

Ibn Al-Athir's Philosophy of History in *Al-Kamil Fi Al-Tarikh*

Azmul Fahimi Kamaruzaman¹, Norsaeidah Jamaludin¹ & Ahmad Faathin Mohd Fadzil¹

¹ Department of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Correspondence: Azmul Fahimi Kamaruzaman, Department of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia, Malaysia. E-mail: azmul@ukm.edu.my

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Abstract

Ibn al-Athir was a Muslim historian in the 6-7th century AH/12-13th century AD and renowned for his masterpiece entitled *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh*. The content structure of *al-Kamil* is divided into two which are, first, 'Muqaddimah' section containing the principles and concepts of history of Ibn al-Athir and, second, narrative section containing information and historical events which dominate almost all of *al-Kamil*. This article is intended for discussion on the philosophy of history in the 'Muqaddimah' section to understand Ibn al-Athir's ideas about history in *al-Kamil*. The discussion applies a document analysis method and historiography approach. Results found that there were three forms of philosophy of history of Ibn al-Athir. First, *tazkirah* (reminder) is a reminder for mankind of historical events that happened. Second, *sahih* (authentic) is a selection technique of factual historical content. Third, *tamm* (completeness or perfection) as a process of scrutiny and observation before a narration is chosen and written. These three indirectly underlie the whole historiography of *al-Kamil* and form Ibn al-Athir's ideas of philosophy of history in *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh*.

Keywords: Ibn al-Athir, philosophy of history, historiography, *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh*

1. Introduction

Ibn al-Athir was a Muslim historian circa the 6-7th century AH/12-13th century AD. He was famed for a historical work of *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh* [*The Complete History*]. The piece collected various genre of history, be it universal or contemporary. The variety of genre revealed that the work did not focus on one age but extended to cover all ages. Historiography with such genre gives a positive implication to the development of Islamic historiography. Therefore, Ibn al-Athir was also one of the leading historians who brought change in Islamic historiography from the point of concept of history and historiography methods based on his philosophy of history.

2. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil* and Fragments of Philosophy of History

Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin Abi al-Karam Muhammad bin Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Karim bin 'Abd al-Wahid al-Shaibani, whose famed title was Abu al-Hasan and 'Izz al-Din but was better known with the name Ibn al-Athir Jazari (Ibn al-Athir, 1966, p. 9), was born on the 4th of Rabi' al-Awwal 555H/1160M in al-Jazirah Ibn 'Umar, Mawsil and died in the month of Sha'ban of the year 630H/1232AD at the age of 75 years (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, pp. 9-10). Ibn al-Athir had two siblings and he was the second among the three. His elder brother was Majd al-Din while his youngest brother was named Diya' al-Din. The family of Ibn al-Athir was from an Arab tribe of Bani Shayban (Tulaymat, 1969, p. 13). According to Richards (2008, p. 1), Ibn al-Athir's family was a respectable family and closely related to the state administration in the days of the Zangids.

The title of al-Athir was given for his expertise in various fields, especially history. His mastery in the field of history stemmed from his passion for the field. Ibn al-Athir scholarship was very much evident in his historical work entitled *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh* (Mahayudin, 1986, p. 460) and in that he was able to memorise previous and later histories and he possessed extensive knowledge of the Arab nations, festivals etc.

Al-Kamil was a work on Islamic history beginning from the history of *Bad' al-Khaliqah* (start of creation) until the year 628H/1230AD and was sourced from the work *Tarikh al-Tabari* (Mahayudin, 1986, p. 460). *Al-Kamil* was a piece of work which belongs to the universal and contemporary genre. Determination of universal genre for *al-Kamil* is based on its content containing the early history of human creation, previous nations, the Prophets, the Islamic era; Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Khulafa' al-Rashidin, Umayyads, 'Abbasids, Fatimids,

Seljuks, Zangids and the Crusade. *Al-Kamil* is also a contemporary historical work as Ibn al-Athir had a tendency to record events in his time by referring to the events in the Zangid kingdom and the Crusade (Mona Joma, 1987, p. 123). As such, information on the philosophy of history in *al-Kamil* was implicitly conveyed by Ibn al-Athir through several pages in the preface of *Muqaddimah al-Kamil* (preface to *al-Kamil*).

