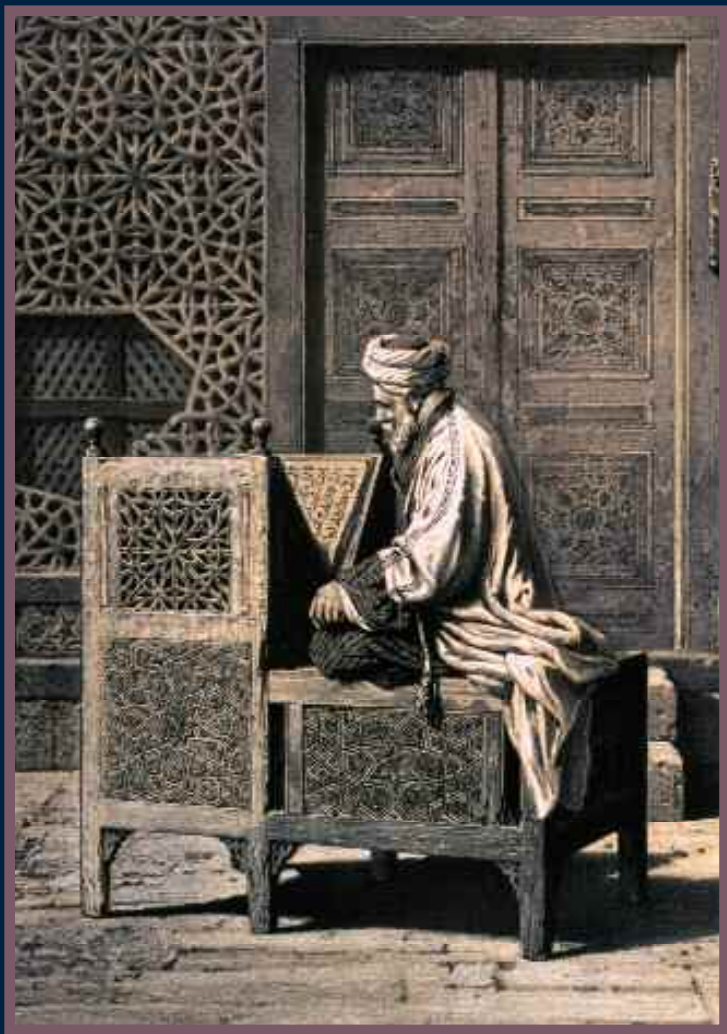


AUTHENTICATION *of Hadith* · REDEFINING THE CRITERIA



ISRAR AHMAD KHAN

Authentication of Hadith
Redefining the Criteria

DEDICATED TO MY WIFE, SHAHNAZ BEGUM

An ideal Muslim woman in my life

AUTHENTICATION OF HADITH

Redefining the Criteria

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ISRAR AHMAD KHAN



THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
LONDON • WASHINGTON

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ISBN 978-1-56564-448-9 paperback

ISBN 978-1-56564-449-6 hardback

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Typesetting and cover design by Shiraz Khan

Printed by MPG Books Group, UK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah alone. It is He alone to Whom I stand indebted for this work. He willed that I should will and by His infinite grace, I willed. Allah, then, helped me to take the task to its completion.

My thanks to The Research Management Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which sponsored my research projects that now form the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 8th chapters of this book. I am deeply grateful to its Dean, Deputy Deans, Directors, Assistant Directors, and other officials for their timely and generous help which I needed for the completion of the research projects.

Associate Professor Dr. Hazizan M. Noon, Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM, deserves my thanks first for approval of my research proposal and for inspiring me to continue my research on the subject.

Professor Dr. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, Professor Dr. Ibrahim M. Zain, Associate Professor Dr. Jamal Basheir Badi, and Dr. Muhammad Tahir Mesawi who encouraged me, advised me, and shared with me their observations on my work. I am extremely grateful to them all.

Dr. Jamal Barzinji, Vice President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT USA), greatly inspired me with his willingness to publish the work. May Allah bless him!

My wife, Shahnaz Begum, my four daughters, Mariya Seemin, Juwayriya Naznin, Naeylah Zarrin, Hamnah Sheerin, and my five sons, Muaaz, Muawwiz, Yasir, Samrah, and Owaym. Throughout my difficult task they all supported me in both words and practice, remaining ever patient and encouraging, never putting the slightest burden on me and shielding me from any pressures, adverse or otherwise, that could have impacted on my work. I pray to Allah for their well being in this world and in the hereafter. *Āmīn.*

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Usage of the Word “Tradition” to Denote Hadith and Sunnah

Readers will note that the author has often used the word “tradition/s” in lieu of the more familiar Arabic terms, Hadith and Sunnah. General readers may feel confused over this usage but this is a convention that has been adopted by both Muslim scholars of Hadith as well as Orientalists. Further, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), considered a pioneer in introducing many religious disciplines, including Hadith Studies, into English, commonly employs the term to signify Hadith and Sunnah. English dictionaries in addition define the term “tradition” similarly in this context for example, “(in Islam) a saying or act ascribed to the Prophet but not recorded in the Koran. See HADITH” (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Finally some English-Arabic dictionaries define “tradition” as *al-Hadīth al-Sharīf* (e.g. Munir Ba‘albaki, *Al-Mawrid*, Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1998).

FOREWORD



Of knowledge, we have none, save what
You have taught us. (The Qur'an 2:32)

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) presents this scholarly work on the topic of *Authentication of Hadith: Redefining the Criteria* to cast new light on the issue of Hadith fabrication.

Israr Khan addresses the sensitive topic of Hadith authentication, focusing on the criteria adopted by compilers of the major collections to argue that concentration on the continuity and accuracy of the chain of narrators, rather than the textual content of Hadith, has led to certain *aḥādīth* being included which either contradict other *aḥādīth* directly, project the Prophet (ṢAAS)* in an uncharacteristic light, or do not reflect and/or conflict with the teachings of the Qur'an. Furthermore, he maintains, given the great mass of traditions which circulated soon after the Prophet passed away, it would be unwise to ignore the fact that many contained targeted forgeries. These not only intended to corrupt the essential message of the Faith but also to bolster political, sectarian, economic, and even theological support. Political as well as religious differences, motivated largely by rivalry towards the fledgling Faith, led to a sustained and well-known campaign of disinformation using the vehicle of Hadith.

