

REVIEW OF TRADITIONAL *SĪRAH* LITERATURE: EARLY SOURCES OF *SĪRAH*

By:

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Abstract

*Artikel ini bertujuan untuk meninjau beberapa aspek penting tentang sumber-sumber *Sīrah* yang awal. Antara isu utama yang dibincangkan ialah permulaan penulisan *Sīrah*, tokoh-tokoh terkemuka yang terlibat dalam bidang ini, faktor-faktor yang mendorong kepada penulisan mengenainya, karya-karya awal yang dihasilkan dan metodologi penulisan yang diaplikasikan. Adalah jelas bahawa penulisan *Sīrah* telah dimulakan oleh para Sahabat dan Tabi'in secara informal yang kemudiannya dikembangkan dan dimantapkan oleh para sejarawan terkemudian. Tidak dapat dinafikan bahawa pada peringkat awal, ahli Hadith juga sebenarnya adalah merupakan ahli sejarah yang telah merintis dan mempelopori ke arah penulisan mengenai *Sīrah*. Rasa kecintaan kepada Rasulullah SAW dan kesedaran terhadap kepentingan ilmu ini telah membawa mereka untuk merakamkan serta menulis mengenainya. Mereka bukan sahaja telah memperkenalkan kaedah atau metode penulisan *Sīrah* yang unggul, malah telah menghasilkan beberapa buah karya yang telah dijadikan rujukan penting oleh masyarakat Islam terkemudian hinggalah ke hari ini.*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of *Sīrah* in getting the real *taṣawwūr* of the essence of Islam, which is based on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.); cannot be disputed, as *Sīrah* is part of the Islamic knowledge. Through *Sīrah*, a Muslim would

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attain guidance from various perspectives, which associate with life. This is due to the fact that *sīrah* contains all practical aspects of the implementation of economics, social and Islamic politics. The history of how the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) had strived to promote Islam would strengthen the spirit and perserverance of Muslims in defending and spreading the religion. Moreover, *Sīrah* is in fact a kind of knowledge that is evergreen. Actions taken by the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) in order to solve various issues at that particular time such as problems with regards to tribes, the *Mushrikūn* and Jews opposition, the sovereignty of the Islamic country and the threats from foreign powers can be espoused today.

Based on the importance of *Sīrah*, this article is prepared to analyse a few vital aspects of its early sources. This significant topic needs to be addressed in order to examine relevant issues such as the beginning of the writing of *sīrah* and its development, factors that led to development of the writing of *sīrah*, the distinguished styles used by classical historians in producing their works, and the methodology of historiography applied. The understanding of the development process of the writing of *Sīrah* at its early stage is necessary since it forms a basis and main platform for the complete understanding of *Sīrah* master pieces and the methodology of the writing of *Sīrah*, which continues to spread from time to time since its early period. It would also avoid false allegations on the authenticity of the authorities.

Since the scope of the discussions on the earlier sources of *Sīrah* is too broad, it is intended in this article to only focus on the main source until the 3rd century of Hijrah. The sources which will be discussed in this article are books that analysed *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī*.¹ During this period, the writing of *sīrah* had spread expansively after it had reached the glorious period in the middle of the second Hijrah. The selected historians were those from Medina as they had played an important role in the writing of *Sīrah* compared to the historians from other places.

¹ According to Fārūq Ḥamādah, the main sources of *sīrah* can be divided into two parts, namely; (i) Primary sources and (ii) Secondary sources. The primary sources are al-Qur’ān and al-Ḥadīth, which their authenticity and authority are undisputable. The secondary sources are books and writings of the Muslim experts which relate to *sīrah* such as books on *Shamā’il*, books on *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, books of *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī* and history books written in choronological order such as *Kitāb Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* by Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* by ‘Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr and *Kitāb al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* by Abū al-Fidā’ b. Kathīr. See Fārūq Ḥamādah (1989), *Maṣādir al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah wa Taqwīmuhā*, al-Dār al-Bayḍā’: Maṭba’at al-Najāh al-Jadīdah, pp. 192-193.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WRITING OF *SĪRAH*²

