



Arabic Manuscripts in Islamic Historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty

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Abstract: Historiography of Islam has often reflected the efforts to construct history distorted by political elements of power and the subjective interests of historians, hindering the presentation of the true historical facts. One of the pressing issues is how the use of the Arabic language in historical texts influences the understanding of Islamic historiography. This research aims to detail and analyze the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the medieval period, especially in the context of the Mamluk Dynasty, with a focus on the role of the Arabic language. The research methodology involves a literature review, examining various previous studies on Islamic historiography. The results of data analysis reveal characteristics of encyclopedic scholarship, the pivotal role of the Arabic language as the primary means of communication in constructing historical narratives, and the presence of creativity and originality in historical writings. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of theoretical frameworks for understanding the history of medieval Islam during the Mamluk period. This study is essential for delving into Islamic historiography of the past, especially in the context of the use of the Arabic language, to gain a deeper understanding of how Islamic history was recorded and conveyed during the Mamluk Dynasty. With this understanding, we can grasp the political, cultural, and social nuances that shaped the Islamic historical narrative during this period, while highlighting the crucial role of the Arabic language in this process.

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Introduction / المقدمة / Pendahuluan

Throughout history, including in Islamic historiography, historical writing often tends to reflect a biased construction of history,¹² Historical writing, which should ideally

¹ Dwi Susanto and Riana Wati, "Wacana Romantisme dalam Sejarah Sastra Indonesia Periode Kolonial Belanda (1900-1942)," *Kembara: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya* 5, no. 1 (2019): 40-52.

² Dunita Nabila A Rahimin, "Mitos dan Legenda: Di Sebalik Percanggahan Fakta dalam Sejarah Asia Tenggara," *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, (2019).

serve as a guardian of historical facts,³ is frequently influenced by the political nuances of power and the subjective interests of historians,⁴⁵ resulting in the distortion of true historical facts. In addition, within the context of Arabic-language history, issues related to the original form of manuscripts have also become a critical concern. However, in response to these shortcomings, modern historians are increasingly recognizing the distortions that occur in historical writing due to various subjective factors.

The development of medieval Islamic historiography is a reflection of these changes. During this period, two main perspectives in historical writing emerged. The first perspective was conservative historical writing, which tended to rely on recycling, summarizing, and repeating previous histories. On the other hand, the second perspective was critical historical writing that adopted a multidimensional approach, constructed new historical directions, and aimed to avoid bias and distortions. In addition to the methods of historical writing, the medieval period was also influenced by the dominant political context of the time, such as the rule of the Mamluk Dynasty in the Egyptian region. The Mamluk Dynasty had a significant influence on the history of Islam during that era,⁶⁷ and making an understanding of the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty period highly important.

Some previous studies on the subject of Islamic historiography include Muhammad Husni's research on the Fall of the Mamluk Dynasty in Egypt.⁸ Sultan Hamdanyah's study on the establishment of the Mamluk Dynasty and their role.⁹ Dadang Mozi's exploration of the military strategies employed by the Mamluk Dynasty in dealing with the Mongols.¹⁰ Stiawan's research focusing on the overlooked history of

³ Joko Sayono, "Biografi dan Studi Tokoh Sejarah," *Jurnal Sejarah, Budaya, dan Pengajarannya* 16, no. 2 (2022): 415–426.

⁴ Ganda Febri Kurniawan, Wanto Wanto, and Leo Agung Sutimin, "Dominasi Orang-Orang Besar dalam Sejarah Indonesia: Kritik Politik Historiografi dan Politik Ingatan," *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha* 4, no. 1 (2019): 36–52.

⁵ Arditya Prayogi and Dewi Anggraeni, "Perkembangan Tema dalam Historiografi Islam: Suatu Telaah," *Studi Multidisipliner: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2022): 33–56.

⁶ Randi Stiawan, "Peran Ilmuwan Muslim dalam Kemajuan Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman pada Masa Dinasti Mamluk di Mesir," *Local History & Heritage* 3, no. 2 (2023): 66–72.

⁷ Dede Efrianti Lubis, Ahmad Muhajir, and Zaini Dahlan, "Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam pada Masa Dinasti Mughal di India," *Islamic Education* 1, no. 2 (2021): 41–46.

⁸ Muhammad Husni, "Keruntuhan Dinasti Mamluk Di Mesir," (Doctoral Dissertation, UIN Alauddin Makassar, 2013).

