

Dr. Suhail Zakkar, his Life and Scientific Biography

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Abstract

Historical studies were, and still are, concerned with the historical event in all its aspects and details in terms of place, time, and even the people who actively and directly contributed to making that event or participated in it, whether in political, economic, social, or historical aspects. However, these studies neglected Personalities who write down events and facts and work to bring their circumstances closer to the reader and present them after time has passed. The history of the Arab Islamic nation was, is and will continue to be, God willing, ridiculed by many scholars and academics who devoted their lives to carrying the message of science and learning in various fields of life, including Dr. Suhail Zakkar, who was He was chosen to be the subject of our research because he addressed many issues in his historical writings and provided many scientific services in Arab universities, and he succeeded in doing so towards development and progress. He was distinguished by the multiplicity of aspects that he handled, scientific and cultural, balancing between the two sides.

Keywords: *Ali Al-Sadiq, Muhammad Zakkar, Al-Kazkaz family, Hama, sheikhs of the Sufi order.*

Introduction

First: His name and lineage:

He is Suhail bin Ali Al-Sadiq ⁽¹⁾ bin Muhammad Al-Zakkar, and the word “Zakkar” goes back in origin to the word merchants members of this family who work in the trade of ghee and sheep in the city of Hama, which historians mentioned in their books and described in the most beautiful pictures ⁽²⁾ The origin of the Al-Zakkar goes back to the Al-Kazkaz family, that authentic Arab family that It is spread throughout most of the lands of the Levant. Imam Yunus al-Rabbani, one of the sheikhs of the Sufi order in Mardin, mentioned by Yaqut al-Hamwi, and whose son is known as Yunus II, is currently buried in Damascus.

The Al-Zakkar family is respected and appreciated by the residents of Hama in particular and Syria in general because they belong to the descendants of Imam Ali Al-Sadiq bin Imam Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (may God be pleased with them all) ⁽³⁾

Second - His birth:

Suhail Zakkar was born in the city of Hama, the largest governorate of the Syrian Arab Republic, in the Al-Hader neighborhood on 7/24/1936 AD⁽⁴⁾ where he grew up in the aforementioned area. He was an outgoing person with a strong personality from an early age, loved by family, relatives and friends.

Third: His upbringing and life:

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Suhail Zakkar grew up in a healthy, middle-class Arab family. He grew up under the care of his father, who took care of his upbringing from a young age, as his father worked in the sheep and ghee trade, which was a good economic resource at that time⁽⁵⁾. However, the French mandate over Syria was really large, which caused material losses. It affected them greatly, which made Suhail Zakkar leave his primary studies. He was twelve years old and helped his father provide a living for his family, despite the harsh conditions that Zakkar lived through and his insensitivity to the childhood of his poem. The political conditions that Syria witnessed during the days of the French Mandate, and the difficult social and economic conditions that his family was experiencing. However, the passion for reading and reading was his greatest obsession. At the time he was helping his father read and write in various types of general books, as he read about existentialist and nationalist philosophies, and he loved and was an aficionado of reading history books in particular⁽⁶⁾. He obtained a preparatory certificate in private study in 1952 AD to be appointed as a deputy teacher. In the countryside of Hama ⁽⁷⁾ then he realized life and began to feel a sense of responsibility and the necessity of work, so he belonged to the Syrian Arab Socialist Baath Party in 1954 AD and became devoted to the details of his work and life. He also worked in the Military Retirement Department, then the Directorate of Moral Guidance, then the Military Magazine in which he wrote many articles⁽⁸⁾ but his passion for reading and writing did not leave him. He thought about obtaining a high school diploma, and things were not easy at that time, as the Arab scene at that time witnessed the tripartite aggression against Egypt, so that the Arabs would come to the aid of their Egyptian brothers. This had a negative impact on all the countries of the Arab world, so Suhail Zakkar joined to perform the scientific service, and during his military performance, he applied for the secondary school certificate. He was able to succeed and join the military college in the city of Latakia to enter this military corps. Here, Zakkar felt the necessity of continuing his dream and obtaining a higher degree, so he was exempted from the military corps due to the difference in its political orientations, so that he could then obtain a bachelor's degree in 1963 AD, and after that he applied for the teachers' competition in the Ministry of Education to become a teaching assistant in the college. Etiquette and done.

