

The early stage of muhammads life theology religion essay



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Introduction

Seeking what was really happened in the early stage of Muhammad's life is something that has been nearly impossible to be achieved. Up until now scholars in this field struggled to portray the best picture of Muhammad's early life. Through multiple scrupulous kinds of methodologies, an extensive range of sources and various levels of approaches, the scholars have already produced a well-grounded and appealing thesis showing different points of view. Approaching a mixture of sources, a lot of predicaments need to be sorted. Traces of contradictions in the accounts, sketches of legend, exaggerations in expression and biases were discovered whilst measuring the reliability of the sources. Assessing a source is a hard task to be accomplished and understanding the source is another complicated task. Yet, in the Muslim side, the Quran was undisputedly the sole premier source to develop an accurate outline of Muhammad's life. Setting the Quran as a historical source of Muhammad's life is a stance that has been disputed by numerous scholars in every single angle of different grounds. The most crucial argument lays on the reliability of the text since the earliest manuscript of the Quran was not contemporary to the time of Muhammad's reign, nor it was designed to record a biography or history of a particular person or event. While it was still under rigorous scrutinisation, some scholars believed in its potential to establish basic information about the Prophet of Islam. On the basis of the principle "by their fruits you will know them", William Montgomery Watt positively outlined Muhammad's history, based on the data acquired from the Quran[1], Alfred T. Welch delineated thematic characters of Muhammad, exclusively relying on the verses of the

Quran as its foundation of description[2], while many others have regarded the Quran as an authoritative source to construct the historical Muhammad. Since this chapter was outlined to examine Muslims' understandings, we will leave out the discussion on this matter and shed light on Islamic traditional thought as the focal point. According to traditional Islamic scholarship, Muhammad was absolutely a vessel that conveyed the word of God to humankind. His appearances in the Quran indicate the close relationship between two parties. Muslims believed that the Quran was revealed to Muhammad as a Messenger of God and in some verses his name was clearly pronounced. Direct references to Muhammad were traced; his name was noticeably quoted four times, or five times, if one includes the name of Ahmad, however, none of these verses are directly addressed to Muhammad.

Determining Muḥammad's Reference in the Qur'ān

Progressing researches have lead to us to believe that it is not an easy task to comprehend the appearance of Muhammad through the lens of the Quran. As was mentioned before, the Quran itself was not a book of biography or history. Welch concludes that: " It contains no historical narrative or description, and it does not have as its purpose the recording of history or biography"[3]. The complex nature of its narratives stumble one who ventures to grasp its message[4], the intricate grammatical uses exhort the reader to generate critical analysis to understand the meaning of its text, and the issue of shifting pronounce in various verses situate the ferret in perplexity. For instance Rippin found that, " There are occasions in the Quran in which we might have thought that singular would have been more

appropriate if Muhammad were to be seen as the addressee of the text but yet the plural is used, this also happen the other way around"[5]. In fact, the same problems shadow the Muslim scholars in their way to render the real meaning of the Quran. The opaque and ambiguous wording and structure entails various kinds of interpretations through the centuries. However, there is one thing that has really made the entire knots unravel facilely in order to understand the message in this scripture. It is their faith. In line with their belief, Muslim scholars have already developed an absolute historical life of Muhammad based on the verses couched in the Quran and the prophetic traditions. Even though this method in academics field has been exposed to the state of using the source uncritically, Muslims have put their confidence in the system of " isnad[6]". It is in this system that the biography of Muhammad has been well developed and created the timeline of Muhammad's life. Since the Quran was not redacted in chronological order, the best way to apprehend the traditional Muslim understanding of the references to Muhammad in the Qur'an is by examining the classical sources that were written deliberately to delineate Muḥammad's characters, thought and his deeds. Typically, this sort of document equipped with the qur'ānic reference to Muḥammad in order to portray his appearance, comprehend the grounds of his notion and manifest the close relationship between Muḥammad's life and God's will. There are a lot of books that have been designed with this kind of method and intention, but the most significant source to attain the objective of this research is the book of Prophet biography or " Sīrah". Al-Sīrah literally means " al-Sunnah" (way of acting, norm or tradition), al-Tariqah (way, journey, method, style) or al-Hai'ah (form, shape)[7]. The word has been used in verse 20: 21 of the Quran. In <https://assignbuster.com/the-early-stage-of-muhammads-life-theology-religion-essay/>

