

Scientific Approach in the Reign of Buveyhid Dynasty

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This paper discusses the number of scholars and their scientific interests in the reign of Buveyhid. Buveyhid the most important Iranian-Shi 'it dynasties appeared in the early era of Islam. They were so powerful that the Abbasid Caliphs had to obey them. According to their Shi 'it religion, they practiced the idea of democracy and all sects were free in their reign. According to the survey more than 350 scholars were prominent in this period, during 320/900- 450/1050. If we count their specialty, the number increases to about 714. What is interesting is that we can find all fields specialists at that time. They are from all religions and also Islamic sects. The number of Shi 'it scholars is outstanding among them.

Keywords: Buveyhids, Scientific approach, Abbasid Caliphs, Islamic history, Shi 'it dynasty.

Introduction

The science of history is usually defined as the history of political activities of the kings, emperors, and those who have political power i.e. those who can change the political status of the countries or can change the physical borders are the main personages in the history of every country or nation. Dealing with the scientific approach or development in the history of countries although not very common is very important. Because even

the most tyrant king or emperor is eager to show himself as the one who likes knowledge and supports the scientists. In this regard, as we mostly see in the historical books and documents, scientists and scholars are subordinates to the kings or emperors' will and intention. Therefore, if the political authorities try to create a suitable environment in which scholars can enrich their thoughts, the knowledge overflows and subsequently the human generations attain the

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results.

The general approach towards knowledge and sciences depends on the strategy defined by the rulers and accepted by the people. While is usually originated from the philosophy or religion accepted by them. Religion and philosophy encourage people to seek the knowledge, subsequently increase the number of scholars and philosophers.

Islam encourages seeking of knowledge

Islam is one of the religions that fundamentally encourages the followers to obtain knowledge. The teachings of Qur'an and the Hadith perfectly deal with this matter (1). It emphasizes not only the Islamic and Qur'anic teachings but encourages them to obtain others' knowledge and culture, too (2). In the Islamic history, after the four Orthodoxies, some Caliphs, in order to deviate people from the true Islamic teachings and to do whatever they wanted, overemphasized on the scientific, literary and cultural heritage of other nations and encouraged the scholars to translate them into Arabic. They tried to use them for their entertainment, fighting and other purposes. The books such as *'Uyn al Akhbar* by Ibn Qutaibah and *'Iqd al Farid* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbah are some of the early examples (3). The movement for translation of non-Islamic books, especially Greek ones, had begun during the Omayid period, enforced in the early Abbasids, and reached to the highest point in the early decades of 3rd /9th and

4th /10th centuries. The translation of philosophical thoughts of Aristotle mostly by Christian authors, which were not fully in consistency with the Islamic teachings, created some severe disputes and discussions among the Muslim scholars. In this period, the strategy of the government was to let everybody free in their belief.

General uprisings against Caliphs

After the Prophet and his four orthodox Caliphs, Unayid and Abbasid dynasties ruled the Islamic. Due to the prejudice of Omavids dynasty over their subordinate nations by practicing Arab superiority over others, there started some local and general uprisings in the form of protest. For example, Abu Moslem Khorasani, one of the designated Iranian commander and protester, helped Abbasids in order to get people rid of Umayyids. But during Abbasids, the people witnessed too that the new Caliphs do not care anything except their personal benefits. The uprisings, which had begun from the previous centuries, here and there in all over the Islamic empire, tried to establish independent governments. Thus some powerful dynasties, came into prominence which even challenged the authority Abbasid Caliphs. During the 3rd and 4th centuries of Higris, there were some prominent uprisings against the Abbasid Caliphs' authority and against their ruling strategy over the Islamic Empire. These movements showed themselves in

new organisations such as: Samanids, Taherids, Safarids in Iran, Buveyhids in Iran and Iraq, Hamdanids in Iraq and Syria, Fatemids in Egypt and Idrisids in North of Africa. What is interesting is that they were all Shi 'its or had some inclination towards shi 'it's conduct (4).

