

mütefekkir

Aksaray Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi

cilt / volume: 12 • sayı / issue: 23 • haziran / june 2025 • 15-40

ISSN: 2148-5631 • e-ISSN: 2148-8134 • DOI: 10.30523/mutefekkir.1733063

THE DAWN OF HISTORY: PERSPECTIVES FROM CLASSICAL MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Klasik İslam Âlimlerinin Perspektifinde Tarihin Başlangıcı

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Makale Bilgisi / Article Information:

Makale Türü / Article Type: Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Geliş Tarihi / Received: 19.02.2025

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 23.05.2025

Yayın Tarihi / Published: 30.06.2025

” Atıf / Cite as:: Gökalp, Hüseyin – Kuşcalı, Ali. “The Dawn Of History: Perspectives From Classical Muslim Scholars”. *Mütefekkir* 12/23 (2025), 15-40. <https://doi.org/10.30523/mutefekkir.1733063>

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KLASİK İSLAM ÂLİMLERİNİN PERSPEKTİFİNDE TARİHİN BAŞLANGICI

Öz

Tarihçiler, tarihin başlangıcıyla ilgili çeşitli öneriler sunmuştur. Bu konu, tarihin tanımıyla yakından ilgili bir tartışmadır. Bazı tarihçiler, somut kanıtları olan bir başlangıç olarak yazılı kayıtların ortaya çıkışını tarihin başlangıcı kabul etmekte ve öncesi dönemi tarih öncesi olarak adlandırmaktadır. Böylece yazılı kayıt bulunmayan veya kanıtları günümüze ulaşmayan uzun bir dönem tarihin dışında kalmaktadır. Bu kategorik ayırma karşı çıkan diğer bir grup ise sözlü gelenekleri de tarih yazımının bir parçası olarak değerlendirmektedir. Ancak bu durumda da somut kanıtların sınırları belirsizleşmekte ve tarihçiler ile arkeologların hayal gücüne geniş alanlar açılmaktadır. Bu tartışma yalnızca tarih veya tarih yazımının değil, aynı zamanda felsefe ve ilahiyatın da ilgi alanına girmektedir.

Bu makale, tarihin başlangıcıyla ilgili tartışmalara klasik Müslüman tarihçilerin bakış açısını inceleyerek katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın kapsamını, klasik İslam tarihçilerinin eserlerindeki tarihin başlangıcına dair anlatımlar oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada kaynak-belge incelemesi yönteminden yararlanılmış, klasik Müslüman tarihçilerin temel eserleri analiz edilerek, tarihin başlangıcını hangi noktadan itibaren ele aldıkları ve tarih yazımına yaptıkları katkılar ortaya konmuştur. Araştırmanın önemi, klasik İslam tarihçilerinin eserlerindeki teolojik perspektifleri modern tarih yazım yöntemleri ile karşılaştırmalı olarak inceleyerek literatüre yeni ve özgün bir bakış sunmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Ulaşılan temel sonuç, klasik Müslüman tarihçilerin tarihin başlangıcını ilahi yaratılış ile ilişkilendirerek, tarihin anlamını ve insan varoluşunu daha geniş bir bağlamda değerlendirdiklerini ve modern yöntemlere önemli bir hatırlatma işlevi gördüklerini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Tarihi, Tarih yazımı, Tarih usulü, Klasik Müslüman tarihçiler, Tarihin başlangıcı

The Dawn Of History: Perspectives From Classical Muslim Scholars

Abstract

Historians have proposed various perspectives on the beginning of history, a debate closely related to the definition of history itself. Some historians identify the emergence of written records as the beginning of history and refer to earlier periods as prehistory. Thus, lengthy periods without written records whether there wasn't any at all or simply has not survived are considered outside of the historical studies. Another group challenges this categorical distinction by regarding oral traditions as part of historiography. However, this approach blurs the boundaries of concrete evidence, expanding the role of imagination for historians and archaeologists significantly. This discussion engages not only historiography but also intersects with philosophy and theology. This article aims to contribute to the discussions about the origins of history by examining perspectives from classical Muslim historians. The scope of this research includes accounts from classical Islamic historians regarding the starting points of history. The study employs document analysis methodology, examining seminal texts from classical Muslim historians to highlight how they approached the inception of history and their contributions to historiography. The significance of this research lies in providing a new and original perspective by comparatively analyzing theological perspectives of classical Islamic historians with modern historiographical methods. The key finding of this study is that classical Muslim historians associated the beginning of history with divine creation, thus interpreting the meaning of history and human existence within a broader context and offering significant reminders to contemporary historiographical approaches.

Keywords: Islamic history, Historiography, Historical methodology, classical Muslim historians, The beginning of history.

INTRODUCTION

The question of when history begins is one that inspires considerable debate and inquiry, given its fundamental dependence on our conceptual understanding of 'history' itself. This problematic question must be included within the scope of the fundamental questions that determine not only the philosophy of history but also philosophy itself and, more profoundly, it is about human existence. The answer to this question prepares the ground for an understanding that decides not only how we look at the world but also how we perceive human beings and all material and spiritual outputs of us, including the knowledge produced by human beings. The historiographical part of the question witnesses the divergence and metamorphosis of perspectives. According to Howell and Prevenier, history is an investigation and narration of past events.¹ That is the conventional Western academic perspective often ties the commencement of history to the emergence of written records, while other cultural contexts and academic disciplines offer alternative paradigms, including oral traditions, archaeology, and anthropology. However, according to the understanding that existed in Europe before modern times, in the Christian and Jewish tradition, and is still present in Islam, history begins with the first human being, and this first human being is a known person, and all other human beings are his descendants. "All of you are descendants of Adam and Adam is from soil (clay)."² This paper, after taking a look at the perspective of modern times, will try to recall and remind the forgotten theories of the beginning of world history.