The writing of *Sīrah* commenced from the period of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) with the emergence of some of his companions who wrote about him. Abū Rāfi' Mawlā Rasūlullāh (d. 36/656) wrote in a note regarding the method of *ṣalāḥ* (prayer) and other *'ibādah* that were performed by the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The note was reserved by Abū Bakr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām.³ Sahl b. Abī Ḥathmah al-Madanī al-'Anṣārī (d. 41/661) also wrote on the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) including *Maghāzī* that he took part in.⁴ 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amrū b. al-'Aṣ b. Wā'il b. Hāshim (d. 63/682) did write in one notebook, which was called "*Saḥīfah al-Ṣādiqah*" regarding the Ḥadīth which he himself heard from the Prophet (p.b.u.h).⁵ Besides, he also possessed several small collections of notes about the early history, *Maghāzī*

² *Sīrah* originates from the word *Sayr*. Literally, *Sīrah* means Sunnah, situations or journey. See al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad al-Zāwī (1971), *Tartīb al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt 'alā Ṭarīqat al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr wa Asās al-Balāghah*, j. 2. Al-Qāhīrah: Matba'at 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, p. 656. The observations on the products of the classical writings mirrored that the word *Sīrah* refers to the life or the biography of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.). Nevertheless, the writing of *Kitāb Sīrah Mu'āwīyah wa Banī Umayyah* by 'Awānah b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764) shows that the word *Sīrah* was not focused merely on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.). See *Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyyah* (n.d.), j. 13. n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, p. 440. In the early stage, the word *Sīrah* was often connected with the word *Maghāzī* which means the battles that Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) had taken part in. Nevertheless, in the context of the Islamic historiography, the scope for the word *Maghāzī* was wider, to include the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) before Islam and the period after his appointment as *Rasūl*. Consequently, the word *Maghāzī* was regarded as a synonym to *Sīrah*. See 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī (1960), *Baḥṭh fī Nash'at 'Ilm al-Tārīkh 'ind al-'Arab*, Beirut: Matba'at al-Kathūlukiyyah, p. 61.

³ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Thābit al-Ma'rūf bi al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (n.d.), *Kitāb al-Kifāyah fī 'Ilm al-Riwāyah*, al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, pp.330-331.

⁴ Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), one of the prominent historians took Sahl's written reports from Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Sahl b. Abī Ḥathmah. See Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī (1964), *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, Marsden Jones (ed.), j. 1&2. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, p. 144,384 & p. 446,664. The written reports of Sahl b. Abī Ḥathmah was also extracted by the later historians such as Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/844) in the *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) in the *Kitāb Ansāb al-'Ashraf* and al-Ṭabarī in the *Kitāb Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*. See Shākir Muṣṭafā (1981), *al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī wa al-Mu'arrikhūn*, j. 1. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil Malāyīn, p. 151.

⁵ Muḥammad b. Sa'd (n.d.), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, j. 2. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, p. 373.

and the biography of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.).⁶ Another companion who wrote about *Sīrah* was ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās (d. 68/687). He had made efforts to write about *Maghāzī* that had been taken part by Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) and the related Qurānic verses to the *Maghāzī*. He had reported about the actions taken by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) by asking questions to Abū Rāfi’.⁷

Thus, notwithstanding that the efforts to compile the events related to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) had clearly taken place informally and was mixed up/simultaneous with the writing of the Ḥadīth, it is believed that the writing of *Sīrah* had commenced in the early stage of Islam. The essence of this phenomenon is that it has clearly shown the awareness on how important the *Sīrah* was among the early Islam community. Since its initial stage, *Sīrah* had been taught by the scholars at that particular time in the Medina Mosque as what was done by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās. The affection towards the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) led them to record *Sīrah* for the sake of the next generation.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *SĪRAH* AND ḤADĪTH AT THE EARLY STAGE

Some of the historians stated that the efforts of writing *Sīrah* emanated as a method of writing the Ḥadīth and later on transformed as a knowledge that possessed its own discipline.⁸ This statement seems admissible based on the following factors:

- i. The same field of study; both field of *Sīrah* and Ḥadīth concentrated on words (*Aqwāl*) and conducts (*Af’āl*) of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h).⁹

⁶ Muhammad Mustafa Azmi (1968), *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, p. 44.

⁷ Ibn Sa’d (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 2, p. 371.

⁸ Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (1985), *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāhīr wa al-‘A’lām*, j. 1. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, p. 29.

