



AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. 6 No. 2 (2023). P-ISSN : 2614-4883; E-ISSN : 2614-4905

Journal website: <https://al-afkar.com>

Research Article

Introduction Of Early Prominent Sirah Writings

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Received : November 17, 2022
Accepted : January 26, 2023

Revised : December 22, 2022
Available online : March 12, 2023

How to Cite: Javid Ahmad Bhat (2023) "Introduction Of Early Prominent Sirah Writings", *al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 6(2), pp. 24-30. doi: 10.31943/afkarjournal.v6i2.497.

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Abstract. The tradition of Sirah writing goes back to the very generation of companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). The very first Sirah works that appeared distinct from the hadith works, however, did not deal with complete biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), rather they addresses aspects of his socio-political life and organisation of the government during the Medinan period. This aspect of Sirah writing came to be known in history as Maghazi. Though a bit later when comprehensive biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) were compiled al-Maghazi were also incorporated in the Sirah works, socio-political aspect of the Prophet's life especially his conduct was entities of his time remained focus of various Sirah works. A large number Sirah works have been written by scholars from different perspectives highlighting different dimensions of it both in the past and in the contemporary times. In this paper the scholar revived few important books, written during early period of Islam.

Keywords; Sirah, Promenent, Magazi.

INTRODUCTION.

The word 'Sīrah' is derived from *Sara*, which means, 'conduct' 'behaviour' 'way of life' or 'to travel' or 'to be on a journey' and the last but not the least 'biography'. It is the story of the person's birth, the events surrounding it, his life and his death, and his manners and characteristics.¹ In the Qur'an the word *Sīrah* occurs in Surah Taha: Allah said: "...Seize it, and fear not: We shall return it at once to its former condition,"²

This is used in the same meaning as 'conduct' or 'condition.' To argue, an individual's *Sīrah* includes not only his life sketch but a detailed account of it from his birth to death, the events related to it and also his conduct, behaviour, personal traits etc. Technically the word *Sīrah* is used for the biography of Prophet Muhammad which includes each and everything related to his life. *Sīrat Rasul Allah* or *al- Sīrah al-Nabawiyah* has been the most widely used names for the traditional account of the Prophet Muhammad's life conduct.³

It has been one of the most prominent genres in the Islamic intellectual tradition from the period of the *Sahabah* (companions of the Prophet) to the contemporary times. It provides role model for the believers in the spiritual, socio-political and legal aspects and equally encompasses the individual/private and collective/ public spheres of life. The Qur'an has best illustrated the personality of the Prophet (SAAS) in these words: "You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes."⁴

The moral and physical features of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), his birth and the events that took place before and after his birth, his genealogy, his lineage, his tribe, his family, his friends and companions, his opponents and enemies, his expeditions, military enlistments and political treaties, and official assignments are a part of *Sīrah* literature. Most *Sīrah* books wrote even the events after the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and do go a little further in time.⁵ Therefore, a large number *Sīrah* works have been written by scholars from different perspectives highlighting different dimensions of it both in the past and in the contemporary times. The trend is gaining more and more momentum in the face of changing circumstances and new challenges of contemporary global world. A large number of biographies of Prophet Muhammad

¹ Muhammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manzur al-Ifriqi, *Lisan al-'Arab*, Vol.3. (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1997), 378; J. Milton Cowan, ed. *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Librairie du Liban, 1980), 446-447; Gordon D. Newby, "Muhammad: Biographies" in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Modern Islamic World Vol.3* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 162-164.

² Al-Qur'an, 20:21, Translation Abdullah Yousuf Ali, (trans.) *Al-Qur'an*, (Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2010).

³ W. Raven. *Encyclopaedia of Islam, "Sira"*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 660-663.

⁴ *Al-Qur'an*, 33:21.

⁵ Ibn Ishaq's *magnum Opus* consisted of three parts: i) *al-Mubtada* (the beginning), it dealt with the creation of the world, the early Prophets from Adam to Jesus (peace be on them) and the Arabs before advent of the Prophet (peace be on him); ii) *al-Ba'th* (the advent), it depicted the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) until his migration to Medina; iii) *al- Maghazi* (expeditions), it described the Prophet's activities after his migration to Medina.

