Methodological Critique of *Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā* by Josef Horovitz

Hamed Jokar[1]✉

1. Corresponding author, Department of Islamic Thought, Faculty of Islamic Sciences and Research, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran: jokar@isr.ikiu.ac.ir

Abstract

The present article offers a methodological critique of *Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā* (The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors) by Josef Horovitz, a German orientalist. Regarded as one of the classic and influential works in the field of prophetic biography (Sīrah) historiography within the Western academic tradition, the book systematically examines the earliest transmitters and compilers of Maghāzī literature up to the third century AH. The research employs inductive, analytical, and critical methods, structured around the distinction between external critique (evaluation of sources, chains of transmission, and citation methods) and internal critique (content and conceptual analysis). The findings indicate that the book suffers from several methodological shortcomings, including: reliance on nonspecialized sources such as *Al-Aghānī*, citing isolated reports (*akhbār al-āḥād*) to establish authorship, unwarranted generalizations about the compositional method of all Sīrah works, conceptual errors in defining "Maghāzī" and conflating it with "Sīrah," and the blending of ḥadīth, Sīrah, and tafsīr sources without regard to their differing evaluative criteria. Furthermore, the author's approach in presenting biographical reports is accompanied by unfounded motivereading and moral disparagement of transmitters such as Abān ibn ʿUthmān, al-Zuhrī, Ibn Isḥāq, and al-Wāqidī, often based on isolated quotations or weak sources. Although these findings cannot be generalized to the entirety of German orientalism, the work in question exhibits a selective approach influenced by the presuppositions of earlier orientalists, particularly Goldziher.

Keywords: German Orientalism, Prophetic Biography (Sīrah), Josef Horovitz, Methodological Critique, Sources of Sīrah, Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā

Accepted Article

1. Introduction

The critique of orientalist works on the prophetic biography (Sīrah) is an important topic in contemporary Islamic studies (al-Sibāʿī, n.d., p. 19; al-Ḥamādah, 2010, pp. 14–15; al-Mastū, 1999, p. 68). Since the nineteenth century CE, orientalists have approached Islamic sources with historical-critical methods (al-Dūrī, 2005, p. 10; al-Sayyid, 2016, p. 35), and many have challenged their authenticity, validity, and antiquity (Goldziher, 1971, vol. 1, pp. 10, 18; 1977, p. 14; Crone & Cook, 1977). Among these works, Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā by Josef Horovitz (1874–1931), a German orientalist of Jewish origin, holds a distinguished position. Drawing on poetic, biographical (rijālī), historical, and literary sources, it examines the transmitters and authors of the earliest Maghāzī, from the Successors (al-Tābiʿīn) to Ibn Saʿd (d. 230 AH), clarifying the role of each of the thirteen earliest compilers.

Despite its fame and frequent citation in Western academia (al-Muṭayrī, 2010, vol. 2, p. 55; 2010, pp. 201–203), the book has not been evaluated independently and comprehensively from a methodological perspective that distinguishes external critique (source criticism, isnād criticism, comprehensiveness of sources) from internal critique (analysis of concepts, content, and arguments). Most studies of Horovitz focus on his theory of the origin of the isnād and its comparison with Jewish oral tradition, while the book's treatment of the earliest Sīrah writers has been neglected.

Some scholars consider German orientalism more moderate, objective, and less biased than French and English orientalism (al-Sayyid, 2016, pp. 45–47). Preliminary investigation shows, however, that Horovitz's book suffers from methodological and content-related shortcomings. It therefore deserves a systematic examination based on criteria accepted in Islamic studies and historiography, to give a more realistic picture of the German orientalist approach to the Sīrah and its sources.

The central questions are: What methodological and content-related shortcomings does the book have? And to what extent is Horovitz's approach consistent with the principles of impartial scientific research? They are pursued through a systematic, inductive examination of his cited sources, methods of argumentation, key concepts, and analytical propositions.

2. Review of Literature

Kāvand (2022), in "Critical Analysis of Orientalists' Views on the Fabrication of Isnāds of Prophetic Ḥadīth (Case Study: The Views of Horovitz, Robson, and Schacht)," concludes that Horovitz's claim of three sources for the words and deeds of the Prophet (peace be upon him) (ḥadīth, Sīrah, and tafsīr), and his treatment of ḥadīth and Sīrah as separate sources, is unacceptable. The article also critiques Schacht's "backward-growing isnād" theory, tracing the demand for isnād to the era of the Companions, and finds the orientalists' critique of isnāds unsupported scientifically and logically.

Gholāmʿ Alī Nadī (2014), in "The Origin of Isnād in Islamic Traditions and Jewish Oral Tradition: A Critique of Horovitz's Articles on the Subject of Isnād," rejects Horovitz's view that the ḥadīth isnād was adapted from Jewish oral tradition, arguing: transmitting with isnād is a rational practice not specific to any people or religion; Horovitz did not distinguish "isnād" (systematic isnād-giving) from "isnāds present in traditions"; and the Jewish evidence is incomplete and incomparable with the coherent Islamic isnād system, in which Muslims took pride as a distinctive feature of their community.

Previous studies thus focus on the origin of the isnād, while the book's treatment of the earliest Sīrah writers has not been subjected to comprehensive methodological critique. A systematic

Accepted Article

critique based on the distinction between external and internal critique is the main innovation of the present article.

