

Parlak N.
**Some evaluations on Lisan Al-Din
Ibn Al-Khatib as a historian in
Andalucia**

An outstanding man of science and historian, Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib (1313-1374) played an important role in the history of the medieval Muslim Spain. In his works he combined many branches of science, that is why his Muslim contemporaries called him "al-'Allama" ("the greatest scientist"), and the Spaniards gave him an honorary title of "el Poligrafo" "the Encyclopaedist".

He owns about 60 scientific works, which occupy a special place in the history writings that make up the most complete historical annals of Muslim Spain.

Ibn al-Khatib viewed history as a means of transferring information to the next generations, immortalizing the moral qualities, tracing their lineage and gaining experience.

Marking his era through the official duties he had, Ibn al-Khatib has had an ongoing influence on people – with the books he wrote – especially, in the fields of history and literature, until today.

Key words: Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib, history, historiography, culture.

Парлак Н.
**Лисан ад-Дин Ибн әл-Хатиб
Андалусиялық тарихшы
ретінде**

Айтулы ғалым және тарихшы Лисан ад-Дин Ибн әл-Хатиб ортағасырлық мұсылмандық Испания тарихында маңызды орын алады. Ол өз еңбектерінде ғылымның көптеген салаларын біріктірді. Осы еңбегі үшін замандастары оны 'аллама, «ғұлама», ал испандықтар el-Poligrafo: «әмбебап ғалым» деп атады. Оған 60-қа жуық ғылыми еңбектер тиесілі. Олардың арасында мұсылмандық Испанияның тарихи жылнамаларынан құралған тарихқа қатысты шығармалар маңызды орын алады.

Ибн әл-Хатиб тарихты келесі ұрпаққа ақпарат беру, өзінің шығу тегін қарастыру, өткеннен тәжірибе алу жолымен моральдық қасиеттерді мығымдау құралы ретінде қарады.

Ибн әл-Хатиб өзінің дәуірін сипаттай отырып, әсіресе тарих пен әдебиет саласындағы кітаптары арқылы әлі күнге дейін адамдарға ықпал етіп келеді.

Түйін сөздер: Лисан ад-Дин Ибн әл-Хатиб, тарих, тарихтану, мәдениет.

Парлак Н.
**Лисан ад-Дин Ибн ал-Хатиб
как Андалусий историк**

Выдающийся ученый и историк Лисан ад-Дин Ибн ал-Хатиб занимает важное место в истории средневековой мусульманской Испании. В своих работах он объединил многие отрасли науки, за что арабские современники почтительно называли его 'аллама, «ученнейший», а испанцы el-Poligrafo: «ученый-универсал», энциклопедист. Ему принадлежит около 60 научных трудов, в которых особое место занимают сочинения по истории, составляющие наиболее полную историческую летопись мусульманской Испании.

Ибн аль-Хатиб рассматривал историю как средство передачи информации следующим поколениям, увековечивания моральных качеств, прослеживая их происхождение и получение опыта.

Ибн аль-Хатиб имел влияния на людей благодаря тем книгам, которые он писал, особенно в области истории и литературы, до сегодняшнего дня.

Ключевые слова: Лисан ад-Дин Ибн ал-Хатиб, история, историография, культура.

SOME EVALUATIONS ON LISAN AL-DIN IBN AL-KHATIB AS A HISTORIAN IN ANDALUCIA

HisLife

Lisân al-din Ibn al-Khatib, a member of a noble Yemeni family who migrated to Syria from Andalusia after the conquest of Andalusia¹, was born on 25 Rabi' al-Thani 713/ 15 November 1313² in Loja, a city in the west of Granada. His early education started under the inspection of his father. Afterwards, he was educated in the fields of religious studies, grammar, poetry and natural sciences by the distinguished scholars of Banu Ahmar dynasty and of North Africa³.

Ibn al-Khatib, who drew Yusuf I (r. 733-755/1333-1354) attention after having penned a eulogy for him, gained his favour and was accepted to the palace and appointed as the grand vizier, or the councillor of state, and became the chief of the royal council, diwan (Shavval 749/January 1349).⁴

Ibn al-Khatib had successfully conducted the duties he had until Abû al-Walid captured the reign of Ismail II in 760 AH. /1359 AD. After that, the toppled Sultan Muhammad V, fled the country and went to Wâdi Âsh. Though Ibn al-Khatib spent efforts to compromise with the new administration, he was arrested and imprisoned and they confiscated all his assets with his opponents' incitement against him.⁵

With the involvement of Sultan Abû Sâlim, who kept close watch on the incidents taking place in Banu Ahmar dynasty⁶, and through the efforts spent by his official secretary Ibn Marzûq, Ibn al-Khatib was released from prison and took refuge in Morocco with Muhammad V. (761 AH /1359 AD).

