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**THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENTS OF EARLY
MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ITS CLIMAX
IN TABARİ**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the origin and developments of early Muslim historiography and its climax in **Tābārī's** historical thought. The researcher employed a very unique approach, which emphasized the interconnectedness and relationships between various historical periods in the early Muslim historiography. After thorough study, the researcher found that the previous studies made only selective or fragmented approaches in the study of early Muslim historiography and produced various theories on *sirah*, *al-maghazi*, *t̤baqaṭ*, *nasab* and *futuḥḥ*. Therefore, this study attempted to present, in an integrated manner, how the early Muslim historiography originated and developed from within. Another approach used, which contributed to an exposition of the origin and developments of early Muslim historiography, was the role of historical, religious and cultural unfolding within the Islamic civilization. Therefore, a special reference was made to the role of *ḥādīḥ*, *fiqh*, *kalam*, *tafsīr*, linguistics, philosophy and literature in the emergence of early Muslim historiography. The process of the origin and developments of early Muslim historiography and the relationship between various periods from within were examined by employing historical and analytical research methods. Historical and analytical methods were used to gather the data and to examine various genres such as *sirah*, *al-maghazi*, *t̤baqaṭ*, *nasab*, *futuḥḥ* and *adab*. The works of major Muslim historians such as Ibn *Ishāq*, al-*Waḥīdī*, Ibn Sa'd, al-*Baladhuri*, al-*Ya'qubi*, Ibn Qutaybah, al-*Dīnawari* and **Tābārī** were used and discussed. The researcher attempted to select, analyze, evaluate and synthesize the data from such sources by using internal and external historical criticism. The findings of this study indicate that there was a clear relationship between various periods of early Muslim historiography in terms of scope, style and methodology. The Holy **Qur'an** and **Ḥādīḥ** laid the foundations of early Muslim historiography while historical, religious and cultural dynamism contributed to the emergence of voluminous historical works. Therefore, the findings indicated that the early Muslim historiography originated and developed from within. The research also found that Muslim historical methodology evolved and reached its climax in **Tābārī**. Finally, the researcher developed a theory of a very unique relationship between historical methodology and the interpretation of history.

صّخلمآ ثآحبأ

تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن نشأة تدوين التاريخ الإسلامي الذي بلغ ذروته في الفكر التاريخي عند الطبري. ولقد استفاد الباحث من توظيف مدخل فريد ومتميز، أكد على الترابط والتداخل في العلاقات بين المراحل التاريخية المختلفة في الكتابات المبكرة للتاريخ الإسلامي. وبعد دراسة معمقة وشاملة، استنتج الباحث أن الدراسات السابقة استخدمت مداخل انتقائية أو مجزأة لدراسة الكتابات الباكرة للتاريخ الإسلامي. وأوجدت نظريات متباينة حول السير، والمغازي، والطبقات، والأنساب والفتوحات. لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة قد حاولت أن تقدم وبمنهج متكامل، كيف أن نشأة وتطور كتابة التاريخ الإسلامي قد نبعت من ذاتها. إلى جانب استخدام الدراسة مدخلاً آخر أسهم أيضاً في إبراز تلك النشأة، ألا وهو الدور التاريخي للفتوح الديني والثقافي من خلال الحضارة الإسلامية. ولذلك أشار الباحث بشكل خاص لدور الحديث النبوي الشريف، والفقه، وعلم الكلام، والتفسير، وعلوم اللغة، والفلسفة، والأدب في النشأة الباكرة لكتابة التاريخ الإسلامي وتطورها، والعلاقة الداخلية بين مراحلها المختلفة، فقام الباحث بفحصها مستخدماً منهج البحث التاريخي التحليلي لجمع المعلومات وفحص جوانب مختلفة من الكتابة التاريخية مثل: المغازي، والطبقات، والأنساب، والفتوحات والأدب. لقد تم استخدام ومناقشة أعمال المؤرخين المسلمين الكبار كابن إسحاق، والواقدي، وابن سعد، والبلاذري، واليعقوبي، وابن قتيبة، والدينوري، والطبري. ولقد استند الباحث إلى استعمال معياري النقد الداخلي والخارجي لاختيار وتحليل وتقويم المعلومات التي استقاها من تلك المصادر كما حاول التوفيق بينها. وتمخضت هذه الدراسة عن نتائج تشير إلى وجود علاقة واضحة بين الدراسات التاريخية الإسلامية في الأطر والأساليب والمنهجية. كما أن القرآن الكريم والحديث النبوي الشريف قد وضعا الأسس التي قامت عليها المراحل الأولى لكتابة التاريخ الإسلامي، بينما أسهمت الدينامية (الحركية) الدينية والثقافية في ظهور المؤلفات التاريخية الضخمة. وبناءً على ذلك فإن كتابة التاريخ الإسلامي قد انبثقت وتطورت من ذات نفسها. وأثبتت هذه الدراسة أيضاً أن منهج البحث التاريخي الإسلامي، قد تطور إلى أن بلغ ذروته عند الطبري. وأخيراً فإن الباحث قد كوّن نظرية متميزة لتوضيح العلاقة بين المنهج التاريخي وتفسير التاريخ.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION PAGE

