

AL Baladhuri's Kitab Futuh al- Buldan: Third Century Hijri Humanistic History

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Abstract

The third century Hijri was a period of excessive academic achievement in the history of Muslim historiography. During this period historical study reached a stage which led to the appearance of the great historians of that time. One of the earliest historians of this phase was Ahmed bin Yahya Baladhuri (d. 279A.H). His most celebrated and significant writing is Kitab Futuh al- Buldan (The Conquest of the Countries) which deals with the early Muslim Conquest and expansion. This book presents the episodic and personal character of early Islamic historiography. This article deals with the historiographical traditions adopted by Baladhuri and explains the differences between his writing and his contemporaries' and also discusses his contributions in the development of Muslim historiographical traditions.

Key words: Universal History, Arab Aristocracy, Geography, Archeology, Episodic History

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Introduction

The spread of Islam from the confines of Mecca and Medina led to the realization that the events and conquests had to be recorded. The oral traditions of the Arabs had up until now sufficed for the transmission of their traditions and history, but now other races were being included within the fold of Islam. The term for history in Arabic was *akhbar*¹ or *Ta'rikh*². "A *khbar* (plural, *akhbar*) was an account of the past composed for historical interest rather than to shed light on Islamic law, and often devoted to the relation of a single event. The term *Ta'rikh*, which first appeared about 644 C.E. and is the modern Arabic word for history, was initially used to describe various sorts of writing organized chronologically (it literally means "dating") whether by annals or by the reigns of caliphs."³The interest in the past in early Islamic history was cultivated by people with varying interests. Abd-al Aziz al-Duri has distinguished two "schools" who then merged together to produce the great 9th century historians like al-Madaini who used the pre-Islamic legacy of Arabia and contributed to the growth and development of *Ta'rikh*⁴.

Franz Rosenthal defines that "Muslim historiography includes those works which Muslims, at a given moment of their literary history, considered historical works and which, at the same time, contain a reasonable amount of material which can be classified as historical according to our definition of history."⁵His definition is illuminating when we examine it with the terms for history as by this inference we see that the works included in Muslim historiography do not necessarily focus on historical events but include elements such as genealogy, natural sciences, philosophy, geography, cosmography, astrology, in short everything concerned with man. Muslim historiography is an intricate and methodical system of historical writing which begins not with the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H but with the creation of the universe and the coming of Adam."The purpose which Muslim historians sought to

¹ Information or News- Oxford Dictionaries

² Dating

³Daniel Woolf, *Historiography*, New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, P., xliii

⁴Abdul Kader al-Tayob, *The Transformation of a Historical Tradition: From Khbar to Tarikh*, The American Journal of Social Sciences, Vol.5, No.2, 1988, P., 231

⁵Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P.,17

accomplish was to produce works which would be useful and improve the social position of the individual acquainted with them. The knowledge of historical works, the content brought with it the political wisdom and conversational skill which assured success in this world and the humility and piety which assured blessedness in the other world.”⁶

There are various forms of Muslim historiography which Rosenthal defines in detail in his work ‘A History of Muslim Historiography’. The oldest form is *habar*, an extension of the battle day narrative characteristic to Arab society, which is an inclusive, well-rounded description of a single event often presented in the form of dialogue and inserted with poetic quotations to lend artistic license. Next is the *Annalistic* form which is assembled on the basis of chronology. Then come the lesser forms of historical periodization which are; *Dynastic Histories* based upon the reigns of the caliphs and other rulers, *Tabaqat* which deals with a particular class or strata of society and *Genealogical* histories.⁷

Due to the nature of Arab society and the Prophet’s emphasis on learning (*ilm*) almost anyone who could write began recording, or more correctly, transcribing the stories of the Prophet and his companions. Chroniclers writing about the life of the Prophet, how he spread Islam and what battles he fought in this mission had to make sure of their sources. Questions were being raised about the authenticity of the conveyed stories which was of vital importance as the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H⁸ were as sacrosanct as the Quran. The main responsibility of each writer was to ensure that the Hadith⁹ were authentic and to achieve this they traced the Hadith back to each person who had quoted it up to one who had heard it from the Prophet himself. “The practice of prefacing a chain of authorities to each Hadith led to the compilation of vast biographical dictionaries, like the Book of Classes of the early ninth century author Ibn Said, which includes a biography of the Prophet and a great deal of information on notable personalities in Mecca and Medina during his lifetime. Works such as this allowed readers to identify and judge the veracity of transmitters of Hadith; later, the content of biographical dictionaries

⁶Ibid, P., 60-61

⁷Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P.P., 66-98

⁸ Peace Be Upon Him

⁹ a narrative record of the sayings or customs of Muhammad and his companions- Merriam-Webster

was broadened to include poets, writers, eminent readers of the Quran, scientists, and the like.”¹⁰ This practice gave Muslim historiography its unique color and which clarifies Rosenthal’s definition of Muslim historiography as works which contained a reasonable amount of material that could be called historical.

One of the most noted historians of the ninth century is al-Baladhuri whose *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* is a primary source of the early Muslim conquests. There exists very little information on his personal life. His date of birth and death are not exactly known. The sources for his life are *al-Fihrist*, Yakut’s *Mu’jam al-Udab’a* and al-Kutbi’s *Fawat al-Wafayat*. His grandfather Jabir was secretary to al-Khasib, minister of finances of Egypt under the caliph Ar-Rashid.¹¹ He was most likely of Persian origin as he translated texts from Persian to Arabic and grew up in Baghdad where he was a government bureaucrat. At the capital, al-Baladhuri was a boon companion of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861) and he retained influence through the reign of al-Mustain (r. 862–866), but lost his position from that of al-Mutamid (r. 844–892).¹² His studies led him to Damascus, Emessa and Antioch, and Iraq. He studied with famous historians such as al-Madaini, Ibn-Saad, and Musab al-Zubayri. He distinguished himself in poetry, especially satire, tradition and genealogy. He is said to have died from the accidental overdose of Baladhur (*Semecarpus Anacardium* L., marking-nut), a drug believed beneficial for one’s mind and memory, hence earning the name al-Baladhuri, but this is not a confirmed fact. In addition to *Futuh al-Buldan* he also wrote the *Ansab al-Ashraf* (Lineage of the Nobles) which is an extensive biography containing genealogical information about the Arab aristocracy from the Prophet and his companions to the Umayyad and Abbasid times.