When Sultan Muhammad V succeeded to the throne again about three years after the coup (763 AH /1362 AD), Ibn al-Khatib was invited to

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¹Vila J., Bosch, "Ibn al-Khatib", EI2, Leiden 1986, III, 835-837.

²Shihâb al-dîn Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Maqqarî, Nafh al-Tîb min ghusn al-Andalus al-ratif wa zikru vezirihâ Lisân al-din Ibn al-Khatib, (Ed. Yusuf al-Sheyh M. al-Bukaî), 10 vols. Beirut 1419/1998, VI, 63.

³Maqqarî, Nafh al-Tîb, VI, 160; Chejne, Muslim Spain, 271.

⁴Ibn al-Khatib, al-Ihâta fi akhbâr Ghamâta, (Ed. M. AbdullahInân), 4 vols.Cairo 1973-1977, IV, 443; Ibn al-Khatib, al-Lamha al-badriyya fi al-Dawla al-Nasriyya, (Ed. Lacnalhyâ al-Turâsi al-Arabî), Beirut 1980, p.104; Bosch, "Ibnal-Khatib", EI2, III, 835-837.

⁵Ibn al-Khatib, Ihâta, IV, 443; Ibn al-Khatib, A'mâl al-a'lâm fimen bûyi'a kabla al-ihtilâmmin mulûk al-Islâm, (Ed. Levi-Provençal, E.), Beirut 1956, p. 311.

⁶Ibn al-Khaldûn, Kitâb al-Iber, 5 vols. Bulak, 1284, VII, 333.

his former position. Ibn al-Khatib's return to his former position with a more powerful stance (2 Ramadân 763 AH /25 June 1362 AD) was not welcomed in some quarters and his activities caused disturbance to some.

Disturbed by the recent developments, and corresponding secretly with the Sultan of Marinid, Ibn al-Khatib took refuge in Sultan Abû al-Faris Abd al-Aziz's country after having been informed that he would be taken under the protection of the Sultan (1 Camaz al-akhir 773/10 December 1371 AD).⁷

The successive attempts to the Marinid dynasty made by those wishing to see Ibn al-Khatib's arrest and execution failed. At that time, young Abû al-Abbâs Ahmad bin Abû Sâlim, who had close ties with the Banu Ahmar dynasty, was enthroned.⁸ Thus, Ibn al-Khatib was arrested by the new regime and imprisoned in early 776 AH/1374 AD.

Ibn al-Khatib, who had been unjustly judged by the legislative council from Banu Ahmar dynasty, was massacred in his cell during the process of ongoing debates over his execution due to his ideas in his books leading to accusations of blasphemy 776 AH/1374 AD. The corpse, which had been buried, was taken out, set on fire, and buried again.⁹

As a Historian

Ibn al-Khatib viewed history as a means of transferring information to the next generations, immortalizing the moral qualities, tracing their lineage and gaining experience. According to him, history is a science, which collects and stores the events that took place in the past, draws lessons from them, and allows people to prepare for the future.

According to Ibn al-Khatib history is also of a great significance from religious point of view. This can be clearly seen both in his works about history and in other works as well. Because, according to him: "History reminds those who are unaware about God, thereby helping people approach God. Knowledgeable people, upon feeling the power of God, discover their faith and find salvation. Those, having witnessed the death of cruel and ruthless people, draw lessons from this for themselves. Hence, they realise the power of God better and their faith grows stronger."¹⁰

⁷ Ibn al-Khatib, A'mâl, 316-318.

⁸ Ibn al-Khaldûn, Iber, VII, 335-340.

⁹ Ibn al-Khaldûn, Iber, VII, 341-342; The grave, which is near B-b al-Mahruk in Morocco, was restored by the Moroccan government (during the reign of King al-Khamis) in 20th century and a tomb-like building was constructed on it. Inân, Lisân al-din, 174; Sâih 42.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Khatib, Ihâta, I, 81. Ibn al-Khatib sets forth some evidence taken from Koranic verses so as to confirm this view. 11 Hûd 120, 12 Yusuf 3.