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

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Signature

Date.....

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright Page	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Statement of the Problem	3
3.0 Objectives of the Study	5
4.0 Significance and Purpose of Research	6
5.0 Research Methodology	8
6.0 Literature Review	9
7.0 Research Outline	16
CHAPTER 2: A SURVEY OF EARLY MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	19
1.0 Introduction	19
2.0 The Idea of History in Ancient Thought	21
2.1 The Idea of History in Greco-Roman Thought	21
2.2 The Idea of History in Christian Thought	29
3.0 Pre-Islamic Historiography	36
4.0 The Qur’anic Conception of History	53
5.0 The Role of Hādīth in the Development of Early Muslim Historiography	65
6.0 Conclusion	73
CHAPTER 3: THE TRADITIONS OF SIRAH, MAGHAZI, ṬĀBAQĀT AND NASAB	76
1.0 Introduction	76
2.0 The Traditions of Sirah and Maghazi	77
2.1 The Beginning of Sirah and Maghazi Writing	77
2.2 Ibn Ishāq and al- Waḥīdī Writers of Sirah and Maghazi	86
2.2.1 Ibn Ishāq’s Sirah	86
2.2.2 Al- Waḥīdī’s Maghazi	94
2.2.3. Orientalists’ View of Sirah and Maghazi	101
3.0 The Traditions of Ṭābaqāt and Nasab	107
3.1 Ibn Sa’d’s Ṭābaqāt	107
3.2. The Tradition of Nasab	111
4.0 Conclusion	115

CHAPTER 4: A PRELUDE TO ṬĀBĀRĪN THE WORKS OF AL-BALĀḌHURĪ, AL-YA'QUBĪ, IBN QUTAYBAH AND AL-DĪNAWĀRĪ	118
1.0 Introduction	118
2.0 Cultural and Historical Dynamism	119
3.0 A Study of the Classical Muslim Historians	128
3.1 Al-Balāḍhūrī	128
3.2 Al-Ya'qubī	136
3.3 Ibn Qutaybah	141
3.4 Al-Dīnawārī	147
4.0 Conclusion	149
CHAPTER 5: ṬĀBĀRĪ: A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CLIMAX OF MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY	152
1.0 Introduction	152
2.0 Ṭābārī's Milieu: Historical-Cultural Context	153
3.0 Ṭābārī's Biography	160
4.0 Ṭābārī's Works and Contributions	163
5.0 Conclusion	168
CHAPTER 6: ṬĀBĀRĪ'S HISTORICAL THOUGHT	169
1.0 Introduction	169
2.0 Ṭābārī's Historical Methodology	170
2.1 Ṭābārī's Sources	170
2.2 Content of Ṭabārī's <i>Kitāb al-rusul wa al-muluk</i>	176
2.3 Style of Ṭabārī's <i>Kitāb al-rusul wa al-muluk</i>	179
2.4 Ṭābārī's Historical Method	186
3.0 Ṭābārī's Philosophy of History	192
4.0 Conclusion	200
CHAPTER 7: GENERAL CONCLUSION	202
BIBLIOGRAPHY	205

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An interest in personal experience very often serves as a preliminary point of departure for the actual study of human history. In this regard, the question that keeps popping into our minds, predominantly related to our identity, self-esteem, happiness and destiny, both as individuals and as nations, significantly influences how we perceive our cultural heritage. Although people become eager to study heritage systematically, very often they are presented with a distorted and inadequate description of their heritage.