3. Research Method

An inductive method was first employed, followed by analytical and critical methods: the contents of Horovitz's book were traced to extract his main views and the features of his method, then examined, evaluated, and categorized. The article is organized around two axes of methodological critique:

External critique: evaluation of sources and documents, including weak source criticism, isnād-related errors, reliance on isolated reports (khabar al-wāḥid) to prove claims, and neglect of the comprehensiveness of Sīrah sources.

Internal critique: content and conceptual analysis, including conceptual errors in defining Maghāzī, conflating ḥadīth and tafsīr sources, motive-reading, and disparagement of transmitters such as al-Zuhrī, Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Hishām, and al-Wāqidī.

Before the critique, Horovitz's views are reconstructed without initial judgment, so that a fair assessment is possible.

4. Part One: Introduction of the Author and the Book

4.1. Introduction of the Author

Josef Horovitz, a German orientalist of Jewish origin, was born in 1874. He studied Semitic languages and Islamic studies at the universities of Berlin and Bonn, and from 1914 CE until his death in 1931 taught Semitic languages at the University of Frankfurt. From its founding in 1925 CE, he directed the Oriental Studies section at the Hebrew University and sat on its board of governors. In 1898 CE he received his doctorate with a dissertation on al-Wāqidī's Al-Maghāzī. His works include an edition of two volumes of Ibn Saʿd's Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā on the Maghāzī of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him); Qurʾānic studies; Hāshimiyyāt of al-Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadī; and Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā (al-Badawī, 1993, p. 621; al-Zaynī 2011, pp. 109–110), which, despite its fame, Badawī omitted from his list of Horovitz's works (al-Badawī, 1993, p. 621).

4.2. Introduction of the Book

The book's cover title is Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā; Ḥusayn al-Naṣṣār translated it into Arabic. al-Naṣṣār explains that while writing his master's thesis, "The Emergence of Writing in Arabic Literature," he found the book frequently cited. The original is a collection of articles Horovitz published in the journal Al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmiyyah, issued in English in Hyderabad, India, in 1927 and 1928 CE. The book has four chapters, subtitled with the names of the earliest transmitters and compilers.

The book is a classic, influential work of Islamic historiography and the first comprehensive study in the modern European academic tradition to examine, using available sources, the formation of the Sīrah from the Successors to Ibn Saʿd in the third century AH. Horovitz examines thirteen of the earliest transmitters and compilers and clarifies each one's role. Its four chapters cover the Successors, the earliest Medinan transmitters, the first students of al-Zuhrī, and the early Abbasid era.

5. Part Two: Reconstruction of Horovitz's Views in Al-Maghāzī

Accepted Article

Before the methodological critique, Horovitz's views, hypotheses, contexts, arguments, and evidence on the formation of the Sīrah and its earliest writers are explained without initial judgment.

5.1. Definition of Maghāzī and Its Relation to Sīrah

Throughout the book, Horovitz deliberately uses "Maghāzī" instead of "Sīrah." He states that Maghāzī means battles and should be restricted to the military actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions, although it is generally applied to the entire Sīrah (Horovitz, 1949, p. 2). In practice, however, he extends it to works not directly related to battles. Discussing Wahb ibn Munabbih, he lists writings such as Isrāʾīliyyāt, Aḥādīth al-Anbiyāʾ, Kitāb al-Mulūk min Ḥimyar wa Akhbāruhum, and Futūḥ and Qadar, and says that if Maghāzī is taken in its general early-Islamic sense, these writings fall within the scope of the research, because they serve as an entry point to the Sīrah (Horovitz, 1949, p. 34).

5.2. Sources of the Words and Deeds of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Horovitz holds that Arabic literature has three domains that are sources of the words and deeds of the Prophet (peace be upon him): books of ḥadīth, Sīrah, and tafsīr (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1). Sīrah books, he says, arrange traditions according to the years of the events the ḥadīths refer to (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1).

5.3. View on the Companions and the Beginning of Sīrah Compilation

Following Goldziher, Horovitz claims that the content of the ḥadīths of some Companions recorded in scrolls (ṣaḥīfahs) and books is doubtful in authenticity and value (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1). He holds that the compilation of the Sunnah and Sīrah began with the Successors: "People in the generation after the Companions, that is, the generation of the Successors, began to collect the reports of his words and deeds that were widespread in their era" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 2).

5.4. Method of Composing Sīrah Books

Horovitz believes Sīrah books arrange traditions by year of occurrence, which distinguishes them from ḥadīth books (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1), and attributes differences among Sīrah authors to their personalities and inclinations and to their differing criteria for examining the authenticity of traditions (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1).

5.5. List of the Earliest Maghāzī Writers

In his book, Horovitz names Abān ibn ʿUthmān, ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, Shuraḥbīl ibn Saʿd, Wahb ibn Munabbih, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr, ʿĀṣim ibn ʿUmar, al-Zuhrī, Mūsā ibn ʿUqbah, Maʿmar ibn Rāshid, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, Abū Maʿshar al-Sindī, al-Wāqidī, and Ibn Saʿd as the earliest writers of Maghāzī books (Horovitz, ١٩٤٩, p. ٦).

5.6. Horovitz's Negative Portrayal of the Earliest Sīrah Writers

Horovitz presents a typically negative picture of the earliest Sīrah writers:

Abān ibn ʿUthmān: portrayed as inclined to joking and buffoonery, citing Al-Aghānī (Horovitz, 1949, p. 9).