Ibn al-Khatib admits that history is of great importance due to the fact that it is comprised of ever-changing events that are doomed to vanish so long as they are not recorded. Because those witnessing some events are indeed rare. Therefore, as time passes, they are prone to be forgotten in time.¹¹

Owing to his ideas, Ibn al-Khatib can be counted as a 'didactic' and 'pragmatic' historian. Because, in this type of historiography drawing a lesson from history and drawing effective conclusions are one of the fundamental aims.¹² This perspective can also be seen in Ibn al-Khatib's works. For example, when examining the relations between France and Castalia-Aragon, Ibn al-Khatib, having informed his readers extensively about the topic, stated that he deliberately prolonged the topic in order to warn Muslims to be more cautious, and to draw lessons from the events.¹³

Ibn al-Khatib wrote history so as to introduce the Muslim societies and states in the west, especially the Banu Ahmar dynasty.¹⁴ Though he wrote seventeen books about history, only ten of them have survived today.

The works of Ibn al-Khatib on history are comprised of two sections. In the first sections, the history, cities, social and cultural structure of Banu Ahmar were dwelt upon. The second sections of the works, which constituted a great part, focused on people. In these sections, the biographies of the people from different layers of societies in North Africa and sometimes of the distinguished people in Christian Spain as well as the biographies of those in Banu Ahmar dynasty were concentrated on.¹⁵ We call this practice – by which Ibn al-Khatib gave information about people in alphabetic order - 'person-oriented narration'. The content of the second sections was not restricted to biographies only, but he also gave key and historically valuable information. Because, 'spatial framework' has broadened to a great extent in this type of person-oriented narration.

In his works pertaining to history, Banu Ahmar dynasty takes priority over other subjects. Hence, Ibn al-Khatib can be regarded as a local historian.

¹¹ Ibn al-Khatib, Lamha, 19.

¹² Historical works have been classified into groups as to their style. 1. Transmitting 2. Didactic / Pragmatic 3. Reason-Result / 4. Social History. Z. Velidî Togan, Tarihte Usûl, Ist. 1969, p. 2-3.

¹³ Ibn al-Khatib, Ihâta, II, 48.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Khatib, A'mâl, 277; Ibn al-Khatib, al-Katîba al-kâmina fi men lakînâhu bi al-Andalus min shuarâi miet al-sâmina, (Ed. Ihsân Abb-s), Beirut 1983, p. 28.

¹⁵ See Ibn al-Khatib, A'mâl, 332-338.

However, his successful narration observed in all his historical works has led him to be called as a ‘great historian’.¹⁶

Ibn al-Khatib penned the political history of Banu Ahmar as well as writing its history of civilisation. In his works he not only examined the political and administrative position of Banu Ahmar but also analysed its social structure. While writing the history of Banu Ahmar dynasty, Ibn al-Khatib also took special interest in the Muslim states in Maghreb as well as the Christian states in the north.

In his works related to history, it has been observed that his audience was not only comprised of statesmen, administrators and luminaries but also common people. Because, in some of his works he preferred a highly erudite style while in some works he favoured to write in plain language.¹⁷

Ibn al-Khatib benefited from various sources, which had different characteristics. Apart from the widely known sources, he also made use of very different sources, such as; a piece of information carved in a tombstone, or private notes belonging to a certain person, or personal comments in the margin of the cover page of a book, or sometimes inscriptions in the walls of a building.¹⁸

In the prologues of his works related to history or in sections, which he specially added, he gave information about geographical features, social characteristics and administrative structures of Banu Ahmar country, and sometimes he went into details.

While transmitting historical information, he, for some reasons, made criticisms and analyses. Ibn al-Khatib, time to time, criticised both the sources from which he cited and the persons about whom he gave information. It was also observed that he criticised the former historians from the point of view of methodology.