The seeker of knowledge can be compared, in a sense, to a thirsty person who is desperately searching for clean drinking water. However, very often the water that the seeker finds turns out not to be clean. Therefore, the task of a historian is to provide a reader with the clean drinking water as much as it is possible, which implies objectivity and adherence to the historical methodology in the process of arriving at the historical knowledge. Actually, historians have an obligation to be objective in formulating their historical explanations by not allowing their biases and presuppositions to influence their historical judgment.

How should one study the Muslim historiography? Each individual who is seeking knowledge, and especially the universities, should become more concerned with this question. For the past century in the fields of biography, tradition, theology, philosophy, history and jurisprudence educators have been relying mostly on secondary sources, thus neglecting to a great extent the classical sources. However, it

is important to mention that such secondary sources, usually fresh doctoral dissertations, very often represent a meager and distorted image of the Muslim heritage.

What is the well of clean drinking water? Serious scholars and educators should request the seekers to find the clean drinking water in the classical sources. Therefore, this research, inspired by the classical approach to the study of Muslim heritage, is an attempt to define the well of clean drinking water. Original knowledge of the Muslim heritage, particularly of Muslim historiography, could revive Muslim identity, self-esteem and cultural awareness. Therefore, the present studies on Muslim heritage, should be re-examined in the light of classical sources. Such an approach is inevitable for a better understanding of how Muslim historiography evolved and culminated in **Tābari**>

Original and clear understanding of ones heritage is, therefore, important not only for the researchers but also for the wider audience, regardless of its religious, cultural or historical affiliations. Such an approach could certainly clear away stereotypes and prejudice that are prevalent in our modern times, and could inevitably show the way towards multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-historical tolerance and understanding. Besides, cultural and historical consciousness is very important for the people who share the same historical past, because their identity and self-esteem are based on, and derived from, their language, religion, culture and history. History and civilization, therefore, have a role to play in the projection of individual, social, religious and cultural identity. Actually, it is history or a cumulative experience of the people that tells us who we are. That is why history and civilization are so important! However, it is very important to project its importance through systematic and

methodologically written works and, more importantly, it is important to make a sense out of it, which is undoubtedly the task of a historian.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Islamic civilization produced very rich heritage, especially in poetry, literature and history, which inspired an enormous interest of the scholars for the past few centuries. Among many of those scholars, the Western scholars have contributed to the field of Muslim historiography significantly. Their interest reached its peak with the emergence of Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), Henri Lammens (d. 1937), Duncan Black Macdonald (d. 1943), Samuel Zwemmer (d. 1950), Marshall Hodgson (d. 1968), Joseph Schacht (d. 1969), H. A. R. Gibb (d. 1971), Gustave E. von Grunebaum (d. 1972), Albert Hourani (d. 1993), William Montgomery Watt, Bernard Lewis, Nabia Abbott, K. Cragg, John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook. However, as commonly accepted, they have mostly produced studies which created doubts about Islam and which intended to downgrade it to an inferior status. Apart from a few significant contributions to the field of Muslim historiography, their works have been founded on accusations, misinterpretations and commentaries upon commentaries.

In the past two centuries, many theories on *ḥadīth*, *ṣiṙah*, *maghazi*, *nasab* and *ṭabaqāt* have emerged. Such studies, though fragmented themselves, questioned the accuracy, reliability and relevance of the Muslim heritage, which, as such, represents the Islamic worldview. Their works also contributed to the emergence of revisionist scholars such as Muḥammad S. Qutb, Edward W. Said, Muḥammad Ḥamidullah, S. M. N. al-Attas, S. H. Nasf, and Muḥammad Muṣṭafa A'zami. Therefore, it is very interesting to compare these two groups of the scholars.

Many fragmented studies, mostly written as monographs, are incomprehensible representations of Muslim historiography. The fragmented approach to the study of Muslim historiography is clearly represented in the studies of the *ḥadīth*, *sīrah*, *maghazi*, *nasab*, *ṭabaqaṭ* and selected Muslim historians. What do we mean by the fragmented approach? It is selection of only specific historical period or the historical concept and projection of a theory, without looking at the history of the Muslim heritage holistically. Therefore, if one excludes the writings of Josef Horowitz, Franz Rosenthal, N. A. Faruqi, ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Duri and Tarif Khalidi, no single work deals objectively and holistically with the systematic developments of early Muslim historiography.