3. 'Muqaddimah' al-Kamil

The description by Ibn al-Athir in the 'Muqaddimah' or preface section of *al-Kamil* shows that he indirectly detailed his philosophy of history for collective understanding of the readers. Interpretation of details in the preface was aimed at dismantling the question of principles and methods of historiography in *al-Kamil*. The first volume in the work was preceded by a preface which was 9-page long (Azmul Fahimi & Norsaeidah, 2011, p. 504).

The preface to *al-Kamil* contains four parts; namely the first, doxology or word of praise; second, introduction; third, writing method, scope of history and source of reference and; fourth, benefits of history writing. Doxology revolves around the words of praise to Allah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) at the beginning of the text (Mahayudin, 2009). The first part was doxology to Allah and His Messenger (p.b.u.h.) such as the pronouncement *Bism Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim* and later ended with verses from Surah Maryam, "And how many a generation before them have we destroyed! Canst thou (Muhammad) see a single man of them, or hear from them the slightest sound?" (Note 1) and Surah al-A'raf "... His verily is all creation and commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!" (Note 2).

Both verses from Surah Maryam and al-'Araf allude to an early understanding on the importance of learning from past stories. According to the interpretation of al-Tabari (2009, p. 730) verse 98 of Surah Maryam means, did you see and hear the voice of previous people destroyed by God because they followed a false path and do evil to Him. The slightest sound is the soft voice of those who perished due to ungratefulness to His blessings. This verse reminds the ummah of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) to immediately repent from sin if they do not want to perish like previous generations. The interpretation of verse 54 Surah al-A'raf meanwhile is to create and rule cannot be done by anything other than Allah, including worshipped gods and idols because both of them can bring about neither harm nor benefit and cannot create anything or rule anything (al-Tabari, 2008, p. 194).

Based on the above interpretation, the authors have the opinion that Ibn al-Athir chose the verses from Surah Maryam and Chapter al-A'raf as a reminder to all mankind of the greatness and power of God who governs life. No one can escape from retribution to their own deeds. Therefore, Ibn al-Athir chose these verses as a reminder that each event or action will be rewarded and to repent from sins for Allah is Almighty over everything.

The introduction in the foreword section of Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 5) registered his keen interest in the field of history so much so that he fervently wrote works of history. His interest was manifested in his curiosity to know more about historical events. This feeling was expressed by him, "*fa inni lam azal muhibban li mutala'ah kutub al-tawarikh wa ma 'rifah ma fiha*" (I love to read history books to know what's inside). He was very interested in history because he wanted to explain or convey historical events. As in his saying, *mu'aththiran li al-itla' 'ala al-jaliy min hawadithiha wa khafiha, ma 'ilan ila al-ma'arif wa al-adab wa al-tajarib al-mawdu'at fi mutawiha* (inclined to explain real and hidden events, inclined to knowledge, literature and past experience in its fold). Ibn al-Athir was fond of history because since childhood he often heard historical accounts from his father ('Inayat, 1995, p. 8). Various narratives and dimensions of history which he learnt created and nurtured a sense of love for knowledge in him. Interesting narration with various scopes interested Ibn al-Athir to follow the journey of every historical narrative.

Then Ibn al-Athir continued with comments and criticism of previous historiography style. In the criticism, he stated, "*falamma ta'ammiltuha ra'aytuha mutabayinah fi tahsil al-ghard, yakadu jawhar al-ma'rifah biha yastahil ila al-'ard*" (when I analyse history books I see in them difference in their goals causing the digest of their contents to be unknown). The difference in objectives of writing was in terms of disorganised and disarrayed writing leaving many of the narratives inside them to fall short of delivering the purpose. Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 5) stated, *famin bayna mutawwilin qad istaqsa al-turuq wa al-riwayat wa mukhtasirin qad akhalla bi kathirin mimma huwa at. Wa ma 'a zalik faqad taraka kulluhum al-'azim min al-hadithat wa al-mashhur min al-ka'inat*" (any long historical account was narrated while the rest of the history was summarized thereby causing major and famous events being omitted).

