Ibn Kathir's Critical View of the Events of Islamic Conflicts and Seditions in "Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah": An Analytical Study

Mohammed Hussein Khalaf

Department of Islamic Education, College of Basic Education, University of Tikrit

Abstract: Islamic history, since the dawn of Islam, has formed a fertile ground for research and criticism due to the decisive events that have profoundly impacted the collective consciousness of the Muslim ummah. In this context, our study aims to explore the critical methodology followed by Ibn Kathir in "Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya" and examine his stance on the companions and Islamic sects during the civil wars. The research problem revolves around the nature of Ibn Kathir's critical perspective, the criteria he used in criticizing the narratives, and the extent to which his doctrinal views influenced his presentation and analysis of events. Our findings show that Ibn Kathir provided a balanced and objective critical analysis of the fitan (seditions), combining various reports and weighing them scientifically, ensuring fairness in dealing with the events. Ibn Kathir aimed to help the ummah derive lessons from these fitan rather than using them as a means of political or sectarian incitement. Based on these findings, we recommend conducting independent studies on the impact of historical fitan on the unity of the Muslim ummah and how to prevent the recurrence of such divisions in the present day. Researchers and intellectuals should also contribute to the objective and scientific critique of historical heritage, in the same manner as Ibn Kathir did in his treatment of the major fitan.

Keywords: Critical Vision, Ibn Kathir, The Beginning and The End, Tribulations, Islamic Conflicts

Introduction

Since the dawn of Islam, Islamic history has been a fertile material for research and criticism, due to the fateful events it contains that significantly shaped the collective consciousness of the Islamic nation. The events of sedition and conflict are at the forefront, with their clash between opinion and doctrine, politics and interest, and the resulting doctrinal and sectarian divisions that have extended their impact to this day.

The writing of Islamic history was the focus of the attention of Islamic scholars, including the Muhaddithis, who paid great attention to the narratives in terms of scrutiny and documentation, to distinguish between the true and the objective, and between honest

transmission and deliberate plagiarism, among them was Imam Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH), the historian, exegete and muhaddith. In his famous encyclopaedia, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihya, he recorded the accounts of history from the beginning of creation until his time, adopting a critical approach, especially in dealing with the events of seditions and conflicts that took place in the early Islamic centuries.

Ibn Kathir distinguished himself from other historians, such as Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir, by his tendency to criticise historical narratives and weigh them against the scale of hadith, as he was not a mere transmitter of narratives, but an investigator and critic, balancing and weighing them and rejecting the weak and false ones, in the light of his hadith and doctrinal criteria. He was also keen not to stir up strife, so he adhered to the side of justice and fairness, influenced by the approach of his Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah, which had a profound impact on the formation of his historical and doctrinal vision.

Research Problem

The study of Ibn Kathir's critical vision of the events of Islamic strife and conflicts in al-Bidayat wa al-Nihya reveals a coherent approach, based on hadithic rules and doctrinal orientations, which aims to build a sound awareness of history that avoids exaggeration and exaggeration, and is based on consideration and education. The importance of this topic increases in our current era, where strife and conflicts are renewed and historical accounts are invoked to justify positions and doctrines without criticism or scrutiny.

Hence, this research questions the nature of the critical vision adopted by Ibn Kathir, the criteria he adopted in his critique of narratives, and the extent to which his ideological vision is reflected in his presentation and analysis of events. The research seeks to analyse this vision through two main sections: The first deals with his critical approach, and the second deals with his ideological and educational dimensions.

The importance of the research

1. Highlighting Ibn Kathir's critical approach in dealing with historical narratives, especially in sensitive issues such as the events of sedition.
2. To contribute to correcting misconceptions about Islamic history that rely on unreliable narratives.
3. Demonstrate Ibn Kathir's excellence in combining the hadithic method with historical analysis in his work 'The Beginning and the End'.
4. To present a moderate scientific model in reading the events of Islamic conflicts, away from sectarian and confessional biases.
5. Reinforcing the importance of reading history with a reformist and educational outlook that promotes the value of justice and fairness at a time when intellectual strife has abounded.

Search goals

1. Recognise the critical approach followed by Ibn Kathir in 'The Beginning and the End'.
2. Studying his attitude towards the Companions and Islamic sects during the sedition.
3. Analyse his method of dealing with historical narratives and compare it with other sources.
4. Analyse his reformist intentions in dealing with the sedition.

Methodology

The research adopts a critical analytical approach by tracing Ibn Kathir's narratives in al-Bidayah wa al-Nahya, analysing their contents and comparing them with other historical and hadith sources to reveal the features of his approach and its intellectual dimensions.

Result and Discussion

Research One: The Critical Approach of Ibn Kathir Ibn Kathir's Critical Approach in Al-Bidayah and Al-Nahya

Ibn Kathir's critical approach is characterised by reliance on the rules of the science of hadith in verifying historical narratives, distinguishing between the true and the weak, and favouring narratives based on their authenticity and content. He also shows his concern for justice and fairness, especially in the events of strife, avoiding defamation and slander without evidence, and aiming to enlighten rather than provoke.