¹⁰ Islam and Islamic History in Arabia and the Middle East, <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/ihame/ref5.htm>, Retrieved on: 16th January 2013

¹¹ P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, (New York: Columbia University, 1916), P.,6

¹² Lewental D.Girshon, Scholarship on Middle Eastern History, Culture and Identity, <http://dglnotes.com/notes/bajilah2.htm#Baladhuri> , Retrieved on: 14th January 2013

Historiographical Traditions in the Kitab Futuh al-Buldan

Futuh al-Buldan is a comprehensive history of the Islamic conquests of the seventh century arranged by conquered regions. It was edited by [M. J. de Goeje](#) as *Liber expugnationis regionum* (Leiden, 1870; Cairo, 1901). It is said to be an edited version of a larger work also named Futuh al-Buldan. The book is divided into two volumes beginning with the wars during the times of the Prophet and goes on to cover the conquests of Syria, Djazira, Armenia, Egypt and the Maghrib and Iraq and Persia. The first volume is translated by P.K Hitti while the second volume is translated by Francis Clark Murgotten. The second volume covers the regions of Northern Media (Jebal), Adharbaijan¹³, Mosul, Jurjan and Tabaristan, Districts of the Tigris, Khuzistan, Fars and Kirman, Sijistan and KAbu-I, Khurasan, Conquest of as-Sind and Five Appendices. The Appendices are thus; Concerning the Laws of Kharaj¹⁴ Lands, History of the Ata in the Caliphate of Umar Ibn al-Khattab, The Seal, The Coinage and The Art of Writing. Each section begins with the first attack on that region leading up to the final conquest and submission of that region. All treaties and accords signed are also included as well as any steps taken for the development of that region. It progresses both in a geographical and chronological order.

P.K. Hitti as regards the book opines that “The book shares with other books of Arabic history the advantage of tracing the report back to the source. Being a synopsis of a larger work, its style is characterized by condensation whereby it gains in conciseness but loses in artistic effect and clearness. Certain passages are mutilated and ambiguous. It is free from exaggeration and the flaws of imagination. Throughout the work the sincere attempt of the author to get to the fact as it happened and to record it as it reached to him is felt. The chapters on colonization, soldier's pay, land tax, coinage and the like make it especially valuable.”¹⁵

Futuh al-Buldan cannot be categorized into any of the usual forms of Muslim historiography writing. It is neither an Annalistic, dynastic or genealogical history as it covers the history of each region from beginning to end without being confined to a

¹³ Azerbaijan

¹⁴ a special Islamic fiscal imposition that was demanded from recent converts to Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries- Encyclopedia Britannica

¹⁵ P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, (New York: Columbia University, 1916), P.,7

particular year, dynasty or person. The history of Ar-Rai and Kumas starts from the time of Umar bin al-Khattab to the Abbasid caliph Al-Mamun¹⁶spanning numerous dynasties and various families. Similarly all other sections are thus grouped, culminating in the final submission of the inhabitants of that place to the Islamic regime, whichever that might be. The conquest of Khurasan starts from the Caliphate of Umar and Uthman, then Caliphate of Ali and Muawiya, Caliphate of Yazid and Abd-ar-Rehman, Caliphate of Yazid and Hisham and finally Under the Abbasids.¹⁷The Futuh is better classified as a combination of the habar and Annalistic forms.

Structure of the Futuh al-Buldan:

The book is written in the episodic format typical to writers of that time including al-Baladhuri who adopts a conversational framework to present the events. The conquest of Mosul is divided thus; *Nineveh and surrounding villages- Urmiyah- Founding of Mosul- Pavement and Walls- Building of Hadithah- Tirhan and Takrit*¹⁸. This episodic distribution serves to divide the text into comprehensive, explicable events and prevents the narrative from becoming long-winded and full of names. It also enables the writer to include more information from various sources thus presenting a more complete picture of the event. Al-Baladhuri uses this division to include not only the details of conquest but to note each and every deed done in that area by the Muslims. On the Conquest of Khuzistan, in the part of the Districts of Al-Ahwaz he says thus about one of the men who came to the Muslim army.

'Al-Muhajir ibn-Ziyad was forced to break his fast at the insistence of his commander Abu--Musa who had resolved that none who fasted would fight in the battle. Al-Muhajir thus broke his fast, not out of thirst, but respect and attained martyrdom for his obedience

About he was said the following:

"And in Manadhir when they all were warring,

¹⁶ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.P., 3-8

¹⁷ Ibid., P.P, 159-203

¹⁸ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.P., 31-34

*Al-Muhajir went in fulfillment of an oath, with camels;
And his house, the house of the Banu-d-Daiyan, we know
Among the family of Madhhij as the pearl of great price*¹⁹

Baladhuri here gives not only customs but imparts the importance of loyalty and fealty present in the Muslims who went on a jihad. In another example he says when al-Furat was conquered the Muslims discovered a new type of bread,

*'Abd-al-Wahid ibn-Ghiyath from Himyari ibn-Karathah ar-Raba'i who says: When they entered al-Ubullah, they found small loaves made of white flour, and they said, "This is the bread of which it is said that it is fattening." And when they ate of it they began to look at their fore-arms and to say, "By Allah, we don't see any fat."*²⁰

Each episode or report begins with the isnad²¹ which is vital in any Muslim history. "The authenticity of the reported fact depends on the continuity of the chain and the confidence in each reporter. Thus would al-Baladhuri start his narrative regarding the campaign of the Prophet against Najran: 'Bakr Ibn-al-Haitham related to me, that Abdallah Ibn-Salih related to him, on the authority of al-Laith Ibn-Sa'd, on the authority of Yunus Ibn-Ziyad al-Aili, on the authority of az-Zuhri, who said. . . .'"²²

Al- Baladhuri in some places gives a very detailed isnad but where the line is very long he gives a few names and ends with 'others'.

- *Al-Husain ibn-'Amr and Ahmad ibn-Muslih al-Azdi from certain learned men of the people of Adharbaijan, who says*²³
- *Al-Husain ibn-'Ali ibn al Aswad al-'Ijli from Yahya ibn-Adam from Abu--Mu'awiyah from ash-Shai'lami from Muhammad ibn-'Abdallah ath-Thakafi:*²⁴
- *Ishak ibn-Sulaimian ash-Shahrazuri from his father from Muhammad ibn-Marwan from al-Kalbi from a member of the clan of 'Azrah al-Bajali*²⁵

The reason for al-Baladhuri ending some isnad with 'others' may be that he did not have the means to verify the isnad beyond that point or he may have felt that the

¹⁹ Ibid., P., 113

²⁰ Ibid., P., 53

²¹ the chain of authorities attesting to the historical authenticity of a particular Hadith- Merriam Webster Dictionary

²² P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, (New York: Columbia University, 1916), P.,3

²³ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,23

²⁴ Ibid, P.,67

²⁵ Ibid, P., 35

last transmitter's authority and claim was enough to refute any objections. However this is speculation as al-Baladhuri himself does not tell us. He also says "*Many people of learning relate*²⁶" or '*Some traditionalists say*²⁷' where the isnad is not known to him.

Al-Baladhuri is said to have traveled far to collect and verify the isnad of any report. He himself says in the opening lines, "I have been informed by certain men learned in tradition, biography and the conquest of the lands whose narratives I transmitted, abridged and pieced up together into one whole." Al-Baladhuri is strange in the sense that, where he is very careful about his isnad and records names fully to the extent of giving the family connections and professions, in some reports he uses a collective *qalu* (i.e. they said). "This was done primarily to produce a smooth narrative out of a number of disjointed reports. In this way, the first move was made to develop a continuous story. However, the more stringent method of verification was still upheld as an ideal."²⁸In certain isnad al-Baladhuri also gives relations of the transmitters as well as sometimes their professions which contribute to the authenticity of the transmission. The more details an isnad contains the more reliable it is considered and it also bears testimony to the efforts of the writer in verifying the chain of authorities.

