

## The Intellectual Pre-Requisites of Historians in Light of Muslim Historical Criticism

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**Abstract:** The discipline of history is loaded with human experiences and changing from far times. As such it is often argued that mastery of Islamic history is difficult because it takes much knowledge and talents, including learning of Islamic law, logic, hadith, biography of Prophet Muhammad, in addition to common sense, open mind and knowledge of other religious histories. Mastery of Islamic history also requires dedication, discipline, objective methodology and ethical conditions. In this study we examine the least minimum knowledge a historian should have and the methodological criteria that should direct historians in their research and historical interpretations. There exists much debate among Muslim historians in regards to the intellectual pre-requisites of historians. In this inquiry however, we examine the make-up of intellectual identity of historian and whether is there any special set of credentials required in the process of Islamic historical writing. We also examine the views of prominent historians including those of Ibn khaldun, as well as the criticism of early historians about the methodology of Islamic historical writing so as to deduce the criteria and credentials required set for Muslim historians.

**Key words:** Islamic History • Historical writing • Academic credentials • Qualifications of historians

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### INTRODUCTION

The Islamic history reflects diverse intellectual, ideological and cultural backgrounds; resulting in a significant number of valuable writings. Such a broad background has had significant impacts on the making of past and current historical writings. Muslim historical writing however, is not immune from the effects of human prejudices and subjectively negative judgements and error sometimes. Some researchers incline to objectivity concerning both Muslims and non-Muslims, making this attitude their established method of inquiry. Others however, assume enmity and intolerance, while a number of others seek refuge behind the bastions of criticality in their attempts to undermine Islamic history as a whole. Some others choose to take on the defense of Islamic history while yet others fail to properly understand Islamic history, thus losing a plethora of wisdom and lessons. Proper observation and understanding of Muslim historical writings and historians, as well as the method and reasons for such writings is thus required.

The historical methodology shared among historians is found in the culture of historians and their respective intellectual backgrounds, in addition to their cognitive and intellectual range and the extent of their familiarity with the Muslim historical criterion. It is also reflected in the respective possession or lack of historians' qualifications and the needed intellectual skills and proficiency. Historical writing is largely dependent on a number of qualifications without which historical narratives would simply be unrealistic or at best incomplete. It is probably this reason that led Ibn Khaldun to dismiss history as merely the indiscriminate gathering of occurrences or collection of information, even though that it may seem to be the case from its outward appearance. For Ibn Khaldun, it is by means of the historian's skillful eye that one is able to reach the hidden meaning of superficial dynamics of history. Ibn Khaldun's definition of history may effectively be summarized into two succinct points: Firstly, history is the justification for the creation and its principles [1], which consists of knowing occurrences and their causes. Secondly, it is the

knowledge of the manners according to which events happen and understanding of their causes [1]; in other words, a search for the reasons which catalyze occurrences and result in historical phenomena. Historian cannot possibly master this without adequate intellectual credentials and an all-inclusive historical training.

**Historians' Academic Training:** If we wish to isolate and at the same time identify the problems inherent within the writings of Islamic history, alongside the impoverished poor styles of writing reflected in the authoring of history, as well as their weak qualifications and subjectivity, a number of pre-requisites must first be fulfilled. For one thing, it is imperative to come to terms with the fact that for a long time continuing well into our present; what was studied in Muslim learning institutions on many occasions was distorted and did not properly reflect the reality of Islamic civilization and its contributions to humanity for innumerable centuries. Even more significantly, European history occupied a large portion of the Muslim historical curriculum and was set to serve colonialism and further enhance its intellectual domination. Under the influence of colonialism and Orientalism together, a great number of Muslims have written on Islamic history, thus distorting its reality, changing its features and further presenting an inverted picture that would consequently be used as teaching material [2].

The same deficiently distorted image of Islamic history is presented in Western universities, where the curricula revolves around constructed ignorance, taught by disciples that were crafted under the keen eye of colonialism tasked with over subjects of Islamic history. Of these, few are to be found who look upon Islamic history from a reductionist and decidedly spiteful stance. The result of this is that Islamic history has become effectively flawed and distorted in the cultural memory of the Muslim nation, as it remains largely ignored in society. It is also largely shunned in schools and universities; where it is often the interest of students of literary arts and weak students holding low academic grades in their secondary education. This serves as a reflection of a prevalent colonial complex that has deeply rooted itself in the Islamic education system. For instance, the majority of Arab universities teach Islamic history within courses of Arab history or confine themselves to the history extending between the Islamic Caliphate to the fall of Baghdad. Within such limits is a fallacy in need of correction; for the reason that Islamic history expresses the history of Islam as a whole. Islamic history

encompasses the deserts of North Africa and other non-Arab nations within Asia such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, in addition to the histories of Muslim minorities within Asia, Europe [3], the Americas and Australia. In order for the history of the aforementioned nations to meet under the banner of Islamic history, an objective scholastic institutionalized effort must be exerted to gather the episodes of Islamic history and all of its respective geographic, temporal, spatial and objective scopes. Moreover, it must also include the ramifications and impacts it brought about for humanity as a whole. This spearheaded initiative must be used to bridge the yawning chasm caused by the old and new colonialism of our world.