Although the misuse and abuse of Hadith is nothing new, in today's complex and volatile world the consequences of relying on fraudulent and counterfeit Hadith to legitimise extremist behavior, justify blatant abuse, particularly of women, and issue disturbing fatwas calling for violent acts, is not only far too easy but in fact very dangerous. In addition, given the widespread anti-Islamic sentiment currently dominating

* (ṢAAS) – *Ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.

mainstream discourse, it is imperative that the issue of fabricated *aḥādīth*, extensively publicised and ruthlessly exploited to support the thesis of Islamic violence and backwardness, is addressed. It is consequently the responsibility of Muslim scholars well versed in the Islamic sciences, to root out with honesty and courage those *aḥādīth* which have clearly been fabricated, and which not only invite spurious interpretation but also perpetuate ignorance betraying both the Qur'an and the Prophet.

Any serious study of the content and scope of these traditions must necessarily start at the beginning, in this instance after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The author traces in precise and careful detail the historical development of the oral and written traditions, as well as the many targeted attempts at fabrication that took place, critiquing in methodical detail certain *aḥādīth* which have come to be widely accepted as "authentic." In any matter of dispute concerning the Hadith, the Qur'an must be the final arbiter. As such, notes the author, any hadith which seems to go against the Qur'an must be examined carefully and accurately, and if no interpretation to resolve the contradiction found, it is to be rejected. Further, as Muhammad was the Last Prophet sent to all mankind, interpretations of both the Qur'an and Hadith are not to be fixated in time, but rather to be carefully examined and reinterpreted to give practical guidance meeting the requirements and challenges of a new age, that is taking into account the time-space factor. It is here that the science of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, or the higher intents and purposes of Islamic law, comes into its own as the heart and philosophy of Islamic Law.

So, to answer the difficult question of whether there is any real need for research into Hadith authentication we must realistically, and in the footsteps of Islam's best scholastic tradition, answer yes. The pursuit of greater accuracy is in no way meant to undermine Muslim confidence in Hadith. Far from it. It is from Hadith, maintains the author, that the life of the Prophet Muhammad has been taken from memory and brought to life, the great forms of Islamic worship and prayer codified, and the foundations of the Sunnah laid. Moreover, the prominent collections we have today, were made possible by the development of the science of Hadith criticism, and Muslim scholars deserve deep appreciation not only for their painstaking work, but

also their invaluable contribution towards preserving the Hadith literature to the best of their ability. However, insists the author, the process is ongoing, and the closed door policy which currently seems to surround Hadith authentication needs careful and systematic reexamination. It is in this vein that he attempts in *Authentication of Hadith* to redefine the criteria used to check traditions, and to then apply this criteria to certain selected *aḥādīth* recorded. His work has added a valuable and useful contemporary and scholarly dimension to the study of Hadith literature.

This study has been published to widen discourse, invite scholars to respond, and hopefully pave the way for further research. Doubtless readers may agree with some of the issues raised, and also disagree with others, but it is hoped that for the most part both general and specialised readers will benefit from the perspective offered and the overall issues examined in the book.

Since its establishment in 1981, the IIIT has continued to serve as a major center to facilitate sincere and serious scholarly efforts, based on Islamic vision, values and principles. Its programs of research, and seminars and conferences, during the last twenty-eight years, have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles in both English, Arabic and other major languages.

We would like to express our thanks to the editorial and production team at the IIIT London Office and all those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this work. We would also like to express our thanks to the author, who, throughout the various stages of production, cooperated closely with the editorial team.

IIIT London Office
Muharram 1431 AH, January 2010

Introduction

The Status and Importance of Hadith in Islam

ISLAM'S SYSTEM OF BELIEF, thought, life activities, social order, economic rules, political regulations, cultural bounds, moral principles, educational norms, intellectual codes, and religious laws are all governed by the Qur'an and the Hadith. The Qur'an represents the precisely revealed words of Allah (SWT)* and the Hadith constitute the practical and methodological dimensions of the Qur'anic commands and instructions.

The Prophet Muhammad, as the Messenger of God, had to carry out a fourfold mission (62:2): (1) to rehearse the messages of the Qur'an to people in general and to his followers in particular, exactly as he received them from God (2) to transform the whole nation of Arabia conceptually as well as behaviorally (3) to unfold the truth revealed in the Qur'an and (4) to demonstrate Qur'anic principles practically in his life and to teach those who entered the fold of his faith. For these heavy and manifold responsibilities he needed the guidance of God and was vouchsafed two things, the Qur'an and its *Bayān*, that is its explanation or meaning:

Move not thy tongue in haste, [repeating the words of the revelation:] for, behold, it is for Us to gather it [in thy heart,] and to cause it to be read [as it ought to be read]. Thus, when We recite it, follow thou its wording [with all thy mind]; and then, behold, it will be for Us to make its meaning (*Bayānahu*) clear. (75:16–19)

*(SWT) – *Subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā*: May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to God.

The Qur'an contains the precisely revealed words of Allah and the *Bayān* is the demonstration of the Qur'an by the Prophet. The *Bayān* of the Qur'an is what is known in Islamic legacy as the Hadith and the Sunnah. The status of the Hadith and the Sunnah in Islamic life is actually the position of the Prophet, meaning that today, when we talk about the Hadith and the Sunnah we actually deal with the Prophet. The Prophet held certain positions such as final judge, guide etc. and since he is no longer with us, his sayings and doings will be looked at from the same angle.

- Blessings of Allah cover those who obey Allah and His Prophet (3:132).
- His obedience is incumbent on his followers (4:59).
- He is a judge in all disputes of life (4:65).
- Deliberate indifference to obedience to Allah and His Prophet forms a serious offence (8:12–25).
- Avoidance of Allah and His Apostle's guidance ultimately leads to failure in life (8:46).
- Disregard of the instructions of Allah and His Apostle causes the deeds of man to become meaningless (47:33).

The Approach of Contemporary Muslims to Hadith

In terms of their approach to Hadith Muslims may be classified into four categories: (1) Those who totally reject the relevance of Hadith in Islamic life. (2) Those who fall blindly into accepting everything that appears to be a hadith regardless of its authenticity. (3) Those who make indiscriminate selection from Hadith for practical purposes. (4) Those who believe in the sanctity of the Prophetic traditions but opt for an extremely careful approach with regard to their logical and practical relevance to Islamic life and civilization.