The first requirement: Ibn Kathir's sources and criteria for criticising narratives

1. Ibn Kathir's Reliance on Hadith Documentation and the Sanad in "Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah"

One of the most notable features of Imam Ibn Kathir al-Dimashqi (d. 774 AH) in his book "Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah" is his strict reliance on the Hadith method in criticizing historical narratives. This method involves analyzing the chains of transmission, judging the narrators, and evaluating their ranks among the Hadith scholars, a precedent rarely found in the works of historians. This method is characterized by precision, rigor, and consistency with the well-known Hadith rules of criticism and validation, making it closer to the books of Hadith scholars than to those of historians. Ibn Kathir: "is considered one of the Hadith critics who subjected history to the standard of the science of narration" (Mahmoud, 2000: 112). In most of the instances in which he narrates pivotal events, particularly those related to major seditions, such as the murder of Uthman ibn Affan, the Battle of the Camel, or the Battle of Siffin, Ibn Kathir proceeds to cite the narrations with their chains of transmission, or attributes them to their original, authenticated sources. He then follows them with a commentary, sometimes authenticating the narration, sometimes weakening it, or pointing out its falsity or irregularity. For example, he would say, "In this chain of transmission is so-and-so, rejected," or "This is a rejected report," or "This is from the

path of Sayf ibn Umar, whose hadith is rejected by scholars" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/253). This approach clearly indicates his absorption of the views of leading scholars of hadith criticism, such as Yahya ibn Ma'in, al-Dhahabi, and others.

Perhaps the most prominent feature that reflects this critical approach to hadith is his extreme caution regarding the narrations of weak narrators, most notably Sayf ibn Umar, the most famous narrator of apostasy and sedition, on whom al-Tabari relied extensively. However, unlike al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir treats his narrations with extreme caution, relying instead on narrations found in authentic hadith books such as Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, and Musnad Ahmad, if they contain historical information, as we see in his discussion of the seditions that occurred in early Islam. Ibn Hajar said: "His hadith is weak, and he was accused of heresy" (al-Asqalani, 1995: 3/10). This is the same observation that Ibn Kathir repeated several times, indicating that Sayf ibn Umar narrates strange and unsound narrations. Ibn Kathir stated in various places in his book that historical narrations are not acceptable unless they follow the path of hadith verification. Regarding the events of the killing of Uthman, he stated: "These narrations are objectionable and contradict what has been proven from trustworthy Companions. It is not correct to rely on mere frequency of transmission without knowing the narrators" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/190). Ibn Kathir made the science of hadith a standard for history, and made critique of narrations a condition for understanding events.

Ibn Kathir was not an imitator in his documentation of narrations. Rather, he practiced internal criticism of both the narration and the text, linking what the narration says to what is established in events or in the principles of faith. This is an approach that combines examining the chain of transmission and the text, in the manner of leading critics such as Imam al-Daraqutni and Ibn Rajab. When he finds a narration that criticizes one of the prominent Companions, he pauses, presents alternative narrations, and weighs the evidence based on the rules of hadith science and contextual evidence, as in his commentary on narrations accusing Ali or Mu'awiyah (may Allah be pleased with them) of incitement or betrayal. He says, "This is not befitting of the status of the Companions, nor is it known from trustworthy sources. Rather, it is narrated through questionable chains of transmission" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/205). Finally, it must be noted that this approach, for Ibn Kathir, was not merely a scientific procedure, but rather an ethical approach and a religious responsibility, evident in his expressions that convey the prestige of narration and the danger of attributing falsehood to Islamic history. Thus, he said in one passage: "We mention what is authentic and proven to us, and we avoid what has no basis or what we know to be weak, for history is a trust, and it is not permissible to transmit it as it is without examination" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 8/15).

2. **Ibn Kathir's Position on Controversial Narrators: Sayf ibn Umar and al-Waqidi as a Model**

Imam Ibn Kathir's (d. 774 AH) position on controversial narrators is one of the most prominent manifestations of his critical approach in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah.

Ibn Kathir dealt with this category of narrators—such as Sayf ibn Umar and al-Waqidi—with a precise methodology based on the standards of the scholars of hadith. He would not review a narration without first examining the status of its narrator and scrutinizing it according to the criteria of criticism and authenticity, avoiding mere transmission or amplification of narrations, as some earlier historians had done.

First: Sayf ibn Umar al-Tamimi (d. after 170 AH)

Sayf ibn Umar is considered one of the most controversial narrators in historical narration. He was a primary source for al-Tabari in narrating the events of apostasy and sedition. Despite this, Ibn Kathir treated him with extreme caution. Although he included some of his narrations, he often pointed out their weakness, and even stated in more than one place that he was "abandoned by scholars," as in his description of him while discussing the turmoil surrounding the killing of Uthman ibn Affan, may God be pleased with him, where he said: "This is among what Sayf ibn Umar narrates, and he is weak by consensus, and his hadith is abandoned. Although the narration agrees with some of the events, it cannot be relied upon" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/253). Ibn Kathir's judgment was consistent with the statements of leading critics, as he said (Al-Asqalani, 1995: 3/10): "Sayf ibn Umar is weak in hadith, abandoned, and he fabricated hadiths and was accused of heresy." Al-Dhahabi also described him by saying: "Abu Dawud said: He is nothing. Ibn Hibban said: He narrates fabrications from reliable sources." Ibn Kathir, a student of al-Dhahabi, was aware of this collective judgment. Therefore, he would occasionally present Sayf's narrations, but he would not base judgments or base positions on them. Rather, he would present them analytically and critically, balancing them with other narrations he considered authentic from other hadith books, such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim, or from trustworthy narrators such as Ibn Ishaq, al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar, and others.

Second: al-Waqidi (Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, d. 207 AH)

Al-Waqidi was highly regarded among scholars of the biography of the Prophet, particularly in narrating the battles, events of the Prophet's biography, and conquests. However, scholars of hadith also criticized him, accusing him of lying or confusion, which was reflected in Ibn Kathir's treatment of him in al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah. It is rarely directly attributed to him, and when he does, he mentions it in a vague or cautious manner, such as by saying, "It was said on the authority of al-Waqidi" or "It was narrated on the authority of Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi." This is often followed by a critical comment or by comparing his narration with more authentic narrations.

