

The Prophetic Biography in Andalusia during the Fifth Century AH / Eleventh Century AD (Ibn Abd al-Barr and His Book Al-Durar as a Case Study)

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Abstract:

Andalusian interest in the Prophetic biography emerged at an early stage in their history. At first, Andalusians relied on works produced in the Islamic East. Over time, they moved from reception to production. Andalusian writings began to appear in the third and fourth centuries AH. The peak of authorship in this field, however, came during the fifth century AH / eleventh century AD.

In this article, I shed light on Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Qurtubi as one of the most prominent authors in this field. This is done by introducing his scholarly personality and by studying his book *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar* in terms of its content, the sources on which he relied, and the method he followed in composing it.

Keywords: Prophetic biography, Ibn Abd al-Barr, Andalusia, maghazi, Cordoba.

Introduction

The Prophetic biography is one of the subjects that received the greatest attention from Muslims. This is due to the status of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. It therefore became a central concern for historians and a basic foundation for writing Islamic history.

In Andalusia, the Prophetic biography was among the earliest interests of Andalusian scholars. At first, they hastened to transmit the works of sira written by scholars of the Islamic East. They brought these works to their country, circulated them, and studied them among themselves. They were narrated in scholarly circles or read to students. The people of Andalusia used the term *al-mashahid* for the *maghazi*. A scholar who transmitted the reports and writings of sira was described as a *hafiz* of *al-mashahid*.

For a time, Andalusians were satisfied with the comprehensive Eastern works and the special writings on the Prophetic biography that had reached them. This was common in the period before the fourth century AH. It was probably before they turned to authorship in this field. In the first half of the fourth century AH, or shortly before it, Andalusian writings on the sira began to appear. This reflected a cultural growth that moved from reception to production.

Creativity in this field reached its height during the fifth century AH / eleventh century AD. This was due to a group of authors, the most prominent of whom was the hadith master Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Namari. This research paper is devoted to him through his book *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar*, which is treated as a model for writing the history of the Prophetic biography.

The problem of this topic consists in identifying Ibn Abd al-Barr's method in this work by raising some questions, including:

- What is the content of his book? - What are the most important sources and materials on which he relied in his work? - What are the features of the method he followed in presenting the events of the sira? What innovation distinguished him from others in this field?

1. The Most Important Andalusian Works on the Prophetic Biography up to the Age of Ibn Abd al-Barr

Among the earliest Andalusian attempts to write on the Prophetic biography, or on subjects related to it, was the work of Abd al-Malik ibn Habib al-Sulami (d. 238 AH / 854 AD), entitled *Fi Maghazi Rasul Allah*, peace and blessings be upon him.¹ Other works then followed. Among them was the work of Qasim ibn Thabit ibn Hazm al-Saraqusti (d. 302 AH / 941 AD), entitled *Al-Dala'il* or *Sharh Gharib al-Hadith*. His father, Thabit ibn Hazm (d. 313 AH / 925 AD), completed it after his death.²

Abu Isa Yahya ibn Abd Allah ibn Yahya al-Laythi (d. 367 AH / 978 AD) also wrote *Ikhtisar Sirat Rasul Allah*, peace and blessings be upon him.³ At the end of the fourth century AH / tenth century AD, Abu al-Mutarrif Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Futays (d. 402 AH / 1011 AD) wrote in this field a book entitled *A'lam al-Nubuwwa wa-Dala'il al-Risala*.⁴ Ibn Bashkuwal mentioned it under this title in *Al-Sila*,⁵ whereas Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi (d. 904 AH / 1499 AD) counted it among the books of *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*.⁶

¹ Ibn Farhun, *Al-Dibaj al-Mudhahhab fi Tarajim A'yan al-Madhhab*, ed. Muhammad al-Ahmadi Abu al-Nur, Dar al-Turath lil-Tiba'a wa-l-Nashr, Cairo, 1976, vol. 2, p. 13.

² Ibn al-Faradi, *Tarikh al-Ulama wa-l-Ruwat li-l-Ilm bi-l-Andalus*, ed. Ruhiyya Abd al-Rahman al-Rifi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1997, p. 283.

³ Ibn Khayr, *Fahrasa ma Rawahu an Shuyukhihi min al-Dawawin al-Musannafa fi Durub al-Ilm wa-Anwa' al-Ma'arif*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, 2nd ed., Dar al-Kitab al-Misri and Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1989, vol. 1, pp. 285-286.

