

Lost Islamic History

Firas Al-Khateeb, **Lost Islamic History**, C. Hurst and Co. Publisher Ltd, London, 2014, pp. 165.

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Firas Al-Khateeb is an American researcher, writer and historian with specialisation in the Islamic history. His book 'Lost Islamic History' covers pre Islamic era, arrival of Islam and struggles of Muslims for their religion. It gives a glimpse of formation of Islamic states, their rise and fall with reasons.

The book starts with introduction of Arabian Peninsula's geography and lifestyle of its habitants i.e., Arabs. Arabs at time of advent of Islam lived a nomadic life in the form of a clan. Poetry was their prime way of expression and people were interested in trade with their neighbouring areas.

In second chapter Al-Khateeb describes early life of Prophet (PBUH). He discusses that Muhammad (PBUH) not only changed the beliefs but also revolutionized the society. The author further discusses that how the number of followers of Muhammad (PBUH) were increased and how they faced hardship as a result. He further illustrates the story of migration of Muhammad (PBUH) from Makah to Medina with his followers and how they faced many challenges there. The author gives account of battles between Muslims and Quraysh; and finally after conquering the Makah, it became a peaceful state in Arabia.

Moving on, the author gives brief description of the circumstances after death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that how Muslims had to choose the successor of Prophet (PBUH); caliph. First they chose Abu Bakr (RA), who was close companion of Muhammad. He tried to implement Islamic laws and fought against those who had claimed to be a prophet. After his death, Umar bin Khatab (RA) was second caliph, then Usman (RA) and then last Ali (RA). The author illuminates the governance of all these caliphs, mentioning the challenges they faced

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during governance. He describes some important aspects of history that how Abu Bakr (RA) preserved Quran in written form and compiled it into form of a book. He also gives detailed explanation of military expeditions and the victories on their credit. The fertile lands of Syria and Mesopotamia fell in the hands of Muslims in reign of Umar. He appointed Khalid bin Walid as commander and Muslim troops conquered cities of Jerusalem, Caesarea and Gaza.

In chapter four, the author discusses how Muslims strengthen their rule during the reign of Mu'awiya (RA). They expanded their territory to North Africa and continued their conquests toward modern Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The author explains incident of Karbala and resulting conflicts especially public sentiments against Ummayyads. Later, Ummayyads regained the strength and stretched their state from Spain to India. .

In early 700 C.E, Abbasids, descendants from Muhammad's uncle revolted against Ummayyads and claimed to uphold the government. The author gives description of account how Abbasids took control of government. At this stage, era of Muslim military conquests stopped for a time and a new era of intellectual conquests began.

The chapter five explains how Muslim era was full of scientific, religious, philosophical and cultural developments. The Abbasid caliph Al-Mamun established 'House of Wisdom' to facilitate intellectual studies. The author separately explains contribution of Muslims in the field of mathematics, astronomy, geography, medicine, physics, fiqh (Islamic legal jurisprudence) and hadith and theology. In this chapter, origin of Shi'ia sect, their beliefs and political role is included and discussed as well.

Author then sheds lights on different sects among Muslims and their political roles. Then migration of Turk tribes and their conversion to Islam is also briefly described. The Seljuk's had to encounter the Byzantine empire. Slowly after weakening of Muslim empire, crusaders began to march towards Jerusalem and conquered it which was considered as disaster in the Muslim world. However, this conquest became one of the entry-points for Muslim knowledge in Europe. Then the writer describes how Salah-al-din liberated the Jerusalem. However,

twenty years after liberation of Jerusalem, Mongol leader Genghis Khan united various Mongol tribes and threatened Islam as political force (p-83). The author further says that by 1219, Genghis Khan ruled a land empire that stretched from Korea to the borders of the Muslim world in Persia (p-83). The Khwarezmian Empire was destroyed by 1222 by Mongols. Muslim state was completely overthrown by Mongol leader Halagu khan.

Al-Khateeb has also described Al- Ghazali's contributions in reforming Islamic laws. Nonetheless, the rule of Umayyad's in al-Andulus is also discussed where Muslims developed a glorious state. Even non-Muslims began to adopt Arabic art, culture and customs. Cordoba libraries and shops were full of books. The rulers emphasized on architecture of mosques and palaces and these were captivating for the visitors. The author says that all this contributed to Cordoba nickname to rest of Europe; the ornament of the world (p-92). Then author explains how in al-Andulus, Granada and Moriscos, Muslims powers came to end with brief descriptions of the prime reasons behind the fall.

Advent of Islam in West Africa, East Africa, China and India are then discussed. According to author, China never wholly adopted Islam, and the Muslim community remained a minority. Despite the fact, Muslims played an integral part in Chinese history for centuries (p.113). The author discusses that Muhammad bin Qasim expedition established a foothold in Sindh but due to its distance from Muslim capitals, further expeditions were impractical. Turkish Muslim leaders especially Mehmud of Ghazni gave more power to Muslims. Soon they were able to establish Islamic state in India. The author further gives details of long time ruling of Muslims in India.

By the title of 'rebirth' author discussed Ottoman Turks, their origin and their struggle for the Muslim state. After getting the peak of its power, civil wars weakened the state and it witnessed slow decline. The author also explains rule of Safavids and Mughals. Then the author describes decline of Ottoman Empire and Safavids. According to writer, liberal reforms and secularism were the major reasons of decline of

Ottoman Muslim state. The several other reasons for downfall of Muslims in India, Africa and Asia are also described.

At last, old and new ideas were explained under heading of western approach, traditional revivalist, partition, the rise of nation states, Islam and secularism. The author illustrates that many Muslim countries are adopting secularism as result of western influence. However, he further illustrates that some nations are coming back to implement Islamic laws and some are even confused and holding their laws in between Islam and secularism.

The book is a marvellous writing and worth reading as it explains many aspects of Muslim history. It explains political details as well and different beliefs in Muslims at different times. Representing the Muslim glory, their politics, science and arts, the book also explains the behaviour of Muslim rulers. The reasons behind every dispute and downfall of magnificent Islamic states are also well described. However, the author seems avoiding detailed discussion on the conflicting issues in Islamic history. On the same time this aspect makes the book more acceptable for general audience along with the scholars as well.