

# Some Important Aspects of Post-Classical Islamic Historiography Based on the Existing Western Scholarship

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## Article history

Received : 2023-01-24

Accepted : 2023-03-26

Published : 2023-04-10

## Keywords

Islamic Historiography,  
Western Scholarship,  
The Post-Classical Peri-  
od

**Abstract:** Most existing studies on Islamic historiography are dominated by the study of the classical-formative period (7th-9th Centuries AD). In contrast, the works in the later/post-classical period still need to be studied so that it becomes an important issue to be addressed. This paper seeks to review the existing scholarship on Islamic historiography in the context of the post-classical period (9th century onwards). This research addresses the discourse developed in studying Islamic historiography during this period by examining the historiographical characteristics and historical context. The findings in this article are based on library research that examines existing studies on Islamic historiography in Western scholarship with intellectual history as the theoretical framework for analyzing the data. The results of this study show that the existing studies, since H.A.R. Gibb, Franz Rosenthal, to Tarif Khalidi, have successfully established the classical period of Islamic historiography. In contrast, the study on “the later period” still needs attention. Chase F. Robinson is the most recent scholar who began paying attention to this period. His initial investigations showed the specific characteristics of this period: the distancing from traditionalist culture, the elimination of the use of *isnad* in writing history, the three main formats in historical writing (chronography, biography, and prosopography), and the emergence of a critical historical school that made history an independent official discipline. This article will conclude, in the end, with a reflection on some of the remaining lacunas in this area of research, along with a brief note on the Indonesian context, both as part of the analytical category in the study and concerning the analysis of Islamic history in that country.

**Abstrak:** Mayoritas kajian dalam historiografi Islam yang ada didominasi oleh telaah di masa klasik-formatif (7th-9th Centuries AD) dan khazanah setelahnya mayoritas masih belum dikaji, sehingga menjadi isu yang penting untuk diperhatikan. Tulisan ini berupaya untuk mereviu perkembangan kesarjanaan historiografi Islam di Barat dalam konteks pasca klasik (Abad ke-9 dan seterusnya). Temuan dalam artikel ini didasarkan kepada penelitian kepustakaan yang menelaah kajian-kajian yang ada tentang historiografi Islam di kesarjanaan barat dengan lensa sejarah intelektual sebagai acuan analisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kajian yang ada saat ini, sejak H.A.R. Gibb, Franz Rosenthal, hingga Tarif Khalidi, telah berhasil memetakan periode klasik historiografi Islam. Adapun kajian terhadap period berikutnya masih perlu mendapatkan perhatian. Chase F. Robinson adalah sarjana terkini yang mulai melakukan telaah atas periode tersebut. studi awal yang ia lakukan menunjukkan adanya karakteristik khusus di periode ini; penarikan jarak dari kultur tradisional, eliminasi penggunaan *isnad* dalam menulis sejarah, tiga format utama dalam tulisan sejarah (kronografi, biografi, dan prosopografi) serta munculnya aliran sejarah kritis yang menjadikan sejarah sebagai disiplin resmi yang independen. Artikel ini akan diakhiri dengan refleksi terkait beberapa lacunas yang masih tersisa dalam area riset ini, berikut catatan singkat terkait konteks Indonesia, baik sebagai kategori analitis dalam kerja riset dan catatan atas fenomena riset sejarah Islam di negara ini.



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**Cite this article:** Safari. (2023). Some Important Aspects of Post-Classical Islamic Historiography Based on the Existing Western Scholarship. *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 33 (1), 97-105 <http://dx.doi.org/10.15294/paramita.v33i1.42274>

## INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic historiography as a field of study has spanned over a century. Scholars have investigated the heritage of Islamic historiography from time to time. The story of Islamic historical writing has passed a critical period, namely scientific recognition internal to the Islamic world and the development of world historiography. This external relationship has shown that Islamic historiography has influenced world historiography. One field in the study of Islamic historiography that continues to be developed is the study of historical criticism. In this case, the work of historians in terms of methods, sources mentioned, and delivery strategies in historical material continue to be investigated, criticized and questioned by subsequent historical writers.

