

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)

ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY DURING THE MAMLUK PERIOD :
THE HISTORY OF TAJI AL-DIN 'ALI AL-MADRIZI
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS AL-KHITAT)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC
THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE M. A. DEGREE

BY
ALIZA BIN ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
AUGUST, 1999



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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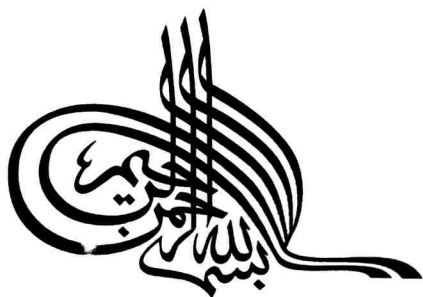


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NOTES ON GENERAL FORMAT, DATES AND STYLE OF TRANSLITERATION

Generally, the system followed in this thesis is adopted from the manual on *ISTAC's Standard Format: Basic Guidelines for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* produced recently by ISTAC as its official guidelines. Consultation also was made to Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Fifth Edition, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1987) for some details. However, in the case of conflict, the preference is given to the former. Dates are given in both of A.H. and C.E. notations respectively. For the sake of convenience, these notations are given only in the first place while in the rest, similar arrangements are retained without the notations. Arabic terms which have become common to English readers, like the term Mamluk, are written without proper transliteration so that it appears as 'Mamluk' instead of 'Mamlük'.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to describe certain important aspects involved in the history of al-Maqrizi (766-845 A.H./1364-1442 C.E.), an immediate student and an admirer of the well-known Ibn Khaldūn, so as to paint a true picture of Muslim historiography which will distinguish it from the so-called Modern Western historiography. Thus, we begin with a discussion of the present Western scholars' views regarding the nature and development of Muslim historiography. Hence, we will argue that the emergence of local historiography, based on the distinguished Islamic conception of life, this world and history itself, does not corroborate the assertion that it marks the secularization of Muslim history.

There follows in the second chapter, an attempt to depict the prosopographic importance of our historian which reveals the spiritual integrity and the harmonious spirit of Islam that has guided our historian's life and which directed him to the intellectual pursuit of history. Since the study of al-Maqrizi as a historian might not be best viewed in terms of his explicit theoretical contributions since, unlike Ibn Khaldūn, he speaks little of theory in his works, chapter three attempts to present his ways of manipulating and apprehending the vast subject matter into his presentation of history. Aspects of life with which he was more intimately involved, such as educational and political affairs are brought to fore, to show that many ideas exclusive to Islamic understanding such as justice, knowledge and religion are tightly interwoven with his descriptions. It is only by understanding his subject matter, his social and academic networks and the historian's involvement in his society that his views of history, will gradually speak for themselves.

These are further enlightened, in chapter four, by the present author's reflections on al-Maqrizi's craft in dealing with history in general, especially in terms of the meanings and value of history, the methods, style and modes with regards to subject matter and the familiar themes which underlined the motives and lessons preponderant in his histories. Finally, major points made in the discussions will be

recapitulated in such a way as to demonstrate that the history of al-Maqrizi could be put forward as a clear example of the distinction between the Muslim historian and the modern Western historian. It is hoped that this will also highlight the possibilities of re-questioning many Western findings and conclusions derived from such a secular outlook projected on the interpretation of Muslim history and Muslim historians.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The histories of Muslim and Western historiography have passed along different paths of development. Though they seem to coincide in certain aspects of the semantic development of the term, especially on the meanings of 'history' which are later acquired, a wide gap still keeps them apart. Muslim historiography, as frequently emphasized by Rosenthal, is the result of a distinctive Muslim consciousness of his religious environment, that guides and moulds it with its own intellectual values, and gives it a concrete identity throughout its diverse appearance in time. To consider and, above all, to interpret Muslim history through value-impregnated Western terms would necessarily lead us into an intellectual quagmire—the mistake which is, to some extent, admitted also by critical Western thinkers.¹ The dangers of the eurocentric or myopic view of history are multifold. From the misenforcement of the peculiar theoretical realm of what the Western term 'history' implies, it entails the misinterpretation of other-world historical developments into the Western conceptual framework which would ultimately reach false analogical conclusions. The most unfortunate fates that Islamic history has received during the past centuries have undoubtedly been the product of Western historiographical-orientalism.²