early Islam, the word Sirah was not formalised, merely referring to the biography of Muhammad. Observations on the early usage of this particular word in Muslim writings suggest that the word was meant to elaborate the history of a particular figure, tribe or place. The work of 'Awanah Ibn Al-Hakam (d. 147H) should be presented as evidence. Al-Zahabi, wrote a book entitled *Siyar Mu'awiyah wa Bani Umayyah*[8], whereas in the third century, *Sirah Umar Ibn Abd Al-Aziz* was produced by Abu Muhammad Al-Misri[9] and at the same period Abu Al-Fadl composed a biography of his father and called it *Sirah Al-Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*[10]. All this work lead to the conclusion that the word Sirah was not simply referring to Muhammad's biography, it had a wider meaning in the early Islamic era. Martin Hinds had proposed that the biographical material on Muhammad was transmitted during the first two centuries of Islam, exclusively under the name of "Maghāzī", whereas Sīrah was applied only since Ibn Hishām[11]. This idea was then argued by Maher Jarrar, stating that the Prophet's biography was already called Sīrah by al-Zuhrī[12]. In general, Sirah is an independent source of information about the Prophet that confirms what is revealed in the Qur'an. The biography of Muḥammad was the central theme of al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah, the materials of its sources were heterogeneous, which is encompassing an assortment of the Quran's verses, prophetic traditions, Arabic poetry, written documents and later on, the traditional Muslims included most of the theological sources produced by early scholars that can be related to the Prophet[13]. For Muslims, the death of their Prophet could be considered as a kick-start to an active works to preserve the stories of their Prophet in order to retain the Prophet's biography substantive in the mind of the coming generations. Most of them will not be negligent to edify

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and equip their progeny's mind with an adequate knowledge about their beloved Prophet. The ambience of seeking information about Muhammad's life was recorded by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi. He narrated the story of Ibn Uqail who visited Jabir Ibn Abdullah; one of the eminent Prophet's companions asked him about Sirah of the Prophet and then wrote it down[14]. Ibn Kathir recounted words of Ali Ibn Al-Hussain that seemed to support the portrayal of this phenomenon. He said that " We were learning the Maghazi (the stories of Prophet's wars) just like we learnt the Quran"[15]. This process of knowledge transfer has been done in form of verbal transmission since there is a lack of equipment to record the memoirs. The Arabs reliance on memorisation, contributes to the scant of recorded materials. Only a few of them have a capacity to work on a documentation process. Aware of the importance to preserve the Prophet's biography, Muslims start to collect the oral traditions pertaining to the Prophet's life. The project commenced with a major effort to assemble and conserve all traditions that cast a light on every single angle of Muhammad's life. However, it is uncertain when the first book of Muhammad's biography was written but some distinguished historians have accommodated to us the names of several first-century worthies who had written notes and passed on their knowledge to the rising generations. The most widely used sources for the life of Muḥammad date from the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Islamic era. Among these, the most highly respected is the Sīrah of Ibn Ishāq (151H/762), which is not extant in its original form, but has been preserved in at least two recensions, one by Ibn Hishām that is widely used, and another by Yūnus b. Bukayr that exists only in manuscript form[16]. Under the tutelage of the 'Abbāsīd caliph Al-Manṣūr, Ibn Ishāq collected accessible traditions that formed the basis of the most important