Based on the commentary, Ibn al-Athir explained that most of historical work that he found had a weakness. The weakness was that the difference in goal of historical writing among the historians. The implication of such difference caused the contents of a history work to be disorderly and unclear, even to the extent that important historical events being ignored compared to others. In addition, Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 5) stated, "*wa sawwada*

kathir minhum al-awraq bi saghair al-umur allati al-i'rad 'anha awla wa tark tastiruha ahra" (they blackened sheets of paper having a small mistake and leave them). Such attitude showed that no effort was taken to improve or correct the wrong historical facts. This circumstance makes historical content incomplete and its explanation vague.

Observation by Ibn al-Athir explains that there are historians who do not distinguish between unimportant things and the more important things, abandoning crucial events and names which should be mentioned. Meaning, they make a selection of history according to their interest before the historical work is written. The criticism was a result of his awareness of the importance of quality of a particular work. An absence of quality reveals a lack of seriousness of the historians in giving the best for the society. It is due to these factors that he wrote *al-Kamil* as best as possible until it evolved into a quality piece of work (Ashur, 1988, p. 189).

In another statement Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 6) mentioned, "*wa qad arrakha kullu minhum ila zamanih waja' ba'dah man zayyala 'alayh. Wa adaf al-mutajaddidat ba'da tarikhi ilayh. Wa sharqiy minhum qad akhal bi zikr akhbar al-gharb wa al-garbi qad ahmala ahwal al-sharq*" (all historians gathered the history in each period and ended their writing by adding subsequent history. For historians in the east, they did not mention events in the west and so did historians in the west too, ignoring the situations in the east). This situation exposed the partisanship of both sides giving priority to historical account in their own area as compared to other regions. When the writing of history is concentrated on an area only, to know a history will require quite a high number of books. This may give rise to boredom and show deficiencies of a work.

The authors are of the opinion that early historians were biased in writing history. The factor behind it is the attitude of historians who paid attention to the history in their own location and did not extend to record events in other areas. That weakness was made even larger with the absence of effort to purify other historians' historical records. In fact they actually perpetuate the same mistake which caused their historical content to become lop-sided. Hence, the matter mentioned by Ibn al-Athir became a problem in Islamic historiography development. Following that, Ibn al-Athir devised a method to handle the problem by renewing the method of writing history.

The third part is writing method, scope of history and reference sources of Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 6). In tackling the above issues he began his writing with a comprehensive history. As in his statement, "*falamma ra'aytu al-amr kazalik shari'tu fi ta'lif tarikh jami' li akhbar muluk al-sharq wa al-gharb*" (When I see a matter like that, I begin writing complete history of the kings of the east and the west). Ibn al-Athir's explanation indicates that his efforts to deal with these problems began with writing history in its entirety. He did not at all focus on the history of a certain region only as did previous historians, but he covered the entire Islamic world such as the history of kings or ruler of a territory.

Apart from that, he also noted events from the earliest times up to his time. This was done by writing down history one by one, beginning from history of the early period until the history in the time of Ibn al-Athir. This was because he admitted that he did not compile historical events in Mawsil alone. Instead, he also wrote any history which had not been reported in other history books (1998, p. 6). As in Ibn al-Athir's statement (1998, p. 6), "*wa ati fihi bi al-hawadith wa al-ka'inat min awwal al-zaman mutatabi'ah yatlu ba'duha ba'dan ila waqtina haza. Wa la aqul inni ataytu 'ala jami' al-hawadith al-muta'alliqah bi al-tarikh fa inna man huwa bi al-mawsil la budda an yashaz 'anhu ma huwa bi aqsa al-sharq wa al-gharb, wa lakin aqul inni qad jami'tu fi kitabi haza ma lam yajtami' fi kitabin wahid*" (And I included events from the early period one by one according to its part until this period of ours. And I do not say I accumulate historical events of individuals in Mawsil either in the east or the west but I say that I compile in this book of mine what has not been compiled in other history books).

