

ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION ON THE SCIENCE OF TAFSIR AND HADITH IN THE WORK "FUTUH AL-BULDAN"

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Abstract

This article analyzes the information related to the sciences of tafsir and hadith in the work of Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Balazuri, Futuh al-Buldon. The main focus of this work is the spread of Islam across Asia and Africa during the early centuries, yet it also includes valuable information on subjects such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and Arabic literature. The author of the article examines Quranic verses and hadiths, illustrating the interconnectedness of Islamic sciences and presenting historical events based on religious sources. The article further discusses how later mufasssirun and scholars have utilized Futuh al-Buldon in their works.

Keywords: Futuh al-Buldon, Al-Balazuri, tafsir, hadith, fiqh, history, Islamic sciences, Quranic verses, Arabic literature, mufasssirun.

Introduction

The 9th–10th centuries hold special significance in the history of Islamic civilization, which greatly contributed to the development of world civilization. During this period, alongside Islamic sciences such as Qur'anic studies, tafsir (exegesis), hadith, fiqh (jurisprudence), and sirah (Prophetic biography), disciplines like mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and medicine also flourished. The scholars and thinkers of this era – known as the “Eastern Renaissance” – did not limit themselves to a single field of knowledge but made contributions in multiple areas.

Prominent scholars such as Musa al-Khwarizmi, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, and Abu Rayhan al-Biruni studied numerous sciences of their time and left behind valuable works in those fields. Their writings contain information relevant to various disciplines. For instance, although most of the works of Imam al-Bukhari – who was honored with titles like “Sultan of the Hadith Scholars” and “Commander of the Faithful in Hadith” – are related to the science of hadith, experts in fiqh, tafsir, and history also benefit from them and consider them important sources in their respective fields. Thus, thinkers of the first Eastern Renaissance produced works across different disciplines, and this is evident in their writings.

Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri's work Futuh al-Buldan is also considered a source containing information on various fields of knowledge. While the main content of the book pertains to the spread of Islam across Asia and Africa in the early medieval period, it also includes information related to hadith, tafsir, fiqh, and Arabic literature. Below are some aspects of the tafsir science reflected in this work.

In narrating the spread of Islam, al-Baladhuri also cited Qur'anic verses and their interpretations, indicating his deep knowledge of tafsir. Some of the events depicted in Futuh al-Buldan cover the



time when the Qur'an was being revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is why the historian referred to Qur'anic verses. Some of these are detailed below.

On the construction of the Quba Mosque, al-Baladhuri cites and interprets verses 107–109 of Surah al-Tawbah. In particular, he focuses on the mosque referred to in verse 108 as being "founded on piety." He presents related hadiths and narrations, noting that according to Said ibn Jubayr and Hasan al-Basri, the mosque mentioned is the Quba Mosque. However, narrators such as Sahl ibn Sa'd, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Ubayy ibn Ka'b argue that the mosque founded on piety refers to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina¹.

Regarding the expulsion of the Jewish tribe Banu Nadir from Medina and the distribution of their wealth among the Muhajirun from Mecca, al-Baladhuri refers to and interprets relevant verses from Surah al-Hashr. Notably, he discusses the word *لينه* in verse 5, which linguistically means "softness" but is explained as referring to date palms in the context².

In 7 AH (628 CE), the regions of Khaybar and Fadak in the northwest of Medina were conquered. While covering this topic, al-Baladhuri refers to several verses, such as "He rewarded them with a near victory" from Surah al-Fath in reference to Khaybar, and **"...and others you were not able to conquer yet"**³ to refer to the Persian and Byzantine empires. He also interprets the verse **"What Allah restored to His Messenger from them – you did not spur horses or camels for it"**⁴ from Surah al-Hashr as referring to Fadak⁵.

On the topic of the conquest of Mecca, particular emphasis is placed on the sanctity of the city and the impermissibility of selling houses or charging pilgrims rent. Relevant hadiths and the verse from Surah al-Hajj (22:25) – **"We made the Sacred Mosque equally accessible to the resident and the visitor"** – are cited. Al-Baladhuri explains that pilgrims performing Hajj and Umrah have the right to stay wherever they choose in Mecca and cannot be evicted. He also quotes Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab's address to the people of Mecca: "Do not place doors on your homes so that desert Arabs may come and stay whenever they please."⁶

Imam Abu Hanifa (80/699–150/767) stated that taking rent for houses in Mecca is only disliked (makruh) during the Hajj season. Al-Baladhuri includes the opinions of various hadith scholars, jurists, and commentators regarding this issue. The topic, closely related to tafsir and fiqh, has been thoroughly examined by Islamic scholars and addressed in numerous sources, including Abu Bakr al-Jassas' *Ahkam al-Qur'an*⁷, al-Suyuti's *al-Durr al-Manthur*⁸, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*⁹, Badr al-Din al-Ayni's *Umdat al-Qari*¹⁰, and Jamal al-Din al-Zayla'i's *Nasab al-Rayah li-Ahadith al-Hidayah*¹¹, among others. *Futuh al-Buldan* is among the oldest sources addressing these issues.