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biography of the Prophet. His work has been recognised as the earliest and most significant book on the Prophet biography and is commonly known as the *Sīrah Ibn Ishāq*. Differed with the commentator's methodology, Ibn Ishāq assembles all the data related to the Prophet's life including all verses referred to him in the Qur'ān and redacted it. The Qur'ān's allusion to the events of Muhammad's life will be provided in a general context and obviously not every event of his life will be supported with the Qur'ānic verses. According to Fārūq Hammadah[17], there are various factors that make Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrah* remain as the most prominent sources for Muḥammad's biography, including; He was among the earliest authors that redacted his account of tradition (ḥadīth) in chronological order like annals. In the second century of Islamic era, most of the Muslim scholars usually arranged their books according to the book of jurisprudence order, like Mālik ibn Anas his notable contemporaries did in his *Muwatta'*. The new arrangement initiated by him makes revision work easy. Ibn Ishāq collected a range of reports without being too strict on selecting the status of narrated traditions. Without being too selective in accepting the Prophet traditions, his work became the most completed book, casting light on Prophet Biography. Ibn Ishāq includes much material that is not prophetic traditions. His book consists of Maghazi literature (another genre of Islamic historical writing which focuses mainly on the battles of Muḥammad's life) and poetry, an Arab tradition dating back to the pre Islamic period. He also encloses material gathered from Jewish sources, known as the *Isra'iliyat*, especially when dealing with the period before Muḥammad. However, the traditional materials collected by him do not always meet the criteria for " authentic" ḥadīth[18]. For this reason, the value of his work is somewhat compromised

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by the fact that some of his notable contemporaries like Mālik ibn Anas and Hisyām ibn 'Urwah questioned the credibility of his reports. He was a major scholar in Sīrah and he was recognized by some of the most important early Islamic figures. He has been praised for his knowledge in Sīrah and Maghāzī by scholars like Al-Zuhrī and Al-Shāfi'ī. Al-Zuhrī portrayed him as " Knowledge will remain in Medina as long as Ibn Ishāq lives". Al- Shāfi'ī described him as " He who wants to study al Maghazi deeply must consult Ibn Ishāq". According to Ahmad ibn Hanbal he is " Excellent in tradition"[19]. Ibn Ishāq's work represents the most momentous reports of classical Muslim generation. He was not just collecting all the data pertaining to the Prophet's life, at times, he also makes a reference to Qur'ānic verses to allow us to see the state of his mind. All the Quranic references made by him regarding Muhammad's life before entering the prophetic office will be of central discourse of this study. Another prophet biography book that will be employed to assist us in understanding Muḥammad's references in the Qur'ān is a Sirah works written by Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Al-Salihi Al-Shami (942H). He was a great pupil of Al-Imam Al-Suyuti, an eminent scholar in his century. Originated from Damascus, he then travelled to Al-Barquqiyyah one of the regions in Egypt. Known as a great compiler of Sirah's work, some scholars have publicly uttered their recognition of him. Attesting his mastery in Sirah, Al-' Imad quoted Al-Sya'rani words saying that: " He was a great scholar in multiple fields, he composed Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah and compiled the information from thousands of books, people were greatly appreciated his works and in his work, he invented something that have never been done before"[20]. Al-' Imad also depicted his characters in general; he portrayed Al-Salihi as love to help the orphans, pious and celibate. While describing his

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attitude with the authority, Al-' Imad said: " He would not accept any funds from governors or his agents, he would never consume any food from them"[21]. His Sirah work entitled as " Subul Al-Huda wa Al-Rashad Fi Sirah Khair Al-' Ibad which means " Ways of Guidance and Prudence in (learning) The Biography of the Great Servant". The book was greatly appreciated by the Muslim world; it was selected by the Supreme Council of Islamic Affair (one of the institutions affiliated to the Egyptian Ministry of Al-Awqaf) to be published by the Council in order to rejuvenate the classical Muslim legacy. Based on the manuscripts acquired from San'a Library, the task of editing and elucidation of references was lead by Sheikh ' Abd Al-Wahhab ' Abd Al-Latif and Dr. Mustafa Abd Al-Wahid. His book has been praised by Muslim experts including Haji Khalifah[22]and Ahmad Ibn Zaini Dahlan[23]. While describing his method of writing in the introduction, Al-Salihi explains that " This book was been composed by selecting information from more than three hundred books, I have made thorough inspection and loads in it only the true fact". He then articulates the scope of topics that he covered in this book. To make sure that all the facts that he used were in line with the Isnad system and that there was no ambiguous information, he demonstrates his style of writing by saying; " I have never put in this book the fabricated traditions (al-Maudu'at), at the end of every chapter, I concluded any confusing facts with a lucid enlightenment together with affixing the novel significance findings. All the vague words will be clarified, and any traditions or narrations that seems contradict each other will be illuminated"[24]. It is hard to deny that Ibn Ishaq and Al-Salihi were leading scholars in this field. Their books have been referred to by thousands of people in the world. Since these books were greatly accepted by the Muslim community, it could be a

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representative of Muslim thought of Muhammad's life in the Quran. In order to explore the Muslim understanding of Muhammad's references in the Qur'an, all verses employed by both of them in their work will be isolated and scrutinized in order to get the best picture of Muslim thought regarding this particular subject. Each verse will be viewed through the lens of Muslim exegetical work as a venture to get a wider picture of how the verse has been understood by Muslims.

