

Tadwin al-Hadith Part 1: Documentation and Recording of Hadith in Written Form

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Foreword

This article is about Tadwin al-hadith. The word “Tadwin al-hadith” is fairly clear to the Muslim readers but to none Muslim readers it may not be so. To present a general idea of this issue the readers should keep in mind that in the Islamic system of beliefs and conducts and laws there two major sources of literature that contain all the texts of the laws and the principles of beliefs of the, Islamic system. One is the holy Quran. The other one is the Sunnah, which consists of the sayings, the deeds and the approvals of the holy Prophet (S). The Arabic word “Hadith” which according to the dictionary means “a report” or a “saying” or a “statement” in the Islamic literature often stands for the word “Sunnah” which literally means “tradition” or “custom” or “manners.”

The Muslim scholars of Fiqh, law, and the scholars of theology all agree that the holy Quran available today is exactly what was revealed through The Archangel Gibrael to Prophet Muhammad (S). However, the meaning of many of the verses in the holy Quran is still not very clear. It perhaps is because they speak of certain facts that are not yet known to people such as the following verse:

“Jinn and mankind, if you can penetrate the diameters of the heavens and the earth, do so, but you cannot do so without power and authority (55:33).”

This verse, obviously, speaks of travelling into space. A thousand years ago people did not have the same idea of travelling in space as people today do.

In the case of Hadith the scholars do not complain about the unclarity of the meanings of the sayings

and the statements of the holy Prophet (S). The major problem in the case of Hadith is the difficult task to verify if a certain statement said to be a saying of the holy Prophet (S) is really true or not.

The following article deals with some of the issues related to the writing and documentation of Hadith and takes up extensively the issues in scholarly manners.

It indeed is an enjoyable amount of reading for people interested to know about Hadith in the Islamic literature.

Documentation and Recording of Hadith in written form

The significance and value of Hadith in the interpretation of the Quran, its overwhelming role in Fiqh and moral discipline is so immense that it does not need any further emphasis. All the schools of Fiqh of the Muslim community agree that the Islamic system without Hadith would be considered incomplete. (Although some of the Muslims of Egypt today do not consider Hadith very useful)

Besides, and above all, the holy Prophet (S) and the holy Quran have also drawn people's attention to the importance of Hadith in the Islamic system.[1](#)

The issue to discuss herein is to examine how the amount of Hadith available was at the beginning documented and recorded in written form. In other words, how and when the sayings, the deeds and the approvals of the holy Prophet (S) were documented and recorded in written form. Were they recorded in written form immediately after their issuance by the holy Prophet (S) or not immediately? This issue may prove to be of serious consequences on the matters of authenticity or otherwise of Hadith and the Sunnah as a whole.

It is clear about the holy Quran that soon after the revelation of every verse and chapter without delay they were very carefully documented in written forms.

This, however, did not take place with Hadith. It was because of the direct effects of Hadith on the social and political issues that made different groups of Muslims show certain sensitivities towards Hadith. This was one reason that despite the commandments of the holy Prophet (S) to preach and preserve Hadith in written form the documentation of Hadith was delayed. It created huge problems for the future generations of Muslims in the task of the verification of the authenticity of Hadith and complicated this task very much.

In this discourse it is important to examine how each of the two major schools of Fiqh, the Shi'ah and Sunni Muslims, have dealt with this issue and how each have found solutions for the task of verifying the authenticity of each piece and items of the Sunnah.

As historical evidence shows the Shi'ah Muslims from the very beginning were well aware of the urgent need to carefully record all the pieces and items of the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (S). Besides this the

infallible Imams (a.s) were living among the people up to the middle of the third century AH. With the existence of such advantages in their favor the Shi'ah Muslims did not suffer any weakness in this regard.

In the following, first the evidence in favor of such advantages in the task of preserving the Sunnah safely in the case of the Shi'ah Muslims will be examined.

The case of the Sunni Muslims with regards to the task of preserving the Sunnah will take a greater part of the discourse due to certain complications that were involved therein. As it will be noted later in the case of the Sunni Muslims Hadith was not recorded in written form for over two centuries. They would preserve Hadith in their memories.

This discourse may help to evaluate the strength of the resources of Fiqh of each school of law in terms of authenticity and otherwise and provide information about the history of Hadith in the Islamic system.

This discourse is open for comments from the scholars of law and ideology.

