



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**COURSE CODE: ISL474**

**COURSE TITLE: ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY**



**COURSE CODE/TITLE:**                    **ISL474 : Islamic Historiography**

**COURSE TEAM**                                 **Dr. Habibah Oladosu-Uthman**  
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**COURSE EDITOR:**                             Prof. A. F. Ahmed (NOUN)



# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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## **Introduction**

I welcome you to this class of ISL 474 Islamic Historiography. This course is designed for the students in the undergraduate level of Islamic studies programme. The course provides an opportunity for students to acquire a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of theories, definitions and concepts of Muslim Historiography as it applies to all climes and times. Students who have gone through this course would be able to analyze the importance of studying history as in relation to Muslims and humanity in general. Students are also expected to be familiar with important texts and literatures in Islamic Historiography and be able to internalize the ideas inherent in them.

This course guide provides you with the necessary information about the content of the course and the materials you will need to get yourself familiar with for a proper understanding of the subject matter. The course is designed to assist you to have the best of it, in order for you to be able to think like a scholar about Islamic Historiography and what you have learnt in the course of your study and thereafter. It also gives you some hints on the way to answer your tutor-marked assignments (TMAs). You will of course receive on-the-spot guidance from your tutorial classes, which you are advised to take cognizance of.

In totality, these modules will provide you with important slot in the study of Historiography as a sub-field of Islamic studies which has been with us for a long period of time. Students will acquire a better understanding to be able to apply the history of the living past to the contemporary situations.

## **What You Will Learn In This Course**

Islamic Historiography open your eyes and gives you the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of what history stand for in the classical, medieval and contemporary periods. The four modules treats the theoretical aspect, it examines the medieval and the contemporary concepts of Islamic Historiography. The key point includes; the Muslims' conception of history, the development of the schools of historiography in the medieval period and the study of key figures like Ibn Khaldun.

## **Study units**

ISL 474 is a 2 credit unit 400 level course for undergraduate Islamic studies students. There are four modules in this course. Module 1 is made up of three units, module 2 four units, module 3 four units, while module 4 contains three units respectively making a total of 14 units in all. The four modules in the course are as follows:

### **Module 1 Starting point: Understanding Islamic Historiography**

Unit 1 What is Historiography?

Unit 2 Muslims' conception of History

Unit 3 Historical Development of Historiography among the early scholars

### **Module 2 Islamic Historiography in the Medieval Period**

Unit 1 Schools of Historiography in Madinah and Iraq

Unit 2 The place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islamic History

Unit 3 Ibn Khaldun: "Father" of Historical Writing

Unit 4 Historical writings and the 'golden age' of Islam

### **Module 3 Some Selected Muslim Historiographers**

Unit 1 Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761)

Unit 2 Intellectual consensus of al-Waqidi (d.207/823) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845)

Unit 3 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari

Unit 4 The genealogies of al-Baladhuri

### **Module 4 Historiography In Islam and Western Culture**

Unit 1 What are the sources of history?

Unit 2 Importance of History in the live of Contemporary man

Unit 3 Muslims versus Western History: Where do we meet?

Each module is preceded by a listing of the units contained in it, contents, an introduction; a list of objectives and the main contents in turn precedes each unit, including Self-Assessments Exercises (SAEs). At the end of each unit, you will find one Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA) which you are expected to work on and submit for marking.

### **Textbooks and References**

At the end of each unit, you will find a list of relevant reference materials which you may yourself wish to consult as the need arises, even though I have made efforts to provide you with the most important information you need to pass this course. However, I would encourage you, as a fourth year student to cultivate the habit of consulting as many relevant materials as you are able to, within the time available to you. In particular, be sure to consult whatever material you are advised to consult before attempting any exercise.

### **Assessments**

Two types of assessments are involved in the course, the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) and the Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA) questions. Your answers to the SAEs are not meant to be submitted, but they are also important since they give you an opportunity to assess your own understanding of the course content. Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA) are on the other hand to be carefully answered and kept in your assignment file for submission and marking. This will count for 30% of your total score in the course.

### **Tutor-Marked Assignment**

At the end of every unit, you will find a Tutor-marked Assignment which you should answer as instructed and put in your assignment file for submission. However, this course guide does not contain any Tutor-Marked Assignment question. The Tutor-Marked Assignment questions are provided from unit1 of module1 to unit 3 of module 4.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination for ISL 474 will take 3 hours and carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination questions will definitely bring into fore the SAEs

and TMAs you have already worked on. I implore you to use your time judiciously by revising your work between the time you complete the last unit and the final examination time, because this would be of much benefit to you.

### **What You Will Need for this Course**

It is important to let you know that what you studied on the history of the Jahiliyyah period before the advent of Islam and history of the Arabs generally will be of immense benefits to you if you endeavour to revise them. Secondly, you may need to purchase one or two texts recommended as Important for your personal use to enhance your knowledge of the course. You also need as a matter of fact, a good and conducive environment to study every week. I think at this level you are ideally expected to be computer-literate; hence you should be prepared to visit important websites. At this level also, you are advised to be a lover of libraries for consultations.

### **Facilitators/ Tutors and Tutorials**

There are fourteen (14) hours tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be told of the dates and location of these tutorials together with the name and phone number of your tutor or facilitator as soon as you are allocated in to a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments and monitor your progress in this course. Make sure you send in your tutor-marked assignments as prompt as possible and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty as regards your SAEs and TMAs or in the grading of your assignments. I advise you to always attend the tutorials and make sure you are always with a list of prepared questions to the tutorials and participate actively in the discussions.

### **Conclusion**

This course is theoretical in nature and outlook but I assure you that you will get the best out of it only if you can make extra effort to complement what is on ground for you. Also, you will benefit more if you can relate what you have learned to the contemporary situations.

**Summary**

This course guide has been designed to furnish you with the information you need for a meritorious experience in this course. Finally, whatever you are able to get from this course depends largely on how much effort you put into it in terms of time and planning.

I wish you knowledge and understanding with a result of success in ISL 474 and in the whole program.



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## **MODULE 1**

### **UNIT 2 MUSLIMS' CONCEPTION OF HISTORY**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Muslims' Conception of History
  - 3.2 Matters Arising from Muslims' conception of history
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I assume you have gone through the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 1. This unit is the second of the three divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to enable you to identify Muslims' conception of history as explained in the Qur'an and the motivation received through the best example of the Prophet. This unit, therefore, forms the basic reasons why Muslims engage in the art of historiography. I hereby implore you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to be able to:

- ❖ Identify the various definitions rendered by scholars to explain the concept of Muslim Historiography
- ❖ State the Muslims' conception of history and what reinforce the conviction to generate historical records.
- ❖ State some general observable attributes of all the given ideas
- ❖ Generate ideas of your own from the message of the Qur'an concerning the people of the past.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

##### **3.1 Muslims Conception of History**

Before writing of any human history, consideration is usually given to the philosophy on which the history will be based. The choice of the kind of materials to be put in

place by any historian before writing is under normal circumstances determined by his own philosophical background or outlook. You can imagine an Ibo man and a Yoruba wanting to write about the genealogy of the Yoruba race. Both approaches and outlook will definitely take different shapes. This instance is also applicable to the Muslim historians both of old and recent. Unlike the western conception of history, which denies the existence of a divine being in the construction of history, Muslims conception of history is directly connected with their faith in the existence of a Supreme Being Who created the heavens and the earth from time immemorial. This understanding of the world phenomena is not just a given but through the divine guidance of the noble Prophet Muhammad who was sent with the message of the Qur'an wherein the faithful are enjoined to reflect on the people of antiquity.

The holy Qur'an, through the mouth and example of the Prophet stressed the importance of relating what has happened to nations and civilizations of the old as a warning for mankind so that historical knowledge will serve as a moral exhortations to the believers. The Qur'an states thus:

Have they not travelled in the land to see the nature of the consequence for those who disbelieved before them? They were mightier than thee in power and (in the) traces (which they) left behind them in the earth. Yet Allah seized them for their sins and they had no protector from Allah. (Qur'an 40: 21)

The Qur'anic vision of history rests upon a certain conception of time and space and a certain style to express that conception. Islam and history are synonymous; 'it was God who called you Muslims from days of old' (22: 78). The human community is addressed the community of the centre which came into being through the creation of Adam. After that, the Qur'an pans over a landscape where time is less a chronology than continuum, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (AS) are all described in a grammatical tense which one is tempted to call the eternal present. The whole of history is present at once to God, within this design events are arranged in clusters, repetitive in form. This indicates that the Qur'anic tale is closer in function and meaning to a case in point, a parable than it is to a story or narrative. The Qur'anic common way of narrative or introducing a discourse about the past is usually, 'As when' Joseph or 'as when Moses...'. This is suggesting an extended moral example or paradigm which is often repeated with only minor changes to suit the moral at hand. To know God is among other things, to recognize the overwhelming evidence of His presence in the past; the Qur'an states further thus:

Have they not journeyed in the land and seen how those before them met their end? They were stronger than them in might, they cultivated the land and built upon it more than they did. (30: 9)

The advent of Islam paved the way for the growth of historiography in Arabia. The abundance of historical data in the Holy Quran provided the followers of Islam with an incentive to study history. The learned discourses of the Holy Prophet of Islam were always punctuated with historical references to the past, which awakened an interest hitherto unknown, for historiography, among the adherents of the new faith. History has always been considered as the most important subject in the educational curriculum of Muslims. A thorough knowledge of history was essential for princes, ministers and scholars alike. No education was considered to be complete without a detailed background of history. Even the soldiers were taught the history of the rise and fall of different nations especially that of the Muslim powers.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the important factors that reinforce the Muslims' perception of history.

### **3.2 Matters Arising from Muslims' conception of history**

So far in this unit, you will agree with me that Muslims conception of history is basically dependent on the understanding of the challenges put forward by the Qur'an. In other words, it is the Islamic faith that defines Muslims' concept of history. As a student of history, therefore, you may wish to note the following assumptions:

- That the holy Qur'an is filled with abundance historical accounts which serves as an incentives to its followers to study history
- That it is common with the Qur'an to start any historical narration with 'as when...' or 'just as when'.
- That the stories narrated in the Qur'an is suggesting an extended moral example or paradigm which is often repeated with only minor changes to suit the moral at hand.
- That the Qur'anic vision of history rests upon a certain conception of time and space projecting man as the main actor and a certain style to express that conception.
- That, Muslim historians were highly influenced by the worldview of rendering service to Islam by studying and writing history because, to them, the overriding aim of studying history is purely moral and ethical.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

The Art of history is ordained by God based on the Qura'nic postulations. Discuss.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Muslims' perception of history is reinforced by their understanding of the message of the Qur'an which is filled with stories of the ancient past starting with Adam down to Muhammad in a successive manner. Based on the Muslims' understanding of the Qur'an, the purpose of study history is for the establishment of justice and good moral standing on the surface of the earth. It was based on this conviction that early Muslim historians such as al-Mas'ud, al-Biruni and Ibn Batuta embarked on their numerous journey around the world. Much about some of these figures will be discussed later in the subsequent unit.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, an attempt is made to make clear Muslims' conception of history. You have been made to realize that history is ordained by God. The instructions in the Qur'an to travel over the lands and see what has befallen the nations and civilizations of the past reinforces the Muslims' understanding of the concept of history and the decision to put it down for record purposes.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page write-up (A4, 1½ spacing) wherein you give a detail account of factors that foster the Muslims' conception of history.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Faruqi, N. A. (1979). *Early Muslim Historiography*. New Delhi: Idarah Adaiyat.

Franz Rosenthal. (1968). *The History of Muslim Historiography*. (ed.) Leiden. E.J. Brill.

Hexter, J. H. (1966). *The Rhetoric of History*. International encyclopedia of the social sciences. (ed.). David L. New York: Sills

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## **MODULE 1 UNIT 3**

### **UNIT 3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIOGRAPHY AMONG THE EARLY SCHOLARS**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 3.1 Historical Development of Historiography Among the Early Scholars
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I assumed you have gone through the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 1. This unit is the last of the three divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to enable you to know the history behind the development of historiography in Islam. This unit, therefore, serves as the heart of the discourse in the whole course. I hereby use this medium to implore you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to be able to:

- ❖ State the historical origin of Islamic historiography
- ❖ State the Muslims' conception of history and what reinforce the conviction to generate historical records.
- ❖ State some general observable attributes of all the given ideas
- ❖ Generate ideas of your own from the message of the Qur'an concerning the people of the past.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Historical Development of historiography among the early scholars

The advent of Islam paved the way for the growth of historiography in Arabia. The abundance of historical data in the Holy Quran provided the followers of Islam with an incentive to study history. The learned discourses of the Holy Prophet of Islam were always punctuated with historical references to the past, which awakened an interest hitherto unknown, for historiography, among the adherents of the new faith. In the initial stages, historical events were mostly committed to memory which led to differences in the reports of the same speeches and events. For example, the well known oration of Hajjaj bin Yusuf, on his first entry into Kufa has been differently reported by various historians. But later on, with the appearance of celebrated historians like Waqidi, Baladhuri, Dinawari and Tabari large volumes of history were compiled. The works of some of these great historical minds have been translated into European languages. One of the prominent western historians in person of George Sarton says in connection to the Muslim historians that; "The main task of mankind was accomplished by Muslims."