The Prophet's Genealogy

One of the most important parts in learning the life of Muhammad is his genealogy. It is not an exaggeration to say that almost all of Muhammad's biography books commence their discussion by introducing his lineage, including Ibn Ishaq and Al-Salihi. It shows that Muslims believe that the final Prophet was elected from the noblest lineage of ancestry. According to Muslim sources, his progenitor line can be traced up to Abraham, even though the reliability of the fact has been disputed[25]. This notion is believed to have been developed by the immense number of prophetic traditions that were equipped with the embellishment of the Prophet's genealogy[26]. The traditions transmitted by Muslim ibn Hajjaj could be one of the witnesses. In the chapter of "The Merit of Prophet genealogy", he recorded a narration that elucidates the Prophet lineage, the Prophet said "Allah chose Ishmael from the children of Abraham and from the children of Ishmael He chose the children of Kinānah, then from the children of Kinānah Allah chose the Quraysh and chose the children of Hashim from the Quraish, then Allah chose me from the children of Hāshim"[27]. While his master, al-Bukhārī, has provided another tradition in this particular subject. Articulating

in his al-Sahīh, Muhammad is said to have been born into the noblest family of the noblest clan (Banī Hāsyim), of the noblest tribe (Quraysh)[28]. So as to support the nobility of the Prophet's genealogy, verses of the Quran have been utilized to establish a solid value. Al-Salihi mentioned verse 26: 219 in the chapter of " The purity of his origin[29]" while Ibn Ishaq did not make any reference to the Quran. Chronologically, Abu Nu'aym Al-Asbahānī[30]seems to be the earliest Muslim historians' connected the Quran's verse with this particular subject. He quoted the interpretation of Ibn Abbās referring to the verse 26: 219 of the Quran that says " and when thou turnest about among those who bow". According to Ibn Abbās, this verse refers to the Prophet's movement or cycle in the lineage of the Prophets before him[31]. Analyzing Ibn Abbās's interpretation, the word " taqallubaka" (your turn or movement) and " as-sājīdīn" (those who bow or prostrate) cannot be understood in a literal explanation. It should be grasped in light of semantic annotation. It is hard to find this verse being quoted in reference to the Prophet's genealogy in the early Muslim's biographies of Muhammad[32]. From a literal point of view, this verse does not actually have any direct function to express the status of the Prophet's lineage. The surface meaning of the verse appeared to be too wide to related to this particular subject. It seems that the general context of this passage appears to be an order and guidance from God to Muhammad to deliver his message to his family members. To make a clear picture, the verse started with an order to Muhammad to admonish his family: " And warn thy clan, thy nearest kin. Lower thy wing to those who follow thee, being believers; then, if they disobey thee, say, 'I am quit of that you do. Put thy trust in the All-mighty, the All-compassionate who sees thee when thou standest and when thou turnest about among those who bow.

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Surely He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing[33]". The whole passage is vivid and coherently connected. The main message seems to be a command for Muhammad to reprimand his kin with a courteous manner; if they did not accept it, he had been asked to remind them that he is disassociated with all the wrongdoers had committed and God ask Muhammad to put his trust in God because He always monitors his messengers. Apparently, this is the general meaning of the passage. It seems that the words were not intended to illustrate the purity of Muhammad's lineage. It was the interpretation of Ibn Abbās that initiated the connection between this verse and the state of Prophet's pedigree. Reviewing the exegetical commentary carried out by Muslim scholars in the second century of Islam, none of them have mentioned this kind of interpretation even though they were the closest generation to the Prophet[34]. Most of them were the prominent pupils of Prophet's companion and they learned the Quran in a straight line from the companions. Strangely, none of them have connected this verse with the status of the Prophet's lineage including Mujāhid ibn Jabr, the famous disciple of Ibn Abbās itself. While the other commentaries produced by other scholars in this century did not encompass this verse in their works such as Al-Dahhāk[35], Al-Suddī[36]and Ibn Jurayj[37]. According to Mujāhid, this verse conveys two meanings[38]; the first one is that the verse exposes the circumstances of the Prophet in his prayer with the believers; the word " taqallubaka" ' means his movement in the prayers' and the word " al-sājidīn" (prostrate) should be understood as " al-Musallīn" (the one who perform a prayer). In general, the meaning of this verse nicely correlates with the previous verses which is by enlarge the meaning is " And rely upon the Exalted in Might, the Merciful, Who sees you when you arise and your