⁴ Ibn Sa'id al-Andalusi, *Al-Mughrib fi Hula al-Maghrib*, ed. Shawqi Dayf, 2nd ed., Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1964, vol. 1, p. 216.

⁵ Ibn Bashkuwal, *Kitab al-Sila fi Tarikh A'immat al-Andalus wa-Ulama'iha wa-Muhaddithiha wa-Fuqaha'iha wa-Udaba'iha*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Hawari, Al-Maktaba al-Asriyya, Sidon-Beirut, 2003, vol. 1, p. 256.

⁶ Al-Sakhawi, *Al-I'lan bi-l-Tawbikh liman Dhamma Ahl al-Tarikh*, ed. Franz Rosenthal, Maktabat al-Muthanna, Baghdad, 1963, p. 88; see also Franz Rosenthal, *Ilm al-Tarikh inda al-Muslimin*, trans. Salah Ahmad al-Ali, Maktabat al-Muthanna, Baghdad, 1963, p. 536.

In the fifth century AH / eleventh century AD, which is regarded as an age of scholarly prosperity in Andalusia, authorship became active in many fields of knowledge, including the Prophetic biography. Among the leading writers in this field during that century were Ibn Abd al-Barr and Ibn Hazm. They represent the height of writing on sira at that stage. The former wrote *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar*.⁷ He also wrote another book entitled *A‘lam al-Nubuwwa*.⁸ The latter wrote *Jawami‘ al-Sira*,⁹ whose importance lies in the precise information it contains on the events of the Prophetic biography and in its method of purifying reports from the errors into which some earlier historians of sira had fallen.¹⁰ He also wrote *Hajjat al-Wada’*. He devoted it to the Prophet’s journey from Medina to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. He presented the events of that pilgrimage in a historical style supported by authentic Prophetic hadiths.¹¹

After these two major figures, a historian known for his broad historical knowledge appeared. He was Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Anas al-Udhri, known as Ibn al-Dala‘i (d. 478 AH / 1086 AD).¹² He wrote *A‘lam al-Nubuwwa*.¹³ Abu Ubayd al-Bakri Abd Allah ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Aziz (d. 487 AH), one of Ibn Abd al-Barr’s students, also wrote a work entitled *A‘lam Nubuwwat Nabiyyina alayhi al-salam*. He may have been influenced by his teacher’s work, which had a similar title.¹⁴

Ibn al-Talla‘, Muhammad ibn Faraj al-Qurtubi (d. 497 AH), also compiled a book on *Aqdiat Rasul Allah*, peace and blessings be upon him.¹⁵

Works on the sira then increased. Scholars’ methods of writing and the aspects in which they specialized also varied. They wrote on the names of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, his birth, his mission, his distinctive qualities, his virtues,

⁷ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa-l-Siyar*, ed. Shawqi Dayf, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Cairo, 1966.

⁸ Ibn Abd al-Barr referred to it in his book *Al-Durar*, p. 31.

⁹ Ibn Hazm, *Jawami‘ al-Sira*, ed. Abd al-Karim Sami al-Jundi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2003.

¹⁰ The same source, p. 97, where he settles the question of zakat. See similar pages: pp. 158, 206, 251.

¹¹ Ibn Hazm, *Hajjat al-Wada’*, ed. Mamduh Haqqi, 2nd ed., Dar al-Yaqaza al-Arabiyya lil-Ta’lif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, Beirut, 1966.

¹² See Ibn Hazm, *Jamharat Ansab al-Arab*, ed. Levi-Provençal, Sharikat Nawabigh al-Fikr lil-Nashr, Cairo, 2009, p. 450; al-Humaydi, *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis fi Tarikh Ulama’ al-Andalus*, ed. Ruhiyya Abd al-Rahman al-Rifi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1997, pp. 213-216.

¹³ See Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, n.d., vol. 2, p. 460; Umar Rida Kahhala, previous reference, vol. 1, p. 216. He gave its title as *Dala’il al-Nubuwwa*.

