

## Towards Understanding the Muslim Historiography and Muslim Historians

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### Abstract

*Islam is a revealed religion and its principles are universal and permanent. These principles provide guidance and fashion life at all ages and all times. Islamic history and historiography is the science which informs us about our heritage, makes us conscious of links with the past, makes us aware of our origin, and provides us with a sense of direction for the future. The present paper highlights the very concept of history in Islam. It also highlights the history-consciousness of the Muslims by highlighting their contributions to historiography.*

**Keywords:** Historiography, Muslim, Ibn Khaldun, Tabari

### Introduction

The origin of the word *Tarikh* which is now generally used for history is very difficult to trace.<sup>1</sup> Though its root form came to use in Yemen during the *jahiliyah* period (age of ignorance),<sup>2</sup> yet in all probability it referred to time, not to history. Although the earlier meaning of the word *Tarikh* is obscure, yet some of the earlier Muslim historians have used the term *Akhbar* for history.<sup>3</sup> The word *Tarikh* so commonly used for history is derived from the Arabic word 'arkh' which means recording the time of an event and as such *Tarikh* is actually the time when a particular event took place.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the word *Tarikh* is used more often in the meaning of a date<sup>5</sup> than of history.<sup>6</sup> According to Ibn Khaldun, history refers to events that are peculiar to a particular age or race.<sup>7</sup> He defines history in terms of a cyclic motion (with a slight but continuous forward movement) of growth and decay within the various forms of human associations.<sup>8</sup>

According to the classic Arabic historiographers, it is knowledge pertaining to a country, customs and manners of people, remains of the people of yore, as well as an account of the actions of those alive.<sup>9</sup> Thus history as a science traces the rise and development of civilizations.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Kafiyaji in his *Al-Mukhtasar fi 'ilm al-Tarikh* defines *Tarikh* as:

Linguistically, *Tarikh* is the indication of time. In the customary usage and as a technical term, *Tarikh* is the general fixation of time, for the purpose of relating to it a time-section, either of the past, the present or the future.<sup>11</sup>

According to Imam Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi:

*Tarikh* is the indication of time that serves for an accurate establishment of circumstances affecting the transmitters of traditions (Ahadith) and religious leaders. It indicates the dates of their birth and death, their soundness of mind and body, their travels and pilgrimages, their accuracy and knowledge of traditions, the degree of reliability and unreliability ascribed to them and similar matters.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, he says:

Important events and occurrences are also added to it. Such events are the appearance of religion. The imposition of new (religious) duties, events concerning caliphs and wazirs, raids, battles and wars, conquests of countries and change of dynasties.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, historiography is a branch of learning which investigates time-sections and circumstances prevailing in them, as well as the circumstances which are connected with those time-sections with a view to their fixation as to time.

### **1. Muslim Consciousness of History**

The Arabs of course, had only a little concept of history before the advent of Islam. They had few stories of what they considered to have been important events and vague, probably untrue legends of the people who had inhabited the old ruins that were scattered in some parts of the peninsula. They lacked even a proper epic and were a people with no consciousness of history. The Muslims, therefore, says I. H. Qureshi, could not have drawn any inspiration for the development of a tradition of historiography from the age of ignorance.<sup>14</sup> It is, therefore more likely that the Arabs developed a sense of history both as a result of Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) mission and the revealed verses (*Ayaat*) of the Holy *Qur'an*. The Muslims were convinced that history was the chosen instrument of God for the gradual development of mankind and for man's preparation for the final reckoning at the inevitable end of the world. The coming of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was viewed as the great turning point of world history, at which for the first time, the purpose of history revealed itself clearly and history became a comprehensible reality.<sup>15</sup> Thus, to Muslim historians, history does not mean the history of kings and their kingdoms. It is rather the story of nations which includes kings. History describes the character and behavior of different people. It records the extent of their intellect, wisdom and other achievements. It depicts the phenomena of the collective rise and fall of communities. It reports the causes and reasons of the rise and fall that appear again and again.