Next, Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 6) stated, "*wa min ta'ammalah 'ilm sahhah zalik fa ibtida'tu bi al-tarikh al-kabir allazi sannafahu al-imam Abu Ja'far al-Tabari. Iz huwa al-kitab al-mu'awwal 'ind al-kaffah 'alayh*" (started by examining the veracity of the information in *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* whose author is Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tabari. In the book there is complete history). Referring to that statement, it is clear that Ibn al-Athir began referring to the work of al-Tabari as a source. The selection of that book was because there in the book was the entire set of history starting from the earliest period to the time of al-Tabari. Therefore, Ibn al-Athir was very much dependent on the work of al-Tabari by examining each of its historical content. Ibn al-Athir examined in its entirety by referring to the difference between the translation of al-Tabari and other historians. The difference was that al-Tabari, compared to other historians, narrated the history of many nobles.

Therefore, Ibn al-Athir intended, "*faqasadtu atimmu al-riwayat fanaqaltuha wa adaftu ilayha min ghayriha ma laysa fiha wa awwada'tu kulla shay' makanihi faja jami' ma fi tilka al-hadithah 'ala ikhtilafi turuquha siyaqan wahidan 'ala ma tarah*" (I intend to complete the narrative and then deliver it. And I gather other than what is in it. I put everything into its place and then state all events with a different method of context). Thus, Ibn al-Athir

completed al-Tabari narrative by compiling other histories not contained within *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* and then wrote them with a specific method.

Ibn al-Athir then stated the method of historical writing of *al-Kamil* in his statement, “*akhaztu ghayrihi min al-tawarikh al-mashhurah wa wada‘tu kullu shay’ minha mawdu‘uhu*” (I took famous histories and I put it all under one title). Another statement of his, “*fajami‘tu ana al-hadithah fi mawdu‘ wahid wa zakartu kullu shay’ minha fi ay shahr aw sanah kanat*” (I gathered historical events under one title and I mention all these events in what month and year). Both statements clarified that Ibn al-Athir applied a method of title and chronology. Title method refers to the phrase “*fajami‘tu ana al-hadithah fi mawdu‘ wahid*” while chronology method refers to the phrase “*zakartu kullu shay’ minha fi ay shahr aw sanah kanat*”.

Ibn al-Athir’s approach was to compile all the information first and then give a title for each historical event and, after that, to arrange them chronologically. The method of *maudu‘at* place each history under one title which was arranged in parallel with the year it occurred. As an example, the history of a king or ruler was written by compiling all of his activities and undertakings in a yearly order. If the duration of rule of the king was short-lived, he noted it all at once from the beginning. Meanwhile, the chronological method was implemented to compile various histories in one particular year. The arrangement according to year began from the history of the early period with the month and year it happened stated. The appropriateness of al-Tabari historiography gave an impact to the historiography of Ibn al-Athir from the point of similarity in the method of annual order arrangement. In the view of the authors, the application of the *maudu‘at* method was linked with the chronological method because the first method justifies each compiled event which was arranged in a yearly order to have a title. Hence, the use of both methods provided a novel presentation to the historical writing of Ibn al-Athir and projected an orderly and tidy arrangement of history.

Ibn al-Athir laid two scopes of history to complete a work. According to him, “*wa zakartu fi kullu sanah li kullu hadithah kabirah mashhurah tarjamah takhussuha, fa amma al-hawadith al-sighar allati la yahtamil minha kulla shay’ tarjamah fa innani afradtu li jami‘iha tarjamah wahidah fi akhir kulla sanah*” (I mentioned specific translation for every major and famous event in every year while for minor events I did not give the translation) (Ibn al-Athir, 1998, p. 7). Based on that statement, the authors define major events as universal history while minor events as contemporary history. The collection of universal history in *al-Kamil* was based on the statements of Ibn al-Athir who mentioned of gathering prominent events. Prominent events in Islamic historiography are crucial Islamic events i.e. pre-Islamic period, the time of Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.), the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Umayyads and the Abbasids. Meanwhile, contemporary history is history close to the writer. Therefore, it is clear that Ibn al-Athir recorded history of both genres, universal and contemporary.

At the same time, Ibn al-Athir stated that the source of *al-Kamil* was the work of history by Abu Ja‘afar al-Tabari namely the book *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* and other sources of history. From the work of al-Tabari, he took its whole content without any doubt as to the veracity of its textual content. As in the words of Ibn al-Athir, (1998, p. 7) “*fa inni lam adafila ma naqalahu Abu Ja‘far shay’an wa i‘tamidtu ‘alayh min bayna al-mu‘arrikhin iz huwa al-imam al-muttaqin haqqa*” (I do not collect history other than of al-Tabari and I rely on the Imam for its truth). The confidence and trust in al-Tabari’s narration was due to that many narrations of hadith in it were impeccable. However, Ibn al-Athir did not mention any other names or types of work.

