The Origin and Development of Muslim Historiography

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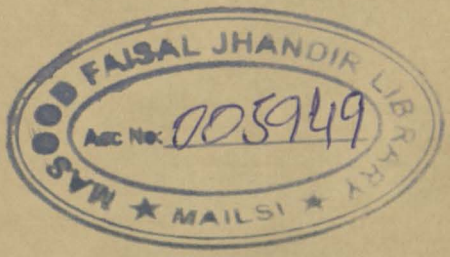

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TO

ALL SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE

Preface

The history that we generally read in our school and even in our college life gives us at best the knowledge of our history and culture from secondary sources, i.e. translation works mainly, which do not always convey the real purposes of the original writers, nor do they always portray the true picture of our people, society, and culture. Translation by its very nature cannot very faithfully and properly communicate the real aim or intent of the original author. Moreover, if the translator acts with some prejudice or from any ulterior motive, his translation naturally becomes distorted and, therefore, prejudicial to the cause of truth which is the supreme goal of history. However much we denounce prejudice, it is not always easy for all of us to overcome it, since, in the words of Hazlitt, "Prejudice is the child of ignorance," and this ignorance is born out of narrow-mindedness in spite of our education. Apart from that, translations generally cannot give us the flavour of the original works. Hence the necessity arises for a study of the original sources, which can fully acquaint us with the exact aims and objects of the original authors and give us the satisfaction of collecting data and materials from direct sources.

Needless to say, we should make an effort to learn the languages, viz. Persian and Arabic, in which the history of our nation has been written. Then and then alone reading of Islamic History and Culture would be fruitful and would instill in our minds, and in the minds of the students, the rising generation, a sense of pride for the glories of our ancestors. Unless a nation is imbued with the ideals

and the spirit of its culture, it can never play a significant role in the onward march of life.

If this humble book of mine, despite its shortcomings, succeeds in awakening an urge in the minds of the students and other readers for the study of history and ascertaining the truth from reliable sources, I shall have the satisfaction of having done some humble service to the cause of truth as well as to the cause of education and culture.

I hope the honest labour that I have put in writing this book will give a little stimulus and help to the students of higher studies in understanding the problems of history and their paramount importance in the growth and development of our national life. Let me also admit my limitations and shortcomings, and, as such, I cannot claim perfection. This is a pioneer's work in this field covering Muslim Historiography in Indo-Pakistan and outside it, written in Persian and Arabic respectively. Of course there are scholarly works covering special periods; the names of many such works I have mentioned in the Bibliography provided. I am indeed indebted to the authors of works I have consulted in writing this book.

In respect of writing this book, I acknowledge with thanks the good wishes and assistance which I received from Mr Abdul Jabbar Beg, M.A., an ex-student of mine.

I shall deem my labours amply rewarded if the book proves helpful to the readers.

M.G. Rasul

14 May 1968

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PART I

ARAB HISTORIOGRAPHY

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sources of Knowledge
according to the
Holy Quran.

Intuition = 3rd source

Chapter I

Historical Consciousness in Islam

Role of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth

"Islam is a religion with a strong sense of history,"[1] rightly observes Bernard Lewis. The two great sources of human knowledge and experience, as described in the Holy Qur'ān, are nature and history, the third source being intuition. Regarding history Bernard Lewis, in *Historians of the Middle East*, says that God Himself told stories about the peoples of the past, and indeed the Qur'ān is full of warnings from the lessons of history.[2] The Qur'ān says: "We tell you stories of the Apostles, which will strengthen your hearts, and thus bring you the Truth, an exhortation and a memorial for the believers,"[3] The Qur'ān describes the stories of the people called 'Ād and Thamūd, the Israelites, the people of Noah, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and many others to enlighten us about their activities which brought them to grief so that we may be cautious about the pitfalls in our path. The Qur'ān draws our attention to the nations of the past who suffered for their misdeeds and violation of God's commands. It says: "Say (O Muḥammad!), travel through the earth to find out surely the consequences of those who denied the truth."[4] History, according to the Qur'ān, is not mere narration of good old days; it is a warning against the pitfalls

1. Bernard Lewis, Editor, *Historians of the Middle East*, Introduction.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. xi. 120.
4. xxx. 42.

in our path. The historical record is the light-house which informs the new sailors of life about the perilous rocks that may be hidden beneath the surface of the bottomless ocean of human existence.[5] These are the indications which point to the fact that the Holy Qur'ān provides us with an incentive to the study of history. The spirit of the Qur'ān itself is thus conducive to historical research and development of historiography. As Lewis observes: "The first lesson of history—of universal history—was received by the Muslims in the shape of religious teachings and they proved themselves worthy students of the subject."[6]

Role of Pre-Islamic Poems and Genealogical Tables in the Growth of Historical Consciousness

The pre-Islamic description of the "Battle-Days of the Arabs" in Arabic poems and genealogical tables at best indicate a line of interest and a technique of narration but provide us no idea of history (Lewis). Franz Rosenthal says: History loomed very large in Muḥammad's thinking. In fact Muslim historiography originated with Muḥammad and the Qur'ān. Professor Gibb says that it is the Qur'ān which made the Muslims "history-conscious". Nevertheless, "The Arabs had a kind of historical tradition," says Lewis, "even before the beginning of Islam, the so-called Ayyam al-Arab or 'Battle-Days of the Arabs,' which described in real detail campaigns between two or more tribes and the heroic deeds of their leaders." Though this kind of historiography was to a very high degree mythological, yet, in the opinion of Lewis, "their

5. Professor Abdul Hamid, *Interpretation of History*, pp. 160-1.
6. Bernard Lewis, op. cit.

proximity to life, their interest in the feeling of the masses and their sense of real and possible detail made them suitable as the nucleus of real historiographical reports." The description of the heroic deeds of the tribes and clans in Arabic poems of pre-Islamic times provided the Muslims with a stimulus to record and preserve the heroic exploits and noble deeds of their Prophet and his Companions and of the early heroes of Islam.

The beginnings of scientific history in Arabic are associated with the study of the life and activities of the Prophet. The source of this discipline is consequently to be found in the collection of the Prophetic Tradition (Ḥadīth) and more especially of the traditions relating to the military expeditions of the Prophet. The home of this study was Medina and it was not until the second century that students of the *Maghāzī* were to be found in other centres. Its association with the Ḥadīth, which left an enduring impress on historical method, explains the immense change which appears from this moment in the character and critical accuracy of historical information amongst the Arabs. For the first time we can feel that we are on a firm ground, even while we admit the existence of some doubtful elements in the Tradition.[7]

Whether Persian Historiography Had any Influence upon Arabic Historiography

Here let us examine the view of some scholars that Arabic historiography was deeply influenced by pre-Islamic Persian historical works. Bernard Lewis in his Introduc-

7. B. Spuler, "Evolution of Persian Historiography," *Historians of the Middle East*, p. 126. Professor A.A. Duri also holds the same view: see ibid., p. 53.

tion to *Historians of the Middle East* (p. 9), quoting the opinion of Bertold Spuler has rejected this view and maintains that there is no evidence of the existence of any written historical works in Persian at the time of the Arab conquest, which could have influenced the historiography of Islam. It was not until the Mongol period that a Persian historiographic pattern begins to emerge.[8] In fact, when Ṭabarī and other Persians began to write history they had to adopt Arabic historical writings as their model.

Muslim Conception of History

Now, to go back to the discussion of Traditions. The collectors of Traditions were almost exclusively theologians and Muḥaddithīn (Traditionists), which suggests that the Muslim conception of history was predominantly theological. "In the theological view," Gibb says, "history was the manifestation of a divine plan for the government of mankind ; and while the historical outlook of the earlier generations might be limited to tracing it through the succession of Prophets which culminated in Muhammad, all Islamic schools were agreed that it did not end there. In the Sunni doctrine, it was the Islamic community, the Ummat Allah, with which the continuation of the divine plan on earth was bound up ; consequently the study of its history was a necessary supplement to the study of the divine revelation in Quran and Hadith."[9]

Sīrah and Ḥadīth and the Method of Isnād developed Historical Sense among Muslims

Muslim historiography begins in fact with the bio-

8. H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, p. 111.
9. Ibid., p. 115.

graphies of the Prophet. The collection of Traditions and examining their genuineness and sifting the true from false traditions by means of *Isnād* or chain of authorities, whereby a narrative could be traced to the original eye-witness who narrated it, developed a scientific and critical attitude among Muslims which was so essential for the development of historiography and historical outlook. The spirit of independent inquiry and critical insight which were indispensable prerequisites for historians was to a great extent the product of the study and search for the Traditions of the Prophet, in other words, of the Science of Traditions. In the words of Dr Fazlur Rahman, "The basic function of Hadith was not so much history-writing but history-making and that contemporary phenomena were projected back in the form of Hadith in order to succeed in moulding the Community on a certain spiritual, political and social pattern."[10] Therefore, he further observes: "The very greatness of the Prophet lies in the fact that, having a unique insight into the forces of history, he passed them into the service of a Divinely-inspired moral pattern."[11] "It is evident," says Dr G. Richter, "that the Apostolic traditions cannot be considered as purely historical literature in the strict sense of the term. But a distinct consciousness of history is perceptible in it very early, in spite of its being mixed with some legendary material."[12]

Maghāzī too Served as an Impetus to History-writing

Another important fact which served as an impetus to

10. *Islamic Methodology in History*, p. 47. 11. Ibid.

12. Translated and edited by Dr M. Saber Khan in *Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad (Deccan), January 1959, p. 244.

the idea of history-writing by the Muslims was the conquest of the neighbouring countries. Description of these conquests and military expeditions came to be called *Maghāzī* (derived from the word *Ghazwah* = war). An urge for recording and preserving the activities and victories of the Prophet in his encounters with the idolaters or non-Muslims engaged the Muslim historians not only in recording the events of the Prophet's life but also the events of the Companions of the Prophet and of the early and later Caliphs. *Sīrah* (biographies) of the Prophet and his Companions and *Maghāzī* of the Prophet and of the later Muslim Caliphs, the two most important branches of Muslim historiography, were gradually evolved and some notable works on *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī* were written. A discussion on *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī* will be undertaken later in the proper place.

Isnād

Now, let us know something about *Isnād* by which Traditions were tested and examined, and which method was also applied to historical facts to test their authenticity. *Isnād* is the chain of authorities by which a narrative can be traced to the original eye-witness who narrated it. The notion that each narrative, in order to be trustworthy, should be traceable through a known series of transmitters to its source pervades historical composition till quite late times. This *Isnād* provides a sort of spirit of inquiry and critical insight to the Muslim mind. "But though the theory of the *Isnād*," writes Professor D. S. Margoliouth, "has occasioned endless troubles owing to the inquiries which have to be made into the trustworthiness of each transmitter, and the fabrication of traditions was a familiar

and at times easily tolerated practice, its value in making for accuracy cannot be questioned, and the Muslims are justified in taking pride in their science of tradition."[13] It is a matter of great credit for the famous six collections of Traditions and, above all, Bukhārī, who took meticulous care and caution in sifting the true from false traditions, so that the posterity derived immense benefit, because of their sincere labours and earnest search for genuine Traditions, by being acquainted with the most valuable and essential pieces of Traditions necessary for their guidance. "Though among the countless transmitters of traditions," writes Margoliouth, " there was a proportion of unscrupulous persons, who perverted or fabricated intentionally, the veracity of the most eminent among the Arab historians attains a high standard and renders their works of great service to humanity."[14]

13. D.S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians*, p. 20.
14. Ibid., p. 21.

Chapter II

Characteristics of Muslim Historiography in Early and Later Stages

The method of *Isnād* followed by the Traditionists was very strictly adhered to by the early historians, at least up to Ṭabarī of the ninth century C.E. This traditionist method became therefore a characteristic feature of early Muslim historiography.[1] Secondly, the historians were chiefly interested in the study of the history of the *Ummah* or the Muslim community, since they believed that the unfolding of the Divine purpose on earth took place through the historical phenomena or events of the Muslim community as a whole. And the early historical writings were mainly biographical. In other words, they closely followed the lines of *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī*. This kind of history later developed into universal history which was written by historians like Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, Mas'ūdī, and others.

It was also the characteristic of early historians to write history from the theological viewpoint. In other words, they tried to interpret history in the light of Divine plan which, they believed, was unfolded through historical events. But later this angle of vision was discarded and in its place history was studied from the sociological standpoint. In place of annalistic history, history now became critical and sociological. Mas'ūdī was the first historian to have introduced this outlook which was carried to its

1. Of all historians Ṭabarī strictly adhered to *Isnād*. Balādhurī followed a middle course and others were not so particular as Ṭabarī. Mas'ūdī, and Ibn Miskawaih were some of them.

culmination by the great sociologist and historian Ibn Khaldūn.

Again, history in its early stages was confined to the study of the *Ummah* or the Muslim community but Mas'ūdī devoted himself to the study of both Muslim and non-Muslim history. He studied and wrote the history of Indians, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans. Thus history became wider in its range and scope. Moreover, geography along with history came to be the subject of study of the Muslim historians. Mas'ūdī was both an historian and a geographer. He studied the influence of climate and geographical factors upon the growth of civilisation. He studied these phenomena to understand the influence of geographical environment on animal and plant life, not only from the geographical but also from an historical point of view. He had some conception of the relation between geography and history. But Ibn Khaldūn developed these ideas into theories and presented them in a more coherent manner than Mas'ūdī.[2]

Another important feature which distinguished early history from the history of later times was its chronological trend. History up to Ṭabarī was written around dates and years but since Mas'ūdī's time history began to be written on the basis of dynasties. This topical method of writing history was the special characteristic of Mas'ūdī's work.

Lastly, another important feature of early Muslim historiography was its freedom from all bias and prejudice since the early historians, viz. Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Hishām, Balādhurī, Ṭabarī, Mas'ūdī, and others, wrote history, more

2. S. Maqbul Ahmad, "Al-Mas'ūdī's Contributions to Medieval Arab Geography," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1954, p. 286.

or less, independently, since they were not courtiers and officials. Later when courtiers and officials began to write history, history lost its independent spirit to some extent. While tracing the growth and evolution of Muslim historiography the above trends of Muslim historiography should be kept in view, so that an easy and clear grasp of the subject may be possible.

Chapter III

Evolution of Muslim Historiography—Ruwat and Akhbaris—Sirah and Maghazi—Universal History

Muslim historiography began after the rise of Islam. But, as already said, the study of geography of the pre-Islamic Arabs and the description of their "Battle-Days" had their share in imparting a knowledge about the technique of narration, though not a very definite idea about history. The notion of pride among pre-Islamic tribes, exhibited in their description through the vehicle of poetry, was operative even among the Umayyads. Under them the tribal feeling persisted in all its strength between the Northerners (Qaḥṭān or al-Yaman). The two South Arabians, one of them, 'Ābid bin Sharīyyah, were summoned by Mu'āwiyah, the founder of the Umayyad Caliphate, to relate the history of the kings of Yemen. 'Ābid bin Sharīyyah composed a Book of Kings and of Past History which was very much in demand in the first century of Islam.

The Maghāzī

An important group of materials to which very scanty attention has been paid by Western scholars is called *Maghāzī* material. This is to be taken to mean such information as the list of expeditions, the aim of each and actual results, the leader and the number, and the names of the participants, etc. This information is usually given

without any *Isnād* both by Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī.

Little *Maghāzī* material can be derived from the Qur'ān, where only some of the expeditions have been mentioned. It must be the result of the work of the students of the *Maghāzī*, questioning a large number of persons and sifting and arranging the information thus obtained. This process continued after Ibn Isḥāq. He knows of several expeditions which he seems to be unable to date or place chronologically and this has been improved upon by al-Wāqidī, who had access to more information than Ibn Isḥāq. Ibn Hishām too has improved upon Ibn Isḥāq in some respects. Ibn Hishām has often added to Ibn Isḥāq's account of the name of the man left in charge of Medina when the Prophet used to be absent.

"The first and foremost motive behind the collection of this material," writes Lewis, "would be pride in the achievements of the Islamic community, which had its counterpart in the pride of the pre-Islamic nomad in the achievements of his tribe. Some of the lists of men and similar matters, especially the lists of those at Badr, would be of importance for the administrators of the Islamic State, since priority in conversion affected the stipend due."

The writings of *Maghāzī* began with the Traditionists who paid special attention to the career of the Prophet. Starting with 'Urwah bin Zubair, whom Professor Duri has admired among early historians, in course of time a regular school of *Maghāzī* scholars came into existence. "The *Maghāzī* material," observes Watt, "is an essential foundation for the biography of Muḥammad and the history of his times."[1] In addition to *Maghāzī* stories, anecdotes (*qaṣaṣ*) about the Prophet and the conquests

1. M. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p. 28.

were told and circulated. Those did not, as Lewis says, initiate any line of history; they supplied later, especially to Ibn Isḥāq, some data, and were looked upon with mistrust by serious scholars.

