

## What Does History Tell Us from the Classical Period of Islam? Some Illustrative Social and Moral Examples

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### Abstract

History, which is subsumed under Social and Humanity Sciences, is a field that closely concerns all branches of sciences. History is a verified set of facts. In the past sense, it is a continuous dimension of human consciousness, the institutions and values of the society and the absolute component of the patterns outside these. In other words, it is the narration, investigation and evaluation of all events in all aspects that took place in the past up to the present time.

Also, history is the branch of science that records the adventure of humanity and the universe since creation. It is a bridge transferring the past to the present between the past and the future. It is the memory of nations and the report card showing their success and failure. It is a branch of science that offers exemplary scenes to be taught and a series of events that would not recur if the lesson had been learned. It is a branch of science that reveals the phases of Sunnatullah, the existence and extinction of the state, nations and civilizations.

This article aims to reveal what history tells us with some examples from the Classical Period of Islam. For, history offers the necessary material to the understanding of humanity as a field and science branch that brings the past and the present together and sheds light on the future. Probably what needs to be done is to benefit properly from the environment prepared and presented by history. For, it is only the actors that change, in fact the historical rules do not change.

**Keywords:** History, Creation, Humanity, Classical Period of Islam, Illustrative Examples.

### Öz

#### *İslâm'ın Klasik Döneminden Tarih Bizze Ne Söyler? Bazı Betimleyici Sosyal ve Ahlakî Örnekler*

İlimlerin taksiminde Sosyal/Beşerî ilimler arasında yer alan Tarih, bütün ilim dallarını yakından ilgilendiren alandır. Tarih doğrulanmış bir olgular kümesidir. Geçmiş anlamıyla da beşer bilincinin sürekli bir boyutu, toplumun sahip olduğu müesseseleri, değerleri ve bunların dışındaki kalıpların mutlak bileşenidir. Bir başka ifadeyle içinde bulunduğumuz zamana kadar



geçmişte vuku bulan bütün olayların anlatımı, tüm yönleriyle irdelenerek soruşturulması ve değerlendirilmesidir.

Bu tanımlara ilave olarak tarih yaratılıştan itibaren insanlığın ve evrenin serüvenini kaydeden ilim dalıdır. Geçmiş günümüze aktaran; geçmiş ile gelecek arasında köprüdür. Milletlerin hafızası, başarı ve başarısızlıklarını gösteren karnesidir. Ders alınmak üzere ibret sahneleri sunan ilim dalıdır. Ders alınsaydı tekerür etmeyecek olan olaylar dizisidir. Sünnetullah'ın safhalarını; devlet, kavim ve medeniyetlerin varoluş ve yok oluşlarını ortaya koyan ilim dalıdır.

Bu makalenin amacı Klasik Dönem İslâm Tarihinden bazı örnekler vererek tarihin bize ne söylediğini ortaya koymaktır. Çünkü tarih, geçmişle günümüzü buluşturan ve geleceğe ışık tutan, yön veren bir alan ve ilim dalı olarak gerekli malzemeyi insanlığın idrakine sunmaktadır. Yapılması gereken herhalde tarihin hazırladığı ve sunduğu ortamdan yerli yerince ve doğru bir şekilde yararlanabilmektedir. Zira değişen sadece aktörlerdir, aslında tarihi kurallar değişmemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tarih, Yaratılış, İnsanlık, Klasik İslâm Dönemi, Betimleyici Örnekler.

### Introduction

First of all, we would like to some introductory remarks as to the definition and subject-matter of history as a discipline. History, which is subsumed under Social and Humanity Sciences, is a field that closely concerns all branches of rational and natural sciences. For every science has definitely a historial background or a historical past spanning from the moment of its first appearance to the various evolutionary stages it has gone through. Besides, like any other discipline, history, too, has its own technical concepts, subject-matters, issues, and theories.

History is expressed as History in English, Histoire in French, Geschichte in German, and *Tarih* in Arabic, which is derived from the Arabic verb, *arrakha / warrakha*. The Arabic term *Tarih* has originated from the word *yaraakh / yarakh* which means moon, month, time or seeing the moon in Akkadian, Abyssinian and Hebrew languages. As such, history is briefly to determine the day and the year in which an event occurred, as well as the sequence of incidents following that event.<sup>1</sup> In other words, history means to determine the date of events and to prepare the catalog of events according to their chronological order.<sup>2</sup> Again, history is “the study and description of all aspects of life lived in the past”<sup>3</sup> and as such it affords considerable knowledge about ideas and actions that had been developed by humanity as part of social structure.<sup>4</sup> Or, it is an independent science whose subject-matter is to collect all human and social events of the past and analyze them in a scientific pattern.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, history, according to another definition, is “a science that collects the single events that were lived and experienced by humanity in the past, recounts them within the framework of time and space and based on written documents and thereby sheds light on the future.”<sup>6</sup>

When we look at the definitions made in this framework, it can be said that

<sup>1</sup> Mustafa Fayda, “Tarih”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2011), 40/30.

