

The Importance of Works on Military Campaigns in Medieval Muslim Historiography

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Abstract: This article discusses the significance of historical works on military campaigns written by Muslim historians during the Middle Ages. These works are invaluable sources for studying Islamic history, providing insights into the socio-political context of the time and the events surrounding the spread of Islam. The article examines the works of historians such as al-Baladhuri, al-Waqidi, Abu Ubayda, and al-Madaini, who chronicled military campaigns and actions of the Arabs across various regions and territories. These works are important resources for understanding the military and political aspects of the early Arab caliphate.

Keywords: History of the First Islam, works of *futuh*, "Kashf az-zunun", Waqidi, Madoini, ibn Asam al-Kufi, Yaqut al-Hamawi, al-Baladhuri, Iraq, Sham, *Futuh al-buldan*.



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Introduction.

The sacred religion of Islam holds a special place in the developmental stages of culture and spirituality among the peoples of Central Asia. Historical works written during the early Middle Ages serve as primary sources for studying the history of Islam. At the same time, the socio-political circumstances that emerged during this period contributed to the development of all branches of science. In the 9th–10th centuries, during the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate in the Middle East, the Arabic language and Islamic creed were predominant.

In the early Middle Ages, most works on Islamic history were written by hadith scholars, as these works primarily focused on the life and activities of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and were known under the titles *maghazi* and *sira*. These works later served as foundational sources for books on subjects such as *futuh* (conquests), *tabaqat* (biographies), *tazkira* (memoirs), and *ansab* (genealogies). Although al-Baladhuri's *Futuh al-Buldan* belongs to the *futuh* genre, it drew on *maghazi* and *sira* literature. Thus, even though early medieval historians' works belonged to specific genres, they could also reflect characteristics typical of other genres.

This article discusses works in the *futuh* genre that provide information about military campaigns.

Main Part.

Some works written in the 8th–9th centuries were focused on the history of military activities. In addition to recording historical events and incidents, they also provide information about the cities and regions targeted during campaigns, including their pre-Islamic history, systems of governance, populations, natural features, beliefs, and the customs and traditions of the local people.

Writing in this genre developed particularly from the 9th–10th centuries. Scholars such as Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi (747–823), Muhammad ibn A'iz ad-Dimashqi (767–847), Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri (d. 892), and Ahmad ibn A'tham al-Kufi (d. 926), among others, authored books on the history of military campaigns.

In Khwaja Khalifa's work *Kashf al-Zunun*, the following works on Arab military expeditions are mentioned:

- *Futuh al-Sham* by Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, which was translated into Turkish in verse form by Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Aja (d. 925/1519). The translated work consists of 12,000 verses¹. The work is written in *saj'* (rhymed prose) style and describes the conquest campaigns in the region of al-Sham during the caliphates of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Umar ibn al-Khattab. It covers the conquests of Damascus, Homs, Qinnasrin, Aleppo, and Palestine. The book *Futuh al-Sham* was published in Beirut in 1997². It is also known that al-Waqidi authored another work titled *Futuh al-Amsar* ("The Conquests of the Cities")³.

Futuh Urminiya is a work by Abu Ubayda Mu'awwar ibn al-Muthanna al-Basri (110/728–209/825). The author also wrote *Futuh Ahwaz*⁴, also had a work titled⁵. Abu Ubayda's two works are mentioned in Ibn al-Nadim's *al-Fihrist*⁶, Shams al-Din Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-A'yan* (Deaths of Notables)⁷ mentioned in the works.

Ahmad ibn A'tham al-Kufi's *Kitab al-Futuh* is one of his notable works. In 1199, it was translated into Persian by Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mustawfi under the order of Khwarazmshah Tekish. Despite its significance in the field of historical studies, there is little information about the work in medieval sources. It is, however, mentioned in Yaqut al-Hamawi's *Mu'jam al-Udaba* (574/1179–626/1229)⁸ and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani's *Lisan al-Mizan*⁹. Only brief, repetitive information is provided in the aforementioned works. In 1881, the first part of the book was discovered in the "Gotha" library in Germany. Until then, only the Persian translation of the book was known. The original Arabic manuscript, however, was found in the library of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul (manuscript no. 2956, in two parts). *Kitab al-Futuh* was published in Beirut in 1991¹⁰.