Motivation for this study

As a university professor, the author teaches as the referred sources in the University of Tehran. Few main topics taught are encyclopedias, biographies and bibliographies as a library science course. Although he was inclined doing some surveys on these topics, he eagerly motivated when he received an Arabic, called: Hayat al 'Ilmyah fi al 'Ahd al Saljuq fi al 'Araq (the Scientific Approach in Iraq in Seljuk Period). As usual, he found that it paid little attention to Shi 'it scientific activities and scholarly works. At that time, the author wished if he could investigate in Shi 'it periods and search for their scientific approaches. Reading some books or articles such as Islamic civilization in the 5th century of Islam by Adam Metz and the scholarly article by Naji Ma 'ruf called: Madaris qabl az Nezamiyah dar Araq (Islamic Schools before Nezamiyah of Baghdad) gave extra motivations for this research. Due to these considerations, he made a proposal entitled "the scientific approaches in the Shi 'it dynasties." Then he began working on Buveyhyds, not necessarily the first, but as the most important ones in the history of Islamic dynasties.

Buveyhid period

Buveyhid dynasty reigned over a great part of Iran and Iraq during 320 and 450 Higri. The three brothers named Hasan, Ali and Ahmad were the founders of this dynasty dividing them equally. Among the next generation of the rulers, there was the most powerful king named 'Adhad al- Dowlah (338-372 A.H.) who was compared with the most powerful Abbasid Caliphs- Harun al- Rashid(170-193 A.H.) whose capitals were Shiraz as well as Baghdad. Due to the weakness of 'Abbasids at that time the Caliphs had to obey them. In some cases the new rulers of Buveyhids nominated or abandoned the Abbasid Caliphs.

Although Buveyhid period is one of the most brilliant eras at the Islamic history, especially from scientific point of view, there is not much written in this field. Some insist to stretch this brilliant period to the 7th and 8th centuries of Hiyris (5). But actually the Ava'il (pre-Islamic sciences like Mathematics Medicine, Astronomy and other natural sciences) were faded away by the fall of Buveyhids. The other dynasties such as Turkish sunni and Ghaznavids, were very biased towards their religion and did not let others be free in their thoughts (6). Even Khwaja Nezam al- Mulk, the very clever minister of Saljuqs was very tough to others. He was partisan for Hanafids and Shafe'ids, two sects of Islamic sunnit religion (7). In fact, this era is unique in its generality and specialty.

Scientific renaissance in this period

It is told that the Buveyhid Age was one of the

most productive periods in the Islamic era. This period saw emergence of numerous scientists and scholars in every domain in comparison to the other periods, quantitatively and qualitatively. Many historians as well as sociologists confessed the exception of this period, calling as the renaissance period, or the period of Islamic humanism (8).

Some authors believed that Samanid (9) or Ghaznavid (10) periods could be called as brilliant era in Islamic history too. But it must be noted that in these two cases one witnesses the cheerfulness of the Persian culture and literature. Some compared (11) the renaissance in this period with the Italian renaissance in 15th century from some points of view. Some others compared it with the Western 12th century renaissance. In this comparison, they say that the works of Plato, Aristotle, Ocludes, Julius and Beatles were retrieved and translated. Even those who are in rpposition with Shi 'it dynasties confess that this period is the outstanding one because of the abundance of scientists and knowledgeable people in all the fields (12). Some of the learned kings of this dynasty as well as their knowledgeable ministers (Vezirs) helped the situation. The best example of this scientific renaissance in the 4th/10th century is Abu al Fadhl al 'Amid, who was the teacher of 'Adhad al Dowlah, the most powerful king of Buveyhids, teaching him how to manage the government and rule the country. Ibn 'Amid considered himself as the best follower of the Greek philosophers such as Plato, Socrates and

Aristotle (13). This period as Kraemer defines, is distinguished for three points: Individualism, Unitarianism, and Secularism (14). At that time, as describes Kraemer, the individual potentiality and one's efficiency was preferred to genealogy. For example, Abu Hayan Towhidi's father was a simple date seller. Ibn-'Amid and Sahib -bin 'Abbad, the knowledgeable ministers, got their jobs because they tried themselves and they had their individual enthusiasm. The real founders of Buveyhid dynasty were sons of an unknown man or a poor fisherman. Baghdad was a metropolitan and all scientists and scholars from all over the Islamic word gathered there to meet each other. This vast Empire was extended from Spain to India (15). The believers of other religions such as Christians, Jews, and the Sabians were cooperating to improve knowledge actively in this Islamic dominated region. Secularism and skepticism were found in all scientific or philosophic circles. Poets practiced their poetic works in front of the ministers such as Sahib bin- 'Ibad (16). The democracy fecilitated by the Buveyhids resulted in the presence of many distinguished scholars at that time. Their approaches were in all subjects and disciplines. For example, in Arabic literature we can name Abu al Hasan Mafarrukhi (d. 348), Abu al Faraj Isfahani (d.356), Ibn Marzban Sirafi (d.368), Abu 'Ali Hasan bin Ahmad (d. 380), and Ahmad bin Faris Razi (d.395).