- *Al-Walid ibn-Salih from Marhum, the perfumer, from his father from Shuwais al-'Adawi who says,*²⁹
- *Azdah, wife of 'Utbah. 'Abbas ibn-Hisham from his father from 'Awanah:*³⁰
- *Al-Mada'ini 'AH ibn-Mujahid from 'Asim, the "squint-eyed", from Abu--'Uthman an Nahdi,*³¹

Al-Baladhuri often relies on independent isnad wherever possible but gives other versions as well. He often uses the accounts of various previous writers such as Al-Waqidi, Abu--Mikhnaf, Ibn-Hisham, Ibn-Battuta and Ibn al-Muthanna. For these

²⁶Ibid, P., 133

²⁷Ibid, P., 133

²⁸Abdul Kader al-Tayob, *The Transformation of a Historical Tradition: From Khabar to Tarikh*, The American Journal of Social Sciences, Vol.5, No.2, 1988, P., 233

²⁹ Op. Cit. *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, P.,53

³⁰ Ibid, P.,55

³¹ Ibid, P.,21

writers he varies in the methodology. In some places he writes '*Al-Waqidi says*' whereas in other places he writes '*Al-Waqidi according to his usual isnad says*' and further more where someone else quotes these authors al-Baladhuri gives the whole chain.

- *Muhammad ibn-Sa'd from al-Waqidi on the strength of his usual isnad*³²
- *'Abdallah ibn-Salih from Abdah from Muhammad ibn-Ishak*³³
- *It is related by Muhammad ibn-Sa'd on the authority of al-Waqidi and others*³⁴
- *Al-'Abbas ibn-Hisham from his father from Abu--Mikhnaf*³⁵

The *matn*³⁶ or akhbar which follows the isnad in Futuh al-Buldan consists of short paragraphs chronicling the arrival of Muslims to conquer any particular area. The *matn* is written like an ongoing direct conversation with quotes and verses. In the Futuh al-Baladhuri includes all sorts of details in the *matn* such as physical characteristics, architectural efforts and peculiarities. The following excerpt is the best example of the detailed uniqueness of the Futuh.

Kathir ibn-Shihab: *Hafs ibn-'Umar al-'Umari from al-Haitham ibn-'Adi from ibn Ayyash al-Hamadhani and others: Kathir ibn-Shihab was governor of ar-Rai, Dastaba, and Kazwin. He was handsome and resolute, but crippled. He used to say, "I am the only cripple who is not a burden on his family." On horseback his legs were as steady as two ploughs. When he made a raid, every one that was with him took a shield, breast-plate, iron helmet, a packing needle and five small needles, linen thread, awl, scissors, nose-bag, and 'basket. He was avaricious, and had a deep dish in front of him, and when anyone came up to him, he would say, "Be off with thee! Didst thou expect aught of what we are eating?"*³⁷

In this episode al-Baladhuri begins by introducing Kathir Ibn-Shihab and his position along with his physical traits. His custom of going on a raid is described but the reason for taking along these varied items is not given. Ibn-Shihab's greediness

³² Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,66

³³ Ibid, P.,56

³⁴ Ibid, P.,80

³⁵ Ibid, P.,133

³⁶ Text or Main body

³⁷ Ibid, P.,5

is illustrated by an example. Al-Baladhuri ends with the time in which he ruled and his connection to the region.

Use of Verses in the Futuh al-Buldan

Of Harithah ibn-Badr al-Ghudani, Governor of Surrak Abu--1-Aswad ad-Du'ali
says:

*"Tell ibn-Badr: Thou that rulest an empire,
Be in it like a rat, cautious and lurking.
For all men are either liars
Saying what serves their desires, or truthful,
Uttering vain imaginings or guesses,
And if asked for proofs, they are dumbfounded.
But be not faint-hearted, for that is the worst habit,
For thy portion hath been stolen (surrak) from rich two-fold 'Irak."*

When the verses reached Harithah he said:

*"May the God of men grant thee his best reward
For thou givest useful [counsel and] sufficient advice.
Thou bid'st me be resolute. Hadst bidden otherwise,
Thou hadst found me rebellious 'gainst thy order."³⁸*

In this episode al-Baladhuri uses verses to report the advice given to Harithah Ibn-Badr after he is made governor of Surrak where he had failed to curb rebellion. Harithah's reply is meant to illustrate his character and ability to follow orders and accept advice. The elucidation of akhbar in poetry is a long standing and advanced mode of expression unique to the Arabs and al-Baladhuri is no exception. Al-Baladhuri gives numerous verses in the Futuh since it is a book of conquests dealing primarily with the battles that the Muslims fought in order to conquer many regions. These battle stories with verses were a significant tradition of the Arab society both

³⁸Franz, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P.,116

in Islamic and pre-Islamic times. Rosenthal declares it to be an ancient Semitic form which appears in some of the oldest historical portions of the Bible and is often connected with a poem spoken on that day³⁹. In Judges 5 of the Old Testament when God granted the Israelites victory over Canaan under Deborah, a prophetess, it says

“On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

*4 “When you, Lord, went out from Seir,
when you marched from the land of Edom,
the earth shook, the heavens poured,
the clouds poured down water.*

*5 The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai,
before the Lord, the God of Israel.”⁴⁰*

“Verses are found in them not only because the philologists who preserved the material cared only for stories which contained poetic material, but mainly because of their character as an indispensable element of the literary form. If no verses were connected with a certain event, or if the verses were not brought into connection with it at some early date, the event would not have been preserved for posterity.”⁴¹ These verses lent not only artistic expression to the text but also allowed the writer some license in narrating these events. This is one of the longest verses in the second volume of the Futuh and is beautifully written detailing the accounts of corruption of various amils⁴² to the Caliph Umar.

*“Send to the Commander of the Believers a letter and say:
Verily, thou art the confirmed of Allah to command or forbid.
Yea, thou art Allah's confirmed among us, and whoever is
Entrusted with the Lord's commission, I do trust.
Let not the people of countryside and towns thoughtlessly
Swallow up the wealth of Allah in countless dishes.
Send to al-Hajjaj and learn his account;
Send to Jaz', and send to Bishr;
And do not forget the two Nafi's, either of them;*

³⁹ Ibid, P.,19

⁴⁰ Holy Bible, New International Version, (Bible Inc, 2011)

⁴¹ Op Cit., *A History of Muslim Historiography*, P.,17

⁴² Governor

*Nor ibn-Ghalab, noblest of the banu-Nasr ;
Nor is 'Asim of their number with empty wallet;
Nor that fellow in as-Suk, the mawla of banu-Badr.
Send also to an-Nu'man and learn his account;
And the brother-in-law of banu-Ghazwan I've heard of.
Ask for the money from Shibl and from ibn-Muharrish,
For he is notorious among the provincials.
So divide up with them. I pledge my people as thy ransom.
They will be pleased if they leave them half.
But do not call me in to testify, for I
Am hid though I see the wonder of the age.
We return when they return, and raid when they raid;
How, then, have they Abu-ndance, while we have naught?
When the merchant of Darin brings a flask of perfume,
It will soon be spread over their hair.*"⁴³

Criticism and Judgment of Traditions

Al-Baladhuri gives conflicting versions of the story as reported by various sources, but he does not comment on which version he considers nearer to the truth. In any event if various persons have made diverse statements al-Baladhuri includes all of them. In cases where an event is not confirmed by other sources al-Baladhuri mentions this fact.