¹ Arnold J. Toynbee for instance characterized this as a "Eurocentric Illusion", see his famous *A Study of History*, abridged by D. C. Somervell (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1981), 54-60. See also J. W. Fück who makes the following remarks, "Every historian of Christian outlook must naturally regard Islam from a Christian viewpoint, but even when no Christian standards were applied, the dualism of church and state in the Christian West could lead a student to misunderstand Islamic institutions", "Islam as an Historical Problem in European Historiography Since 1800", in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 303-314, henceforth cited as *Historians*.

² Franz Rosenthal. *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 196. Henceforth cited as *Muslim Historiography*. A contemporary Muslim thinker who has successfully expounded and refuted many Western historical misconceptions is undoubtedly S. M. Naquib al-Attas as depicted throughout his works on the history of the Islamization of the Malay world especially in *Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu*, (Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), 1990), henceforth cited as *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan*.

The demarcation line that sets Muslim and Western historiography apart rests in the mental foundation that prompted Muslims to embark on historical tasks and prepare the way for how histories should be viewed. This foundation is fundamentally provided by the teachings and values embodied in the revelation i.e. the Qur'ān and in the Traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, throughout its appearance, history in Muslim historiography has revealed the same firm and fundamental characteristics. As early Muslim historiography was centered on the life of the Prophet (PBUH), so do and so will the present and future historiographical undertakings revolve around religion and religious consciousness. Muslim historiography, however 'secular' its subjects are, always reflects a religious end if viewed in a whole perspective of narration and the objective of their compositions. The spiritual integrity of Muslim historians viewed hand in hand with their works, the network and environment where they lived will, in its totality, exhibit a clear departure on the part of Muslim historiography from its Western counterpart .

Since the term 'history' is an English term pregnant with connotations exclusive to the Western philosophical mind, its usage here, which most of the time refers to Muslim historiography, must be explained at the outset. European words, whether the English 'history', the French *histoire* or the Italian *storia*, have their origins in the Greek *historia* which was first used to denote a general inquiry into things. This simple meaning later grew and changed drastically in the Western world in line with the influx of constantly changing philosophical ideas, to ascribe certain notions of what the term 'history' demands, of function, of purpose, and of what is and is not.³ Our present 'history' does not have these modern Western philosophical implications. Our usage here is restricted to its external sense implying both the happening and the description of that happening so that when the word 'al-Maqrīzī's history' is used, it should be read in its totality of the aspects involved in historiographical writing and endeavours including

³ *The Syntopicon: An Index to the Great Ideas*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler, fifth edition (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1993), s.v. "Chapter 34:History", 1: 546-554, henceforth cited as "History"; Mircea Eliade, ed, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "Historiography: An Overview", by Ernst Breisarch, 6: 371-382; for modern Western historiography see s.v. "Historiography:Western Studies", by Arnaldo Momigliano, 383-390.

the style, method and mental framework which moulded and underlined al-Maqrizi's perception of historical things rather than the limited narration of historical events.

A

History in Qur'anic Perspective

The Qur'an is not a history book though it contains rich references to historical elements. The term *al-ta'rikh* which has been employed to designate the meaning of history is not a Qur'anic term, at least, it is used nowhere in the Qur'an. The term 'Qur'anic concepts of history' is therefore used with reference to the collaboration of certain definite assumptions by which all historical statements of the Qur'an could be coherently conceived. The Qur'an, despite the absence of the term '*ta'rikh*', contains various allusions to the need to contemplate past events, particularly the call to reflect on the consequences that befell those people who transgressed the laws of Allāh, hence giving the idea of history. Some modern scholars refer to the following verse and verses of its similar expressions as a call to reflect on history ; "...*fa-sirū fī al-ard fa unzurū kayfa kāna 'āqibat al-mukhadhdhibin* (... so travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied [the truth])" (*Sūrat al-Nahl*, 16: 36),⁴ since to travel through the earth could also include reading through pages of historical books or documented historical events. The method of reflecting on history is implied in the key-word '*unzurū*'⁵ used in the above verse. It derives from the root *n-z-r*, and means literally to look at with the eye. The word could also imply to look both at a physical thing or the meaning which lies therein as it was used in the following *ḥadīth* "Verily Allāh will not look (*lā yanzurū*) at your physical appearance and wealth but (He looks) at your hearts and deeds."⁶ It is in relation to the latter meaning that '*al-naẓar*' is given

⁴ The translation used for this Qur'anic verse and the rest of the verses cited in the present study is of 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, new ed. with rev. translation and commentary, (Brentwood: Amana Corporation, 1991).