Wahb ibn Munabbih and his students: Wahb's narrations "grew and multiplied due to the additions of his students, especially by some members of his family, particularly his grandson ʿAbd al-Munʿim" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 31).

Al-Zuhrī: accused of narrating ḥadīth for political purposes and of permitting others to narrate ḥadīths without seeing them (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 50, 65).

Ibn Isḥāq: citing al-Wāqidī, Horovitz reports that "Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq used to sit near the women in the back part of the mosque and spend the night with women" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 76), and implies that his father may have been Christian (Horovitz, 1949, p. 76).

Accepted Article

Ibn Hishām: accused of omitting Sīrah reports out of flattery of the Abbasids (Horovitz, 1949, p. 83).
Al-Wāqidī: accused of literary theft from Ibn Isḥāq and, as a protégé of the Abbasid caliphs, of removing ʿAbbās's name from the list of captives of Badr (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 121, 126).

6. Part Three: External Critique (Source Criticism and Isnād Criticism)

This section examines source criticism, isnād criticism, and the comprehensiveness of Horovitz's sources.

6.1. Reliance on Nonspecialized Sources

Horovitz sometimes cites nonspecialized sources rather than primary ones. A major example in the field of Sīrah is Al-Aghānī by al-Iṣfahānī, which he cites frequently (for example, Horovitz, 1949, pp. 24, 43, 58, 69, 74, etc.). This has sometimes led him to include material unrelated to the subject, such as:
A) Mentioning reports indicating the permissibility of mixing between men and women
Horovitz includes points unconnected to the Maghāzī authors' biographies, especially matters incompatible with their religious ideas. In the biography of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ḥazm, he says: "It is appropriate to mention the method by which Ibn Isḥāq, the student of ʿAbd Allāh, obtained one of these ḥadīths from ʿAmrah, so that the issue of women mixing with men in those days may become clear." He then recounts that ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr instructs his wife to relate to Ibn Isḥāq what she heard from ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Horovitz, 1949, p. 43).
Horovitz apparently aims to show the prevalence of mixing between men and women. Yet the event is simply a woman narrating a prophetic ḥadīth to Ibn Isḥāq in her husband's presence; generalizing it to mixing, which has various meanings and levels, is not correct. Moreover, no narration from Ibn Isḥāq from the wife of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr exists in the books of ḥadīth and Sīrah, and not even her name is mentioned. Rather, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr, son of Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī, narrated from ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, his father's paternal aunt (al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mazzī, 1986, vol. 14, p. 350).
B) The inclination of the people of Medina toward music
Discussing Abān ibn ʿUthmān, Horovitz refers to the Medinans' interest in music: "The inclination and attention of the people of Medina was not limited to religious sciences; rather, they paid great attention to music and poetry." To show that religious scholars were connected with poetry, he cites ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtbah ibn Masʿūd, who fought at Uḥud, quoting from Al-Aghānī poetry apparently about his love for a Hudhayl woman and inviting the six jurists of Medina to witness his interest (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 6–7).
But what Horovitz transmits concerns the Medinans generally, not their religious scholars. Some Medinans considered singing (ghināʾ) permissible, as some Iraqis considered the flute permissible, but this cannot be generalized to scholars, some of whom opposed it. ʿĪsā ibn Isḥāq al-Ṭāʿ, asked about Mālik's view on the permission of ghināʾ by some Medinans, answered: "With us, only the corrupt (fussāq) do such a thing" (al-Bākhū, 2007, p. 17). Mālik also considered the tambourine and musical instruments reprehensible and forbade ghināʾ and listening to it (al-Jawzī, 2000, pp. 204–205).
Al-Dhahabī says: "Whoever follows the permissions of the schools and the slips of the mujtahids, his religion becomes weak, as al-Awrāqī or someone else said: Whoever adopts the view of the people of Mecca concerning temporary marriage, ... the view of the people of Medina concerning

Accepted Article

ghināʾ, and the view of the people of Syria concerning the infallibility of the caliphs, has gathered evil together" (al-Dhahabī, 1993, vol. 8, p. 90).
Attributing to the Medinans a consensus on the permissibility of ghināʾ is therefore incorrect; only some of them held that view.