When Islamic Arabic scholarship begins in earnest in the early years following the death of the Prophet, it took as luggage both a *jahilli* and a Qur'anic manner of interpreting nature, man and time. What the earliest scholars shared in common was an Arabian or Near-Eastern heritage, now overlaid by the Quranic text and all of this accompanied a radical change in political fortunes. To start with, thousands who had accompanied, met or seen or heard the prophet were now plunged into a world conquest. Humble men of Arabian origins found themselves ruling the richest provinces of Persia or Byzantium rapidly becoming the successors of the great emperors of antiquity.

The shadow of the Prophet fell across these events and moved forward to lengthen in the eyes of his followers. The earliest social hierarchy among Muslims began to emerge; it was upon seniority in embracing Islam (*sabiqah*), the determination of which was an open

invitation to historical inquiry. With the growing image of the Prophet, it was followed by growing fortunes of the Islamic empire. However, here, great conquests and empire building were mixed with civil wars that led to calamities. The painful birth of the early empire was the single most important motive for the emergence of Islamic historiography. There are lots and lots of historical records in terms of military conquests and religious setbacks. The pious scholars of the early Islamic communities in Syria, Iraq and Hijaz had many historical examples to hand and strong motives to record them. Within fifty years or so, these examples could be drawn from across a wide expanse of lands and regions, once parts of hostile empires and now united and allowed to mingle regularly and freely. To these scholars, the life of Muhammad was a total triumph, but the triumph of his community was less than total. There are echoes here of the Qur'anic view, perceptible to anyone who cares to listen and understand. One can probably conclude here that this ambiguity of significance is a powerful stimulant in the rise of any historiography tradition.

It is not an over-statement to say that the wind of change was very rapid. Many fast and drastic changes must have been squeezed into the life time of someone like Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (d. 60/680). Given his crowded life, the reports which make him out to be the first systemic patron of Islamic historiography seem credible. To the fast tempo of dramatic change one must add the importance of the very early adoption of a dating system i.e the *Hijri*, which was initiated by the second caliph of Islam (Umar bn Khattab), an event of considerable scholarly as well as administrative achievements. Islam, therefore, remain the fastest religion to provide itself with a chronology. With this chronology the temporal scaffolding of Islamic culture was now in place.

The society in which this first half century of scholarship began was massive. In different regions, different relations obtained between conquerors and conquered. In Syria, stability was soon achieved and the two settled down to co-exist, dialogue, occasional

worship together and polemics. In Iraq, on the other hand, society was more easily recognizable as subservient to a conquering class. The tribes arrived in Iraq in bulk and settle down in their own camp cities as Muslim neighbors but also as Arabian rivals. The bureaucratic structure was rigid and tended to strengthen tribal identity. In Hijaz, the twin cities of Makkah and Madinah were soon overtaken in importance by their northern sisters, Damascus, Kufa and Basrah. After an initial and short period of prosperity, they leaned to be watched carefully and perhaps kept deliberately underdeveloped. These two cities became a home of lost causes for the many pretenders to supreme powers, defeated politically and militarily, Makkah and Madinah reared their aristocratic heads.

These differences undoubtedly affected the colouring, structure and pre-occupations of early Islamic scholarship, including historical writing. Early-Iraqi literature paid much attention to tribal lore, Hijazi to aristocratic and religious tradition, Syrian to ancient histories. Tribal history, sacred history and world history were in all likelihood the three initial shades of interest that evolved from the pre-occupations of the ruling elites of these three societies. It is dangerous to overrate regional factors since scholarship was undertaken by mobile scholars who cannot often be identified with only one region. In the studies of the Quranic and prophetic teachings a pan-Islamic interest is in evidence from the outset and eventually these regional distinctions were no longer valid even for historical writing. In a search for origins, however, these initial differences of shade should be kept in mind because they illustrate the extent to which early historiography received different motivation from differing environments. It should be noted that the three areas of historical curiosity came into being under the shadow of Hadith. In view of the above, the art of writing history in the lands of Islam can probably be said to be systemic and gradual in its development.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

The art of writing history started with a figure known as Mua'wiya b. Abi Sufyan. Discuss.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The historical development of historiography among the Muslims travels through different stages and regions; in Syria and its suburbs, in Iraq and in the Hijaz. Regional factors become important in the development of historical writings especially during the first century of Islamic era as well as the medieval times. In this case, you may wish to note the following for your proper understanding of the importance of regional development of historiography:

---That the differences in the style of documentation and writing based on region undoubtedly affected the colouring, structure and pre-occupations of early Islamic scholarship, including historical writing.

---That Early-Iraqi literature paid much attention to tribal lore, Hijazi to aristocratic and religious tradition, Syrian to ancient histories.

--- Tribal history, sacred history and world history were in all likelihood the three initial shades of interest that evolved from the pre-occupations of the ruling elites of these three societies.

---It is rather risky to overestimate regional factors since scholarship was undertaken by mobile scholars who cannot often be identified with only one region.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, an attempt has been made to take you through the historical stages of the development of historiography in Islamic scholarship. You have just been told that the whole exercise took place in about three regions where early Muslims showcases the importance of putting history down in black and white. The attempt made by the early scholars to search for origins, however, shows differences in their approach. These initial

differences of shade should be kept in mind because they illustrate the extent to which early historiography received different motivation from differing environments. It should also be noted that the three areas of historical curiosity came into being under the shadow of Hadiths.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two and a half page assignment (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you trace the historical stages of Islamic historiography.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Faruqi, N. A. (1979). *Early Muslim Historiography*. New Delhi: Idarah Adaiyat.

Franz Rosenthal. (1968). *The History of Muslim Historiography*. (ed.) Leiden. E.J. Brill.

Hexter, J. H. (1966). *The Rhetoric of History*. International encyclopedia of the social sciences. (ed.). David L. New York: Sills

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## **MODULE 2 ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

The aim of this module is to take you through historical analysis of the period after the first century of Islam. In other words, you will be introduced to the times of the followers (*tabi'in*) of the rightly guided caliphs. You will also learn about the followers of the followers (*tabi tabi'in*) and the period prior to the contemporary times.

In this module, which is made up of four units, you will equally learn about how the medieval Muslims tried in terms of the art of historical writings and how they were able to achieve remarkable landmark for Islam as a way of life. In the first unit, you will be acquainted with the schools of historiography in this period. The second unit addresses the place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islamic scholarship, the third units takes you through the contribution of Ibn Khaldun in reshaping historical writings while the last unit focuses on the 'golden era of Islam. After taking you through the four units, I assume you will have course to appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Islamic scholars.

The four units that constitute this module are thematically linked and so, at the end of this module, you must have refreshed your memory on what really happened in the medieval period and conceptualize it with contemporary situations. In other words, the unit is divided into as follows:

Unit 1 Schools of historiography in Madinah and Iraq

Unit 2 The place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islam

Unit 3 Ibn Khaldun as the father of historiography

Unit 4 Historical writings and 'golden age' of Islam

## **UNIT 1 SCHOOLS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY IN MADINAH AND IRAQ**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Contents

3.1 Schools of historiography in Madinah and Iraq

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

7.0 References/ Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I believe you have gone through the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 2. This unit is the first of the four divisions of the unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to enable you to identify Muslims' efforts towards ensuring that proper and correct information were put down for generations as reference point. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the heart of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the classical periods
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Schools of historiography in Madinah and Iraq

The city of the Prophet Al-Madinah al-Munāwarah serves as the capital of the caliphate during the first forty years of Islamic state including the time of the Prophet himself. It was during this period that the early Muslims commenced the art of history writing. As you are aware, that the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet forms the major sources of Islamic Jurisprudence and so, they both constitute the source of historical writing. Some companions of the Prophet and Tabi'un (followers of the companions) saw a great need in the collection and compilation of the sayings and practices of the Prophet hence they started collecting both the written and the memorized form from the transmitters. During the course of the collation, these scholars developed critical methods of ensuring accuracy of the report. One of the methods employed was *Isnad* (scrutinizing the chain of transmitters), this explains the immense change which appears from that moment in the character and accuracy of historical information amongst the Arabs.

Similarly, this method was extended to the study of the Qur'an through a standard known as *Mutawatir*. *Mutawatir* is refers to as the recitation of the content by a large number of people in the first generation to a great number of people in the second generation and so on and so forth to ensure accuracy through numerous, identical transmissions. The search for authentic, reliable, and honest transmitters by the scholars of Hadith made them developed critical methods; this method involves investigating and recording biographical information on the transmitters including individual character and the likelihood of having been opportune to meet the Prophet or the companions of the Prophet or their followers. These studies form the nub of the biographical genus which included studies of the lives of the companions of the Prophet as models for Muslims in terms of character and faith. In this regard, the history of the early Muslims and the military campaigns of the Prophet were collected and preserved for future information.

The aim of the school of historiography in Madinah is, therefore, to preserve only the authentic and accurate historical materials.

Among the early scholars of Madinah includes the following; Aban ibn Uthman (22-105A.H), 'Urwa ibn al Zubayr (23-94A.H), Muhammad b. Muslim ibn Shihab al- Zuhri (51-124A.H), Ibn Ishaq (d. 151A.H), Muhammad b. Umar al Wakidi (130-207 A.H) and Muhammad ibn Sa'd (d. 230). It should be noted that Ibn Ishaq represent a second century historian of the school of Madinah and he was able to broaden the conception of *sirah* to include events from prophecy back to the creation. The historians of Madinah introduced the method of *Isnad* (chain of authority of narrators) in the second and third Islamic century in order that the historical works were criticized in accordance with the set standard. Particularly, two important features were attributed to the school of Madinah, they are; the travelogue (*Rihla*) genre and the biographical compendium.

On the other hand, the school of Iraq was identified with the record of tribal tradition, based on the historical writings; it was developed in the stronghold towns of Kufah and Basrah in Iraq. The method employed in putting down historical data was mainly based on oral traditions; the identity of an individual is associated with the deeds of prominent ancestors and martial exploits. Consequently, genealogical genus emerged from this source whereby various tribes developed specialization in it and also in poetry which distinguished and embroidered accounts of events and aided memory. During these periods, this collection of information served various purposes; firstly, it assisted in projecting the importance of extended family or tribe in the social realm, though, the Islamic concept of *Ummah* (community of believers) had taken precedence over tribal attachment. This method also re-established the pre-Islamic continuity and the interest in tribal histories continued during this period. Not only that, the method serves as a springboard on which different warring groups launched their attacks on especially during the struggle between Ali and Mu'awiyah. The institution of the Diwan with its

lists of those entitled to state pension also gave importance to genealogical histories. In the lands of Islam, Arabic became the *lingua franca*, this led to the development of philological studies of Arabic poetry and various tribal dialects. Among Iraqi scholars of repute in this period were the following; al Kalbi, Abu Ubayda, Hisham b. Muhammad al- Kalbi (110-209A.H).

During the third century of Hijrah, the literary activities received impetus with the increasing standard of materials and the introduction of the use of paper. The introduction of paper, subsequently at about 750, or the beginning of the Abbasid dynasty, made possible the large quantity of literary production that had not been seen in the literary history of the Mediterranean world before.

In the final analysis, the Basrian Ali b. Muhammad al- Mada'ini (d. 225 A.H), represents a bridge-builder of both the Madinah and Iraqi schools during the third century in to what the scholars calls; "a common field of interest in historical studies and in common historical views." With this effort of his in the historical development, the discernible traits in the two schools ceased to exist. Materials from both have been since synthesized into general and universal histories. One of the distinguished scholars who epitomized this trend was Ahmad b. Yahya al-Baladhuri (d. 279 A.H), he brought to the limelight the oral and written accounts of earlier generations, weaving together a coherent and balanced account.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify other scholars who have made significant contributions in the synthesization of historical writings during the medieval period.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The two schools of historiography that were based in both Madinah and Iraq represent the epitome of Islamic scholarship. It gave room for diversification of knowledge without favor or prejudices. It is clear from the above exposé that the introduction of the use of

paper in the third century of Islamic scholarship marked the glorious period of literary production that had never been witnessed before in the history of the Mediterranean world. As a student of history, you will also agree with me that the efforts put forward by the early scholars remain unrivalled till this period.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, effort has been made to take you through the historical efforts of the early scholars in terms of taking the historical records to a greater height in both cities of Madinah and Iraq. You have been made to see that the field of Islamic knowledge is wide and accommodative of different views and opinions. In other words, rigidity of opinion is unknown to Islamic scholarship.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) wherein you trace the historical development of historiography in the two cities of Madinah and Iraq and state what is peculiar to each of them.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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## **MODULE 2 UNIT 2**

### **UNIT 2 THE PLACE OF SIRAH AND MAGHAZI LITERATURE IN ISLAM**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
- 3.1 The Place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islam
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I believe you have gone through the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 2. This unit is the second of the four divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to enable you to identify the place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islam and Muslims' efforts towards ensuring that proper and correct information were put down for generations as reference point. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the heart of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the classical periods
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.
- Know the place of Sirah and Maghazi literature in Islamic scholarship

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Place of Sirah and Maghazi Literature in Islam

The holy Prophet Muhammad remains the best worker of the message of the Qur'an through his perfect examples. Hence, his *Sunnah* forms an identity with the Qur'anic directives about history. Just like the Prophets who came before him, the Prophet usually used parables and stories from the past to draw important lessons to teach his companions. In other words, history is synonymous with the message of the Qur'an. The place of *Sirah* in Islamic literature is therefore significant to this study for your proper understanding of the subject matter. Before we go further, it is important to let you know the meaning of *Sirah* as an Islamic terminology.

