

## History of *Maqatal al-Hossein* Documents: From Factual History to Fictional History

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### Abstract

The chronological account of *Maqatal al-Hossein* is a literary work that has been preserved and has become a source of inspiration for the formation of the collective identity of the Shi'a. However, *Maqatal al-Hossein* as a literary work, written based on the subjective understanding of its author, also leaves traces of distortion in the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* itself. This article aims to illustrate the gradual shift of *Maqatal al-Hossein's* narrative from historical to fictional. This article discusses (1) A discussion of the history of the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* as a development of literacy by previous writers, followed by a review of the history of the writing of the historical kitab *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the second century to the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the tenth century Hijri. (2). A review of the critical analysis of the text of the hadiths of *Maqatal al-Hossein* that indicated fiction from the third century Hijri to the tenth century Hijri in the two kitabs of *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the third century and *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the seventh century Hijri. The conclusion of this article shows that the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the period of the third century Hijri to the tenth century Hijri provides an argument about the shift in the historical value of writing the history of *Maqatal al-Hossein*, from historical facts to fictional narratives. Meanwhile, the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the tenth century was also influenced by the various interests of Islamic power at that time.

**Keywords:** *Maqatal al-Hossein*, *Ashura*, *Karbala*.

### Introduction

The commemoration of *Ashura* day by the Shi'a Muslims is carried out by holding several traditions, including the reading of the narrative of Imam al-Hossein's heroism. This narrative is commonly called *Maqatal al-Hossein*. In addition, this mourning event is also filled with *Ashura* sermons and mourning assemblies, which are decorated with

several recitations of mourning poems, songs, and *Ashura ziyārah* prayers. A rhythmic grief poem is performed in chorus while beating the chest as an expression of lament over the tragedy of Imam Hossein's death in Karbala.

Sunni Muslims also celebrate *Ashura* with joy. It has been keeping *Ashura* alive as a day of compassion for orphans. Many traditions recommend fasting on *Ashura* day. In addition, it is also believed that *Ashura* Day is the day of rescue from the calamities that befell the prophets, such as the rescue of Prophet Musa. Starting with the pursuit of Pharaoh, the release of Prophet Yunus from the belly of the fish, the return of Prophet Ibrahim, and so on.

From the Shi'a point of view, the *Maqatal al-Hossein* narrative text circulating today is a narrative product resulting from a long history of writing historical texts on the Karbala tragedy. *Maqatal* texts in the Shi'a tradition are important to evoke collective and deep grief.

According to Prof. Mohsen Kadivar (2020), in a Persian-language article entitled "*Az Kabala Tarikhi To Karbala Asathir*" (From Historical Karbala to Fictional Karbala) states that the distortion of the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* began from the fifth century Hijri and above. The writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* in that century was gradually influenced by the narrative of Shi'a extremists (*ghuluw*), who believed that the Imams, especially al-Hossein, had supernatural knowledge and supernatural powers. Imam Hossein is regarded as an extraordinary human being. From here, the style of historical writing slowly turned into fiction.

The change in the orientation of writing the history of *Maqatal al-Hossein* into a fictional narrative is also related to the lively commemoration of *Ashura* among the Shi'ah, which aims to exploit the atmosphere of grief and oppression. A group of Shi'a believe that if they participate in organizing a mourning assembly for al-Hossein, just shedding tears, then they believe they will get *shafā'at* (help) from Imam Hossein in the afterlife.

According to Mohsen Ranjbar in the first of a series of Persian-language articles entitled *Siri dar Maqatal Newishi va Tarikh Negari Ashuro az Aghoz to Ashre Hozir* (1) (The

History of Writing the *Maqatal al-Hossein* (peace be upon him) from the Beginning to the Present), some of the earliest historians or writers from among the companions of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* had written the *Maqatal al-Hossein* (Ranjbar, 2007b)

In later centuries, historians or translators were more interested in analyzing the history of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) in depth. The historical writings from the second to the seventh centuries are still original, and the chain of transmission, or the so-called *sanad*, is still done. However, slowly, the inclusion of this *sanad* began to be less noticed.

According to Mohsen Ranjbar in his second and third series of articles, entitled "The History of the *Maqatal al-Hossein* (peace be upon him) from the Beginning to the Present" states that the content of the historical value of writing *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the second century to the seventh century Hijri is still considered accurate and convincing, because the indications are still visible in the inclusion of hadith sources (Ranjbar, 2007a, 2008)

However, from the third to the fifth centuries, historians such as Baladzuri, Dinawari, Ya'qubi, and Sheikh Mufid took histories from the same source for summarization or to avoid disputes in writing. Hence, they gradually abandoned the inclusion of the source of the history.

The hadith histories taken were sometimes written very briefly and with additions without mentioning the source of the *sanad*. As in the kitab of Ibn A'tsam al-Kufi there are several narratives whose writing flows like a story. He wrote some additional narratives, even though they were never found in previous historical *kitābs*.

In the eighth to tenth centuries and afterward, *Maqatal al-Hossein's* writings were largely destroyed due to the political conditions of the Mongol invasion and the establishment of the Timurid dynasty. From this, the historical sources of *Ashura* at that time underwent many changes and were no longer of original value, even weak and false. At that time, the writing of the history of the *Ashura* tragedy had turned into a fictitious narrative. In the third part of his article, Mohsen Ranjbar even collects only

those histories that seem fictional and have no historical value, dividing them into several titles (Ranjbar, 2008)

According to Mohsen Raf'at in his article entitled *Naqd va Barrasi Riwayat Anggareha Sayid bin Thawwus Dar Luhouf* (Critique and Analysis of the Histories Contained in the *Kitāb of Al-Luhūf*), states that the author of the kitab of *al-Luhūf* named Sayid bin Thawus was one of the seventh century Shi'a *muhadith*. He is also the author of *Maqtal al-Hossein*. The history quoted by Sayid Ibn Thawus has never been found in the *kitābs* of the previous century, but his *kitāb* remains a reference for the authors of *kitābs* in the following century (Ref'at, 2021)

A look at the content of his history shows that he believed that the Imams (peace be upon them) possessed the *knowledge of the unseen* and *the realm of takwini*, so he accepted a history whose substance was fictional. It is also possible that he quoted a history without examining the validity of its *sanad*. Mohsen Raf'at, in his article, concludes his study of the *kitāb* of *al-Luhūf* that Sayid bin Thawus was much influenced by the Sufism perspective that was popular in his time.