6.2. Methodological Errors

The author's method shows methodological errors that can lead to imprecise conclusions. The most important are:
A) Relying on a single text to establish authorship in Sīrah
Having identified Abān ibn ʿUthmān as the first Maghāzī compiler, Horovitz relies on a single text to prove he wrote on Maghāzī: "And he was trustworthy, of little ḥadīth, except for the Maghāzī of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), which he took from Abān ibn ʿUthmān, and it was often read to him, and he would order us to teach it" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 6). Its source is part of the biography of Mughayrah ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān in Ibn Saʿd's Ṭabaqāt, on the authority of al-Wāqidī (Ibn Saʿd, 1990, vol. 5, p. 162). The text is unclear. Some scholars believe it does not refer to a book by Abān; indeed, no compilation by him is reported, perhaps because he had no student to disseminate his knowledge (al-Aʿẓamī, 1981, p. 27).
The reasons for concluding that Abān ibn ʿUthmān had no Sīrah compilation are:
First: None of the historical books on Abān's biography mention a Maghāzī compilation.
Second: The catalogues (fihrist) of compilations, including the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm, Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, al-Sakhāwī, Ḥājjī Khalīfah, and others, mention no Maghāzī compilation by Abān ibn ʿUthmān.
Third: No Maghāzī or Sīrah narration from Abān ibn ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān is transmitted in the books of Sīrah and history. Some scholars, including ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī (al-Dūrī, 2005, p. 68) and Fuʾād Sezgin, list him among the earliest Sīrah writers, with reports in Ibn Saʿd's Ṭabaqāt and the Tārīkh of al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī (Jaʿfariyān, 1996, p. 8). However, the person Ibn Saʿd and al-Yaʿqūbī transmit from is Abān ibn ʿUthmān al-Aḥmar al-Bajalī al-Shīʿī, who, al-Yaʿqūbī explicitly says, narrated the reports of Imām al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) (al-Yaʿqūbī, n.d., vol. 2, p. 6); the son of the third caliph, who fought at the Battle of the Camel alongside ʿĀʾishah, could not have done so. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān collected the scattered material of Abān al-Shīʿī's book, published in 1996 in Qom as Al-Mabʿath wa Al-Maghāzī wa al-Wafāt wa al-Saqīfah wa al-Riddah, which also concerns the Sīrah (Jaʿfariyān, 1996, p. 8). Al-Ṭabarī, however, transmits nothing from either man concerning Maghāzī.
Horovitz thus also erred methodologically by considering Abān ibn ʿUthmān the author of a Maghāzī writing on the basis of a single quotation.
B) Unwarranted generalizations about the method of composing Sīrah books
Comparing ḥadīth books with Sīrah and tafsīr books, Horovitz says Sīrah books arrange traditions by the year of occurrence (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1). This is inconclusive. Many Sīrah and history books present each Hijrī year's events separately without regard to subject, but some specialized works follow a thematic order based on chronology, with headings such as Migration, Battle of Badr, and Battle of Uḥud. Others, such as books of Shamāʾil and Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah, are purely thematic and disregard chronology. The claim that all Sīrah sources arrange contents by year is therefore incorrect.
C) Failure to mention all Maghāzī authors
Horovitz names only thirteen writers of the earliest Maghāzī books, while studies show many more. In his introduction to Maghāzī Rasūl Allāh (peace be upon him) by ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr,

Accepted Article

Aʿẓamī emphasizes that twenty-six individuals, including Ibn ʿAbbās, Saʿīd ibn Saʿd ibn ʿ ʿIbādah, and Sahl ibn Abī Ḥathmah, had compiled works on the Sīrah and Maghāzī before ʿUrwah (al-Aʿẓamī, 1981, introduction).
This is among the book's greatest shortcomings, and some later writers have repeated it without research, considering ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr the first Sīrah and Maghāzī writer. One writes: "The book of ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, if it is not the first book composed in Islam, is the first book that was composed absolutely in Maghāzī and Sīrah" (al-Muṭayrī, 2010, p. 70).
As for Abān ibn ʿUthmān, some doubt that he was a compiler at all.

7. Part Four: Content and Conceptual Critique Based on Internal Critique

The book's content shows shortcomings that, if overlooked, may lead readers to a mistaken understanding of the compilation of the Sīrah and its history. The most important are examined below.

7.1. Conceptual Error in Defining and Applying "Maghāzī"

Although Horovitz states that Maghāzī in its specific meaning is limited to the Prophet's battles (Horovitz, 1949, p. 2), he insists on "Maghāzī" instead of "Sīrah" and extends it to works such as Isrāʾīliyyāt and Aḥādīth al-Anbiyāʾ by Wahb ibn Munabbih (Horovitz, 1949: 34). He gives no reason for this expansion, and the inconsistency undermines the book's methodological foundation. Some Sīrah writers distinguished the two terms, such as Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463 AH) in Al-Durar fī Ikhtiṣār al-Maghāzī wa al-Siyar and Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734 AH) in ʿUyūn al-Athar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa al-Shamāʾil wa al-Siyar. Some scholars attribute the use of Maghāzī to predominance and importance (al-Ḥamādah, 2010: 46); others hold the two terms neither synonymous nor concomitant. Orientalists, wishing to portray a warlike image of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him), insist on the synonymy. Primary sources confirm the lack of concomitance: Mālik's Muwaṭṭaʾ has a Kitāb al-Jihād devoted solely to war, not Sīrah, and in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī the distinction is even clearer (al-Mastū, 1999: 69).

7.2. Conflating Ḥadīth, Sīrah, and Tafsīr Sources

Horovitz's treatment of ḥadīth, Sīrah, and tafsīr as three sources of the words and deeds of the Prophet (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1) is methodologically problematic, because they differ essentially in criteria for accepting narrations, level of criticism, and reliability, and cannot be placed on the same level. Tafsīr books, containing Isrāʾīliyyāt and weaker narrations, cannot serve as an independent source for the Sīrah. The contents of Sīrah books are generally found in ḥadīth books as musnad narrations, though not connected like Sīrah books. The most authentic source for recovering the Sīrah is therefore the early ḥadīth sources, where material appears in musnad form with specified isnāds, allowing assessment of attribution and text together; adding any other source may admit inaccurate and even objectionable material.