Of all the categories those in the fourth seem to be the most justly balanced between the extremes. For those in category one, total rejection of Hadith as an important source of Islamic life-values is in sheer conflict with the Qur'an's own statements. In a number of places in the Qur'an Allah commands the believers to: "Obey Allah and obey the Prophet" (e.g. 4:59). Obedience to Allah is to follow the instructions

enshrined in the Qur'an; and obedience to the Prophet signifies acting upon the methodological pattern of life available in the authentic traditions of the Prophet. Concurrent mention in the Qur'an of both kinds of obedience – to Allah and the Prophet – can in no way be construed to mean obedience to Allah only, as those who deny the Hadith claim. Total rejection of the Sunnah and the Hadith, can only result in Islam becoming a mere philosophy vulnerable to variations in its interpretation. It is often claimed that the deplorable plight of Muslims today is due to their stereotyped religiosity, however even if this line of argument is given any serious consideration, the Sunnah and the Hadith cannot be held responsible. On the contrary Muslims are not suffering because of some rigid adherence to old traditions of the Prophet, but rather for having strayed far from both the Qur'an and the Sunnah in their thoughts and practices.

Opposed to those who totally deny the validity of Hadith are those whose love for it and the Sunnah is unconditional, being generally semi-literate Muslims who stand misguided and who consequently misguide many, blindly adhering to anything termed a Prophetic tradition regardless of the authenticity of the traditions reported in the sources. Furthermore, if a survey were to be conducted on Prophetic traditions very popular among Muslims today, the findings may be shocking, for in religious circles a great number of such traditions are being narrated, interpreted, and practiced as if genuine when in reality they are little more than the remainders of fabricated Prophetic traditions. As such this is one of the main factors behind Muslim backwardness and decline in virtually every field of life including the religious and spiritual.

People of previous divine Scriptures have been criticized in the Qur'an for their half-hearted treatment of them (2:85) as well as indifference to the commands of their prophets (5:20–24). Even the hypocrites during the time of the Prophet have been rebuked in the Qur'an for their selective approach to the Revelation and the Prophet's exhortations (4:150). In the Muslim world today there are people who select only those Qur'anic *ayāt* and only those Prophetic traditions which benefit in one way or another their vested interests and covert agendas. The Qur'an refers to these Muslims as those in whose hearts is a disease, not sincere to Islam or its cause. A highly balanced approach

to the Qur'an as well as the Sunnah and the Hadith seems to be the only viable approach to take, as recommended in the Qur'an (2:143). A balanced approach to the Sunnah and the Hadith denotes a belief in, and practice of, only those traditions of the Prophet that are highly authentic and far beyond any doubt whatsoever.

Authenticity of the Sunnah and the Hadith

Islamic writings both old and modern abound in Sunnah and Hadith literature, testament to the great importance of these subjects. Compilations of Hadith may be classified commonly into four categories according to the rank of their authenticity:

- (1) Those collections of Hadith that are claimed to be the most authentic works such as al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's.
- (2) Those collections that contain only a few dubious reports such as al-Tirmidhī's, al-Nasā'ī's, and Abū Dāwūd's.
- (3) Those collections which comprise many problematic traditions such as Ibn Mājah's and Aḥmad's.
- (4) Those collections that have too many weak and fabricated traditions such as al-Ṭabarānī's.

Authenticity of Hadith as claimed by Hadith authorities is entirely dependent on the authenticity of the chain of narrators reporting Hadith. There is hardly any serious attention paid to the authenticity of Hadith by the authentication of the text of Hadith.

Authentication of Hadith Text

Muslim scholars and students believe that if the chain of narrators of a hadith fulfils five criteria – continuity in the chain of narrators (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), integrity of character (*ʿadālah*), infallible retention (*ḍabt*), freedom from any hidden defect (*ghayr al-ʿillah*), and safety from any aberrance (*ʿadm al-shudhūdh*) – the hadith is to be accepted as authentic. The last two criteria are also applicable to the examination of the text of a hadith. In practice, however, this remains confined to only debates and discussion in the works of *ʿUlūm al-Hadīth*, and the compilers of Hadith have rarely accommodated them in their examination

of Hadith text. Some scholars at a later stage of Islamic history did suggest the examination of Hadith from a textual angle but their call fell on deaf ears.

Is there any real need for Hadith authentication from a textual angle? The answer to this question is both a difficult and an easy one. Difficult because today's Hadith scholars lack the courage required to answer to it, and easy because reasons justifying the examination of Hadith text are numerous.

1—*Controversy over the Position of a Particular Narrator*

It is well-known that Hadith scholars are not all unanimous over the reliability of some narrators and examples of these can be found in the biographical dictionaries. For instance, concerning a particular narrator Muslim's observation differs from that of al-Bukhārī; one biographical expert claims a narrator to be reliable (*thiqah*), whilst another finds him weak (*ḍa'īf*), with a third authority concluding there is no problem in him (*lā ba'sa bihi*)! How is one to act and react in this situation?

2—*Inability of Some Narrators to Maintain the Preciseness of the Report*

Almost all the Hadith scholars are of the view that most of the Prophetic traditions have not been narrated in the words of the Prophet but in terms of the meaning of the message. Freedom to narrate Prophetic statements in terms of the meaning is not free from problems and, as this work will show, certain reporters could not even maintain this. The following example, as cited by al-Zarkashī in his monumental work *Al-Ijābah*, is illustrative of this concerning two *adhāns* signifying the call for morning prayer (*salah*) in the month of Ramadan, one pronounced by Bilāl and the other by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Umm Maktūm: ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar said that the Prophet said: "Bilāl indeed calls for prayer while it is still night; you may continue eating and drinking until ʿAbd Allāh ibn Umm Maktūm comes to call for prayer." ʿĀ'ishah blamed Ibn ʿUmar for reporting the Prophetic statement wrongly. She corrected the statement that the Prophet said: "Ibn Umm Maktūm is blind when he calls for prayer, continue eating and drinking until Bilāl gives the call to prayer." Here one might suggest

that al-Bukhārī has recorded two reports on the same subject matter, one on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar and the other on the authority of ʿĀʾishah; and both the reports are the same hence ʿĀʾishah's correction of Ibn ʿUmar seems unsubstantiated. It does appear so, but there are other reports on the authority of ʿĀʾishah and others as recorded in other Hadith works such as Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal's and al-Bayhaqī's, which corroborate the view of al-Zarkashī as mentioned above. It should be born in mind that the reports on the authority of ʿĀʾishah on this matter as recorded in sources other than al-Bukhārī are equally highly authentic from the angle of the chain (*sanad*). According to al-Zarkashī, ʿĀʾishah also observed that Bilāl could see well the time for morning prayer and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Umm Maktūm due to his blindness was not in a position to discern the time. This rational justification suggests that a reporter in al-Bukhārī's chain of the report might have erred and inverted the order of the names, Bilāl and Ibn Umm Maktūm.