Based on the existing studies, however, there needs to be an explicit mention of the periodization of Islamic historiography. Rather, it stops at a period, and the comprehensive sketch of the historiographical tradition in Islamic history still needs to be completed. Therefore, more studies are required to understand Islamic historiography's broader picture. Thus, the one-century modern study on this field has, at least, established what might be called the classical-formative period of Islamic historiography" (6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries) through the works of H.A.R. Gibb (2023), Franz Rosenthal (1968), Tarif Khalidi (1996), Tayeb El-Hibri (2004), Boaz Shosan (2004), Chase F. Robinson (2003), until the most recent work on this field by Ryan J. Lynch (2021).

However, studies of the post-classical period have been conducted, for example, by Robinson, who calls it "the later period." However, he restricts it to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and has yet to make claims to cover the later centuries. It is also recognized that starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, several indicators show the "confidence" of historians in writing history not to be confined to the rules and ethos of traditionalists. If the study of the early period has been done very much, then the study of the latter remains a field that has yet to be widely investigated by scholars. This is also inseparable from the influence of "the golden age of Islam narrative," which obscures the development of Islamic scholarship in the post-classical period. It can be argued that the essential development of Islamic historiography itself took place during this period.

Going beyond the mainstream trend of focusing on the classical period, this article will sketch the development of Islamic historiography in the

context of the post-classical period, also known as "the later Islamic historiography." This is done after reviewing modern Western scholarship in exploring Islamic historiography in the classical-formative period. This study will also offer some suggestions regarding the further development in the study of Islamic historiography, especially in the context of the post-classical period. In the end, this paper will also formulate some reflective remarks related to research opportunities that may be carried out and developed in the study of Islamic history in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This investigation is library research examining the representative works on Islamic historiography. The later Islamic historiography is an interesting issue to investigate as one of the most critical accounts in the history of Muslim historiography. The research data come from written materials published in books, journals, and others. The primary sources used in this article are previous studies related to Islamic historiography conducted mainly by Western scholars since the last century. The data will be mapped into a representative narrative to explain the current state of arts in the study of medieval Islamic historiography. The data analysis is based on the framework of intellectual history to map the construction of post-classical Islamic historiography.

## FROM H.A.G. GIBB TO TARIF KHALIDI: ESTABLISHING THE "EARLY/CLASSICAL ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY"

It must be recognized that the attempt to draw the theoretical framework and historical development of what is currently known as "Islamic historiography" has been conducted since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Theoretical issues related to Islamic historiography have begun to be undertaken, for example, by Carra de Vaux, M. Plessner, and H.A.R. Gibb in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* published between 1913-1938 (Gibb, 2023). Their entry on *ta'rikh* perhaps became the first stepping stones for subsequent research on what is currently well-known as Islamic historiography. Vaux explains *Ta'rikh* as "history in general, annals, chronicles." It is the title of many historical works ..." (Vaux, 2023). H.A.R. Gibb was perhaps the earliest scholar to equate historiography with *'ilm al-ta'rikh*. He wrote, "*'Ilm al-Ta'rikh*, Historiography, as a term of literature, embraces both annalistic and biography (but not as a rule literary history)" (Gibb, 2023). Meanwhile, he has also emphasized that "the

problem of the origins of Arabic historiography is not yet finally solved.” As noted by Chase F. Robinson, with limited sources at the time, Gibb could be said to have been very much “working in the dark” (Robinson, 1997, p. 199).

It was also Gibb who perhaps became the earliest scholar to formulate a periodization of the development of historiography in the Muslim world with particular attention to the Arab and Persian context from the beginning up to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. According to him, the development of “Arabic and Persian historiography” can be summarized in four sections: (a) from the origins to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century of the *Hijra*; (a) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries; (c) from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century; (d) from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Gibb, 2023). It can be seen that the area studies perspective is the foundation of Gibb's description. At that time, the terms used were still based on specific regions. There was no more universal claim, as scholars today are generally comfortable using the term “Islamic historiography.”

