Fathnama-e-Sindh alias Chachnama: An Exploration of the Earliest Account of Muslim Conquest of Sindh

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Abstract

This article attempts to highlight the significance and authenticity of the Kitab Futuh us-Sindh wal-Hind or Fathnama-i-Sindh which is known by various names most popularly as the Chachnama. This book is regarded as the earliest source of the early Muslim (Arab) raids and subsequent conquest of Sindh. It is perhaps the earliest surviving historical text in India. Originally written in Arabic, it is found only in Persian. The historical references of Sindh, (famous as Indus Valley Civilization) are meagre from the ancient times. There is hardly any work on the history of Sindh until the beginning of the thirteenth century. By the time, people received historical records through the classical Sanskrit literature, travellers' accounts, folk-lore, romantic poems, epics and ballads of local Bhats and Charans. However, the Persian and Central Asian immigrant intelligentsia played a dynamic role in development of literary and scholarly activities in medieval Sindh including history writing, which was mostly in Persian. The paper focuses the introduction, evaluation and analysis of the Chachnama as

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an authentic and valuable historical source with reference to the overview of some emerging trends and traditions in the field of history writing.

Introduction

The Muslim rule in Sindh played a dynamic role in the development of literary and scholarly pursuits including history writing. The earliest record of the history of Arab conquest of Sindh was written outside India in the ninth century CE, when an anonymous writer compiled *Minhaj al-Din Wa'l Mulk* in Arabic, most probably between the years 830 to 868 CE. Though, some scholars referring certain internal evidences infer that the work would have been written earlier than 753 CE.[1] However, this book was subsequently translated into Persian under the title of the *Fathnama-i-Sindh* better known as the *Chachnama* by Ali bin Hamid bin Abi Bakr Al-Kufi (d. 1220 CE) in 1216 CE at Bakkhar.[2] This was the time when Sultan Nasir al-Din Qabacha was ruling Sindh and the adjacent South-West Punjab (r. 1205-1228 CE) with his capital at Uchh under the Sultanate of Delhi. During his rule, Multan became the centre of literary activities. Qabacha patronized the scholars and literary migrated from Central Asia and Persia due to the Mongol invasion; settled mostly at his capital Uchh.[3] However, to this court, were gathered luminaries of the scholarly class, men like 'Awfi (who completed his *Lubab al-Albab*) and Juzjani (who began his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* here).

At the age of fifty-eight, he gave up all other concerns and decided to create 'کتاب نفیس را انیس و جلیس' [Persian: a book of exceptional beauty and grace] telling the wisdom and bravery with which Muhammad bin Qasim, in 712 CE, conquered India and Sindh (Hind w'al Sind), besieged forts, built mosques and governed. It was a text, Kufi writes, which

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1   G. P. Singh, *Early Indian Historical Traditions and Archaeology* (New Delhi: D. K. Print World, 1994), 281.

2   Ali bin Hamid bin Abi Bakar al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* Preface, ed. Dr. Umar bin Muhammad Daud Pota (Delhi: Majlis Maktubat-i Farsi Hyderabad Deccan, 1939).

3   *Balochistan Gazetteer*, vol. 6, 34-35.

would provide a key to the 'بندگان دولت محمد' [Persian: slaves of the Prophetic world] to govern.[4] For favour from Qabacha's court, Kufi dedicated this book to Ain-al Mulk Fakhar al-Din Husayn, the son of Qabacha's powerful minister. Most of readings show that Ali Kufi was never guaranteed any support from the court. Unlike Juzjani and Awfi, he had no official position, nor any salary from Qabacha. Ali Kufi was not writing a court chronicle. Kufi's compilation represents a very interesting and admirable deal of contemporary trends of Persian literature.

The *Chachnama*, originally recorded in Arabic appeared as the first book on history of Sindh and perhaps one of the earliest historical works compiled in India.[5] This book is known by a number of titles such as the *Tarikh Minhaj al-Masalik*,[6] *Kitab Futuh us-Sindh wal-Hind*[7] and *Tarikh-i-Hind* etc.[8] The rare manuscript of this book was with Qadi Isma'il bin Ali al-Thaqafi, a member of an illustrious Qadi family of Aror and Bakkhar in Sindh.[9] Though, the author illustrates purpose of carrying out such a grim task of its translation in its preface but he has mentioned neither the specific title of the original Arabic work nor the name of its actual author. Rather, he frequently mentions its title as the *Fathnama-i-Sindh*.[10] At two different places in the text, the author referred it as *Tarikh-i-Hind wa Fath-i-Sindh* or *Fath Bilad-i-*

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4   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* 7.

5   Mir Ali Sher Qani Thattawi, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, ed. S. Hussam al-Din Rashidi, Urdu trans. Akhtar Rizvi, vol. 3, ed. (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1971), 12.