Ibn Khaldun vehemently says: "The past is more similar to the present than water is water."<sup>16</sup> According to him, the study of history demands depths of knowledge and breadth of vision which enables one to understand causes and effects. Furthermore, he says that: "History is solidly rooted in philosophy and is quite worthy of being treated as one of its departments."<sup>17</sup>

The Muslims paid their attention towards this branch of knowledge to obtain the pleasure of Allah (SWT).<sup>18</sup> The *Qur'an* stresses the need of historical knowledge as a moral exhortation to the faithful when it says: "Have they not travelled in the land to see the nature of the consequences for those who disbelieved before them? They were mightier than these in power and (in the) traces (which they) left behind them in the earth, yet Allah seized them for their sins and they had no protector from Allah."<sup>19</sup>

Muslim commentators in general are of the view, that 'to travel on earth' was a substitute for a formal study of history, because the historical accounts of that

period were extinguished and the only way to acquaint oneself with their history was to see their ruins.<sup>20</sup> The Holy *Qur'an* interprets history neither as a constantly moving equilibrium between self-developing spiritual forces nor as a constant clash between economic classes but as a perpetual tussle between the forces of good and evil.<sup>21</sup> This is the theme to which the *Qur'an* frequently refers to and quotes instances from history, both past and contemporary. In fact, the viewpoint of Muslim historians is influenced by the Holy *Qur'an*.<sup>22</sup> The *Qur'anic* way of referring to ancient people and their civilizations and exhorting the faithful to learn a lesson from their history clearly shows that the religion Islam is essentially history-conscious.<sup>23</sup>

From the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), we also gather sufficient evidence that he was well informed about the life and teachings of the Prophets who preceded him.<sup>24</sup> Description of various prophets are found in the *Qur'an*.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the idea of continuity of Prophethood, as presented in the *Qur'an* had to be elaborated by the early commentators and *Sirah* writers, which led to the realization of the importance of history in general.<sup>26</sup> Thus, those who collected and compiled historical data during the early Islamic period belonged to the religious elite, i.e., jurists and *Muhaddithin*.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Concept of History in the Holy Qur'an

From the historical point of view, the Holy *Qur'an* is the first and the most authentic available source of Islam.<sup>28</sup> It covers various events of the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), accounts of the battles fought by him and the circumstances in which certain commandments of Allah (SWT) were revealed unto him.<sup>29</sup> Revelation of the Holy *Qur'an* to the Prophet (SAW) directly, references to all major developments in the early period of Islam and the process of its preservation, add to the historical importance of the *Qur'an*.

A remarkable testimony to the historical sciences of Muslim is, besides the collection of *Hadith*, their efforts in preserving the text of the *Qur'an*. It really arose from two of the teachings of the Book itself. The first of these is the doctrine of the corruption of the previous scriptures through changes or interpretations. The other is the promise that *Qur'an* shall be preserved.<sup>30</sup> Thus, historiography in the Muslim world has religious beginnings. Though the verses of the Holy *Qur'an* exercised a great influence on the early historical writings, yet the text of the *Qur'an* was itself preserved by the Muslims, which demonstrates their historical sense. Besides other sources, the religion of Islam (*Al-Qur'an*) had an ever lasting impact on the development of Muslim historiography. It gave the Muslims their historical sense, made it imperative for the Muslim theologians to undertake historical research and to lay down canons for evaluating historical data to eliminate doubts and errors. It led them to explore the traditions of religions allied to their own which had preceded the mission of the Prophet (SAW) in point of time. Indeed, historical studies started in Islam as a necessary adjunct of theological development.<sup>31</sup> It was therefore, necessary for the Muslims to cultivate a religious attitude towards history which could not be discarded easily. It was because of this fact that the various verses of

the Holy *Qur'an* were interpreted in historical perspective and were given a historical color. Even most of the verses of the text were explained by other verses of the *Qur'an* to depict their reliability. Abu Ja'far al-Tabari while presenting the verses of the Holy *Qur'an* in historical perspective, has followed the same path.