According to Rasul Ja'fariyan (2002) in his article entitled *Dar Borehe Manabi' Tharikh Ashura* (About the Sources of the History of Ashura), the writing of the history of Ashura was originally the result of investigative journalism work. Nevertheless, over time, the writing of the history of Ashura began to be inserted by various factors tailored to the author's interests. Some insert theological, political, and cultural interests.

According to Mansour Dadashnezad and Ibrahim Ghudarzi (2016) in his article entitled *Naqsh Zaman wa Makan wa Muqtaziat Anha dar Barrasi Guzaresh Hoyo Ashura* (The Role of Tempo and Spatial as well as the Requirements Related to the *Ashura* Event in *Ashura's* Histories) states that to find out the sources of accurate information of *Ashura*, the search begins with the question; what happened in the *Ashura* event and why did it happen? When we find sources of history related to the *Ashura* event, why did it happen? When we find sources of history related to the events of *Ashura*, sometimes what escapes the observation of historians is the investigation of when

(temporal) the history appeared and where (spatial) it appeared. Is this history suitable when matched with the temporal and spatial requirements of the time? Here, the author, through observing these two things, wants to show the reader how to analyze accurate and factual sources of history against fake from all the theoretical views put forward by the researchers above, the following points can be summarized: Firstly, they agree that the historical value of writing about the Karbala incident has deteriorated over time.

Second, the researchers agreed that all sources of history related to the events of *Ashura* are worth investigating for their accuracy and suitability to the aspect of historicity itself. Third, each researcher tries to observe the history of *Ashura* by sorting out the history that has historical value with the fictional history.

This article aims to (1) describe the chronology of the writing of the historical document *Maqatal al-Hossein* by Muslim historians from the second or third-century hijri until the tenth century; (2) describe how the process of changing the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* from writing that has historiographical value to writing that has fictional value; (3) describe examples of hadith histories that have fictional value and propose some criticisms of the hadith.

This article is written based on the historical research method, which specifically takes the topic of *Maqatal al-Hossein's* historiography. Collecting data on the history of *Maqatal al-Hossein's* writing uses library research. Several kitab sources by Islamic historians who wrote on *Maqatal al-Hossein* are grouped following the order of periodization. They started from the writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the third century to the tenth-century *hijri* (Islamic calendar based on lunar system). Data analysis followed the internal criticism verification method, which is criticism related to disinformation in the content of historical sources. After the internal criticism procedure, the author interpreted the relationship between the historical texts written by *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the third century to the tenth century.

## Discussion

### The Writing of *Maqatal al-Hossein's Documents from the Second to the Sixth Century Hijri*

#### A. The Role of Abi Mekhnaf in the Second-Century Hijri

After the tragedy of Karbala, several Islamic historians began to write the history of Karbala in their *Maqatal kitābs*. *Maqatal* here means a collection of the history of the events of *Ashura* in Karbala. This collection shows the enthusiasm of historians to immortalize the events of the tragedy that occurred in Karbala with the aim that the description of these important events is not lost to time.

Most of the early records of these early historians have been destroyed, and the history has yet to reach us. These writings are very close to the time of the Karbala incident, which was in the second century *Hijri*, including the following *kitābs*:

1. *Maqatal al-Hossein*, written by Jabir b. Ju'fi. One of the companions of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (peace be upon him) and Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) died in 128 A.H. (Rijal Najashi, pages 128, 129, number 332).
2. *Maqatal al-Hossein*, written by Qasim bin Ashbagh bin Nabatah.
3. *Maqatal al-Hossein*, written by Ammar bin Abi Muawiyah Bajalli Duhni.
4. *Maqatal al-Hossein*, the writing of Abi Mekhnaf, Luth bin Yahya Azdi.

Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal al-Hossein* is the most popular kitab in writing the history of the Karbala tragedy due to its position as the first historical source to record the events of the Karbala tragedy.

Abi Mekhnaf's real name was Lut bin Yahya bin Sa'id bin Mekhnaf bin Salim Azdi Ghamidi. He was a historian from Kufa. Abi Mekhnaf's grandfather was a companion of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him). Abi Mekhnaf lived in a family that loved the *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be upon them). However, the original *kitāb of Maqatal al-Hossein* by Abi Mekhnaf has not reached us, and even his life history has not reached us. Only a few histories from him are quoted from Imam Ja'far al-Shodiq (the sixth Imam of the Shi'a Imamiyah).

Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal al-Hossein* was written after seventy years of the Karbala tragedy. However, the historical quotes taken in Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal al-Hossein* are from the testimonies of those closest to the events of Karbala. Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal* was also documented by one of his students named Hisham Kalbi, who copied the history from him and became the main reference in writing the *Maqatal*.

The popularity of Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal* has always been a major reference among *rijāl* scholars. The *kitāb* was not immune to forgery, as Abi Mekhnaf's *Maqatal* was destroyed, and its traces are only found in the quotations of later historians, mainly by Thabari.

According to Ranjbar and Muftakhiri (2008), many histories have been attributed to Abi Mekhnaf since then, such as the history in the writings of Ibn Shahr Ashub that recounts the events of Karbala. The history is quoted from Abi Mekhnaf from Jaludi, even though Jaludi was unknown. The content of the history is also very different and is not found in other *kitābs* such as *Thabari*, *Irshad*, and *Maqatiluth ath-Thalibin*. Some scholars say Abi Mekhnaf's false *Maqatal* was made during the Safavid era (al-Amin, 1987).