6   Nizam al-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Urdu trans. M. Ayyub Qadri (Lahore: Urdu Science Board, 1990), 632; Saeed Nafisi, *Tarikh Nazm-o-Nasr dar Iran-odar Zaban-i Farsi* [Farsi: History of Prose and Poetry in Iran and Persian Language], vol. III, ed. 2 (Tehran: Intisharat-i-Faroghi, 1944), 151.

7   Zahuruddin Ahmad, *Pakistan mein Farsi Adab* [Urdu: Persian Literature in Pakistan], vol. I (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1974), 280.

8   Nafisi, *Tarikh Nazm-o-Nasr dar Iran-o-dar Zaban-i-Farsi*, 151.

9   Khawja Abdul Majeed Yazdani, *Tarikh-i Adbiyat Musalmanan-i Pakistan-o-Hind*, vol. III, Persian Literature (Part-1) (Lahore: Punjab University, 1971), 259.

10   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* 7-8, 10, 191.

Hind wa Fath-i-Sindh. The internal evidences based on a comparison of its text with the chapter entitled *Futuh al-Sindh* in Baladuri's *Futuh al-Buldan*,[11] which is mainly based on the authority of Al-Mada'ini (d. 839 CE),[12] indicate that the original in Arabic was either authored by Mada'ini or was based mainly on his works entitled the *Kitab Thaghar al-Hind* and the *Fath Makran*, which are unfortunately no longer extant. The book resembles with the *Futuh al-Buldan* and the *Tarikh al-Yaqubi*[13] in its subject matter which is quite authentic and reliable. On the other hand, some of the information is derived from the oral evidences particularly from Qadis of Aror and Bakkhar.[14] Dr. N. B. Baloch and Derryl McLean point out that some thirteen citations within *Chachnama* (the first on p. 56 and the last on p. 187) contain an attribution to Mada'ini. Since Baladuri, Tabari and Ya'qubi all attribute their material on Sindh to Mada'ini, it certainly cements *Chachnama* with impressive source credentials.

Ali Kufi's narration is richer than that of al-Baladuri, however, with a focus on the inner turmoil, deliberations,

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11   Al-Baladuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, ed. M.J. De Goeje, vol. I (Leiden: E. J Brill, 1866), 424-25; Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 892 CE) was a 9th Century Persian historian. He was one of the eminent middle-eastern historians of his age who spent most of his life in Baghdad. He travelled in Syria and Iraq, compiling information for his major works. He is regarded as a reliable source for the history of the early Arabs and the history of Muslim expansion. His chief extant work, a condensation of a longer history, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* [Persian: Book of the Conquests of Lands] tells of the wars and conquests of the Arabs from the 7th Century, and the terms made with the residents of the conquered territories. It covers the conquests of lands from Arabia West to Egypt, North Africa, and Spain and East to Iraq, Iran, and Sindh.

12   Abu al-Hasan al-Mada'ini was a Muslim historian of Basra, whose work is the source for the main Muslim conquest of Central Asia. It is said that he compiled a number of books on history, including accounts of the Arab conquest of Khurasan and Transoxiana and biographies of the governors. The era of the great conquests had ended at 751 CE, just two years before his birth, so unlike other Arabs al-Mada'ini collectors could gather and edit the stories more realistic, vivid and detailed that we have about campaigns of this period, making the conquest of Central Asia is the best documented of the early Muslim expansion.

13   Ahmed Ibn Abi Yaqub Ibn Jaffer (Yaqubi), *Tarikh al-Yaqubi*, ed. M. T. Houtsma, vol. I (Leiden, 1883), 50-55.

14   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 38.

doubts and planning. The text precisely labels itself a *hikayat* [Persian: stories, often told and heard orally], a *tarikh* [Persian: history], *dastan* [Persian: epic] and participates in those narrative voices accordingly. Kufi expresses his commanding views over the methods and theories of historiography. For instance, he uniquely blends two major components of historiography; taking the cyclical universe of Firdausi in which rise and fall based on the moral qualities of the rulers themselves and planting within it the righteously guided history of al-Tabari according to him the progression of time is linear and the teleology is directly focused towards the Prophet and then away from the Prophet, with the moral universe expanding and contracting according to the chronological distance from him.[15]

An early reference to the *Chachnama* is found in the *Insha-i-Mahru*, a collection of administrative letters written by Ain al-Mulk Abdullah Mahru during the reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388 CE) by his governor based in Lahore. In a letter addressed to the Uchh noble, who was resisting taxation, Mahru refers to *Tarikh-i Dahir-i Chach* [Persian: History of Dahir, son of Chach], which is famous among the common people in Sindh.[16] The textual reference works both to give weight to the insults delivered by Mahru and also to affirm a historical link between the text and the space.