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movement among those who prostrate". The second meaning was a bit stranger than the first one. Mujāhid said that the verse could be interpreted as " the Prophet could see everyone who's performing a prayer behind him"[39]. In any case, both interpretations did not make any connection with the nobility of the Prophet's lineage. The same understanding has been indicated by Sufyān al-Thaurī dan Muqātil ibn Sulaymān in their exegetical commentaries. Both of them believed that this verse actually refers to the appearance of Prophet's movements in his prayer with the believers[40]. Yahya ibn Salām and Al-San'ānī[41], the scholars of the third century of Islam also expressed a similar interpretation. Yahya did not just illuminate the meanings; he also coupled his explanation with the Prophet's tradition to support his interpretation[42]. It is worth noting that, even al-Tabarī, the one who is greatly known as the compiler of the prevailed traditions was not attaching the verse with status of Prophet's lineage as well[43]. The initial exegetical interpretation that ties this verse with the Prophet's genealogy can be traced in Ibn Abī Hātim's works[44]. He articulates three different interpretations by providing every single opinion with prophetic traditions. The first interpretation shows that this verse clearly illustrates the Prophet's connection with the previous prophets. By adducing the prophetic traditions narrated by Ibn Abbās, the notion appears to seem sound. Ibn Abbās said that the meaning of the verse is " from prophet to prophet until you have been turned as a prophet". Another tradition that also reported from Ibn Abbās informs: " Still the Prophet was remained moving in the back bone of prophets until his mother bore him"[45]. Ibn Abī Hātim was not the only scholar of the fourth century of Islam that brought this novel idea; it has also been transmitted by Abu Al-Layth Al-Samarqandī. Without quoting any <https://assignbuster.com/the-early-stage-of-muhammads-life-theology-religion-essay/>

prophetic tradition, Al-Samarqandī confirms that this verse means " your movement in the back bones of the fathers and in the wombs of the mothers, from Adam to Noah, until Abraham and the prophets after him may God's peace upon them"[46]. This notion was then been transmitted to other scholars of the next centuries, encompassing not only exegetical works but including the Prophet's biographies account as well[47]. Even though the major idea originated from Ibn Abbās, it's sparks curiosity as the narration only appears to be recorded in the fourth century of Islam. The eminent exegetical references of the early Islamic era did not quote this narration and Al-Tabarī was not excluded. By attributing the narration with Ibn Abbās and his disciple ' Ata', it seems to be very sound. Analyzing its chain of narrator, there's look like having no obvious dubiety. Examining each of its transmitters, people may realise that one of his narrators was unable to be recognised. According to Ibn Abī Hātim[48], ' Ata' narrated this tradition to his pupil named Sa'īd, whilst most of the others scholars believed that it was Sa'dān ibn al-Walīd[49]. Even if we take the opinion of the majority that states most of them quoted Sa'dān ibn Al-Walīd as the real transmitter from ' Ata', it will raise another problem. Sa'dān ibn Al-Walīd was been labeled as " Majhul" (unknown) by the scholars of biographical evaluation (ilm al-rijāl) [50]. So, in terms of the traditions status, it seems that this tradition or narration cannot be easily used as to support our interpretation of the Quran's verses. To enhance our understanding of the Quran, one should provide an authentic fact that could be used as a tool for us to better understand the Quran. Yet another point to ponder is why should this connection begin at the early phase of the fourth century of Islam. The first Quran's commentary references mentioned this interpretation was Tafsīr Ibn <https://assignbuster.com/the-early-stage-of-muhammads-life-theology-religion-essay/>

Abī Hātim while Abu Nu'aym Al-Asbahānī represents the first Sīrah's collections that associates this verse with the Prophet's lineage. It is quite obvious that there is no other scholar before them has referred this verse to the Muhammad's lineage. It seems like the reference made by the later scholars was part of theological development gradually growing in the Muslim understanding of the Quran.

