

The Methodology of Studying History among Muslims: Political Historiography as a Model

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the methodology of historical inquiry in Islamic civilization, with a particular focus on political historiography as a model. It seeks to uncover the values and methodological features that distinguished Muslim historical writing. The research begins by emphasizing the significance of history as the oldest of the human sciences and the one most closely tied to human existence, while also addressing the problem of objectivity in historical writing, which inevitably reflects the historian's own historical context. Interest in history among the Arabs predates Islam, as seen in their concern with genealogy and the preservation of ancestral narratives. The Qur'an then provided a powerful impetus for this orientation through its accounts of prophets and past nations, highlighting the role of history in moral reflection, drawing lessons, and identifying the laws governing social and political transformations. With the emergence of the Islamic state in Medina, history acquired a new dimension, evolving from oral reports into a written discipline with a clear methodology. The adoption of the Hijri calendar during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb marked a decisive turning point in recording and organizing the events of the Muslim community. History was not merely a means of documentation, but also a political tool for consolidating the unity of the ummah and legitimizing the caliphate.

Islamic historical writing passed through three major stages: the early stage of biography and military campaigns represented by Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidi; the stage of expansion in themes and the emergence of the idea of "universal history," exemplified by al-Ṭabarī; and finally, the stage of theorization and critique with Ibn Khaldūn. The latter called for moving beyond the narrative method based solely on chains of transmission, distinguishing between religious reports, which rely on isnād, and historical reports, which must rest on reason and empirical reality. He also introduced the concept of 'ilm al-'umrān (the science of civilization) as a means to understand the social and economic laws that shape historical development, criticizing a merely descriptive approach to events without analysis. Central themes such as the caliphate, embodying the unity of the ummah; jihād, as a means of defending the abode of Islam; and the Great Fitna, which left a profound imprint on the collective consciousness, occupied pivotal positions in Islamic historiography. Together, they illustrate the ongoing interrelation between the religious and the political in the making of history.

Keywords : Methodology - The Muslims - History - Political Historiography

Introduction

The science of history is the oldest human science, and the word "history" for most peoples has two meanings: it means what happened to man in the past, and it also means what man has written about that past. This double meaning of the word history is justified, for the human being who is the object of historical knowledge is a historical being. This close connection between man and history has made those interested in history always ask the question of "scientific" in writing history: Can the historian, as a historical being, set aside his historical nature and write an objective history?

It is almost agreed that the requirement of science (like the natural and correct sciences) is abstained from because it is impossible for the historian to carry out experiments in the manner of physicists and chemists. Nevertheless, the historian is required to make a scientific method and a tendency to convince his readers of the credibility of what he writes. The subject of the curriculum is very important in the writing of history because it is related to the prostitution of this science, as going back to the past provides man with human models that serve as role models to weave in their example, and the tragedies of the past make him seek not to repeat what is similar to them.

Muslims have a large share of this knowledge and a sound statement in it. There is no evidence of this from the fact that the greatest Muslim scholar who shone his star, ancient and modern, in all parts of the world, was a historian and a student of history at the same time, by which we mean Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun.

Through this study, we will try to identify the method of studying history among Muslims, specifically political history, by seeking to understand this method and extract the values of this history.

I Muslims and History

The Muslims' interest in history dates back to before Islam, when they believed in the value of their fathers and grandfathers in guiding their behavior and choices in life. With the great conquests and the emergence of Islamic countries and their succession to rule the world, the Arab-Islamic culture spread (Arabic in terms of language and Islamic in terms of content). Writing their theories in history.

1. The Concept of History

A. Language: Al-Sakhawi defined history by going back to Arabic dictionaries and defined a set of meanings for it:

- Definition of time: "It is said that you dated the book and its date, i.e., you showed the time of its writing" (**Al-Sakhawi, 1986**).
- Conclusion: "Abu al-Faraj Qudamah ibn Ja'far al-Katib said in al-Kharaj: The history of everything is the last" (**Al-Sakhawi, 1986**).
- Ultimate and End: "The date of everything has its end and the time at which its time ends. From this, it was said to so-and-so the history of his people, either because he was the ultimate in the honor of his people... Or because he remembers the news and the like" (**Al-Sakhawi, 1986**).