*Sirah* is an Arabic word that denotes 'condition', 'form', it also implies 'biography', which in turn meaning 'conduct', or 'manner of living' of an individual. The *Sirah* serves as the major source of information concerning the life and deeds of the holy Prophet. It was put together by the early chroniclers. The *Sirah* literature includes a variety of materials such as political treatise, military enlistments, and assignments of officials which were recorded by successive generations of Muslims just like how the recording of the Hadith and the Sunnah of the Prophet came into being.

Moreover, the desire to really know the personality of the Prophet in detail ignited the search to have the minutest information about his personal life and habits. Muslims have realized the importance of following him into details even before the injunction from the Qur'an endorsing him as the best example for mankind. In addition to the search for the personality of the Prophet, there was a great improvement in the search for historical data about his time, his companions and in all the events in which they participated. The chronological arrangement of these reports may be said to have taken place in the middle of the first century (*Hijri*) at exact time when the attention of the learned men of Madinah were on Hadith gathering and collection. It should be made clear here, that at the early

stage; the term *Maghazi* was loosely used to mean both the *Sirah* and the military campaign. It was at later stage that the two terms became separated from each others. You remember we have mentioned earlier that due to the interlink nature of *Sirah/Maghazi* literature, it is interesting to state that the collectors of Hadith were at the same time the compilers of *maghazi*.

The term *Maghazi* is used in Islamic literature to denote “campaigns”. It is refers to as the records of the military campaigns embarked upon by Prophet Muhammad against the enemies of Islam and to protect the newly founded Islamic state in Madinah. Those campaigns were necessary and inevitably fought against those foes whose actions and utterances were hostile to the growth of Islam and the peaceful co-existence of the people living under the new Islamic state. It is important to state that all the campaigns were carried out after the migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah.

At the earlier stage, *Maghazi* literature was only concerned with the battles fought by the Prophet and his companions, which also included expeditions for exploration purpose within the domain of Islamic state. Later on when the tentacle of the message of Islam was reaching far beyond the shores of Arabian Peninsula, details of the events that led to the triumph then became an integral part of this record. There was the need for the accurate records of events and most importantly the chief actors in the events; their live stories, the way and manner of their conversion to Islam and their personal relationship with the Prophet were documented. This record became an archive from which later historians developed their chronicles. These reports could only be seen in later works as quotations, the validity of which could only be ascertained through the unbroken chain of reporters. It may interest you to mark the following names of the compilers of Maghazi literature; Aban ibn Uthman (b.15-20<sup>th</sup> H.), ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (26-94H.), Shurahbil ibn Sa’d (d.123H.), Wahb ibn Munabbih al-Yamani (34-110H.), Abd Allah ibn ‘Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Amr ibn Hazm (d. 130/135H.) and many others

that includes; Musa ibn ‘Uqbah (55-141H.), Ma’mar ibn Rashid(96-154H.) and Muhammad ibn Ishaq (85-150/151H.). the most famous of the last three names was Muhammad ibn Ishaq probably because his work the *kitab al-Maghazi* edited by Ibn Hisham (d.218H.) was brought to us in its complete form or may be because he was the first to place Islam and its direct recipients in the scheme of universal history. He was also said to have contributed to a large extent in bringing the knowledge of *Maghazi* in particular and historiography in general to a greater height. The success he recorded lasted for centuries to the extent that his work became the reference point for his successors and he indeed played a decisive role on the future development of *Sirah*. Based on the above exposition, you will agree with me that the place of *Sirah* and *Maghazi* cannot be over-emphasized within the framework of Islamic literature because they both serves as the fuel to the engine whereby the Islamic histories were put together.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify other compilers of *Maghazi* known to you apart from the ones given in the essay.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The records of the life of the Prophet and his military campaigns became important as soon as the Prophet and his companions settled down in Madinah; their new abode where they found peace and love. It all started with personal history of the Prophet and his companions’ ways of live and expeditions for the development of Islam within Arabian soil; it later grew to become records of events in line with the actors involved and the circumstances that led to each event in a chronological order as soon as the message of Islam started spreading beyond Arabian shores. It is interesting to tell you that the urge to collect and record the words and deeds of the Prophet and his companions began in the middle of the first century (A.H).

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

So far in this unit, effort has been made to take you through the place of *Sirah* and *Maghazi* in Islamic literature. You have been told how it all began within the premises of Madinah by those Muslims who felt the need for putting down the Prophet’s sayings and

deeds including those of his companions. An interesting issue is how the records of the military campaigns embarked upon by the Prophet and his companions were later expanded through the expansion of Islamic territories.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Write a concise essay of not more than two pages (A4, 1½ spacing) where you trace the historical development of Sirah and Maghazi literature from the first century of Hijrah to the time of Muhammad Ibn Ishaq.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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**MODULE 2 UNIT 3****UNIT 3 IBN KHALDUN: THE “FATHER” OF HISTORICAL WRITING****CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 Ibn Khaldun: The “Father” of Historical Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I am aware of your understanding of the message contained in the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 2. This unit is the third of the four divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to enable you to identify those important scholars such as Ibn Khaldun in the field of historiography and the indelible mark they have left behind to serve as reference point to generations yet unborn. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the classical periods
- Know who Ibn Khaldun was and still in history
- Apply some of Ibn Khaldun’s theories to daily activities
- Situate the early scholars’ position to the contemporary situations

- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Ibn Khaldun: The “Father” of Historical Writing

Throughout the long history of human beings and within its diverse cultures and civilizations, the emergence of great creative minds in various fields of knowledge has often been associated with a good standard of the so-called learned advanced knowledge. This requires two basic things; literacy and a high command of knowledge in one’s field. The literacy factor may not be necessary for innovation and creativity in certain fields of human activities but literacy is very crucial for creative and innovative minds in most branches of human knowledge. Ibn Khaldun represents well one of these creative minds of both the medieval and the contemporary periods; the relation between Ibn Khaldun’s wide Islamic knowledge background and his creative mind in the social sciences remains a testing ground in this course.

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (d.808/1406) had a strong desire for learning and knowledge since his early infancy, he says about himself thus; “Since my very early infancy, the time of my weaning, I have never ceased to seek knowledge and the best virtues, dividing my time between attending the courses and the circles of scholars until the time of the devastating plague that killed dignitaries, notables and most of my teachers in Tunis.” (*At- Tarif* A: 57; F:72).

In his youth in Tunis, Ibn Khaldun studied three main branches of Islamic sciences; (1) Islamic studies, which covered the science of the Qur’an, the Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) especially the Malikite-school, (2) the sciences of the Arabic language which deals with the grammar, conjugation and (3) Logic, philosophy, natural sciences and mathematics. These studies gave Ibn Khaldun an educational background in the two cultures of his time- the Islamic and the western cultures.

Ibn Khaldun later had the opportunity to return to his studies after the plague in Fez, which had become the center of scholarship through those scholars who have migrated from Al-Andalus (Spain) and Tunisia. Fez had the richest Islamic libraries. Ibn Khaldun's presence in this intellectual environment expanded and enhanced his scope of knowledge and better still satisfied his yearning for knowledge. He was quoted to have said thus; "I took advantage of the situation to reflect and read and meet the great scholars from Morocco and Al-Andalus who came as ambassadors of their princes to the Moroccan sultan, I thus, fulfilled my desire for the acquisition of knowledge." (*At-Ta'rif* A: 61; F: 75).

Describing Ibn Khaldun as the father of history cannot be over-emphasized because of his numerous contributions toward ensuring that history is divulged of all discrepancies and forgeries. Even though Ibn Khaldun was perceived as the father of modern sociology, the father of modern philosophy of history and historiography and had surpassed the knowledge of history of his time, yet almost all the praises lack the comprehensive understanding of Ibn Khaldun's idea of history in its totality. In discussing history, we may conclude that it is a mere perspective of events, dates, cultures, nations and institutions and it may become something that distort the mind and can be unfairly perceived due to the misinterpretations of the historians themselves in accordance with their understanding of what history is. Ibn Khaldun had since realized this fact of misconception that can befall history and that was why he criticized many historians before him of distorting facts, over-emphasizing certain events and being misleading. The fact is that, in order to over-praise a particular state of affairs, figure or a race, the historian may step beyond his limits and made history become more fictive than fact. This phenomenon according to Ibn Khaldun, had taken place among the Greeks as well as the Arab and Jewish historians who were considered biased and had really caused discrepancies in the facts of history.

Ibn Khaldun on his own part considers history to be originated as a result of some particular events that took place according to a natural law of change, a rule set which continuously transforms and alters the development of institutions and societies or civilizations without exception. To him, history is ordained. The infusion of the natural law is unexceptionally working in history and human society and that the work of a historian is merely to observe and identify history rather than create history. He is of the opinion that there must be separation and categorization in many fields of knowledge. This needs be extended to the field of politics, sociology and even sciences. This he said, if neglected as time pass by, what can be expected is the lack of unity in knowledge which may cause further distortions that continually hinder us from realizing the universality of history because in this connection the universality of knowledge is crucial too.

It may be concluded by some that Ibn Khaldun made many paradoxical statement in his primary work *al-Muqaddimah*; in certain places of his writing, he may seem to have emphasized the scientifically proven facts pertaining to societies under discussion by taking in to consideration the elements, climates and geographical conditions, and a host of others and at the same time urging us to totally surrender to fate and natural conditions; that notwithstanding does not bring down his reputation as the father of historical writings.

Ibn Khaldun as a religious and medieval scholar looked at knowledge and the historical process from a completely different angle and point of view. Just like his contemporaries such as Al- Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, he maintained that knowledge is a unity that cannot be pierced open and understood only by analyzing a particular part, but must be taken in and understood in its totality wherein each layer of knowledge or each component are taken

into consideration in an attempt to conclude the meanings of the other in one and vice versa.

Further, the classification of sciences in Ibn Khaldun's thought should be taken into account as part of the unified knowledge of God and His Prophet when he talks on the philosophy of history or on the scientific history governed by the natural law of the rise and fall; that is to say that if his concept of history is to be wholly understood. The reason why Ibn Khaldun includes the classification of knowledge and the nature of knowledge in his work on history and society should be seen in the light of how Islam and other religions construct the notion of knowledge. His philosophy of change, social as well as changes in institutions, government and history can only be understood when integrated and unified with his theory of knowledge and religious understanding. Ibn Khaldun sees the operative nature of the Divine intervention through the active intellect into human history. History to him is made possible to be comprehensively traced, identified, and studied. To understand these trends of the external changes, a historian has to be a man of knowing who contemplates creation and its process, and regards the totality of the metaphysics of event and the process of transformations. In Khaldunian thought, history is the process of the eternal return wherein when the end takes place, the beginning is ever returning again, hence, cyclical or spiral rather than the modern linear concept of history.

In addition, what is most significant in Ibn Khaldun's discourse is the transformation that took place in the external history of man. The application of the theoretical knowledge to the practical knowledge not of philosophy but of history as a field of knowledge that even though distinctively integrated within its own law and order is yet connected to the non-empirical world above, to the heavenly principles that serves as its foundation. Ibn Khaldun was not a modern man, he was not secular but he remained intact within his ideas and concepts which are founded on the classical and traditional knowledge that

always perceive history from metaphysical point of view. He cannot be separated from his own ideals and realities that have prevailed in the past in its concept of history of man. He remains medieval in his concept and ideas.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Who is Ibn Khaldun in the Islamic scheme of things?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The medieval scholars saw history as being metaphysical in nature; history repeat itself. In Khaldunian thought, history is the process of the eternal return wherein when the end takes place, the beginning is ever returning again, hence, cyclical or spiral rather than the modern linear concept of history. It must be briefly stated that the modern minds and thinkers on the concept of history is in need of metaphysics of a universal foundation before a particular history of nation of a geographical boundary is developed. History need to be integrated into a main body of knowledge which is more profoundly established, comprehensive and universal that tends to unite humanity, religions and civilizations. In other words, history should not be based on particulars as if it is the result of fickle minded individuals' concept.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, I have been able to take you through a brief biography of Ibn Khaldun; his educational pursuit and attainment of greatness to have earned him the title of the 'father of sociology or history'. You have learned that history according to Ibn Khaldun is universal, Metaphysical and cyclical in nature. You have also learned that an historian is a knowing and contemplating individual who do not only think about the past but reflect on the process of creation and the return of all affairs.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you elucidate on the Khaldunian thought about history.

