



# HAGIOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS IN THE BATTLE OF UHUD: A PROLEGOMENON TO THE EARLY SIRAH TRADITIONS

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## Abstract

Recent studies on the Sirah are usually focusing on the reliability of its sources by applying critical analysis of its material. There is obviously a lack of study on its hagiographic elements and its patterns. This is precisely where the lacuna occurs in which the present study aims to fill by clarification and analysis. It has been confirmed by the preliminary study of the present researcher that there is an obvious hagiographical element in the narrative of Battle of Uhud. Therefore, this study aims (1) to explore the nature and element of hagiography by focusing on the hadith of al-Maghazi in the Battle of Uhud, (2) and identify these elements based on the narrative delivered in the early Sirah literature. The study is qualitative in nature in which the researcher employed critical textual analysis as a main method of study. The study in its finding argues that there is some addition and deduction in the storyline conveyed by the early Sirah compilers. Secondly, there is difference facts among the biographer of Sirah about particular issue in the Battle of Uhud. Thirdly, the study traced elements that implied that particular author apparently prone to Shi'ite doctrine.

**Keywords:** Hagiograph, Sirah Nabawiyyah, Hadith

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sirah, the word that is originated from Sayr which literally means Sunnah, situations or journey (Zawi, 1971) has initially emerged in the early stage of Islam which obviously portrays the awareness on Sirah is significant among the community. It is one of the genre in Islamic literature that possessed the biography and life of Prophet Muhammad. Faruq Hamadah (1989) suggested that the main sources of Sirah can be divided into two; the primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources are al-Qur'an and al-Hadith, which their authenticity and veracity are unquestionable. The secondary sources are books and accounts of the Muslim scholars which associate to Sirah. For example, books on Shama'il and Dala'il al-Nubuwwah, Sirah and Maghazi, and history books written in chronological order such as Kitab Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk by Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari<sup>1</sup>.

Maghazi means the battles that Prophet Muhammad had joined was often related to Sirah at the early stage. However, its scope is wider in the context of Islamic historiography that include the life of Prophet Muhammad before Islam and after his appointment as Messenger. Thus, the word Maghazi is considered as a synonym to Sirah (Al-Duri, 1960).

During Prophet Muhammad's time, Sirah has been written by some of the Companions. As an example, Abu Rafi' Mawla Rasulullah (d. 36AH. / 656AD.) wrote a note on the method of prayer (solat) and other worships that were performed by the Prophet, which then Abu Bakr b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith b. Hisham has reserved the note<sup>2</sup>. 'Abd Allah b. 'Amru b. al-'As b. Wa'il b. Hashim (d. 36AH. / 682AD.) wrote about the Hadith that he heard by himself from the Prophet in a notebook called *Sahifah al-Sadiqah*<sup>3</sup>. Different collections of notes about early history, Maghazi and biography of the Prophet Muhammad also possessed by him (Azmi, 1968). Besides that, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas (d. 68AH. /687AD.) wrote about Maghazi that had been participated by the Prophet and its related Quranic verses. The actions taken by the Prophet also has been asked by him to Abu Rafi'<sup>4</sup>. Thus,

it is believed that Sirah took place at an early stage of Islam by the Companions and this development shows the importance of Sira among the early Islam community and how they attempted to record the Sirah for the benefits of future generations.

However, John Wansbrough gave a stern criticism on the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. He considered the prophethood of Muhammad as imitation from the Moses<sup>5</sup>. He postulates that there is no writing of early history of Islam except after the generation of the Companions<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, William Montgomery Watt has criticised the assumption made by Wansbrough is doubtful eventhough the work is conducted scholarly or academically. Thus, it is important for a scholar in analysing and understand critically in referring the work of orientalist.

Some of early historian who wrote Sirah based on the Hadith of Prophet and all affairs related to him from the first to third century of Hijrah are 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712) who was regarded as a reliable scholar<sup>7</sup> and Muhammad b. Muslim al-Zuhri (d. 124/741) from Tabi'in group in Medina. Al-Zuhri is motivated to write Sirah because he awared that Sirah is necessary in religious field, in addition it could strengthen the faith of a Muslim (al-Dhahabi, 1980).