The Imams of Shi'ah Muslims and the recording in written form of Hadith and its narration

In this brief discourse the position of the Shi'ah Muslims in the issue of the recording in written form of the Hadith will be examined. Evidence from history will show that in the midst of the misleading attitudes of others towards Hadith the Imams of the Shi'ah Muslims had always insisted on recording in written form of Hadith for its safe preservation from forgery and lies.

On the other hand even until the first parts of the third century the Sunni Muslim scholars would only for the sake of preserving the memorized Hadith would write Hadith just for personal use to help boost their memory. This case at last changed into full recording in written form of the Hadith after a long anxiously awaited period of time. This, however, happened against all the so-called Hadith against recording in written form of Hadith.

'Alb'a ibn Ahmar has reported that once Imam Ali (a.s) was giving a speech from the pulpit wherein he said this, "Who wants to buy knowledge for one Dirham? Harith ibn A'war purchased some paper for one Dirham and came to Imam Ali (a.s) and wrote on it a great deal of Knowledge."[2](#)

Imam Hassan ibn Ali (a.s) would say this to his children; "You are the children of a nation and you will become of the elders of this nation in future. You must acquire knowledge. Let those of you who cannot memorize Knowledge (Hadith) record it in written form and keep it at home."[3](#)

Hujr ibn 'Uday was one of the companions of the holy Prophet (S) and Imam Ali (a.s). He would write down the Ahadith from Imam Ali in a book and whenever he would need to know a rule of Shari'ah he would read in that book about it. [4](#)

The above are evidence of the fact that Imam Ali (a.s) and his associates would consider the recording in written form of Hadith a religious duty.

‘Umar ibn Ali has reported that a person asked Imam Ali (a.s), “How is it that you narrate more Hadith from the holy Prophet (S) than the other companions of the holy Prophet do? The Imam replied, “The reason is that whenever I would ask the holy Prophet (S) questions he would reply and whenever I would not ask he would begin to speak to me.” [5](#)

It is reported from Ali ibn Huwshab, who had heard Makhul, a scholar from Sham, Syria, saying, “Once the holy Prophet (S) recited verse 12 of chapter 69. That partially reads, “**...and the listening ears will listen to it...**” [6](#) and he said to Ali (a.s), “I prayed to Allah to mean thereby your ears.” Imam Ali (a.s) has said that after that whatever Hadith or so I heard from the holy Prophet I never forgot them. [7](#)

‘Amr ibn Harith has said, “Ali (a.s) once turned his face to the sky and then assumed a normal posture and said, ‘Allah and His messenger have told us the truth.’ People asked him, “About what?” The Imam (a.s) replied, “I am experienced in wars and wars are won through deceit. If I would fall from the sky and only birds would come to help me, such a condition (of helplessness) is more preferable to me than forging things against the messenger of Allah. Whatever you hear from me act up on them.” [8](#)

It is reported from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq who has said, “Write down and spread your knowledge among your brethren. When you die your children will inherit your books. A time will come when things will be chaotic and the solace and support for people will be books only. [9](#)

It is also narrated from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s) who has said, “Preserve your books; one day you will need them.” Also he has said: “A proper support for the heart and memory is writing.” [10](#)

Abi Basir has narrated from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s) who has said, “People from Basrah asked certain Ahadith and wrote them down. Why do you not write them down.” Later the Imam (a.s) said, “Remember that you will not be able to preserve Hadith in your memories until you write them down.” [11](#)

As it is mentioned in many Hadith the Imams (a.s) had books and booklets with them that they had received from their fathers in inheritance. [12](#)

It is reported from Imam Ali (a.s) who has said, “Document, or record down in written form the knowledge and repeated this twice. [13](#)

It is narrated from Jabir who has said, “Abu Hanifah used to call Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq a ‘book-worm’ because of reliance on books very often and the Imam would take pride in doing so. [14](#)

According to reports Imam Muhammad al-Baqir had written down the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S) from Jabir ibn ‘Abdallah al-Ansari. [15](#)

This Imam (a.s) was only five years old when Jabir died. Although it seems very unlikely but a possibility

still exists.