How did Muslim historiography originate, develop and achieve its climax in Ṭāḥiri? There is no significant study on the development of early Muslim historiography from its beginnings to the great Ṭāḥiri, the master of Muslim annals. It is, therefore, important to examine primary classical sources, illustrate the clear development of early Muslim historiography and show the climax of Muslim historiography in Ṭāḥiri. Such primary classical sources, as will be analyzed critically in the literature review, also include Ṭāḥiri’s *Kitāb al-rusul wa al-muluk* (*The history of prophets and kings*), a book of great magnitude that unfortunately has not yet been critically analyzed.

This study will attempt to relate the development of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *kalam*, linguistics and philosophy to the emergence of early Muslim historiography. For instance, there is no significant study on the role of *ḥadīth* methodology in the emergence of early Muslim historiography. Then, several scholars assume that the socio-cultural aspects of history did not have a place in the classical Muslim works and as a result, they label the Muslim historical heritage as a house of collected

historical narrations. In this regard, we will re-examine this assumption and analyze the scope of the classical Muslim works.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to analyze origin, developments and climax of early Muslim historiography. Therefore, this study will focus on the following:

- To identify the role of Greco-Roman and Christian historiography, especially in terms of historical methodology and the interpretation of history. The main objective of this part of the research is to examine possible similarities and differences and, as well as, influences on the early Muslim historiography.
- To explore the pre-Islamic historical techniques such as battle-days narratives, genealogy and poetry, and their role in the emergence of the early Muslim historiography.
- To expose the role of the Holy **Qur'an** and **Hādith** in the emergence of early Muslim historiography. A special emphasis is made on the role of these two sources in fostering Muslim historical consciousness in terms of historical methodology and, as well as, of the meaning of history.
- To relate the Holy **Qur'an** and **Hādith** to the emergence of earliest historical genres such as *sirah*, *al-maghazi*, *ṭabaqa* and *nasab*. These genres will be examined from within historical, religious and cultural contexts.
- To examine the historical, religious and cultural developments and their role in the emergence of early Muslim historiography. In this regard, the researcher will examine the role of *ḥādīth*, *fiqh*, *kalam*, *tafsīr*, linguistics, philosophy and literature in the emergence of early Muslim historiography.

- To employ interconnected and holistic approach in presenting developments of early Muslim historiography in terms of style, scope and methodology, as found in the classical sources of Ibn **Ishāq**, al-**Waqidi**, Ibn Sa'd, al-**Baladhuri**, al-**Ya'qubi**, Ibn Qutaybah, al-**Dinawari** and **Tābari**.
- To present how Muslim historiography reached its climax in **Tābari**. The main objective is to relate all historical periods and determine the relationship in terms of historical methodology and the interpretation of history.

A combination of all the above objectives once achieved, will enable us to understand profoundly the origin, developments and climax of early Muslim historiography.

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Many scholars disregard the significance of the methodology in preserving Muslim heritage. The Holy **Qur'an** and the Prophet of Islam repeatedly emphasize true knowledge and the rejection of falsehood. Being aware of the implications, the Companions of the Prophet and the classical scholars had seriously undertaken the task of developing methodologies and, thus, managed to safeguard the heritage from corruption. A systematic methodology was developed for the sake of the collection and preservation of the Holy **Qur'an** and the *ḥadīth*. Under the influence of such a methodology, later methodologies of other sciences also emerged.

Any unfair criticism of the *ḥadīth*-historical methodology is considered by Muslims as an indirect attack on the integrity and relevance of the Muslim heritage as a whole. Therefore, it is significant to examine the role of the historical methodology in preserving the Muslim heritage. In this regard, analysis of the early Muslim

historiography and its climax in **Tābari** is expected to be one of the greatest benefits of the present research.

It is universally well known that historiography as a science was flourishing long before the emergence of the Islamic civilization among Jews, Greeks, Romans, Christians, Persians and Chinese. Therefore, it is significant to relate and compare earlier developments and their possible influences on the emergence of the early Muslim historiography. However, the researcher will attempt to distinguish between technical influences and conceptual influences, which is another novelty of this research.

The present study will analyze **Tābari**'s historical thought based on *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa al-muluk*. However, we will also examine the early developments in Muslim historiography that contributed to the emergence of his historical thought. The lack of any contextual approach has been undoubtedly a serious shortcoming of the scholarship on Muslim historiography. Therefore, the researcher will attempt to present the chronologically interrelated developments of early Muslim historiography.

