books - Kitāb al-Tarīkh and Siratu Mu'awiyah wa Banū Umayya.

Abū Mikhnaḥ was born at Kūfa (Iraq). The involvement of his great grandfather in the Caliphal affairs and close association with contemporaneous political events infused in Abū Mikhnaḥ a passion for history. His historical studies covered the accounts of Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Persia and Iraq. More than thirty works are ascribed to him but none of them are extant to now.

Date of publication
Saif b Umar hailed from Banū Tamīm. He derived major portion of his narrations from the tribal traditions of his tribe. He is reported to have penned two books - Kitāb al-Futūḥ al-Kabir wa al-Riddah and Kitāb al-Jamal wa Siyarū 'Aishah wa 'Alī.

These akhbar reporters are not regarded as reliable as traditionists and maghāzī writers because in their reportings they did not adhere to the isnad system as strictly as traditionists and Sirat or maghāzī writers.

Books on the history of Islam were also written during this period. Such a book was penned by Urwa b. al-Zubayr who was an eye witness to some important events such as the wars of Riddah, Qadisiyah, Yarmuk etc. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri also recorded the history of Islam. But both ^{the} works are now extinct.

Besides, Amir b. Sharahil al-Shabi (d 728) also deserves mention in this context. Though he wrote nothing and though his transmissions were put down in black and white by his pupils, his narratives were of historical value. His historical transmissions covered the post migration period ending with Uthman's assassination and the period starting from Ali's caliphate and extending till the end of the first century.

No doubt, the contribution of these works can by no means be under-rated in the advancement of Muslim historiography. But the share of the maghazi or Sirat writing in this regard was greater than these. The maghazi or Sirat literature dealt with the life and conquests of the Prophet, Muhammad (S.A.W.). It actually owes its beginning to Aban b. Uthman b. Affan (d 105 A.H./723 A.D.) whose work was unfortunately regarded by scholars as a collection of ahadith instead of the maghazi. And it was Urwa b. Zubair (d 94 A.H./712 A.D.) who was credited with the compilation of the first book on the maghazi in the wider sense of the term.

Another maghazi writer of this period was Shurahbil b. Sab (d 123 A.H./740 A.D.). He is said to have prepared the indices of the names of those companions of the Prophet who had taken part in early wars.

One of the most outstanding maghāzī writers was Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d 124 A.H./741 A.D.) who contributed greatly to the maghāzī literature by making extensive researches and examining reports provided by transmitters. He shared the honour of introducing the term "Sirat" for the maghāzī literature. His work on the Sirat or maghāzī consisted of the biographical details and conquests of the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.) together with the accounts of Islamic history down to the time of Yazīd b. Mu'awiyah.

Yet another was Mūsā b. 'Uqba (141 A.H./758 A.D.). He penned a book on the maghāzī. But the original work is not available now.

Next to him was Mamar b. Rashīd (d 154 A.H./770 A.D.). He also wrote a treatise on the maghāzī of the Prophet (S.A.W.). The treatise is now extinct.

Other maghāzī or Sirat writers of prominence include Muḥammad b. Kab' al-Qurazi, 'Asim b. 'Umar Qatāda, 'Abdullāh b. Abū Bakr and Abū al-Aswad Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Naufal.

The historical literature of this period may chiefly be divided into two categories : (i) Pre-Islamic history, (ii) Pro-Islamic history. The pre-Islamic history may further be divided into two kinds : (i) history of ancient Arabs, (ii) history of non-Arabs particularly the Persians. And the pro-Islamic history may be classified as follows : (i) the maghāzī or Sirat literature i.e. the history of life and conquests of the Prophet (S.A.W.), (ii) early Islamic history, (iii) the history of U^mayyad rulers.

There also developed two schools in Muslim historiography - the Madīna school and the Kūfa school. The Madīna school was represented by Abān b. 'Uthmān, al-Zuhru, Mūsā b. 'Uqba etc. Among those belonging to the Kūfa school were 'Abīd b. Sharyā, Wabb b. Munabbih, Kab, 'Abdullāh b. Salam etc. The distinct features of the ^{madīna} school were to follow the isnād system in all transmissions, record dates and chronology of all events, and describe in detail the life and conquests of the Prophet (S.A.W.) together with his sayings. And the characteristics of the Kūfa school were to concentrate on the text of a narration, follow the chronological system only in anecdotes and war narratives, concentrate more on genealogy, the accounts of battles etc., glorify the deeds and achievements of forefathers etc.