¹⁴ See Ibn Bashkuwal, *Kitab al-Sila*, vol. 1, ed. Salah al-Din al-Hawari, *Al-Maktaba al-Asriyya lil-Kitab*, Sidon-Beirut, 2003, vol. 1, p. 240; Ibn al-Abbar, *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, ed. Husayn Mu’nis, 2nd ed., Dar al-Ma‘arif, Cairo, 1985, vol. 2, p. 185; Umar Rida Kahhala, previous reference, vol. 6, p. 75.

¹⁵ Ibn Bashkuwal, *Al-Sila*, vol. 3, p. 823.

his traits, the signs of his prophethood, and his campaigns. Some also brought all these subjects together in comprehensive works.¹⁶

2. Introducing Ibn Abd al-Barr

He is Abu Umar Yusuf ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Barr ibn Asim. He was born in Cordoba to a family from Banu al-Namr ibn Qasit on 25 Rabi al-Akhir 362 AH / 982 AD. His father, Abd Allah, was a jurist and a man of learning. Ibn Abd al-Barr grew up in Cordoba, where he studied jurisprudence, hadith, language, and history with its scholars. He studied with Abu Muhammad Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Asad al-Juhani, Abu Umar Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jusur, Abu Umar Ahmad ibn Abd Allah al-Baji, and Abu al-Walid ibn al-Faradi. From the latter he acquired much knowledge of hadith and read the Musnad of Malik. He also studied with Abu Umar al-Talamanki, the Qur'an reciter.¹⁷ Ibn Abd al-Barr remained close to Abu Umar Ahmad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Hashim, the Sevillian jurist, and studied jurisprudence with him.¹⁸ He heard from Abu Muhammad Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Mu'min the Sunan of Abu Dawud, Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh by Abu Dawud, and the Musnad of Ahmad. He read to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Dayfun the Tafsir of Muhammad ibn Sanjar. He also read to Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Warith ibn Sufyan Al-Muwatta al-Saghir of Ibn Wahb, through his transmission from Qasim ibn Asbagh, from Ibn Waddah, from Sahnun and others, from Ibn Wahb.¹⁹ He heard from Sa'id ibn Nasr the Muwatta of Malik, Al-Mushkil of Ibn Qutayba, and the Musnad of al-Humaydi. He heard from the hadith master Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-Qasim ibn Sahl the work of Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Hakam, and he heard from al-Husayn ibn Yaqub al-Baja'i. He read to Abd al-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ibn Khalid al-Wahrani the Muwatta of Ibn al-Qasim.²⁰ He also heard from Yahya ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Wajh al-Janna, Muhammad ibn Rashiq al-Mukattib, Ahmad ibn al-Qasim al-Taharti al-Bazzaz, Abu Hafs Umar ibn Husayn ibn Nabil, Muhammad ibn Khalifa al-Imam, Abu Zakariya al-Ashari, Ahmad ibn Fath ibn al-Rassan, Abu al-Mutarrif al-Qunazi'i, Judge Yunus ibn Abd Allah, Abu Umar Ahmad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn al-Makwi, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Amrus al-Qurtubi, and others.^{21,22}

¹⁶ Layth Saud Jasim, *Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Andalusi wa-Juhuduhu fi al-Tarikh*, Dar al-Wafa' lil-Tiba'a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2nd ed., Mansoura, Egypt, 1988, pp. 255-256.

¹⁷ Al-Humaydi, previous source, p. 332; al-Dabbi, *Bughyat al-Multamis fi Tarikh Rijal Ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Ruhiyya Abd al-Rahman al-Rifi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1997, p. 425.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Jusur was a scholar of hadith, genealogy, and rijal. Ibn Abd al-Barr remained with him for a long time. He studied with him *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal* by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and took many of his transmissions from him. Al-Humaydi, previous source, p. 46.

¹⁹ Al-Qadi Iyad, *Tartib al-Madarik wa-Taqrif al-Masalik li-Ma'rifat A'lam Madhhab Malik*, ed. Ahmad Bakir Mahmud, Maktabat al-Hayat, Beirut, 1965, vol. 4, p. 808.

²⁰ See his biography in Ibn Bashkuwal, previous source, vol. 1, pp. 35-36.

²¹ Al-Humaydi, previous source, p. 223.

²² Ibn Bashkuwal, previous source, vol. 2, p. 521.