⁵ The word appears repetitively in twelve Qur'anic verses as a consequential response to call for making journey or travel, six in its positive sense (*sirū*) and six in its negative sense (i.e. *afalam yasirū*). For the former see *Sūrat al-An'am*, 6: 11, *Āli 'Imrān*, 3: 137, *al-Nahl*, 16: 36, *al-Naml*, 27: 69, *al-Ankabūt*, 29:20, *al-Rūm*, 30:42; for the latter see *Yūsuf*, 12:109, *al-Rūm*, 30: 9, *Fāṭir*, 35: 44, *Ghāfir*, 40: 31, 82, *Muhammad*, 47: 10.

⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawāwī*, eds. 'Iṣām al-Ṣabābiti, Ḥāzīm Muḥammad and 'Imād 'Āmir, *Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣīlah wa al-Ādāb*, 34 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), 8:363.

as a contemplation of a thing by one's own assessment or consideration and comparison (*al-fikr fī al-shay' tuqaddiruhu wa tuqisuhu minka*).⁷ According to Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib al-Fāsi, *al-naẓr*, when used unrestrictedly by scholastic theologians it means *al-i'tibār*. *Al-i'tibār*, in fact, is another key word referring to reflection on the lessons of history such as in the verse " *fa 'tabirū yā 'ulī al-abṣār* "(*Sūrat al-Ḥaṣhr*, 59: 2).⁸ It derives from the root '-b-r which means literally to cross, travel or pass by quickly. The word is also used in relation to dreams such as '*abara al-ru'ya* which means to interpret, explain the dream and tell its final sequel or result. It is also used in the sense of comparing as used by Ibn Sirīn, *a'tabiru al-ḥadīth* which means I used to judge by comparison and *i'tabara ba'd al-kitāb bi ba'dīn* , (he considered and compared ... in order to understand it).⁹ We could therefore fairly surmise that the Qur'ān calls us, with regard to history, to think about past events, to understand their lessons embedded in terms of warnings and examples, by judging what is hidden from what is apparent and undertaking comparative reasoning.

Historical values and views of the Qur'ān are indeed part and parcel of the very projection of the Islamic world view itself. The whole history rests upon the relationship of man to God and to the universe. Historical time, past, present and future becomes a single moment before God. They all abide by and are governed by the same laws, so that the pattern of history becomes repetitive in form. Man is not only created as God's slave on earth but is also assigned as His vicegerent whose duty is "calling to goodness and forbidding evil". Goodness here implies that which springs from the ultimate truth i.e. the true teachings of Islām. This is to be contrasted with the utilitarian view which tends to see goodness in terms of immediate utility which disregards the ultimate and the final sequence of things, including the afterlife. Therefore, the end of history which is looked for is actually a history of man in relation to his spiritual and

⁷ See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1994)), 5: 215-220.

⁸ Used in the form of '*ibrah* appears six times in the Qur'ān, *Āli 'Imrān*, 3: 13, *Yūsuf*, 12:111, *al-Nuḥl*, 16:66, *al-Mu'minūn*, 23:21, *al-Nūr*, 24:44, *al-Nāzi'āt*, 79:26.