Along with the increasing availability of sources related to Islamic historiography, another important changing landscape in the field of study was in place since the 1950s with the work of Franz Rosenthal through his groundbreaking work, *A History of Muslim Historiography*. This book generally explores the creativity of Muslim scholars in writing Islamic history. The discussion of historiography, for Rosenthal, is inseparable from the discussion of historical concepts and thoughts written by historians (Rosenthal, 1968, p. 3). Since Rosenthal, there has been at least some awareness among scholars to distinguish between two things that Tarif Khalidi refers to as what Muslim historians “may or may not tell us about the past or for what they tell us about *thinking* about the past” (Khalidi, 1996: xi).

According to Rosenthal, the writing of history (historiography) is inseparable from observing the development of the concept of history both in thought and approach that is periodic from growth, development, progress, and decline. He also mentions the cross-influence of Islamic historiography with the outside world. However, Rosenthal is a scholar who believes that Muslim historiography should be viewed as “a self-contained intellectual growth it is” (Rosenthal, 1968, p. 7). If Gibb prefers the term “Arabic/Persian Historiography,” then Rosenthal uses the term “Muslim historiography.” This is a further implication of the view that seeks to place this kind of historiography in an independent epistemic place.

However, it does not mean that he neglected the scope of his study since he also drew the geo-cultural limits. The term “Muslim” used by Rosenthal is understood in a “restricted cultural sense” within a particular period, namely the classical times. His work refers to “the great civilization which took shape in Damascus and Bagdad from the seventh century to the tenth century A.D.” with Arabic as the primary language (Rosenthal, 1968, p. 7).

Rosenthal's contribution, in this case, is the division of classical Islamic historiography which is divided into several theoretical forms. The efforts of early historians in constructing Islamic history were formed in three methods; (a) *Khabar* history; (b) the annalistic form; and (c) lesser forms of historical periodization (Rosenthal, 1968, p. 245). The term *khabar*, according to him, is synonymous with the words *dzikr*, *amr*, or *ḥadīth*. *Ḥadīth*, in this sense, is not a historical source taken from *ḥadīth* in a sense set out by *muḥadditsīn*. It refers to one of the etymological meanings of *hadith* itself as the events that occurred in the past. The following models of Islamic historiography are the annalistic (*ḥauliyyāt*), dynastic, *ṭabaqāt* and genealogical (*nasab*) models, all of which are characteristic and do not occur chronologically. However, since the model of *khabar*, the concept of time has been used in Islam. The use of time is recognized in annalistic historiography, but historical periodization is always based on dynastic and *ṭabaqāt* considerations. Rosenthal mentions the influence of the historiography of the outside world on Islamic historiography; he always mentions the possibility of the influence of Christian Persia and Syria in Islamic historiography, and vice versa; Persia also adopted Islamic historiography. Nevertheless, he asserts that *ṭabaqāt* historiography is the original form of Islamic origin (Rosenthal, 1968, p. 66).

Rosenthal's next contribution is in his findings about the historical approach that became the focus of Islamic historians in the past. According to him, historians raised historical themes at that time and became a specific history: genealogy (*nasab*), biography (*ṭabaqāt*), geography and cosmography, astrology, philosophy, politics, and social politics. In addition, sources based on documents, inscriptions, and coin research have also come to the attention of historians (Rosenthal, 1968, pp. 100-127). However, Rosenthal's work does not mention the periodization of Islamic historiography as he only stops at a period and does not sketch the development of Muslim historiographical accounts.