⁹ Sulthan Hamdanyah, "Peran Dinasti Mamluk (Mamalik) dalam Menghadapi Mongol di Perang Ain Jalut pada Tahun 1260 M' (Doctoral Dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2022).

¹⁰ Dadang Mozi, *Strategi Perang Dinasti Mamluk dalam Menghadapi Bangsa Mongol* (Doctoral Dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, 2018).

the Mamluk Dynasty in Egypt, which sheds light on the crucial role of the Mamluk Dynasty in the development of Islamic knowledge during that period.¹¹

Melia's study delves into the influence of hadith (traditions of the Prophet) on Islamic historiography, highlighting the significance of hadith as a reference source and its impact on the early development of Islam.¹² Furthermore, Lukmanul Hakim discusses the influence of Islam on Indonesian historiography before the colonial era.¹³ Additionally, other research has focused on the institution of Al-Hisbah during the Mamluk Dynasty.¹⁴ These previous studies have attempted to uncover the characteristics of Islamic historiography during this era, exploring various aspects, from the decline of the Mamluk Dynasty to its role in facing challenges like the Mongols. However, these studies have been limited in their scope. Therefore, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of medieval Islamic historiography during the Mamluk period.

Therefore, this research aims to elevate our understanding of the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty to a more comprehensive level. By incorporating various aspects of historical writing during this period, the study will analyze the characteristics of medieval Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty. In addressing this inquiry, the research adopts a literature review approach, examining previous literature on Islamic historiography. Data analysis will be conducted using an intellectual history framework to map the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty. It is expected that this research will provide deeper insights and a more comprehensive understanding of the development of Islamic history during that era, particularly in the context of the use of the Arabic language.

Methods / منهج البحث / Metode

The method employed in this research is a literature review methodology. The literature review method is used as this study primarily focuses on analyzing existing

¹¹ Stiawan.

¹² Melia Afdayeni, "Hadist dan Histografi Islam," *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah: Talimat, Budaya, Agama dan Humaniora* 24, no. 1 (2020): 15–24.

¹³ Lukmanul Hakim and Abu Haif, "Historiografi Indonesia: Melacak Pengaruh Islam Sebelum Masa Kolonial," *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah: Talimat, Budaya, Agama dan Humaniora* (2019): 98–113.

¹⁴ Aidil Novia, "Lembaga Al-Hisbah dalam Perjalanan Sejarah (Penelusuran Lembaga Al-Hisbah Masa Dinasti Mamluk)," *Maqdis: Jurnal Kajian Ekonomi Islam* 6, no. 1 (2021): 93–109.

written sources such as historical texts and relevant historical literature. The research does not involve the collection of primary data but is centered on comprehending and interpreting previous studies. With this approach, the researcher can construct a more profound understanding of the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty, especially concerning the use of the Arabic language in historical narratives during that period.

In the process of gathering literary material, it commenced with the collection of pertinent literature related to the research topic, which is Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty. The researcher searched for and accessed historical sources, articles, books, and relevant scholarly papers that had been published. These sources form the basis for the research analysis. Subsequently, an in-depth analysis of the literary materials was conducted. Following the collection of literary materials, the researcher delved into a comprehensive analysis of these sources. This analysis encompasses the understanding of key concepts in Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty, the use of the Arabic language in historical narratives, and the approaches and methods used by historians during that period.

To map the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty, the researcher employed an intellectual history framework. This framework assists in analyzing and organizing the findings from the literary materials and identifying patterns that emerge in historical writing during that period. Moreover, a crucial focus of this research methodology is the analysis of the use of the Arabic language in historical narratives. The researcher analyzed how this language was utilized as a means of communication in constructing Islamic historical narratives during the Mamluk Dynasty. This included an understanding of linguistic structures, key phrases, and writing styles employed by historians during that era.

Lastly, interpretation and conclusion. Following an in-depth analysis of the literary materials and the data uncovered, the researcher provided interpretations of the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty. The conclusions drawn from these findings are used to comprehend and elucidate the influence of the Arabic language on Islamic historiography and the development of Islamic history during the Mamluk Dynasty period.