Among the famous writers of *Maghāzī* the names of Abān b. 'Uthmān, (20-100 H.), 'Urwah b. Zubair (23-94 H.), Shurāḥbil b. Sa'd, Wahb b. Munabbih (34-100 H.), 'Āṣim b. 'Umar Qatādah al-Anṣārī (d. 120 H.), Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (51-124 H.) and 'Abdullah b. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. Ḥazm Wāqidī, and Balādhurī are noteworthy. Of them 'Urwah b. al-Zubair, Wahb b. Munabbih, Qatādah al-Anṣārī, al-Zuhrī, Wāqidī, and Balādhurī were the most distinguished. Elaborate discussion on all of them will be made later.

Sīrah

According to Professor Duri, *Sīrah*-writing spread to Yemen, Syria, and Iraq in the second century H. By the end of the third century H. the lines of the *Sīrah* were laid and the bulk of the basic material was collected. The writing down of notes began fairly early; by the end of the first century H. it was established by Zuhrī and henceforth sources, both oral and written, became available. Arab culture was of course basically oral and poetry was its most conspicuous example. Writing, however, came into vogue towards the end of the first century and first half of the second century. Among the *Sīrah*-writers, Imām Zuhrī, Ibn Isḥāq, and Ibn Sa'd were the most prominent.

Ruwāts and Akhbārīs

At these initial stages, *Akhbārīs* and *Ruwāts* were our

first historians. Just as in the *Sīrah* literature we have predecessors for Ibn Isḥāq, such as Zuhrī, on whom he largely depends, so we find that *Akhbārīs* drew largely from certain *Ruwāt*. Thus out of sixty *Rāwīs*, Saif b. 'Umar drew his materials.[2] These *Akhbārīs* wrote in direct, simple prose giving at times a graphic and vivid account of events.[3] Among these *Akhbārīs* Abū Mikhnaf (d. 774 C.E.), Awana b. al-Ḥakam (d. 764 C.E.), Saif b. 'Umar and their foremost representative al-Madā'inī (d. 839 C.E.) are the most distinguished names. It is with Madā'inī that more than one report on the same point is given and a more balanced and impartial presentation. Most of the sources were oral traditions but some were probably written (Lewis). Madā'inī alone ranges through the whole field of Arab history—starting with pre-Islamic and going to the beginning of the third century. Abul Ḥasan 'Alī al-Madā'inī, shortly called al-Madā'inī (753-831 C.E.) wrote over two hundred books about the Prophet, his wives, Companions, enemies, delegations, treaties, and military units, as well as about the folklore of the period. One of his books is *Al-Maghāzī* and many of his other works are about the invasions of Syria, Cyprus, Persia, and India. He also compiled five histories of the Caliphs up to the time of al-Mu'taṣim, the 'Abbasid Caliph;[4] other writers discussed up to the end of the second century H. only.

Al-Madā'inī.

By the beginning of the third century H. historical studies reached a stage that led to the advent of the great historians of that century. In method increased attention

2. B. Lewis, *Historians of the Middle East.*

3. Ibid.

4. Bayard Dodge, "Titles of Books during the First Four Centuries," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1954, p. 536.

was given to the *Isnād* and besides we notice in Madā'inī, Abū 'Ubaidah, and Hishām al-Kalbī the tendency to utilise written material as well as oral traditions. They utilised the materials from the works of Abū Mikhnaf, Awana, and some others.

Third Century—A New Phase of A Cultural Development

The third century saw a new phase of cultural development, as Lewis observes. This was the period of travels for knowledge, initiated by Traditionists to collect the Traditions. *Isnād* was now widely used and its rules more strictly applied.

The historians of the third century, to name some of them, al-Balādurī (d. 892 C.E.), al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897), al-Dīnawarī (d. 897), Ibn Qutaibah[5] (d. 882), and al-Ṭabarī wrote continuous histories. Their basic ideas were the unity of the experience of the *Ummah*, and universal history. They applied the critical method of the Traditionists, and Ṭabarī, more than all of them, is a strict Traditionist in approach as can be seen from his emphasis on chains of authorities. Ibn Qutaibah takes reports from well-established sources, and al-Ya'qūbī is particularly critical of his sources for pre-Islamic history. Balādhurī follows a middle course. They were on the whole free from any bias or partisanship.

These historians improved upon the works of the *Akhbārīs* by their wide researches and scholarship, and used both oral and written materials, including documents and articles. They superseded the *Akhbārīs* and set definite lines of Muslim historiography.

5. Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Qutaibah wrote a history called *The Book of Knowledge* before he died in 889 C.E.

Chapter IV

Sirah and Maghazi Writers

It is certain that Ibn Isḥāq's biography of the Prophet had no serious rival, but it was preceded by several *Maghāzī* books. The first of these was Abān b. 'Uthmān (20-100 H.). Ibn Isḥāq does not mention his name. *Muḥaddithīn* or the Traditionists, however, have mentioned his name.

A man of much greater reputation was 'Urwah b. al-Zubair b. al-'Awwām (23-94 H.), a cousin of the Prophet. 'Urwah's mother was Abū Bakr's daughter Asmā'. He and his brother 'Abdullah were in close touch with the Prophet's widow 'Ā'yeshah. He was recognised an authority on the early history of Islam. It is not certain whether he wrote any book, but many Traditions that have been handed down in his name by Ibn Isḥāq and other writers point to the conclusion that he was the founder of Islamic history. Professor Duri, an authority, is of this opinion.[1] Much of his material rests on the statements of his aunt 'Ā'yeshah.

Little is known about Shuraḥbil b. Sa'd (d. 123 H.), presumably of South Arabia, but it is true that he wrote a book on *Maghāzī*. He reported Traditions from some of the Prophet's Companions and Mūsā bin 'Uqbah says that he wrote lists of the names of the Emigrants and the Anṣār at Badr and Uḥud.

Another important figure was Wahb b. Munabbih

1. Professor A.A. Duri in *Historians of the Middle East*, edited by B. Lewis.

(34-110 H.), a Yemenite of Persian origin. His father was a Jew. He had knowledge of Jewish and Christian scriptures and traditions. Like early Traditionists he did not use *Isnād* so much.

A little later comes 'Āṣim b. 'Umar Qatādah al-Anṣārī (d. 120 H.). He lectured in Damascus on the campaigns of the Prophet and his Companions and seems to have committed his lectures to writing; sometimes he quotes *Isnād*. He returned to Medina to continue his work and Ibn Isḥāq attended his lectures there.

Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (51-124 H.) was a member of a distinguished Meccan family. He wrote down some traditions for princely pupils like 'Abd al-Malik, Hishām, and Yazīd. He was the forerunner of the later Traditionists inasmuch as he took pains to inquire of people of both sexes, who might possess knowledge of the past. He left a history of his own family and a book on *Maghāzī*. He spent some years in Medina as a young man. Ibn Isḥāq met him when he came south on pilgrimage. He is often named as an authority on the *Sīrah*. He was the most renowned Traditionist of his time.

'Abdullah b. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. Ḥazm (d. 130 or 135 H.) was one of the most important sources of information for Ibn Isḥāq. His father had been asked by 'Umar b.'Abd-ul-'Azīz to compile a collection of Ḥadīth.

Abu'l-Aswad Muḥammad b. 'Abdur Raḥmān b. Naufal (d. 131 or 137 H.) left a *Maghāzī* book which closely follows 'Urwah b. Zubair's work.

Contemporary with Ibn Isḥāq in the third generation was Mūsā b. 'Uqbah (55-141 H.). A fragment of his work has survived and was published by Sachau in 1904. It once rivalled Ibn Isḥāq's book. Guillaume has given a

translation of his extant Traditions. Mālik b. Anas, al-Shāfi'ī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal have highly praised his authenticity and importance. Mūsā depended heavily on Zuhrī. Ibn Isḥāq never mentions him, but al-Wāqidī ibn Sa'd, al-Balādhurī, and Ṭabarī freely quote him. He gives lists of those who went to Abyssinia and fought at Badr. He generally gives an *Isnād* though it is not clear whether he is relying on written or oral sources.

According to Professor A.A. Duri, from Ibn Isḥāq's time clear demarcation was made between Traditions and history. With him dawned a new era in Muslim historiography.

Ibn Isḥāq

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq is the most famous writer on *Maghāzī* as well as on *Sīrah*, and he is regarded as the highest authority, matched only by Wāqidī, the famous *Maghāzī* writer. But in veracity and trustworthiness Ibn Isḥāq excels even Wāqidī. He had seen Anas, one of the Companions of the Prophet, and he had been a great favourite of his teacher, Imām Zuhrī. Imām Mālik has questioned the veracity of Ibn Isḥāq since he reported facts which he heard from the Jews. He depended on the *Ahl al-Kitāb* for his sources for the first part of his book *Sīrat Rasūlullah*, the part which deals with pre-Islamic Arabia. There are also some other charges against him. According to Professor Duri, Ibn Isḥāq inserted fabricated poems in his *Sīrah*. Thirdly, he committed mistakes in genealogy. Fourthly, he has given some false references in his work. Fifthly, he has been charged with Shī'ite tendencies and leanings, and Professor Duri says that it is not without truth. He was a *Qadarite* in his

Criticism against Ibn Isḥāq.

belief and conviction. But against the charge that he was anti-Umayyad, Professor Duri has nothing to say.[2] The first book, however, on the biography of the Prophet was written by Ibn Isḥāq for al-Manṣūr, the 'Abbasid Caliph.

Sīrat Rasūlullah

The *Sīrat Rasūlullah* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767 C.E.) is not available in its original form. Ibn Hishām brought out a very elaborate and enlarged edition, known as *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*, which remains a relic of its original work. The first book on the campaigns was, however,written by Mūsā bin 'Uqbah who died in 758 C.E.

Sīrat Ibn Hishām.

Ibn Hishām

According to Khuda Bukhsh, in the handling of his materials Ibn Hishām shows a distinct advance upon Ibn Isḥāq. He reveals greater critical insight, shows an inclination to test the sources from which the information comes, and expresses his opinion on their authenticity or otherwise.[3]

According to Professor Duri, Ibn Hishām corrected the false *riwāyāt* (reports) in the first part of Ibn Isḥāq's book and dropped the fabricated poems. He also brought, according to the above authority, his book closer in style with the *Muḥaddithīn* (Traditionists).

Ibn Sa'd

The great work on biography was written by Ibn Sa'd who was secretary of al-Wāqidī, the renowned historian of

2. *'Ilm-i-Tārikh 'Ind al-'Arab.*
3. Khuda Bukhsh, *The Caliphate*, p. 43.

the Muslim conquests. Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣaghīr*, and *Tārīkh al-Islām* are regarded more reliable and authentic than the works of his master al-Wāqidī, who was patronised by Yaḥyā Barmakī, the Wazīr of the Caliph Hārūn-ar-Rashīd. Ibn Sa'd, the writer of another work *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, is also praised for his comprehensive and elaborate work on the lives of the Prophet and his Companions. Ibn Sa'd, a Hāshimite, born in the town of Baṣrah, subsequently settled in Baghdad. The famous historian Balādhurī was his disciple. He passed away in 844 H. His *Ṭabaqāt* in eight volumes deals with the life of the Prophet and the lives of his Companions.

Al-Wāqidī

Criticism of his work.

Al-Wāqidī, the master of Ibn Sa'd, wrote two works, *Kitāb al-Sīrah* and *Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Maghāzī*.[4] According to Imām Shāfi'ī, Wāqidī is thoroughly unreliable, since he depended upon Jewish sources of information while writing his work. According to Khuda Bukhsh, stupendous was his literary and historical output. "In the history of the companions of the Prophet," Khuda Bukhsh says, "he shows a notable advance upon his forerunners in the handling of his materials. His work gives us the impression of a connected, coherent historical work, rippling with funny humour, resplendent with a lively style."[5]

According to Professor Duri, Wāqidī is more particular in respect of *Isnād* than Ibn Isḥāq. He was more critical and scientific in his investigation of facts and dates.[6]

4. He also wrote, according to Professor Duri, *Tārīkh al-Kabīr* and *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*.

5. S. Khuda Bukhsh, op. cit., p. 44.

6. Duri, op. cit., pp. 30-1.

Wāqidī also supplied, Professor Duri says, topographical and geographical details with regard to the battlefields of the Prophet. He has also quoted Qur'ānic references in respect of the campaigns of Badr and Uḥud. But he never quoted Ibn Isḥāq, as he had difference of opinion with him.

His Life-sketch and Scholarship

Wāqidī was born in 130 H. in Medina where he was a corn-dealer. He was well versed in Muslim history, but in religious matters his authority has not been accepted by the orthodox, because of his Shī'ite tendencies. He was reputed to be generous, and is said to have lavishly spent on charitable purposes. Being heavily involved in debt he went to Baghdad and approached Wazīr Yaḥyā Barmakī, who accorded him a hearty welcome. The Wazīr provided him with a house and offered him two lakh dīnārs. He was also appointed a Qāḍī in the city of Baghdad on the western side of the Tigris. He loved and purchased books, and left behind on his death, according to Khuda Bukhsh, 600 chests of books.[7] He is said to have written twenty-eight books. He was a pupil of Mālik b. Anas and Sufyān Thaurī, both jurists of the highest order (Margoliouth). According to Margoliouth, he is also an authority on Tradition and jurisprudence as well as on history.[8] According to Yāqūt, his books formed 120 camel-loads. European scholars have praised Wāqidī for special attention to chronology.[9] The only work of his which has seen the light is a part of his *Maghāzī*, published in Calcutta,

7. S. Khuda Bukhsh, op. cit., p. 44, footnote.
8. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians*, p. 92.
9. Ibid., p. 95.

and a translation in German of a fuller manuscript preserved in the British Museum. His works contain an account of the Prophet's mission and his campaigns and some accounts of Syria and Iraq, besides some chapters on the period of the Khulafā'-i-Rāshidīn.

After the middle of the ninth century (895-900 C.E.), four great historians, namely, Ibn Qutaibah, Balādhurī, Dīnawarī, and Ya'qūbī, appeared. Among them Balādhurī enjoys greater reputation than others. These historians were more or less compilers and their position remained intermediary between biographers and historians.

Life-sketch of al-Balādhurī

Balādhurī, the *Encyclopædia of Islam* says, is one of the greatest Arabic historians of the third/ninth century. Little is known of his life; neither the year of his birth nor of his death is definitely known. For the date of his birth Muslim authors suggest 892 C.E. as the latest and most likely date. He probably was born and certainly spent most of his life in Baghdad and its environs. For studies he travelled to Damascus, Edessa, and Antioch and in Iraq he studied among others with such famous men as Musa'b al-Zubairī. He was a boon companion of al-Mutawakkil, the 'Abbasid Caliph.

Merits of His Work

His two great works are *Futūḥ al-Buldān* and *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. The former is the short version of a more comprehensive work on the subject. The work begins with the wars of the Prophet, followed by accounts of the Riddā war, the conquest of Syria, Jazīrah, Armenia, Egypt, and Maghrib and, lastly, the occupation of Iraq

and Persia. "Remarks of importance for the history of culture and social conditions are interwoven with the historical narrative."[10] "He has also discussed," the same authority says, "questions of taxation, coinage and currency." Balādhurī is regarded as the greatest *Maghāzī*-writer as Margoliouth says, and his book *Futūh al-Buldān* serves as a link between Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* and Ṭabarī's "History". The early historians, in fact, prepared the way for the great historians like Ṭabarī and Mas'ūdī.

Criticism

"In spite of all al-Balādhurī's merits," writes the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, "his value as an historical source has been occasionally overestimated. It is not correct to say that he always gives the original texts which later writers embellished and expanded. It may be with much more truth presumed from the agreement of essential portions of his works with later more detailed works that he abridged the material at his disposal in a number of cases though he often remained faithful to his sources. His style aims at conciseness, at the expense, at times, of the artistic effect. We seldom meet with long stories, though they do occur."[11] Balādhurī wrote a history of the Muslim conquests, which, in the words of Khuda Bukhsh, "conspicuous by an absence of pedantry, not only exhibits excellence of method, but shows, throughout, tacts and the tastes of a cultivated mind—accustomed to the best society—and freedom from the bondage of the school of traditionists."[12]

10. *Encyclopædia of Islam*, Vol. I, London, 1960, pp. 971-2.
11. Ibid.
12. Khuda Bukhsh, op. cit., p. 47.

