

The Luminous Child: A Critical Analysis of Qur'ānic References in *Sīra Nabawiyya*

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Abstract

In the *sīra* tradition, light serves as a symbol of Prophet Muḥammad's prophetic signs, and this concept is exemplified extensively. The *sīra* illustrated the Prophet as born with light, he was described as casting no shadow, even in bright sunlight or in moonlight. Interestingly, some *sīra* scholars have employed Qur'ānic verse as an evidentiary apparatus to substantiate the authenticity of the incident recorded in the *sīra*. This study aims to explore the narrative of the Prophet's luminous condition at his birth, analyse the historical connection between the occurrence and verse 5:15 of the Qur'ān and examine hermeneutical responses of Muslim exegetes on the verse. The study is qualitative in nature in which the researcher employed both critical and analytical approaches to the works of *tafsīr* and *sīra* corpus. The study in its finding asserts that traces of a gradual development of Muslim thought, based on the specific cases from the Qur'ān. This indicates that the references they made to the Prophet Muḥammad were the result of intellectual reaction within their contemporary framework.

Keywords: *sīra nabawiyya*, Qur'ānic references, Muḥammad, birth, al-Ṣāliḥī

Introduction

In the Qur'ān, Prophet Muḥammad is consistently portrayed in solidly human terms, as a most humane human being.¹ He is presented in his full human nature, and is not associated with any miraculous abilities. Every time when an adversary asks him to perform signs or miracles (*āya*), the Qur'ān asserts continually that signs can come only from God (6:109) and Muḥammad is only a 'messenger' (13:7). By contrast, the way the *sīra* presents Muḥammad's attributes seems discrepant with his attributes as depicted in the Qur'ān. He was presented as a normal human being in the Qur'ān, while *sīra* articulates in detail his capacity to perform miracles since the time he was in the womb of his mother.

¹ For example; in 41:6 and 18:110.

He was born circumcised² and accompanied with light,³ he then fell on the ground, leaning on his hands, raised his head toward Heaven and made a supplication to God immediately after he was born.⁴ On the day he was born, fourteen pillars in Kisrā's palace cracked and rolled down, the Persians' sacred fire died down and some churches on Lake Sawā sank and collapsed.⁵ All these extraordinary features were aspects of a convention that recurs frequently in the works of *sīra*.

The Luminous Child

There are many features of the Prophet's attributed in Islamic sources⁶ and one of the most prevalent themes in the Qur'ān is light, which always represents an emblem of truth, God's guidance, features of Islam and faith. The Qur'ān itself was not only characterised as guidance for mankind (2:185), but is also itself referred to as a light (4:174). One of the *sūras* of the Qur'ān is called "the light" (*al-nūr*), and Islamic tradition relates that the Prophet himself named this chapter.⁷ In this chapter, the Qur'ān describes God as a source of light: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth." Standing as evidence of truth, the miracle of other Prophets is also portrayed as a form of spiritual

² Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān ibn Aḥmad al-Bustī, *Sira al-Nabawiyya wa Akhbar al-Khulafa'* (Beirut: al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyya, 1996) p.58; Abū Nu'aym Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Asbahānī, *Dalā'il* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1986), 154.

³ There are various narrations on the Prophet's and its association with the light. This will be discussed in the subchapter entitled 'The Luminous Child' in this chapter.

⁴ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1984), 1:88 and 136.

⁵ Al-Asbahānī, *Dalā'il*, 138, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *A'lām al-Nubuwwah*, p.138, al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, 126.

⁶ For example the account of his early life were recorded in the letter of Ibn al-Layth and al-Bukhārī. See Ahmad Sanusi Azmi et. al, "Qur'ānic Sīra in the Diplomatic Letter of Ibn al-Layth to the Byzantine Emperor", *Advanced Science Letters* 23, no. 5 (2017): 4914-4917; Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "Narratives of the Prophet's Early Life in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: An Analytical Study of Qur'ānic References in Sīra Nabawiyya", *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 15, no. 2 (2017): 193-212.

⁷ Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Ashūr al-Tunisi, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (n.p.: Dār al-Tunisiyah li an-Nashr, 1984), 18:139.

illumination. For instance, God granted Moses nine miracles (27:12) and one of them was that his hand appeared as white (i.e. luminous) (20:22)⁸.