One of the key defining moments in human evolution was the development of writing, a technological innovation that fundamentally transformed how knowledge was stored, disseminated, and inherited across generations. This revolutionary advancement is often hailed as the inception of history from a modern perspective.³ The principal advantage of written records lies in their physical existence—they are tangible and relatively enduring. They serve as a direct conduit to the thoughts, beliefs, and societal structures of past civilizations, furnishing historians with a concrete basis for analysis. Unlike spoken words, which are ephemeral and dependent on human memory, written words capture information in

¹ Martha C. Howell ve Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 2.

² Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Wāqīd al-Sahmī al-Aslamī bi-l-walā', al-Madanī, Abū 'Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, taḥqīq Marsden Jones (Beirut: Dār al-A'lamī, 1989), 2/836.

³ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 45.

a stable and long-lasting medium, enabling more precise and reliable transmission of knowledge over time and space.

The modern perspective typically situates the beginning of history around the 4th millennium BCE, marked by the invention of cuneiform script in Mesopotamia⁴ and hieroglyphs in Egypt.⁵ These early writing systems, initially developed for administrative record-keeping such as trade logs or tax tallies, underwent evolutionary changes and began to document a broader spectrum of human experiences literature, laws, philosophical musings, historical events, and more. They served as vehicles for the codification and preservation of cultural and intellectual heritage, empowering societies to construct and transmit complex narratives about their world. However, the adoption of writing as the start of history does not imply that societies without written scripts lacked history. Numerous societies developed intricate socio-cultural structures and maintained vibrant oral traditions long before the advent of writing. Moreover, even today, some societies continue to rely on non-written forms of communication and record-keeping. In essence, while the advent of writing provided a clear, definable threshold marking a transformative stage in human socio-cultural evolution, it does not and cannot encapsulate the entirety of human historical experience. The beginning of history, as seen through the lens of the modern perspective, is less about defining a precise chronological milestone and more about recognizing a pivotal shift in how humans could record and reflect upon their collective experiences and knowledge.

The significance of written records in the understanding of history is beyond dispute. However, relying solely on written records to demarcate the beginning of history can be restrictive and incomplete. It fails to acknowledge the vast human experience that precedes the advent of writing and continues to persist in societies with oral cultures. A holistic perspective, therefore, expands the conception of history beyond written records, accommodating prehistoric cultures, and oral traditions. Prehistory refers to the time before the invention of writing and recording of written history. This period, which comprises most of the human past, saw the development of complex cultures, technologies, and belief systems.⁶ Archaeological artifacts and structures left behind by prehistoric societies from stone tools and cave paintings to megalithic

⁴ Nicholas Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 55-60.

⁵ James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10-15.

⁶ V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (London: Watts & Co, 1951), 25-30.

structures provide significant insights into their ways of life, societal structures, and technological advancements. Despite the lack of written documentation, these archaeological findings offer an alternative, albeit fragmented, narrative of human history. They are testimonies to human ingenuity, resilience, and societal development long before the advent of written records. Therefore, archaeology expands our understanding of history, blurring the rigid distinction between history and prehistory.

Moreover, countless societies around the world have a rich heritage of oral traditions that played, and in some instances still play, a fundamental role in preserving and transmitting historical knowledge. These traditions, encompassing myths, legends, folk tales, ballads, proverbs, and more, were often passed down from generation to generation before eventually being transcribed.⁷ Oral traditions, though distinct from written history, provide a wealth of insights into a society's history, culture, beliefs, and societal norms. They highlight the agency and historical consciousness of societies without writing, challenging the idea that history begins with written records. These elements of prehistoric cultures and oral traditions broadly challenge the notion of 'prehistory' as a time without history. They argue for a more nuanced understanding of when history begins, one that acknowledges the diverse mediums through which societies have recorded and transmitted their histories. Thus, the holistic perspective underscores the multidimensionality of history, advocating for an inclusive approach that respects and accommodates the diverse ways in which human societies have experienced and narrated their pasts.

The quest to understand the beginning of history is significantly enriched by perspectives from archaeology, anthropology, and natural sciences. These disciplines offer alternate methodologies and frameworks that broaden our horizons, helping us delve deeper into the labyrinth of the past. Archaeology, as a discipline, provides tangible connections to the distant past, extending the historical timeline beyond written records. It presents a wealth of material evidence, from rudimentary stone tools to grand architectural marvels, shedding light on the development of hominids and early human societies.⁸ Archaeological excavations provide a peek into the lives of our ancestors—how they lived, what tools they used, and how they adapted to their environment. While archaeological findings often raise more questions than they answer, they nonetheless enrich our understanding of human history.

⁷ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 27-30.

⁸ Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 12-15.

Anthropology, on the other hand, offers a holistic perspective on the cultural, social, and biological dimensions of early societies.⁹ Anthropological studies integrate both material and non-material aspects of human life, ranging from physical artefacts and human remains to language, customs, and belief systems. By studying these diverse elements, anthropology paints a nuanced and multi-dimensional picture of early human societies, illuminating the rich tapestry of human experience that pre-dates written history. In the realm of natural science, disciplines such as genetics and climate science provide valuable contexts for understanding early human history. Genomic research allows for tracking historical patterns of human migration and interbreeding among hominid species, offering insights into the distribution and evolution of early human populations.¹⁰ Climate science helps us understand the environmental conditions that shaped human evolution and societal development. By studying ancient climatic patterns, scientists can infer how changes in the environment might have triggered migrations, adaptations, and technological innovations among early humans.¹¹ Thus, by integrating insights from archaeology, anthropology, and natural science, we can construct a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of human history. This inter-disciplinary approach offers a more holistic perspective on when history begins, bridging the temporal gap between the advent of written records and the origin of human species.

The perception of history and its beginnings is profoundly influenced by cultural paradigms, leading to a rich tapestry of diverse understandings. Not all cultures align with the linear conceptualization of time and history that often underpins Western thought. Thus, exploring cultural variances in conceptualizing history can illuminate alternative viewpoints, broadening the scope of our discourse. For instance, many Indigenous cultures around the world perceive time and history in cyclical or non-linear terms, a stark departure from the linear temporal trajectory commonly associated with Western historical thinking.¹² In these cultures, events from the past are not isolated incidents consigned

⁹ Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15-18.