After Rosenthal, many subsequent studies are conducted by scholars in Islamic historiography. One of this progress is shown by Tarif Khalidi's book, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. In his book, he made a rigorous investigation to show Islamic historiography's development that is alive and influenced by several other disciplines. For him, the classical Arabic-Islamic tradition developed gradually through four "domes": *ḥadīth*, *adab*, *ḥikmah*, and *siyāsah* (Khalidi, 1996). With this "four domes" theory, one can identify Muslim history and historians, for instance, into *ḥadīth*-historiography, *adab*-oriented historian, *ḥikma*-inspired historiography, and so on. If Rosenthal limited his survey to the 10<sup>th</sup> century in formulating his theoretical claims, Khalidi limited his research to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In Khalidi's mapping, *ḥadīth* overshadowed the history writing from the 4<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, *adab* from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, *ḥikma* during the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and *siyāsah* from the 6-9<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Khalidi, 1996: xii).

#### CHASE F. ROBINSON AND THE GATE TO "LATER ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY"

At the dawn of the third millennium, more achievements are obtained. In this regard, Chase F. Robinson's survey in *Islamic Historiography* (2003) has contributed to reconstructing the foundations of the formative period of Islamic historiography viewed through intellectual history and the later development aftermath, which he classifies into several phases. *The first phase* (610-730 CE) was the phase of the search for the life story of the Prophet Muhammad and the stories of war veterans. The historical tradition developed at this time was the *Hijāz* tradition, characterized by oral history. Furthermore, Robinson notes that the Marwanite rule with strong documentation has influenced the culture of history writing. In this phase, 'Urwah bin Zubair (d. 712 CE), who wrote the history of several Mosques in Makkah and Madinah, was an expert in the biography of Muhammad, his work being dedicated to 'Abdul Malik bin Marwan (Robinson, 2003, p. 24).

According to Robinson, *the second phase* (730-830 CE) is a period of historiography that began to reveal the form of biography, prosopography, with chronography. This phase is known as the period of *akhbār* (the corpus of *akhbār* material) (Robinson, 2003, p. 24). Robinson also notes several known narratives of this period, including a monograph on Musailimah, labeled a pseudo-prophet; an account of Husayn's death; and an account of The Battle of

Camel. The historian Ibn Ishaq who wrote a biography of Prophet Muhammad, later edited by Ibn Hishām (d. 835 CE), appeared in this phase (Robinson, 2003, p. 25).

*The third phase* (830-925 CE) onward, according to Robinson, was a period of historical writing that marked a shift from the era of monographs to the tradition of large-scale writing and synthetic collections. The *ḥadīth* selection conducted by al-Bukhari (d. 870 CE) was a historical writing in the form of *Khabar* (Robinson, 2003, p. 32). Later on, it moved to the annalistic model of historiography. The historian Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, for instance, who reprinted Mada'in's account of *Fath al-Khurasān* (The Conquests of Khurasan) (Robinson, 2003: 32; Rosenthal, 1968: 69-71), was the representative figure of this type. These three phases, which started from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century AD, according to Robinson, represent the early Islamic historiography responsible for the emergence of the genre in Islamic history. The period after the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD enters a new chapter called "later Islamic historiography" (Robinson, 2003, p. 50).

In this case, we need to clarify some thoughts regarding the issue of periodization, which is usually divided into classical, medieval/middle ages, and modern. In this case, there are several problems in the everyday use of that classification, especially the concept of "medieval/middle ages" in the context of Islamic studies. This is confirmed by Josef W. Meri (2006: xii). However, he argues that Medieval Islam began in 622 AD when the *Hijri* calendar appeared, until the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD. One of the reasons for this is the ambiguity of the concept of Islamic history which is often framed in the concept of periodization of Western (European) history, which at least recognizes several key periodizations; *the classical/ancient period* (antiquity; Greek-Roman-Barbarian: 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD), *the middle ages* (5<sup>th</sup> century AD to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD), *the renaissance period* (14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> century CE), *the period of enlightenment* (18<sup>th</sup> century AD), until the latest developments (Britannica, 2010). This means Islam had just been born (7<sup>th</sup> century AD) when European history entered the early days of its middle ages.