- ***The mosque; It is said that 'Utbah took the marking out of the limits of the mosque into his own hands. Others say that Mihjar ibn-al-Adra al-Bahzi of Sulaim marked them but. Another tradition has it that Nafi' ibn-al-Harithal-Kaladah did it when he laid out the limits of his own house. Still another account says that on the contrary al-Aswad ibn-Sari' at-Tamimi did it, and that he was the first to act as qadi in it.***⁴⁴

⁴³Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P., 122-123

⁴⁴ Ibid, P., 60

- **Transoxiana:** Abu-'Ubaidah : Ibn-'Amir conquered the territory this side of the river, but when he came to deal with the people on the other side of the river (Transoxiana), they asked him to make a treaty with them, which he did.

No other authority mentions his crossing the river and making the treaty with the people of the eastern bank⁴⁵.

He makes sure to include various accounts by other writers as well but ends in some places with *Allah knows best* leaving it up to the reader to decide which version is closest to the truth. Thus by this we can say that Baladhuri absolves himself of any accountability by leaving the truth open to interpretation.

- *The Asawirah asked for protection which Abu-Musa granted, and they 'became Moslems. Others say that they had sought peace before this and had found favor with Abu- Musa and took part at Tustar on the Moslem side. Allah knows best.*⁴⁶
- *Al-Ba'ith was one of the children of 'Atib ibn-'Amr ibn-Wahb ibn-Afsa ibn-Du'mi ibn-Jadilah ibn-Asad ibn-Rabi'ah. Others say of 'Atib ibn-'Auf ibn-Sinan, and the 'Utbiyun agree to this. Allah knows best.*⁴⁷
- *Urmiyah was part of the conquest of al-Mausil, having been conquered by 'Utbah ibn-Farkad, and its kharaj being at one time paid to al-Mausil. Such also was the case with al-Hur, Khuwi and Salmas. 'Mu'afa says: I 'have also heard that 'Utbah conquered it (Urmiyah) when he was governor of Adharbajian. Allah knows best.*⁴⁸
- *'Utbah ibn-Farkad subdued at-Tirhin and Takrit, granting aman to the inhabitants of Takrit for their persons and their property.*

⁴⁵ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P., 167

⁴⁶ Ibid, P.,119

⁴⁷ Ibid, P.,27

⁴⁸ Ibid, P.,32

Al-Haitham ibn-'Adi asserts that 'Iyad ibn-Ghanm, when he conquered Balad, went to al-Mausil and reduced one of the two forts. Allah knows best.⁴⁹

Sometimes Al-Baladhuri also gives his own opinion on which account he considers more favorable. Tarif Khalidi writes, "Al-Baladhuri is on the whole an accurate historian who preserved contrasting accounts of events but often expressed his own preference in terse and authoritative comments reflecting perhaps the attention to detail and bureaucratic thoroughness of the Abbasid regime that he served.⁵⁰" This was new to Muslim historiography as until that time Muslim historians had been just reproducers of what they had heard and were just conveyers. This attitude was widespread among scholars such as al-Masudi for whom 'historiography was factual information (khabar) and not speculative research, and the author of a historical work was a compiler not a historian.'⁵¹ This concept was not exclusive to just Muslim historiography as we can see from Homer, who says in the beginning verse of *The Odyssey*,

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns....

Launch out on his story Muse, daughter of Zeus

Start from where you will- sing for our time too⁵²

By these lines he infers that what he reports is not his own material but what the daughter of Zeus whispers to him and his own opinion is not included. Muslim historians had more or less the same concept that what they wrote was pre-ordained and it was not upon them to pass judgment on the stories passed on to them. These are some of the examples from the *Futuh* of al-Baladhuri saying which version he considers more probable.

- *Kais ibn al-Haitham went through the land of Tukharistan, and every region he came to made peace with him and submitted to him, until he came to*

⁴⁹ Ibid, P.,34

⁵⁰ Nagendra Kr. Singh, Al-Baladhuri, Ahmad B. Yahya B. Djabir B. Dawud (9th Century), Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World, Vol. 1, (Delhi), 2003, P.,166

⁵¹ Franz, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P., 42

⁵² Robert Fagles, *Homer- The Odyssey*, Book 1, Verse 1- 12.

Siminjan. They resisted him, and so he besieged them until he reduced the city by force.

It has been said ibn-Amir assigned Khurasan to three governors, but the former account is the more probable.⁵³

- Yazid ibn-al-Muhallab ibn-Abu-Safrah set out for Khurasan, his attention was drawn to Sul the Turk, and he went to Dihistan, where Sul was, and invested it. Sul sent to Yazid, asking for peace, Yazid guaranteed him his life and property and his household in return for the city. Abu--'Ubaidah Ma'mar ibn-al-Muthanna says that Sul was killed, but the first account is more probable⁵⁴.
- Some 'have related that Abu--Musa was in al-Basrah when 'Umar wrote to him about the governorship and asked him to send al-Mughirah back. But the former account is the more probable.⁵⁵
- Abu--Musa's governorship was in the year 16 (others say 17). The more probable account is that Abu--Musa was appointed governor of al-Basrah in the year 16.⁵⁶
- Harithah visited Ziyad after this during the term of his governorship, and then said, "I have never seen a canal worse than this one. The dwellings of those near it fairly ooze with water; they are bitten by its mosquitoes in their homes, and in it their children are drowned." Some claim that Ghailan ibn-Kharashah was the one who said this, but the former account is the more probable.⁵⁷

⁵³Francis C. Murgotten,Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,168

⁵⁴Ibid, P.,41

⁵⁵ Ibid, P.,59

⁵⁶ Ibid, P.,59

⁵⁷ Ibid, P.P.,82-83

Focus on all aspects of History

According to Hitti one of the weak characteristic of Arab historians is their utter disregard of the social side of national life. The political history for them is history par excellence. It should, however, be said, to the credit of al-Baladhuri, that while from a modern standpoint he is defective in that respect, he still stands superior to other historians. As one reads *Futuh al-Buldan* and is struck by the fact that a long chapter is devoted to the "digging of the wells of Mecca whereas the conquest of Tripoli, Africa, is dismissed with a few words, one cannot help feeling his sense of proportion suffer. Most of the two chapters entitled "The Founding of al-Kufa" ' and "of al-Basra " are devoted to the explanation of the names given to baths, canals and castles and only a small part relates to actual colonization.⁵⁸ Al-Baladhuri covers not only conquests but culture, politics, economy, social and public welfare acts and is very discerning in his narration taking a judicious approach. Nothing escapes his attention from baths and canals to food, clothing, inheritance laws, war strategies, immigration issues and assassinations. He encompasses all aspects of Muslim activity in the lands he discusses in the *Futuh al-Buldan*. The *Futuh* presents us with a clear representation of the life of Muslims and non-Muslims in the days that Islam spread from Mecca to the world. Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Iji in his work *Tuhfat al-Faqir ila sahib as-sarir* also gives the importance of these details when he defines history or *ilm al-akhbar* as the science which reports on the conditions of creating things, mainly human beings, but other creations of human beings such as their actions, their dwelling places, their countries with their roads and remarkable phenomena, and the remaining effects (monuments- *asaar*) of their activities⁵⁹.