<sup>2</sup> Şahin Uçar, *Tarih Felsefesi Yazıları* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1994), 11.

<sup>3</sup> A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Tarihte Usûl* (İstanbul: Enderun Yayınları, 1981), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Tuncer Baykara, *Tarih, Araştırma ve Yazma Metodu* (İzmir: İrfan Kültür ve Eğitim Merkezi Yayınları, 1996), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Doğan Özlem, *Tarih Felsefesi* (Ankara: Say Yayınları, 2010), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ekrem Memiş, *Tarih Metodolojisi* (Konya: Çizgi Yayınları, 2008), 6.

history is a set of verified facts.<sup>7</sup> In terms of its meaning with regard to the past, it is seen as a continuous dimension of human consciousness, as well as the totality of all the institutions and values of a society, together with all the patterns that remain outside them.<sup>8</sup> In other words, it is the narration, investigation and evaluation of all events in all aspects that have taken place from the past up to the present time.<sup>9</sup>

In light of all these and other known yet uncited definitions, we can modestly suggest our opinion about history as follows:

-It is a particular science that records ventures of humanity and the universe since the creation.

-It is a bridge transferring the past to the present and linking the past with the future.

-It is a branch of science that determines the specificity of the past events in terms of time and place.

-It is the memory of nations and the report card showing their successes and failures.

-It is a tool that holds a mirror from the past to the present and enables people to confront their past in the present.

-It is a branch of science that offers lessons and admonitions for people's benefit.

-It is a series of events, which, if taken heed of and lessons learned duly, would not recur.

-It is the background of the politics followed by states.

-It is a branch of science that reveals the phases of Sunnatullah (natural law of God), the existence and disappearance of the state, nations and civilizations.

-For some people, it is a rightful pride; for some others, it is just a vain glory.

-It is a disgrace and shame for some others even if they try to hide it.

-It is a field of occupation for some that can be exploited, distorted and undesired.

-It is a source of courage and synergy for nations.

In addition to the sacred texts, all printed and manuscript works composed by historians in different fields and all kinds of archaeological findings, documents and works that have survived until today, all are accepted as sources of history.<sup>10</sup> A historian ought to be an expert in this field. Here, we prefer to use the term of history in general meaning and as a science also.

As for the question of what history tells us from the Classical Period of Islam with its definitions and sources, we shall try to answer and illustrate it with specific selected examples from history itself by taking into account its sources

<sup>7</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *Tarih Nedir*, trans. Misket Gizem Gürtürk (İstanbul: İletişim Yay, 1991), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Tarih Üzerine*, trans. Osman Akınhay (Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, 1999), 17.

<sup>9</sup> İhsan Süreyya Sırma, *Müslümanların Tarihi* (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2016), 1/71.

<sup>10</sup> For the sources of history, see Togan, *Tarihte Usûl*, 36-75.

and periods. In doing so, we shall mention the principles and rules shown by historical events and process and then the examples to clarify these facts. History says:

**The Last Divine Message, the Glorious Quran, Which was Sent Down to All Humanity, is at the Same Time a Source of History and It Draws Attention to the Following Truths:**

The Quran, by relating the story of the creation of human, which constitutes one of the central subjects of history, emphasizes that the purpose of human's creation and of his coming to the world is worship and trial. It introduces to the humanity of the present time the historical struggle of the prophets and their followers for the establishment of the Truth vis-à-vis falsehood as recorded in *Qisas al-Anbiya (Stories of the Prophets)*, a struggle which will continue until the Day of Judgment.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, the Qur'an offers the glad-tiding news that the Truth will ultimately prevail and the Falsehood will perish in the end.<sup>12</sup> However, at this point, it goes on to proclaim that those who are in the right and straight path must continue, despite all kinds of obstacles and difficulties, this daunting struggle with strong faith and patience and without falling into despair at all. Although throughout the ages the representatives of the falsehoods and the adherents of the superstitions have appeared in diverse disguises and forms, the general rule in this regard will not change in the end, provided that the believers are fully conscious and mindful of their responsibilities. During this long struggle, such concepts as monotheism, disbelief, truth, justice and cruelty, etc. become more paramount and crucial. The struggle of the Prophet Moses against the Pharaoh and that of the Prophet Abraham against Nimrod contain the basic principles and references as to how to dealing with the Pharaohs and Nimrods of the modern age.<sup>13</sup>

**The Meaning of This-Worldly Life should be Conceived Accurately and Correctly**

In this context one is frequently reminded that, though the life of this world is temporary, the attainment of eternal happiness in the world to come, nevertheless, and the enjoyment of countless blessings of Allah there still depends on the life of this world, which has been given for us free but as a land of trial. At this point, a healthy balance ought to be made between this world and the hereafter in such a way that all efforts in this world should be exerted and directed towards conducting affairs, constructing institutions and building civilization<sup>14</sup> but without ever forgetting the reality of the eternal life for which the same efforts should be made too. At the root of the great turmoil, blood and tears that surround the world and the humanity today, lie the aggressions and injustices of those materially mighty people who, though they allegedly declare to be correctors and reformers, are in fact corrupters and destroyers. The fol-

<sup>11</sup> For *Qisas al-Anbiya*, see Mustafa Asım Köksal, *Peygamberler Tarihi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> *al-Isrâ'* 17/81.