He was discharged from the army, and in 1963 AD, and at his own desire, Zakkar resigned from the Arab Socialist Baath Party, making a vow to himself not to belong to any other party and to devote the rest of his life to writing, maintaining his affiliation and adhering to the issues of the nation and his own conviction in the role of Islam, the present of the Arabs, their past, and their great history ⁽⁹⁾

Fourth - His titles:

The scientific career full of scientific production and the large and many publications of Suhail Zakkar made him the object of admiration for many Arab and foreign countries. Therefore, he was given many titles, including local and international ones. These titles did not come from a vacuum, but rather came from the great position that Zakkar enjoyed, the owner of broad knowledge and outlook. Insightful history, and one of the most important of these titles is the title (Dean of Arab Historians) ⁽¹⁰⁾

He was also called (the Encyclopedia of Hama) because he represents the first generation of that city that produced many historians and intellectual figures. ⁽¹¹⁾

Fifth - His family and marriage:

Suhail Zakkar grew up under the care of his father, and he is the second son in the family line. He has an older brother, Abdul Salam, who worked in the sheep trade. Then he is Suhail Zakkar, followed by his brother, Abdul Rahim, who worked in the industry, then his brother, Walid, who worked in the tile industry, and his younger brother, Abdul Jabbar, who was a teaching assistant in the field. Damascus university⁽¹²⁾

He has two sisters (Halima and Bushra) who work as housewives

As for his uncles, they are Medhat, Ahmed, Adnan, Abdul Karim, Noman, and Salem

And his aunts Fatima and Alia

As for his maternal uncles, he has one paternal uncle, Abdullah Zakkar

He also has one aunt, Khairiya Zakkar

The majority of this family are deceased, except for his sister, Bushra Zakkar, who is an old woman and bedridden⁽¹³⁾

Sixth - His marriage:

Suhail Zakkar married on September 2, 1973 AD to Jumana Mustafa Al-Barbeer, of Lebanese origin. Her mother, Syria, belongs to the Zakkar family. She is related to Suhail Zakkar⁽¹⁴⁾ and she was born on March 10, 1952 AD⁽¹⁵⁾ Beirut. She holds a diploma in history from the Lebanese University, residing in Kuwait

As for the children, they have one son, Mustafa, born in Damascus, September 26, 1974 AD. He is married to a Saudi woman and has two daughters (Ru'a and Zara). He is married to a second woman, a Hungarian national, who currently resides in London and works as a cardiologist. As for the daughters⁽¹⁶⁾ they have three daughters, Lama, born Damascus, October 21, 1975 AD. She is an ear, nose, and throat doctor and currently resides in Kuwait⁽¹⁷⁾. As for the second daughter, Ruba, born in Damascus, August 19, 1980, she is an ophthalmologist, married to Dr. Alaa Al-Akhdar, an ear, nose, and throat doctor. They have four children: Rasha, Yara, Tawfiq, and Muhammad. She currently resides in Kuwait⁽¹⁸⁾, and the youngest daughter is Heba, born in Damascus on November 10, 1980 AD. She is a gynecologist and currently resides in Kuwait⁽¹⁹⁾ she wrote against her father:

Father, should I write to you while you are in history a kingdom in which you had authority and had books?

These present images, how do I live them when they are like a dagger in my ribs tearing me apart.....

Seventh - Primary, middle and secondary education:

We may not depart from objectivity when we say that Dr. Suhail Zakkar had a number of factors available to him that may not have been available to his peers in the city of Hama, including his family's keenness to raise him with an academic upbringing, as well as the marital status of his mother, the easy financial situation, and their commercial work, in addition to his desire to engage in education. In the early days of his life, which qualified him to be among the great sons of the city of Hama in the field of human knowledge, in addition to that, Zakkar was passionate and inspiring and guided the course of his scientific and intellectual life. The sources available to us did not mention the details of his primary education or his personal interviews, attributing the reason to Dr. Suhail Zakkar who did not speak. The author himself and the book go into great detail about his life, and the information we obtained about his primary studies is that he studied primary school at (Saeed bin Al-Aas School) in the city of Hama and was one of the outstanding students until the seventh grade⁽²⁰⁾ He left school due to the economic conditions his family was going through in order to help his father provide a living for his family⁽²¹⁾ Neither the sources nor the personal interviews mentioned to us the date he entered school or the year he left school. In any case, despite his interruption from school, he did not stop reading and writing. The passion for study did not leave him. He read books of all kinds and read a lot about existentialism and nationalism, and he tended to read history books. In particular, in 1952 AD, Zakkar took a special exam in order to obtain a preparatory certificate and was able to pass with distinction⁽²²⁾ To be appointed as a deputy teacher in the countryside of Hama. During this period, Zakkar lived through the

political events that Syria was witnessing and included him in the service of education. However, this matter did not stand in the way of his academic journey and he applied for a secondary school certificate. The circumstances were harsh and difficult for life and the passion for living, as he was moving from the Sheikh Maskin area. ⁽²³⁾ To Damascus at night in order to arrive early in the morning to the examination center and return, especially since the means of transportation back and forth were very difficult, so it was not possible to sleep well. This fatigue and staying up late reaped the rewards with success and achieving first place in Syria with a grade of 190/200 ⁽²⁴⁾

He applied for registration in the university according to the ability he had to qualify for any college he wanted, because he was born with a love of history, so he entered this department despite the circumstances that surrounded him, but he was able to pass all the exams successfully and excelled, and he was the first to graduate from the university by obtaining a bachelor's degree in history, and in the year 1963 AD To apply for the teachers' competition in the Ministry of Education and another competition to be a teaching assistant in the College of Arts, he succeeded and was the first in Syria, and he was entitled to be appointed in Damascus, but his eyes were in Hama, and the director of Hama's education said to him at the time: Because you will leave teaching and go to the university, I will not appoint you in the city: Because You will leave teaching and go to the university, so I will not appoint you in the city. Indeed, he was appointed in the village of (Al-Salamiyah) and studied there for three months. Then, after that, the results of accepting teaching assistants were issued and he was among the successful ones, so the university decided to join her as a teaching assistant in the College of Arts, given his academic level and academic excellence, so that Zakkar could continue his career. Academic teaching assistant at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Damascus, and after a short period of time, less than two years, the University of Damascus sent him to London to obtain a master's degree due to the superior level he enjoyed ⁽²⁵⁾ After landing in London, Zakkar went to the University of London to meet with the head of the history department at the same university, the Orientalist (Bernard Lewis), who told him that you must learn the English language and come back to us here. Zakkar felt that this was necessary, so he devoted all his time to learning English, so he entered a private school that taught the language. English, despite the special circumstances that surrounded him, he did not care about any objection, and his goal was education, so a young Saudi man helped him in that, and he guided him on some steps towards diligent work. In the morning and in the evening, he went to a private government school that taught the English language, and after a month of staying up late, tired, and effort, he was able to Zakkar was very proficient in the English language, which astonished Bernard Lewis and how this wonderful work Zakkar achieved in a very short period of time. Here, Lewis asked Zakkar to obtain a certificate equivalency under training and guidance, but he encountered incorrect information, so he complained about the foreign coach of Bernard Lewis, so he asked him: Why? Did this happen? He said to him calmly: He is trying to teach us something wrong, and he explained to him some historical matters. Then Louis asked him, "What is your job?" He said to him: A delegated teaching assistant. He asked him, "Do you have books?" He said to him: "Write some studies, and I have completed my books, Khalifa Ibn Khayyat and Tabaqat Ibn Khayyat." He replied. Louis was surprised: Were they found? He replied: One is in Damascus and the other is in Morocco. I have some printed copies that I will show to you. He brought them the next day. Louis asked Zakkar to write an article about Khalifa bin Khayyat for the Islamic Encyclopedia and within three days he presented it to Louis and then after that.

