Tadwin al-Hadith
Part 3

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This is third and last part of the article on Tadwin al-Hadith. It deals with some of the issues related to the writing and documentation of Hadith and takes up extensively the issues in scholarly manners.
It is an enjoyable amount of reading for people interested to know about Hadith in the Islamic literature.

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In the light of the above information it is not possible to hold the Prophet (S) responsible for the failure to write Hadith; such a stand would raise questions that would have no answer. It was mentioned that some of the Caliphs interfered directly in this matter and prohibited the writing of Hadith.

In the following an effort will be made to find an explanation for such a prohibition. After evaluating a number of reasons that have been offered in this regard, what seems to have been the main reason behind the prohibition will also be mentioned with sufficient evidence to support such viewpoint.

The Reasons Given for the Prohibition

1. One reason offered is the fear for the people's failure to distinguish between the holy Quran and Hadith of the holy Prophet (S) which would result in the corruption (Tahrif) of the Quranic text, an unforgivable offence.1

Ustadh Abu Riyyah has rejected this weak argument in the following words:

Such a reason may appear convincing to ordinary people, but a researcher cannot accepted it, because it would suggest that the eloquence of the Quran stands on the same level as that of Hadith.2

In his proposition if the miracle of Quranic eloquence is understandable for the people, how they would have mixed Hadith of the holy Prophet (S), which stand on a lower level of eloquence than the holy Quran, with the verses of the Holy Book. Such a viewpoint, in fact, amounts to a denial of the miraculous character of the holy Quran.

In fact, to believe in the possibility of a mix between the holy Quran and Hadith is to believe in the possibility of textual corruption finding way into the holy Quran. Such a belief is unfounded; God Almighty has personally guaranteed the incorruptibility of the holy Quran:

Verily, We have sent down al-Dhikr, the holy Quran, and verily We are its protector. (***15:9***)

A group of Companions knew the entire holy Quran by heart, and with the high degree of their protective care and devotion towards the holy Quran it was not reasonable to entertain any fear of a mix of the holy Quran and Hadith. At most such fear was only a possibility, and in no way was an eminent danger. On the other hand it was certain that harm would follow for not writing down Hadith. It had obvious effects from the first day.

The Companions disagreed amongst themselves from the early days about some laws of the Shari'ah, and it was obvious that if the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S) were not recorded such differences would become more serious with time, as it did. Between a remote threat and an eminent danger of widening differences, they should have given more weight to the latter. Basically, the former did not have any real weight at all.

2. According to abu-Riyyah, let it be accepted that the prohibition came from the holy Prophet (S) to keep the laws of the Shari'ah within restricted limits and was opposed to the proliferation of Ahadith. This was one reason, according to him, behind the instances where the Prophet (S) disliked answering questions put to him. The same reason also holds true in the case of Hadith that were valid at a particular time and not so after wards.3

This argument is very weak. It is not possible to accept that the Prophet (S) opposed the increase in Hadith as the basis of the legal system of the Shari'ah. How can it be accepted when the holy Quran

and the Sunnah are to answer the variegated needs for law to the Day of Judgement and to offer constant guidance to man? Moreover, there is no evidence that the holy Prophet (S) ever issued such a prohibition on the writing down of Hadith.

3. Al-'Awza'i, offering another explanation, writes, "The science of Hadith is a noble one when it is transmitted orally. Such method always keeps the people engaged in reminding one another of Hadith. But, when written, their light would fade and they may fall into unworthy hands."4

However, al-Awza'i's explanations is not an answer to the need for recording in written form of Hadith, although oral transmission is beneficial in some respects such as constantly reminding people about the contents of Hadith. Such method would be constant cause of subjecting Hadith to addition and omission of human memory. In fact, al-'Awza'i himself has invented this explanation and it is doubtful whether those who prohibited the writing of Hadith had considered it or not.

4. Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, offering an explanation similar to the above one, writes, "The writing of Ahadith was prohibited so that individuals should not rely solely on what they have written and would abstain from memorizing them. In that case, the task of memorizing Hadith would diminish altogether.5

This rationale is also unacceptable, because the losses resulting from the failure to write Hadith were incomparably serious and far greater than such benefits. Human civilization and values have been guarded through the written word and not by means of memory, although the memorization of Hadith is in itself a very valuable practice.

5. Another explanation that is given in this regard is that had Hadith been written down the people would have abandoned the holy Quran to give all their attention to Hadith6.