B- Terminology: Before the advent of the term "history" among Muslims, "news" appeared, but it remained limited to the novel and was related to literature, folk biographies, legends, and strange events. It is also concerned with one single event that is not related to any other events. It is more of an oral narrative than a written one. The word has been used in the Holy Qur'an in two places in the sense of the attribute of the thing, as Moses said to his family, "I have forgotten a fire, from which I will bring you news, or I will bring you a meteor from Qabas, so that you may be struck ."**Al-Naml (27/7 and Al-Qasas 28/29)**.

Al-Sakhawi defines history as follows: "It is the definition of the time at which the conditions are controlled from the birth of the narrators and the imams, the death, health, mind, body, journey, pilgrimage, memorization, control, documentation, wounding, and the like, which is the reference of the examination of their conditions at their beginning, their condition, and their reception, and is joined by what is consistent with the great events and realities, such as the emergence of a nation, the renewal of an imposition, a caliph and a vizier, an invasion, an epic, a war, the conquest of a country, its taking from the conqueror, the transfer of a state, and perhaps expanding it to the beginning of creation and stories. The Prophets, and other matters of the past nations, and the conditions of the Resurrection and its preliminaries. They make it like a mosque building, a school, an archway, a sidewalk, or the like, which is commonly used by what is commonly seen, or hidden from heaven, such as locusts, eclipses, and eclipses, or earthly things like earthquakes, fires, floods, droughts, plagues, deaths, and other great signs and great wonders. The result is an art in which it searches for the realities of time in terms of the determination and timing, but also about what was in the world" (**Franz Rosenthal 1986**).

Al-Sakhawi's definition of history clearly reveals the extent to which Muslims have reached maturity in dealing with the science of history. The distance between the linguistic definition and the idiomatic definition is the time it took for Muslims to acquire and develop knowledge of this science. Hence, this definition shows that Muslims were aware of history in its temporal dimension (examining their conditions at their beginnings, their condition, and their reception), that is, they understood history as a science of past events. The word "examination" indicates the critical dimension in the Muslims' perception of history, as it is a science that seeks the truth, the truth of what happened, and thus Muslims cut off with "news" as a popular narrative of a mostly mythical nature.

2- The Emergence of History

There is no room to talk about the emergence of historical thought among the Arabs except at the moment when the Arab man became aware of his centrality in the world, and this awareness would not have happened until the moment of the emergence of Islam. The pre-Islamic Arab did not possess a time, but an "eternity" that had no beginning, no end, and no content, his time was empty of all content.

{ . With Islam, time is no longer without a beginning and without an end. Hence, Islam has deliberately multiplied time, and by this we mean its fragmentation. This division is attested to by the many words denoting time in the Qur'an (Ali Al-Araibi, 1991), for example, the Qur'an used the word "today" 406 times, of which 332 times to denote the Hereafter (the end of worldly time), and it also used the words "dawn", "sunrise", "morning", "duh", "duh", "dawn", "noon", "asr", "sunset", "dusk", "Isha", and "magic". The Qur'an also used other words for calendaring and compilation, including: month – year – year – summer – winter – era – covenant – period – duration... The Holy Qur'an has been the code of action in history (Triki (Fathi), 1991).

In the language of history, Muslims have a nation to which they belong and write its history, that is, they transmit to the later generations the spirit of the community, the spirit of the Islamic nation. The Muslim has become an actor in time, and it is his duty to convey this activity to others, based on this activity of the Holy Qur'an, as it guides his behavior and all his life.

But when did history arise for Muslims? The Holy Qur'an provided the necessary framework for the emergence of historical thought, i.e., awareness of history. But history as a science was only created at the moment of the establishment of the Islamic state in Medina, a state that gave the first Islamic group self-awareness by bringing it together for the historical mission of spreading Islam.

