Journal of Islamic History
Vol. 6, No. 1sp, 2026: p.170-197. 10.53088/jih.v6i1sp. 3716
https://journal.nurscienceinstitute.id/index.php/jih

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY BETWEEN THE CLAIMS OF THE PROPHET IDRIS AND UNUSY IN ISLAMIC ASTRONOMICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Muhammad Himmatur Riza
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia
Email: muh.himmaturriza@staff.uinsaid.ac.id

Muhammad Al Maliki
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia
Email: Malikial456@gmail.com

Uki Nur Annisa'
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia
Email: nisanurr2425@gmail.com

Submited:	Revision Required:	Published:
August 15, 2026	September 13, 2026	October 22, 2026

Abstract
This study examines the historiographical construction of the origin of astronomy in the Islamic tradition through the comparison of the narratives of the Prophet Idris AS and Unusy. The research problem departs from the dominance of claims that place the Prophet Idris AS as the initial figure or founder of astronomy, while certain literature associates Unusy with knowledge of writing, calculations, and the hisab of the month and year. This study aims to analyze the process of formation, transmission, and legitimacy of the two narratives and explain the factors that cause the narrative of Idris to be more dominant in the historiography of astronomy. The research uses historical methods with the perspective of historiography, intellectual

history, and historiographic deconstruction. Data were obtained through literature and documentation studies of religious literature, history books, astronomical and astronomical works, as well as previous research. The analysis was carried out through criticism of external and internal sources, textual comparison, and tracing of narrative transmission. The results show that Idris's attribution as the discoverer of astronomy is not explicitly stated in the Qur'an, but develops through intellectual and religious traditions, including Idris' association with Hermes. Meanwhile, the Unusy narrative has a textual basis, but its transmission is more limited. Thus, both narratives are more appropriately understood as historiographic constructions in the history of the transmission and accumulation of astronomical knowledge than as evidence of a single discoverer.

Keywords: *Historiography; Islamic astronomy; prophet idris AS; Unusy.*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini mengkaji konstruksi historiografis mengenai asal-usul ilmu falak dalam tradisi Islam melalui perbandingan narasi Nabi Idris AS dan Unusy. Persoalan penelitian berangkat dari dominannya klaim yang menempatkan Nabi Idris AS sebagai tokoh awal atau peletak ilmu falak, sementara literatur tertentu mengaitkan Unusy dengan pengetahuan tulisan, perhitungan, serta hisab bulan dan tahun. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis proses terbentuknya, transmisi, dan legitimasi kedua narasi tersebut serta menjelaskan faktor yang menyebabkan narasi Idris lebih dominan dalam historiografi ilmu falak. Penelitian menggunakan metode sejarah dengan perspektif historiografi, sejarah intelektual, dan dekonstruksi historiografi. Data diperoleh melalui studi kepustakaan dan dokumentasi terhadap literatur keagamaan, kitab sejarah, karya astronomi dan ilmu falak, serta penelitian terdahulu. Analisis dilakukan melalui kritik sumber eksternal dan internal, komparasi tekstual, dan penelusuran transmisi narasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa atribusi Idris sebagai penemu ilmu falak tidak dinyatakan secara eksplisit dalam Al-Qur'an, tetapi berkembang melalui tradisi intelektual dan keagamaan, termasuk asosiasi Idris dengan Hermes. Sementara itu, narasi Unusy memiliki dasar tekstual, tetapi transmisinya lebih terbatas. Dengan demikian, kedua narasi lebih tepat dipahami sebagai konstruksi historiografis dalam sejarah

transmisi dan akumulasi pengetahuan astronomi daripada bukti tentang seorang penemu tunggal.

Kata Kunci: *Historiografi; astronomi Islam; Nabi Idris AS, Unusy,*

INTRODUCTION

The science of astronomy occupies an important position in the Islamic scientific tradition because it is closely related to human efforts to understand the order of celestial bodies while using them for religious needs. In the sense that develops in the Islamic tradition, astronomy is not only related to the observation of celestial bodies, but also to the calculation of the motion of celestial bodies for the purpose of determining the time and space of worship, such as the time of prayer, the direction of the Qibla, the Hijri calendar, and the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. The development of Islamic astronomy then formed the tradition of observation, computation, and the preparation of astronomical tables (*they*), and the development of instruments such as astrolabs. The study of the history of Islamic astronomy shows that observational activities and their application to time-determination and sacred geography were an important part of the tradition (Morrison, 2013). Thus, the history of astronomy cannot be separated from the history of the development of human knowledge about the sky, both before and after the emergence of Islamic civilization.

The problem becomes more complex when the discussion is directed to the origins of astronomy. In some Islamic literature, the Prophet Idris AS is placed as an important figure in the early history of science, including astronomy or astronomy. The Qur'an itself refers to Idris as a *ṣiddīq* and the prophet and stated that Allah raised him to a high dignity, but did not explicitly mention Idris as the inventor of astronomy or astronomy (Shihab, 2005; Wardhana, 2005). Idris' attribution as an early figure in astronomy actually developed in the broader literary and interpretive traditions. A number of works studied by Luthfi Nur Fadhilah (Son, 2019), for example, shows that *al-Khulāṣah al-Wāfiyyah* by Zubair Umar al-Jailani and *Mukhtaṣar Mahāżab* by Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani places Idris as a *São Paulo'*

or the laying of astronomy (Jailani, n.d.). In fact, another study of Idris shows how the figure continues to be positioned as an important figure in the history of astronomy through a reading of religious traditions and astronomical literature (Mufidoh, 2020). Therefore, the claim about Idris needs to be methodologically distinguished between normative-religious information, intellectual traditions, and historical evidence regarding the development of astronomy.

