

AL-ILM Journal

Volume 5, Issue 1

ISSN (Print): 2618-1134

ISSN (Electronic): 2618-1142

Issue: <https://www.gcwus.edu.pk/al-ilm/>

URL: <https://www.gcwus.edu.pk/al-ilm/>

Title	Census In The Light Of Hadith Literature
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Received on:	02 November, 2020
Accepted on:	15 Ferbruary, 2021
Published on:	18March, 2021
Citation:	English Names of Authors, " Census In The Light Of Hadith Literature", AL-ILM 5 no 1 (2021): 1-10
Publisher:	Institute of Arabic & Islamic Studies, Govt. College Women University, Sialkot



CENSUS IN THE LIGHT OF HADITH LITERATURE

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Abstract

Hadith literature advocates that The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) carried out census first time in Madinah for the assessment of Muslim power, for sending delegations, for preaching Islam, spreading education, taking jizya, enumeration of warriors of ghazwat and for those who attended the last pilgrimage. This research discusses the contradictions in ahadith of census and tries to create compatibility among them. There are two basic contradictions about census. Firstly, hadith of Bukhari does not explain the occasion among of census whether it was the eve of Badr or Khandaq, Hudaibiyah or Uḥud. Therefore, Muhadithīn (Narrators of ḥadith), who elaborate it, have tried to guess the time of its occurrence. Secondly, three ahadith state three different statistics of the same time. Imam Nawawī has tried to create compatibility among them. This study aims at analysing the issue that how much importance was given by The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to conduct census.

Key words: Census, Evaluation, List, Inhabitants, Ghazwat, Warriors.

Literature Review

The concept of census is found in early Arabic literature as in Sahih Sitta and its commentaries like; Qastalani's "Irshad al Sari", Al – Asqalani's "Fatah al Bari etc. Seerah and history books have not much details on it except Dr.M. Sultan Shah has written comprehensive essay on census in his book "Seerat e Muṣṭafa ṣall'Allaahu 'alaihi wa'ṣallam Aur Asri Scienci Tehqīq"

Introduction

The root word of census in Latin is "Censere". It was, for first time, used in 1634 A.D." (1)Strictly speaking the modern population census began to evolve only in the 17th century." (2) So, census is "numbering of population with various statistics." (3) In Al-Qāmūs and Al- Mawrid the following Arabic equivalents have been introduced:

«الإحصاء، التعداد» (4) «السُّكَّانِيَّات» (5) «إحصاء النفوس، إحصاءية، إحصاءات السُّكَّان، رِسْمِي الإحصاء» *

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The word «أَحْصَى» in The Holy Qur'ān

This word is used in the Quran in the following meanings:

Pare	Surah No	Verse	Word	Meaning
15	Al –Kahaf 18	12	أَحْصَى	“Mark out” ⁽⁷⁾
29	Al –Muzzammil 73	20	تُحْصَوْنَ	“Ye count it” ⁽⁸⁾
28	Al –Ṭalāq 86	1	أَحْصُوا	“Reckon the period” ⁽⁹⁾

This table shows that in all places this word is used in same meanings.

The word «أَحْصُوا» in ḥadith

This word is also used with the same meaning in ḥadith as in the Qur'ān.

Hudhaifa (God be pleased with him) for instance has reported:

“قَالَ كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَحْصُوا لِي كَمْ يَلْفِظُ الْإِسْلَامَ”⁽¹⁰⁾

“We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he said, “Tell me how many people have professed Islam.”⁽¹¹⁾

Some other related words show that in old times, census was carried out.

The other words used for census are as follow:

Register: “مسجل”⁽¹²⁾ “Recording of name, record of list etc.”⁽¹³⁾

Dīwan: “This term was used for the list of soldiers but later it was used for list of all kinds of things and books of enrolling. Very lately it was used for office”⁽¹⁴⁾ Though Rome,⁽¹⁵⁾ China, India, Egypt, Medieval Europe,⁽¹⁶⁾ Incan Empire⁽¹⁷⁾ and Persian Empire had undertaken census in remote past for collecting tax⁽¹⁸⁾ they were wrong in their claim that they were its forerunner. In the holy Bible, six censuses have been mentioned five in the Old Testament⁽¹⁹⁾ and one in the New Testament.⁽²⁰⁾ As far as Islam is concerned, The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) commanded to carry out census. The Caliph Umar (God be please with him) practised it in his caliphate. He conducted census for giving scholarships, getting khiraj and jizyah, assessment of Muslim power, realizing the Glory of Islam to others.