Besides providing a description of various races, dynasties, civilizations and people of yore, the Holy *Qur'an* refers to the history of Prophethood, describing some of the important prophets of Islam. It also refers to the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in its various phases. The Muslim historiographers and *Sirah* writers after giving a description of the conquest of Makkah, describe the events relating to the last pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the year of Deputation that came to him, the Prophet's (SAW) illness and death. References to all such events, especially the *Sirah* of the Prophet (SAW) are available in the verses of the *Holy Qur'an*.<sup>32</sup> The *Qur'an* also describes the social evils which were present in the Arabian society during the age of ignorance. All such events when pieced together, form a major component of Muslim historiography. The works of the major Muslim historians including al-Tabari and Ibn Ishaq as such can be fully authenticated by the *Qur'an* in almost all aspects. The truth is that with the thoughtful study of the Holy *Qur'an*, a particular world view takes place giving birth to a particular behavior. The study of the Holy *Qur'an* brings us to the conclusion that the fountain head of several sciences and disciplines is the Book itself and history is one of them.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Contribution of Muslim Historians to Historiography**

The *Qur'an* played a great role in the historical consciousness of the Muslims and because of the historical consciousness of Muslims, historiography was approached by the Muslims with utmost care and sincerity.<sup>34</sup> The Muslims considered themselves to be the great custodians and transmitters of the knowledge and facts that could not be altered.<sup>35</sup> They produced a vast literature of history that was of considerable merit at a time when even among the civilized people, there was not much flair for historiography.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it were the Muslims who gave new orientation to historical thinking and writing with a greater depth and dimensions. The histories written by the Muslim historians were characterized by accuracy, scientific assembling of facts and their objective approach.<sup>37</sup> Islam has given a galaxy of historians to the world such as al-Tabari, Ibn Khaldun, Baladhuri, al-Masudi and Ibn Ishaq; they all have an everlasting and towering contribution in the development of Muslim historiography during the medieval times.<sup>38</sup>

#### **a) Ibn-e-Jarir Tabari**

Baghdad, the metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphs and the dreamland of the *Arabian Nights*, was the highest seat of learning in the world during the medieval times. It had attracted within its portals, some of the greatest minds of the age. There lived in one of its suburbs, an old man of Turkish blood with sparse beard and good physique. One evening, a stately procession followed by a large retinue, stopped at his humble cottage. Soon after, the highest dignitary of the

state, the Grand *Vizier* of the Abbasid Caliphate was brought into the presence of the old man, who was absorbed in his study. This old man was Tabari, one of the greatest historians of Islam. The Caliph had offered him a handsome pension and sent costly presents in recognition of his contribution to Islamic learning. The celebrated historian refused to accept anything for his services to learning, as he did not want to sell his pen.

The advent of Islam paved the way for the growth of historiography in Arabia. The Arabs had a great attachment with their past. They even maintained the lineage of horses and camels. The abundance of historical data in the Holy *Qur'an* provided a practical incentive for the study of history for the followers of Islam.<sup>39</sup>

The learned discourses of the Holy Prophet (SAW) of Islam were always punctuated with historical references to the past, which awakened an interest hitherto unknown, for historiography among the adherents of the new faith. History is one of the most copious sections of Arabic literature.

The German orientalist Tenfeld collected more than 590 historical works in Arabic written during the first thousand years of the Islamic era. The writing of history commenced during the Umayyad period and was developed during the Abbasid times.<sup>40</sup> The author of *Kashf-uz-Zunun* gives a long list of 1,300 historical books written in Arabic during the first few centuries of Islam. Only a few historical works of the Umayyad period have survived.<sup>41</sup>

The third century of the Islamic era is a period of great intellectual attainment. It was in this period that some of the highest intellectual luminaries rose on the horizon of Islamic learning, whose light guided the later writers in diverse branches of knowledge. Muhammad ibn Jarir Abu Jafar al-Tabari (838-923 C E) was one of them. Today, he is recognized as the father of Islamic history and one of the greatest historians that the world has produced.<sup>42</sup>