In the midst of the dominance of Idris's narrative, the name Unusy appears as a figure that presents the possibility of an alternative narrative about the origins of astronomy. In Sabā'ik al-Żahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab, which is attributed to al-Suwaidi, there is information that places Unusy as the discoverer of astrology, while Idris is associated with astrology (Al-Banjary, 2013; Al-Suwaidi, n.d.). This finding has been recorded in the study of Fadhilah and Putra (Son, 2019), which explicitly shows the difference in attribution between Idris and Unusy. More recent studies also raise the fact that Unusy already knew the writings, the calculation of the month, and the calculation of the year before the time of Idris (Izzuddin, 2025). In fact, the 2024 study on Idris as the discoverer of astronomy explicitly acknowledges the existence of an alternative opinion that states that Unusy knew astronomy before Idris (Yaqin, 2024). This phenomenon shows that the narrative about the origins of astronomy in the Islamic tradition is not single.

Thus, the question of this research is not enough to be formulated in a simple question, "Who exactly is the inventor of astronomy?" A more historically relevant question is: how and why did the Prophet Idris AS become the dominant figure in the narrative of the origin of astronomy, while there is a literary tradition that associates astronomical knowledge with Unusy? This question is important because the history of science is not only a matter of finding the first figure, but also about how a claim of knowledge emerges, is transmitted, interpreted, acquires authority, and finally becomes the dominant narrative. With such a perspective, the difference between the narratives of Idris and Unusy can be read as a problem of the historiographical construction of knowledge in the Islamic tradition.

The historical context of this issue needs to be placed in the long history of astronomical knowledge that has developed before Islam. Astronomy is a tradition of knowledge that involves the observation of celestial bodies, calendar systems, mathematics, and the practical needs of society (Syami, 1997). As Islamic civilization developed, astronomical knowledge did not emerge from empty space. During the Abbasid period, for example, there was a process of knowledge transmission through the translation of Greek, Persian, Indian, and Syriac traditions into Arabic. The translation movement between the eighth and tenth centuries became one of the greatest episodes of knowledge transfer of knowledge of that period (Montgomery, 2018). The Islamic astronomical tradition further developed through observation and correction of previous astronomical parameters to give birth to scientists such as al-Battani and al-Biruni.

In the context of the prophetic tradition, Idris also acquired a special position in Islamic literature as a figure associated with knowledge, wisdom, and various skills. The tradition then developed further by identifying Idris with the figure of Hermes in a number of Islamic intellectual literature, especially in the cosmological and esoteric traditions (Sariyannis, 2025). Meanwhile, the name Unusy appears much more limited in literature that talks about the early history of science. The difference in frequency and authority of the two narratives is actually a historiographical problem that needs to be studied through source criticism, writing context, and text transmission.

Previous research can be mapped into four groups. First, research on Prophet Idris and astronomy. Fadhilah and Putra in "Prophet Idris in the Study of the History of Astronomy" is an important study because it directly brings together the narrative of Idris and Unusy (Son, 2019). The study uses a literature review of the works of classical scholars and shows that a number of books place Idris as a São Paulo' astronomy, while Sabā'ik al-Żahab Unusy as the inventor of astronomy and Idris as the inventor of astrology.

Second, research that puts Idris in the perspective of the holy books and the history of astronomy. Mufidoh (Mufidoh, 2020)

examines his identity and genealogy based on the Qur'an, Torah, and the Gospels, and then relates them to the claim that Idris was the inventor of astronomy. Faza and Yaqin's research (Yaqin, 2024) published in 2024 also specifically discusses Idris as the discoverer of astronomy from the perspective of the Qur'an and the Bible, although the study still emphasizes more arguments in favor of Idris's position.

Third, research on the development of astronomy in Islamic civilization. The scientific historical literature shows that Islamic astronomy developed through a complex interplay between Greek, Persian, Indian, and local traditions, resulting in new observations, theories, astronomical tables, and instruments (Montgomery, 2018). The study of al-Biruni, for example, shows that Islamic astronomy reached maturity through centuries of research, not through the actions of a single figure (Samso, 2014).

Fourth, the study of the historiography of knowledge places history as a process of selection, interpretation, and construction of narratives based on available sources. This perspective is important because it allows research not to simply accept traditional claims about the "first discoverer", but to trace how a claim gains legitimacy. Thus, research on Idris and Unusy needs to move from a mere comparison of opinions to criticism of the source and process of narrative transmission.

Although research on the Prophet Idris and the origins of astronomy has been conducted, there is still an open historiographical gap. Previous research has identified the existence of two claims—Idris and Unusy—but has not adequately made the difference between the two narratives the main object of historiographical reconstruction. Some studies are still oriented towards proving that Idris was the inventor or early figure of astronomy, while the existence of Unusy is treated more as alternative information. Even recent research that acknowledges the existence of Unusy's claim still focuses on arguments about Idris (Yaqin, 2024). Thus, what is not sufficiently explained is not only who is called the early figure of astronomy, but why one narrative became dominant, how the other

narrative survives in certain literature, and how both should be judged based on criticism of historical sources.

Based on these questions, this research is directed at three questions: how did the narrative of the Prophet Idris AS as an early figure or discoverer of astronomy form and develop in Islamic literature?, what is the position of Unusy in literature that relates it to the origins of astronomy?, how can the comparison of the two narratives be reconstructed through the perspective of Islamic astronomical historiography?

This article argues that the claim of the Prophet Idris AS as the discoverer of astronomy should not be treated simply as historical fact, but needs to be placed in the context of the formation, transmission, and legitimacy of the narrative of knowledge in the Islamic tradition. The Qur'an confers prophetic status and glory on Idris, but the specific attribution as the discoverer of astronomy comes from layers of literature and intellectual traditions that developed later (Shihab, 2005). On the other hand, the emergence of Unusy shows the existence of an alternative intellectual memory that has so far received little attention in the historiography of astronomy. This research therefore does not aim to establish a priori that Idris or Unusy were the "first discoverers", but rather to deconstruct the process of formation of these two claims through the criticism of sources, historical contexts, and transmission of literature. The main contribution of the research lies in the effort to distinguish between religious claims, intellectual traditions, and historical reconstructions, while offering a new reading of the early historiography of Islamic astronomy. This approach is in line with the research template that demands criticism of historical sources and interpretations, rather than mere reproduction of traditional narratives.