Based on such explanations, there is some awareness among scholars concerning the need to place Islamic history in its position, the periodization that is independent of Western-European historical classifications. As such, several independent historical periodizations emerged. In this case, the periodization has some minor differences based on the different variables (Shiddieqi, 1983, p. 65). In

political history, Marshall Hodgson, for instance, has formulated his independent periodization. (1) the Late Sasanid and Early Caliphate (485 AD-692 AD); (2) the High Caliphate (692 AD-945 AD); (3) the Early Middle Islamic period (945 AD-1258 AD) (4) the Later Middle Islamic period (1258 AD-1503 AD); (5) the Gunpowder empire period (1503 AD-1789 AD) (6) Modern Technical Period (1789 AD onwards) (Hodgson, 2002, pp. 138-139).

It must be admitted that such periodization in the context of Islamic historiography has not been entirely possible as Hodgson formulated his classification. Robinson, for example, was confident to classify up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century due to the scope of his study that is limited to that time. We lack studies on Islamic historiography after the 15<sup>th</sup> century, even after the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Most existing studies revolve around classical literature and rarely examine post-classical literature. In my view, Robinson's formulation may be the most established classification so far. It means that what might be called "medieval Islamic historiography" denotes "the later period" in Robinson's scheme, which refers to the 9/10<sup>th</sup> century.

Another reasonable offer is the division of Islamic intellectual history into classical (before the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>) and post-classical (6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>) periods (Ahmed & Larkin, 2013b, p. 213). Currently, the term "post-classical" is widely used by historians to explore the dynamics of Islamic civilization that occurred after the fall of Baghdad in 1258. If this period was previously considered a period of decline, then post-classical studies refute this narrative and show that there was a significant dynamic after this period. This is, for example, shown by some studies conducted by some scholars who popularized this trend (Ahmed and Larkin [eds], 2013a)

However, one should also note that the movement of post-classical study does not seem to have touched on the issue of Islamic historiography. Therefore it becomes an area that deserves more scholarly attention. Therefore, instead of using the problematic terms *Medieval Islamic Historiography* or *Islamic Historiography in the Middle Ages*, I prefer to say *Post-classical Islamic Historiography*, which also corresponds to Robinson's term for *the later period*, to refer to the dynamics of Islamic historiographical tradition that occurred after the classical-formative stage from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As we shall see, some areas have been sufficiently explored by Robinson as one of the scholars focusing on this field. However, some issues remain untouched and deserve to be investigated by subsequent researchers.

## POST-CLASSICAL ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS

Many scholars on Islamic historiography agree that the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Century AD was the phase when "history" began to become a recognized genre or discipline in Islamic intellectual activity, even though it was still blended with traditionalism, both in model, linearity, and format, as well as the paradigm or *weltanschauung* underlying the historical tradition at that time. Thus, according to Robinson, the early Islamic historiography (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> AH/7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> AD) must be positioned within a "traditionalist" culture that made the *hadith* scholars (*muhaddith*) one of its first protagonists (Robinson, 2003: 24; Gani, 1991: 26; Mustafa, 1990: Vol. 3. 74).

The phase between the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup>/15 CE, which constitutes the later period, marks a new direction in historiography. In this case, after the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Century AD, several significant developments reflected the main feature of later Islamic historiography. The first was the significant change in the ethic of writing historical narratives, the *isnad* tools, which were shortened and eliminated from the 5<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup>. As exemplified by al-Ya'qubi in his *Tārikh al-Ya'qūbī* (2010), who ignored *isnad* in writing the historical narrative, historians in the fifth and sixth centuries began to mainstream the same. In this case, the historians fully recognized their existence and began to break away from the ethos and rule the traditionalists had previously established in historiography (Robinson, 2002, p. 92).