Chapter V

The Age of Tabari and Mas'udi

Ṭabarī—His Merits

After Balādhurī and other historians mentioned above, the next great historians were Ṭabarī and Mas'ūdī with whom the golden age of Muslim historiography ushered. To Muḥammad Jarīr Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī are credited two most important works : his exhaustive commentary on the Qur'ān and his chronology of Apostles and Kings, entitled *Kitāb al-Mulūk-wa'r-Rusul*, brought down to 298 H. Ṭabarī acquired eminence in Tradition, law, reading of the Qur'ān, and history. According to Margoliouth, Ṭabarī is the first great Muslim historian who dealt with the subject in a comprehensive and analytic method and formed a chronological sense of events.[1] His book on history is the most informative and reliable work. As Margoliouth says, the sequence of events is very important in the art of history-writing, and Ṭabarī has maintained it to the last. The universal history mentioned above was ten times bigger in its original form than in its present shape. Ṭabarī has dealt with the history of pre-Islamic period in two volumes and has dwelt upon the life of the Prophet, the Pious Caliphs, the Umayyad and 'Abbasid dynasties up to 302/915.

Criticism

Some historians based their works on Ṭabarī's

1. D. S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians.*

"History"—like Ibn Miskawaih and Ibn al-Athīr. Ibn al-Athīr's history *Al-Kāmil fi't-Tārīkh* which comes up to 123 H. is an abbreviation of the work of Ṭabarī with additional developments. Professor Gibb observes: "The excellence of Tabari is his authority and comprehensiveness which marked the close of an epoch. No later compiler ever set himself to collect and investigate afresh the materials for the early history of Islam, but either abstracted them from al-Tabari (sometimes supplemented by al-Baladhuri), or else began where al-Tabari left off. At the same time, the poverty of the latter part of al-Tabari's work gave warning that the purely traditionist approach to history was no longer sufficient. The bureaucratic organization of government brought the class of officials and courtiers to the fore as authorities for political history and relegated the men of religion to the second place. For this reason also, the third century marks the end of a stage in Arabic historiography." [2]

The Cause of Ṭabarī's Weakness as Pointed out by Gibb

The weakness or insufficiency in Ṭabarī's traditionist approach to history hinted above may be explained by the fact that Ṭabarī relied on the reports of Saif b. 'Umar, an *Akhbārī*, at best a pseudo-historian, more than the reports of al-'Wāqidī, a reputed historian, simply because the latter sometimes took reports from Jewish sources.

His Technique

But his merits as an historian are considerable. Besides his authority and comprehensiveness Ṭabarī possessed,

2. H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, pp. 118-9.

like other great Muslim historians, the sense of time and accuracy in dating the events which became the hallmark of Muslim historiography.[3] Ṭabarī has arranged all the events according to the year of happening and has collected as many versions of an event as he was able to find out. Ṭabarī was a true historian in the sense that he wrote history without any motives and did not try to shape it according to particular interests and objects.[4] According to the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, he refused so many official positions and devoted himself wholeheartedly and independently to history-reading and writing.

Life-sketch

A life-sketch of Ṭabarī may not be without interest. Ṭabarī was born at Anmul in Tabaristan from where he proceeded to Rayy. Here one of his teachers, Muḥammad b. Ḥumaid Rāzī, communicated to him more than one lakh traditions. From Rayy Ṭabarī went to Baghdad to attend the lectures of the learned for some time and then left for Baṣrah, having stopped for a time at Wāsiṭ. From Baṣrah he repaired to Kūfah, where he learnt another one lakh traditions from one Shaikh Abū Kuraib. From Kūfah he came back to Baghdad, where he took to the studies of Law and the Holy Qur'ān. Thence he travelled westward and having halted at some Syrian cities he proceeded to Fusṭāṭ (253 H.). In Fusṭāṭ the most hospitable savant was 'Alī b. Sarrāj, who admired Ṭabarī's knowledge in religious sciences as well as in poetry. From Fusṭāṭ he returned to Baghdad and from there to Tabaristan which he visited again in 290 H. On his return to Baghdad he incurred the

3. Margoliouth, op. cit. 4. Ibid.

displeasure of the Ḥanbalites owing to a remark of his about their founder which was regarded as objectionable. Ṭabarī had also to quit Tabaristan after his last visit, because he did not support the cursing of the three Caliphs from the pulpit of the mosque, a practice then rife in that province, even though he had Shī'ite proclivities. So, he was broadminded and tolerant in his views, a great quality for an historian. Ṭabarī had learnt the Qur'ān by heart at the age of seven, had led the prayers at the age of eight, and had taken down Traditions at the age of nine.[5] He breathed his last in 310/823.

His broad-mindedness.

Mas'ūdī

After Ṭabarī the most important figure in historiography is Mas'ūdī, a renowned historian, geographer, and philosopher, who was born in Baghdad. He travelled in Spain, Russia, China, India, Syria, and Egypt. Thus he undertook extensive tours to gather first-hand information for his works on history and geography. His history, a most extensive work, was *Kitāb Akhbār-uz-Zamān*, written in thirty volumes, with a supplement of *Kitāb al-Awsāṭ*, a chronological sketch of general history. The substance of the two parts was gathered by him in *Murūj-udh-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawāhir* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Precious Stones) which is a history of the universe from creation to 947 C.E. It embraces social and literary history and discussions as well as geographic descriptions. Unlike Ṭabarī's "History," Mas'ūdī has arranged events around dynasties and empires. He did not follow the path of Ṭabarī, but created his own

His merits and his characteristic features.

5. Ibid., p. 104.

style of history-writing.[6] His encyclopædic historio-geographical work includes his researches on Indo-Persian, Roman, and Jewish history and religion, as also history of Islam. Muslim historiography was fully developed at the hands of Ṭabarī and Mas'ūdī. They were followed by a band of historians like Miskawaih, Ibn Khallikān, Abu'l-Fidā', and Ibn Khaldūn. His famous works are *Murūj-udh-Dhahab, Kitāb al-Tanbīh* and *Mirāt-uz-Zamān*. Throughout Mas'ūdī shows the very same lively interest in non-Muslim as in Muslim peoples. He has been called Muslim Herodotus for his wide interest and humanistic attitude. "Certainly his book," says Khuda Bukhsh, "stands unrivalled in its combination of instruction and amusement."[7]

Muslim Herodotus.

His Views on History

De Boer pays him the highest tribute when he says: "A representative of the humanistic attitude of mind is met with in Masudi, who died about the year 956. He appreciates and is interested in everything that concerns humanity. Everywhere he is learning something from the men he meets with. . . . He knows where his strength lies, and up to the last, when he is spending his old age in Egypt, far from his native home, he finds his consolation,—the medicine of his soul,—in the study of history. History for him is the all-embracing science: it is his philosophy, and its task is to set forth the truth of that which was and is."[8] Mas'ūdī believed, in the words of De Boer, that learned men come and go, but history records their intellectual

6. Ibid.
7. Khuda Bukhsh, *The Caliphate*, p. 49.
8. T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 69.

achievements, and thereby restores the connection between the past and the present. It gives us unprejudiced information about events and about the views of men.[9]

Criticism

Regarding Mas'ūdī Professor Gibb says: "Al-Masudi is indeed entitled to be reckoned amongst the major Arabic historians, but the loss of the larger compositions, of which his surviving works are an abstract, renders it difficult to reach an exact idea of his methods. It is evident from such works as these that a fresh intellectual element had entered into Arabic historiography, an element which we may define as the desire of knowledge for its own sake. It is significant that writers like Yaqubi and Masudi were not only historians but also geographers, whose geographical information was gained chiefly by wide travels. In this development we can doubtless trace the working of that legacy of Hellenistic culture which was penetrating into all branches of intellectual activities in Islam during the second and third centuries. In historiography indeed it went little farther but the link thus created between history and geography was maintained by a succession of writers down to the Ottoman period." [10]

The statement of Mas'ūdī in the Introduction to his "Golden Meadow" that, for the purposes of his book, he had gone through fifty historical works, suffices to indicate the range and extent of the literary activity of those times.[11]

A New School of Historiography

Finally, let us remember that Mas'ūdī represents the

9. Ibid.
10. Gibb, op. cit., pp. 117-8.
11. S. Khuda Bukhsh, op. cit., p. 49.

spirit of a new age. With him dawned a new era in Muslim historiography which replaced the old school of Muslim historiography.[12] The traditionist, annalistic school of writing came to an end and in its place the sociological and dynastic study of history came into being.[13] History, moreover, became broadbased and humanistic. Mas'ūdī inaugurated the writing of Muslim as well as non-Muslim history and took into consideration the geographical factors and physical environment that moulded the character ofnations. With regard to climate, Mas'ūdī says that there are five factors which determine it, viz. the seasons, the rising and setting of the stars, the winds, the position of the land, and, lastly, the position of the seas. The object of Mas'ūdī's study of these problems was to understand the influences of geographical environment on animal and plant life, not only from the geographical angle, but also from the historical point of view.[14] All these changes were characteristic of a new style and method of history-writing. Rightly observes Franz Rosenthal : "Muslim historiography achieved a definite advance beyond previous historical writing in the sociological understanding of history and the scientific systematization of historiography."[15] This type of historiography saw its culmination and perfection in the writings of Ibn Khaldūn, the great sociologist and philosopher-historian the world has ever produced.

Mas'ūdī breathed his last in 956 C.E. He was followed

12. Khuda Bukhsh says, "The old traditional view is, to a great extent, set aside, and the intellectual vision is considerably widened (ibid , p. 46).

13. P. Hitti says : "The first Arab historian to use the topical method as against the annalistic, was al-Mas'ūdī of Baghdad" (*The Near East in History*, p. 254).

14. S. Maqbul Ahmad, "Al-Mas'udī's Contributions to Medieval Arab Geography," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1954, pp. 285-6.

15. F. Rosenthal, *History of Moslem Historiography*.

by Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Miskawaih, Abu'l-Fidā', and Ibn Khaldūn.

The death of al-Mas'ūdī removed one of the greatest exponents of a new school of historiography and his age also saw the flowering of the glorious epoch of history-writing that began in the first century of Islam and ended with its third century. Though Mas'ūdī was not entirely an historian of the third century H. since he died in 345, yet he lived many years in the third century H. and hence he can be reckoned as an historian of the third century too. According to Professor Duri, "The first three centuries of Islam were the ages of Muslim historiography. The method of history-writing developed during this period. In subsequent ages there were other developments in culture and other branches of knowledge, such as geography, philosophy, astronomy, etc., which had an important impact on the writing of history. But the historical methodology remained unchanged." [16]

Ibn al-Athīr

Ibn al-Athīr and Miskawaih based their works on Ṭabarī's universal history. Ibn al-Athīr possessed considerable philosphical grasp upon cause and effect in historical development.[17] The works which gained Ibn al-Athīr his fame as an historian were his universal history named *Al-Kāmil* and his local history *Al-Bahir fi't-Tārīkh Atabak al-Mawṣil*. In *Al-Kāmil*, Ibn al-Athīr has discussed some important events deliberately passed over or omitted through prejudice. He avoided repetition of any event or long chain of *Isnād*. Thus *Al-Kāmil* was planned to contain a great

16. Duri, *'Ilm-i-Tārikh 'Ind al-'Arab*.
17. B. Lewis, *Historians of the Middle East*.

amount of historical information, dealing with all localities in chronological order.[18]

The author drew upon previous works, al-Ṭabarī occupying a favourite position in the first three centuries. His works cover events of a period of 130 years (1084-1210 C.E.). In the opinion of Francesco Gabrieli, Ibn al-Athīr has sense of proportion, his capacity for synthesis, his mastery and good taste as a writer.[19]

Criticism

After the researches of Professor Gibb he cannot of course be regarded as a primary source for the early history of the Crusades, or even for the age of Ṣalāḥuddīn, since he has sometimes been contradicted and improved upon by Bahā'uddīn and 'Imāduddīn who wrote specially upon the Crusades. Nevertheless, he remains one of the major Arabic historians.

Ibn Khallikān

Ibn Kallikān is regarded as the ablest contributor to historical biography and his work *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān* contains in alphabetical order the lives of the most celebrated men in Muslim history and literature, except those of the Holy Prophet, the four Pious Caliphs and the Companions of the Prophet and their followers (*Tābi'īn*). Ibn Khallikān's biography of the most distinguished Muslims in history is regarded by Nicholson as the "best general biography ever written".[20]

18. Gabrieli, "The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades," *Historians of the Middle East.*

19. Ibid.

20. Quoted from M.M. Sharif, *Muslim Thought—Its Origin and Achievements*, p. 43.

Ibn Miskawaih

Ibn Miskawaih was a physician, philosopher, and historian. According to Margoliouth, Miskawaih's qualifications for the composition of history are very much greater than those of Ṭabarī.[21] In his historical compositions Miskawaih could present first-hand information on the Buwaihid time and society, as he happened to be an officer at the Buwaihid court. He had been a courtier of two great Wazīrs, Muhallibī and Abu'l-Faḍl ibn al-'Amīd, for a period of twelve years, and as such he had the privilege of coming in contact with many official reports and information and with persons engaged in various official works of the Buwaihid Empire. Besides, there are five others, in addition to the two Wazīrs mentioned above, whom Ibn Miskawaih trusted, and from whom he received eye-witness reports for his work. Those five persons were Abu'l-'Alā' Sa'īd ibn Thābit, Abū Bakr ibn Abī Sa'īd, 'Alī ibn al-Qāsim, who were secretaries, and Fīrūz, the court physician, and Muḥammad ibn 'Umar 'Alawī, active politician of the time.[22] He was also familiar, for the above reason, with methods of administration and warfare of the time. He, therefore, furnishes copious information about the economy of the empire, the sources and method of taxation, etc., whereas Ṭabarī's information regarding these matters is very scanty.[23]

His merits.

Criticism

But Miskawaih relied too much upon the reports of

21. Op. cit., p. 129.

22. M. S. Khan, "The Eye-witness Reporters of Miskawaih's History," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4, October 1964.

23. Margoliouth, op. cit., p. 129.

officials and ministers, and even on the reports of such persons who collected them from the officials. This sort of excessive reliance upon official reports has also its risks as it has its advantages. According to Professor M.S. Khan, the historian also refused to receive any report unfavourable to his patron, the Bawaihid Sulṭān, 'Aḍad-ud-Dawlah,[24] but Margoliouth, on the contrary, holds a different view. According to him, Miskawaih is singularly free from partisanship and is outspoken in his judgments. Though a servant of the Buwaihids, says the same scholar, he does never conceal their crimes and indeed condemns them in strong terms.[25]

Unlike Ṭabarī, who was a theologian and a jurist, Miskawaih exhibits very little religious partisanship.[26] Miskawaih displays greater power both as a portrayer of character and a narrator of thrilling scenes.[27]

His Views on History

Miskawaih displays an attitude of scepticism towards the supernatural.[28] He thought that the age of the Prophet, in which extraordinary revolution was accomplished in Arabia, should be treated as a phenomenon outside the pale of history, i.e. usual human experience. But Ibn Khaldūn holds a different view.

Ibn Miskawaih's and Ibn Khaldūn's Views

In the words of Franz Rosenthal, "Miskawaih com-

24. M.S. Khan, op. cit.
25. Margoliouth, op. cit., p. 130.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 132.
28. Ibid., p. 133.

pletely eliminated God from history by the simple expedient of declaring the doing of the Prophet Muhammad's life-work something outside human experience, that is, history, and, therefore, not deserving the attention of the historian. . . . Like Miskawaih Ibn Khaldun had to divorce the traditional view from his own historical insights by assuming two different levels of existence, the supernatural or divine and the human. Both levels, he contended, are normally separate. Human history moved in circles, determined by material needs and psychological attitudes, and these circles are only very occasionally and irregularly disturbed by some arbitrary, if highly effective, supernatural interference. He characterized the period of Muhammad as a glorious and awe-inspiring one, to be sure—during which the *'asabiyya*[29] was inoperative."[30]

Regarding his attitude to the *Isnād* it may be said that Miskawaih was particular about it before 952 C.E. but after that he omitted them.

In attitude and outlook Miskawaih was secular, so to say. Like his predecessor Ṭabarī or others, he was free from Ṭraditionist bias and studied history from the sociological angle. Perhaps, for that reason, Margoliouth says that historical composition reached the highest summit in his time.[31] A certain scholar says, his "'Experience of the Nations'[32] is noteworthy for its objectivity, impartiality and outspoken judgments."[33]

29. *'Aṣabiyyah* is a term used by Ibn Khaldūn to mean group-mind.

30. "The Influence of Biblical Tradition on Muslim Historiography," *Historians of the Middle East*, p. 40.

31. Op. cit.

32. His book, of which the title is *Tajārib al-'Umam.*

33. Robert L. Gulick, Jr., *Muhammad the Educator.*

Chapter VI

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406)

Ibn Khaldūn as an Historian

Ibn Khaldūn, De Boer observes, "comes forward with a claim to establish new philosophical discipline, of which Aristotle had no conception".[1] The historical works of his forerunners, particularly of Ṭabarī and Mas'ūdī, have had most influence on the development of his thoughts. According to Walter J. Fischel, the historian Ṭabarī is regarded by Ibn Khaldūn as "one of the few good historians" and counted among those historians of whom there are "not more than the fingers on one hand". Ibn Khaldūn leans heavily on Ṭabarī's historical works and draws material from him for his history of the non-Arabic peoples and for the illustration of his own socio-philosophical views.[2] Mas'ūdī discarded the old school of historiography which followed closely in the Traditionist method and conceived of a new style and technique of history-writing which took cognizance of society and social aspects of human life. This particular standpoint was fully developed by Ibn Khaldūn and he made a scientific and analytic study of history, which established history as a science—a subject which teaches us that it is not a mere catalogue of facts, nor a mere narrative of past happenings, but a science to be studied for understanding the causes of the rise and fall of States and nations. It is Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddamah*

1. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 203.
2. *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane*, p. 87.