¹⁰ David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018), 87-95.

¹¹ William F. Ruddiman, *Earth's Climate: Past and Future* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 2014), 45-50.

¹² Leo Killsback, "Indigenous Perceptions of Time: Decolonizing Theory, World History, and the Fates of Human Societies," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 4 (2013): 85-114. Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15-20.

to a distant, irretrievable past; instead, they are intertwined with the present and future in a recurrent cycle. Such a cyclical or spiral concept of time challenges the idea of a singular, identifiable 'beginning' of history.

Furthermore, these Indigenous cultures often privilege oral traditions and ancestral knowledge as valid historical records. Their histories are woven into stories, songs, dances, and rituals passed down generations, reflecting a different, yet equally significant, method of recording and remembering the past. In addition, cultures influenced by religious or philosophical systems, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, conceive of time in grand cosmological cycles, making the idea of a fixed 'beginning' of history conceptually irrelevant. In these contexts, history is seen as an ongoing, cyclical process of creation, preservation, and dissolution.¹³

Hence, asserting a single 'beginning' of history may be seen as a Eurocentric construct. This assertion often undervalues or overlooks non-linear, non-textual, and non-European traditions of history, limiting our understanding of the past. Recognizing these cultural variations in conceptualizing history is essential to cultivating a more inclusive, nuanced, and global understanding of the human past, in which there are many beginnings, depending on one's temporal and cultural lens.

From a Christian perspective, history is seen as having a linear progression, characterized by a beginning, a path, and an end, all under the sovereign purposes of God. This concept is rooted in the Bible, which provides an account of the beginning of history with the story of Creation. As such, many Christians believe history begins at Creation, as documented in the Book of Genesis. This linear view of history emphasizes that there is both a starting point and an ultimate end, in accordance with the Bible's teachings and prophecies.¹⁴

The Jewish view of when history begins is rooted in the narrative of the Hebrew Bible. In traditional Jewish thought, history is seen as a linear progression starting from Creation, detailed in the Book of Genesis, and progressing in predetermined stages toward the messianic era. Key events and figures, like Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and the various epochs of the Jewish people, play pivotal

¹³Subhamoy Das, "The Concept of Time in Hinduism," Learn Religions, last modified June 25, 2024, <https://www.learnreligions.com/the-concept-of-time-1770059>, David J. Kalupahana, "The Buddhist Conception of Time," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003).

¹⁴ R.C. Sproul, "Moving Toward the Goal of History," (Access 3 August 2024).; Zondervan Academic, "Understanding the Creation Story from Genesis," (Access 3 August 2024).

roles in this historical narrative. The concept of a linear history contrasts with cyclical views of time found in some other cultures and signifies progress towards a divine purpose or end goal. In summary, from a Jewish perspective, history begins with the creation of the world as described in the Hebrew Bible and continues linearly, marked by significant events and figures, towards a divine purpose.¹⁵

Classical Muslim historians similarly root their conception of history's beginning in theological narratives. Prominent figures such as Ibn Qutayba, al-Dīnawarī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn K̲h̲aldūn anchor their historical accounts in the Qur'an and hadiths. Their works typically commence with the creation of the world and the story of Adam, establishing a divine framework within which all subsequent human history unfolds. This approach underscores the integral role of divine revelation in shaping historical consciousness within the Islamic tradition.

The question of when history begins is multifaceted and influenced by various cultural, religious, and academic perspectives. While the advent of writing marks a significant milestone in the recording of history from a modern standpoint, a comprehensive understanding of history's beginnings must also consider prehistoric cultures, oral traditions, and diverse cultural paradigms. The inclusion of theological narratives from Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions further enriches this discourse, highlighting the profound relationship between human existence and the divine. Acknowledging this multidimensionality is crucial for a nuanced exploration of the human past and the concept of history itself. In this article, we aim to explore how selected classical Islamic historians describe the beginnings of human history, examining their perspectives on history and humanity. We will also consider how their contributions have enriched the study of world history.

Materials and Methods

This study examines eight classical Muslim historians who are widely regarded as authoritative figures in Islamic historiography. These scholars were not concerned with documenting merely a specific region or limited period; rather, their aim was to compose comprehensive universal histories that span from the creation of the world to their own times. Their works, which have been extensively consulted throughout centuries, reflect both the evolution of Islamic historical thought and the diversity of methodological approaches within the tradition. The selection of these historians is based on three interrelated criteria: their

¹⁵ Jewish Virtual Library, "Creation and Cosmogony in the Bible," (Access 3 August 2024).

substantial contributions to the Islamic historiographical canon, their representation of distinct centuries between the third and eighth centuries Hijri, and their unique conceptions of historical beginnings. Collectively, these figures offer insight into the intellectual development of Islamic historical writing and exemplify the enduring scholarly engagement with the theological and philosophical dimensions of history.

The distinctive approaches of these historians can be better appreciated through a closer examination of their major works. A brief overview of their works reveals that Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif* provides a comprehensive account of human history from the creation of the world, focusing on genealogical records and significant events. Al-Dīnawarī's *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl* offers a historical narrative that begins with Adam and his descendants, linking these events to broader historical contexts. Al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk* starts with the creation of the world and explores the nature of time, providing a comprehensive approach to world history. Al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* integrates religious beliefs with historical narratives, beginning with Allah's creation. Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* emphasizes the evidence for the existence of a creator and discusses the significance of historical knowledge. Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* explains the use of dates in Islam and the concept of time, detailing the creation process and the first creations.

Secondary sources include scholarly articles and books that provide context and analysis of the primary texts. These sources help in understanding the broader historiographical practices in the Islamic tradition and offer comparative insights with modern historiographical methods. By examining these materials, the study aims to highlight the unique contributions of classical Muslim historians to the field of historiography and to provide a nuanced understanding of their methodologies and perspectives.