Al-Baladhuri's inclusion of details of architectural projects and monuments built by Muslims is explained by Rosenthal who says that while all historians were aware of the importance of information from living sources, they availed themselves of the possibility that the historical past could speak through inanimate relics where literary sources were replaced by observation. The example of al-Waqidi who once was

⁵⁸ P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, (New York: Columbia University, 1916), P., 8

⁵⁹Ibid, P., 206

seen in Mecca carrying a knapsack saying he was going to Hunayn⁶⁰ to see the place and historical event which took place there.⁶¹ Al-Baladhuri gives us particulars of all asaar⁶² from walls and pavements to mosques, castles and canals.

- **Pavement and walls.** *The one who paved al-Mausil with stone was ibn-Talid, master of the guard.*⁶³
- **Official buildings.** *'Utbah built the official residence near the mosque in the square which is called today the Rahabat banu-Hashim. (It used to be called ad-Dahna'. In it was also the prison and the registry [diwan]. When the inhabitants went on a raid, they used to takedown these reeds, pack them up, and lay them away until they should return from the raid; and when they returned, they restored their buildings. This custom lasted sometime. Then the people marked out limits, and built regular dwellings. And Abu--Musa al-Ash'ari built the mosque and official residence of dried brick and clay, and roofed them with grass, at the same time enlarging the mosque.*⁶⁴
- *Abu--1-Hasan says: "Some say it was called Hazardar –because Shirawaih constructed in his castle a thousand doors. But others say that in this place there lived in a thousand lodges' a thousand Persian horsemen whom the Kisra maintained there, on which account it was called Hazardar.*^{65"}

Al-Baladhuri also includes many political details and rivalries among the various factions in Muslim society. He also includes details of the many assassinations of the commanders and governors. The following excerpt is a detailed explanation of one man's vendetta against Suleiman Ibn Abdul Malik.

⁶⁰A valley on the road from Mecca to Taif

⁶¹Franz, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P., 60

⁶² Ancient Monuments

⁶³ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P., 33

⁶⁴ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P., 61

⁶⁵Ibid, P., 81

- *Kutaibah feared the hostility of Sulaiman ibn-'Abd-al-Malik; he had worked to have 'Abd-al-'Aziz ibn-al-Walid succeed to the caliphate, and wanted to keep the succession from Sulaiman. When al-Walid died, and Sulaiman succeeded him, Kutaibah urged the people to depose Sulaiman, but none of them consented to this.⁶⁶*
- *Abdullah had a presentiment of evil, and placed a rag and some cotton on one of his eyes, and then bandaged it, and so got the nickname of Abu--Tinah ("the muddy "); and he used to sell olive oil. In this condition he continued until al-Walid ibn-'Abd-al-Malik perished and Sulaiman succeeded him. Then he put off the dirt and the rag and delivered a speech of congratulation for Sulaiman and of excoriation for al-Hajjaj and Kutaibah, who had both sworn allegiance to 'Abd-al-'Aziz ibn-'Abdal- Malik and had repudiated Sulaiman. As the people dispersed, they said, "Abu-Tinah, the oil seller, is the most eloquent of men.*

Baladhuri also gives the details of the assassination of various men who were either killed by dissidents or by royal command. This is important as the record of these were a warning to future men of what fate awaited them if they followed in the footsteps of these men.

- *Ma'n, being fearful of the winter and its storms, withdrew to Bust. Some of the heretics (khawarij) who disapproved of his mode of life, plotted with certain workmen who were doing some building in his dwelling, and when they were putting on the roofing, they concealed their swords by putting them in the bundles of reeds. Then they surprised him in his tent while he was having himself cupped, and treacherously murdered him, one of them splitting his 'belly with a dagger he had. Yazid ibn-Mazyad executed them all and not one of them escaped.⁶⁷*

⁶⁶ Ibid, P.,191

⁶⁷Ibid, P.,154

In his article on genealogy (nasab) in the Encyclopedia of Islam, Franz Rosenthal considers genealogy to be “the most fundamental organizing principle of Arab society.” He goes on to say that “genealogy provides the historical validation of kinship and all that it involves. Kinship always dominated group life in human society and to a large extent still does today.” Al-Baladhuri also focuses on genealogical detail as it was another way to verify his authenticity. These are two examples from the Futuh of the importance of genealogy to the Arabs.

- **A dubious pedigree:** *'Auf ibn-Ahmad al-'Abdi from Abu--Hanash al-'Ijli from his father, who says: I was acquainted with a member of the Tamim al-'Ijli who told me, "I saw one of the mawali of the banu-'Ijl who claimed to be a direct descendant from him (i. e. from Ijl). And I said, 'Thy father did not try to trace among the Arabs his descent but rather among the Persians. How then dost thou assert that thou art 'Ijl's direct descendant?' He replied, 'My mother told me so.' And I said, ' She is to be believed. She knows better than thy father'⁶⁸*
- *“When 'Umar called the assembly for the purpose of instituting the Register [diwan], which was in the month Muharram of the year 20, he began enrolling with the Banu Hashim, then the nearest related to the Apostle of Allah, and so forth. If any were equal in their relationship, he put first those of priority of conversion..”⁶⁹*

Use of Language

Arabic historians were not very careful about the sort of language they used in their accounts, particularly if they were biased towards a person or event. Al-Baladhuri is relatively free of this kind of usage except in the case of al-Mughirah the governor of Basra under Umar. Here the Futuh takes on a delightfully peculiar color with all of al-Mugirah’s transgressions outlined in all its gory details. Al-Mughirah is accused of adultery with a married woman of the Banu Hilal. Four men learn about this and spy upon them and then go to Umar to testify. 'Umar said to Abu--Musa al-

⁶⁸ Francis C. Murgotten , *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,13

⁶⁹Ibid, P.,242

Ash'ari, "I wish to send thee to a country where Satan has made his nest"... And when al-Mughirah reached 'Umar, he was confronted with the witnesses; and Nafi' Ibn-al-Harith said, "I saw him on the woman Having intercourse with her."⁷⁰ The translator adds in a footnote that the picturesque but indecent language of the Arabic has been toned down in translation.