The biography of Prophet Muhammad and his life hold extreme significance in the chronicling of Islamic history, as Muslim historians must gather its details. One may however note the need for the historical details surrounding the time of the Prophet Muhammad, particularly in regards to socio-cultural context, including the communal life and neighbors relations, customs, cosmetics and so forth. Likewise, it is equally daunting to find precise descriptions of women's garments during the issuance of prophecy and with such a gaping absence disappear a number of highly valuable illustrations of society at that time. In this light, comprehensive historical studies must deeply examine the prophetic era; seeking a thorough understanding of the splendidly rich social, political, cultural and literary fabrics of that time and all that relates to the life of the Prophet. Such an endeavour would not only effectively create a comprehensive and holistic illustration of the period of revelation and accurately render the reality of life in such a dynamic society, but it would further aid in manifesting the biography of Prophet Muhammad to the world in a context replete with touching examples of human life.

**The Background of Historians and Historical Philosophy:** The production of original intellectual studies is dependent on the Muslim historian's conception of the universe, life, humanity, nature and environment. What is more, the historian must be a part of the Islamic life and general human life as a whole in order to open all windows of his consciousness and thereby comprehending the sites of historical occurrences [3]. Sayyid Qutb is of the opinion that such properties are hardly found in Arab speaking researchers, forget about non-Muslims. Along the same parallel, while its lack of availability in the non-Muslim researcher may be seen as a given,

this however does not necessarily point to its absence in the non-Arab as generally true. This may have been for the reason that Sayyid Qutb likely expects non-Arab historians to be ignorant of the primary historical sources which are largely in Arabic, thus seriously handicapping them and thus preventing them to achieve the purpose behind the study of history. Qutb maintains that even non-Arab Muslims who are competent in Arabic are capable of achieving these goals.

History is as broad as life itself and is a manifestation of its diversity and complexity. This in turn indicates that the numerous battles, treaties and historical events are governed by factors over which researchers have differed in cognition and assessment, according to degrees to which it extends throughout his thoughts and intellectual perspective generally. The historian's perception and cognition of life are effectively linked to impactful factors in the course of history, in addition to the ability to understand and in turn reply to it with a correct answer. Islamic history is a period covering not only the Muslim life, but a history of humankind as well, as Islam has impacted humanity; especially those specific regions that entered its folds or were neighbors to it. This is true to the extent that history prior to Islam as such is also found among Islamic history [3]. This is what T?abari in his historical chronicle of *al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* has found in his interpretation of humankind from the time of Adam.

As for the study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad in such a universal context of history, it effectively takes his personality, lineage, environment, life, customs of his environment and all that surrounded him and established through it intentional factors or planned approvals, which explains his deputation to such an unprecedented universal occurrence. This makes a case for the study of this occurrence prior to the study of the events and global revolutions that came in pursuance to him; thereby preparing a complete causative rendition of events that occurred in the Islamic history following his emergence. This is for the reason that history is a process involving reflection and response to the souls of matters, persons, times and events. It is linked to the codes of the universe and the pathways of humanity and within it the characteristics of each lived entity [3]. The study of history cannot therefore deal with historical events in a full and specific progressive manner. Rather, it should be similar to a linear chart that indicates and instructs, without investigation. In another manner of speaking, it may be summed as creating specific historical general intellectual character that benefits those addressing historical happenings with particularism and historical personas with analysis [3].

**Principles of Islamic Historical Writings:** In their composition of history, historians should possess some principles, which would effectively enable them to review historical materials and comprehensively understand them, as well as retrieve them, analyze and verify them and further discern their truths.

**Familiarity with the Islamic Sources:** The Islamic sources represent the most important and foremost in the transmission of information as firstly, the people of Makkah know their people best, or in other words, their sources best describe their history and secondly due to its distinction and recognition regarding dependability of transmission and verification. This is because a wide range of multifaceted information is to be found within it, stemming from numerous perspectives which effectively bridge the fragments of the historical scene. By returning to the original works of exegesis and interpretations of prophetic traditions and other Islamic sources in all arts and niches, the historian would find rich matter that aids him in the understanding and analysis of Islamic historical events while equipping him with necessary details only found in the natural environment for a great number of occurrences in Islamic history. If we look to the yardstick set by Ahmad al-WansharÊsÊ (d. 1508), the Islamic legal fatwas reflect a live image of societal life in Andalusia and the works of *al-nawÊzil* are precious sources of Islamic history in many of its stages and forms.