On the other hand, the author does not provide any reference regarding his early life, family and career. He mentions in the text that he was fifty-eight years old in 1216 CE. It means that he was born in 1160 CE. He spent a long spell of his early life in Kufa. During the reign of Nasir al-Din Qabacha, he came to Sindh and settled at its capital Uchh. At the age of fifty, he secured personal consideration and patronage of Qabacha's influential minister, Sharf al-Mulk Radhi al-Din Abu Bakar Muhammad bin Muhammad Abu

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15   Manan Ahmed, "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Columbia University*, 49, no. 4 (2012): 467.

16   Ain al-Mulk Mahru, *Insha-i-Mahru*, ed. Shaykh Abdul Rashid (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1965), 233.

Bakar al-Ash'ari. After Sharf al-Mulk's death, his son Ain al-Mulk Fakhar al-Din Husayn succeeded with the title of Malik al-Wuzara, to whom the author dedicated his work.[17]

Due to jealousy of his contemporaries, Ali Kufi soon became victim of suspicion of his patron, consequently deprived of his trust and benefaction. In this regard, he writes in his eloquent style that:

"...شرابدار تقدیر کاسہ مسرت را بہ حنظل مضرت بدل کرد و استقامت بہ ندمت سرور متواتر شد و از شداید چرخ دو ارغدار شربت های زهر چشیده آمد و ضربت های قهر کشیده شده بود..."[18]

(Translation: …the wine-server of destiny changed the drink of joy into the poison of sorrow, owing to the hardship of the revolving heavens, tasted many a drink of poison and to bear many a blow of calamity…).[19]

During this period of discontent and disillusionment, he spent most of his time in reading literary books particularly of history. He enhanced and extended his knowledge beyond any particular discipline. He remained busy day and night in studying different kind of literature and translations of history books. Writing this book, Ali Kufi marks two explicit goals: that of linking this local history to the history of Arabs and promoting the concept of a 'renewal' of central principles of Islam. While mentioning the purpose of compilation, he writes:

"--- از جملہ اشغال کہ در درست داشت اعراض نمود و کتب نفیس را انیس و جلیس خود ساخت۔۔ علمای زمانہ و حکمای یگانہ هر یکی در دوران خود بہ استظهار مخدومان و مربیان، تاریخی و تصنیفی در گردن روزگار قلاده کرده اند --- و بہ فتح هندوستان کہ بردست محمد بن قاسم و امرای عرب و شام بود، در این دیار اسلام گشت، و از دریای محیط تا کشمیر و کنوج مساجد و منابر بناشد و رای داهر بن چچ بن سلائج کہ او بہ دارالملک ارور بود و امیر۔۔ محمد بن قاسم ۔۔ او را بکشت و این نواحی تمام بامضافات او را مسلم شد، خواستم تا ذکر این نواحی و کیفیت خلق و کشتن آن معلوم گردد و تاریخی ساختہ آید۔"[20]

(Translation: … put aside every other occupation and busied in reading exquisite books… began to reflect that, as something of

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17   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* 11.

18   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* 8.

19   Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, trans., *The Chachnama: An Ancient History of Sind* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1985), 6.

20   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 8-9.

every science or branch of knowledge and other miscellaneous subjects had been already inscribed on the mind, and as learned men and erudite philosophers of the time have, in their respective ages, written some history or other book, with the help of their patrons and masters, and thus left behind them a relic of their memory; and as the conquest of Hindustan by Muhammad bin Qasim and the chiefs of Arabia and Syria, the spreading of Islam in that country, the building and mosques and pulpits from the sea to the limits of Kashmir and Kanuj; the death of Rai Dahir Chach, son of Salaij, who resided at the capital city of Alor, at the hands of the great Amir, Muhammad bin Qasim…, and the transfer of that whole territory together with its dependencies to him, had not yet been known to the world, a history should be written describing all these events).[21]

Finally, spending years in this painstaking task of collecting authentic and reliable accounts of the Arab conquest of Sindh, he visited far and wide, the whole region from Uchh to Bakkhar via Sukkur and Rohri. Fortunately, he acquired a quite rare original manuscript of this book from a Thaqafi family of Arab origin of Bakkhar. However, he carried out this task of translation with diligence and finished the work in 1216 CE. He dedicated his book to Aʻin al-Mulk at the court of Uchh. It is noticeable that he does not provide the original title of the book, nor does provide any indications on its provenance. In his dedication, ʻAli Kufi provides a further hint about his project of linking this *Fathnama* to an Islamo-Arabian history.[22] His purpose is to highlight the tribal affiliation of the chief minister, ʻAin al-Mulk Fakhar al-Din al-Husayn bin Abi Bakr al Ashʻari, who was a Qurayshite and descendent of the holy Prophet's family. Such an intense focus on the 'Syrianization' of the ruling elite within the 'Persianization' of the text needs to be seen in the wider context of the struggle between the Yemeni Ismaʻili *daʻwa* forces and the Sunni orthodoxy in Uchh and Multan for the centuries preceding Ali Kufi; a history of which, he must have been acutely aware.

