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DESCRIPTION OF GENRES OF ISLAMIC HISTORY

Abstract. *Islamic historiography emerged as a distinct scholarly discipline within the framework of Islamic sciences, closely intertwined with the development of hadith, tafsir, and fiqh. This article examines the formative stages of Islamic historical writing, focusing on the genres of siyar and maghazi as the earliest foundations of Islamic history. It analyzes the linguistic and conceptual meanings of these terms, their usage in the Qur'an and hadith literature, and their methodological significance in preserving the life and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The study further explores the role of muhaddithun in shaping reliable historical methodology through isnad-based verification, highlighting their contribution to the credibility of early Islamic historical sources. Additionally, the article discusses the evolution of biographical literature (tarajim and tabaqat) and the function of hadith collections as primary historical sources. The findings demonstrate that Islamic historiography developed systematically from religious documentation into an independent and methodologically rigorous field, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the early Islamic period and the intellectual foundations of Islamic civilization.*

Keywords: *Islamic historiography; Siyar and Maghazi; Prophetic biography; Hadith and history; Tarajim and Tabaqat; Early Islamic sources.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic history represents an independent and systematic discipline within the broader framework of Islamic sciences. Its emergence is closely connected with the early efforts of Muslim scholars to preserve the life, actions, and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). From the earliest period, historical inquiry in Islam

was not merely narrative but functioned as a means of safeguarding religious knowledge and communal identity (Fayda, 2009). The Qur'an and hadith literature played a decisive role in shaping the epistemological foundations of Islamic historiography, which developed in close interaction with tafsir, hadith, and fiqh.

MAIN PART

Formation of Siyar and Maghazi Literature

The earliest stage of Islamic historiography is represented by the genres of siyar and maghazi, which focus on the biography and military activities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The term siyar (سيار), derived from siyra (سيرة), signifies conduct, lifestyle, and moral behavior, and in scholarly usage refers specifically to the prophetic biography (Fayda, 2009). This semantic breadth reflects the holistic nature of Islamic historical writing, which combines ethical instruction with factual narration.

The Qur'an itself employs the concept of siyra to denote a "state" or "form," illustrating that historical terminology in Islam is rooted in revelatory language (Muhammad Yusuf, 2019). In hadith literature, the Prophet's siyra is presented as a practical model for individual and collective conduct, encompassing social relations, governance, and military ethics (Ibn Hisham, 1990).

The term maghazi (مغازي) refers to the military expeditions of the Prophet and constitutes a specialized subfield within early Islamic history. Classical scholars further categorized these expeditions into ghazwa, campaigns personally led by the Prophet, and sariya, missions carried out by his companions under his command (Algül, 1996; Özdemir, 2009). However, historical sources often employ these terms interchangeably, indicating that the distinction was not always rigid in early historiography (Az-Zurqani, 1907–1910; Tabari, 1960–1970).

Muhaddithun and the Reliability of Early Historical Sources

A distinctive feature of Islamic historiography is the dominant role of muhaddithun in the formation of historical literature. Early scholars of siyar and maghazi were primarily hadith specialists who applied the principles of isnad criticism to historical reports. This methodological approach significantly enhanced the credibility and precision of early Islamic historical works (Az-Zabidi, 2012).

Prominent early figures such as Urwa ibn az-Zubayr, Aban ibn Usman, and Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri played a foundational role in collecting and transmitting information about the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Their efforts laid the groundwork for later comprehensive biographies and historical compilations (Ibn Sa‘d, 1968). The close relationship between hadith and history ensured that Islamic historiography developed as a disciplined and critically evaluated field rather than a collection of unverified narratives.

Classical Works of Siyar and Maghazi

Among the most influential works of early Islamic history are Ibn Ishaq’s *Siyar*, Ibn Hisham’s *As-Sirat an-Nabawiyya*, and al-Waqidi’s *Kitab al-Maghazi*. These works not only preserve valuable historical data but also reflect the methodological evolution of Islamic historiography (Ibn Ishaq, 1988; Ibn Hisham, 1990; al-Waqidi, 1989). Despite scholarly debates regarding the reliability of certain narrations, these texts remain indispensable for understanding the formative period of Islam.

Emergence of Tarajim and Tabaqat Literature

As Islamic civilization expanded, historical writing evolved beyond the prophetic biography to include the documentation of scholars, jurists, administrators, and spiritual figures. This development gave rise to *tarajim* (biographical dictionaries) and *tabaqat* (generational classifications). These genres organized biographical information according to scholarly rank, chronological generation, geographic origin, or professional affiliation (Avci, 2010).

Works such as Ibn Sa‘d’s *At-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Ibn al-Asir’s *Asad al-Ghaba*, and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani’s *Al-Isaba* became essential reference tools for historians and contributed to the preservation of intellectual continuity within Islamic scholarship (Ibn Sa‘d, 1968; Ibn al-Asir, 2012; Ibn Hajar, 1995).

Hadith Collections as Historical Sources

Hadith literature occupies a central position in Islamic historiography, serving as both a religious and historical archive. Beyond legal and theological content, hadith collections provide detailed insights into social norms, political events, and institutional developments of the early Islamic period. Imam Bukhari’s *Al-Jami‘ as-Sahih* exemplifies this dual function, as it systematically records narrations related to the Prophet’s life, practices, and historical context (Amin, n.d.; an-Nawawi, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Islamic historiography emerged organically from the religious experience of the early Muslim community and developed into a structured scholarly discipline by the end of the first century AH. The Qur'an, hadith literature, and early historical genres such as siyar and maghazi provided the foundational framework for this development. Subsequent genres, including tarajim and tabaqat, expanded the scope of historical inquiry and ensured the preservation of Islamic intellectual heritage. Together, these sources continue to serve as indispensable tools for understanding the historical evolution of Islamic civilization.

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