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THE IMPORTANCE OF QURANIC STORIES IN STUDYING ISLAMIC HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reveals the significance of Quranic stories in the study of Islamic history. The author has chosen Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari's al-Kamil fi-t-Tarikh as an example to illustrate the role of Quranic stories in depicting historical events. The paper also briefly touches upon Ibn al-Athir's life..

Introduction. Muslim historians have repeatedly referred to Quranic stories when describing historical events. Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari's *al-Kamil fi-t-Tarikh* can be cited as an example. His full name was Izz al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi al-Karam Ibn al-Athir ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Shaybani al-Jazari. He authored a number of works, most of which were historical, and they serve as important sources for studying the Middle Ages.

Main Part. More complete information about Ibn al-Athir's life is provided in Imam al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, where he is mentioned in the 18th class under number 1124. The historian Ibn Khallikan also recorded details about his life and career. During his long journeys in pursuit of knowledge, Ibn al-Athir met many scholars from whom he learned hadith, fiqh, usul, fara'id (laws of inheritance), logic, and qira'at (Quranic recitation). Although he mastered many sciences, he later focused his attention on two fields: hadith and history. As a result, he became a distinguished scholar of hadith, mastering both the hadith texts and the related disciplines. He also studied history in depth, including Arab genealogy, festivals, and reports. He paid special attention to the biographies of the Companions (Sahabah).

Shams al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad, known as Ibn Khallikan, was one of Ibn al-Athir's close friends, and they frequently held scholarly discussions. Ibn Khallikan described him positively: "His house in Mosul was a gathering place for virtuous people. I met him in Aleppo and saw that he possessed excellent morals and virtues. Later, I visited him again when Atabeg Tughrul's servant received him with great respect in Aleppo"¹. These notes by Ibn Khallikan play an important role in studying Ibn al-Athir's life.

The book *al-Kamil fi-t-Tarikh* ("The Complete History") is the most famous of Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari's works and is considered the most comprehensive and detailed among them. The book consists of two parts: an introduction and the main body of historical events. The

¹ Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad 'Uthman. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1996, Vol. 22, p. 355.

introduction discusses the content of the work, the author's purpose in writing it, the method he used, the naming of the work, and its worldly and religious benefits. The work consists of ten volumes, with a separate index added as the eleventh volume in modern editions. The historical period it covers is divided into two sections: from the creation of the world to the advent of Islam, and from the emergence of Islam to the year 628 AH (1230 CE)².

The book begins with the creation of the world, followed by accounts of prophets such as Idris, Nuh (Noah), Salih, Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Lut (Lot), Musa (Moses), Khidr, Dawud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), Ya'qub (Jacob), Yusha ibn Nun (Joshua), Shamwil (Samuel), Yusuf (Joseph), Isa (Jesus), Zakariyya (Zachariah), Yahya (John), and Yunus ibn Matta (Jonah) — peace be upon them all — as well as other famous figures such as Jamshid, Qarun (Korah), Talut (Saul), Manuchehr, Ardashir, Kay Khosrow, Siyavush, and Kay Kavus. It also describes the founding of Jerusalem and Mecca. Then the book gives a detailed account of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his birth, life, and prophethood. After the Hijra (migration to Medina), the author changes his approach: events are presented year by year, each year listing the events that occurred within it. In this way, the early Islamic period, its conquests, and the lands opened to Islam are described. Later, the book discusses the Caliphate, the emergence of civil strife (*fitnah*), the decline of the Caliphate's power, and the states that separated from it along with the dynasties that ruled them.

The author mainly records significant and meaningful events, omitting minor ones. Due to its importance, *al-Kamil fi-t-Tarikh* is considered the second most authoritative historical source in the Islamic world after Imam al-Tabari's work, and Ibn al-Athir often refers to al-Tabari. The book contains numerous Quranic verses and authentic hadiths.

In studying the period from the creation of the world to the emergence of Islam, Ibn al-Athir frequently uses Quranic verses and hadiths. He especially cites Quranic stories and supplements them with narrations, presenting them in chronological order. For example, the section titled *The Placement of Adam (peace be upon him) in Paradise and His Expulsion from It* includes the verses:

"O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers" (2:35). "But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed of their private parts; he said, 'Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal.' And he swore [by Allah] to them, 'Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors.' So he made them fall, through deception" (7:20–22).

These verses narrate the story of Adam (peace be upon him). Ibn al-Athir mentions that the forbidden tree was wheat and explains how Satan, after being expelled from Paradise, managed to whisper to Adam and Eve, leading them to eat from the tree and the events that followed³. He also cites the sayings of Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) and Sa'id ibn

² Ibn al-Athir, 'Izz al-Din Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jazari. *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 7; Richards, D. S. *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period*. England: British Library, 2010, p. 6.

³ Ibn al-Athir, 'Izz al-Din Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jazari. *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1987, Vol. 1, pp. 30–32.

al-Musayyib. The author uses Quranic stories extensively in describing the lives of other prophets as well.

Conclusion. Quranic stories serve as essential sources in studying Islamic history. They not only convey historical events but also illuminate their moral and spiritual meanings. Muslim historians have effectively used these stories to explain the early stages of human history and the lives and missions of the prophets. This can clearly be observed in Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari's *al-Kamil fi-t-Tarikh*.

