ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF 
HAGIOGRAPHY IN THE ISLAMICATE 
WORLD: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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Abstract

A hagiography or sufi tadhkirah is a genre of sufi literature that studies the life of a sufi and expresses reverence and respect for its subject. It provides uncritically supportive arguments to its subjects often to embellish their life-stories as yard-sticks of piety and spiritual authority. It propagates the ideas and agendas of both subject sufi and hagiographers that have been often devotees of a sufi. The present article is an attempt to trace the roots of its origin, subsequent developments and the continuities in the themes and style in the hagiography writings from early Muslim Civilization, to Persia to South Asia. In addition, it illuminates the role of this genre as a source of, and an aid to, scholarship that has been interested in social history of medieval India. This study is divided into section and sub-sections for better understanding of origin and developments of hagiographical literature. However, all the sections are inclusively connected to each other for coherence and comprehensiveness.

1. Introduction to Hagiography or Tadhkirah

Before going to explore the origin and development of tadhkirah writings, one must has to answer the basic question what Muslim hagiographical literature actually is? Hagiographic literature is the genre dedicated to the individuals, ‘saints’ or ‘holy men,’ who hold a distinct religious status in the society. To answer the basic question what Muslim biographical material is, Marilyn Waldman and Anne Lambton contend:

“biographical information may be found not only in specifically biographical works but also in local
histories, geographical dictionaries, chronicles, letters, ‘memoirs of princes’ literature, didactic and *(adab)* writings, poetry, and travel literature”.

It is important to bear in mind that the tradition of religious biographical writings is not inspired by any outsider influence but is an indigenous creation of the Muslim community. H. A. R. Gibb argues that “the biographical dictionary is a wholly indigenous creation of the Muslim community”.3

The word *tadhkirah* means commemoration. This genre gathers information about the lives of poets, sufis or scholars. Though *tadhkiras* are parallel to *tabaqat*, yet they do not necessarily have had ranking systems as that in *tabaqat*. Sufi *tadhkiras* are the collections of biographical notes of sufis written by their disciples or devotees. *Tadhkirah* genre of sufi literature is known as hagiographical literature as well.5 Hagiographies are also referred to as *tabaqat* (generations or ranks). The word *tadhkirah* took its origin from term *sirah* (pl. *siyar*) initially referred to the life story of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H. b. 570-d. 632) but also has been applied to refer to the biographical dictionaries (*tabaqat* and *tadhkiras*) of the sufis.6 Though biographies of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) and Shiite Imams overlap with the sufi hagiographies, yet it is accepted that sufis’ biographies are distinct one from that of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

2. Origin and Early Development of Tadhkirah Writing in the Islamicate World

The roots of Muslim biographical writings can be traced back to the earliest period of Muslim Civilization. Earliest Muslim biographical literature was produced to show what Hermansen says ‘inclusiveness’ of an individual within Muslim society. In early Muslim biographical dictionaries, the priority to join Islam and distinctive rank was being highlighted. This genre enumerated the good deeds of Prophet’s companions, their genealogies and affiliations with their respective tribes.7 The tradition of biographical writings in the Islamicate World8 is
stemmed in the origin and development of hadith collection, genealogical writings, fada’il (virtues), and khasa’is (qualities) tradition. The connection between hadith collection and Muslim biographical writings is manifested in the origin and development of ilm al-rijal (science of men), originated to verify the reliability of transmitter of hadith.9

Moreover, fada’il and khasa’is are also an important source in the development of hagiographical wirings. Both these genres are considered to be the sub-sections of hadith collections. The content of these genres enumerated the charisma and character of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) or Companions. The Prophet’s wife, Hazrat A’isha’s (d. 678) fada’il is an example in case. It describes the qualities, character, and loving relationship between Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) and his wife Hazrat A’isha. Further, a genre of biographical literature flourished during hadith collection was Kutub al-zuhd (Books on Asceticism). These works provide information about the earliest developments of Sufism and how the character of sufis functioned as a yard-stick of piety.10

