

Part 2:
The Nature of Revelation

Kitāb ut-Tawḥeed
(The Book of Monotheism)

By Professor Muḥammad ibn Abdullah al-Mas'ari

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20. A brief overview of the period of ‘Sunnah recordation’

At this juncture, it is necessary to provide an overview of how the Prophetic *Sunnah* was recorded and documented. A great many people, including amongst ‘intellectual’ elites are surprisingly unaware of this. What has not helped this situation has been the pseudo-intellectualism of the Orientalists as well as their imitators, such as the ‘Qur’ānists’ – those who would reject the *Sunnah* in its entirety as a matter of course, arguing that it is completely fabricated. Many of these groups have misconstrued and misunderstood the words and indeed the terminology which appear in the corpus of *aḥādith* as utilised by the *muḥadditheen* (scholars / collectors of *ḥadith*). Commonly, the terms ‘narrated to us’ and ‘narrated to me’ (حدثنا ، حدثني) have been misunderstood to construe that the Prophetic *Sunnah* was *only* reported orally, with no accompanying written record, *until* the time when Imām Mālik composed the *Muwattā’*, thereby ushering in the era which has been termed - ‘documenting the *Sunnah*.’ In tandem with this, the narrative also notes that this was the time when the two Ḥammād’s; the two Sufyān’s, Sa’eed ibn Abi ‘Aruba, Ma’mar bin Rāshid and other than them, put their respective *Sunan* collections into public circulation. All of this was against the backdrop of the insistence from the then ‘Abbāsi *Khaleefah*, Abu Ja’far al-Manṣūr. Most who cite this narrative rely upon the events as detailed in the work of history composed by Imām aṭ-Ṭabari.

Yet the difficulty with this narrative and the claims of the Orientalists, is that it is baseless and without substantive foundation. Preservation of the Prophetic *Sunnah*, in writing specifically, began *during the era of the Prophet* (peace be upon him). The detailed writings of the Prophet’s companions will be considered shortly. Suffice is to say that it is an acknowledged fact that almost all companions had their own manuscripts during the era of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Not only were these in relation to the Qur’ān, which was being revealed, but also covered the Prophetic *aḥādith*, which was preserved by writing. These manuscripts were reviewed, updated and revised as a matter of course during the period of revelation.

As has been reported by al-Rāmḥurmuzi in *al-Muḥadith al-Fāṣil bayn ar-Rāwi wal’Wā’ee*, with an *isnād* that is *ḥasan*:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى الْمَرْوَزِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَاصِمُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يَحْيَى بْنِ طَلْحَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو قَالَ: كَانَ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، نَاسٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ وَأَنَا مَعَهُمْ وَأَنَا أَصْغَرُ الْقَوْمِ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُنْعَمًا فَلْيَنْتَبِئُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ؛ فَلَمَّا خَرَجَ الْقَوْمُ قُلْتُ لَهُمْ: كَيْفَ تُحَدِّثُونَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَقَدْ سَمِعْتُمْ مَا قَالَ، وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْهَمُونَ فِي الْحَدِيثِ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ؟ قَالَ: فَضَحِكُوا، وَقَالُوا: يَا ابْنَ أَخِيْنَا، إِنَّ كُلَّ مَا سَمِعْنَا مِنْهُ فَهُوَ عِنْدَنَا فِي كِتَابٍ

Muhammad bin Yahya al-Marwazi narrated to us 'Aāsim bin Ali narrated to us Ishāq bin Yahya bin Ṭalḥa bin 'Ubaidallah narrated to us from Mujāhid from Abdullah bin 'Amr he said: When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), people from his companions and I (were) with them and I, less among the people. So the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *Whoever tells lies about me deliberately, let him take his place in hell.* When the people came out I told them – how do you narrate from the Messenger (peace be upon him)? Have you heard what he said and you are all insatiable in *ḥadith* from the Prophet (peace be upon him)? In reply – they laughed and they said oh son of our brother! All that we have heard from him, it is (taken from) the book.

I would submit - Muhammad bin Yahya al-Marwazi is most probably Muhammad bin Yahya bin Sulaymān al-Marwazi, Abu Bakr al-Warrāq. He resided in Baghdad, being a companion of Abu 'Ubaid. He is trustworthy and studied from scholars of Imām an-Nasā'i. He died in the year 298 AH. Similar is reported in *Taqreeb at-Tahzeeb* of Ibn Ḥajar.¹

It may also be that Muhammad bin Yahya bin Khālid al-Marwazi, Abu Yahya al-Masha'rāni is also *thiqa* – as per what is in *Taqreeb at-Tahzeeb*.² But according to the majority, (he is) weak upon the (view of) Ishāq bin Yahya bin Ṭalḥa bin 'Ubaidallah at-Taymi. But Imām Bukhāri said: '(he is) a mountain of memorisation; Imām of the world and leader of moderation,' in the book of *dua'fā'* of Bukhāri;³ 'Speaks (from his) memorisation; write his *ḥadith*.' And he also says to reiterate – '(There is) concern (about) some things, however he is trustworthy.' And Ya'qub ibn Shayba said: 'There is nothing untoward with him (*la ba'sa bihi*) and his *ḥadith* are very vexatious (*muḍṭarib*).' Al-Ḥāfiẓ Muhammad bin Abdallah bin 'Aāmar al-Mawṣili (Abu Ya'la) said: 'Righteous, valid (*Ṣāliḥ*).' All of this is from *Tahzeeb at-Tahzeeb*.⁴ Writing in his famous work *ath-Thiqāt*,⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān said: 'Mistaken in (some) matters. We may have introduced Ishāq bin Yahya, this in the weak ones (*aḍ-ḍua'fā'*). What was in it or giving the impression that (he) reported it. If the *ijtihād* led to leaving him what didn't pursue from him, he is worthy of inclusion in the *thiqāt* (trustworthy narrators) after that...'