He asked Zakkar to show him the lectures he had prepared, so he gave it to him. ⁽²⁶⁾ Then Zakkar met with Louis, who said to him, "You have an exemption." He asked him, "Why?" He replied, "You do not need an equivalence examination, and since you are a two-book examiner, the university decided to exempt you from the master's degree, and this is the decision of the university council. ⁽²⁷⁾ To begin a new phase of Zakkar's life with his doctoral studies, Zakkar began his journey to study for the doctorate, characterized by

diligence, perseverance, and sincerity in order to reach his goal, as he was keen to obtain historical information from authentic historical sources and texts, so he chose a title for his doctoral thesis entitled (The Emirate of Aleppo in the Eleventh Century AD). He began collecting the sources, manuscripts, and documents he needed, so he traveled to Turkey, Italy, France, and Spain in order to collect what he needed, and Bernard Lewis supervised him in 1969 AD. Thus, he completed his doctoral studies and was awarded a doctorate from the University of London. Here Lewis's ambitions towards Zakkar began, so he made him an offer and told him that she would accept to work. You choose the salary that suits you and stay here in London, but Zakkar rejected that idea, preferring to return to his motherland, Syria, because it crushes all goodness from him. He returned to his country in 1969 AD and began his work as a professor in the department of the Faculty of Arts at the University, achieving his goal for which he made a name for himself, verses of sacrifice. And sincerity ⁽²⁸⁾ From here, Suhail Zakkar began to pour his good deeds into that university as a distinguished professor who was loved by everyone. In 1970 AD, he received a promotion to become an assistant lecturer. In 1976 AD, Suhail Zakkar was sent to the Arab Maghreb ⁽²⁹⁾ To study at the University of Muhammad bin Abdullah in the city of Fez with Al-Qarawiyyin. He also went to Algeria and studied at the University of Constantinople, then returned to his country after a few months spent in Morocco. He was regular in his work and his students and cared for them. He taught bachelor's students the subjects (Abbasid-Andalusian History) and the subject (Language). He used to give broader information to his students, as he presented logical events and gave precise details of the events, which helped his students to give them a clear picture of the events of the Abbasid and Andalusian era. He also taught the English language precisely, which he loved to teach his students. This language, and he always encouraged them to learn it. He also taught graduate students the subjects (History of the Arabs and Islam) and the subject (English Language). He was keen on teaching his students the English language because he spoke it fluently and with complete mastery. As for (the History of the Arabs and Islam subject), the history of the East and the West together in all its dimensions. Political and civilizational, he is very keen to extract information from more so that his lecture is in the true image required to achieve the scientific goal ⁽³⁰⁾ In 1988 AD, he became head of the History Department at the College of Arts for two years, knowing that he was not interested in administrative work. In 1996 AD, they were sent to London on a scientific mission for scientific research for a period of six months ⁽³¹⁾, after which he returned to Damascus and obtained the rank of professor⁽³²⁾

To return to practicing his profession as a professor at the university, and in the same year, Zakkar began teaching at the University of the Levant, the Al-Fath Islamic Complex in Damascus, until 2020 AD, all the internal and external conferences held by the university, especially Spain and Malaysia, and he was distinguished in his theses and responses, and Dr. Suhail Zakkar remained working at the University of the Levant until He was a role model and a reference in his work and production⁽³³⁾.

In 2002 AD⁽³⁴⁾ he was referred to retirement (however, the University of Damascus could not neglect this great academic stature, so it renewed the appointment with him after a few months, so that Suhail Zakkar could begin his work again in his previous position, so that the wheel of generous knowledge and prosperity towards his students would continue, and his appointment would be renewed at the end of each year⁽³⁵⁾

Dr. Suhail Zakkar's scientific activity was not limited to the University of Damascus only, but he held seminars in many governorates of the Syrian Republic and gave lectures in most of the universities in Qatar. He also chaired discussion committees in universities in Qatar, in addition to his participation in a number of local Arab television seminars and interviews.