The tradition of hadith collection was followed by the development of two literary genres Sirah, the biography of Prophet (P.B.U.H.), and the Maghazi, the military history of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.).11 The first systematic biographical dictionary was compiled by the Muhammad ibn Sa’ad (d. 844). His work titled Tabaqat al-Kubra is considered to be the foundational Arabic biographical dictionary of the Muslim civilization.12 The basic objective of these hadith-based biographical dictionaries of Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was to serve as the Prophet’s (P.B.U.H.) life as yard-stick of legal and ethical tradition. Al-Tabari’s (d. 923), History of the Prophets and Kings was considered to be the ancillary subject of hadith and Quranic studies. One can see the dominance of biographical literature in the local histories as well. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi’s (d. 1071) History of Baghdad, a long series of biographies, was example in case.13 However, the biographies of religious scholars and jurists served to present them as the heirs of revelation and to transmit the religious norms to the generations to come. Muslim biographical writings do not describe a list of
events; it traces genealogy of an individual and his character. The focus of earliest popular Arabic *tabaqat* was biographical dictionaries of Quran reciters and memorizers, judges, jurists, or sufis. Other *tabaqat* also focused on a particular region or enlisted biographical entries of prominent Muslims died in a particular century, latter category is known as “centennial”.14

After evaluation of the biographical tradition in the early Muslim civilization, the second most important region where this genre systematically flourished was Persia. The idea of biographical writings into Persian encompassed a wider range of writing than what had been written in the early Muslim Civilization in this genre of literature. In Persia, the roots of biographical writings can be traced with the beginning of the Arabic *tabaqat* writings back in the eleventh century AD. This tradition was initiated to compile the collective biographies. Abdul-Rahman al-Sulami (d. 1021), an exegete and hagiographer of Nishapur, compiled a biographical dictionary of sufis titled *Tabaqat al-Sufiyya* that is considered to be the earliest Arabic work of this genre in Persia. It includes nine hundred and ninety-nine generation-wise, as in aforementioned Ibn Sa’ad’s *tabaqat*, biographical entries of sufis. It starts with biography of an earliest sufi al-Fudayl b. Iyad (d. 803) and come to an end with last entry of Abu Abdullah al-Dinawari (d. 895 or 902 circa). Al-Sulami adopted the methodology which was being used in *hadith* collection. Each entry starts with the Prophet’s *hadith* and a sufi who transmitted it. It was followed by a number of sufi sayings. The purpose of al-Sulami was never to highlight only narrative biography of a sufi but to elucidate the piety of each sufi by enumerating his sayings, character and knowledge as an ideal one to his followers.15

The second Arabic work of this type was a Persian-born Abu Nu‘aym al-Isfahani’s (d. 1038) titled *Hilyat al-Awliya*. He introduced a new format to include the biographical entries. Al-Isfahani made an attempt to trace the genealogies of sufis back to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) via the early caliphs. It was subordinated to the doctrinal narrative and paradigmatic mode which had been the subject of sufi hagiographies.16 Another Arab origin, religious scholar, sufi hagiographer, local of
Nishapur Abul Qasim Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri (d. 1072), also wrote an Arabic treatise on Sufism named *al-Risala al-Qushayriyya* on the same chronological pattern. Apart from tracing the roots of tradition of the Sufism in relation with early Muslim Civilization, there are about eighty three biographical entries of sufis in this manual.\(^{17}\)

However, the first and foundational work of this genre in Persian is said to have been of Abd-Allah Ansari’s (d. 1089) *Tabaqat al-Suffiya*, later on, compiled by his students in local Herat dialect.\(^{18}\) All above mentioned eleventh century works were being written to defend Sufism and its adherents against the criticism of orthodox and conservative *ulema*. The writers of these biographical works traced the roots of Sufism and its beliefs through the genealogical link of adherents with Prophet (P.B.U.H.). Taken together, all these works were compiled to represent the specific agendas of their respective writers.