The Shi'ah Muslims and the Task of Documenting Hadith

Since documenting and recording down in written form of Hadith was a fact of life among the Shi'ah Muslims from the very beginning the task of documenting Fiqh and Hadith had been common in this community in the very early days. Doctor Shawqi Dayf writes, "The Shi'ah Muslim's attention towards documenting Fiqh and Hadith had been very strong. One reason for this is their belief in their Imams (a.s) as guiding and well-guided people whose Fatwas, legal opinions, were must to follow. Therefore, they paid proper attention to the judicial decisions of Imam Ali (a.s). The first compilation and documented record of legal matters was produced by Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali, contemporary to Hajjaj." [16](#)

'Allamah Sayyid Sharaf al-Din also writes, "Imam Ali (a.s) and his followers paid proper attention to documenting Hadith from the very early days. The first thing that Imam Ali (a.s) did was documenting in written form of the whole of the holy Quran. Soon after the death of the holy Prophet (S) he organized the verses and chapters of this holy book the way they were revealed to the holy Prophet (S). He did so with a mention of which word, phrase, sentence or verse was of a general, particular, absolute, stipulated, clear or of metaphorical sense. After completing such a documentation of the holy Quran he worked on a book for Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra' (a.s).

This book came to be popularly known to their descendants as the "Mushaf of Fatimah". After this Imam Ali (a.s) wrote a book on the rules of compensation for losses due to criminal acts. Which was called 'Sahifah'. Ibn Sa'd has recorded it at the end of his well-known works 'al-Jami' as Musnad of Ali (a.s).

Of the other writers among the Shi'ah Muslims is abu Rafi' who wrote the books called 'Sunan, Ahkam and Judgements'. [17](#)

Late Sayyid Hassan Sadr writes, "The first person in the Shi'ah Muslim community who produced a book was abu Rafi' Mawla of the holy Prophet (S) [18](#)

Najashi also writes, "Of the first generation of the Shi'ah Muslim authors was abu Rafi' Mawla of the Messenger of Allah. Muhammad ibn Sa'd has said in his works on history that he (abu Rafi') was one of the best individuals of the Shi'ah Muslim community. He participated in all the battles with Imam Ali (a.s) and was the treasurer of the Baytul Mal in Kufa, Iraq... Abu Rafi' had written a book on Sunan, Ahkam and Judgments.

The book is narrated by Muhammad ibn abi Rafi' from his father and from his grandfather. It begins with a chapter on prayer then Fasting, Zakat and judicial rules. In Kufa this book is narrated by Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Mubarak. Ali ibn abi Rafi' also had another book and he was of the Tabi'in, the second, generation and one of the best individuals in the Shi'ah Muslim community. He had a book on the

subjects of Fiqh and chapters on Wuzu, prayers and other chapters of Fiqh. [19](#)

As mentioned earlier Abu Hanifah would call Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq as a 'Kutubi' bookworm. When this was mentioned to the Imam (a.s) he smiled and said, "That he says I am a 'suhufi' is true. I have read the 'Suhuf', books of my father and grandfathers. [20](#)

This report clearly shows that the Imam (a.s) had books compiled by his father or grandfather or great grandfathers. This was at a time when the Sunni Muslim scholars had not paid any attention to compiling books on Hadith.

Another evidence for the existence of such books with Imams (a.s) is the report from Sayrafi, "I with Hakam ibn 'Uyaynah were in the presence of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s) and he asked questions from the Imam (a.s) and the Imam (a.s) paid particular attention to him. Hakam and I had a disagreement on some issues and the Imam asked his son, "Please bring me that big book. He opened the book and turned several leaves until he found the answer and said, "This is the hand writing of Ali (a.s) and the dictation of the holy Prophet (S)." [21](#)

It is narrated from Imam abi Ja'far (a.s) who has said, "We found it in the book of Ali (a.s) that the holy Prophet (S) has said, 'If Zakat is not paid the blessings of the land goes away.'" [22](#)

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) who has said, "My father has said, 'I read in the book of Ali (a.s) that the holy Prophet (a.s) ordered to write a covenant among the Muhajir, the immigrant Muslims, the Ansar, the Muslim people of Madina and other Muslims. In it, it was said, "The rules about a neighbor is like the rules applicable to one's own self. One must not do injustice to a neighbor. The protection of the respects of a neighbor is just like the protection of the respect for a mother.'" [23](#)

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq who has said, "It is written in the book of Ali (a.s), "This world is like a snake whose appearance is attractive but inside there is deadly poison therein. A person of reason stays away from it but a child may go close to it." [24](#)

It is also narrated that in the book of discipline of Imam Ali (a.s) it said, "One must not use analogy in the matters of religion because the religion of Allah is not based on analogy. There will come a people who will use analogy. They, in fact, will do animosity to religion." [25](#)

Zurarah has narrated, "I asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir about the inheritance of a grandfather and said, 'I have not seen anybody speak about it but that is based on personal opinions except Amirul Mu'minin Ali (a.s).' I asked, "What has he said in this matter?" The Imam replied, "Come tomorrow so I can read it for you from the book." I then requested, "Please say it to me in the form of Hadith because your Hadith is better for me than books." "Do what I asked you to do, said the Imam (a.s). "Come tomorrow and I will read for you from the book." Zurarah has said, "I visited the Imam next day in the afternoon. Ja'far ibn Muhammad the son of the Imam (a.s) came to me and the Imam asked him to read for me from the book." [26](#)