Ibn Kathir, discussing some details of the conquest of Syria, said, "It was narrated by al-Waqidi, who narrated many narrations, but he is not reliable, and the scholars of hadith have often criticized him" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/16). This position is also consistent with the scholars of criticism and validation; al-Shafi'i said, "All of al-Waqidi's books are false," and al-Bukhari said, "Hadith is abandoned," as was reported from him (al-Jurjani, 1997: 6/211). Although Ibn Kathir sometimes drew on al-Waqidi's material when more

reliable narrations were not available, he preferred the narrations of Ibn Ishaq, Musa ibn Uqba, al-Zuhri, or other trustworthy narrators of the battles, as he indicated in the introduction to his account of the Prophet's biography.

By examining Ibn Kathir's approach, it becomes clear that his stance on controversial narrators was a balanced, critical stance based on the following

1. Relying on the opinions of leading hadith scholars: Ibn Kathir prioritized the opinions of prominent critics such as Ahmad, al-Bukhari, and al-Dhahabi over mere historical transmission.
2. Not relying on them unless supported by evidence: such as if the hadith were in agreement with another authentic narration or had corroborating evidence.
3. Pointing out weaknesses: so that it would not be understood that citing a narration meant accepting it.
4. Not dismissing the material entirely: that is, he did not ignore everything reported by these narrators, but he did not accept it without critique and analysis.
5. Balancing narrations: He balanced the reports of weak narrators against those reported by trustworthy narrators, and deduced the most correct opinion.

Contemporary researchers agree that Ibn Kathir represented an aspect of the historical critical school in Islam. He "subjected the narrative to the standard of hadith, without discounting its value if it served to structure the historical scene, provided it did not contradict established facts" (Siddiqi, 1988: 135). Ibn Kathir's Use of the Method of Collection and Preference in "Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah"

One of the critical methods employed by Imam Ibn Kathir in "Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah" is the method of collection and preference. This method relies on documenting multiple narratives that may narrate a single event, then combining these disparate or conflicting narratives, and finally, preferring the strongest narratives based on scientific criteria such as the authenticity of the chain of transmission, the text's compatibility with historical or doctrinal constants, and its agreement with the opinions of scholars. This method highlights Ibn Kathir's ability to deal with multiple and contradictory narratives in a systematic manner that reflects precise analysis and a keenness to present an accurate historical narrative (Kanani, 2025: 92).

First: Combining Different Narrations

Ibn Kathir was keen to combine diverse narratives about the historical events he narrated. This is evident in his treatment of major events such as the murder of Uthman ibn Affan, the Great Sedition, and the seditions witnessed during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. He did not limit himself to transmitting a single narrative; rather, he tracked all available narratives, then presented them in parallel within a single context, attempting to provide a complete picture of the event as it varied across multiple sources. For example, when discussing the events of the murder of Uthman, Ibn Kathir reviews the various accounts that discuss the causes of the sedition and the course of the siege, such as the

account transmitted by al-Waqidi on the authority of Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, which he narrates on the authority of the Companion Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, as well as the account mentioned in Khulasat al-Tabari on the authority of Marwan ibn al-Hakam, along with his comments on the weakness of some of the chains of transmission and the differences between these accounts: "As for the account that claims that Marwan ibn al-Hakam ordered the killing of Uthman, it is a weak account that is not authentic, because Marwan was not in Medina at that moment" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/110). Elsewhere, he continues discussing the causes: "Some accounts indicate that some Companions played a role in instigating the events, and it is not possible to ascertain which account is correct except by combining the accounts."

Second: Weighing Conflicting Accounts

Ibn Kathir does not limit himself to collecting the various accounts; rather, he attaches great importance to weighing the evidence in interpreting historical events. When one chain of narration contradicts another, or the narrations differ in essential details, Ibn Kathir prefers the stronger narration based on the criteria he uses to criticize the chain of narration and the text. He follows a balanced methodology that combines hadith documentation with historical logic, and relies on a review of the chains of narration based on the opinions of leading hadith critics, such as Ibn Hajar, al-Dhahabi, and Yahya ibn Ma'in.

In the case of the murder of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ibn Kathir cites narrations that recount different details of the incident. He cites al-Waqidi's opinion, which states that Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam was working under the influence of a secret group. He then cites Ibn Abbas's narration, which denies any political collusion in Ali's murder. He says, "Ibn Abbas's narration is more authentic, as it agrees with the established hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), which states that Ali was right and that he was killed by a wicked person" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 8/203). In this case, Ibn Kathir prefers Ibn Abbas's narration based on the strength of the chain of transmission and the reliability of the text, as he explains elsewhere: "The narration that says that the matter was a conspiracy between Muawiyah and Amr ibn al-As is not correct, as it has no reliable chain of transmission" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 8/215).

Third: Weighing the Text and the Sanad

In addition to verifying the strength of the chain of transmission, Ibn Kathir relies on an internal analysis of the text, seeking to reconcile the historical text with what is consistent with religious and doctrinal principles. In this context, Ibn Kathir is careful to ensure that the text does not conflict with Islamic legal texts or the doctrinal standards of the Islamic nation.

When Ibn Kathir discusses a narration about the Great Fitna or the Battle of Siffin, he adds an assessment of the text beyond the chain of transmission. Rather, he relies on reconciling the events with other historical sources, such as previous writings on the same topic. For example, when he discusses the Battle of Siffin, he cites several conflicting

accounts of the killing of Amr ibn al-As, saying: "There has been disagreement about the killing of Amr ibn al-As, but the account reported by al-Tabari has proven its authenticity, as it has been shown that the killing of Amr ibn al-As was the result of a mistake in the battle" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/301). In this case, the account that aligns with the concordant texts in the books of the biography and the hadiths of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is preferred.

Fourth: Combining and Preferring in Light of Hadith Rules

Ibn Kathir utilized Hadith rules to combine multiple narrations and prioritize the most likely. This was an ancient approach established in the Islamic critical school. He applied the rule of weakness and authenticity to each individual narration, as evidenced by his commentary on numerous narrations about the events of the Battle of the Camel and the Syrian Revolt. In each narration he mentioned, he placed it under the scale of authenticity or discrediting based on the testimonies of hadith scholars, especially al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar, whom he consulted on this matter (al-Baghdadi, 1977: 100).