In the fourth part, Ibn al-Athir presented the benefits of writing history. The benefits were divided into two, namely, one from the worldly angle, and another from the point of the afterlife. His analysis of the benefits of history knowledge was triggered from the attitude of certain quarters of the society who rejected the discipline and narration of history. In their view, history is a new and ambiguous story and it is sufficient to look at it externally, and not internally. According to Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 9) the benefit of knowledge on earth is “*faminha inna al-insan la yakhfi innahu yuhibb al-baqa’, wa yu‘athiru anna yakun fi zamrah al-ahya’*”. The worldly benefit of knowledge is that it affects the environment of society through empirical differences and *mutalaah*. Ibn al-Athir added (1998, p. 9) if we read and analyse we will acquire new knowledge and only after we are knowledgeable will we become a civilised people. As a result, man will have the experience and knowledge of an event which has an impact onto his thoughts.

The benefit of knowledge from the afterlife viewpoint is as in his statement, “*faminha anna al-‘aqil al-labib iza tafakara fiha*” (Ibn al-Athir, 1998, p. 10). The meaning is anyone who thinks about world development will have both the worldly and the afterlife. If we, guided by knowledge, reject the world and embrace the afterlife, we will receive reward for our knowledgeability. Having good morals with patience and following good examples are two benefits of *akhlaq*. To learn a lesson is to look at the world’s evils as harmful and inviting the wrath of Allah and His Messenger. Each matter has wisdom as reminded by Allah in Surah Qaf verse 37, “Lo! Therein verily is

a reminder for him who hath a heart, or giveth ear with full intelligence” (Note 3).

According to al-Tabari’s interpretation (2009, p. 890), the verse means that events of the past from previous generations are a reminder for those who have a heart (mind). The reminder was for the ummah of Prophet Muhammad not to do the same thing as the previous generations did i.e. disobedient to Allah for fear of punishment befalling them. Therefore, Ibn al-Athir cited the verse as an afterthought that every human being capable of thinking must contemplate and understand each incident. Each incident is preordained by God for humans to take as a lesson, example and penitence. Mankind needs to evaluate and learn from experience of previous generation about life. Hence, Ibn al-Athir emphasised the lessons of history he wrote for the benefit in this world and the hereafter.

4. Understanding the Philosophy of History of Ibn al-Athir via ‘*Muqaddimah*’ *al-Kamil*

To understand the philosophy of history of Ibn al-Athir, the authors present a debate by interpreting its relation with *Muqaddimah* of *al-Kamil*. This is because Ibn al-Athir implicitly stated his philosophy of history. In spite of this, the author attempts to explain one by one the philosophy by linking them to three principles namely *tazkirah*, *sahih* and *tamm*.

Ibn al-Athir stated the three principles describing his philosophy of history. The first principle, with *tazkirah* at its core, refers to the elements of reminder and lesson. History and *tazkirah* rely on each other when historiography is aimed at giving benefit to society. The content of history which has its unique narrative by involving various groups of people, time, place and era gives a picture of reasons for the occurrence of an event. Comprehensive writing and compilation of history facilitate the readers to journey through history and gain lessons from it. This was asserted by Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 6), “*shari‘tu fi ta’lif tarikh jami’ li akhbar muluk al-sharq wa al-gharb wa ma baynahuma li yakun tazkirah li uraji’uhu khawf al-nisyan*” (I embarked upon writing with a complete history involving news of kings of the east and of the west and the surrounding areas to serve as a reminder for me to refer to it during fear and forgetfulness). His statement was clear that the work of history is a reference for himself or anyone else, especially when penitence about all sins arises.

Tazkirah is seen as the main goal in Ibn al-Athir’s writing of history for each account that was delivered gives an impact on the audience whether they believe it or not. Therefore, Ibn al-Athir was inclined to write a complete historical work so that the goal to convey the truth was achieved. A thorough writing of history can affect the human mind and personality after studying and learning from each incident that occurred. The option to learn from lessons of an event lies in the man himself, either to continuously do evil or change for the better.