<sup>13</sup> On these issues, refer to Mazharuddîn Siddîki, *Kur'ân'da Tarih Kavramı*, trans. Süleyman Kalkan (Ankara: Pınar Yayınları, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> *Hüd* 11/61.

lowers of the right path should undertake the task of governing, rather than being ruled, and they should always struggle in order to obtain this important task without being discouraged, while disregarding any form criticism if they ever face in seeking and demanding this entitlement. It should not be forgotten that Allah the Almighty has been with the believers throughout history.

### **The Prophet, Sent to All Humanity, is the Most Beautiful Role Model for All Humanity together with the Believers**

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s entire life, spanning both his pre-prophetic and prophetic periods, contains substantial examples out of which a historian can derive universal principles for the benefit of not only believers but all humanity, as well. We will try to focus on a few of them here.

First of all, it should be underlined that all the revolutions that took place in the world history targeted first and foremost human beings and societies with the aim at reforming them individually and collectively. No reform can be achieved in a given society unless it is directed towards ameliorating the conditions of people in terms of goodness, virtue and beauty. It must be pointed out at this juncture that the process of struggle re-undertaken by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) for the reformation of certain practices of the Jahiliya, especially the practices that were contrary to the creation and the human nature, has been an on-going evolutionary journey of humanity since the time of the Prophet Adam. The Trustworthy Muhammad's personality has always been taken as an exemplary model and foremost leader for this journey. Just to recall here, when he was given the task of the arbitration of the Kaaba, at the age of thirty-five, long before he had been commissioned as a Prophet<sup>15</sup> and also when he handed over the relics belonging to the infidels of Mecca to the care of Ali b. Abi Talib before he migrated<sup>16</sup>, he acted responsibly and diligently at both situations without compromising the trust consigned to him. Being reliable and inspiring reliability and trust is one of the most essential human values and a most needed building block of societies. It is not possible to talk about sustainable social and political peace and healthy economic relations in anywhere in the world if this foundational stone has been demolished, shaken and damaged.

The new period and the struggle for monotheism, which started with the first revelation to the Prophet, offers excellent examples for a better understanding of numerous moral and social ideas, such as faith, perseverance, patience, persistence, submission, humility, forgiveness, gratitude, resolution, loyalty, determination of goal and method, jihad and strategy, etc. For example, the Prophet Muhammad's congenial and lenient attitude in his relations with the environment<sup>17</sup> is one of the most effective factors in reaching the masses and bringing people together with Islam.

<sup>15</sup> Abū Muhammad Abdūmelik Ibn Hisham, *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*, Critical ed. Mustafa al-Saqqā-Ibrahim al-Abyārī-Abdūlhafiz al-Shalabi (Egypt, 1955), 1/209-210; Abu'l-Fidā Ismail Ibn Kethir, *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*, Critical ed. Mustafa Abd al-Wāhid (Qahira, 1966), 1/280-281.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmet Önkal, "Hicret", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 17/460-461.

<sup>17</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/159.

### The Future of Societies Depends on the Establishment of a Solid Family Structure and the Observance and Fulfilment of the Rights and Responsibilities of Women and Men

For instance, today the rights of women are apparently an important issue for the modern world, including our country, and they try, or say rather, seemingly try, to find solutions to this issue in order to improve their position in society. Moreover, this issue has been continuously debated in the western world mostly by referring to the Muslim world with a groundless attack on the religion of Islam, alleging that women's rights were infringed. Here, it would be appropriate to state these common facts: Man and woman are two individuals and two opposite sexes who, when married, form a family, and as mutually responsible spouses they complement each other; and as independent members they are the cornerstones of societies. At both cases each has a role to perform for the well-being of family in particular and that of the society in general. Again, it is also necessary to underline that a very lofty position, like motherhood, is assigned to woman because of which the heaven is placed beneath her feet and hence she has the priority to be served. This honorable position ought to be protected and not to be eroded or undermined by the state and society.