Also it is narrated from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) who has said, "It is written in the book of Ali (a.s), 'One who drinks wine or any other kind of intoxicating substances must receive the same kind of penalty.'" [27](#)

Muhammad ibn Muslim, a companion of Imam al-Baqir (a.s) has said, "Abu Ja'far read for me from the book Fara'id that was a dictation of the holy Prophet (S) written with the hand writing of Imam Ali (a.s)." [28](#)

These were just a few Hadith out of many more on the issue of recording in written form of Ahadith. The task of properly documenting Hadith was common practice under the guidance of the Imams (a.s). This noble practice had originated from Imam Ali (a.s) under the guidance of the holy Prophet (S). These Ahadith are Mutawatir according to Shi'ah Muslims and in the Ahadith of the Sunni Muslims also they are mentioned in some degrees. This practice is a great support for the reliability of the Hadith of the Shi'ah Muslims.

After the time of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) people had written so many books that it is difficult to enumerate them. Just a quick examination of the works of Najashi will show that the students of the Imams had compiled a great deal of books as resources of the Fiqh. The resources of Fiqh available to Shi'ah Muslims are quite rich. This is all because of the strong support of the Imams of the Shi'ah Muslims of the great and valuable task of recording in written form of Ahadith in the proper times.

Such resources are distinct from those of the Sunni Muslims in two ways.

(a) A much larger quantity

(a) Its aloofness from the influence of the rulers and their power seeking struggles and politics

History of Hadith in the Sunni Muslims Community

The works on Hadith available today were compiled and completed in the last parts of the second century and in the third century Hijrah, Islamic Calendar. Historical evidence shows that in the second century a very few reporters of Hadith possessed very few Hadith, which were not even organized properly. Later on those small writings became the source of large works of Hadith. Most of the Ahadith in major collections of Hadith were handed down to the new generations by the help of the reporter's memories. Before being recorded in the major works of Hadith the Ahadith did not exist in a written and recorded form anywhere else.

The issue of delay in the recording of Ahadith in a written form is a very important historical issue. It is important because it has a significant effect on the quantity, authenticity as well the forged Hadith and other related issues. One such issue is concerned with the elements that were the cause of such delays. It was due to the attitudes of such people towards Hadith that became reason for others not to record the Ahadith in the written form.

To find explanations for the plans of the people who caused delays in recording the Ahadith in written form is one of the objectives of this discourse.

In our belief from what history proves some of the Caliphs for particular interests prevented the recording in written form of the Ahadith and other Sahabah and Tabi'in, second generation Muslims, also followed such lead; these people because of the fact that "people follow their rulers" for a long time abstained from recording in written form of Hadith. They only would preserve the Ahadith in their memories.

As it will be noted later some of these people would write down from time to time some of the Ahadith only to destroy them towards the end of their lives as if such writings would only help them to memorize better. Such writings were not to transfer knowledge to coming generations.

It is interesting to note that abstention from recording in written form of Hadith came from the rulers and the reason for recording in written form of Hadith also came from the rulers.

Zuhri reports, "We disliked recording of knowledge in writing until we were compelled by the rulers to do so and then we found out that of the Muslims also no one opposed it". He further says, "The kings demanded of me to write down the knowledge for them. For a long time I continued writing the knowledge for them but then I felt ashamed before Allah for writing the knowledge for the kings but not for the others."[29](#)

All the Sahabah and Tabi'in, however, were not alike in this matter. Some of them like Imam Ali (a.s) would record the Ahadith in written form and would command others to also do so. The others began writing the Ahadith only when the prohibition of the Caliphs changed into their command to writing the Ahadith.[30](#)

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz (who died 101AH) was the first among the Caliphs who ordered the scholars of the different cities to write down the Ahadith and send them to him (the caliph).[31](#)

It is reported that he wrote to Murrah Ibn Kathir asking him to record in written form the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet (S)[32](#). He also wrote to Muhammad Hazm to write down all the Hadith of the Holy Prophet (S) available to him and also anything available of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab be added and sent to the Caliph ('Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz). "I am afraid for the loss of the Ahadith." Wrote 'Umar Ibn Abdul 'Aziz[33](#). He also wrote to the people of Madina asking them to write down all the available Ahadith of the Holy Prophet (S) and then send them all to the Caliph. "I am afraid of the loss of Ahadith." He had complained.[34](#)

This statement of 'Umar Ibn 'Adal 'Aziz shows clearly that until that time recording in written form of Hadith did not exist as a task but this does not prove, in any way or manner, that no record in written form of Hadith existed at all anywhere else also.