The method of combining and preferring that Ibn Kathir followed in al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah was not merely a narrative process; rather, it was an artistic critical stance aimed at presenting historical narrations in a neutral, scholarly context. Through this approach, Ibn Kathir provided subsequent generations with a precise understanding of historical events, while balancing the authenticity of the chain of transmission and the strength of the text. This was embodied in his meticulous interpretation of contradictory events and his refusal to rely on weak narrations. This approach has contributed to making The Beginning and the End a primary reference in historical studies, and has emphasized the necessity of supporting every historical event with reliable, balanced sources, making it an encyclopedic work that will continue to be studied and critiqued throughout the ages.

The Second Section: His View of the Events of the Great Tribulations
The Assassination of Uthman ibn Affan: Analysis of Narrations and Comments

The assassination of Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) is considered one of the most important events that marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Islamic nation. It led to the outbreak of the Great Tribulations, the effects of which were not limited to political conflict but also extended to encompass social and religious dimensions. In this context, Ibn Kathir, in his book Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah, presented a comprehensive study of the incident of Uthman's assassination, with a careful analysis of the various narratives related to the incident, following a methodology of combining and weighing in on the multiple and contradictory narratives.

a. **Analysis of the Various Narrations Concerning the Assassination of Uthman**

Many narratives address Uthman's assassination, and Ibn Kathir mentioned many of them in Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah, emphasizing the importance of researching the chain of transmission of each narrative and carefully studying it before adopting it. For example, Ibn Kathir noted that accounts differ regarding who incited the murder of

Uthman and who the parties involved in the assassination of the third caliph were. He said: "Al-Waqidi's account of the Companion Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr states that the sedition began after a demonstration led by some Companions against Uthman, while another account states that Marwan ibn al-Hakam was one of the main instigators" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/112).

Ibn Kathir also pointed to differences in the details of the siege of Uthman's house and the various Companions' attempts to mediate between him and the rebels. On this point, he noted that some accounts indicate that the Companions refused to help Uthman, while others sought a peaceful solution. He said: "Al-Tabari's account states that Ali ibn Abi Talib tried to mediate to end the siege, but Marwan played a role in maintaining the tense situation" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/114).

b. **Ibn Kathir's Position on the Different Narrators Regarding the Assassination of Uthman**

In his study of the various narrations, Ibn Kathir approached the different narrators with a critical eye, analyzing the chain of transmission of the narration and examining the positions of controversial narrators such as Sayf ibn Umar and al-Waqidi. These narrations were the focus of Ibn Kathir's discussion, as he believed that some unreliable narrators significantly influenced the interpretation of historical events.

In his discussion of Sayf ibn Umar's narration of the assassination of Uthman, Ibn Kathir said: "Sayf ibn Umar's narration of the events of the assassination of Uthman cannot be fully relied upon, as it has been subject to criticism by hadith scholars such as Yahya ibn Ma'in and Ibn Hibban" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/116). It is worth noting that Sayf ibn Umar was one of the narrators whose narrations frequently had weak chains of transmission and sparked controversy due to accusations of weakness and fabrication.

c. **Combining and Weighing His Position on Narrations**

Ibn Kathir adopted the method of combining and weighing in presenting the details of Uthman's assassination, first presenting the various narrations and then presenting the reasons that led him to favor a particular narration. In the case of Uthman's assassination, Ibn Kathir presented multiple narrations and combined them based on various sources, such as al-Tabari, al-Waqidi, and Ibn Sa'd. He then reviewed the authenticity of the chain of transmission and the veracity of the text.

In this context, Ibn Kathir favored the narration that the siege of Uthman was gradual, and that there was no specific motive or organized conspiracy by a particular faction within the Muslim community against Uthman. He added: "It is not possible that Uthman's assassination was solely the result of an external conspiracy. Rather, there was a flaw in internal politics and disagreements among the Companions regarding administration and relations with certain governors" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/118).

d. **His Comments on the Spread of Sedition after the Assassination of Uthman**

After providing a comprehensive analysis of the events surrounding the assassination of Uthman, Ibn Kathir emphasized in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah that this incident was the direct cause of the spread of sedition in the Islamic Ummah,

highlighting the role of the Great Sedition in undermining Muslim unity and opening the door to political differences, manifested in the Battles of the Camel and Siffin.

In this context, Ibn Kathir said: "The assassination of Uthman marked the beginning of a new phase of conflict among the Companions, as the Ummah was divided into pro- and anti-Shiite factions. This contributed to the emergence of the Great Sedition, which had painful consequences for the Islamic Ummah" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/120).

e. **The Position on the Logic of Violence and Political Intervention**

One of Ibn Kathir's important comments was his critique of the violent logic that emerged after the assassination of Uthman in dealing with political differences. He believed that murder and sedition were not a solution to political problems that could be resolved through dialogue and negotiation, a position consistent with Imam Ibn Kathir's view, which calls for maintaining political stability within the Islamic Ummah. Ibn Kathir concluded his analysis of this incident by saying: "The strife that erupted after the assassination of Uthman was evidence that we, as a nation, were not keen to resolve disputes wisely. Violence was the preferred path for some, leading to much pain and bloodshed over political disputes" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/122).

In his study of the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan, Ibn Kathir provided a comprehensive critical analysis that reflects his ability to approach diverse sources with a critical mind, while also highlighting his familiarity with the hadith methodology, which enabled him to distinguish between weak and reliable narrations. Through this method of combining and weighing, Ibn Kathir was able to present an impartial historical perspective that explains the reasons for Uthman's assassination, emphasizing that the incident was not merely the result of a political conspiracy or a dispute between personalities, but rather a reflection of the ideological and political conflict that the nation was experiencing at the time.