The aforementioned report, appears to have been the motivation behind Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aāṣ (may Allah be pleased with him) composition of his famous pamphlet which was entitled '*aṣ-Ṣādiqa*.' This pamphlet included about a thousand *aḥādith* that he heard directly

¹ *Taqreeb at-Tahzeeb* Vol. 1 sec. 512, n. 6,385

² *Ibid.* no. 6,383

³ *Kitāb aḍ-ḍua'fā'* Vol. 1 sec. 17, n. 21

⁴ *Tahzeeb at-Tahzeeb* Vol. 1 sec. 222, n. 479

⁵ *ath-Thiqāt* Vol. 6 sec. 45, n. 6,652

from the Prophet (peace be upon him). So guarded was this work of Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, he kept it in a closed box which only he accessed. It was only brought forth in order to make revisions and / or to dictate to his students. Indeed, Abdullah ibn ‘Amr utilised the written work during study-circles where he would dictate to his students. Use of the pamphlet was regular, since Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) held many scholarly circles. In fact one of his renowned students, Ḥussein bin Shafī bin Māti’ al-Aṣḥāḥi in Egypt, copied this work into two books or volumes, one of which was dedicated to the rulings given by the Prophet (peace be upon him). The work was formatted in the manner of ‘Judgements – concerning this and that; and he said this in relation to this matter’ and ‘What events will occur up to the day of judgement.’ His children and grandsons inherited that pamphlet. The Quraysh had previously objected to his writing and his consultation with the Prophet (peace be upon him) over the issue. However, the Prophet approved to him that he can write and record what he hears. A number of proofs exist to substantiate these points. For example, the following has been reported by al-Rāmḥurmuzi in *al-Muḥadith al-Fāṣil*:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ غَنَمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ حَكِيمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شَرِيكٌ، عَنْ لَيْثٍ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو قَالَ: مَا يُرْغَبُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ إِلَّا خَصْلَتَانِ؛ الْوَهْطُ، وَالصَّادِقَةُ. صَحِيفَةٌ كُنْتُ اسْتَأْذَنْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، أَنْ أَكْتُبَهَا عَنْهُ فَكَتَبْتُهَا وَهِيَ الصَّادِقَةُ

Abdullah bin Ghanām narrated to us Ali bin Ḥakeem narrated to us Shareek narrated to us from Layth from Mujāhid from Abdallah bin ‘Amr he said: What do you wish in this life except these two qualities – *al-Waḥṭ* (a land near Ṭā’if) and *as-Sādiqa*? I asked the permission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding the *Ṣaḥīfa*, that I could write it and have it as a book and it is *as-Sādiqa*.

Also cited in the same work there are another three channels of note:

حَدَّثَنِي عُمَرُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ جُبَيْرِ الْوَاسِطِيِّ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَيْسَى الْعَطَّارُ، حَدَّثَنَا عَاصِمُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يَحْيَى بْنِ طَلْحَةَ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ قَالَ: رَأَيْتُ عِنْدَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو صَحِيفَةً، فَذَهَبْتُ أَتَّأَوَّلُهَا فَقَالَ: (مَهْ يَا غُلَامَ بَنِي مَحْزُومٍ قُلْتُ: مَا كُنْتُ تَمَنَعْنِي شَيْئًا قَالَ: (هَذِهِ الصَّادِقَةُ، فِيهَا مَا سَمِعْتُهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، لَيْسَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ فِيهَا أَحَدٌ

Umar bin al-Ḥasan bin Jubayr al-Wāsiṭi narrated to me Muḥammad bin Esa al-‘Aṭār narrated to us ‘Aāsīm bin Ali narrated to us Ishāq bin Yahya bin Ṭalḥa narrated to us from Mujāhid he said: I saw Abdallah bin ‘Amr with *Ṣaḥīfa*. So I went to obtain it. He replied – Stop oh you (young) lad from Bani Maḥzoom. I said what (is the reason) you are preventing me from something? He said: This is *as-Sādiqa*, in it is what I heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him); there isn’t anyone in it between me and between him.