The Prophetic Order Regarding Census

The Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) instructed his followers to conduct census in Madina after migration. A number of ahadith mention that the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) enrolled the population of Madīnah.

Census Objectives

Keeping in view various prophetic traditions, the following objectives of census can be enumerated:

- Assessment of Muslim power

- Collecting Jizyah
- Sending delegations for preaching Islam
- Estimation of army
- Expanding Education
- Showing the Glory of Islam to others

1. Assessment of Muslim Power

One aspect of census that was ordered by the holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was the assessment of Muslim power. On the other hand, he may want to comfort his companions that now they were in good numbers and Islam had become powerful. So, they didn't need to get afraid of someone. As in hadith of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "اَكْتُبُوا لِي مَنْ تَلَفَّظَ بِالإِسْلَامِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ أَلْفًا وَخَمْسِينَ رَجُلًا، فَقُلْنَا نَخَافُ وَنَحْنُ أَلْفٌ وَخَمْسِينَ فَلَقَدْ رَأَيْنَا ابْنًا حَتَّى إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيُصَلِّي وَحْدَهُ وَهُوَ خَائِفٌ" (22)

"The Prophet said (to us), "List the names of those people who have announced that they are Muslims." So, we listed one thousand and five hundred men. Then we wondered, "Should we be afraid (of infidels) although we are one thousand and five hundred in number?"

No doubt, we witnessed ourselves being afflicted with such bad trials that a man would offer the Salāt (prayer) alone while he was in fear."

(22)

Imam Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ has transmitted another hadith:

فَوَجَدْنَاهُمْ خَمْسِينَ. قَالَ أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ مَا بَيْنَ سِتِّينَ إِلَى سَبْعِينَ (23)

"We (listed the Muslims and) found them five hundred." And AbU Mu'awiya said, "Between six" (24)

قَالَ كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ "أَخْصُوا لِي كَمْ يَلْفُظُ الإِسْلَامَ". قَالَ فَقُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَتَخَافُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ مَا بَيْنَ السِّتِّينَ إِلَى السَّبْعِينَ. قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ أَنْ تُبْتَلَوْا" قَالَ فَأَبْغَلِينَا حَتَّى جَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ مِنَّا لَا يُصَلِّي إِلَّا سِرًّا (25)

"We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he said, "Tell me how many people have professed Islam. We said: 'O Messenger of Allah, do you fear for us while we are between six hundred and seven hundred strong? He said: You don't know, perhaps you will be tested' He said: And we were, until some of us performed, salat only secret" (26)

Creating Compatibility between Hadiths

First Possibility:

Imam Nawawī creates compatibility above hadiths and says:

“Some Muslim commentators have established compatibility in this way that the total number of Muslims both men and women was 1500 person. Among them 600 to 700 were males out of which 500 were warriors”⁽²⁷⁾

Second Possibility:

It was possible that companions saw the register in different time.

Contradiction in a Hadith Occasion

It is essential to describe that there is conflict in famous hadith of Bukhari about census where the holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered to conduct census. But when did he command it? The hadith does not explain the occasion whether it was the eve of Badr or Khandaq, Ḥudaibiyah or Uḥud. Therefore, authors who elaborated it, tried to guess the time of its occurrence.

Dr. S. M Nāz narrates while elaborating this ḥadith of Bukhari:

“This hadith did not clarify when the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered it, therefore different Muhadithīn (Narrators of ḥadith) gave different opinions”

Time of First Hijra and its Supporters

According to many narrators, The Muslims were enlisted at the first year of hijrah.

❖ Dr. M. Ḥmīdullah assumes in “ ‘Ahd Nabwī Main Nizām-e-Ḥukmarānī”:

“This ḥadith of Bukhari according to which Muslims were enrolled looks like initial time of migration.”⁽²⁸⁾

❖ Dr. Ṣubḥī Ṣālih concurs with Dr. M. Ḥmīdullah and says:

“The Holy prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) ordered Ṣahābah to carry out census in the first year of migration.”⁽²⁹⁾

Time of Ghazwah Uḥud and its Supporters

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar writes in “Fath al-Bārī”: “This order was given probably when the companions were going for “War of Uḥud”⁽³⁰⁾