The Battle of the Camel and Siffin: Presentation and Analysis, and Avoidance of Exaggeration or Disparagement

a. **The Battle of the Camel: Presentation and Analysis**

The Battle of the Camel is considered one of the most prominent events in the history of the Islamic nation. It was the first major military battle after the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) and marked the beginning of the major seditions that led to the division of the Islamic nation. The battle took place in Taif in the year 36 AH between the army of Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) and the army of Aisha, Talha, and al-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with them), who had come out to demand revenge for Uthman's blood.

Ibn Kathir, in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, presented the details of the Battle of the Camel in a neutral manner, avoiding bias toward any of the conflicting parties. He used a critical approach to presenting the narratives and analyzing the events accurately. He compiled the various narratives about the battle and weighed some of them, taking into account the chain of transmission and the text. He stated that the battle was between the

Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), which led Ibn Kathir to avoid disparagement or exaggeration in presenting the positions of any of the parties. In this context, Ibn Kathir said: "The Battle of the Camel was a major beginning for the rift between the ummah. Both sides were prominent Companions who held a great position in Islam. Those killed in the Battle of the Camel were Companions of the Messenger of God, who played significant roles in spreading Islam and consolidating its pillars" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/128). This text demonstrates that Ibn Kathir respects the status of both sides in the battle. He does not seek to present any of them as an absolute tyrant or sinner, but rather approaches the events from a purely analytical perspective.

b. The Political and Religious Dimensions of the Battle of the Camel

Through his presentation and analysis of the events, Ibn Kathir highlighted the political reasons that led to the Battle of the Camel, such as the political tension resulting from the murder of Uthman ibn Affan and the Muslims' division over how to deal with this incident. He also pointed to the role of the Companions who joined Aisha in demanding retribution for Uthman's killers, which led to a clash with the army of Ali ibn Abi Talib, who believed that internal war would lead to division within the ummah and that retribution should come after the establishment of order (Al-Shawadfi, 1996: 6). Ibn Kathir said in Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah: "The Battle of the Camel was a result of the political circumstances that the Muslim nation was experiencing after the assassination of Uthman. Each side believed that its position was correct, making it a political battle and not merely a military conflict between individuals" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/130).

c. Avoiding Exaggeration or Disparaging the Parties

In his analysis, Ibn Kathir avoided exaggeration or disparaging any of the parties involved in the battle. Although he highlighted the differences in viewpoints between Ali, Aisha, Talhah, and al-Zubayr, he presented this within the framework of legitimate political differences of their time, while continuing to respect the status of the Companions in Islam. Ibn Kathir did not present the parties involved in the battle as enemies of the religion or opponents of the faith. Rather, he presented the battle as legitimate political differences between a group of Companions who were engaged in a military conflict over the same issue, but whose handling was misguided and led to bloodshed among the Muslims. Ibn Kathir says: "This war was essentially a war between the Companions of the Messenger of God. It was not a religious war as much as it was a war for power and retribution for the killers of Uthman. This should be understood as a political dispute during a time of strife" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/132).

d. The Battle of Siffin: Presentation and Analysis

The Battle of Siffin, which took place in the year 37 AH between the army of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the army of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, is considered one of the other events that occurred within the context of the major strife that followed the murder of Uthman. The dispute between Ali and Muawiyah concerned the issue of retribution for the killers of Uthman and determining the political legitimacy of Ali's rule.

Ibn Kathir presents the Battle of Siffin as part of the same context, indicating that the battle was due to political disputes over the murder of Uthman and the failure to identify the true killer. Ibn Kathir describes the conflict between the two groups as being more related to political interests than religious orientations. Ibn Kathir said: "The Battle of Siffin was like the Battle of the Camel; it represented the political disputes within the Islamic nation after the death of Uthman. Each side claimed legitimacy and the right to bloodshed. The conflict intensified until it led to an arbitration conspiracy that made matters even more complicated" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/145).

e. **Avoiding exaggeration or attacking the parties in the Battle of Siffin**

As in the Battle of the Camel, Ibn Kathir, in his presentation and analysis of the Battle of Siffin, avoids exaggeration or attacking any of the parties. He emphasizes that the Companions who participated in the battle were not opposed to religion, but rather were seeking to reform the nation and establish justice, each from his own perspective. Ibn Kathir presented the situations with extreme caution, without making strict judgments on the positions of Ali or Muawiyah. He describes this period as a period of strife that must be dealt with with caution and a deep understanding of the political and religious reasons that led to it. Ibn Kathir said in this regard: "It is important to remember that these seditions were not an expression of doctrinal disagreement as much as they were differences in politics and legitimacy that were affected by the death of Uthman" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/148).

In Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir presented a balanced presentation of the events of the Battle of the Camel and the Battle of Siffin, adopting a critical approach that does not tend toward exaggeration or disparagement of any of the parties. Through his analysis, he demonstrates that these battles were complex political conflicts between the Companions who differed in their political vision regarding the issue of Uthman's murder and the governance of the ummah. In doing so, Ibn Kathir highlights the major challenges facing the Islamic ummah during the period of major seditions, without bias or taking sides, making him a fair historian in his presentation of events.

Section Two: The Doctrinal and Reformist Dimensions of Ibn Kathir's Critique of the Tribulations

The doctrinal and reformist dimensions of Ibn Kathir's criticism of the tribulations are evident in his commitment to justice and fairness toward the Companions, his emphasis on the need to avoid slander and insults against various Islamic sects, and his constructive criticism of the tribulations with the aim of reforming society and strengthening adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah as a way to overcome conflicts and differences.