Results and Discussion / نتائج البحث / Hasil dan Pembahasan

This research uncovers several characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty, emphasizing the role of the Arabic language in the process and discussing it in the context of previous research findings. One significant finding that contributes novelty to this research is the encyclopedic scholarly characteristic. During the Mamluk Dynasty period, a primary characteristic of historiography was the compilation of encyclopedic works in the field of knowledge.¹⁵ This demonstrates a focus on gathering and presenting knowledge in a more comprehensive form. Thanks to the diligence and strength of the Mamluks, they were able to preserve their intellectual heritage.¹⁶

A. Malik Madany observed that the scholarly movement during the Mamluk Dynasty was driven by the protection of Islamic cultural heritage and knowledge from various external threats. The typical characteristics of written works during this period were more focused on collecting, adding explanatory notes (*syarh*), providing interpretations (*menafsirkan*), and summarizing, while innovation or originality was less emphasized. However, there were still historians who stood out with their creativity and innovation, such as Ibn Taimiyyah, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani. Their presence did not overshadow the prevailing protective scholarly characteristics of that era. Historians like them demonstrated creative abilities in handling historical data. Although many works tended to collect and condense information, this research highlights that some historians during the Mamluk period continued to excel with creativity and originality in their historical writings.^{17,18}

The next finding highlights the significant role of the Arabic language as the primary means of communication in constructing historical narratives during the Mamluk Dynasty.¹⁹ This language was used to depict historical events and understand key aspects in Islamic historiography during that period. In the context of historical discipline, the

¹⁵ A. Malik Madaniy, "Israiliyyat dan Maudu'at dalam Tafsir AL-Qur'an (Studi Tafsir Al-Jalalain), Dissertation (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2010),52.

¹⁶ Siti Maryam, "Dinasti Mamluk di Mesir Penyelamat Peradaban Islam 1250-1517 M," (2022).

¹⁷ Fery Yanto, "Konsep Pendidikan Sosiologi Menurut Perspektif Ibn Khaldun," *Rayah Al-Islam* 4, no. 2 (2020): 184–199.

¹⁸ S. Th I Ahmad Mubarak, "Sinergitas Ulama dan Umara dalam Perspektif Hadis," *Magister* 6, 478.

Mamluk era is represented by historians who lived during the Mamluk Dynasty and reached the pinnacle of Islamic history. One example is Muwaffiquddin al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn al-Usaibi'ah, a medical historian who produced the monumental work "Uyun al-Anba 'fi Tabaqat al-Atibba" (The Springs of News Regarding the Classes of Physicians), which provides detailed biographies of over 400 Arab and Greek medical experts.

In the context of historiography and biography writing, Ibn Khallikan emerged as a significant figure during the Mamluk period. His work, "Wafayat al-A'yan wa Anba Abna al-Zaman" (Obituaries of Eminent Men and History of the Sons of the Epoch), is considered the first national biographical dictionary in the Arabic language. This work is characterized by accurate name spellings, precise data, comprehensive genealogies, significant facts, as well as embellishments with poetry and anecdotes, making it one of the "best general biographies ever written." Robinson also refers to this book as the first biographical dictionary that includes various subjects from diverse backgrounds.²⁰

Moreover, the Mamluk phase, which succeeded the Fatimid dynasty,²¹ also brought significant contributions to the field of biography. Historians such as Ibn Khallikan and Al-Suyuti created biographical literature models that influenced the writing of history during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. They presented these models in the form of narratives of magnificence (manaqib), virtues (mahasin), and merits (fada'il) that characterized historical figures. During the Mamluk period, biographical literature underwent significant development, and many historical figures, including caliphs and jurists, received special attention in biography writing. This tradition also influenced al-Suyuti's narratives of caliphs, focusing on these elements.

In the Mamluk era, known for its contributions to architecture,²² there was a change in the way history was compiled. Historians like Abu al-Fida', Ibn Khaldun, al-Maqrizi, Ibn Tagri-Birdi, and al-Suyuti contributed to the development of universal history, covering various aspects of life. Ibn Khaldun, known as the father of Islamic

¹⁹ Yusri Mohamad Ramli, "Sorotan Sejarah Transformasi Pendidikan Mesir: A Review of the History of Educational Transformation in Egypt," *Attarbawiy: Malaysian Online Journal of Education* 6, no. 2 (2022): 37–52.

²⁰ Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 68.

