

THE IMPORTANCE OF “AT-TABAQAT AL-KUBRA” IN THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC BIOGRAPHIES

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ABSTRACT

This article provides information about the importance of the work “al-Tabaqat al-Kubra” by Muhammad ibn Sa'd as a biographical source. Ibn Sa'd was a historian lived in the Abbasid era. The work consists of 5554 persons' biographies (with repetitions) in total and studies them in classes. The article reveals the content of these classes.

Key words: Ibn Sa'd, Biography, at-Tabaqat al-Kubra, Seerah, Prophet, Akhbar, Companion (Sahabah), Follower (Tabi'un), Successor (Taba Tabi'un).

INTRODUCTION

In Islamic culture, among biographical works, sources from the Tabaqat series are of particular importance. Among the books of this series, the oldest that has reached us is the work “at-Tabaqat al-kubra” [7:112] by Muhammad ibn Sa'd Zuhri (784-845). This work is considered one of the primary sources in the study of biographies of people who lived in the early Islamic period. In fact, it contains life and battles of the Prophet, and the biographies of more than 5,000 companions, followers, and successors.

DISCUSSION

The work consists of two main sections. These are the sections “Akhbar al-Nabi” (seerah-maghazi) and “Tabaqat” (biographies of companions, followers and successors). In the “Akhbar an-Nabi” section, attention is paid to the chronological sequence of events related to the Prophet. At the same time, information on a certain topic was collected under one heading and an attempt was made to eliminate fragmentation. The “Tabaqat” section is arranged according to characteristics such as people's closeness to the Prophet, when they became Muslims, where they lived, and their gender.

The “Akhbar al-Nabi” section includes the topics of seerah and maghazi. This section is significant as it presents both chronological and thematic information [2:80]. In the last edition of “Maktabatul Hanji”, this section covers the first two volumes of the work. The first volume consists of three parts. In the first part, the genealogy of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the genealogy of other prophets are revealed [5:4-40]. In the second part of the first volume, Ibn Sa'd talks about the Meccan period, which includes events before and after the prophethood. In the third part, he tried to illuminate the period after the migration to Madinah with all the details. In this part, he also provides information on "shamail" and "dalail an-nubuwwa". In this place, the attributes of the Prophet in the Torah and the Bible, his morals (speech, eating, preaching, praying, etc.), appearance, clothes, personal belongings and endowments were described. In this way, Ibn Sa'd also contributed to the formation of "Shamail" literature [1:112]. “At-Tabaqat al-Kubra” served as a source for the works such as “al-Shamail al-Myhammadiyya”

by Imam Tirmidhi, "al-Wafa" by Ibn al-Jawzi, "Dalail an-Nubuwwa" and "Khilyat al-Awliya" by Abu Nuaym Isfahani and "Dalail an-Nubuwwa" by Bayhaqi.

The second volume of "Akhbar an-Nabi" consists of two parts. The first part begins with the sariyyas and the ghazats, in which the events leading up to the burial of the Prophet, peace be upon him, are covered in detail. In this part, Ibn Sa'd mentioned the ghazats and sariyyas of the Prophet in chronological order. The author covers many aspects such as the history of ghazat and sariyya, where they took place and number of ghazat or sariyyas, who raised the flag, what method was used, and what was the result. Ibn Sa'd completed the first part by describing topics such as the Prophet's illness, death, burial, legacies, and laments for him.

From the third volume of the work, the section "Tabaqat" began. Ibn Sa'd, in arranging the biographies in his work, first of all used the arrangement in the divan of caliph Umar as a basis [6:294-300]. According to this arrangement, the Companions were studied in the following five classes:

1. Muhajir and Ansar who participated in Badr Ghazat;
2. Those who participated in Uhud from Muhajir and Ansar;
3. Those who participated in Khandaq and became Muslims before the conquest of Makkah;
4. Companions who became Muslims during and after the conquest of Mecca;
5. Companions who were young when the Messenger of God (pbuh) died.

The "Tabaqat" section includes the third to tenth volumes of the work. The third volume is devoted to the class of Muhajir and Ansar who participated in the Badr Ghazat [6:1]. Consisting of two major sections, the first section of this volume is composed of the emigrants who participated in Badr. This first part presents the biographies of 85 immigrants. In the second part, the lives of 238 companions from the class of Ansar are included. In general, biographical information about a total of 323 companions in the first class of companions is given.

In the fourth volume of the work, the second class of companions, "Those who participated in Uhud from Muhajir and Ansar", is included. This class includes 101 immigrants. Biographies of 245 Ansars are also given. This class contains information about 353 companions in total.

The fifth volume of the work contains the category "Those who participated in Khandaq and became Muslims before the conquest of Makkah". A total of 309 companions' biographies are covered in this class.

The sixth volume of the work includes the fourth and fifth classes of companions, that is, "Companions who became Muslims during and after the conquest of Mecca" and "Companions who were young when the Messenger of God (pbuh) died." A total of 385 companions are listed in these classes.

