

A Study of the Muslim and Western Historiography

Dr. Naseem Akhter

Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: khtr_nsm@yahoo.com

Dr Shumaila Rafiq

Lecturer, Department of Arabic & Islamic Studies Women University Swabi, KPK, Pakistan
shumailarafiq06@gmail.com

Iqra Nazeer Malghani

M.Phil Scholar in History, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan
iqramalghani919@gmail.com

Abstract

In this analytical study, the focus is on analyzing the trends and styles of historiography adopted by historians. Western and Muslim historians both used different techniques and methodologies to write history in their time as the Western historians passed through the different ages from ancient times to the enlightenment and even later with a materialistic approach, while Muslim historians started their historiography according to the guidance of Islamic concepts under the light of the Quran and Sunah as they initially started it with the life of the Prophet (Salallah-o-Alaih). This paper explores and highlights Islamic and Western concepts of historiography.

Keywords: History, Historiography, Western, Islamic, Seerah, Madina.

Introduction

The word history is usually considered about the knowledge and record of the past. It is derived from a Greek word Historia which mean to research, investigation or inquiry. The Greek Historian Herodotus is called as the father of history.¹ Some also claim that it was Hecht us who started to write the scattered piece of different events.² Muslim historiography, also known as Islamic historiography, encompasses the rich tradition of historical writing within the Islamic world. Early Islamic cultures saw the development of certain techniques and procedures for documenting and interpreting historical events, which were deeply ingrained in Muslim history. It has become an essential component of Islamic thought and culture, combining political principles, cultural values, and religious beliefs. Islamic history had several purposes, including maintaining communal memory, teaching moral lessons to future generations, and establishing governmental authority. The primary characteristics, sources, and techniques of Muslim historiography are examined in this introduction, with an emphasis

on how it adds to the larger field of historical study. Western historiography, also called European or Western historiography, refers to the tradition of historical writing that developed in Western societies. Spanning centuries of intellectual development, Western historiography has witnessed significant shifts in methodologies, perspectives, and aims. Its roots can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides laid the foundation for critical and empirical historiography. In subsequent periods, Western historiography went through transformative phases influenced by factors such as the Enlightenment, nationalism, and postmodernism. The section examines the main characteristics, sources, and approaches employed in Western historiography, highlighting its impact on shaping our understanding of the past and its on-going evolution in the contemporary era.

Muslim Historiography

Some historians consider the historiography of the Muslims as the historiography of the Arabs only, which is wrong. Islam has reached Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, India, Africa, Egypt and Spain, when other nations and civilizations of the world entered the circle of Islam; it had an essential effect on the historiography of the Muslims, because each civilization has its own style of historiography.

THE QURANIC CONCEPT OF HISTORY

Islamic faith is fundamentally aware of its past. Although the Quran is a sacred text, it emphasises the need of historical knowledge as a moral call to action for the believers. It is not a history book, it is sacred book of Allah (SWT). The book is intended for human instruction. The Holy Quran Sent through a revelation. The history of earlier communities and nations, as well as the prophets given to them, make up a significant portion of the Quran. The text not only describes the mannerisms, demeanour, and traits of these ancient societies, but it also explains how and why God showed favour to certain of them, while destroying others due to various reasons. Their conceit, haughtiness, and desire for dominance, together with their luxury, ungraciousness, and, most importantly, injustice, were the reasons behind their downfall or their eradication off the face of the planet. Accordingly, the Quran talks about the rules that determine how different societies and organisations flourish and fail. Material dominance and strength are unimportant to it. Instead, what is desired is supremacy in moral and ethical standards. In addition, Quranic teachings state that tyranny and injustice become the catalyst for God's anger rather than disbelief (shirk) as a justification for punishment. The moralistic intent of the Old Testament events recounted in the Quran encourages readers to

