

# A VALUABLE HISTORICAL MS. OF ARABIC- *AL-IKTIFA'*

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THE title of the Ms. is *Al-Iktifa' Bima Tadammanahu min Maghazi Rasulil-lahi wa Maghazi l-Khulafa'*. It was written by a sixth century Spanish scholar and deals with the accounts and wars of the Prophet and his three immediate successors. Despite its limited scope, it consists of 448 pages of big size. The author has drawn upon many sources of which the majority are unavailable now, such as the *Kitabur-Riddah* of Sayf b. 'Umar, the *Futuhu l-Iraq* of Mada'ini, the *Sirah* of Ibn-Ishaq Madani and *Ansab-Quraysh* of Qadi Zubayr b. Bakkar.

The name of the author is Sulayman and *Kunyah* Abu r-Rabi'. Because of his kinship to the South-Arabian prince, Dhul-kala' and his birth at Balansia, (Valencia), he is famous as Kala 'i and Balansi. Unfortunately, we do not know enough about him. History and Hadith dominated his intellectual pursuits. He seems to have been attached to the Court of Balansia and to have held on several occasions the chief preachership of the city, an office of considerable importance in Muslim Spain. One of his pupils and townsmen, Abu-Bakr b. Bakkar (d. 659), the author of *Takmilatu s-Silah*, has noticed him and some of his works. He says in the *Takmilah*, that Sulayman paid utmost attention to criticism and tradition (Riwayat). He was an Imam of the science of Hadith and had an insight into it. He knew by heart many Traditions and was well acquainted with the principles that governed sound and unsound Hadith and good and bad transmitter. He excelled the doctors of his age in remembering the names and the dates of birth and death of prominent men, particularly those of his own times. He wrote a great deal with his hand and was an accomplished calligrapher. He possessed a wide knowledge of literature and was noted for his rhetorical style. He had no equal in epistolary diction. He was an excellent poet and an eloquent speaker. He had a good taste for clothing and dressed elegantly. In the assemblies of princes he acted as their ambassador and in formal meetings he addressed as their spokesman. He was official preacher of Balansia for a number of times. He wrote useful works on a variety of subjects. Some of them are: (1) *Al-Iktifa' bima Tadammanahu min Maghazi Rasulillahi wa th-Thalathatil-Khulafa'* in 4 volumes. (2) A comprehensive but unfinished anthology of the Companions and the Tabi 'un. (3) *Misbahu*

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1. An important town 13 Arab miles inland from the eastern coast of Spain. *Mu'jamul Buldan* by Yaqut, Cairo 2-279. It lay at a distance of 13 day's march by a short cut from Cordova (Qurtubah) . . *Raudul-Mi'tar fl Khabari'l-Aqtar* (Section relating to Spain), Cairo 1937, p. 79.

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z-*Zulam*. (4) Biography of Imam Bukhari and (5) *Kitabu l-Arba'in*. Besides these, he wrote many books on Hadith and literature and also sermons. Seekers of knowledge from distant places were attracted to his door. "I learned much from him" says the author of *Takmilah*, and was immensely benefited by him in the domain of Hadith. It was he who urged me to write this book (i. e. *Takmilatu s-Silah*) and helped me with his notes and other fresh information with which I have filled my book. He was born in Ramadan 565 A.H. and died a valiant martyr's death on the 20th Dhu l-Hijj in an incident at Anishah some farsakhs off Balansia"...<sup>1</sup>

In the preface Kala'i has given his reasons for compiling the *Iktifa'* and referred to the manner in which he has compiled it and mentioned a number of his sources. The reason for writing the book is, to quote his own words, "Iqa'u l-Iqna' wa Imta'u n-Nufusi wa l-Asma", that is, he wants to furnish the accounts of the life and wars of the Prophet and those of his three immediate successors in such detail and ampleness as thoroughly to satisfy the reader and also to delight the hearts and the ears of those who listen to them. Referring to the manner of compiling, he says that he has collected his material from many sources, that he has used it to supplement and complement his narrative, sometimes to explain and clarify it and sometimes to supply new information.