3–*Textual Conflicts among Reports*

Whether we examine al-Bukhārī's compilation of Hadith or Muslim's there are several instances where certain reports concerning the same matter vary from each other, not only in words but also in meaning. It is generally suggested that such differences in reporting are not due to errors on the part of narrators but because the Prophet himself made the statements differently on different occasions. This principle may be true in some cases but is not relevant everywhere. For example, in his chapter on *al-Musāqāt* (sharecropping) Muslim has recorded fifteen traditions on the spiritual loss that the domestication of dogs may bring, seven on the authority of ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿUmar and the remaining eight on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (Muslim: 3999–4013). Out of seven reports narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar five traditions inform us of the daily deduction of two carats (*Qīrātān*) from the deeds of one who keeps a dog as a pet without any genuine purpose, but two of them refer to the deduction of only one single carat (*Qīrāt*). Out of eight reports narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah only one mentions the deduction of two carats of good deeds, whereas the remaining seven put the deduction to only one carat. How is one to resolve the discrepancy and is there any way to make a compromise between them?

4–‘Delusion’ of Reliable Narrators

At times the chain of narrators is extremely authentic but there exists some obvious problem in the text of the narration. In this situation instead of examining the issue carefully Hadith commentators immediately put the blame on one or other of the narrators anonymously, observing that he must have had a misunderstanding/misconception (*qad wahima*), leaving the matter at that. They prefer not to examine the text as a possible source of unreliability or defect and why this would be so and the most probable reason they fail to do this is because they do not see any problem in the chain of narrators. In fact, if they find some problem in the text it must be declared as such. If delusion on the part of a narrator is detected, what is the criterion to determine this? There has to be some criteria to identify defect in the text.

5–Practical Correction of Narrations

Even during the time of the Companions the reporting of Prophetic traditions was given serious attention, particularly as to their preciseness. Chapters three and four will illustrate how some statements of the Prophet that were reported incorrectly were then corrected by those who were at the forefront of Islamic knowledge. The following example demonstrates the issue well. Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī reported from the Prophet that: “The one who is dead will indeed be revived in the dress he put on at the time of death.” This was immediately corrected by ʿĀʾishah stating that the Prophet mentioned deed, instead of dress. She then argued with the help of another tradition of the Prophet that “People will be raised naked, barefooted, and non-circumcised” (*al-Ijābah*: 120). This correction was in the text. Should this state of affairs be allowed to continue given the confusion and problems it creates?

6–Identifying the Contemporary Relevance of Hadith

The Qurʾan and Hadith encapsulate the teachings of the Prophet and are meant for practical application in our daily lives, not for mere lip service. As Muhammad was the Last Prophet sent to mankind his comprehensive teachings are relevant for every person, time, place, and situation. Therefore interpretations of both the Qurʾan and Hadith are not to be fixated in time, but to be carefully examined and reinterpreted to give practical guidance meeting the requirements and challenges of a

new age, the time-space factor. In the process of doing this one will no doubt come across various interpretations already advanced by Hadith commentators, and these interpretations may, at times, be mutually conflicting. To overcome this and avoid confusion the best way forward would be to re-examine the position of the words used in the text of Prophetic traditions.

7—Understanding the Methodological Dimension of Hadith

The Prophetic traditions may be classified into two major categories, legislative and non-legislative, with one of these being binding and the other not. As for the binding traditions, their position must be viewed vis-a-vis the Qur'an, one's reason, and the *Sunnah Mutawātirah* (that is, a hadith which is reported by such a large number of people that they cannot be expected to agree upon a lie, all of them together). There is a possibility that the Hadith and the Qur'an may contrast one another in which case scholars need to place their efforts into affecting a compromise among the conflicting traditions. If this is not possible, traditions lose their eminent status as authentic. Only the authentic text of a tradition can be used as source of guidance, both methodological as well as practical.

8—Probability of Fabrication in Hadith Text

There is no denying the fact that around two decades after the Prophet traditions were fabricated and falsely attributed to him. The number of these runs into untold thousands. Undoubtedly, Hadith scholars did their best to identify the genuine from the false but despite great care and effort they could not ensure one hundred percent accuracy. Consequently there remains the possibility that some fabricated traditions are still considered genuine merely because of the authentic chain of narrators behind them. Scholars have already identified, for instance, around ninety traditions in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* as fabricated. Are we to close the door on exposing them forever? In terms of the chain of narrators it might be considered closed but in terms of textual examination the door should remain open. In other words we have no other way to check for fabricated traditions in the most popular sources other than to examine the text of the traditions concerned.

9–*Fiqhī Controversy among Fuqahā'*

Many controversies exist among Muslim jurists concerning certain issues related to Islamic life. One of the main reasons of this occurrence is that certain texts of a particular tradition are preferred to other texts. Instead of viewing all as authentic it could be that some are authentic from the angle of the chain of narrators, but are not necessarily authentic in terms of the text. The *fiqhī* controversy may be overcome therefore by authentication of Hadith text.

10–*Sanctity of Hadith*

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was once asked as to why he investigated the life and character of a narrator declaring them to be either reliable, weak, or liars, especially as this would be considered a form of backbiting against people, an unlawful practice in Islam. He confidently observed that he did not care if the people affected complained against him on the Day of Judgment for he could not afford to face a situation in which the Prophet would be a plaintiff against him on the Day of Judgment, complaining that he had not done anything to ensure the authenticity of the Prophetic traditions. The responsibility of scholars is not yet over. They have to continue doing their best to leave no lacuna or gap in the authentication of Hadith. The Hadith hold a very sacred position in Islamic life, but this sanctity is exclusively for the genuine traditions of the Prophet.