The writings of Sirah then was continued by Muhammad b. Ishaq (d. 151 AH) who was well known because of his writing in *Kitab al-Mubtada' wa al-Mab'ath wa al-Maghazi* (the Beginning, the mission [of Muhammad], and the expeditions) which included the history of the earlier Prophets and the life of the companions which was arranged chronologically. Later, Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Waqidi (d. 207AH.) wrote several books related to Sirah such as Kitab al-Maghazi. His book is one of the important sources for the narration of the Prophet's life in the historical writings of both al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892)) and al-Tabari (d.310/923)<sup>8</sup>. Then, 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham (d. 218 AH) wrote Kitab al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah which he modified from the book of Ibn Ishaq. In this book, some adjustments and his own opinions in a particular event

<sup>1</sup> Wan Kamal Mujani, "Sirah Narratives in Early Muslim Historiography", *Advances* 6, no. 6 (2012): 959-965.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Thabit al-Ma'ruf bi al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Kitab al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah* (al-Madinah al-Munawwarah: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d), 330-331.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad b. Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), vol. 2, 373.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 371.

<sup>5</sup> John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Source and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 55-56.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Rippin, "Literary of al-Qur'an and Sirah the Methodology of John Wansbrough" in *Approaches to Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin (USA: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 154-156.

<sup>7</sup> Jamal al-Din Abi al-Hajjaj Yusuf al-Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-Kamal fi Asma' al-Rijal* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), vol. 20, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Rizwi S. Faizer, "The Issue of Authenticity regarding the Traditions of al-Waqidi as Established in His Kitab al-Maghazi", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58, no. 2 (1999): 97-106.



has made by him. Muhammad b. Sa'd (d. 230AH.) who was known as Katib al-Waqidi, wrote about Sirah in his Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra. As Sachau remarks, Ibn Sa'd shows impartiality and honesty, thoroughness, minuteness objectivity and originality<sup>9</sup>.

Gordon Newby (1989) in his analysis of Ibn Ishaq's Sirah, proposed that Sirah literature is actually a hybrid biography, combination of prophetology and hagiography. In addition, he noticed elements of hagiography in the earliest Sirah sources. Hagiography is a branch of literary analysis that has been developed well in Christianity and Biblical Studies. In modern studies, hagiography represents all literature that recorded accounts of live of the prophets, his companions and Islamic pious figures as portrayed in popular folk literature, narratives in regional accounts, academic works and official sponsored publications.

Marcia Hermansen (1988) stated that the major biographical Islamic genres are *Sirah* (biography of the Prophet), *Manaqib* (merits and miraculous deeds), *Fada'il* (discussions of the virtuous qualities of important people), *Khasa'is* (outlines of the special merits of prophets and their Companions), *Tabaqat* (ranks or classes), *Tadhkirah* (later collective biographies), and autobiographies.

The existing literature has shown that Hadith of al-Maghazi holds elements of hagiographic in its transmission of Sirah narratives. However, there is a very limited study on this type of hadith in which most of the studies done on Hadith of al-Maghazi did not analyse its hagiographic pattern (Renard, 2009; Stewart, 2010; Peters, 2011; Gilliot, 2006).

Thus, the focus of this study is to explore the nature and element of hagiography in early Sirah sources where Battle of Uhud is chosen as the parameter for this study. Battle of Uhud took place on Saturday, the seventh of Shawwal of 3 AH or March 23, 625 which is triggered from the intention of Quraysh to retaliate and take revenge on Muslim after their defeat in the Battle of Badr. Battle of Uhud is a symbol of defeat for Muslim, and this defeat was caused by disagreement and dissension among the them, brought about by the satan. However, this defeat became a trial for Muslim, to examine the extent and the strength and faith in God and their love for Him.