Bias in the Futuh al-Buldan

Al-Baladhuri is unbiased in the matter of religion especially considering the Shia-Sunni divide that many authors covering the events of that time are judged by. Even though he is from Baghdad, he is afflicted by the phenomena of Arab superiority over non-Arab which is illustrated in some of the statements he quotes. The Arabs always considered their race superior especially after expanding from the confines of Arabia.

- *Mujashi ibn-Mas'ud was absent, and so 'Utbah ordered al-Mughirah ibn-Shu'bah to lead in prayer until the return of Mujashi. Then 'Umar said, "As I live, verily, someone from the civilized Arabs [ahl al-madar] should have been appointed ruler rather than one of the nomads [ahl al-Wabar]"⁷¹*
- *'Umar conquered as-Sawad and al-Ahwaz by force. He was asked to divide this land, but said, "What then shall there be for those Moslems who come after us?" And he put the inhabitants in the category of dhimmis.⁷²*

Al-Baladhuri also seems biased towards the Abbasids especially if we read about the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in Volume 1 of the Futuh. In Volume two however he often refers to the Abbasids as the 'Blessed Dynasty'⁷³ which Murgotten says indicates that he belonged to their party. We already know that he was patronized by three Abbasid caliphs during his life. However the rest of the Futuh is not colored by bias as Baladhuri more or less attempts to just narrate the events in a straight manner withholding any sort of judgment.

⁷⁰ Ibid, P.P.,57-58

⁷¹Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,56

⁷²Ibid, P.,122

⁷³ Ibid, P.P. , 95, 230

Use of a vast number of sources

The Futuh has a large number of sources ranging from oral traditions to accounts from previous writers to letters and myths or stories. Al-Baladhuri uses these in order to lend more authenticity to the narrative and present a more complete picture of the conquest. In the Futuh he covers each and every aspect of the spread of Islam. His account leaves nothing out but at the same time is very selective discarding those things the author thinks irrelevant. "The use of documents, letters, government papers, official declarations, speeches, and related material was well-nigh universal in Muslim historical literature. Even where documents of this type were not directly quoted, they were extensively used by historians who held positions of political influence, when they wrote the history of their period. International treaties were occasionally quoted. Important documents of internal politics, such as documents appointing the presumptive successor to the ruling caliph or other high officials, were faithfully quoted by historians.⁷⁴" Al-Baladhuri gives the original letter of Caliph Umar to Mughirah Ibn Shubah resolving a dispute.

- *"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, and the Merciful. From the servant of Allah, 'Umar, the Commander of the Believers, to al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. Peace be upon thee. To thee I praise Allah, than whom there is no god but he."*

Now Abu--'Adal'lah relates that he has sown [a field] in al-Basrah in die jurisdiction of ibn-Ghazwan, and has raised colts there, at a time when none of the people of al-Basrah raised them, and that he is pleased with what he has seen. So help him with his crop and his horses ; for I have granted him permission to sow, and I give him his land which he has sown, if it be not land upon which is the jizyah of Persian land, nor supplied with water from land Which is subject to jizyah. And thou shalt not assign it to him except with good will. And peace be upon thee and the mercy of Allah.

Written by Mu'aikib ibn-Abu--Fatimah in Safar of the year 17"⁷⁵

⁷⁴Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), P.,119-121

⁷⁵Francis C. Murgotten,*Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), PP., 67-68

Since the Futuh is a book of conquests many peace treaties are given by Balādhurī.

- *Governor of Sijistan 'Abd-ar-Rahman ibn-Samurah ibn-Habib ibn-'Abd-Shams went to Zaranj and surrounded its satrap in his castle on one of their festal days. The latter made peace with him for 2,000,000 dirham and 2,000 'slaves.*
- *Al-Hajjaj made peace with Ratbil, agreeing not to make war upon him for seven years, (others say nine years) on condition that he pays thereafter every year 900,000 dirham in kind.*

Various local legends and stories lend color and interest to the narrative of the Futuh.

- *It has come to my knowledge that there were in the army of al-Hajjaj which he sent to ad-Dailam, three individuals of the inhabitants of al-Kufah, who used to drink together, not associating with anyone else. One of them died suddenly. His two companions buried him and used to drink by his grave, and when his cup was brought, they would pour it on his grave and weep. Afterwards the second one died, and the remaining one buried him by the side of the first, and used to sit by the two graves and drink, and then pour a cup upon the grave which was near him, and then a cup upon the other, and weep. And one day he made up some verses, Not long afterwards he died and was buried near his two comrades and their graves are known as the graves of the Boon Companions.⁷⁶*
- *Al-Jarrah ibn-'Abdallah used to take silver and gold coins of different weights and put them under the carpet in his room, and when any one of his brothers*

⁷⁶Ibid, P.P.,14-15

or intimate friends came to visit him, he would toss to each one of them in proportion to his opinion of each one's deserts.⁷⁷

- **The tomb of Daniel.** *Abu--Musa saw in their citadel a house upon which was a veil, and upon asking about it, was told that in it were the remains of Daniel the prophet. (Peace be upon him and upon the [other] prophets of Allah and upon his apostles.) Abu--Musa wrote about this to 'Umar, who replied, "Wrap him in a shroud and bury him", Abu-Musa dammed up a river until he could bury him [in the river bed] while it was stopped. Then he let the water flow above him.⁷⁸*

Financial record in the Futuh al-Buldan

The Kitab Futuh al-Buldan is an important source for examining the socio-economic conditions of the early Muslim period. It is an observation that conquests can only be successful and maintained by the invading power if its economic situation is stable. We can see throughout history that conquests have been lost whenever the economic state of affairs takes a turn for the worse. The Futuh al-Buldan is thus, a vital source for examining the economic environment and how this was conducive to further conquests.

As Balādhurī names the different places that were conquered and the names of those responsible he also adds in each account whether the conquered areas accepted Islam or not and the tribute that was decided in lieu of this acceptance. According to Islamic law the tribute given by Muslims and non-Muslims was different therefore it was important whether the conquered areas entered the fold of Islam or chose to adhere to their own religion. "The origin of the concept of the *kharāj* is closely linked to changes in the status of non-Muslims and of recent converts to Islam in newly conquered Islamic territories. The indigenous Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian populations of these territories were permitted either to convert to Islam

⁷⁷Ibid, P.,197

⁷⁸ Ibid, P.P.,114-115

or to maintain their previous religious affiliations. Those individuals who preferred not to convert were required to pay a special tribute, usually in the form of a [poll tax](#) or head tax known as the [jizyah](#) and thus constituted another source of public revenues. But those who chose to convert, in theory, would be placed on an equal fiscal footing with other Muslims. Under Islamic law, only original Muslims or converts to Islam could own land. Thus, there was incentive for non-Muslim cultivators to convert to Islam [so](#) that they could maintain their agricultural holdings. Upon conversion, the cultivators were required to pay the [ushr](#) (or tithe), a tax equivalent to one-tenth of their produce”⁷⁹ All these details were clearly laid out in the treaty so that future misunderstandings could be avoided. One such treaty is given thus,