This argument is also not defendable, because the same thing could be said of oral Hadith and the holy Quran. It is true that exclusive attention to Hadith is a deviation. People vulnerable to such matters can be warned and asked to take an equal interest in the holy Quran. The prohibition on writing of Hadith, which inflicted irreparable damage on Islamic system, was not a correct way of obtaining that result.

6. The author of Abjad al-'ulum writes, "The Sahabah and the Tabi'un did not need to write Hadith and the laws for the following reasons: Their faith was pure and they had the blessing of proximity to the times of the holy Prophet (S). Disagreement among them was absent and they had the opportunity of referring to reliable persona. But when Islam spread they began to write and compile Hadith, Fiqh and Tafsir of the holy Quran.7

What the author states is not the reason for the opposition of some Companions to the writing of Hadith. It is only an explanation that may or may not apply to the history of Hadith. In fact, why Hadith was not written the real cause was opposition to the writing of Hadith, not absence of the need to write down Hadith.

The spread of Islam occurred in the first twenty, or at the most fifty, years after the demise of the holy Prophet (S), whereas the writing and compilation of Hadith was delayed until the latter part of the first half of the 2nd/8th century. Aside from these two points it is well known that fabrication of Hadith in the name of the Prophet (S) began in his (S) own lifetime, and it naturally increased in the absence of recorded in written form of Hadith. It was the duty of the Companions, who differed amongst themselves over legal questions, to stop the increasing forgeries and further differences by committing Hadith to writing.

7. The actual reason behind the prohibition on the writing of Hadith, was what has been advanced by a contemporary scholar, Sayyid Ja'far Murtada, and is confirmed by the evidence available. He says, "There existed two sects among the Jews, of which one believed in a written literature. The other believed that nothing except the Torah should be committed to writing. The second group was called Qurra' (Readers).

Dada has pointed this out in his book on Jewish religious thought.

Ka'b al–'Ahbar, a Jewish convert to Islam, belonged to this second sect. Once asked a question by 'Umar about poetry, of the things he says about Arabs is that a group of the descendants of Isma'il carried the Gospel only in their hearts and spoke with wisdom.... It is probable that the Caliph had taken the idea (of not writing anything except the holy Quran) from Ka'b al–'Ahbar. 'Umar had very intimate terms with Ka'b al–'Ahbar and respected his opinions.

The prohibition on writing Hadith also went well with his state policies. He thereby could curb criticism and further consolidate his own power. Such a step would have resulted in the effacement of the part of Hadith relating to the opponents' claims and merits and served to lend strength to their position.8

The author, as his statement shows, considers it probable that a number of reasons lay behind the prohibition on writing Hadith. The most important was the influence of the views of Ahl al–Kitab over the Second Caliph, who, it seems, liked to read their books since the time of his conversion.

The Riwayah of 'Urwah ibn al–Zubayr confirms this influence. According to this Riwayahthe Caliph had first intended to have the 'Sunan' compiled and he even consulted the Companions about his plan. They approved it, but he changed his mind with the argument that the Ahl al–Kitab had abandoned their scripture for other books that they had written and that he would not allow something similar to happen with the holy Quran.9

It is very probable that this argument of the Caliph was inspired by Ka'b al–'Ahbar, who belonged to the sect of the Qurra who refrained from writing anything besides the Torah. Ka'b had evil designs against Islam; although the Caliph may not have had similar intentions, he, unfortunately, failed to see through Ka'b's malice.

'Umar's argument against the writing of Hadith came to be echoed by others. Abu Burdah reports from

his father that he said: “Banu Isma’il wrote books and abandoned the Divine Scripture”.10 Hakam ibn ‘Atiyyah narrated from Muhammad (probably, Muhammad ibn Sirin) that he used to say, “It has been narrated that Banu Israel were led into error on account of the books that they inherited from their ancestors besides the Torah.”11

Another scholar writes, “One of the major influences that the Jews incorporated among the Muslims was the latter’s practice of refraining from writing Hadith. It is written in the Talmud, “You have no right to write things, which you narrate orally.” It is not improbable that the Muslims were motivated by Ka’b al-‘Ahbar in this matter, although they set it forth in the fond of a Prophetic Hadith. An evidence of such influence is the declaration of the Caliph after burning the Ahadith that had collected saying, “Not a Mishnat like the Mishnat of the People of the Book.”12 These words show a form of influence from the practice of the Jews.