Born at Amol in Tabaristan, the mountainous district of Persia, situated alongside the Caspian Sea, Tabari Islam is said to have learnt the *Qur'an* by heart at the age of seven. He received his education at Rayy, Baghdad, Wasit, Basra, Kufa and Fustat (old Cairo). He made extensive study tours of Persia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, in quest of knowledge and for collecting information for his monumental historical works. After his father's death, he was reduced to great poverty. On one occasion, he had to sell the sleeves of his shirt in order to buy bread. Later, he was appointed a tutor to the son of the *vizier* Obaidullah ibn Yahya. His finances then improved slightly. He journeyed to Egypt, but soon returned to Baghdad where he remained until his death as a teacher of Tradition of Islamic Law. According to Yaqut, for forty years Tabari wrote forty pages a day. Yaqut states that Tabari was contemplating to write two books... A history and a commentary of the Holy *Qur'an* of thirty thousand leaves (60 thousand pages) each, but his friends dissuaded him that human life would not be sufficient to undertake as well as go through such gigantic works. Hence, he reduced the two books to 1/10th of the original size, i.e., 3000 leaves each. Tabari lived for 85 years, died in 93 CE and was buried in Baghdad. Among his pupils was

Ahmad Ibn Kamil, the person to whom Miskawayh owed his guidance in history.<sup>43</sup>

Among his works, the two most outstanding contributions which influenced the later writers are: (1) "The Exhaustive Commentary of the Qur'an" and (2) *Tarikh al-Rusulwal Muluk* (Annals of Apostles and Kings) with focus on Islam as universal history. His commentary on the Qur'an comprising about 3,000 leaves is a standard book and has the largest collection of exegetical traditions. All the books were eclipsed by the Annals of Tabari', adds Encyclopedia Britannica, whose fame lasts up to the present time. The value of the book is of great significance. The author's selection of tradition is usually happy and most important episodes were treated with most fullness of detail.

Several translated and abridged editions of the *Annals of Tabari* have been published. One of these in 13 volumes was published in Leiden. Its history begins with the creation of the world and coastlines up to 302 A.H. (915 CE). This history by Islam became renowned for details and accuracy; it was edited by M. J. de Geoje and published in three series consisting of 13 volumes excluding two extra volumes meant for indices, introduction and glossary. The Samanid Minister, Al-Balami, published its abridged Persian edition which was translated in French by H. Zotenberg.<sup>44</sup>

While writing about the *Annals of Tabari*, in his *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Franz Rosenthal states, "Al Tabari's world history was incomparably more important than Al-Yaqubi's who soon was all but forgotten. Tabari brought to his work the scrupulousness and indefatigable long wideness of the theologian, the accuracy and love of order of the scholarly and the insight in to political, justice affairs of the practicing lawyer politician. All those were qualities which commended enduring and ever-increasing respect in the intellectual circles of orthodox Islam. It was therefore, only natural that his historical work never ceased to exercise a tremendous influence upon future historians as a model of how history should be written. The story of Muhammad (SAW) follows the Sirah "pattern."<sup>45</sup>

The Arabic historical composition reached its zenith in Tabari and Masudi, who were pioneers in this branch of learning until the birth of Ibn Khaldun. His second great work is his commentary on the Holy *Qur'an*, which comprising of about 3000 pages is a standard book, having the largest collection of exegetical traditions. It is like *Annals*, known for the same fullness of details. This monumental work of Tabari was published in 30 volumes, excluding extra index volume at Cairo in 1902-03. The size of this work and spirit of independence pervading it provided a check to its popularity and wide circulation. This commentary much influenced well-known scholars like Baghawi and Suyuti.

His other works include his voluminous legal work *Ikhtilaaf* comprising of 3000 leaves, his *Tahzibul Athar*, dealing with the traditions of the Prophet of Islam (SAW) and *al Basit*, a juristic treatise. He had projected a third voluminous book, dealing with the traditions of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam (SAW),

which could not be completed. A list of Tabari's minor works is given in the *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadeem.<sup>46</sup>