"This is a statement from Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, to Ukaidir as he accepted Islam and forsook the objects of worship and idols, and to the people of Dumat: To you shall belong the water-places outside the city, the un-tilled lands, the deserts and wastelands, as well as the defensive and offensive weapons, the horses, and the fortress; and to you shall belong the palm-trees within the city, and the running water. Your cattle which are pasturing shall not, for the purpose of taking the sadakah, be brought together [but shall be numbered on the pasture-land], and what is above the fixed number of animals from which a sadakah is required shall not be taken into consideration. Your herds shall graze wherever ye want, and ye shall observe prayer in its time, and pay the zakat as it is due. To this effect, I give you the covenant of Allah and his promise, and ye are entitled to our sincerity as regards the fulfillment of the terms. Witnessed by Allah and those of the Moslems who are present."⁸⁰

This treaty served to act as a guideline for the conquered areas. Balādhurī also gives accounts where the violation of these treaties led to a repeated assault on that area and the subsequent treaty which often turned out to have harsher terms.

⁷⁹ Kharāj-Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316354/kharaj>, Accessed on: 18th October 2013

⁸⁰ P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, P.P., 95-96

- *Al-Birwaz, fought with him, but finally made peace for a payment of money. After-ward he broke the treaty, and abu-Musa al-Ash'ari raided the city.*⁸¹

Balādhurī also gives various other economic details such as the salaries of various governors according to their station and area. Both volumes of the *Futuh al-Buldan* have vital information relating to taxation and other economic matters in the appendices. Balādhurī's attention to detail comes through in them as he includes all traditions relating to any particular matter. In the matter of laws concerning kharaj lands he includes all accounts as well as what the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence say concerning the matter at hand. The attention to chronicling the economic development in all matters of state tells us that even during the early period of conquests the financial ministry or Diwan was well developed. In the appendices dealing with coinage the matter of counterfeiting is described in detail and the punishment dealt out to various counterfeiters is also given, which shows us that corruption and all crimes relating to economic matters were severely checked upon and appropriate punishment dealt for such crimes.

A very interesting information which Balādhurī provides in his book is about the system of pension started by the Caliph Umar. As a result of vast conquests the flow of money increased in the treasury and because of the abundance of wealth Caliph Umar initiated the system of Pensions (ata). For this he started the institution of the Register (Diwan). He enrolled the names of the family members of the Prophet, companions of the Prophet, Emigrants, war veterans, women, and even the newly born children. Thus throughout the state a regular account was maintained for the proper distribution of pension.

Balādhurī contributes a detail information regarding the amount paid to these individuals. For example he writes that caliph Umar assigned to BiBi Aishah, the wife of the Prophet, 12,000 Dirhams, and to the rest of the wives of the Prophet 10,000 Dirhams each. He assigned 5,000 Dirhams to Ali-Ibn-Abu-Talib, the son in law of the Prophet, 5,000 Dirhams to the emigrants, 2,000 Dirhams to the sons of the veterans of the battle of Badr, 4,000 Dirhams to each those who were converted to Islam as early as the veterans of Badr, 3,000 apiece to those emigrated before the conquest

⁸¹ Francis C. Murgotten, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P., 112

of Makkah and 2,000 Dirhams to those converted at the time of the conquest.⁸² He allocated 6,000 Dirhams to a woman by the name of Safiyah bint- Abd-al-Muttalib, 1000 Dirhams to Asma bint-Umais, Umm-Kulthum bint-Ukbah and Umm-Abdallah Ibn-Masud. He used to allot 100 Dirhams to the newly born child's guardian who received each month, to meet the needs and taking constant care of the babies from 'year to year'.⁸³

Accounts of other historians

“According to Haji Khalifa, the first writers of biography and campaigns were, among others, Urwah Ibn-az-Zubair (d. 93) and Wahb Ibn-Munabbih (d. 114); and we read that Muhammad Ibn-Muslim az-Zuhri wrote a book of campaigns. These works are all lost and the first biography we have is that of Ibn-Hisham (d. 213) based on Ibn-Ishak (d. 151). Az-Zubair and az-Zuhri, as well as Ibn-Ishak, are among the sources of al-Baladhuri. Al-Baladhuri makes no mention of Ibn-Hisham but quotes Ibn-Ishak eleven times. The isnad in Baladhuri is longer, it might be conjectured that he did not get his material at first hand from Ibn-Ishak's work but through subsequent reporters.⁸⁴”

In volume two of the Futuh Baladhuri mentions az-Zuhri almost 5 times often in association with other writers such as Ibn-Ishak, al-Waqidi and Al-Madaini. The fact that Baladhuri uses longer isnads for az-Zuhri and Ibn-Ishak among others tells us that Baladhuri did not have direct access to these accounts but got his information through other reporters.

- *Al-Mada'ini from 'Ali Ibn-Mujahid from Muhammad Ibn-Ishak from az-Zuhri:*⁸⁵
- *Al-Ahwaz conquered by force. Muhammad ibn-Sa'd from al-Waqidi from Muhammad ibn-'Abdallah from az- Zuhri:*⁸⁶

⁸² Ibid., pp. 242-243

⁸³ Ibid.,p.244

⁸⁴ P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, P.P., 8-9

⁸⁵ Francis C. Murgotten , *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.2, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), P.,21

⁸⁶ Ibid, P.,122

- *Muhammad ibn-Sa'd from al-Waqidi from Muhammad ibn-'Aibdallah from az-Zuhri from Sa'id from some others whom al-Waqidi names and whose traditions are interwoven*⁸⁷

If we compare the Historiographic tradition of al-Baladhuri with other writers of his age we can see that "Ibn Qutayba thought of secretaries and their need for a comprehensive historical manual which would represent a synthesis of types-Ayyam, universal history, juristic needs. Al Dinwari wanted to show the role of Iraq and Persia in his universal history and found his justification in Sassanid and Abbasid times. Al-Tabari wanted history to explain the will of God and to illustrate his revelation. The critical approach of the Traditionists is more fully applied. Al-Tabari is a strict Traditionist as can be seen from his emphasis on chains of authorities and his abstention from criticism of the content.

Ibn Qutayba, critical of his sources to the extent of going to the Old Testament to check Wahb Ibn- Munnabbih, takes what is well established in his sources. Al-Ya'qubi is critical of his sources especially for pre-Islam; he scrutinizes his authorities for the Islamic period, but contents himself with referring to them in the introduction as their chains of authorities are known.