It is clear from the above that Ibn Abd al-Barr remained attached to a large number of shaykhs. He attended scholarly gatherings held in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, in other mosques, and even in scholars' homes. Ibn al-Faradi stated that these mosques held study circles in rotation.²³ Ibn Abd al-Barr continued on this path until he acquired abundant knowledge. His scholarly horizon expanded, and he became the hadith master of the Islamic West.²⁴

- When political conditions in Cordoba worsened after the fall of the Amirids in 399 AH / 1009 AD and civil war broke out between the Berbers and the people of Cordoba, he left the city in 403 AH / 1013 AD. He then moved between Andalusian cities. He visited Seville and its districts. Wherever he settled, he held scholarly circles and made up for what he had missed by meeting scholars. He later travelled through eastern and western Andalusia, visiting Denia, Valencia, and Shatiba. He held the judgeship of Lisbon and Santarem during the rule of al-Muzaffar ibn al-Aftas, lord of Badajoz. Ibn Abd al-Barr died in late Rabi al-Akhir 463 AH / 1070 AD in Shatiba, at about ninety-five years of age. He left a vast scholarly production in jurisprudence, hadith, literature, and history. This was due to his broad encyclopaedic culture. His works were described as “crowns on the heads of great men and a model for knowledge and scholars.”²⁵ Ibn Hazm acknowledged his excellence in authorship, saying: “Our companion Ibn Abd al-Barr has books that have no equal.”²⁶ Ibn Sa‘id also testified to his merit, saying: “Look at his works; they will spare you the need to hear his reports.” In the East, some scholars wished to travel to him and learn from him or from his students. They agreed in recognizing his broad knowledge and fine authorship.²⁷

Among his most important works are: *Al-Tamhid lima fi al-Muwatta min al-Ma'ani wa al-Asanid*; *Al-Istidhkar li-Madhahib Ulama al-Amsar fima Tadammahu al-Muwatta min Ma'ani al-Ra'y wa al-Athar*; *Al-Taqaasi li-Hadith al-Muwatta*; *Al-Isti'ab li-Asma al-Sahaba*; *Jami Bayan al-Ilm wa-Fadlih*; *Al-Bayan an Tilawat al-Qur'an*; *Bahjat al-Majalis wa-Uns al-Majalis*; *Al-Aql wa al-Uqala*; *Al-Kafi fi al-Fiqh fi al-Ikhtilaf wa-Aqwal Malik wa-Ashabih*; *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar*; *Al-Madkhal fi al-Qira'at*; *Al-Intiqa fi Fada'il al-Thalathat al-Fuqaha*, in which he wrote biographies of Malik ibn Anas, Abu Hanifa, and al-Shafi'i; *Al-Qasd wa al-Umam fi Ansab al-Arab wa al-Ajam*; *Al-Inbah ala Qaba'il al-Ruwat*; *Al-Insaf fima bayna al-Ulama min al-Ikhtilaf*; and many others.

²³ Ibn al-Faradi, previous source, p. 422.

²⁴ See Ibn Bashkuwal, previous source, vol. 2, p. 521; Ibn Khallikan, previous source, vol. 6, p. 69. In his biography of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, he stated that al-Khatib was the hadith master of the East and Ibn Abd al-Barr the hadith master of the West. They died in the same year.

²⁵ Ibn Bassam, *Al-Dhakhira fi Mahasin Ahl al-Jazira*, ed. Ihsan Abbas, *Al-Dar al-Arabiyya lil-Kitab*, Libya-Tunisia, 1975, vol. 1, part 1, p. 81; see Layth Saud Jasim, previous reference, p. 199.

²⁶ Al-Maqqari, previous source, *Risala fi Fadl al-Andalus* by Ibn Hazm, vol. 3, pp. 169-170.

²⁷ Ibn Sa‘id, previous source, vol. 2, p. 407.

3. His Book Al-Durar and Its Content

Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar is one of the most important Andalusian works in the field of the Prophetic biography. It gained a high position that led Andalusian researchers and writers to rely on it in their works in this field of knowledge. For example, his contemporary Ibn Hazm relied on it heavily when writing *Jawami al-Sira*. Its influence also went beyond Andalusia. It spread in the Maghreb and the Islamic East and attracted the attention of scholars there.