History of this Research

Like any concerned Muslim, I felt uncomfortable with the idea of an apparent conflict existing between various texts of Prophetic traditions recorded as ostensibly genuine. On discussing the issue of textual disparity with several scholars I met with one of two reactions, either discouragement from pursuing debate on Hadith further or encouragement to continue discourse. Despite some heated discussions and opposition I persevered and continued deliberation upon traditions recorded in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, reading Hadith commentaries of these two works, and also particularly the works of al-Nawawī, al-ʿAynī, and Ibn Ḥajar. It seemed to me that the Hadith commentators had not used any well-established and universally defined principles of

Hadith commentary, and that they had not been justly balanced in their approach to Hadith, placing main focus on the chain of narrators, and not on the text of the traditions. As I felt somewhat dissatisfied with the interpretations made by the great scholars I began more serious research on the authenticity of Hadith from the point of view of its text. I applied to the International Islamic University Malaysia, obtained sponsorship and ultimately produced a study entitled “Authentication of Hadith: Redefining the Criteria” copies of which were sent to several scholars including Hadith scholars and experts in Islamic law, seeking their comments, observations, and suggestions. The general observations were encouraging and I submitted a small portion of the research to a highly recognized international refereed journal in America, where it was published, after which I decided to have it published as a book, culminating in this work. In order to do this I have had to include two new chapters not originally part of the research.

Contents of the Book

The first chapter focuses on fabrication in the Prophetic tradition from a historical perspective, tracing factors that lead to this as well as the remedial measures taken by distinguished Muslim authorities. The second chapter identifies the contributions of scholars from two perspectives, the chain of narrators and the text.

Chapter three examines the Hadith in the light of Qur’anic principles and instructions. Chapter four is devoted to a textual Hadith examination using highly authentic traditions of the Prophet. Chapter five concerns the checking of the authenticity of Hadith text through reasoning. Chapter six discusses the criterion established in history to authenticate the historical dimensions available in Hadith texts. Chapter seven traces the acceptability of Hadith in line with another criterion e.g. moderation.

The eighth and final chapter is based on discussion and reinterpretation of a particular chapter of al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Qadar* (Chapter on Predetermination). In chapters three, four, five, six, and eight the traditions selected for examination and interpretation are taken from al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

It is my strong personal belief that the discussions undertaken in these chapters are, to a great extent, original. I have tried to do two things in the discussions concerned, firstly, to rationally define the criteria of Hadith text and secondly, to sincerely apply them to selected traditions by using relevant methodology.

Finally, dates cited for the various scholars and individuals listed are mentioned on their first occurrence only.

Translation of the Qur'anic *Āyāt*

The Qur'anic verses cited throughout the work have primarily been taken from the translations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, with a general preference given to the translation of Muhammad Asad which I believe is based on the concept of thematic unity in the Qur'an. In any case the most appropriate translation for the verse(s) in question has been used throughout.

The Significance of Chapter Eight – Al-Bukhārī's Chapter on Predestination/Predetermination

It may appear to readers that chapter eight is not connected to the theme of this book, and that the traditions discussed could easily be more appropriately rearranged under chapters three, four, five, six and seven where the respective criteria have been applied to ascertain the authenticity of prophetic traditions. However, the twenty-seven traditions of al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-Qadar* (chapter on predetermination/predestination) cannot be easily evaluated under certain particular criteria only. They further needed to be treated separately, practically because these traditions need analysis from several angles and therefore cannot be scattered in various chapters, and psychologically because of the nature of *Kitāb al-Qadar*'s subject matter and its deep impact on Muslims' psyche.

An Earnest Appeal

In Muslim, specifically religious, academia those works which appear to differ from established norms and beliefs are forthrightly rejected as

nonsense. Established dogma in relation to Hadith consists of two components:

(1) If the chain of narrators is authentic, the hadith is considered authentic regardless of the problem(s) its text may contain.

(2) The traditions selected and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim are regarded as highly authentic. Any apparent discrepancies in the texts of these traditions can be interpreted but to declare any report from these two sources as unreliable is considered an almost unacceptable stance and a virtual offence.

In this study I have done what I sincerely felt compelled to do. My objective has in no wise been to discredit the effort and unparalleled contributions of the great Hadith scholars, but rather to consolidate the position of Hadith further. Yet, I can in no way claim perfection in my work for only Allah is Perfect. Human effort is never free from shortcomings, and if there are any flaws in my presentation I welcome their being pointed out. In possible future editions of the book I will take these suggested changes into serious consideration. I pray to Allah, the Source of all knowledge, to make this humble work useful for all those concerned. *Āmīn!*

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15 July 2008

Fabrication in Prophetic Traditions: Causal Factors and Remedial Measures

FABRICATION IN PROPHETIC traditions, literally as well as technically, signifies attribution of a statement or practice to the Prophet falsely with or without intention. Reports containing information about the Prophet's sayings or deeds, which he never said or did, are unanimously rejected (*mardūd*) as lies.

Hadith scholars have identified various statements used in the traditions which point to their apocryphal nature, some of these are obviously indicative of fabrication whilst others refer to fabrication metonymically. When authorities refer to some transmitters in a chain of narrators (*sanad*) using expressions which are superlative, exaggerated or simple degree adjectives, these constitute for them obvious terms signaling fabrication. Examples of superlative verbosity include: the greatest fabricator of all (*awḍaʿ al-nās*), the source of the lie (*manbaʿ al-kadhib*), the lie ends with so and so (*al-kidhb yantahī ilayhi*) etc. Examples of exaggerative verbosity include: totally engrossed in fabrication (*waḍḍāʿ*), extremely given to lies (*kadhḥāb*), diehard falsifier (*dajjāl*), fanatically inventing falsehood (*affāk*) etc. Examples of simple degree adjectives include: So and so fabricates traditions (*fulānun yaḍaʿu al-ḥadīth*), so and so coins traditions (*fulānun yakh-taliq al-ḥadīth*), this or that Hadith authority has declared so and so to be a liar (*fulānun kadhḥabahū*) etc. Some metonymical references to reporters also prove the reports concerned to be false such as so and so narrates false reports (*fulānun yuḥaddithu bi al-Abāṭil*), and to his

credit there are false reports (*lahū aḥādīth bāṭilah*). Likewise, Hadith authorities use several terms to declare a tradition to be unacceptable. These include *mawḍūʿ* (fabricated), *bāṭil* (false), and *hādihā al-ḥadīth lā aṣla lahu* (this tradition is baseless) etc.