⁹ For the semantic meanings and discussions of both terms see E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, on "*nazara*", Part. 8, 2810-2812; on "*abara*", Part. 5, 1936-1937.

cultural refinement which has gone through a process of cause and effect.¹⁰ Under this design, true happiness is taught as being above and beyond any historical materials which are neither partial nor relative. History opens the path to happiness wide and clear for, while the universe is full of God's signs (*āyāt*), history brings those signs dearer and closer to human experience.¹¹

Under this general framework, the Qur'ān conveys its messages, with the call to reflect on history, in terms of lessons and religious values that it sets in the historical settings illustrated. Facts and the chronicle of events are not the prime concern of the Qur'ān for it goes much deeper into the analysis of the ideological and psychological foundations and the moral attitudes that will ultimately outline the alternating fate of power, prosperity, decay and annihilation of a nation.¹² "Not the prime concern" however is not a statement that easily leads to another consequence, as is baselessly claimed by Rosenthal, who asserts that the principal fault of the historical material of the Qur'ān is that it contains a lot of obviously false data.¹³ For, the historical data of the Qur'ān are both truth and accurately told by the Creator whose knowledge is all-encompassing. On the other hand, it is other books of revelation that are now known to contain a lot of erroneous and false data, as affirmed by the Qur'ān,¹⁴ since they have been subjected to alterations and modifications by men, whose 'subjective interference',

¹⁰ This idea was expressed and emphasised by al-Attas in collaboration with a similar assertion made by Meinecke, see al-Attas, *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan*, 61.

¹¹ See discussions on Islamic views of history by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *The Qur'anic Concept of History* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1993), henceforth cited as *Concept of History*; 'Imad al-Din Khalil, "The Qur'anic Interpretation of History", Rashid al-Barāwi, "Factors that Influence History"; Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja'far, "Islam Looks at History", 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Hajj, "Basic Principles of Islamic History", Anwār al-Jundi, "The Philosophy of Islamic History", Maḥmūd al-Sharqāwī, "History is Humanity's Way to God" and Sayyid al-Qutb, "History as the Interpretation of Events", included as appendices in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 134-204, passim. Also see Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8-16, passim, henceforth cited as *Historical Thought*.

¹² Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Concept of History*, 52.

¹³ Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 27. An attempt to find at least a single example from him for this assertion however comes to no avail. An insight into his other article however verifies our suspicion that it is referred to the notion that (in his view) the Qur'ān had transformed or invented data contradictory to or deviating from Biblical sources yet his examples given rather show not that Qur'ānic data have deviated but it is the interpretation of the Qur'ān especially from stories elaborated to support Qur'ānic data which are in fact his concern! see idem, "The Influence of the Biblical Tradition on Muslim Historiography", in *Historians*, 35-45.

¹⁴ See for example *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2: 75, *al-Nisā'*, 4: 46, *al-Mā'idah*, 5: 13 and 41.

as a Western philosopher of history himself so strongly puts it, should be doubted or accepted in a highly suspicious manner.¹⁵ If the modern Western philosophy of history now believes that all knowledge is historical, Islamic historiography since the day of its emergence, has consistently held to the belief and view that Divine knowledge whose truth and authenticity is beyond any doubt, is beyond and above the historical.

In accord with the above framework, historical changes are depicted in the Qur'ān as being bound to moral virtues. The Qur'ān frequently emphasized that historical changes will always be in favour of good virtues. While good virtues themselves definitely spring from the religious world-view since only religion can prevent the morality of mankind from going astray. Evil forces, armed with material power are considered by the Qur'ān as frail, and short-lived and their success in this world is temporary and usually transitory. The Qur'ān draws our attention to the examples of various nations persisting in evil, who, despite their material power and skills cannot resist destruction and absolute ruination when it comes. Hence, the Qur'ān speaks of various causes that bring certain nations to total destruction and these causes are immutable throughout human history, past, present and future. The Qur'ān mentions that the extinction of a society is mainly the result of injustice, tyranny and oppression.

How many towns have We destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them on a sudden by night or while they slept for their afternoon rest. When (thus) our punishment took them, no cry did they utter but this: " Indeed we did wrong (*Sūrat al-A'raf*, 7: 4 - 5)

... nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members practice iniquity (*Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28: 59)

The fundamental problem which results in injustice is undoubtedly the ignorance of knowledge. For ignorance is like an absolute darkness by which an orderly state of proper things in their proper places is subject to confusion and

¹⁵ The question of relative subjectivity has become a hallmark which haunted the development of Western historiography. See for example Walsh's discussions of the problem of historical objectivity and his assertion that the issue is the most baffling topic in critical philosophy of history, W.H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (London: Thoemnes Press, 1992), 94 and Christopher Blake, " Can History be Objective?" in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (New York: The Free Press, 1959), 329 - 343.