²¹ Muhammad Al-Fatih, Maulida Tri Puspita, Tia Pratiwi and Mardinal Tarigan, "Peradaban Islam di Kerajaan Samudera Pasai," *Journal of Teaching and Science Education (JOTASE)* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–7.

²² Spahic Omer, "The Contributions of the Mamluks to the Architecture of the Prophet's Mosque (Sumbangan Dinasti Mamluk kepada Senibina Masjid Nabawi)," *Journal of Islam in Asia (E-ISSN 2289-8077)* 15, no. 2 (2018): 329–362.

economics,²³ particularly introduced innovation by presenting a critical approach and distinguishing between the external (*zahiriha*) and internal (*batiniha*) aspects of history. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun, with his work "*al-Muqaddimah*," paved the way for a critical approach in Islamic history by introducing two aspects of history: the external aspect involving reports on wars, states, and past societies, and the internal aspect, which meant observations, analyses, and fundamental principles and causes.

Slowly some historians began to build opinions in order to make history a discipline that was also recognised in the Islamic intellectual constellation. This was done, for example, with mutual praise among fellow historians such as that of al-Safadi to his colleague, al-Zahabi who was considered a historian who had been freed from the "rigid" rules of the hadith experts (*jumud al-Muhaddisin*). Finally, epistemologically, at this time history was recognised as an independent discipline that deserved to be alongside other disciplines. Shamsuddin as-Sakhawi wrote a special work entitled *al-I'lan bi at-Taubikh 'ala man zamma 'ala at-Tarikh*.²⁴ In it, he aligned history with other branches of science. In it, he also explains the science of history starting from the definition, object, purpose, usefulness, and other aspects.

In this regard, as-Sakhawi said that pursuing the science of history (*fann at-tarikh*) is one form of noble duty for a scholar. For people who have clear thinking, studying history falls into the five categories of law (*al-ahkam al-khamsah*). As a technical term, history is a knowledge of the indications of time that lead to an accurate construction of some circumstances (*al-ahwal*) such as the birth of narrators and imams, the year of their death, physical and mental health, travels undertaken, Hajj, the status of *tajrih* or *ta'dil*, and other realities produced by the search (*al-fahs*) about their circumstances.

These testimonies from Islamic historiographical literature in the Middle Ages show what the development of historiography in that phase was like. Although this dynasty was born from slaves from various tribes and nations,^{25,26} in general, it can be said that the Mamluk phase represents a very rapid development in historiography.

²³ A.I.D.I.L Aidil Novia, "Ulama-Ekonomi Dinasti Mamluk: Penelidikan Pemikiran Ibn Khaldun," (2022).

²⁴ Syamsuddin as-Sakha>wi>, *al-I'la>n bi at-Taubi>kh li man z\amma 'ala at-Ta>ri>kh* (Beiru>t: Mu'assasah al-Risa>lah, 1986).

²⁵ Sulthan Hamdanyah, "Peran Dinasti Mamluk (Mamalik) dalam Menghadapi Mongol di Perang Ain Jalut pada Tahun 1260 M," Dissertation (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2022).

Historians during the Mamluk Dynasty were a group that Syakir Mustafa called the historians of the "Egyptian Mazhab" (Madraset Misr) which spanned from the beginning of the Mamluk Dynasty in Egypt in the 13th century AD/7 H until entering the 17th century AD/11 H. During this time no less than 300 historians were born and around 810 historical works were born from their hands.²⁷

Mustafa²⁸ mentioned three typologies of Egyptian Mazhab historians, especially historians of the Mamluk Dynasty, in terms of the profession that the chronicler undertook. Firstly, administrative employees (muwazzifu ad-dawawin). This group focused on writing biographies of law enforcement officials and sultans and recording the history of several institutions that existed at that time, especially educational institutions. The most representative historian in this regard is Ibn Fadillah al-'Umari, author of *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar*,²⁹ which also became one of as-Suyuti's references in writing *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*. Second, historians from among the religious scholars ('ulama ad-din). This group basically continued the historiographical tradition of the muhaddisin who wrote the history of the hadith narrators and memorisers from the previous generation to the time when they wrote their works. However, sometimes they also wrote about objects other than these such as the biographies of politicians (sasa), merchants (tujjar), ascetic groups (ahl at-taqi wa an-nusk) and others.