The second feature is three main styles of later post-classical Islamic historiography; chronography, biography, and prosopography, whose dynamics were determined by the political-intellectual background surrounding them (Robinson, 2002, p. 98). The biographical model recounts a person's life from birth to death. The most prestigious early form in this genre is the prophetic biography that has existed since Ibn Ishaq compiled his *Sirah*, which Ibn Hishyam later edited. This tradition of writing biographies then continued in the later period. One representative example is the biography of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi (Saladin) (d. 589 AH/1193 CE) authored by Baha al-Din Ibn Sadad (d. 651 AH/1235 CE). In it, the figure of Saladin as a war hero is told. In addition, the Prophet's biography is also sometimes extracted from a chronographic work such as from *al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah* by Ibn Kasir (d. 774 AH/1372 CE) and *Tārikh al-Islām* by al-Dzahabi (d. 749 AH/1348 CE), and published as a separate *sirah* (Robinson, 2002, pp. 61-65).

The prosopographic model, which contains some biographical data that places an individual as part of a community, also characterizes the historiography that crystallized in medieval times. In general, the prosopographical model consists of two genres. *First*, biographical dictionaries. Some representative examples are *Tarikh Dimasyq*, by Ibn 'Asakir (d. 572 AH/1176 CE), *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681 AH/1282 CE), *al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*, by al-Safadi (d. 764 AH/1363 CE), *al-Durar al-Kāminah*, by Ibn Hajar (d. 853 AH/1449 CE) and many others. *Secondly*, the work of the *tabaqat* (class) found its specific form and, at that time, already had its social function as literature that sought to present "programmatically" history. Examples of this type of work are *Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā*, by Abu Ishaq ash-Syirāzi (d. 480 AH/1087 CE), *Tabaqāt as-Syāfi'iyyah*, by al-Subki (d. 772 AH/1370 CE), and *Tabaqāt as-Syāfi'iyyah*, by al-Subki (d. 772 AH/1370 CE). 772 AH/1370 AD), *Tabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, by al-Zahabi (d. 749 AH), to *Tabaqāt al-Mufassirin*, by al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH).

Chronography, which is the type of historiography that has most influenced the development of modern history, is the type that has attracted the most attention. *al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Basyar*, by Abu al-Fida' (d. 731 AH/1331 CE), for example, was translated into Latin as early as 1754 CE. According to Robinson, chronographic works have two main principles: annalistic history (*ta'rikh 'ala sinin*), in which a historical narrative is organized around a chronicle based on the *Hijri* year, and caliphal history. In turn, this chronographic work also produced a universal history, which has been pioneered since *Tārikh al-Ya'qubi*, by al-Ya'qubi (d. 285 AH/898 CE), *Tārikh ar-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, by al-Tabari (d. 311 AH/923 CE) and *Muruj al-Dzahab*, by al-Mas'udi (d. 345 AH/956 CE). In the next generation, some representative works, such as *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, by Ibn Kasir (d. 1372 AD) and *Tārikh al-Islam* by al-Dzahabi (d. 1348 AD). In addition, the chronographic trend also produced several works that specifically contain historical narratives of Muslim rulers, such as *al-Inbā' fi Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, by Ibn al-'Imrān (d. 580 H/1184 AD) and *Tārikh al-Khulafā'*, by al-Suyuti (d. 1505 AD).

A distinctly historical dynamic shaped these two critical features of the early part of later post-classical Islamic historiography. The early dynamic portrait of Islam at that time is the dialog with change. In this case, open-minded orientation is a fundamental trait in history. The form of openness begins with an effort to open the horizons of

knowledge with a pattern of translating knowledge from Greek, Persian, Syrian, and other sources into Arabic (Hiti, 2006, pp. 300-301). The translation movement of several scientific works from other nations has formed a transformation of knowledge since the early Islamic caliphate, which provided the "incubation period" for the rise of sciences (Sirjani, 2011: 45). The translation movement, which then became a scientific incubation conducted as early as the Umayyad period has shaped the following pattern of knowledge.