Diversity of history exposure can create a sense of anxiety and awareness in the human soul to be vigilant and not to repeat the same mistakes. Thus, history is educational material based on past experiences to be used as examples to the readers. With history also, mankind can evaluate actions of historical characters whether to follow them or not. Therefore, the principle of history of Ibn al-Athir was based on *tazkirah* as a reminder to mankind.

Based on that principle, Ibn al-Athir emerged with an interesting style of historiography which displayed an extensive and thorough textual content. Selection of the entire history of Islam is derived from the foundation that desires the society to get the lessons and experience. Through such display of history, it can provide knowledge and create a sense of self-awareness in the community to be alert. This historical principle is indirectly guided by the spirit and philosophy of al-Qur’an. To serve as examples and role models in human life is consistent with the objective of history.

The principle of *sahih* is oriented around the selection of authentic historical content. As in the statement of Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 6), “*jami’tu fi kitabi haza ma lam yajtami’ fi kitabin wahid. Wa min ta’ammilhu ‘ilm sahhah zalik*” (I have collected in this book of mine what was not collected in other books of history and I scrutinize the validity of the information). This principle is a factor for completion of *al-Kamil*, with emphasis on the authenticity of history. Each detail of historical information was vetted as to its truth before it was written and compiled.

Ibn al-Athir’s was inclined to research historical information because he wanted to circumvent error in presenting fact. This was practiced when referring to and extracting narratives from the work of al-Tabari. He stated, “*Wa min ta’ammilhu ‘ilm sahhah zalik fa ibtida’u bi al-tarikh al-kabir allazi sannafahu al-imam Abu Ja’far al-Tabari. Iz huwa al-kitab al-mu’awwal ‘ind al-kaffah ‘alaih. Wa al-marju’ ‘ind al-ikhtilaf ilayh*” (I started researching the authenticity of facts with the book *al-Tarikh al-Kabir*, the author is Imam Abu Ja’far al-Tabari. In the book is the entire history and I referred to the difference in it) (Ibn al-Athir, 1998, p. 6). Thus, Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 7) first examined and then wrote it once the truth was known as in his saying, “*inni lam*

anqal illa min al-tawarikh al-mazkurah wa al-kutub al-mashhurah, mimman ya'lam bi sadaqihim fi ma naqaluhu wa sahhah ma dawwanuhu" (I do not write except from the history which was stated, from well-known books whose notes were known for its validity and authenticity).

Based on Ibn al-Athir excerpt, it is clear that he gave so much importance to the accuracy and truth of historical content. In the authors' view, he did not allow weak narration into the work of *al-Kamil*. This is based on his meticulousness when selecting and writing a history i.e. taking history from authentic sources such as *Tarikh Rusul wa al-Muluk* and having confidence in the personality of the author of the source. Ibn al-Athir had the trust and confidence in the knowledge and truth brought by al-Tabari, as in his admission, "*i'tamidtu 'alayh min bayna al-mu'arrikhin iz huwa al-imam al-muttaqin haqqan, al-jami' 'ilman wa sahhah i'tiqad wa sadiqan*" (I rely onto a great historian, whose knowledge is extensive, valid, trusted and true) (Ibn al-Athir, 1998, p. 7). As such, the truth of any information became the principle of historical writing of Ibn al-Athir in choosing a history and also its source.

An orientation of quality production of history was applied in each and every effort of Ibn al-Athir. Ibn al-Athir therefore held to the principle of *tamm* which is completeness or perfection. This principle is evident in the process of writing and compiling. In his statement (1998, p. 7), "*faqasadu atimmu al-riwayat fanaqaltuha*" (I intend to complete the narrative and then write it down). The statement describes that each narration should be improved in terms of sentence structure or its content. Ibn al-Athir acted on perfecting each narration used. The intention was carried out by first examining every detail to ensure accuracy. Once the narration is believed to be true then the history is completed and written.