alteration. The problem of knowledge which must necessarily give rise to the phenomenon of injustice is clearly suggested by a definition of knowledge, as referring to meaning, as given by al-Attas, which " consists of the recognition of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence".¹⁶ In relation to this, the Qur'ân also emphasizes the underlying conditions which would usually lead to grave injustice. Abundant material prosperity, and easy life-styles that people become habituated with are usually characterized as being liable to corrupt the morals of a community :

And how many populations We destroyed, which exulted in their life (of ease and plenty) (*Sûrat al-Qaşaş*, 28: 58)

Since, the apparent success of transgressors is transitory, The Qur'ân mentions that prosperity of this life does not exclude the transgressors and wicked for the present material life is ephemeral and means nothing compared to the Hereafter.

If any do wish for the transitory things (of this life), We readily grant them-such things as we will, to such persons as We will: in the end have We provided Hell for them: they will burn therein, disgraced and rejected (*Sûrat al-Isrâ'*, 17: 18)

The Qur'ân also explains that historical change is an accumulative process and the punishment of God will not come all of sudden. God gives opportunities to the people to repent from their mistakes and to reform themselves by giving a reminder, sometimes in term of sufferings and adversity (*ibtilâ'*). If they do not pay heed to the calls then God inflicts the final punishment on them:

When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them; then We destroy them (*Sûrat al-Isrâ'*, 17: 16)

When the suffering reached them from Us, why then did they not learn humility? On the contrary their hearts became hardened, and Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them. But when they forgot the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all (good) things, until, in the midst of their enjoyment of our gifts, on a sudden,

¹⁶ Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islām: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1991), 19.

we called them to account, when lo! They were plunged in despair
(*Sūrat al-An'ām*, 6: 43 - 44)

Man's role as a vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth to enjoin good and forbid evils is meant for maintaining collective order and peace. This collective justice is a prime factor by which a nation rises to a level of success and prosperity. It is even extended to include its warning against grave consequences if this order is neglected. Thus, Allah says that grave injustices have a far-reaching impact and inflict both the innocent and the guilty alike.

"And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong, and know that Allah is strict in punishment" (*Sūrat al-Anfāl*, 8: 25).

B

Early 15th Century Mamluk Historiography: A Survey of Historians in Egypt

Fifteenth century Mamluk historiography is considered one of the most interesting epochs in the entire history of Muslim historiography. It was an epoch rich in sources which can be attributed to the emergence of a number of historians who revolved around the metropolis of Cairo, the heartland of the Mamluk dynasty. The presence of Ibn Khaldūn at the centre of the intellectual life of Cairo, the historic city which had begun to emulate the glory of Baghdād, had shifted a group of scholars' attention to pay heed to the call of reviewing some problems pertaining to the theoretical and methodological approaches to historiography which might lead to the problem of historical truth. This claim, as believed by Western scholars, is true as far as the external reactions to the *Muqaddimah* are concerned since Ibn Khaldūn's theory itself was less well understood or followed by his Egyptian colleagues and successors. Ibn Khaldūn, despite the admiration of modern scholarship towards his *Muqaddimah*, was rather better known in his time as a judge and a teacher of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* than as a historian. His scholarly capacity as a historian was doubted and undermined by his more respected and influential Egyptian colleagues such as Ibn Ḥajar himself.¹⁷ This

¹⁷ See for example Muḥammad 'Abdullāh 'Inān, *Ibn Khaldūn: His Life and Work* (Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1993), 95. Henceforth cited as *Life and Work*.

case of Ibn Khaldūn alone has given rise to many exaggerated remarks about the fate of intellectuality in the early 15th. century historiography. For example, Nicholson concluded that it was the most decisive symptom of intellectual lethargy in which even the greatest writers would find themselves struggling in vain against the spirit of their own time.¹⁸