Ibn Abd al-Barr introduced Al-Durar in its preface. He began by explaining his method, references, and main sources. He said: "This is a book in which I have abridged the account of the Prophet's mission, peace and blessings be upon him, the beginning of his prophethood, the first matter of his message, his campaigns, and his conduct in them. I mentioned his birth, his state during his upbringing, and selected reports about him at the beginning of my book on the Companions.²⁸ I devoted this book to the rest of the reports about his mission and its times, peace and blessings be upon him. I mentioned his campaigns and his sira in an approximate and concise manner. I limited myself to the essential reports, without padding or confusion."²⁹

As noted in the quotation from the author's preface, Al-Durar begins with the Prophetic mission. As for what preceded it, including the birth of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, his lineage, the death of his father, mother, and grandfather, the care of his uncle Abu Talib, his upbringing, the stages of his life before the mission, and his marriage to Lady Khadija, may God be pleased with her, Ibn Abd al-Barr summarized these matters at the beginning of his book *Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat al-Ashab*.³⁰

Ibn Abd al-Barr divided Al-Durar into eight chapters. He devoted each chapter to a specific historical topic. He also placed some chapters under subheadings.

In arranging the material of this book and its chronological sequence, he relied on the book of Ibn Ishaq. The chapters are as follows:³¹

The first chapter is entitled: "A Chapter on the Report of His Mission, peace and blessings be upon him." In it, he dealt with the events of the Prophet's mission, peace and blessings be upon him. He reviewed the details of the descent of revelation to him in the cave of Hira. He explained the role of Lady Khadija, may God be pleased with her, in calming and supporting him when he returned in fear. He also mentioned how the mission of the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, prevented the devils from stealing hearing from heaven.³²

²⁸ He means the book *Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat al-Ashab*.

²⁹ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, p. 29.

³⁰ Ridwan al-Daya, *Andalusiyyat Shamiyya*, Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir, Beirut, and Dar al-Fikr, Damascus, 2000, p. 28.

³¹ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, p. 29.

³² The same source, pp. 30-37.

In this chapter, Ibn Abd al-Barr stated that he would have a book on the signs of his prophethood. For this reason, he did not provide much detail here on those signs.³³

The second chapter is entitled: “The Messenger’s Call to His People and Others.” In it, he mentioned the Prophet’s call to his people, the first people to believe in him, the harm that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, suffered from his people, and his patience in facing it. He also listed the names of those who openly wronged the Messenger of God from Banu Hashim, Banu Abd Shams, Banu Asad, Banu Makhzum, and others, while noting those among them who later embraced Islam.³⁴

The third chapter is devoted to the events of the migration to Abyssinia. It lists the names of the Companions and their families who took part in this migration after the harm inflicted by the polytheists increased. He gave special attention to the story of the migration of the Companion Abu Musa al-Ashari.³⁵

The fourth chapter is entitled: “The Entry of Banu Hashim ibn Abd Manaf and Banu al-Muttalib into the Valley of Abu Talib.” It treats several events from the Prophetic biography. The most important of these is the siege imposed on Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib because they refused to hand the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, over to Quraysh. He also referred to the return of some migrants from Abyssinia to Mecca after news spread that its people had accepted Islam. That news later proved to be untrue. He also discussed the Prophet’s journey to Ta’if, the conversion of al-Tufayl ibn Amr al-Dawsi, and the events of the First and Second Pledges of al-Aqaba. He mentioned the names of the Ansar who attended them, including the twelve chiefs.³⁶

The fifth chapter is the chapter on migration to Medina. It mentions the events of the migration from Mecca to Medina and lists the names of the emigrants one by one. It discusses the two most important acts carried out by the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, after his arrival in Medina: building the mosque and establishing brotherhood between the Muhajirun and the Ansar. It then moves on to present the twenty-seven campaigns of the Messenger of God. It gives particular detail to the major campaigns, such as Badr, Uhud, al-Khandaq, Khaybar, the Conquest of Mecca, and Hunayn. It records their locations, dates, and military plans. It also

³³ The same source, p. 31.

³⁴ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, pp. 38-49.

³⁵ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, pp. 50-57.