Kala 'i has founded the account of the life and wars of the Prophet on the illustrious *Sirah* of Ibn-Ishaq of Madinah (d. 234) and has paid a glowing tribute to it. He has omitted those parts of the *Sirah* which dwelt so liberally on the genealogy of prominent Arabs and their clans. He has also excluded the large number of verses which it contained. The chief reason for this double exclusion is that many an expert on genealogy, especially among the Traditionists, look askance at the genealogical tables of Ibn-Ishaq and old critics of poetry suspect the authenticity of many verses quoted in the *Sirah* (See *Fihrist* of Ibnu n-Nadim, Cairo 1348 A. H. p. 136). Leaving aside the genealogy and poetry, Kala 'i has incorporated almost the whole of the *Sirah* in his work. Besides it, he has borrowed from other important books, the majority of which are unavailable and has mentioned four of them by name: (1) *Maghazi* by Musa b. 'Uqbah (d. 141) (2) *Kitabu l-Mab'ath* by Qadi Waqidi (d. 207). Speaking of it our author says that it was a very comprehensive work. (3) *Ansab-Quraysh* by Qadi Zubayr b. Bakkar (d. 256). About it Kala 'i quotes this comment of his teacher's teacher: "Hadha Kitabun 'Ajibun La Kitabu Nasabin" i.e., it is not a book on genealogy but a wonderful work of rare information. An idea of the great value of *Ansab-Quraysh* for illumining obscure aspects of the lives of the aristocracy of the Quraysh can be formed by reading the Commentary on *Nahju l-Balaghah*, where Ibn-Abi l-Hadid has scattered many a pearl of that book. (4) *Tarikhu l-Kabir* by Abu-Bakr b. Abi-Khaythamah. Referring to it, Kala 'i says: 'It is such a well that the most indefatigable water-drawer cannot exhaust it'. The *Fihrist* of Ibnu n-Nadim mentions four books of Ibn-Abi-Khaythamah of which one is *Kitabu t-Tarikh*, designated by our author as *Tarikhu l-Kabir*. Ibn-Abi-Khaythamah was a professional

1. *Takmilatu s-Silah* by Ibn-Abbar Quda'i Balansi, Madrid, 1887 A.D., pp. 708-709.

Muhaddith, jurist and historian who died in 279 A. H.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of his preface, Kala 'i observes: "When I have written the accounts and *Maghazi* of the Prophet in such detail as I aspire to do, I intend, God willing, to add to them the *Maghazi* of the first three Caliphs....."

In Cairo I saw three copies of *Iktifa'* of which one is complete and two are mutilated. The mutilated copies do not contain an account of the Prophet and are restricted to the military operations that took place in the caliphates of Abu-Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. The great National Library of Cairo, (the Daru l-Kutub) possesses one of the two copies under the title *Kitabun fi l-Maghazi wa l-Futuh* and the other copy is to be found in the Library of Azhar University under the name of *Tarikhu l-Khulafa' ir-Rashidin*. The printed catalogues of both the Daru l-Kutub and the Azhar University Library put the words "Le Mu' allifin Majhulin" after mentioning the titles of the two. When I read *Iktifa'* after consulting the two copies, I found the chapters on the three caliphs common to all the three and it became clear to me that the two mutilated copies were not works of unidentified scholars, as is mentioned in the catalogues but portions of Kala'i's book *Iktifa'*. The mutilated MS. of the Daru l-Kutub is written in a bad hand and abounds with mistakes; the other one of the Azhar University Library, though written legibly, is yet corrupt at many places.

As I have pointed out in the beginning, the complete Ms. of the *Iktifa'* runs into 448 pages. Nearly half this number, that is to say, 220 pages are devoted to the accounts of the Prophet, 66 pages (from 220 to 286) to the wars of Riddah during the caliphate of Abu-Bakr and 154 pages (from 286 to 440) to the conquests of 'Umar, while only 7 pages are devoted to the military exploits of 'Uthman. As the caliphate of 'Ali was wanting in conquests or wars of expansion, it has been left out.