Period
(4) Muslim Historiography during the Abbasid Period:

Date
The historical works produced during the Umayyad period are very rarely available in original. The majority of historical writings date from the 'Abbāsīd period during which Muslim historiography progressed by leaps and bounds. Ibn-Ishāq (d 151 A.H./767 A.D.) was among those who played a vital role in the development of this art. Specialised in the maghāzī writing, he wrote for al-Mansūr, the 'Abbāsīd Caliph, a book on the conquests of the Prophet, Muḥammad (S.A.W.). The book was divided into three parts - Kitāb al-Mubtada', dealing with the history of the beginning of the creation upto the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.); Kitāb al-maghāzī, covering the story of the prophethood upto the death of the prophet (S.A.W.); and Kitāb al-Khulafā', giving the accounts of the successors of the Prophet (S.A.W.). This work originally entitled "Sīrat Rasūl Allāh"

has come down to us only in the recension of Ibn Hishām who died in 834 A.D. at Fustāt (old Cairo). It is now known as Sīrat ibn-Hishām.

Next to him was Abū Mashar al-Sindi who wrote a book on the biography of the Prophet (S.A.W.). But, unfortunately, his work does not survive today, and only some quotations incorporated in the works written later are extant.

Another remarkable historian of this age is al-Wāqidi (d 822/3 A.D.) under whom Muslim historiography - particularly the maghāzī writing - prospered. Unrivalled in this art, al-Wāqidi used to pay personal visits to the places to which the events recorded by him were related. A representative of the Madīna school, he strictly followed the Isnād system which was part and parcel of the said school. He wrote a book on the "maghāzī" entitled "Kitāb al-Tarīkh wa-al-maghāzī". His other works include Futūh al-Shām and "Futūh al-Iraq".

No less famous in the art was Ibn Sād, known as al-Wāqidi's secretary. He died in 845 A.D. From his pen, we have the first great book of classified biographies containing sketches of the lives of the Prophet (S.A.W.), the companions and their successors down to his own time. It is better known as "Tabaqāt Ibn Sād". Another work entitled "Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Nabī" is also ascribed to him.

Besides, two other leading historians of the Muslim conquests were equally prominent. One of them was the Egyptian ibn-Hakam (d 870/71 A.D.) whose Futūh Miṣr wa Akhbāruhā is the earliest extant document on the conquests of Egypt, North Africa and Spain. The

other was Abū Jafar Ahmad b-Yahya b-Jabir al-Baladhuri (d 892 A.D.). His main works are "Futuh al-Buldan" and "Ansab al-Ashraf".

Ahmad b-Abū Yaqūb b-Wāḍih al-Yaʿqūbī was yet another historian of good reputation. He was also a geographer. He penned several books such as Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr, Kitāb Asmā' al-Buldan, Kitāb fil Akhbar al-'Umam al-Salifa, etc. All these works except Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr better known as "Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī" are extinct.

Among his contemporaries was Ibn Qutayba who died at Baghdad in 889. A.D. His works include "Kitāb al-Maʿarif" and "Uyūn al-Akhbar" in three volumes. Ibn Qutayba did not follow the chain of Isnād, which evoked the resentment of traditionists. In his 'Uyūn al-Akhbar' he utilized the books of his predecessors like Wahb ibn Munabbih, Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidi and also consulted the book entitled Kitāb Siyar al-Mulūk al-ʿAjam (Khudā-i-Nama).

Another was Abū Ḥanīfa Ahmad b-Dawūd al-Dīnawarī (d 895 A.D.). He flourished in Isfahān and Dīnawar (in the Persian Irāq). He wrote a book entitled "al-Akhbar al-Tiwāl", (long narratives) which covers the accounts down to the time of the Abbasid ruler, Mutasim bi Allāh. He has described in this work the victory by the rulers over the Persians in detail.

Among the greatest historians of this age was al-Tabarī (838-923 A.D.). He wrote a detailed book on history entitled "Tārīkh al-Rasul wa al-Mulūk". In his universal work he made use of the works of Ibn Ishāq, al-Kalbī, al-Wāqidi, Ibn Sād, Ibn al-Muqaffa' etc. In this work al-Tabarī adopted the annalistic method.

After al-Tabarī the most important figure is historiography was al-Masūdī with his full name Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b-Ḥasan (d 956/7 A.D.). He spent the greater part of his life in travelling to collect first hand information for his history and geography. His famous work *"Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar"* is a history of the universe from creation to 947 A.D. This encyclopaedic historical work consists of his painstaking researches on Indo-Persian, Roman and Jewish history and religion and also history of Islam. Unlike al-Tabarī, he arranged his events around dynasties, kings and peoples. He thus represented a landmark in Muslim historiography. That is why he is styled the "Herodotus of the Arabs". Among his other works is Kitāb al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf.

Hamza Isfahānī was also one of the renowned historians of this period. He died in Isfahān in 961 A.D. His work "Tarīkh Sini Mulūk al-Ard wa al-Ambiyā" is important from historical point of view.

Another great historian of Persian stock was Ibn-Miskawayh who died in 1030 A.D. He compiled a universal history down to 369 A.H. (979/80 A.D.) entitled "Tajārib al-Umam wa Ta'āqub al-Himam". Unlike his predecessors, Ibn Miskawayh devoted remarkable attention to reasons and causes of the events and overlooked those throwing no light on causes and effects. He was the first to make this art philosophical and rational rather than traditional. He was so rational that he even did not make mention of the miracles of the Prophet (S.A.W.), considering them unrelated to reasons.