⁹ Nevertheless, *Sīrah* covers wide aspects as it includes all matters related to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) such as his *Nasab* (genealogy) and descendants. This includes all activities done by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) in his life before and after *Bi’tah*. Besides, it also covers the life of the companions, the *Jihād* to promote Islam and the unity of the Arab tribes under the rule of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.). See ‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (n.d.), *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Muṣṭafā al-Saqā’ et al. (eds.), j. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Ilmiyyah, p. 3.

- ii. The method of revealing; at the early stage both fields were conveyed through *riwāyat shafahiyyah* (oral) before they were written and compiled.¹⁰
- iii. The methodology of *Isnād*;¹¹ the historians at the early stage applied the method of *Isnād* to ensure the authenticity of the history reports. This method was also utilized by the *Muḥaddithūn* in order to affirm the status and position of the Prophet's Ḥadīth.
- iv. The writing of *Sīrah* at the early stage was initiated by the *Muḥaddithūn* who were also the historians as was stated above. This was followed by several scholars such as Sa`īd b. al-Musayyib al-Makhzūmī (d. 94/712), `Urwah b. al-Zubayr b. al-`Awwām (d. 94/712) and Abū Faḍālah `Abd Allāh b. Ka`b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī (d. 97/715). Their methodology in narrating the Ḥadīth of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and writing *Sīrah* was similar as they arranged them by commencing with the chain of *Isnād* and then followed by *Matan*.¹²

THE GREAT HISTORIANS FROM THE 1ST CENTURY OF HIJRAH UNTIL 3RD CENTURY OF HIJRAH

Medina was the great institution of knowledge as it was the place where the writing of *Sīrah* arose. It had placed the foundation for the writing of *Sīrah*. At the meantime Medina was considered as the main source for *Sīrah* reports. It also functioned as the place where Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) demonstrated his way of life and his relationship with the various communities. Consequently, the historians from Medina were found to be greatly influenced by the affairs and events connected to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) until they were known as *Historians of Sīrah and Maghāzī*.¹³ They had started the writing of *Sīrah* based on the Prophet's Ḥadīth and all affairs connected to him.

`Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712) was one of the famous historians who wrote about *Sīrah*. This can be seen from his letters to Khalīfah `Abd al-Malik b. Marwān as reported by Abū Ja`far Muḥammad b. Jarīr

¹⁰ `Abd al-`Alīm `Abd al-Raḥmān Khuḍar (1993), *al-Muslimūn wa Kitābat al-Tārīkh*, United States of America: al-Ma`had al-`Ālamī lil Fikr al-Islāmī, p. 38.

¹¹ The chain of transmitters.

¹² The difference that can be seen is that when narrating the Ḥadīth, they were more concerned with the chain of *Isnād* and the narrators. When writing *Sīrah*, they loosened the requirements of *Isnād* and paid more attention to the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) compared to Ḥadīth that are related to the rulings of Islam.

¹³ Shawqī al-Jamal (1987), *Ilm al-Tārīkh*, Egypt: Dār al-Ma`ārif, p. 37.

al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922). His name was stated approximately 79 times in the *Kitāb Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* which described his position as the early main reference.¹⁴ His narrations were considered accurate as most of them were taken from the great scholars at that time such as ‘Ā’ishah b. Abū Bakr, Usāmah b. Zayd, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amrū b. al-‘Āṣ. Besides, he also referred to written sources. He was regarded as a reliable scholar.¹⁵ He avoided from any political activities or involvement in any political movement of his brother, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr in the opposition towards Banī Umayyah. Thus, his report was considered as “*‘ādil*” as it did not side any parties. The narration of ‘Urwah about *Sīrah* covers the period of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) before *Bi`thah* and the period after *Bi`thah* when the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was in Mecca and Medina.

Among of his narrations are:

- i. The event of ‘the chest operation’ (*Shaq al-Sadr*) that occurred on Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) as a preparation to hold the challenge and heavy task and responsibility.¹⁶
- ii. The situation where the Prophet (p.b.u.h) preferred to sit alone (*tahannuth*) in the cave of Ḥirā’ before his appointment as a *Rasūl*. The revelation of Sūrah al-‘Alaq and the intention of Waraqah b. Nawfal to assist him in spreading Islam.¹⁷
- iii. The migration to Ḥabashah that had taken place as a result of the oppression on the Muslim minority. Ḥabashah was selected as the place to migrate because of its just and fair rulings and the country was not regarded as a strange place as it was a Quraysh commercial centre during the Jāhiliyyah period.¹⁸
- iv. The brave action taken by ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas`ūd by reading several Qurānic verses from Sūrah al-Raḥmān in public until he was beaten.¹⁹

¹⁴ Jawād ‘Alī (1954), “Mawārid Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī,” in *Majallāt al-Majma’ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Irāqī*, J. 3, 1954 p. 43.