Thus, the emergence of history among Muslims was linked to politics. Al-Sakhawi wrote in this regard: "Ibn 'Asakir narrated in his Tarikh Damascus that Anas said: "History was from the beginning of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in Medina." Al-Hakim narrated in al-Akleel through Ibn Jarir from Abu Salamah from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri that when the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) came to Medina, he ordered the date and it was written in Rabi' al-Awwal. . He then clarifies the connection between the moment of the "Islamic State" and the awareness of history by saying: "Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas said to 'Umar: 'Date the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and he said, 'Ali said, 'Date the migration of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), for it differentiated between truth and falsehood, **and showed Islam**, so the opinion of the Muslims was unanimous in starting with the year of the Hijrah, which is the year in which **Islam and its people were honored.**" (Franz Rosenthal, 1986).

II : Muslim Historians and the Historical Method

The Holy Qur'an confirmed that the messages of the prophets are originally one message preached by many prophets, so its view of history was a global one in which it turned to the histories of the previous prophets and the societies and civilizations they lived through. From this point of view, the Muslims were aware that they were the successors of the previous nations and that they were therefore the bearers of a great message, that they were passing through an important phase, and that the great conquests had made them feel that they had a dangerous historical role.

All of this had a strong impact on historical studies. Omar ibn al-Khattab supported a fixed calendar, which is the Hijri history, which became a vital element in the emergence of the historical idea.

1- The Three Stages of Historical Writing

The science of history about Muslims initially took two directions, an Islamic trend (in Medina) and a tribal direction (Basra and Kufa), and then the Islamic trend prevailed later. Scholars have been unanimous or almost unanimous that the attention to the Prophet's hadith constituted the beginnings of historical writing among Muslims. When the field of the Prophet's hadith expanded to include the activities and sayings of the Companions and the Followers, and since the experiences of the Ummah (and consensus in particular) were a source of legislation, historical studies expanded to include them. Moreover, political issues, especially the question of the caliphate, required the search for history in search of truth and objectivity. The beginnings of Islamic history were linked to the emergence of institutions, and as these institutions developed, historical writing developed.

Al-Zuhri (d. 124 AH) was the first to give the "Sira" its final color and form, but Ibn Ishaq is the actual founder of the "Sira" as the nucleus of the "science" of history among Muslims. His studies and researches are similar to the studies of his professors, and thus he memorizes the knowledge of the school to which he belongs, and adds what he has reached" (Abdulaziz Al-Douri, 2000).

Therefore, these writings carried many of the characteristics of the work, the systematic history of Muhammad bin Omar Al-Waqidi, the author of "Al-Maghazi", is systematic and logical in dealing with his material, as he first presents the framework of the subject, then follows it by mentioning the details, and begins with a list of his main sources, and with a list of the Prophet's Maghazi and their dates, and when he mentions the conquests led by the Prophet, he mentions the names of the princes of Medina in his absence, and then deals with the dates of the invasions one after the other according to their historical

sequence" (**Abdulaziz Al-Douri, 2000**).

With the emergence of Islamic parties after the Great Fitna, the Islamic society tended towards diversity, but it is a diversity that draws from the same sources, i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is what made it imperative for historians to develop their writing of history, as history is no longer a record of events, but the historian has become concerned with giving the historical event meaning, i.e., to search for the extent to which it conforms to the values of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). In parallel, the historian had to search for a new identity for the historical discourse by separating it from other sciences such as "Hadith" and "Fiqh". etc. The emergence of prose due to contact with other peoples and civilizations helped to accomplish this task, and "literature" appeared not in its usual sense today – a meaning that Islamic civilization has only recently known – but in the sense given to it by al-Jahiz, i.e., in the sense of encyclopedic knowledge. Accordingly, the topics of history varied, and many "books" / dates appeared, including "The Book of Songs", "The Book of Kufa Plans", "The Book of Anecdotes", and "The Book of Knowledge". etc. World history and the concept of the Islamic Ummah have come to an end. This is what we find in the "History" of Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari (d. 309 AH). Al-Tabari's book "The History of the Messengers and Kings" includes a new way of writing history that sought to rationalize historical narratives by making them acceptable to readers and at the same time capable of unifying the Islamic Ummah. In order to achieve this lofty goal, Al-Tabari sought to criticize and scrutinize the narrations, to mention their sources, and to increase the number of narrations for the same event, and even to mention contradictory narratives, and in a word, Al-Tabari sought to raise the historical news to the level of the reliability of the legal news (**Ali Omlil, 1985**).