In Fiqh and Usul (jurisprudence) and Qur 'anic interpretation, we can name Abu Bakr Ahmad bin

Isma'il Jurjani(d. 371), Ibn al Tabari (d.376), Abu Hamed Isfaraeni (d. 406).

Mas'udi (d. 347) and Istakhri(d. 346) , Muhammad bin Hasan Qumi and Abu Sa'id Abi (d.421) were famous in history and geography.

In Kalam and Islamic Philosophy we have Qadhi Abd al Jabbar al Mu'tazeli (d. 415), Sistani, Ibn Muskuyeh, Ibn Sina and Syed Murtedha.

In mysticism, the names of Ibn Khafif Shirazi(d. 371). Ibn Sheiban Qarmasini(d. 377) and Baba Tahir 'Uryan are outstanding.

In Medicine, Mathematics, and Astronomy there were some famous scholars such as Ibn Tayeb al Tabari(d. 366), Majusi Ahvazi (d.384), Buzjani(d. 388), and Abu al Khayr al Jara'ehi (17).

The Buveyhids era began after the two great semi-philosophic movements called I- 'tezal and Asha'irah. Now in this time, the Buveyhids, first Zeydi in religion who then turned to Ithna- 'Ashari (twelve Imams), let people choose their own religion and they showed no bias in this regard. Among the Vezirs (ministers) of some of the kings, there were from other religions and sects such as Christian, Jews, Ash'ari, Zaheri and so on. This caused the presence of the scientists in all domains even in controversial subjects. Not only the kings but their ministers and other minor rulers encouraged the scientists and their scholarly activities. They managed some regular scientific circles which was attended by many poets or learned people such as philosophers or mathematicians. Some believe that this period is

not comparable to any other Islamic period, even with the era of great universities like Nezamiyeh in Baghdad or other places (18).

Literature survey

As told before, not too many books have been written on the history of Buveyhids. Most of the books are about the Islamic or Iranian history in general. Some books are biographical accounts of individuals such as, Saheb bin 'Abbad, Ibn 'Amid, Abu Hayan Towhidi, Ibn Mus-kuyah, Aycinna, and others. The most famous works of this period, as far as the author knows, are Metz's *The Islamic Civilization in the 4th Century*; the *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* by Joel Kraemer, and two Persian books by Faqihi called: *'Al-e Buyah va Awdha' zaman -e Ishan* (Buyeh dynasty and the social status at that time), and *Shahanshah 'Adhad al Dowlah* ('Adhad al Dowlah, the king of the kings).

These books are very important but they discuss the subject from some specific angles. For example, the first book deals with sociological aspects of this period. It describes the situation governing palaces as well as poor huts and it shows the contradictions in cultural, economic and sociological aspects of that time. While discussing the way of life in the governmental apparatus as well as in the society, the author reveals some social and political changes. Nevertheless, the author allocates some chapters to the scientific

approaches. The Indian translator of the book into English has added some good points but it lacks significances in other parts of the Islamic vast Empire such as Transoxania (Mavara' al - Nahr or Andalus, (Spain). It mostly focuses on the two metropolitan cities – Baghdad and Cairo (19).

Kraemer's book focuses on the mere cultural aspects in Buveyhid period. It also emphasizes on Iraq. As it was mentioned before, it tries to show the individual approaches to scholarly works and discussions. Kraemer pointed out that he intended to show that in the Buveyhid period, the state authorities intentionally tried to attract all other philosophic and cultural sciences of their neighbors especially the Greek ones (20).

