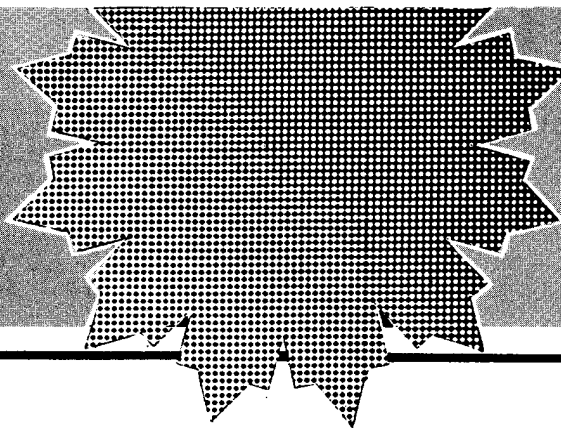


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ARAB CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL THOUGHT



BY

DR. M. M. SIDDIQI

Historians say that the study of political Science was started in the west during the 16th and 17th Centuries. Western Political Philosophers and Writers on the Art of Government, who presented the first dissertations were either ignorant of the most valuable Arab Contributions on this subject or they were too prejudiced to mention the names of Arab Political thinkers and authors on the Art of Administration. It is also an important fact of history, never mentioned by Western authors, that International Law was developed as an independent science by Arabs to guide and organise the nations of the world in the year 750 A.D. and there was no International law in Europe till 1856⁽¹⁾. What passed as such was only a Public law of Christian nations. It is of interest to mention here that in 1856-a non-Christian nation-Turkey was allowed to take benefit from this public law of Christians. This does not indicate that International law with its modern connotations was born then and there, the fact is that it already existed and practised by Arabs. In the light of the teachings of the Quran and Sayings of Prophet Mohammed (Peace be on him) Arabs had reconised that all states have similar rights and obligations.

Arab Writers on Political Science and Administration combined the study with strong ethical background keeping in view the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet. In this connection first of all I would like to mention the name of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Abi Rabi (833 A.D.) who Produced the earliest book on political philosophy, advances the notion of state and welfare state. The book written by Abi Al Rabi,⁽²⁾ is entitled "Suluk-ul-Malik-fi Tadbiral-Mamalik". It will not beout of place to mention here that many concepts and ideas discussed by Abi Rabi in 833 A.D. were repeated by famous European Political Scientist Lock (1632 to 1704) in his book, "Civil Government" after 800 years. While this name appears in every book of "History of Political Thought" and Abi Rabi's name is not mentioned although he should be considered and acknowledged as one of the Pioneers of political thought. Abi Rabi discusses in detail the division and sub-division of human knowledge and deals with all the sciences and subjects. under the title middle knowledge he discusses the principle of politics-The Rulers-Kings, policies of states and their evolution with moral and ethical principles. Such division has similarly been adapted by pollock. He divides Moral Sciences under the title "Knowledge and actions" perhaps following the pattern⁽³⁾ from Abi Rabi's book. He initiates his work with the the position and status of man, as he holds the view that the position of man is higher than that of the Sky and the essence of Islamic culture is respect for man.

He also discusses in detail the following topics :

1. Control over oneself.
2. Control over the household.
3. Control over other persons.

He considers "Sound Knowledge of History" as a necessary subject for all the people at the helm of affairs and important Administrators. He clearly states that "Divine laws are necessary and indispensable for the protection and organization of the people and for a "Universal Order". He assigns divine qualities for the administrators and wants them to dedicate themselves for the service, unity and brotherhood of mankind.

Ibn Abi Rabi discusses in detail the principles of justice. It consists in placing everything in its proper place and giving every one his due. Justice entails a system of rights which are three fold. A right, due to God, those due to living and due⁽⁴⁾ to dead. He also up holds obedience to the ruler as a form & Justice.

Ibn Abi Rabi more than a thousand years ago is fully conscious of the importance of absolutely impartial and independent judiciary and the necessary qualities and attributes deemed necessary for a judge in the modern world. Abi Rabi says that a judge should fulfil the follow requirements :

1. He should be a God fearing and dignified person.
2. He should have sound common sense and be conversant with the standard judicial literature.
3. He should bear an absolutely irreproachable character.
4. He should not deliver judgements before he is satisfied that full proof has been laid before him, nor tarry in his judgement when sufficient evidence has been produced.
5. He should be fearless in awarding what is right and due.
6. He should never see any party in private.
7. He should take great care to protect the rights and property of orphans.