The researcher will develop a new historical theory, which meaningfully interrelate historical methodology and the interpretation of history. The historical truth is based on methodology while the historical interpretation is based on judgment. Such a historical theory could be useful for contemporary historical scholarship for it separates the historical truth and the historical interpretation and prevents historical skepticism.

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We will use *historical methodology*, which is essentially different from the research methods used in other academic fields. This research attempts to discuss the research problem systematically and objectively by selecting, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating classical and modern sources. Then, the data in such sources will be collected, organized, verified and validated for the sake of the accurate representation of the origins and development of Muslim historiography and its climax in **Tābari**

The author will use mostly primary sources to examine the developments of early Muslim historiography. In order to place this problem in context we will examine classical works in the field of early Muslim historiography such as that of Ibn **Ishāq**, al-**Waḥīdī**, Ibn Sa'd, al-**Baladhuri**, al-**Ya'qubi**, Ibn Qutaybah, al-**Dinawari** and **Tābari**. We will evaluate those sources by using historical criticism. It is of utmost importance to re-evaluate the validity of the contents of sources by employing internal criticism. The meaning, accuracy and trustworthiness of the material in these sources will be evaluated. Then, external criticism will be used to examine the originality and authenticity of these sources. Such an approach is inevitable for the formulation, analysis and interpretation of logical conclusions and the exposition of early Muslim historiography.

The origins and development of early Muslim historiography and its climax in **Tābari** require serious analysis of the historical concepts, which are virtually interrelated and interconnected. We will establish a clear relationship between the early historical periods in early Muslim historiography. Each historical period will be introduced, conceptualized and explained. The researcher will seriously take into consideration the social, cultural, economic, political, historical and intellectual

developments and their influence on the formation and development of early Muslim historiography.

6.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Since this study deals with the origin and developments of early Muslim historiography, the researcher aims to evaluate all classical historical sources in the first three centuries of the Muslim calendar. The classical sources of Ibn Ishāq, al-Waqidi, Ibn Sa'd, al-Baladhuri, al-Ya'qubi, Ibn Qutaybah, al-Dinawari and Tabari will be employed in this research.

The main aim of this study is to analyze the development of early Muslim historiography that ultimately led to the emergence of Tabari's historical thought. Therefore, it is inevitable that we should deal with the classical sources and began with Muhammad Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/768), who was one of the earliest biography writers and, unquestionably, the earliest authority on *sirah* and *maghazi*. The original version of his work has been lost but Ibn Hisham (d. 218/834) fortunately edited it. Alfred Guillaume also translated this work into English in 1955.¹

Since Ibn Ishāq's work is the primary source on *sirah*, it has been put under huge scrutiny and enormous investigation by both classical and modern scholars. Although he appeared to be very careful in writing history, attempting to be objective, critical historians have indicated the inaccuracies in his work. In his writing, he often uses the phrase "what has been mentioned," "what came to my knowledge" or "Allah knows best." It is also important to indicate that his biography, with excessive overemphasis on the miraculous dimension of the Prophet's life, was a compilation of

¹ See Alfred Guillaume, *The life of Muhammad*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

anecdotes and traditions arranged chronologically. Such shortcomings were edited, abridged, corrected and improved by Ibn Hisham.

Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Waḳidi (d. 207/823) was the second most authoritative historian on biography and especially on the expeditions and battles of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Although al-Waḳidi has contributed many works on *sirah*, *maghazi* and *futuh*, the researcher will in particular emphasize his *Kitāb al-maghazi*.² This three-volume work deals with *sirah*, *ghazawat* and *maghazi*. Al-Waḳidi in his introduction critically listed his historical sources. His narration of the expeditions and battles is very systematic and illustrative. Each narration includes the name of the historical event, participants, the historical narrators, the geographical position and the cause and outcome of the battle. Since al-Waḳidi represents a transitional period in the history of early Muslim historiography, it is of utmost importance to analyze his historical methodology, as such findings would undoubtedly help in defining the emergence of Ṭabari’s historical thought.

Muḥammad Ibn S’ad (d. 230/845), was the third authority on *sirah*. He was a Muslim biographer who received his training in tradition from al-Waḳidi to whom he was both student and secretary. He had the reputation of being both trustworthy and accurate in his writings. His greatest contribution to the field of historiography is *Kitāb al-tābaqāt al-kabīr*.³ This work deals with the biography of the Prophet, his Companions and Followers. In fact, it contains more than four thousand biographies of the narrators of the traditions.

