

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF PRE-ISLAMIC ARAB IN THE EAST AND WEST

Haringun Trisiwi Adhi Rachmawati

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

Email: haringuntrisiwiadhi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the various problems that arise in writing the history of the pre-Islamic period, especially related to the limitations of historical sources, interpretation, and bias in traditional historiography. The method used in this research is a literature review, utilizing a comparative approach between the results of modern historiography and the findings of recent research. The research shows that the development of modern social sciences, such as archaeology, anthropology and linguistic studies, made a significant contribution in overcoming these challenges. With a multidisciplinary approach, modern historiography is able to provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the pre-Islamic period, while minimizing the interpretative biases that have limited understanding of the period. The results of this study support the importance of integrating modern social sciences in rewriting history to produce a more objective and comprehensive narrative.

KEYWORDS Historiography, Modern social sciences, and Pre-Islamic history



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INTRODUCTION

In Islamic sciences, history has a fundamental position, as well as a dominant position. The great importance and orientation in the study of history makes the study of history a theme that is always alive. In this regard, Islamic historiography is also constantly developing. Many works of Islamic historiography have emerged, both compiled by eastern and western historians. The environment has a very important role in shaping the devices and products of thought. This difference in cultural background certainly makes it possible to give rise to different opinions and views on various aspects of Historiography.

The pre-Islamic Arab period is one of the topics of Islamic historiography that is often overlooked. This period covers the period before the emergence of Islam in Arabia, known as the Jahiliyah period. The term "Jahiliyyah" often reduces the importance of this historical phase, when in fact, pre-Islamic Arab societies have complex social, political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

Arab society in the pre-Islamic period was inhabited by various tribes that had strong social systems, rich customs, and diverse religious practices. Trade also played an important role in shaping their social and economic life, especially in

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major cities that became regional trading centers, such as Mecca. In addition, the strong oral culture and literary tradition of poetry are also the main means for Arab people to convey various kinds of information they have.

Although there are not as many historiographic sources for the pre-Islamic period as the period after the emergence of Islam, research on this period provides an in-depth view of the origins of Arab society, which later became a factor in the formation of early Islamic civilization. In addition, by studying the historiography of this period, we can see how the narrative of pre-Islamic history was transmitted, modified, and even reinterpreted after Islam flourished.

This research is also important to dismantle the stereotypes that have been attached to pre-Islamic Arab societies and provide a more balanced understanding of the contribution of pre-Islamic civilization to the history of the Arab region and Islam as a whole. Thus, the study of pre-Islamic Arab historiography is an effort to broaden the understanding of the historical dynamics of the Middle East and provide a broader context for the development of Islamic civilization that emerged afterwards. Therefore, this study aims to understand more deeply about pre-Islamic Arab historiography, along with its sources.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a literature review approach and literature criticism as the basis for analysis. The purpose of this approach is to examine in depth various works of modern historiography and identify and compare the elements of historiography contained in them. Data is collected through a search of relevant literature, including books, scientific journal articles, dissertations, theses, as well as classical and modern historiographical works. The selected literature will be analyzed based on the relevance of the topic, historiographic methodology, and contribution to the development of modern historical studies.

The first stage in this research is to conduct a literature review that aims to identify the historiographic approach used in each work, explore the social, political and cultural contexts that influence historical writing, and understand the development of historiographic methods from traditional to modern times. After that, a literature critique is conducted that focuses on critically assessing the validity, reliability and objectivity of the historiographic sources analyzed. This critique also included an evaluation of the credibility of the authors, the methodology used, and the interpretative biases that influenced the historiographical results, as well as how the development of modern social sciences has helped overcome the limitations of traditional historiography.

Furthermore, this research conducted a comparative study between traditional and modern historiography. It aims to identify differences and similarities in terms of the use of historical sources, narrative approaches, and the contribution of social sciences such as archaeology and anthropology. The results of this comparative analysis are expected to provide a deeper insight into the development of modern historiography and how this method is able to provide a more comprehensive and objective understanding of the history of the pre-Islamic period. The conclusion of this research will highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in

modern historical writing to produce a more accurate and critical historical narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge of History has always been limited by incompleteness. Only a part of what was observed in the past is remembered by those who observed it, only a part of what is remembered is recorded, only a part of what is recorded that still exists, only a part of what is still of concern to historians, only a part of what is of concern to historians that can be trusted, only a part of what is trustworthy that can be understood, and only a part of what has been understood can be deciphered or told by historians.