The life of the Prophet with his wife Khadija, who had held the most esteemed rank as being the first of the Pious Spouses from the time of her marriage till her death, can be mentioned as one of the most beautiful historical answers to this issue. In this example of marriage, mutual love and respect appear to have prevailed in the Prophet Muhammad's blessed family. In fact, the Prophet continued to hold for the memory of his beloved Khadija and her friends after her death the same profound respect and love which he had shown to her during their life together. One would recall at this point of Ai'sha's discomfort with regard to the Prophet's noticeable fondness for Khadija. When she raised her nit-picking critique to the Prophet, he softly expressed and reiterated to her his love and respect for Khadija without hurting her feelings.<sup>18</sup> It is quite meaningful that the Prophet has warned humanity about the rights of spouses in the Farewell Sermon.<sup>19</sup> It is a historically well-known fact that the Prophet himself extended the best possible treatment to his wives and thereby set an example for his Companions and Muslims at large. No violence whatsoever was ever heard of in his household.

At this point, it should not be forgotten that in protecting the rights of spouses, attention should be paid to decisions and practices that will harm the family structure and integrity.

<sup>18</sup> Rıza Savaş, "Asr-ı Saadet'te Hz.Peygamber'in Aile Hayatı ve Evlilikleri", *Bütün Yönleriyle Asr-ı Saadet'te İslâm*, ed. Vecdi Akyüz (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 1994), 1/300, 307; M.Yaşar Kandemir, "Hatice", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1997), 16/465-466; Ömer Sabuncu, *Hız.Peygamber'in İlk Hanımı Hz.Hatice'nin Hayatı ve Şahsiyeti* (Urfa: Harran Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2008), 59-62.

<sup>19</sup> İbn Hisham, *al-Sıra al-Nabawiyya*, 4/250-251. For the Farewell Sermon, see Bünyamin Erul, "Vedâ Hutbesi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2012), 42/591-593.

**As long as the Muslims Remain United, They can Easily Overcome, with the Help of Allah, any Difficulty They may Face**

The boycott incident, which took place between 617 and 619 in Mecca, yielded another reality as history shows us. This historical incident taught the believers that when they confront hardships, if they come together and pool their effort together, to them will surely come the aid of Allah and thus they will be able to remove all obstacles before them. For the Meccan polytheists, in the face of the rise of Islam, acted with unbelievable cruelty and hostility against Muslims and even resorted to such inhuman treatment as, for instance, isolating them from their kins and denying their access to nutritive resources and food. Their sole aim was to exterminate believers altogether. For this purpose, they enforced a harsh decision and cut off all kinds of social and economic relations with the Prophet and his followers. Vis-à-vis such adversarial situation, the believers remained strong and confident, acting together as a single body, both in body and spirit, and without breaking apart. However, thanks to the affectionate behavior and sensible intervention of a few Meccan polytheists, this inhumane blockade history had witnessed failed in the end.<sup>20</sup> So, Allah's succor was surely to come as history has shown, provided that the believers stay away from all mundane concerns and interests and work together with determination and perseverance in facing all kinds of hardships and combatting their common enemies.

**Prophet of Mercy (al-Nabiyyu'r-Rahme) Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is also the Prophet of the Battlefields (al-Nabiyyu'l-Melhame) When It is Necessary within the Conditions Mentioned in al-Qur'an al-Karim**

One of the main problems that the modern world is in and accuses the Islam and the Muslims is war and terror. One of the accusations frequently directed at Islam and Muslims by some westerners in modern times has to do with war and terror. In addition to being the most honorable creature, the blood-shedding nature of man is expressed in the language of angels.<sup>21</sup> Throughout history, human beings have shed blood for justifiable or unwarrantable reasons. The whole human history is replete with countless examples of this bitter reality.

It is inconceivable for Islam, which stipulates the exercise of mercy in slaughtering sacrificial animals for religious purposes, to tolerate or condone any form of unjust attempt at terminating the life of even an animal, let alone the soul of a human being. Indeed, such a thing, namely "slaying a soul has been equated with slaying whole mankind".<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad set forth quite explicitly certain laws and rules for Muslims to observe strictly in conducting themselves during war.

In the classical sources of Islam, we find numerous accounts detailing the history of the expeditions and incursions which, due to the persecution of the believers, had been conducted by the Prophet in the form of a jihad (justifiable

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Hisham, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 1/375-380; Ibn Kethir, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 2/66-71.

<sup>21</sup> al-Baqara 2/30.