³⁶ The same source, pp. 57-80.

mentions those who were martyred among the Muslim emigrants and the Ansar, as well as those killed among the polytheists.³⁷

As for his expeditions, peace and blessings be upon him, Ibn Abd al-Barr presented eight expeditions. They begin with the missions of Hamza, Ubayda, and Abd Allah ibn Utayk, and end with the mission of Khalid ibn al-Walid.³⁸

Ibn Abd al-Barr devoted the sixth and seventh chapters to the division of the spoils of Hunayn and the events connected with it, as well as to the Arab delegations that came to the Messenger of God from Banu Hanifa, Banu Tamim, and Hamdan.³⁹ The eighth and final chapter is devoted to the death of the best of mankind, our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the shock and grief of Muslims after receiving this news, and the events of pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr as caliph in the Saqifa of Banu Saïda.⁴⁰

4. His Sources in Al-Durar

The sources on which Ibn Abd al-Barr relied in *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa al-Siyar* were varied and numerous. He used specialized sources on maghazi and sira, along with other books that dealt with different subjects. He also referred in several places to his own works. Some of these sources were mentioned explicitly in the preface to the book, while others were not stated directly.

The *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq (d. 151 AH / 768 AD) is one of his main sources, through the transmission and recension of Ibn Hisham, and through two other transmissions: that of Yunus ibn Bukayr (d. 199 AH / 814 AD),⁴¹ and that of Ibrahim ibn Sa'd (d. 184 AH / 800 AD).⁴² Ibn Ishaq is known as one of the major scholars, an authority in maghazi and sira, and one of the repositories of knowledge in this field.⁴³ At this point, Ibn Abd al-Barr explains: Whatever in this book is from Ibn Ishaq, our transmission of it is from Abd al-Warith ibn Sufyan, from Qasim ibn Asbagh, from Muhammad ibn Salam al-Khushani, from Muhammad al-Barqi, from Ibn Hisham ibn Ziyad al-Bakka'i, from Muhammad ibn Ishaq.⁴⁴

It was also read to me through Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf, from Ibn al-Mufarrij, from Ibn al-Arabi, from al-Attardi, from Yunus ibn Bukayr, from Ibn Ishaq.

³⁷ The same source, pp. 80-244.

³⁸ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, pp. 57-80.

³⁹ The same source, pp. 245-282.

⁴⁰ The same source, pp. 285-288.

⁴¹ Ibn Abd al-Barr quoted from him in *Al-Durar*, pp. 40, 41, 42, 59, 206, 211, 273.

⁴² Suhayl Zakkar edited two important fragments of Ibn Ishaq's *Sira* through the transmission of Ibn Bukayr and published them with Dar al-Fikr (Beirut, 1978) under the title *Al-Siyar wa-l-Maghazi*.

⁴³ Ibn Abd al-Barr quoted from him in *Al-Durar*, pp. 31, 211.

⁴⁴ *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, vol. 1, p. 173.

It was also read to me through Abd al-Warith ibn Sufyan, from Qasim ibn Asbagh, from Ubayd ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Bazzaz, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ayyub, from Ibrahim ibn Sa'd, from Ibn Ishaq.

Thus, Ibn Abd al-Barr had access to the Sira of Ibn Ishaq through three transmissions:

- The transmission of Ziyad Abd Allah al-Bakka'i.
- The transmission of Yunus ibn Bukayr.
- The transmission of Ibrahim ibn Sa'd.

Among his sources was also Kitab al-Maghazi by Musa ibn Uqba (d. 188 AH / 899 AD). Ibn Abd al-Barr transmitted from Musa ibn Uqba through two routes. He referred to his book Al-Isti'ab and to his index of transmissions in order to clarify the two routes through which he transmitted these maghazi. He stated that what appears in his book from Musa ibn Uqba came through two routes:⁴⁵

The first is what he transmitted from Abd al-Warith ibn Sufyan, from Qasim ibn Asbagh, from Mutarrif ibn Abd al-Rahman, from Yaqub ibn Humayd ibn Kasib, from Muhammad ibn Fulayh, from Musa ibn Uqba.

The second is through Khalaf ibn Qasim, from Abu al-Hasan, from Ibn Alun al-Misri, from Jafar ibn Sulayman al-Nawfali, from Ibrahim ibn al-Mundhir al-Hizami, from Muhammad ibn Fulayh, from Musa ibn Uqba.