Futuh al-Bayt al-Maqdis is a work by Abu Huzayfa Ishaq ibn Bashshar al-Bukhari (d. 206/821)¹¹. Ishaq ibn Bashshar was born in Balkh and later moved to Bukhara, where he passed away.

¹ Kâtip Çelebi. *Kashf al-Zunun*, Vol. II. – Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1981. – p. 1237

² **Muhammad ibn Umar al-Voqidi.** *Futuh ash-Shom* / **Editor: Abdul Latif Abdul Rahman.** – Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1997. – 607 p.

³ Hoji Khalifa. *Kashf az-Zunun*, vol. II. – Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1981. – p. 1237.

⁴ Ahwaz is a city that is part of the Khuzestan province of Iran. It is located in the southwest of the country, near the border with Iraq. In the 5th century, the city was the administrative and political center of Khuzestan.

⁵ Hoji Khalifa. *Kashf az-Zunun*, vol. II. – Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1981. – p. 1239.

⁶ **Ibn an-Nadim.** *Al-Fihrist*. – Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1997. – p. 80.

⁷ **Shamsiddin ibn Khallikan.** *Wafiyat al-A'yan*, vol. V / **Editor: Dr. Ihsan Abbas.** – Beirut: Daru Sadir, 1972. – p. 239.

⁸ **Yaqut al-Hamawi.** *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, vol. I. – Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993. – p. 202.

⁹ **Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani.** *Lisan al-Mizan*, vol. I. – Beirut: Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyya, 2002. – p. 407.

¹⁰ **Ahmad ibn Asam.** *Kitab al-Futuh* / **Editor: Ali Shiri.** – Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1991. – p. 1993.

¹¹ **Hodja Khalifa.** *Kashf az-Zunun*, vol. II. – Beirut: Daru Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1981. – p. 1240.

Therefore, he was given the *al-Bukhari* attribution. His work *Futuh al-Bayt al-Maqdis* is mentioned in al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's *Tarikh Baghdad*¹², Yaqut al-Hamawi's *Mu'jam al-Udaba* (Dictionary of the Literati)¹³, "**Kitab al-Wafi bil-Wafayat**" by Salah al-Din al-Safadi (696/1296–764/1363)¹⁴. It has been referred to as *Kitab al-Futuh* in sources such as Salah al-Din al-Safadi's *Kitab al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*. In Ibn al-Nadim's *al-Fihrist*, several works authored by Ishaq ibn Bashshar al-Bukhari are listed, including *Kitab al-Mubtada*, *Kitab al-Ridda*, *Kitab al-Jamal*, *Kitab Siffin*, and *Kitab Hufr Zamzam*¹⁵. However, it does not contain any information about *Kitab al-Futuh* or *Futuh al-Bayt al-Maqdis*.

Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib is a work by Abu'l-Qasim Abdurrahman ibn Abdullah ibn Abd al-Hakam al-Misri (187/803–257/871)¹⁶. The author divided the work into seven parts. In six of them, he discusses the ancient history of Egypt, the arrival of Islam there, the administration during the time of Amr ibn al-As, judicial matters, and the Companions who came to Egypt. Only in the sixth part does he provide information about the conquest of North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. Several manuscript copies of the work have survived to this day, and it was published in Cairo in the years 1922, 1961, 1974, and 1995¹⁷.

The book "*Kitab al-Buldan wa Futuhuha*" by Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri¹⁸. The work is known in other sources by the name "*Futuh al-Buldan*"¹⁹. Al-Baladhuri's work "*Futuh al-Buldan*" ("The Conquest of the Lands") is the first dedicated book that narrates the Arab conquests. In the 10th century, the historian al-Mas'udi made extensive use of this work and highly praised it, stating: "The book describes the lands of the East and the West, the North and the South. We know of no better book written about the conquests of the countries"²⁰. This work is of particular importance to us because it reflects the military campaigns conducted by the Arabs in various countries, as well as the political and socio-economic history of the early period of the Arab Caliphate. It is considered one of the most important sources for any specialist studying the early history of the Arab Caliphate, alongside al-Tabari's '*Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*' ('The History of Prophets and Kings'). The work was published in a modern format in 1866 by Michael Jan de Goeje (1836–1909), with an introduction that included information about al-Baladhuri's life, his scholarly activity, and the manuscripts of "*Futuh al-Buldan*".