METHODS

This research is a historical research (Historical Research) which uses three complementary perspectives, namely historiography, intellectual history, and historiographic deconstruction. (Gottschalk, 1969; Lang, 2006; Whatmore, 2016). Historiography is used to

examine how knowledge about the early history of astronomy was written, the sources used, and the process of forming the position of certain figures as early figures or São Paulo' Astronomy. This perspective is important because the history of science is not only concerned with past facts, but also with the process of selection, interpretation, and arrangement of facts into historical narratives. Intellectual history is used to trace the development of ideas about astronomy and astronomy and the intellectual context that surrounds them. The ideas of Idris, Unusy, astronomy, and astronomy are understood based on the environment of thought, actors, and historical problems that gave birth to them. Meanwhile, historiographical deconstruction is used to test the narrative structure that causes the claim of the Prophet Idris AS to be more dominant than the claim about Unusy. The deconstruction is not intended to prove that Idris was not an early figure in astronomy, but rather to test how a claim was formed, transmitted, and acquired historiographic authority.

The historical approach is used to reconstruct the development of the narrative regarding the origins of astronomy based on available sources (Bloch, 1953). The intellectual history approach is used to read the ideas of Idris, Unusy, astronomy, and astronomy according to the intellectual context of each period, while historiography is used to compare the way the authors represent the two figures. This approach was chosen because the object of research is not astronomical events that can be observed directly, but rather narratives and ideas about the origins of astronomy recorded in various Islamic literatures. Thus, the origins of astronomy are understood as a process of transmission and construction of knowledge involving various traditions, including Babylonian, Greek, Persian, and India, rather than simply as a search for a "first discoverer".

The heuristic stage is carried out by searching, identifying, collecting, and classifying relevant sources. Primary sources include books containing the narratives of the Prophet Idris AS and Unusy, tafsir and qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā', historical or biographies, astronomical

literature and classical astronomy, as well as manuscripts or critical editions where available. One of the main sources of concern is Sabā'ik al-Żahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab by al-Suwaidi, especially since there are studies that identify information about Unusy in relation to astronomy. Other relevant sources are al-Khulāṣah al-Wāfiyyah by Zubair Umar al-Jailani and Mukhtaṣar Mahāżab by Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani which contain the attribution of Idris in the history of astronomy. Secondary sources are books on the history of Islamic astronomy, journal articles, and research on Idris, Unusy, historiography, and intellectual history.

Data collection is carried out through literature and documentation studies with content tracing techniques to track each mention of Idris and Unusy and citation tracing to identify the sources referred to by each author. Source criticism is carried out through external and internal criticism. External criticism is used to test the author's identity, lifetime, time and place of writing, the form of the text, the status of the manuscript or copy, and the text transmission path. Internal criticism is directed at the content, context, and historical meaning of the editorial used. Research specifically distinguishes the terms "knowing", "learning", "teaching", "laying the foundation", "developing", and "discovering" because the attribution of wāḍi' al-'ilm is not always synonymous with modern concepts of "discoverers of knowledge". Each claim is also traced to possible sources of transmission, including Islamic traditions, qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā', Israiliyyat, and the heritage of pre-Islamic knowledge.

Interpretation is carried out after the source has passed through external and internal criticism. The analysis was carried out comparatively by constructing a narrative matrix of Idris and Unusy based on the identity of the character, attribution terms, the type of knowledge attributed, the source of reference, the context of the writing, and the position of the character in the hierarchy of knowledge. The main question of the research was not only "who came first?", but "why did Idris become a more dominant narrative?" and "why did the Unusy narrative not gain the same position?". The question was used to identify the mechanisms of the formation of the

dominant narrative, such as repetition in the literature, the religious authority of the author, the transmission between books, and the change in the meaning of the term.

The final stage is in the form of historiography, which is the preparation of the results of criticism and interpretation into an argumentative historical narrative (Gottschalk, 1969; Lang, 2006). The historiography of research is not directed to dogmatically designate Idris or Unusy as the "discoverer of astronomy", but rather to explain the process of formation, inheritance, and strengthening of claims about the origins of astronomy. The final narrative connects three layers, namely religious narratives, intellectual transmission, and historical reconstruction, thus resulting in a new reading of the authority and dominance of a claim in the historiography of astronomy.

The analysis techniques used include historical-critical analysis, textual comparative, and narrative transmission (Skinner, 1969). Historical-critical analysis is used to assess the credibility and context of sources; textual comparative analysis to compare the redactions of Idris and Unusy between sources; while narrative transmission analysis is used to trace the transfer of information and the possibility of changes in its meaning. The research instrument is in the form of a matrix of source criticism that records the identity and type of source, Arabic redaction and translations, figures, attribution, astronomy/falak/astrological contexts, reference sources, external and internal criticism, historiographic positions, and interpretation results. These instruments are used consistently to ensure that each claim can be traced to its source, context, and narrative formation process.

DISCUSSION

Genealogy of the Early Narrative of Astronomy in the Islamic Tradition

The talk of the origin of astronomy in the Islamic tradition cannot be separated from the long history of human knowledge about the sky. Astronomy is basically a knowledge that develops through the observation of celestial bodies, measuring time, compiling calendars,

and trying to understand the regularity of the movements of the Sun, Moon, and stars (Morrison, 2013). Therefore, the history of astronomy did not begin with one civilization or a particular figure. Long before the development of Islamic civilization, the peoples of Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Egypt, India, Persia, and Greece had developed various forms of astronomical knowledge (Ibrahim, 2023; Pingre, 1963). As astronomy developed in Islamic civilization, it underwent a process of reception, translation, development, correction, and reconstruction. David A. King (King, 1990) notes that Islamic astronomy developed through the entry of the Indian, Sassanne, and Hellenistic astronomical traditions into the Abbasid intellectual milieu, later giving birth to a very extensive astronomical corpus.

