

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IBN AT’HAM AL-KUFI’S INFORMATION ON AL-SHASH REGION WITH INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES

Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of historical information on the basis of “Kitab al-Futuh” (“The Book of Discoveries”) by Ibn ‘A‘tham al-Kufi.

Keywords and expressions: arabs, islam, Arabian caliphate, Arabs conquests, Central Asia, Ash-Shash region.

Аннотация. Мақолада Ибн Аъсам ал-Куфийнинг “Китаб ал-футух” (Мамлакатларнинг фатх этилиши китоби) асосида Аш-Шош вилояти ҳақидаги тарихий маълумотлар таҳлил қилинган.

Таянч сўз ва иборалар: араблар, ислом, Араб халифалиги, фатх, Марказий Осиё, Аш-Шош вилояти.

Аннотация. В статье анализируются исторические сведения об области Аш-Шаш на основе произведения Ибн Асама аль-Куфия «Китаб аль-футух» («Книга о завоевании стран»).

Опорные слова и выражения: арабы, ислам, Арабский халифат, завоевание, Центральная Азия, область Аш-Шаш.

From the ancient times in the East appeared a lot of scholars who made a valuable contribution with their works to the world civilization. It’s important to introduce their heritage to the world science. Books related to Islamic history play significant role while researching history of Central Asia. Some of them contain valuable information not only about history of the Islamic world, but also about history of the Central Asian region, such as at-Tabari’s “Tarikh al-Umam wa-l-Muluk”, Ibn al-Athir’s “Al-Kamil fi-t-Ta’rikh” and al-Baladhuri’s “Futuh al-Buldan”. “Kitab al-Futuh” by Ibn A‘tham al-Kufi also gives us large scale of background about the routes of the Arabs to Central Asia. However, the book is not learned fully in the source studies and not well known among historians.

Abu Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Ali ‘A‘tham al-Kufi al-Kindi al-Akhbari is considered to be Arabian historian who is not learned fully. There is almost no information about his birth data. It was supposed that he dead in 314 A.H. (926 A.D.)¹ His only book which is extant at the time is “Kitab al-Futuh”. Even though Yaqut al-

المجلة الأردنية للتاريخ و الآثار. المجلد 2. 2008م. 22 ص. / ابراهيم يوسف. منهج أحمد بن أعثم الكوفي عن الخلافة الاموية من كتابه الفتوح¹

Hamawi in his book “Mu’jam al-Udaba” said that he had books named “Kitab at-Ta’rikh” and “Kitab al-Ma’luf” as well².

Yaqut al-Hamawi continues giving information about his biography. It’s said that Ibn A’tam confessed al-Shi’a direction of Islam and the Hadiths he had narrated were *zaiyf* (which are not trustful). In “Mu’jam al-Udaba” there is a poem as well written by Ahmad al-Bayhaqi which gives description of Ibn A’tam al-Kufi.

“Kitab al-Futuh” by Ibn A’tam consists of three parts and includes historical events from the time of the caliph Abu Bakr till the reign of the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Musta’in (866). Only one manuscript of the first part includes the backgrounds till the time of the caliph ‘Uthman; it is stored in the library Gotha in Germany (No. 1592)³. Manuscripts of the first and the third parts are stored in the library Sultan Ahmad III in Istanbul (No. A1956/1–2)⁴.

Information used in this article is based on the last edition of the book (Bayrut, 1991) and especially the parts related to the region of al-Shash were taken as the main source.

“Kitab al-Futuh” by Ibn A’tam is not researched fully by scholars. Chapters related to the Khazar’s history have been researched by D. M. Dunlop, D. Ludwig and M. I. Artamonov. Z. M. Buniyatov translated into Russian the parts related to Azarbaydjan’s history. It’s important to carry out a research on this book because of the large scale of information about the history of Central Asia included in it and using it as a comparative source. F. Sezgin mentioned that author’s second book named “Kitab at-Ta’rikh” can be continuation of the first work or can be a part of it⁵.

There is some original information about the Central Asian history, which is not the same with the data of the historical works of al-Baladhuri, Ibn al-Athir and at-Tabari. Bal’ami while translated the book of at-Tabari used this book widely. In the years 1190–1200 Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Mustawfi al-Harawi started translation of this work into Persian and because of his death it was not finished. Translation had been finished by Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mabaronabadi. In 1882–1887 final version of the Persian translation was published in Bombay.