However, knowledge incubation does not always occur positively but also negatively. The case of Islamic historical literature of Islamic history also has political content. Islamic historical literature that is easily traceable in the classical period in Arabic is mainly found during the 'Abbasid period (Hitti, 2006 p. 489). Most historical writings can be traced to this period, and the so-called court historians had become a promising profession. However, since that time, the political issue of writing history also emerged, namely the disappearance of historical writings in the previous period. It is mainly related to the unpeaceful transition from the Umayyads to the Abbasids, which led to the construction of opinions about previous history. According to Nurul Hak, the negative imaging of the Umayyad is inseparable from the construction, methodology and historical "manipulation" in Islamic historiography (Hak, 2012, p. 71). The construction of history occurs in historical sources with narration from narrators who provide bad information that has no apparent foundation.

According to Nurul Hak (2012: 81), one of the negative images of the Umayyads, for example, was carried out in the form of historical "engineering" about the religious image or theological formation of a power that was primarily aimed at Yazid bin Mu'awiyah. From the beginning, Ibn Khaldūn has conducted historical criticism related to the narration of important 'Abbasiyah figures whom historians also wrote with a negative image. Ibn Khaldūn, for instance, contested the negative image of a famous judge in the era of al-Ma'mūn. For Ibn Khaldūn, the story of his worldly relationship was a lie (Ibn Khaldūn, 2006, p. 15).

This gave rise to another important feature in post-classical Islamic historiography; the so-called "historical criticism" and the "official" foundation of the *tārikh* as a discipline. The former culminated in the hand of Ibn Khaldūn ((d. 809 AH/1406 AD)), who developed the trend of critical history through

his *muqaddimah*. He, for instance, has questioned the veracity of the work of historians who rely entirely on information obtained through the transmission (*mujarrad an-naql*). The value of truth and historical logic put forward by al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 AH/956 AD), one of the leading historians and several other historians of his level, has been questioned by Ibn Khaldūn (Ibn Khaldūn, 2006, p. 8).

The trend of historical criticism has had implications for the emergence of more rigorous historians that had increasingly distanced themselves from traditionalist historians. In turn, al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497 M) in the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> declared history (*fann al-tārikh*) as a branch of knowledge that deserves to be alongside the other established discipline. He wrote a remarkable treatise entitled *al-I'lān bi al-Taubīkh 'ala man dzamma 'alā al-Tārikh* (1986). In it, he explains the science of history starting from the definition, object, purpose, usefulness, and other aspects (Sakhāwī, 1986: 16). However, it should be noted that historians with traditionalist tendencies still occupied a significant position in post-classical Islamic historiography. Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 909/1505) is one of the most representative figures of this surviving group. Based on these accounts, Robinson rightly mentioned three major groups of historians who reflected different epistemological backgrounds; traditionalist historians, court-patronage historians, and fellow historians (Robinson, 2003, pp. 85-92). In other words, I have conducted a particular study on *Tārikh al-Khulafā'* composed by the prolific traditionalist historians of the post-classical period of Islamic historiography, Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 909/1505) (Safari, 2016a; Safari, 2016b).

#### MORE LACUNAS IN POST-CLASSICAL ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BEYOND

We have seen that Robinson's efforts have more or less opened the gates for the study of later/post-classical Islamic historiography. However, this has not been enough to stimulate current scholars to explore the historiographical literature produced during this period. Several other breakthroughs have also been rolled out, one of which is by post-colonial scholars. In this case, a unique work emerged in Islamic historiography. Aziz al-Azmeh's *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* represented the post-colonial critique of Islamic historiography (Al-Azmeh, 2007). This work re-considers some fundamental themes in Islamic historiographies, such as the notions of time, civilization, tradition, and canon, the foundation that is distinctive compared to the European

historiographical tradition. However, Al-Azmeh's work does not follow the historiographical studies as previously known. He emphasizes the need to situate Islamic historiography on its foundations and contextualize European historiographical traditions on the other hand. Until now, Al-Azmeh's proposal has not been welcomed by Islamic historiography scholars, so it has become one of the most current issues to be followed up on by subsequent scholars.