Historical Background of Hadith Fabrication

According to historians, who particularly focus on events during ʿUthmān’s (RAA)* Caliphate, it was initially Ibn Saba’ who fabricated traditions in the name of the Prophet in a bid to tarnish the image of Islam and cause rift among the Muslims.¹ This would seem to suggest that fabrication in the Prophetic tradition began in the middle of ʿUthmān’s Caliphate.

In Akram Diya al-Umri’s opinion the first person to fabricate a tradition in the name of the Prophet was Ibn ʿAdīs, one of the opponents of the third Caliph, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. He falsely reported a statement of the Prophet on the authority of ʿAbd Allah ibn Masʿūd containing a condemnation of ʿUthmān.² It would appear from this that fabrication in Prophetic traditions began towards the end of ʿUthmān’s Caliphate.

Muhammad Abu Zahw and Ahmad Amin on the other hand believe that fabrication in Prophetic traditions begin earlier, and can be traced to the time of the Prophet himself.³ Their only evidence in support of this is the Prophet’s warning: “He who consciously attributes to me some lie deserves to be allotted a place in hellfire.”⁴ This reasoning is a little strained for the Prophet could easily have made the statement as a precautionary measure to ensure the originality of his sayings and doings (there was a trend in Arab society to attribute statements falsely to anyone) and not necessarily to warn those among his followers who had already begun to start fabricating traditions in his name. In addition, the Prophet’s Companions were so sincere in their commitment to him, a loyalty almost legendary in nature, that it is inconceivable to even imagine that they would knowingly fabricate traditions in his name. They loved him more than anyone, including their own selves, and were prepared to lay down their lives for him.

Muhammad Abu Shahbah traces fabrication in the Prophetic traditions to the year 41 AH when the enemies of the third Caliph had

* (RAA) – *Raḍīya Allāhu ʿAnhu*, May Allah be pleased with him. Said whenever a Companion of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned by name.

succeeded in instigating the people against him. He refers to Ibn Saba' as the originator of fabrication coining and attributing many traditions wrongly to the Prophet. One such fabricated hadith stated that the Prophet declared 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib to be his successor.⁵ However, Abu Shahbah seems to have overlooked an important historical fact, the third Caliph was assassinated in 35 AH. If, therefore, Ibn Saba' was indeed the first to have begun the traitorous act of fabricating traditions in the name of the Prophet to instigate Muslims against their faith, one another and their leadership, then this should not have been in the year 41 AH but rather 30 AH.

Subhi al-Salih believes that fabrication first registered an appearance during the beginning of fourth Caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's rule, that is during a time when the Muslim community had divided into various camps. Each community played a part in inventing traditions attributed to the Prophet to garner support for its stand.⁶

In sum it would appear that fabrication of Prophetic traditions began sometime during the middle of 'Uthmān's Caliphate, climaxed during the time of 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah, and continued in later years of Muslim history until the Abbasid period.

Causes of Fabrication

It may not be too difficult to trace the main factors which led to fabrication in the Prophetic traditions. Even a cursory examination of fabricated reports yields an indication of what was coined in the name of the Prophet and why. When it comes to intentional fabrication it seems that traditions were invented in the Prophet's name by those who a) were very much interested in convincing the general populace of their respective stands on the Caliphate and its succession, b) wanted to smear the originality of Islamic teachings, c) wanted to promote their respective businesses, d) wanted to overzealously attract people to a religious life, e) desired worldly gain by pleasing people in power, and f) aspired to earn fame as those who were knowledgeable.

1-Political Movements

Certain sections of the expanding Muslim empire were resentful of the way 'Uthmān, the third Caliph, had been tackling administrative

matters of the state and this ultimately culminated in his assassination, a terrible event which shocked the general populace and leaders of society. When ʿAlī was instated as the fourth Caliph, a number of leading personalities demanded strict measures against those responsible for plunging the Muslim community into chaos. Since the new Caliph had his own method for resolving the problem, the Muslim community once again became divided, this time into three major political camps, pro Muʿāwiyah, pro ʿĀʾishah, and pro ʿAlī. Political division led to grim military conflicts between the opponents. These battles not only inflicted serious losses on the warring parties but also created a psychological environment of distrust such that the majority of Muslim society became aghast that such a corrupt state of affairs had come about. Each political faction wanted to win the majority of Muslims over to its own particular side and one of the easiest ways of doing this was to coin traditions in the name of the Prophet to support their respective positions.

Traditions fabricated in this heightened state of affairs were of two categories, one set condemning prominent leaders and the other set commending them. For example, one can trace how the position of Muʿāwiyah became elevated by examining relevant traditions fabricated in the latter category. Narration one mentions that Archangel Gabriel came down to the Prophet with a golden pen. The Prophet was then asked to give the pen, in accordance with Allah's will, to Muʿāwiyah and to advise him to write the *Āyah al-Kursī* (2:255) with it. Using the pen Muʿāwiyah wrote the verse (in very beautiful script), upon which the Prophet informed him that Allah had credited his account with a cumulative reward equivalent to the recitation of that verse by readers until the Day of Judgment.⁷ Narration two cites the Prophet as having said: "In the eyes of Allah there are three trustworthy figures, myself, Gabriel, and Muʿāwiyah."⁸ A third narration cites the Prophet as saying: "Allah trusted with regard to His revelations Gabriel in the heaven, and Muhammad and Muʿāwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān on the earth."⁹ In a fourth narration the Prophet is said to have called for Muʿāwiyah, and when he came commanded those present around him, including Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, to entrust Muʿāwiyah with the leadership of the Muslims because he was the most powerful, and the most trustworthy.¹⁰ A fifth narration cites the Prophet as

saying that on the Day of Resurrection Mu‘āwiyah would be revived with a cloak made of light on his body.¹¹