Third, historians from the descendants of Mamluk soldiers (aulad al-jund). This group is the descendants of the first generation of Mamluk soldiers who were non-Arabic and almost entirely Turkish. They usually wrote history related to political events, information related to warfare, and political rulers. A representative historian is Ibn Tagri-Birdi, author of *an-Nujum az-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*.³⁰ As-Suyuti himself represents the second group. However, as explained in the source analysis section, as-Suyuti's references in *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* are not only limited to traditionalist historical works such as Ibn 'Asakir, az-Zahabi and Ibn Kasir, but historical works such as *Masalik al-Absar*, al-'Umari's work and several similar works as basic materials when presenting his historical narrative in *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*.

²⁶ Akramun Nisa, "Peradaban Islam dan Ideologi Politik pada Masa Dinasti Mamluk di Mesir," *Ash-Shahabah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 9, no. 1 (2023): 37–49.

²⁷ Mustafa, *at-Ta'rikh*, juz. 3, 97-98.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁹ Ibn Fadillah al-'Umari, *Masalik al-Absar wa Mamalik al-Absar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2010).

Ultimately, the Mamluk phase was an important milestone in the development of Islamic historiography, with historians creating numerous works and historical writing methods evolving. Although some historians still maintained the old traditions, many also began to establish history as an independent and recognised discipline within Islamic intellectuality. This is reflected in works such as those written by Syamsuddin as-Sakhawi, who views history as one of the disciplines that has an important place in Islamic thought. This research reveals the important role of the Mamluk Dynasty in the development of Islamic historiography and how the historiographical characteristics of the time influenced the development of Islamic history during the period.

This research makes a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty. By revealing the unique characteristics of this period, it helps to fill the gap in existing knowledge about medieval Islamic history. Furthermore, this research also highlights the role of Arabic in Islamic historiography during the Mamluk period which provides deeper insights into the relationship between language and the presentation of history. This is also relevant in the context of preserving and understanding Islamic cultural heritage. Finally, this study recognises the role of creative historians of the Mamluk period such as Ibn Taimiyyah, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. This helps to appreciate their intellectual contributions in developing historical writing methods. Thus, the findings of this study are not only profound, but also make a significant contribution to the development of the theoretical framework of Islamic historiography in the medieval Mamluk period.

Conclusion / الخلاصة / Kesimpulan

Medieval Islamic historiography, represented by historians who lived during the Mamluk dynasty, represents one of the high points of Islamic historiography. This is shown by several indicators. During this period, the science of history moved in a thematic form, writing biographies in the form of classification based on science continued to be carried out. This research contributes to the development of a theoretical framework for the characteristics of medieval Islamic historiography in the Mamluk context. In general, it can be said that the Mamluk phase represents a very rapid

³⁰ Jamaluddin Ibn Tagri Birdi, *an-Nujum az-Zahirah fi Muluk Misrwa al-Qahirah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992).

development in historiography with a focus on the use of Arabic. The main findings of this research include the scholarly characteristics of the Mamluk period characterised by the collection of encyclopaedic works, the role of Arabic as the main means of communication in historiography and the existence of creative historians in the period. In addition, this research also has limitations that are more descriptive and less analysing the concrete impact of historiographical characteristics on the understanding of Islamic history during this period. In addition, this research tends to focus on positive characteristics without exploring them in the context of critical issues or intellectual debates that may have arisen at that time. Therefore, the researcher suggests future research to deepen the analysis of the impact of Mamluk historiographical characteristics on the understanding of Islamic history in that period. This could involve case studies of specific historical works. Then a more in-depth study of the critical issues that may arise in Mamluk Islamic historiography would provide a more comprehensive insight. This could include an understanding of intellectual disputes, political influences on historical writing, or how different historical approaches affect historical narratives. Finally, further research could involve understanding how the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk dynasty contributed to subsequent developments in the Islamic intellectual world illustrating how the Mamluk phase paved the way for the development of Islamic thought and history writing in subsequent periods. This research provides valuable insights into the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty by emphasising the role of the Arabic language.

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Author Contributions Statement / إفادة مساهمات الباحث

The author (SS) is the main researcher in this study and is responsible for the formulation of the research concept, data collection and analysis, and the writing of this

journal. The author identifies the characteristics of Islamic historiography during the Mamluk Dynasty, with a particular focus on the role of Arabic in the presentation of history. This was followed by a comprehensive literature review of relevant sources. The formulation of research findings and integration with existing literature were also carried out by the author.

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