Although it is not mentioned in Kâtip Çelebi's (Haji Khalifa's) work, it is natural that there were also other works devoted to the history of military campaigns, which hold an important place in the study of early Islamic history. These include the works of Abul Hasan al-Mada'ini (135/752–225/840) and Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn A'iz. Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Nadim recorded 47 works written by al-Mada'ini in this field²¹, Yaqut al-Hamawi's 34 works²² He mentioned them. They contain accounts of the Arab military campaigns in regions such as Sham, Iraq, Basra, Khurasan, Sijistan, Tabaristan, Egypt, and other areas, as well as information about the governors in those regions²³ al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba, who served in the position (of governor)²⁴, Abu Musa

¹² **Khatib al-Baghdadi**. *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. VII. – Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 2001. – p. 336.

¹³ **Yaqut al-Hamawi**. *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, vol. I. – Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993. – p. 623.

¹⁴ **Salahiddin as-Safadi**. *Kitab al-Wafi bil-Wafiyat*, vol. VIII. – Beirut: Daru Ihya at-Turath al-Arabiyy, 2000. – p. 264.

¹⁵ **Ibn an-Nadim**. *Al-Fihrist*. – Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arifa, 1997. – p. 137.

¹⁶ **Hodja Khalifa**. *Kashf az-Zunun*, vol. II. – Beirut: Daru Ihya' at-Turath al-Arabiyy, 1981. – p. 1240.

¹⁷ **Ibn Abdulkhakam**. *Futūḥ Miṣr wa al-Maghrib* / **Editor and Publisher: Dr. Ali Muḥammad Umar**. – Cairo: Maktabat al-Ṣaḡāfa al-Dīniyya, 1995. – p. 9.

¹⁸ **Hodja Khalifa**. *Kashf az-Zunun*, vol. II. – Beirut: Daru Ihya' at-Turath al-Arabiyy, 1981. – p. 1402.

¹⁹ Detailed information on the work *Futūḥ al-Buldān* will be provided in the following sections.

²⁰ **Mas'udi**. *Muruj az-Zahab*, vol. I. – Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Asriyya, 2005. – p. 12.

²¹ **Ibn an-Nadim**. *Al-Fihrist*. – Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arifa, 1997. – p. 150.

²² **Yaqut al-Hamawi**. *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, vol. I. – Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993. – p. 1857.

²³ **Wali** – the governor of a province.

²⁴ **Mughīra ibn Shu'bah** – a Companion; served as governor of the Kufa province from 662 to 670.

al-Ash'ari²⁵, Qutayba ibn Muslim²⁶, Junayd ibn Abd al-Rahman²⁷, Asad ibn Abd Allah al-Qasri²⁸, Nasr ibn Sayyar²⁹ The history of such figures is covered. It is also emphasized in the works *Tarikh Baghdad* by Khatib al-Baghdadi (392/1002–462/1071) and *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala* by Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi that Abul Hasan al-Mada'ini wrote a work on the history of military campaigns³⁰. Al-Baladhuri frequently used the information of al-Mada'ini in writing *Futuh al-Buldan*³¹.

Regarding Muhammad ibn A'iz's work "*Kitab al-Futuh*", it is mentioned in Ali ibn Husayn ibn Asakir's *History of Damascus (Tarikh Dimashq)*³², Jamal al-Din al-Mizzi's (653/1256–742/1341) "*Tahdhib al-Kamal*"³³, Salah al-Din al-Safadi's *Kitab al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*³⁴, Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi's "*Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*"³⁵ These works contain references to Muhammad ibn A'iz. In Salah al-Din al-Safadi's work, Muhammad ibn A'iz's '*Al-Futuh*' is mentioned at one point in the form '*Kitab al-Maghazi wa al-Futuh*'. From this, one might conclude that '*Al-Maghazi*' and '*Al-Futuh*' were a single book. However, the information presented in '*Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*' contradicts this view. Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi first discusses the work '*Al-Maghazi*', stating that he had heard most of the reports transmitted from it. Then he goes on to mention other works by Muhammad ibn A'iz, including '*Kitab al-Futuh*'. From this, it is clear that '*Al-Maghazi*' and "*Al-Futuh*" were not a single book³⁶. No information was found during the research regarding any surviving manuscript or critical edition of the work to this day.

Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya (110/728–170/787) also wrote works on the history of military campaigns. His works included '*Futuh al-Iraq*' and '*Futuh al-Sham*'. However, due to his use of weak narrations in some instances, Abu Mikhnaf was largely ignored by medieval historians. His works on the conquests of Sham and Iraq are mentioned in Ibn al-Nadim's "*Al-Fihrist*"³⁷, Yaqut al-Hamawi's "*Mu'jam al-Udaba*"³⁸, Yaqut al-Hamawi's "*Mu'jam al-Udaba*"³⁹, Ahmad ibn Ali al-Najashi's '*Rijal al-Najashi*'⁴⁰, Inayatullah al-Qahbani's "*Majma' al-Rijal*" (d. 1019/1610)⁴¹ каби асарларида нақл қилинган. "Мажмаъ ар-рижал"да муаллифнинг "Футуху Хуросон" номли асари ҳам борлиги айtilган.

Conclusion.

Most of the works on the history of military campaigns mentioned in biographical dictionaries (*tadhkirah* literature) were written by early medieval historians. This indicates that, during that period, writing in this genre was widespread among historians. The mentioned works serve as

²⁵ **Abu Musa al-Ash'ari** – a Companion; served as governor of the Basra province from 639 to 650.

²⁶ Qutayba ibn Muslim – He governed the province of Khurasan from 705 to 715.

²⁷ Junayd ibn Abdurrahman – He served as the governor of Khurasan from 730 to 734.

²⁸ Asad ibn Abdullah al-Qasri – He was the governor of Khurasan from 725 to 728 and again from 735 to 738.

²⁹ Nasr ibn Sayyar – The last governor of Khurasan during the Umayyad period, he governed the province from 738 to 748.

³⁰ Khatib al-Baghdadi. *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. XII. – Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2011. – p. 54.

Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, Vol. VIII. – Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2006. – p. 446.

³¹ Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri. *Futuh al-Buldan*. – Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ma'arif, 1987. – p. 730.

³² Ibn Asakir. *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, Vol. LIII. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995. – p. 288.

³³ Jamal al-Din al-Muzzi. *Tahzib al-Kamal*, Vol. XXV. – Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1992. – p. 427.

³⁴ Salah al-Din al-Safadi. *Kitab al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*, Vol. III. – Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2000. – p. 149.

³⁵ Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, Vol. IX. – Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2006. – p. 145.

³⁶ Sulaiman ibn Abdullah al-Sawikat. *Muhammad ibn 'Aiz al-Dimashqi and His Historical Works* // Majalla al-Daro, Hijri 1420 (Gregorian 1999), Issue 3. – Riyadh: Dar al-Malik Abdulaziz, 1999. – p. 19.

³⁷ Ibn al-Nadim. *Al-Fihrist*. – Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1997. – p. 126.

³⁸ Yaqut al-Hamawi. *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, Vol. I. – Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993. – p. 2253.

³⁹ Muhammad ibn Shakir al-Kutubi. *Fawat al-Wafayat*, Vol. III. – Beirut: Daru Sadir, 1973. – p. 225.

⁴⁰ An-Najashi. *Rijal al-Najashi*. – Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashir al-Islami, 1979. – p. 321.

⁴¹ Al-Qahbani. *Majma' ar-Rijal*, Vol. V. – Isfahan: Matba'ah ar-Ruwshan, 1967. – p. 82.

valuable sources for studying the history of the regions that were part of the Arab Caliphate and the peoples who lived there.

However, works on Islamic history written during the early medieval period were not limited to this field alone. During that time, numerous works were also composed in the fields of *sīrah* (biographies of the Prophet), *ṭabaqāt* (biographical classifications), *ansāb* (genealogies), and *akhbār* (narrative reports). Studying the historical works and authors of the period under investigation helps determine which sources provide the most reliable information.