The study of Abi Rabi's book reveals that in his political thought the reader cannot find a

word or term which might indicate the slightest racial or religious prejudice or the exclusion of any sect from any office of the state.

Abul Hassan Ali b. Mohammed b. Habib al Mawardi (974 to 1058) is another great Arab Jurist and pure rationalist who contributed valuable works on science of politics and administration:

1. Kitab-al-Ahkam Es Sultaniah.
(The book of the rules of Power)
2. Qawaninnul Wizart (Laws of the Ministry).
3. Nasihatul Muluk.

These books are devoted to the principal, political, legal and social institutions of the Islamic State. He discusses in detail the issues of Elections, Nominations, Voters and qualifications of Candidates and Voters. It is interesting to mention here that instead of regarding purely artificial factors such as age, property and residence Mawardi considers that only qualified candidates are those who, Keeping in view the Quranic teachings can distinguish between right and wrong, between good and evil.

Nizam ul Mulk Tusi (1017 to 1019) the founder of the Nizamiya University at Baghdad is also known for his prominent book on politics and Administration. Saiyast-nama and Dastural Wazaras indicate the fact the author of these works had a comparative, logical and lucid style. As prime-minister he put into practice the political and administrative ideas and theories formulated by him as a statesman and author of valuable works on political thought and administration.

Abu Hamid Muhammad b. Ahmed Al-Ghazzali 1058 to 1111

The remarkable thing about Ghazzali is that when he was writing on political theories and international affairs in 1100 A.D. the medieval west had not even begun to investigate into the elements of politics and their implications on world affairs. He defines politics as a science which deals with proper order for state affairs of the mundane category.

As in philosophy we find Al Ghazzali forestalling Descartes' method of doubt, Kants criticism of pure reason, and Humes⁽⁶⁾ Scepticism, we also find in his political works most modern notes which remind us of Herbert Spencer (1820 to 1903) when he likens the different elements of the state to the organs of a living body⁽⁷⁾.

The Austinian theory of sovereignty propounded nearly 700 years after Ghazzali⁽⁸⁾ was not a step forward as he had discussed all the concepts and theories related to state, religion, constitution, law and citizens in his political works and Lord and Sidgwick were ignorant of the History of Arab Political thought when they expressed the view that politics is product of Western thought⁽⁹⁾.

Ibn Khaldun (1332 to 1406)

Long before modern sociologists Ibn Khaldun applied himself to the evolution of human society and tried to give rational explanation of the progress of history.

It is practically impossible to analyse here the immense work of Ibn Khaldun.

P.K.Hitti expresses surprise that the fathers of philosophy of History and Social Sciences particularly vico, comte Montesquieu and Adam Smith had a precursor,⁽¹⁰⁾ who should be admired and remembered for the relevance and modernity of his political, social and economic principles. In brief Ibn Khaldun presents the subjects of state, sovereignty and rule of law from longer and more far reaching points of view and greatly surpassed the Italian political thinker Machiavelli in discussing its social aspects. He may be called the master of the political and social study which Machiavelli treated a century later⁽¹¹⁾.

Summing up we may say that the great difference between Arab political Scientists and European authors was the fact that Muslims were successful administrators while almost all Western authors had little experience of practical politics. Plato's theories were never put into practice anywhere. Aristotle, whose arguments are based on the constitutions of

various city states, that the Greece of the city states was already a thing of the past in his time.

Hobbes the author of Leviathan is exiled⁽¹²⁾, Rousseau ends his life in distant lands unhonoured and unwept. Even Bentham, when he tries to influence his contemporaries by his theory of law, no one takes much notice of him. On the other hand, Arab Political thinkers, like Ghazzali, Ibn Khaldun, Nizamul Mulk Tusi and Mawardi were advisers and prominent members of the governments of their times and whatever they wrote, in the light of the teachings of the Quran and the Prophe's (Peace be on him), sayings and practices, on the science of political Thought and Administration passed the acid test of experience.

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