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَضْرَمِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ بْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، عَنْ عَمْرٍو، عَنْ وَهْبِ بْنِ مُنْبِهِ، عَنْ أَخِيهِ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ يَقُولُ: مَا أَحَدٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ مُحَمَّدٍ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، أَكْثَرَ حَدِيثًا مِنِّي، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، إِلَّا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ يَكْتُبُ، وَأَنَا لَا أَكْتُبُ

Al-Ḥaḍrami narrated to us Abdallah bin Umar narrated to us Sufyān bin 'Uyayna narrated to us from 'Amr from Wahb bin Munabbih from his brother he said: I heard Abu Hurayrah say – Indeed, is there one of the companions of Muḥammad (peace be upon him) (who) has more *ḥadīth* from the Prophet (peace be upon him) except Abdullah bin 'Amr? Indeed, he was writing while I didn't write.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْخَطَّابِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْأَعْلَى، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ شُعَيْبٍ، عَنْ الْمُغِيرَةَ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: كُنْتُ أَعْيُ بِقَلْبِي، وَكَانَ هُوَ يَعِي بِقَلْبِهِ، وَيَكْتُبُ بِيَدِهِ بَعْنِي: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو

Muḥammad bin Ya'qub narrated to us Abul-Khaṭṭāb narrated to us Abdul 'Alā narrated to us Muḥammad bin Ishāq narrated to us from 'Amr bin Shu'ayb from al-Mughira bin Ḥakeem from Abu Hurayrah he said: I was aware of my heart and he is aware of his heart, and he writes with his hand, that is to say – Abdullah ibn 'Amr.

The famous *litterateur* Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) was diligent in the recordation of knowledge and its preservation by writing. After the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him) Ibn 'Abbās made extensive enquires to the companions and wrote a considerable amount of material, to the extent that he had them carried by camel. His books were preserved and it is reliably trustworthy. Confirmation of this written material which Ibn 'Abbās had, has reached us via several reports. One of which, with an authentic *isnād*, is contained in *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra* of Ibn Sa'd:

أَخْبَرَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ يُونُسَ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرٌ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ عُقَيْبَةَ قَالَ: وَضَعَ عِنْدَنَا كُرْبُيبٌ جَمَلٌ بَعِيرٍ أَوْ عَدَلٌ بَعِيرٍ مِنْ كُتُبِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ. قَالَ: فَكَانَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ إِذَا أَرَادَ الْكِتَابَ كَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ: ابْعَثْ إِلَيَّ بِصَحِيفَةٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا. قَالَ: فَيَنْسُخُهَا، فَيَبْعَثُ إِلَيْهِ بِأَحَدَاهِمَا

Aḥmad ibn Abdullah bin Yunus reported to us he said Zuhayr narrated to us he said Musa bin 'Uqba narrated to us he said, Kurayb (ibn Muslim) deposited with us a camel's loan of the books of Ibn 'Abbās. When his own son Ali ibn Abdallah ibn 'Abbās wanted a book, he wrote to Kurayb saying – search amongst the *Ṣaḥīfa* (for) this and this. He said: copy / transcribe it and send to him one of the two copies (i.e. the original or copy).

Similar has also been reported in *Tārikh al-Kabir* of Ibn Abu Khaythama and *Taqayyad al-'Ilm* of Khaṭṭeab Baghdadi, with the following transmission channel – 'Abul'Ḥasan Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Razqwehi reported to us 'Uthmān bin Aḥmad ad-Daqqāq reported to us Ḥanbal bin Ishāq narrated to us Aḥmad bin Yunus narrated to us.' Imām Bayhaqy also reports this in *Sunan al-Kubra* via the channel of – 'Abul'Ḥusein reported to us Abu 'Amr reported to us Ḥanbal narrated to us Aḥmad bin Yunus narrated to us.'

It is also noteworthy that the book of Abdullah ibn 'Abbās was well known, copied, put into public circulation and read during his lifetime, as mentioned in the weak tradition recorded in the *Sunan* of Imām Tirmidhi:

حدثنا سويد بن نصر، حدثنا علي بن الحسين بن واقد، عن أبي عصمة، عن يزيد النحوي، عن عكرمة: أن نفرا قدموا على ابن عباس من أهل الطائف، يكتبون من كتبه، فجعل يقرأ عليهم، فيقدم، ويؤخر، فقال: إني بليت بهذه المصيبة، فاقروا علي، فإن إقراري به كفرائي عليكم

Suwayd bin Naṣr narrated to us Ali bin al-Ḥussein bin Wāqid narrated to us from Abu Uṣama from Yazeed an-Naḥwe from 'Ikrima: some people from Tā'if came to Ibn 'Abbās with books (taken / copied) from his books. When he began to read the books in front of them he would lose his place. So he said – 'I have been tested with this calamity (short-sightedness or blindness), so read in front of me and my agreeing to what you read is just like my reading it out to you.'

From the above it can be discerned that the books of Abdullah ibn 'Abbās were many. It would be incredulous to claim that these books would be devoid of Prophetic *aḥādith*. Rather, these must have been the substantive core of the books. Moreover, Abdullah ibn Ma'sud bequeathed written material to his children and students, as reported from Mis'ar from Ma'n who said: 'Go out to Abdar-Raḥman bin Abdullah bin Mas'ud, I swear that the book is composed by his father's hand.'