Abu ‘Ubayd, in his Gharib al-Hadith, writes, “I asked a scholar learned in the Torah and Gospel about the word ‘Mishnat’ He said, “The rabbis and doctors of Banu Israel wrote certain books after Moses, aside from the Scripture and called it ‘Mishna’.”

Obviously the Caliph had liked the practice of the group of Jews of the opposite camp to the writers of ‘Mishna’. Abu ‘Ubayd further says, “After the above clarification I understood the meaning of this Riwayah. This was the reason why ‘Abdallah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As was averse to taking anything from the Ahl al-kitab, although he possessed some books which he had come to acquire during the campaign of Yarmuk (from Jewish synagogues).

Abu ‘Ubayd adds, “It is certain that the prohibition (on writing and narration) did not pertain to the Hadith and Sunnah of the Prophet (S). Had it been so, how would most of the Companions themselves narrate Ahadith?13

This shows that the Second Caliph proscribed the Hadith and Sunnah of the holy Prophet (S) because he considered that writing them was similar to the writings of Jewish doctors. Thereby, instead of halting the spread of Jewish ideas he was induced to practice them over the Hadith that could lead to the destruction of the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (S). It must also be added that ‘Abdallah ibn ‘Amr was himself one of the propagators of Israeliyat, Jewish ideas, and not at all disinclined to them. For his knowledge of the Torah people would ask him to describe the characteristics of the holy Prophet (S) for them.14

To recap that which happened to Hadith was that generally it was not recorded in written form until the end of the lst/7th century, although some of the Companions favored its writing and a few possessed certain tablets with Hadith written on them. Scattered records in written form of Hadith began to appear at the outset of the 2nd/8th century, but thorough compilation started towards the end of the 2nd/8th and mostly in the 3rd/9th century. All of the six Sihah date from the 3rd/9th century. Although it is possible that some of the compilers had random compilations of Hadith at their disposal, evidently most of their

Hadith came from an oral narration.

The existence of some very short works, not comparable with any of the great collections of Hadith available today, supports the fact that there is little sign of the occurrence of recording in written form of Hadith during the 2nd /8th century. So, Hadith was not recorded in written form for a long period of time and it was mostly transmitted orally to next generations of Muslims.[15]

The Consequences of Not Recording in Written form of Hadith

The absence of recorded in written form of Hadith for narration resulted in a number of harmful consequences. In the following some such consequences will be examined.

1. The Loss of a Great Many Ahadith

The loss of a great may Hadith was a natural result of not documenting Hadith properly. Although memorization did result in preserving a large number of Hadith, it also resulted in the loss of many, for memory is only an imperfect means of preservation. Muhaddithun, narrators of Hadith, admit such losses is best proof of the negative aspect of not recording Hadith in written form.

Ibn Qulabah says, "Books and writing are better for us than weak memory and forgetfulness."[16] Yahya ibn Sa'id writes, "I found scholars who disliked writing Hadith. Had we recorded Hadith in written form, we would have now possessed a great deal of the knowledge (ʻilm) of Sa'id ibn Musayyab and his opinions." [17]Yahya here regrets the loss of the Ahadith narrated by Sa'id and the loss of his views.

ʻUrwah ibn al-Zubayr writes, "I wrote a great number of Ahadith and later had them effaced. I wish I had not destroyed them even if it would make me to give away all my property and children for such cause".[18]

Hisham ibn ʻUrwah narrates, "My father burnt the books that he possessed during in the episode of Harrah, during the attack on Madinah and ravaging of the city the in the year 63/283 by the Syrian army). Later he said to me, "Had I kept them, it would have been better for me than the property I now possess and my children."[19] Yahya ibn Sa'id has said something similar.[20] These statements indicate how much some people regretted not for documenting Hadith properly.

Mu'ammar says, "I narrated some Hadith to Yahya ibn Kathir. He asked me to write for him the Hadith of so and so. 'We detest the writing of 'ilm.' I told him. He said to me, "Do write, for if you do not you would definitely lose it."[21]

Al-Mansur says, "I wish that I had written down the Ahadith…; I have forgotten as much as I now remember. Alas! Only if I had written them down! Now I remember only a half of what I have heard."[22]

Ibn Rushd writes, "Had the scholars not preserved knowledge through writing and had they not defined

the trustworthy from the untrustworthy, all knowledge would have been lost and there would have remained no trace of the Din, religion. May God give them the best of rewards".23 The commencement of the writing Hadith, despite the unfortunate delay, was a welcome development, even though it followed the narration of oral Hadith that tried to preserve the trustworthy and the otherwise.