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## **MODULE 2 UNIT 4**

### **UNIT 4 HISTORY WRITING AND THE ‘GOLDEN AGE’ OF ISLAM**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Contents

3.1 History Writing and the ‘Golden age’ of Islam

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You must have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 2. This unit is the last of the four divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to take you through the historical journey of the ‘golden era’ of Islam which was made possible through the art of writing and governance and the indelible mark the early scholars have left behind to serve as reference point to generations yet unborn. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the classical periods
- Know about the ‘golden age’ of Islam
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Situate the early scholars’ position to the contemporary situations

- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 History Writing and the ‘Golden age’ of Islam**

The ‘golden age’ of Islam is characterized by the reign of the Abbasids caliphate otherwise known as the Abbasid dynasty. The Abbasid dynasty attained its most brilliant period of political and intellectual life soon after its establishment in 750 A.D. The caliphate line was founded by al-Saffah and al- Mansur in Baghdad and reached its prime in the period between the reigns of the third caliph in the Abbasid line, al-Mahdi and the ninth, al-Wathiq. This was much more pronounced during the days of Harun al-Rashid and his son al-Ma’mun. It was essentially because of these two glowing caliphs that the Abbasid dynasty acquired a corona in popular imagination and became the most celebrated in the history of Islam. The thought of the extent of power and glory and progress attained by the Abbasid caliphate at its highest and best may be gained from a study of its foreign relations, a reading of court and aristocratic life in its capital, Baghdad, and an appraisal of the unparalleled intellectual awakening that culminated under the patronage of al-Ma’mun.

Historical records and legends are unanimous in placing the most brilliant period of the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, Baghdad, during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid (786-809), though, not more than half a century old, the city of Baghdad had by that time grown from nothingness to a centre of exceptional wealth and international importance standing alone as the Byzantium rival. Then, Baghdad became a city with no peer throughout the whole wide world! The luxurious style of living made this period popular in history and in fiction, but the most outstanding factor that rendered this age illustrious in the world annals is the fact that it witnessed the most momentous intellectual awakening in the history of Islam and one of the most important in the whole history of thought and culture. The awareness of the Muslim scholars was to a large extent due to

foreign influences, which were partly Indo-Persian and Syrian but mainly Hellenic, and was marked by translations into Arabic from Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek.

In addition, scholars of this age in order to bring history to limelight adopted many methods in their writings. It was under the general rubric of Hadith that the basic religious sciences of Islam, including historical writing, were developed. In the long history of Hadith and of the various sciences which were developed from it, including historical writing, two periods of intensity may be identified: the first in the 3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Hadith was classified and edited, and the second in the 8<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when the biographical dictionaries of Hadith transmitters and related topics were completed. The first period is the most relevant to us in this course because it was during this time that history and Hadith were most connected. There were numerous number of debates during this period centering on the veracity of the chain of transmitters in determining the authenticity of reports which had far-reaching effect on the historical writing and especially how these debates helped in creating for historiography a more sharply focused territory and method.

When the Abbasid came into power, they paraded themselves as the real restorers of legitimacy of the Prophetic legacies. They were to base their ruling system on the heritage of the Prophet and the guardians to his throne, claiming spiritual as well as political authority. But far from bringing the *Ummah* together, around the 'house' of the Prophet, the first century of Abbasid rule witnessed an intensification of the intellectual agitation of the late Umayyad period. The Hadith was deeply, permanently embroiled in political and religious polemic. Much of these polemics were historical in nature. Questions such as the following were the focus of discussions; did the Prophet lay down clear guidelines regarding the question of political succession? Did the Prophet specifically delegate authority to 'Ali? Were the Umayyads legitimate? These and similar questions necessitated historical research.

Similarly, in the course of these researches, many questions were also raised concerning the trustworthiness of the transmitters of the sayings of the Prophet, hence the need for criteria of *Isnad*. The science of *Isnad* at this time, tended to be divided into series and groups for the fact that sectarianism hold sway among the Muslims. Various parties or sects arrogated to themselves those chains of transmission which appeared most indisputable and to attack or otherwise ridicule rival chains. Certain chains for example, would be labeled Shi'i by opponents and if such chains should feature in the work of someone, he would definitely suffer the charge of being a Shiite. The case for Shi'ism rested ultimately on the historical determination of a delegation of authority beginning from the Prophet, traced back to Ali or his uncle 'Abbas without interruption in-between the line of the said Prophet's 'household'. Not only that, the large number of historians of the second and third centuries (*Hijri*) who were sympathetic to the course of Ali were indiscriminately tagged Shi'ah. In this period, the case for or against Shi'i claims served as the most powerful stimulus of historical Hadith in particular and of historical writing in general. In other words, the influence of sectarian polemics on the development of historical thought cannot be over-emphasized.

Another important area of focus that enhanced the historical writing at this period was the scholars' responses to the increasing influence of *Adab*, (a moral and intellectual training) and in doing so they were able to modify historical contents, forms and perspectives. This gradual shift took history to a new and more 'secular' environment. In this environment, the style and horizons of Hadith were no longer seen to be adequate criteria of authenticity of historical reports. Then, there was the need for history to be more pragmatic and more sensitive to the influence of foreign cultures. The chief instrument of transformation needed at this time was *Adab*. To really understand its influence on historical writing, it is important that one clearly explore the environment in which *Adab* grew and flourished to show how it came to exercise that influence.

In the early Abbasid period, two principles of Arabic philology were widely accepted: the superiority of pre-Islamic time over Islamic poetry as a model of prosody, grammar and usage, and the nomadic Arabs as the authority of correct Arabic and eloquence. The process by which these two principles were laid down was essentially an exercise in antiquarian reconstruction during which the debates often became tensed. The debates helped in a no small measure to free the potentialities of *Adab* to mark out new lines of expertise and to resurrect and develop a humanistic spirit which did not always coexist in peace with the rapidly maturing Hadith.

History makes its appearance in the curriculum in the form of lessons or moral references or examples which the particular historian needs to comprehend in order to maintain a lofty sense of his mission in life. To that end, it is not just Arab history which is relevant but the history of other nations as well. In other words, the potential *Adab* is tended to surpass the Arabian-Islamic horizons of philology and Hadith in its quest for a diffuse and universal education. The typical form of *Adab* writing is the epistle, real or contrived in which the caliphal directives or else advice, thanks, congratulations, apologies, condolences and so on and so forth are offered. The epistle in each case was composed with adept care and meticulous attention to the choice of words.

In more specific terms, Abbasid *Adab* was nearer to the Persian-Indian-Hellenistic cultural zone and more open to the challenge of foreign cultures than ever before in the history of Muslim writings. The new or revitalized cities of Iraq, Kufa, Basra and Baghdad, the focal point of the Abbasid dynasty provided the vitality, prosperity and ethnic diversities needed for *Adab* to seep into wider sector of society. Not only that, the early Abbasids were not ideologically stable but experimented with one sectarian and theological position after another; the result was a wider spectrum of conceptual choice. These and other factors in turn all contributed to the flourishing state of historiography during this period and made it to be characterized as the 'golden age' of Islam.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How did both Hadith and Adab assisted the schools of historiography during the Abbasid era?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The replacement of the Arab Umayyad elite by a mixed Arab-Persian Abbasid elite resulted into new political, ethnic and cultural transformations. These, in turn, tended to feed polemic and controversy for which *Adab* had already been well armed through cultivation of expression. Disturbing *Adab* also was the messianic atmosphere with which several early-Abbasid caliphs attempted to surround their reign. Court-circulated propaganda was centered on the coming of a new era of justice and goodness and the contrast with the earlier era of wickedness. This comparison of eras stimulated literary and historiographic theorizing. Thus, between the second and fourth centuries AH, *Adab* served as the arena in which a number of debates of distinct relevance to history were fought out.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, effort has been made to identify two major institutions that enhanced the performances of the schools of historiography during the early Abbasid rule. You have been made to be aware that the institutions of Hadith through the scrutinization of *Isnad* and *Adab* were the major arenas through which debates of relevant topics to history were determined. And in doing this, both the history and the historians were screened for better result.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you give an account of what is most significant in the reign of the Abbasid caliphs to have earned the era in which they ruled as the “golden Age” of Islam.

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### **MODULE 3 SOME SELECTED MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHERS**

The general aim of this module is to provide you with an in-depth historical sketch of some selected Muslim historiographers who have contributed extensively to the development of Islamic historiography. The module aims at enlightening you on the focus and methods embarked upon by these scholars in their writings to have distinguished them to become great historiographers in the annals of Islam. We want to see what were the motivating factors to the medieval scholars to have achieved tremendously in their attempt to put history in a proper shape and where is the modern man within history. The key issues include the question of how do we reconcile history with the human experience and especially that of the modern man. This review also intends to prepare your mind on what should be the tasks of the modern thinkers or historians to be able to rebuild the school of historiography in the contemporary period.

In this module, which is made up of four units, you will be intimated with the life and works of four scholars who have demonstrated real knowledge in the field of historiography. In the first unit, you will be taking through the work of Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761), his methods and organizations. The second unit looks at al-Waqidi (d. 207/823) and ibn Sa'd (d.230/845), their methods and consensus in writing, the third unit introduces you to the work of Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d.310/923) the 'Imam' of Hadith historiographer while the last unit is about the genealogies of al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892) who is also a third century Islam scholar.

The four units in this module are ideally linked. At the end of this module, you would have understood the circumstances of the scholars of the past before putting what have become unrivalled down for the generations yet unborn. This module will help you to have a rethink on the docile state of intellectualism in which modern Muslims have found themselves.

Unit 1 Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761)

Unit 2 Intellectual consensus of al-Waqidi (d.207/823) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845)

Unit 3 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari

Unit 4 The genealogies of al-Baladhuri

## **UNIT 1 MUHAMMAD IBN ISHAQ (d.151/761)**

### **CONTENTS**

**1.0** Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761)

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You must have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 3. This unit is the first of the four divisions of unit in this module. The main focus of this unit is to take you through the intellectual journey of that renowned Islamic scholar, Muhammad ibn Ishaq who had left behind legacies to serve as reference point to generations yet unborn. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods

- ☑ Know about the golden age of Islam
- ☑ Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- ☑ Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- ☑ Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.
- ☑ Know who Ibn Ishaq is in the field of historiography.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761)**

The personality of Muhammad ibn Ishaq is distinguishable because of his renowned contribution to the field of historiography. Thus, he was nicknamed 'the Prince of *muhaddiths*' or commander of the believers in Hadiths by men of his generation. He is of key importance in the transition from hadiths to history and his life achievements have been scrutinized for a millennium or more by Muslims and for about a century by Western orientalist. In the recent times, Muslim scholars have discovered and edited portions of Ibn Ishaq's materials which equals more closely than ever to his original work, this has helped in a no small measure in facilitating the examination of his work's basic structure by many titles. His work has been known as the book of the Genesis of Creation and of the life of Prophet Muhammad (*Sirah*) and his Military campaigns (*Maghazi*). There is no doubt, however, that we are dealing in this section with one work originally structured into two or three divisions in the first part, one is able to see material that aims to organize the story of the prophets in a historical continuum within the non historical framework provided by the Qur'an. In the other two divisions, the same continuity is imposed upon the life of the prophet within half of a century of its appearance, the work was edited by Ibn Hisham (d.208/834) but the abundant passages of phrases expunged can now be more fully recovered up till now. The originality that lies in Ibn Ishaq's work can be traced to the transitional period between the Umayyads and Abbasids.

In the beginning, one discovered that a certain cold attitudes during the late-Umayyad caliphate. Some scholars during this time had made their peace with the ruling dynasty, assisting the authority to confer legitimacy and orthodoxy upon the Umayyad system. This is in a way bred numerous counter-orthodoxy in the system. As soon as the Umayyad dynasty declined, scholarly polemics became more deeply charged with political suggestions. Ibn Ishaq benefited immensely from the works of 'Urwa and Zuhri which assisted him in a no small measure and contributed to the formation of the official orthodoxy of the community by providing the necessary historical scaffolding for the life of the Prophet but Ibn Ishaq's age was more revolutionary than that of 'Urwa and Zuhri.