("Prolegomena") which forms his main contribution to his social and political philosophy.

The Background of Arabic Historiography before Ibn Khaldūn

Before we discuss Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy of history at some length, let us not forget the contributions of his predecessors who prepared the field for him. Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Hishām, Wāqidī, Balādhurī, Ṭabarī, and, last but not the least, Mas'ūdī were pioneers in a long and illustrious line of historians who first employed criticism in historical research and placed it on a scientific footing. The Arab spirit of scientific thought and systematic inquiry, which wrought a revolution in practically all the realms of knowledge, effected a transformation in the field of historiography also by elevating the dry records of the past into a dynamic philosophy of social development. The person through whom this spirit manifested itself in the domain of history was Ibn Khaldūn of Tunis (1332-1406).

The Genius of Ibn Khaldūn who gave a New Interpretation to History

In the words of Dr Buddha Prakash, "Ibn Khaldun flashed like a solitary star in a pervasive fall of darkness. He is the father of sociology, the inventor of the scientific method of human studies and the originator of the philosophy of history." [3]

"It was no wonder," says Professor H.K. Sherwani, "that a man of such worldwide experience and remarkable

3. Dr. Buddha Prakash: "Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History," *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1954, p. 492.

calibre should have forestalled later European authors in his breadth of vision, inventive mind and favour of analysis."[4]

"By the consensus of all critical opinion," writes P.K. Hitti, "Ibn Khaldūn was the greatest historical philosopher Islam produced and one of the greatest of all times."[5]

"Ibn Khaldūn," observes Charles Issawi, "remained for five centuries a Prophet without honour in either his own country or abroad. During the last hundred years, however, he has increasingly attracted the interest of both Arab and Western scholars. He was discovered by the West too late to influence its thought; but there, perhaps even more than in the East, his genius has been fully appreciated."[6] Professor Robert Flint's glowing tribute to the genius of the great historian is worth quoting: "Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were not his peers and these names are not even fit to be mentioned along with his name."[7]

Kitāb al-'Ibar and Muqaddamah. Now, in the context of the above findings and views let us now discuss Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy of history as it has been presented in his *Muqaddamah.* The *Muqaddamah* ("Prolegomena") is the long preface or introduction to a larger book *Kitāb al-'Ibar* of which it constitutes the first volume. In this volume, viz. the *Muqaddamah,* the phenomena of society and State are discussed at length, and in which the author expounds his sociological and philosophical views. The second book of four volumes begins with an account of the history of

4. H.K. Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration,* p. 197.

5. P.K. Hitti, *The History of the Arabs,* p. 568.

6. Charles Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History,* p. 25.

7. Robert Flint, *Philosophy of History.*

ancient nations such as those of the pre-Islamic Arabs, Babylonians and Nabateans, Copts, Israelites and Jews, early Christians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Goths, Turks, and Franks up to eighth/fourteenth century and deals then with the history of Islam, the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsids, and other dynasties until the author's time. The third book, dealing with the history of the Berbers up to the days of the author, fills the sixth and the seventh volumes. Ibn Khaldūn concluded his *Kitāb al-'Ibar* with some chapters about his life and activities. This part, usually called "Autobiography," consists of several long chapters in which he describes his origin and genealogy, his early education, his teachers and the books he read, his activities in the political sphere of North Africa and Spain, the various posts and positions he held under almost all the leading rulers and dynasties of the Maghrib of his time, his visit to Granada, his mission to the Christian king Pedro the Cruel, and then his retirement into the fortress of Qatat ibn Salama in order to write his "History," his return to Tunis, and his subsequent departure from Tunis to Egypt in the year 784/1382. In writing about his life in Egypt Ibn Khaldūn dwelt at great length on his relations with the Mamlūk Sulṭān Barqūq, his various academic appointments to al-Azhar, his appointment as the Mālikite chief judge, the intrigues against him, his resignation from the post of Qāḍī, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his return therefrom to Egypt.

Ibn Khaldūn, in his *'Ibar*, Volume V, has given an account of the Tartars, of Chengiz Khan and his sons, and of the early campaigns and expeditions of Tīmūr up to the year 1395 C.E. In these last chapters on his "Autobio-

graphy" he continues Tīmūr's biography and activities up to the year 1402 C.E., an account which is so valuable inasmuch as it is based on a direct contact with the conqueror and on intimate knowledge of his personality.

Some remarkable comments of scholars about the *Muqaddamah*.

As regards the *Muqaddamah* in which Ibn Khaldūn's historical philosophy has been expounded, the world famous historians have held high opinion. Some observations of those scholars will be of great interest and will serve the purpose of giving us a clear idea of the genius of Ibn Khaldūn. Ibn Khaldūn's fame as one of the greatest historians of Islam, as the forerunner of modern sociology, has been acknowledged by modern scholars in glowing terms. A.J. Toynbee[8] declares it to be "the greatest work of its kind that has been created by any mind in any time or place." G. Sarton[9] regards it as "one of the noblest and most impressive monuments of medieval thought." R.A. Nicholson[10] thus evaluates the *Muqaddamah*: "No Muslim had even taken a view at once so comprehensive and so philosophical; none had attempted to trace the deeply hidden forces of events, to expose the moral and physical forces at work beneath the surface, or to divide the immutable laws of national progress and decay. . . . He stood far above his age, and his own countrymen had admired rather than followed him. His intellectual descendants are the great medieval and modern historians of Europe—Machiavelli and Vico and Gibbon." "He [Ibn Khaldūn]," M.A. Enan says, "is distinguished from his predecessors for excellent arrangement and presentation, as well as for

8. *A Study in History*, Vol. III, p. 322.
9. *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. III. p. 1775.
10. *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 438.

clearness, precision in the division of subjects and in making tables of contents. . . . Ibn Khaldūn has a special style of exposition and expression. As his Prolegomena is distinguished for the brilliance of its literary style which is at the same time characterised by simplicity, force of expression, precision of argument and harmony . . . notwithstanding occasional weakness of style, queerness of expression, as well as the use of unusual words . . . ."[11] Franz Rosenthal[12] writes, "While the form of the Muqaddimah and the scholarly details of its compositions are not without significance for the proper appreciation of the work and its author, its main interest is as a contribution to human thought . . . much of its value lies in the light that it sheds upon details in Ibn Khaldun's political, sociological, economic and philosophic thinking." Elsewhere,[13] Franz Rosenthal pays tribute to Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddamah* thus: "Our evidence does not permit us to attribute a great amount of originality to Ibn Khaldun so far as the details of his work are concerned. Yet, he was right when he claimed that his Muqaddimah was profoundly original and constituted a new departure in scholarly research. The Muqaddimah re-evaluates, in an altogether unprecedented way, practically every simple individual manifestation of a great and highly developed civilization. It accomplishes this both comprehensively and in detail in the light of one fundamental and sound insight, namely, by considering everything as a function of man and human social organization."

Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History. History, as

11. *Ibn Khaldūn—His Life and Work*, pp. 105-6.
12. *Maqaddimah*, Introduction, Vol. I, p. lxxi.
13. Ibid., p. lxxxvi.

conceived by Ibn Khaldūn, is the record of human society, or world civilisation, of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another with the resulting kingdoms and States, with their various ranks; of the different activities and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts; and in general of all the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature.[14] As a philosopher of history Ibn Khaldūn, in his *Muqaddamah*, "prescribed for the first time a theory of historical development which takes due cognizance of the physical facts of climate and geography as well as the moral and spiritual forces at work. As one who endeavours to find and formulate laws of natural progress and decay Ibn Khaldūn may be considered the discoverer of the true scope and nature of history."[15] History was so long a mere record of events and chronicle of kings and dynasties, but Ibn Khaldūn for the first time saw through these phenomena the stages of the growth of the social and political lives of nations. He studies the effects of geographical features, climate, air, food, etc., upon the growth and evolution of civilisation and culture; in other words, the above things influence and determine the nature and pattern of human character and civilisation, thought and culture, society and State. Dr Inayatullah says that Ibn Khaldūn dealt with the subject of geographical influence more fully, and based his survey of human civilisation on a careful geographical analysis.

Influence of Climate. Ibn Khaldūn has cleary examined

14. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 56.
15. P. K. Hitti, op. cit., p. 568.

the influence of climate upon the character, temperament, taste, and culture of individuals and nations. He has expounded his theory by citing examples from history. He has illustrated his theory that people living in very cold climatic regions such as Siberia or Lapland or people living near the Equator, exposed to excessive heat, cannot make much progress and contribute to human thought. According to him, nations living in temperate zones such as Romans, Greeks, Persians, and Arabs, more than any other nation, have contributed to civilisation. In our days we find that Englishmen and French and other nations living in not very cold climatic regions made progress in subsequent times. This example has only confirmed the theory of Ibn Khaldūn. On the contrary, he says that countries with extreme climates are much inferior in civilisation and culture. He says, even man's common sense and wisdom, habits and customs are affected also by longitude and latitude.

Group-Mind and Other Factors in the Formation of State. In the formation of State, Ibn Khaldūn says, one of the factors is the sense of oneness or group-mind, which he termed as *'Aṣabīyah*. This group-mind and religion are two of the most important factors at the root of the evolution of States. At the same time he does not assign to religion, according to Khuda Bukhsh, a place of importance as a formative element in civilisation. In this respect, the historian observes, Ibn Khaldūn is the first representative of an intellectual tendency which manifested itself in the West only five hundred years later.[16] In the words of Franz Rosenthal: "Religious fervour and the appearance of Prophets, who, incidentally, cannot succeed in this

16. S. Khuda Bukhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, Vol. II, p. 209.

world without concrete political support, can intensify and accelerate political movements. History offers instances of these, the most prominent one being the phenomenal, superhuman success of Islam." [17]

In Modern Times. But in modern times group-mind or unity of purpose has played more than religion or any other factor in the formation of such heterogeneous States as Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, and the United States of America.

Different Stages of Civilisation. Further, Ibn Khaldūn has maintained that human civilisation advances from pastoral and nomadic to urban and city-life and ultimately to vast imperial dominion. The nomadic simple, rude, and natural life is replaced by a life of opulence and luxury which leads to indolence in place of former activity, which again produces effeminate nature in men, rendering them unfit for protection from foreign aggression.[18] In that stage the ruler is obliged to employ mercenaries in order to save the State. In this stage the State does not last long and ceases to exist and dies a natural death. The other process may also begin to work when the autocracy or absolutism of the ruler, because of people's inertia or indolence, may be ultimately challenged by popular movement and the State in that case may grow strong and virile and the cycle begins to work again.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn says that the State has an organic growth. Like a human being, it has its birth, youth, old age, decay, and death. This organic conception of society and biological interpretation of history places Ibn Khaldūn

17. F. Rosenthal, op. cit., Intro., p. cxxiii.

18. The history of the Arabs, their rise, development, decay and downfall illustrate and prove the assumptions of Ibn Khaldūn.

in the category of modern exponents of this important school of sociological thought. We feel as if Oswald Spengler was merely recapitulating the theories and concepts of Ibn Khaldūn.[19]

Ibn Khaldūn's Handicaps. And this magnificent achievement of Ibn Khaldūn surprises us all the more when we take into consideration the handicaps under which he had to work. As Charles Issawi says, he had to work and build up a theory of society with the little material which he had in his time. And most of the weaknesses of his theories, Issawi says, can be attributed to the poverty and unreliability of the material on which he worked.[20]

Lastly, let us close the discussion on Ibn Khaldūn by quoting Charles Issawi, who says, "And if, to the best of our knowledge, he had no predecessor he certainly had no successor in the world of Islam."[21]

Life-sketch

Let us close the discussion of Ibn Khaldūn with his birth, parentage, and life-sketch. 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn was born in Tunis on 1 Ramaḍān 732/27 May 1332 and belonged to an Andalusian family which had migrated from Andalusia or Muslim Spain to Tunis in the middle of the seventh century of the Hijrah. He is believed by some writers to have originally descended from the Yemenite Arabs of Hadramaut, but he himself did not claim to be an Arab. In his "Prolegomena" he shows strong prejudice and hosti-

19. Dr Buddha Prakash, op. cit.

20. Op. cit., p 25.

21. Ibid., p. 24. M.A. Enan (op. cit) says that traces of his influence can be seen in the work of the Egyptian scholar and historian al-Maqrīzī who attended his lectures in Cairo.

lity to the Arabs, while, in another part of his history, he praises the Berbers and extols many traits of their character and qualities.

Ibn Khaldūn served under Sulṭān Abū 'Inān, son of Sulṭān Abu'l-Ḥasan, King of Morocco, as a member of his Academy (Council of 'Ulamā'), and also as one of his secretaries and seal-bearers. But later, due to a conspiracy with the rival of Sulṭān Abū 'Inān, the historian fell from honour and was arrested and imprisoned. After two years of imprisonment, Abū 'Inān promised to release him on his supplications, but before his release Abū 'Inān fell ill and died (1358 C.E.). The Wazīr al-Ḥasan ibn 'Umar, the acting regent, released him and restored him to his post. He also served under Abū Salam as secretary and then as Chief Qāḍī. He later migrated to Andalusia. Ibn Khaldūn was married, but he tells us nothing of his children and family. He breathed his last in 1406. With him passed a renowned Muslim savant from the Islamic world and an original thinker and master mind from the world.

PART II

MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY INSIDE INDO-PAKISTAN

Chapter VII

General Characteristics of Muslim Historiography inside Indo-Pakistan

Muslim historiography inside the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent developed in an atmosphere and in circumstances different from those prevailing in early Islam. In that period of historical development history was closely linked with Ḥadīth and followed in fact the Traditionist method till the time of Ṭabarī of ninth century C.E.

But here in Indo-Pakistan, history had nothing to do with Ḥadīth, since historical development had reached a stage when it could free itself from the influence of the Traditionist method; in other words, the stage of linking history with the study of Ḥadīth was no longer necessary.

Secondly, historiography outside Indo-Pakistan developed in a freer atmosphere. In other words, writing of history was done independently and without any prejudice to or influence from any quarters, since in early times court history or official history did not develop. Of course, in later times in Umayyad and specially in 'Abbāsid times official history was written and thence writing of history was influenced by the likes and dislikes of the Caliphs and rulers. Thus we find that historical works written in the 'Abbāsid times were not in general fair and just to the Umayyad Caliphs and their times. Balādhurī, Ṭabarī, and Mas'ūdī, to name only a few, wrote histories independently. When court historians came to the fore, politicians and statesmen achieved eminence and

others fell to the background.

Historiography, both outside and inside Indo-Pakistan, was written from religious outlook and both had didactic purposes. But historiography outside Indo-Pakistan later developed into a full-fledged science which had its beginning at the hands of Mas'ūdī and its culmination at the hands of Ibn Khaldūn. Of course, even before Mas'ūdī Arab historiography was critical and, therefore, scientific in its attitude and outlook. Subsequently, history was established as a science by Ibn Khaldūn to be studied for understanding the nature and character of different cultures and civilisations.

In Indo-Pakistan, history that was written in the days of the Delhi Sulṭāns and the Mughal Emperors was no doubt accurate and critical as a whole, but, developed as it was mostly in the court, it suffered from some drawbacks: sometimes, it was employed to eulogise the Sulṭāns with whom historians were in favour, or to condemn them when they happened to be in conflict with them. This does not mean, of course, that truth was always suppressed. Rather there are instances of historians narrating the truth and speaking things against their patrons, for instance, Baranī and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah sometimes tell the unpleasant truth, though of course they sometimes exaggerate things or distort facts. Likewise, Badā'ūnī, Niẓāmuddīn Bakhshī, Ferishtah, and others told the truth even of it went against the interest of their masters. Badā'ūnī of Akbar's court praised the genius of Sher Shāh, the Afghān leader, and Ferishtah, writing at the court of the Bijapur Sulṭān Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh, sometimes wrote things against his patron and in favour of the Mughal Emperors.

Besides, the standard of writing history and presentation of facts was so high that some historians have won admiration and applause from European scholars and thinkers. Pitt, a renowned statesman of England, paid glowing tribute to the genius of Ferishtah as an historian in a sitting of the House of Commons.[1] Lord Macaulay very often used to quote from Ghulām Ḥusain's *Siyar-ul-Muta'akhkhirīn* and spoke highly of the excellent writing of the historian.[2] Baranī, though his writings suffered from some defects, was considerably accurate and truthful. In the words of Dr Iswari Prasad : "For matters which did not affect his order or the religion of Islam he is perfectly reliable and, although he is always deficient in chronology and careless in his methods or arrangement, he records the annals of the reign with considerable accuracy and truthfulness."[3] Professor John Dowson too has highly praised the veracity and impartiality of the historian Baranī.