This condition shows that the concept of "the origin of astronomy" needs to be understood carefully. If astronomy is understood as a system of knowledge about celestial bodies, then its emergence is a cumulative process that lasts over a long period of time. On the other hand, if what is meant is the first figure who according to a religious tradition acquires knowledge of the sky, then the problem turns into a historical problem of literary ideas and traditions (Montgomery, 2018). This difference in understanding becomes important when Islamic literature connects the origins of astronomy with prophetic figures.

In a number of Islamic literature, the Prophet Idris AS is placed as one of the earliest figures related to astronomical knowledge. The tradition later developed into the claim that Idris was a *São Paulo'* or laying the foundation of astronomy. Fadhilah and Putra's Research (Son, 2019) found that *al-Khulāṣah al-Wāfiyyah* by Zubair Umar al-Jailani and *Mukhtaṣar Mahāżab* by Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani places the Prophet Idris as *São Paulo'* astronomy. However, the same study found different information in *Sabā'ik al-Żahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab* by al-Suwaidi, who associates Unusy with astronomy and Idris with astrology.

Thus, the genealogy of the early narrative of astronomy in the Islamic tradition is not singular. It is the result of the meeting between religious traditions, prophetic history, astronomical knowledge, and

historiography of science. This can also be seen in the development of Idris' identification with Hermes. Kevin van Bladel (Bladel, 2009) shows that in Arabic literature, the identification of Hermes with Enoch/Idris developed through a long process, until Hermes was then seen by some Arab scholars as a prophetic figure who revealed various sciences.

Therefore, the narrative about Idris as an early figure in astronomy cannot be directly treated as historiography in the modern sense. It is more accurately understood as a historiographic-religious tradition, namely a narrative about the past formed from a combination of religious beliefs, story transmission, intellectual interpretation, and historical writing (Montgomery, 2018). The main problem of the research is not to reject the tradition, but to identify how the tradition is built and gain legitimacy.

Prophet Idris AS and the Construction of Narrative as the Early Figures of Astronomy

The position of the Prophet Idris AS in the history of Islamic science has a unique character. The Qur'an mentions Idris as a prophet and *ṣiddīq*, and declares that Allah raised him to a high place. However, the Qur'an does not explicitly state that Idris was the inventor of astronomy or astronomy. That is, special attribution to astronomy must be traced to other layers of literature that developed in the Islamic tradition (Shihab, 2005).

In the classical and postclassical literary traditions, Idris derives attribution to various forms of knowledge. He is associated not only with astronomy, but also with writings, calculations, astrology, and various forms *Ḥikmah*. The development became more complex when Idris was identified with Hermes. Van Bladel (Bladel, 2009) shows that Hermes' identification with Enoch/Idris developed through various Arabic works, and in the later period Hermes was even positioned as a figure who introduced or revealed science to man.

This identification provides an important context for the development of Idris's narrative as an early figure in astronomy. In some traditions, knowledge of celestial bodies is not only considered

a mathematical science, but also part of cosmological knowledge and *Ḥikmah*. Therefore, prophetic figures who are considered to have acquired extraordinary knowledge from God are more easily placed as the initial source of knowledge about the cosmos (Morrison, 2013).

Fadhilah and Putra's Study (Son, 2019) shows that Zubair Umar al-Jailani in *al-Khulāṣah al-Wāfiyyah* placing the Prophet Idris as the inventor or initial founder of astronomy. Meanwhile, Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani is also said to connect Idris with this position. This narrative then contributes to the formation of an understanding among some astronomy students that the history of astronomy can be traced back to the Prophet Idris.

However, there are terminological issues that should not be ignored. Stating that Idris was a figure who acquired or taught knowledge about celestial bodies is not automatically the same as stating that he was the "inventor of astronomy". The concept of "discovery" contains a certain historiographical meaning: the existence of something that was previously unknown and then discovered by a certain individual. In fact, astronomy is a knowledge that develops gradually through observation and accumulation of knowledge (King, 1990; Morrison, 2013).

The difference between the two statements is very important. "Idris as a figure associated with astronomical knowledge" is a claim about the representation of figures in a literary tradition. While "Idris as the discoverer of astronomy" is a much stronger historiographical conclusion and requires different proofs.

Faza and Yaqin Research (Yaqin, 2024) published in *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* in 2024 shows that the debate is still ongoing. The article mentions the existence of literature that places Idris as the first person to know astronomy, but also acknowledges the opinion that Unusy knew astronomy before Idris. However, the research is ultimately more directed at strengthening Idris's position based on the perspective of the Qur'an, the Bible, and the opinions of astronomers.

The findings show a historiographical tendency: Idris's narrative is easier to reproduce because it has a stronger legitimacy in the

prophetic tradition and because Idris has acquired an association with Hermes in Islamic intellectual literature (Bladel, 2009). In the Middle Ages, for example, Arabic sources continued to develop Hermes' identification with prophetic figures and to connect him to various sciences, including astrology and knowledge of the cosmos (Bladel, 2009).

Thus, Idris's dominance does not have to be explained through the assumption that the claim must be more historical than the other claims. Such dominance can also be read as the result of the process of transmission and reproduction of narratives. The more often a claim is cited by subsequent works, the more likely it is that it acquires the status of established knowledge (Montgomery, 2018). This is where historiographical deconstruction is necessary: research must separate between the age of an information, its number of reproductions, the author's authority, and the historical validity of the claim.

Unusy as an Alternative Narrative in the History of Astronomy

If Idris is a relatively popular figure in the literature on the history of astronomy, then Unusy occupies a much more marginal position. It is precisely this marginality that makes Unusy important to study. The presence of Unusy shows that the Islamic tradition does not completely produce a single narrative about the early figures of astronomy.