After 'Umar Ibn 'Adal 'Aziz other Caliphs did not follow up what he had started and this move faded away once again. Memorization of Ahadith was the only heritage of the Sunni Muslim Scholars that they had

received until that time from their predecessors; therefore, changing of such attitude was very difficult. This becomes more believable after an examination of the fact that some scholars of Hadith even towards the end of the second century AH would still dislike writing down of the Ahadith.

The assertions of historians of historical matters are indicative of the delay in recording down in written form of the Ahadith. It is reported from 'Adul Razzaq, "The first person who wrote down Hadith was Ibn Jurayh." Al-Awza'i also began to write down the Ahadith after he presented his books before Yahya Ibn Kathir."[35](#)

Al-Dhahabi writes, "In the year 143 AH the Muslim scholars began to write down the Ahadith, Fiqh and commentary of the holy Quran. Of such scholars were Ibn Jurayh in Makkah, Malik in Madinah, al-Awza'i in Sham, Damascus, Ibn Abi 'Urubah in Basrah, Mu'ammār in Yemen and Sufyan al-Thuri in Kufa, Iraq. Before this time the scholars of Hadith would narrate the Ahadith from their memories or they would narrate knowledge from the small authentic booklets that were not so organized."[36](#)

He has stated even more clearly, "Ibn Jurayh and Ibn Abi 'Urubah are the first people who began to write down Hadith and Mu'ammār Ibn Rashid of Yemen also did so."[37](#)

It is also reported from 'Adal Al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad al-Darwardi, who has said that the first person to write down knowledge was Ibn Shihab Zuhri. "[38](#)

It is reported from Ibn Shihab Zuhri who has said that 'Adal 'Aziz had ordered us to record down in written form the Sunnah and in the shape of note books and sent copies to all the lands under his rule."[39](#)

As mentioned earlier after 'Umar Ibn 'Abdal 'Aziz the writing down of Hadith became a disputed matter and once again it was ignored for another half century. Ibn Hajar has said, "The recording down in written form of Ahadith began towards the end of the period of Tabi'in when Muslim scholars dispersed in various cities. Of the first people who wrote down the Ahadith were Rabi' Ibn Subayh and Sa'id ibn Abi 'Urubah and the third generation of Muslims compiled the Laws."[40](#) Dhahabi also has narrated a similar statement.[41](#)

This shows that in the first half of the second century AH compilation of Hadith was incomplete. In the second half of this century it took a more complete shape.

Haji Khalifah writes, "When Islam spread, the cities of the Muslims became larger. The Sahabah and Tabi'in dispersed in these lands. After a while the older ones died as a result preservation of Hadith decreased. The scholars felt the need to record in written form the Ahadith. I swear up on my soul that the recording down in written form of the Ahadith was a fundamental issue because human memory is not immune from neglect. After them the task was up to the Imams of Hadith like Ibn Jurayh and Malik ibn Anas. It is said that the first person to record Hadith in written form was Rabi'a ibn Subayh in Basrah and after him the task of writing down of Hadith spread."[42](#)

From the above three stages of the conditions of Hadith the following comes to light.

1. In the first century no collections in written form of Hadith with due popularity existed except for few instances that some of the Sahabah may have acted against the will of the Caliphs.
1. In the first half of the second century Ahadith were compiled in an incomplete form.
1. In the last parts of the second century Ahadith were recorded in written form in a basic shape. This began in the last parts of the second century. However, there is not much of such works available today. The oldest of such written records available today are the compilation of 'abd al-Razzaq, the compilation of ibn abi Shaybah and Muwatta' of ibn Malik ibn Anas that were mostly compiled in second half of the second century.

According to Dhahabi Na'im ibn Hammad compiled the first Musnad⁴³ Yahya al-Hamani compiled the first Musnad in Kufa, Iraq.⁴⁴ Musaddad was the first to compile a Musnad in Basrah.⁴⁵

The Causes for the Delay in Recording in Written form of Hadith

The holy Prophet (S) from the very beginning stressed upon recording in written form of the holy Quran as a protective measure against forgery and lies. The holy Prophet (S) had granted permission to write down his Ahadith and even he had ordered to write his Ahadith down. Some of the Ahadith were written down in his lifetime but after his departure from this world not much attention was paid to preserving the Ahadith in written form. In addition, there existed an opposition to the task of the recording in written form of Ahadith and many problems surfaced because of such oppositions.