Ibn Sa'd completed the biography of the Companions in the sixth volume of his work. From the seventh volume of the work, he begins to write about the followers, who are the most auspicious offspring of the Islamic Ummah after the Companions. The seventh volume is fully devoted to the life of the men of Madinah. A total of 890 biographies are presented in this volume. The author studied the men of Madinah into seven classes.

In the eighth-ninth volumes of the work, the author used a new method of dividing people into classes. Now Ibn Sa'd focused on the element of place while classifying individuals according to the history and lineage of becoming a Muslim. Ibn Sa'd mentioned first the Companions, then the Followers and the Successors. He listed the individuals first in the geographical order of

Madinah and then in the form of "Makkah, Taif, Yemen, Yamama, Bahrain, Kufa, and so on". This is how Ibn Sa'd influenced the works of city history written after him. In their writings, later authors provided detailed information about the scholars who came from that city and worked there.

When citing individuals by city, companions are mentioned first. However, the biographies of the Companions presented in these chapters are much shorter compared to the previous chapters. After the companions, the biographies of the followers and successors who narrated the hadith from them are given.

In the eighth volume of the work, the first persons who lived in Makkah were mentioned. The Mecca section begins with Abu Sabra ibn Abu Ruhm, who returned to Mecca after the death of the Prophet and settled there. Then the subjects who narrated the hadith from Umar (r.a.) were studied in total five classes. The Makkans are followed by the Taifites and after them the Yemenites. After the mention of the people of Yamama and Bahrain, the section on Kufa, which constitutes two-thirds of this volume, begins. The people of Kufa were divided into nine classes. In this volume, the cities are used as the basis for the classification of followers and successors, and biographies of muhaddiths and jurists who narrated hadiths from Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali (RA) are presented. This volume contains the biographies of a total of 1350 people.

The ninth volume of the work contains the biographies of the Companions who lived in cities outside the Arabian Peninsula and the faqih, qurra, and muhaddith scholars who narrated from them. The people who lived in the city of Basra are mentioned first. The people of Basra are divided into six classes. In the later parts of this volume, the companions and followers who settled in Wasit, Madain, Baghdad, Khorasan, Ray, Hamadan, Qum, and Anbar regions are mentioned. In the Sham section, the people of this region are divided into eight classes. The next parts are dedicated to the scholars of al-Jazeera, Egypt, Aila, Ifriqiya and finally Andalus, a part of the Islamic world on the European continent. In the ninth volume, the biographies of a total of 1273 people are described.

The tenth volume of the work contains the class of women. In this regard, Ibn Sa'd is also recognized as the first author who wrote biographies of women. He made this part of his book a separate volume and dedicated it to female companions and followers. Before going into the biographical information, it can be seen that the author gives the narrations related to the oath of allegiance of women.

The women's class begins with a biography of Khadijah (RA) under the heading " Muslim Immigrant Women from Quraish." After that, the biography of the Prophet's daughters, aunts and cousins is covered. At the end, women of Ansar are mentioned starting from the Aws.

In this volume, the biography of the Prophet's wives is described in a separate chapter with very detailed narrations. Narrations on the Prophet's wives, marriage periods, dowries, houses they lived in, family life, affairs between his wives and other important topics are presented [3:90-91]. A total of 629 biographies are listed in the Women's Class volume.

The work "at-Tabaqat al-Kubra" acquires its own significance as it shows the history of the spread of Islam and reflects the scientific and religious progress by cities. By studying the work, one gets detailed information about which regions the companions went to, where they settled and where they died, and who helped spread and develop the Islamic religion and teachings in different regions. The work is rich in information and distinguished from other sources by its

high scientific level. According to Ihsan Abbas (1920-2003), a famous Palestinian scholar of manuscripts, Ibn Sa'd provided a lot of information about the social situation of the Golden Age (Asr al-Saadah), the markets, clothing, food and drink, types of work, occupations and activities, and commercial life of that time. In the same way, the author revealed to us the cultural environment of that time, procedures, the conflict between sunnah and bid'ah, and dozens of similar topics [4:14].

CONCLUSION

The work "at-Tabaqat al-Kubra" made Ibn Sa'd one of the founders of the science of tabaqat-tarajim. Although there were people who worked in this field before him, their works have not been found yet. Accordingly, Ibn Sa'd is the author of the first tabaqat book that has survived to this day. So, "at-Tabaqat al-Kubra" is the most ancient tabaqat book in our hands. In this respect, Ibn Sa'd is a scholar who laid the foundation stone of tarajim science [8:266-267].

In conclusion, "at-Tabaqat al-Kubra" by Ibn Sa'd is considered one of the important biographical sources related to the history of Islam. The work is important because it introduced new topics to Islamic historiography compared to previous sources, and at the same time it served as a foundation for the future books of tabaqat and tarajim.

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