Ibn al-Khatib, if he was not sure about the credibility of his sources, he clearly preferred to use certain expressions, like ‘*yu’abberru*’ (it is stated that...), ‘*yüqalu*’ (it is said that...), and ‘*qîle*’ (it is expressed that...), etc.¹⁹ If he had some doubts about the information he had, he clearly expressed it and

added: “I am still in the process of investigating the credibility of the information I quoted” to show his sensitivity about the issue. If he was so sure about his sources, he also asserted “if this news is correct, I cannot possibly be unaware of it!”²⁰

Ibn al-Khatib was not able to influence his contemporaries in the field of history. For instance, his contemporaries, like Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Battûta, and Ibn al-Ahmar did not make any negative or positive comments about Ibn al-Khatib as a historian. However, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn al-Ahmar praised Ibn al-Khatib’s literary identity and poetry and expressed their opinions with quite extravagant words.

Ibn Khaldun called Ibn al-Khatib as ‘one of the miracles of God in poetry and prose’.²¹ However, we also observed that Ibn al-Khatib was not mentioned in Ibn Khaldun’s works pertaining to ideas and thought. Furthermore, we have concluded that, though not expressing clearly, Ibn Khaldun criticised Ibn al-Khatib’s historiography. The reason why we have reached this conclusion lies in the fact that the style of history-writing, which Ibn Khaldun generally criticised without revealing any name, invariably overlaps with that of Ibn al-Khatib’s historiography.²²

Though widely known in the milieu of the scholars, Ibn al-Khatib is not, unfortunately, known by large audience. We believe that the reason for this lies in the fact that the political struggles, especially the virulent hate campaigns against him in his home country, thereby leading to burning of his books in the squares,²³ have all been effective to a great extent. On the other hand, his remarkable erudition and frequent use of literary applications have all contributed to misconceptions about him or his recognition only by a small minority.

Marking his era through the official duties he had, Ibn al-Khatib has had an ongoing influence on people – with the books he wrote – especially, in the fields of history and literature, until today. Hence, he has influenced the authors and thinkers of the following eras to a great extent. The historians, such as Ibn Farhun²⁴ (d. 1397 AD / 799

¹⁶ For further information, please refer to Nizamettin Parlak Lisânüddîn Ibnü’l-Hatib’in Siyâsî Kişiliği ve Tarihçiliği, Ankara 2012, 84.

¹⁷ Ibid, 77-86.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Khatib, *Ihâta*, II, 100, 119; III, 326, 329; IV, 87...

¹⁹ Ibn al-Khatib, *Ihâta*, I, 91, 260, 299; Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufâda al-jirâb fî ulâlat al-ightirâb*, (A. Muhtar al-Abbâdî and Abd al-aziz al-Ahvânî), *Dâr al-Baydâ* 1985, p. 117, 119, 273...; Ibn al-Khatib, *A’mâl*, II, 4, 12...

²⁰ Ibn al-Khatib, *Nufâda*, 131.

²¹ Ibn al-Khaldûn, *al-Ta’rîf bi Ibn Haldûn*, Lebanon-Cairo 1979, p. 167.

²² Abd al-rahman Ibn al-Khaldûn, (d. 808/1406), *al-Muqaddimah*, 3 vols. Trans. Z. Kadiri Ugan Ist. 1986, I, 74-75.

²³ Ab al-Hasan al-Nubâhi, *Târîkh qudât al-Andalus*, (al-Marqaba al-uly, Ed. L. Provençal), Cairo 1948, p. 202; Ibn al-Khatib, *A’mâl*, 319.

²⁴ Ibn Farhûn al-Dîbâc al-muzhab, Egypt 1351, I, 345.

AH), Kalkashandî²⁵ (d. 1418 AD / 821 AH), Ibn Quadi Shubba al-Damashki (d. 1448 AD / 851 AH), Ibn Hagar al-Ashkalani (d. 1448 AD / 851 AH), al-Suyû'Isam Qasabci, who wrote a book about Ibn al-Khatib's life, mentions the name, Ibn al Khamis al-Tilimsânî among the teachers of Ibn al-Khatib. It is obvious that Ibn al Khamis, who died before 708 AH (1309 AD), cannot possibly tutor Ibn al-Khatib, who was born in 713 AH (1313 AD).

Ibn al-Khatib had to leave Granada and went to Morocco in (773 AH) 1371 AD. After a short while, Ibn al-Khatib's books were burnt in Granada. Even though the books set on fire were said to be on medicine, Sufism, and music²⁶, the perpetrator, Abû al-Hasan al-Nubahi, who himself set the books on fire, stated 'I had Ibn al-Khatib's books, which were on theology and ethics, burnt for their content.'