Since, the *Chachnama* provides comprehensive accounts and eye-witness reports of the Arab campaign in

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21 Fredunbeg, trans., *The Chachnama*, 6.

22 al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 8.

Sindh, the book is recognized as the repository of the earliest and the most authentic record of early Indo-Muslim history. These accounts also shed light on the history of the native ruling dynasty of Sindh at the time of Arab invasion in 712 CE. Chach was the name of Brahman minister of Rai Sahasi, who seized the throne and married the wife of his patron king after his death. Chach's son and successor Dahir ascended the throne in 708 CE, faced the Arab assault and got killed in the battlefield. The reason of referring the book with the title of the *Chachnama* is simply that the Arab conquest of Sindh took place during the period of Chach bin Sela'ij, to whom the first whole chapter of the book is devoted.[23] The book also deals with the pedigree of the Rai and Brahman dynasties, which is somehow defective. This whole story constitutes the first third of the *Chachnama*, characterizes three main themes: the basis of legitimacy of the ruler, the good council of the advisor and the immorality of treachery. Ali Kufi recounts this section on basis of the previous chain reporters, whom he calls 'the tellers of tradition and authors of histories', 'the author of this romance and the writer of this bouquet', 'writers of the story of this conquest'; at each moment in the narrative stating both a textual precedence and an oral one, whereas also affirms a heterogeneity towards the conventions of various narrative genres.

Undoubtedly, the *Chachnama* offers valuable accounts of Muslim conquest of Sindh with the description of the contest between Muhammad bin Qasim and Raja Dahir bin Chach bin Sela'ij, in which the later was defeated and executed by the former. The book also includes the accounts of Muhammad bin Qasim's execution due to the allegation of Dahir's two daughters, who were sent to Waleed bin Abd al-Malik (r. 668-715 CE),[24] the Umayyad Caliph. The story of tragic end of Muhammad bin Qasim for mistreating Raja Dahir's two daughters also belongs to Kufi's romantic

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23   Yazdani, *Tarikh-i Adbiyat Musalmanan-e Pakistan-o-Hind*, 259.

24   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 346-47.

version.[25] It seems to be designed by the author himself to justify the inhuman death of such a great conqueror. Though, in the absence of original Arabic text of Minhaj al-Din, it is difficult to segregate truth from untruth. It is evident that Muhammad bin Qasim was arrested and imprisoned in the fort of Wasit, where he died after the end of the Umayyad caliph Waleed bin Abd al-Malik's reign.[26] Unlike his contemporaries, Kufi withholds the past by stopping the narrative with the death of Muhammad bin Qasim; abruptly breaking the tradition of contemporary history.

On the other hand, the myth regarding the death of Muhammad Bin Qasim had also been reproduced in an epistle of A'in al Mulk Mahru, the governor of Multan while addressing to Jam of Thatta (r. 1360-1365 CE). This treachery of the daughters of Dahir indicates that the copies of the *Chachnama* would have surely been appeared in the scholarly circles of Uchh-Multan region.[27] The authors of *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* (c. 1593-94 CE), *Tarikh-i-Masumi* (c. 1600 CE), *Tarikh-i-Farishta* (c. 1606-1607 CE), *Beglarnama* (c. 1608 CE), *Zubdat al-Tawarikh* (c. 1605-1616 CE), *Tarikh-i-Mufaddali* (c. 1712-1719 CE) and *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (c. 1768 CE) also used the *Chachnama* as a source in their works.

Nevertheless, the legendary and mythological accounts of the *Chachnama* such as the story of Rai Dahir bin Chach and infatuation of Rani for Chach seem more like a romantic tale than a history based on oral testimonies.[28] The romantic element as myth and folklore in the text is like as an excrescence after removing which, a historian can get a healthy body of historical text. The first part of the *Chachnama* mostly overruns with legendary substance that is useful for a historian in order to unveil historical truth out of it than any other form of narration. Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala opines that the description of Chach's conquest

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25   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 245-47.