¹⁵ Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Mizzī (1992), *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā’ al-Rijāl*, j. 20. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, p. 15.

¹⁶ Abū Ja`far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (1991), *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, j. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, p. 469.

¹⁷ Abū Ja`far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (1987), *Tārīkh al-‘Umam wa al-Mulūk*, j. 1. Beirut: Mu’assasat ‘Izz al-Dīn, p. 466.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 484-489.

- v. The migration of Muslims to Medina after the execution of the treaty of ‘Aqabah. The strategy taken by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) during the migration.²⁰
- vi. Sariyyah (the military expedition) ‘Abd Allāh b. Jahs and the defamation that occurred after the battle.²¹
- vii. The battle of Badr, which had taken place due to the efforts taken by the Quraysh to obliterate the Muslims.²²
- viii. The battle of Banī Qaynuqā’. After the battle, Banī Qaynuqā’ was chased from Medina and their property was taken as a result of their breach of the treaty with Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.).²³
- ix. The battle of Khandaq that had taken place as a result of the efforts of the Jews Banī Naḍīr who instigated the Arabs to fight against Muslims.²⁴
- x. The battle of Banī al-Muṣṭaliq and the event of *Ḥadīth al-Ifk*. The role played by *Munāfiqūn* in their plan to slander ‘Ā’ishah and Ṣafwān ibn al-Mu‘aṭṭal al-Sulamī.²⁵
- xi. The treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah that was executed between Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) and the Quraysh for the long-term benefit of Islam.²⁶
- xii. The battle of Mu`tah, which had demonstrated the clash between the power of Islam and the foreign power of Byzantine.²⁷
- xiii. The opening of Mecca as the Quraysh had breach the treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah.²⁸
- xiv. The fighting amongst several Arabian tribes which had caused the battle of Ḥunayn and the battle of Ṭā’if.²⁹

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 529.

²³ al-Wāqidī (1964), *op. cit.*, j. 1. p. 410.

²⁴ al-Ṭabarī (1987), *op. cit.*, j. 1. p. 600.

²⁵ Ibn Hishām (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 2. p. 279.

²⁶ al-Ṭabarī (1987), *op. cit.*, j. 1. p. 627-636.

²⁷ Ibn Hishām (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 2. p. 373,382.

²⁸ Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (1964), *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, j. 3. Netherlands: E.J. Brill, p. 1634-1636.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.1654-1670.

- xv. The emissary of the Prophet's letters to the several of the tribes in the Peninsular of Arab for *da`wah*.³⁰
- xvi. The military expedition of Usāmah b. Zayd³¹ and the demise of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.).³²

The above are the basic narrations about *Sīrah* as was presented by ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr. Then it was spread by the later historians. Consequently, he was considered as the pioneer of the writing of *Sīrah*. Even though his narrations were considered too brief and most of them did not elaborate or explain the events that had occurred, it remained as a guidance and main draft in the writing of *Sīrah*. His writing applied the *Isnād* methodology and consisted of the verses of Holy Qur’ān and thus it clearly shows the influence of Islam. The main consideration which motivated ‘Urwah on writing and studying *Sīrah* was his awareness towards the importance of *Sīrah* which contained various guidance and teachings. He understood comprehensively the meaning of the Sūrah Yūsuf verse 111 which means:

*“There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it, -a detailed exposition of all things, and a Guide and a Mercy to any such as believe.”*³³

‘Urwah also felt that *Sīrah* was very vital in order to understand Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth because of its potential to explain and examine the events that were stated by both of the said sources.

This is where the role of the scholars becomes important in order to analyse the historical facts that were brought by ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr. For instance, ‘Urwah has indirectly mentioned about the power of Islam when he reported the brave action taken by ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas’ūd by reading several Qur’ānic verses from Sūrah al-Raḥmān in public until he was beaten. The righteousness, piety and strong faith of the Muslim minority at the early period of Islam had proven the real power in Islam. The strong spiritual virtue possessed by them had assisted them to defend the religion and later on spread it to the people of Mecca. The strength of Islam is the spiritual strength and

³⁰ al-Balādhurī (1966), *The Origins of the Islamic State (Futūḥ al-Buldān)*, Beirut: Khayyāt, 1: 122.