Furthermore, there are several pamphlets, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) dictated to more than one of his administrative officials, when appointing them as governors, judges or tax collectors in the remote outer regions of Islamic lands. Usually this included important rulings related to *zakāt*, as well as matters concerning general behaviour or mannerisms; rulings in relation to blood-money as well as general commands and directives. Some of these include the following:

- ❖ The *Ṣaḥīfa* of 'Amr bin Ḥazm al-Anṣāry (may Allah be pleased with him), who was appointed as governor over the people of Najrān
- ❖ The book of al-'Alā bin al-Ḥaḍrami when he was sent to al-Mundhur bin Sāwi. 'Alā said: 'Write for me oh Messenger of Allah a book, I can take with me.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) wrote to him detailing obligations, what can be levied on livestock as well as rulings on gold and silver.
- ❖ The book of Wā'el bin Ḥujr bin Sa'eed bin Masrooq, Abu Haneeda al-Ḥaḍrami al-Kindi. He was one of the kings of Yemen. The Prophet (peace be upon him) wrote to him for 'the people of Wā'el bin Ḥujr in Ḥaḍramawt.' Contained within this major work, were the parameters of Islam and the details of *zakāt*; the lawful punishment for *zinā*, the prohibition of alcohol and that every intoxicant is prohibited.
- ❖ The *Ṣaḥīfa* of Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) when he was utilised to collect the *zakāt* from the people of Baḥrain by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). This same document was also utilised under the *Khilafah* of Abu Bakr.
- ❖ A copy of the *Ṣaḥīfa* was commissioned by Abu Bakr from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and contained the stamp of the noble Prophetic seal. Many letters and correspondence were also made during this time. There were other books held by Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him), within them *aḥādith* which he directly wrote from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and confirmed with him. This

'presentation' to the Shaykh is reading, in other words, reading back what he had recorded from these *ḥadīth* and confirming them to the Shaykh himself. This was done to ensure the validity and accuracy of what had been dictated.

Next, the following has been reported in *Tārikh al-Wāsiṭ* with a good *isnād*:

حدثنا العباس بن الوليد بن مزيد، قال: حدثنا أبو شعيب (وهو محمد بن شعيب بن شاذان الدمشقي)، قال: حدثنا عتبة بن أبي حكيم عن هبيرة بن عبد الرحمن (وهو أبو عمر بن هبيرة) قال: كان أنس بن مالك إذا حدث وكثر عليه الناس جاء يكتب فألقاها، ثم قال: (هذه أحاديث سمعتها من رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم، وكتبتها عن رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم، وعرضتها عليه

Al-'Abbās bin al-Waleed bin Mazeed narrated to us he said Abu Shu'ayb (and he is Muḥammad bin Shu'ayb bin Shābur ad-Dimishqi) narrated to us he said 'Utba bin Abu al-Ḥakim narrated to us from Hubayra bin Abdar-Raḥman (and he is Abu Umar bin Hubayra) he said (once it) occurred that Anas bin Mālik was taking audience and many people came to write from him. Then he said: This is the *aḥādīth* I heard them from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and I wrote them from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and presented them before him.

A shorter version of the aforementioned narration is contained within *al-Muḥadīth al-Fāṣl* of al-Rāmḥurmuzi:

حدثنا الحضرمي، حدثنا محمد بن حنان الحمصي، حدثنا بقة بن الوليد، عن عتبة بن أبي حكيم، عن هبيرة بن عبد الرحمن قال: كنا إذا أكثرنا على أنس بن مالك ألقى إلينا مخلاة فقال: هذه أحاديث كتبتها عن رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم

Al-Ḥaḍrami narrated to us Muḥammad bin Ḥanān al-Ḥimṣi narrated to us Baqiya bin al-Waleed narrated to us from 'Uqba bin Abi Ḥakeem from Hubayra bin Abdar-Raḥman he said – When we used to press much, Anas would take out note-books and say – These are the *aḥādīth* I wrote from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Imām Bukhāri has substantiated this narration by way of comment on the narrator Hubayra bin Abdar-Raḥman in his *al-Tārikh al-Kabir*. He writes: 'Hubayra bin Abdar-Raḥman said - When we attended upon Anas bin Mālik he delivered to us from a record and said - This is the *aḥādīth* which I wrote from the Messenger (peace be upon him) then I presented them to him.' Moreover, this is also reported in the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim:

حدثنا أبو العباس محمد بن يعقوب، أنبأ العباس بن الوليد بن مزيد البيروتي، حدثنا محمد بن شعيب بن شاذان، حدثني عتبة بن أبي حكيم، عن معبد بن هلال، قال: كنا إذا أكثرنا على أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه أخرج إلينا مجالاً عنده، فقال: هذه سمعتها من النبي، صلى الله عليه وسلم، فكتبتها وعرضتها عليه

Abul-'Abbās Muḥammad bin Ya'qub narrated to us al-'Abbās bin al-Waleed bin Mazeed

al-Bayrooti reports: Muḥammad bin Shu'ayb bin Shāboor narrated to us 'Utba bin Abi Hakeem narrated to me from Ma'bad bin Hilāl he said: When we used to press much (during attendance) upon Anas bin Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him), he came out to us from an area and he said – this is what I heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and I wrote it and presented it to him.

The aforementioned channel comes via Ma'bad bin Hilāl. It may have been that 'Utba bin Abi Hakeem heard from both Hubayra bin Abdar-Raḥman and Ma'bad bin Hilāl. In any event, it doesn't make sense to say as adh-Dhahabi said – '*ḥadith munkar*' after seeking to correct Bukhāri.