² See Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Waḳidi, *The kitāb al-maghazi of al-Waḳidi (al-Waḳidi’s book of military campaigns)* edited by Marsden Jones, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

³ See Muḥammad Ibn S’ad, *Kitāb al-tābaqāt al-kabīr*.³ (*The large book of the generations*), edited by E. Sachau, 9 vols. (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1905-1940); Muḥammad Ibn S’ad, *Al-Tābaqāt al-kubra* 9 vols (Beirut: Dar Saḳir, 1957-1968) and Muḥammad Ibn S’ad, *Ibn Sa’d’s kitāb al-tābaqāt al-kabīr*, edited and translated by Syed Moinul Haq and H. K. Ghazanfar (Karachi: n.p., 1967).

This work includes a critical, genealogical and biographical account of the narrators. Because of this methodological approach, many classical historians, such as **Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Uthman al-Dhahabi** (d. 748/1347), **Ibn al-Nadīm** (d. 343/995) and **al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī** (d. 463/1071), praised the accuracy in the work of Ibn Sa'd. Since Ibn Sa'd was greatly influenced by **Ibn Ishāq** and **al-Waqīdī** regarding the narration of the biography and the critical collection of chains of transmitters, this source is significant for a proper examination of the development of early Muslim historiography.

There are other prominent historians who predated **al-Ṭābarī** and whose works are very important in defining **Ṭābarī's** historical thought. Among the historians one who deserves a special mention is **Aḥmad b. Yahyā b. Jabir al-Balādhurī** (d. 279/892). Although this historian had written many works on history, the researcher will closely examine his *Futuh al-buldan* (*The origins of the Islamic state*).⁴ This work is of great significance as it represents continuity as well as novelty in the writing of history. The greatest novelty in the historical writing of **al-Balādhurī** is his emphasis on geography, genealogical and socio-cultural history, and less emphasis on the chain of transmission of events. Although biographers like **Ibn Nadīm**, **Yaḥyā al-Ḥamawī** (d. 626/1229) and **al-Dhahabi** strongly support his authority and accuracy in writing history, many critics criticize him for his uncritical use of the narrated events.

ʿAbd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba (d. 276/889) is another Muslim historian who predated **Ṭābarī**. **Ibn Qutaybah** contributed many works on history, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *kalām* and *ʿadab*. However, we will critically analyze **Ibn Qutayba's** *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-*

⁴ **Aḥmad b. Yahyā b. Jabir al-Balādhurī**, *Futuh al-buldan* (*The origins of the Islamic state*) translated by Philip Hitti and Francis Murgotten 2 vols, (New York, AMS Press, 1968) and, **Aḥmad b. Yahyā b. Jabir al-Balādhurī**, *Futuh al-Buldan* (Beirut, Dar al-Maktabah al-Hilāl, 1988),

akhbar (Book of choice narratives), and *Kitab al-ma'arif* (Book of knowledge).⁵ In these works, he emphasized 'adab and historical writing about nobility. He actually used two separate methodologies, one for writing history and the other for writing legal sciences. Many historians are critical of his work for lack of chronological order, historical criticism and the interpretation of historical events.

Abu>Hānifa Ahmad b. Dawūd al-Dīnawari>(d. 290/903) was a grammarian, historian and theologian. His best work on history is *al-Akhbar al-tfwal* (General history).⁶ This book begins with the history of creation and continues with the history of the prophets, Persian history and selected parts of Muslim history. In this book, al-Dīnawari>omits the chain of narrators and does not deal with his sources critically. The events are narrated as fables and stories, which is one of the greatest shortcomings of the work.

Ahmad b Abi>Ya'qub b. Waḍḥ}al-Ya'qubi>s (d. 292/897) best work is *Ta'rikh al-Ya`qubi>* (History of al-Ya`qubi>).⁷ His history deals with Adam, the prophets and their nations, ancient peoples and empires, the Persians, Chinese, Romans and Islamic history. This work represents the geographical, religious and socio-cultural aspects of history. Apparently, he was a Shi'ite and presented his own version of the speculative question of the succession.

In spite of being called, and rightly so, the imam of Muslim annals, very little has been written about Abu>Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīf al-Tābari>(d. 310/923). Especially in Muslim academic circles, Tābari>is better known for his contributions to

⁵ See Abi>Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah al-Dīnawari> *'Uyūn al-akhbar* (Book of choice narratives), 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1986) and Abi>Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah al-Dīnawari, *al-Ma'arif li Ibn Qutaybah*, (Book of knowledge) (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1969).

