

The Idea of Tarikh in Syamarih fi Ilmi Tarikh by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti

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Abstract

This study delves into "Syamarih fi ilmi Tarikh" by Jalaluddin al-Sayuti, an exploratory work on historical methodologies. The objective is to illuminate the essence of historical study through al-Sayuti's lens, highlighting the importance of understanding history as a discipline. Despite its profound contributions to historical discourse, al-Sayuti's text remains underexplored among scholars, signaling a gap in academic discussions on historical conceptualizations. Utilizing content analysis, this research uncovers al-Sayuti's motives and his unique approach to presenting history. Our findings indicate that al-Sayuti perceives 'tarikh' (history) as inherently linked to temporal dynamics, incorporating aspects of chronological, cyclical, and natural times. This conceptualization is closely tied to Islamic principles, suggesting that his interpretation serves not only as an academic endeavor but also as a reflection of Islamic civilization's understanding of time. Al-Sayuti's work, thus, provides insightful perspectives on the interplay between time and history, emphasizing the significance of temporal frameworks in shaping historical narratives. The conclusion underscores al-Sayuti's contribution to historical thought, offering a nuanced view that enriches our comprehension of history as both a subject and a methodology. This research affirms the critical need to further investigate such foundational texts to enhance our grasp of historical sciences.

Keywords: History; Islamic Civilization; Temporal Dynamics; Jalaluddin al-Sayuti; Content Analysis.

Introduction

The exploration of Tarikh (history) within Islamic scholarship presents a rich and multifaceted field of study, marked by the contributions of numerous scholars who have woven their intricate understandings of history into the fabric of Islamic historiography. Among these, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's work, "Syamarih fi Ilmi Tarikh," stands out as a seminal piece that delves deeply into the conceptualization of history from an Islamic perspective. This study seeks to bridge the gap between the historical narratives constructed by Islamic scholars and the methodologies and frameworks they employed to interpret, analyze, and present history.

In undertaking this exploration, it is crucial to consider the broader scholarly landscape, where significant studies have illuminated various aspects of Islamic historiography. The research by Kamaruzaman et al. (2015), which scrutinizes Ibn Al-Athir's philosophy of history as articulated in "Al-Kamil Fi Al-Tarikh," exemplifies the depth of inquiry into the methodologies underlying credible

historical research within the Islamic tradition.¹ This study not only highlights the importance of document analysis and historiographical approaches but also sets a precedent for evaluating the credibility of historical narratives.

Further enriching this discourse, Nurcahya & Akbar (2020) explore the historiographical and philosophical ideas of Muhammad bin Sulaiman bin Saad Al-Kafiyaji, particularly through his work "Al-Mukhtasar Al-Mufid Fi Ilmi Al-Tarikh." Their research contributes significantly to the understanding of emerging topics in the field of Islamic historiography, opening avenues for further scholarly investigation into the contributions of lesser-known figures².

The study on the life of Shaykh Musa Kamara during the colonial era by Marsh (2020) adds another layer to the conversation, shedding light on the evolving consensus regarding Islam's role in colonial governance. This research offers invaluable insights into how colonial narratives have influenced the interpretation of historical texts, including those like "Syamarah fi Ilmi Tarikh"³.

Additionally, Burge's (2019) examination of angelology in Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's "al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik" unveils the intersection between theology and historical thought, providing a unique perspective on the intellectual context within which Suyuti's works were produced. This study underscores the necessity of understanding the theological underpinnings that inform historical narratives in Islamic scholarship⁴.

The contrast in reception of al-Suyuti's works between Western academia and the Muslim world, as discussed by Hernandez (2017), highlights an area ripe for debate and further exploration. This divergence underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of al-Suyuti's contributions to both Islamic scholarship and broader historiographical discourse⁵.

In addressing the methodologies that enhance the credibility of historical findings, Topal (2023) research on the expedition to al-Kharrar in classical sources the critical importance of source evaluation and narrative construction within

¹ Azmul Fahimi Kamaruzaman, Norsaeidah Jamaludin, and Ahmad Faathin Mohd Fadzil, "Ibn Al-Athir's Philosophy of History in Al-Kamil Fi Al-Tarikh," *Asian Social Science* 11, no. 23 (September 17, 2015): p28, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n23p28>.