reflect on and learn from these tales. The Quran emphasises the moral aspect of history and provides an ethical analysis of the past in this way. Muslims were deeply impacted by the Quranic understanding of history, and this moralistic perspective was evident in the historical narratives they wrote.³The process of gathering the Quran and hadiths—sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, b. 570–d. 632—is where the Muslim tradition of history originated. A number of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Companions were tasked with writing down the revelations from the Quran during his lifetime. These writings, nevertheless, were dispersed and had not been assembled. Furthermore, the Quran was committed to memory by several Companions of the Prophet (PBUH). During the rule of Caliph Abu Bakr (RA) in 632–634, many of his Companions who had memorised the Quran were murdered at the Battle of Yamamah in 632, which highlighted the necessity for the Quran to be collected in a single book. Acknowledging the necessity of assembling the Quran, Caliph Abu Bakr (RA) constituted a committee headed by Hazrat Zayd ibn Sabit (RA). For this reason, the Prophet's (PBUH) personal scribe was used, and the Holy Quran was eventually collected into books under Hazrat Usman's leadership. Muslim started historiography with writing the biography of the Prophet as it was called *Seerah Nigari* and the war achievements were called as *Maghazi*. The phase of the development of historiography was divided in the two phases. During the caliphate period historiography was also started with new manners. Many persons contributed to the creation of the *Seerah* and *Maghazi* literature in their initial stages. Written by Hazrat Usman ibn-e-Afan's son Aban ibn-e-Uthman, the governor of Madina and a companion of the Prophet PBUH, the first book on *Seerah* and *Maghazi* was published.⁴ The work is not as extensive as it once was, nor are its excerpts available in other publications. A book on *Maghazi* was written by Urwa bin Zubair, the grandson of Hazrat Abuakar and the other companion of the Prophet PBUH. Some historians have included excerpts from this work. The famed scholar and narrator of the Hadith, Imam Muhammad ibn Muslim Zuhri, was a disciple of Urwah bin Zubair and produced several works on history, including one on *Maghazi* and the history of the pious caliphate. Other notable writers of history include Waqdi, Tabri, and Ibne Saad. Wahab ibne Munabbiah was one of the significant historians who also contributed to *Seerah* and *Maghazi* literature. Renowned historians Asim bin Umar, ibne Qatadah, and Musa ibne Uqba are also included. In contrast, Muslim historians wrote history in a more methodical manner during the second stage of the development of *Seerah* and *Maghazi* texts. Among these Ibne Ishaq, was the first and the foremost for the history writing. Ibn-e- Ishaq was a disciple of Zuhri and he authored a book *Al-Maghazi* which is

considered not only remarkable but an authentic work for the later historians. Therefore, the later historians guided from his work. His work Muslim historian who different and has held of study the employed presentation of historical discourse of sources on a historical event, be give his personal version and it was a critical. The historians, whether historical accounts. Like this book. Hog's not authentic, and was used the later histones assocors, the material in this book has been rejected by many of ahadith) as well as modem histohans such as Shib Nauthen Ibn Saad Muhammad ibn Saad 230 AN844 AD) was andere w was a student and secrety-editor of Wed from whom the benefitted. Ton Sa'ad's work Tabapar al-Kaden, popularly known as Saad, is a biographical demonic.

The early history of the East as a whole is a mixture of facts and fiction and the farther back to move the greater the element of fiction. It must have taken many centuries to cover the march from fables to facts or from mythology to history, more in principle than in practice. With the rise of Islam under the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the whole world in general and Arabia and Persia in particular witnessed a momentous change in life and thought. The word universal best defines the compass of that change and the word scientific its attitude. We will deal with this with reference to history very briefly here but at some length in its proper place. Since Islam proclaimed the unity of existence, the unity of human race and the unity of faith, the Mailmans all over the world constitute one single nation, because they have a common culture and a common source of inspiration-Quran. It is for this reason that their contributions to History, which had much in common, are treated together and not in connection with the accounts of the countries of their birth and residence. The view expressed in the following account that the source of inspiration in the case of every Muslim thinker was the Holy Quran, will be confirmed by the contents of the chapters on Islamic Ideology and Islamic Concept of History.