In stark contrast, condemnation of Mu‘āwiyah is also apparent from fabricated reports. In one narration the Prophet is said to have mentioned, “If you see Mu‘āwiyah from this particular pulpit, kill him.”¹² In a second the Prophet informs Mu‘āwiyah that he, “as leader of the Muslims, would make the evil good and the good evil; and that his wrong doings would be enormous.”¹³ In a third, the Prophet once prays against Mu‘āwiyah and ‘Amrū ibn al-‘Āṣ saying: “O Allah! Put them both in serious chaos; O Allah! Throw them both into hellfire.”¹⁴

Traditions were also fabricated both in favor of and against ‘Ā’ishah. In praise we have the following: The Archangel Gabriel once informed the Prophet that it was Allah’s will that he marry one of Abū Bakr’s daughters as a result of which the Prophet requested Abū Bakr for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Abū Bakr had three daughters for marriage and showed them all to the Prophet who chose ‘Ā’ishah because Allah had exhorted him to marry her.¹⁵ This is a very clear lie on two counts. First, the Prophet married ‘Ā’ishah in Makkah, and not in Madinah as this tradition reports. Historically, the Prophet married ‘Ā’ishah in Makkah with consummation of the marriage taking place in Madinah. Second, Abū Bakr only had two daughters at the time, Asmā’ and ‘Ā’ishah, and not three as the report asserts. In fact Abū Bakr did have a third daughter but she was only born after his death in 13 AH. Her name was Umm Kulthūm.¹⁶

In terms of condemnation of ‘Ā’ishah, the following tradition was fabricated on the occasion of the battle of the Camel: “The Prophet stated that people who are led by a woman cannot achieve success.”¹⁷

A great number of traditions attributed to the Prophet also surfaced in praise of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. A few of these are listed below:

- (1) The Prophet said that he, Hārūn ibn ‘Imrān, Yaḥyā ibn Zakarīyyā, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib were created from one and the same clay.¹⁸
- (2) The Prophet said that ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib was his brother, his minister, and his successor, who would pay off his [the Prophet’s] debts and fulfill his promises after him.¹⁹

- (3) The Prophet said that looking at the face of ʿAlī is an act of devotion (*ʿibādah*).²⁰
- (4) The Prophet said that he who wished to see Adam with his knowledge, Noah with his understanding, Abraham with his wisdom, John with his devotion, and Moses with his grip, should see ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib.²¹
- (5) The Prophet said that his name in the Qurʾan was *wa al-Shams wa Duḥāhā* (by the sun and its splendor), the name of ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib *wa al-Qamar idhā talāhā* (by the moon as it follows it), the name of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn *wa al-Nahār idhā jallāhā* (by the day as it shows up the glory), and the name of the Umayyad dynasty *wa al-Layl idhā yaghshāhā* (by the night as it conceals it).²²
- (6) When Abū Bakr and ʿUmar proposed to Fāṭimah, the Prophet said: “O ʿAlī! She is for you, not for the imposters (*dajjāl*).”²³

In contrast against ʿAlī we have the Prophet saying to him: “Leadership is not for you, nor for any of your descendents.”²⁴ It seems that those hostile to ʿAlī fabricated this tradition in order to prevent people from believing in the eligibility of ʿAlī for the Caliphate.

In 66 AH, al-Mukhtār al-Thaqafī an unprincipled and designing man, rebelled against the establishment and seized power in Kufah. He once requested one of the then authorities on Hadith to fabricate traditions in the name of the Prophet that could validate his stand. In exchange he offered the scholar tens of thousands of dirhams, horses, a retinue of slaves, and precious clothes. The *muḥaddith* refused to do so but, consented instead to fabricate traditions attributed to some of the *Ṣaḥābah*.²⁵ In fact, many traditions were fabricated out of political motivation as an attempt to discredit those in power by showing them to have been condemned by the Prophet. For example, the Prophet is said to have declared Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah as the killer of al-Ḥusayn and cursed him. Likewise, al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was condemned through one such fabricated tradition in the name of the Prophet.²⁶

2–Inimical Missions against Islam and Muslims

In Islamic history many hadith were fabricated by a group known as *zanādiqah* (heretics/hypocrites who feigned Islam outwardly but who harbored enmity within, spreading heretical beliefs). They fabricated

traditions in almost all matters of Islamic life. ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Abī al-‘Arjā’ was one such heretic who would insert his own concocted traditions in the document of genuine traditions compiled by one of his relatives, Ḥammād ibn Salamah. Before being put to death, he claimed to have fabricated four thousand traditions in the name of the Prophet in a bid to declare the lawful as unlawful and the unlawful as lawful.²⁷ Al-Mahdī, a great scholar of Hadith is reported to have said that one of the heretics confessed before him to have fabricated four thousand traditions and to have circulated them among the populace.²⁸

In addition Madinah was home to a number of Jewish tribes whose various forms of treachery against the Prophet caused their eventual expulsion. With military expeditions and open propaganda not viable options, it seems that the more resentful factions amongst these decided to focus on sabotaging the fundamental teachings of Islam through fabrication of *aḥādīth*. The aim was to create a rift in the unity of the Muslims and a new version of the religion. A case in point is that of Ibn Saba’. A Jew who apparently embraced Islam he traveled widely throughout the Islamic empire in the garb of his new faith managing to dupe unsuspecting believers in the new Muslim territories. He fabricated a number of traditions in the name of the Prophet and circulated them among Muslim society.

Another case is that of Bayān ibn Sam‘ān al-Nahdī, a heretic who claimed to be an apostle of God. Naturally, he must have come up with some justification through his fabricated traditions in support of this outrageous claim. He was later put to death for blasphemy. Mughīrah ibn Sa‘īd, a magician, also played a part in polluting the sacred heritage of Prophetic traditions. He was beheaded for this gross offense.²⁹

Some spectacular examples of fabricated traditions manufactured by the opponents of Islam are given below:

- (1) In response to a question as to the basic element of God, the Prophet said that it is neither from heaven nor from earth; He rather created a horse and made it run; when it perspired, God created Himself from that perspiration. This was fabricated by a heretic, Muḥammad ibn Shujā‘ al-Balkhī.³⁰
- (2) A female jinn used to visit the Prophet along with other female jinn. One day she appeared late. When asked by the Prophet she

said: "I went to India to offer condolence to a bereaved family. On the way I saw something very strange." The Prophet then asked her to relate what she saw. She continued: "I saw Satan praying salah on a rock. When I asked him what made him mislead the descendents of Adam, he avoided the answer. When I asked him as to why, he then prayed, and answered that he hoped for the forgiveness of his Lord." Upon this the Prophet laughed like he never laughed again.³¹ In all likelihood, this fabrication was aimed at creating some sort of sympathy for Satan in the hearts of Muslims.