The MS. is in a legible hand and is much more correct than either of the two mutilated copies. There are 41 lines in a closely written page of small letters. If it were to be printed on the pattern of the Leyden edition of *Tabaqat Ibn-Sa'd*, it might well exceed 2,500 pages. The small letters of the MS. discourage its detailed study as the eye gets strained. For this reason I was not able to read that portion which deals with the life and wars of the Prophet. I am therefore not competent to assess the worth of the MS. or pass any judgment on its merits. Nevertheless, in view of its very comprehensive nature and the great books which Kala'i had used in preparing it, it probably contains information which one does not find in the *Maghazi* of Waqidi, *Tabaqat* of Ibn-Sa'd, *Ansabu l-Ashraf* of Baladhuri (at Daru l-Kutub), History of Ya'qubi, History of Tabari, History of Ibn-Kathir, *Siratu Halabiyyah* of Ibu-'Imad Hanbali and *Tarikh-Khamis* of Diyarbakri.

I was, however, able to make a close study of the portions relating to the three caliphs and copied out such parts thereof as are not to be found elsewhere. I hope they will be printed for the benefit of the student of Islamic history before long. The sources of our author for the three caliphs repre-

1. *Fihrist*, Cairo, p. 321.



sent books which have been published and those which have either been lost or have remained hidden so far. The published books comprise the great history of Tabari which is well known, the *Futuhu sh-Sham* of Abu-Isma'il Azdi (3rd century), which was edited by D. N. Lees and printed in Calcutta in 1854 and lastly the *Futuh-Misr* of Ibn-'Abdil-Hakam published by the Oriental Society of the Yale University, U. S. A., in 1920. Our author has liberally drawn upon all the three. From Tabari he has taken, material for the Riddah wars and conquests in Iraq, Persia and Transoxiana from *Futuhu sh-Sham* of Azdi for conquests in Syria and from Ibn-'Abdil-Hakam for those in Egypt. In fact, he has incorporated the greater part of the works of the last two writers in *Iktifa'*. But in writing the accounts of the Riddah wars and the conquest of 'Umar in 'Iraq and in particular the accounts of the great battles of Qadisiyyah, Mada'in and Jalula', our author brings in new information gleaned from sources now beyond our reach. Of these, he mentions the following:—

(1) *Kitabu l-Waqidi* by which he probably means the *Kitabu r-Riddah* of Qadi Waqidi, enumerated by Ibnu'n-Nadim among the works of that great author. Besides *Kitabu r-Riddah*, Waqidi wrote two independent books on Abu-Bakr, namely *Kitabu s-Saqifah wa Bay'ati Abi-Bakr* and *Kitabu Sirati Abi-Bakr wa Wafatihi*.

(2) *Kitabu l-Zuhri*.

(3) *Kitabu l-Umawi*.

(4) *Kitabu r-Riddah* by Wathimah b. Musa (d. 237). Wathimah was born in Fasa' (Faris) and traded in silk. He went to Basrah, thence to Egypt and thence to Spain in connection with his trade. Ibn-Khallikan, who had seen his *Kitabu r-Riddah*, says in the *Wafayat*: 'It is an excellent book full of revealing information'. (*Wafayatu l-'Ayan*, Cairo, 1310 A. H. 2/171).

Besides gleanings from the above four books in connection with the Riddah wars, our author introduces many isolated traditions which seem to have been taken from virgin sources. The battle of Yamamah has been described in considerable detail and some of its scenes have been very vividly depicted. Its account by Sayf b. 'Umar in Tabari is not so revealing. The accounts of the Riddah wars in *Iktifa'* and Tabari, which mainly derives from Sayf b. 'Umar, differ on many important points and sometimes contradict one another. *Iktifa'* has, moreover, a number of letters of Abu-Bakr addressed to his generals which I have not found in any Arabic or Persian history. And lastly, our author quotes scores of verses composed during the Riddah period which are wanting in our most comprehensive histories such as the *Tarikhu r-Rusul wa l-Muluk* of Tabari, *Futuhu l-Buldan* of Baladhuri and *Futuh of A'sam Kufi*.