7.3. Doubting the Reliability of the Companions' Narrations

Horovitz claims that the ḥadīths of some Companions recorded in scrolls and books are doubtful in authenticity and value, on the basis of Goldziher's Muhammedanische Studien (Horovitz, 1949, p. 1). Although this claim can be rejected in summary and in detail, following Goldziher without a scientific, methodical argument is unacceptable. Researchers have answered Goldziher in detail, including Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī in Al-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fī al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī (al-Sibāʿī, n.d., p. 222). Horovitz's aim is evident: before doubting the writings attributed to the Companions, he claims that the compilation of the Sunnah and Sīrah began with the Successors (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 1–2). Yet part of the Sīrah content later compiled by Maghāzī and Sīrah writers was written in the era of the Companions and during the Prophet's lifetime (peace be upon him), though not

Accepted Article

distinguished from other narrations and included in ḥadīth collections, including the Kitāb Al-Maghāzī section of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (al-Aʿẓamī, 1981, p. 21).

Regarding ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām, Horovitz says Ibn al-Nadīm narrated from him that Wahb ibn Munabbih was one of the People of the Book who embraced Islam; noting the gap between Wahb's birth in 34 AH (al-Dhahabī, 1993, vol. 2, p. 414) and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām's conversion, he casts doubt on the report. He evidently means that the material from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām is unreliable and fabricated (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 27–28). But Al-Fihrist shows that the transmitter is not the Companion ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām but an unknown "Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām," whose name appears only in this text. It is unclear why Horovitz ignored the difference, especially since ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām himself is named in this text:

> "Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām, client of the Commander of the Faithful Hārūn—I think he was al-Rashīd—said: I translated this book... and I included in it what is needed of proof in that regard, from the Qurʾān and the traditions... and from those of the People of the Book who embraced Islam, among them: ʿAbd Allāh ibn Salām, Bāmīn ibn Yāmīn, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, Ibn al-Tahbān, and Buḥayrā the Monk" (Ibn al-Nadīm, 1996, p. 37).

7.4. Disparagement of Sīrah Compilers

Horovitz's presentation of the earliest Sīrah compilers is not impartial: he mixes sound and unsound material and relies on nonauthentic sources that combine pure and impure material, such as al-Iṣfahānī's Al-Aghānī. Among those he disparages are:

First: Abān ibn ʿUthmān

Citing Al-Aghānī, Horovitz presents Abān as inclined to joking and buffoonery: "Ibn Harmah narrates from his father: Abān ibn ʿUthmān was one of the most humorous and most jesting of people..." (Horovitz, 1949, p. 9). But first, the report is transmitted through Ibn Zabālah, whom Abū Dāwūd called a liar and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn untrustworthy; al-Nisāʾī and al-Azudī considered him abandoned (matrūk), Abū Ḥātim called him "worthless in ḥadīth" (wāhī al-ḥadīth), and al-Dāraquṭnī "denounced in ḥadīth" (munkar al-ḥadīth) (al-Dhahabī, n.d., vol. 3, p. 514). Second, Abān's biographers mention no jesting and describe him in good terms (al-Dhahabī, 1993, vol. 7, p. 397). Moreover, being humorous does not imply a defect in reliability.

Second: Wahb ibn Munabbih and his students

Horovitz casts doubt on Wahb's family and students, claiming that Wahb's narrations "grew and multiplied due to the additions of his students, especially by some members of his family, particularly his grandson ʿAbd al-Munʿim" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 31). Some of Wahb's students were indeed accused of weakness, such as Idrīs ibn Sinān (his grandson) and ʿUthmān ibn ʿAmr ibn Sāj (al-Dhahabī, n.d., vol. 3, p. 49), but this cannot be generalized to all of Wahb's narrations and students. In Sunnī biographical sources, trustworthy narrators such as Ibn Isḥāq narrated from him (Ibn Ḥajar, 1908, vol. 2, p. 157; al-Dhahabī, 2001, p. 36). Although some considered Wahb himself weak in memory, they did not accuse him of lying. Horovitz mentions four ḥadīths, concerning the Prophet's wife, Abraham's wife, Ishmael and Isaac, and the age of the Prophet's wife, implying fabrication; some appear in mustadrak and adab books and have no basis for attribution to Wahb. His claim that ʿAbd al-Munʿim fabricated many ḥadīths and attributed them to his grandfather is incorrect.

Third: Ibn Isḥāq

Ibn Isḥāq, one of the most important Sīrah writers, did not escape Horovitz's criticism. Horovitz narrates a report from al-Wāqidī: "Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq used to sit near the women in the back

Accepted Article

part of the mosque and spend the night with women" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 76). But the report is false and distorted. The Arabic expression "al-mushāyarah" means "consultation," not "night-talking." Horovitz doubted both parts of the report and in one place changed the meaning of the expression, making a significant difference. No available version mentions "night-talking" or "consultation with women," and Sunnī sources consider the report a lie and its narrator a liar (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 1908, vol. 9, p. 34/6). Ibn Isḥāq's biographers also defended him against the accusation (Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, 1993, p. 17); had it been established, they would not have remained silent.