Al-Baladhuri follows a middle course, quoting previous historians by name, but dropping their isnad, where necessary. Al-Tabari and al-Baladhuri both give different traditions bearing on the same point. There is less in them, and the others, even al-Ya'qubi, that is partisan and the correlation of previous authorities helps considerably to give a balanced view.⁸⁸

The Futuh al-Buldan is a valuable book as it contains accounts from many works which have been lost in the vagaries of history. "Al-Mada'ini lived from 135-215 (753-830). He wrote a "history of the caliphs" and a book of "campaigns ", both of which are lost and are known only by excerpts through al-Baladhuri, at-Tabari and Yakut. Of these, al-Baladhuri alone has over forty citations from him. Al-Waqidi wrote 28 books recorded in al-Fihrist, only a few of which have come down to us. Having lived

⁸⁷ Ibid, P., 242

⁸⁸ Nagendra Kr. Singh, Muslim Historiography of Iraqi school, Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World, Vol. 1, (Delhi), 2003, P.,695

in Baghdad, his works were certainly accessible to al-Baladhuri, who quotes him on 80 different occasions and more than any other source. Most of the quotations are made through Ibn-Sa'd, the secretary of al-Waqidi, and one of al-Baladhuri's teachers. Ibn-Sa'd (d. 230) being the disciple of al-Waqidi and the professor of al-Baladhuri acted as a connecting link between the two. In his *Futuh*, al-Baladhuri has 48 quotations from him, many of which were communicated by word of mouth and were recorded verbatim by al-Baladhuri.⁸⁹ Thus through Baladhuri we find many previous works preserved through posterity and the *Futuh* becomes a valuable source for tracing earlier writings and traditions. Ad-Dinwari is another contemporary of Baladhuri but we find no mention of his work though both hailed from Baghdad. "The Italian scholar Vaglieri highlights the centrality of Mikhnaf in Muslim historians reporting the event of Karbala', showing how both al-Tabari and al-Baladhuri relied on the account of Mikhnaf directly or through the disciple of Mikhnaf, Hishām b. Muhammad al-Kalbī. Nowadays, Mikhnaf's original work seems to be lost and that which has reached us has been transmitted through his student'. That transmission is confirmed as authentic by the corroborating evidence of reports in other historians, particularly al-Baladhuri, which have come to Abū Mikhnaf through a different transmission."⁹⁰

Conclusion

In the early centuries of Muslim expansions, the evolution of Muslim historiography originated from Madinah and Iraq. Historians from Madinan School focused on the life of the Holy Prophet and the spread of Islam. Historians such as Ibn Ishaq, al Zubayr, and al Waqidi belong to this group. But during the late second and third century AH with the consolidation of Muslim political power, researchers from Iraq school started writing on the humanistic aspect of Muslim society. Thus the evolution of universal or Umma history went underway. Al Baladhuri belongs to this

⁸⁹P.K. Hitti, *Al-Baladhuri- Futuh al-Buldan*, Vol.1, (New York: Columbia University, 1916), P., 9

⁹⁰Francesco Stermotich Capellari, *Sacred History Beyond History: Some Reflections on the Kitab Maqatal al-Husayn by Abu- Mikhnaf*, University of Edinburgh,
http://www.academia.edu/1560494/Sacred_history_beyond_history_some_reflections_on_the_Kitab_Maqatal_al-Husayn_by_Abu-_Mikhnaf

school of historiography. The tradition of humanistic historiography started by al-Baladhuri reached to its zenith with Ibn Khaldun.

On the basis of the discussion it can be said that the *Futuh* is not just a book of Islamic conquests (*maghazi*) but is a comprehensive work on the Islamic way of life. The *Futuh* includes examples of enforcement of justice through the Sharia, it explains the various peace treaties signed with subjugated areas as well as anecdotes of how certain words or proverbs originated. In this way the *Futuh* becomes a source of juristic and administrative matters. His sources are well researched and documented, and though the *Futuh* is the abridged version of the later one, by all appearances it stands strong on its own. It sets a precedent for compilation of various types of *akhbar* or histories into a single cohesive account. The *Futuh* introduced a change in the Muslim historiographical tradition by paving the way to universal histories that covered all aspects of human or Muslim life. Al-Baladhuri relied extensively on *isnad* dealing with a particular event and reported various traditions. He divides history into episodes and to explain them he retrogrades as well as goes forward in time. Because of this approach his work is considered as a linkage between the separate narratives of Madaini and the continuous history of Tabari.

The third century historian al-Baladhuri, and his contemporaries al-Ya'qubi, al-Dinwari, Ibn Qutayba and Tabari wrote continuous histories but events are arranged in chronological order with dates in the writings of Ibn Wadhih, Tabari and others. Whereas al-Baladhuri wrote a history which was woven around the Arab aristocracy and he arranged events according to the subjects. His *Futuh* expresses a central mission of Islam and meets a juristic and administrative need.⁹¹ Al-Waqidi was interested in establishing the exact chronology of the spread of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and adjoining areas, while al-Baladhuri was interested in legal and tax problems connected with the settlement of new lands. To understand the importance of the Baladhuri's work it can be observed that al-Masudi, al-Hamdhani, Mukaddisi and various other historians and geographers of latter centuries cite al-

⁹¹Nagendra Kr. Singh, *Muslim Historiography of Iraqi school*, *Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, Vol. 1, (Delhi), 2003, P.,695

Baladhuri quite frequently. Yakut in his Mu'jam ul-Buldan quotes a great part of the Futuh.

Khalidi says, "In spite of all al-Baladhuri's merits, his value as a historical source has been occasionally over-estimated in certain respects. It is not correct to say he always gives the original texts which later writers embellished and expanded; it may be with much more truth presumed, from the agreement of essential portions of his works with later more detailed works that al-Baladhuri abridged the material in at his disposal in a number of cases, though he often remained faithful to his sources."⁹² However I do not agree with him based on the fact that the Futuh is over-estimated as a historical source because by reading it we can see that Baladhuri in abridged the material at his disposal is making it easier for the reader to focus on more important issues. His book is not a universal history and it was not written to cover the whole of Muslim life from the Prophet to the Abbasids. In fact al-Baladhuri's purpose was to mark the conquest of the various states by the Islamic regime. He is very discriminating in abridging his material with the aim of staying true to his purpose. "With al-Madaini began scientific history writing. Inspired by him, Ahmad bin Yahya al-Baladhuri besides, Omar al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'ad wrote important treatises whose enduring legacy is discernible in the critical accuracy of historical information used by later writers."⁹³

There can be no higher praise for al-Baladhuri's work than the statement that al-Masudi makes in the introductory chapter of his remarkable work Muruj ud-Dhahab (Meadows of Gold) where he mentions al-Baladhuri saying,

*"History of Ahmed Ben Yahya el-Beladori the work of the same author which has the following title, "The countries and their subjection to the Mohammedans, by treaty or force, after the Hijrah of the prophet, and all the conquests of Mohammed, and of the Khalifs after him, also the traditions illustrative of this subject;" The author describes in this book,, all the countries east and west, south and north. **We do not know of any better work on the conquest of the countries than this.**"⁹⁴*

⁹²Nagendra Kr. Singh, Muslim Historiography of Iraqi school, Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World, Vol. 1, (Delhi), 2003, P.,166

⁹³Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography up to the Thirteenth Century*, (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), P., 3

⁹⁴Aloys Sprenger, El Masudi's Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems, Vol.1, (London: 1841) P., 16

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