<sup>22</sup> al-Mā'ida 5/32

war) upon the Divine permission as stated in the relevant verses of the Qur'an.<sup>23</sup> In view of all of these obvious historical facts, it must be pointed out that most of the social concepts and principles, such as human dignity, human rights, freedom, justice and peace, that today's so-called modern man fights for appear to have been well enunciated and even enforced by the Prophet Muhammad himself. It is, moreover, among the clear instructions of the Prophet that in the event of a war, which can be waged only for the establishment of justice and the elimination of oppressions and corruptions, all civilians, women, children, all animals and plants, as well as all worship houses – churches, synagogues, temples, etc- be protected and that no innocent be hurt at all.<sup>24</sup> As it is already well known, when the Prophet had been leading his army towards the conquest of Mecca, they encountered on the road a dog stretching over its puppies and breastfeeding them. Then the Prophet immediately summoned Jua b. Suraqa, one of his Companions, and charged him with the task of protecting the dog and its puppies, which he duly executed.<sup>25</sup> In addition, as history bears witness, it is also a well-established fact that the Prophet resorted to the use of weapons in order to preserve the dignity and honor of Islam and believers as a last alternative and only after he had exhausted all available peaceful means.

### **The Consequence of Disobedience to the Prophet is Severe**

History continues to teach us more lessons for us to consider seriously in facing challenges of the present day. If we recall what had happened in the Battle of Uhud<sup>26</sup>, the Companions had ignored, or better say, disobeyed the Prophet's explicit instructions and hence paid a very heavy price in the end, many Muslims had been martyred and severely injured. An important lesson to be derived from this historic event is that in any military establishment there is a strict chain of command to be observed by all and if it is broken or violated – as was the case with the archers in the Battle of Uhud who had disobeyed their commander-in-chief's, i.e. the Prophet's decisive order and left their assigned places on their own- the result will be unbearably costly, as was seen at the end of Uhud Battle. Everybody who had participated in the Battle had directly and bitterly experienced the painful consequences of their disobedience to the Prophet on a worldly issue. What had happened in Uhud might be interpreted by some merely in relation to the ghazwa process. If, however, the Uhud experience is closely re-examined and carefully re-evaluated, it is to be understood that obedience to the Sunnah of the Prophet certainly yields immense benefits for the believers and that deviation from it or disobedience to it causes for them terrible losses both in this world and the hereafter.

### **Victory Comes only from Allah the Almighty**

History, again, underscores in reference to the events that took place on the day of Hunayn that an army's boastfulness on account of numerical supe-

<sup>23</sup> al-Baqara 2/244; al-Nisā' 4/76; al-Tawba 9/41; al-Ḥajj 22/39-40.

<sup>24</sup> Mehmet Ali Kapar, *Hz.Muhammed'in Müşriklerle Münasebeti* (İstanbul: İlim Yayınları, 1987), 168-170.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad b. Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, ed. Marsden Jones (Beirut, 1984), 2/ 804.

<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqât al-Kubrâ*, (Beirut, 1968), 2/41-42.



riority and their imprudent move may lead to dreadful consequences, similar to those witnessed on the day of Uhud. Of course it is quite natural for someone to think that numerical dominance as a positive factor most likely leads to victory. However, feeling boastful in such superiority and relying on it blindly, while forgetting for a moment that victory comes only from Allah, would lead to severe consequences, some rare examples of which had been experienced by Muslims in history in the form of retreat (*rij'at*).<sup>27</sup>

### **The People of the Book Have Showed Their Hostility to Islam at Every Opportunity**

The Prophet's interactions and relations with the People of the Book, especially the Jewish tribes, during the Medinan period are among the subjects on which the Western Orientalist historians made extensive debates and different interpretations, often associated with their partial views and distortions, far away from reflecting an impartial assessment. Nevertheless, historical records unveil the facts on this subject in detail.

Before the prophethood of the Prophet, the Jews living in Medina had been, as part of their belief, in anticipation of the coming of the last prophet from among them. Even the name of the last prophet to come has been specified as Hamdâ in their Scriptures. However, when the expected prophet came from another place and another tribe, they refused to accept him as a prophet. They had, furthermore, entered into secret collaboration with the Meccan polytheists and mentored them in devising strategies against Islam and Muslims. In the period after the Prophet's historic migration, they showed their hostility openly to him and Muslims on every occasion.

In fact, under an officially signed historic document, known as Medina Document or Agreement or Constitution, the Prophet granted constitutional status to three major Jewish tribes and recognized them, along with others, as the equal members and citizens of the Muslim community in Medina. After the Battle of Badr, the Qaynuqas, one of these three Jewish tribes, challenged the Prophet by breaking the treaty and harassed a Muslim woman who was shopping in their bazaar. Later, following the Battle of Badr, the Nadirs, another Jewish tribe, allied themselves with the Meccan polytheists against the Muslims. And even furthermore, they attempted to assassinate the Prophet and a few of his companions in the period after the tragedy of Bi'ru Mauna. Thereafter, upon their exiled by the Prophet from Medina, they made their settlement in Damascus and Khaybar region. As to the third tribe, the Qurayzas, on the other hand, their warriors were sentenced to death not just simply because they broke the treaty but they also aggressively participated in the Battle of Hendek against the Muslims.<sup>28</sup> The punishment given was in fact compatible with the provision of the Torah.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from this, while their famous poets, such as Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, were praising the Meccan polytheists with their poems, they satirized Muslims. The

<sup>27</sup> See al-Tawba 9/25-26.