³¹ al-Ṭabarī (1964), *op. cit.*, j. 3. p. 1808.

³² Ibn Hishām (n.d), *op. cit.*, j. 2. p. 654.

³³ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Alī (2000), *The Holy Qur’an – Original Arabic Text with English Translation & Selected Commentaries*, Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media Sdn. Bhd., p. 291.

faith of its followers. Thus, the real power in Islam is not depending on the quantity of Muslims but it certainly depends on their quality.

The steadfast writing of *Sīrah* was continued later by Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741) whose was from Tabi'īn group in Medina. His appearance was more presentable as he had given full concentration to write each narration that he obtained. For about 45 years, al-Zuhrī himself had spent his life collecting the Ḥadīth and in the meantime he learnt a lot in order to gain more knowledge.³⁴ This was clearly shown in his ordinary routine from Ḥijāz to Shām. Al-Zuhrī had applied the comprehensive method in his research on history to obtain accurate information about Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) by comparing the narration between the events or interviewing experts who were considered as eligible in case there existed a conflict of facts. The most important source of al-Zuhrī was Qur'ān and authentic Ḥadīth. The narration of 'Ā'ishah bt. Abū Bakr and Anas b. Mālik were also his important sources on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) while the reports of 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr functioned as his main references about the battles that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) had taken part in.³⁵ The outline of his writing of *Sīrah* commenced by the introduction of the period before Islam and its connection to the socio-politics, religion and cultural situation of the Arabs before the birth of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.). al-Zuhrī mentioned about the important events that occurred in the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) at Mecca such as the revelation of the *Waḥyu*, the process of da'wah and the migration to Medina. During the period at Medina, he also mentioned the historical events in a chronological order such as the battles, the opening of the city of Mecca, the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) deployment of representatives to foreign countries, the da'wah efforts and *Wuḥūd* (the trip comprised of the Arabs tribes) for the agreement with the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). al-Zuhrī also mentioned the activities of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) which included social, economic and religious activities. He ended his discussion about *Sīrah* on the demise of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.).³⁶

Al-Zuhrī had spread and widened the meaning of *Sīrah* by not only focusing on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) but also including the life of the companions and their involvement in spreading Islam. Al-Zuhrī remained determined as a *Muḥaddith* who was concerned about the *Isnād*

³⁴ Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī (1969), *al-'A'lām – Qāmūs Tarājūm li Ashhar al-Rijāl wa al-Nisā' min al-'Arab wa al-Musta'rabīn wa al-Mustashriqīn*, j. n.p.: n.p., 7: 317.

³⁵ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (n.d.), *al-'Iḥṣān bi al-Tawbīkh li Man Dhamma al-Tārīkh*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, p. 159.

³⁶ Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Zuhrī (1981), *al-Maghāzī al-Nabawīyyah*, Suhayl Zakkār (ed.), Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, p. 31.

when narrating the *Sīrah*. Nevertheless, there were occasions where he loosens the requirements of *Isnād*.³⁷ He introduced and acquainted the different methods of *Isnād* of those *Muḥaddithīn* i.e. *Isnād al-Jam'ī*.³⁸ It was intended to avoid the repetition of *Isnād* which affects the comprehension and flow of a particular narration of *Sīrah*. Besides the Qur'ānic verses, al-Zuhrī included the poems at several places in his reports. This shows that the tradition of delivering poems was regarded as remarkable heritage and culture which cannot be ignored in the writing of *Sīrah* at that time. Nevertheless, al-Zuhrī did not apply them as a point of argument or a proven fact of a particular event.