This influence of Tabari's historical works and commentary on the Holy *Qur'an* may be traced in later writers. The well-known historian Miskawayh is indebted for his historical knowledge to Ibn Kamil, the biographer and disciple of Tabari. His 'Annals' was the greatest source of information and the most outstanding historical work till the birth of Ibn Khaldun. This was the chief source of guidance for such famous historians as Abul Fida, ibn Athir, Miskawayh and Ibn Kamil. His annalistic method in the writing of history was followed by Al-Waqidi, Miskawayh, Ibn Athir and Abul Fida. His commentary on the Holy *Qur'an* was studied and followed by Allamah Suyuti and Baghawi. Thus, Abu Jafar al-Tabari, known as 'Livy of Arabs' and the father of Islamic history, is one of the greatest historians of medieval times who paved the way for the gigantic growth of Muslim historiography in the world.<sup>47</sup>

Imam Abu Jafar al-Tabari is a celebrated and renowned Muslim historian and thinker. His vast historical repository has remained with us as an immortal monument of his extensive scientific activity, which has been written in the early fourth (tenth) century and is the first work in the annalistic form written by a Muslim that has come down to us. Imam Tabari's greatness as a matter of fact, is recognized in all quarters because of his accuracy and great diligence in collecting data and giving them the form of authentic history.<sup>48</sup> Imam Tabari's renowned and most important work bears the title of *Tarikhul Rusulwal Muluk* (the History of the Prophets and the Kings).<sup>49</sup> While commenting on this renowned history, al-Masudi says, "It excels all other historical works in brilliance and substance as it includes all different kinds of historical information, comprises a great variety of memorable data and contains all sorts of knowledge; it is an extremely useful work."<sup>50</sup>

Imam Tabari's work is constructed in an extremely different principle. His work shows a definite departure from the ancient form, although in details of style ancient influences are still alive, especially in those parts of the work which deal with the age of ignorance and the advent of Islam. What makes his work especially valuable for the purpose of scientific research is the manner in which he imparts the events recorded. "Probably, we are to regard Imam Tabari as performing for history a task similar to what Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim did for traditions (*Ahadith*)."<sup>51</sup> Imam Tabari's work not only contains a mere historical narrative but also imparts the documents authenticating the events. This is the real merit and value of his great historical work for science. For this reason, Imam Tabari has been justly called "The father of Arab history."<sup>51</sup> Imam Tabari was a true and real historian, as he wrote without any motives and did not try to shape it according to particular interests and objects.

## b) Ibn-e-Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's life is relatively well-documented, as he wrote an autobiography, (*Al-Tarif bi Ibn- Khaldun Wa Rihlatuhu GharbanWa Sharqan*), in which numerous documents regarding his life are quoted word-for-word.<sup>52</sup> However,

the autobiography has little to say about his private life, so little is known about his family background. Generally known as “Ibn Khaldun” after a remote ancestor, he was born in Tunis in 1332 CE (732 A.H) into an upper class *Andusian* family, the Banu Khaldun. His family, which held many high offices in *Anduslia*, had immigrated to Tunisia after the fall of Seville to Reconquista forces around the middle of the 13th century. Under the Tunisian Hafsids Dynasty, some of his family held political office; Ibn Khaldun’s father and grandfather however, withdrew from political life and joined a mystical order. His brother, Yahya Ibn Khaldun, was also a historian who wrote a book on the Abdal Wadid Dynasty and was assassinated by a rival for being the official historiographer of the court.<sup>53</sup>