Very serious and undesirable effects came out of not recording in written form of Hadith. Some people went far enough to place the responsibility for this shortcoming on the shoulders of the holy Prophet (S) himself. Knowing that the holy Prophet cannot be blamed the way others can be blamed it was planned to falsely ascribe a Hadith as the following sentence to him about this issue.

The so called Hadith Prohibiting documentation of Hadith

"Do not write down anything from me except the holy Quran and those who have written must wipe them out."⁴⁶

The statement is very clear and it does not need any interpretations. It simply prohibits writing down of Hadith. Even those who had written some Hadith down had been made responsible to wipe them out.

1. For the very clarity of this statement it cannot be accepted as true Hadith besides other reasons.

In case it is accepted its authority cannot be limited for a certain period of time. If writing down of Hadith is prohibited it is so all the time. It is known that even the narrators of this statement have

ignored it and themselves have compiled their works on Hadith. The first compilers of Hadith in the first half of the second century A.H. began to compile the Ahadith and ignore the above-mentioned assertion. They knew that if something is unlawful in Shari'ah it cannot be made lawful. How can such a Hadith be accepted as true?

2. The same narrators of Hadith have narrated certain Hadith from the holy Prophet (S) that speak of writing down of Hadith as lawful.[47](#)

3. Abu Sa'id al-Khudari who is mostly considered to be the narrator of the above Hadith is also considered to be the narrator of the following Hadith or assertion that negates this Hadith to a certain degree

“We in those days would not write anything besides the holy Quran and Tashahhud, the testimony.”[48](#)

There are two things to note in this later statement.

(a) He did not say that it was because of the commands of the holy Prophet (S) unless one would interpret it as such, because of his not considering it the main point in his statement, which is possible but very unlikely.[49](#)

(b) The writing of testimony is mentioned here while the former so called Hadith prohibits everything from the Holy Prophet (S) other than the holy Quran. In another narration from ibn Mas'ud Istikharah is also added.[50](#) Why the holy Prophet (S) would grant permission for writing down of the Testimony and prohibit the writing down of the other Ahadith?

As it will be discussed latter, evidence show that even Abu Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab at the beginning had the intention of writing down the Ahadith but latter because of the reason that 'Umar stated, he did not write down the Ahadith. None of them mentioned any prohibition from the holy Prophet (S).

In addition, when 'Umar consulted the Sahabah about the writing down of the Ahadith they also supported the idea of recording in written form of the Ahadith.

4. There is another narration in which abi Basir speaks to abi Sa'id al-Khudari saying, “What we read we write them down. Abu Sa'id responds, ‘Do you want to make them a book? The holy Prophet (S) spoke to us and we speak to you and you should just memorize them like us.”[51](#)

There are two points to note in this case also.

(a) Abu Sa'id did not ascribe the prohibition to the holy Prophet (S)

(a) His reason for not writing down the Ahadith is the same as that given by the Caliph who also did not ascribe the prohibition to the holy Prophet (S).

5. After the so called Hadith of prohibition there is this expression, “Speak (as much as you like) of Banu Israel; there is no offense in it.”

So the whole of the so called Hadith placed together would mean, “Do not write the Ahadith of Prophet Muhammad but speak of the Israelites as much as one would wish”.

If something would destroy whatever Prophet Muhammad (S) has taught and propagate whatever Banu Israel says it becomes clear what the author of the so called Hadith had wanted. He simply wanted to replace the Ahadith of Prophet Muhammad (S) with those of Banu Israel. Can reason believe Prophet Muhammad (S) would say such a thing?

6. The following part of the statement of abu Sa’id expresses a possibility that the so called prohibition may have been for him only: “I requested permission from the holy Prophet (S) to write down his Hadith but he denied me such permission.”[52](#)

It will be observed later that the holy Prophet (S) did grant permission to people for writing down of his Ahadith.

The Narration of Abu Hurayrah

It is narrated from abu Hurayrah who has said, “The holy Prophet (S) came to us when we were writing down Hadith. He asked us, ‘ what is this you are writing?’ We replied, “These are the matters that we have heard from you.” He then said, ‘Do you want a book other than the book of Allah? The nations before you were destroyed only for what they had written along with the book of Allah.’[53](#)

Comments to this are as follows.