² Nurcahya Nurcahya and Mahbub Hefdzil Akbar, "Pemikiran Muhammad bin Sulaiman bin Saad Al-Kafiyaji dalam Bidang Sejarah: Studi Historiografi dan Filologi Terhadap Kitab Al-Mukhtas A-R Al-Mufid Fi Ilmi Al-Tarikh Abad ke-15 M," *Historia Madania: Jurnal Ilmu Sejarah* 3, no. 2 (December 28, 2019): 121–46, <https://doi.org/10.15575/hm.v3i2.9172>.

³ Wendell Marsh, "Reading with the Colonial in the Life of Shaykh Musa Kamara, a Muslim Scholar-Saint," May 2020, 604–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972020000091>.

⁴ S. R. Burge, "Scattered Pearls: Exploring al-Suy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, no. 2 (April 2014): 251–96, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186313000795>.

⁵ Rebecca Skreslet Hernandez, "Introduction," in *The Legal Thought of Jalal Al-Din al-Suyuti: Authority and Legacy*, ed. Rebecca Hernandez (Oxford University Press, 2017), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198805939.003.0001>.

Islamic historiography⁶. This approach emphasizes the methodological rigor necessary for producing coherent and credible historical narratives.

Emerging topics in the field are further highlighted by the work of Wildan & Nasution (2022), which examines the differing interpretation methods of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and Jalal al-Din al-Mahallî, showcasing the varied scholarly perspectives within the discourse on Islamic historiography. Their study illustrates the dynamic nature of interpreting historical texts and the need for a comprehensive understanding of the methodological approaches employed by Islamic scholars⁷.

This investigation into "Syamarîh fi Ilmi Tarikh" and the broader field of Islamic historiography is anchored in a comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates insights from key studies across the discipline. By engaging with these diverse perspectives, this research aims to contribute to the scholarly understanding of Tarikh, illuminating the methodologies, debates, and emerging topics that have shaped the field.

The urgency of this research lies in its potential to not only fill existing gaps in the academic understanding of Islamic historiography but also to foster a deeper appreciation for the intellectual rigor and methodological diversity that characterize Islamic historical scholarship. This study endeavors to bring to light the nuanced and complex ways in which Islamic scholars, like Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, have conceptualized history, thereby enriching the academic discourse surrounding historical methodology and philosophy in Islamic studies.

In synthesizing the insights gleaned from these key studies, this research will draw upon a robust array of sources, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive analysis. The commitment to using primarily articles from accredited national and reputable international journals, published within the last decade, aligns with the academic standards for primary source material and guarantees that the exploration is grounded in contemporary scholarly debates.

Through this meticulous approach, the study seeks to bridge historical insights with contemporary scholarly dialogues, contributing to a more nuanced and enriched understanding of the concept of Tarikh in Islamic historiography. By situating Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's "Syamarîh fi Ilmi Tarikh" within this broader intellectual and methodological context, the research endeavors to illuminate the depth and breadth of Islamic historiographical thought, offering new insights into

⁶ Ahmet Topal, "The Narrative Change in Muslim Historiography within the Context of the Expedition to Al-Kharrâr Harrâr Seriyyesi Özelinde Müslüman Tarih Yazıcılığında Anlatı Değişimi," *Türkiye İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7 (March 27, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.32711/tiad.1233329>.

⁷ T. Wildan and Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, "JALÂL AL-DÎN AL-MAHALLÎ AND JALÂL AL-DÎN AL-SUYUTÎS' INTERPRETATION METHOD OF THE MUTASYÂBIHÂT VERSE IN TAFSÎR JALÂLAYN," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 46, no. 1 (August 29, 2022): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v46i1.882>.

the complex interplay between history, methodology, and intellectual inquiry in the Islamic scholarly tradition.

Method

This research delves into the intellectual milieu of the Arabic-Islamic world during a specific era, with a focus not on the sequential development of historical notions but on the scrutiny of historical concepts as articulated in al-Suyuti's oeuvre. Central to this endeavor is the application of content analysis as the primary methodology to distill the fundamental ideas embedded within his writings, sidestepping a purely chronological narrative.