The sources that are an important point in this study are *Sabā'ik al-Dhahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab* The Work of Muḥammad Amin al-Baghdadi al-Suwaidi (Al-Suwaidi, n.d.). This work was compiled by a scholar and genealogist from Baghdad who died in 1246 H/1830 AD and bibliographically categorized as a work on the genealogy of the Arabs.

Al-Suwaidi explained about Unusy in his book as follows (Al-Suwaidi, n.d.):

ست مائة وخمسة سنين, ما ال ذ ك أهـ التـ راة, وعا تسـ ما ة وستة ستين نة, والله أعلم.
الـ خل ونط ـيالحكمة وإليه نتقل ا نور لنبوي, كان مو ده ن بـ د مضى ن مر أ يه يت

من حت يه ن عيت , و و ول من علم لكتابة علم ا حساب الشهو والسنين وأو من غر
(أذ ش) با نون الشيـ لمعجـ ة وهـ وصـ أبيـ شيت, فلم توـ ي أ وه ام سياسة الملك وتدبـ ره

Meaning: " Unusy is the heir to his father, Nabi Syit. When his father died, he (Unusy) replaced his father's position leading the politics of the kingdom and managed it under his supervision. He was the first person to know writing and the first person to know the Science of Reckoning, both month and year reckoning, and he was the first person to plant a coconut tree and speak with wisdom, to which the light of prophecy was transferred. He was born after his father was more than 650 years old, as said by the Torah experts, and he (Unusy) lived for 966 years, *wallahu a'lam.* "

Faza and Yaqin Research (Yaqin, 2024) in 2024 also cites part of the *Sabā'ik al-Żahab* who described Unusy as the successor of Syits and referred to him as the first person to know the writings and science of calculations, including the calculation of months and years. This information is important because it provides a more specific textual basis than the mere statement that "Unusy was the inventor of astronomy".

If the redaction is read carefully, there is an important question: is knowledge of writing, the calculation of the moon, and the calculation of years identical to astronomy in the modern sense? The answer cannot be given directly. The calculation of months and years is indeed closely related to astronomy and calendars, but it is not necessarily identical to the mathematical astronomical system as it developed later (Morrison, 2013).

Therefore, Unusy's claim needs to be placed in the terminological context of the source itself. If the source states that Unusy was the first to know *ḥisāb* of the month and year, then the study must first explain the meaning of *ḥisāb* in that context before concluding it as "astronomy". This process is important so that the researcher does not engage in conceptual anachronism, i.e. inserting the notion of modern science into past texts.

The next issue is the identity of Unusy. In the genealogical tradition, Unusy is usually placed in the lineage of Adam through Syits.

Research of Faza and Yaqin (Yaqin, 2024) suggests that the name Unusy is relatively rare in Arabic literature and connects it to Enos in the Old Testament tradition. This connection is interesting because it opens up the possibility that the narrative of Unusy can be understood not only through Islamic historiography, but also through the broader genealogical tradition of early human generations. However, Unusy's relationship with Enos must also be treated as an object of criticism of sources, rather than an immediately accepted fact. The identification of names between texts and between traditions can undergo phonetic changes, transliterations, and reinterpretations. Therefore, the similarity of names does not automatically prove the similarity of the overall narrative about a figure (Bladel, 2009).

More importantly, it is to explain why the narrative of Unusy did not become dominant. There are several possibilities that could be raised. First, Unusy does not have the same strong narrative position as Idris in Islamic literature. Second, attribution to Unusy does not seem to have developed into a widespread tradition in Islamic astronomical literature. Third, Idris gained additional reinforcement through identification with Hermes that made him an important figure in the history of Arabic science and philosophy. Van Bladel (Bladel, 2009) suggests that the identification of Hermes–Idris developed through a long literary process and ultimately placed Idris/Hermes as an important figure in the history of science. Fourth, the Unusy narrative does not seem to have obtained comparable reproduction in the later popular works of astronomy. Fadhilah and Putra (Son, 2019) in fact, found a very clear difference between the works that referred to Idris as *São Paulo'* astronomy and al-Suwaidi's work that links Unusy to this knowledge.

Thus, Unusy's marginality should not be interpreted as evidence that the narrative is false. Historiographically, it is rarely cited as not synonymous with incorrectness. On the contrary, the scarcity of transmission is a fact that must be explained. This is one of the important values of the deconstructive approach: the narrative that is on the fringes is not directly rejected, but examined to find out why it is on the fringes.

Idris AS and Unusy's Narrative Contest: Who Is Called the "Inventor"?

The contention of Idris and Unusy is at the heart of the problem because it shows that the early history of astronomy in Islamic literature does not have a uniform construction. The two figures appear in different traditions and obtain attributions that are not always the same.

Aspects	Prophet Idris AS	Unusy
Identified primary sources	*al-Khulāṣah al-Wāfiyyah*, *Mukhtaṣar Mahāżab*, Idris/Hermes literature	*Sabā'ik al-Żahab* al-Suwaidi
Attribution	*Wāḍi'*; in other traditions related to astrology and various sciences	Associated with astronomy and *ḥisāb* years
Position in tradition	Relatively dominant	Relatively marginal
Basis of legitimacy	Prophetic traditions, religious literature, Hermes associations	Genealogy of the early generations and descriptions of *ḥisāb knowledge*
Transmission	Reproduced in a number of religious and philosophical works	More limited to specific sources
Historiographical problems	There is potential for an expansion of meaning from a knowledgeable figure to an "inventor"	There is potential for an expansion of meaning from *ḥisāb* month/year to "astronomy"
Historical Status	Traditional claims that require source criticism	Alternative claims that also require criticism of sources

Table 1. Historiographic Mapping of the Claims of the Prophet Idris AS and Unusy in the Early Genealogy of Astronomy

The table shows that the problem is not just the existence of two names, but two mechanisms of legitimacy. Idris gained legitimacy through prophetic status and the development of the Hermes–Idris tradition (Bladel, 2009). Unusy gained legitimacy through genealogical information about the early generation of humans as well as knowledge of writing and time calculation.