In addition, Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 7) stated, "*falamma jami'tu aktharuhu 'aradtu 'anhu maddah tawilah li hawadith tajaddudat wa qawati' tawalatu wa ta'addidat wa la'in ma 'rifati bi haza al-naw' kamiltu wa tammal*" (after I collected much of it, I took a long time to write new events and I decided the sequel to the event after that because my knowledge has been complete and perfect). This situation shows that Ibn al-Athir did not directly continue to write even though that there was subsequent history afterwards. He did that because he considered his writing of history to be almost perfect. Therefore, he deferred his writing until he was instructed to continue his work.

The purpose of deferring the writing was to update the information written so as to be thorough and complete. Within that period, he took the steps to improve the weakness in the work and add more notes. Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 8) said, "*wa al-'azam 'ala itmamuhu fatir, wa al-'ajzu zahir*" (and am resolved to perfect notes which are loose and weak). In the authors' view, this principle is found to coincide with etymology *al-Kamil* which is perfection. The perfection or completeness is accomplished with the effort towards perfection bringing about quality results. Each quality result surely benefits and avoids harm to mankind.

Next, Ibn al-Athir (1998, p. 9) explained *wa shara'tu fi itmamuhu musabiqan* (and I embarked upon completion of previous works). Based on that statement, it can be known that he was trying to complete the writing of *al-Kamil* within the deferment period. The work was run due to the demand of Zangid ruler then who asked him to continue writing with perfection. In relation to that he continued to improve the work by making criticism and presenting initial hypothesis of his work. As in his statement, "*wa shara'tu fi itmamuhu musabiqan wa nasabtu nafsi ghardan li al-siham wa ja'altuha muzannah li aqwal al-lawam*" (and I embarked upon perfecting previous works and I strived to achieve the goal by making hypothesis based on the criticism that I did) (Ibn al-Athir, 1998, p. 9).

Therefore, it is clear that *tamm* is the third principle of Ibn al-Athir in perfecting the writing of *al-Kamil*. The completion process started from the intent of his heart to accomplish each narration in *al-Kamil*. The implication of such intent led to the writing of the first phase which was nearly complete and momentarily suspended. Then Ibn al-Athir continued the work to correct narrations in *al-Kamil* after receiving order from *Badr al-Din Lu'lu* who was then the Zangid ruler. The effort eventually led to appraisal and criticism from Ibn al-Athir as an improvement to his writing and completed the overall writing of *al-Kamil*.

The authors conclude that, the whole historical writing of *al-Kamil* revolves around three key principles i.e. *tazkirah*, *sahih* and *tamm*. These three principles are a combination process towards history perfection as intended by Ibn al-Athir. Ibn al-Athir's writing must have aimed to give a reminder and lesson to the people and not just mere monotonous storytelling. Centring on the principle of *tazkirah* caused Ibn al-Athir to choose to write a universal work in view of the need to achieve the goal of *tazkirah* which requires an extensive collection of history. Furthermore, Ibn al-Athir put a condition that each narration of history should be authentic and true. Historical authenticity was achieved by making research and observations before a narrative was adopted and written. Therefore, the truthfulness of the communicated information makes *al-Kamil* a great work on history the

authenticity of which is believed in. Therefore, in tandem with the principles of *tazkirah* and *sahih* the work of Ibn al-Athir was bound to be based on the principle of *tamm*. *Tamm* is fulfilled in the final process of writing i.e. improvements and corrections to the recently completed narrative. The refinement process of narrations perfected the contents of *al-Kamil* as a work of history that serves as a reminder and is believed in as to its veracity because its writing was perfectly done.

5. Conclusion

Historiographical analysis of *al-Kamil* showed that Ibn al-Athir put forward a principle of history in the foreword section. The author's observation found that there are three principles which depicted the philosophy of history of Ibn al-Athir, namely *tazkirah* (reminder), *sahih* (truth) and *tamm* (perfection). These three principles indirectly underlie the whole writing of Ibn al-Athir in *al-Kamil*. The principles function through the main goal of history writing as a lesson and reminder to mankind to learn from mistakes. The reminder must be conveyed from truthful and accurate account and be refined to the best possible so that mankind can know the whole lesson from history.

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Notes

Note 1. al-Quran, Surah Maryam (19) verse 98.

Note 2. al-Quran, Surah al-A'raf (7) verse 54.

Note 3. al-Quran, Surah Qaf (50) verse 37.

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