Section One: His Position on the Companions and Islamic Sects

The great Islamic historian Ibn Kathir played a crucial role in addressing the major tribulations from beginning to end. He sought to highlight the doctrinal and reformist positions he adopted in his critique of these tribulations, focusing in particular on the issue of dealing with the Companions and the Islamic sects that emerged after the major tribulations. Ibn Kathir was distinguished by his just and fair approach in his evaluation of the Companions and the Islamic sects, avoiding bias or defamation, making him one of the most accomplished historians who attempted to arrive at a balanced vision and a sound critical approach to addressing the events of the major tribulations. In this section, we will attempt to present the most important features of Ibn Kathir's position toward the Companions and Islamic sects (Ibrahim, 1987: 245).

a. **His commitment to the approach of "justice and fairness" toward the Companions**

One of the most prominent features of Ibn Kathir's position in his criticism of the seditions was the justice and fairness in his judgment of the Companions, regardless of the political positions or differences that arose among them. Although major seditions, such as the Battle of the Camel and the Battle of Siffin, led to fighting among the Companions, Ibn Kathir was extremely cautious in addressing these events, avoiding placing full responsibility on any party or neglecting to criticize or slander any of the Companions. In this context, he always emphasized the merits of the Companions and their significant role in supporting Islam and building the Islamic nation. He said in Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah: "Even though the Companions differed in opinion and fought, this did not diminish their status in Islam. What occurred between them was a sedition resulting from political differences, not religious disputes" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/135). Thus, Ibn Kathir believed that the Companions had a high status in Islam, and that any disagreement between them did not affect their status or faith.

b. **His Position on the Khawarij and Shi'a**

Regarding the Khawarij and Shi'a sects, Ibn Kathir presented balanced positions that took into account the legal evidence that indicated the error of some of the Khawarij's positions. At the same time, he respected the Companions who had differed with them in battle. His position on the Khawarij was harsh in its criticism, as he considered them among the first sects to deviate from the truth and miscalculate matters after the sedition of the murder of Uthman ibn Affan. According to Ibn Kathir, the Khawarij adopted extremist positions that led to division among Muslims and were ultimately a major cause of the tensions that arose within the ummah. In his interpretation of events related to the Kharijites, he always reiterated that the Kharijites had deviated from the path of the Companions and insisted on their extremist view of rejecting the positions of Ali ibn Abi Talib after the assassination of Uthman (Kanani, 2025: 92).

His position on the Shiites was moderate, as he refused to expand on the criticism of the Shiites due to their doctrinal differences. Although he criticized some of their actions and sometimes their positions, which he considered inconsistent with the teachings of the Sunnah and the community, he recognized their place in the history of

Islam. Ibn Kathir always emphasized the need to avoid excommunication and fanaticism against any Islamic sect, regardless of their doctrinal differences with the Sunnis. He stated in Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah: "The Kharijites committed a great error by contradicting the Companions, but we must remember that they are ultimately Muslims, and the Shiites, despite some of their differences, are among the Islamic sects who must be treated justly and avoid extensive criticism" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/137).

c. **His emphasis on avoiding excessive insults or defamation**

Ibn Kathir was one of the leading scholars who sought to strengthen the principle of Islamic unity and reduce the influence of sectarian differences within the Islamic nation. He called for avoiding exaggeration or defamation in criticizing the Companions and Islamic sects, regardless of the political tensions between the various parties. In his commentaries on the events of the major tribulations, he emphasized the need to be cautious in both speech and action. He always emphasized that the Companions were the best of the nation and that those among them who fought during the tribulations were right in their intentions, but the political circumstances and events that arose led to disagreement and fighting among them. He showed respect for all parties, while pointing out that declaring the Companions or any Islamic sects as infidels is not permissible.

He also stated in Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah: "Insulting and defaming the Companions is not permissible under any circumstances. Those who participated in the tribulations are men of Paradise and companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him)" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 7/139). It was clear that Ibn Kathir was keen to preserve the dignity of the Companions and the Islamic nation from disintegration due to political or doctrinal differences. He advocated a return to moderation in dealings and avoiding disputes that might harm Islamic unity. Through the stance he adopted toward the Companions and Islamic sects, it is clear that he represented justice and fairness in his criticism of the major seditions. He presented events objectively, avoiding bias or criticism of any party. He highlighted his moderate and realistic stance toward the Kharijites and Shiites, emphasizing the need to preserve the unity of the Islamic nation and affirming the status of the Companions in Islamic history without criticizing or exaggerating in favor of any party during the seditions (Al-Sayyid, 1993: 85).

The Second Requirement: The Educational and Reformist Vision Through Narrating the Tribulations

Ibn Kathir's educational and reformist vision through narrating the tribulations lies in extracting lessons and morals from these tribulations to guide the nation toward benefiting from past mistakes and avoiding their recurrence, while emphasizing the necessity of adhering to the Qur'an and Sunnah as a method for preserving the unity and integrity of the nation. Ibn Kathir also sought to establish the concept of divine scrutiny of the nation through tribulations, to strengthen its faith and refine its religious and social awareness (Al-Bura'i, 2010: 170).

Drawing Lessons from Tribulations, Not Incitement

In his historical work, Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir was more than just a historian; he sought to extract educational lessons and morals from the events of the tribulations that ravaged the Islamic nation. In narrating the major tribulations that occurred in the nation's history, such as the killing of Uthman ibn Affan, the Battle of the Camel, and the Battle of Siffin, Ibn Kathir aimed to raise awareness, achieve reform, and highlight mistakes, not to incite or incite tribulations. In his analysis of these events, he focused on highlighting the benefits the Islamic nation could derive from these difficult experiences. He did not simply overlook mistakes or hide behind historical realism, but rather worked to link the events to educational reform directives that would motivate the Islamic community to avoid excessive repetition of past mistakes (Szymborska, 1997: 90).