In spite of the fact that Baranī betrayed his lack of sense of proportion while writing the accounts of the reign of the Delhi Sulṭāns as he has attached more importance to some less noted reigns and less importance to some notable reigns, none the less he has described, more than any other historian of his age, all the aspects of the people's life of that time besides the political. He has quoted, for instance, even the market prices of different consumer goods and other necessaries of human life. Besides the narrative mode of writing history Baranī and Ferishtah

1. S.M. Ikram, *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan*. Dr Habibullah too has praised Ferishtah's accuracy and scientific treatment of facts—*Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 16.

2. S.M. Ikram, op. cit.

3. *A History of the Qarannah Turks in India*, pp. 344-5.

discussed in their works the cultural, religious, and economic aspects of life including the political. Moreover, Baranī's technique of portraying human character was indeed marvellous and this evoked praise from a person of no less eminence than Lytton Strachey.[4] The quality of Bābar's memoirs (*Bābarnāmah*) and Abul Faḍl's *Āīn-i-Akbarī* has also been highly praised by scholars.

Lastly, though in general the style and language of the writings of medieval Muslim historians were ornate and burdened with heavy rhetoric, yet the presentation of historians like Baranī, 'Afīf, and Ferishtah was on the whole lucid and clear. After these general observations on the nature and character of writings of Muslim historians of medieval Indo-Pakistan we shall now take up individual historians for elaborate discussion.

4. S.M. Ikram, op. cit.

Chapter VIII

Historians of the Sultanate Period

Ḥasan Niẓāmī's Tāj al-Ma'athir

Among the early Muslim historians who have dealt with the foundation of Muslim rule in India and the early part of the regime of the Sulṭāns of Delhi the names of Ḥasan Niẓāmī, author of *Tāj al-Ma'athir*, and Fakhruddīn Mubārak Shāh, known as Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, are worthy of mention. The earliest among the above writers is Ḥasan Niẓamī who wrote *Tāj al-Ma'athir* completed towards the end of Iltutmish's reign. According to Dr Habibullah, "it contains a narration of the chief military events of the years 1192-1228, and, although extremely florid and ornamental in style, is generally correct in the minimum of facts which it embodies."[1] The author came to India soon after the conquest of Delhi and commenced his work early in the reign of Aibak to whom the first part of the work was dedicated. But the work does not contain any narration from the year 1227-28 except one copy which Elliot procured.

Fakhr-i-Mudabbir

According to Dr Habibullah, "Extremely valuable for the early history of the conquest and independent of the *Tajul-Ma'athir*, is the historical portion in the Introduction to the Book of Genealogies of Fakhruddin Mubarak

1. Dr A. B. M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Introductory, p. 9.

Shah, known as Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, discovered and edited by Denison Ross. The author, who was a learned man of repute in the court of Ghazni and later of Delhi, wrote another history of the Ghorides in verse which, though mentioned by Minhaj-i-Siraj, unfortunately does not appear to be extant."[2]

Minhāj-i-Sirāj and His Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī

Introduction about the Author and His Work. Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī of Minhājuddīn Abū 'Umar b. Sīrājuddīn al-Juzjānī, completed in 1260, is a connected account of the period it covers. The author held high ecclesiastical and judicial offices in the reign of Iltutmish of Delhi and his successors and lived at Uch, Gawalior, Delhi, and Bengal, and from everywhere he collected his materials. A relative of Sulṭān Muḥammad, an eye-witness and participator in many of the events he narrates, he has written a very interesting and informative account of the period. In fact, it is a very lucid and accurate account of the foundation and consolidation of the Delhi Sulṭanate. His work covers the events of the Sulṭanate till the close of the reign of Nāṣiruddīn Maḥmūd to whom he has dedicated his work. Major Raverty has translated and edited this work. According to Dr Habibullah, "He is biased towards the Ghorides and the dynasty of Iltutmish and in many places conceals facts unfavourable to his patron Ulugh Khan and the Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud to whom the work is dedicated. Although generally correct with regard to facts, he is very sparing in supplying details and in some places makes contradictory statements. Nevertheless its

2. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

value as our main original source can hardly be over-estimated."[3]

Minhāj supplies an important information with regard to the conquest of Bengal. With regard to Ikhtiyāruddīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī, Minhāj furnishes us with the information that Bakhtiyār established in Bengal and Bihar mosques, colleges, Khanqahs or charitable establishments consisting of students' hostels and travellers' guest-houses, founded cities and established military outposts at strategic points and had coins minted in the name of his master Quṭubuddīn Aibak.[4] He also erected embankments, constructed roads and bridges connecting his military outpost at Deokot and his southern outpost at Lakhnor (Birbhum) with his newly founded capital at Lakhnauti. But, curiously enough, his narration stops in 1260 and does not provide us with any information for a period of five years, i.e. from 1260 to 1265, and this blank has not been filled up by any subsequent writer.

3. Ibid., pp. 10-1.
4. *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, pp. 149-51.

Chapter IX

Dia'uddin Barani and His Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi

Baranī's Merits

The unfinished work of Minhāj-i-Sirāj was taken up by Ḍiā'uddīn Baranī, an historian of great merit and renown. Although he was not very particular about the accuracy of dates, which naturally detracted much from his credit, he was nevertheless a powerful historian who left behind him an interesting and illuminating account of the reigns of the Delhi Sulṭāns up to the sixth year of Fīrūz Shāh's reign along with a description of social, cultural, religious, and economic conditions of the people of that time. He handled his materials with such skill and ability that, instead of becoming a dry catalogue of facts, his account has become a lucid, useful, and charming historical work. "Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, completed in 758/1357, is the vigorous and trenchant expression of a conscious philosophy of history which lifts Barani out of the ranks of mere compilers of chronicles and annals. Barani wrote history as no mere pastime."[1] He did not confine himself only to the history of the Kings and Princes but also attached due importance to the literary, religious, and economic aspects of people's life. He even quoted market prices of the consumer goods and other articles of necessity.

1. P. Hardy, *Historians of the Medieval India*.

His Portrayal of Character. The minute but important details and aspects of human character never escaped the attention of the historian. The character of the stern and severe disciplinarian Balban has been so skilfully portrayed in a few words: "He hardly laughed publicly and his private attendants even never saw him without socks and shoes This minute observation of the Sultan's conduct by the historian has indeed spoken volumes about the character of the Sultan. Such skilful delineation of character has charmed a scholar like Lytton Strachey."[2]

Baranī wrote another history named *Fatāwā-i-Jahāndārī*, a political and administrative manual,[3] and he also translated into Persian an Arabic work on the Barmekids of the 'Abbāsids.

Baranī's Views on History. Baranī was not merely a narrator of events, but he held certain views about history. To him history was a very important subject which furnishes valuable guidance and provides enlightenment to kings and statesmen, ministers and officials, by which they may profit if they act upon, so that they may attain success in their achievements. History also warns the readers to avoid the base and the contemptible. History, Hardy says, is to Baranī inculcation of true religion and morality by examples, an indispensable study for the good life. Moreover, it also gives us knowledge of the annals and Traditions of Prophets, Caliphs, and Sulṭāns and other great men, of Government as well as of religion. According to Baranī, history loses its value if it concerns the deeds of mean and unworthy persons. In other words,

2. S.M. Ikram, *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan.*

3. Baranī prescribes certain requisites for a stable kingdom—a strong and contented army, a well-filled treasury, an equitable system of taxation, and an efficient intelligence system for reporting acts of injustice and wrong.

history is not meant for the common people; as Baranī says history is next in importance to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. It was from this angle of vision that Baranī wrote his history. He was an orthodox Muslim and belonged to the conservative aristocratic class. He was, therefore, not so liberal-minded and had clashes sometimes with rationalist-minded Sulṭāns like Muḥammad bin Tughlaq.

Benefits of History. According to Baranī, history confers seven benefits upon readers. Firstly, it gives mankind an acquaintance with the heavenly books, the Traditions or the deeds of the Prophets and the Sulṭāns. History is that science which provides numerous examples for those who have eyes to see or who can derive lessons. Secondly, it is the twin-brother of the science of Ḥadīth, indispensable for a knowledge of the words and deeds of the Prophets. Thirdly, history is a means of strengthening the reason and good sense by the study of the experience of others. Fourthly, a knowledge of history furnishes guidance to Sulṭāns in critical situations from past experience of others. Fifthly, a knowledge from history of the Traditions and deeds of the Prophets and the hardship they suffered will stimulate the patience and mental strength of the Muslims in trying situations and misfortunes. Sixthly, history proves to the readers the fruits of good deeds from the example of the lives of the pious and virtuous and the results of bad deeds from the lives of sinners. Thus, the Sulṭāns are induced to do good deeds and act kindly to their subjects and not indulge in tyranny and oppression. Seventhly, history is a necessary foundation of truth. It narrates truth and avoids falsehood. Thus Baranī, P. Hardy says, "conceives history to have a

didactic religious purpose. . . . Barani insists that an historian will show forth his piety and right belief by stating the truth without fear or favour. For what he writes he will be accountable to God on the Day of Judgment. In sum, then, for Barani the duty of the historian is to teach the lessons of history."[4] Elsewhere in his work the same scholar observes: "For Ziyauddin Barani in particular, the study of history was the study of God, not of man; the past is a commentary upon the Divine Purpose for men, a vehicle of Revelation."[5] But here we should be cautious to accept the remark *in toto*, since Muslim conception of history differs from the Western conception, and it would not be right and proper to study Muslim history from the Western standpoint.

Barani's Technique. According to Dr Habibullah, what Baranī purports to teach is stressed sometimes by selected examples of the ruler's behaviour, but often by long discourses on statecraft, putting them in the mouth of the historical personages. "This dramatization of history—not unknown since the days of Thucydides—together with his undoubted power of description, accounts for the fame which Barani's Tarikh has enjoyed. But the work can hardly be regarded as a chronicle. It is rather a series of character-study of rulers whose words and deeds are meant to be illustrative of the extent to which they may conform to the ideal king the author has in view."[6]

His Drawbacks. So far as the drawbacks of his writings are concerned, Baranī lacks accuracy of dates. For instance, the dates of the accessions of Balban, Kaiqubād,

4. P. Hardy, op. cit., pp. 23-4.
5. Ibid., p. 118.
6. Dr Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, pp. 11-2.

and Jalāluddīn Khaljī are incorrect. The historian is also found wanting in sense of proportion which is so necessary for a reputed writer who aims compiling a comprehensive and authentic account, an account of the history and politics of more than one century. Curiously enough, the historian has devoted the same number of pages to the short and dull reign of Jalāluddīn Khaljī (1290-6) as to the longest and most eventful reign of Muḥammad bin Tughlaq. Then, again, Kaiqubād's reign with almost nothing of importance except the Khaljī revolution covers nearly fifteen pages more than the reign of Ghiyāthuddīn Tughlaq.[7] Besides, Baranī had the habit of resorting to the device of putting his own ideas into the mouths of others. The counsels of Balban to Bughra Khān or of the latter to his son Kaiqubād are illustrations of the tendency. This is the view maintained by Dr A.B.M. Habibullah.

His Fearlessness in Expressing the Truth. According to S.M. Ikram, "What distinguishes him more than anything else is his fearlessness in expressing the truth and criticizing and condemning the actions of great men when necessary. For a contemporary writer this is highly creditable and even if he had no other qualities he would have deserved to be ranked with the most eminent historians of his age."[8]

Fatāwā-i-Jahāndārī. Baranī's *Fatāwā-i-Jahāndārī* too is a remarkable book. In this book Baranī lays down his own opinion that only the first four rightly-guided Caliphs were true Muslim rulers, since, following the example of the Prophet, they combined in themselves personal poverty, humility towards God, and the duties of rulership. Moreover,

7. Dr Moinul Haq, *Baranī's History ofthe Tughlaqs*.
8. Op. cit.

they were the elected representatives of the people, whereas beginning from the Umayyad Caliphs all rulers gained authority by military force or nomination by their predecessors or a diploma of investiture by the Caliph. To the question as to how such rulers may justly claim their subjects' obedience and escape Divine wrath and punishment although their power is *prima facie* un-Islamic in origin and character, Baranī's answer is that the Muslim Sulṭāns and Caliphs must utilise that power in the protection and maintenance of Islam or in the establishment of a State of social peace and order in which Islam can flourish. Thus a true Muslim Sulṭān is he who enforces the Sharī'ah, suppresses unorthodoxy and infidelity, dispenses strict justice, and appoints only pious Muslims to office. If any Muslim Sulṭān acts up to this advice and remains inwardly humble before and dutiful towards God, he may hope for salvation in the next world despite his indulgence in outward pomp and magnificence.

But Baranī held certain peculiar views which do not behove an historian. He does not attribute 'Alā'uddīn's all-round success to his own talent and ability, but it was, he believed, due to the blessings of the Chishtī saint, Shaikh Niẓāmuddīn Auliyā' of Delhi. The saint's blessings are no doubt true but to attribute everything to the saint's blessings is going too far. Individual initiative and talents have no doubt values of their own and play an important part in bringing success to a person.

Baranī was well connected with the ruling circles of Delhi. His father, Mu'ayyid al-Mulk, was uncle to Arqali Khān, the second son of Jalāluddīn Khaljī, and his paternal uncle Malik 'Alā'ul-Mulk was Kotwāl of Delhi under Sulṭān 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī. His other relatives too held

high posts in the reign of Balban. Baranī himself became a courtier and boon companion of Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq for seventeen years and three months. Baranī says that after the death of his patron he fell on evil days because of the jealousy of his enemies who secured his banishment from the court. Had it not been for the kindness of Fīrūz Shāh Tughlaq, the successor of Muḥammad bin Tughlaq, Baranī says in his own words, he would have "slept in the lap of my Mother Earth".

After Baranī's death the history of the Tughlaqs was written by Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afīf who dwelt on the entire reign of Fīrūz Tughlaq.

Chapter X

Shams-i-Siraj 'Afif and His Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi

'Afif's Conception of History. As P. Hardy writes: "Certainly Afif opens the *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* in the manner of a biography of a mystic. God, he says, created two worlds, this one and the next, wherein He may repose those who worship Him and keep His commandments. Out of His Bounty He has communicated some of His divine purposes to Mankind through the Prophet Muhammad and has made him Sultan of both worlds. But the Prophet, like a true Sufi, does not crave this power and has delegated it to Ulama and Mashaikh on the one hand and pious Sultans on the other. Farsighted Sultans have followed the example of leaders of religion (*imaman-i-din*). As the *maqamat* of the people of the mystic path are of particular value, Afif will, he says, set down ten *maqamat* which are peculiarly appropriate for rulers. The use of the term *maqamat* to describe qualities in rulers indicates that Afif intended to write in a manner befitting a biographer of a pious Sufi rather than of a politic Sultan."[1] *A maqām* (plural, *maqāmāt*) or "station" is a technical term for certain stages through which the mystic must pass on the way to God. Among them are *taubah* or turning to God in repentance, *wara'* or abstinance from what is unlawful, and *riḍā'* or complete resignation to the will of God.

1. *Historians of the Medieval India.*

Ten Virtues of an Ideal Sulṭān. These *maqāmāt* are: (1) *shafqat*, or compassion for God's creatures; (2) *'afw*, or forgiveness of the sins of others from fear of God; (3) *'adl* and *faḍl*, capacity for justice and wisdom; (4) *muqātilah*, or readiness to fight against the lower self and the forces of evil, and to fight for true religion; (5) *īthār* and *iftikhār*, or generosity to raise people in dignity; (6) *'aẓmat* and *rab*, or power and majesty, the capacity to overawe the turbulent and the infidel for true religion's sake; (7) *hushyārī* and *bedārī*, or vilgilance and alertness in saving and serving the good and in combating lust and passion for material things; (8) *'ibrat*, or circumspection and ability to set an example; (9) faith and *naṣrat*, or victory over one's lower self, over the enemies of Islam and of the realm, and the last (10) *kiyāsat* and *firāsat*, or sagacity and foresight to foresee what is in the interests of religion and government in unforeseen circumstances.

Fīrūz—a Model Sulṭān for 'Afīf. According to 'Afīf, Fīrūz Tughluq was mild and kindhearted and abstained from cruelty and oppression unlike other Sulṭāns of Delhi, and resorted to justice and fairplay to win the hearts of men. He was, 'Afīf says, the Imām of the age, since during his long reign of forty years no Mongols crossed the Indus to attack Delhi and no disorder or rebellion marred the peace and tranquillity of the realm. 'Afīf wishes his readers to understand that the subject of his work is no ordinary man but a *walī*, a friend of God.