Another task that needs to be done is a particular study of the literature on the "science of history" produced during the period of post-classical Islamic historiography. Through this period, we have several available works on this field, such as *al-I'lān bi al-Taubīkh li man dzamma 'alā al-Tārikh* by al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-Faqīr ilā Ṣāḥib al-Sarīr* by Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Ījī (Rosenthal, 1968, pp. 201-244), *al-Syamārikh fi 'Ilm al-Tārikh* by al-Suyūṭī (1894), and the similar works. This is important to be conducted to understand better Muslim historians' *weltanschauung* in looking at history itself, a note that Rosenthal has long reminded to compare with other historiographical traditions, including that of Western historiographical tradition. It should be noted that until this paper is written, the particular study of the "science of history" literature, which has only emerged in post-classical Islamic historiography, has not received the attention it deserves. This issue deserves to be a potential research object, even for dissertation research.

It is also safe to say that the current study of Islamic historiography remains Arabic-centric, as studying other languages is rarely founded. So far, Andrew Peacock is one of the representative scholars in this issue who has studied the historiographical literature in Persian (Peacock, 2007). However, exploring non-Arabic languages remains open for researchers, including Islamic historiography written in Southeast Asian languages, mainly Indonesian. It should also be noted that the Islamic historiography tradition also occurred in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the publication of several works of Islamic history written occasionally. However, we must admit that the study of this tradition is more appropriate to be included in the Islamic historiography of the modern period. This domain is "darker" than the post-classical period itself. It proves that the scope of Islamic historiography to date is still dominated by investigating the classical period and ignoring the post-classical tradition, moreover, the modern period.

In Indonesia, we have seen a relatively blooming activity of writing Islamic history since

the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some important works, such as those written by Hamka (1949), Aboebakar Aceh (1979), and the likes, are indispensable works on Islamic historiography written in Indonesian. One of its salient features lies in the issues on the *historiography of Islamisation*, which may be the uniqueness of Islamic historiography in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, in particular, and in the non-Arabic speaking regions, in general. However, universal Islamic historiography has also become a concern, as represented by Hamka's *Sedjarah Umat Islam* (1949). In modern educational institutions, countless Indonesian textbooks on Islamic history emerged in *pesantren* (traditional Indonesian religious learning institutions), schools, or universities. In this context, the issue of contemporary Islamic historiography in Indonesia and other parts of the Muslim world becomes an issue that is waiting to be explored. In this context, the orientation of scientific research in Indonesian Islamic universities, in particular, must be aware of this issue. Research trends in departments of Islamic history are still dominated by the study of "history" and have not touched the realm of "science of history"; that is, the issue of historiography itself.

## CONCLUSION

A century of Western scholarship on Islamic historiography has established the tradition of writing history among Muslim scholars during the early period, which ended in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. However, investigating the later post-classical period remains a scholarly endeavor that still needs to be done. So far, the narrative that can be employed is that the post-classical Islamic historiography was a phase in which the discipline of *tārīkh* began to find its place in the Islamic intellectual constellation. However, current studies have not given this critical stage the attention it deserves. One significant lacuna, for example, is the absence of a comprehensive study of the works on the science of history (*‘ilm al- tārīkh*) in this phase. Another blind spot is the Arab-centric tendency in Islamic historiography studies, so the Islamic historiographical traditions in the non-Arab world, including Indonesia, are another area that deserves to be explored. As such, my article here introduces the theoretical framework of studying later post-classical Islamic historiography. However, this research has limitations as it is only a brief review of this field's current state of the arts. Therefore, I suggest future research as the follow-ups of the suggestions offered by this article.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I express my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Religious Affairs for providing the scholarship during my doctoral studies at the School of Graduate Studies, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (2009-2016), where the initial research for this article was conducted.

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