**The Islamic Creed:** Attention to the Islamic creed is largely absent in the historical analysis and methodologies of orientalists. In his dialogue with orientalists and his work entitled '*al-TarÊkh al-IslÊmÊ Yudhkar*', JalÊl 'Aÿiyah asserts that orientalism fell between two ideas formulated by the West regarding the East; the first being that the features of the East as drawn by Europeans stem from their old religious complexes and that these pictures are conceived through the pens of a group of western thinkers and writers [4], while the ill feelings we harbor towards orientalists do nothing to protect us. Rather, this is evidenced in their sayings, as Zwemer says: "Missionaries should not fall to anger when they see the weak yield of their efforts. Our foremost mission is not to convert the Muslims, but to shake the Muslims away from their adhesion to Islam. In this we surely win a resounding success" [2]. The unmistakable truth however, is that the orientalist campaign against Islam is inherited from the vestiges of a legacy tracing back to the Crusades and all that remains of it in European minds [5].

Interestingly enough, reading the works of the Orientalists easily points out to a great deal of interpretation of events on economic basis, or societal needs completely absent from Muslim creed. In such a manner, the Islamic conquests are branded as geographical expansion made out of commercial necessity, as rendered by Montgomery Watt and his disciples in the West and Islamic East, as well as the innumerable orientalists and their followers and their conception of Jihad. In addition to this, orientalists ignored the message carried by Muslims to the world. It is for this reason that historians need to take into account the value of the driving force of creed in shaping Muslim society throughout its historical movements so as to unveil the reasons and impetuses that led to such events. This is in addition to religious, spiritual and societal factors which formulate a historical context that cannot be ignored in the name of intellectualism or objectivism while allowing for a more grievous error to occur; namely, the superficial, materialistic interpretation of history.

A rather indispensable work for historians with regard to the purpose of understanding orientalists is that of Mustafa al-Sib  's *'Al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha fi al-Tashri' al-Islami'* (*The Sunnah and its position in the Islamic Legislation*) made on the study of the noble tradition of Prophet Muhammad, consisting of two volumes entitled: *Manhaj al-Mustashriq  n f   al-Dir  s   t al-Isl  miyyah* (*The Methodology of the Orientalists in Islamic Studies*). This work was published by the Office of Arab Education in conjunction with that of Arab Education for Arab Gulf States. A significant number of other studies with varying opinions regarding Orientalism allow one to procure a historical background that qualifies historians to comprehend a number of historical works produced by Orientalists. In this context, it is worth mentioning that it is unfair to place all orientalists under the same category and into the same general judgement. 'Abdul Am  r al-A'sam asserts:

"We observe that there are researchers who undermine the evidences advanced by Orientalists collectively and particularly and this is an error we guard against by virtue of the large amount of the good-intentioned and concerned with our heritage, culture and sciences. Along this line, it cannot be stated that all orientalists are suspect of forgery or fabrication, just as we cannot say that all that is written by orientalist so and so is fabricated and is at odds with the subjects of our heritage and culture because it contains abuse" [6].

There is a need to acknowledge the efforts of a number of orientalists in the service of the Islamic intellectual heritage with all clarity and frankness. They dedicated their energies to the study of Islamic sciences and passionately researched its treasures by virtue of these efforts much of the treasures of Islamic heritage has been made prominent and existent after centuries of seclusion in libraries and finally found its path to publication.

**Verification of Claims Made in Regards to Historical Personalities:** Scientific verification is the judging scale of people and narrations. When we review the interpretations of some historians regarding what had happened among the companions of the Prophet Muhammad we are made witness to the extent of injustice and ignorance clear in it. For this reason, it is required of the historian to hold to patience in sounding out information and to further obtain knowledge of authentic and weak reports. Moreover, the historian is required to distance himself from conjecture which has no basis in science nor was it built on evidence but rather on the mere musings of historians and their assumptions. Some have assumed matters on the basis of preserved and transmitted texts, after which judgements were they did not actually confirm to the actual realities.

In other instances judgements are based on weak, rejected, or false narrations. This generally occurred due to a carelessness and lack of nurturing of the scholarly method and verification. As such, due attention to the interpretation of history must be upheld from both Muslims and Orientalists, while historians must not submit to their analyses and conclusions that stem from extremism and could be far away from the Islamic spiritual and geographic context. The basis here is adhering to verification and to the scholarly method and keeping true to what is made clear from the truth after extensive and objective study and authentication. Furthermore, no historical information or conclusion may spurn or be rejected for originating from a non-Muslim and furthermore may be accepted from even a Muslim without careful scrutiny until the truth is made clear. In the same parallel, Ibn Taymiyyah states: "Speech among people should be with knowledge and authentication and not with transgression as with the people of heresy" [7].

This is while Allah states: "And do not deprive people of their due" [Qur'an, 7:85] as it is a part of justice to mention good and bad deeds together and that the historian should not hold bias by the mere mention of ill,

or for the loyalist with the mention of good. Equality and justice are found in the unveiling of the truth, far away from personal inclination towards or away from individuals. The Qur'Ēn establishes the notions of justice and scrutiny in all matters: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do" [Qur'Ēn, 5:8].