At this point, the concept of "inventor" becomes problematic. If *inventor* understood in modern terms as the first individual to create a particular system of knowledge, then both Idris's and Unusy's claims require much stronger evidence than mere genealogical texts or religious narratives. On the contrary, if *inventor* understood in the sense of a figure who in a tradition is considered to be the laying or early bearer of knowledge, then the two claims can be understood as different products of historiography (Lucas, 2024).

This difference is also seen when the history of Islamic astronomy is placed in the context of the broader development of science. Islamic astronomy did not emerge from a single source. The historical literature shows that the astronomy that developed in the Islamic world was the result of an encounter with the Indian, Persian, Sasanian, and Hellenistic traditions (Syarif, 2021). Research on astronomical sources in the Abbasid period also shows that Muslim astronomical knowledge originated from Indian and Persian traditions, among others, in addition to Greek sources and pre-Islamic Arab traditions (Ibrahim, 2023). Even recent studies of the transmission of Ptolemaic astronomy show that Islamic astronomy developed through the process of acceptance, development, and redistribution to various regions of Asia, North Africa, and Europe (Dalen, 2024).

Thus, there is a historiographical paradox. On the one hand, the history of Islamic astronomy shows the process of transmission and accumulation of knowledge across cultures. On the other hand, some popular narratives about the origins of astronomy actually look for one figure as the "first discoverer". This paradox suggests that the

concept of "inventor" may reflect more of the human narrative's need to find a starting point than the actual character of the development of science (Morrison, 2013).

The Idris–Unusy contestation should therefore be read as a contest of intellectual memory. Idris's narrative has a higher reproduction power because the character is at the center of the prophetic tradition and acquires an association with the figure of Hermes (Bladel, 2009). Meanwhile, Unusy is in a more limited area of genealogical narrative (Yaqin, 2024).

Interestingly, modern studies themselves have not completely escaped this pattern. Articles by Faza and Yaqin (Yaqin, 2024) acknowledges the existence of Unusy's claims, but the main purpose of his research is still to confirm Idris as the discoverer of astronomy through the reading of the Qur'an, the Bible, and the opinions of experts. Thus, the research gap of this research lies not in the discovery that "there is an opinion about Unusy"—because it is already known—but in the unfinished reconstruction that places both claims as equal objects of historiographical criticism.

Deconstructing the Concept of the Inventor of Astronomy

The deconstruction of the history of astronomy must begin with a more fundamental question: what is meant by the "discoverer of astronomy"? This question seems simple, but it actually determines the overall way in which the history of astronomy is written. Astronomy was not born as a completed system of science. Knowledge of the sky developed through repeated observations, the recording of phenomena, the creation of calendars, the development of mathematics, the preparation of models of celestial bodies, and the creation of instruments. Therefore, calling a figure an "astronomical discoverer" has the potential to simplify the process that actually takes place cumulatively (Dalen, 2024).

The history of astronomy shows that the Mesopotamian and Babylonian peoples had made systematic observations of celestial bodies. The Greek tradition later provided certain geometric and mathematical formulations. India and Persia also had their own

astronomical traditions. This knowledge then interacted with the Islamic world through translation and intellectual transmission (Prince, 2024). The study of astronomical sources in the Abbasid period shows that the Indian and Persian traditions played an important role in the formation of Islamic astronomical knowledge, in addition to the Greek and Arab traditions (Ibrahim, 2023).

The translation movement also shows that the development of Islamic science is dialogical. Greek works were not simply translated, but studied and developed. The development of Islamic astronomy then resulted in a long tradition of research, including the development of *zīj*, astronomical observations, instruments, mathematical models, and planetary theories (Ragep, 2016).

Subsequent developments produced astronomers such as al-Battani, al-Biruni, al-Sufi, and many other figures. They did not just repeat previous knowledge, but made observations, corrections, calculations, and model development. The Metropolitan Museum even emphasized that astronomers in the Islamic world developed methods of measuring and calculating the motion of celestial bodies based on Greek, Persian, and Indian sources (Lucas, 2024; Princess, 2024).

With this perspective, the term "inventor of astronomy" is more appropriately understood as a historiographical construction than a simple scientific category. A person can be referred to as *Pioneer*, *Founder*, *Transmitter*, *systematizer*, or *Developer*, but each has a different historical meaning (Dalen, 2024; Ragep, 2016). Consequently, Idris and Unusy's claims must be read at the right level. If a source states that Idris knew the secrets of star circulation or taught certain knowledge, then the conclusion that can be drawn is that the source represents Idris as a figure of astronomical knowledge. This conclusion is not enough to state that Idris historically created astronomy from a previous state of non-existence.

The same applies to Unusy. Statement that Unusy is the first to know *ḥisāb* Months and years can be indicators of the attribution of calendar or astronomical knowledge to him. However, these attributes

do not automatically prove that Unusy is the creator of the entire astronomical system (Yaqin, 2024).

Deconstruction thus does not produce a new answer in the form of "Unusy was the real inventor". Quite the opposite, deconstruction challenges the assumption that the history of science must always have a single inventor. The focus of research shifts from "who was first?" to "how does a society name, remember, and pass on figures as the original bearers of knowledge?".

This change in question is an important methodological consequence. The history of astronomy can then be understood as a history of knowledge accumulation, textual transmission, conceptual transformation, and negotiation of authority. Within this framework, Idris and Unusy need not be placed as two candidates to be contested binarily, but as two different representations of how the Islamic tradition constructed the early days of astronomical knowledge.

Historiography of Islamic Astronomy and the Formation of the Dominant Narrative

The reading of Idris and Unusy must ultimately be placed in the historiography of Islamic astronomy more broadly. Modern historiography of Islamic astronomy generally emphasizes the process of scientific development, astronomical figures, observatories, instruments, astronomical tables, and the transmission of knowledge (Morrison, 2013). David A. King (King, 2004) shows how extensive the corpus of Islamic astronomy has survived to the present day; it is estimated that there are about 10,000 volumes of astronomical manuscripts scattered in various libraries, while most of them have not been adequately studied. This fact shows that the history of Islamic astronomy is much more complex than a narrative centered on only a few figures.