The collective biographical tradition followed by the works written to collect the biographical material of an individual sufi. These collective biographies were originally written in Arabic but translated into Persian later on. The description of the life of Abu Abd Allah Mohammad ibn Afif (d. 981-82) by the Abu al-Hassan b. Ali Mohammad Deylami (circa 10th century) and the description of the life of Abu Eshaq Kazaruni\(^{19}\) (d. 1030) written by Katib Imam Abu Bakr Moḥammad b. ‘Abd-al-Karim, both translated into Persian by Rukn al-Din Yahya ibn Junayd Shirazi and Mahmud ibn Usman respectively are examples in case. These two works were followed by two individual biographies of which the subject was the life of Abu Said Fazl-Allah b. Abu al-Khayr (d. 1049), a sufī-poet, loyalist of Shafi law, and sufī of Khurasan. Both these works were written by Abu Said’s descendants almost two centuries after his death. First one was written by Muhammad b. Abī Rawḥ Lutf Allah titled *Halat-wa-Sukhanani-i Abu Sa’id Abu al-Khayr*. Second was of another descendant named Muhammad b. al-Munawar titled *Asrar al-Tawhid fi Maqamat al-Shaykh Abu Sa’id* (composed in between 1179-92). It is considered to be one of the masterpieces of Persian hagiographic works.\(^{20}\) On the same pattern, another biography was composed to record the life-story of Ahmad-i-Jam (d. 1141) in the same time period. He was born in Khurasan but
when was of forty he migrated to the Jam, an Afghan town where he laid the foundation of his own sufi silsilah. The main purpose of this hagiography was to establish a link between the Abu Sa’id Abi al-Khayr and the descendants of Ahmad-i Jam.\textsuperscript{21} One of Ahmad-i Jam’s hagiographers was Sadid al-Din Ghaznavi, the compiler of \textit{Maqamat-i-Zanda Pil}. It is a collection of Ahmad-i Jam’s wondrous deed or \textit{karamat}. In addition, it also describes the relationship between the sufi and ruler, especially with the Saljuq king, Sultan Sanjar (r. 1096-1157).\textsuperscript{22} Aforementioned works are considered to be the foundational ones in the pre-Mongol period.

In addition, two other biographies of the native of Fars, Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209) were composed by his great-grandsons on the same pattern. Baqli was a mystical writer and sufi from Shiraz, Iran. He himself wrote his autobiography titled \textit{Kashf al-Asrar}, a summation of his spiritual experiences. Two great-grandsons of Baqli named Sharaf al-Din Ibrahim (d. 1300) and Shams al-Din (d. 1305), were sons of Sadr al-Din Ruzbihan II (d. 1286), a grandson of Ruzbihan. Two hagiographies; \textit{Tuhfat al-Irfan}, in 1300 and \textit{Ruh al-Jinan}, in 1305, were compiled by Sharaf al-Din Ibrahim and Shams al-Din respectively. Both biographies established the spiritual authority of Ruzbihan and illuminated his tomb’s importance as the centre of pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{23}

The subject of these individual hagiographical works was to highlight the change and development of the mystical practices and structures. The primary purpose of these works was twofold: to increase the inner cohesion among the followers of one shaykh, and to highlight his authority and piety. After the eleventh century, the subject matter of these works was not only to record the outer aspect of sufis but also to narrate their miracle-stories as well. The primary concern to record the life-stories of a sufi was “to transmit to believing and pious audience matters of practical spiritual value; the specifically ‘human’-the whole stuff of modern biography-is trivial and profoundly uninteresting from a traditional viewpoint”.\textsuperscript{24}
The Mongol era experienced relative fall of traditional ulema and the subsequent rise of mystical tradition. With the development of sufi silsilahs, to trace the hereditary lineage and to debate the fundamental issues of the development of Islamic mysticism became the primary subject-matter of hagiographical writings at that time. The biographies of Safi al-Din Ardabili, (d. 1334), Persian spiritual leader, and of Jalal-al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) are examples of hereditary based works. The hagiographers were no more concerned with to defend the mysticism against the traditional ulema rather debating the competition within sufi silsilahs.

Farid al-Din Attar (d. 1220/21) was a prominent sufi and hagiographer of Nishpur. Apart from didactic-poetry called mathnawi, he compiled a biographical dictionary of prominent sufis titled Tadhkirat al-Awliya, on the similar pattern that of Abu Nu‘aym and Sulami. Though a manual on Sufism titled Kashf al-Mahjub by Saiyid Ali Hujwiri (d. 1072) having a separate section on sufi biographies was written about a century and half earlier, yet it cannot be enlisted as sufi tadhkirah because of its form and arrangement. There was another work of Abdullah b. Muhammad al-Ansari al-Harawi (d. 1088) titled Tabaqat al-Sufiya written in the same period when Hujwiri wrote Kashf al-Mahjub. The original text is no longer extant; we find only its extracts in Jami’s Nafahat al-UNS. It was based on Sulami’s Arabic Tabaqat al-Sufiya but itself was compiled in the ancient dialect of Herat, which was anarchic Persian, according to Jami. Thus, Attar’s Tadhkirat al-Awliya is considered to be the oldest Persian biographical dictionary of sufis. Maulana Abd al-Rehman Jami (d. 1492), a Naqshbandi adept, sufi poet and hagiographer of Herat compiled a detailed sufi biographical work titled Nafahat al-UNS. In the concluding section of this work, he provides a summation of almost three dozen biographical details of women sufis as well.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the trend to compile the individual hagiographies continued. A number of founders of sufi silsilahs such as Baha al-Din Naqsband (d. 1389), Saiyid Ali Hamdani (d. 1385) and Shah Nimat Allah (d. 1392) were biographed by Attar.
1430-31) had been the subject of these works. The pre-Mongol trend of locality had also been the focus of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries’ hagiographers. Hagiographers of both Persia and Central Asia composed works focused either on a *silsilah* or a specific locality.