The employment of content analysis in this study is driven by the aim to elucidate the explicit themes and notions contained within Suyuti's texts, devoid of their temporal backdrop. This approach allows for a nuanced engagement with Suyuti's historical concepts, leveraging them for scholarly exploration. Such a methodological choice represents a deviation from traditional applications of content analysis, as seen in Marilyn Neimark's analysis of General Motors' annual reports, by emphasizing a unique utilization of content analysis within the domain of historical scholarship. Traditionally, content analysis is utilized to analyze a broad spectrum of documents and datasets across various time periods.

To ensure this methodology aligns with contemporary scholarly standards and rigor, it is imperative to weave in recent discussions on content analysis as employed in the humanities. The evolution of content analysis methodologies, particularly in the context of historical and textual analyses, has been significantly shaped by the contributions of scholars like Krippendorff (2013)⁸ and Schreier (2012)⁹. These contributions have provided detailed frameworks for conducting content analysis, highlighting its adaptability and relevance for a wide range of texts and media formats. Moreover, the work of W. Norman Gustafson (1998) specifically sheds light on the intricacies of applying content analysis to historical texts, presenting strategies for navigating the challenges of interpreting ancient documents through a modern research lens¹⁰.

Incorporating these methodological advancements, the current study seeks to enrich the field of Arabic-Islamic intellectual history through an in-depth exploration of al-Suyuti's contributions. By leveraging content analysis, informed by the latest academic discourse, this research ensures a meticulous examination of al-Suyuti's texts. This methodological stance acknowledges the historical and intellectual contexts that informed his work, facilitating a comprehensive

⁸ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (SAGE, 2013).

⁹ Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529682571>.

¹⁰ W. Norman Gustafson, "Content Analysis in the History Class," *The Social Studies* 89, no. 1 (January 1998): 39–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377999809599821>.

understanding of his contributions to historical thought. Through this approach, the study endeavors to offer novel insights into the intellectual traditions of the Arabic-Islamic world, emphasizing the enduring relevance of al-Suyuti's perspectives in contemporary scholarly discussions.

Results and Discussions

Jalaluddin al-Sayuti's Biography and Works

Abu al-Fadl 'Abdu al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad Jalal al-din al-Suyuti, widely known by his given name, hailed from a family of Turkish and Persian heritage in Cairo, Egypt¹¹. His birth occurred on a Sunday evening, following the Maghrib prayer, or in the early hours of Rajab, in the year 749 H (1447 AD). Al-Suyuti's life spanned between 60 and 62 years, concluding in 911 H (1505 AD)¹².

The moniker Ibn Kutub, translating to "Son of Books," was bestowed upon him due to his father's esteemed status as a scholar and a mufti within the Islamic law framework. While much is documented about his paternal lineage, details regarding his mother remain scant, primarily noting her Turkish background¹³.

Al-Suyuti's early education was marked by his memorization of the Qur'an and esteemed texts such as 'Umdatul Ahkam,' 'Minhaju Nawawi,' 'Alfiyah Ibn Malik,' and 'Minhaj al-Baidhowi.' His scholarly pursuits extended beyond these texts, as he engaged in studies under prominent scholars including al-Hafid ibn Hajar and Sirojuddin al Baqlani in the realms of Islamic law and Hadith during his pilgrimage to Mecca¹⁴.

Throughout his lifetime, al-Suyuti authored over 500 works, encompassing a broad spectrum of Islamic studies. Among these, his collaboration with Jalaludin al-Mahali on the 'Tafsir al-Jalalain,' a detailed word-by-word interpretation of the Qur'an, stands out as a significant contribution to his fame. Additionally, his own works, 'Itqan fi ulum al-Qur'an' in Qur'anic exegesis and 'Tarikh al-Khulafa'

¹¹ Rebecca Hernandez, *The Legal Thought of Jalal Al-Din al-Suyuti: Authority and Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198805939.001.0001>.

¹² "Jalāl Al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Volume I : Biography and Background | E.M. Sartain | Download on Z-Library," accessed March 7, 2024, <https://z-library.se/book/1193884/8fe7a7/jal%C4%811-ald%C4%ABn-alsuy%C5%AB%E1%B9%AD%C4%AB-volume-i-biography-and-background.html>.

¹³ "Jalāl Al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Volume I : Biography and Background | E.M. Sartain | Download on Z-Library."

¹⁴ "Jalāl Al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Volume I : Biography and Background | E.M. Sartain | Download on Z-Library."

alongside 'Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh' in the field of history, further cemented his reputation as a prolific scholar¹⁵¹⁶.