As he says in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah: "These tribulations were mentioned so that the nation would learn a lesson and become more aware that what happened between them was merely the result of wrongdoing. We must learn from political differences and adhere in our lives to the principles contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 8/144). Thus, Ibn Kathir presented the tribulations as an educational tool aimed at teaching the nation moderation and political and social awareness, in contrast to what some historians do, who may overlook the reformist objective in addressing these events. Explaining the

Divine Laws in Testing the Ummah

In his interpretation of the events of seditious events, Ibn Kathir was keen to explain the divine laws that govern the path of the Islamic Ummah, manifested in the testing of the Ummah through trials and tribulations. He believed that these tribulations were not merely passing incidents or historical events, but rather tests from God Almighty to test and purify the Ummah. According to him, trials help reveal intentions, emphasize the strength of faith, and expose any deviations that may afflict the Ummah. Therefore, he demonstrated that trials and tribulations are part of the divine laws that Muslims must understand and be aware of their effects.

In this context, Ibn Kathir says: "The trials that befall the Ummah are divine tests that reveal hearts and intentions. They are divine laws aimed at testing Muslims and purifying their ranks from falsehood and falsehood" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 10/159). In this perspective, Ibn Kathir linked the tribulations to a clear divine wisdom: that the scrutiny of the nation through these tribulations leads to the clarification of the truth and the emergence of sincere and diligent reformers. This reflects his desire to build a conscious nation that recognizes that the trials that befall it are merely a means of testing from which it must benefit and strengthen itself.

His Connection Between Tribulations and Deviation from the True Path (the Qur'an and Sunnah

One of the most prominent aspects that emerged in Ibn Kathir's treatment of the major tribulations was his connection between tribulations and deviation from the true path represented by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Ibn Kathir believed that when the nation deviates from the correct Islamic path, tribulations become part of a painful history that reflects the absence of this path. He viewed each of the major tribulations he recounted as evidence of a deviation from the prophetic guidance and the Noble Qur'an, and that these tribulations would not have occurred had Muslims adhered to the path of truth brought by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). In his interpretation of some of the tribulations, he says: "The tribulations that occurred among the Companions were a natural result of their deviation from the path of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The further people strayed from this correct path, the more divided they became, and the more discord and tribulations appeared among them" (Ibn Kathir, 1358: 6/122).

This statement clearly reflects Ibn Kathir's reformist vision, which was not merely concerned with presenting historical events, but also addressed educational guidance and intellectual reform for the Islamic nation. He aimed to awaken the nation from its slumber and view history with critical eyes, far from the exaggeration of political or ideological perceptions. He also always pointed out that returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah was the only way to avoid tribulations and preserve the unity of the Islamic nation, and he often reiterated that the true solution to tribulations lies in returning to the principles established by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) at the beginning of Islam (Al-Suwayan, 2000: 88). The educational and reformist vision that Ibn Kathir adopted by narrating the trials at the beginning and end was comprehensive and balanced. For him, the trials were lessons for reform and opportunities to teach the nation how to avoid historical mistakes and how to benefit from experiences to achieve righteousness and justice. By deducing lessons from the trials, clarifying the divine laws for testing the nation, and linking events to the true methodology of the Qur'an and Sunnah, Ibn Kathir was attempting to guide the nation to the right path, away from the deviations that caused the trials. His approach would remain a beacon for future generations in the face of historical and religious challenges.

Conclusion

From the above, we find that the great historian and commentator has provided a unique and comprehensive vision for understanding the seditions that have plagued the Islamic nation since the era of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate and the conflicts that followed. Ibn Kathir was able to combine historical analysis with doctrinal interpretation, indicating that seditions are not merely political events, but rather divine tests aimed at purifying the nation and cleansing it of the impurities of deviation. Furthermore, through his presentation of these seditions, Ibn Kathir sought to benefit educationally and reformatively by establishing justice and fairness in dealing with events and narratives, avoiding exaggeration or exaggeration in describing personalities and events. His ultimate goal was to reform the nation and guide it back to the true path represented by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah is an important reference for understanding the dimensions of the political and ideological seditions that the Islamic nation experienced. It provides us with keys to understanding the historical transformations it has undergone, which can be used to reform political and religious thought in the modern era. Ibn Kathir's approach to combining and weighing up narratives, and his critical examination of narratives, proves his prominent role as a historian and interpreter capable of distinguishing between what is authentic and what is weak, which makes his critical vision worthy of in-depth study and attention.

Results:

1. Ibn Kathir provided an objective critical analysis of the events of the Fitnah, combining narratives and weighing them in a scientific manner that ensured fairness in dealing with the events.
2. Ibn Kathir aimed to benefit the nation from the lessons of the Fitnah, rather than using them as a means of political or sectarian incitement.
3. Ibn Kathir was very careful to highlight the importance of the Qur'an and Sunnah in determining historical positions and interpretations, emphasizing that they are the correct approach to understanding the Fitnah.
4. Ibn Kathir adopted a fair approach in his treatment of the events, avoiding exaggeration or belittling individuals or the Fitnah.
5. In his analysis of the events, Ibn Kathir relied on authentic hadiths and verified the authenticity of the chains of transmission of historical narratives, which added significant credibility to his critical perspective.

Recommendations:

1. Contemporary historians should follow Ibn Kathir's critical approach, carefully examining narratives and events and emphasizing sound documentation in the sources.
2. The Islamic Ummah today must draw lessons from the tribulations it has experienced by deepening its historical understanding and adhering to approaches to religious and political reform.
3. Independent studies should be conducted on the impact of historical tribulations on the unity of the Islamic Ummah and how to avoid the recurrence of such divisions in the present era.
4. Researchers and thinkers should contribute to critiquing the historical legacy objectively and scholarlyally, similar to what Ibn Kathir did in his treatment of the major tribulations.
5. Deepen the study of the relationship between historical events and doctrinal differences, to understand how doctrinal conflicts affect the path of the Ummah and the directions of reform.