The Luminous Child

One of the most prevalent themes in the Quran is the light. Light is always representing an emblem of the truth, God's guidance, features of Islam and faith. The Quran itself was not only characterised as guidance for mankind (2: 185), it is also manifested as a light (4: 174). There is a particular chapter named " the light" in the Quran. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet himself named this chapter as chapter of the light[51]. Furthermore, in this chapter, the Quran attributes God as a light. It says that " Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth". Standing as evidence of truth, the miracle of other Prophets was also presented in this kind of nature. God has embellished Moses with nine miracles (27: 12) and one of them is his hand, which was appeared in white (luminous) (20: 22)[52]. Muhammad was not excluded from this luminous theme as well. Even though there is no obvious verse elucidating Muhammad as a light, some interpretations of the Quran maintain that the word light in the Quran alludes to Muhammad. In 5: 15, the Quran says " O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book". The word light at the end of this verse was interpreted as

Muhammad by many of Muslim commentator in their exegetical works[53]. And in another passage (7: 157), the Quran confirms that Muhammad was equipped with the light from God, it says that " Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him it is those who will be the successful". In Sirah's tradition, the light also serves as a symbol of Muhammad's prophetic signs. This concept was illustrated in a very extensive scope. He was depicted as a figure without a shadow even in the radiance of sunlight or in the illumination of the moon[54]. Confirming this notion, Al-Nasafi provides prophetic tradition in order to support the concept of the Prophet who does not possess a shadow. He narrated on the authority of Uthman saying that " Allah did not put the Prophet's shadow on the Earth in case someone trod upon it[55]". One of the most famous stories during the birth of Muhammad is that he was born with a light. Recorded by many of Muslim biographers in various versions, Muhammad's mother is believed to said: " When he was born, there was a light that issued out of my pudendum and lit the palaces of Busra in Syria"[56]. While according to the mother of Uthman ibn Al-Ash, who witnessed the event, the light over shone everything until she could not see anything except light[57]. Examining this story, one would realise that this story was not actually narrated by Ibn Ishaq in visualizing the condition of Muhammad's birth[58]. In fact, the story actually came in his Sirah as a part of explaining his mother's vision when <https://assignbuster.com/the-early-stage-of-muhammads-life-theology-religion-essay/>

she conceived Muhammad[59]. Ibn Ishaq then recounted it again when describing the event of the opening of Muhammad's chest. There is no detailed narration about the condition of his birth relating to the light recorded in the chapter of his birth in Ibn Ishaq's works. Drawing on the situation of Muhammad's birth, Ibn Ishaq was only mentioned a few particulars regarding to the date, place where he was born and a story about a Jew who witnessed a star that he believed was a sign of a becoming prophet. Subsequently, he added the chapter with an extra enlightenment about what his mother and his grandfather did after he was born. Then the stories end up with a discussion about his suckling period. In contrast with his predecessor, Ibn Saad clearly locates this story in the chapter of the Prophet birth[60]. He recorded five difference versions of traditions referring to the light that accompanied the birth of Muhammad. A similar step was taken by Al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir. Both of them have engraved this luminous theme of stories in their significant works[61]. It appears that, none of these scholars have attached any verse from the Quran to support this remarkable event. The story solely relied on the traditions narrated by the early Muslim generation. As far as my observation has extended, Al-Salihi was the first biographer of Muhammad who employed verse from the Quran to establish a fundamental connection with this story[62]. He said: " and the light that accompanied the birth of the Prophet is a sign of what he brings together with him which is a light of guidance that will be a pathfinder for the people of the earth and expunge the darkness of polytheism. As what the God says " There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book. By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkneses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a