7.5. Motive Reading of Sīrah Writers and the Claim of Partiality to Rulers

Horovitz in some cases claims that individuals were partial to rulers, to cast doubt on the authenticity of their Sīrah material and present it as arising from political and partisan tendencies. Among them:

First: Al-Zuhrī

By pointing to al-Zuhrī's silence about the role of his grandfather ʿAbd Allāh ibn Shihāb in the Battle of the Camel (Horovitz, 1949, p. 50), and by narrating a report of his connection with ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, Horovitz implicitly presents him as inclined to the Umayyads. Yet this report appears in Sunnī ḥadīth sources through al-Zuhrī and other paths (Muslim, 1992, vol. 2, pp. 1014–1015; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995, vol. 7, p. 86; al-Tirmidhī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 205), and Horovitz himself narrates it from al-Yaʿqūbī, who views al-Zuhrī negatively. He then says that if the report is correct, al-Zuhrī cannot be accused of fabricating ḥadīth, only of siding with ʿAbd al-Malik against Ibn al-Zubayr (Horovitz, 1949, p. 50).

Horovitz narrated al-Yaʿqūbī's report without accepting it, yet drew from it that al-Zuhrī was inclined to the government, making this appear to bias his narrations.

This judgment seems derived from Goldziher, the master of orientalists, who, discussing the Umayyads' worldliness, says they used al-Zuhrī and others to fabricate ḥadīth to establish the state's pillars and fulfill their desires, seeking to discredit the earliest narrators and question their other narrations (Goldziher, 1971, vol. 2, pp. 47–48).

Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī in Al-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fī al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī responds to Goldziher and shows by examples that orientalists typically refer neither to original sources nor to their own understanding, but make Goldziher's books and views their guiding light (al-Sibāʿī, n.d., p. 217).

Importantly, historical evidence shows that al-Zuhrī did not know or see ʿAbd al-Malik in the days of Ibn al-Zubayr, and became acquainted with him years after Ibn al-Zubayr's killing (al-Sibāʿī, n.d., p. 219).

Horovitz also accuses al-Zuhrī of permitting a person named Ibrāhīm ibn Walīd to narrate without examining the content of the book (Horovitz, 1949, p. 65). Yet this method, known in ḥadīth science as "ʿarḍ al-munāwalah," was considered valid by many muḥaddiths, including al-Zuhrī himself (al-Suyūṭī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 467). Moreover, as al-Sibāʿī notes, no person named Ibrāhīm ibn Walīd narrates anything from al-Zuhrī in the books of Sīrah (al-Sibāʿī, n.d., p. 221).

Second: Ibn Hishām

While defending Ibn Isḥāq against those who accuse him of flattering the caliph, Horovitz accuses Ibn Hishām of omitting the report of ʿAbbās's capture by the Muslims out of flattery of the Abbasids (Horovitz, 1949, pp. 83–85). This is inconsistent with Ibn Hishām's text, which narrates a statement from Ibn Isḥāq clearly indicating ʿAbbās's presence among the enemies at Badr: "Ibn Isḥāq said: ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib narrated to me from some of his family, from Ibn ʿAbbās, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to his Companions on that day: I know that men from Banū Hāshim and others have been brought to war by force... Whoever meets

Accepted Article

ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, the uncle of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), let him not kill him..." (Ibn Hishām, n.d., vol. 1, p. 629; al-Maqrīzī, 1999, vol. 12, p. 169). Horovitz apparently did not read Ibn Hishām's Sīrah carefully and relied on another German orientalist, Johann Wilhelm Fück, who wrote a book on Ibn Isḥāq[1].

Casting doubt without stating a definitive position is a method Horovitz uses repeatedly. Even about Ibn Isḥāq, whom he treats favorably above, he says without evidence that his father may have been Christian: "Ibn Isḥāq is from a family of clients (mawālī), and his grandfather Yasār, who may have been an Arab Christian, was brought to Medina with other captives after the conquest of ʿAyn al-Tamr in Iraq in the year 12 AH" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 76). He presents no evidence, and the claim is not correct (Ḥamīd Allāh, 1976, introdution).

Third: Al-Wāqidī

Discussing al-Wāqidī, Horovitz in effect accuses him of literary theft from Ibn Isḥāq and of presenting his material without naming the source: "And there can be no doubt that al-Wāqidī used the book of Ibn Isḥāq and perhaps heard ḥadīth from Ibn Isḥāq more than from any other person who preceded him. It is possible that the reason for al-Wāqidī's failure to mention the name of Ibn Isḥāq is that he did not want to make clear what he took from him" (Horovitz, 1949, p. 121).

But al-Wāqidī, as his student Ibn Saʿd narrates, was born at the beginning of 130 AH (Ibn Saʿd, 1990, vol. 5, p. 499) and composed his Maghāzī in Medina, which Ibn Isḥāq had left long before. Al-Dhahabī narrates that Ibn Isḥāq came to Egypt in 115 AH (al-Dhahabī, 1993, vol. 7, p. 47). Al-Wāqidī was thus born fifteen years after Ibn Isḥāq left Medina and could not have heard ḥadīth from him.

Independent studies also refute this claim, including Salūmī's Al-Wāqidī wa Kitābuhu Al-Maghāzī: Manhajuhu wa Maṣādiruhu. Its third part, "Refutation of the Accusation of Theft by al-Wāqidī from the Book of Ibn Isḥāq in Sīrah," responds in detail to Horovitz's objections and gives examples of the two books' independence (al-Salūmī, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 176–188).