The whole history of the past (the so-called history-as-actuality) can be known only through the surviving record (history-as-record), and most history-as-record is only the surviving part of the observed part of the whole. Even when past records come directly from archaeological or anthropological remains, they are simply the parts selected by experts from the discovered parts of the entire extant past.

As long as the historian has an external object to study, that object is not history-as-actuality, but rather a surviving record of what happened (history-as-record). History can only be told from history-as-record; Meanwhile, spoken history (spoken-as-actuality) is only a part that historians emphasize as a reliable part of history-as-record. Before the past was told by historians, it is likely that it had gone through eight separate stages, each of which had been lost; and there is no guarantee that what is left is the most important, the largest, the most valuable, the most representative, or the most enduring piece. In other words, the "objects" that historians study are not only incomplete, but also very varied.

Sources of Pre-Islamic Arabic Historiography

First, the discovery of inscriptions and carvings in South Arabia, which attests to the emergence of four kingdoms. These kingdoms left behind inscriptions that recorded various actions, such as acts of charity and excellence, taxes, irrigation projects, the construction of walls and fortifications, and military campaigns. Although some of these inscriptions are religious, others are essentially an attempt to record human actions and capture the memory of important deeds. Most of the inscriptions found have flaws in the dating system, but the existence of the information itself suggests the idea of recording human actions, and has inspired the emergence of a number of historical thoughts.

Second, documents and genealogical records kept by several clans. Since the time of jahiliyyah, Arabs have had a tradition of paying attention to and maintaining nasab. Even at that time, knowledge of nasab was included in the category of branches of knowledge that were considered important. Each tribe memorizes its genealogy, and each family member maintains this genealogy by memorizing it, to be proud of the other tribes.

Third, Yemeni stories found in major literary sources are generally legendary. Like Wahb ibn Munabbih and 'Ubaid ibn Shariyah, narrate poetic imaginary stories about Yemeni history, which are a mixture of popular folklore and Israiliyat stories.

In doing so, they sought to glorify the Arabs in Yemen by attributing their glory in the fields of warfare, development projects, language and literature. To prove that they were ahead of the Arabs in the North in their glory, or that they were not inferior to them in that respect. The cultural rivalry between the Arabs of the North and the South (Yemen) is the main cause of the news, and it may have led to some of the bloodline fanaticism of the Arabs in the North. Therefore, these historical narrators are more suitable to be categorized as storytellers/writers than historians. This objective condition causes novels to have little value in the idea of history even if they are the result of a past history.

Fourth, in the northern part of the peninsula, the kings of Lakhmid had "books" kept in churches, which contained stories about the Arabs in the city, their genealogy, and biographies of the rulers. They also knew a lot of Persian news.

Fifth, the Arabs of the North had oral narratives, including stories about their gods and narratives about their social affairs and exploitation. Most of these narratives revolve around their invasions and battles and about their lineage, which has to do with the rules of society and social opinions and ideals, the formation of the idea of deeds/muru'ah, or a set of virtues, the idea of lineage, the honor of origin, the nobility of ancestral deeds.

It is important for individuals to know their ancestors and the exploits they have achieved. Thus, the tribes have stories and news about their actions. The narrative of this tribe is circulated orally and prose, poetry plays a fundamental role in the oral narrative, interspersed with the story, or appears at the end of the story depending on the role of the poet, whether he participates in the event or not. This poem does not follow the story, but it gives vitality and influence. Over time, it became a document that strengthened the truth of the story. The narrative is confusing in terms of timing. Although it lacks harmony and cohesion, and does not have the idea of history. However, it still contains some historical facts. Its fundamental importance is that it continued in the early days of Islam, and its style influenced the beginning of history, particularly in Iraq. Thus, al-Ayyam became part of the historical news, and the appearance of poetry in it made it part of the historical news.

Criticism of Pre-Islamic Arabic Historiography Sources

History is a picture of the past, but the past cannot be fully described in history. There has always been a culture that lived before the history of that culture was written. Our knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabia shows a great deal of disparity, because it comes from very few and varied sources. Most of the information available is based on Islamic sources. The extent to which these sources can be relied upon in describing the conditions of pre-Islamic culture and early Islam, especially because they are closely related to literary material makes the historical sources of the Pre-Islamic Period a subject of debate.