Criticism of His History. "In recounting the events of the reign," P. Hardy says, "Afif, though paying heed to a very general chronological sequence of events, does not attempt to place them in a close chronological order, although within particular episodes he does (but without

dates) narrate a story in detail. His main aim is to put Firuz Shah Tughluq in the most favourable light possible whatever he does; in effect, to show the Sultan to be acting as may befit those moral stations (*maqamat*) which he set forth at the beginning of the work."[2]

Be that as it may, regarding the merits of the work of 'Afīf Professor Dowson writes that his work "gives a better view of the internal conditions of India under a Mohammedan sovereign than is presented in any other work except the Ayin-i-Akbari."[3]

'Afīf no doubt bestows lavish praise on the Sulṭān as a patron and disciple of the Ṣūfīs. Indeed, according to 'Afīf,[4] Quṭbuddīn Munawwar went further than calling him a patron and a crowned Ṣūfī himself. Though 'Afīf went to excesses or exaggerated things, yet his impression about the Sulṭāns is not wholly false : it contains large elements of truth. As an instance, Fīrūz's own statement may be quoted: Fīrūz in his *Futūḥāt-i-Fīrūz Shāhī*, which he himself wrote, says that his predecessors acted upon the principle:

ملک را برقرار می خواهی تیغ را بیقرار خواهی داشت

[If you want the government to remain stable, then keep your sword moving.]

But his own policy was based on the maxim :

کرم کن چون دست تو بالا تر است که بخشائش از خشم بالا تر است

[Grant mercy when you have the upper hand, i.e. are in a higher position, for forgiveness is nobler than anger.]

Besides this, there is a clear testimony of the Hindu historian Sujan Rai who speaks about Fīrūz Tughlaq

2. Ibid.
3. *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. Firuz Shahi, p. 2.
4. *Tārikh-i-Firūz Shāhi*, pp. 22-3.

thus:

در عمر نود برگ طبعی رحمت حق پیوست و نام نیک خود را در عالمیان گذاشت -

[At the age of ninety he passed away and left a good name in both the worlds.][5]

These are eloquent proofs of the fact that Fīrūz was really a benevolent and kind ruler worthy of praise. But in all fairness we may say that 'Afīf only recounted the good deeds and praised the Sulṭān but he never pointed out his defects and drawbacks from which he suffered, and which were to no small extent responsible for the decline of his empire. Those defects were connected with the administration of the realm. The Sulṭān's weakness, lack of foresight and prudence, and his lack of personality were largely responsible for the disintegration of his dominion.

His Technique. "In technique," Hardy says, "Afif is an historian writing from 'authorities'. He accepts the word of reliable informants for his information. . . .Where Afif does not give common report or precise authority of others for the statements in his work, he relies upon his own eye-witness. That alone guarantees the truth of his assertions."[6]

In conclusion, we may say that 'Afīf was fanciful and idealistic in approach, but Baranī, with all his drawbacks, was more practical and realistic in his approach. But both stand on some common ground. As put by Hardy, "As with Barani, Afif's criteria for ascertaining historical truth are ultimately religious."[7] But unlike Baranī, 'Afīf is no writer of thesis, offering a coherent interpretation of

5. *Khulāṣat-ut-Tawārikh*, Delhi edn., p. 252.
6. Op. cit.
7. Ibid.

how and why things happen in history. He does not interpret the past (Chapter XI) in such a way as to teach specific ethical principles and course of action.[8]

8. Ibid.

Chapter XI

Yahya ibn Ahmad Sirhindi and His Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi

Professor Dowson observes: "The Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi by Yahya Ibn Ahmad Sirhindī, in spite of its small size and lack of literary pretensions, is a work of exceeding value, being the primary source of information for one particular period of Delhi history, namely the reigns of the Sultans of the Sayyid dynasty. . . . Thus he is our most original authority for a period of thirty-five years 1400-1434, or even longer, as he supplements the meagre information of Afif from about 1830 onwards. What enhances his value is that he is, in the words of Professor J.N. Sarkar, 'the only source of all our knowledge of the Sayyid period. All later writers have been directly or indirectly indebted to him for the history of the troublous times which followed the invasion of Timur.... The whole account of the Sayyid period in Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* is a mere reproduction of the statements of *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* very often copied *verbatim*. Badayuni follows it very closely. Ferishtah often borrows its very words."[1]

According to Hardy, Sir Wolseley Haig appears to have agreed with this judgment, for Chapter VIII of the third volume of the *Cambridge History of India* is almost wholly based upon the *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī*. Nothing is known of Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad beyond what he himself

1. Sarkar quoted in P. Hardy's *Historians of the Medieval India*, p. 56.

says in his *Tārīkh* and that is extremely scanty. From his information it is persumed that he was not a courtier at Delhi, though he had hoped to become one as a reward for writing his history. No information of his age, education, and previous life has been furnished by the historians.

The *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī* has given an account of the history of Islam in Hindustan from the time of Muḥammad bin Sām of Ghor to Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad's own day. It is based upon the previous Muslim historical works for the period before 1351. Among the works he utilised were *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī* by Minhāj al-Sirāj and Baranī's *Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī* and Amīr Khusrau's *Qirān al-Sa'dayn*.

So far as the merits of the book are concerned, Professor Dowson says that the author is a careful and apparently an honest chronicler, and furnishes us with all the knowledge necessary for the history of the Sayyids; in fact, it is the best source of the Sayyid period which was considerably utilised by Niẓāmuddīn Aḥmad while writing his *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*.[2]

Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad has omitted in his work all mention of 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī's economic measures which Baranī has mentioned in his *Tārīkh*. In other respects he has followed Baranī. In attributing the troubles of the reign, besides other factors mentioned by Baranī, he gives two factors—Tamashirin's invasion and famine—which Baranī either does not mention or belittles their importance. He drew certain morals from the record of human actions. In the words of P. Hardy, the historian says: "The more

2. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. VI, p. 77.

man becomes attached to worldly vanities, the more catastrophic his undoing. The world is not to be sought, it is to be avoided."[3]

3. P. Hardy, op. cit., p. 63.

Chapter XII

Amir Khusrau and His Historical Works

Amīr Khusrau (1253-1325) is the most prolific writer and versatile genius of medieval India. He was a great poet and historian and at the same time an eminent musician adept in classical music. The famous historical works which have made him famous are *Qirān al-Sa'dayn* (completed in 1289), a *mathnawī* on the meeting of Sulṭān Mu'izzuddīn Kaiqubād and his father Naṣīruddīn Bughra Khān in 1287 on the banks of the Sarju in Oudh (Awadh); the *Miftāḥ al-Futūḥ*, a *mathnawī* on four victories of Sulṭān Jalāluddīn Khaljī (completed in 1291), the *Khazā'in al-Futūḥ*, a prose account of the victories of Sulṭān 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī, completed in 1311-2, the *Dewal Rānī Khiḍr Khān*, a *mathnawī* on the love story of Khiḍr Khān, son of 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī and Dewal Rānī, daughter of Rājah Karan of Nahrwala, completed in 1316, and continued up to the blinding of Khiḍr Khān and his murder at the hands of Malik Kāfūr. Then the *Nūḥ Sipihr*, completed in 1318, describing the reign of Sulṭān Quṭubuddīn Mubārak Khaljī, and *Tughlaq Nāmah*, a *mathnawī* on the victory of Ghiyāthuddīn Tughlaq over Khusrau Khān in 1320.

Qirān al-Sa'dayn. Though Amīr Khusrau was more a poet than an historian, yet his historical works have merits of their own. Regarding his *Qirān al-Sa'dayn*, Dr B. P. Saksena writes: "*Qiran al-Sa'dayn* is the first historical *mathnawi* of the celebrated poet-historian Amir Khusrau

Dihlawi. It is decidedly the best of his works in which poetry and history have been harmoniously blended together round the central theme of the meeting of the Sultan Kaiqubad with his father Bughra Khan. The poet has woven a picturesque account of the contemporary life at Delhi. He describes the capital of the Turkish Empire in the thirteenth century with a precision of detail that vividly portrays to us its grandeur and magnificence. . . . While composing his *mathnawi* the poet's imagination was stirred to supreme heights of eloquence."[1]

The Khazā'in al-Futūḥ. "The Khazain-ul-Futuh," writes P. Hardy, "has been much valued as the history extant which was written in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. . . . The account of action in the *Khazain al-Futuh* is subordinated from the very beginning of the work to aesthetic effect."[2] Amīr Khusrau in his *Khazā'in al-Futūḥ* has given a faithful and elaborate account of 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī's conquests and campaigns. In this respect this work enjoys great merit. The historian has also praised 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī for keeping down the prices of corns by storing grain and releasing it to the market at times of scarcity, and for establishing a cloth-mart and a fruit-mart where people could make purchases at fair prices. Then the historian has also given account of the religious buildings repaired and erected by the Sulṭān. "The *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, in particular," Dr K. M. Ashraf says, "has a value of its own. Here the author gives a systematic account of the first fifteen years of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and it appears from its topographical and other details that the author was a personal witness of some at

1. Cf. *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Lahore, 4th Session, 1940, pp. 229-33.

2. *Historians of the Medieval India*, p. 76.

least of the scenes even of those in the distant south. It is the only contemporary history of the period and the facts are narrated with admirable accuracy and wealth of detail. On the whole we can agree in our estimate of Amir Khusrau with Professor Cowell that, although his style is full of exaggeration and metaphorical description, the facts are given with tolerable fidelity."[3]

The Tughlaq Nāmah. The *Tughlaq Nāmah,* the last of Amīr Khusrau's historical poems, is the story of Ghiyāth-uddīn Tughlaq's campaign and success over Khusrau Khān and his seizure of the throne of Delhi from Khusrau Khān in 1320. It is written in the form of a religious and moral melodrama.

Criticism of His History. According to Hardy, "History is not the story of a developing, changing human nature in action, developing and changing in interaction with its environment, but a spectacle of Divine Ordination. The individual is depersonalized, dehumanized; Amir Khusrau's figures, whether virtuous or vicious, are as statues polished for an exhibition, they are gods or devils, not men."[4] "For Amir Khusrau wrote about the past to fulfil not a practical, or a moral, or a religious, or an academic purpose, but to fulfil an aesthetic purpose."[5]

Let us finish this chapter with a mention of Amīr Khusrau's parentage. His father, Amīr Saifuddīn, was one of the numerous refugees who had fled from their original homes before the advancing Mongol hordes and had taken shelter in Hindustan at that time. There he soon distinguished himself as a soldier under Sulṭān Iltutmish

3. *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, 1200-1550.*
4. Hardy, op. cit., pp. 88-9.
5. Ibid., p. 92.

of Delhi and settled down at Patiali where Khusrau was born in 1253. He breathed his last in 1325 at the age of 72. He was a devoted and favourite disciple of Hāḍrat Niẓāmuddīn Auliyā' of Delhi.

Chapter XIII

Isami and His Futuh al-Salatin

A Few Words about Futūḥ. The *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn* is a remarkable literary achievement. It contains over eleven thousand couplets in the metre of Firdausī's *Shāhnāmah*, giving a history of the deeds of Muslims in Hindustan from the time of Maḥmūd of Ghzanī to the author's own day. It was written seven or eight years before Baranī's *Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī* and it was written at the court of 'Alā'uddīn Bahman Shāh, the Bahmanī Sulṭān of the Deccan, to whom the historian dedicated his work. *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn* was utilised by later Mughal historians, notably by Niẓāmuddīn Aḥmad in his *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī.*

Isāmī's Aversion for Muḥammad bin Tughlaq. Isāmī was not well disposed towards Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq of Delhi who took Isāmī, then a boy, and his old grandfather 'Izzudīn with him to Deogir or Daulatabad when the city was made a second capital. His grandfather died pathetically at Tilpat on the way to Daulatabad. Nothing is known about the life of the historian until the age of forty. Presumably he was busy in writing the *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn.* Isāmī had lost all his near and dear relatives. He had no charm of life and so he wanted to leave behind him a memorial in the shape of an historical work.

Criticism of Isāmī's work. Isāmī's narrative is vivid and his style is clear and lucid, as admitted by P. Hardy and Dr Mahdi Husain. "There is little doubt," Hardy says, "about Isami's narrative powers, his ability to tell an

interesting story."[1] Isāmī was, however, not concerned with dates. The only date given for the whole of the reign of Sulṭān 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī is that of his death. Isāmī's outlook too, like Baranī and other historians of the time, was religious. Isāmī writes that it is impossible to apply human criteria of justice and injustice to his acts. Isāmī finds God's purposes inscrutable and His commands incomprehensive to mortal man.[2]

Maḥmūd of Ghaznī was for Isāmī as for Ḍiā'uddīn Baranī (in his *Fatāwā-i-Jahāndārī*) the archetype of the perfect Muslim hero, a model for imitation by succeeding generations of Muslims.[3]

Muḥammad bin Tughlaq is condemned by Isāmī as a wicked man and as a bad Sulṭān who, he believed, killed his own father, Ghiyāthuddīn Tughlaq. He was also very much annoyed and displeased with the Sulṭān because of his ambitious projects, particularly transfer of capital to Daulatabad, in which Isāmī and his grandfather terribly suffered. This suffering Isāmī never forgot in his life, and so he could not speak well of Muḥammad bin Tughlaq. It may be noted that Isāmī is guilty of contradictory statements. In one couplet he says that the entire population was ordered to leave the city of Delhi. Later he speaks of the exile of the leading Muslims only. In his own words once he says:

Isāmī's contradictory statement.

گفتا بشهر آتشی در زند همه خلق از شهر بیرون کند

[He ordered that the city should be set to fire: the entire populace should be turned out.]

And again he says:

1. Hardy, *Historians of the Medieval India*, p. 100.
2. Ibid., p. 104.
3. Ibid., p. 107.

در آن شهر چون کس نماند ز کرام به بستند دروازها را تمام

[When none remained in the city from among the leading persons, all the gates were closed.]

Isāmī's Objective. In conclusion, it may be said that Isāmī's ambition was to be a man of letters rather than to be an historian. Dr Mahdi Husain's statement that the *Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn* may legitimately be called the "Shāhnāmah" of medieval India is not very wide of the mark. Consequently, the *Futūḥ-al-Salāṭīn* is, to sum up, not a critical history nor a theology, nor an ethic but an epic.[4] Here, the observation of Hardy about the place Ḥasan Niẓāmī, Amīr Khusrau, and Isāmī occupy in writing history may be quoted. Hardy says: "Since Hasan Nizami, Amir Khusrau and Isami subordinate history to art and treat the past as raw material for the poetic imagination, showing indeed great disinclination for facts and every inclination for fantasy, it is perhaps arguable whether their works should be classed as part of Indo-Muslim historiography, important as they may be as historital evidence."[5] About medieval history in general, P. Hardy observes: "History is purposeful and directed, though by other than human hands. In the final analysis, Muslim historiography in early medieval India is theocratic rather than humanist."[6]

Futūḥ—the Shāhnāmah of medieval India, not a critical history.

4. Ibid., p. 110.
5. Hardy, in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 125.
6. Ibid., pp. 126-7.

Chapter XIV

Ibn Battutah

Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, a foreigner to Hindustan, and an itinerary pre-eminently, was also an historian. Though as a traveller he was not attached to any court, and as such had the advantage of being free from local prejudices and influences, yet against these advantages we should bear in mind his handicaps. Being a traveller he had become used to swallowing all sorts of stories and gossips without carefully weighing their authenticity. In the case of Indo-Pakistan his accounts could not remain unaffected by his personal relations with the Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq with whom he had good and cordial relations for about eight years as a judge in Delhi, but subsequently he came to have bitter relations with the Sulṭān, which caused his imprisonment for some time. This fact, nevertheless, embittered their mutual relations and coloured Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's attitude towards the Sulṭān.

Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Baṭṭūṭah (1304-78) was a native of Tangiers. He was one of the greatest medieval travellers and he extensively travelled during a period of about twenty-eight years (1325-55). He visited North Africa, Arabia, Asia Minor, Iraq, Persia, the Levant, and Constantinople and from there he visited Khwarazm, Bukhara, and Samarqand, and then through Khurasan and Afghanistan he crossed the Hindukush and arrived in Sind on 1 Muharram 754/12 September 1333. On his way to Delhi he passed through Multan and the Punjab. When he

reached Delhi in 1334 the Sulṭān was at Daulatabad, the second capital. He was, however, well received by the Wazīr and very soon rose to great favour with the Sulṭān who appointed him Qāḍī of Delhi, a post he occupied for about eight years, and had excellent opportunities of watching and observing the activities of the Sulṭān and the policy of his government. After about eight years he lost favour with the Sulṭān for some unknown reason and was, as said before, arrested and imprisoned.