In the introductory part of the Turkish translation of Ibn Hazm's book, *Tawq al-hamama (The Dove's Necking)* is a general commentary about poetry and literature in Andalusia, and in that part Ibn al-Khatib is mentioned and the information, 'his book *Kitâb al-Andalus* is very important...' is given. However, there is no such a book called *Kitâb al-Andalus* among about sixty books written by Ibn al-Khatib. In the book²⁷, from which this information was taken, and in which the Andalusian authors were mentioned, the expression, 'Kuttâb al-Andalus' was, in our opinion, probably misunderstood by the translator and misspelled as '*Kitâb al-Andalus*' and also it was misconceived as one of Ibn al-Khatib's books.²⁸

Ibn al-Khatib's work, called *Raḡm al-hulal*, was mistaken for *al-Hulal al-marqûma*, which was one of his books as well.²⁹ In fact, Ibn al-Khatib mentioned these books separately and he clearly stated that *al-Hulal al-marqûma* was based on the methodology of the canon jurisprudence of Islam (fiqh).³⁰

Ismail Pasha, in his book, *Hadiyya al-ârifin*, attributed two books, called *Siyâsa al-madina* and *Maḡama al-ushshâk* to Ibn al-Khatib. However, neither Ibn al-Khatib, nor the other sources giving information about Ibn al-Khatib made any mention of these books.

Ibn al-Khatib's work, *Mufradat*, can be regarded as a sort of dictionary for some certain important words. There are also words from medical terminology in this work. Yet, as Brockelmann³¹ expressed, this work is not only a medical dictionary.

Ibn Asker al-Gassani's work, called *al-Ikmâl*, is one of the sources from which Ibn al-Khatib benefited in *Ihâta*. However, Ibrahim Mustafa, who studied Ibn al-Khatib's sources, was not able to ascertain this. Thus, he did not mention this source in the study, which he conducted about the sources used by Ibn al-Khatib. Again, in the same study, Mustafa Ibrahim mentioned Musa al-Radi (d. 955 AD / 344 AH) among the sources benefited by Ibn al-Khatib; however, he also added: "Ibn al-Khatib did not mention from which of Radi's books he had benefited." Actually, Ibn al-Khatib stated that he had benefited from the book called *al-Istiyab* by Radi on page 133 in *Ihâta* II.

Apart from these, it will be appropriate to mention two points in general. Ibn al-Khatib strove hard to appoint his own men both to the palace and to the high-ranking positions. He never hesitated to get rid of those who were able to become affiliated with the royal family in the palace without his permission, or those who were held in high esteem by the royalty or even those who were likely to be shown respect in the palace in the long run. However, all these political struggles led to his murder.

Numerous things have been said and written about Ibn al-Khatib after his death. But an incident, which took place fifty years after his death, is of significance. During the first reign of the sultan, Abû Abdullah Muhammad from Banu Ahmar dynasty (820 – 830 AH / 1417 – 1427 AD), a copy of Ibn al-Khatib's work, *Ihâta*, was donated by the vizier and the qadi (Islamic magistrate), Abû Yahya bin Asim, to Yusufiya Madrasah (theological school attached to a mosque) in *Granada*. The vizier eulogized Ibn al-Khatib in the charter of the waqf, which he especially wrote for the work, *Ihâta*.³² We can claim that this could be regarded as a sort of reinstatement of his shattered memoir.

²⁵ Kalkashandî, Subh al ashâ, (Ed. M. Husayin Shamsaddin), 14 vols. Beirut-Lebanon, 407/1987, I, 128-129; II, 458-461, 535-537; VI, 458-461, 535-536; VII, 40-41, 64-69, 70-73, 108-110, 348-349; XI, 4-6.

²⁶ Ibn al-Khatib, Sharh Raḡm al-hulal fî nazm al-duwal, (Ed. Adnan Darwish) Damascus 1990, p. 42.

²⁷ Hasan al-Zayyât Târîkh al-adab al-Arabî (Cairo nodate), 343.

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³⁰ Ibn al-Khatib, *Ihâta*, IV, 462.

³¹ Brockelmann, *Târîkh al-adab al-Arabî* (Trans. Mahmut Fehmi Hicazi), 9 vols. Egypt 1995, VII, 529.

³² Maqqarî *Nafh al-Tib*, VIII, 276.

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