With Ibn Khaldun, the "science" of history among Muslims reached its maximum stage, the stage of theorizing or "theory", Khaldun's criticism of the science of history by its predecessors ended up that their historical discourse was fundamentally wrong because of their ignorance of the laws of urbanism, which are an alternative to the approach of the modernists (isnaad) that they adopted. Ibn Khaldun broke with the old concept of history as a commemoration of the feats of the nation and a "accumulation" of news and narratives to establish in its place a history based on reading the past through the study of the present: people's way of life, customs, traditions and beliefs. etc.

2- Criticism of the Method

Ibn Khaldun wrote in the Muqaddam, criticizing the approach of his predecessors: "However, the stallions of historians in Islam have absorbed the news of the days, collected them, written them down in the pages of the books, and deposited them... The interlocutors mixed it with intrigues of falsehood and delusional or invented it... Many of those who came after them traced these monuments and followed them, and they presented them to us as they heard them, and they did not notice the causes of the facts and circumstances and did not take them into account" (**Ibn Khaldun, 1984**). The reason for this, in his opinion, is due to the historians' adoption of the method of the hadiths, i.e., the "chain": "... Because if the news is based on mere transmission and does not govern the principles of habit, the rules of politics, the nature of urbanization and conditions, and the absent is not measured by the witness and the present by the going, then perhaps he did not believe in it from the finder, and the slip of the foot and the deviation from the path of truthfulness" (**Ibn Khaldun, 1984**). If "modification and insulting is what is considered in the authenticity of the legitimate news, because most of it is a construction cost that the street has to work on until it is suspected to be true, and the way to correct the suspicion is to trust the narrators with justice and control", then "reporting about events is not Its truthfulness and validity must be taken into account, so the possibility of its occurrence must be considered, and in this case, it has become more important than the amendment and before it" (**Ibn Khaldun, 1984**).

It is clear that Ibn Khaldun distinguishes between two types of "news", the first is a sacred law and the second is a report of worldly events in the first place. The first type considers the validity of the affiliation of this news to the origin issued by him (God - the Prophet), so it must be subjected to dual control, to control the stability of its identity through time and generations, and to control the morals of its transmitters (the science of modification and desecration). The method of attribution ultimately results in the fact that it is based on a moral criterion that is never useful in writing history because of the ease of touching on it. Lying to the news of course (Shiism for opinions and doctrines - trust in the transmitters... etc.). In order to avoid these pitfalls, "the law in distinguishing truth from falsehood in news is that it is possible and impossible to look at human society, which is urbanization, and distinguish what it inflicts on itself and according to its nature, and what is accidental and insignificant and cannot be exposed to it" (**Ibn Khaldun, 1984**).

Thus, Ibn Khaldun discovered the science of human urbanism as the correct method for writing a history without errors or with the least possible errors. The meaning of urbanism is explained by the wise men when they say, "Man is civil by nature", i.e., he must meet the city (**Ibn Khaldun, 1984**).

III The Political History of Muslims: Sunnah and Lessons

This happened with the advent of Islam and developed with all the major twists and turns that the history of Muslims has known, starting with the revelation and passing through the great conquests, imperial expansion, and sedition, and ending with the era of Ibn Khaldun, where the situation changed altogether.