Although the reconciliation came afterwards, the two were never actually reconciled. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah was then sent to China on a diplomatic mission. On the way he was shipwrecked and reached Maldive islands from where he came to Madura in South India. Then he came to Chittagong and sailed for China. He is believed to have met Shāh Jalāl Tabrīzī of Sylhet from whom he received a robe called *Khirqah* (the cloak of a saint). On his way back he passed through Sumatra and visited the Indian ports of Quilon and Calicut. He then went to Arabia and performed the pilgrimage and returned home in 1349. After another short journey in Central Africa he settled in Morocco. He wrote his *Riḥlah* and died in Morocco in 1377-8 at the age of seventy-three.

As already mentioned, his subsequent estrangement with the Sulṭān led him to distort facts or relate what was not true. He lent willing ears to the enemies of the Sulṭān. His book contains many errors, which may be said to have been due to two causes. Firstly, he had lost his notes which he took down in his travels, and, secondly, for the events to which he himself was not an eye-witness he accepted the versions of his narrators rather uncritically. His evidence, therefore, is to be received with caution,

and unless his evidence for which he relies upon others is corroborated by better authorities, it should not be taken as conclusive. In the light of this fact Dr Mahdi Husain's observation appears to be too much when he says: "Ibn Batuta possessed greater advantages than Barani for getting new and accurate information about facts."

Before we close the discussion of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, let us give a few instances of his deliberate distortion of fact. Though he accused in his book *Riḥlah* the Sulṭān of deserting the capital city Delhi, yet when he arrived in Delhi (1334), a time when Delhi was not the capital, he unguardedly expressed the truth in his book that he found the city very populous and flourishing.[1] In this way though he attempted to suppress the truth, yet he unwillingly committed the truth.

But, in all fairness, it must also be admitted that Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's evidence has sometimes been found correct. For instance, so far as the project of the Khurasan expedition is concerned, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah told the truth, whereas many other historians distorted the whole thing. It was Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who has furnished the information that Tamashirin of Khurasan did not invade Delhi, rather he came with his troops to Delhi to take shelter, being defeated and pursued by the troops of Abū Sa'īd of Persia. And 5000 dīnārs which the Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq offered to Tamashirin was by way of presentation to an honoured guest, and not by way of buying him off to save his throne from his raid. This is the view maintained by Dr Mahdi Husain. So, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah sometimes tells the truth and his information has given us light on some

1. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah again assigned the reason for transfer of capital to writing of letters, abusive and objectionable, by the people addressed to the Sulṭān.

important events of the Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq.

Then, again, it was Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who has given us correct information with regard to the Qarachil expedition. Neither Baranī nor Ferishtah has furnished correct information, whereas Ibn Baṭṭūṭah has alone maintained that the expedition was launched against the hill-chieftain and his tribe of Qarachil at the foot of the Himalayas. So, the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah has its merits, though at times, owing to the grudge that he bore against the Sulṭān, he could not rise above personal hatred and prejudice.

Chapter XV

Historians of the Mughal Period

Bābur-Nāmah or Wāqi'āt-i-Bāburī

Bābur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, though not an historian, wrote his Memoirs, which, besides being a marvellous piece of literary work, furnishes not a little information about Bābur's own life and adventure, his boyhood and youth, his struggles and rise to power, and the history of his empire-building in Hindustan. Moreover, it also gives us a faithful and true picture of the social and political conditions of Hindustan of that time. Besides, it also furnishes information about the power politics then going on among the nobles of the Lodī Empire. It gives us an insight into Bābur's keen observation, political foresight, and prudent statesmanship. According to *Cambridge History of India* (Vol. IV), Bābur's Memoirs reveals his wonderful diplomacy with which he played off one party against another in order to win the game in Hindustan. The above authority says that in this respect Bābur may well compare with Machiavelli of Europe, who was well known as a great diplomat.

In the words of Dr S.K. Bannerji, "It is the Bible of the Mughal History of India, and any fact quoted from or supported by it is placed beyond all doubt."[1] It is an important source of information about Mughal-Afghān relations in the time of Bābur. Bābur was generous

1. *Humayun Badshah*, p. 263.

towards the vanquished Afghāns and followed a policy of conciliation towards them. He arranged a ceremonial funeral for the fallen adversary, Sulṭān Ibrāhīm Lodī, and treated his mother generously, who however returned Bābur's magnanimity by an attempt to poison him.

Bābur-Nāmah is a very reliable source. In it Bābur has recorded with all sincerity and frankness all the events of his life and has not concealed his failings and shortcomings. Indeed, it is a faithful representation of Bābur's character and career, his likes and dislikes of persons and things, his policy and principles.

It also reveals that Bābur had a poor impression about India and her people. He did not like men and manners of Hindustan, its flora and fauna, its flowers and fruits, its culture and arts. He always pined for the grapes and water-melons of Farghānah and Samarqand. The wild life of Farghānah and Samarqand, its charms and pleasures, always haunted him.

Indeed, as a piece of literature it is a masterpiece. Bābur knew Turki and Persian very well. His Memoirs, written in Turki, was translated by 'Abdur Raḥīm Khān Khānān, Bairām Khān's son and Akbar's prime minister, and this Persian translation has been rendered into English by Mrs A.S. Beveridge. Indeed, Bābur's Memoirs has won world renown as one of the five great autobiographies of the world.

Jahāngīr's Memoirs (Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī)

Jahāngīr's Memoirs is also an autobiography. Jahāngīr, though not an adventurer like Bābur and though he had no such varied experience of life as Bābur had, none the less he was a scholar and connoisseur of art. He had fine

literary taste; this is borne by his Memoirs in which he has confessed his faults and blemishes with frankness worthy of praise. In his Memoirs he admits his crime of the murder of Abul Faḍl and his other vices, and in this respect he is to be praised like Bābur. In this Memoirs not only the political affairs of his time but also his refinement and culture have been discussed. His Memoirs enjoys a reputation next to Bābur's. It is no doubt an interesting study, but Bābur's Memoirs is of unsurpassed interest. Jahāngīr's Memoirs covers nineteen years of his reign and it also gives some account of the reign of his father, Akbar.

Jauhar's Tadhkirat al-Wāqi'āt

Jauhar was a contemporary historian of Humāyūn's time. Moreover, he served Humāyūn and accompanied him for more than twenty-five years, and hence he was intimately connected with Humāyūn's life and activity. According to Dr S.K. Bannerji, Jauhar developed an exaggerated notion of his master's abilities and put down the most trivial incidents connected with him.[2] Dr Bannerji also says that Jauhar suffers from a failing memory, and that at times he makes silly mistakes. He also had poor topographical knowledge of the Deccan. Moreover, he also made other mistakes, for instance, his information that the siege of Mandasor continued for three or four months does not seem to be correct.

According to Dr S. Moinul Haq, though Jauhar wrote his work thirty years after Humāyūn's death, yet the facts narrated by him are on the whole correct, since he seems to have based his work on the notes kept by him in the lifetime of Humāyūn. His work also deserves consideration

2. Ibid, p. 261.

because of the fact that he was an eye-witness to all the events that he has narrated. He has also supplied very important information with regard to Humāyūn's life. It was he who for the first time reported that Humāyūn yielded to the demand of Shāh Ṭahmasp to become a Shī'ah in order to obtain military aid from him for the restoration of his throne. He has really given us a true and faithful portrait of Humāyūn's character with his merits and shortcomings. But Jauhar's dates are sometimes incorrect and his order and arrangement of facts are defective. Though he was not a scholar, yet he was well informed. He has quoted verses from Sa'dī, Ḥāfiẓ, and Firdausī and has also cited verses from the Qur'ān.[3]

Gulbadan's Humāyūn-Nāmah

Humāyūn-Nāmah of Gulbadan Begum, sister of Humāyūn, is a precious work. She is the only woman writer of the period. She has supplied much information about Humāyūn's reign and important events of his time. She has given a vivid description of Humāyūn's return journey from Gaur and records of Humāyūn's losses after the battle of Chausa. We also get an idea from her about Bābur's love for Maham Begum and Humāyūn and his sacrifice of life for the latter.[4] Dr Bannerji points out her defects too. He says that her spelling of words is not always in the orthodox style ; secondly, her dates are not always correct ; thirdly, her love for her full brother, Hindal, made her blind to his defects.[5] Yet Gulbadan furnishes much valuable information about Hamāyūn's reign.

3. Moinul Haq, Tr., *Tadhkirat al-Wāqi'āt.*
4. S.K. Bannerji, op. cit., p. 260.
5. Ibid , p. 261.

Chapter XVI

Abul Fadl and His Akbar-Namah and A'in-i-Akbari

Scope of Abul Faḍl's History. Abul Faḍl 'Allāmī, the courtier and friend of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, wrote a valuable historical work called *Akbar-Nāmah* of which *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī* constitutes a part. In his two books, Abul Faḍl describes the whole career of Akbar, his conquests, his religious policy, his social and administrative reforms, and the Mughal society and culture. No aspect of the life of the Emperor has been left untouched. *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī* furnishes detailed information about the laws, regulations, and administrative system and financial and revenue systems of Akbar's time. "Abul Fazl," writes Dr S.K. Bannerji, "was the most gifted. He possessed a sound historical imagination which he brought into play while writing the *Akbar-nama* and thus throws considerable light on Mughal culture and military strength."[1]

Some Views on Abul Faḍl's Work. But it is difficult to agree with Dr Bannerji when he says that of the contemporary historical works "Abul Fazl's work is by far the best and most reliable," since Abul Faḍl's work does not present the true picture so much as other contemporary works on Akbar. Abul Faḍl, in fact, wrote a panegyric on Akbar. Though he took immense labour in collecting materials and composing a voluminous historical work, yet, instead of presenting a true state of affairs, he presents an ideal one.

1. *Humayun Badshah*, p. 260.

Sir J.N. Sarkar writes : "He is an insufferable rhetorician and, even when he intends to tell a fact, he buries it under a mass of figures of speech and roundabout expression. His work therefore does not give us as much help in a detailed picture of the administrative machinery though in statistical portion it is detailed and correct. We are oppressed by a sense of vagueness and unreality of the picture as we go through the descriptive parts of the *Ain.*"[2] Elliot and Dowson too are of opinion that Abul Faḍl's work is full of unqualified praise for Akbar. In fact, Abul Faḍl has been accused of concealing many facts for fear of damaging the reputation of the Emperor. Henry Beveridge, who has translated the *Akbar-Nāmah* in English, holds that his style is obscure and that he was a shameless flatterer. Badā'ūnī, the contemporary historian, disliked Abul Faḍl immensely for his so-called heretic views and for his fulsome adulation of Akbar.

A View on Merits of Abul Faḍl's Work. But another eminent scholar maintains : "That his [Abul Faḍl's] work forms the most complete and authentic history of Akbar's reign, is beyond dispute. His literary attainments, his acute and analytical mind, his great industry and honesty of purpose eminently fitted him to become the Historiographer Royal of the Mughals. In India Abul Fazl has been regarded as a master of style and unexcelled in the epistolary art. As a writer his style is grand and free from the technicalities and flimsy pettiness of other writers, the force of his words and the structure of his sentences are inimitable."[3] But, according to Elliot, "his narrative is florid, fickle and indistinct. . . ." Colonel H.S. Jarret, the translator of *Ā'īn-*

2. Quoted by Jarrett in his Translation of *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*.
3. Quoted from C.H. Philips, Ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*.

i-Akbarī, says : "The merit and the only merit of the *Ain-i-Akbari* is in what it tells and not in the manner of its telling which has little to recommended it."[4]

Merits of His Work. Despite its drawbacks Abul Faḍl's work has its merits. *Akbar-Nāmah* is a detailed history of the reign of Akbar. The first part deals with Akbar's birth and the reigns of Bābur and Humāyūn. The second part deals with Akbar's reign from the first to the end of the forty-sixth year, and the third is the famous *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, which will go down to posterity as a unique compilation of the systems of administration and other particulars of Akbar's reign. Abul Faḍl wrote under State patronage, and hence had all the facilities the State could place at his disposal.

Besides this official history of the reign of Akbar, we have several other works by Muslim writers that supplement the *Akbar-Nāmah* and act as corrective to the eulogistic account of this monarch left by Abul Faḍl.

His Good Traits. Abul Faḍl had some good traits which are reflected in this work. As a court historian he is expected to be hostile towards the Afghāns, but at the same time he appreciates the genius of Sher Shāh. Abul Faḍl even appreciates the genius of Hīmū and feels for his unhappy end.

His Birth, Parentage and His Rise to Greatness. Abul Faḍl, the son of Shaikh Mubārak of Nagaur, was born on 14 January 1551. He completed his education before he was fifteen and became a teacher before he was twenty. He was presented to Akbar in 1573 by his elder brother Faiḍī, the court-poet of Akbar, and soon rose to position and

4. *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, Vol. II, Translator's Preface, p. vii.

eminence at the court by his vast learning and sincere devotion to his master. He distinguished himself as a writer, statesman, diplomat, and commander. He was assassinated at the instigation of Prince Salīm (later Jahāngīr) on 22 August 1602.

Chapter XVII

'Abdul Qadir Bada'uni and His Muntakhab al-Tawarikh

Birth and Family. Badā'ūnī, born in 947 or 949/1540, at Badā'ūn (Rohīlkhand), was the son of Shaikh Maluk Shāh whom he lost in 969 H. The date of Badā'ūnī's death has been fixed by *Ṭabaqāt-i-Shāh Jahānī* at the beginning of eleventh century H. or 1615 C.E.[1]

His Learning and His Views. Badā'ūnī excelled in music, history, and astronomy. He had education in theology and other subjects under distinguished scholars, like Shaikh Ḥatīm, Shaikh Mubārak, Sayyid Muḥammad Makkī,[2] and other 'Ulamā' of the time. He has made a mention of his teachers in the third volume of his book. He was an orthodox Sunnī Muslim and was, therefore, opposed to Akbar and his associates, Abul Faḍl, Faiḍī, and their father Shaikh Mubārak. He was a vehement critic of Akbar's religious views and policy. He disliked Akbar's free thought and eclecticism, and on that account he has denounced Akbar, Abul Faḍl, and Faiḍī in his book.

His Place in the Court. In 1574 Badā'ūnī was presented to Akbar who appointed him as Imām of the principal mosque and gave him 1000 bighas of land as subsistence allowance (*madad-i-ma'āsh*). Akbar was impressed by the range of his learning and his ability to break the pride of the learning of the Mullās. But after the introduction of Abul

1. Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India,*—Akbar—Badā'ūnī, p. 2.
2. Maulvī Muḥammad Ḥusain, *Darbār-i-Akbari*, pp. 524-5.

Faḍl at the court of Akbar, Badā'ūnī was thrown into the background and that is why he never forgave Akbar and Abul Faḍl.[3] His work *Tārīkh-i-Badā'ūnī* was completed shortly before his death and, according to Khafī Khān, its publication was suppressed by Jahāngīr. It was published in the reign of Jahāngīr, ten years after his accession. That the book was not published within ten years of Jahāngīr's accession, is borne by the fact that 'Abdul Bāqī, the author of *Ma'athir-i-Raḥīmī*, while writing his book at that time, deplored the fact that he had no other work for consultation besides Abul Faḍl's *Akbar-Nāmah* and Niẓāmuddīn Aḥmad's *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*.[4]

Concerning publication of his work.

Views of Historians and Scholars about His Work. Vincent Smith has attached great importance to Badā'ūnī's work as being a "check on the lurid panegyric composed by latitudinarians [Abul Faḍl]". It supplies us with a great deal of information on almost every aspect of Akbar's policy and administration. Blochmann says: "It is much prized as written by an enemy of Akbar whose character in its grandness and in its failings is much more prominent than in Akbar-nama or Ain-i-Akbari or Maasir-i-Rahimi." Elliot and Dowson observe: "It is a general history of India from the time of Ghaznavides to the fortieth year of Akbar; and in the reign of the latter, it is especially useful as correcting, by its prevalent love of censure and disparagement, the fulsome eulogism of the Akbar-nama. Despite its systematic depreciation, it has been observed that Abdul Qadir's narrative conveys a more favourable impression of the character of Akbar than the rhetorical

3. C.H. Philips, Ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.*
4. Elliot & Dowson, op. cit.

or flourishes of the court journalist. It concludes with the lives of saints, philosophers, physicians and poets of Akbar's reign." According to the same authors, his history ends with the beginning of the year 1695-6 and his sources were *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī* and *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*.