Concerning Syamarikh fi Ilmi Tarikh Edition

This study utilized two primary sources: a manuscript from the Al-Azhar collection, numbered 6697, and a book published by Maktabah al-Adab, based in Cairo. Both sources are now widely accessible, with the Al-Azhar manuscript included in the digital collection and the Cairo-based publication available online.

The manuscript, consisting of only 17 pages, provides a concise yet crucial glimpse into the topic under investigation, offering no further elaboration beyond its limited scope. Conversely, the Cairo-published book extends to a total of 32 pages, providing a broader exploration of the subject matter. Initial remarks by the editor or researcher (*muhaqiq*) precede the detailed examination of the author's contributions, adhering to a structured analytical approach.

Significant is the mention of another manuscript originating from Lahore, Pakistan, identified as being completed during *Dzi al-Qo'dah* in the year 872 H according to preliminary reports. Another distinct manuscript, labeled as number 405, was finalized in *Jumadil Ula* 985 H, though details about its author remain unknown. This latter manuscript is one of the most recent among several others, bearing the catalog number 859 and concluding its compilation on a Wednesday in 1079 H, with the authorship similarly unattributed.

The Maktabah al-Adab edition from Cairo sheds light on this scholarly work, with Abdul Rahman Mas'ud providing insights into the utilized sources to compile a comprehensive edition. This endeavor drew upon at least three manuscripts, all housed within Egypt, to form a complete and authoritative edition of the work.

Structure of The Book

In "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh," Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti offers a comprehensive examination of the concept of history as understood by Arabic scholars. His work meticulously outlines the methods employed by these scholars to delineate and define historical epochs, thereby establishing a systematic approach to periodization. Al-Suyuti begins his discourse by exploring various cultural practices related to the measurement and significance of time, highlighting his profound understanding of pre-Islamic periodization techniques.

Al-Suyuti's text is essentially an annotated compendium of his reflections on the essence of history, where he amalgamates numerous traditions with the concept

¹⁵ Safari Daud, "POTRET JALALUDDIN AL-SUYUTI SEBAGAI SEORANG SEJARAWAN," 2016, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/POTRET-JALALUDDIN-AL-SUYUTI-SEBAGAI-SEORANG-Daud/dac1038a04a9c2abf766747de487b57646634f8a>.

¹⁶ "Jalāl Al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Volume I : Biography and Background | E.M. Sartain | Download on Z-Library."

of time. He articulates his intention to extract and compile the 'fawaid' or benefits of history, a mission he declares in the introduction to his work. He quotes:

“لا جليلا يستفاد ولا حقيرا, فلم ار فيه لاقليلا ولا كثيرا, فقد وقف من بعض شيوخنا على كتاب في علم التاريخ, وسميته به الشماريخ في علم التاريخ, وتتحل به الالسن, ما تقربه الاعين: فوضعت في هذا الكتاب من الفوائد ورتبته على ابواب”

“I have read several teachers' books on historical science, and I have not found anything in them that is neither small nor numerous, neither taken up by nobles nor common people. As a result, I decided to add some benefits to this book, calling it *Syamarikh fi ilm at-Tarikh* (the pinnacle of historical science) and organizing it into chapters.”¹⁷

Al-Suyuti aims to enrich the reader's understanding by drawing from an extensive array of historical narratives and scholars. He meticulously categorizes this knowledge into chapters, ensuring a structured presentation of insights.

Prominently, Al-Suyuti references several ulamas within his book to underscore the breadth of his historical perspective. He acknowledges figures like Ibn Abi Khoisyimah, renowned for his biographical works on Hadith scholars, alongside other eminent historians such as Ibn Asakir and Ibn Jarir at-Tabari. This inclusion serves to illustrate the wide-ranging impact of historical scholarship.

The structure of "*Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh*" is methodically divided into three chapters, each addressing distinct aspects of history – its periodization, purpose, and the derived benefits¹⁸. Al-Suyuti embarks on a discourse regarding both pre-Islamic and Islamic calendrical systems, shedding light on the diverse historical notions that predate Islam. He traces the evolution of historical timelines from the era of Adam through to the Prophet Muhammad, mentioning significant events that define these periods.