¹ Ahmad ibn Yahyo al-Balazuriy. *Futuh al-buldon*. – Beirut: Muassasat al-Ma'arif, 1987. – pp. 8–11.

² *Futuh al-buldon*. – pp. 28–31.

³ Surah Al-Fath, verse 18. The meanings of the Qur'anic verses are based on the 2018 edition of A. Mansur's work *"The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary of Its Meanings"*, published by TIU Publishing House in Tashkent.

⁴ Surah Al-Hashr, Verse 6.

⁵ "Futuh al-Buldan. – pp. 36–37, 44."

⁶ Surah Al-Hashr, verse 6.

⁷ Abu Bakr al-Jassas. *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, vol. 5. – Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1992. – pp. 61–62.

⁸ Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti. *Al-Durr al-Mansur fi Tafsir al-Ma'sur*, vol. 6. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2011. – pp. 24–26.

⁹ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 7. – Beirut: Dar al-Risalah al-Ilmiyyah, 2013. – pp. 378–379.

¹⁰ Badr al-Din al-Ayni. *Umdat al-Qari*, vol. 9. – Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2001. – pp. 321–327.

¹¹ Jamal al-Din al-Zayla'i. *Nasab al-Ruyah li-Ahadith al-Hidaya*, vol. 4. – Jeddah: Dar al-Qibla li-Saqafa al-Islamiyya, 1938. – pp. 266–267.



Regarding the Najran¹² Pact, al-Baladhuri narrates how two men from Najran came to Medina and debated with the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Christian delegates argued about the nature of Jesus (peace be upon him), following which verses 58–61 of Surah “Al-Imran” were revealed¹³. Additional verses related to the Najran treaty are also cited and interpreted, including Surah al-Baqarah verse 193 concerning the Arab tribes that did not accept Islam¹⁴, and Surah al-Tawbah verse 30 concerning the People of the Book.

The author does not quote Qur’anic verses merely to add authenticity to his information but instead selects verses directly relevant to the topic and provides their interpretation. This clearly demonstrates al-Baladhuri’s scholarly competence in the science of tafsir.

Many mufassirs (Qur’anic exegetes) have benefited from Futuh al-Buldan. For instance, works such as al-Khatib al-Sharbini’s Tafsir al-Siraj al-Munir, Burhan al-Din al-Biq’a’s Nazm al-Durar fi Tanasub al-Ayat wa al-Suwar, and Muhammad Rashid Rida’s Tafsir al-Manar cite information derived from al-Baladhuri’s book. This is because the work is recognized as a primary historical source.

Although the era in which the author lived saw the specialization of hadith, history, fiqh, and other fields, historians still followed the methodology of hadith scholars when reporting events. They would present narrators and transmit multiple versions of an event. Since the events in Futuh al-Buldan relate to early Islamic history, it would have been impossible to recount them without referencing the words of the Prophet and his companions. For this reason, historian Salah al-Din al-Safadi described al-Baladhuri as a scholar, poet, erudite man, and narrator.

The hadiths narrated in al-Baladhuri’s work are also found in reliable sources such as al-Hakim al-Naysaburi’s al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn¹⁵, Ibn Asakir’s Tarikh Madinat Dimashq¹⁶, and Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani’s al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah¹⁷, among others. Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi, in Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, referred to al-Baladhuri as a hafiz (hadith master)¹⁸ and placed him among the contemporaries of the hadith scholar Abu Dawud al-Sijistani¹⁹.

Thus, although the primary subject of Futuh al-Buldan is the history of Islamic conquests, it also contains information related to Qur’anic exegesis, hadith, and fiqh. This is because scholars of the 8th–9th centuries did not confine themselves to one area of knowledge; they were well-versed in all Islamic sciences, and this is reflected in their works. That is why later mufassirs consulted Futuh al-Buldan in their Qur’anic interpretations.

References:

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¹² Najran is a city located in the southwestern part of Saudi Arabia. It is one of the ancient cities, and its inhabitants were engaged in agriculture.

¹³ Futuh al-Buldan. – p. 86.

¹⁴ The people of the Book include those who believe in Christianity and Judaism.

¹⁵ Hakim al-Naysaburi. *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 1. – Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2002. – p. 645.

¹⁶ Ibn Asakir. *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, vol. 6. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995. – pp. 75–76.

¹⁷ Al-Asqalani. *Al-Isaba*, vol. 2. – Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1995. – p. 82.

¹⁸ Hafiz – The term “hafiz” in the science of hadith has various definitions. In *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit*, it is mentioned that a person who memorizes three hundred thousand hadith texts and their chains of narration reaches the level of hafiz.

¹⁹ Shams al-Din al-Zahabi. *Tazkirat al-Huffaz*. – Hyderabad (India): Da'irah al-Ma'arif, 1958. – p. 892.



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10. Surah Al-Fath, verse 18.
11. Surah Al-Hashr, Verse 6.