Rashid Rida writes, "We are certain that we have forgotten and lost a great number of the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S). The scholars did not write down what they had heard. But that which was lost did not belong to the exegesis of the Quran nor was it related to religious matters."24

After admitting the fact of the loss of Ahadith, he tries to play down its significance in a mere conjecture that the amount of Hadith lost was not on the Quranic exegesis on religion's matters. Such a view is inadmissible. How is it possible that what is a Hadith, a form of the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) would not be part of religion? His statement affirms the fact that some of the Muslim sects do not possess all the teachings of the Prophet (S), as his Ahl al-Bayt (a.s) had presented.

Ibn 'Abd al-Birr writes, "Today no one is against the writing of Hadith. If no one would write down Hadith, a great amount of knowledge would be lost."25

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz said, "When I left Madinah I was the most knowledgeable of men, but on reaching Syria I forgot what I knew."26

Yazid ibn Harun has said, "I memorized three thousand Hadith from Yahya ibn Sa'id, but I forgot a half of them due to an illness."27

Ibn Rahewayh writes, "I remembered seventy thousand Hadith by heart and could recall one hundred thousand of them. Whatever would I hear I could commit it to memory. But after sometimes I forgot them."28

Al-Sha'bi has said, "Until now I have not written a single page, and until now no one has narrated a Hadith to me that I have not memorized it, and I disliked his reciting it to me twice. But I have forgotten a great amount of knowledge ('ilm), to the extent that it could make someone one a scholar in his own right."29

Ishaq ibn al-Mansur writes, "I asked Ahmad ibn Hanbal as to who disliked the writing down of 'ilm." He said that some detested it and some recommended it. I remarked that had 'ilm not been written down it would have been lost. He agreed, saying, 'Were it not for the writing down of 'ilm, we would have had no 'ilm today.'30

Ahmad ibn Hanbal has said, "Some people narrated Hadith to us from memory and some from their books. The Hadith of those who narrated from books was more precise."31 Ahmad himself never narrated Hadith except from a book.32

Ibn Salah writes, "Had Hadith not come to have been written down, all 'ilm would have disappeared in

the latter era."[33]

These statements are sufficient testimony to the loss of a great deal of Hadith.

2. The Spread of Lies

Another evil consequence of not writing down and documenting Hadith properly was the increase of fabricated Hadith. It was not possible to keep the orally transmitted Hadith in a precise, stable form. In the beginning, as is well known, even any attention was not paid to Sanad, chain of narrators, due to the general atmosphere of trust that prevailed. Now the scholars of Hadith, to escape the negative implications of this fact, state that fabricated Ahadith did not exist during the era of the Companions. But recent researches have proved that some individuals, like Abu-Hurayrah, did forge a large number of Hadith.[34]

Later on, there is no doubt, much effort was made to separate reliable from unreliable Hadith, but this was during a period when a considerable number of groups had emerged in the society along political and ideological lines. It was when even the criterion of what was trustworthy (Thiqah) could be variously interpreted. In such circumstances, it is obvious to what extent a correct evaluation of Hadith is possible and what kind of devastation it could cause in the system.

Writing on this topic, Abu Riyyah says, "When the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S) were left without being properly documented in a written form the Companions did not take any step to do so. It opened the door of narration for both the devote as well as the devious. The devious would narrate whatever they wished without any fear of anyone."[35]

Another author writes, "One of the causes of the emergence of the fabrication of Hadith was that Hadith had not been committed to writing and the Companions were satisfied with memorizing and narrating it orally."[36]

Abu al-'Abbas al-Hanbali (d.716/1316) in this regard writes, "One of the causes of the divergence of opinion among the 'ulama' is contradictory Hadith and texts. Some think that Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was responsible for it. The Companions asked his permission to write Hadith but he stopped them. It was in spite of knowing that the Prophet (S) had ordered the sermon delivered on the occasion of the last pilgrimage to be written down for Abu Shat and that he (S) had said, "preserve knowledge by means of writing."