Further, Al-Suyuti delves into the establishment and significance of the Islamic calendar in the narrative's subsequent section. He chronicles its inception from the Prophet Muhammad's time to its formal adoption under Caliph Umar ibn Khattab, marking the enduring relevance of the Hijri calendar.¹⁹

In exploring the objectives of historical study, Al-Suyuti discusses the religious and scholarly merits of understanding history, such as recognizing the timelines of scholars' lives and the chronology of prophetic traditions. He then addresses the interpretation of time within Arabic lexicon and its pivotal role in

¹⁷ “As-Suyuti, J. (2011). *Tarikh al-Khulafa*. Darul Kutub Islamiyah.,” accessed June 24, 2024, <https://dn790009.ca.archive.org/0/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.322662/2015.322662.Tarikh-Al.pdf>.

¹⁸ “As-Suyuti, J. (1991). *Syamarikh Fi Ilm Tarikh*. Maktabah al-Adab.,” accessed March 7, 2024, <https://ia801902.us.archive.org/1/items/Book1galerikitabkuning/book3.pdf>.

¹⁹ “As-Suyuti, J. (2011). *Tarikh al-Khulafa*. Darul Kutub Islamiyah.”

historical context in the third chapter²⁰. This section encompasses a detailed analysis of time measurement, from days to months, and introduces specific terms related to time, providing a comprehensive overview of the Arabic understanding of temporal concepts.

Al-Suyuti's "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh" stands as a seminal work that not only expounds on the methodologies of historical periodization but also emphasizes the intrinsic value of history in the Islamic and Arabic intellectual tradition.

Book Position in Related Historical Work

The scholarly examination of history within Islamic traditions reveals a nuanced categorization of historical works, which can be broadly divided into two distinct types. The first category encompasses general historical analyses, exemplified by the seminal contributions of Ibn Khaldun and al Iji from the fifteenth century. The second category is more specialized, focusing exclusively on the study of history or 'tarikh'. Notable works by as-Sakhawi and al-Kafiyaji typify this classification.

Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh" aligns with the latter category, offering a focused exploration of historical concepts. This positioning suggests that al-Suyuti's contributions are primarily concerned with the historical narrative. A comparative analysis with other historical texts highlights several factors contributing to the relative obscurity of al-Suyuti's work.

Primarily, al-Suyuti's manuscript is a compilation, employing a traditional Hadith paradigm that, while not unusual among Islamic scholars, sets his work apart from those of al Kafiyaji, Syakhawi, and Ibn Khaldun. Unlike the latter, where the authors predominantly articulate in their own words, al-Suyuti's reliance on the Hadith model, characterized by its sanad-based structure, marks a distinct methodological choice.

Another contributing factor to the work's limited recognition involves its presentation and thematic focus. The title and central theme of al-Suyuti's book, which subtly bypasses a direct mention of 'ilm tarikh' (the science of history), concentrates instead on various historical timelines and periods. This approach may obscure the work's contribution to the historiography field, particularly for readers seeking a comprehensive treatment of history as a scientific discipline.

Notably, Franz Rosenthal does not reference "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh" in his discussions on historical scholarship, underscoring the text's limited engagement within the broader academic community. Furthermore, its utilization for theoretical or practical purposes in historical studies appears uncommon, possibly reflecting its alignment with the traditional religious study paradigms prevalent in Islamic scholarship.

²⁰ "As-Suyuti, J. (1991). *Syamarikh Fi Ilm Tarikh*. Maktabah al-Adab."

By contextualizing al-Suyuti's approach within the wider Islamic academic tradition, one can appreciate the unique perspective his work offers on the historical narrative. Although "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh" may not have garnered widespread attention, its methodological and thematic choices contribute valuable insights into the understanding of history within the Islamic scholarly framework.

Tarikh as Time and History

In "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh," Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti explores the multifaceted concept of Tarikh, which encompasses both cyclical and historical time. The term "ilmtarikh," chosen for the book's title, suggests a nuanced intersection between the study of time and history, blending the temporal with the historical. The book navigates between the abstract notion of time and its concrete historical manifestations, highlighting the complexity of understanding past events.