In addition, one way of responding to orthodoxy was for the annoyed scholars like Ibn Ishaq to challenge its view of history by appealing to a wider and specifically prophetic vision of legitimacy. With the work of Ibn Ishaq, Muslims have come to the stage where the Qur'anic view of history in its larger, moral sense begins to be examined, following an earlier period when attention had been focused on the prophet Muhammad's immediate period as it related to state and community building. His emigration from Madinah to the very ancient world of Iraq, Egypt and the East symbolizes the transition from Muhammadan Hadith to prophetic history.

Just like those scholars of his days and age, Ibn Ishaq was a controversial figure. His mastery of his subject was widely acknowledged not minding the fact that he was accused of transmitting Hadiths with defective chain of transmitters (*Isnad*). His work was said to have made up of essentially the same discreet units of individual hadiths, which were varying in length, although they were substantial in size. Also in the work of Ibn Ishaq, there is a large corpus of hadiths related only by him which in turn shows the authority he commanded.

It is important to mention here that any reader of Ibn Ishaq will always discover the voice of the historian beginning to speak and not merely the voice of a transmitter, however authoritative. Whenever he renders explanations to a given hadith, he brings to fore his personal comments and reflections.

Furthermore, another characteristic of Ibn Ishaq's style lies in his pronounced literary interests and a large body of verses he uses to dramatize events. His audiences were accustomed to accounts of man who was both acting and reciting poetry, though the authenticity of these verses has been questioned by Muslim scholars since very early days. The role this played in Ibn Ishaq's work is a sign of his attention to the literary polish of his narrative. Ibn Isaaq did not, however, escape the criticism of his contemporaries; he was accused for example of having Jewish informants and for his careless use of *isnad*. In both cases, Ibn Isaaq was indeed helping to take the institution of hadith to the direction of wider historical perspectives and of connected, more interpretive historical narrative. The range of his intellectual interest may be weighed from, a frequent lexical, exegetical, geographical and anthropological comments.

Uncountable also, are his explications of historical circumstances featuring in the various passages of the Qur'an which eventually becomes a major source for later exegetes of the Qur'an. This branch of knowledge, was later called or branded 'circumstances of revelation' (*asbab al-nuzul*), and it had already come to form an important segment of the work of muhaddith-historians like 'Urwa and Zuhri'. In the work of Ibn Ishaq, however, such explications tend to be fuller, but also more guarded where doubt seems necessary.

Ibn Ishaq's use of the *isnad* and other related issues that have to do with his informants have been the object of attention of Muslims and western orientalist scholars. He quoted *isnads* in full and also used collective *isnad* but he also often quoted a trustworthy informant, a man of good memory and old man in Makkah etcetera. With this

inconsistence in his use of *isnad*, there is frequency in Ibn Ishaq's interest in specifying dates and years authoritatively. This, together with the careful chronological structure of his narrative, suggests that Ibn Ishaq was prepared to accept other criteria of genuineness besides that of personal witness, the backbone of *isnad*. The inclusion of non-Muslim informants, who were mainly Christians and Jews, is of course an implied acknowledgement of the expertise of these communities in pre-Islamic history in general and in Biblical history in particular. This was to become a source of great improvement for later Islamic historiography.

To conclude, Ibn Ishaq's great achievement rests upon the degree to which he was able to integrate the Prophet's life into history and hagiography of near-Eastern prophecy and to arrange the life history sequentially by making Hadith submissive to interpretation and chronological arrangement. In doing so, the image of the Prophet which passes through his filter is one which retains credibility and human personality.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify other factors that assisted Ibn Ishaq in putting down his historical compendium.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

During the late Umayyad and early Abbasid dynasties, scholars of repute emerged to make the twin fields of hadith and historiography known to the people. It has been noted so far that, this was made possible due to the fact that the ruling class of the time were in dire need of scholars to legitimize and confirm their orthodoxy to the throne through the sayings of the Prophet or by their lineage to the household of the Prophet. In other words, scholars during this time were seen as authorities in their own rights for they were regarded as the custodians of knowledge and of the Prophet's legacies. Ibn Ishaq was in the forefront in the struggle to make history of the Prophet known in its authentic version by employing the critical method of *isnad*; hence, he became the 'prince of *muhaddiths*' or the 'commander of the believers in hadiths' by men of his time.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, an attempt has been made to introduce you to the life and work of Muhammad ibn Ishaq who was both a muhaddith and historiographer. You have been made to understand what his motivating factors were to have left an unrivalled legacy to the Muslim world in particular and the world in general.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page assignment (A4, 1½ spacing) wherein you give a detailed account of the life and works of Muhammad ibn Ishaq.

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## **MODULE 3 UNIT 2**

### **UNIT 2 THE INTELLECTUAL CONSENSUS OF AL-WAQIDI AND IBN SA'D**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Intellectual Consensus of al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You must have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 3. This is the second unit of the four divisions of unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to enlighten you about the intellectual contributions of the two renowned Islamic scholars, Al-Waqidi (d.207/823) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) the pair who have provided stream of knowledge from where later scholars quench their thirst. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
- Know about the golden age of Islam
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

- Be familiar with the intellectual achievements of the pair scholars known as Al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Intellectual Consensus of al-waqidi and Ibn Sa'd**

Al-Waqidi (d. 207/823) and Ibn Sa'd were regarded as a pair who took the field of historiography to a better state. They were able to do this because of the intellectual consensus that happened between both of them. Both of them were considered as good historians in the sense that the educational and homiletic elements in the work of their contemporaries were then less explicit and secondary to the establishment of well-attested, consensually accepted facts. With both of them, the historical records were to be set straight.

With al-Waqidi in particular, one can see a historian whose personality and method are for the first time fully perceptible. Al-Waqidi was an historian who regards himself as a member of a community of scholars who engaged in a common pursuit. The said scholarly community was then detailed in the biographical generations of Ibn Sa'd among the earliest in what was to become a long and distinguished genre of Islamic historiography. This represent a rare glimpse of a historian in the making, of one whose eagerness to check names, places and events for himself and whose attentiveness to detail were qualities that remained with him for the rest of his working life. The quantity of Waqidi's writings made up of one fully preserved work, the *Maghazi*, and the several quotations in the works of others, notably Ibn Sa'd and Tabari, depicts him to have been more specialized in his historical range than Ibn Ishaq. Al-Waqidi was in actual fact a historian of the Prophet and of the first century of the Muslim era; but as a historian of the early community, his works is recognizable by the teeming characteristics with names and dates as the whole community, both the high and the low finds themselves preserved in his pages. He did not stop at that, he later subjects so many of these names and events

to scrutiny and comparative analysis so that the community and its history can come alive.

There are two main features that were peculiar to his method which needs mentioning here; the first one is his use of the principle of the consensus of the scholars (*Ijma'*) to confirm the authenticity of events and the second is his preoccupation with putting down dates and the chronology arrangement of events. This seems to be an attempt to make his history more total and accessible to official and for scholarly use.

To know the depth of the scholarly consensus, you need to understand the fact that an attempt was made by the late-Umayyad and the early Abbasid dynasties to bring uniformity into the legal judgments, perhaps to serve as a means of getting people to obedience through forceful legal means and also to help in centralizing the governmental routine. In other words, the idea of intellectual consensus of the scholars was the idea of the ruling circles. The scholars became the spiritual constituency of the empire and they were regarded as authority in their own right.

A flashback to the period of 'Umar bn Abd Aziz (d. 101/720), will reflect the fact that the policy of Islamization of ideas clearly required uniformity of judicial practice. Not only that, the urgency with which the early Abbasids carried the favour of the Iraqi jurists in particular must have inclined them to push for a consensus which they could at that time have total control of. In the opinion of Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd, consensus was essentially the agreement of scholars whose views and judgments from one age to the next underpinned the history of the whole community.

Similarly, in the works of Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd the term *tabaqa* denotes a human generation and becomes one of the earliest time divisions in Islamic historiography. These generations provide for the continuity between the then and the contemporary

which confer structure and meaning upon the gathered materials. Structurally, the *tabaqat* of Ibn Sa‘d which in turn is the heart of the *tabaqat* of Waqidi, were built upon a platform of listing the distinguished companions and successors in order of seniority in the acceptance of Islam. Their descendants were also listed down to approximately the year 230/844. Each entry is provided with a biography commensurate with the importance of the figure. The past, in their works is linked to the present in numerous ways, which in essence is signifying its continuing relevance. More so, the genealogical and religious concerns lie behind the attempt to trace the descendants of the Prophet’s companions still living in various cities. The Hijazi terms that were clearly unfamiliar to contemporary, probably the Iraqi audiences were given modern equivalents. In these ways, Waqidi and Ibn Sa‘d stressed the abiding importance of tradition. But it was also this sensitivity to persistence which made Waqidi and to a lesser extent Ibn Sa‘d, systematically critical historians.

So far, it must be noted that the twin scholars relied on each other for critical analysis of their findings. Although, Waqidi was regarded as the senior partner to Ibn Sa‘d, on the other hand, he was regarded as the secretary-editor of his master and of the materials he had assembled and then augmented. The issue of master-student relationship between the twin scholars does not in any way affected their dealings with each other or their intellectual consensus in bringing about a corpus of good ideas into the field of historiography.

Furthermore, al-Waqidi represents in one sense, a retreat from the universal horizons of Ibn Ishaq. Waqidi was trying to move history in the direction of factual accuracy and specialization within a single theme, that of the Prophet and his community. To depict the historical vision, his method is less in grand than the vision of Ibn Ishaq. Notwithstanding, it is also a more rigorous, more practicable vision and one which Waqidi in all probability hoped would be of use to the growing corps of state secretaries,

jurists and scholars of the early-Abbasid state. The historical record was pruned of its fantastic elements; it was made normative, given a graspable structure, dated, arranged in generations, and made to stretch in one unbroken chain of legitimacy and social custom, fortified by consensus. Like Ibn Ishaq, Waqidi was accused of using loose *isnad* by hadith practitioners who were distinguishing themselves more than ever before from their scholarly contemporaries. Waqidi's *Maghazi* and *Tabaqat* commemorate the Prophet and his community. The result is a view of history as a useful political record. With Waqidi, the break between Hadith and historiography is now more or less complete.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify other features peculiar to al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd apart from the use of *isnad* in their writings.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The consensus of opinion amongst the earlier scholars helped in a no small measure in assisting them to arrive at logical conclusions in their intellectual endeavors. The difference that arises during various debates were merely seen as part of human experiences that should not be taken as fundamental rather, it helped them to build solid foundation for the transfer of knowledge to the incoming generations. This example is clearly seen in the personalities of the twin scholars (al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd) discussed in this unit. They both gave the historical records their normative characteristics, history was given a graspable structure, and it was dated, arranged in generations, and made to stretch in one unbroken chain of legitimacy and social custom, fortified by consensus. Hence, they both became distinguished in consensus scholarship of their time.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has exposed you to the beauty of consensus in intellectual output. You have learned how both al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd came together to bring history to a noticeable

level despite their seemingly differences and the issue of master-student relationship that existed between both of them. Their works were known and distinguished based on the distinctive way of scrutinizing *isnad* for authenticity. Notwithstanding, the allegation by their colleagues of using loose *isnad*, they were both relevant in constantly linking the past to the present and in essence suggesting continuing relevance of historical w

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Summarize in your own words, not more than two and a half pages (A4, 1½ spacing), the method employed by al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa‘d in their writings.

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## **MODULE 2 UNIT 3**

### **UNIT 3 MUHAMMAD IBN JARIR AL-TABARI: THE ‘IMAM’ OF HADITH HISTORIOGRAPHY**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari: The ‘Imam of Hadith Historiography

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You must have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 3. This is the third of the four divisions of unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to enlighten you about the intellectual contributions of the renowned Islamic scholar, Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d.310/923) the ‘Imam’ of Hadith Historiography who has provided stream of knowledge from where later scholars quench their thirst. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
  - Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
  - Know about the golden age of Islam
  - Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.

- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.
- Be familiar with the intellectual achievements of the 'Imam of hadith historiography (Al-Tabari).

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari**

Imam al-Tabari (d. 923) was born in Amul (Tabaristan province on the Southern shore of the Caspian) in 839. He traveled widely in search of traditions about the Prophet, and he was a prolific author whose works included jurisprudence, Qur'an commentary, and history. He settled in Baghdad and embarked on a long and celebrated career as a Muslim scholar. His history of Prophets and kings and his Qur'anic commentary were both huge works and brought him an equally enormous reputation even in his own life time. As a scholar of the law and Hadith, he was pushed into public life and involved in controversy, probably against his own inclinations, inspiring a legal school or *madhab* which was named after him and which lasted for a brief while. His massive output crossed much of the third/ninth century and reflected a wide range of that period's scholarly apprehensions.