Had every Companion written down what he had heard from the Prophet (S), the Sunnah would have been recorded with as short chain of narrators as only one link (in the chain of transmission)[37] between the Prophet (S) and (the next generation of) the Ummah.

It is interesting to note that Abu al-'Abbas had been accused of Rafd, rejection and Tashayyu', being a Shi'ah Muslim for this statement.

Abu Riyyah in another statement, where he appears to reject the belief that it was the Prophet (S) who imposed the prohibition on the writing of Hadith, says, “Would it be proper to think that the Prophet (S) might have neglected a half of what had been revealed to him?

How would he leave it unguarded in the memories of persons, of whom one would remember, another forget and yet another one would add to that which had remained undocumented properly…? Where was the kind of care that the Companions exercised in a similar case, the holy Quran? Why did they not write down Hadith as they wrote the holy Quran? Their negligence half of revelation remaining undocumented properly and they all are responsible for it.38

Ibrahim ibn Sa’d is explicit about the documentation of Hadith. He states, “Documentation of Hadith started when false and fabricated Hadith had spread noticeably. Had it not been for the Hadith which came to us from the east, we would not have written down a single Hadith, nor permitted it to be documented.”39

A similar statement is ascribed to Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. However, Hadith was documented in written form when it was already very late. How late it was can be inferred from the fact that Sahih al-Bukhari was selected out of seven hundred thousand Hadith and Abu Hanifah could accept only 150 out of a number of nearly one million Hadith.

3. The Narration of Meanings

One of the consequences of not documenting Hadith was that the actual words of Ahadith were generally forgotten and narration based upon meaning became a common practice. It is natural that one who had heard a Hadith twenty years ago could remember only its meaning to narrate it to others. Additions and deletions are also frequent in such case. Had Hadith been committed to writing from the beginning, the probability of such a hazard would have been of a much lower degree.

‘Imran ibn al-Husayn has said, “By God, had I wished I could narrate the Hadith of the holy Prophet (S) for two consecutive days, but what stopped me was that I saw those who heard as I had heard narrated Hadith in a form which it did not possess originally. I was afraid of also narrating Hadith in the same erroneous manner as they do although not intentionally.”40

Sufyan has said, “I heard through a certain chain of narration from Bara’ ibn ‘Azib from the holy Prophet (S), ‘I saw the holy Prophet (S) raised his two hands when starting the prayer. When I went to Kufa I observed that the narrator of Hadith, Ibn Abi Layla, added to the above Hadith the phrase, “Then he would not repeat it”. It seems that his memory was better when he was in Makkah. I was told that his memory had undergone changes.”41

Ibn al-Jawzi, in the biographical account of the narrators whose Ahadith contain fabrications, writes, “The first kind are those who under the influence of asceticism gradually neglected memorization as well as the classification of Hadith. There were also those who, in a faulty manner, narrated Hadith from their

memory after their books were lost, burnt or buried. These people sometimes would narrate a Mursal Hadith as Marfu', a Mawquf Hadith as Musnad, and sometimes insert one Hadith into another."[42]

4. The Divergence amongst Muslims

Another consequence of not documenting in written form of Hadith was the differences and divergence of legal opinion amongst the Muslims, to the extent that divergent Fatwas and beliefs, based on differing Ahadith, became a prevalent feature of the Muslim community. Following the early conquests Islam spread to new regions.

The Sahabah and the Tabi'un who dispersed in different directions, each of them carried with him only that portion of the Hadith of the holy Prophet (S) that he had heard from him (S) or his Companions. From Madinah, some of them went to Makkah and Yemen, some to Syria and Palestine, and some settled in the cities of Iraq, such as Kufa and Basrah.

As a result of this dispersion each of them adopted a legal approach that agreed with the Ahadith that he knew. Not knowing the Ahadith that others knew, each of them followed different and divergent Fatwas. When such divergence became public in the period of the Tabi'un, they began to journey to various cities, and this is how 'travelling in search for Hadith' (al-Rihlah fi Talab al-Hadith) came to be instituted. Most of these journeys occurred during the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, and even later.

The real cause for this was the dispersion of Hadith through the different cities and the itinerant scholars endeavored to bring about uniformity and unison between the Ahadith of various lands. Sometimes it was found out that a single Hadith had been narrated differently in different locations.