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze the historiographical contributions of classical Muslim scholars. By examining primary texts from notable historians such as Ibn Qutayba, al-Dīnawarī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn al-Jawzī, and Ibn al-Athīr, the research aims to uncover the underlying methodologies and frameworks these historians used to document human history. The study also utilizes secondary literature to provide context and analysis of the primary sources, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the historiographical practices in the Islamic tradition.

The analysis focuses on several key aspects: genealogical frameworks, the chronological methods employed by these historians,

including their use of dates and the structuring of historical events, the integration of theological perspectives into historical narratives, and a comparative analysis of the historiographical methods of classical Muslim historians with modern approaches.

1. THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY ACCORDING TO MUSLIM HISTORIANS

1.1. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) - Kitāb al-ma'ārif

The 3rd century Hijri was a period marked by intensive compilation and classification activities in Islamic sciences. One of the prominent scholars of this era was Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī, who was born in Kufa and pursued his education in Baghdad, one of the major centers of learning. He made significant contributions in various fields such as history, language, literature, exegesis, jurisprudence, and hadith, authoring important works in these domains.¹⁶

Ibn Qutayba made significant contributions to Islamic history through his writings, particularly with his work "al-Ma'ārif." In the preface of this book, he explains his reasons for writing it and the topics he addresses. He aims to convey the cultural heritage accumulated through the honor and prestige of scholars, the virtues of knowledge and eloquence, and the value of learning to rulers and honorable individuals. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of informing people about their ancestry to provide them with accurate historical knowledge.¹⁷

In his book, Ibn Qutayba emphasizes the breadth of knowledge across various fields. The first topic he explores is the beginning of creation. He states that the first things created by Allah were the heavens and the earth, and he provides details on their creation. He then discusses the creation of night and day, plants, fruit trees, birds, and the first human. By starting with the beginning of creation, Ibn Qutayba approaches the human journey not just from a historical perspective but from a timeless existence, suggesting that human existence and history should be understood in a deeper, universal, and timeless context.

1.2. al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/895) - Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl

There is limited information about the life of Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b.

¹⁶ Muhammed b. İshāk en-Nedīm, *el-Fihrist*, trans. Ramazan Şeşen (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu, 2019), 244; M. Bahaüddin Varol, "İbn Kuteybe (v. 276/889) ve Tarihçiliği", *İslâmî İlimler Dergisi* 3/2 (2008), 186-188.

¹⁷ Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2007), 1-2; Varol, "İbn Kuteybe ve Tarihçiliği", 196.

Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī in the sources. He is believed to have been born in Dinawar and pursued his education in Basra and Kufa. He engaged in various sciences such as grammar, lexicography, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy, and authored books in these fields. Al-Dīnawarī is also known for his interest in history, particularly his famous work "Kitāb al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl."¹⁸

The first edition of the work "al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl," which contains extensive information on the history of Iran, was published in 1888 in Leiden. A critical edition was later published in 1960 by ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Āmir.¹⁹

In "al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl," one of the early sources of Islamic history, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī diverges from the classical Islamic historiography's tendency to begin with the creation of the world and humanity. Instead, he starts with the story of Adam and his children and continues up to his own time. Following this, he provides summaries of the lives and lineages of some prophets, explores the diversity of languages, and examines the histories of the Arabs, Abyssinians, Persians, Yemenites, and Israelites.²⁰ In "al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl," some historical events are detailed, others are briefly mentioned, and some are only named. The work notably connects these events to Persian history. Additionally, it employs a narrative style and pays little attention to the chain of transmission (isnad).²¹

1.3. al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk

One of the most prominent historians produced by the Islamic world, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī lived from 224/839 to 310/922. He authored valuable works not only in history but also in exegesis (tafsir), hadith, and jurisprudence (fiqh). Al-Ṭabarī's extensive knowledge in these fields was greatly influenced by his visits to major centers of learning such as Rayy, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Wasit, Sham, and Egypt, where he studied with various scholars.²²

¹⁸ en-Nedīm, *el-Fihrist*, 246; Muhammed Hamīdullah, "Dīnawarī, Ebū Hanīfe", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1994), 9/356.

¹⁹ Hamīdullah, "Dīnawarī, Ebū Hanīfe", 9/358.

²⁰ Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Āmir (Cairo: Dār al-Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1960). 410.; en-Nedīm, *el-Fihrist*, 246; Feyza Betül Köse, "Müslüman Tarihçilerin Kurgusal Tarih Anlatımı: Dīnawarī'nin Ahbârü't-Tivâl Örneği", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi (CÜİFD)* 21/1 (22 Haziran 2021), 165; Ethem Ruhi Fırlah, "el-Ahbârü't-Tivâl", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988), 1/493.

²¹ Zekeriyâ Akman, "Ebū Hanīfe Ahmed Dīnawarī Hayatı, Tahsili ve İlmî Kişiliği", *el-Ahbârü't-Tivâl Eskilerin Haberleri* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2017), 36-37.

²² en-Nedīm, *el-Fihrist*, 762; Bozkurt, *Müslüman Tarihçilerin Dünya Tarihi Tasarımları*, 57.

Al-Ṭabarī's "Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk" (History of the Prophets and Kings) is a seminal work that earned him great renown in the field of history. This book serves as a bridge between the past and the present, aiding our understanding of historical perspectives of that era. It provides access to information from many works that have not survived to the present day and serves as an important reference for subsequent historians.²³

Al-Ṭabarī begins the preface of his book "Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk" by praising Allah, emphasizing His greatness, power, and oneness. He expresses gratitude for Allah's blessings, noting that those who are thankful will receive increased blessings in this life and eternal rewards in the hereafter. Conversely, those who are ungrateful and serve others will lose these blessings and face greater punishment in the afterlife.

After this introduction, al-Ṭabarī outlines the topics of his book. These include the history of humanity from creation to his present day, the prophets blessed by Allah, mighty kings, and caliphs. Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī considers it more reasonable to first discuss the concept of time. He begins his work by exploring the nature of time and its essence. He addresses questions such as: What is the nature and quantity of time? How did time begin? Does time have an end? Were there other beings before the creation of time?