Among the early historians Jahiz is believed to have been the first to take up the idea of evolution by noting metamorphosis, motion, movement, activity or change in bird life occasioned by mass movements.⁵ Ibn Maskawaih developed it into a definite theory, employed it in his Al-Fauz-al-Asghar and made it a pivot of his argument to prove the presence of the Prime-Mover or Maker, the Ultimate Cause or Cause without Cause and the Ultimate Source or the Source without Source, the nature of Soul and the qualities of Prophethood. The idea of universal activity, which is the very soul of history, originated with him and enabled him to work out his theory of evolution, which deserves serious study not only on account of trend of

early Muslim thought. Its positive value but also because it sheds light on the Theory of Evolution:

Pre Islamic Features

Individual and Tribal Historiography

In Arab before Islam, History writing was not in a collective form, different tribes write their own history, in which the days of Arabs before Islam, the history of North Arabia, tribal traditions, prose and poetry were their main topics; each tribe had its own narrator or writer who was a professional historian. Hattie Wrote “Pre Hijrah was bound to be a period of ignorance”⁶

History of Family

All Arabs had a custom of family history to express their family superiority. “In Arab, there were special things that were related to history and which were not found in other nations, such as the discussion of genealogy, a child of the tribe remembered the genealogy of ancestors and their relations, ten, ten, twelve, twelve generations and kept it safe.”⁷

Oral History

Oral traditions were very common among the Arabs; they remembered the events orally and passed them on to their generations.

Characteristics of Islamic Historiography

Seerah Writing

The word *Seerah* is actually derived from *Saaḏ-o- Mayasar* and it has many meanings which are as follows, religion, *Sunnah*, circumstances, description of the Prophet's way of life, description of all the circumstances of the Prophet i.e. biography and character etc. Apart from this, there are innumerable topics of *Sirat-ul-Nabi*, such as appearances of *Nabowat*, signs of prophethood, prophetic medicine, prophetic ethics, sermons, genealogy, correspondences, deaths, wars, treaties, Wives of Prophet, descendants of the book, etc. Generally, it is believed that editing and compilation started from the time of Caliph Mansoor Abbasi, till that time the collection of biographies and traditions was not written.

Hadith Writing

In this regard, first hadiths were collected and the criteria of authenticity and falsity of hadiths were changed and selected, this is the reason why scholars say that hadiths are preferable.⁸

The art of history writing in Islam was also based on the principles of hadith. In the beginning, many historians were *Muhaddith*, so their style of writing was adopted for hadith in history books.

***Maghazi* Writing**

Maghazi means to write a description of war conditions. At first, when compilation and authorship began, *Maghazi* and *Sirat* were considered to be the same thing. As earlier the history of the emperors was called *Shahnama*, Shibli Nomani writes on this that although this method was not correct for the history of the empire and government, it is not suitable for the biography of the Prophet.

Biographical writing

Biography is a genre of history that is not related to human races and groups but to individuals or that it is a statement of all the thoughts of a person from birth to death, that is, the facts along with the character and development of the mind. Biography as a literary genre is the life history of individuals after Islam, due to which the conditions of at least 100,000 people can be known today.

Western Historiography

Historiography, like other sciences, has its origins in Greece. It would seem that all the sciences traveled together here. The status of these sciences for each other is that supporting sciences. These sciences not only had profound effects, but as a result of these effects, the foundation of new concepts was also developed. There is lot of literature and history in the Greek language. The original principles of eloquence were regulated by the Greeks, besides Aristotle, other people also wrote books in this art, the life and soul of Greek literature is the speech of Homer. Europe claims that there is no poet greater than him in the world.⁹

Characteristics of Western Historiography

The characteristics of western historiography are given below:

Scientific and literary Historiography

In ancient Greece, history was a science; Herodotus' era was a scientific era of history. But later in Greece itself, it took the form of literature, i.e., it continued to include fictional stories, anecdotes and fictional legends, the Thucydides and the age of Aristotle being the best examples. The historiography of Thucydides was fictional. The great proof of this is that Conford named his book "The Mythical Historiography of Thucydides ". EH Carr writes, "Herodotus was admired for his account of the conflicts between the Greeks and the barbarians."¹⁰

Roman Historiography

Important wars were also an important subject for Roman historians, the politicians and generals who participated in these wars wrote their memoirs so that they could prove their achievements. In this regard, the memoirs of Julius Caesar are very famous. A Roman historian, Levi wrote 145 books on Roman history.