Besides Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Maqrizī, al-'Aynī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Sakhāwī, Ibn al-Ṣayrafī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī are among notable historians who represented early fifteenth century Mamluk historiography. It is interesting to note that these 'historians' emerged from the circle of traditional Islamic sciences particularly *ḥadīth* scholarship. Biographical accounts of these scholars reveal their mastery, attachment and affiliation to the field and profession of *muḥaddithīn*. Their deep involvement with the discipline of *ḥadīth* had obviously left a discernible impact on their occupation with history. Ibn Ḥajar and his student al-Sakhāwī's interests in *ḥadīth*, for example, had clearly shaped their tendencies in viewing history and historical writings. Ibn Ḥajar's interest in history particularly centered on the life and conditions of the narrators of *ḥadīth* especially those whom he received *ijāzah* from, such as his *al-Durar al-Kāminah* which contains biographies of notables from the year 701 A.H./1301 C.E. to the end of 800/1398 and covered both those in the land of Egypt and other Islamic regions. His student, al-Sakhāwī, took his devotion to *ḥadīth* even further to infuse his views on history with it. In his view, *tārikh* is a time by which conditions of narrators of *ḥadīth* and leaders of knowledge from birth to death are determined and thus, biographical dictionaries occupy the supreme position in the field of history relegating events and happenings to second position.¹⁹ He compiled an enormous biographical work *al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'* modelled on the format of his teacher's *al-Durar al-Kāminah* but pursued it in a highly critical manner. This personality criticism was adopted in a very enthusiastic style in almost all of his

¹⁸ Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 453.

¹⁹ Al-Sakhāwī, *al-I'lān bi al-Tawbikh li man dhamma al-Tārikh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d), 18. Henceforth cited as *al-I'lān*. English translation by Rosenthal in *Muslim Historiography*, 273.

writings that sometimes went beyond the proper limits. He himself was a polemicist who drew a lot of controversy especially with al-Buqā'i²⁰ and al-Suyūṭī. Al-Suyūṭī, for instance, could not help but write a small work condemning this tendency in al-Sakhāwī called *Al-Kāwī 'ala Ta'rikh al-Sakhāwī* (A Vilification of al-Sakhāwī's *Ta'rikh*) which contained in its preface the following remarks;

What do you think of a man compiling biographies of great persons and notables yet swindled to eat their flesh treacherously? ... he made the flesh of Muslims his meal and engrossed all his time, including in fasting, in eating. Never does he distinguish between praiseworthy and blameworthy qualities ... and stretched-out far to include even great 'ulamā'.²¹

Fifteenth century historians also depict a vivid picture of a pure relation between historians, scholars and their contemporary rulers which occasionally turned into rivalry. Unlike al-Maqrīzī, whose distance from and dislike of his contemporary sultāns manifested itself throughout his life, al-'Aynī's presence in Cairo tells a different story. Through his mastery of Turkish, al-'Aynī was frequently invited to the palace to teach *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and history, especially from his writings, *'Iqd al-Jumān* and *'Umdat al-Qārī fī Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*. Another historian whose biography tells of his acquaintance with rulers is Ibn Taghri Birdī, ironically, the most faithful student of al-Maqrīzī. His relations with rulers and the bureaucrats were more profound since his father was one of the slaves (*mamālik*) of al-Sulṭān Barqūq (d. 802/1399) who held many respected bureaucratic positions.²² Due to this relation, Ibn Taghri Birdī frequently claimed his superior knowledge of rulers' conditions in responding to some harsh criticisms levelled at them by his teacher, al-Maqrīzī.

Returning to the development of historiography, the most staunch admirer and supporter of Ibn Khaldūn among the historians of the fifteenth century was undoubtedly the historian al-Maqrīzī, who will be the focus of this study. His praise of the *Muqaddimah* had prompted and drawn various comments and evaluation of Ibn

²⁰ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar (d. 885/1480).

²¹ As quoted by Muḥammad 'Abdullah 'Inān in *Mu'arrikhū Miṣr al-Islāmiyya wa Maṣādir al-Tārikh al-Miṣri* (Cairo: Mu'assasah Mukhtār, 1991), 136, henceforth cited as *Mu'arrikhū Miṣr*.

²² See the biography of his father in Ibn Taghri Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhirah* (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Ta'lif wa al-Nashr, 1971), 6: 432 - 435. Henceforth will be cited as *al-Nujūm*.