In his autobiography, Ibn Khaldun traces his descent back to the time of Muhammad through an Arab tribe from Yemen, specifically Hadhramaut, which came to Spain in the eighth century at the beginning of the Islamic conquest. In his own words: “And our ancestry is from Hadhramaut from the Arabs of Yemen, via Wa’il Ibn Hajar, from the best of the Arabs, well-known and respected.” However, the biographer Mohammad Enan, questions his claim and suggests that his family may have been Muladis who pretended to be of Arab origin in order to gain social status. Enan also mentions a well- documented past tradition, concerning certain Berber groups, whereby they deceptively “aggrandize” themselves with some Arab ancestry. The motive for such an invention was always the desire for political and societal ascendancy.<sup>54</sup> Some speculate this of the Khaldun family which elaborates that Ibn Khaldun himself was the product of the same Berber ancestry as the native majority of his birth place. A point congenial to this posits that Ibn Khaldun’s unusual written focus on, and admiration for Berbers reveals a difference towards them that is born of a vested interest in preserving them in the realm of conscious history; such is that which the true Arabs of his day would find no enthusiasm for and indeed, a vested interest in suppressing. Moreover, the special position that he affords Berbers in his work is fully vindicated upon comparing it with his vitriolic attitude towards the Arabs, and his relative disinterest in the state of affairs outside the Maghreb. In contrast, Muhammad Hozien chooses to believe: “The [Berber] identity would be valid however at the time that Ibn Khaldun’s ancestors left Andalusia and moved to Tunisia they did not change their claim to Arab ancestry. Even in the times when Berbers were ruling in Al-Andalus, the region of Almoravids and Almohads, Ibn Khaldun did not reclaim their Berber heritage.” This point ignores the aforementioned phenomenon of adopting an Arab ancestry to garner prestige.<sup>55</sup>

His family’s high rank enabled Ibn Khaldun to study with the best teachers in the Maghreb. He received a classical Islamic education, studying the *Qur’an* which he memorized by heart, Arabic linguistics, the basis for an understanding of the *Qur’an*, *Hadith*, *Shariah* (Law) and *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence). He received certification (*Ijazah*) for all these subjects.<sup>56</sup>

The mathematician and philosopher, Al-Abili of Tlemcen, introduced him to mathematics, logic and philosophy, where he above all studied the works of



Averroes, Avicenna, Razi and Tusi. At the age of 17, Ibn Khaldun lost both his parents to the Black Death, an intercontinental epidemic of the plague that hit Tunis in 1348-1349.<sup>57</sup>

Following family tradition, Ibn Khaldun strove for a political career. In the face of a tumultuous political situation in North Africa, this required a high degree of skill in developing and dropping alliances prudently, to avoid falling with the short-lived regimes of the time. Ibn Khaldun's autobiography is the story of an adventure, in which he spends time in prison, reaches the highest offices and falls again into exile.<sup>58</sup>

Ibn Khaldun, the talented Muslim philosopher of history and the greatest intellectual of his age, is one of the most outstanding thinkers that the world has ever produced. Being the founder of the science of 'Philosophy of History', Ibn Khaldun had the unique distinction of treating history as a science by supporting his facts with reasoning. "There is nothing in the Christian literature of the middle ages", says a celebrated western critic, "Worthy of being compared with it (Ibn Khaldun's history) and no Christian wrote a version with such clearness and precision on any Muslim state."

Born in Tunis, Ibn Khaldun had a chequered career during his life, taking active part in the intriguing power politics of small North African principalities, enjoying alternatively, the favor as well as disfavor of the rulers and at times, taking refuge in the distant Granada. His revolutionary spirit, being fed up with the dirty politics of those times, was obliged to take a short respite of about four years in the suburbs of Tunis, where he completed his immortal *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) in 1377 CE. Thereafter, he shifted to Tunis to finish his masterly work *Kitab al-Ibar* (World History).<sup>59</sup>

Ibn Khaldun has acquired worldwide reputation and occupies an outstanding place amongst the galaxy of the world's historical philosophers. He is distinguished from the rest of historians, because he treated history as a science and not merely a narrative. He wrote history in the light of his new method of explanation and reasoning and developed it as a social philosophy.<sup>60</sup>

Explaining the art of writing history, Ibn Khaldun says in Prolegomena, "it is only by an attentive examination and well sustained application that we can discover the truth and guard ourselves against errors and mistakes. In fact, if we were merely to satisfy ourselves by reproducing the records transmitted by tradition without consulting the rules furnished by experience, the fundamental principle of the art of Government, the Nature, even of the particular civilization, or the circumstances which characterize the human society; if we are not to judge the wants which occurred in the distant times by those which are occurring under our eyes, if we are not to compare the past with the present, we can hardly escape from failing into errors and losing the way of truth."