<sup>28</sup> See al-Ahzâb 33/26.

<sup>29</sup> *Kitab-ı Mukaddes* (İstanbul: 1972), Tesniye, 20, 10-15.

Khaybar Jews, besides being the mentor of the polytheists, assisted them further with their financial support.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, as it is well known today, the Zionist Jewish community is among the actors that are committed to the domination of blood and tears in the Muslim geography and that provide media and capital support to the formation and spread of Islamophobia in the world public opinion. Actually history recurs.

### **The First Political Test of the Muslim Community after the Death of the Prophet was the Election of the Caliph Abu Bakr**

The period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, which started with the caliphate of Abu Bakr and lasted for thirty years, witnessed important events that was to direct the course of the history of humanity. As history relates, the first challenge involved the election of caliph.

It is quite well known that in his lifetime the Prophet had nominated no successor to lead the Community as head of state after his death. In spite of this fact, this issue has become very crucial for the first time in history, just because a certain group, which was later to be named the Shi'a, claimed that the caliphate had been the right of Ali and that this right had been usurped. With the inclusion of the Ahl al-Sunnah (the People of Sunna) into the debates, different approaches emerged over the time on various aspects about this issue.

The election of the first caliph, that is, the leader of the Community, is a historical event that started with the meeting of Ansar in Saqifa in order to determine the new ruler, while the preparations of and procedures for the funeral of the Prophet, on the other hand, were underway. The social, political and theological implications and ramifications of historical event still continue to affect Muslim world until today. The election process, which had initially been presented in a rather broad meaning as the first struggle for power in Islam, has become a serious political problem that needed to be resolved by the believers.

As history testifies it, Ansar was about to elect Sa'd b. Ubada, one of their members, as the caliph by arguing from their angle that they were entitled for the leadership. No sooner this news leaked from the Saqifa than Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubeyde b. al-Jarrah (God be pleased with them) arrived there and consequently the course of discussion shifted. In the end of the serious discussions between the representatives of the Ansar and those of the Muhajir, the principle that "the Imams must descend from the Quraysh," which was later to be interpreted differently among Muslim scholars, was accepted unanimously by both parties as a binding criterion to resolve the issue of who should be the successor to the Prophet and the caliph of the Community. Owing to the foresight of 'Umar and in compliance with the above-adopted rule, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, a most intimate Companion of the Prophet and a descent of the Quraysh, was elected as the caliph.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> On these issues, refer to İsmail Hakkı Atçeken, *Hız Peygamber'in Yahudilerle Münasebetleri* (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> On the election of the First Caliph, refer to Cem Zorlu, *İslâm Tarihinde İlk İktidar Mücadelesi* (İstanbul: İz Yayınları, 2014).

In describing this somewhat tumultuous election process, the history at the same time sets down in clear terms a universal truth that, regardless of who you are, whether be a close friend of the Prophet or a relative of him, seeking power and aspiring to rule consists in the very nature of human being, as witnessed in the debates of the Companions, which ultimately resulted in the settlement of the problem but with some resentment. One would naturally expect that such an important task should have been entrusted at the very outset to the most competent and most qualified among them without leaving any room for speculations, disputes and conflicts. In other words, the well-being of the society, not the interest of any individual, ought to be taken into consideration before anything else. In fact, Umar's courageous attitude during this process proved to be a good example in this direction. Despite this, though, Sa'd b. Ubada still resisted to approve the result of the election and as a result, therefore, some of the Companions delayed their recognition of Abu Bakr as the first caliph. It should be remarked, on the other hand, that throughout the history some part of the Muslim world, contrary to the historical records, has continued to proclaim that the right of the caliphate (or Imamate) belonged exclusively to Ali and that his right was unjustly usurped. This attitude (of partisanship) has most of the time become a determining factor in the background in establishing relationships and conducting international affairs in the Muslim World.

**The Rulings of Islam should be Observed together in Their Totality without Excluding or Separating any of them from others. A Collective Struggle should be Directed against All Kinds of Deviant, Harmful and Sectarian Trends**

Ridda (apostasy) events can be cited as another important development in the history, which bears highly useful messages and lessons to us about this period. Ridda technically refers to the incidents caused, during the reign of Abu Bakr, by those who refused to pay their zakat, the poor-tax, to the state by quitting the Islamic circle, and claiming prophethood.