Horovitz also objects that al-Wāqidī was partisan toward the Abbasids, under whose patronage he lived: "It is clear that respect for the ruling family is the reason for removing the name of ʿAbbās from the list of enemies taken captive at Badr and bringing the word 'soandso' instead of the name of ʿAbbās in the list of financial supporters of the Prophet's army (Muṭʿimīn) of the Quraysh army..." (Horovitz, 1949, p. 126).

But Horovitz's explanation for the removal of ʿAbbās's name from the list of captives is incorrect for several reasons:

First: Al-Wāqidī, in one report with an isnād from Maḥmūd ibn Labīd, narrates the names of the captives of Badr without ʿAbbās (al-Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 1, p. 138).

Second: This is not specific to al-Wāqidī; Ibn Hishām, despite his standing in Sīrah, also does not mention ʿAbbās among the captives of Badr (Ibn Hishām, n.d., vol. 2, p. 3).

Third: According to a report from Abū Dharr, ʿAbbās is not named among the captives because he had embraced Islam and concealed it out of fear of his people (Ibn Hishām, n.d., vol. 2, p. 3).

Conclusion

The examination of Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā on the two axes of external and internal critique shows that Horovitz's method is inconsistent with the principles of impartial scientific research:

---

[1]. Muhammad ibn Ishaq: literarhistorische Untersuchungen (doctoral dissertation). Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. 1925.

Accepted Article

External critique shows these methodological weaknesses: reliance on a single text to establish authorship in Sīrah (as with Abān ibn ʿUthmān); reliance on nonspecialized sources such as Al-Aghānī and the narration of reports unrelated to mixing and music; failure to refer to primary sources; unwarranted generalizations about the method of composing all Sīrah books; failure to mention all the earliest Sīrah writers; and neglect of the comprehensiveness of Sīrah sources shown by later research (such as al-Aʿẓamī and al-Dūrī).

Internal critique shows these content-related problems: conceptual errors in defining and applying Maghāzī and expanding its meaning without reason; conflation of ḥadīth, Sīrah, and tafsīr sources; motive-reading and moral disparagement of narrators such as Abān ibn ʿUthmān, al-Zuhrī, Ibn Isḥāq, and al-Wāqidī, often based on isolated quotations or weak sources; and casting doubt without definitive evidence (such as suggesting that Ibn Isḥāq's father was Christian).

The claim of moderation and impartiality in this work is therefore not confirmed. Although this cannot be generalized to German orientalism as a whole, Horovitz's book shows a selective approach, influenced by earlier orientalists (especially Goldziher) and aimed at creating doubt about the authenticity of Sīrah sources.

This study emphasizes the necessity of independently re-examining orientalist works by referring directly to original Islamic sources rather than relying on previous researchers' claims. Future research should examine other works of German orientalists, including those edited and published by their students.

Accepted Article

References

1. Ibn Abī Khaythamah, Aḥmad ibn Zuhayr. ٢٠٠٣. Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr: Tārīkh Ibn Abī Khaythamah. Edited by Ṣalāḥ ibn Fatḥī Halal. ٤vols. Cairo: Al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīthah.
2. I
   b
3. Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram. ١٩٩٣. Lisān al-ʿArab. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir.
4. Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Shaybānī. ١٩٩١. Kitāb al-Musnad al-Maʿrifah. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth.
5. Ibn Ḥibbān, Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān. ١٩٧٦. Al-Majrūḥīn min al-Muḥaddithīn wa al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa al-Matrūkīn. Edited by Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid. Aleppo: Dār al-Waʿy.
6. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī. ١٩٠٨. Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb. Maṭbaʿat Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyyah, India.
7. I
   bn Saʿd, Muḥammad ibn Saʿd. ١٩٩٠. Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā. Edited by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn. ٩vols. Beirut:
8. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
   bn Sayyid al-Nās, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. ١٩٩٣. ʿUyūn al-Athar fī Funūn Al-Maghāzī wa al-Shamāʾil wa al-Siyar. Edited by Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ramaḍān. ٢vols. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam.
9. bn ʿAbd Al-Birr, Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd Allāh. ١٩٨٣. Al-Durar fī Ikhtiṣār Al-Maghāzī wa al-Siyar. Edited by Shawqī Dayf. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif.
10. Ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām. n.d. Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah. Edited by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. ٢vols. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah.
11. al-Aʿẓamī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, and Abū al-Aswad, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-R
    aḥmān. ١٩٨١. Maghāzī Rasūl Allāh Ṣallā Allāh ʿAlayhi wa Sallam. ١vol. Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-ʿArabī li-Duwal al-Khalīj.
12. al-Bakrī, Muṣṭafā. n.y. Ḥukm al-Ghināʾ fī Madhhab al-Mālikiyyah. Jarīdat al-Sabīl.
13. al-Badawī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. ١٩٩٣. Mawsūʿat al-Mustashriqīn. ١vol. Beirut–Lebanon: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn.
14. al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā. n.d. Sunan al-Tirmidhī. ٥vols. No place.
15. J
    a
    ʿfariyān, Rasūl, and Aḥmar Bajalī, Abān ibn ʿUthmān. ١٩٩٦. Al-Mabʿath wa Al-Maghāzī wa al-Wafāt wa al-