To add to the above, there is also the *Ṣaḥīfa* of the Imām of guidance and leader of the believers, namely Ali bin Abi Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him). He guarded and preserved this, keeping it within the sheath of his sword. This particular pamphlet included a number of important rulings, covering issues of *zakāt*, constitutional rules as well as some of the famous constitutional principles which were extracted from the constitution of Medina. More has been detailed on this point in our specialist work – *Obedience to the Rulers: Its Principles and Limits*. Furthermore, it also had an important comprehensive corpus concerning charity as has been reported from Ibn Ḥanafiya, in other words, Muḥammad bin Ali bin Abi Ṭālib; he said: 'Take this book and go with it to 'Uthmān, for verily it contains the orders of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with regards to charity (*ṣadaqa*).' That point is also elaborated in our work, *Obedience to the Rulers* as is the matter of the Constitution of Medina, which is a matter of paramount importance.

When the famous scholar of Islam and its premier narrator Abu Hurayrah Abdur-Raḥman Sakhr (may Allah be pleased with him) returned from Baḥrain, where he had been appointed to take care of some works as an assistant to its governor, al-'Alā bin al-Ḥaḍrami, he had to provide a detailed account to the ruler of Medina and leader of all believers, Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb. It was well known that Umar was meticulous in scrutinising the actions of all public officials and Abu Hurayrah was no exception to this. So meticulous was this process of accountability, it even resulted in Abu Hurayrah being subject to a beating and having his wealth confiscated. A separate section has been prepared solely to detail this incident.⁶ Following this incident, Abu Hurayrah retired from public office altogether. He turned his attention to scholarship, learning to read and write till he was proficient in both. He memorised the glorious Qur'ān, wrote his memorised materials from the Prophet (peace be upon him), which were in the region of four-thousand *aḥādith*. Thereafter, he devoted a part of every night to revise and commit them well to his memory till the end of his life. On rare occasions, he would use these written manuscripts to refresh his memory. One can therefore see that the use of written materials was prominent, even in the earliest epoch of Islam, in this specific incidence, within ten-years following receipt from the Prophetic source.

There is also the *Ṣaḥīfa* of Jābir bin Abdullah al-Anṣāry, which is famous, containing

⁶ The section entitled 'The beating of Abu Hurayrah and confiscation of his wealth' is included in a separate appendix to the Arabic edition.

almost five-hundred *aḥādith* of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Although, it has not been ascertained with any degree of certitude whether he wrote them in the same direct manner from the Prophet (peace be upon him) like Abdullah ibn 'Amr and Anas bin Mālik did, or whether this was composed from memory after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which is similar to Abu Hurayrah. It has been reported that he also had another book regarding *Ḥajj*, which carried the name 'The Smaller Rites (or rituals)' (*al-manasik al-ṣagheer*) as supported by the famous long *ḥadith* which has been reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām Muslim.

Other than what has been detailed above, it is known that there were other works in existence, other *Ṣaḥīfa*'s and books, by other companions such as Sa'd bin 'Ubāda al-Anṣārī who had a book or books of *ḥadith* taken from the Prophet (peace be upon him), as cited by Imām Bukhārī, which goes on to explain that this *Ṣaḥīfa* was a copy of another *Ṣaḥīfa* which was held by Abdallah bin Abi 'Aufa. Again he had written these *aḥādith* by his own hand.

There is also Abu Rāfi who was the *mawla* of the Prophet (peace be upon him). People gathered collectively to read upon him from his dictated collections. Within the book was recorded the supplication at the start of the prayer, as well as tribute paid to Abu Bakr bin Abdar-Raḥman al-Ḥārith, one of the seven-renowned jurists of Medina. Asmā' bint 'Umays had a book which contained within it a collection of some *aḥādith*. There was also the book found in the sheath of the sword which belonged to Muḥammad bin Maslama al-Anṣārī when he died; it began 'In the name of Allah ar-Raḥman ar-Raḥeem, I heard that the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying *Verily your Lord in the end of your epoch...*' And also there was what was written by Subaya' al-Aslamiya to Abdallah bin 'Utba reporting from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he ordered her with *nikāḥ* shortly after her husband's death after he developed; and a lot other than this.

This is some of what has been written from the corpus of the noble Prophetic *aḥādith*, immediately during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or within a short period after his passing from this world. These *aḥādith* being directly taken from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and as has been seen, read-back and confirmed with him. Taken in the round, it is arguable that more than half of the entire corpus of *aḥādith* which we currently possess today was recorded in this manner as detailed above. Memorisation and oral transmission was dominant at the time of the Companions, and this is the case for those who lived through paganism and Islam and those who missed the honour of companionship, but lived through both the Islamic and pre-Islamic epoch (*mukhadrameen*). It is the same for the first class of the reporters after the companions; i.e. the great successors (*Kibār at-Tābi'een*). Many of this class used to deliver their narrations on special occasions as well as providing comment upon great events and delivering legal judgements. In addition to this, they would narrate both from memory and by way of dictation from written material in the many study circles and other gatherings of knowledge, designated to learning and disseminating the Prophet's *aḥādith*, much the same as was done at that earlier stage in the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

As has been attested from the writing of Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aāṣ, the companions took turn in attendance at the Prophet's *ḥalaqa* where he would teach. We know of Umar bin

al-Khattāb rotating his attendance with that of Abdullah ibn ‘Amr. Some companions would be in attendance in the morning, others would be in attendance to learn later in the day or evening. Each taking it in turn to attend at the classes delivered by the Prophet (peace be upon him). The subsequent *halaqa*’s of the leading companions such as Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aās, Ibn Mas’ud, Ibn ‘Abbās and other then them continued also in the same vein. Moreover, teaching and delivering knowledge by way of designated *halaqa*, special seminars, and assemblies dedicated to narrating / dictating *aḥādith*, where the teacher would dictate to the students and / or the students would read back to the teacher, was a common feature which the *Ṣaḥabah* bequeathed to subsequent generations. They in turn, continued in this manner. Indeed, every scholar and student of knowledge utilised written manuscripts for the dispensation of knowledge. Sessions were characterised by the dictation from the teacher (Shaykh) to his students; or the reading of a student (who would be an excellent orator and narrator) back to the teacher, while the teacher checks what is being read either by way of memory or against his own manuscript. Each of the other students in attendance would not be sitting idly, but rather also dictating what is being read. Transmission of *aḥādith* took this format and was a noted feature amongst the senior and junior *Tābi’een*.