⁶ See Abu>Hānifa Ahmad b. Dawūd al-Dīnawari, *al-Akhbar al-tfwal* (General history), (Cairo: Dar Ihya> al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1960).

⁷ See Ahmad b Abi>Ya'qub b. Waḍḥ}al-Ya'qubi> *Ta'rikh al-Ya`qubi>* (History of al-Ya`qubi>) (Beirut: Dar Dadir lil-Tiba'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1960).

tafsir than for his contributions to the field of Muslim historiography. There is only scattered information and few illustrations here and there about his contributions to the field of Muslim historiography.

This study will reach peak in **Tābari**, who was not merely a historian, but also an eminent authority on language, grammar, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *kalām* and ethics. Evidence of the excellence of his scholarship is provided by his major works on *tafsir* and history, which run into many lengthy volumes. Our analysis of **Tābari**'s historical thought will be based on his *Ta'rikh*.⁸ This work has been translated into English in thirty-nine volumes as *The history of al-Tābari*. It was published by the State University of New York Press from 1988 through 1998.⁹ In this work, **Tābari** employed his unique annalistic historical methodology, a methodology used for writing history from the creation of Adam down to the advent of Islam until the beginning of the 9th century.

Tābari also wrote an extensive commentary on the Holy **Qur'aan**.¹⁰ This work is among the first major voluminous and systematic works written in the field of *tafsir*. **Tābari** uses the most prominent narrators of the *ḥadīth*, who were the principal sources in the field of *tafsir*. Therefore, it is significant to analyze the role of *tafsir* in the emergence of **Tābari**'s historical thought.

The works on **Tābari** mostly deal with his thought and methodology in *tafsir*, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* while a detailed work on his contributions to historiography has not yet been written. Besides his own book on history, few works shed some light on his

⁸ See Abu-Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīf al-Tābari, *Ta'rikh al-Tābari*, *Ta'rikh al-umam wa al-muluk*, (*History of al-Tābari*, *The history of prophets and kings*) 6 vols., (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1988).

⁹ Abu-Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīf al-Tābari, *The history of al-Tabari*, 39 vols. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988-1998).

¹⁰ See Abu-Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīf al-Tābari, *Jāmi' al-bayan 'an ta'wīl ay al-Qur'aan* (*The comprehensive exposition of the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'aan*), (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995).

contributions to the field of historiography. A general exposition of **Tābari's** biography and his contributions to *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, *kalam* and historiography was written by **Muḥammad Zahī**¹¹ Although this work, actually a survey, provides an overview of **Tābari's** academic interests and his contributions, the author did not analyze his sources and there is a serious inadequacy with regard to the analysis of **Tābari's** contributions.

Another relevant and sound source on **Tābari's** historical thought, particularly on **Tābari's** sources, was written by 'Ali**Jawād**.¹² Three articles, written by one of the most prolific modern writers in the field of Muslim historiography, primarily deal with **Tābari's** sources, systematically analyzed according to the main historical periods. This is an excellent study, based mostly on the primary sources, which is of great interest to our present study.

A survey on **Tābari's** world history was written by **Husayn 'Asj**¹³ This book is yet another overview of **Tābari's** contributions to the field of Muslim historiography. Although the author frequently referred to the classical historical sources, it lacks synthesis, analysis and interpretation of the historical ideas.

Some of the most recent publications on **Tābari** include the work of Boaz Shoshan.¹⁴ Being influenced by the modern historical approaches, the author attempted to analyze **Tābari's History** from the ideological, literary and theological perspectives. Such an approach, deemed a preliminary for effective textual criticism,

¹¹ See **Muḥammad Zahī** *Imām al-Tābari shaykh al-mufasssīr, wa 'umdat al-mu'arrikhīn wa muqaddam al-fuqaha' al-muḥaddithīn saḥīb al-madhab*, (Damascus: **Daʿ al-Qalam**, 1990).

¹² See 'Ali**Jawād**, "Mawarīd Ta'rikh al-Tābari" *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmi-al-'Iraqi* vols. 1-3 (1950-1954).

¹³ See **Husayn 'Asj** *Abu-Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīf al-Tābari wa kitabuhu ta'rikh al-umam wa al-muluk*, (Beirut: **Daʿ al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah**, 1992).

¹⁴ See Boaz Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic historiography: Deconstructing Tābari's history* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004).