The statement of contemporary Shia muhadith Sheikh Abbas Qomi also supports this. In his *kitāb Alkānī wa al-Alqāb* and *Muqaddimah Nafs al-Humūm*, he states: "If there is a *kitāb* that claims to quote Abu Mekhnaf, but its source is not *Tārīkh al-Thabārī* or other historians, even if they are well-established, then it cannot be used as a guide."

Hasan Ghifari collected all the quotes from Thabari taken from Abi Mekhnaf and published in 1357 HS (Iranian *Hijri Shamsi* calendar). In 1367 A.H., the second printing was published in Qom and was authenticated by Muhammad Hadi Yusufi with the *Kitāb of Waqa'at Althāf* and translated into Persian by Jawad Sulaimani. In 1377 AH, the third printing was published in Tehran by *Hujjah Allah Judaki* under the title *Qiyam Javid* (translation of *Maqatal Abi Mekhnaf*). Later, it was published in Beirut in 1420 AH by Kamil Salman al-Jaburi under the title *Maqatal Imam Al-Hossein bin Ali* (Kadivar, 2020).

The total number of histories collected from *Tarikh Thabari*, quoted from Abu Mekhnaf is about 125 hadiths. One hundred of them are directly quoted from his *Kitāb of Maqtal*, and 10 of them are histories quoted from his student Hisham Kalbi. The remaining 15 histories from *Tārīkh al-Thabārī* are taken from sources other than Abu Mekhnaf.

Dr. Ghulam Hossein Zargari Nezyad took 110 quotes of Abi Mekhnaf's hadith in his kitab entitled *Nahdzat Imām Hossein wa Qiyām Karbala*, Tehran 1383 A.H. The following sources of writing are classified as follows:

1. Imam Hossein's family who were present at Karbala, including Imam Ali Zainal Abidin, four-year-old Imam Muhammad Baqir, and Fatimah bint Ali, Imam Hossein's sister.
2. Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) had close, loyal companions such as Uqbah, Sam'an --the wife of Zuhair, b. Qain, Marqa' bin Tsamamah Asadi, and four others. Then Dhahhak bin Abdullah Masyriqi left Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) on the day of *Ashura* because he saw that the enemy had taken control of the fields of Karbala.
3. The eyewitnesses of the *Ashura* tragedy who were impartial and did not participate in the battle were from the Banu Sa'd group, Abdullah bin Salim and Mudzri bin Sham'an.
4. The eyewitnesses of Ibn Sa'd's army consisted of two groups. First, the group of soldiers who participated in killing Imam Hossein (peace be upon him), such as Katsir bin 'Abd Allah Shu'bi and Hani b. Tsabit al-Hadzrami. Second, the group of soldiers forbade participating in the killing of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him), namely Humaid bin Muslim, Qurrah b. Qais Tamimi, Masruq b. Wail, Afif b. Zuhair, and four others.

Abi Mekhnaf's method of taking histories from them was either directly or through an intermediary, like a son hearing a history from his father. From this, it can be concluded that the writing of the *Maqtal* during the time of Abi Mekhnaf until the time of Shaykh Mufid was not colored by sect fanaticism. The *Sunnis* were also lovers of the

*Ahl al-Bayt*, and the Shi'ah did not hesitate to refer to *Sunni* scholars for their knowledge.

### B. The History of *Maqatal al-Hossein's* Writing in the Third Century Hijri

After the era of writing *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the 2nd century ended, historians continued writing the history of *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the 3rd century AH to the 6th century AH.

In contrast to the 2nd century *Maqatal al-Hossein's* historical writings, which were untraced and did not reach us, the works of the 3rd century historians have reached us. The historical works of the 3rd century are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Historian Authors of *Maqatal al-Hossein* of the 3rd Century Hijri

No.	Kitab Title	Author	Year of Death
1.	<i>Maqatal al-Hossein</i>	Hisyam bin Muhammad Kalbi	(d. 204-6 AH.)
2.	<i>Maqatal al-Hossein</i>	Muhammad bin Umar Waqidi	(d. 207 AH.)
3.	<i>Maqatal al-Hossein</i>	Abu Ubaidah Ma'mar bin Mutsanna	(d. 209 AH.)
4.	<i>Maqatal min Thabāqāt al-Kubrā</i>	Muhammad bin Sa'ad	(d.230 AH.)
5.	<i>Kitāb Maqatal</i>	Ahmad bin Hanbal	(d. 241 AH.)
6.	<i>Maqatal al-Hossein bin Ali</i>	Ibnu Qutaibah Dinawari	(d. 276 AH.)
7.	<i>Tarjumah wa Maqatal Imam Hossein, min Kitāb Ansāb Al-Asyrāf</i>	Ahmad bin Yahya bin Jabir Baladzuri	(d. 279 AH.)
8.	<i>Ikhbār al-Thiwāl</i>	Abu Hanifah Dinawari	(d. 282 AH.)
9	<i>Tārīkh Ya'qūbī</i>	Ahmad bin Abi Ya'qub bin Ja'far bin Wahb bin Waadhih Ya'qubi	(d. 292 AH.)

From Table 1 above, nine quite popular works are produced by Muslim historians. However, of the nine kitabs, only the kitab of *Thabāqāt Ibn Sa'ad* is the most popular, which will be discussed briefly, as follows:

*Thabāqāt Hossein Muhammad bin Sa'd* (died 230 A.H.)

Muhammad bin Sa'ad was a Sunni historian who was not fanatical. Ibn Sa'd is one of the historians who did not escape various accusations and criticisms, such as Ibn Ishaq, Abi Mekhnaf, Hisham Kalbi, and others. Some Shi'a rijals, such as al-Majlisi, accused him of being a contrarian. In contrast, a group of *Sunni rijals* accused him of being a *rafidhah shia*—some scholars, such as Yahya bin Ma'in accused him of being a liar. Some groups of Sunni scholars, such as Abu Hatim Razi, stated that Ibn Sa'd was truthful and were later followed by Shamsuddin adz-Dzahabi, who helped rehabilitate his good name.