An illustrative example of this is that of the great scholar of *ḥadith*, Imām Muḥammad ibn Shihāb az-Zuhri. He had a large personal library that was transported on camels for him. Az-Zuhri was one of the class of the junior *Tābi’een* (which is the class that learned from some of the companions, who lived longer and died latest). He always used to revise his books whenever he was alone, to the extent that his wife became bored with that, and made a statement to the effect that those books were harder on her than her co-wives!

Another example which can be gleaned is that of the major figure of *ḥadith*, Abdal-Aziz bin Marwān, as reported by Ibn Sa’d in *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra*:

كثيرُ بنُ مرةَ الحَضْرَمِيُّ، ويكنى أبا شجرة. وكان ثقة: قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ صَالِحٍ عَنِ اللَّيْثِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي
يَزِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي حَبِيبٍ أَنَّ عَبْدَ الْعَزِيزِ بْنَ مَرْوَانَ كَتَبَ إِلَيَّ كَثِيرُ بْنُ مَرْوَةَ الْحَضْرَمِيِّ. وَكَانَ قَدْ أَدْرَكَ بِحُمْصَ سَبْعِينَ
بَدْرِيًّا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، (قَالَ لَيْثٌ: وَكَانَ يُسَمَّى الْجُنْدَ الْمُقَدَّم). قَالَ: فَكَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ
يَكْتُبَ إِلَيْهِ بِمَا سَمِعَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، مِنْ أَحَادِيثِهِمْ، إِلَّا حَدِيثَ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ فَإِنَّهُ
عِنْدَنَا

Kathir bin Murra al-Ḥaḍarami and (his) *kunya* Abu Shajara. And he was trustworthy (*thiqa*). Abdallah bin Ṣāliḥ said from al-Layth bin Sa’d – Yazeed bin Abi Ḥabeeb narrated to me that Abdal-Aziz bin Marwān wrote to Kathir bin Murra al-Ḥaḍarami he had seen in Ḥimṣ seventy Badri companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Layth said – it was called the ‘veteran soldiers’. He said: he wrote to him that - write what you hear from the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from their *aḥādith*, except the *ḥadith* of Abu Hurayrah, since we have them.

The just and arguably *Rāshid Khaleefa*, Umar bin Abdal-Aziz ibn Marwān (may Allah be pleased with him) was also a prominent trustworthy narrator. He began the collection and writing of *aḥādith* in a comprehensive manner; this was formally done given his status as ruler

of Islamic lands. Specifically, he reported the *ḥadīth* of Amr bin Abdal-Raḥman which was the channel of narration to the mother of the believers, 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). He ordered the judge of Medina, Abu Bakr bin Muḥammad bin Amr bin Ḥazm (who was the grandson of the aforementioned Amr bin Ḥazm, governor of the Prophet for the region of Najrān) to undertake this mission. Abu Bakr was from amongst the prominent *Tābi'een*, being an Imām of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as well as *ḥadīth* and established as a *thiqa* (trustworthy) narrator himself. It is arguable he had inherited his father's collection and manuscripts. All of this took place roughly around the year 100 AH.

The following generations of major, middle and lower-order *Tābi'een*, continued with this method, progressing to the point where they made the narration of *aḥādīth* into an actual academic subject or as some would say, a science. Gatherings dedicated to narrating and dictating *aḥādīth* had their own particular etiquettes, procedures, and even records of attendance. These can still be accessed in the (former) great centres of Islamic learning. The notion of 'spontaneous narration' waned considerably. The idea that *ḥadīth* were simply narrated by wise old men, story-tellers and preachers at Friday prayers are something of a misnomer; in fact the stringent protocols underpinning the science of *ḥadīth*, made such instances incredibly rare.

Given what has been expounded on this topic thus far, one may credibly ask, what the actual meaning of the term – '*Aṣr at-Tadween* (Era of documentation of the *Sunnah*) – refers to? Discerning the meaning of this can be made easier by replacing this with its correct terminology, which is the 'the Era of Publication' or '*Aṣr an-Nashr wal-Warrāqeen*. To clarify the matter further, we would say that by the end of the first-Islamic century and at the beginning of the second, paper had become more widespread and available. The industry in paper in the Muslim world emanated from Samarkand in Central Asia, in turn, originating from China.