Upon the death of the Prophet, members of the Banu Abs and Zubian tribes, who lived in regions far from Medina, refused to pay zakat. Zakat is one of the fundamental principles of Islam, the fulfilment of which proves one's recognition of the state and authority. Despite some opposing views, Abu Bakr openly declared that he would fight those who deliberately neglect to pay their zakat even if they have uttered expressly the word of faith, the Tawhid, and performed the obligatory prayers. As a result, these tribes had been taken under control. The injunctions and prohibitions of Islam ought to be adhered to as a whole and as such they can never be divided nor can one be preferred over another. It is certain that any kinds of opposition to this truth is unacceptable and any one who rejects it would be considered as having broken tie with the religion of Islam. In other words, history imparts that what lies behind Abu Bakr's determination to struggle against those who declined to give the zakat is the same truth as we have just stated, i.e. *Islam must be adopted and practiced in its totality.*

Those who claimed themselves to be a prophet constituted the second group of the Ridda events. Musaylemetul-Kezzab, among them, had denied Is-

lam at time of the Prophet. After the death of the Prophet, certain figures, including Tulayha b. Khuwaylid and Sajah who was a woman, claimed to be a prophet and instigated rebellious acts against Medina with their supporters. Abu Bakr, again, fought with the same determination against these deviant groups and factions, which have been described by some researchers as “false prophets.”<sup>32</sup> But, since such a characterization is somewhat problematic and inaccurate, we tend to disapprove of it.

History has also witnessed other aberrant movements similar to the Ridda, which aimed to instigate strifes and conflicts in Islamic societies at different times and places around the world. As part of the lesson one could extract from these historical incidents, today too it is necessary for Muslims to stay alert and take necessary measures and precautions against the emergence of similar sectarian ideological movements and factions and not to allow them to target young brains and degenerate their faith and morality. History warns us that such harmful movements may arise at any time and in any geography if preventive measures are not taken.

#### **Islamic Conquests cannot be Considered as Occupation, Expansion or Invasion**

Another important development of the period of the first caliph as mentioned in history involves the First Islamic Conquests, which have generally been exploited by the Orientalists. The Islamic conquests, which continued during the reigns of Umar and Uthman, are, generally speaking, regarded as military operations. And through these conquests most of the lands covering from Iraq-Iran-Khorasan-Azerbaijan-Irmîniyye, Syria-Damascus to Egypt and North Africa came under the rule of Muslim governance.

When the Islamic conquests are closely examined one by one in their own contexts, along with their backgrounds and outcomes, it will be seen that they were more than military operations. First of all, the conquests should be evaluated in terms of the objectives of the Islamic state and also within the context of, and struggle against, the neighboring empires, such as the Iranian Sassanids and Eastern Roman, i.e. the Byzantine. However, most of the Western researchers view these conquests as expansion, invasion and occupation or annexation of foreign lands. They go even further and describe them as the events which resulted from the forced migrations because of the Muslims' greed, plundering and looting, as they allege.<sup>33</sup>

In the eyes of Muslim historians, Islamic conquests are the genuine struggles of Muslims for their own existence and also for the “*ilâ-yı kelimetullah*” (spreading the word of Allah) and “*fi sabilillah*” (inviting to the path of Allah). Their history goes as far back as to the Mute and Tabuk Ghazwas, which had been waged against the Byzantium during the time of the Prophet, and it also

<sup>32</sup> For instance, Bahriye Üçok has used this expression in her book untitled *İslamdan Dönenler ve Yalancı Peygamberler* (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi Yayınları, 2019). For the Ridda Movements, see Muhammad b. Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Ridda*, ed. Mahmud Abdullah Abu'l-Hayr (Ammam, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> For the approaches of Western authors, see Ahmet Turan Yüksel, “Bazı Batılı Araştırmacılara Göre İlk İslâm Fetihleri”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyât Fakültesi Dergisi* 6 (1996), 169-195.

goes back to the incidents which emerged because of the Iranian Kisra's ill-treatment of the Prophet's messenger, right after the latter handed over the Prophet's letter of invitation to the former. The conquests are closely related to the policies of the two great powers dominating the surrounding geography of the Arabian Peninsula, since they both undertook what the Meccan polytheists had failed in their attempt to stop the spread of Islam. In other words, the Islamic conquests should be considered in the context of interstate relations.

In this context, the Islamic conquests, when taken together with the activities following them, should not be viewed as wars between two ordinary states. As a matter of fact, they constitute a series of actions in every field, ranging from the determination of the social and religious status of the nations residing in the territories conquered by Muslims to the establishment of justice and peace and the construction of social institutions.<sup>34</sup> When looked at the history with a fair perspective, it will be noticed that the Islamic conquests, including those which took place during the Umayyad period, had been carried out with justifiable reasons and for noble causes and hence their characterization with the term of occupation would be utterly mistaken and inconsistent with historical facts at all.