The first printing of *Thabāqāt al-Kubrā* was done in Leiden, Europe, in 1904-1917. However, this printing was still incomplete and imperfect, then in the next printing, the shortcomings were included in the form of separate *kitābs* consisting of 3 volumes.

Sayyid Abdul Aziz Thabathaba'i (1996) researched the manuscripts of Ibn Sa'd that had been stored in Turkish libraries since the seventh century and managed to print them. However, the section entitled *Tarjumah Hasanain* was not included in the kitab. Then, after being corrected and authorized by Muhammad bin Shamil Sulami, the kitab was printed in two volumes under the titles *al-Thabāqāt al-Kubrā*, *al-Thabāqāt al-Khāmisah min al-Shaikh*. In the first volume, pages 369-519 tell about Imam Hossein (Ranjbar, 2007b)

In the kitāb of *al-Thabāqāt*, the history of Imam Hossein is written in two parts. The first part is about Imam Hossein's virtues and life from birth, and the second is about *Maqatal al-Hossein*. In the first part, Muhammad b. Sa'd writes on the basis of the sanad of the hadith which he quotes 90 hadiths, and in the second part about the event of *Ashura* on the basis of 50 hadith *sanad* reports. He does not specify the source of the hadith, but only mentions it in general terms, such as "Qālū..." or "they said..."

In some of his histories, he relies on hadith experts such as Waqidi, Abi Mekhnaf, and others; at the end, he also emphasizes, "and besides them, I also narrated this hadith from several sources, and I recorded it in my kitab *Maqatal al-Hossein rahmah Allah wa ridhwānuhū wa shalawātuhū wa barakātuhū*" (Ja'fariyan, 2002).

However, there is one history that seems odd, and this history is only found in the kitab of *al-Thabāqāt* and not in other kitabs, namely: "... at the time of Karbala and afterward, every stone bled, and the sky was red. The enemy soldiers found unusual things." (Ja'fariyan, 2002).

### C. The History of *Maqṭal al-Hossein's* Writing in the Fourth Century AH

After the end of the era of writing *Maqṭal al-Hossein* in the 3rd century, historians continued writing the history of *Maqṭal al-Hossein* from the 4th century Hijri. The popular historical works writing *Maqṭal al-Hossein* from the 4th century are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Historians who wrote the *Maqṭal al-Hossein* of the 4th Century Hijri

No.	Kitab Title	Author	Year of Death
1.	<i>Qiyām Ashura in al-Umam wa al Mulūk</i>	Muhammad bin Jarir Thabari	(d. 310 AH)
2.	<i>Al-Futūḥ</i>	Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Ali bin A'tsam Kufi	(d.314 AH.)
3.	<i>Al-Iqd al-Farīdh</i>	Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abdurrabbah Andalusi	(d. 328 AH)
4.	<i>Murūj al-Dzahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawāhir</i>	Abul Hasan Ali bin Hossein bin Ali Mas'udi	(d. 346 AH.)
5.	<i>Maqatil al-Thālibīn</i>	Abul Faraj Isfahani	(d. 356 AH.)
6.	<i>Syarḥ al-Akhhār fī Fadhā'il A'immah Al-Athhār</i>	Qadhi Nu'man Tamimi Maghribi	(d. 363 H).

There are at least five popular works by historians of the fourth-century *Hijri* who wrote about *Maqṭal al-Hossein*. The following is a description of the work of one of the historians who was quite influential in his time:

*Maqṭal al-Hossein*, Ahmad bin A'tsam al-Kufi (died 314 H)

Ahmad bin A'tsam Kufi was a contemporary of earlier historians such as Thabari, Dinawari, Baladzurri, Ya'qubi, and Mas'udi. He recorded his historical documents regarding the beginning of Islam in his kitab entitled *Al-Futūḥ*. He recorded many accounts of the history since the death of the Prophet Muhammad. From the caliphate

of the second century to the middle. Only slightly, he recorded the events of Karbala. Like the *kitābs* of Ya'qubi and Dinawari, this kitab is a narrative and rarely includes hadith *sanads*.

Ibn A'tsam took many narratives from various sources so that many valuable narratives can be taken from his *kitābs*, such as the document on the Imam's will and Zainab's sermon when she was a prisoner in Kufa. Ibn A'tsam was the second narrator to narrate Zainab's speech. He is the second narrator after Ibn Abi Thayfur, who deserves to be the main reference, although further research is needed. The debate between Imam Sajjad (Imam Ali b. Hossein) and an older man when he was a prisoner and entered the city of Sham caused the older man to repent – Imam Sajjad's sermon at the court of Yazid. Ibn A'tsam is the main source for the history of such sermons.

#### D. Historians Writing *Maqatal al-Hossein* in the 5th & 6th Centuries Hijri

Among the popular historical works writing *Maqatal al-Hossein* from the 5th and 6th centuries are shown in table 3 below:

Table 3. Historians Writing *Maqatal al-Hossein* of the 5th and 6th Century Hijri

No.	Kitab Title	Author	Year of Death
1.	<i>al-Irshād</i>	Syekh Mofid	(d. 413 AH.)
2.	<i>Maqatal al-Hossein or Nūr al-A'immah</i>	Abul Mu'ayad Muwafaq bin Ahmad Khawarizmi	(d. 568 AH.)
3.	<i>Tarjumah Rayḥānah Rasūl Allah saw.</i>	Ibnu Asakir	(d. 571 AH.)
4.	<i>Manāqib 'Alī Abī Thālib</i>	Ibnu Syahri Asyub	(d. 588 AH.)