The sources of our author for the wars of conquest in Iraq are three: (1) Tabari. (2) An un-named work of his teacher Khatib Abu l-Qasim. (3) *Futuhu l-Iraq* of the 2nd-3rd century savant Mada'ini (d. 225). The history of Tabari is within the reach of every student of Islamic history, so that gleanings from it in *Iktifa'* have apparently ceased to be of any value. This, however, is not the case. The original of Tabari, from which the author of *Iktifa'* transcribed his extracts, has at places sounder text than is to be

found in the printed edition of Tabari. We sometimes find in this great history words or phrases which smack of corruption and do not fit in the required sense. This is due to the mistakes of the scribe or the copyist who sometimes alters, in a fit of carelessness, the right word, sometimes is unable to decipher an illegible word of the text which he copies and which he writes incorrectly, and sometimes interpolates words or phrases to render the text, as he thinks, more meaningful or impressive or elegant. A comparative study of the common passages of Tabari and *Iktifa'* lifts the curtain from many a textual mistake of the former. Let me cite an example. The text of the following letter of 'Umar to Sa'd b. Abi-Waqqas, who was on his way to Qadisiyyah to fight Rustam, is as follows in the Cairo edition of Tabari:

اما بعد فسر من شراف نحو فارس بمن معك من المسلمين و توكل على الله و استعن به على امرك كله و اعلم فيما لديك انك تقدم على امة عددهم كثير و عدتهم فاضلة و باسهم شديد و على بلد منيع و ان كان سهلاً كؤود بحوره و فيوضه و دأدئه الا ان توافقوا غيظاً من فيض و اذا لقيتم القوم او احداً منهم فابدؤهم اشد الضرب و اياكم والمناظرة لجموعهم ولا يتخذ عنكم فانهم خدعة مكررة ، امرهم غير امركم الا أن تجادوهم و اذ انتهيت الى القادسية والقادسية باب فارس في الجاهلية و هي اجمع تلك الابواب لمادتهم و لما يريدونه من تلك الاصل و هو منزل رقيب خصيب حصين دونه قناطر و انهار ممتنعة فتكون مسالحك على انقابها و يكون الناس بين الحجر و المدر على حافات الحجر و حافات المدر و الجراح بينها ، ثم ألزم مكانك فلا تبرحه فانهم اذا احسوك انقضتهم و رموك بجمعهم الذي ياتي على خيلهم و رجلهم و جدهم فان انتم صبرتم لعددكم و احتسبتم لقتاله و نويتم الا مائة رجوت ان تنصروا عليهم ثم لا يجتمع لكم مثلكم ابداً الا ان يجتمعوا و ليست معهم قلوبهم ، و ان تكن الاخرى كان الحجر في ادباركم فانصرفتم من اول مدرة من ارضهم الى ادنى حجر من ارضكم ثم كنتم عليها اجراً و بها اعلم و كانوا عنها اجبن و بها اجهل حتى ياتي الله بالفتح عليهم و يرد لكم الكرة

There are certain corruptions and uncalled for additions in the above text which, to the great relief of the reader, have been exposed by that in *Iktifa'*. The letter here reads:

اما بعد فسر من شراف نحو فارس بمن معك من المسلمين و توكل على الله و استعن به على امرك ، و اعلم (طبرى - فيما لديك) انك تقدم على امة عددهم كثير و عدتهم فاضلة و باسهم شديد و على بلد (طبرى - منيع) و ان كان سهلاً كؤود بحوره و فيوضه و دأدئه (طبرى - الا ان توافقوا فيضاً من فيض) فاذا لقيتم القوم او احداً منهم فابدؤوا الضرب و اشد (طبرى - فابدؤهم اشد الضرب) و اياكم والمناظرة لجموعهم ، ولا يتخذ عنكم فانهم خدعة مكررة امرهم غير امركم (طبرى - امرهم غير امركم) الا ان تجادوهم فاذا انتهيت الى القادسية والقادسية باب فارس في الجاهلية و هي اجمع تلك الابواب (طبرى - لمادتهم و لما تريدونه من تلك الاصل) لما تريد و لما يريدون ، وهو منزل رقيب خصيب حصين دونه قناطر و انهار ممتنعة ، فيكون مسالحك

1. Tabari, first edition, Cairo 4/88.

على انقابها و يكون الناس من الحجر والمدر على اقصى حجر من ارض العرب ( طبرى - على حافات الحجر و حافات المدر والجراع بينها ) و ادنى مدرة من ارض العجم ، ثم آلم مكانك فلا تبرحه فانهم اذا احسوك انقضتكم ( طبرى - انقضتكم ) و رموك بجمعهم الذى ياتى على خيلهم و أرجلهم و حدهم و جدهم فان انتم صبرتم يعدوكم و احتسبتم لقتالهم ( طبرى - و نويتم الامانة ) رجوت ان تنصروا عليهم ثم لا يجتمع لكم مثلهم ابداً الا ان يجتمعوا و ليست معهم قلوبهم ، و ان تكن الاخرى كان الحجر فى ادباركم فانصرفتم من ادنى مدرة من ارضهم الى ادنى حجر من ارضكم ثم كنتم عليها اجراً وبها اعلم و كان عنها اجبن و بها اجهل حتى ياتيكم الله بالفتح و يرد لكم الكرة -

A startling fact has emerged in connection with this letter, namely that its text in *Iktifa'* exceeds that in Tabari by one fourth. Nothing but guess can account for this discrepancy. Our author occasionally heralds a new tradition by the words: *Wa fi Kitabi-Sayf*, which suggests that he or his teacher Khatib Abu l-Qasim had access to the great work of Sayf on early conquests and that the letter in its ampler form was derived from it.

The third source of Kala'i for the conquest of Iraq is the *Futuhu l-Iraq* of Mada'ini. This source is of special significance. The best written book of the conquests in Arabic, the *Futuhu l-Buldan* of Baladhuri, has taken its material for the conquest of Iraq from Abu-Mikhnaf Azdi, 'Uwanah, Haytham b. 'Adi, Hisham Kalbi and Abu-'Ubaydah Ma'mar, and the long chapters of Tabari are based on the transmissions of Sayf b. 'Umar and to a very small degree on those of Ibn-Ishaq. Neither Baladhuri nor Tabari has borrowed from the *Futuhu l-Iraq* of Mada'ini and it is difficult to say why they have ignored that important source. We must be thankful to the author of *Iktifa'* for introducing us to it.

Kala 'i's gleanings from the *Futuhu l-Iraq* can be classified into 4 categories: (1) Those which confirm traditional history. (2) Those which differ from it or repudiate it. (3) Those which supplement or complement it or remove its existing vagueness or shed fresh light on one or other of its aspects. (4) Those which furnish new information. In this category we may put some letters of 'Umar not to be found elsewhere.

A specimen from the *Futuhu l-Iraq* will not be out of place here. It relates to the fall of Mada'in, the Iraqi capital of the Sasanian emperors. Before giving the specimen, I feel it necessary to say a few introductory words on Mada'in. It is plural of Madinah (city) and represented a group of cities built by the Sasanian monarchs in keeping with their particular aesthetic and architectural tastes. Some of these cities were closely situated and some lay apart. The Arabs called the oldest city Madinatu l-'Atiqah, the name of another was Rumiya and a third was called Bahura-sir. All the cities were on the eastern bank of the Tigris except Bahurasir which lay on the western. (See *Mu'jamu l-Buldan* of Yaqut, Cairo 1906 A.D. 7/413).