26   Akbar Shah Najeebabadi, *The History of Islam*, vol. II (Lahore: Darrussalam, 2001), 188-89.

27   Mahru, *Insha-i-Mahru,* 233-34.

28   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 14-17, 21.

was a "*rifaccimento* in Persian prose of a poetical *Digvijaya*' and 'every whit as unhistorical as similar lucubration of Sanskrit poets and Rajput bards."[29] While Aftab Asghar expounding the historical significance of the *Chachnama* opines that "Undeniably, *Chachnama* is the earliest history written in Persian which is known as the History of Sindh, Ali Kufi translated from an anonymous Arabic manuscript in 613 AH. Thus, no one had written the history of this region long after Ali Kufi."[30]

Despite its certain mythological outlook, the *Chachnama* gives every useful information and minute details in terms of logistic and strategy of the Arabs in Sindh. The main purpose of compiling such *magnum opus* was to provide a guideline for the administration of newly founded Muslim polity. The records of regular communication, calling for and receiving regular day to day reports from Muhammad bin Qasim and instructions sent by Hajjaj bin Yousuf are also of great significance. Ali Kufi tries to make the *Chachnama* an interesting and valuable source for the Muslim rulers who were enjoying immense political and military authority. Notwithstanding the *Chachnama* represents the beginnings of a new political theology. This work was suggested by the author as the *sunna* or model practice for later generations of Muslims engaged in government and in war. Kufi describes his work as '*Dastan-i-dini*' [Persian: Holy tale] that is firmly based on a foundation of rules of ruler-ship and government.[31] The author counsels the members of the ruling elite to adopt the right posture towards the members of the religious class, not forcing them to abandon their lives of devotion to suit the ruler's own convenience but making an

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29 Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own historians, with a foreword by Sir Richard Burns*: supplement, vol. 2, reprint (Bombay: Islamic Book Service, 1979), 83.

30 Aftab Asghar, *Tarikhnavisi Farsi dar Hind-o-Pakistan: Timurian-i-Buzurgaz Babur ta Aurangzeb* [Persian: Historiography in Indo-Pak: Great Timurids, from Babur to Aurangzeb] (Lahore: Culture Centre Islamic Republic of Iran, 1985), 167.

31 al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 11.

appropriate appointment. He splices within this rhetoric from ethico-political literature, most prominently Ibn al-Muqaffa's (died *c.* 756/759 CE) the *Adab al-Kabir*.[32]

The author further includes detailed account of the Umayyad rulers starting from Muawiya to Walid and the governors of Sindh appointed by them from Sanan bin Salamah up to Hakam bin Manzar, by which one may get a clear layout of the administrative setup of the Muslim empire in the eighth century.[33] This chapter is quite similar with any annalistic history such as al-Tabari.[34] In this chapter, the accounts are narrated by the generic 'tellers of traditions' to be replaced with direct chains of transmission for instance, the author writes Abu al-Hasan's reports etc.

The book serves as a valuable source of political theory of the era, approach of the author seems to be quite critical when he examines the causes of fall and decline of a ruler as well as a dynasty. In this regard, the author suggests that it is duty of a ruler to command the world according to the will of God, rather indicates what happens when duty is not perceived or is fully ignored.[35] The structure of the *Chachnama* implicitly reveals the concepts of balance, of moderation, and a bias towards accommodation between different elements in a body politics. It signifies the role of a wise counsellor to king and commander. Counsel is depicted as an essential element of polity. Another motif of the *Chachnama* relates to the control and the welfare of the agents of the ruler or commander.

Thus, the text of the *Chachama* is regarded by its author as comprising lessons for Muslim rulers of his own days, particularly, the successors to the Ghorids, who were establishing their authority in the northern part of India from

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32   Ahmed, "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama," 467.

33   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 72-88.

34   Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (Arabic: History of the Prophets and Kings) ed. & trans. Ehsan Yar-Shater (New York: The State University of New York Press, 1999).

35   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 8-10.

the mid-twelfth to the early thirteenth century.[36] In this way, the author of the *Chachnama*, likewise the *Arthasastra* thinkers of ancient India represents the ideas of seven elements incumbent for a state such as the policy-ruler, officials, rural area, the fortified urban area, the permanent revenue, the standing army and the foreign ally. In addition, there appears a co-relationship between the ideas of Kufi and that of Manu and Yajnavalkya in terms of four kinds of political measures taken by a ruler for achieving authority like conciliation, bribery, dissension and force.[37] All these kinds are referred in the *Chachnama*, while Kufi reproduces a letter of Hajjaj bin Yousuf addressing to Muhammad bin Qasim giving some advices for gaining kingship. In other themes, such as the relation with women, the use of conciliation, the varieties of military advice which should be offered to king, there appear to be important associations between the ancient Indian political traditions and those found in the *Chachnama*.