*Manāqib 'Alī Abī Thālib*; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahri Ashub al-Syarawi al-Mazandarani (d. 588 AH)

From reading the title alone, it is clear that the content of this kitab is aimed at something other than writing a biography. Rather, it contains an account of the virtues, honor, miracles, and moral excellence of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him). However, there is a chapter devoted to the events of Karbala. The kitab describes the strange

events after the martyrdom of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him). Some other histories explain the Prophet's love for Imam Hossein, the history of his birth, the choice of his name and nickname, and matters related to his martyrdom.

Some of his histories are quoted from Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, Imam Shadiq, and Imam Ridho, both regarding the life, virtues, and events of Ashura until the killing of Imam Hossein. In addition, Ibn Shahri Ashub also took sources from the *kitābs* of *Ansāb al-Ashrāf Baladzuri*, *Tārīkh al-Thabārī*, *Maqṭal Ibn Babawaih*, *Fadhā'il 'Ashroh Abū Sa'ādah*, *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā Abu Na'im Isfahānī* as well as from previous historians such as *Abi Mekhnaf*, *Shu'aib bin Abdurrahman Khuza'i*, *Sayid Jurjani*, *Ibn Mahdi Mamathiri*, *Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal*, *Syakir bin Ghanimah Abul Fadhl Hashimi*.

### Deviations in the Authorship of Maqṭal al-Hossein

The following is a critical analysis of the hadith text controversy whose content goes beyond the rules of historiography into a fictitious hadith narrative. However, here we only present three critical analyses of three hadiths sourced from three historical *kitābs*, namely, Ibn Sa'd's third-century *Thābaqāt*, Ibn A'tsam's fourth-century *al-Futūḥ* and Ibn Thawus' seventh-century *al-Luhūf*, a kitab popular in the tenth century.

#### A. The History of Ibn Sa'd (230 AH)

In the first three centuries, most of *Maqṭal al-Hossein's* sources of history still contained historical values, and if one *kitāb* recorded an odd event, it would be easily detected. Some of the hadiths that are indicated to be odd are the *kitāb Tarjumah al-Imām Hossein wa Maqṭalah Min al-Kitāb al-Thābaqāt al-Kubrā* written by Ibn Sa'ad (230 AH) page 90 which contains the following odd histories:

1. He said it was narrated from Affan bin Muslim Yahya bin Ibad, Katsir bin Hisham, Muslim bin Ibrahim, and Musa bin Ismail. They said it was told to me by Hamad bin Salamah. He said: Ammar bin Abi Ammar informed me from Umm Salamah. She said: "I heard the jinn lamenting for al-Hossein."

2. He said: It was narrated to me by Ali bin Muhammad from Ali b. Mujahid from Hansy b. Haris from Shaykh from an-Nakho'i, who said: Hajjaj said: "Whoever is afflicted by calamity, stand up!" So one of the people stood up and mentioned (his calamity). Then Sannan bin Anas stood up and said: "I am the murderer of Hossein, so then Sannan said: "Calamity! Fine." At that time, Sannan returned to his place, and immediately, his tongue became twisted and crazy. After that, he always ate and had wudats in his place.
3. He said: Muslim ibn Ibrahim informed me: Umm Shauq al-Abdiyah said to me: Nadzratul Azdiyah said: "When Hossein bin Ali was killed a rain of blood fell from the sky, and it made our tent and everything else covered with blood".
4. He said it was narrated to us from Sulaiman bin Harb and Musa bin Ismail, both of whom said it was narrated from Hammad bin Salamah, he said it was narrated from Sulaim al-Qas, he said: "we were showered with blood on the day al-Hossein was killed".
5. He told me Muhammad bin Umar, from Najih told me about a man from Ali Said who said; I heard Zuhdi say: I was asked by Abdul Malik bin Marwan, He said: "What are the signs of the place where Hossein was killed?". Zuhdi replied: "On that day, there was not a single rock, but bad blood came out of it." Then Abdul Malik said: "You and I are strangers in this place".

The above histories are examples of fictitious, non-factual, and ahistorical sources. Other historical kitabs never narrate anything like this, and the rest of the histories in *Thābaqāt* have historical content.

Moreover, Ibn Sa'd's *Thabaqāt* was first printed in Leiden, Europe, from a collection of rudimentary manuscripts and was completed a decade later, but the missing parts were then printed separately in three volumes. The missing part of the manuscript is the section on the history of Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein (a.s.) known as "*Tarjumah al-Hossein wa Maqtalah min at-Thabaqāh al-Kubrā*".

The person who first discovered this missing section was the late Sayyid Abdul Aziz Thabathabai. He discovered this ancient manuscript in the seventh century in a

Turkish library. It was then printed and authenticated by Muhammad bin Shamil Assalmi (Ja'fariyan, 2002).

Critique:

1. The mention of the name of the murderer of *Imam* al-Hossein is not in accordance with the established historical *kitābs*, so it is very likely that there has been a distortion of history through this newly discovered manuscript in Turkey. It is clear that this anomalous history was deliberately attributed to *Thabaqāt Ibn Sa'ad* in order to distort history by inserting a history.
2. Most contemporaneous historical *kitābs* have generalized histories, but this passage uses hyperbolic language such as raining blood and bloody stones. Ibn Sa'd, on the other hand, writes history by maintaining an objective narrative.
3. The meaning of raining blood or bleeding stones may have a connotative meaning that describes the atmosphere of war that seems to rain blood when arrows or swords rain down on soldiers. However, if the denotative meaning is meant, then this history describes a curse from God in this world, whereas the verse of the Qur'an explains that the punishment for sinners is postponed until the coming of the Day of Resurrection.