The journalist said that this history, full of great achievements, has become a referee in a large number of researches in many Arab countries, including (Iraq, Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, the Emirates, and Jordan). He was also a member of the examination of scientific production for promotion to the rank of professor in many countries, including (Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Jordan). He also served as a member of the examination of scientific production for promotion to the rank of professor. Dr. Suhail Zakkar held many advisory positions, including historical advisor to Syrian President Hafez Assad, with whom he had a very good relationship. He spoke about this, saying: I would like to point out that the late leader and I had a beautiful and great relationship with interest in history during his academic aspirations, and he directed him for the first time to print a book (in order to request *In the History of Aleppo*) by Ibn al-Adim in 12 volumes. In 1991, he worked on producing a major book on the history of the Crusades. Since then, Zakkar's worker has been printing this book, which is considered the largest book of its kind, as it includes 45,000 pages, at the expense of the Presidential Office⁽³⁶⁾ He is also a member of the committee that supervised the restoration of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. He also worked as a historical advisor to a number of historical series produced by Syrian drama, including the series ((Searching for Saladin)) and the series ((Harun al-Rashid)) and a member of the National Committee for Writing the History of the Arab Nation and a member of the supervisory committee. On establishing a military history museum for the history of the Levant ⁽³⁷⁾ and Vice President of the Union of Arab Historians ⁽³⁸⁾ in Cairo

Eighth - His death:

Syrian researcher and historian Suhail Zakkar passes away after 84 years, leaving us many books on the history of the Arabs and Muslims. He left after a career that lasted decades, leaving us about 150,000 pages in which he immersed himself in studying the history of the Arabs and Muslims. Despite his old age, his health was good in the late years of his life. He remained abundant in activity and scientific and intellectual giving throughout his life. He had a strong memory and was mostly confined to his home and library, adhering to his religion, prayer and fasting. At dawn on Sunday, 3/1/2020 AD, he was reading the Qur'an before the dawn prayer and after the prayer he lay down in his bed, sensing the cold weather so that his wife would bring him a blanket to keep him warm. Then his health deteriorated and he was taken to the hospital and on the way he died ⁽³⁹⁾ He was moved to his final resting place to be buried in Damascus in the Bab Saghir cemetery⁽⁴⁰⁾ with the graves of the Companions and the righteous saints after a journey of knowledge and continuous jihad. He spent most of his days writing, teaching, and raising generations. It lasted for more than 50 years. The great historian left us an unforgettable impact on the history of the Crusades and their representation. Pictures. He is a rare person of classy personalities and his sophisticated style with his students and colleagues. Zakkar passed away after eighty-four years full of diverse scientific, intellectual and cultural activity. The day of his death was like a tragedy in the hearts of his fans.

The Syrian Ministry of Culture mourned its deceased, Dr. Suhail Zakkar, as one of its notables who were distinguished by his love of goodness and progress. The University of Damascus also mourned him, from whom he was physically absent. However, his name is a person who still frequents the classrooms of universities and that generations will bear witness to the scientific legacy that he conveyed to them, carrying all its meanings. Human⁽⁴⁰⁾

Conclusion

The character of Dr. Suhail Zakkar is considered one of the characters who played a major role in writing Islamic history, as he was distinguished by his high morals and was known for his generosity, in addition to his extreme humility and simplicity. The environment in which he grew up and grew up affected him. He was a struggling person who was able, through his scientific efforts, to be liberated from the difficult

circumstances in which he was living. To become a prominent figure among historians, just as Dr. Zakkar was able to create a scientific family so that his children would become doctors serving their country. He is a model of leadership at various levels, such as the University of Damascus, in many international and domestic affairs. He had extensive cultural relations that were not limited to Syrian universities only, but included Arab and European universities, as He headed many cultural delegations to Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other European countries, and he has many published researches that demonstrated Dr. Suhail's knowledge and his ability to treat events in a scientific and objective manner if he followed the analytical method of historical events and conveying narratives, as he treated many religious issues in a historical and not a religious manner. Many historians do. He had a clear scientific approach in dealing with accusations of issues in Arab and Islamic history, and he is considered to be a part of Orientalist studies. He had a distinctive approach in supervising theses and dissertations, following up on what the student wrote, and in large part, he reviewed the sources on which he relied, some of the sources he saw as appropriate for his subject, and he cooperated very well with his students. In conclusion, I cannot help but raise the supplication to God in His Almighty's saying ((Our Lord, do not hold us accountable if we forget or make a mistake))

Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 286.

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