

THE STRUCTURE OF ISLAMIC HISTORY BOOK (The Method of Analysis)

Among the requirements Muslim historians were expected to answer was the ability to arrange their materials so as to achieve a harmonious composition and an attractive form [1]. Among the criteria applied when estimating a work on history, the question of its structure was among those of primary importance. In this article we shall try to outline the principal forms of arranging materials employed by the medieval authors writing in Persian and Turkish and to define the place and functions of the main structural components of their works.

An accomplished historical work by a medieval Muslim author displays, as a rule, a clear structure formed by the following three components: the introduction, the main text and the conclusion. There was no established definition for the notion of “composition”. Different words and combinations were used by Muslim authors to express it: *tartīb*, *tarkīb*, *naẓm*, *siyāq*, *nasaq*, *tansīq*, *tabvīb*, *ṣūrat*, *ilaj*, *tarz wa tartīb*, *jam’ wa tartīb*, *ṣūrat-i rabṭ wa tartīb*, etc.

The introductory part usually consisted of a preface and an introduction (*dībācha*, *pīshgustār*, *muqaddima*). This is the most significant part of a historical work, performing very important functions. The preface and the introduction contain information about the author, the name and the character of his work, the motives and the circumstances impelling him to write it, the time when the work was written and, often, a dedication. Sometimes the author explains there, how his materials had been collected, providing the list of his principal sources and their characteristics. Sometimes the plan of the work is given there also, along with its detailed contents (*fihrist*). This part is very important for understanding the theoretical views of the author; often the theory and the principles of historiography are explained there. There are introductory parts writ-

ten with some special aim in mind. Thus Vasif in the introduction to his book was trying to prove that after the first four righteous Khalifs there had been no sovereigns better than the Ottoman sultans [2].

Introductions to works on history are not uniform. Some are written in verse, some in prose, others in prose mixed up with verse. Usually the volume of the preface and the introduction is equal to just one page of the text, but sometimes the introductory part grows up into an independent composition which gets its own name. Thus the introduction to *Zafar-nāma* by Yazdī — on the genealogy of the Turks and the Mongols and the history of Chinghiz Khān and his descendants — became known under the title *Tārīkh-i Jahāngīr* or simply *Iftitah* (“The Beginning”).

Among the questions arising in connection with medieval works on history is the sequence of their making: when the introductory parts were written — before or after the main text? There is still no definite answer supported by any convincing arguments. The solution of this problem depends, first of all, on the primary materials we select for our study. The most reliable source here can be the autographs of historical treatises. The table below contains data on seven autographs from the Manuscript Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies.

No such elements as capital letters or division into paragraphs are present in Muslim manuscripts. Graphically the text is a single whole, with no blanks or spaces, which was dictated by a desire to use the space available as fully as possible — paper was not cheap. One of the important characteristics of the text is the equal number of lines on each folio. The course of our reasoning when making the table was basing upon these principal features of the graphic structure of Muslim manuscripts.

No.	Date	Call No.	Title	Total number of folios	Folios of preface and introduction	Number of lines		Folio and line between introduction and main text
						preface and introduction	main text	
1.	1336	C 372	<i>Majma’ al-ansāb</i>	235	1b—24b	24	24	blank page between introduction and main text, 25a
2.	1516	C 491	<i>Tārīkh-i khānī</i>	350	1b—4b	12	12	4b; 4th line from below