(SAAS) exist in all Islamic languages in prose, poetry, and more recently even on films.⁶

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Early Sīrah Writings

The tradition of Sīrah writing goes back to the very generation of companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). The very first Sīrah works that appeared distinct from the hadith works, however, did not deal with complete biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), rather they addresses aspects of his socio-political life and organisation of the government during the Medinan period. This aspect of Sīrah writing came to be known in history as *Maghazi*. Though a bit later when comprehensive biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) were compiled *al-Maghazi* were also incorporated in the Sīrah works, socio-political aspect of the Prophet's life especially his conduct was entities of his time remained focus of various works known as *al-Siyar*.⁷

Scholars has traced that the very first writing in this regard were dictated by famous companion 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas (d. 687 A.c), whereas two other companions, 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr (d. 684 A.C.), and al-Bara b. 'Azib (d. 693 A.C.) had compiled *Maghazi* of Rasul Allah, which have been reported on their authority in various works of the hadith. Similarly, he had mentioned several successors (Tabien) who had compiled *Maghazi-i Rasul Allah*. Few among them are, 'Urwah b. Al-Zubayr (d712 A.C) Aban b. 'Uthman (d. 718 A.C), Miqdam Mawala ibn .Abbas (d. 719 A.C) and 'Amar b. Shurabil al-Sha'bi (d. 721 A.C) was prominent in this regard. Waqidī and many other scholars viewed 'Urwah b.al-Zubayr to be the first one to compile *Maghazi Rasul Allah*.⁸ This subject developed greatly from the period of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (d. 720 A.C), for he paid special attention to all branches of Islamic Knowledge including *al-maghazi* and *Sīrah*; Shibli Numani (d. 1914 A.C) noted that he "ordered that people be taught and trained in this branch of knowledge."⁹

Therefore, there are many *Maghazi* and Sīrah works which have been compiled during the early phase of Islam and it is not possible to review all the works of *Maghazi* and *Sīrah*. My humble attempt in this chapter is to review few prominent works of Sīrah during the early phase upto the contemporary times, few early Sīrah writings are:

- a. Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Hisham, **Sirat Rasul Allah**, trans. Inas A.Farid, Cairo Egypt: Al-Falah Foundation, 2000.

⁶Films on the biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) include, *The Message* (1977); *Muhammad*:

Legacy of a Prophet (2002); *Muhammad: The Last Prophet* (2004).

⁷ Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, *Mahazirat i Sirat* (New Delhi: Areeb Publication, 2016), 159-60.

⁸ Muhammad Mustafa al- A'zimi, "*Muqaddamah*" in 'Urwah b. Al-Zubayr, *Maghazi Rasul Allah*, ed. Muhammad Mustafa A'zimi, trans., Muhammad Said al-Rehman 'Alavi (Lahore: Idarah Thaqafat i Islamiyah, 1990), 30-36. Cf. Tawseef Parray, "Focusing socio-Political reforms of the Prophet (peace be on him) An Appraisal of Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui's Sīrah works" *Insight*, 'mercy for the worlds, 02: no. 2-3 (winter 2009- spring 2010), 265.

⁹ Allama Shibli Numani, *Sirat-Un-Nabi*, trans. M. Tayyib Bakhsh Budayuni, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2017), 15.

The book *Sīrat Rasul Allah* is actually written by Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar (85-151 A.H/ 704-768 A.C), he was the first to write a complete, comprehensive and systematic biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) Although several treatises had been written on Muhammad's life before Ibn Ishaq's work, but he was the first to offer a wider conception than that of the predecessors and contemporaries, in that he aimed at giving not only a history of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), but a history of Prophecy. Ibn Ishaq's work bear the title *Kitab al-Maghazi* (the book of wars). This work was not related only to wars, but this work was divided into three main sections, as *Al-Mubtada*, *Al-Mub'ath* and *Al-Maghazi*. It must not be supposed that the book ever existed in three separate parts; they are chapters of one single book. Ibn Ishaq is also the first writer among Muslims who copied literally from the bible.¹⁰ Ibn Ishaq's book is not in the original form, because Ibn Hisham examined this by editing, abridging, making additions and sometimes criticising and objecting through the narrations of other scholars.¹¹ There is no doubt that Ibn Hisham was honest and that he confirmed in his citation of Ibn Ishaq's book. He ever changed or added a word of Ibn Ishaq unless he was explaining or refuting a narration. Ibn Hisham omitted the first part of Ibn Ishaq's book as well as the stories and information of Ismail's sons which in his opinion did not serve the Prophets biography. He also eliminated all the controversial poems.¹²

With the completion of Ibn Ishaq's book, the Sīrah took its final shape. All that came after, followed the example set by Ibn Ishaq, the difference are minor ones, while the similarities are numerous. Undoubtedly, this is a great source to know about the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). This book was and will continue to be a major reference for readers of the Prophet's biography. Without referring to this book it seems the biography is incomplete because, it is a major source of information.

b. Muhammad Bin Ishaq Bin Yasar, **Sirat ibn Ishaq**, ed by Dr Hamidullah, Urdu trans. Noor Ilahi Advocate, New Delhi: Milli Publication, 2013.