3. Origin and Early Development of *Tadhkirah* Writing in South Asia

In South Asian context of Sufism, especially of medieval India, what we know about the sufis is come from the biographical dictionaries which were either written by the disciples or devotees of sufis. Interestingly, in premodern India the Persian hagiographical literature written is larger than the literature of the same genre composed both in Iran and Central Asia. With the coming of sufis into India, in addition to change in varied aspects of Indian society, tradition of *tadhkirah* writing became prominent as well. In India, the originality of the Persian hagiographical literature lays into two factors: on the one hand, India not only attracted the Muslim sufis from Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan but also many sufi *silsilahs* took their origin from this fertile land itself; on the other hand, Muslim rulers of India had been facing different local Indian religious identities such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism as well. Thus, Muslim traditional religious literature was representing a counter-narrative to the above mentioned non-Muslim identities; it was only sufi syncretistic literature, in the last analysis, which greatly contributed to the Muslim religious thought in India.

Ali ibn ‘Uthman al-Hujwiri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (d. 1072), a Hanafi religious scholar, and mystical theorist was the first one who wrote foundational Persian manual on Sufism titled *Kashf al-Mahjub* in India. It is detailed work on the formative years of Sufism and its doctrines. It is considered the earliest Persian treatise on the sufi doctrines that contains a separate section on sufi biographies. However, the earliest Persian *tadhkirah* of India is considered to be the *Siyar*
al-Awliya written by Muhammad ibn Mubarak Mir Khurd (d. 770/1368-9), a disciple of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya and an Indian hagiographer. This work is an important source of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries sufis lives of north-India. It is a source of information about both the lives of Chishti sufis and their teachings. There is a debate about its classification in the sufi literature that either it is an exclusively tadhkirah or not because it combines the characteristics of both genres tadhkirah and malfuzat. The main focus of this work is the life-stories of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya and other Chishti adepts in chronological order which partly enlists it in the category of tadhkirah genre of sufi literature. The second portion of this work is based on the events and themes taken from earlier malfuzat especially the excerpts of Fawa’id al-Fuad. Muhammad Habib maintained that “his work, though very informative and quite indispensable, is not an equally safe guide”.

As argued above that Siyar al-Awliya is partly a tadhkirah and partly a malfuz, so one cannot enlist it as an ‘exclusive’ tadhkirah. It was written about a century earlier before Jamali’s Siyar al-Arifin, yet it cannot be enlisted as an exclusive tadhkirah because of its form and arrangement. Therefore, the first and an exclusive tadhkirah of South Asia is Jamali’s Siyar al-Arifin that is an exclusive tadhkirah. Hamid ibn Fazlullah Jamali (d. 1536), a Suhrawardi adept, Indian hagiographer and poet, composed Siyar al-Arifin. It starts with Moin-al-Din Chishti (d. 633/1235) and ends with Jamali’s spiritual master Shaykh Sama-al-Din (d. 1496). This work provides in-depth biographical details of six Chishti and seven Suhrawardi sufis of medieval India. In addition to these thirteen entries, there are a number of short biographical entries of many contemporary sufis. It is considered to be first systematic Indian Persian multi-lineage biographical dictionary.