After this introduction, he states that he will narrate the history of past rulers and the events of their times, the periods and lives of prophets, and the histories, lives, periods of rule, and events during the times of past caliphs.²⁴ In the preface, he discusses the concept of time and its nature. He defines time as a concept used for night and day hours and long and short periods. He then shares his views on the age of humanity from its beginning to his own era. Interestingly, after discussing the concept of time, he refers to hadiths from the Prophet about the Day of Judgment, indicating that the end of the world is near. Al-Ṭabarī includes this to remind readers that Allah's created time is not infinite but has a beginning and an end.²⁵

Al-Ṭabarī defines time in terms of the hours of night and day and explains how these hours are formed. According to him, the hours of night and day result from the movements of the sun and moon in space. He cites

²³ Hasan Kurt, "Ṭabarī'nin Tarih Anlayışı", *İslâmi İlimler Dergisi* 3/2 (2008), 89-103.

²⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 1/3-8.

²⁵ Bozkurt, *Müslüman Tarihçilerin Dünya Tarihi Tasarımları*, 62-63.

verses 37-40 of Surah Yasin²⁶ as evidence for this explanation.²⁷

Following his explanations on time and its nature, al-Ṭabarī delves into the creation of all existence. He emphasizes that every being is either composite or separate, where separate entities unite with their likes, and composite ones have the potential to separate. He asserts that only a being with the power to create and manage these separations and unions, without resembling anything, can accomplish this, and that being is Allah. After this introduction, al-Ṭabarī discusses the beginning of creation and the first created entity.²⁸

Al-Ṭabarī's book, with its comprehensive approach to world history, is structured around an overarching narrative from a Muslim perspective. This narrative highlights significant events in human history, the relationship between Allah and humanity, and the development of the Muslim community. The primary aim is to reinforce the belief that the Islamic community is the true community of faith and to explain the conditions faced by the Muslim community during al-Ṭabarī's time.²⁹

1.4. al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*

Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī was born in Baghdad and lived between 280/893 and 345/956. Besides his formal education and extensive reading, he traveled extensively within and outside the Islamic world, excluding only the Maghreb and Andalusia. During his travels by land and sea, al-Mas'ūdī gathered information from scholars, sailors, merchants, travelers, government officials, and people of various religions and sects. This broad range of experiences and contacts made him not only an Islamic historian but also a historian of the world.³⁰

During his extensive travels, al-Mas'ūdī conducted numerous interviews, allowing him to gather firsthand information. He integrated this vast knowledge into his works, covering topics such as history, geography, astrology, religious and sectarian history, jurisprudence,

²⁶ "And a sign for them is the night. We remove from it [the light of] day, so they are [left] in darkness. And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. And the moon - We have determined for it phases, until it returns [appearing] like the old date stalk. It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming."

²⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1/20.

²⁸ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1/28-32.

²⁹ Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islāmic Origins The Beginnings of Islāmic Historical Writing* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1998), 129.

³⁰ Casim Avcı, "Mes'ūdī, Ali b. Hüseyin", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2004), 29/353.

philosophy, and various other sciences. Unfortunately, only a few of these valuable works have survived to the present day. His most famous work in the field of history is undoubtedly "Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar" (The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems).³¹

In the preface of his work, al-Mas'ūdī outlines the purpose of his book, the sources he used, and the topics he covers.³² Based on this, al-Mas'ūdī first addresses the starting point of human history (mebde') in his work.³³ He then examines the creation of beings and the history of humanity from Adam to Ibrahim.³⁴ According to al-Mas'ūdī, Allah created everything from nothing, without any model. Islamic scholars agree on this. Based on a narration attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, al-Mas'ūdī states that water was the first thing Allah created, with His throne above it. Allah then produced a kind of vapor from the water, which rose and was called "heaven." He solidified the water into a single earth, then divided it into seven earths. He also created mountains and sustenance for creatures. Following this, al-Mas'ūdī discusses the dialogues between Allah, the angels, and Iblis before the creation of Adam.³⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī begins his historical account with Allah's creation of existence, showing that his historical perspective and chronology are shaped by his religious beliefs.³⁶ He deliberately anchors historical narrative in pre-human divine acts, reflecting his view that history cannot be properly understood outside a cosmological framework. This approach reveals his understanding of history not merely as human events but as part of a divinely ordained continuum beginning with God's first creative act.

1.5. Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam

Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī was born in Baghdad in 510/1116. From a young age, he was interested in Islamic sciences and studied under prominent scholars such as Ibn al-Zāghūnī, al-Shaybānī, and al-Jawālīqī. He gained extensive knowledge in various fields, including tafsir, hadith, fiqh, history, and theology, and authored

³¹ Şeşen, *Müslümanlarda Tarih-Coğrafya Yazıcılığı*, 60; Bozkurt, *Müslüman Tarihçilerin Dünya Tarihi Tasarımları*, 68.

³² Zeynep Kaya Ünal, *Abbasi Dönemi'nde Bir Dünya Tarihi Anlatısı Kurmak Mes'ûdi ve Tarih Metodu* (Dergah Yayınları, 2024), 35.

³³ Mebde: Allah'ın kainatı, varlığı ilkin nasıl yarattığı ile alakalı sürecin adıdır. M. Sait Özervarlı, "Mebde ve Meâd", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2003), 28/211.

³⁴ Abū l-Hasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥasan Mar'ī (Beirut: Maktabat al-'Aşriyya, 2005), 1/16.

³⁵ al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 1/24-26.