The total silence of Pre-Islamic Historical sources in relation to the vast amount of true literary activity in the pre-Islamic period may be due to the Muslim view of ancient Arabia as a state of "ignorance." However, it is much more likely to assume that this silence is explained by the fact that there was actually nothing

to report at the time. There is almost no room to develop historical literature, mainly due to the lack of scale

Political organization, which was characteristic of pre-Islamic Arabs. Their natural interest in major events, and important events is used as an orientation point in history. There is no doubt that the tradition of battle days is as old as it claims to be and or much older. The tradition cannot be created just like that. In fact, it is the same shape that appears in the oldest parts of history in the Bible. Whether one narrative or the other was sometimes written in pre-Islamic times cannot be decided. However, we can be fairly sure that the al-Ayyam narrative dates back to pre-Islamic times, and the question arises as to whether its existence is an indication or an expression of historical consciousness. The answer is definitely negative. Because after all, initially the narrative was not intended to be a historical material. Early Muslim historians usually confine themselves to brief references to al-Ayyam. Historians show to have hesitation to adopt material that they recognize as belonging to the domain of philologists and writers. And in essence, in its origins, the narrative of al-Ayyam is more of a part of literature in a narrow sense than history. Al-Ayyam is not seen in terms of historical cause and effect, and is essentially not bound by time. There is also no indication that in pre-Islamic times, historical consciousness had ever developed in such a way that there was an attempt to bring these narratives into some sort of historical order. Thus, al-Ayyam's narratives have not been able to evolve into, or provide impetus for, the development of historical literature, although their techniques and forms play an important role in Muslim historiography.

Genealogy, in turn, is much less important than al-Ayyam as a form of historical expression, but rather indicates the existence of historical meaning. It can hardly be assumed that in pre-Islamic times the preservation of lineage included the preservation of historical events associated with individual members of the lineage. Violations of such historical areas have never been the true purpose of genealogy. There is even less evidence for the assumption that genealogical knowledge may have ever been written down in pre-Islamic Arabia. As a result, genealogy could not have developed into a literary form and in fact, genealogy later had a rather insignificant part in the formation of the literary form of Muslim historiography. On the other hand, a practical interest in genealogy may, under favorable circumstances, develop into an interest in the past in general and foster or strengthen the historical consciousness which is an absolute condition for the creation of historical literature.

Examples of Pre-Islamic Arabic Historiography

History of Arabs (1927-1970) karya Philip K Hitti

The low worldview of the Arab world has given rise to political upheavals and other Arab-related events have become increasingly complicated. This happened because there was no fulfillment of the world's needs for Arab history which was seen as authoritative. Based on this background, Daniel Macmillan asked Philip K Hitti to compile a work based on his teaching and learning experiences at Columbia University, American University in Beirut, and Princeton

University, where Philip K Hitti was an Assistant Professor of Semitic Literature at Princeton University.

Philip K Hitti conducted his historical research to compile this work, for 10 years starting around 1927 to 1937. In the process of compiling it, Philip K Hitti submitted his draft writings to various scholars from various generations, both in the west and in the east, to be criticized and discussed. This work was later translated into many languages after its publication, including Arabic, Spanish, Urdu, Italian, and Polish. Each edition has produced dozens of review articles from well-known experts in each country. The corrections, suggestions, and criticisms that were produced then demanded Philip K Hitti to continue to evaluate his work. Less than four decades later, Philip K Hitti continued to consider and make new discoveries to perfect the Historical materials and Historical sources to perfect his work.

The History of Arabs forms an infrastructure of knowledge about the Arab world that covers a period of time from pre-Islamic times to the Ottoman period. The core of the book is found in chapters I to V, which explain the origins of the Arabs. This book pays great attention to the ongoing process of cultural exchange between Arabs and foreign nations. This book also describes the contributions made by other religions to Arab civilization and Islam.

The sources used by Philip K Hitti are various original texts, in the form of poetry, the Bible, classical literature of non-Arabs, travel notes, speeches, and decrees. A neat and sharp narrative accompanied by clear evidence is the advantage of this work. In addition to using primary historical sources, Philip K Hitti also reconstructed the history he wrote by using various sources of pre-existing historical records.