The books of al-Waqidi, including his book on the classes, were among the sources that Ibn Abd al-Barr explicitly mentioned at the end of Al-Durar. Yet he quoted from him in the main text only once.⁴⁶ He did not mention the chain of his transmission from al-Waqidi in Al-Durar. He only referred to Al-Isti'ab, in order to avoid lengthening Al-Durar and departing from his method of abridgement.⁴⁷ He also benefited from Al-Tarikh al-Kabir by Ahmad ibn Zuhayr Abu Bakr ibn Abi Khaythama (d. 279 AH / 892 AD).⁴⁸

In addition to these sources, he relied on many other written references. Some were related to the sira. Some belonged to the science of rijal. Others were works by hadith transmitters connected with the Prophetic biography. He also referred to his own works without detailed quotation, in keeping with his commitment to concision. Among these works were Al-Tamhid,⁴⁹ Al-Isti'ab,⁵⁰ and his index of transmissions.⁵¹ He also mentioned books that he wished to write, such as Mihan al-Ulama⁵² and A'lam al-Nubuwwa, which he intended as a complement to Al-Durar.⁵³

It is clear from the above that Ibn Abd al-Barr sought to present his book in a refined and concise form, with diverse sources and with careful documentation of its material.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Ibn Abd al-Barr, Al-Durar, pp. 39, 56, 59, 62, 209, 214.

⁴⁶ Ibn Abd al-Barr, Al-Durar, p. 39.

⁴⁷ See Ibn Abd al-Barr, Al-Isti'ab, vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁸ The same source, editor's introduction, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Ibn Abd al-Barr, Al-Durar, pp. 33, 176, 217, 221, 287.

⁵⁰ Ibn Abd al-Barr, Al-Durar, pp. 40, 44, 123, 162, 169, 221, 225, 271, 276, 287.

⁵¹ The same source, p. 276.

⁵² The same source, p. 49.

⁵³ The same source, p. 31.

5. His Method in the Book

The effect of his encyclopaedic culture appears in the composition of this book. His knowledge extended to hadith, jurisprudence, literature, and history. This was clearly reflected in his method of presenting the events of the Prophetic biography. One of the most important features of this method is his combination of the style of hadith scholars and historians in writing the sira. Although he cared for isnad, he did not adhere to it in many places. At the same time, he preserved the coherence of the subject and the sequence of events. He therefore shortened some chains of transmission and omitted what he considered unnecessary. It is as if he believed that books of sira were often marked by digression and length. He chose instead to limit himself to valuable reports and useful points that make the text more coherent and connected in its events.⁵⁴

He also avoided unreliable reports and discussed weak reports when he included them. In doing so, he relied on the method of al-jarh wa al-ta'dil in criticizing and evaluating reports.⁵⁵ He also practiced criticism of chains of transmission and judged them as sound or weak. An example is the report attributed to Ibn Mas'ud concerning the conversion of the jinn. He examined it and stated that the report attributed to him, which mentions ablution with nabidh, includes an unknown transmitter who is not known among the companions of Ibn Mas'ud. Regarding the jinn, what appears in Surat al-Jinn is sufficient: "Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened..." This is also supported by what appears in Surat al-Ahqaf: "And when We directed to you a group of the jinn listening to the Qur'an." This shows that his rejection of a report such as the Prophet's ablution with nabidh was based first on reference to the Qur'an, and then on the method of hadith criticism.⁵⁶

When he treats some issues in the history of the Prophetic biography, especially those related to maghazi, he states, corrects, and sometimes rejects views that he does not accept. One example is his discussion of the Battle of Khaybar and the killing of Marhab the Jew. He reported Ibn Ishaq's view that Muhammad ibn Maslama killed him. Yet he did not agree with it. He mentioned that others disagreed and said that Ali ibn Abi Talib killed him, which he considered the correct opinion.

He discusses some jurisprudential questions through the events of the sira. He treats them within limits that do not take him away from his method of abridgement. Otherwise, he refers the reader to his other works in which these issues were treated in detail.⁵⁷

He presents the events and discusses them. He then states his opinion and gives preference to what he considers consistent with the information he has reached when

⁵⁴ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, editor's introduction, p. 13.

⁵⁵ The same source, editor's introduction, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Durar*, pp. 35-64.