٩٠ ..... ترجمة الإمام الحسين وفتلته عليه السلام  
 نحوها: فقال: هكذا بكتفه على وجهه، وقال: لا تحمدت بهذا أحداً.  
 ٣١٩. قال: أخبرنا عغان بن مسلم ويحيى بن عباد وكثير بن هشام  
 ومسلم بن إبراهيم وموسى بن اسماعيل، قالوا: حدثنا حماد بن سلمة، قال أخبرنا  
 عمار بن أبي عمار، عن أم سلمة، قالت: سمعت النبي ﷺ يقول: من قتل الحسين،  
 ٣٢٠. قال: أخبرنا علي بن محمد، عن علي بن جاهد، عن حنش بن  
 الحارث، عن شيخ من النخع، قال: قال الخنيج: من كان له بلاء فليقيم، فقام  
 قوم فذكروا.  
 وقام ستان بن أسد، فقال: أنا قاتل حسين، فقال: بلاء حسن! ورجع  
 ستان إلى منزله فاعتقل لسانه وذبح عنقه، فكان يأكل ويمدح في مكانه.  
 ٣٢١. قال: أخبرنا مسلم بن إبراهيم، قال حدثنا أم شوق العبدية،  
 قالت: حدثني نضرة الأزدي، قالت:  
 لما قتل الحسين بن علي مطرت السماء دماً، فأصبحت خيامنا وكل شيء  
 منا على دم.  
 ٣٢٢. قال: أخبرنا سليمان بن حرب وموسى بن اسماعيل، قالوا: حدثنا  
 حماد بن سلمة، قال: حدثنا صالح القاص، قال: طُفرت دم يوم قتل الحسين.  
 ٣٢٣. قال: أخبرنا محمد بن عمر، قال: حدثني نجيج، عن رجل من آل  
 سعيد [٧٠/أب] يقول:  
 سمعت الزهري يقول: سأني عبد الملك بن مروان، فقال: ما كان علامة  
 مقتل الحسين؟ قال: لم تكشف يوشحاً حجراً إلا وجدت نحه دماً عبيطاً! قال  
 عبد الملك: أنا وأنت في هذا غريبان.  
 ٣٢٤. قال: أخبرنا محمد بن عمر، قال حدثني عمر بن محمد بن عمر بن  
 علي، عن أبيه، قال: أرسل عبد الملك إلى ابن رأس الجالوت، فقال: هل كان في  
 (٣١٩) وأخرجه أحمد في الفضائل عن عبد الرحمن بن عهدي عن حماد بن سلمة: يكتن على  
 حسين.  
 وأخرجه أحمد بن حنبل في الطبقات (٦١/٤).  
 (٣٢١) حكاية سبط ابن الجوزي في تذكرة خواص الأئمة ص ٣٧٤ من ابن سعد.

Picture 1: *Kitāb of Tarjumah al-Imām Hossein Min al-Thabaqāt al-Kubrā*, p. 90

## **B. History Ibnu A'tsam (314 H)**

The history of Ibn A'tsam became a reference to the *kitābs* by the great scholars later both from Sunni and Shi'a circles. Among them are Ya'qubi, Dinawari, Ibn Shahr Ashub, Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, the *kitab Biḥar al-Anwār* owner, Khawarizmi, and others.

Ibn A'tsam was the first to narrate the dream of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) at the tomb of the Prophet (peace be upon him) before leaving Madinah. This history is quite long, like a story. The content is that al-Hossein dreamed of meeting the prophet and the news of his imminent death.

The hadith briefly describes Imam Hossein's departure from Medina after refusing the order of allegiance to Yazid. Walid bin Utbah carried out the order of allegiance as the ruler of Medina. News of this refusal reached Yazid by letter, and Yazid wrote back with an order to execute Imam Hossein.

After Imam Hossein refused allegiance to Yazid, he did not immediately leave Medina to avoid the demands of allegiance and the possible consequences of his refusal. He stayed in Madinah for three days and two nights, even though the demand for allegiance to Yazeed was immediate, and refusing it would have meant endangering his life.

In the history of Ibn A'tsam, for three days and two nights, Imam Hossein made a pilgrimage to the grave of the Messenger of Allah, complained and complained about the fate that had befallen him to the Messenger of Allah, cried and fell asleep, and then he had a dream. The narrative of this dream written by Ibn A'tsam describes the news about his death in Karbala, below is a partial excerpt of the narrative as follows:

*"He (Ibn A'tsam) said, Then al-Hossein wept until near dawn, and he put his head on the tomb of the prophet until he fell asleep for a while, then he dreamed of meeting the prophet who had welcomed him and was accompanied by angels both on his right and left, front and back. Then the apostle of Allah embraced al-Hossein on his chest and kissed his forehead then said; "Ya bunayya O my son Hossein as if I see you in the near future in a state of being killed and slaughtered in a land called Karbun wa Bala by a group of my people and you are then in a state of thirst not given water and in a state of thirst and do not say that they want mercy from me, not at all I will not give my mercy on the Day of Judgment, nor will Allah help him. O my*

beloved Hossein, verily your father, mother, and brother have welcomed you, and they are longing for you, and verily you will be in the highest degree of Paradise, which cannot be attained except through shahadah. In the dream, Hossein said, "O grandfather, forever I do not want to return to this world, so let me come with you ..." then the apostle of Allah saw. Said, "O Hossein, you must return to this world until you get the sustenance of shahadah, and that is what Allah has determined for you, because in it there is a considerable reward, verily you, your father, and your brother and your uncle, your paternal uncle on the Day of Resurrection will be gathered in the same group to enter heaven. He (Ibn A'tsam) said immediately that Hossein awoke from sleep in a state of fear and told his family about his dream, so the assembly was filled with weeping and lamentation where, from the east and west, there was no sorrow like this. Furthermore, on the third night, Imam Hossein went to his mother's and brother's graves (Imam Hasan). He returned home until dawn, and the following night, he and his family went to Mecca. When he was about to leave for Mecca, he wrote a will to his brother Muhammad bin Hanafiyah, the gist of which was that he was going to Kufa to uphold the teachings of my grandfather (the Prophet Muhammad), my father (Ali bin Abi Talib) and the teachings of the Khulafaur Rashidin."