The main factor that motivated al-Zuhrī to write *Sīrah* was his awareness that *Sīrah* was necessary in the religious field and it was also one of the knowledge that can enrich and strengthen the faith.³⁹ Moreover, his intention was to record the experience of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) for the next generation and explain several vital aspects of the Prophet's life. Al-Zuhrī had clearly depicted the events as he was a reliable *Muḥaddith*. He regarded a particular event that had taken place as part of a divinely ordained plan beside the human influence. This can be clearly seen when he spoke of battles such as Badr.⁴⁰ Al-Zuhrī had also demonstrated his arguments by providing elaboration and explanation from the historical point of view such as supporting the treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah for the long term benefits of Muslims at that particular time. It is interesting to note that in the narration of al-Zuhrī there was a discussion on Jews in Medina. It can be understood that the conflicts that often occurred were because of the misdemeanors of the Jews. Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) was not pleased with them not because they were Jews but because of their hatred towards Islam. al-Zuhrī stated that the great enemy of Islam was *Munāfiqūn*. They were not only causing disputes such as in the battle of Uḥud and the event of Ḥadīth al-Ifk but they also influenced the Jews of Banī Naḍir to fight against the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) until they were chased out from Medina to Khaybar. Besides writing about *Sīrah* such as *Kitāb Mashāhid al-Nabiyy*, al-Zuhrī also produced *Kitāb al-Qabā'il al-'Arabiyyah al-Shimāliyyah*, *Kitāb Nasab Quraysh* and *Kitāb Asnān al-Khulafā'*. Nevertheless, these efforts did not reach today's generation

³⁷ This means that when he wrote reports on history, al-Zuhrī did not practise the methodology of *Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl* which he did when reporting Ḥadīth.

³⁸ *Isnād al-Jam'ī* means the collaboration of several *riwāyats* which forms one complete and comprehensive *riwāyat* and it begins with one particular *Isnād* only.

³⁹ Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (1890), *Tarājim Rijāl Rawā 'anhum Muḥammad ibn Ishāq*, Laiden: n.p., p. 72.

⁴⁰ Al-Ṭabarī (1991), *op. cit.*, j. 2. p. 30-47.

except some parts or paragraphs that were extracted by Muḥammad b. Ishāq, Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Sayyid al-Nās.⁴¹

It can be seen from the reports of al-Zuhrī that the power in Islam would be strengthened by the collaboration on two factors i.e. the quality of Muslims and political power. This can be clearly seen in the period of Medina. The Muslims at that particular time gained victory in the battles of Badr and Khandaq and in most of the battle because of these two factors. Their righteousness had led them not only to the success and victory but had also assisted them in their personality and at the same time abolished the tribal sentiments.

The writing of *Sīrah* later reached its glorious time with the presence of Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 151/768) who produced *Kitāb al-Mubtadā’ wa al-Mab’ath wa al-Maghāzī*. His ability was well known compared to the earlier historians as he was knowledgeable and learned. He possessed universal knowledge and capable of gathering information from various sources. He was able to arrange the data in a good order. His writings clearly mirrored his wide and comprehensive understanding about *Sīrah* compared to the earlier historians. This was due to the fact that his writings included the history of the earlier Prophets and the life of the companions which was arranged chronologically. Even though Ibn Ishāq received great criticisms from some of the *Muḥaddithūn*, his contributions and role in developing the field of *Sīrah* was considered as one of the most undeniable facts when he obtained a recognition from al-Zuhrī and Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi’ī.⁴² Since many of the Ḥadīth scholars were in favour of him, these allegations which question his authority need to be re-assessed.

The book that was produced by Ibn Ishāq was divided into three parts, namely, *al-Mubtadā’*, *al-Mab’ath* and *Maghāzī*. The part that discussed thoroughly about *Sīrah* was *al-Mab’ath* which included the life of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) in Mecca until the first century of Hijrah. Another part of *al-Maghāzī* conveyed the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) until his demise. Ibn Ishāq delivered the facts of history chronologically with suitable topics and a plot. He had contributed a lot in providing the names of those who were involved in events such as the companions who attended at the treaty of ‘Aqabah. The sources of Ibn Ishāq in producing his books were from oral and written materials.

⁴¹ Jawād ‘Alī (1954), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴² Ibn Khallikān (1974), *Wafayāt al-‘A’yān wa Anbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, j. 4. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, p. 276.