In his historical works, Tabari combined the story creation and prophesy with the story of ancient nations, especially the Persians, combining them with the history of the Prophet Muhammad, his expeditions (*Maghazi*) and the history of the community up to his own days. In his methodology, it is possible to find echoes of Ibn Ishaq's method of universalism, of Waqidi's consensus and accuracy and a host of other scholars of his time. It was al-Tabari who wrote what later became the most explicit defense of the Hadith method in historical writing, while his annalistic arrangements preserved a style that lasted until modern times. In the beginning of his history, he sets forth what he considered to be the only means by which one can arrive at knowledge of the past. He is

of the opinion that knowledge of the past cannot be deduced or inferred; knowledge of the past can only be transmitted from one generation to another generation. There were two popular terms which were peculiar to the division of sciences during his time, they are; *'aqliyya* (rational) and *naqliyya* (transmitted). Tabari sought to place history into the second category, classifying it into a branch of hadith.

Before we proceed, it is important to let you know about the problem he faced in his scholarship inputs. The level of the problems he faced can best be seen in his commentary on the Qur'an. Tabari's exegesis is a massive work of erudition, displaying the author's mastery of the subject matter and argumentation. Each verse is carefully paraphrased, followed by hadiths from the Prophet or his companions and the views of distinguished early scholars in support of whatever he had paraphrased, in doing so; he would amplify its historical and theological context. If these ahadith were in conflict, Tabari concludes with a summary of his own views. He was regarded as both erudite and polemical. If a grammatical problem arises, the views of the Basran and Kufan grammarians were quoted and assessed. Poetic examples were used abundantly as illustration. If a historical event is disputed, the *isnad* seemed most trustworthy was accepted. Due to our limitation in this page, we cannot exhaust al-Tabari's method of scrutinization of information before writing his commentary of the Qur'an. And since our focus on this course is on history, we, therefore, will take you through al-Tabari's historical writings.

The landscape of al-Tabari's history is quite different from his commentary of the Qur'an. Here, there is no manifest clarity, but only *akhbar* (reports) which, stretching from the creation of the world to the Last Hour across a span of 14,000 years in Tabari's estimation, vary enormously in import and veracity. Firstly, Tabari was faced with a mass of pre-Islamic historical materials transmitted by such authorities as Ibn 'Abbas, Wahb and Ibn Ishaq. Secondly, he was confronted with a fairly well-delineated history of the

Prophet, thanks to the works of scholars like Ibn Ishaq and Waqidi. And thirdly, the challenge of the enormous and expanding body of historical reports covering the conquests, the Umayyad and the early-Abbasid periods transmitted by scholars like 'Awana, Abu Mikhnaf, Sayf, Mada'ini, Waqidi and others. Unlike his commentary on the Qur'an, where inference and reasoning could be employed to extract meaning out of a text, the case for history writing was a different experience to Tabari, in history; therefore, Tabari depended solely on his transmitters. It should be noted that it is easy to make clear the differences that lies between Tabari's commentary and his history writing. Whereas a fairly wide range of interpretive resources are available to explain revelation, history is made up of *akhbar* (reports) which cannot be inferred or deduced but can only be transmitted.

In addition, a little that Tabari has to say on the epistemic status and the evaluation of historical reports can directly be seen in his writing about the pre-Islamic era. The reason for this can only be accounted for in the fact that Tabari felt that there was urgent need to reshape history in order to conform to both the form and the substance of the Qur'anic view. He was in essence, one of the earliest historians of Islam who project a vision of history inspired by the regular rhythms of the Qur'anic narratives. In writing about the pre-Islamic era, Tabari identified two historiographical traditions as both authoritative and of particular relevance to Islam; the Biblical and the Persian. The Biblical tradition had of course been incorporated into Islamic historiography by earlier scholars like Ibn Ishaq. But the Persian tradition was the one which attracted the attention of Tabari, and in fact, he preferred it above all others.

The long historical traditions had the added advantage of Tabari for the margin into one another so that the Biblical line of the Isrealites was ended by the Persian and the Persian was ended by the *Ummah* (community) of Muhammad. Therefore, Tabari set for himself the task of bringing these histories into harmony by synchronization of chronologies.

This meant that the biblical line of descends from Adam and his progeny was to be reconciled to the line from Kayumarth, the Persian Adam and his royal successors. Thus the stories of such figures as Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses were taken from the Islamic historical traditions, amended if need be by reference to the Qur'an and Hadith, and then interwoven with their contemporaneous Persian kings. In essence, one continuous and comparative history of the pre Islamic world was now created. The community of Islam was thus shown to be the prophetic heir of Biblical tradition and the temporal heir of Persian dominion. Accordingly, a fabric had been built by which the Muslim community could situate itself with respect to the past. It is arguable, therefore, that Tabari's intention was to historicize the Qur'an, to transform its timeless, one-dimensional allegories into historical narratives that reflected the scholarly interests and attachments to pious ancestors popular among the Hadith group to which he belonged. Tabari seized to illustrate what he takes to be the origin, structure and ultimate destiny of world history, as symbolized by the struggle of prophets and kings. It is a history of moral types, and one which might be expected to set the stage for what is to come in the Islamic portion of the world.

It is made up of a history built mainly on the materials of Ibn Ishaq and Waqidi. There was a section on the conquests and an annalistic history of the leading figures of the community until the year 302/915. The annals were introduced with the beginning of Hijrah calendar, approximately halfway through the prophetic mission, and it was strictly adhered to until the end.

Moreover the three centuries of Islamic history that Tabari recalls were dotted with events that had grievous political and theological consequences. Many of the issues discussed were still very hot in Tabari's own days. Several strands of historical writing had arisen during this time which shows bias in favour of one party or another though Tabari in his commentary had expressed views which were inimical to the Qur'anic

interpretations of some of these political-religious group. It is important, therefore, to presume that Tabari exercised great care in selecting reports which he held to have been most trustworthy in line with his avowed reliance on the expert in each field.

To conclude, Hadith had served history well. It had inspired its earliest form and methods. It had provided it with its chief medium for the establishment of authenticity, the *isnad*. It had instilled into it something of its own factuality and attention to detail. Through the preservation of divergent accounts of events, the history written under the umbrella of Hadith enables the modern historians to assess the different historiographical traditions and to reconstruct the emergent views of various politico-religious parties and movements.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify three major challenges faced by Tabari while writing his history book (*at-Tarikh*).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As we have observed earlier, the school of Hadith has helped in a no small measure to put the field of historiography into its proper shape. It has helped in sifting facts from mere conjectures through its instrument of veracity of the chain of the transmitters (*isnad*). Imam al-Tabari would not put any reports down until it is confirmed to be authentic and the transmitter of the particular report is said to be trustworthy. Though, the *isnad* was largely inaccessible or becomes irrelevant as far as the histories of foreign nations were concerned but more importantly, the *isnad* was designed not for the expression of personal opinion but for accuracy of transmission.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, effort has been made to let you have a comprehensive knowledge about Imam al-Tabari, the ‘Imam of Hadith historiography’. You have learned that Tabari depicted a great sense of history writing through the use of *isnad* for certainty of reports. You have also learnt that this great scholar’s method is distinct in the sense that he was able to reshape historical writing to conform to both the form and the substance of the Qur’anic views. He was able to historicize the Qur’an to place its timelessness into fore. In doing this, he was able to build a fabric by which the Muslim community could situate itself with respect to the past nations and events.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Examine in not more than two pages (A4, 1½ spacing) the veracity of *Isnad* in the writing of his historical work.

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For more on the four personalities discussed in this module, see: Tarif Khalidi. (1994). Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.

## **MODULE 3 UNIT 4 THE GENEALOGIES OF AL-BALADHURI CONTENT**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Genealogies of al-Baladhuri

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having read the course guide, I believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 3. This is the last of the four divisions of unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to get you familiar with the intellectual inputs of that great scholar known as al-Baladhuri (d. c.279/892). His method of writing his genealogies remains a treasure with which later scholars quench their thirst. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
- Know about the golden age of Islam
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

- Be familiar with the writings of al-Baladhuri towards the development of historiography.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The genealogies of al-Baladhuri (d. c.279/892)**

It is important to let you know that both the classical and the medieval scholars deployed different ways and methods in their intellectual performances and it is exactly this variant in methods that has made their works to become so distinct from one another. For example the genealogies written by such scholars as Mu'arrij, Mus'ab and Zubayr were based on the Quraysh as the pivot of the community, its aristocracy, its guiding spirit and others which they considered important in the early Abbasid period. But the genealogies of al-Baladhuri were conceived on a much huge scale. The scale in the real sense of it is so huge that his work *Ansab al-Ashraf* (Genealogies of the Nobility) is more like a comprehensive history loosely arranged around prominent families than a work which is strictly based on genealogy. Not only that, there is also a corresponding shift in the writing mood. Whereas the earlier genealogies might be said to be the epic of heroic and religious reports, the genealogies of al-Baladhuri are described according to Bakhtin, as 'romantic', less differential towards the Quraysh, more consciously witty and more directly aimed at the secretarial class to which he himself belonged.

During the period of Baladhuri, the Abbasid state, which he seems to have served as a middle-ranking bureaucrat for most of his professional life was more than a century old. During the first century of Abbasid rule, the Abbasid caliphs pursued a baffling variety of policies and religious options. There were rapid and dramatic shifts from the known path of history. While it is believed that these policy shifts were instrumental in destabilizing the political-military elite of the empire, they must have also contributed to the cultural vitality of the great Abbasid cities. The third/ninth century might well be regarded as the age of debate and recapitulation in the Arab Islamic intellectual history. The proliferation

of parties, sects and intellectual circles with their sharp dialectic skills are sketched in the inconsistencies portrayed by such scholars as Jahiz (d. 255/868), as he switches from one intellectual position to its opposite in the same essay. At the same time, probably because of this ideological instability at the top, a mood is identified which seeks to encompass, to restate, to reformulate the outstanding features of the community's traditions. If this period was the century of rebels like Jahiz, it was also the century of master traditionalists like Bukhari and Muslim who gave definitive shape to the science of Hadith. The latter duo did not in any way shared from the unstable careers of their senior fellows, they rather by the time reached a high degree of sophistication and complexity in their chosen careers which was destined to become the major institutional legacy of the Abbasid Empire, to be inherited and further developed by successor states.

Further, al-Baladhuri's genealogies range over all major provinces of the empire. The work begins with a lengthy biography of the Prophet, the information of which extensively relies on a fellow genealogist Hisham al-Kalbi. The result is a more vivid and literary account with plentiful verses and smooth-flowing narratives. At the end of the Prophetic period, the work assumes a genealogical mode detailing the extended family of the Prophet, which is followed by a long catalogue of information relating to various aspect of his personal life. As soon as this Prophetic introduction is completed, the huge work itself begins to unfold. The Quraysh families come first in succession, and followed by lesser known or important families of the northern Arab.

Moreover, in broad perspective, Baladhuri's work (*Ansab*) resembles a series of pyramids, with the leading figures of each family forming the apex. Though overlapping in time and *dramatis personae* is inevitable but it is skillfully kept under control. Major themes weave their way between these pyramids; one of these is being represented by the great oppositional movement of the first three centuries of Islam, the Khawarij. What really gives the work a sense of irony is the juxtaposition of the nobleman and rebel, this

irony is further enhanced by Baladhuri's apparent freedom from all ideological attachment.

Leading figures are introduced through a sequence of stories which often seem polished and even doctored in order to provide a lesson or a piece of wisdom, wit or aphorism. Occasionally, Baladhuri will resort to literary criticism of the caliph or the governor of a particular region by asking a wise man series of questions such as; what is courage? What is generosity? What is reason? And so on and so forth, and at the end of the day, drawing from the wise man short and informative answers. The critical means of the historians' skill as employed by Baladhuri in his work are fairly simple according to his critics. The phrase which he uses most frequently in his attempt to settle arguments concerning the veracity of a report, a date or an event is; *wa hadha al-thabat* ('and this is the firm, or the established truth'). This phrase is significant when contrasted with the consensual phrase that were preferred by Waqidi and his school; *al-mujtama'* '*wa hadha alayhi* ('and this is the agreed-upon truth'). Whereas the latter appeals to a community of like-minded scholars, Baladhuri's formula seems to be derived from bureaucratic practice. It is from the brief and dismissive tone often adopted by the bureaucrats towards the lower citizens. It seems in any case to derive from a historian who, in the later, post-Prophetic portion of his work, frequently resorts to collective *isnad* (chain of transmitters of report) which were expressed in phrases such as; *qalu* ('they say') or *yuqal* ('it is said').

It is worthy of note that the switch from the strict citation of *isnad* for the Prophetic history to a more narrative style for non-Prophetic materials in the same work shows how dynamic the historians of the third century Islam were in adopting different attitude to *akhbar* or historical reports. But the glimpses of the historian at work are very rare in Baladhuri's work. There are no comments on the criteria adopted to test historical reports, no indication on why one authority was preferred to another, no room for criticism for the reader or listener in the form of remarks or reflections. His own curt

assertions of the truth must stand. You will agree with me that a lot of reading and research must have come with this massive collection of genealogies and biographies to have witnessed extremely rare comments.