The book begins accordingly with Muslim writing traditions such as *tahmid* (gratefulling God) and describing the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and blessing him and included the reign of the caliph Harun al-Rashid.

² ابو عبد الله شهاب الدين ياقوت الحموي. معجم الأدياء. بيروت – لبنان. 1993م. 202 ص.

³ Pertsch W. Die Arabischen Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Gotha Bd. III. – Gotha, 1881. – P. 219.

⁴ Topkapi Sarayi Muezesi Kuetuephanasi Arapca Yazmalar katalogu / Hazirlayan F.E.Karatay. – Istanbul, 1966. – S. 341–342.

⁵ Sezgin F. Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums. – Leiden: Brill, 1967. – P. 527.

The book consists of 5 main parts: Ridda event; assassin of ‘Uthman; caliphate of Abu Sufyan; conquests and victories; Karbala descend. Dividing the book into parts like this can not be met in the books of other scholars such as Ibn Hisham, al-Waqidi and al-Mada’ini, who were well known historians in the Muslim world.

There can be met some background about the history of al-Shash, Arabs conquest and the people of this country as well. Moreover, the situation in this country at that time also is mentioned. For instance, in the chapter named “Qutayba’s visit to Samarqand region and his war with the people there” he wrote:

“Qutayba arrived to Samarqand, at this time Ghuzak ibn Ikhshid was rulling there and he had 130 soldiers. Qutayba surrounded all the gates of the city. All of the Sogdians went out armed against them. Between the two militant had been started war and a lot of people were killed,...

...King of Samarqand sent a letter to the al-Shash’s kang saying: the Arabs are killing us and we are killing them. If they win us they will continue their route to your side. Protect yourself, we will be with you. If you come to us for help it will be your victory. People of al-Shash gathered in Samarqand for help. They sent a messenger to Ghuzak warning that soldier were planning to attack at night. People of al-Shash sent their vigorous soldiers for help. They went forward the place where soldiers of Qutayba were staying. Qutayba spied out about it. Then he had chosen 700 soldiers from his army and told: as you know people of al-Shash are planning to attack with his governor at night. Now you should go out and put traps in different places and prevent your religion.

Muslims went out almost at midnight and one mile afar from Qutayba’s army to the place where the side against them were planning to attack. Chieftain of Muslim thinking their be hoof divided his army into three and put three traps in different places. One trap to the right side and the second to the north and the last was Qutayba’s brother who placed in the middle of the rode.

In midnight people of al-Shash came fully armed. When they came face to face with Muslims they started to attack and two sides had been mixed. Soldiers who were staying in the right and left trap attacked against them also. Person who had more authority among soldiers was taken out of his head. Kafirs (people who do not have religion) lost the war and run away. Their all weapons were taken away. Almost none of them managed to run away. Muslims held them as hostages and told to Qutayba about it. Qutayba said: “May Allah be pleased with you for fighting without thinking about yourself and showing your power. Then hostages were brought and all of them were taken of their heads... Qutayba gave to his soldiers a lot of awards and continued his route to Samarqand...”⁶.

⁶ ابن اعثم الكوفي. كتاب الفتوح. دار الاضواء. بيروت – لبنان. 1991م. 158 ص.

At-Tabari described this event in his book like this:

“...governor of Samarqand sent a letter to the governor of Jaj (Chach) saying that Arabs has come to us. If they manage to win us they will go forward you. People of Chach got together and faced to Samarqand. They sent a legate to Ghurak and said to call them for war. When they are engaged with you we will attack them... Qutayba found out about it. Qutayba had chosen one thousand of his soldiers and sent them towards Chach. Each of them was equal to hundreds of them in power. Qutayba told them that Chach’s troop are planning to come towards us to attack. He ordered them to stay in one place in a trap and chose Salih ibn Muslim as a leader. Salih ibn Muslim divided soldiers into three groups. One group stayed on the right and the second on the left and finally he with his soldiers stayed in the middle.

Almost half of the night passed. Salih ibn Muslim had gone out from the trap and started fighting. Shu‘ayb ibn Tayir from Muslim’s side attacked one of the princes of Chach and took his head. Seeing this Chach army lost the war. Arabs run after them and killed some of them. No one could run away. Heads that were taken away were brought to Qutayba. Almost all of them were princes. Muslims could gain a lot of arms and brought them to Qutayba...”⁷.