³⁶ Bozkurt, *Müslüman Tarihçilerin Dünya Tarihi Tasarımları*, 70.

numerous works in these areas. Ibn al-Jawzī passed away in Baghdad in 597/1201.³⁷

He became famous for his work "al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam," an important source on both world and Islamic history. The book presents its narratives chronologically and focuses on history and biography.³⁸

In the introduction of his work, Ibn al-Jawzī states that he will first present evidence for the existence of a creator, then discuss the beings created by the creator in order, and finally address the creation of Adam. He believes that every rational person understands that the world was not created by chance and that every event has a cause. The proof, according to him, is that everything except Allah is created. To support his thesis, Ibn al-Jawzī cites verses from the Qur'an.³⁹ Following this, Ibn al-Jawzī addresses the beginning of creation, introducing the topic with a narration from the Prophet. He mentions that the first thing Allah created was the Pen and that Allah commanded it to write everything that would happen until the Hour of Judgment. He also references another narration stating that Allah created the Pen and the Inkpot first and commanded the Pen to write everything until the Judgment Day. Additionally, he includes a narration that Allah established decrees fifty thousand years before creating the heavens and the earth.⁴⁰

In the introduction, after presenting a general account of creation, Ibn al-Jawzī organizes the information in his work according to chapters. The first chapter he addresses concerns created beings. Under this heading, he provides detailed information about the creation of the earth, its regions, mountains, seas, and rivers.⁴¹ The information Ibn al-Jawzī provides in this chapter is essentially a summary of the accounts of creation given by al-Ṭabarī in his work.

Based on the initial topics Ibn al-Jawzī addresses, it is evident that he aims to write a world history. He believes that discussing biographies and historical events offers numerous benefits. Firstly, by recounting the lives and achievements of virtuous individuals, one learns good governance and steadfastness, and by highlighting their mistakes and consequences,

³⁷ Yusuf Şevki Yavuz - Casim Avcı, "İbnü'l-Cevzî, Ebü'l-Ferec", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1999), 20/543.

³⁸ Şeşen, *Müslümanlarda Tarih-Coğrafya Yazıcılığı*, 122.

³⁹ Abū l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tā'rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 1/116-119.

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 1/120-121.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 1/128-163.

one avoids negligence. This helps leaders become disciplined and memorable. Secondly, knowing the interesting aspects of historical periods, witnessing the changes of time, and the challenges of fate provide comfort and guidance for those who seek knowledge.⁴²

Based on this information, it can be inferred that Ibn al-Jawzī believed historical knowledge significantly contributes to self-understanding. Therefore, he begins his work by presenting evidence of a creator's existence and introducing the first creations. This approach underscores the importance he places on understanding the origins and fundamental aspects of existence as a foundation for comprehending history and one's place within it.

1.6. Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*

‘Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Abī al-Karam Ibn al-Athīr, a member of a family with a scholarly tradition, was born in 555/1160 in Cizre (Jazīrat ibn ‘Umar) and was raised there. He traveled to various cities in the Islamic world, including Mosul, Baghdad, Damascus, and Jerusalem, to receive education from the leading scholars of his time. As a result of his education, Ibn al-Athīr became proficient in sciences such as ḥadīth, ḥadīth methodology, genealogy (ansāb), history, language, and literature. However, he became renowned for his works in the fields of ḥadīth and history. His work in ḥadīth was so significant that he attained the rank of imam. Reaching the level of ḥāfiẓ in ḥadīth, particularly producing works in the rijāl genre and his interest in genealogy, indicates his special interest in sciences related to history. Known both as a ḥadīth scholar and historian, Ibn al-Athīr passed away in Mosul in 630/1233.⁴³

Ibn al-Athīr's work in the field of history, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, is his most well-known and comprehensive work. The author aimed to address world history as a whole from an east-west perspective in his work. To achieve this goal, he developed a critical method by avoiding the inclusion of lengthy, unnecessary, and historically irrelevant information in his book from the reports he received.⁴⁴

In the introduction of his work, Ibn al-Athīr discusses the reasons for

⁴² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 1/117.

⁴³ Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbā’ abnā’ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1391/1971–1415/1994), 3:348; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a’lām al-nubalā’*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma’rūf and Muḥyī Hilāl al-Sarḥān (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1985), 3:353–354 Yusuf Büyükyılmaz, *İbnü’l-Esîr (555-630/1161-1233): Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tarihçiliği* (İstanbul: Kitap Dünyası, 2024), 26-29, 41.

⁴⁴ Büyükyılmaz, *İbnü’l-Esîr: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tarihçiliği*, 55.

writing his book and his interest in history, the benefits of studying historical events, the sources he utilized, and the methodology he followed.⁴⁵ Following these topics mentioned in the introduction, the author's first subject is the history of the use of dates in Islam. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad ordered the use of dates for necessary matters after the Hijra. Additionally, during the caliphate of Umar, he commanded the use of dates as well. The author also touches upon the discussions during Umar's period regarding which date should be accepted as the beginning of the Islamic calendar, concluding that the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad was chosen. As a result of these discussions, the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad was accepted as the starting point of the Islamic calendar.⁴⁶

After discussing the history of the use of dates in Islam, the author focuses on the concept of time. Under this heading, he sheds light on what time is and how many years have passed from its beginning to the present day.⁴⁷

After addressing the use of dates and the concept of time among Muslims, Ibn al-Athīr delves into the topic of creation. In this section, he provides information about the beginning of creation and the first thing created. Based on a narration from the Prophet Muhammad, he states that the first thing Allah created was the pen. He then offers explanatory information about the creation of the cloud, the throne, the universe, the earth and its contents, and day and night, following the creation of the pen. Subsequently, the author discusses Iblis's refusal to prostrate to Adam and his rebellion against Allah, providing detailed information on how Adam was created.⁴⁸

In light of all this information, it is evident that Ibn al-Athīr begins his work by explaining the process of how Muslims started using dates. Indeed, the calendar is a fundamental tool for identifying and evaluating historical events. He then addresses the concept of time and the beginning of creation, providing an introduction to the history of Muslims from Adam to his contemporary period.⁴⁹

1.7. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*

Abū al-Fiḍā' Ismā'īl b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, born in 701/1301-1302 in

⁴⁵ Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abī l-Karīm Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, ed. 'Abdallāh al-Kādī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), 1:5–11.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 1/12-14.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 1/15-17.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, 1/17-28.