Nevertheless, there were arguments about him regarding his writings which did not concentrate on *Isnād*. He just stated the poems without differentiating between the false ones from the true ones. In short, the first argument was rebutted through the thorough study of his works from as it had proved that Ibn Ishāq utilised the complete method of writing when delivering the narration. His detailed research on the application of *Isnād* was varied based on the period, category, and the importance of the narration that were stated. In the next part of *al-Mubtadā'* which discussed the unknown accuracy of classical history and were not related to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) or his family, Ibn Ishāq did not pay much attention to the application of *Isnād*. Most of his *Isnād* were *Maqtū'*⁴³ *in nātūre*. Nevertheless, when he narrated the events that related to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) and his family, Ibn Ishāq had discussed them by carefully considering the application of *Isnād* such as the digging of the well of Zamzam. The conscious nature of Ibn Ishāq in the application of *Isnād* reached the maximum stage whenever he discussed the events that occurred in Islam and those related to Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) such his appointment as a *Rasūl*. Here *Isnād* of Ibn Ishāq stopped at 'Ā'ishah who was the Prophet's wife. Nevertheless, in the events of the battles, Ibn Ishāq was more interested with the application of *Isnād al-Jam'ī* which was intended to summarise the chain of narrators. For instance, in the battle of Banī Muṣṭaliq.⁴⁴ Regarding the poems that were questioned on their authenticity, Ibn Ishāq had admitted that he merely conveyed the poems which were brought before him by the poem reciters. His intention was not to prove the authenticity of the events but to incorporate entertainment and spice up his writings of *Sīrah* as what was done by 'Urwah and al-Zuhrī.⁴⁵

Thus, it is clear that the controversy about him was more regarding the relationship with *Muḥaddithīn* whose methodology differed from the historians. Nevertheless, this did not affect the credibility of Ibn Ishāq in his writings of *Sīrah* because most of the scholars such as Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah, Abu Zur'ah al-Dimishqī, Shu'bah b. al-Ḥajjāj, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Isnād Maqtū'* or *Munqati'* is where the chain of the companions as narrators ceased to exist. For instance, when he discussed the development of Cristianity in Najrān. See Ibn Hishām (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 1. p. 31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 234, 290, 297.

⁴⁵ 'Alī Adham (1974), *Ba'd al-Mu'arrikhī al-Islām*, n.p.: al-Mu'assasat al-'Arabiyyah, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (n.d.), *al-Kāshif fī Ma'rifat man lahu Riwayāt fī al-Kutub al-Sittah*, j. 3. Egypt: Maṭba'at Dār al-Ta'līf, p. 19; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (n.d.), *Tārīkh Baghdād*, j. 1. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, p. 228-231; Ibn Sa'd (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 2. p. 371. See also Wan Kamal Mujani (1990), "Pandangan

Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) later wrote several books related to Sīrah such as *Kitāb Azwāj al-Nabiyy*, *Kitāb al-Tārīkh wa al-Maghāzī wa al-Mab`ath* and *Kitāb Waḥāt al-Nabiyy*.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, he was more famously known through his book *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. Based on this book, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had participated in 27 battles (*Ghazawāt*) and embarked on 47 military expeditions (*Sarāyā*). In general, the battles that occurred had pictured the clash between the Islamic power and the four main power houses i.e. Quraysh, Jews, the Arab tribes and foreign powers such as Byzantine and Persian. Clearly, the battles initiated by Muslims were defensive and not offensive in nature. Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) had participated in four battles and sent about 4 military expeditions before the battle of Badr. The intention of sending the military expeditions very often was to exhibit to the Quraysh that Islam now had strength and was not as weak as before, when it was oppressed. It was also to remind the enemies that Islam will fight against those who wanted to demolish Islam. Expedition by expedition was initiated to show that the dominance of Islam would continue and this raised fear among the enemies in Medina (such as *Munāfiqūn* and Jews) or outside Medina. Besides, its intention was to discover new areas that can be used as a new route between Medina and other places and set up treaties with the Arab tribes.⁴⁸

This book explained that the battle of Badr and Uḥud mirrored the fact that Quraysh had the intention to destroy Islam but failed to do so. The victory in the battle of Khandaq was regarded as a shift towards to the dominance of Islam to continue spreading without barriers by the Quraysh until the execution of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah and the opening of the city of Mecca. The ambush on the Banī Qaynuqā’, Banī al-Naḍīr and Qurayzah was initiated by Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) after the Jews breached the treaty and regularly created havoc. There was no room for compromise with them after several attempts and opportunities were given. The battles of Tābūk dan Mu`tah had shown the efforts of *da`wah Islāmiyyah* which had spread at the international level. The book of al-Wāqidī was not only focusing on the battles but also included the administration of the Medina city. For instance, Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) had appointed Ibn Umm Maktūm al-Ma`isiy, to replace him for 14 times during his absence from Medina. Thus, it was clear that the battles in Islam were part of the *da`wah Islāmiyyah*.⁴⁹

Ulama Terhadap Karya dan Ketokohan Muḥammad bin Ishāq,” in *Islāmiyyat*, Vol. 20, 1999, p. 21-34.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm (1985), *al-Fihrist*, n.p.: Dār al-Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā’ah, p. 195.