**Proficiency in the Science of Authentication and Validation of Narrations:** This was given a considerably large amount of attention by scholars of ĀdĒth who sought to formally develop and crystallize its rules. The science of ĀdĒth is relied upon by historians during discrepancies of narrations or clashes of narrators. Ignorance in the rules of ĀdĒth may negatively affect historians, leading thereby to possible errors in reconciling contradictions or fabrications between conflicting reports. The science of ĀdĒth aids the historian in restoring weak narrations and further supplements him with rules on organizing narrations and promoting one over another. A rather significant number of forged narrations embedded within the first sources of Islamic history were left, with unseen weaknesses except for those familiar with the principles of authentication and validation of narrations and narrators, as well as the degrees of narrative strength and weakness. Such a lack of knowledge was a central reason for grim errors committed on the part of historians and narrators of ĀdĒth in their analyses and interpretations. Historians rely on authentic narrations, followed by the good in order to render a true picture of Islamic society in such an era of Islam and in cases of incompatibility make use of the stronger evidence. With regards to weak narrations however, benefit may be derived from them through their use for filling gaps through confirmation or reaffirmation, within the confines of authentic and good narrations, on the condition that they go hand in hand with the spirit of Islamic society before being considered for use. Furthermore, they cannot be contradictory to the perspectives of creed or law; as the basis is caution on matters pertaining to law or creed.

Historians need to refer to works of Sunnah as primary, predominant sources in matters pertaining to primary information and well as in the case of history consequently arranged on its basis. This is in addition to healthy and accurate historical narrations and also in light of the fact that such a method has seen its fair share of

examination and criticism by critics; both Muslim and non-Muslim alike. This is of course, in addition to referring to works of the Sunan and Musnad, literature, lexicons, books on virtues, classes and dates as classified by scholars of ĀdĒth. In such a context, one would note that their ĀdĒth-centric culture, alongside their quotations of presently long-lost history books composed by the foremost scholars of ĀdĒth has effectively resulted in highly rich commentaries of significant historical value. As an example, one finds in *FatĀ al-BĒrĒ* a sound explanation of SaĀĀ al-BukhĒrĒ because of Ibn ĵajar's preservation of such books. From a historical perspective however, this points out to historical texts of significant import during his time, in addition to commentaries rather vital to understanding past historical stages as well as the more recent phase of Ibn ĵajar's life.

**Awareness of Non-islamic Sources:** Islamic history has set clear relationship with individuals living within their nation or adjacent to it while holding a relationship with non-Muslims, their habits and their respective customs and traditions. Whoever does not understand this is not fit to be a historian and is not aware of the object of history. Such a matter has nothing to do with hostility or prejudice held against Islamic history by works of orientalist and colonial. In the name of objectivity, desire for truth and impartiality to scientific research, a large number of Muslim historians fell prey to the traps of Orientalist and colonialist historians, as well as the cultural invasion. For historians to fortify against such deviations, they must be familiar with the pathways of human thought and its objectives. Scientific observation allows historians to benefit from sources globally without falling into the trap of ideologies, which lurk behind historical writings. Thus, along the same lines, the writer of history cannot be ignorant of the historical schools of thought and their respective objectives and means for achieving them. Moreover, historians are tasked with the distinction between scholarly historical writings and those that hide behind the banner of objectivity. The basis however, is that non-Muslim history and a history of Islam written by non-Muslims still fall within the scope of Islamic history. Moreover, the knowledge of it becomes a scientific priority.

**Use of Terminology:** Historians must gather and also master terminology, the time of its usage and its associated accessories. They are warned against the use of new terminology in the context of the Old and vice

versa, as that undermine the concept of historical events of any generation. The terms of each people and each period of time should be taken into account in the interpretation and analysis of events and facts prevailing during that era. Additionally, terminology consists of historical contents and indicators with import to relevant historical and cultural conditions accompanying the emergence of a specific term. Moreover, the term is an integral part of society's cultural fabric, as well as the political distribution of historical periods. As an example, it serves to reflect the fluctuations as well as cultural and social conditions experienced in Europe. Then come terms such as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and other context bearing terminology. Interestingly enough, the European Middle Ages are known by another name in the context of Islamic civilization; and furthermore, what was dubbed the age of Renaissance seems rather far-fetched to the Islamic world, which was mostly under the oppressive yokes of colonialism.

After mentioning some of these principles required for understanding Islamic history and Muslims, one concludes with a number of essential characteristics and standards that the historian is required to set as a basis and further master in order to reach a reasonable level of composing history. As is well known, the writing of history is not an arbitrary writing, nor a literary venture. By reviewing the gathered views of scholars and teachers of history, we extracted a number of methodological standards and scholarly attributes that the historian must possess in order to become eligible for this scientific and artistic work.

### **Qualifications of Historians**

**Knowledge:** The historian must possess a broad spectrum of knowledge and culture and should be heavily equipped with understanding and familiarity with art and literature to the extent that it gifts him with the ability to implicitly comprehend occurrences and their respective circumstances, while further analyzing their contents and extracting lessons from them. The majority of our historical inheritance is far removed from producing benefit and making the culture of the Muslim nation bloom. There can be no ignoring the Shar'ah, which aids one in understanding the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the necessary degree of Islamic studies achieving a clear perception of Islamic history. Equally important to the historian are sciences, which have relations to history as with Qur'an exegesis, politics and sociology among others. Language acts as the historian's very limb and his tool. Through he would perfect his understanding and

better his writing, while the weakness of the historian's language is precarious, with a defect resulting in a corruption of understanding and flawed writing.