By the middle of the second Islamic century and the consolidation of 'Abbāsīd rule, the paper industry grew considerably, spreading throughout the Muslim world. High quality paper was for the first time available at reasonably low prices. Publishing books became much easier and with this grew the sale of books, which the mass public began to consume. Books of poetry, literature and Arabic language spread widely, as did the writings of Ibn Al-Muqaffa', the translations of *Kaleela and Dimnah*, and many other literary works from Persia and as far afield as India. Therefore, the profession of publishing appeared. The publisher, *Al-Warrāq*, was a person who hired a large number of scribes, copyists and sub-editors and the like, to prepare books *en-masse* for publication and sale. Thus the *Warrāq* was not merely a publisher, but also a printer and a literary agent in the modern sense of the term. With this literary revolution engulfing the Islamic world, scholars of *ḥadīth* did not, at least initially, give approval to the publication of such materials. Though the production of the *Warrāq* was of high quality with few mistakes, it was to able to reach the level of authentication required by the growing *ḥadīth* science. Scholars still preferred to obtain material in the 'traditional' manner, through attendance upon a Shaykh and recording by dictation and / or presentation. They feared that the strict principles of narration via transmission be lost and that the distorted or forged versions would spread as happened with the people of the previous two books; namely the Jews and Christians. Yet Abu Ja'far Al-Manṣūr was not convinced and insisted that

common Muslims, who were not dedicated to studying *ḥadīth* sciences had the right to see the truth of Prophetic *ḥadīth* themselves and have such books and libraries in their own houses.

As for students of knowledge, their Imām's, scholars of *ḥadīth* placed a premium upon receipt of authentic reliable transmission in a direct manner. However, they were also able to continue with this while correct versions which were obtained from the *Warrāq* and utilising this material either by reading or by presenting them to their qualified teachers. I would submit that history has shown that the *Ameer al-Mu'mineen* Abu Ja'far was correct in his policy. The rigorous discipline of *ḥadīth* narration and transmission, with its associated dedicated gatherings continued for several centuries and was not undermined by the widespread dissemination of books. Indeed, its actuality, it worked in tandem with it. In the first wave of publication, came the *Muwattā'* of Imām Mālik, the works of the two Sufyāns – Sufyān ath-Thawri and Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna. There was also the works of the two Ḥammāds, Ḥammād ibn Zayd and Ḥammād ibn Salamah and that of Sa'eed ibn Abi Aruba. All of these works were compiled and put into public circulation by around 145 AH. Following this, we may note a further three distinct 'waves' of publication:

- *Second wave* - saw the publication of the *Muṣṣanaḥ* of Abdar-Razzāq; *Sunan* Ḥumaydi, the *Musnad* of aṭ-Ṭayālisi, the works of al-Wāqidi and many others. We may posit a nominal date-marker for the second wave as being 190 AH.
- *Third wave* – included all the famous books carrying the titles of *Musnad* and *Al-Jāmi*, such as the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal; *Musnad* Ishāq bin Rāhawayh; *Muṣṣanaḥ* Ibn Abi Shayba, *Sunan* Sa'eed bin Mansūr, the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, the *Sunan* of ad-Dārimi and many others. Again, the nominal date-marker for this wave is 220 AH.
- *Fourth wave* – the nominal date-marker for this wave is 250 AH. Within this phase came the blessed books of *Ṣaḥīḥ* by Imām Bukhāri and Muslim. With them, albeit slightly after, were the famous *Sunan* works from Abu Dāwud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah. There was also the *Musnad* of Baqi bin Makhlad in Spain; the *Musnad* of Abu Ya'la and al-Bazzār as well as the *Sunan* of Imām Nasā'i. By this juncture, the collection and compilation of the Prophetic *ḥadīth* was by and large assembled and disseminated.
- *Fifth wave* – what was left over from the preceding compilations became featured in later works. During this era, the large collections of Ṭabarāni appeared; there was also the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Hibbān, *Sunan* Dāraquṭni, and the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim. Another feature were books about narrators, which also contained full channels of narration and *isnād*, such as *Al-Kāmil fi aḍ-Ḍua'fā'* (compendium of weak narrators) and that of Ibn 'Aḍy as well as others. Most of these books and compilations became widespread. Any mistakes made by scribes and copyists which were contained therein were not of any major import, any attempts at deliberate falsification were thus detected. It would be absurd to suggest that widespread and deliberate forgeries could easily creep into this corpus.

Notwithstanding the above, a very small number of *aḥādith* and a minority of alternate channels for better known *ḥadith* could be identified in books of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *uṣūl* (foundational methodology and principles), as well as in books of history and works dedicated to profiling *ḥadith* narrators. Arguably some of the most important of these were *as-Sunan al-Kubra* by Imām Bayhaqy; *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* (Judgement on the Principles of Law) and *al-Muḥalla bil Athār* (The Adorned Treatise) by Imām Abu Muḥammad Ali Ibn Ḥazm, and *Tārikh Baghdād* (History of Baghdad) by the grand Imām al-Khaṭīb Baghdādi. The nominal date-marker for these works where completed by is 450 AH.

Despite this, narrating and dictating *aḥādith* has remained within the Islamic world. Whether that be in the far west in Morocco or in the east in the Indian sub-continent, scholars and students of knowledge have continued to receive *ḥadith* in the 'traditional manner', namely by attendance in the audience of the Shaykh, dictating and reading back to him. With the advances made in modern technology and computers, valuable books are being digitised at an incredible rate. One could argue that this is a new method of preservation. Although admittedly, there are some texts that are not as reliable as first thought, since they are not based upon the best manuscripts. However, a large number of researchers, scholars and students of knowledge are seeking to correct this, by the grace and mercy of Allah.