In the book History of Arabs, the discussion of the pre-Islamic period is written in the first part of the book which consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the Arabs as a Semitic Race and the Arabian Peninsula as their birthplace, this chapter discusses several phenomena of the Arab world, modern exploration, ethnic relations of Semitic nations, geographical conditions of the Arabian Peninsula, land conditions and cultivation of natural resources, and how about the life of the Bedouins in the Arabian Peninsula. The second chapter deals with the earliest International Relations; between Southern Arabia and northern Arabia, cultural contact with the Hebrews (Jewish cultural interaction), Arabic culture and classical literature (Roman and Greek), and about Roman expeditions. The third chapter discusses saba and other Negri countries in South Arabia. The fourth chapter deals with the Kingdom of Nabasia and the Lesser Kingdom of Linnya in Northern and Central Arabia; nabasia, Palmyra, Gassan, Lakmi, and Kindah. The fifth chapter discusses Hijaz before the birth of Islam; The development and influence of the Northern Arabs, the Characteristics of the Bedouins, the Culture of Poetry, the Beliefs and Position of the Kaaba, the Three main cities of the Hijaz, and the cultural influences that still exist (saba, Abishinian, Persian, and Ghassan).

Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām (1968-1974) karya jawwād 'ali

In the book *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām* written by Dr. Jawwad Ali, it clearly tells the history of ancient Arabia from various aspects: geography, climate, characteristics, genealogy; politics, law, and government; socio-cultural; religion and belief; natural resources and economy; even language, literacy and literature. It refers to classical sources such as manuscripts, Greek, Roman, Jewish records, and discoveries from archaeologists. The Historical Narrative presented in this book has a straightforward character, clear description, deep observation, and a comprehensive explanation of the ancient Arabs before Islam. Jawwād'Ali in his work tries to describe how the Arabs are after conducting thorough research, in-depth analysis, and careful discussion. Jawwād 'Ali, in his preface, said that he had made a serious effort to report the results of his historical research as much as possible by minimizing judgments and feelings that contained elements of subjectivity. He did this in order to produce a more objective work of history about the origin of the Arab nation. The philosophical background that prompted Jawwād'Ali, to compile this work of History was due to concerns about the lack of attention paid by Arab governments to their own ancient History.

The book *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām* consists of 10 volumes, with the details of the discussion as follows;

- 1) It consists of 16 Chapters. The first subchapter discusses the definition of the word Arabic, the second subchapter discusses the Age of Jahiliyah and historical sources for the Jahiliyah period (The existence of pre-Islamic Arabic historical sources, inscriptions and writings, the history of writings, the Torah, the Talmud, tafsir, and Hebrew syrahs, classical books, the existence of sources from Christianity, Arabic Islam, and mentions several Muslim historians), the third Subchapter discusses how pre-Islamic history was perpetuated, recorded, and rewritten. The fourth subchapter discusses the geographical conditions of Arabia. The fifth subchapter discusses the nature of the Arabian Peninsula, its wealth, and its inhabitants. The sixth subchapter discusses the relationship between the Arabs and the Semites. The seventh subchapter deals with the nature of the Arab mentality. The eighth subchapter discusses the tabaqah of the Arabs. The ninth subchapter discusses Arabic 'Aaribah and Arabic Musta'ribah. The tenth subchapter deals with the Relic of the Torah (Ismailiyyah, Son of Cush, Hagarane). The eleventh subchapter deals with the Nasab of the Arabs (Qathanis and adnanis in Islam, 'Aaribah and Musta'ribah). The twelfth subchapter deals with tribal tabaqah, such as their Nasab, totemism, the role of mothers, and the origin of names. The thirteenth subchapter discusses the history of the ancient Arabian Peninsula. The fourteenth subchapter discusses Arabia as a fertile region. The fifteenth subchapter deals with the relationship between the Arabs and the Chaldeans and Persians. The sixteenth subchapter deals with the Arabs and the Hebrews.
- 2) It consists of 17 Chapters. This second volume focuses on the interaction and relationship that exists between pre-Islamic Arabs and other nations. In this volume, it is explained that the pre-Islamic Arabs had interactions with the

Romans, Greeks, Hadramaut, Qathban, Daidan, Saba', Hamdan, Himyarit, Sasanit, and Byzantium.