As history and geography have a close association and the trend of explaining geography of important cities was first introduced by the Arabs. In the same manner, the *Chachnama* recounts a successful investment of a number of urban strongholds in Sindh such as Askaland, Multan, Siwistan, Brahmanabad, and Debal. However, the geographical information given in the *Chachnama* is of great value but requires a volume to do justice with it, and to discuss the various theories that have been advanced as to the situation of the numerous places mentioned in this book.

Besides the political history and geography, the book also provides information about the social and religious conditions of Sindh during the seventh and eighth centuries particularly about the Buddhism as a dominant religion of the region. It tells us about the religious harmony between the Buddhists and the Brahmans. The book also incorporates

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36   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 8.

37   P. Hardy, *"*Is the Chachnamah Intelligible to the Historian as Political Theory?" in *Sindh Through the Centuries*, ed. Dr. Hamida Khuhro (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 116.

some evidences that highlight the role and status of women and their position in family life and economic activities etc. It states that the ladies of elite ruling classes practiced seclusion but might talk with the outsiders behind the veil.[38] When their husbands died, they burnt themselves on their husbands' pyres. This tradition was commonly in vogue known as *Sati*. The people were superstitious, strictly followed their religious rituals and rites and started their work according to the forebodings of astrologers and soothsayers.[39] They were mostly cultivators by profession.

The book also reveals the kind treatment and unprejudiced conduct of the Arabs with the natives. It also comprised of the authentic and detailed notes about the ethnological composition of Sindh, progress of Buddhism, political relations of Sindh with other neighbouring kingdoms such as Kashmir, Takka, Kannuj, Chitor, Ramal (Jesalmer), Bailman (Bhillamal), Kaira (Gujrat), Cambay and Kutch.[40] Elphinston refers it "a minute and consistent account of the transactions during Muhammad bin Qasim's invasions and some of the preceding Hindu reigns. It is full of names and places."[41]

However, the *Chachnama*, being the first compilation set forth the earliest trends and traditions of historiography in Sindh, which were followed by the later historians for centuries. The writing-style used by the author was didactic prose, although it does not give an impression of disjunction, of discord, and of disharmony in historical tradition since the period of Chach's rule and that of Ali Kufi's own day. Following the customary trend of Arabic historiography, the text is adorned with Arabic poetry along with explicit mentions of those who did commendable and heroic deeds.

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38   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama,* 20.

39   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 52.

40   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 50.

41   Moundstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India*, vol. V (London: John Murray, 1841), 509.

The book reveals a traditional doxology, having a preface, begins in the name of God, upholding Him as a compassionate and merciful, a very affluent trend and the traditional Islamic way of starting a work. The author mentions no reference books he had in hands at the time of its compilation. The language of the text is complex and ornate with elaborate words and expressions. The style is straight forward and the author maintains the flow of language throughout the text. Though, the language of the text is Persian, it is of immense interest that Arabic words, maxims and idiomatic expressions commonly employed by the author of an Arab origin.[42] The reason behind this encumbered use of Arabic seems to be that it was reproduced from an Arabic version. On the other hand, it was a transitory period when Persian language had not completely replaced Arabic, which was still thriving.

It is evident from the text that Ali Kufi could not restrain himself from merely translation of the original Arabic text rather he includes some additional information of marginal nature. He exhibits his additional quality of expressing his eloquence in Persian in a literary style and investing it with romantic content in truly Persian tradition in order to create interest and delight for his readers.[43] For this purpose, he gives brief introduction to the different sections with poetic imaginary characteristic of *tashbih* in *qasidah*, adorned text by occasional use of his self-composed odes and the verses of other poets, improvised titles for Muhammad bin Qasim and others following the contemporary literary trend.[44] Rather, Ali Kufi uses Perso-Islamic idioms particularly counting the events of Chach's time. For instance, though Chach was a Hindu but represented as warning Chandra of his accountability to God in an Islamic idiom.

The author elaborates conversation between different characters, and even at times invests the simple business

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42   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 4, 6, 7, 346 etc.

43   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 191.

44   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 1-7.

like correspondence between Hajjaj and Muhammad bin Qasim in a rhetoric style. He occasionally pens down tales with humour and romanticism. The story of the two daughters of Dahir having succeeded in their conspiracy in bringing about the downfall and death of Muhammad bin Qasim is one of the examples of such exaggerated and hyperbolic contemporary writing style.[45]

The multi-genre text of the *Chachnama* exemplifies a distinctive formulation of a possible future for a Muslim state at the frontier and under immense pressure. In its explicit linkage of a Muslim with a local pre-Islamic past within the site and milieu of its production, the *Chachnama* represents the beginnings of a new political theology. Long understood as a translation of an earlier text, it is instead a specifically imagined text that found political and romantic resonance in the histories of Uchh and Sindh through the centuries.[46] Ali Kufi displays his eloquence and excellent command over Arabic and suitably adorned the text with numerous Arabic odes, maxims and dictums. This ornate and over elaborate writing style demonstrates the influence of Muslim culture on the author. He reproduced verses composed by a famous Arab poet at the time of Hadrat Ali's arrival at Basra after a victory under the title as following:

مثال شعری از حکیم که مردی سخنگوی و در فن شاعر توانا بوده :

ان الرزیۃ فقد العلم و الحکم   لیس الرزیۃ بالدینار نفده
اهل العفاف و اهل الجود و الکرم[47]   و ان اشرف من او دی الزمان بہ

Translation: Oh Ali, owing to your alliance (with the Prophet) you are truly of high birth, and your example is great, and you are wise and excellent, and your advent has made your age an age of generosity and kindness and brotherly love.[48]

The narration composed by Ali Kufi in this translation is smooth and steady, according to the prevailing Persian

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45   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 245-47.

46   Ahmed, "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama," 459.

47   al-Kufi, *Fathnama-i-Sindh* alias *Chachnama*, 74.

48   Fredunbeg, trans., *The Chachnama,* 59.

literary trend during the sixteenth century of Hijra era. However, it is true that the influence of contemporary Persian style is evident from its translation but it does not affect the essence of the Arabic text. In the preface of the book gives a list of Arabic doxology before starting the actual text as this was a contemporary trend, despite the fact that in the text he gives an inclusive translation.[49] Ali Kufi transformed the simple objective narrative into a Persian romantic version as per the Persianised medieval tradition of historiography. In the words of N. B. Baloch, "Though the original work in Arabic was highly commendable from the point of style and diction of Arab language … it was devoid of the decorative style peculiar to the Persian language and, therefore, did not gain popularity among the non-Arabs. Ali Kufi in all earnestness tried to make up such deficiencies in his Persian translation."[50]

In fact, the method and attitude of Arab historiography in the ninth and tenth centuries has been challenged by some recent scholars, raising interesting new questions.[51] There are some ideas generating across Arabic and Persian disciplinary realms and appearances of Hardy's views on the relationship of festivity to narratives and of history to genre

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49   Zabihullah Safa, *Tarikh Adbiyat-i-Iran* (Farsi: History of Iranian Literature) vol. iii, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1353 A. H.), 1167.

50   N. A. Baloch, *Sindh: Studies Historical* (Jamshoro: University of Sindh, 2003), 56.

51   To cite a few key examples of historiographic debate on al-Tabari, truth and narration, see Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narratives of the Abbasid Caliphate*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Paul. L. Heck, "Genres, Values and the Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization," *Studia Islamica* 94 (2002); Steven C. Judd, "Narratives and Character Development: al-Abari and al-Baladhuri on Late Umayyad History," in *Ideas, Images and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. Sebastian Guenther (Leiden. E. J. Brill, 205); Peterson, "Review of the History of al-Tabari," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999) and John C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002); Heck, "Genres, Values and the Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization", 2011; Judd, "Narratives and Character Development".

continue to hold ground.[52] For instance, I. H. Siddiqui argues that "there is a divergence in the approach of Arab historians of the Classical period and the compiler of the *Chachnama*' where the first set is concerned only with meticulous presentation of facts and important details, and the second effort becomes valuable only once 'stripped of the tales of romance and other trivial matter'."[53]

Contrary to above mentioned point of view, P. Keshavmurthy in a literary study on Awfi, a contemporary of Ali Kufi in Uchh concludes that "… at no point in any of the aforementioned medieval Persian texts, then, can we distinguish the universal and timeless claims of literary theoretical notions from the historically local political motivations of a text's author' and that 'performance of older universal literary conventions overtly shared by all classical Persian literature authorized and disguised local political motivations."[54] Such scholarly judgments hold a set outlook on Persian historiography; one simply attached to Hardy. Whether in the mode of parsing texts for truth or for over-determining the influence of genre at the cost of specificity of locality and time, the pre-Mughal historiography has a long history of foreclosing meaning and understanding of texts.[55]

In dealing with the Jats, the *Chachnama* proffers three levels of history for the audience of the thirteenth century: the existing rules of Chach, the precedent of Muhammad bin Qasim and then, as a legitimizing force, the practice of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. It is, in these ways that the *Chachnama* emerges as a hybrid text that represents only the past within which it was composed; the early-thirteenth century. Its concerns are the concerns of a locale beset with

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52 In addition to *Textures*, the work of Daud Ali (2004), Samira Sheikh (2010) and Sunil Kumar (2010) have fruitfully challenged the prevalence of genre in historical analysis.

53 I. H. Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography up to the Thirteenth Century* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 31.