Muḥammad was not excluded from this theme of luminosity, either. Even though there is no obvious verse that specifically refers to Muḥammad as a light, some interpretations of the Qur'ān maintain that the word light in the Qur'ān allude to Muḥammad. 5:15 says: "O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book." The word "light" at the end of this verse was interpreted as meaning Muḥammad by many Muslim commentator in their exegetical works⁹ In another passage (7:157), the Qur'ān confirms that Muḥammad was equipped with light from God: "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong, and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil, and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him; it is those who will be the successful". And in (33:46) he was ascribed as possessing personal illumination (*munīra*).

⁸ Some Muslims have interpreted this as meaning his hand was shining like a lamp. For instance, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, "He brought it out, and by Allah, it was as if it were a lamp". See Abū al-Fidā' 'Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* ed. Sāmī Salāma, (n.p.: Dār Ṭayyiba li al-Naṣr wa al-Tawzī', 1999), 5:280.

⁹ Including Abū Ja'far Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān fi Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ahmad Shakir, (Egypt: Muassasah al-Risālah, 2000), 10:143, Abū al-Layth Naṣr ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Samarqandī, Baḥr al-'Ulūm (n.p.: n.pb., n.d.), 1:378, Abū Ishāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa Al-Bayān* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2002), 4:39, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), 2:32, Fakhḥ al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999) 11:327 and 'Abd al-Raḥman ibn Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Nawāhid al-Abkār* (Saudi Arabia: Jāmi'ah Umm al-Qurā, 2005), 1:139.

Elements of Luminous in *Sīra Nabawiyya*

In the *sīra* tradition, the light also serves as a symbol of Muḥammad's prophetic signs, and this concept is illustrated extensively. His father was said to possess a shining blaze between his eyes, a sign of the prophetic seed latent in his body¹⁰. When his mother was conceiving him, she had a vision of light emerging from his body illuminating the palaces of Buṣra in Syria¹¹. Muḥammad was born with light: he was described as casting no shadow, even in bright sunlight or in moonlight.¹² Confirming this notion, al-Nasafī cites Prophetic tradition in order to support the concept of the Prophet having no shadow. He narrated on the authority of 'Uthmān, saying that "Allah did not put the Prophet's shadow on the Earth in case someone trod upon it."¹³ One of the most famous stories concerning the birth of Muḥammad is that he was born with a light. It is recorded by many Muslim biographers in various versions that Muḥammad's mother is believed to said: "When he was born, there was a light that issued out of my

¹⁰ Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69, al-Asbahānī, *Dalā'il*, 1:130.

¹¹ The element of light (nur) in this hadith denotes the command of truth that will overcome the Darkness of oppression or polytheist. Since the Quran itself symbolises the Darkness as representing polytheism and oppression, it is reasonable to assume that the word 'light' that engulfs the palaces in Bushra, Syria, in this hadith denotes the image of the truth of Islam that will overcome the Darkness (of polytheist or oppression) embraced by the Syrian ruler. The prophet also mentions that he saw the light engulf the castles of Persian and San'a (Yemen) while digging a trench in preparation of the Battle of al-Khandaq (the Trench). Al-Bayhaqy, *Dalā'il*, 1:83.

¹² Aḥmad ibn 'Ālī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-Asmā' bi māli al-Nabī min al-Aḥwāl wa-al-Amwāl wa-al-Hafada wa-al-Matā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman bin Kamāl al-Dīn Abi Bakr al-Suyūfī, *al-Shamā'il al-Sharīfa*, (n.p.: Dār Tayr al-'Ilm, n.d.), 45; Muhammad ibn Yūsuf al-Shāmī Al-Ṣāliḥī, *Subul al-Hudā wa Al-Rashād fī Sīra Kayr al-'Ibād*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad, et. al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 2:90.