The historian should also look historical into occurrences and their circumstances without separating incidents from their surrounding reality; as the political, societal and economic states pave the way for the understanding and analysis of historical truths. As such, the historian does not only rely on works of history or other sources, but rather sifts through documents and books of literature and records, as well as politics, science and every relevant and seemingly irrelevant detail that may lead on to the understanding of the historical incident and the clarity of its circumstances.

**Ijtihéd:** The historian assiduously deduces matters with precision, or comes very close to such a state. If he errs however, he is corrected by others like him and is therefore guided by the opinions of others. For this reason, it is natural for historians to differ and it falls upon the historian to realize the location of errors tracing back to deduction. Prejudice against ijti'héd is incorrect however as no individual is infallible. This is namely seen in that the companions of Prophet Muhammad disagreed with one another, which was not a flaw for any of them. One opinion to be found is that 'Uthm'én's delegation of a number of individuals from Ban' Ummayah was without the basis of qualification and that it is only after they took on their roles that the administrative corruption began. This is an opinion of course, yet it falls upon the historian to scrutinize data and to further verify narrations and present historical facts rationally, while comparing it to other contexts and information available during that period and finally, not overlooking historical occurrences surrounding it [8].

In the eventuality that the historian exhausts the historical sources and material and then issues an opinion or reaches what he believes to be the truth following his analysis, then out of objectivity his opinion should be respected even if it contradicts the known. This is because history is past and each historian's understanding of it is based on the available data. Even if a portion of data is absent, or he reaches an understanding other than that of the mainstream historical conception, it is still considered history. What is important however is that the historian possesses an established and wide cultural scope, after which it is his duty to retrieve the past and understand from it what his understanding and scope of cognition permits him to derive from it.

**Objectivity and Scientific Spirit:** The historian is a seeker of truth and as such should attempt a number of possible paths and make effective use of evidence. If a specific view controls him, it will then confine him and his thought to a particular area or niche, thereby leading him to dereliction of his duty. Such a deviation came about a large number of orientalist who studied Islamic history through ready-made principles applied to Islam and Muslims. The Orientalists inherited an inheritance which effectively noted the present while ignoring the background and past. As such, it is rather common to stand amongst intolerant works exhibiting gender, superiority, insecurities and colonial purposes. This resembles the intolerance of a number of Muslim historians and their lack of acknowledgement of human expertise and history that is the possession of all humanity. Their previous judgement was in effect based on everything that was not Islamic.

For this reason, it falls on both Muslim and non-Muslim historians alike to free themselves from bias, fanaticism and intolerance. Furthermore, whoever composes history while afflicted with a sense of tribalism and fanaticism or a specific doctrinal or political outlook will eventually distort events and individuals in order to establish what he wishes to prove. The elite among the earliest Muslim historians left some of the best and most prominent examples of academic practice, impartiality and integrity for our benefit. A historian from the Seventeenth Century, Ibn Tabtaba al-‘Alwi, better known as Babin al-Taqtqi states: “In it –this manuscript– I have committed to two matters, one of them being: That I do not incline towards anything except that it is the truth; do not utter anything in a matter except in fairness; isolate myself from the hold of whim; leave the rule of the parent and instructor; and place myself as a stranger and foreigner between them” [9].

**On Methodology:** It is imperative upon the historian to be knowledgeable in the curricula of Muslim historians and their respective methodologies of writing and must also surround himself with it. In them one finds both positive and negative aspects, as they are not on equal footing concerning their dependability, thoroughness and referral to sources. A number of them adhered to the science of chain of narration, as with the background of Ibn KhayyĒĪ, AbĒ Abid, Ibn Shaybah al-BalĒdhĒrĒĒ, AbĒ Zar‘ah, AbdulĪakĒĒm and al-T‘abarĒĒ. Others among them gather the chains of narrations on occasion and do without it in other instances, as with Ibn IsĪĒq, al-WĒqidĒĒ and Ibn Sa‘d. Some historians left this altogether and

instead transmitted sources within the introduction or within the composition, as is the case with Abū YanĪfa DĪnawarĪ and al-Ya‘qĒbĒĒ.

Furthermore, the historian is obliged to hold some amount of knowledge regarding the narrators, historians, weak, suspected and defect with regards to their integrity. Moreover, the historian is required to learn the dogmatic backgrounds for all these individuals; where the works of invalidation and validating of narrators (*al-jarĪ wa al-ta‘dĒl*) hold a significant amount of information for this. The historian must therefore master the era he writes on and that which follows it. A cardinal difference is to be found between the historian and the writer of epics and tragedies, as the first presents historical matter impartially and in a scholarly manner while searching for causal links between events while further attempting to understand what truth is present therein and ceasing to operate or guess where he does not possess evidence. The second however, elicits the reactions of the masses and plays with emotions. The historian must be of sound and clear methodology, declaring his criteria and his doctrine towards the interpretation of occurrences and judgement on it. Such clarity is mainly to prevent the writing of history from turning into literary writing and therefore requires the study of methodologies in Islamic sciences as well as a significant deal of theorizing and verification when the necessity calls for it. Likewise, the historian must give greater weight to some matters over others and criticize when necessary. Furthermore, no single manner or method can control the historian, which would cause him to leave behind what is intended from historical writings.