Saqīfah wa al-Riddah. ١vol. Qom: Daftar-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī-yi Ḥawzah-yi ʿIlmiyyah-yi Qom, Markaz-i Intishārāt.
16. al-Jawzī, Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. ٢٠٠٠. Talbīs Iblīs. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr li-l-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr.
17. al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mazzī, Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. ١٩٨٦. Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmāʾ al-Rijāl. ٣٥vols. Edited by Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah.
18. al-Ḥamādah, Fārūq. ٢٠١٠. Maṣādir al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah wa Taqwīmuhā. ١vol. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam.
19. Ḥamīd Allāh, Muḥammad. ١٩٧٦. Sīrat Ibn Isḥāq. Rabat: Maʿhad al-Dirāsāt wa al-Abḥāth li-l-Taʿrīb.
20. a
l
21. al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. ١٩٩٣. Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ. Edited by Nadhīr Ḥamdān and others. ٢٥vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah.
22. Dūrī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. ٢٠٠٥. Nash'at ʿIlm al-Tārīkh ʿinda al-ʿArab. ١vol. Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahdah al-ʿArabiyyah.
23. al-Zabīdī, Murtaḍā. n.d. Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
24. a
l
25. al-Zaynī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm. ٢٠١١. Al-Istishrāq al-Yahūdī: Ruʾyah Mawḍūʿiyyah. ١vol. Manṣūrah, Egypt: Dār al-Bayān.
26. al-Sibāʿī, Mustafā. n.d. Al-Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fī al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī. ١vol. Beirut–Lebanon: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī.
27. Sezgin, Fuʾād, Ḥijāzī, Maḥmūd Fahmī, Muṣṭafā, ʿUrfah, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Saʿīd, ʿAmmāwī, Māzin, and Ḥijāzī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh. ١٩٩٢. Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī. ٥vols. Qom–Iran: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmā Marʿashī Najafī.
28. al-Salūmī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Sulaymān. ٢٠٠٣. Al-Wāqidī wa Kitābuhu Al-Maghāzī: Manhajuhu wa Maṣādiruhu. Medina: Al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah.
29. al-Sayyid, Riḍwān. ٢٠١٦. Al-Mustashriqūn al-Almān: Al-Nashʾah wa al-Taʾthīr wa al-Maṣāʾir. ١vol. Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī.
30. al-Suyūṭī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr. n.d. Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī. Edited by Naṣr Muḥammad Farrābī. Ṭ. Dār Ṭaybah.
31. G
hulāmʿalī, Mahdī. ٢٠١٤. "Khāstgāh-i Isnād dar Rivāyāt-i Islāmī va Sunnat-i Shifāhī-yi Yahūd." Mutālaʿāt-i Kāushā, Andīshah, pp. ٢٤٩–٢٦٣.
32. Kausha, Ahmad Riḍa'. ٢٠٢٣. Taḥlīl-i Intiqādī-yi Shubhah-i Khāvarshināsān Pīrāmūn-i Jaʿl-i Asnād-i Aḥādīth-i Nabavī (Mawrid-i Pizhūhishī: Dīdgāh-i Hurūvīts, Rābsūn va Shākht)." Nīmsālānah-yi ʿIlmī-Tarvījī-yi Ḥadīth va Andīshah, vol. ١٧, no. ٣٣, pp. ٢٥٦–.٢٨٠
33. a
l
34. al-Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. ١٩٩٢. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. Edited by Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī. ٥vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth.
35. Mastū, Muḥyī al-Dīn. ١٩٩٩. Manhāj al-Taʾlīf fī al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah khilāl al-Qurūn al-Arbaʿah al-Ūlā min al-Hijrah al-Nabawiyyah. Beirut: Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib.
36. a
l
al-Maqrīzī, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī. ١٩٩٩. Imtāʿ al-Asmāʿ bimā li-l-Nabī min al-Aḥwāl wa al-Amwāl wa al-Ḥafadah wa al-Matāʿ. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Namīsī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
37. M
al-Wāqidī, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar. ١٩٨٩. Al-Maghāzī. Edited by Marsden Jones. ٣vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Matbūʿāt.
38. Ḥakīm, Ḥātim. ٢٠٠٠. "Urwah b. al-Zubayr wa Kitāb Al-Maghāzī: Dirāsah wa Muqāranah." Majallat Kulliyyat al-Dirāsat al-Islāmiyyah wa al-ʿArabiyyah, Jāmiʿat al-Azhar, Iskandariyyah, no. ٢٢, pp. ١٠٠–.Dār al-Maʿārif.
39. Horovitz, J. ١٩٤٩. Al-Maghāzī al-Ūlā wa Muʾallifūhā. Translated by Husayn Nassār. Cairo:
al-Yaʿqūbī, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq. n.d. Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī: Tārīkh Aḥmad ibn Abī Yaʿqūb ibn Jaʿfar ibn Wahb ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Kātib al-ʿAbbāsī al-Maʿrūf bi-al-Yaʿqūbī. ٢vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir.
40. Crone, P., & Cook, M. (١٩٧٧). Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World. Cambridge University Press.
41. Goldziher, Ignác. (١٩٧١). Muslim Studies (Translation of Muhammedanische Studien), ٢vols. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.
42. Horovitz, J. (٢٠٢١). The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors (L. I. Conrad, Ed.). Gerlach Press. https://doi.org/١٠,٢٣٠٧/j.ctv١b٩f٥f٢
43. Schacht, J. (١٩٥٠). The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Accepted Article

44. Wansbrough, J. (١٩٧٧). Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation. Oxford University Press.

Accepted Article