¹³ Abū Al-Barakāt 'Abd Allah ibn Aḥmad ibn Mahmūd al-Nasafī, *Madārik Al-Tanzīl wa Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kalim Al-Tayyib, 1998), 2:492.

puendum and lit the palaces of Buṣra in Syria,”¹⁴ while, according to the mother of ‘Uthmān ibn al-‘Aṣ, who witnessed the event, the light shone over everything until she could not see anything but light.¹⁵

When this story is examined, it appears that it is not in fact narrated by Ibn Ishāq in his description of the circumstances of Muḥammad’s birth,¹⁶ but rather was included in his *Sīra* as part of his explanation of Muḥammad’s mother’s vision when she conceived him.¹⁷ Ibn Ishāq then recounts it again when describing the incident of the opening of Muḥammad’s breast. There is nothing in Ibn Ishāq’s chapter about the birth that gives any detail about an apparent light. Depicting the situation of Muḥammad’s birth, Ibn Ishāq only mentions a few particulars regarding the date, the place where he was born and a story about a Jew who witnessed a star that he believed was a sign of a coming prophet. He then added to the chapter with an extra information about what his mother and his grandfather did after he was born, and the stories end with a discussion of his suckling period.¹⁸

In contrast with his predecessor, Ibn Sa‘d clearly locates this story in the chapter of the Prophet’s birth,¹⁹ recording five different versions of traditions referring to the light that accompanied the birth of Muḥammad. A similar step was taken by al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, who both engraved this theme of light in

¹⁴ Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Ishāq*, ed. al-Mazidī. (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2004), 1:45; Muḥammad ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. Mustafā al-Saqā, (Egypt: Maṭba‘ah al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādūh, 1955), 1:158.; Abū Hātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya wa Akhbār al-Khulafā’* (Beirut: al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyya, 1996), 1:53; ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Muḥammad al-Kharkūshī, *Sharf al-Muṣṭafā* (Mecca: Dār al-Basha‘ir, 2003), 1:289; al-Asbahānī, *Dalā‘il*, p.1:135.; al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā‘il*, 1:82.; Abū al-Fidā ‘Ismā‘il ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (Lubnān: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1976), 1:228.

¹⁵ Al-Asbahānī, *Dalā‘il*, 1:135, Abū Ja‘far Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh* (Beirut: Dār al-Turath, 1966), 2:157; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, p.1:207.

¹⁶ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 69; Ibn Ishāq, ed. al-Mazidī, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Ishāq* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2004), 96-99.

¹⁷ Guillaume, *Life*, 69; Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Ishāq*, p.97.

¹⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Ishāq*, p.1:45.; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, p.1:158

¹⁹ Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ad, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, 1976), 1:206-207.

their momentous works.²⁰ It appears, however, that neither of them cite any verses from the Qur'ān to support this remarkable occurrence: the story relies solely on the traditions narrated by earlier generation of Muslims.

Connecting the Qur'ān with Event in the *Sīra Nabawiyya*

Apparently, it has become a standard practice of Muslim authors to relate Muḥammad's miracle with Qur'ānic verses. Ibn Rabban for example employed extensive Qur'ānic verse to vindicate the prophethood of Muḥammad.²¹ As far as the researcher has been able to discover, al-Ṣāliḥī was the first of Muḥammad's biographers who employed verses from the Qur'ān to establish a fundamental connection with this story.²² He said: "and the light that accompanied the birth of the Prophet is a sign of what he brings together with him which is a light of guidance that will be a pathfinder for the people of the earth and expunge the darkness of polytheism. As God says 'There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book. By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkneses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path' [5:15-16]." Clearly the central discussion in this passage is of the light associated with Muḥammad's birth. By citing this verse, al-Ṣāliḥī appears to suggest that the word "light" in this verse refers to the event, and should be interpreted within this context.

This novel connection and fresh reading was actually preceded by Ibn Rajb al-Ḥanbalī.²³ In the eighth/fourteenth century, he wrote a book entitled *Latā'if al-Ma'ārif fīma Li Mawāsim al-Ām Min al-Waḏā'if* (*The Subtleties of Learning Concerning the Devotions of Various Seasons*), which was intended as a guide to the virtues and devotions that should be

²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, pp.2:156-165.; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 1:206-207.

²¹ Azmi, Ahmad Sanusi, et. al., "From Christianity to Islam: An Analysis of Ibn Rabban's Approach towards Sira Nabawiyya 1", *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 11 (2017): 1-6.

²² Al-Ṣāliḥī, *Subul al-Hudā wa al-Rashād*, 1:342.