The history of Islam, with its great lines, is an expression of the divine will and the unity of the nation. The Qur'an came with a global view of history represented by the succession of prophecies, which is basically one message preached by many prophets. This view had its effect on paying attention to the history of the prophets and the history of previous nations. However, this view was limited to the periods before the advent of Islam, but after that, attention was focused on the history of Islam. Muslims succeeded the previous nations in which prophecies appeared, and their deeds and affairs are worthy special care. They have become the center of the world and the history of other nations has only one role: consideration. Thus, the history of al-Baladhuri (d. 279 AH) in "Genealogy of the Ashrafs" was in defense of the idea of the unity of the nation, and in "Conquests of the Countries" as a demonstration of the value of the nation's experience for administrative and legislative purposes. The history of the Jacobites (d. 298 AH) was a universal history that begins with creation and narrates the history of peoples, nations and civilizations, but in order to prove that the history of the Muslims is the true history that all other histories lead to. On the other hand, the narrative (the narrative of history) should contribute to the cohesion of the unity of the nation, especially when it comes to its own history, here it is necessary to reach a narrative of history around which "consensus" is achieved through a broad critique of various narratives.

It is worth mentioning that all Muslim historians accept the myths of pre-Islamic history while being careful when it comes to Muslim history. True history, i.e., the "science of history", begins only with Islam and the Nation of Islam.

The unity of the Ummah has historically been manifested through three basic intertwined and overlapping issues that have pushed Islamic history in its various stages **and continue to cast a heavy shadow on their current reality, albeit under other names**. Methodically, we can arrange these issues as follows: the first of these issues in terms of importance is the "Caliphate", followed by the consequentialism, and the result is the issues of "Jihad" and "Religious and Political Dialectic".

1- Succession

Muslim historians were very concerned with the situation of the Caliphate as a political embodiment of the unity of Muslims, and therefore they called all its opponents "Kharijites" and always showed their understanding of the weakness of the Caliphs and sympathized with them whenever they were afflicted with a political calamity. The news of the caliphs was at the forefront of the events of their histories, and it was they who made this history, despite the fact that these dates included social, economic, and natural events (the news of earthquakes, epidemics, droughts, and floods. etc.).

It is no wonder that the caliphate was the first dilemma that Muslims faced shortly after the death of the Prophet in the "shed", where the conflict between the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) over his caliphate emerged early, and during the wars of apostasy, when many tribes refused to submit to the caliph of the Messenger of Allah. After the end of the first wave of major conquests, the "Great Fitna" (the struggle for the position of caliphate) broke out, causing a great rift in the consciousness of Muslims who are still with them to this day. Despite all these shocks that the "Caliphate" has been subjected to, it has succeeded to a great extent in consolidating the idea of the unity of the Ummah, which still exists in the collective consciousness and is still an urgent demand among the Muslim public.

Ibn Khaldun, following Al-Mawardi (t.t.), defined the caliphate as "on behalf of the author of the law and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in preserving religion and the policy of the world in it" (**Ibn Khaldun, Introduction, vol. 2**), so the role of the Caliph, according to this definition, is religious and political. Islam" (**Hajam Djait and Fahmi Jadaan**). This phrase is implicit in many studies (**Radwan Al-Sayed and Abdulaziz Al-Douri**). How did this dialectic manifest itself in the history of Muslims and in the writings of historians?

2- Jihad and the Religious and Political Dialectic

It is enough to look closely at the definition of the caliphate that we mentioned earlier to realize that

the preservation of religion is the origin and the policy of this world is the branch, "because all the conditions of this world are due to the consideration of the interests of the Hereafter." This means that the caliphate is essentially a religious function whose main role is to "hold everyone accountable for their otherworldly and worldly interests in accordance with the lawful consideration of their otherworldly and worldly interests." Therefore, the nature of power does not matter, whether it is a caliphate or a king, nor how to reach it, but what is important is that it has authority over people.