In this historiography, figures such as al-Khwarizmi, al-Battani, al-Biruni, al-Sufi, and other scientists gained an important position because they left behind works that could be analyzed through textual and mathematical evidence. Their position differed from that of Idris

and Unusy in that the claims of such historical astronomical figures can be traced through relatively concrete scientific works (Dalen, 2024).

The problem of Idris and Unusy is on different layers. Both are figures in the genealogical and religious traditions who are then attributed knowledge. Therefore, putting them in the same category as al-Battani or al-Biruni as "astronomers" requires methodological caution.

This is where the historiography of Islamic astronomy requires a division between the history of astronomical knowledge and the history of representations about astronomy. Idris and Unusy are more appropriately placed in the second category when the available evidence is in the form of genealogical narratives or religious literature. Meanwhile, figures such as al-Battani and al-Biruni can be placed in the first category because there are astronomical works available that allow analysis of their methods, parameters, and theories (Ragep, 2016).

Such differences do not mean that the narratives of Idris and Unusy are not important. Rather, they show how the Muslim intellectual community understood the relationship between prophethood and knowledge. Idris's identification with Hermes, for example, shows how prophetic figures can serve as a link between religious knowledge and ancient knowledge. Van Bladel (Bladel, 2009) shows that the construction of Hermes as a prophet of science took place through the process of synthesis of various ancient traditions in Arabic literature.

More recent studies of the Ottoman tradition even show that Idris/Hermes continues to be placed as a figure who has a connection with knowledge, astronomy, astrology, and various forms *Ḥikmah*. The tradition shows that Idris's association with Hermes was not a construction that arose suddenly, but developed through a long literary transmission (Sariyannis, 2025).

Meanwhile, the existence of Unusy shows that the construction is not entirely uniform. There is another tradition that places the earlier generation in the Adamic lineage as the possessor of

knowledge of writing and the calculation of time. However, because the narrative does not receive transmission as much as Idris's narrative, its position becomes marginal.

From a historiographical perspective, the dominance of a narrative is not always a direct consequence of its historical truth. Dominance can be formed through a combination of source authority, frequency of citations, text transmission networks, the popularity of a book, and the suitability of the narrative with the intellectual needs of the people in a given period. The historiographic study of modern Islamic science also reminds that the history of Islamic science should not be written through linear narratives that simplify the development, transmission, and change of knowledge (Lucas, 2024).

These findings have important implications for the writing of the history of astronomy. The history of science is not enough to be written based on the question "who invented it?", but it must also ask who wrote the history, what sources were used, who was quoted, who was not quoted, and why one narrative became more influential than another.

In this context, this study offers an alternative reading to the early historiography of astronomy. Idris's narrative is not rejected, but placed on its proper epistemic status as a traditional claim that has a specific history of transmission. The Unusy narrative is also not directly accepted as fact, but is treated as an alternative narrative that must be tested based on its sources, terminology, and context.

Thus, the contribution of the research does not determine the winner between Idris and Unusy. His contribution is to show that the history of the "inventor of astronomy" itself is a product of historiography. The way Muslims remember the early days of astronomy is influenced by the relationship between religion, prophetic genealogy, the transmission of knowledge, and the development of historiography.

This perspective also places the history of Islamic astronomy in a global context. Recent studies of Ptolemaic astronomical transmission show that astronomical knowledge moved from the Greek tradition to the Islamic world, then developed and spread again

to China, India, and Europe (Dalen, 2024). That is, even when discussing Islamic astronomy in a more documented historical period, the basic pattern remains the transmission, adaptation, and transformation of knowledge, rather than a creation that is completely disconnected from previous traditions.

Therefore, the narrative of Idris and Unusy should be read as part of a layer of historiography that explains how Muslim society imagined the beginning of astronomical knowledge, while the history of astronomy as a scientific practice needs to be traced through observational evidence, mathematical texts, instruments, astronomical tables, and knowledge transmission networks.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the narrative about the origin of astronomy in the Islamic tradition cannot be reduced to the question of who was the "first discoverer" of the science. Based on a historical-critical search of literature that talks about the Prophet Idris AS and Unusy, it was found that the two figures were present through different narrative constructions and had different levels of legitimacy and transmission. Thus, the difference between Idris and Unusy is more accurately understood as a matter of historiography of knowledge rather than simply a dispute about the identity of the inventor of astronomy.

First, the narrative of the Prophet Idris AS as an early figure or founder of astronomy was formed primarily through the development of religious and intellectual traditions that attribute knowledge to Idris. The Qur'an does place Idris as a prophet and ṣiddīq, but does not mention him as the discoverer of astronomy or astronomy. This attribution developed in subsequent literature, including works that place Idris as wāḍi' of astronomy. The strengthening of this narrative is also related to the development of Idris's identification with Hermes in Islamic intellectual literature. Because it was reproduced through a number of works and gained support from religious and intellectual authorities, Idris's narrative then had a stronger power of transmission and became the dominant narrative.

Second, Unusy is an alternative narrative that has a textual basis in al-Suwaidi's *Sabā'ik al-Żahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab*. The text associates Unusy with knowledge of writing, calculations, and calculations of months and years. This finding is important because it shows that the tradition regarding the origins of astronomical knowledge is not entirely singular. However, such attribution cannot be directly translated into evidence that Unusy was the "inventor of astronomy" in the modern sense. The terms ḥisāb month and year must be read according to the historical context of the source so as not to cause anachronism. Thus, Unusy's narrative is an alternative historiographical claim that has important value as an object of research, but cannot yet be positioned as a final historical fact.