The Muslim historian was slowly freed from the method of transmission with the spread of writing during the second Century of the Hijra; as it had effectively obliged the historian to be a mere transmitter of information, or in other words, a bearer of news. This effectively led to the school of Imam T‘abarĒĒ and of those historians who preceded him and who were specifically attentive to the *sanad* (chain of transmission) and the sequence of narrators; thereby finding it sufficient to include information unassigned to its owners [9]. A number of historians such as such as al-Ya‘qĒbĒĒ (d.284 A.H.) and al-Mas‘ĒdĒĒ ‘Ali bin al-Hussayn (d.364 A.H.) choose to exclude much of the traditions narrated on the authority of the Prophet from their historical narrations, as they were content with noting their historical sources in the introductions of their works. Critical study was in some cases similar to what al-Mas‘ĒdĒĒ did in the introduction of his work

*MurĒj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'Ēdin al-Jawhar*, which was not only a development in the method of writing, but also a progression in the manner of writing emphasizing simplicity, clarity and was almost devoid of poetry. This in was in turn made through use of *Saj'* (end-rhyme) [10].

**Academic Ethics:** The historian may be likened to a judge, in that he must adjudicate between opponents with fairness and cannot fall into distinction or discrimination or else his work become invalid. The judicial process has its foundations, in the same manner that writing history has its foundations and principles. In history, individuals are innocent unless convicted with cutting evidence. The fundamental difference between the judge and historian however, is that the historian's vocation obliges him to link between threads and events and gather a cohesive picture with fidelity and trustworthiness while the judge merely adjudicates between two opponents on a set basis.

**Encompassing the History of the Ummah:** The study of the history of any Muslim people is an obligation. The present day however, reveals that Muslims are generally ignorant of their own history, the nation's history and that of other nations. Most writers of Islamic history learned a somewhat deficient form of history, which is better said to be regional even if it is Islamic in name. Imam al-GhazĒlĒ notes that when he was in his second year of elementary study he studied the history of the Ottoman Empire and furthermore that he completed his Azharite studies over five years without once studying even one letter pertaining to Muslims in South-East and South Asia, or North Africa and the West in our contemporary times. Nor did he learn anything of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia, or that of Spain to the Sulu Islands and Mindanao and the numerous other islands known as the Philippines. Moreover, he was not taught how the French colonized Indochina or what befell the Muslims in Patani, Malaya and Singapore [11]. Not only that, but he was largely ignorant of the Muslims of Chinese Turkistan and Russia and the remainder of Muslim peoples devoured by the Russian dragon [12].

It thus became apparent to al-GhazĒlĒ that the study of Islamic history is shallow. As for his study of human history, it was slightly next to zero [12]. The history of nations who have significantly served Islamic culture is largely non-existent, with the Arabs over-indulging in relating their history while neglecting the rights of the other Islamic peoples, effectively leading to historical insufficiency. This therefore led to the creation of a flaw

in the cultural structure and cultural unity of the Muslim nation. This was with regards to Shaykh Muhammad GhazĒlĒ as a graduate of Azhar, who was on the receiving end of original education considered as some of the best to be found in the Muslim world in terms of preparation of scholars. The situation however, is far worse in the case of numerous generations who did not learn the history of their nations, let alone the history of Islamic people. A simple glance to the educational courses today reveals a deficiency in the image of Islamic history, with its divergent titles and shallow subject matter that does nothing to fulfill any purpose.

**The Difference between the Historian and Journalist:** The Historian grows through understanding, knowledge and research and pays no heed to small events at the expense of important occurrences. This is because the historian is not a reporter who transmits the latest events and becomes preoccupied with it. Rather, the historian must be perceptive of the events of his time and that which happens to his world for the very simple reason that it is upon the historian to monitor the movements of development, humanity and the universe from his position, while further observing the relationship linking together. This is whereas the journalist remains content with the news that reaches him, whereas the historian reads the news and surrounds himself with its details, its indications, its relation to others and its depths. In order for the historian to do so, he must possess knowledge of the sources.

As such, the renowned historian Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-WĒqidĒ, did not allow his popularity and status to prevent him from deep and dedicated search for the soundest and most trustworthy sources for his writings. He said: "I would not meet a man from among the sons of the Companions or sons of Martyrs, or a servant to them except that I would ask them: 'Have you ever heard someone from your family speak to you of his passing..? Where was he killed?' Upon telling me, I would then proceed to the site and examine it for myself" [13]. This form of verification points towards one of the many sound methodologies in composing history among early Muslim historians. In it one finds examination mixed with knowledge, thereby resulting in the historical truth [13]. It is also upon the historian to benefit from certificates, inscriptions and coinage, as books of history have also included large amounts of certificates and speeches. The usage of coinage as a historical source was a common practice among Muslim historians, with the historians reporting useful information relating to the



detection of forgery during the said times [13], which effectively indicates how Muslim historians would resort to all available means in the writing of history.