⁴⁹ Büyükyılmaz, *İbnü'l-Esîr: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tarihçiliği*, 63-64.

Busra, moved to Damascus with his family after losing his father at the age of three. This move marked the beginning of his scholarly life. Starting his academic journey at a young age, he developed himself in a multifaceted manner by taking lessons from distinguished scholars in various fields such as fiqh, hadith, history, qira'at, and kalam. His works and studies in disciplines like tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and history had a significant impact both in his own time and in later periods. In addition to his scholarly contributions, Ibn Kathīr held various positions such as preacher, teacher, qira'at scholar, mufti, and member of the judicial committee. He passed away in Damascus in 774/1373.⁵⁰

One of the prominent scholars of the 8th/14th century Islamic world, Ibn Kathīr, not only left significant works in various Islamic sciences but also made well-known contributions in the field of history. His work "al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya" is the most notable among his historical writings. This book gained widespread acceptance and authority in the Islamic world. The title of his work, al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya means "The Beginning and the End." The author, who examines events in a chronological manner, begins the preface of his work by praising Allah. He mentions that Allah created the earth for His creatures and placed it on the waves of water, and before creating the heavens, He set firm mountains on the earth. He also established seasons according to a law so that the necessary food for the continuation of creatures' lives could grow. Following this, Ibn Kathīr addresses the creation of humankind, explaining that Allah designed the earth for human habitation, caused springs to gush forth, and thus brought various plants into existence.⁵¹

Following this general introduction, Ibn Kathīr discusses the content of his book, stating that the first topic he addresses is the beginning of the creation of creatures. He mentions that he will subsequently cover the creation of the throne (*Arsh*) the footstool (*Kursi*) the heavens, the earth, and the beings within them. Additionally, he indicates that he will explain the creation of angels, jinn, devils, and Adam.⁵²

After the preface, Ibn Kathīr explains in the section he writes, based on verses and hadiths, that everything other than Allah was created by Him. In this section, he also touches upon the differing opinions among scholars regarding whether anything was created before the heavens and

⁵⁰ Yusuf Ziya Keskin, *İbn Kesîr'in Hayatı, Eserleri ve Hadis İlmindeki Yeri* (Şanlıurfa: Harran Ün. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 1999), 48-49; Abdülkerim Özeydin, "İbn Kesîr, Ebü'l-Fidâ", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1999), 20/132-133.

⁵¹ Abū l-Fidā' İsmā'il b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 1997), 1:3-5.

⁵² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 1/6.

the earth. Additionally, he mentions, based on a hadith of the Prophet, that the first thing Allah created was the pen.⁵³

The first topic Ibn Kathīr examines under a specific heading in his work is the creation of the Throne (‘Arsh) and the Footstool (Kursī). In this section, he gathers verses and hadiths related to the creation of the Throne and the Footstool, attempting to provide an understanding of their significance and nature.⁵⁴ The author then addresses the creation of the Preserved Tablet (Lauh al-Mahfūz), the heavens, the earth, and everything in between.⁵⁵ In addressing these topics, it is evident that Qur’anic verses and the hadiths of the Prophet are his primary sources. This indicates that he constructs his view of world history around Islamic ideology, shaping his historical thought within a theological context. In other words, he bases his understanding of history on revelation and faith.⁵⁶

Ibn Kathīr’s work in the field of history was regarded as a significant source in his time and had a profound impact on studies of Islamic history. The work contributed to the development of historiography in the Islamic world and became an essential reference for those who seek to understand and analyze Islamic history. It played a crucial role not only in recording historical events but also in shaping the historical perception of the Islamic world.

1.8. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa’l-khabar fī ayyām al-‘Arab wa’l-‘Ajam wa’l-Barbar wa-man ‘āṣarahum min dhawī al-sultān al-akbar

Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, belonging to a distinguished family engaged in knowledge, thought, poetry, literature, teaching, administration, and politics, was born in 732/1332 in Tunis. He learned the Qur’an, tajwid, qira’at, and literature from his father, who was a scholar of the time. Subsequently, he studied fiqh, hadith, tafsir, and aqidah sciences under various scholars. In addition to religious studies, he also pursued intellectual sciences such as philosophy, mathematics, and logic. Thus, he acquired scholarly knowledge in both religious and intellectual and empirical sciences. Due to this extensive knowledge, he was appointed as a secretary to the Sultan of Tunis, Abū Ishāq, at a young age. Forced to leave Tunis for various reasons, Ibn Khaldūn lived in Fez, Andalusia, and Egypt. During his years in these regions, he held various

⁵³ Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, 1/11-13.

⁵⁴ Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, 1/15-24.

⁵⁵ Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, 1/26-62.

⁵⁶ Bozkurt, *Müslüman Tarihçilerin Dünya Tarihi Tasarımları*, 115-116.

bureaucratic positions while continuing his scholarly activities. He passed away in Egypt in 808/1406.⁵⁷ Ibn Khaldūn's career appears to have been shaped by politics, education, and intellectual activities.

Ibn Khaldūn is one of the most important thinkers produced by the Islamic world, known as a historian, sociologist, statesman, and educator. He demonstrated his extensive knowledge through the works he authored. His life and writings have left a profound impact both in the Islamic world and the Western world, significantly contributing to the development of social sciences.