In conclusion, the genealogies of al-Baladhuri can be said to be a master-piece among the master-pieces discussed earlier in this module. If the work is said to be based on ulterior argument or purpose, the reason might well lie in an in-built political moral of the spectacle of powerful dynasties which were rising and falling at the same time. From his bureaucratic vantage point, he was uniquely qualified to offer ironic though reserved testimony to the lives of the political elites.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What is the significance of genealogies to history writing?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Attention to genealogy appears to have been prevalent among the Arabs since very early times. Genealogies, for example account for the record of events and dynasties from the exact progenitors of each clan within a framework of time. Genealogy also helps in a no small measure to bring to fore the root and descent of individual family trees. To be a successful genealogist therefore, there is the need for in-depth understanding of the people of the past and events. But genealogy was not simply a tribal or communal concern since it also extended to horses, suggesting the courteous connotations of the subject. In a general sense, genealogy must be thought of as an organizing principle, an epistemic instrument which relates history by arranging it in a family-tree structure. There could hardly have been a more telling image to impress upon an Arab tribal audience the idea of a total breakdown in social relationships. These kinships were of

vital importance in tribal politics and loss of interest in genealogy would mean an end to political life and all social interaction.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, an attempt has been made to let you know the importance of al-Baladhuri's genealogies in the historical writings. You have learned that his genealogies were conceived on a much vaster scale than his predecessors and contemporaries and that there is also a shift in the mood of writing different from the known paths of his predecessors. You have also learnt that Baladhuri's involvement in the bureaucratic process of the Abbasid rule assisted him a lot to be able to present the society as they were in the real sense of it without favor or prejudice to any opposing group.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you explain why the genealogies of Baladhuri were conceived in a much vaster scale than his predecessors.

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#### **MODULE 4 HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ISLAM AND WESTERN CULTURE.**

The general aim of this module is to provide you with an understanding of what historiography is in both the Islamic and Western cultures. The main issues are; what history connotes in both cultures, the meeting point of the two cultures and the way forward in order to take the field of historiography to the greater height. As a compliment to the meanings of historiography given by scholars in module one, only a brief review of the concept of historiography will be examined here. This review aims at refreshing your mind on what you have learnt about history before and the contribution of modern thinkers to the field of historiography.

This module comprises of three units, which will get you familiar with the western concept of history and methods. In the first unit, you will learn about what the sources of history are. The second unit is on the importance of history in the live of contemporary man while the third unit discusses Muslim versus Western history: where do both meet? After you have gone through the three units, the stage would have been set for you to appreciate the two cultures of Islam and the West.

The three units that constitute this module are linked together. At the end of this module, you should be able to understand the diversities in the Islamic and Western cultures. You will also be made to know that the meeting point of both Islam and the western cultures is not remote.

Unit 1 What are the sources of History?

Unit 2 Importance of history in the live of contemporary man

Unit 3 Muslim versus Western history: Where do we meet?

## **UNIT 1 WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF HISTORY?**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 What are the sources of history?

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having read the course guide, I believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 4. This is the first unit of the three divisions of unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to take you through the similarities and the dissimilarities between the Western and the Islamic cultures. Acquisitions of knowledge from both perspectives remain a treasure with which scholars quench their thirst. This unit, therefore, is one of the most important aspects of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
- Know about the golden age of Islam
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.

- Be familiar with both the Western and Islamic culture in relation to history writings.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 What are the sources of History?**

There is no doubting the fact that the sources of history from the Islamic perspective stem from the Qur'an. While that of the West, may be said to have stemmed from Greek tradition and Judeo-Christian lore and fables. The Qur'anic view of history may be said to have emerged from the creation of the heavens and the earth, the Prophetic realm and their different nations. Later came the *jahilli* Arabian environment where the last of His messengers emerged. One may speak of an environment in which there is a sharpening in the perception of a common identity, probably as a reaction to increased political, religious and cultural penetration of the Peninsula by its neighbors. A string of new northern towns was becoming proudly aware of its place in the affairs of a much larger world and a roving band of poets was a crucial importance in spreading a common language and ethos among the tribes. The Arabian poetry, in which narrative defers to moralizing and the lines of verse are neatly bisected, bears a significant resemblance to Qur'anic narrative and early-Islamic historiographic forms. There is little in this epic scene framed by the causality of the Time (*Dahr*) which prepares us for the arrival of the Qur'an. Later Islamic scholars were to return repeatedly to the history and culture of *jahilli* Arabia, and some would make of it the natural recipient of revelation, citing such things as the purity of its desert air or the profound souls of its inhabitants. However, the *jahilli* culture was essentially pre-literate. Written texts then were almost exclusively religious or legal in nature. Although a common memory was slowly crystallizing, this is not by itself a sufficient precondition for the appearance of historical thought and writing. The Arabs learnt a new history when they acquired a new religion.

Similarly, an axial text is an end and a beginning, a program for thought and action, a theory and its paradigms. The Qur'an is a source of ideas on history as well as a repository of historical examples offered for contemplation. It proclaims its own appearance as a book, as an event of seismic proportions. The Qur'an in its characteristic repeatedly contrasts human affairs with divine providence, calling itself 'the Distinguisher' and 'the Reminder'. The Qur'an set side by side two time-scales with two corresponding orders of existence, one earthly and illusory, the other divine and real. The holy Qur'an's plunge into the world is an occurrence which traverses the earthly order, creating a new historical era where truth can finally and manifestly be distinguished from falsehood. To explore these issues in more detail, three principal Qur'anic themes may be singled out from the above discussion; the vision of history, the narratives of Prophets and kings and views of man and his place in the scheme of things.

The Qur'anic vision of history is based on the conception of time and space; Islam and history are synonymous. Also, the Qur'anic narratives of Prophets and Kings is an extension of its view of time's eternity, the Prophets of the Qur'an are types of moral life. They essentially came with the same message and their lives followed closely the same patterns with slight differences. Their way were the stories of the lonely voice crying over the injustice or indifference of his community and undergoing similar social, political and spiritual crises. Finally, the Qur'anic view of man has to do with the fact that man needs God not only for salvation but also for psychological harmony and social peace. Without belief in God, man is not stable, he becomes a prey to all worldly violence and barbarism of the *jahiliyya*, which is as much a historical era as it is a warped state of mind, the original concept of Qur'anic man. Disasters in history were caused by the abandonment of God by men to run after personal whims and amusements which are soon degenerated by the reality of God. This in turn link the human circle with that of nature and to establish the solid image of all creation eventually coming back to God and this is the Qur'an's expression for the end of history.

Furthermore, man is ordered in the Qur'an to remember, it is through remembrance that the seed of faith is planted in the heart of man and morality is acquired and fortified through repeated historical examples. In this connection, the relationship between God and man is based on historical record; a register of deeds and misdeeds which need to be impressed upon memory. One might argue that the Qur'anic vision of history consists of two elements. It is both orderly and accidental, rational and chaotic, wholly under the care of God but it is also subject to the blind violence of the human will. This view of history had a profound effect on the Islamic historical tradition.

On the other hand, during the formative days of Islam, the Qur'an's impact on historiography was not immediately felt among the early historians, for it was among several other, more pressing stimuli to historical thought and writing. Muslims, therefore, had to wait until the third/ninth century before the emergence of historians who grasped fully the historiographical challenge of the Qur'an though other factors, other circumstances were initially more decisive in the formation of this tradition. Hence, this period marked the beginning of serious historiographical accounts among the Muslims.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What was an environment in which Qur'anic vision of history emerged?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Man remains the main subject of history both in the Western and Islamic perspective. He is to be carefully studied from the beginning of time, generation to generation till the end of time. Whether man is subjected to true record of history or not is a moral factor which is only relevant in the realm of religions through the divine revealed Books. The holy Qur'an, represent the main source of history to the Muslims other sources may be said to be mere external forces which has not in any way disproved the established truth of the

Qur'an. In other words, all other sources of history could be concluded were deduced from its eternal contents.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, an attempt has been made to let you know what the sources of history are especially as it relate to Islam. You have learned that the Qur'an serves as the major source of historiography. It historicizes time, man, the Prophets of God and their nations, other civilizations and the future life. You have also learned that the Qur'anic vision of history is based majorly on two elements which are both in order and accidental in nature and the two elements are under the care and tutelage of God the history Maker.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page write-up (A4, 1½ spacing), in which you state the characteristics of history from the view point of the Qur'an.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Baharuddin Ahmad. (2009). "Ibn Khaldun and the Metaphysics of History." In The conference proceedings of the International conference at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia. P. 43-53

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Siddiqi, M. (1965). *The Qur'anic Concept of History*. Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research.

For more on the four personalities discussed in this module, see: Tarif Khalidi. (1994). Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.

**MODULE 4 UNIT 2****UNIT 2 IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY IN THE LIVE OF CONTEMPORARY MAN****CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Importance of History in the live of contemporary man

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I assume you have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 4. This is the second unit of the three divisions of unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to enlighten you about the importance of history and history writing in the life of the contemporary man. The unit also aims to provide you with necessary information to give you clear understanding of the importance of history in the life of man. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars

- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
- Appreciate the importance of history in the life of contemporary man
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.
- Be familiar with both the Western and Islamic culture in relation to history writings.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Importance of History in the life of the Contemporary Man**

It is important to emphasize the need to know why man will constantly be in need of history. This is particularly important because the development of nations and races are due to numerous factors but for the purpose of unity and social inter-dependence, a tribe develops to become a race and a race in turn develops to become a civilization. The parable is like a tree which originates from a seed, the same thing applies to the human history which develops from a single self to become nations. The element of unity, the need for it is the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic key factor that unites a race, a nation or a society. This unifying factor is more important than those factors that cause the decline of a nation or a society. Hence, history should be able to relate and identify those factors that lead to the unification of human society than its destruction in order for it to be more meaningful and constructive. Therefore, history of today should involve the people once again. History should be able to relate the factors that unite men with the traits and characteristics that represent man himself.

The characteristic pertaining to man in history is more everlasting and enduring than the formation of governments and administrations which may rise and fall. In other words, Muslims of today are in dire need of such history for they have built such a history in the past; a common history of Muslims. According to the opinion of Ibn Khaldun, there must

be a cause or causes that formed history and the understanding of this requires intellectual proofs and arguments. As a practical philosopher, he describes the rise and fall of civilizations he also chose the revealed aspect of knowledge to replace Aristotelian ontology and he found a right combination between his practical philosophy and religion. This represents a new combination that contributed to Islamic history of thought. To Ibn Khaldun, group solidarity (*'assabiyyah*) forms a major aspect of the rise or fall of any civilization and should be given prior consideration while writing history of any given nation or civilization.

Moreover, Hamed Ansari on the other hand is of the opinion that there can be no complete validity of the theory on the process of the rise and fall of civilization, institution, government and the circle of the rise and fall that theoretically should in a way take place. According to him, it is not always the tribal solidarity that brings about the turning point in history. Religious piety and moral solidarity should be seen as the bases for the formation of many governments that came about in Islamic history even during the time of reputable scholars like Ibn Khaldun. Although, it is true that the rise of the Mughals, the Ottomans and the new Saudi Kingdom may be seen through the mirror of the concept of *'assabiyyah'*, but the major events in history which appears in form of colonization, and recent developments such as the American *'intervention'* in Muslim countries have proved otherwise. Sudden military power of the West, industrialization, modern arms and economic over-drive and requirements may lead to the intervention in history without resorting to the natural factors in historical transformation. Therefore, as projected by Ibn Khaldun, religion may not be the only strengthening factor, but in many cases, the major factor that transforms history.

It must be clearly stated here that, in recent times or in recent history, group solidarity was formed due to the ideological conflicts and different values between the colonialists and the colonized. Muslim countries were freed either by force formed by the people or

were allowed to be free due to the internal pressure faced by the colonialists. In both cases, it was the force of the people not the supremacy of the arms alone that is the key factor. In other words, there are new factors that cause historical transformations. For example, it may be true in the case of the Taliban that tribal heads have joined forces to oppose the Afghan government, but the major factors remain to a large extent the intervention of external non-religious forces which were identified by the people of Afghanistan as either Communist, Capitalist or the Intruders.

However, the above view does not in any way invalidate the idea of change as continually taking place in history as postulated by Ibn Khaldun. All we need to do is to readdress the issue and add new factors to what has been spelled out earlier by Ibn Khaldun, and in so doing, we will also come to terms with the importance of history in the life of contemporary man. Many aspects of recent events may still fall within the scope of Ibn Khaldun's ideas of development and disintegration of society, and can be redefined within the scope of the cyclical process of history. You will notice that despite the linear concept of history of the modern West, many recent events are integrated and suit well with the way history is perceived by Ibn Khaldun. However, it requires modifications and new analyses to accommodate new developments in the contemporary history and historical events. Again, just as it has been said in the preceding module, Ibn Khaldun should be appraised through a long period of history rather than events that takes place in a short period of time, too contemporary and waiting for the moment of change to take effect.