**Criticism and Comparison:** It is imperative for the historian to possess the spirit of criticality and to have the necessary courage for reviewing deviations on the part of Muslim historians to be on the safe side and to avoid exposure to the same criticisms and reviews. Among other writers of history works, Ibn Khaldun's impact on the science of history was that he carried the occurrence from a limited context into an entire historical framework and from the midst of the event to a scope entailing the context of time and place [13]. The central purpose for Ibn Khaldun's writing of the *Muqaddima* was to rid historical narratives from error and falsehood and to put laws into effect, which would aid the historian to avoid the pitfalls such dangers presented. As such, he elaborated on human development and the principles which governed life and movement. Ibn Khaldun furthermore applied his methodology in the criticism of historical narratives, saying: "Is such a narrative established or not if firstly, it is exposed to the rules of the science of society and does it contradict the nature of the era and the nature of societal relationships of its time?" He also provides a number of examples on the inconsistency of historical reports with the principles of sociology, one of which is the story of Alabasah, sister of al-Rashid. He says:

"One narrative among historians is what they all transmit regarding the reason for the Barmakid's demise the hands of al-Rashid, through the story of his sister Alabasah and his servant Ja'far ibn Yahya ibn Kholid. The story relates that in accordance with their position he permitted them a marriage contract without isolation for the two, ensuring that they would both remain in his council together, where al-'Abasah then proceeded to trick him. Ibn Khaldun follows this with his criticism regarding the narrative saying: "How impossible was this for the rank of Alabasah ... to seek isolation and so became with child from Ja'far, for one of her religion and stature and father. She was the daughter of Abdullah ibn Abbas, with only four noble men of piety and heroes of the faith spanning the time between them and how inconceivable is it for al-Rashid to carry out the execution of the Barmakids and in such a fit of fury. Moreover, al-'Abasah was the daughter of Muhammad al-Mahdi Ibn Ja'far al-Manifi ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, caretaker of the Qur'an and daughter of the Caliph, Sister to a Caliph, surrounded by the might of kingship, close to the era of Arab Bedouin origins and

naivety of religion. She was far removed from the norms of luxury and ranges of immorality, so how is it then conceivable that al-Rashid would attach a non-Arab servant to his honor and the greatness of his forefathers? The strike of the Barmakids was only because of the despotism they held over the state [8].

Serious oversights, use of unreliable sources, or lack of adherence to a proper historical process presents numerous complications and is not limited to the sphere of personal biographies either. Many historians fall into illusion and error when the historical incident is related to numbers and statistics, as with the size of armies, or wealth gathered through the land tax (*kharaj*). Some historians have a penchant for exaggerating numbers and therefore mention numbers that clash with both mind and established axioms, while further going against population growth laws. Ibn Khaldun criticizes historians prior to him for falling prey to these mistakes and made it a point to use statistics as an extension to his scientific criticism, as per the limitations of increase of a population within a geographic area in which they reside. He states: "This is as was transmitted by al-Mas'udi and many historians regarding the armies of the people of Israel and that [Prophet] Moses numbered them during their exodus after allowing anyone of twenty years or above to bear arms and that they had numbered 600,000 or more. Ibn Khaldun criticizes this narration, pointing out that "This is amazing in consideration of the size of Egypt and Greater Syria relative to such an army. The Persian kingdom and their empire were greater than that of the people of Israel and yet the Persian armies never exceeded such a number or even came close to it. The largest amount of soldiers they ever gathered was during the Battle of al-Qadisiyyah and they numbered 120,000; all followed. Their retinue exceeded 200,000 followers. Moreover, 'Oshah and al-Zuhri narrate that the masses with which Rostum faced Sa'd at al-Qadisiyyah were in fact 60,000 in number" [8].

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun asserted that what separates Musa from Israel or Ya'qub are only four forefathers according to what is stated by investigators. The people of Israel had resided in Egypt until they left with Prophet Musa into their long wander for 120 years. As such, it is difficult to believe that their lineage would have split and grown to such an extent over four generations [8]. The comparative method is a scientific necessity for the historian according to the opinion of Ibn Khaldun, for without comparison between a phenomenon's historical past and respective present one cannot ascertain what changes have occurred to it, or track the transformations within industrial organization

across history. This is for the reason that industry is ever-developing and changing and comparison for Ibn Khaldun serves as the means by which one juxtaposes a state in previous eras with the state in the present, which allows one to therefore compare the present life of nations with others during his lifetime. Along similar parallels one further compares civilized life to that of the Bedouins, in addition to other comparisons which greatly aid in distinguishing differences [14].