- 3) It consists of 7 Chapters. This third volume still discusses the interaction and relationship of the pre-Islamic Arabs with other nations and kingdoms such as Nabat, Tadmir, Al-Hirrah, Kindah, and Ghassan.
- 4) It consists of 8 chapters. This fourth volume has a focus on discussing aspects of social life in Arabia in the pre-Islamic period. The details of the discussion in this volume are about the social conditions of the city of Makkah, yastrib, and Thoif. Political conditions in general, Arab society, explanation of qabilah and nasab, details about the discussion of the Bani Adnan, the division of the system of positions and degrees in
- 5) It consists of 11 chapters. This fifth volume has a focus on the economy and politics of the pre-Islamic Arab nation. In this volume, Jawwād 'Ali explains in detail how poverty and wealth, matters of statehood, rights owned by kings and tribal leaders, wars and invasions that they commit, how the legal system exists, what status each individual has, as well as discussions about agreements and the fulfillment of agreements.
- 6) It consists of 20 chapters. This sixth volume focuses on the belief system and religious practices of the pre-Islamic Arab nation. In this volume, Jawwād 'Ali, explains how the religions existed at that time, how the monotheistic and polytheistic belief systems developed, the prophetic aspects of the pre-Islamic period, how the relationship of god with the fate of man, how their understanding of the soul spirit and eternity, how the gods and ways to get closer to their gods, how the discussion of the idols they had (in the form of statues and writings), how their religious rituals, how the Hajj and Umrah were carried out at that time, how the Kaaba was positioned as their place of worship, the existence of the Hanif, the existence of Jews and Nazrays, the position of Jewish poetry and Christian doctrines circulating at that time, as well as the pre-Islamic Arab belief in the tatayyur.
- 7) It consists of 28 chapters. In this volume Jawwād 'Ali examines the Arab economy, covering trade, agriculture, and existing natural resources. This discussion explains how the natural conditions of the Arabs affect the existing economic system such as how the agricultural system developed at that time, how the grasslands existed at that time and what professions developed around them, how they traded from their livestock and agricultural products, how they traded by land and sea, How they made the market, the trading system, the mechanism for storing wealth, and about how they made the system of measurements and scales as the unit of measurement they used.
- 8) It consists of 28 chapters. This section generally discusses the various systems that existed in the pre-Islamic Arabs, such as the system of time, month, medicine, language, buildings, calligraphy, scholars, philosophy, wisdom, calendars, and calendars that they used.
- 9) It consists of 25 chapters. This section discusses the development of literature, especially poetry in the world of Arabic literature. This book explains how to use diction and language in a poem, how to use nahwu in their literature, how to use nahwu in their literature, how to system the verse, how the rules are,

how to form and type, how to make the verse, how poetry developed in Bashrah and in kuffah, how the virtues of poetry at that time, who were the famous poet narrators of that time, how they categorize the narrators of poetry (vagrants, villages, quraysh, yastribs, tsaqif, jews, and nashrani), how to say Muallaqat as-sab', and how the owner is positioned.

CONCLUSION

Pre-Islamic Arab historiography is an important area of study in understanding the development and influence of Arab societies before the arrival of Islam. Despite the lack of systematic written records, knowledge about this period can be obtained from a variety of sources, including oral traditions, poetry, foreign records, and a variety of other usable sciences. This historiography focuses on the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects that shaped the identity of Pre-Islamic Arabs.

One of the main challenges in this study is the limitation of primary sources. Much of the information comes from secondary sources written after the rise of Islam, such as the works of early Muslim historians. However, a critical analysis of these sources allows us to identify broader patterns in pre-Islamic history. It is important to consider the social and political context in which the records were made, as well as how the author's perspective influenced historical representation.

The use of interdisciplinary methodologies, including anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology, can enrich our understanding of this period. Sources such as pre-Islamic poetic works, trade documents, and travel notes from such outside authors also provide valuable additional insights.

Serious efforts and improvements to a historian's understanding of historical events are a must, so that historical events can be properly reconstructed. With the help of social sciences, historical facts provide the movement of time through various events. However, what needs to be emphasized is that the movement of time must be the main focus of the exploration of historical events. It helps to understand that this is effective when historians use social sciences to explain history, but still pay attention to the process and chronology. By applying social knowledge insights, historical content such as human activities in the past will be the same as the problems of today's society. Modern history is inspired by the development of the social sciences. Without ignoring the existence and characteristics of history, models, ideas, and concepts of social science are considered to be able to help expand the picture of historical reality, so that it becomes a historical narrative that develops and has a scope that remains coordinated.

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