Criticism—Merits and Drawbacks. "Although a Mughal by affiliation he is favourably disposed towards the Afghans and he deplores their bad luck. His information about the administration of Sher Shah and Islam Shah and also about the Afghan rule in Bengal is important."[5] The historian's tribute to the memory of Sher Shāh has been so clearly expressed in his own work *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh* where he says that "as the Holy Prophet once expressed his satisfaction that he was born in the time of the great Persian King Nausherwan the Just, so I too take pride in the fact, God be praised, that I was born on the 17th of Rabī'-uth-Thānī of 947 H. corresponding to 12th August of 1540 in the regime of celebrated Sher Shāh."[6] According to Dr S.K. Bannerji, Badā'ūnī sometimes commits mistakes and supplies wrong information. That Humāyūn's Kalinjar campaign took two years to complete, is not supported by any other writer.[7] Barring such few mistakes Badā'ūnī is wholly reliable and his power of writing is unquestionable. According to S.M. Ikram, he has portrayed the character of eminent contemporary persons so skilfully in a few words. He had the pen of an artist.[8] In his book, besides giving an account of the Ghaznavide Sulṭāns and the Delhi Sulṭāns and the reigns of Bābur,

5. Philips, op. cit.
6. Quoted by Muhammad Ḥusain, op. cit., p. 522.
7. *Humayun Badshah*, p. 264.
8. *Cultural Heritage of Pakistan.*

Humāyūn and Akbar, he has also discussed the lives of thirty-eight Ṣūfīs and saints, sixty-nine poets and scholars, and fifteen physicians of name and fame.[9]

Above all, the merit of the work lies in the fact that it gives a true and complete picture of Akbar's court which has not been done by any other contemporary historian.

9. Elliot and Dowson, op. cit.

Chapter XVIII

Nizamuddin Ahmad and His Tabaqat-i-Akbari

Merits of the Work. Niẓāmuddīn Aḥmad, *Bakhshī* (pay-master), (a highly-placed official of Akbar's court), wrote the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*. Dr S.K. Bannerji says: "Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* also has a high place among the medieval histories of India."[1] As pointed out by Dowson, "it is one of the most celebrated histories of India and is the first that was composed upon a new model in India which alone forms the subject-matter of the work, to the exclusion of the histories of other Asiatic countries." As Dr Bannerji says, "Both Ferishta and Shah Nawaz Khan, the author of the Maasir-ul-Umara, have highly praised Nizamuddin's work. According to Ferishta, of all the histories that he consulted, it is the only one he found complete."[2] He is a straightforward writer and Abul Faḍl and Badā'ūnī too held him in high esteem.

A Popular and Respected Personality. The *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* was written in 1592-3. It is a general history beginning with the Ghaznavides and coming down to the thirty-eighth year of Akbar's reign. The history has been held in high repute for its sobriety and authentic account of the events of the period which it covers. It became the basis of subsequent works. The author was a reputed, honest, and upright person who commanded great respect

1. *Humayun Badshah*, p. 261.
2. Ibid., p. 262.

from high and low. His death was widely lamented. On his death Badā'ūnī wrote:

گوهر بی بها زدنیا رفت

[A priceless jewel has left the world].

Badā'ūnī says: "There was scarcely anyone of high or low degree in the city who did not weep over his bier and recall his gracious qualities and gnaw the back of the hand of regret."[3]

Demerits of the Work. But *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* suffers also from some defects. The author has not given any criticism of Akbar's religious policy which is so important. Vincent Smith thinks that "the book is a dry, colourless chronicle of external events. It completely ignores Akbar's religious vagaries and seldom or never attempts to offer reflections or criticisms of the events and actions recorded."[4] According to Dr S.K. Bannerji, "he is usually too plain in his descriptions and lacks in human touch."[5] According to another scholar, "He occasionally conceals information instead of distorting or misrepresenting it. He gives a detailed account of Baz Bahadur but does not refer to his confinement by emperor Akbar, while Badauni has mentioned this fact."[6]

3. Cf. B. De's Preface to Tran. of *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, p. xvi.
4. Vincent Smith, *Akbar the Great Mughal.*
5. Op cit., p. 262.
6. C. H. Philips, Ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.*

Chapter XIX

Ferishtah and His Work— Tarikh-i-Ferishtah

Merits as an Historian. "Though written later than the Tabaqat-i-Akbari," Dr Bannerji says, "the Tarikh-i-Ferishta enjoys the reputation of being a reliable history."[1] Muḥammad Qāsim Hindū Shāh, better known as Ferishtah, wrote his work, *Gulshan-i-Ibrāhīmī*, more well known as *Tārīkh-i-Ferishtah*, in the court of Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh, the Sulṭān of Bijapur. That is why we find that Ferishtah has allotted a great deal of space to the description of the rulers of South Indian States. In the words of an historian: "He is free from prejudice and partiality; he does never even flatter the prince in whose reign he lived. On the whole his accounts are true and faithful and his writing is lucid and clear."

In this connection the opinion of Dr A.B.M. Habibullah may be quoted: "Only in a few instances have his statements been found incorrect; he is certainly accurate and more scientific in his treatment of facts than others of his line though he is prone to be a little imaginative. In any case, he does not deserve Raverty's uncharitable remarks."[2] In a very simple, direct, and clear language he has narrated the facts and has avoided all unnecessary rhetoric and vague and indirect expressions. This direct, simple, and lucid style attracted admirers from among the European scholars also. This work has been translated by

1. *Humayun Badshah*, p. 262.
2. *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 16.

John Briggs. Ferishtah has furnished ample materials with regard to the history of the Delhi Sulṭāns as well as of Mughal Emperors. Ferishtah based his work on the works of his predecessors, viz. Abul Faḍl, Badā'ūnī, Niẓāmuddīn Aḥmad.

New Information Supplied by Ferishtah. Ferishtah has supplied a new information that Bakhtiyār Khaljī, besides establishing his headquarters at Lakhnauti and Debkot (Dinajpur), founded another headquarters at Rangpur, but this has not been corroborated by any other historian. Perhaps Bakhtiyār did it, but eventually on his death Rangpur lost its importance. Secondly, Bakhtiyār's stay at Rangpur was very short, and as such he could hardly get the time to develop the place. That he came to Rangpur, is borne by the fact that there is still a village, very close to Rangpur, by the name of Bakhtiyārpūr which, most probably, was named after him.

His Mistake. A glaring mistake committed by Ferishtah may now be pointed out. Ferishtah has wrongly held that Muḥammad bin Tughlaq undertook an expedition to China, whereas we know that he actually launched a campaign against a refractory hill chieftain of a turbulant tribe at a place called Qarachil at the foot of the Himalayas.

Valuable Information and Vivid Description. But we know from Ferishtah that Sulṭān Fīrūz Tughlaq erected thirty colleges at Delhi and Agra and his description of Sulṭān Ghiyāthuddīn Balban's suppression of Mewati Rajputs of the Doab and Katehar (Bihar) is vivid and elaborate. Besides this, Ferishtah has supplied the information that at least fifteen princes came from countries outside Indo-Pakistan to seek asylum at the court of Sulṭān Balban of Delhi from the persecution of the Mongols.

Delhi flourished as a great centre of culture which could then vie with other cultural centres of the Muslim world, and it will not be an exaggeration to say that in cultural activities Delhi eclipsed famous cities like Baghdad, Damascus, Samarqand, Herat, Balkh, and Bukhara of that time. Ferishtah has given us names of fifteen localities (Maḥallahs) which came into being when the aforesaid fifteen princes settled in Delhi. The names of such Maḥallahs as mentioned by Ferishtah are as follows:

(1) 'Abbāsī
(2) Sanjarī
(3) Khawarizm-shāhī
(4) Daylamī
(5) Aluy
(6) Atabaki
(7) Ghorī
(8) Chingizī
(9) Rūmī
(10) Sunkarī
(11) Yemenī
(12) Mosulla
(13) Samarqandī
(14) Kāshgharī
(15) Khatuī

In this way Ferishtah has furnished much valuable material on the Muslim rule in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Though all his narrations and information on the history of the Delhi Sultanate are not accurate or true, yet on the whole he has written his history without any bias or prejudice. His writings have elicited admiration from scholars of East and West, though sometimes he has furnished wrong information. For instance, Ferishtah has

attributed Qarachil expedition of Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Tughlaq to his desire of invading China, which is not correct according to other historians contemporary or later. But Ferishtah's dates are on the whole correct.

Other Works. Besides the aforesaid historical works on the Mughal rule, there are some other works, viz. *Iqbāl-Nāmah-i-Jahāngīrī* and *Ma'athir-i-Jahāngīrī*, which were completed in 1630. They were written from the reign of Bābur to that of Jahāngīr. They were mainly based on Jahāngīr's Memoirs for the first six years of his reign, and, besides, they were based on other famous works for other reigns besides Jahāngīr's.

Another historical work which was written in Shāh Jahān's reign was *Pādshah-Namah* by 'Abdul Ḥamīd Lāhorī, which is a voluminous and authoritative account of Shāh Jahān's reign. He has dwelt on social, political, and cultural life of the period. 'Abdul Ḥamīd lays stress, according to a scholar, on two things—firstly, that salvation cannot be attained except by following the path of the Sharī'ah, and, secondly, that the basis of stability of a government is the fear and awe inspired by the king.[3] The work was continued by his pupil Muḥammad Wārith.

3. Professor Abdur Rashid in C.H. Philips, Ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.*

Chapter XX

Khafi Khan and His Muntakhab al-Lubab

Khafī Khān was an official of Aurangzeb, the great Mughal Emperor. As a court chronicle his *Muntakhab al-Lubab* enjoys a great reputation and distinction since it has been an impartial and unbiased account of the reign of Aurangzeb as well as of other contemporary events. It has neither concealed the defects and drawbacks in Aurangzeb's policy and administration, nor has it suppressed the qualities of his rival and political adversary, Shivaji, the Maratha leader.

The style of this work is lucid and clear, and it has given us a picture of the contemporary literary and religious life and conditions. In striking contrast to Abul Faḍl's *Akbar-Nāmah*, this work is not a panegyric ; rather it is a true and critical account of the Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, his character, administration, and policy. As an historical source it is on the whole dependable and trutworthy. It has thrown a good deal of light upon Aurangzeb's relations with the Deccan States of Bijapur and Golconda which reveals that Aurangzeb had sufficient reasons to proceed against Shivaji and the Marathas.[1]

Regarding Khafī Khān's history and such other works Professor J.N. Sarkar writes: "These were written by officials, but, not having been meant for the Emperor's eyes, they supply us with many of the facts suppressed in the court annals, though their dates and names are some-

1. Khafī Khān, *Muntakhab al-Lubab*, Vol. III.

times inaccurate and their description meagre."[2]

Aurangzeb withdrew his permission for the preparation of the official history. According to Sir J.N. Sarkar, this was due to the Emperor's financial difficulties. This, however, does not appear to be correct since Professor 'Abdur Rashīd has suggested that the Emperor abandoned the practice of employing an official historiographer because, on account of increasing political and diplomatic complications, he did not want the accounts of the reign to be made public. Moreover, he was of the view that the cultivation of internal piety was preferable to the ostentatious display of his achievements.[3]

The second book, *Ma'athir-i-'Ālamgīrī*, was published after the death of the Emperor. The author had been an eye-witness for forty years to many of the events recorded by him. His style is simple and straightforward. As J.N. Sarkar writes, "these works were written with the help of materials obtained from official correspondence, newsletters, treaties and revenue returns. They are rich in dates and topographical details of the utmost value and accuracy."[4]

2. *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p. 5.
3. C.H. Philips, Ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 150.
4. Op. cit., p. 5.

Chapter XXI

Ghulam Husain Salim & His Riyad al-Salatin

Ghulām Ḥusain's *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* is a standard history of Bengal, and it is "continually quoted by Blochmann in his contribution to the *History and Geography of Bengal*; in the journals of the Asiatic Society Blochmann strongly recommended that it should be translated and, therefore, the book is one which deserves being translated and published by the Asiatic Society."[1] This translation was undertaken in 1903 at the request of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. About the merits of *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* the above opinion of Blochmann is noteworthy.

Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn is a work of great importance and of exceedingly great interest, inasmuch as it records the history of the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiyār Khaljī and the later history of Bengal after his death till the year 1788. Therefore, it contains the account of the reigns of Bakhtiyār Khaljī's lieutenants, viz. of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī, Sherān Khaljī, Ghiyāthuddīn Aiwaz Khaljī, and after the latter's defeat and death at the hands of Sulṭān Iltutmish; it also describes the fortunes of Bengal under the Delhi Sulṭāns and the tragic fate of Tughril Khān, the rebel governor of Bengal, and the rule of Bughra Khān, Balban's son, and of Bughra Khān's descendants. The work traces the history of Bengal up to 1788, describing Nawāb Sirāj-uddowlah's struggle with the English and his ultimate tragic end. Mīr Qāsim's struggle with the English and his

1. Maulvī 'Abdus Salām, Trans., *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn*, quoting Blochmann.

overthrow, and the grant of the Dewānī of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa by Emperor Shāh 'Ālam to the East India Company. The author continued the history till 1788, his own times.

It is no doubt a faithful and true account of the period it embraces. He was himself an eye-witness to many events and had direct first-hand knowledge of them. He has exonerated Sirājuddowlah of many of the false charges which he was accused of by his enemies and hostile critics. In this respect he is much better than Ghulām Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the writer of another work *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirīn,* who tried to hold Sirājuddowlah responsible for the ultimate unhappy turn of events. The *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn,* thus, is a dependable and trustworthy source for the period of the history of Bengal that it covers.

Chapter XXII

Ghulam Husain Tabataba'i & His Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirin

An Idea about His Work. Ghulām Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā'ī was the last great historian of Muslim India. He completed his notable work, *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirīn* in three volumes. In Volume I he has given an account of the geography, climate, animals, forts, *Ṣūbahs* as well as the 'Ulamā' and saints of Hindustan. He has also described briefly the Muslim conquest of Hindustan and Muslim rule in this subcontinent up to Emperor Aurangzeb. Volume II begins with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 and discusses the reigns of his successors, the later Mughals. It also gives an elaborate account of the *Niẓāmat* of Murshidabad, the relations of the English with the Nawābs, the battle of Plassey, Mīr Qāsim's struggle with the English, the English supremacy in Bengal and Bihar. It also narrates the rules, regulations, and the administrative system of the English in their newly-established empire in this province. Volume III discusses the affairs of the Niẓām of Hyderabad, Ḥaidar 'Alī, and the Nawābs of Oudh. It also narrates Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī's invasion and his encounters with the Marathas and Mīr Qāsim's defeat and death at the hands of the English. It closes with a discussion on the English affairs till 1781.

J. Briggs, in his Preface to the translation of the work, says that "it was written in the latter half of the nineteenth century by Ghulam Husain Tabatabai, a person of high

familyat the court of Delhi, and who with his father resided for many years at the court of the Nawābs of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. It embraces a period of about seventy years and affords a complete insight into the events which caused the fall of the Mughal power and the elevation of the Marathas and it brings us to the first steps which led to the occupation of Bengal and eventually of all India, by the British Government."

"The work is written," Briggs continues, "in the style of private memoirs, the most useful and encouraging shape which history can assume. . . . The Duc de Sully, Lord Clarendon, or Bishop Burnet need not have been ashamed to be the authors of such a production."[1]

The work has indeed great merits. It furnishes us with information about the history from the death of Emperor 'Ālamgīr to the time of the author—a period which no historian has dwelt upon. Volumes II and III of the work fill the gap, particularly in respect of the accounts of the Bengal Nawābs and the English in Bengal and Bihar. The historian was an eye-witness to many events and was himself involved in many affairs, and thereby he had the advantage of personal knowledge which he utilised in writing his history. Unlike Khafī Khān, he gives abundant information about Bengal and the great political dramas in that part of the subcontinent.

Moreover, he has given us copious information regarding the English up to Warren Hastings and of their government, their revenue and judicial administration, etc. The translator M. Raymond was struck with surprise when he read this work and exclaimed: "A Persian

1. Preface to the Trans. of the *Siyar*.

discourse upon English politics. Strange indeed!"[2]

But the integrity of Ghulām Ḥusain's character is questionable. He proved faithless and opportunist on several occasions. As an envoy, he batrayed Nawāb Mīr Qāsim and gave out the secrets of the Nawāb to the English which strengthened their position. He was also hostile to Nawāb Sirājuddowlah. He joined Shaukat Jang of Purnea in his war with Sirājuddowlah and yet, on the former's defeat, he was pardoned by the generous Nawāb and allowed to escape with his family to 'Aẓīmābād (Patna) and thence to Benares. Yet the historian was not grateful to the Nawāb for this clemency and magnanimity. This hostility to the Nawāb and servile attitude to the English detract much from the reputation of the historian and from the reliability of his work. His work thus suffers from partiality and prejudice. So, in evaluating the work the scholars have agreed that, though his work is a good source for the history of the period it covers, it has jeopardised the cause of not only Sirājuddowlah but also the greater national cause.

In this respect the *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirīn* is in striking contrast to *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* the author of which has rightly pointed out that Nawāb Sirājuddowlah was justified in his war with Shaukat Jang of Purnea, since he had publicly declared his pretensions to the throne of Bengal. But so far as Mīr Ja'far is concerned, *Siyar al-Muta'akhkhirīn* is in agreement with other historians and Ghulām Ḥusain informs us that Mīr Ja'far proved treacherous even in the lifetime of 'Alīvardī Khān in his struggle with the Marathas.

2. Quoted by Dr A. Rahim, "Historian Ghulam Husain Tabatabai," *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, December 1963, p. 122.

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