Khaldūn's history scholarship. However, despite his admiration for Ibn Khaldūn, al-Maqrīzī failed to excite Western and European scholars who are eager to see the influence and impact of Ibn Khaldūn in al-Maqrīzī's writing. Rosenthal for instance, found that al-Maqrīzī did not devote any special studies to the theory of historiography like his teacher.²³ Likewise, other European scholars, like J. J. saunders tend to conclude that Ibn Khaldūn's impact is absent in al-Maqrīzī.²⁴ The views also went so far as to deny any harmonious relation between Ibn Khaldūn's theory and his own works, so that their contention can be put forward like this; "Ibn Khaldūn failed to influence himself with his theory, let alone his student al-Maqrīzī." On the other hand, there are those who have refused to accept this assertion in total, especially certain Arab scholars. Tarif Khalidi, for example, in contradistinction to the above views, asserted that Ibn Khaldūn's history was in fact intended to be "a precise and carefully constructed demonstration of the principles of historical change outlined in the *Muqaddimah*".²⁵ While Inān tried to show that al-Maqrīzī was influenced and in fact used the method and principles of Ibn Khaldūn in analyzing the causes of ruin and misfortune that befell Egypt and the conditions of each class of his society.²⁶

Be that as it may, the cultural climate of historiography started to exhibit a kind of lively interaction and correspondence between historians who had naturally progressed to critically evaluating each other's works. This phenomenon is also connected to the consciousness to revive the state of Muslim scholarship which had culminated in al-Sakhāwī. Al-Sakhāwī's stern manner undoubtedly arose from his unwillingness to accept the decline in the state of contemporary studies in the Prophetic traditions, resulting in the inaccuracy of narrations.²⁷ Thus, in the historiographical field of the fifteenth century, al-Maqrīzī's history was severely criticized by al-Sakhāwī for alleged plagiarism, errors and misspellings; Ibn Taghri Birdī was criticized by the

²³ Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 41.

²⁴ See J. J. Saunders's assertion in his review of *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History*, by Muhsin Mahdi, in *History and Theory* 7, no.3 (1966): 342-347. Henceforth cited as "Review".

²⁵ Tarif Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 222.

²⁶ Muḥammad 'Abdullah 'Inān, *Mu'arrikhū Miṣr*, 99-101.

²⁷ Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 9. Henceforth cited as *Civilian Elite*.

same al-Sakhāwī for self-illusion in his claims and factual errors, while al-Sakhāwī himself was denounced by al-Suyūṭī for his extremism and exploitation of personality criticism; Ibn Taghri Birdī showed the errors and mistakes of his teacher, al-Maqrīzī's evaluation of their contemporary rulers' accounts, Ibn Ḥajar criticized al-'Aynī for his untrustworthiness in narrating events; Ibn Taghri Birdī sensed the weaknesses that led to errors and inaccuracies of al-Aynī. All of this represents clear evidence of the active minds of the fifteenth century historians who participated in the discourse of history and revealed to us the nature of their historiographical network.

C

Muslim Local Historiography: An Overview

In the field of Muslim historians' engagement with local historiography, ideas and observations by European scholars are represented in the works of Gibb and Rosenthal.²⁸ Gibb roughly dated this new historiographical tradition as beginning in the third century, a period when historical writings appeared in mixed historical forms. Both share the view that the earliest local historiography grew out of theological-juridical considerations. This is evidenced by the fact that the earliest local histories written were the history of Mecca by al-Azraqī, which Gibb asserts as belonged to the *sīrah* circle and histories of Muslim conquests such as the Conquests of Egypt (*Futūḥ Miṣr*) by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abd al-Ḥakam. Rosenthal, however, emphasized the strong attachment, the feeling of local pride as an implicit yet compelling factor behind the works on these local histories. It is under this psychological current that later local historiography developed into a new mainstream, which is identified by both writers as secular local historiography, to distinguish it from the earlier theological local historiography. Rosenthal's observations further attempt, in a manner typical of orientalist thinking, to trace the origin of this tradition as being allegedly rooted in some pre-Islamic antecedents. While Gibb, after ascribing his own invented adjective of 'secular' to local history, prescribed this secularization of

²⁸ H. A. R. Gibb, "Tārīkh", in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 119-130, henceforth cited as *Studies*; Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 150-172.