When the Caliphate was weakened as a political system that embodies the unity of Muslims as a result of the increasing separation from the center, the large number of outsiders, and the flare-up of sectarian strife, this dialectic surfaced in conjunction with the threats of the Byzantine Romans and then the Crusaders at a later stage. The Muslims were divided into two groups, one that demanded compliance with the rule of Sharia and thus the appointment of a caliph according to the Shari'a conditions to carry out the duty of jihad against the infidels, and a group that waived these legal conditions and accepted the emirate of the victorious and the illegitimate on the condition that the causes of weakness were resisted and Muslims were reunited.

Is of the sedition and all the news of the rebels with the same importance as they Historians reported all the detail Islam, and showed great enthusiasm for all the -gave to the news of the Roman and Crusader attacks on Dar al or and the enemies of the outside. As long as these efforts of the caliphate in the face of the enemies of the interi efforts are aimed at preserving the unity of the nation, the ruler of the nation is legitimate, whether he is a weak .legitimate caliph or an illegitimate conqueror

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In this year (445 AH), Banisapur announced the curse of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, and Abu al-Qasim Abdul Karim ibn Hawazin al-Qushayri made a letter called "The complaint of the Sunnis about the ordeal they have received." The Sultan said, "But he will curse al-Ash'ari, who said these articles, if they do not condemn them and al-Ash'ari does not say anything of them, then you have nothing to do with what he says." Al-Ash'ari has an innovator who is more than the Mu'tazilites. Al-Qushayri said: O Mu'asher of the Muslims, Ghayath al-Ghayath.

Al-Musannaf (may Allah have mercy on him) said: If al-Qushayri had not acted in this letter, he would have been in a state of concealment, because he only mentioned in it that the curse had taken place and that he had asked the sultan to leave it, but he did not answer, and then he did not mention an argument or give a suspicion to the opponent. He mentioned such a kind of negligence." (Ibn al-Jawzi, d.t.).

Islamic history is not a history of thought, events, social phenomena, political conditions and states that prevailed, but also, and before that, a history of a comprehensive faith, which has its own distinctive features and components. Since Islam is concerned with life in general, and since the affairs of this life are important, experiences and examples are necessary for good behavior. It provides examples of what one can live a better life and what helps to enlighten the rulers.

Conclusion

The Arabs had no history before Islam, as history arose with the establishment of the Islamic state in Medina. From that date onwards, cities made the history of Islam. Medina means urbanization, i.e., meeting, as Ibn Khaldun wrote. The emergence of history among Muslims was linked to the emergence of the state, i.e., politics. Therefore, their history was political par excellence, as it is the history of states and kings. This is what the sheikh of Arab historians, Abdul Aziz al-Douri, meant when he said: "The science of history among the Arabs is a natural development in Islam, for the new religion, the formation of an empire, and the establishment of a fixed calendar, all these formed the foundation. Moreover, the Islamic tendencies represented in the interest in the biography of the Prophet, the consensus and experiences of the Ummah, the opinions and rulings of its scholars, and the major events that determined its historical course, were the main motives for the study of history in Medina." (**Abdulaziz Al-Douri, 2000**).

For this reason, the history of Muslims has not been separated from their faith and their view of themselves and the world. For this reason, history has been linked to two central concepts in Islam, namely the concept of "change": "Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves" (Al-Ra'd, 7/13). The concept of "consensus" means "My nation shall not gather together in error" (**Abu Dawood, Kitab al-Fitna wa al-Epic**). The concept of change required that Muslims develop their history as their conditions developed, and the concept of consensus required that Muslims write their history based on what Muslims agreed upon, i.e. the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His

Messenger as the measure of historical truth.

The situation of Muslims has changed a lot since Ibn Khaldun, but their writing of history has not changed much, so modern Arab historical writing has been considered the title of a crisis in which many people have written and around it, perhaps the most prominent of which is "Abdullah al-Aroui", who revealed the alienation of this Salafi and modern thought from the achievements of the modern mind.

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