'Abdallah ibn Mubarak, we are told, traveled to Yemen, Egypt, Syria and Kufa to collect Hadith.[43] Abu Hatim al-Razi writes, "The first of my journeys in search for Hadith took seven years. I calculated that the distance that I had traveled on foot added up to about a thousand parsangs, a distance of about four miles. I kept on adding up in this way and would leave off when the distance reached a thousand parsangs.…Many a time I journeyed from Makkah to Madinah and from Syria to Egypt, from Egypt to Ramlah, from Ramlah to Bayt al-Maqdis, from there to 'Asqalan, Tabariyyah, Damascus and Hums.…[44]

Ibn Musayyab has said, "I have traveled for days and nights in search of a single Hadith.[45]"
These journey traditions were so widespread that al-Khatib compiled a whole work on this topic with the title "al-Rihlah fi Talab al-Hadith", journeys in search of Hadith, and al-Ramhurmuzi assigned a chapter of his book al-Muhaddith al-fadil to this topic.[46]

This traveling in search of Hadith became so important that Yahya ibn Mu'in had to say, "There are four kinds of persons who cannot be expected to attain any maturity. . . A man who remains in his hometown, writes Hadith therein without travelling to other cities in the search of Hadith."[47]

Such problems as these, which were a natural consequence of the failure to properly document Hadith,

did not occur in the case of the holy Quran. Had the Hadith of the Prophet (S) been committed to writing from the beginning, with the cooperation of all the Companions, all the various legal, even theological and political schools that emerged later would not have come into existence. Each of these schools based its beliefs on Ahadith. But how far were those Ahadith authentic? To what extent were they acceptable to others? To what extent others could accept their importance in cases where narration had been based on the narration of meaning? These were questions to which no answer existed.

Abu Zuhrah writes, "When 'Umar died and the Companions left for different towns, each of them founded a school of law for himself and each of them followed his own way. When the era of the Tabi'un arrived, every town had its own school of law whose views were as remote from another as the cities were remote from each others."48

Al-Mansur once told Malik ibn Anas of his intention to give a standard status to his works on Hadith called 'Muwatta'. He suggested to copy the book for every town and to order the people to teach only its contents and to refrain from referring to anything else (as legal authority). Malik had replied, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, do not do such a thing. These people have already their own beliefs on the basis of what they have heard and narrated of Hadith. Leave the people of every town alone with that which they have chosen for themselves."49

5. The Spread of Ra'y

Another negative consequence of the failure to document Hadith properly was the emergence and subsequent prevalence of the practice of Ra'y (analogy) among the Muslim scholars of Fiqh, because each of them had access only to some of the Ahadith, of which many were either lost or were inaccessible. The people pressed them to give Fatwas but they did not have adequate amount of Hadith available. They had to take recourse in Ra'y to answer the people. A number of them practiced Ra'y for lack of confidence in Ahadith, which was a natural result of the absence of a reliable and properly documented Hadith.

At times, in one city a Hukm, a ruling, was based on an available Hadith, while elsewhere the Hukm was based on analogical opinion. Unfortunately, after some time, the judgements based on analogy assumed legal authority for others, which also did not have access to reliable Hadith. They preferred to act according to the Ra'y of their predecessors instead of formulating their own analogical opinions or Fatwas. The prevalence of the practice of Ra'y to this extent amongst the Ahl al-Sunnah was due to the unavailability and inadequacy of Hadith, which in turn was due to the loss of a great number of the Ahadith of the Prophet (S).

The Prohibition on the Narration of Hadith

It was discussed above how documenting Hadith in writing was prohibited and what consequences resulted therefrom. In the following the discussion relates to the fact , as history reveals, that certain

people among the Companions had tried to even stop oral narration of Hadith. They prohibited documentation of Hadith under the pretext of safeguarding the holy Quran. They prohibited its oral narration also but under the pretext that the attention of the people should be focused mainly upon the holy Quran, as if their sole aim was to make Hadith appear as insignificant altogether. It is probable that political reasons may have been behind as the motive.

Qurrah ibn Ka'b has said, "We set out from Madinah to Iraq. 'Umar accompanied us to the out skirts of the city. He said, "Do you know why I have come?" "Perhaps you came to bid us farewell as Companions of the Prophet (S)" We replied. He said, "I have come to tell you that you should give greater exposure to the holy Quran and that you should narrate fewer Hadith of the holy Prophet (S). Now go, for I am your partner in this matter."

Qurzah has added in another Riwayah, " I was sitting amongst some people who reminded each other of Hadith. It appeared to me that I remembered more Ahadith than they did. But I kept my silence when I remembered 'Umar's advice."