54 P. Keshavmurthy, "Finitude and the Authorship of Fiction: Muhammad 'Awfi's Preface to his Chronicle, *Lubab al-Albab* (The Piths of Intellects)," *Arab Studies Journal*, 19 (2011): 119.

55 Ahmed, "The Long Thirteenth Century of the Chachnama, 264.

political and military turmoil. Its intention is to ground the reality into an imagined past—that can provide a sustained, moral universe allowing its rulers and their advisors guidance in their present. The movement of the conquest episode from a simple *akhbar* in al-Baladuri to a complex and layered takes on the similarities and differences that under-gird the moral universe of conquest is a deliberate movement, and it shows the central concern of the *Chachnama* as a text. It wishes to present a history; similar not only to al-Baladuri but also to Firdausi that shows the necessary ingredients for a just and moral polity.

V. N. Rao's *Textures of Time* discusses Peter Hardy's classificatory scheme for Indo-Persian histories written during the Sultanate period (1206-1526 CE) remains a dominant paradigm in the field.[56] Hardy drew upon H. A. R. Gibb to argue that with the passing of the golden age of Arabic historical writing (say with al-Tabari), Muslim historiography in India became 'theocratic rather than humanist' with no sense of their immediate pasts, concerned solely with the history of the *ummah* and without any progressive world-view.[57] To Hardy, most of the genres emerging in the early Indo-Muslim history (such as the universal history, hagiography, advice, or artistic forms), either had 'facts subordinated to effect' or simply had a 'great disinclination for facts'.[58] For Hardy, it is an overarching theory of history and history writing in Muslim India; once history writing left Arabia (and Arabic) it quickly denigrated from history. Consequently, Hardy argues that historical understanding for this time-period is

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56 V. N. Rao, D. Shulman and S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 219-21.

57 Hardy, "Is the Chachnamah Intelligible to the Historian as Political Theory?", 127.

58 Hardy, "Is the Chachnamah Intelligible to the Historian as Political Theory?", 123-25.

'literally composed of strata upon strata of frozen narratives' where historical tropes continue to reign.[59] The 'frozen' narratives make the task of pre-Mughal historiography more dependent on the classificatory sense-making of genres, as it did for Hardy. In more recent scholarship, the evidently incontrovertible primary location of the Arab historiography in the ninth until the tenth century has both been challenged, and interesting new questions have been aroused.[60]

Conclusion

The re-evaluation of the *Chachnama* as the earliest known account of the history of Sindh compiled in the early-thirteenth century seeks to comment widely on its political and social present, and offers a range of possibilities for the features of Uchh. The *Chachnama* is a complex text that draws upon a number of genres from Arabic and Persian historiography. It is a '*tarikh'* [Persian: history] but not a simple aggregation of '*akhbar*' [Persian: reports] without narrative thread. It is a '*dastan'* [Persian: story] with romance; such as Chach and Suhnan Deo, Dahir and his sister Ma'ian, Dahir's wife Ladi and Muhammad bin Qasim, Changi and Jai'sinah, and finally Muhammad bin Qasim and the two daughters of Dahir. It is also an '*ada'b* [Persian: literature] with advice and '*insha*' [Persian: epistles] between the commander and his governor. It is a vision of Uchh's future, with the author providing a clear ordering of the known universe so as to provide a template for good governance. Where *Chachnama* draws on existing historical texts (in verse or in prose), it is a transmutation of those texts.

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59 Hardy*, "*Is the Chachnamah Intelligible to the Historian as Political Theory?", 119.

60 To cite a few key exemplars of the historiographical debate on al-Tabari, truth and narrativity, see El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, 1999; Heck, "Genres, Values and the Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization, 2011; Judd, 'Narratives and Character Development', 2005; Peterson, "Review of the History of al-Tabari," 1999 and Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation*, 2002.

It offers to re-cast local history as universal. It was also Ali Kufi's endeavour to 'Arabize' the credentials of Qabacha's court to the locality of Uchh (by focusing on Arab Sindh) in counter to the Ghorid warlords arrayed against him, Iltutmish and Yildiz, with the knowledge that 'finding' an original local text would bolster such efforts. Ali Kufi never cites a name for the original text, which he 'brought out of the veil of Hejaz, nor does he provide the name of an author or any direct citation of any other history that he used. Additionally, there are no texts outside of *Chachnama* derived from, based on, or referring to the events in 'Ali Kufi's narrative, as he framed it. Based on both inter-textual and extra-textual evidence, it is concluded that the *Chachnama* is not a translation of a unitary, pre-existing Arabic history of the eighth century. It subsists in a recognized scale of texts; working together with traditional histories of Muslim pasts, of newer forms of cultural imaginations, as well as, the non-Muslim world that surrounded it in the thirteenth century.