The aim of this article is to show the plenty of the scientists in this period and to clarify that these scholars have been in all disciplines known in that time. It means that, although the scholars may have been numerous in previous period, due to the kind of democratic practice of the Buveyhids government, this showed itself completely.

Methodology

The methodology is based on the content analysis. The author collected all the related biographies from several main recourses as encyclopedias and main historical texts. The examples of the first are Da'rat al Ma 'arif al Islamiyeh (The Great Encyclopedia of Islam), Tashayo 'Encyclopedia (The Shi 'it Encyclopedia) Lughat Nameh –e Dehkhoda(Dehkhoda Lexicography), and the

examples of the latter are Tarikh- Baghdad(Baghdad History) of Khatib Baghdadi, Subh al A 'sha fi sana 'at Insha (the Dawn of Blinds for Literary works) by Qalqashandi, the Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age, by Kraemer, and Aal Buyeh and Awdha ' Zaman Ishan(Buveyhid dynasty and their social status) by Faqihi and others.

After making a questionnaire based on analyzed demographic information, religion, teachers and students, social responsibility, and main biography, scientifically, they were filled using the above-mentioned resources.

The survey was based on the principle showed that those who were born or died inside the territory reigned by one of Buveyhids, were with one of their kings or their ministers (Vezirs), were connected in any way with this dynasty, or moved to any cities like Baghdad, Rey, Isfahan, Shiraz and others. For example, Kuleini, who passed his life in the reign of Buveyhids (d.328) was added while Farabi who lived with Hamdanids (d.329), and Ferdowsi, who is said to have met one of the Buveyhids rulers but not in a formal way, were excluded.

The scholars' biographies were arranged according to a new method introduced by the author in his article called "New scheme for Classification of Knowledge". This new scheme is based on two main elements: hierarchical and binary (21). This scheme, is based on one of the

Qur'anic verses (22),

The result of this study showed the presence of more than 350 famous scholars in this period if we count them only according to their first interests. The number and its percentage would vary if we count their specialties altogether. Since some of the scholars had more than one interest, the historians

may not have mentioned their true interests orderly so, the author thought that it was better to count all their interests in whatever field they were, collectively. According to the new method, this number reached to about 714. which has been shown in Figure 1 and Table 1 more clearly.

Table 1 The number of scholars in their primary and other interests in Buvehyid period

| Subject/Specialty | Primary | others | Total |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Astronomy | 8 | 13 | 21 |
| Bibliography | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Biography | 8 | 10 | 18 |
| Calligraphy | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Geography | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| History | 7 | 10 | 17 |
| Jurisdiction | 70 | 39 | 109 |
| Kalam | 18 | 22 | 40 |
| Lexicography | 11 | 25 | 36 |
| Literature | 42 | 59 | 101 |
| Mathematics | 7 | 23 | 30 |
| Medicine | 21 | 5 | 26 |
| Mysticism | 16 | 1 | 17 |
| Philosophy | 9 | 14 | 23 |
| Physics | | 3 | 3 |
| Poetry | 31 | 40 | 71 |
| Politics | 14 | 3 | 17 |
| Qur'anic Sciences | 8 | 15 | 23 |
| Recitation | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| Tradition | 64 | 64 | 128 |
| Translation | | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 350 | 364 | 714 |

According to this survey, the highest number is for those who worked in Hadith (Tradition), Fiqh (jurisprudence), Adab (literary works) and Shi 'r (poetry) respectively. Their numbers are 128, 109, 101 and 71 accordingly. The reason is that many issues in the society i.e. legal, ethical, cultural, social and political aspects are derived from Hadith (Tradition) and Fiqh (jurisdiction).

Other fields include History, 17, Geography, 3, Calligraphy 9, Rejal (biography) and Geoalogy18, Mathematics, 30, Politics, 17, Chemistry, 1, Medicine, 26, 'Irfan and tasavuf (mysticism), 17, Qur'anic sciences and interpretation 14, Bibliography and Catalogues 4, Qira'at (recitation) 16, Kalam, 40, Philosophy and logic 23, Lughat (lexicography), 36, and Astronomy 21. Also the

libraries subject at that time was very famous. The ones in Shiraz and Rey were outstanding (23). religions have participated in this scientific movement, which has been shown in Table 2.