1. Even assuming this to be abu Hurayrah’s own narration his truthfulness is very much questionable because of the research others have conducted about him.
2. The reason given in this narration is just like the reason given by the Caliph in this matter. Abu Hurayrah ascribes to the Prophet (S) but the Caliph did not ascribe it to the Prophet (S).
3. This narration may have some of its theme come from the Hadith of the holy Prophet about the books of the people of the books but it is not about the Hadith that is the finishing substance for the divine message.
4. How would possibly the holy Prophet (S) prohibit the writing down of his Sunnah that explains the Islamic system of Shari’ah?

Another narration of abu Hurayrah shows that either he was unaware of the first narration or those who ascribe it to him. It says, “The holy Prophet (S) had heard that people write down Ahadith. He went on the pulpit. After praising Allah said, ‘What are these books that I hear you write? I am only a mortal.

Whoever has some of it with him let him bring it to Me.’[54](#)

This narration has clearly considered the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (S) as of no authority. His considering himself a mortal has negated the authority of his own Hadith. This is not acceptable to Muslims.

It is important to note that a similar thing was said by certain group to ‘Abdallah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Al-‘Ass who would write the Ahadith of the Prophet (S) to which the Prophet had said, “I do not say but the truth.”[55](#)

This expression of the holy Prophet (S) clearly negates the narration of abu Hurayrah.

1. Abu Hurayrah himself has said that no one has more Hadith than he except ‘Abdallah Ibn ‘Umar does because he would write the Ahadith but abu Hurayrah would not write.[56](#)

This shows that there was no prohibition on writing down of Ahadith. Abu Hurayrah’s not writing may have been for personal reasons.

2. One of the pupils of abu Hurayrah, abu Nahyak, has said, “I would take the books from abu Hurayrah and would write from them for myself and then would take them to abu Hurayrah and read to him and ask him, “Did you hear them from the holy Prophet (S)? He would acknowledge.”[57](#)

Do these narrations not negate his (abu Hurayrah) narration that say writing of Hadith is prohibited?

3. Also it is narrated that Hamam ibn Manbal, a pupil of abu Hurayrah had compiled a book in the lifetime of abu Hurayrah that contained the Ahadith from him.[58](#)

This does not agree with abu Hurayrah’s narration of the prohibition of writing Hadith when his own pupil writes Hadith with his knowledge. Another report is narrated from Zayd Ibn Thabit who when in the presence of Mu’awiyah was asked about a Hadith and was asked to write down that Hadith to which Zayd had said, “The holy Prophet (S) had told us not to write any of his Ahadith.”[59](#)

The answer to this among the others is the huge collections of the works on Hadith that are all available today. As it will be observed after examining the true reason for such prohibitions, such narration is not truly from the holy Prophet (S).

Ibn Mas’ud’s case, who was told to destroy the book full of Hadith[60](#) could be explain as follow.

(a) It is not known if the holy Prophet (S) had asked him to destroy the book. It is possible it was done because of the order of the Caliphs.

(b) This, as will be explained, was done about the narration of Banu Israel not the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (S). The same is the case with abu Musa al-Ash’ari whose son had a collection of Hadith and it was destroyed.

... “In the life of the Messenger of Allah there is good examples for you to follow... Holy Quran, 33: 12.

...Follow whatever the messenger teaches and abide by his prohibitions... Holy Quran, 59:7.

...It does not befit a believer to act as they choose when Allah and His messenger have already decided for them.” Holy Quran, 33:36.