Time of Ghazwah Khandaq and its Supporters

Dr. S. M Nāz says: “It was the time of Ghzwah Khandaq.”⁽³¹⁾

Time of Ḥudaibiyah and its Supporters

‘Abdul Ḥamīd Qādarī in “Justajū’ay Madīnah” discusses very briefly the population of Madīnah. He says that it was the time of Ḥudaibiyah. He explains it as follows:

“The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered to conduct census before going to Ghazwah Ḥudaibiyah to know what was the number of citizens of city state Madīnah. That time Madīnah has 700 to 1000 houses and those who accompanied the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) during

the journey were 1400. So, it supports that was the occasion of hudaibiyah. Because figures are very close to the hadith's numbers that is 1500.”⁽³²⁾

2. For Collecting Jizyah

Hāfiẓ Waḥīd Anwar describes that census was conducted for non-Muslims to collect jizyah from them. He observes:

- “Sometimes, an amount was fixed for everyone. It was demand from Jews of Yaman, Iḥlah, Jarsh or equivalents of any other commodity.
- Sometimes those people who earned and were young, all were counted and after enumeration; they were fixed to pay “a dīnār” or equivalents of any other commodity”⁽³³⁾

3. Sending Delegations for Preaching Islam

As a matter of fact, Islamic Government's main goal was to promote Islam. Therefore, it worked hard day and night as possible as it could be. For this purpose, troops were sent to near and far of Madīnah as is mentioned in the following tradition:

أَنَّ رِعْلًا، وَذُكْوَانَ وَعُصَيَّةَ وَبَنِي لَحْيَانَ اسْتَمَدُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى عَدُوٍّ، فَأَمَلَهُمْ بِسَبْعِينَ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ، كُنَّا نُسَيِّرُهُمُ الْقُرَاءَ فِي زَمَانِهِمْ، كَانُوا يَحْتَطِبُونَ بِالنَّهَارِ وَيُصَلُّونَ بِاللَّيْلِ،
.....الْأَنْصَارُ قَتَلُوا بِبَنِي مَعُونَةَ⁽³⁴⁾

(The tribes of) Ri'l, Dhakwān, 'Usaiyya and Bani Liyan asked Allah's Messenger to provide them with some men to support them against their enemy. He therefore provided them with seventy men from the Ansār whom we used to call A1-Qurra' in their lifetime. They used to collect wood by daytime and offer Salat (prayer) at night. When they were at the well of Ma'Una, the infidels killed them by betraying them. When this news reached the Prophet, he said A1-Qunut for one month in the morning Salat (prayer), invoking evil upon some of the 'Arab tribes, upon Ri'l, Dhakwān, 'Usaiyya and Bani Liyan. We used to read a verse of the Qur'an revealed in their connection, but later the verse was cancelled. It was: "Convey to our people on our behalf the information that we have met our Lord, and He is pleased with us, and has made us pleased”⁽³⁵⁾

4. Estimation of Army

In Madīnah, the holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) faced opponents of Islam and fought various wars with the Makkans. He introduced new strategies that were corresponding his nature with great discipline and management. Census was one of them. The holy Prophet (peace be upon him) provided all resources as possible as he can for war. He selected the army as was available possibly. In some wars like battle of Tabūk, it was compulsory for everyone to take part in war. But in undersized wars, he estimated the soldiers as Allah almighty ordered in Surah Al- Anfāl:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ۖ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ⁽³⁸⁾

“O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred and if there be of you a hundred (steadfast) they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are a folk without intelligence.”⁽³⁷⁾

It has been narrated on the authority of Salim b. Abu al-Ja'd who is telling the best number of warriors in a war:

“قَالَ سَأَلْتُ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الشَّجَرَةِ فَقَالَ لَوْ كُنَّا مِائَةَ أَلْفٍ لَكُنَّا أَكْثَرًا أَلْفًا وَخَمْسِينَ⁽³⁸⁾”

“I asked Jabir bin 'Abdullah about the Companions of the tree. He said: If we had been one hundred thousand, it (the water in well) would have sufficed us, but we were fifteen hundred.”⁽³⁹⁾

Siḥāḥ Sittah have quoted a bundle of different traditions that based on Ghazwat statistics. These prove that the Prophet (peace be upon him) estimated soldiers fully that's why we have correct information about the numbers of warriors in Ghazwat. The number of both the emigrants (Muhajirīn) and the helpers (Ansār) has been told in the following hadith:

قَالَ اسْتَضَعِرْتُ أَنَا وَابْنُ عُمَرَ يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ، وَكَانَ الْمُهَاجِرُونَ يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ نِيفًا عَلَى سِتِّينَ، وَالْأَنْصَارُ نِيفًا وَأَرْبَعِينَ وَمِائَتَيْنِ⁽⁴⁰⁾

“Ibn 'Umar were considered too young (to take part) in the battle of Badr, and the number of the emigrant warriors were over: sixty (men) and the Ansar were over 249.”⁽⁴¹⁾

The following hadith also indicates that the soldiers were enlisted for fighting in Ghazwat:

قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ فِي غَزْوَةٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا، وَأَمَرَأَتِي حَاجَةٌ. قَالَ "ارْجِعْ فَتَجِّعْ مَعَ امْرَأَتِكَ"⁽⁴²⁾

“A man came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Messenger! I have enlisted in the army for such and such Ghazwa, and my wife is leaving for Ijajj." Allah's Messenger said, "Go and perform Hajj with your wife.”⁽⁴³⁾

Dr. Muhammad Ḥmīdullah narrates in “Khutbāt-e- Bahāwulpur” regarding enrolment of believers in a register:

“According to some historians the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) set up “Dīwān”. Its main objective was to prepare the list of such warriors who not only can take part in wars but were also such capable that whenever they were called, they were ready for military service. This duty was done by “Kātib” (writer).”⁽⁴⁴⁾

In Hadith literature it has also been told that the number of warriors during Badr war:

قَالَ كُنَّا أَصْحَابَ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَتَخَلَّطُ أَنَّ عِدَّةَ أَصْحَابِ بَدْرٍ عَلَى عِدَّةِ أَصْحَابِ طَالُوتَ الَّذِينَ جَاوَزُوا مَعَهُ النَّهْرَ، وَلَمْ يُجَاوِزْ مَعَهُ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنٌ بِضْعَةَ عَشَرَ وَثَلَاثُمِائَةٍ⁽⁴⁵⁾

“We, the Companions of (the Prophet) Muhammad fj used to say that the number of the warriors of Badr was the same as the number of Talut's (Saul's) companions who crossed the river (of Jordan) with him, and none crossed the river with him but a believer, and they were over three hundred and ten men.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

5. For Expanding Education

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) gave so much importance to education. Fidia of Ghazwah Badar was to educate ten Muslim children of Madinah. Census taking was a practice and motivation of getting education for Muslims. As Dr. Muhammad Hmīdullah gives another reason of taking census in “ ‘Ahd Nabwī Main Nizām Hukmarānī”:

“Instant after migration, Political agreements, writing letters and making ledgers for Government, making list of soldiers of war, getting Secret information from different regions and conducting census were helped to expand education in companions. It also helped out to increasing literacy rate.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

Counting People during the Time of the Last Pilgrimage

The Muslims were counted in Ghazwat, similarly they were enrolled in the last pilgrimage also. A number of companions described statistics of last pilgrimage of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him). As Urdū Encyclopaedia of Islam alluded towards it:

“One hundred and forty thousand (140,000) companions joined the holy prophet (peace be upon him) in the last pilgrimage. It was just before death of the holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).”⁽⁴⁸⁾

Conclusions and and Recommendations

Semitic religions have history of census. The Holy Bible has six censuses, five in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. The Book of Numbers has its name due to unfolding evaluations and census in it, accompanied by different prophets like: The Prophet Moses, Aaroon, David and Solomon. As far as Islam is concerned, The holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) enrolled the Madīnah's population for estimation of Muslim's power, enlisted the warriors of Ghazwat, recorded of people who attended the last pilgrimage, counted people for sending delegations for preaching Islam, spreading education and for taking jizyah. ‘Uthmān (God be please with him) suggested the caliph ‘Umar (God be please with him) to enlist people. ‘Umar not only carried out census but also

modernized it. After him many rulers carried it out. In the light of hadith literature, there are indispensable instances to realize the importance of census, especially to Muslim countries. Unfortunately, almost all the Muslim countries including Pakistan conducted it on irregular basis. No one can deny the impact of census on all the fields of life. It is a key to planning that opens the door of success. No doubt, census is very effective but as well as very expensive and time consuming. with reliable statistics. There is a need to introduce cheaper and short-term procedures with reliable statistics.

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