⁵⁷ The same source, pp. 176, 210, 414, 217, 221, 230, 232, 246, 287.

disagreement occurs. He also relies on some poems to express certain events he addresses, while taking care not to overuse poetry or include weak poetic material.⁵⁸ Abu al-Qasim al-Suhayli (d. 581 AH / 1186 AD) also included Al-Durar among the sources he used in writing Al-Rawd al-Unuf.⁵⁹

Abu al-Rabi Sulayman ibn Musa al-Kala'i (d. 634 AH / 1236 AD) quoted from him in Al-Iktifa fi Maghazi Rasul Allah wa al-Thalathat al-Khulafa.⁶⁰

Ibn Sayyid al-Nas al-Umari (d. 734 AH / 1333 AD) also returned to it in his major sira entitled Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghazi wa al-Shama'il wa al-Siyar. According to the editor of the book, Al-Durar was among the sources on which Ibn Sayyid al-Nas relied.⁶¹

As for scholars of the Islamic East, Ibn al-Athir (d. 630 AH / 1233 AD) quoted from him in Usd al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat al-Sahaba.⁶² Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH / 1448 AD) also drew on him and made him one of his main sources in Al-Isaba and Tahdhib al-Tahdhib.⁶³ Al-Suyuti also benefited from Al-Durar in his biographical and historical writings.⁶⁴

Conclusion

At the end of the article, we may say:

- Ibn Abd al-Barr's work within this framework represents an important methodological step in writing the history of the Prophetic biography. This was a stage in which writings in this field witnessed clear development in both quantity and quality. Historians were no longer concerned only with collecting historical material and arranging it within a methodological order. Their work moved to a deeper level based on revision and verification. For this reason, the works of this period were often marked by concision, or by an attempt to abridge as much as possible.
- In presenting reports and their chains of transmission, Ibn Abd al-Barr maintained the mention of isnad when transmitting most reports. This reflects his identity as a hadith scholar who knew the names of transmitters and mastered the craft of hadith.

⁵⁸ The same source, pp. 54, 186, 201, 202.

⁵⁹ See his biography in Ibn Dihya, Al-Mutrib min Ash'ar Ahl al-Maghrib, vol. 1, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, Dar al-Ilm lil-Malayin, 1955, p. 230; Ibn Taghri Bardi, Al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Akhbar Misr wa-l-Qahira, vol. 6, Egyptian General Book Organization, Cairo, n.d., p. 100.

⁶⁰ This is how the title of the book appears in the author's introduction, and also in Ibn Abd al-Malik al-Marrakushi, Al-Dhayl wa-l-Takmila li-Kitabay al-Mawsul wa-l-Sila, vol. 4, ed. Muhammad ibn Sharifa, Dar al-Thaqafa, Beirut, n.d., p. 83.

⁶¹ See his biography in al-Safadi, Al-Wafi bi-l-Wafayat, ed. Ahmad al-Arna'ut and Turki Mustafa, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 2000, vol. 1, p. 291; see also Palencia, Tarikh al-Fikr al-Andalusi, trans. Husayn Mu'nis, Maktabat al-Thaqafa al-Diniyya, Cairo, 1955, p. 238.

⁶² See Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, Shadharat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahab, ed. Arab Heritage Committee, Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, Beirut, n.d., vol. 5, p. 138.

⁶³ The same source, vol. 7, p. 272.

⁶⁴ See his biography in the same source, vol. 8, pp. 249-250.

He was not satisfied with what came from Ibn Ishaq's book through a single transmission. Instead, he gathered the available routes of that book. He followed the same approach with the book of Musa ibn Uqba. This shows his concern for documentation and for controlling the scholarly material with which he worked.

- Therefore, his book on the sira was not merely a repetition of earlier writings. It offered a clear addition through the author's expression of his opinion while presenting facts and events, and through his use of methodological tools and scholarly criteria.

- The importance of this work is evident in the position it occupied among works of sira from the beginning of authorship in this discipline to the present day. His contemporaries relied on it and benefited from it in their writings.

- His method was marked by integration in terms of the elements of documentation. His mastery of several sciences had a major effect in strengthening the value of the reports he included in his book.

- The sira of Ibn Abd al-Barr, known as *Al-Durar*, retains a special place and a clear influence in books of sira and related fields. His scholarly personality also remained active and influential. Hardly any Andalusian author who wrote on the sira failed to benefit from *Al-Durar*, in addition to benefiting from his other works. The book also passed to the Maghreb and the Islamic East with Andalusian scholars whose scholarly journeys to the East continued. Some of them stayed there for long periods.

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