After Siyar al-Arifin, a number of tadhkirahs were written that include collective hagiography of Indian sufis titled Akhbar al-Akhyar, completed in 1591 by Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Dihlawi, a Qadiri adept; Dara Shikuh (d. 1659) compiled two sufi biographical works: Safinat al-Awliya and Sakinat al-Awliya; Shaykh Abd al-Rahman, a Chishti adept, (d.
1094/1683) compiled a generation-wise *tadkhira* titled *Mir’at al-Asrar* and, Ghulam Sarwar Lahori’s, a nineteenth-century Punjabi hagiographer, *Khazinat al-Asfiya* is considered to be last systematic Sufi *tadkhira* of South Asia. The purpose of these Sufi *tadkhira*hs was often to commemorate sufis of a particular region or *silsila*. The abridged and translated versions of these Sufi compendia are available in regional languages as well. These Sufi compendia influenced the traditional settings because sufis have been portrayed as symbol of piety and character builders by the hagiographers.

4. Modern Developments in Hagiography Writing

The transition from traditional biographical writing to modern one is influenced by the western model of biography writings. In South Asian context, the change in biographical writings is stemmed in the rise of Urdu as a modern prose language in the late nineteenth century. The critical approach to the biographies of ‘Heroes of Islam’ such as Second Caliph Umar (d. 644), Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 767), Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), and Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) by Shibli Numani (d. 1914) are examples in case. Numani’s critical treatment to these biographies manifests the influence of the canons of Europeans and particularly English literature on traditional biographical writings.

Other trends in modern Sufi biographical writings are to edify the subject, and to use it to reinforce national or regional identities. In Pakistan, for example, keeping in view the social and political importance of pre-modern Persian Sufi biographies, the Sufi-veneration among the Barelwi Islam and the faith of majority of Pakistanis, a number of Persian Sufi biographies have been translated into Urdu. Since Barelwis are believed to be in majority in Pakistan, such publications have given role to the sufis as the sign of Pakistani nationalism. Translated copies of these compendia are also being distributed among the followers of a particular shrine to legitimize their authority and to affirm the linkage among the followers of the shrine by the hereditary custodians of shrines.
In Shiism, Imams’ lives have been portrayed as role models for the contemporary times and all the generations to come. In pre-revolutionary Iran, for example, the Prophet’s grandson, Imam Hussain’s (d. 680) biography was presented in a way that shifted Imam Hussain’s role from tragic martyr to an activist who had challenged unjust social order. This new trend linked deliberately the past events to the contemporary problems faced by Iranians. In this way, the traditional Muslim sources have been combined with Western existential focus.41

The roots of females’ biographical writings can be traced back to the origin of *tabaqat* that contained brief biographical entries of females at the end. The modern development in this regard is that the traditional Muslim scholars have presented early Muslim women to reinforce the traditional patterns in the female behavior. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi’s (d. 1953) *Heroic Deeds of Muslim Women* (New Delhi, 1985) and Muhammad Zakariya Kandhalavi’s (d. 1982) *Stories of Sahaabah* (Johannesburg, 1987) are examples in case. Contrarily, a revisionist approach to the early Muslims women is adopted by a Moroccan historian Fatima Mernissi who has attempted to highlight their resistance to the supposed values and to recover their independence of actions.42 However, this genre has faced decline in recent years.43

5. Hagiographical Literature: A Critique

Sufi biographers manipulate facts to suit their argument in the favour of particular sufis and their *silsilahs*. Hagiographers presented evidences to portray these religious individuals as exemplars of Islamic spirituality not only for their own time but all the generations to come. However, job of a historian is twofold: first to scrutinize how these hagiographers manipulated the facts; and, second, to explore their purpose behind it. These texts are not merely manipulations of facts but source of encyclopedic knowledge of long journey of Islamic spirituality. Though, they have their temporal and structural limits, yet they offer evidence about the sufis as the agents of
Muslim culture and fresh look on the society from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

To use these biographies as historical source of medieval Indian society, it is necessary to employ a hermeneutical method that explores the self-statements and choices of entries which have been used by the authors of these texts. It is also mandatory to look at what these authors hide and what they highlight in these sufi narratives: why do they intentionally omit some ‘obvious’ data and biographies? Do they use any patterns of selectivity that are easy to trace? In what follows would be a brief discussion on the said texts about their methodology, their patterns of selectivity, about their authorship and contents.

For the social and economic historians of medieval India, it is necessary to explore methods which have been used in sufi biographies which hold great importance in this regard. These biographies can be different from each other in terms of their subject and organization. What is only common in these biographies, in the last analysis, is the information which is rarely considered to be ‘historical’ one. However, taken together, these texts contain some common qualities which are of great importance for the social and economic historians. There are two main qualities: one is the standardized biographical entries, and second is the randomness in the selection of individuals. These biographies are being used just as reference work by the historian. The problem is how to make these texts meaningful to explore the social and economic aspects of respective society. It is necessary for the one who explores the social history of medieval Indian to scrutinize the sufi biographies. One should try to avoid both reductionist approach as well as advocacy.