Third, historiographical reconstruction shows that neither Idris's nor Unusy's claims are strong enough to establish a single discoverer of astronomy. Astronomy developed cumulatively through observation, calculation, transmission, adaptation, correction, and knowledge development from various traditions, including Babylonian, Greek, Persia, Indian, and Arabic. The dominance of Idris's narrative is therefore more appropriately explained through the mechanisms of transmission, authority, reproduction of texts, and prophetic associations than solely due to the historical certainty of the claim.

The historiographical contribution of this research lies in the shift of focus from the question "who was the inventor of astronomy?" to the question "how was a figure constructed as the early bearer of astronomical knowledge and why did certain narratives become dominant?". This research does not reject Idris nor does it establish Unusy as the actual discoverer. Instead, both are placed on a proportionate epistemic status: Idris as a traditional narrative that acquires legitimacy and strong transmission, while Unusy as an alternative narrative that has a textual basis but still requires further criticism of the source. Thus, this study offers a historiographic model that distinguishes between religious claims, intellectual traditions, and historical reconstructions, while affirming that the early history of astronomy is more accurately understood as the history of the

transmission and construction of knowledge rather than the history of a single discoverer.

REFERENCES

Al-Banjary, N. H. (2013). *Penemu Ilmu Falak*. Pustaka Ilmu.

Al-Suwaidi, M. A. al-B. (n.d.). *Sabā'ik al-Dhahab fī Ma'rifat Qabā'il al-'Arab*. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Bladel, K. van. (2009). *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science*. Oxford University Press.

Bloch, M. (1953). *The Historian's Craft*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Dalen, B. van. (2024). Ptolemaic Astronomy and Its Dissemination in the Islamic World, Europe, and Asia. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, *2877*, 1–12. https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1742-6596/2877/1/012033

Gottschalk, L. (1969). *Understanding History: a Primer of Historical Method*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Ibrahim, H. O. A. dan M. M. (2023). Sources of astronomical knowledge among Muslims during the Abbasid era (132-656 AH / 750-1258 AD) "Indian and Persian sources as an example." *Humanities Journal of University of Zakho*, *11*(3), 653–661. https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2023.11.3.1109

Izzuddin, M. T. L. dan A. (2025). Eksistensi Ilmu Falak dari Masa Nabi Syits hingga Masa Nabi Idris. *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy*, *4*(2), 220–238. https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v4i2.5974

Jailani, Z. U. (n.d.). *Khulasah al-Wafiyah*. Menara Kudus.

King, D. A. (1990). Astronomy. In *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period, ed. M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham, dan R. B. Serjeant* (pp. 274–289). Cambridge University Press.

King, D. A. (2004). *In Synchrony with the Heavens: Studies in Astronomical Timekeeping and Instrumentation in Medieval Islamic Civilization*. Brill.

Lang, J. T. and S. (2006). *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (Fourth Edi).

Longman.

Lucas, A. (2024). Re-Evaluating the Development of the Islamic Sciences: The Case Against the Classical Narrative and the Myth of Decline. *Unisia*, *42*(1), 57–86. https://doi.org/10.20885/unisia.vol42.iss1.art3

Montgomery, S. L. (2018). Mobilities of Science: The Era of Translation into Arabic. *Isis*, *109*(2), 313–319. https://doi.org/10.1086/698236

Morrison, R. G. (2013). Islamic Astronomy. In *The Cambridge History of Science, ed. David C. Lindberg dan Michael H. Shank* (pp. 109–138). Cambridge University Press.

Mufidoh, N. A. (2020). Nabi Idris dalam Perspektif Kitab-kitab Suci Agama dan Ketokohannya dalam Kajian Ilmu Falak. *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman*, *9*(1), 167–189. https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v9i1.196

Pingre, D. (1963). Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran. *Isis*, *54*(2), 229–246. https://doi.org/10.1086/349703

Putra, L. N. F. dan M. A.-F. (2019). Nabi Idris dalam Kajian Sejarah Ilmu Falak. *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Hukum Islam*, *2*(2), 115–131. https://jurnal.unissula.ac.id/index.php/ua/article/view/3885?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Putri, M. (2024). History and Development of Astronomy in World Civilization. *Al-Hisab: Journal of Islamic Astronomy*, *1*(3), 107–113. https://doi.org/10.33096/jah.v1i3.20789

Ragep, S. P. (2016). *Jaghmīnī's Mulakhkhaṣ: An Islamic Introduction to Ptolemaic Astronomy*. Springer.

Samso, J. (2014). *Al-Biruni: A High Point in the Development of Islamic Astronomy*. Qatar National Library. https://www.qdl.qa/en/al-bīrūnī-high-point-development-islamic-astronomy

Sariyannis, M. (2025). *Ottomans and the Supernatural: Nature and the Limits of Knowledge in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Oxford University Press.

Shihab, M. Q. (2005). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan*

Keserasian Al-Qur'an (6th ed.). Lentera Hati.

Skinner, Q. (1969). Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas. *History and Theory*, *8*(1), 3–53. https://doi.org/10.2307/2504188

Syami, Y. (1997). *'Ilmu al-Falak min Ṣafaḥat al-Turāṡal-'Ilmy, (Beirut: , cet. 1, 1997), h. 56* (First). Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī.

Syarif, I. U. Z. dan M. R. (2021). Kodifikasi Historis Ilmu Falak pada Abad Pertengahan. *El-Falaky: Jurnal Ilmu Falak*, *5*(2), 179–191. https://doi.org/10.24252/ifk.v5i2.31337

Wardhana, R. dan E. (2005). *Kisah Nabi Idris as: Seorang Nabi yang Benar dan Diangkatnya ke Tempat yang Tinggi*. Terbit Terang.

Whatmore, R. (2016). *What is Intellectual History?* Polity Press.

Yaqin, R. U. F. dan A. A. (2024). Prophet Idris as the Investor of Islamic Astronomy from the Bible and Al-Qur'an Perspectives. *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy*, *6*(2), 141–156.