Being the originator of sociology, philosophical and political economy, his works possess striking originality, recording a new system in understanding and explaining the social phenomena as well as an understanding, criticizing and analyzing history. He has divided his historical work into three parts. The first

part, known as his famous *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) deals with society and its origin, sovereignty, the birth of towns and villages, trades, means of livelihood and science. This is the best part of the book, in which the writer ascends. The summits of creativeness, reviewing diverse subjects like political economy, sociology and history with striking originality and brilliance. The third chapter of the book deals with the state and sovereignty. In it, the learned author has propounded his advanced political theories which were later incorporated in the works of such celebrated political thinkers as Machiavelli and Vice. Machiavelli's 'Prince', written in the stormy days of Italy, a century later, bears a close resemblance to Prolegomena and it is probable that the celebrated Italian borrowed some of his ideas from the works of Ibn Khaldun.

The third part of his great historical work, *Kitab al-Ibar*, which comprises of two volumes, deals elaborately with the history of the Berbers and other neighboring tribes. It also contains the autobiography of the author, known as Al-Tarif. Before him autobiographies were written in diary form, events having no connection with each other. Ibn Khaldun was the first to write a long systematic autobiography.<sup>61</sup>

Paying glowing tributes to Khaldun's genius and achievements, P. K. Hitti writes,

as one who endeavored to formulate laws of national progress and decay, Ibn Khaldun may be considered the discoverer as he himself claimed of the true scope and nature of history or at least the real founder of the science of sociology. No Arab writer, indeed no European, had ever taken a view of history at once so comprehensive and philosophic. By the consensus of all critical opinion, Ibn Khaldun was the greatest historical philosopher Islam produced and one of the greatest of all time." "Not only is he the greatest historian of the middle ages", says George Sarton, "towering like a giant over a tribe of pygmies, but one of the first philosophers of history, a forerunner of Machiavelli, Bodin, Vice, Comte and Cournot."<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion

The Muslim historians and historiographers were able to expand the scope of history and historiography from mere recording of facts to a repository of political, administrative and cultural experiences and made fruitful efforts in the analytical fields as well. Though the debt that history and historiography owes to the efforts of Muslim writers is generally recognized by the Orientalists, yet the consciousness of the value and significance of Muslim contribution in the field of historiography is rare among Western historians.

## References and Endnotes

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- <sup>8</sup> Raghib al-Tabbakh, *Tarikh al-Afkar wa Ulum al-Islami*, Vol. II (Delhi, 1998), 281.
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- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, op. cit. 6.
- <sup>24</sup> For instance, When he (SAW) was distributing booty at Hunayn, one of the Ansars of Madinah protested the system of distribution adopted by him, the Prophet (SAW) expressed his annoyance in these words: 'May Allah shower his mercy on Moses' he was posted more than this. [Imam Bukhari, *Adab al-Mufrad* Vol. I (Cairo, 1378), 481]
- <sup>25</sup> A. K. Brohi, *The Quran and its Impact on Human History* (Aligarh, 1981), 9.
- <sup>26</sup> Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, op. cit. 7
- <sup>27</sup> M. M. Sharief, op. cit. 1202 .
- <sup>28</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi, op. cit. 261.
- <sup>29</sup> Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, op. cit. 134.
- <sup>30</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi, op. cit. 262.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Mohammad Tahir, *Medieval Muslim Historiography* (Delhi, 1998), 1.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, op. cit. 43.
- <sup>37</sup> D. S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians* (Delhi, 1977), 82.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Dr. Ahsan al-Allah Fahad, *Imam Ibn Jarir Tabari* (Delhi, 2002), 153.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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- 42 Ibid.  
 43 Raghīb al-Ṭabbakh, *op. cit.* 311.  
 44 Imam Ṭabari, *Tarikh-i Rusul Wa al-Muluk*, Vol. I (New York, 1989), 86.  
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 46 Ibid.  
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 48 Ibid.  
 49 Ibid.  
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 52 Mohammad Abdullah Enan, *Ibn Khaldun: His Life and Work* (Delhi, 1979), 1.  
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 55 Abd al-Salam Nadwi, *Ibn Khaldun*, (Dar al-Musannefeen, Azamgarh, U. P), 27.  
 56 Ibid.  
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