**Historians and Politics:** The historian must be skilled and learned in the principles of politics, the nature of entities and must know the differences between factions, nations, eras, biographies, ethics, customs and doctrines among other conditions. Additionally, there is a pressing need for the historian to be well-versed on the present and hold a similar grasp over unannounced accords or discords, as well as over agreeing or conflicting explanations of changes in states and societies. It also falls within the purview of the historian to comprehend the origins of the state and religion and the principles for their emergence, the reasons for their formation and the conditions of their caretakers and their histories. Having a grasp over these would allow the historian to fulfill the reasons for each occurrence and effectively reach the origin and essence of reports [8]. Furthermore, the historian's grasp of politics protects and shields him from the slippery slope of exaggeration and beautification of history and hiding the misdemeanours of kings and governors. This is because the historian is aware that an end will eventually come to the ruler's rule and that only history will remain after him and them. As such, he casts it out of his whim for beautification at the expense of truth and many other benefits.

**The Historical Sense:** The accomplished historian acquires a sense of history from history itself and his sources; which closely resembles a sort of artistic feeling only possessed by the specialist and not present in others. As such, if he is presented with mixed or contradictory subject-matter, with unclear historical information, he draws on his historical sensitivity to comprehend the incidents, while analyzing it through the utilization of historical principles, practices and experience. In addition to this, the historian would effectively reach the depths of related issues and events and sound out the arising relationships. Al-Sakhwî (d.902 AD) is of the opinion that this 'taste' is a necessary trait of the historian and that in a sense it allows him to rely on the pronunciation rather than the meaning and

further not writing from notes or previous theorizations that are not compatible with the present. He also asserts that as a result of this, the historian mentions his sources and if they are translated then he is aware of the translator and his religious attributes. Moreover, he is well spoken and aware of connotations of positive imagery and able to perceive the state of the translator, while further avoiding elaborative praise and not excessive in disparagement [15].

**The Worldview:** It is not practical for the historian to handle separate historical events and incidents. Ibn Khaldun is of the opinion that singular supernatural or unusual events are opposing matters that do not provide a comprehensive picture of societal life. In this regard he states: "So do not trust what is presented to you from that, meditate over reports and present them according to correct rules, where it thereby falls on you to scrutinize it in the best manner" [16]. Ibn Khaldun sees history from a worldview which surpasses superficial comprehension of history, as there is a relationship between historical reality and theoretical reality or the norms of growth and development. An approach to one particular historical reality must therefore be based on a theory that serves as the basis for such an approach.

Furthermore, there exists a relationship between historical reality and the universal principles for historical transformations. In his search for the reasons behind historical crises, Ibn Khaldun pinpoints an internal mechanism for societal movement and from here established his interpretation of history based on the premises of tribalism and group-feeling in addition to its effects on the rise and fall of nations. This is an interpretation was based on an established rule, after which Ibn Khaldun set out to apply this principle on other societies that are subject to similar societal and historical conditions through historical comparison. In doing so, he examined the case of the Maghrib states in North African and finalized his theory of *A'ābiyyah* as a law that governs transformation, following which he let aside the example of the Maghrib and sought out other societies passing through the same historical phases. Ibn Khaldun went on to apply this to the rise and fall of the Abbasid and Umayyad Dynasties in addition to a number of other states. His reliance on the law of *A'ābiyyah* in the interpretation of historical phenomena led Ibn Khaldun to acquire scientific and legendary status. Furthermore, this was one principle set by Ibn Khaldun, a historian with numerous qualifications which effectively opened to him the gates of reasoning, far vision and deduction.

However, historical change is characterized and governed by a large number of principles and as such, universal and cosmic thought cannot cease with Ibn Khaldun's discovery of the law of *Al'abiyyah*, as there are numerous other principles and laws awaiting the erudite historian who masters the art of history and its composition.

### CONCLUSION

History is a series of human occurrences and experiences caused by humankind throughout innumerable epochs and eras and are further characterized by all humanity and do not hold sacred attributes as their respective outcomes are all derived from human thought. History is subject to levels of understanding and intellectual and scientific levels, as well as historian's prowess and level of culture. Moreover, it is shaped by practices and environments, in addition to concepts and assumptions. All these factors hold sway over the historical heritage we inherit from people, nation, or individual. Furthermore, history derives the present from the past through recovery, review, comparison and analysis. Societies with a higher level of advancement have taken history to be a teacher and benefited from its knowledge. The recent democratic governments came as a boon and benefit to this beneficial science, as the Muslim people today still suffer from what is akin to the tyranny of the Pharaohs, for the reason that history in the Muslim world has poor relation to the reality of people and their lives and could not be read for lessons or teaching.

Had Islamic history been written in a way to nourish the Islamic culture and to learn from the errors of the past, it would have been much more beneficial and would have revived the principles and reasons behind the rise of civilizations and the fall of others. The treatment of Islamic history throughout different ages and environments has made historians' missions diverse; effectively reflecting much differences and variety and further requiring them to purify and cleanse it from crises and backwardness. As such, the historian should be aware of the contrast and contradictions inherent within the narrations to be found in the historical narrative and to introduce them to the new generations in such a manner that they learn from the past. Historians should also make the difference between history and religion; as history is not Islam. Rather, it is the sum of events and occurrences, some of which are more critical than others, while some tend towards idealism and thus require stringent systematic revision.

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