



DOI: **10.5958/2249-7137.2021.01827.9**

IBN A'THAM AL-KUFI AND STUDY OF HIS BOOK "KITAB AL-FUTUH"

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ABSTRACT

Ibn A'tham al-Kufi's "Kitab al-futuh" is not learned deeply till today by the scholars. From this case carrying out the research about this book helps us to enlarge our knowledge in source studies and making scientific comparison with other books in this field. There a lot of new information related to Central Asian history in this book. The aim of the research is learning deeply the life of the author and the situation in the period written "Kitab al-futuh", taking notes its scientific value in historical disciplines, making scientific comparative analyses with other historical books and as a result to show its important value in history and source studies.

Keywords: Preacher, Mu'tazila, Mihna, Shi'ite, Sunni, Isnads.

INTRODUCTION

Abu Muḥammad Aḥmad ibn A'tham al-Kufi al-Kindi (أبو محمد أحمد بن أعثم الكوفي) was a 9th century Arab Muslim historian, poet and preacher (*qāṣṣ*) active in the late 8th and early 9th centuries. He was a Shi'i of the *akhbārī* school, a son of a student (or tradent) of the sixth imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who died in 765¹.

Although Ibn A'tham al-Kufi's date of death is usually given as AH 314 (AD 926/7), this is an error. His major work, *Kitab al-Futuh* (Book of Conquests), was composed during the caliphate of al-Ma'mun (813–833). It survives in a single two-volume manuscript, Ahmad III 2956, now in Istanbul.

Main part

There are some manuscripts and lithographic editions of his book which is known to us by its Persian translations by Muhammad al-Mustawfi. With the help of this translation it is obvious to understand the main meaning and special features of the book. Although, it was difficult to determine its value as a historical source without reference to the original text.

In Persian translation it is obviously seen the Shi'ite spirit of the author while writing and maybe because of this representatives of the Sunni sect denied the existence of this book and its author.

European scientists also learned "Kitab al-futuh" by its Persian translations. The name Ibn A'tham was firstly met in "Oriental collections" which was prepared for publication by Owsley. Three chapters of the book was translated from Persian to English in this collection (1798 y.). Owsley notes the book as a valuable resource and draws the attention of orientalists to it. Friant in his book named "Indications bibliographiques" writes the author's date of death AH 314. Although it is assumed that this information was taken from the original work, it should be noted that the original work has not been found for a long time.

In the 1881 years in Germany Pertsch published "Catalogues of Arabic manuscripts" in the Gotha library and here the Arabic version of "Kitab al-futuh" was given under the number 1592. However, suspicious attitude towards his name has been continued. Because, Perstch himself was skeptical about "Kitab al-futuh" that it was the original Arabic text. Manuscript preserved in Gotha library consists of 192 volumes and in these volumes the lives of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman (r.a) were narrated. There is also a commentary in the final part that the incident of Ali (r.a.)'s murder will be narrated in the next section. If we take into consideration that Al-Mustawfi's translation covers the events leading up to the assassination of Husain ibn Ali (r.a) in Karbala (60 AH), then it can be concluded that "Kitab al-Futuh" is a continuation of the work and that the manuscript preserved in Gotha is a certain part of the work. The original Arabic copy of the book, found in the Topkapi Library in Istanbul, is a continuation of a manuscript in Gotha that contains information about the caliphate years of Ali (r.a).

The genre of the work reflects one of the most important aspects of ancient Arabic historiography. That is, it is based on the traditions of the second century AH, such as gathering its details around current monographs and covering the whole historical process of the third century AH. Ibn A'tham's work was written in the Shi'ite spirit, and such works can be found in the third century AH. While such movements were prohibited in the cities of Madinah and Kufa, the Shi'ites had established a camp for themselves in Baghdad. At the same time, the *Mu'tazilites*² movement was developing during this period, and the events of *Mihna*³ and the formation of the "Bayt al hikma" (House of Wisdom) required the high cultural reforms that would dominate the capital in the near future. Ibn A'tham's work addresses the problematic historical issues of the time through the views of a growing Muslim community⁴.

There is any information about the author's life in special literatures. The information about Ibn A'tham al-Kufi in Brockelmen's "Geschichte der Arabischen literature", "The Encyclopedia of Islam", Brown's "History of Persian Literature", or Storey's "Persian literature" is based on information in a catalogue published by Perstch. In the 1929 year Braun says these words: "The work of the historian al-A'tham al-Kufi about the first caliphs is a powerful work written in the Shi'ite spirit, and we are more familiar with this work through his Persian translation ...". In

Storey's work the Persian translation of the work mentioned as one of the most necessary and useful books. It is reported that only Zaki Walidi used its original Arabic text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The original of the work is kept in two parts under the number 2956 in the Ahmad III Library in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul; written in naskh script; section names are in red; On the first page of the work is the name of the book and the name of the author. At the end of the second part, the name of the secretary and the date of copying (15 rab. 873-30 Oct. 1468) are given. Considering that the first Persian translation of the work was in 977 AH, the original Arabic text in Topkapi dates back to 100 years and increases the historical value of the work.

The first volume of the Kitab al-Futuh consists of 267 chapters, covering the years of the caliphate of Ma'mun from the last years of Uthman (ra). The second volume of the work, which covers 273 chapters, concludes with a brief account of the assassination of Ma'mun and the revolt of Bobek, as well as the assassination of Caliph Mustafa.