Military, Political and Social Historiography

Roman history was the history of an empire, therefore, his historiography had a wide range of experiences, along with war, political institutions and traditions were also included in it. Acquaintance with the language and customs of different nations was reflected in the experiences of Roman society. In this period, the words of the historians, the topics of the book Kings of Rome, the book of Constantine, the book Adam to Constantine, the kings of Greece and Rome, etc.¹¹

Christian Biased Historiography.

In the early period of Christianity, historiography became religious. At that time, events were not analysed by historians because they all happened by divine will. Man was beyond reason and understanding. In early Christianity era, history was based on the Bible, with themes such as the formation of the early state, the distribution of nations and languages, and the origin of industry and craftsmanship Western historians projected their ideal society through the past. Under this theory, the theory of great personalities and the history of the whole era will be told by making great personalities the centre. Apart from this, the activities of the Pope and Christian missionaries were also preserved in history. At that time, history was used to propagate the Christian religion.

Expansion of Historiography

Even in the middle Age, history was dominated by religion, as most of its historians were Christians. A further development in the history of this era occurred as Charlemagne issued a decree for the monasteries in his empire to write down the events of his reign. Under this decree, the monks began to write down the annual events by season and month. For this reason, the political and social events of his era were preserved in the history.

Romanticism in Historiography

The rationalist past was viewed as a remote and gloomy ignorance, and the Romanticism Movement emerged as a response to it. However, romanticism historians claimed that the past was correct and found beauty and appeal in it. It is appropriate to acknowledge and comprehend his contributions to the world in a civilised way.

Conclusion

This study examines and identifies the inconsistencies between Western and Muslim historiography. Additionally, every approach that was applied in various ways is highlighted in this study project. As. When historical data is analysed and processed, several frames and viewpoints become clear. This research aims to identify the distinctive characteristics and challenges of each historical tradition by examining key elements of both, including their histories, prejudices, and goals. This research examines how cultural, theological, and ideological factors, as well as historical writing by Western and Muslim scholars, have shaped historical narratives. It provides significant awareness of the intricate process of historical interpretation and its consequences for a more thorough comprehension of the past. Finally, the goal of this research work is to provide a more thorough and critical approach to the historical approaches that differ in Muslim and Western contexts, therefore advancing a comparative analysis. In 19th and 20th centuries, the Western scholars distinguishing themselves from their forebears, the modern historians do not confine their historical writings to the time of the Prophet. But the Muslims historians were able to distinguish history from religious studies, unlike their mediaeval Christian counterparts, but they did not do so since they saw history as an independent branch of knowledge.¹²

References

- ¹S.M Jaffer, History of History, Peshawar, 1961, P.1
- ² Prof. Sadiq, Gill, Fun-e-Tareekh Naveesi, Urdu Bazar, Lahore,1998, P.71.
- ³ Sadiqi, Mazhar, D. The Quranic Concept of History, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, 1965, pp. 18-19
- ⁴ G.Rasool, The Origin of the Development of Muslim Historiography, Lahore, 1968, P.16.
- ⁵ Shibli Nomani, Al-Farooq, Qaomi press ,Dehli , P. 32, 33
- ⁶ P.K Hitti, History of Arabs, Macmillan Company, New York 1937, P. 75
- ⁷ Shibli Nomani, Al-Farooq, Qaomi press ,Dehli , P. 32, 33
- ⁸ Shibli Nomani, Seerah Tul Nabi, Vol-I, Azamgarh P. 8, 9
- ⁹ Shibli Nomani Muqalat e Shibli, , Vol- 6, Azamgarh P. 79
- ¹⁰ E.H Carr, What is History, Cambridge, 1941, P. 87
- ¹¹ Muqalat e Shibli, Molana Shibli Nomani, Azamgarh, 1962 ,P.79
- ¹² Tanveer Anjum, Historiography, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, 2012, P. 58