The term "araha," of Persian origin, is crucial in this discourse, serving as a linguistic bridge to convey the notion of time in Arabic²¹. It signifies the act of reflecting on, recording, or dating events, thus imbuing it with historical significance²². Unlike "araha," which is directly associated with historical context, Arabic employs various terms such as "zaman," "waqt," "dahar," and "ajal" to denote the passage of time, each with its own nuances. We may see examples of these in the book of al-Kafiyaji, which reflects the common usage of zaman and waqt as time in and of themselves to distinguish from araha, which denotes past time:

“والميقات اعم من الوقت , و الوقت معرف عند القوم , ثم الزمان في اللغة هو الوقت“

“Zaman is time according to etymology, and people are familiar with time; yet, miqot is more all-encompassing than time.”²³

Al-Suyuti's work differentiates between the general concept of time ("zaman" and "waqt") and the specific notion of "araha," which is tied to historical dating and events. This distinction underlines the broader aim of his study: to dissect time's role within the historical narrative. Al Iji's contributions further illuminate this discussion, presenting "ta'rikh" as a term that encapsulates the idea of time linked to historical occurrences (Franz Rosenthal).

²¹ “Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition — Brill,” accessed June 24, 2024, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/>.

²² R.S. Humphreys, “Historical Thought and Historiography: Islamic Tradition,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition*, 2015, 61–66, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.62031-7>.

²³ M. A. A. M. B. S. B. M Kafiyaji, *Mukhtasarfi Ilmi Tarikh* (Alamul Kutub, 1990).

In contrast, araha itself has a specific connotation to historical times or dating. It is stated in a number of classical Arabic writings, one of which is the work of al Iji, which we will cite here:

التاريخ لغة تعريف الوقت مأخوذ من لفظ فارسي هو ماه و رو نعني الشهر واليوم وهو معرب و غير الى مؤرخ واخذ منه التاريخ وسار مستقاته و العرب اذا استعملوا الفظا من غير لغتهم خلطوا فيه تخليطا فاحشا حتى صار من جنس كلامهم واصطلاح تعيين وقت لينسب اليه زمان يأت بعده و قيل تعريف الوقت باسناده الى اول حدوث امر شائع كظهور ملة او دولة او وقوع حادثه ممايلة لطوفن وقيل مدة معلومة بين حدوث²⁴،

“Linguistically, ta’rih is the indication of time. It is derived from a Persian expression, namely, mah u roz, that is, month and day. It was arabicized and changed to mu’arrah, from which ta’rih and other derivatives were formed. Whenever the Arabs use a foreign word, they mix it up badly until it fits into their kind of speech. As a technical term, ta’rih is the fixation of time for the purpose of relating to it a time-section that comes later.”²⁵

As a result, the Arabic language's adoption of this word has a deliberate objective to reflect time as past time to establish beginning and finish. Instead of using the Arabic origin words ajal, Waqt, or Dahr for the same reason, they opt to utilize this as an additional name for the science of historical events. Arabic terms for time can only be used to conceptualize time.

In "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh," Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti presents a nuanced understanding of Tarikh, conceptualizing it within two distinct realms: the chronological and the societal. Chronologically, time serves as the foundation for delineating beginnings, periods, and significant events. Societally, it acts as a mnemonic device, aiding groups and societies in commemorating significant occurrences. This bifurcation underscores the complexity of historical time as both a measurable continuum and a repository of collective memory.

Al-Suyuti's analysis begins by situating Islamic tradition within a unique temporal framework, distinguishing it from both preceding and contemporaneous cultures. This demarcation underscores the formation of an Islamic historical identity post the prophetic migrations, a pivotal moment that Fred Donner acknowledges as critical in defining Islamic cultural and historical boundaries²⁶.

The discourse extends to the integration of the Qur'anic concept of time and the Hijri calendar, illustrating how these elements shape the Muslim historiographical tradition. Tarif Khalidi highlights the challenges of adhering

²⁴ Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Iji, "Tuhfat al Fakir Ila Sahib As-Sarir Fi Ilm Tarikh" (n.d.).

²⁵ Franz Rosenthal, "A History of Muslim Historiography" (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1968).

²⁶ Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Gerlach Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1b9f5gk>.

strictly to Qur'anic chronology, noting the diverse methodologies in Islamic historiography concerning period durations and historical categorizations²⁷.

A comparative analysis of works with the title "Al-Mukhtasar fi Ilm at Tarikh" reveals a shared emphasis on understanding history primarily through the lens of time. This perspective is a hallmark of Arab Muslim historians, as seen in the detailed discussions by Muhammad bin Sulaiman bin sa'd al-Kafiyaji and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Iji, who provide critical examinations of historical terminology and its implications²⁸.