It is known that Bal'ami used "Kitab al-Futuh" in his work. If Bal'ami's work was written in 352 AH, then Ibn A'tham lived before that date. Friant states in his work that the date of his death is 314 AH, and this information is also repeated in the works of Brockelman and Storey. But we have no evidence to confirm this information. From the above, it can be concluded that Ibn A'tham al-Kufi was a contemporary of great Arab historians such as Tabari, Ya'qubi and Balazuri and had a position in their ranks, only his work differs in many respects from the books of Tabari, Balazuri and Ya'qubi.

After the discovery of the original Arabic text of the "Kitab al-Futuh" a question arose among scholars as to the connection between the works of Ibn A'tham and Bal'ami. The reason for this is that Bal'ami's "History Book" is in many ways similar to the events given in al-Kufi's work, rather than Tabari's work. Balami's history book, known as the "Tabari Translation", is in fact in line with Ibn A'tham's original Arabic text. Hence, it can be concluded that the book of Bal'ami is filled with new information from the work of Ibn A'tham and is probably based on new sources unknown to us.

The results of research and studies by Lawrence Conrad conclude that the date of writing of the work is 204 / 819-820, in which he relies on the Arabic text of the work. In the introduction to one of the chapters, Ibn A'tham writes: "Ja'far ibn Muhammad used to say this to my father ...". Considering that Ja'far is mentioned among the *isnads* of the author's work and occupies a central place in Shi'a hadiths, it can be concluded that he was one of the six imams in Shi'ism. Hence, the fact that the son of one of the disciples of Ja'far as-Sadiq (d. 148/765) wrote the work would be logically close to the truth⁵.

An in-depth study of the history of Ibn A'tham provides an insight into how the author used the sources. Needless to say, it is not limited to copying data. Like other scholars of his time, he wanted his work to have a scientific level. Modern historians note that "Kitab al-Futuh" should be considered not only as a book copied from earlier sources and containing several separate chapters, but also as an analysis of the author's own analysis.

In Ibn A'tham al-Kufi's should be taken special attention in the order of quoting *isnads*. In the first part of the work there are only 19 *isnads*, and in some places there are no *isnads* even on

100 pages. This can be explained by the fact that the author mentioned the name of the collective *isnads* in the process of describing any major event, and did not find it necessary to repeat the *isnads* when describing the details of the event.

An in-depth study of Ibn A'tham's order of use of *isnads* poses considerable difficulty for the researcher. In the five parts of the "Kitab al-Futuh" that preceded the event of Karbala, we find almost no references. In general, the order in which *isnads* are given in a play can be studied from two perspectives. Firstly, he was not well acquainted with the procedure for quoting *isnads*, and secondly, the imposition of *isnads* in it meant the benefit of some representatives of the autonomy.

In the description of the four events in the play, one can see the places given to the collective *isnads* that have filled them. These are the election of Abu Bakr (r.a) as caliph, the caliphate of Uthman ibn Awfan (r.a), the Battle of Siffin, and the events leading up to Karbala.

It can be seen that the places where the *isnads* are singled out are reflected in the development of events that are important to the Shi'ites and in the first part of the work. But it should also be noted that there are shortcomings in the order of *isnads*. The names of narrators in the *isnads* are in many orders unknown people.

It is known that these works were written two hundred years after the Arab conquests. It should be noted that historical works of that period were written based on certain traditions and legends. It takes into account the interests of certain sects and tribes. In his work, Gibb lists the following most famous of these traditions:

1. *Qays* tradition of the family of Ibn Hazm;
2. The tradition of Khazrat Muhallaba of *AzdRobi'a*. This tradition is popular among the Arabs, and Balazuri wrote his work using this tradition;
3. The *Bahili* tradition. It is dedicated to Qutayba ibn Muslim, the hero of the Bahili tribe. Ibn A'tham al-Kufi used this tradition in the chapter on the conquest of Turkestan. Yaqubi also quotes this tradition in his work. In Tabari's work, fragments of this tradition can be seen, i.e. (according to the Bakhili ..);
4. The *Bukhara* tradition narrated by Yaqubi, Narshahi and Balazuri;
5. *Dinavoriis* narrations;
6. Narrations by Abu Ubaydah in the interest of the Shu'biyya movement.

The most important part of the work is the section "Arab conquests of Central Asia". In this regard, H.A.R. Gibb's research is conspicuous. Gibb was familiar with parts of the "Kitab al-Futuh" that were similar to Zottenberg's translation of Balami. Ibn A'tham's work has its own characteristics that are not found in other works. Qutayba ibn Muslim's chapters on his military campaigns in Khorezm and Samarkand are the same as in other works. However, the events in the play, such as Ghurak, the leader of the Sogdians, his march against Qutayba ibn Muslim, and the siege of Samarkand by the Arabs, have a special significance. Bal'ami (Zottenberg's translation) also narrated these events consistently. However, there is more evidence that Ibn A'tham's "Kitab al-Futuh" was written before Balami's work. This can also be seen in the murder of Qutayba ibn Muslim.

Ibn A'tham cites a whole copy of this incident, and this document is in line with the content of the documents of that period. It would be useful to get acquainted with the oldest of the correspondence between Turkestan and the Arabs. The date given in the play attracts the attention of scholars. Tabari, Balami (Zottenberg's translation) and later ibn al-Asir refer to the date of Qutayba ibn Muslim's conquest of Samarkand, as well as the year of the signing of the peace treaty between Qutayba and Gurak, as 93 AH. In "Kitab al-Futuh", this date is given as 94 AH. If this work is considered to be the oldest and most reliable among the history books, there is no doubt that the date in it is correct.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that Balami's history book, known as the Tabari Translation, is in fact in line with Ibn A'tham's original Arabic text. Ibn A'tham used a number of traditions that were popular at the time in writing his work, and in the first part of the work one can encounter only 19 *isnads*, and in some places not even 100 *isnads*.

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