Ibn Khaldūn's renowned work in the field of history is "Kitāb al-'Ibar". This seven-volume work is divided into three sections. The first section, which consists of the preface and introduction, is also the first volume of the work and has become famous over time as the "Muqaddimah." In this section, where the author introduces his work, he discusses the importance of the science of history, examines the methods used in writing history, and addresses the mistakes made by historians and the reasons for these errors. The second section comprises the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th volumes, while the third section consists of the 6th and 7th volumes.⁵⁸

After this extensive preface and introduction, Ibn Khaldūn begins the second volume with the histories of Arab tribes and their generations, starting from the creation of the world up to his own time. He also discusses the differences among various world nations and generations, such as the Syrians, Nabataeans, Chaldeans, Persians, Copts, Jews, Greeks, and Romans, providing general information about their lineages. Following this, Ibn Khaldūn details the lineage of humankind, noting that scholars of genealogy agree that the first ancestor of all creatures is Prophet Adam. He then provides information about the prophets and their genealogies in chronological order.⁵⁹

After providing general information about the topics he will cover in the second volume, Ibn Khaldūn explains how he will approach the genealogies of the nations he will examine in his book. He intends to depict the genealogies of these nations using the metaphor of a tree. To

⁵⁷ Süleyman Uludağ, *İbn Haldun Hayatı, Eserleri, Fikirleri* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), 6-17; Hilmi Ziya Ülken - Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *İbni Haldun* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1940), 7-12.

⁵⁸ Arslan Tekin, "İbn Haldun Hayatı ve Görüşleri", *İbn Haldun Mukaddime I* (İstanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat, 2016), 19.

⁵⁹ 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar fī tārikh al-'Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'āsharahum min dhawī l-sha'n al-akbar*, ed. Khalīl Shahāda (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2000), 2:3-15.

this end, after discussing the lineages and general characteristics of the nations, he aims to portray their genealogies by arranging them from the roots to the branches, listing them from the bottom to the top, and depicting their ancestors who unite them in a family tree. Subsequently, he first addresses the genealogical tree of the Arabs, their class distinctions, and the genealogies of each lineage. Additionally, he explains how the Arabs sustain their livelihoods and shelter.⁶⁰

As can be seen, Ibn Khaldūn believed that understanding the genealogies of nations was crucial. His emphasis on genealogy can be interpreted as his belief that it is essential for deeply understanding social structures and relationships. Additionally, while examining topics, he did not rely solely on texts but also prioritized his observations and fieldwork. This approach to historiography marked a significant milestone in the development of both history and social sciences. His methodology in writing history distinguished him from other historians discussed in this study.

RESULTS

The analysis of the works of classical Muslim historians reveals a distinct approach to historiography that intertwines theological perspectives with historical narratives. Ibn Qutayba, in his work *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*, begins with the creation of the world and traces human history from a divine perspective. Al-Dīnawarī, in *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, starts with Adam and his descendants, linking these events to Persian history, thus providing a broader historical context. Al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk* begins with a discussion on the nature of time and the creation of the world, offering a comprehensive approach to world history that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all events. Al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar* integrates religious beliefs into the historical narrative, starting with Allah's creation. Ibn al-Jawzī, in *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, emphasizes the evidence for the existence of a creator and discusses the significance of historical knowledge from a religious standpoint. Ibn al-Athīr, in *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, explains the concept of time and the use of dates in Islam, detailing the creation process and the first creations.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that classical Muslim historians developed a sophisticated historiographical approach, integrating theological narratives and human experience into a coherent framework. By

⁶⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, 2/16-17.

positioning creation as the origin of history, they affirmed that human existence gains meaning primarily within a divine context.

According to Khalidi, the question of the beginning of history is closely related to the Qur'ānic vision of history. The Qur'ān places the Muslim *umma* at the center and traces its origin back to the first human, *Ādam*, who is also regarded as the first Muslim.⁶¹ On the other hand, Robinson, drawing on the example of al-Ya'qūbī, emphasizes that he wrote a form of universal history and placed *Ādam* at the opening scene of history. While he does not comment extensively on the concept of historical beginnings, he focuses more on understanding what Muslim historians meant by history and how they interpreted it.⁶²

Prominent scholars like al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Khaldūn exemplify how theological convictions can coexist with rigorous scholarly methods. Their historical narratives blend meticulous textual analysis, source criticism, and empirical observation within a spiritual worldview, demonstrating that theological perspectives need not compromise historical rigor. Ibn Khaldūn's sociological insights, in particular, emerge organically from his metaphysical understanding of history, indicating that spiritual frameworks can stimulate rather than hinder intellectual innovation.

Rather than viewing religious perspectives as limiting, classical Muslim historians consciously employed them as interpretive resources, bridging divine revelation and human experiences. Their historiographical approach thus moves beyond the simple dichotomy between secular empiricism and theological narrative, presenting a balanced model that recognizes history as an interplay of human agency and divine purpose. Such integrative methodologies encourage contemporary scholars to reconsider conventional boundaries in historiography, acknowledging the profound ways in which faith and reason can enrich our understanding of the past.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of classical Muslim historians reveals their distinct approach to historiography, which integrates theological perspectives with historical narratives. Their works, beginning with the creation of the world, emphasize the importance of divine will in shaping human history. This theological framework structures historical knowledge and

⁶¹ Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 83-85.

⁶² Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 136.

reinforces the interconnectedness of divine will and human events. The methodologies employed by these historians, including the use of genealogical records and chronological methods, provide a unique perspective that differs from modern historiographical approaches. These contributions extend beyond history of Islam, influencing the development of historiography and social sciences. The balanced model they offer, respecting religious texts while engaging in rigorous scholarly inquiry, provides valuable insights into the relationship between human existence and divine purpose. This approach provides historians and philosophers with a valuable cyclical reminder to re-evaluate historiographical methods that diverge from contemporary frameworks, thereby enriching the discourse with alternative perspectives on the beginning of history. This study has been written as a general reminder and to point out the meaningful implications in historiography, even in the choices regarding the beginning of history. The contributions of Muslim historians to the field of historiography require more in-depth and specific research. Researchers interested in this field must make contributions either by focusing on a single historian or through comparative studies involving multiple historians.

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Etik Beyan / Ethical Statement: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur. / It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.

Yazar(lar) / Author(s): Hüseyin GÖKALP – Ali KUŞCALI.

Finansman / Funding: Yazar(lar)bu araştırmayı desteklemek için herhangi bir dış fon almadıklarını kabul eder(ler)/ The authors acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.