Al-Suyuti's "Tarikh al-Khulafa" exemplifies the foundational role of periodization and criterion in Islamic history, employing the concept of Khilafat for thematic organization and rejecting alternative conceptualizations of Islamic leadership.

The exploration of time continues with an analysis of its social division, particularly in the context of Islamic rituals and traditions. This includes the determination of the fasting month's commencement and the significance of day and night in Islamic jurisprudence, rooted in prophetic teachings about the genesis of light and darkness.

Al-Suyuti delves into the grammatical nuances of expressing time in Arabic, particularly the use of the letter tha (ث) to form compound nouns related to temporal measurement. This linguistic precision facilitates the concise expression of dates and periods.

Furthermore, the discussion encompasses the cultural and religious significance of days, weeks, and months within the Islamic calendar, highlighting the socio-cultural factors that influence the Islamic conceptualization of time²⁹.

The second chapter's focus on the utility of time knowledge underscores its integral role in historical consciousness, serving not only to mark beginnings but also to authenticate narratives and traditions. This aspect is illuminated through references to the practical uses of historical knowledge in distinguishing truth from falsehood, a principle deeply ingrained in Islamic scholarly tradition.

This intricate examination of time, from its etymological roots to its practical implications in Islamic historiography, encapsulates the comprehensive approach Al-Suyuti adopts in "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh." The work transcends a mere chronological recounting, offering a profound reflection on time's multifaceted role in shaping historical understanding and cultural identity within the Islamic world.

²⁷ "Reflections on Periodisation in Aradic Historiography - Tarif Khalidi, 1998," accessed June 24, 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/097194589800100107>.

²⁸ Rosenthal, "A History of Muslim Historiography /."

²⁹ "The History of Time: A Very Short Introduction - Leofranc Holford-Strevens - Oxford University Press," accessed June 25, 2024, <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-history-of-time-a-very-short-introduction-9780192804990?cc=id&lang=en&>.

By adopting "araha" and related terms, al-Suyuti endeavors to frame history as a discipline that extends beyond the mere cataloging of dates to include the analysis and interpretation of time's passage through various cultures and epochs. This approach allows for a deep dive into the methodologies of periodization and the cultural significance of historical timelines, from the pre-Islamic era to the establishment of the Islamic calendar.

Al-Suyuti's exploration of historical time does not merely catalog events but seeks to understand how societies have structured their understanding of time through religious, cultural, and administrative practices. This includes the examination of calendrical systems, the significance of specific days and months, and the functional aspects of knowing time for religious observance and historical accuracy³⁰.

The discussion on the administrative and religious importance of chronology reflects a profound engagement with the practicalities of historical knowledge. It underscores the utility of history in verifying the authenticity of narratives and the significance of aligning events with specific temporal markers³¹.

Furthermore, al-Suyuti addresses the societal role of time in shaping collective memory and identity. By analyzing traditional conceptions of cyclical, social, and mythical time, he places Islamic historiography within a broader cultural context, illustrating how time functions as a critical element in understanding history, rituals, and the chronology of historical purposes³².

In sum, "Syamarikh fi Ilm at Tarikh" transcends a simple examination of historical dates to interrogate the essence of time as it intersects with human experience, culture, and religious practice. Al-Suyuti's work contributes significantly to the historiographical discourse, offering insights into the complex interplay between time and history in the Islamic world.

Conclusion

In Suyuti's book, a picture of what is intended by the name "Tarikh" is depicted. The word tarikh has two meanings in the book. It deals with dating or chronicling as well as various time ideas. The author mentions or compiles some khabar or narrative from other scholars rather than providing a clear explanation of ilm, which is another image we might take away from the book. The way he

³⁰ Stephen P. Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139343305>.

³¹ "As-Suyuti, J. (1991). *Syamarikh Fi Ilm Tarikh*. Maktabah al-Adab."

³² Arie Wilschut, "Historical Consciousness of Time and Its Societal Uses," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 51, no. 6 (November 2, 2019): 831–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1652939>.

constructs the idea in the hadith model tradition, the area where history in the Islamic Arabic world has its root, is one that we can avoid observing.

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