In al-Dhahabi's narration, he is reported to have said, "When they asked me to narrate Hadith, I told them that 'Umar had prohibited me to do so."50

It has also been reported that when the Caliph sent Abu Musa al-'Ash'ari to Iraq, he told him, "Do not engage them in Ahadith. I am your partner in this affair."51

These Riwayah indicate that an attempt was made to stop the propagation of the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S) not merely its writing but also its narration in any form and manner.

Ibn 'Asakir has recorded the following statement of Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman.

By God, 'Umar did not die before he summoned the Companions of the holy Prophet (S), such as Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, Abu al-Darda', Abu Dharr, 'Aqabah ibn 'Amir and . . . He told them, "What are these Ahadith that you have spread all over the horizon?" They said, "Do you stop us from narrating Hadith?"52

According to a Riwayah recorded by al-Tabarani, Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman used to say, "'Umar summoned 'Abdallah ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Mas'ud al-'Ansari and Abu al-Darda'. He told them, "What are these Ahadith that you narrate so extensively from the Prophet (S)?" Then he detained them in Madinah until his own death."53

Obviously, these individuals were among the most well-known Companions of the holy Prophet (S). The Ahl al-Sunnah have no doubts about the veracity of such men as Hudhayfah, Abu al-Darda' and Ibn Mas'ud. 'Umar himself had so much regard for Ibn Mas'ud that while sending him to Iraq he wrote to the Iraqis, "I have preferred your benefit to my own by sending Ibn Mas'ud to you."54

Ibn Hazm has taken note of the seriousness of the charge against the Caliph, but, daring not criticize the

Caliph's act, he raises doubts about the veracity of the Riwayah. He has said, "This Hadith is Mursal, and doubtful on account of Shu'bah in the chain of narrators. It is not possibly to cite it as evidence." But we know that the Hadith has been narrated through several chains. In addition to this, Ibn Haytham, in Majma' al-Zaw'id vol. 1, p. 147, after classifying this Hadith as Sahih, writes, "This statement of 'Umar is Sahih (authentic) and it has been narrated through many chains of narrators."

However, Ibn Hazm, while examining this Hadith, has said, "This Riwayah is evidently false; should we accept it we must consider its speaker outside the pale of Islam, because his efforts were directed to the cover-up and negation of the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (S)."55

The author of al-Sunnah Qabl al-Tadwin writes, "The rationale that the detention (Habs) of the Sahabah (in Madinah) was on account of their prolific narration of Hadith, is not correct. Because Abu-Hurayrah was one of such individuals, yet he was not detained (by 'Umar)."56

The above statement is not true, because Abu-Hurayrah himself was one of those whom 'Umar had forbidden to narrate the Ahadith of the holy Prophet (S). Abu-Hurayrah complied with 'Umar's instructions and narrated fewer Hadith as long as the latter was alive.

Concluded, WA al-hamdu lil-Lah

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10. Taqyid al-'ilm, 51; Jami' bayan al-'ilm, I, 64; Kanz al-'ummal, V, 239.
11. Sunan al-Darimi, I, 124; Taqyid al-'ilm, 56; see also Taqyid al-'ilm, 57, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, I, 296.
12. Taqyid al 'ilm, 61; Jami' bayan al-'ilm, I, 65; Husn al-Tanbih, 92.
13. See Buhuth Ma'a Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Salafiyyah, 97; for the statement from Talmud, see al-Tafkir al-Dini 'ind al-

Yahud, p.79, from Talmud Hittin, 60 Bab Tamura, Bab 14; Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr says, “The number of Ahadith increasedduring ‘Umar’s rule. He ordered them to be brought to him and set them on fire, declaring, “No Mishnat like Mishnat of Ahl al-Kitab.” See al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, V, 188.

14. Gharib al-Hadith, IV, 282.

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16. Although some of the compilers began their works of compilation during the 2nd/8th century, the dates of their death occur generally in the 3rd/9th century.

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18. Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, V, 141. Jami’ bayan al-‘ilm, I, 81.

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48. Al-Rihlah fi Talab al-Hadith, 89; see Fath al-Bari, I, 158, 169; Jami’ bayan al-‘ilm, I, 111, 113, al-Mujrahun, I, 57; Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, I, 108; al-Muhaddith al-Fadil, 215, 223.

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