What has been said thus far regarding *aḥādith* is also applicable to the Prophetic *Seerah* (life and biography), particularly for the period post-migration in Medina which also covers the great battles, contrary to those who are ignorant of this. Compilation within this field began many years earlier than that of the *Sunan* or *Musnad* collections and were prepared under the title of *al-Maghāzi* (the battles or conquests). Such works were published and well received amongst the Muslim masses. This is a historical fact and it is of no surprise it was well received, given that the vast majority of people can readily digest biographies, stories and history in general, as opposed to turgid rigorous style employed within the *Sunan* or *Musnad* collections. In fact, public sessions or recitals were held on the topic of *al-Maghāzi* during the time of the rightly-guided Caliphs. The recitals were employed as a means of inspiring soldiers and urging Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah. These sessions were called 'storytelling' and were delivered by a 'storyteller.'

Also there was the work of *al-Maghāzi* prepared by the *Tābi'* Imām 'Abbān bin Uthmān bin 'Affān (may Allah be pleased with him). He made a fatal error though when he presented this work to the tyrant Caliph al-Waleed bin Abdal-Malik bin Marwān, may the curse of Allah be upon him. Al-Waleed denounced the work ordering it to be destroyed because of the facts reported therein which exposed and detailed the crimes of Bani Umayyah. Faced with this, 'Abbān bin Uthmān did not have the courage to recompose the book after its destruction and it was lost to posterity; there is no power or might save in Allah! Without doubt many other writers compiled works of *al-Maghāzi*, such as Imām Muḥammad ibn Shihāb az-Zuhri. Directly following such works were that produced by the Imām *Maghāzi* and *Seerah* - Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār who died in the year 150 AH. He produced a huge comprehensive biography but a lot of doubtful information was enclosed. Much of it was re-worked and edited by Imām Ibn Hishām and thereafter became known as the *Seerah* of Ibn

Hishām – which became a landmark work, some would say the standard for biographical works about the Prophet (peace be upon him). Work has continued upon the *Seerah* even up to the present, Shaykh Ṣafi-ur-Raḥman al-Mubārakpuri, with his monumental work *ar-Raḥeeq al-Makhtum* (the Sealed Nectar); may Allah reward him abundantly for his effort. Mubārakpuri's work has received international acclaim, being translated into numerous languages.

People have queried why such biographical works are not used in determining matters of general legislation and rulings, or *aqeedah*, given that they generally are taken from the historical background. The reason for this is that the authors of such historical works have tended to drop the channels of transmission in general as well as putting narratives together to make a coherent readily accessible narrative. Whilst this does provide an accurate picture of historical events overall, it does not produce legal certainty to the requisite standard which can be used as proof in matters of *Deen*. It shouldn't therefore be of great surprise that scholars of *ḥadith*, applying strict principles have regarded such works in general as having no substantive basis to them. That is not to say that they are works of fabrication, but that they do not meet the required legal standards to be utilised for matters of creed and legislation. One could liken this form of reporting to be akin to that found in contemporary journalism as found in newspapers, the radio and television. Although a generic picture is provided of actual events, such manner of reporting is not generally viewed as being admissible evidence in a judicial capacity. There has to be physical evidence, witness statements, official documentation and the like which can withstand rigorous and detailed cross-examination. Matters related to *Deen*, be they creedal or legislative, without doubt rank highly thus requiring the rigorous methodologies which have accompanied them to date.

The work as detailed here is but a brief overview. To do real justice to the subject as a whole would inevitably require a separate volume altogether. Such works are being produced and are dealing a death-blow to the claims of the Orientalists. One notable work in this regard, is that submitted originally as a PhD thesis at Cambridge University by the renowned Shaykh Dr Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al-‘Azami;⁷ may Allah reward him abundantly for his noble distinguished work. His work has fundamentally deconstructed the theories which the Orientalists have held sacrosanct for over a century and he has, by the grace of Allah, demonstrated that they are utterly false. Given the ground-breaking nature of the Shaykh's work, all those who had a semblance of intellectual honesty from amongst the Orientalists have thus abandoned the bizarre opinions of the likes of Goldzieher and Schacht. Work is ongoing within this field and many are being published which have only further entrenched the strength of the Prophetic *Sunnah*, providing even further substantiation to its truthfulness, underpinned with a sound rigorous academic approach.⁸ Taken in the round, all such works provide yet further evidence to the truthfulness which Allah himself attests will be established, step-by-step, in the glorious Qur'ān:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ، أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ

⁷ M. M. ‘Azami (2000), *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust)

⁸ For example: Dr Muḥammad Hamidullah (2003), *An Introduction to the Conservation of Ḥadith: in light of the Ṣaḥīfa of Hammām ibn Munabbih* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust)

Overview: the period of 'Sunnah Recordation'

مِن لِّقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَّا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ

We will soon show them our signs in the universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient regarding your Lord that He is a witness over all things? Now surely, they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord; He encompasses all things.⁹

Just as this occurred at the very dawn of Islam and was witnessed by the Quraysh, it is constantly recurring throughout the ages, including our present time and indeed, will continue until the day of judgement.

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?

⁹ *Qur'ān* 41: 53/54