**Any Form of Asabiyyah, which is based on the Supremacy of a Particular Race or an Ideology or a Sect and which Causes Separation and Conflicts by Otherizing the Rest, must be seen as a Deadly Virus Affecting the Muslim Societies**

According to Ibn Khaldun's theory, asabiyya means the feeling and tendency of people with or without descent to come together naturally, cooperation and solidarity in the face of cruelty and injustice.<sup>35</sup> The point we want to underscore here is that it is the words *hamiyyet* / *hamiyyetü'l-jahiliyya*, -meaning 'the advocacy of the superiority of a race or a tribe; defense of tribalism or tribal superiority- which occur in the Qur'an, that constitute the basis of this thought.<sup>36</sup>

One of the chief goals of the Prophet, during his struggle for twenty-three years of his prophethood, was to ensure the unity of his Umma with the bond of faith and hence he sternly warned his ummah, especially in the Farewell Sermon, of not falling into the traps and dangers of the *jahilliya* form of asabiyyah. In other words, advocating the superiority of a particular race over another, for instance the superiority of an Arab over a Persian or that of a Persian over an Arab, is a form of asabiyya.

One of the most striking examples of this ideology was seen during the Umayyad period. In spite of their incredible successes in expanding the lands of Islam through their conquests, known as the second wave of Islamic conquests, as well as in developing both rational and religious sciences and con-

<sup>34</sup> For the examples, see Ahmet Turan Yüksel, "Fütühu'l-Büldân'a Göre Fetihlerden Sonraki Faaliyetler", *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyât Fakültesi Dergisi* 9 (2000), 45-79.

<sup>35</sup> Mustafa Çağrıncı, "Asabiyyet", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1991), 3/454.

<sup>36</sup> al-Fath 48/26.

tributing to the growth of Islamic civilization, the Umayyads had not been able to maintain their rule, which lasted even less than a century, due to their troublesome policy of the Arab asabiyya that fostered the superiority of the Umayyads.<sup>37</sup> In the consequence of the implementation of such an erroneous policy, together with their Mawali policy which they applied towards the Transoxiana geography, there arose a great deal of distrust and resentment among their subjects, leading eventually to the eruption of infights and finally to the Abbasid revolution. One of the setbacks of these development was that , the Transoxiana geography's encounter with the religion of Islam on a mass scale was postponed to the following centuries.

Similarly, the Andalusian geography, which contained almost all kinds of people from diverse ethnic origins, including Arabs, Berbers, Eastern and Persian Mawalis, Muslims from the local population and Saqalibe (slaves), as well as indigenous people, had been infected with the same virus of Asabiyya, which has led to the emergence of painful incidents in the reigion. While the Andalusian Umayyads, on the one hand, produced magnificent works almost in every field of Islamic civilization and even paved the way for the flourishing of scientific activities in Europe, they, on the other hand, faced tremendous challenges and problems, due to their succumb to the traps of the Asabiyya ideology. As a matter of fact, the roots of the tribal conflicts between the people of Qays and Yemen, who both constitute the Muslim Arab population, go back to the pre-Islamic and Jahiliyya notion of asabiyya, which is the major weakness of most Muslims. One would still add that the Berbers, who were superior in number and at the same time made great contributions in the conquest of Andalusia, were not given the opportunity to take a very active role in political and administrative life.<sup>38</sup>This unfortunate situation will be one of the major reasons for the collapse of the Andalusian Umayyad State.

On the other hand, the wars between Mulûku 't-Tawâif (1031-1090), which emerged as a result of the declaration of autonomy by influential families in cities other than Cordoba following collapse of the Andalusian Umayyad State, might as well, be accepted as an important part of this process. Consequently, the Muslims became increasingly weaker and this paved the way for the existing Christian kingdoms to achieve their goal of reconquista, that is, to reclaim Andalusia from the Muslims.

This has ended with the Inquisition period, which witnessed the most painful and tragic events of human history, including the persecutions, oppressions and tortures of Jews along with Muslims.<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

To sum up, history as an independent discipline linking the past with the

<sup>37</sup> For detailed information on asabiyya during the time of the Prophet and Umayyads, refer to Adem Apak, *Asabiyyet ve Erken Dönem İslâm Siyasî Tarihindeki Etkileri* (İstanbul: Düşünce Kitabevi Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Mehmet Özdemir, "Endülüs", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995), 11/216-217.

<sup>39</sup> On the Spanish Inquisition, see Jasim Alabudi, "Müdeccenler ve Moriskolar", *Endülüs, İslâm Tarihi ve Medeniyeti*, ed. Mehmet Özdemir (İstanbul: Siyer Yayınları, 2018), 4/309-314.

present and shedding light on the future offers invaluable materials to the understanding of humanity. What needs to be done is to try to obtain maximum benefit from what history presents and prepare for the future with the help of lessons and principles extracted from its records. For it is only the actors that change; the historical rules never change.

Again, history imparts its message only to those who make efforts to comprehend it and those who are eager to learn lessons from it, either directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, with evidence or signs. History will definitely guide us in finding what is truth and what is good, provided that we approach it with openness, sincerity, impartiality and responsibility.

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