As for its narrative, a preliminary study has been conducted by researcher from 3 books of early 9<sup>th</sup> century Muslim biographers of Muhammad which is Kitab Maghazi by Waqidi (d. 207AH.), Sirah Nabawiyah by Ibn Hisham (d. 218AH.) and Kitab Tabaqat al-Kubra by Ibn Sa'd (d. 230AH.) in analysing the narrative of battle of Uhud. It is found that obvious few hagiographical elements are presented. Indeed, work of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham who transmit Ibn Ishaq's narration and Waqidi's work can provide vast information on the narrative itself. For example, Prophet Muhammad has encountered a dream which is a miracle for him in interpreting what would be happened in the battle. Besides that, miracle has happened to the Prophet when Abdullah b. Shihab al-Razi was searching for him intentionally to kill him, but he did not see the Prophet, indeed he was at his side. In addition, the martyrdom of the Companions such as Hamza b. Abdul Muttalib and Hanzala.

In addition, recent studies on the Sirah are usually focusing on the reliability of its sources by applying critical analysis of its material. Meanwhile, there is a lack in the study of hagiographic element and its patterns. Thus, this is precisely where the lacuna occurs in which the present study aims to fill by clarification and analysis. Hence this study aims to explore the nature and element of hagiography in Sirah literature, extract its pattern and develop a Sirah hagiography based on the narrative delivered in the battle of Uhud.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature, in which the researcher will employ both descriptive and source-critical approaches. This study employed textual analysis in which it will be focusing on analysing the textual content of Hadith al-Maghazi. The study is based on primary and secondary literature available to the researcher. Range of literature for this study encompasses books, thesis, journals, and articles in Arabic, Malay and English.

The collected data will be analysed using comparative analysis in which the work of three biographers has been selected as a parameter of the study. All data will be compared in different timeline and specific framework designed in detail to proportionate each events occurred in the Battle of Uhud. In addition, analytical method is used in analysing all the narratives

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith literature: Its origin, development and special features*, ed. Abdal Hakim Murad (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 99.



related to the battle of Uhud in Sirah works. Such significant differences traced in the process of comparative analysis between the narratives of selected authors of Sirah will be identified and extracted systematically.

### 3. ANALYSIS

In the early nineteenth century, modern scholars appeared to approach materials from Sirah literature within the framework of a historico-critical method. Gustav Weil (1843), Aloy Sprenger (1851), Muir (1856-1861), Margoliouth (1905) William M Watt (1971), John Wansbrough (1977), Patricia Crone (1977), Michael Cooks (1977), Yehuda Nevo (2003) and Judith Koren (2003), to name a few, are among scholars that inaugurated an advanced method of critical literary analysis on Sirah material. Most of their study are focusing on the reliability of the Sirah material in which they applied a historico-critical approach on Sira texts. There are, however, obviously a lack of examination on the hagiographical pattern of Sirah literature.

In 1989, Gordon Newby (1989) in his analysis of Ibn Ishaq's Sirah, proposed that Sirah literature is actually a hybrid biography, combination of prophetology and hagiography. He noticed a pattern of hagiographic account in the earliest Sirah sources. A recent study conducted by Finlayson (2014) confirms Newby's proposition, that Sirah is a type of hagiographic account in Islamic literature.

Taking this point further, an attempt is made by scholars in order to identify types of Islamic hagiography. Marcia Hermansen (2004) concluded that Muslim religious hagiography were composed in specific genres including Tabaqat, Tazkirat and Malfuzat. While John Renard (2009) and Ch. Pellat (2012) confirm that Hadith of al-Manaqib and al-Maghazi are branch of Islamic or Sirah Hagiography. This kind of literature is however received meager attention in academic world.

Existing literature indicates the lack of fundamental analysis in exploring the pattern of hagiographic and its delicate characteristic (See, al-Umari, 1994; Rizqullah, 1992; Abu Shahba, 1992).

Bauhng (2012) has written an Mphil thesis entitled

“Early Sira Material and the Battle of Badr”.<sup>10</sup> He has made a word-to-word and thematic analysis of Ibn Ishaq material in the recensions of Ibn Hishyam and Tabari. It is discovered that there are a bulk of material identical, nonetheless underwent modifications and reconstructions, sometimes out of hagiographic impetus to idealize the figure of Muhammad. His study found that Ibn Ishaq and Waqidi were found pro-Abbasid bias and storytelling material. In his finding, there is differences and similarities between material of Ibn Ishaq and that ascribed to Musa b. ‘Uqba. Thus, the researcher attempt to adapt his method in comparative analysis.