²³ Since the book was not intended to focus the discussion on *Sīra* material, al-Ṣāliḥī's notion is referred to first even though chronologically speaking, Ibn Rajab preceded Al-Ṣāliḥī.

practised by obedient Muslims at every specific times. When discussing the rituals of the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal, he commenced the chapter by articulating how the Prophet’s birth (*Mawlid*) should be regarded.²⁴ Furthermore in order to prove the prophecy of Muḥammad, Ibn Rajb provided an extensive range of Prophetic traditions, including the story of the light, alluding to the tradition narrated by Ibn Ishāq. It is in this passage that he initially links the story with verse 5:15 of the Qur’ān.²⁵ Even though this idea was initially proposed by Ibn Rajb, it seems that the notion was not widely circulated in the field of *sīra* scholarship until it was then quoted by al-Qastalānī in his *al-Mawāhib*.²⁶ Al-Ṣāliḥī then includes it in his work, but using his own words, without citing any other scholar’s words as quotations (although there was a probability that he had been influenced by Ibn Rajb’s thought). It seems that the idea penetrated the sphere of *sīra* discourse in the tenth/sixteenth century, since both of them al-Ṣāliḥī and al-Qastalānī lived in the same era.

Exegetes Views on Verse 5:15

The complicated connection between Muslim understanding on the meaning of the Qur’ān and its relationship with the *sīra* has been demonstrated in modern studies.²⁷ In order to acquire a wider picture of Muslim understanding of this verse, we must also scrutinise Muslim exegetical works. As it is hard to find references in *sīra* works, the connection between this light at Muḥammad’s birth and 5:15 of the Qur’ān was never mentioned in the early Muslim commentaries on the Qur’ān. Second-century commentators never alluded to this verse to be part of this event; and, furthermore, the word “light” in this verse was never

²⁴ ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Laṭā’if al-Ma’ārif fī ma li Mawāsīm al-‘Ām min al-Wazā’if* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1989) 94-115.

²⁵ Al-Hanbali, *Laṭā’if al-Ma’ārif fī ma li Mawāsīm al-‘Ām min al-Wazā’if*, 105.

²⁶ Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Qastalānī, *al-Mawāhib al-Laduniyya bi al-Minahi al-Muhammadiyya* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 2004), p.1/128. Others may consider al-Qastalānī as the first biographer of Muhammad to associate Q 5:15 with this miraculous event, but since he was just quoting the exact words of Ibn Rajab, it is reasonable to suggest that al-Ṣāliḥī was the first.

²⁷ Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, “The Intricate Labyrinth of Qur’anic References In *Sīrah Nabawiyah*: An Overview of the Orientalist Works”, *Journal of Hadith Studies* 1 (1), 1-5.

interpreted as referring to Muḥammad in any way. Muqātil, for instance, simply elaborates the meaning of the word literally, without proposing any allegorical interpretation. The word “light” was translated literally as “*diyā*” (which means shine or luminosity)²⁸, and it seems that the word was not perceived to have any veiled meaning. The same phenomenon occurs in the third century of Islam. Al-Ṣan‘ānī and al-Tustarī did not even attempt to give an exegesis of this verse in their works, suggesting that the meaning of the verse was well understood and did not require any interpretation.²⁹ When it comes to the fourth/tenth century, a theological development may be detected in Muslim exegetical works. Al-Ṭabarī starts by suggesting that this word should be interpreted as “the light which came with Muḥammad”,³⁰ whereas Ibn Abī Zamanayn suggested that the word should be interpreted as referring to the Qur’ān³¹. Without alluding to the words of earlier scholars, this commentary seems to be purely the result of their own ideas.

As time went by, the initial literal thoughts about the word “light” gradually evolved with a specific theological interpretation. The word “light” was constantly being interpreted as referring either to Muḥammad or the Qur’ān; and within three centuries, this became the accepted view. Commenced by al-Ṭabarī, then al-Tha‘labī followed in his footsteps by offering the same meaning in his *Tafsīr*.³² Al-Baghawī³³, and al-Rāzī³⁴ confirm that the word refers to Muḥammad, while al-Zamakhsharī³⁵ and Ibn Kathīr³⁶

²⁸ Muqātil Ibn Sulayman, *Tafsīr*, 1:288.

²⁹ Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tafsīr ‘Abd al-Razzāq*, (Bayrūt : Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998),1 :181-186, Abū Muḥammad Sahl ibn ‘Abdullah al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, (Bayrūt : Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2002) 1:58.

³⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, 10 :143.

³¹ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn Isa Ibn Abī Zamanayn, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān Al-‘Azīz* (Cairo: al-Farūq al-Tibā‘ah li al-Nashr, 2002), 2:17.

³² Al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa Al-Bayān*, 4 :39.

³³ Al-Baghawī, *Ma’ālim al-Tanzīl*, 2:32.

³⁴ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, p.11:327. Al-Rāzī expounds the word in detail by discussing three different meanings of the word.

³⁵ Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ‘Amrū ibn Aḥmad al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ‘An Ḥaqā’iq wa Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), p.1:617.

³⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, p.3:68.

prefer to understand it as referring specifically to the Qur'ān. As far as the investigation of the researcher is concerned, no Muslim Qur'ānic commentators have attached their understanding of this word or verse to the event of the “luminous” birth of Muḥammad. Most of them have interpreted the verse in its Qur'ānic context alone, without connecting the verse to any particular event.

When examining the use of this particular tradition³⁷ in the Muslim commentaries of the Qur'ān, the researcher found that another similar tradition has also been mentioned in various commentaries on other chapters. The tradition that was also narrated by Ibn Ishāq in a longer version recounted that some of Muḥammad's companions asked him to tell them about himself. He said: “I am what Abraham my father prayed for and the good news of (my brother) Jesus. When my mother was carrying me she saw a light proceeding from her which showed her the castles of Syria”.³⁸ This tradition has been used to provide an auxiliary explanation of certain verses in the Qur'ān; but even so, none of these verses refers to the occasion of Muḥammad's birth. For instance, al-Ṭabarī cites this tradition to elucidate the meaning of “Good tiding of 'Isā” in 6:61,³⁹ while Ibn Kathīr quoted it to explain the meaning of 2:129 regarding Abraham's prayer.

It is apparent that following our investigation of this verse and its interpretation, all the readings have led us to conclude that they contain no clear reference to the event of Muḥammad's birth. As a matter of fact, it is hard to see that the early Muslim commentators interpreted the word ‘light’ in this verse as referring to Muḥammad in any significant way. It was actually later generations who developed a new sight of interpretation, until it was used by a biographer of Muḥammad to establish a connection between this verse and the occasion of Muḥammad's birth.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that Muslim understanding of references to Muḥammad in the Qur'ān underwent an evolution in

³⁷ The tradition that elaborates the emergence of light at the event of the Prophet's birth. See Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Ishāq*, 1:45 and Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya*, 1:158.

³⁸ Guillaume, *Life*, p.72.

³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, p.23:359.

Muslim intellectual works, reflecting their immediate Islamic context. Traces of a gradual development of Muslim thought, based on the specific cases from the Qur'ān, have been detected; this indicates that the references they made to Muḥammad were the fruit of intellectual reaction within their contemporary framework. There are several types of development which have been noted. One of the types is the introduction of novel ideas of which there has never been found in the early period. These are totally new interpretations invented by later Muslims reflecting the progress and development of Islamic knowledge. The reference to Muḥammad in 5:15 is the best example of this development. The idea that this verse is linked with the event of the Prophet's luminous birth is scarcely to be found in Qur'ānic commentaries from the seventh to fourteenth centuries. Remarkably, the connection was then discovered in *sīra* works, whose central discourse is the Prophet's biography and not specifically Qur'ānic interpretation. This new type of understanding is rarely accepted by later commentators for the simple reason that there is no supporting tradition that upholds the tradition. What is apparent is that connections between the Qur'ān and Muḥammad's early biography in commentaries of the early century of Islam are sparse, for example in the work of Ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari quoted less Qur'ānic references from the later did.⁴⁰ When such connections appeared at a later date, they would be regarded as of doubtful provenance, or even unconventional.

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⁴⁰ Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "Ahl al-Hadith Methodologies on Qur'anic Discourses in the Ninth Century: A Comparative Analysis of Ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari", *Online Journal Research in Islamic Studies* 17-26; "Sīrah of The Prophet's Early Life in Musnad of Aḥmad: An Analytical Study of Qur'anic References In Sīrah Nabawiyah", *Sains Humanika* 9, no. 3 (2017): 37-42.

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