References

Al-Asqalani, Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Hajar [d. 852 AH], Lisan al-Mizan. Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1995 AD.

Al-Asqalani, Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Hajar [d. 852 AH]. Lisan al-Mizan (The Tongue of the Balance). Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1995.

Al-Baghdadi, Abdul Qahir bin Tahir bin Muhammad bin Abdullah [d. 429 AH], The Difference Between Sects and the Explanation of the Saved Sect. Publisher: Dar Al-Afaq Al-Jadida - Beirut, 1977 AD.

Al-Baghdadi, Abdul-Qahir ibn Tahir ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah [d. 429 AH]. Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq wa Bayan al-Firqa al-Najiya (The Difference Between Sects and Clarification of the Saved Sect). Dar Al-Afaq Al-Jadidah – Beirut, 1977.

Al-Bar'i, Nijad. Bidayat al-Nihaya (The Beginning of the End). Creativity Center – 3rd Issue, Egyptian General Book Organization, No. 15, Egypt, 2010.

Al-Barai, Najad, The Beginning of the End, Creativity Center - Third Edition, Egyptian General Book Authority, No. 15, Egypt, 2010.

Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman ibn Qaymaz (d. 748 AH), The Balance of Moderation in Criticizing Men. Edited by: Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi. Dar al-Ma'rifah for Printing and Publishing, Beirut - Lebanon, 1963 AD.

Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman ibn Qaymaz [d. 748 AH]. Mizan al-I'tidal fi Naqd al-Rijal (The Scale of Moderation in Criticism of Men). Edited by: Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi. Dar al-Ma'rifah for Printing and Publishing, Beirut – Lebanon, 1963.

Al-Jurjani, Abu Ahmad ibn 'Adi [d. 365 AH]. Al-Kamil fi Du'afa' al-Rijal (The Complete Work on Weak Narrators). Edited by: Adel Ahmad Abdul-Mawjud and Ali Muhammad Muawwad, with contribution by: Abdul-Fattah Abu Sannah. Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut – Lebanon, 1997.

Al-Jurjani, Abu Ahmad ibn Adi [d. 365 AH], Al-Kamil fi Du'afa' al-Rijal. Edited by: Adel Ahmad Abd al-Mawjud, Ali Muhammad Mu'awwad, edited by: Abd al-Fattah Abu Sinnah. Publisher: Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1997.

Al-Sayyid, Faruq Hassan. Nihayat al-Bidaya (The End of the Beginning). Al-Adab al-Islami, International League of Islamic Literature, Vol. 1, No. 2, Saudi Arabia, 1993.

Al-Shawadfi, Safwat, The Beginning and the End. Monotheism, Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiya Group, Vol. 24, No. 10, Egypt, 1996.

Al-Shawadfi, Safwat. Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya. Al-Tawhid, Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyyah Society, Vol. 24, No. 10, Egypt, 1996.

Al-Suwaian, Ahmad bin Abdul Rahman, The Beginning of the End. Al-Bayan, Islamic Forum, Vol. 15, No. 153, Britain, Jumada al-Ula 1421 AH, 2000 AD.

Al-Suwayan, Ahmad bin Abdulrahman. Bidayat al-Nihaya (The Beginning of the End). Al-Bayan, Islamic Forum, Vol. 15, No. 153, UK, Jumada I 1421 AH / 2000.

Ibn Kathir, Imad al-Din Abu al-Fida Ismail ibn Umar al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi [d. 774 AH].. The Beginning and the End. Al-Saada Press - Cairo, 1st ed., (1348-1358 AH).

Ibn Kathir, Imad al-Din Abu al-Fida Ismail ibn Umar al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi [d. 774 AH]. Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya (The Beginning and the End). Al-Sa'adah Press – Cairo, 1st ed., (1348–1358 AH).

Ibrahim, Hassan Ali, The Beginning and the End, Journal of the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, Arabic Language Academy, Vol. 60, Egypt, May/Ramadan 1407 AH, pp. 245-250.

Ibrahim, Hassan Ali. Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, Journal of the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, Arabic Language Academy, Vol. 60, Egypt, May / Ramadan 1407 AH, pp. 245–250.

Kanani, Yasin Muhammad. Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya. Al-Wa'i al-Islami, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Vol. 61, No. 715, Kuwait, 2025.

Kanani, Yassin Muhammad, The Beginning and the End. Islamic Awareness, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Vol. 61, No. 715, Kuwait, 2025 AD.

Mahmoud, Munea bin Abdul-Halim. Manahij al-Mufassirin (Methodologies of the Exegetes). Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masri – Cairo, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubnani – Beirut, 2000.

Mahmoud, Munee' bin Abdul Halim, Methods of Interpreters. Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masry - Cairo, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubnani - Beirut, 2000 AD.

My friend, Muhammad Yasin Mazhar, Malicious Attacks on Islamic History. Translated by: Dr. Samir Abdel Hamid Ibrahim. Publisher: Dar Al-Sahwa Publishing House, 1988.

Sayed, Farouk Hassan, The End of the Beginning. Islamic Literature, The International Association of Islamic Literature, Vol. 1, No. 2, Saudi Arabia, 1993.

Siddiqi, Muhammad Yasin Mazhar. Al-Hajamat al-Mughredhah 'ala al-Tarikh al-Islami (Malicious Attacks on Islamic History). Translated by: Dr. Samir Abdul-Hamid Ibrahim. Dar Al-Sahwah Publishing, 1988.

Szymborska, Wisława, The End and the Beginning. Windows, Jeddah Cultural Literary Club, Issue 1, Saudi Arabia, Jumada al-Ula 1418 AH, 1997 AD.

Szymborska, Wislawa. The End and the Beginning. Nawafidh, Jeddah Literary and Cultural Club, No. 1, Saudi Arabia, Jumada I 1418 AH / 1997.