Picture 2: *Kitāb Al-Futūḥ, Ahmad Ibn A'tsam, Volume 5 pp. 18-19*

Critique:

1. This history contradicts the histories of most other historians, such as those of Shaykh Mofid, Shaykh Shaduq, Thabari, Khawarizmi, and others. The well-known history states that the ruler of Medina urged Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) to pay allegiance to Yazid immediately after 'asr time. Because of this emergency,

Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) asked for time to think about it until the next morning, and that very night, he left Madinah to avoid giving allegiance to Yazid.

2. He was looking at the content of Ibn A'tsam's history above, which depicts Imam Hossein as so desperate that he asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to die on the spot and not to return to this world. This hadith is not under the personality of believers forbidden to despair.
3. History states that Imam Hossein will not reach heaven except through martyrdom. This destiny means that martyrdom to get to heaven is a destiny for Imam Hossein that cannot be rejected, so in this case, the Yazid government cannot be blamed because Yazid is also one of the factors that can lead Imam Hossein to heaven.

Ibn A'tsam was a loyal historian of *Ahl al-Sunnah* but also deeply loved the prophet's family. Therefore, in writing the history of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him), he wanted to convey the message that the position of the *al-Khulafa' al-Rāsyidūn* rulers was in line with the struggle of *Ashura*. This analogy can be seen in the history of his will to Muhammad bin Hanafiyah, which states that I want to carry out the story of my grandfather, the Prophet, and the story of my father, Ali bin Abi Talib and the story of the *al-Khulafa' al-Rāsyidūn*.

### C. The History of Ibn Thawus in *Kitāb al-Malhūf 'Alā Qatl al-Thufūf*, known as *Kitāb al-Luhūf* (d. 664 AH).

The name *Kitāb al-Luhūf* is another name for *Kitāb al-Malhūf 'Alā Qatl al-Thufūf*, by Sayid Ibn Thawwus (d. 664 AH). It was written in the seventh century *Hijri*, but it was not until the tenth century *Hijri* that it became popular. The characteristics of this book are historically flawed. For example, it does not show the chain of narrators and introduces foreign narratives that are never mentioned in other historical *kitābs*.

Some hadiths about *Maqtal al-Hossein* that did not exist until the seventh century, then appeared in the seventh century and became popular in the tenth century were hadiths in the *Kitāb al-Luhūf*. These *hadiths* led to a schism among the scholars in later centuries.

This split divided the *ummah* into two groups. The first group said that Imam Hossein's resurrection's purpose was to fulfill his death's destiny. Through his death and the commemoration of *Ashura*, it was recognized that the teachings of Islam would be revived with the hope that Muslims would take Imam Hossein as a symbol of heroism in opposition to oppression.

The second group is the opinion of Sheikh Mofid and his group, who say that the purpose of Imam Hossein's resurrection was to overthrow Yazid's rule, not to fetch his death. As for the *shahādah*, it was the end of his defeat in battle, just as the Muslims had also experienced defeat in battle, such as in the battle of Uhud.

Examples of the two histories of Ibn Thawus are as follows:

*First history:*

Towards dawn, imam Hossein (peace be upon him) left Makkah. As soon as his brother Muhammad ibn Hanafiyah heard this news, he immediately mounted the dowry camel that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) used to ride and said: "O my brother, have you not promised me to reconsider my words?". Hossein (peace be upon him) replied: "Why not!". Mohammed b. Hanafiyah said: "Then for what reason do you want to leave?". Hossein (peace be upon him) said: "After your departure, the apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) came to me and said: "O Hossein, go to Iraq, for it is the will of Allah to see you killed." Ibn Hanafiyah said: "*Innā lillāhi wainnā ilaihi rāji'ūn*" "and are you now going to be killed, so why should you take women with you?". Hossein (a.s.) said that "the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Surely Allah swt. wills to see them in a state of captivity" (*Al-Luhūf*, page 65).

Sayyid bin Thawus does not mention the source of this history. However, the content of the history is to emphasize first that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) knew that he would be killed and his family would be taken captive. Secondly, the killing of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) and the captivity of his family was the will and destiny of Allah swt. Upon him who had to meet *shahādah*.

Critique:

1. If the killing of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) and the captivity of his family were part of God's will, then the question is whether it is possible for God to want bad things for his servants. Could it be that Islamic Shari'ah condones cruel, murderous, and oppressive behavior? So far, religion has taught resistance to oppression such as the resistance to King Namrud and Pharaoh.
2. If the killing of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) and the captivity of his family were the will of God, then the Umayyads' will was in accordance with the will of God. Hence, the Umayyads should not be blamed for the killing, massacre, and captivity of the women of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be upon them).
3. If the killing of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) and the captivity of his family were the destiny of Almighty Allah upon Imam Hossein (peace be upon him), then the struggle of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) to Karbala was not based on the will of Imam Hossein (peace be upon him). His destiny is contrary to Shi'a theology, which believes in the freedom of choice in life, such as whether to avoid destruction or to choose to fall into destruction.

*Second history:*

The history of *Umm al-Fadhl*, the wife of Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, about Imam Hossein's destiny as an infant. At that time the apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) wept over his grandson Hossein and said: "Verily Gabriel has informed me and said that in the future my people will kill my son" (*Al-Luhūf*, page 92)

Alternatively, the hadith of Umm Salamah about a clod of earth that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) willed to her. Later, when the clod of earth turned into blood, al-Hossein was killed in Karbala.

These two histories confirm that from the time of his birth, the Prophet knew that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) would be killed. Through this hadith, the Ummah also knew that one day Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) would be killed.

*Critique:*

1. The content of the above history contains a general explanation of the death of al-Hossein (peace be upon him) and does not mention where and when it will

happen. Although there are some other histories that are similar to it and mention how, where, and when it will happen. This similarity means that these two histories cannot be taken as evidence that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) and the people knew what would happen to him and his family in Karbala.