To conclude, you will agree with me that the importance of history cannot be over-emphasized in the life of contemporary man. Despite the fact that history is cyclical in nature, it continually needs interpreter, developer and someone to make history live forever. It is the job of a historian to check and to come up with a more logical conclusion instead of hearing a heresy and quicken it in a historical report. History of

today is in dire need of historians who will constantly bring back the past into the reckoning of the contemporary man so as to be able to bring or situate the past into the present and move the field of historiography to the next level.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify other factors that can enhance the preservation of historical records in the contemporary period.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The contemporary man needs history more than ever before. History today serves as one of the instruments of development because it brings back the past as if in the present to remind the people of what has happened to the generations before them. In doing this, it becomes important for the present to learn from both mistakes and fortunes of the past nations because history often times repeat itself. In other words, man becomes a universal being within history and that the importance of history cannot be over-emphasized in the life of contemporary man.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have been made to understand the importance of history in the life of contemporary man. You have also learnt that group solidarity sometimes serves as factor of emancipation or put in another way, often times contribute to the rise and fall of a particular nation or civilization. You have also learnt that in as much as history naturally is cyclical according to the postulations of Ibn Khaldun, for the contemporary history to be relevant and complete, it requires modifications and new analyses to accommodate new developments in the contemporary history and historical events.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Give a detail account in not more than two and a half page (A4, 1½ spacing) of how perfect the concept of '*assabiyyah*' according to Ibn Khaldun serves as a factor of societal development.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Siddiqi, M. (1965). *The Qur'anic Concept of History*. Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research.

For more on the three personalities discussed so far, see: Tarif Khalidi. (1994). *Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.

**MODULE 4****UNIT 3****CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Muslim versus Western history: Where do we meet?

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I assume you have read the course guide. I also believe you have familiarized yourself with the introductory message to module 4. This is the last unit in this module. The aim of this unit is to let you have an in depth understanding of the relationship between the western and the Muslims' understanding of historiography. The unit also aims to provide you with necessary information on the meeting point of both cultures to give you clear understanding of the importance of history in the life of man. This unit, therefore, may be regarded as part of the most important aspect of this course. I hereby advise you to give it the necessary attention it deserves.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the unrivalled legacy left behind by early Muslim scholars
- Distinguish between the medieval and the modern periods
- Appreciate the importance of history in the life of contemporary man
- Discuss in detail the events of the time of the Abbasid dynasty.

- Situate the early scholars' position to the contemporary situations
- Bring the schools of historiography to mind all the times.
- Be familiar with both the Western and Islamic culture in relation to history writings.
- Know the meeting point of both western and Muslims' conception of history.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Muslim versus Western historiography: Where do we meet?**

In an attempt to discuss the meeting point or the differences between both western and Muslims' understanding of the concept of knowledge in line with historical records, we would like to focus on the '*aql-naql* mind as propounded by Ibn Khaldun as shown in the sixth part of his *Muqaddimah*. In order to understand the specific Islamic knowledge factors that shaped Ibn khaldun's intellectual mind, there is the need for us to look at the general characteristics of the Muslim mind, since it has been assumed from a sociological perspective that Ibn Khaldun's intellectual mind had worked out his 'new science' within the religious cultural framework before Western domination and colonization of the Islamic world in the contemporary period. The classical Muslim intellectual mind was heavily influenced by the Qur'an's ethics of knowledge acquisition and creation. The Qur'anic ethics could be simply summarized in the following features:

- The Qur'an gives top priority to knowledge acquisition and creation. The first revealed Qur'anic verses strongly stress the importance of literacy and continuous learning to secure wide knowledge of everything in this world or in the universe.
- It ordered humanity to seek knowledge and develop it. The Qur'anic text asks Muslims and non-Muslims to adopt the methodology of continuous observation of three main areas of the (1) the universe/nature (2) the historical events of human civilizations, societies and their social actors and (3) the human distinct

nature; this Qur'anic appeal certainly serves well the development of the sciences in the two cultures. The epistemological unity of the latter comes from the Qur'anic idea of one God, the Creator of all the worlds' phenomena that the sciences of the two cultures study.

- In the view of the Qur'an, true knowledge should make scientists, historians/scholars the most pious and humble persons towards God- knowledge in Islam's conception should lead to spiritual salvation. The reverse is the case when it comes to the Western conception of knowledge. In other words, knowledge should be devoid of God.
- No matter how vast or wide human knowledge could be, it is always limited when compared with God's unlimited and universal knowledge.
- The divine knowledge has absolute authenticity, certainty, and inclusiveness of all things in the world and the universe at large.

Considering the historical records, early Muslim scholars and scientists of all disciplines were able to produce unrivalled legacies in terms of knowledge creation because of their abilities to merge together the revealed sacred knowledge (*naql*) on the one hand, and the human acquired knowledge based on human reasoning (*'aql*) on the other hand. Ibn Khaldun's interdisciplinary thought is not an exception to this rule of the combination of the revealed and acquired knowledge; that is to say that he strongly adopted the cognitive dualist perspective (*'aql-naql*) in writing his entire works including the *Muqaddimah*.

Moreover, the sociological perspective helps in a no small measure in understanding and explaining the differences between the two minds (Muslim and the Western) with reference to the acquisition and creation of knowledge. Whereas the Muslim mind sees no contradictions between the *aql* and *naql* knowledge but rather emphasizes their harmony, the Western mind on the other hand has witnessed a sweeping liberation from the influence of the Christian theological thought since the Renaissance. Rationalism, experimentation, empirical data collections have all become the only basis for Western

contemporary knowledge. Al-Jabri asserts the difference between these two minds in accordance with the way each of them prioritizes the following; Man, Nature and God. Whereas the Western mind gives more importance to the first two- man and nature; the Muslim mind on the other hand gives priority to the three- God being the prime facie. This in turn helps to account for the non-readiness of the former and the readiness of the latter to adopt the perspective of the '*aql-naql* mind (Al-Jabri 1988: 27-31). With these cultural differences in the knowledge acquisition and creation from the perspectives of the two cultures in mind, it becomes clear to us why Western scholars have often been impressed by the '*aql* side as propounded by Ibn Khaldun and why they have denied and criticized him for his reference to the *naql* side (Lacoste 1998: 241-57).

The existence of the two minds in the realm of knowledge acquisition and creation generates controversy. The Western modern mind look at issues with suspicion, disbelief and with hostility towards any knowledge attached to religion. The Muslim mind, however, finds solace in the fundamental revealed texts for the human-made knowledge. Despite the controversial nature of the two minds, each of them has contributed to the human advancement in terms of knowledge acquisition and creation. In the contemporary times, however, the Western modern mind serves as the only yardstick with which human knowledge is determined. It is appropriate to mention here whether there is enough justification for Muslims' '*aql-naql* mind to stand on its own and even compete with the Western mind in knowledge creation.

First, the Muslim mind is strongly a pro-knowledge acquisition and creation which is attached to the Divine. The Qur'anic text is an open invitation to the entire human race to ponder and reflect on the universe endless phenomena. It is estimated that one-sixth of the verses of the Qur'an speaks directly or indirectly about the importance of knowledge in the life of human beings. Hence, the scientists and scholars who imbibed the culture of

the Qur'an become the inheritors of the Prophets. In other words, the ethics of knowledge-seeking is deeply rooted in the Muslim '*aql-naql*' mind.

Second, the two major sources of the Shari'ah (Qur'an and hadith) include explicit and implicit statements to scientific facts about various phenomena in the world that have just recently been discovered by modern science. One important example from the Qur'an is the development of the embryo which is known in the modern science as embryology. The stages of human development have been stated in the Qur'an for over fourteen centuries ago, in which there is no conflict with the discoveries of the modern science. To this, the famous embryologist Keith Moore has strongly praised the Qur'anic precise terms for the phases of human development in the womb (Moore 1982).

Similarly, in his comparative of the place of the scientific facts in both the Bible and the Qur'an, Maurice Bucaille comes to the conclusion that; "the Qur'anic statements are in perfect agreement with modern scientific facts which are unconceivable to consider Mohammad as their author. Thus, modern scientific knowledge permits us to understand the meanings of certain Qur'anic verses which have not been well understood until the present day". (Bucaille 1976: 254-255).

Thirdly, it could be argued that the Muslims' insistence on the reason and revelation is justified because of the fact that human-made knowledge is always problematic in their outlook. This type of knowledge is a combination of fact and error, a mixture of certainty and doubt. Man's use of his intellect and analytical reasoning often involves probabilities between the truth and the false in the body of knowledge he attains. Thinkers, scientists and philosophers of all ages have come to the awareness of the problematic nature of the fact and error dimension that characterizes human-made knowledge.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's theory of *al-Mutabaqa* (the matching between historical events and human social realities) in the science of history is aimed at minimizing the downsides of historical knowledge in which Muslim historians were involved before and during Ibn Khaldun's time. This theory was meant to raise the level of authenticity and credibility of historical knowledge. This may be said to be in conformity with the influence of ethics of Positivism and Empiricism on the modern knowledge. But there is no doubting the fact that modern knowledge will hardly be able to exhaust all the causes of errors and pitfalls in the human-made knowledge. This is because human-made knowledge is limited in scope, it would legitimately and modestly need the Divine intervention as its complimentary to help human deal particularly with the controversial ethical, moral issues that have proven to be rather difficult to arrive at the ultimate reality which can assist humanity to settle for the good of man and society when relying only on human reasoning.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Western mind's prejudice against religion is as a result of special socio historical circumstance that Western civilization has experienced since the Renaissance in the confrontation between the Church on the one hand, and scientists and Western modernizing societies at large on the other. The said experiences have served as culture of separation and distrust between science and religion. In other words, it becomes so difficult for the Western mind to understand or accept any deal of cooperation between the science and the religion as manifested in the '*aql-naql* mind of the Muslim.

In conclusion, from the Islamic perspective, the reason assisted by revelation serves as the ideal mind which can reach out for a more credible and complete corpus of knowledge. Ibn Khaldun's work raises serious questions about the assumption of the modern Western mind's persistence on the fact that true science and genuine knowledge cannot be obtained if religion is not separated from science. As stated above, this

conclusion was arrived at by the Western mind based on their experience with the history of the church. Muslims' mind strongly defies the substance of those claims and opens the line for scientists, historians and scholars to seek more than one way to create and establish solid knowledge. Hence, if the two cultures must meet, there must be openings to the meeting point which is between the revealed and rational knowledge.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain very briefly the '*aql-naql* mind as propounded by Ibn Khaldun.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The mind that the Qur'an built is of course not the same thing with the mind that only senses and reasoning built. It is important to note that the challenges posed by the Qur'an to humanity to ponder on the creation of God and to travel on the land to see what has happened to the people in aforetime sends a signal of dependency of man on revelations. This is because the Divine revelation seems to be the only claimant of authority of guidance which can lead humanity to the ultimate Reality. Both philosophy and science have failed in arriving at the concrete answers to the ultimate questions- because they both lack accuracy and finality.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learned that both the Western and the Muslim mind are in conflict because of the inability on the part of the Western mind to accommodate revelation in the knowledge creation and acquisition. You have also learned that since historical records are directly motivated by the Qur'an, the Muslim historians did everything possible to make sure that historical records are put into the test of accuracy and authenticity.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ line spacing), where you give a detail account of the dichotomy between the Muslim and the Western mind in the knowledge creation and acquisition.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

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**The Marking guide for the Examiner (s)**

It has already been stated in the course guide that all the tutor-marked assignment carries 30 marks each and examinations also carries 70 marks. Answers to all the tutor-marked assignments given in this course are all within the essay of each unit. It is expected that the examiner(s) will look inward before setting the questions for the examinations. Any student that is able to reproduce 70% of what is in the body of the essay concerning each topics of discourse in this course with additional information apart from the one given by the course developer in both the tutor-marked assignments and the examinations is entitled to be graded 7 point or A or a distinction grade as the case may be. If a student is able to give back 70% of what is taught without any additional information, he/she is also entitled to an “A” grade while others who are below 70% ranges between credits and passes grades. I am confident that with the in depth discussions in this course material and all the materials I suggested for consultations for the students on their own; none of my students should get anything less than a credit in this course.

For the tutor-marked assignment grade, the tutorial coordinators/facilitators should take students’ attendance at the tutorials very seriously because I presumed that attendance at the tutorials should assist the students to have a correct mastery of the course content and subject matter. Not only this, the attendance should also be given certain percentage (10%) of the whole exercise. In other words, I am saying ten (10) marks should be allotted to attendance at the tutorials while the remaining (20) marks be allotted to the tutor-marked assignments. The examiner (s) is expected to set five (5) questions for the examinations out of which the students are expected to answer three (3) questions carrying between twenty to twenty-five (25) marks each. This is determined by how wide or short the length of each question is. With all these explanations, I assume the examiner should know how to go about all these without any further problem.

I wish you all the best in this course and your entire sojourn in the National Open University of Nigeria.