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Khaṭīb (1985), *Dirāsāt Taḥlīliyyah fī Tārīkh al-Duwaylāt al-Islāmiyyah*, j. 1. Cairo: Maṭba’at al-Jiblāwī, p. 47-48.

⁴⁹ For further information on al-Wāqidī’s writings, see Wan Kamal Mujani (2000),

‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. 218/833) later on wrote about *Sīrah* via his works, *Kitāb al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*. This kitab was the book of Ibn Ishāq which was modified by Ibn Hishām. He made several amendments such as adding and summarising the narration and pointed out his own opinion regarding particular events.⁵⁰ Until now, this book is still functioning as a main reference about *Sīrah*. Muḥammad b. Sa’d (d. 230/844) also wrote about *Sīrah* in his *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*. It discussed the period of childhood of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and his teenage years until the migration to Medina. Several topics that had been discussed by him in the period of Medina were the battles, the efforts of spreading Islam and his credibility as the Exemplar.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

The above discussion clearly exhibits the early sources of *Sīrah* which were later on developed by historians and remain as the main references. Most of the scholars stated that the writing of *Sīrah* had reached its glorious period when the book of *al-Mubtadā’ wa al-Mab’ath wa al-Maghāzī* written by Ibn Ishāq was produced. This is based on factors stated above and most of the later writing of *Sīrah* refers to his narration. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the other historians played an important role in developing the writing of *Sīrah*. Among others are Sa’īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/712), al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 107/725), Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 114/732), ‘Aṣim b. ‘Umar b. Qatādah (d. 120/737), Shuraḥbīl b. Sa’d (d. 123/740), Yazīd b. Rumān al-‘Asadī (d. 130/747), Abū al-‘Aswad Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 131/748), ‘Abd Allāh b. Abū Bakr b. Ḥazm (d. 135/752), Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah (d. 141/758), Ma’mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), Nājiḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sindī (d. 170/786), Ziyād b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Bakkā’ī (d. 183/799) and Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-‘Abrash al-‘Anṣārī (d. 191/806).

The classical historians realised the significance of *Sīrah* in their life and the life of the *ummah*. This is evident in their conducts and show of concern to write all the deeds of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) which include the events since his birth until his demise. Nevertheless, the discussions were concentrated on the historical events and were not connected to the current

“Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidi: Tokoh Bidang Pensejarahan Islam,” in *Ketokohan Cendekiawan Islam*, Bangi: Jabatan Pengajian Arab & Tamadun Islam, UKM, pp. 61-82.

⁵⁰ Ibn Hishām (n.d.), *op. cit.*, j. 1. p. 11-12.

⁵¹ Wan Kamal Mujani (1998), Muḥammad ibn Sa’d (168H.230H./784M.-844M.) dan Penulisan Beliau Mengenai al-Ṭabaqāt,” in Fariza Md. Sham & Zakaria Stapa (eds.), *Sejarah dan Pemikiran Islam*, Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM. p. 117-125.

issues. By virtue of the changing time and period, the writing of *Sīrah* was developed and was connected to the current issues. For instance, most of the writing of *Sīrah* based on *Shamā'il* and *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* emerged after the middle century of second Hijrah as written by Abū Zur'ah 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (d. 264/877), Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/888), al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Ḥayyān (d. 369/979) and Abū al-'Abbās Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Mustaghfarī (d. 432/1040). Al-Qāḍī Iyāḍ Abū al-Faḍl b. Mūsā (d. 544/1149) wrote *Kitāb al-Shifā' bi Ta'rīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* to answer the allegations and false accusations towards Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.). The writing of *Sīrah* continues until today.

The authority and reliability of the books that were discussed above cannot be neglected as most of the scholars had recognised and accepted them as the main sources of *Sīrah*. Nevertheless, most of the orientalist writers endeavoured to question the credibility of the books. At this point, it is necessary to understand the early sources of *Sīrah* in order to avoid false accusations and to preserve the Islamic heritage from being desecrated.