Al-Khuni (2003) wrote his master thesis entitled “*Fiqh al-Sirah min Khilal Ghazwah Uhud*”<sup>11</sup>. It explores the circumstances in which this battle took place and it discovers the lesson and example that could be benefit. The study explores events before battle of Uhud happen, but it does not compare any differences from other Sirah sources specifically.

Al-Haj (1990) in his master thesis entitled “*Ibn Sa’d wa Manhajihī fī Kitābihī al-Tarikh*” has described the historical methodology used by Ibn Sa’d in Kitab Tabaqat al-Kabir<sup>12</sup>. He found that Ibn Sa’d has combined chronological with topical in his book. For example, the signs of prophecy and Maghazi. From this study, the researcher could understand the methodology used by Ibn Sa’d and focus on battle of Uhud.

### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is adopting the biblical studies’ method. Recent studies from Western scholars in Islamic hagiography has indicated that this field could be a new venture for scholars in understanding the Islamic studies from the viewpoint of Western. By giving explanation to the society and academicians, this research could contribute to the understanding of Sira literature better, beside it could identify and inform the society about the characteristics of fraud in Sira literature.

### 5. LIMITATION OF STUDY

This research will be focusing on the hadith of Maghazi in the Battle of Uhud, one of the many battles, because it provides an opportunity to analyse how our sources

<sup>10</sup> Victor Jongjin Bauhng, “Early Sira material and the Battle Of Badr” (MPhil thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Al-Sadik M. al-Khuni, “Fiqh al-Sirah min Khilal Ghazwah Uhud” (master’s thesis, King Saud University, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Zaid Saleh Abu al-Haj, “Ibn Sa’d wa Manhajihī fī Kitābihī al-Tarikh” (master’s thesis, Jordan University, 1990).





treat several incidents that relate with hagiography. The sources to be studied in this research is Kitab Tabaqat al-Kubra by Ibn Sa'd, Maghazi by Waqidi and Sirah Nabawiyah by Ibn Hisham, were significant because it contains the Maghazi's hadith related with battle of Uhud. The researcher only does analysis of hagiography in martyrology.

## 6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Recent studies on the Sirah are usually focusing on the reliability of its sources by applying critical analysis of its material. There is obviously a lack of study on its hagiographic elements and its patterns. This is precisely where the lacuna occurs in which the present study aims to fill by clarification and analysis. From the preliminary work that has been conducted, it is found that there is obvious few hagiographical elements are presented in the narrative of Battle of Uhud. In addition, there are significant findings indicate the difference of structure of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham and Waqidi in conveying the narrative of battle of Uhud.

Firstly, there is addition and deduction in their storyline. For example, regarding miraculous element of Prophet Muhammad's dream in a hadith, only Waqidi put the riwayat, while Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hisham did not put it. Other example, when 'Abbas b. Abdul Muttalib sent a letter to the Prophet to tell the news of Quraysh preparation in attacking Muslim, which shows that he could not read. It is found that Ibn Sa'd and Waqidi explain the event, meanwhile Ibn Hisham did not.

Secondly, there is difference facts among the biographer about an issue in battle of Uhud. For example, Ibn Hisham stated that Arta' b. Syurahbil has been killed by Hamza b. Abd al-Muttalib, however, Ibn Sa'd and Waqidi mentioned that Ali b. Abi Talib has killed him.

Thirdly, Shi'ite elements and tendencies has been traced in the traditions and seems to be one of the factors that probably influence the establishment of the narratives. It has been discovered when the researcher found that the author of Sirah commonly emphasized on the figure that relates with Shi'ite figures such as Ali b. Abi Talib, Fatimah and Mu'awiyah.

This preliminary analysis confirms the gaps that need to be fill and further clarified. The study has also traced elements of contradiction and hagiographic in its study on the narratives of the Battle of Uhud.

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