

MAJOR TRENDS IN HISTORICAL THOUGHT AND
WRITING
MODULE-I
TOPIC WEST ASIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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- ▣ TARIKH – organization of material by date – History
- ▣ Pre-Islamic period- ballads & genealogies- half legend & half history
- ▣ Life of Prophet Mohammed marked a great dividing line in Muslim historiography

Factors influencing Muslim Historiography

- ▣ CONQUEST OF VAST EMPIRE –
 - Arabs empire covers Asia, Africa & Europe
 - 2 forces bind the empire- religion & Arabic language
 - Empire building & writing history go together
- ▣ INFLUENCE OF CONQUERED PERSIA
 - Inspiration for writing history came from Sassanid Persia
 - Sassanid historical sources revealed Arabs the history of the country they conquered
 - it created an interest in their own past & past of people they subjugated

▣ COMMON CHRONOLOGY

- Began with Hijara- migration of Prophet from Mecca to Medina in AD 622
- ▣ Thus common chronology & new religion provided stimulus to Arab historiography
- ▣ Flourished with the foundation of Abassid Caliphate
- ▣ Developed as a separate branch of knowledge, with new vigor, dignity & magnitude

Muslim historical literature

- ▣ Universal histories
- ▣ Histories of single countries under muslim domination
- ▣ Dynastic histories
- ▣ City chronicles
- ▣ Biographies
- ▣ Travel literature

HISTORIANS

- ▣ Early Arab historians concerned mainly on the biography of Prophet & wars & conquest of the period
- ▣ MUHAMMAD IBN ISHAQ- 8th C.AD
 - 'THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET'
 - earliest recorder of Muhammad's campaign
 - wrote history of Umayyad dynasty of Damascus

▣ ABU IBN YAHYA

- 33 treatise on different persons & events
- 'HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF IRAQ'

▣ Last decades of 8th & 9th C – brilliant period of Abbasid historiography

▣ AL WAQIDI

- native of Medina
- favourite of Harun al – rashid
- 'KITAB-AL-MAGHAZI' -history of military & missionary expansion of islam
- carried personal library along with him where ever he travelled- 20 camels

- ▣ AL- MADAINI
 - ' BOOK OF THE CONQUEST FROM ABU BEKER TO OTHMAN'
 - ' BOOK OF THE KHALIFS'
 - TWO MONOGRAPHS ON INDIA
 - 'TARIKH AL KHULAF A'
- ▣ AL- BALADHURI- 'HISTORY OF THE CONQUESTS' - Subjugation of Syria, mesopotamia, Armenia, Egypt, Cyprus, spain & Nubia
- ▣ AL DINAWARI- HISTORY OF ARABIA & PERSIA
- ▣ IBN AL TAHIR - HISTORY OF BAGHDAD & IT'S CALIPHS

▣ AL TABARI-

- 'HISTORY OF PROPHETS & KINGS' - first universal history in Arabic language

- LIVY OF MUSLIMS

-collected source materials & travelled extensively

▣ AL MASUDI

-native of Baghdad

- wrote 36 works

- 'MEADOW OF GOLD' - history of several dynasties & rulers

- political, social & cultural life of people

- HEREDOTUS OF ARABS

▣ AL-BIRUNI

-SURVIVING MONUMENTS OF PAST GENERATIONS

- KITAB- UL-HIND-Indian culture- its philosophy, mathematics, astronomy

▣ IBN BATUTA

- traveler & writer

-Qazi of Muhammad Thuglaq court

- KITAB -UL RIHLA-description of India

▣ IBN KHALDUN

- greatest historian of west Asia
- KITAB -AL-IBAR /UNIVERSAL HISTORY – 7 vols- 3 Books
- Al- Taarif – autobiography of author
- Muqaddima / introduction – treatise on the science of history & the development of society
- First book – Civilization & its impact on human being
- Second book – Expansion of Arab empire fro Asia to Africa & Europe
- Third book – History of Berber Dynaties of Africa
- Muqaddima- methodological preface- history not simply record of events but a description of internal & external social relationship
- believed in dynamic nature of historic growth & held that like organism history undergoes constant changes
- belived in cycclical theory in historical process

- ▣ To him every society had a fixed span of life & in this span of life society goes through 2 stages, rural & urban
- ▣ When society transforms from rural to urban its inner strength weakens
- ▣ In 2nd stage- advancement in craft, science, standard of living, but decay in inner strength
- ▣ Urbanization leads to the monopoly of power & resources by a small group of people & the exclusion of majority – leads to severe oppression & gradual decay of society

- ▣ Introduced concept of science of history
- ▣ History is not merely the study of events but of their inter-relations ,meanings & values.
- ▣ Environment – influence on social life of people & history also
- ▣ Emphasis psychological desires, which determine social habits
- ▣ Classify sciences into- theoretical, practical & productive comparable to humanities, sciences & technology
- ▣ Humanities- knowledge of truth
- ▣ Science- practical action
- ▣ Technology- perfection of things

- ▣ Four factors for genesis of culture
 - material – physical conditions
 - formal – instruments like state through culture take place
 - efficient – solidarity & harmony in society
 - final – idea of common goodness
- ▣ Culture is result of play of political & economic factors
- ▣ Ideal state offers safety & security & organize skill for full utilization of economic resources

- ▣ 3 types of state
 - fosters goodness of this & next world
 - goodness of this world
 - goodness of rulers only
- ▣ Envisage a political system in which ruler establish rule of law
- ▣ Ruler must know law & capacity to enforce it, to interpret it
- ▣ Ruler – not a law giving person but law enforcing authority
- ▣ Did not interpret history from religious view point

- ▣ Historian- well versed in his craft with critical enquiry
- ▣ consider annals & chronicles as untrue history
- ▣ Historian should always be skeptical
- ▣ History is information about human social organization which itself is identical with world civilization
- ▣ Application of sociology is helpful to avoid falsification of social aspects
- ▣ Man cannot live alone- part & parcel of society- solidarity among people – help the state to exist longer & stronger – population increases labour force increases – led to surplus production – rulers use surplus production for luxury of minority not for needs of majority

- ▣ Muqaddima translated into European languages in 19th C
- ▣ European scholars surprised how a medieval Muslim scholar lived in a religious & theocratic atmosphere produced such genuine theories in historical writing
- ▣ H.E.Barnes – unique feature- rationalize the subject of history and to reflect upon its methods & purposes
- ▣ Toynbee- ‘undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time / place