1. See verses 12:33, 7:59 and 36:33 Holy Quran.
2. Tabaqat al-Kubra Vol. 6, P 168, Taqyid al-‘ilm P 89–90, Kanzul ‘ummal vol. 10, P 156, Rabi’ al-Abrar vol. 3, P 294.
3. Behar al-Anwar vol 2 P 152, al-Taratib al-‘idariyah vol. 2 P 246, Sunan al-Darimi vol. 1 P 130, ‘ilal al-Hadith vol. 2 P 438, Taqyid al-‘ilm P 91, Jami’ al-Bayan al-‘ilm vol. 1 P 99, Kanzul ‘ummal vol. 1 P 193, Rabi’ al- Abrar vol. 3, P 326, Tarjamah al-Imam Hassan from history of Damascus P 167.
4. Tabaqat al-kubra vol. 6 P 220
5. Ansab al-Ashraf vol. 3 P 98 Hadith No 980 from Tarjamah of Imam Ali (a.s) in history of Damascus, Behar al-Anwar vol. 2 P 230, al-Fadael of ibn Hanbal Hadith No 222
6. Holy Quran 69:12.
7. Ansab al-Ashraf vol. 1 P 121, History of Damascus vol 38 P 202, Hulyatul Awliya vol. P 67, Shawahid al-Tanzil Hadith No. 1009.
8. Ansab al-Ashraf vol. 2 P 145.
9. Behar al-Anwar vol. 2 P 50 from Kashf al-Mahajjah.
10. Behar al-Anwar vol. 2 P 152.
11. Behar al-Anwar vol. 2 P 153.
12. See Makatib al-Rasul vol. 1 P 71–89, Ali Ahmadi Miyanchi.
13. Taqyid al-‘ilm P 89.
14. Rawadat al-Jannat vol. 8 P 169.
15. Taqyid al-‘ilm P 104.
16. Tarikh al-Adab al-Arabi (al-‘asr al-Islami) P 453, Tamhid of Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Islamiyah P 202–203, Mustafa ‘Abd al-Razzaq.
17. Al-Muraja’at P 305–306, A’lami, Beirut.
18. Ta’sis al-Shi’ah, li ‘ulum al-Islami P. 280, A’lami, Beirut.
19. Rijal of Najashi P 3–4, Qum.
20. Qamus al-Rijal under Tarjamah of Muhammad ibn ‘abdallah ibn Hassan, Rawadat al-Jannat vol. 8 P 77.
21. Rijal of Najashi P 255.
22. Furu’ al-Kafi vol. 2 P 666, also Fru’ al-Kafi vol. 7 P 77.
23. Wasael al-Shi’ah, Kitab al-Zakat, also Makatib al-Rasul vol. P 73.
24. Wasael al-Shi’ah, Kitab al-Jihad, Makatib al-Rasul P 76.
25. Wasael al-Shi’ah, Kitab al-Qada’.
26. Furu’ al-Kafi vol. 7 P 94.
27. Wasael al-Shi’ah, Kitab al-Hudud.
28. Furu’ al-Kafi vol. 7 P 98.
29. Tabaqat al-kubra’ vol. 2 P 389, Musannaf ‘Abd al-Razzaq vol. 11 P 258, Taqyid al-‘ilm P 107.
30. Jami’ Bayan al-‘ilm vol. 1 P 92.
31. Musannaf ‘Abd al-Razzaq vol. 9 P 337.
32. Tabaqat al-Kubra’ vol. 7 P 447.
33. Sunan al-Darimi vol. P 126, Taqyid al-‘ilm P 105–106.
34. Sunan al-Darimi vol. 1 P 126, Akhbar Asbahan vol. 1 P 312, Tadrib al-Rawi P 90 by Sayuti.
35. Al-Jarh Wa al-Ta’dil vol. P 184.

- [36.](#) Tarikh al-Khulafa' P 261 by Sayuti.
- [37.](#) Tadhkirat al-Huffaz vol. 1 P 170, 169, 203.
- [38.](#) Jami' Bayan al-'ilm vol. 1 P 88-91.
- [39.](#) Jami' Bayan al-'ilm vol. 1 P 92.
- [40.](#) Muqaddimah fath al-Bari P 4-5.
- [41.](#) Tadhkirat al-Huffaz vol. P 160.
- [42.](#) Kashf al-Zunun vol. 1 P 237.
- [43.](#) Tadhkirat al-Huffaz vol. 1 P 419.
- [44.](#) Tadhkirat al-Huffaz vol. 1 P 419.
- [45.](#) Ibid, Tadrib al-Rawi P 88-89.
- [46.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 29-31, Musnad Ahmad vol. 3 P 12, 21, 39, Sunan al-Darimi vol. P 110.
- [47.](#) Jami' Bayan al-'ilm vol. P 76, Kashf al-Astar, vol. 1 P 109.
- [48.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm p 93, Musannaf ibn abi Shaybah vol. 1 P 293.
- [49.](#) Musannaf ibn abi Shaybah vol. 1 P 294.
- [50.](#) Musannaf ibn abi Shaybah vol. 1 P 294.
- [51.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 36-37.
- [52.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 36.
- [53.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 34.
- [54.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 34.
- [55.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 34.
- [56.](#) Al-Kifayah fi 'ilm al-Riwayah, P 82.
- [57.](#) Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar vol. 4 P 320.
- [58.](#) 'Ulum al-Hadith P 21-22.
- [59.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 35, 'Umdat al-Qari vol. 1 P 572, Musnad Ahmad P 182 vol. 5.
- [60.](#) Taqyid al-'ilm P 39, Sunan al-Darimi vol.1 P 124-125.

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