These events described like this in Ibn Athir’s history book also. But in his book number of the soldiers who were sent against al-Shash’s army is written from 400 hundreds to 600 hundreds of people. Furthermore, it is mentioned that Salih ibn Muslim who was chosen as a leader to the army had divided his troop not in three parts, but in two parts and then began fighting⁸.

Al-Baladhuri in his book “Futuh al-Buldan” described this event in this way:

“...Qutayba captured people of Samarqand. They met one more time and fought. Governor of al-Sughd wrote a letter to al-Shash’s king who had lived in at-Tarband. King of al-Shash with his army came to help them. Muslims faced with them and they fought. Then Qutayba won the war ...”⁹.

At-Tabari in his book described Qutayba’s campaign to al-Shash in details and it’s not given in Ibn A’tam’s book. There is the chapter “Description of Qutayba’s war to Chach and Farghana” in “Tarikh at-Tabari”:

“It was 94. Qutayba decided to go to capture Farghana and Chach. Leaving marv he passed Djayhun river and gathered troop with twenty hundreds of people and joining with his own soldiers they arrived to Samarqand. He sent his troop to Chach and he himself came to Farghana then he continued his conquest till

⁷ تاريخ الرسل و الملوك المعروف بتاريخ الطبري للإمام أبي جعفر بن جرير الطبري. القاهرة. 1985م. ص. 472.

⁸ ابن الأثير. الكامل في التاريخ. دار الكتب العلمية. بيروت – لبنان. 1987م. ص. 274.

⁹ Liber Expugnationis Regionorum auctore imamo Ahmed ibn Jahja ibn Djabir al-Beladsori / Ed. M.J. de Goeje. Lugduni Batavorum, 1866. – P. 321.

Khudjand. People of Farghana were ready for fighting. Then they started to fight. There was not any day without war. All the time the victory was in Muslims side...

...Soldiers of Qutayba surrounded the city. They found out that they lost the war. After that they made an agreement to make a condition that they will pay taxes every year... ”¹⁰.

Ibn al-Athir mentioned the same information. But he added that Qutayba’s troop with 20 thousands soldiers were gathered not only from Kish and Kh^warazm but from Bukhara and Nasaf as well¹¹.

Al-Baladhuri described Qutayba’s capture of al-Shash like this:

“...al-Haytham ibn ‘Adi says: “As the information I got from Ibn ‘Ayyash al-Hamadani that Qutayba captured al-Shash totally and got through Isbijob. Furthermore I was told that this palace was captured in past times also then Turks got it and in that time some people from al-Shash were with them. In the caliphate time of amir al-mu’minun al-Mu’tasim billah this palace was captured by Nuh ibn Asad. Then he built a wall that surrounds people’s fields... ”¹².

We can met also some other information about al-Shash in Ibn A’tam’s book. For example he described event that happened in 123 A.H. like this:

“... Hisham sent Nasr ibn Sayyar to Khurasan as a governor. Nasr bin Sayyar arriving there decided to begin a war to the places behind the river which were not joined the caliphate. He captured al-Shash and Farghana. He made easier to pay hiraj (type of tax in Islamic counties) for people in this cities. As a result people’s attitude to him changed and they treated him good... ”¹³.

At-Tabari also described this event like this:

“...Nasr ibn Sayyar came and captured cities of al-Shash. He was busy with war and he made easier hiraj (the taxes). And the nation treated him like a friend... ”¹⁴.

As a conclusion we can say that Ibn A’tam al-Kufi’s “Kitab al-Futuh” plays significant role to get new information about the history of Central Asia and to compare with another books. The source is necessary because of the historical names which are not met in other books. Study of this book fully gives us opportunity to research history of Central Asia in more details.

¹⁰ تاريخ الرسل و الملوك المعروف بتاريخ الطبري للإمام أبي جعفر بن جرير الطبري. القاهرة. 1985م. ص. 483.

¹¹ ابن الأثير. الكامل في التاريخ. دار الكتب العلمية. بيروت – لبنان. 1987م. ص. 281.

¹² Liber Expugnationis Regionorum auctore imamo Ahmed ibn Jahja ibn Djabir al-Beladsori / Ed. M.J. de Goeje. Lugduni Batavorum, 1866. – P. 322.

¹³ ابن اعثم الكوفي. كتاب الفتوح. دار الاضواء. بيروت – لبنان. 1991م. ص. 283.

¹⁴ تاريخ الرسل و الملوك المعروف بتاريخ الطبري للإمام أبي جعفر بن جرير الطبري. القاهرة. 1985م. ص. 192.