It is suggested by the account of Mada'ini that Rumiya was a well fortified town in the vicinity of the river Dijlah and served as the main bastion of its neighbour city, which was the capital of the reigning Persian king. It might well have been a great cantonment. Mada'ini states that it



had a quarter, called Tassuj Hinduan, inhabited by the hardy Jats of India. I am inclined to think that they formed a regiment of the army of the Sasanian kings.

“When S‘ad b. Abi Waggas occupied Nahr Shir (Bahurasir of Tabari) and the landlords of west Tigris made pacts of Jizyah with him, Yazdajird shifted his treasures, belongings and offices to Hulwan (frontier town of north Iraq). He stayed back with his forces in the Iwan of Mada’in, while S‘ad and the Muslims took up their quarters at Dayr Mubarak (in Nahr Shir on the western bank). Dijlah was then in high flood. One night the Muslims heard this cry: ‘O Muslims, the gates of Mada’in have been closed, boats have been removed from the river-side and bridges have been dismantled. What are you waiting for? Your lord who carried you on the land will also carry you on the river. Hearing this cry, S‘ad urged the Muslims to cross the river’. Our author here omits a part of the narrative on the plea that Mada’ini’s account of the crossing of the river by a section of the Muslims on horseback is in keeping with the preceding account of other historians. After describing the crossing, Mada’ini says: ‘As Darrar b. Khattab and the Muslims cast their glances ahead, they perceived a white building. Darrar thereupon exclaimed: ‘God is greatest’! By the lord of K‘abah, here is the white palace of the Kisra!’” “When the Muslims crossed the river, the guards of the fortified points near the bank of the river, fled, shouting: ‘They come from heaven!’ Residents of Rumiya and companies of the royal cavalry (Asawirah) that were there came out and with them were elephants. The Muslims gave them battle. The elephants roared in the face of their horses. The Muslims were in small numbers; their footmen who would defend their cavalry were not with them (being on the other side of the river). Their horses were scared by the elephants. A man came to Sa’d and said: ‘Grant safety to me, my wealth and my family and I shall tell you how to drive away the elephants.’ Sa’d: ‘I grant you safety’. The new-comer: ‘Pigs are the remedy of the elephants’. Sa’d: ‘How could I get pigs!’ The new-comer: ‘I will bring them to you.’ He fetched a number of pigs which, on being beaten, ran into the faces of the elephants which in fright turned back. The dualists were routed. A Persian horseman came and took up position to guard the passage of their retreat. When the Muslims came near him, he goaded his horse to go forward, but it would not. He again urged it, this time to flee, but again it refused to move. In the meanwhile a Muslim came and killed him with a spear. The Muslims entered Rumiya. The retreating Asawirah came to Yazdajird who was in the Iwan (palace of Mada’in) and this caused such a panic that he fled from the capital with his cavalry and infantry. Sa’d and his horsemen marched to the old city (Madinatu l-‘Atiqah). On their way the Muslims came across the Assembly of the Kisra which was known as Bahisht Iwan. Enchanted by its beauty they stopped to see it while Sa’d continued his march.....”

“The residents of Mada’in came out to meet Sa’d with cups of silver and gold, filled with dirhams and dinars and asked him to grant them safety, showing their readiness to pay the Jizyah. Sa’d granted them safety and accepted the Jizyah. He occupied the Marble Palace (Qasr Abyad), pitched

his camp at two places, Naqus and Nahr Abghash, both of which lay one mile apart. The camp at Nahr Abghash was larger than the other one. Sa'd made a mosque at Naqus which till this day is known as the Masjid 'Askar. In it 'Ali b. Abi-Talib offered prayers when he visited Mada'in on his way to Siffin. Sa'd did not take anything from the city or its inhabitants except what belonged to the kings, the royal house and those who had fled."