This book Sīrah Ibn Ishaq is written by Ibn Ishaq, but unfortunately we do not have the original book of Ibn Ishaq but in the form of Ibn Hisham, but Ibn Hisham has omitted many things from the book, which after thirteen hundred years Hamidullah after his painstaking research from different libraries of the world finds the omitted things which Ibn Hisham omitted when he compiled the *Sīrat Rasul Allah*. Hamidullah worked hard to find it then edited it and compiled it in a book form. Now we have a complete book of Ibn Ishaq in the form of Ibn Hisham and Hamiduulah.¹³

c. Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Waqidi, **The Life of Muhammad (Kitab al-Maghazi)**, ed. By Rizwi Faizer, trans. Rizwi Faizer, Asma Ismail and Abdul Kadir Tayob, London: Routledge, 2011.

¹⁰ Hamadeh Muhammad Maher, *Muhammad the Prophet: A Selected Bibliography*, U.P., PhD. Thesis (The University of Michigan: Library Science 1965), 12.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 16.

¹² *Ibid*, 12.

¹³ Muhammad Bin Ishaq Bin Yasar, *Sirat ibn Ishaq*, ed. Dr Hamidullah, trans. Noor Ilahi Advocate (New Delhi: Milli Publication, 2013) Cover page..

The work deals with the socio-political aspect of the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). It reports the events of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) from the time of *hijrah*. Bringing together events the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) especially his campaigns (*ghazwat*), with appropriate passages of the Qur'an in a well thought sequence, the author presents an interpretation of Islam that exist in his times. It includes citation from the Qur'an, as well as poetry that appears to have been inspired by activities during his life. Recently Rizwi Faizer, an independent scholar, formerly of McGill University, has edited it and rendered it the first time in English as the life of Muhammad: Al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi.

Besides Ibn Ishaq, Waqidi made use of all sources that were in many ways attainable and offered a great deal which is not to be found in Ibn Ishaq at all. In comparison with Ibn Ishaq al-Waqidi shows little taste for poetry. On the contrary he had a great talent for chronology, the systematic treatment of which goes back to Waqidi.¹⁴

d. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, **Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk**, New York; State University Press, 1988, vol. 40.

Tabari (d.921 A.C) is one of the earliest and most prominent historian and exegete of Qu'ran.¹⁵ The book discussed universal history and takes up Muhammad's biography as a part of this history; it is basis of all historical books which came afterward. The author includes many details from former authors whose books were lost. This work has been translated by many authors in English and is of forty volume book in English. Volume 6 to 9 of this historical work deals with the Sīrah of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS).

Volume 6 and vol 7, which has been translated and annotated by W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald. The 6th volume deals with the ancestors of prophet Muhammad, with his own life, and then with his Prophetic mission up to the time of *hijrah* (migration). The 7th volume deals with the history of the Islamic community at Medina during the first four years of the Islamic period. The main events recounted by Tabari are the battles between Muhammad's supporters in Medina and their adversaries in Makah. He also discussed the rivalries and infighting among Muhammad's early supporters, including their early relations with the Jewish community in Medina.

Volume 8 of the book has been translated by Michael Fishbein. This volume covers the history of the Muslim community and the biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) in the middle Medina years. It begins with the unsuccessful last Makkan attack on Medina, known as battle of trench. In this volume discussion was laid on treaty of Hdaybia, and was followed by a series of Muslim expeditions, climaxing in the important conquest of Khaybar. Letters to six different rulers inviting them to accept Islam. Conquest of Makah was also discussed in this volume and the

¹⁴ His other works are, he is the first to write a book on the *Tabaqat* (classes), by which the biographies of the eminent people are arranged according to the generation. This work was lost, but a great portion of it is found in Ibn Sa'd's *Tabaqat*. He wrote many books on the conquest of Syria, Iraq and other countries, and we find a great deal of them in Baladhuri and Tabari's writings.