Interestingly, we find in that all sects and

Table 2 The number of the scholars in the Buveyhid period according to their religion

| Subject/Religio | Shiet | Zydi | Sunni | Shaf'i | Hanbal | Hanafi | Maleki | Mu'tazeli | Ash'ari | Christie | Sabe'i | Unknow | Total |
|-----------------|-------|------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|--------|--------|-------|
| Astronomy | 7 | | 7 | | | | | | | | | 6 | 20 |
| Bibliography | 4 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 8 |
| Biography | 12 | | 3 | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 19 |
| Caligraphy | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 7 |
| Chemistry | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Fiqh | 50 | 2 | 11 | 32 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 1 | | | | 2 | 114 |
| Geography | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Geology | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Hadith | 72 | | 25 | 12 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 4 | 129 |
| History | 9 | | 5 | 2 | | | | | | | | 1 | 17 |
| Kalam | 21 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | | 1 | | 3 | 42 |
| Lexicography | 16 | | 10 | 4 | | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 | 36 |
| Litrature | 50 | | 29 | 13 | | | 1 | | | | | 7 | 100 |
| Mathematics | 6 | | 7 | 2 | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 20 |
| Medicine | 4 | | 12 | | | | | | | 3 | 2 | 4 | 25 |
| Misticism | 5 | | 8 | | | | | | | | | 4 | 17 |
| Music | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | 4 | 8 |
| Philosophy | 6 | | 9 | | | | | | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 22 |
| Phisics | | | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | 1 | 4 |
| Poetry | 42 | 1 | 17 | 7 | | 1 | | | | | | 3 | 71 |
| Politics | 12 | 1 | 4 | 2 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 22 |
| Qur'anic Scienc | 6 | | 3 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 15 |
| Recitation | 6 | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | 10 |
| Translation | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Total | 335 | 5 | 164 | 82 | 13 | 26 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 13 | 4 | 55 | 714 |

Conclusion

From time scientific point view, Buveyhid Age, (4th and 5th centuries A.H) is one of the most, if not the only, fruitful periods in the Islamic history. Kings and their ministers respected the scholars. It is not peculiar that we see that most outstanding scholars in the history of Islam appeared at that time. Not only in religious studies we, too had some designated

persons like as Kuleini, Sadooq and Mufid, but in philosophy and medicine we witnessed the great scholars like Avcinna. As shown in the figure and tables, we saw that we had scientists in nearly all fields. In literature they made a movement, which was for the first time. Up to then, the Arabic literature had a sort of conservatism. Nobody dared to violate the old style. They had a slogan that the

ancestors did not leave anything for the coming generation. Ibn Faris, the famous literary critic in the reign of 'Adhad al Dwolah violated this tradition and came up some new works (24). Also, the general approaches had been to all subjects and disciplines. Besides, the scholars practiced their religion according to what they wanted. The Shi 'it rulers were not biased towards shi 'ism. Even Sheikh Mufid (Ibn al Mu 'alim) who is one of the greatest shi 'it theologians, was banished twice from Baghdad (25).

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2. The Prophet says: "Seek knowledge even if it is in China". As the China was far from the area, especially that time, this emphasizes the importance of obtaining knowledge; also: Seek knowledge from cradle to grave. See: Biha al Anvar..., vol. 1
3. These two books are arranged in a way that the kings or Caliphs can be benefitted from them. The first book is divided into section such as war, women, horses and so on. The latter is named as an unique necklace, which each part has a special name such as pearl, ruby, etc.
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22. Qur'an. Fusselat, 53: *We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth.* According to this classification all knowledge is divided into two, human knowledge and the knowledge about nature. The first divided into two, knowledge about human soul and spirit and knowledge about his body. The latter divided further into the knowledge of heaven and earth and then each of them into two and then moves down in two. Thus, all biographies are arranged into two big divisions.

The first is the Natural Sciences such as Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Geology and Medicine. The latter part consists of Human Sciences such as: Literature, Poetry, Hadith (tradition), Fiqh (jurisdiction), Qur'anic sciences and commentaries, Kalam (theological sciences), 'Irfan (mysticism), Rejal (biography), Syasat (politics), Philosophy and Logic, and Mathematics.

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