There are two exclusive positions of scholars and historians on sufi texts. One group accepts the sufi biographies as authentic one, whereas the other considers it spurious and apocryphal. Lawrence comments on the spurious sufi texts: ‘they do have “incidental value for estimating the mood of popular piety in fourteenth century Delhi…Yet on a whole,
they seriously distort the historical image of the saints whom they awkwardly attempt to eulogize”. Thus, one needs to be careful while studying these fabrications.

Another important issue of sufi texts is their focus and content. Authors of hagiographical literature either were disciple or devotes of a sufi to whom the books were being dedicated. Hagiographers included the entries which suited to their world-view. They emphasized on the achievements and miracles of sufis and what they considered appropriate to disseminate among the readers of these texts. However, it is an admitted fact that these works are source of pre-modern Indian society. Nizami contends that “the purpose [of miracles in them] is to bring out some higher and nobler principle of social life, rather than to enthrall popular imagination with supernatural stories”. However, for a social and economic historian of pre-modern India, it is necessary to scrutinize them while producing history of pre-modern Indian society.
References

3 Hermansen, “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Islamic Biographical Materials”, 164.
8 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, invented the term ‘Islamicate’ to use an adjective in 1960s. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 57-60. The use this term is not restricted to religious connotation. To Eaton, the term was “intended to capture a broader, more flexible, and less communal notion of culture than is conveyed by the more narrowly defined religious terms ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’”. See introduction in Richard M. Eaton, ed. *India’s Islamic Traditions, 711-1750* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.
10 Hermansen, “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Islamic Biographical Materials”, 167-68.
11 Since the subject-matter of Prophet’s (P.B.U.H.) biography was both his life and times and military history, there was no clear
division upon which one could draw a line between *Sirah* and *Maghazi* genres. Historically, the development of *Sirah* and *Maghazi* writings broadly can be divided into two phases: first phase, beginning of this literature; second phase, its development in a systematic way. Ablah ibn Uthman al-Ahmer (d. 723/24), a Companion of Prophet (P.B.U.H.), is considered to be the foundational writer of both *Sirah* and *Maghazi* genres of first phase. M. Hinds, “al-Maghazi,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, 3rd* rev. ed. (Boston & Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1161-64. The second phase of *Maghazi* and *Sirah* writing was a more systematic one. *Kitab al-Maghazi* of Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 761) is considered to be the first systematic work of *Maghazi* genre. Its construction was based on the sources like Arab oral epic, *maghazi* writings and *hadith* literature. Carl W. Ernst, “From Hagiography to Martyrology: Conflicting Testimonies to a Sufi Martyr of the Delhi Sultanate”, *History of Religions*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (May, 1985): 308-327, 310. Another Arab historian named Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi (d. 823) wrote a book on the subject was titled *Kitab al-Maghazi*. Al-Waqidi is considered to be the first historian who developed a systematic framework to differentiate between *Maghazi* and *Sirah* as two separate genres. Hinds, “al-Maghazi,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1161.


Dilawar Hussain


19 For details of his life and times see, N. Hanif, Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Central Asia and Middle East (New Delhi: Sarup Sons, 2002), 95.


26 For a detailed discussion, see preface to Farid al-Din Attar, Tadhkirat Al-Awliya, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co. 1905).


34 Lawrence, “An Indo-Persian Perspective on the Significance of Early Persian Sufi Masters”, 23.
36 Lawrence, “An Indo-Persian Perspective on the Significance of Early Persian Sufi Masters”, 27.
38 Hermensen, “Biography and Hagiography”, 220.
40 Hermansen “Biography and Hagiography”, 4.
42 Hermansen “Biography and Hagiography”, 5.
43 As western culture has been increasingly influencing the Muslims societies, the modern genres of literature such as the novel and short story are being given priority over traditional biographical writings. The factor behind the decline of this genre is because of two reasons: on the one hand, decline in the tradition of Sufism; on the other hand, rise in the development of secular and even English-language biographies. Religious biographies have been facing the aforementioned challenges. Fatima Mernissi, *Women in Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (Delhi: Kali for Women Publisher, 1991), 148. See also for detailed discussion,