2. There is no evidence in history that the people had heard of such a hadith or a hadith similar to it which mentions where and when the killing would take place. If they had, they would have tried to prevent him from going to Karbala to change his unfortunate fate. This means that hadiths like this were made after the Karbala incident and then popularized.
3. The historical fact is that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) sent Muslim bin Aqil to Kufa to ascertain the readiness of the people of Kufa to receive Imam Hossein, and Imam Hossein left Madinah after receiving a letter from Muslim bin Aqil informing him of the situation of the people of Kufa who were eagerly awaiting his presence. However, it was only later that the Imam (peace be upon him) learned that Yazid's espionage had killed Muslim bin Aqil. So what was all this for if, in the end, Imam Hossein ('a) knew everything that would happen? For what purpose would Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) send Muslim b. Aqil and hand him over to the enemy to be killed? This is difficult for reason to accept (Najafabadi, 2004).

From these two histories, the author of *al-Luhūf* seems to be conveying that he believes that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) has the ability of the supernatural or knowledge of the future, even the secrets of when and where his death will occur. This belief violates the teachings of the Qur'an, which states that no one knows when and where he will die based on the knowledge of the supernatural.

Mohsen Raf'at's study illustrates that Sayyid bin Thawus' belief about Imam Hosein's knowledge of the secret of his shahadah often finds contradictions between one history and another, and this shows his indecision in his belief (Ref'at, 2021)

For example, the history in *al-Luhūf* on page 65 indicates the Imam's knowledge that he would be killed and his family would be taken captive. However, in the history of *al-Luhūf*, on page 84, it is explained that the purpose of the imam (peace be upon

him) taking his entire family to Kufa was because he feared that his family would be taken captive by Yazid's army, thus preventing imam Hossein (peace be upon him) from practicing *al-Amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* with the people of Kufa.

The history of *al-Luhūf* on page 64 mentions Imam Hossein's (peace be upon him) fear of being killed in the Sacred Mosque, but on pages 62, 66, 81, it mentions that his supernatural knowledge of his slaughter in Karbala did not affect his fear.

The writing of *al-Luhūf*'s account of Ashura aimed not only to expand his belief that Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) possessed supernatural knowledge and the secret of his death. However, without realizing it, it also meant justifying the *Umayyad-Jabariyah* theology that wanted the Hossein family to be killed and taken captive, which was following the will of God.

The martyrdom of Hussein means that the Umayyads cannot be blamed for their involvement in the assassination of Imam Hossein, as they were merely a means to the realization of the will of God, who wanted to see Hossein (peace be upon him) killed and his family taken captive. This belief violates Shi'a theology, which believes that people have the power to make choices and will be held accountable for their choices.

In the tenth century, the writing of the history of *Ashura* was influenced by socio-political and cultural factors, considering that at that time it was the heyday of the Mongol dynasty called *Timuriyah*, followed by the Safavid and Qajar dynasties to the Shahansyahi dynasty until today.

The kitab of *al-Luhūf* only reappeared in the tenth century, after it had previously been considered lost or unpopular in the era of Ibn Thawus bad the seventh hijri. The Safavid rulers later popularized it to cultivate mourning assemblies.

*Maqatal* writing in this century was adapted to the needs of the community as a means of filling the program at the mourning assembly (*majlis 'aza*) that could anesthetize the community to cry, so what was touched was feeling, tenderness, crying, sadness, calamity, injury, alienation, separation, thirst, oppression, and others.

This can be seen in the titles of kitabs about *Maqatal al-Hossein* during the Qajar rule, such as *Tharīq al-Bukā'* (The Path of Weeping), *Thufan al-Bukā'* (Taufan of

Weeping), *Amwaj al-Bukā'* (Waves of Weeping), *Bahr al-dumū'* (Sea of Tears), *Shabuddumū'* (Pouring of Tears), *Baḥr al-Bukā' fī Mashaib al-Ma'shūmīn* (Sea of Weeping in the Calamity of Saints).

## Conclusion

Based on the review of the description in discussion one and the critical analysis in discussion 2, the following points can be concluded: *Firstly*, The history of *Maqṭal al-Hossein's* writing underwent a gradual transformation from historical writing by previous historians to the writing of *Maqṭal al-Hossein* based on literary or fictional narratives. *Secondly*, the writing of the history of *Maqṭal al-Hossein* in the third century Hijri, such as in the *kitāb* of *Thabāqāt Ibn Sa'ad*, has also found some odd *hadiths* such as the phrase "the sky turned red", "bloody stones", "blood rain" and so on. Regardless of whether these are just expressions with connotative meanings, these oddities can still be confronted with similar contemporaneous *kitābs*. *Maqṭal al-Hossein's* method of writing history includes the chain of transmission (*sanad*) as used by *hadith* scholars. *Thirdly*, in the fourth and fifth centuries, since the publication of Thabari and Irshad Mofid, the method of writing history that includes the chain of transmission began to decrease. The inclusion of the *sanad* was summarized with the words "*Qālū...*" (It has been said). However, the editorial content of the text can still be traced to the origin of the source. In addition, writers in that century slowly began to add and subtract many narratives, then assemble them into a story. *Fourthly*, entering the sixth and seventh centuries, the writing of *Maqṭal al-Hossein's* history began to shift to the form of stories or prose. Although its historical value was retained, theological views began to be inserted. *Fifthly*, Under the rule of the Timurid dynasty in the eighth-century hijri, Iranian Muslims began to tend to Sufism in their religion. Until power passed to the Safavid dynasty in the tenth century, there was an acculturation of Sufism and Shi'ism into the tradition of mourning assemblies (*majlis azadori*). The Safavid rulers' support for the spread of the Shi'a school of thought in Iran was carried out by intensifying the

organization of Imam Hossein's mourning assembly tradition. Until the tenth century, *Maqatal al-Hossein's kitābs*, such as *al-Luhūf*, *Raudhah al-Syuhadā'*, *al-Fakhri*, and others, became the religious needs of the people at that time.

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