

Ancient Roman Historiography:

The Roman historical consciousness was quite different from that of the Greeks. For the Romans, history meant continuity of the past. In the Roman period, many historians contributed to history-writing. Among them, Polybius (d. 120 circa BC) was the most notable one. His approach to history has largely been interpreted as pragmatic one, but recent research reveals that he evaluated historical events and human actions from a moral point of view. He saw a moralistic purpose in historiography, and argued that history of the past events can serve as corrective of human behavior. For him, another important purpose of history was to educate and train political leaders for efficient state conduct. Polybius was conscious of the fact that history writing requires objectivity, and thus urged that a historian must forget love for one's friends and hatred for one's enemies while writing history because sometimes a historian has to praise his enemies and blame his friends. History becomes useless without the element of truth. Regarding historical causation, he stressed that a historian must see things in a cause-and-effect relationship.

After Polybius, many other historians including Diodorus, Dionysius, Cicero (d. 43 BC; also a famous statesman and philosopher), Josephus of Jerusalem, Lucian, Herodian and Theophylactus contributed to historiography. However, during the Roman period, two notable historians, namely Livy and Tacitus, made notable contributions to historical thinking.

Livy (d. 17 AD) was a prolific Roman historian who authored 142 books, out of which only, 35 Survived. He is famous for writing the history of Rome (founded in 753 BC), which is considered to be first of its kind. He produced an annalistic form of history, which recorded events year-by-year. To the Romans, his work was not a particular history; rather it was a universal history, In fact, Rome was the entire world to the Romans, who had developed a sense of superiority over others." Livy made no claim that his work was based on original research. Sometimes he was critical of the sources he used for history-writing. He stressed on the moralistic purpose behind historiography. Moreover, he was able to differentiate between myth and reality, and highlighted the human factor in historical interpretation, instead of the role of the divine forces.

Cornelius Tacitus (d. 117 AD) also focused on the history of Rome. He was famous for his character-drawing. He interpreted history as a clash or conflict between the good and bad characters, or between the forces of virtue and vice. So he did not pay attention to the positive aspects of the past events alone but also shed light on the negative dimension of historical events. His approach was psychological-didactic, as he discussed the actions and intentions of individuals, and also tried to draw moral lessons from them for his readers. Like Polybius, he believed that history should be written by experienced politicians. However, the sources of Tacitus were untrustworthy as he relied on biased authorities, and also invented speeches of

historical-characters. Owing to lack of historical criticism, particularly-on sources of the past.

Greco-Roman Historiography: An Overview:

In ancient times, the historiography is considered to represent a decline as compared to the historiographical traditions. In ancient times, the historical thought was largely Theo-centric, placing God or the supernatural powers in its center, and revolving round it. All events were attributed to God, and their causes were sought in the will of divine forces. It also gave way several semi-mythical and quasi-historical explanations of historical events. This Theo-centric, historiographical tradition was challenged by the ancient Greek historians among whom Herodotus and Thucydides were most notable. Their approach was largely anthro-centric, and they insisted on a humanistic and rational interpretation of history, though some mythical explanations too found way in their works. They held human beings responsible for their actions, which caused historical events. In a nutshell, humanism was one of the chief characteristics of Greco-Roman historiography.

The Greco-Roman historians were convinced of the utility and usefulness of history. Most of them saw a moralistic purpose in historiography since the readers of historical works could draw moral lessons from them. In addition to concentrating on some specific historical events, they also tried to search for the principles or laws that govern history. Moreover, they also employed psychological-approach in their

historical works by highlighting the role of human psyche in history. They also realized the significance of the notion of objectivity and insisted that a historian should put his likes and dislikes, as well as biases and prejudices, aside while writing history. They were also able to differentiate between myth and reality, between legends and historical truth. Moreover, the Greco-Roman historians were also conscious of the reliability and trustworthiness of their sources and also critically evaluated them.

Jewish-Hebrew Historiography: Theological-cum- historical Approach:

The fourth century BC witnessed the development of Jewish-Hebrew historiographical tradition. It was of semi-mythical and semi-historical nature. However, the most important characteristic of Jewish-Hebrew historiography was the moralistic interpretation of history. Historical works were written with a moralistic purpose so that the posterity or the future generations could draw moral lessons from the past and thus, avoid repeating the past errors and mistakes. However, without assigning values to the past historical developments, it was not easy to draw moral lessons of the past. Therefore, value-judgments were made by the historians whereby they judged the past historical events in the light of their own values. These works criticized the actions of earlier generations and ancestors. It must be remembered that religion has the power to break taboos like eulogizing or unduly praising one's ancestors.

Another important characteristic of Jewish-Hebrew historiography was that there was a lot of theological and religious content in the historical works. In fact, these works included texts compiled by religious leaders including the "Prophet-historians such as Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elijah and Isaiah etc. Therefore, it was difficult to differentiate between sacred religious texts and historical works.

Historiography in Ancient China: Beginning of Philosophical Interpretation of History:

The ancient China had quite rich historiographical traditions. In addition to history-writing, the ancient Chinese were able to philosophize or theorize history, and thus came up with theories or philosophies of history. One of the most renowned Chinese philosophers was Confucius (d. 479 BC), the founder of Confucianism. He authored many works including Spring and Autumn Annals and Book of History (Shu Ching). Though he is remembered as a moral philosopher, who propounded a moral philosophy, his views about time and history had considerable impact on the ideas of later historians and philosophers of history including Ssu-Ma Ch'ien. Confucius presented a lineal (like a straight line without circles) theory of time, which argued that history does not exactly repeat itself.

2.8 Ssu-Ma Ch'ien -The Grand Historian of China

Ssu-Ma Ch'ien (b. 145-d. 90? BC) was a Chinese historian and philosopher of history, who is remembered as the Grand Historian of China: China has been

regarded as the historian's paradise owing to the appreciation and admiration the historians receive. Ssu-Ma Ch'ien's father was also a historian. Both of them served the Emperors of the Han Dynasty. Ssu-Ma Ch'ien composed Shi Ji (The Record of History/Record of the Historians), Which covers a macro-history) of 3000 years of Chinese history. He is considered to be the first systematic philosopher of history, as he presented a theory of history in order to explain the rise and fall of a dynasty or a ruling family. His main frame or reference or unit or analysis was dynasty. He offered a moralistic interpretation of history, since he considered moral principles responsible for historical change. To him, the presence of Virtue and morality was responsible for the rise of a dynasty, while decline in morality determines the fall of a dynasty. A dynasty was generally founded by a sage-king, whereas the last ruler of a dynasty is generally a wicked tyrant. His philosophy of history was humanistic, since he believed that human actions were responsible for historical change, and thus, human beings ought to be the main focus of history. To him, the pattern of historical progress was cyclical (like a cycle), wherein historical developments represent the same cycle of strengthening and weakening of morality. However, he was conscious of the fact that history does not exactly repeat itself. Only the laws governing history are repeated.