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straight path" (5: 15-16). Clearly the central discussion conferred in this passage is the light that associates Muhammad's birth. By stating the Quran's verse, Al-Salihi appears to suggest that the word light in the verse refers to the event and should be interpreted in this context. This novel connection and unmarked construal was actually preceded by Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali[63]. In the 14th century, he wrote a book entitled "The Subtleties of Learning Concerning the Devotions of Various Seasons". The book was intended to elucidate the virtues and devotions that should be practiced by submissive Muslims at every specific time. While discussing the rituals of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, he commenced the chapter by articulating the observance of the Prophet's birth (Mawlid)[64] and in order to prove the prophecy of Muhammad, Ibn Rajab provided an extensive range of prophetic traditions including the story of the light by quoting the tradition narrated by Ibn Ishaq. It is in this passage that he initially linked the story with verse 5: 15 of the Quran[65]. Even though this idea was initially proposed by Ibn Rajab, it seems that the notion was not widely circulated in the field of Sirah scholarship until it was then quoted by Al-Qastalani in his Al-Mawahib[66]. Al-Salihi then brings it in his work using his own words without citing from any other scholar's words as quotation (though there was a probability that he had been influenced by Ibn Rajab's thought). It seems like the idea was penetrated the sphere of Sirah's discourse in the 16th century since both of them (Al-Salihi and Al-Qastalani) lived in the same era. To have a better view of Muslim understanding towards this verse, Muslim exegetical works are something that must be scrutinised. As it is hard to be found in Sirah's work, the connection between this phenomenal event and the verse 5: 15 of the Quran was never mentioned in the early Muslim's commentary of the Quran.

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Commentators of the second century of Islam have never rendered the verse to be part of this event, and on top of that, the word "light" in this verse has never been interpreted as Muhammad. Muqatil as for instance, was just illustrates the meaning of the word literally without proposing any allegorical interpretation. The word light was translated literally as "Diya" (which means shine or luminosity)[67]and it seems that the word has nothing to do with any veiled meaning. The same phenomena engulfed the third century of Islam. Al-San'ani and Al-Tustari did not even interpret the verse in their works, suggesting that the meaning of the verse was well understood and it did not even need an interpretation[68]. When it came to the fourth century, there was a theological development detected in the Muslim's exegetical works. Al-Tabari starts by alluding this word to be interpreted as "the light which is came with Muhammad[69]" whereas Ibn Abi Zamanain suggested that the word should be interpreted as the Quran[70]. Without quoting a word from the earlier scholars, this commentary seems to be purely sparked from their own frugal mind. As time goes by, the initial literal thought on this word evolved gradually to the theological interpretation. The word light was constantly being interpreted either as Muhammad or the Quran and after almost three centuries it was conceived in a denotative point of view. Commenced by Al-Tabari, Al-Tha'labi follows the step by delivering the same meaning in his Tafsir[71]. Al-Baghawi[72], and Al-Razi[73]confirm that the word refers to Muhammad, while Al-Zamakhshari[74]and Ibn Kathir[75]prefer it to be translated as the Quran. As far as my investigation is concerned, none of the Muslim commentators of the Quran have attached their understanding of this word or verse to the famous event of the luminous birth of Muhammad. Most of them have interpreted this verse in its Quranic

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context without connecting the verse to any particular event. While examining the usage of this particular tradition in the Muslim commentaries of the Quran, I found that one similar tradition has been mentioned in various chapters. This tradition was also narrated by Ibn Ishaq in a longer version. According to him, some of Muhammad's companions asked him to tell them about himself. He said: " I am what Abraham my father prayed for and the good news of (my brother) Jesus. When my mother was carrying me she saw a light proceeding from her which showed her the castles of Syria"[76]. This tradition has been utilised to render an auxiliary explanation of certain verses in the Quran but none of these verses refer to the occasion of Muhammad's birth. For instance Al-Tabari cited this tradition to elucidate the meaning of " Good tiding of Isa" in 6: 61[77], whilst Ibn Kathir quoted this tradition to articulate the meaning of verse 2: 129 pertaining Abraham's prayer. It is apparent that through my investigation on this verse and its interpretation, all the readings have lead me to conclude that there is no clear reference to the event of Muhammad's birth. As a matter of fact, it is hard to find the early Muslim commentators that interpret the word ' light' in this verse as to refer to Muhammad. Later generations were the ones who developed a new sight of interpretation until it was used by a biographer of Muhammad to establish a connection between this verse and the occasion of Muhammad's birth.