After Ibn-Miskawayh Muslim historiography started on a rapid decline. His successor Ibn al-'Athīr (1160-1234) compiled a universal

history named "al-Kāmil fi al-Tarīkh" (the complete book of chronocles). In al-Kāmil he has abridged al-Tabarī's annals and continued the narrative to 1231 A.D. But the portion of the work dealing with the crusades is an original contribution. His another important work is 'Uṣd al-Ghāba (the lions of the thicket).

Among his contemporaries was Sibṭ b. al-Jauzī (1186-1257). He wrote among other works the Mirāt al-Zamān fi Tarīkh al-'Ayyām, a universal history from creation to 1256 A.D.

(5) Muslim Historiography during the Mamlūk Period:

To the Mamlūk period belongs Shams al-Dīn Ahmad b. Muḥammad-b. Khallikān (1211-1282). He has the distinction of being the first Muslim to compose a dictionary of national biography. His famous work "Kitāb wafayāt al-A'yān" discusses in alphabetical order 865 biographies of most celebrated Muslims in history.

Among the famous Mamlūk historians were Abū al-Fidā' al-Dhahabī, Ibn-Kathīr, al-Maqrīzī, Ibn-Tagh̄dī Birdī and al-Suyūṭī.

Abū al-Fidā' (1273-1332 A.D.) was a historian-geographer. His fame rests on his work "Mukhtaṣar Tarīkh al-Bashar" (epitome of the history of mankind) also called al-Mukhtaṣar fi Akhbār al-Bashar. It is an abridged form of al-Athīr's work. His main contribution in it is that he has continued the narrative down to his own time.

Next to him was his contemporary, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (1274-1348 A.D.). His major works are Duwal al-Islām, published in two volumes in Hayderābād, India, in 1337 A.H./1918 and Tarīkh al-Islām wa Tabaqāt Mashāhīr al-'Ālam.

Another was Ibn-Kathīr (d 1372/73 A.D.). From his pen we have the most celebrated "al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya".

*Revised
Ms.* The most outstanding was Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442 A.D.). His best known work is "al-Mawāiiz wa al-Itibār fi Dhikr al-Khitāt wa al-Āthār". It is devoted to Egyptian topography, history and antiquities. His other works include "al-Sulūk li marīfa Duwal al-Mutūk, Ittiāz al-Hunafa bi Akhbār al-Aimma al-Khulafā, al-Dhahab al-Mastūk fi Dhikri man Hajja min al-Mutūk and Kitāb al-Khabar 'an al-Bashar.

He was followed by Abū al-Mahāsin b-Taghri Birdī (1411-69 A.D.). His major work is al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhira. It deals with the history of Egypt from the Arab conquest till 1453. Among his other works are Maurid al-Latafa fi man walla al-Salṭana wa al-Khilāfa and Mansha' al-Latafa fi Dhikri man walla al-Khilāfa.

Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505 A.D.) was also one of the famous historians of this period. His historical works include Ḥuṣn al-Muḥādara fi Akhbār Miṣr wa al-Qāhira (a history of Egypt) and "Tarīkh al-Khulafā" (history of the Caliphs).

(6) Muslim Historiography in Spain:

In Spain, historiography had a comparatively late development. Abū Bakr b Umar b al-Qūtiya (d 977 A.D.) was one of the earliest historians of Spain. From his pen we have "Tarīkh Iftitāh al-Āndalus". It extends from the Muslim conquest to the early part of Abd al-Rahmān III's reign.

Among other early historians was Abū Marwān Ḥayyān b-Khalaf, surnamed Ibn-Ḥayyān (987/8-1076 A.D.). He is supposed to have written about fifty books. But unfortunately only one of his works "al-Muqtabis fi Tarīkh Rijāl al-ʿAndalus", is extant.

ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī was yet another historian. His "al-Mujīb fi Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib" is regarded as the most valuable work on the Muwahhid period. It was written in 1224 A.D.

The two figures who stand supreme in historiography are Ibn al-Khatīb and Ibn-Khaldūn.

Lisān al-Dīn b-al-Khatīb (1313-74 A.D.) is reported to have penned sixty works on different subjects. Al-Iḥāṭa fi Akhbār Gharbāṭa is on history. It is an extensive history of ~~Granada~~.

Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406 A.D.) owes his fame to his "muqaddima". He is regarded as the greatest historical philosopher Islam has ever produced. His reputed work on history is known as "Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ fi ʿAyyām al-ʿArab wa al-ʿĀjam al-Barbar". It is composed of three parts : a Muqaddima, forming volume one; the main body, with the Arabs and neighbouring peoples; and the last part, describing the history of the Berbers and the Muslim dynasties of North Africa.