¹⁵ He wrote Tafsir i Qur'an, *Al-Jami 'li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, commonly known as *Tafsir al-Tabari*.

lenient treatment of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) towards Makkan people was discussed in this volume. Two person events of Prophetic personal life was also discussed which caused controversies in the community (marriage of Zaynab bint jahsh, and accession against 'Aishah).

Volume 9 of this work has been translated and annotated by Ismail K. Poonawala, this volume deals with the last and a half year of the Prophet's life. In addition to the three major expeditions to Hunayn, Taif and Tabuk, it describes in detail the circumstances surrounding the illness from which Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) died and the subsequent crises of leadership faces by the emerging Muslim community.

- e. Muhammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Shaybani, **Kitab Al-Siyar Al-Saghir: The Shorter Book on Muslim International Law**, trans. and ed. By Mahmud Ahmad Ghazi, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1998.

The book on Muslim International law was originally composed by Allamah Shaybani (750-805 C.E.) between 767 and 773 C.E. This book has been translated by Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi (1950-2010 C.E.) the book was first published in English in 1998 C.E., published by the Islamic Research Institute of the international Islamic University, Islamabad. The present book is of nine chapters and the book deals with the issues related to conduct of war and international law, and its arguments are derived from the socio-political life of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). Translator dedicated this book to Dr. Hammadullah¹⁶

- f. Ismail bin 'Amr bin Kathir, **Sirat al-Nabawwiyah (The Life of Prophet Muhammad)**, trans. Trevor Le Gassick, revised by Dr Muneer fareed, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2006, vol's V.

The book is a part of the great historical work of Ibn Kathir's (d.774 A.H.), '*Al-Bidayawa al-Nihaya*'. This biographic work is same as founded in *al-Bidayah*. Nevertheless, 'Abd al-Wahid must be commended for the task of editing and publishing this particular section as an independent unit and titled it *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Kathir*. In this biographical work Ibn Kathir brings methods of *Muhaddith* (the scholar of hadith tradition) more assiduously than he does that of the traditional historian. He gave the very extensive usage of hadith material in this particular work. Therefore, in this work Ibn kathir's method is more that of the hadith scholar that that of historian.

This work has been translated into English by professor Trevor le gassick and reviewed by Dr Ahmad Fareed. The present work is a 4 volume book. The 1st volume deals with the political and social conditions of Jahaliya Arabia, ancestors of prophet Muhammad, with his own life, and then with his Prophetic mission up to the time of migration to Ethopia. In volume 2nd of the book, the discussion has been laid on the persecution of Makkan, spread of Islam to Yathrib, Journey of Taif, migration to Medina and on the first two years of Medinan period such as brotherhood, military

¹⁶ Ghazi dedicated this book to Dr. Mohammad Hamidullah Parsi, considered him the Shaybani of twentieth century. He remodified the international law of Islam in the context of the present century. So Ghazi dedicated the book of 8th century Shaybani to the twentieth century Shaybani.

expeditions and battle of Badr etc. up to 2 A.H. Third volume of the work deals with the events that took place from 3 A.H up to the 8 A.H, such as battle of Uhad, Battle of Trench, treaty of Hudabiya, letters to the rulers and fath-i- Makkah. In the fourth volume of this book Ibn kathir discussed the expedition to Tabuk , account of masjid al-Dirar, delegations that came to Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), farewell pilgrimage and address of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and finally his demise.

CONCLUSION

Thus the tradition of Sīrah writing goes back to the first half of the first century Hijrah and has continued apace ever since. As a result, we have a rich accumulation of writing on life of the prophet (SAAS) in different languages, particularly Arabic, English, and Urdu.

The tradition of Sīrah writing goes back to the very generation of companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). The very first Sīrah works that appeared distinct from the hadith works, however, did not deal with complete biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), rather they addresses aspects of his socio-political life and organisation of the government during the Medinan period. This aspect of Sīrah writing came to be known in history as Maghazi. Though a bit later when comprehensive biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) were compiled al-Maghazi were also incorporated in the Sīrah works, socio-political aspect of the Prophet's life especially his conduct was entities of his time remained focus of various Sīrah works

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al-Afkar

Journal For Islamic Studies

Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023)

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ISSN Online : 2614-4905



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