- (3) The Prophet said: "He from whose hands a non-believer accepts Islam will inherit property from the new Muslim."³² This is quite obviously an attempt to alter the law of inheritance in Islam.
- (4) The Prophet said: "One who did not pay zakah during his life can compensate for the loss by making his bequest in the light of the Qur'an."³³ This fabrication was obviously meant to console those who had avoided paying the zakah.
- (5) The Prophet said: "In the year 150 abstain from marriage; he who married in that year, Allah would take away his mind and destroy his religion, and he would be deprived of both this world and the hereafter."³⁴ It seems that these fabricators wanted to weaken Muslims demographically by discouraging them from marriage.
- (6) The Prophet said: "Nothing affects faith negatively just as nothing brings good with polytheism."³⁵ This was fabricated in order to encourage Muslims to do anything they pleased whether good or bad and to convince them that they could commit sinful acts such as lying, stealing, committing adultery and fornication, killing someone unjustly, taking usury, usurping another's rightful property, etc. without this having any adverse impact on their faith.
- (7) The Prophet said: "There will be no prophet after me except if Allah wills otherwise."³⁶ The first part of this tradition – "There will be no prophet after me" – is a genuine statement of the Prophet recorded in the most authentic works of Hadith including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. The last part of the tradition – "except if Allah wills otherwise" – is a later insertion by a well-known heretic, Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd. These enemies of Islam were well aware that the unique basis of the religion rested on the finality of Prophet Muhammad. The obvious aim of fabrications

such as these was therefore to create doubt in people's minds concerning the finality of Prophet Muhammad and to further remove doubt about the position of impostors after him. In addition Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd claimed that whenever he heard an apparently nice statement, he developed for this a chain of narrators linking it to the Prophet!³⁷

3-Corroboation of Particular Schools of Thought

The expansion of Islamic territory and the extension of its frontiers to as far as Rome and Persia brought about an interaction between Muslim people and those of the new realms. The heritage of the latter passed into the hands of the Muslims and this new knowledge borrowed and learned from others led to the emergence of debate among scholars, which ultimately resulted in the appearance of several conflicting thoughts and views particularly of a philosophical nature. The main subjects of these debates concerned the position of the Qur'an, the concept of preordination of man's destiny, the freedom of man, the nature and consequence of major sin etc. As it was not easy for anyone to convince the public through the simple force of rational argument, debaters and supporters of a particular point of view resorted instead to the fabrication of traditions in the name of the Prophet.

Enthusiasts of the historically well-known theological groups, the Muʿtazilite, Murji'ite, Qadarite, Jabrite, and Ash'rite, ventured into forbidden territory and dared to fabricate traditions in the name of the Prophet so as to validate their own respective schools of thought. A repentant member of one of these schools divulged what he and others from the same camp had used to do stating: "Whenever we saw an appreciable opinion, we turned it into a prophetic tradition."³⁸

For example, one school of thought believed that faith (*īmān*) was not static, but rather increased and decreased. However proponents of the idea remained dissatisfied with their own line of reasoning and began to attribute this statement to the Prophet so as to further strengthen their own approach and convince the people in general of its veracity. Another group who favored the opposite idea, that faith was in fact static, conveniently came up with a contrasting tradition in support of their belief, fabricating the following in the name of the Prophet: "A delegation from Thaqīf asked the Prophet whether faith

increases and decreases. The Prophet answered: 'Faith is firm in the hearts like firmly erected mountains on the earth; its increase and decrease constitute blasphemy'." The Murji'ite group coined many other traditions in the name of the Prophet to prove the authenticity of their view. Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭālkānī, a prominent leader of this group is a case in point. He fabricated many traditions to substantiate the group's view including the following:

The Prophet said: "Those who have proclaimed increase and decrease in faith should know that its increase is hypocrisy and its decrease is blasphemy. If they repent, leave them; if not, chop their necks with a sword. They are the enemies of the Most Merciful. Remember, their salah, fasting, zakah, hajj, and religion are not acceptable. They are not related to the Prophet."³⁹

The Jabarites believed in the fore-written destiny of man. To rebut this the Qadarites fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet as follows: "On the Day of Judgment Allah will gather all at the same place; a crier from beneath the Divine throne will proclaim: 'Lo! One who was purified of his sins, let him enter Paradise.'"⁴⁰

Fanatics of these theological schools crossed all bounds, fabricating traditions in the name of the Prophet condemning each other, seemingly oblivious of the gravity of what they were doing. Further examples of such fabricated traditions are given below:

- (1) The Prophet said: "Verily, for each community is a magian [fire worshippers]; the magians of this Ummah are the Qadarites. Do not visit them when they fall sick; and do not join their funeral prayer after they die."⁴¹
- (2) Once the Prophet said that Allah had cursed four categories of people through the tongues of seventy prophets. His Companions then asked about their identity. The Prophet answered: "Qadarites, Juhmites, Murji'ites, and Rafizites." When requested to explain their problems, the Prophet said: "Qadarites claim that good is from Allah and evil from Satan: Remember! Good and evil are both from Allah, whoever says other than this is doomed; Juhmites say that the Qur'an is creation: Remember! The Qur'an

is non-creation, whoever says other than this is doomed; Murji'tes believe that faith is mere utterance without action; Rafizites revile Abū Bakr and ʿUmar: Remember! One who angered the two is doomed.”⁴²

- (3) The Prophet said that if the dead body of some Qadarite or Murji'ite were to be excavated three days after burial, his face would be turned toward a direction other than the Kaʿbah.⁴³
- (4) The Prophet said that Murji'ites, Qadarites, Rafizites, and Kharijites would be stripped of their faith in the unity of God by one fourth and thrown into hellfire as non-believers to abide therein forever.⁴⁴

It is amazing that stalwarts of theological schools of thought went to such terrible lengths misusing the name of the Prophet to simply give legitimacy to and bolster their own opinion.

4-Jurisprudential Rivalry

Islamic law has been interpreted by many jurists. The most prominent among them are Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 AH), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH), Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH). Although differences of opinion existed among them on many issues these great scholars guided people to the best of their ability in interpreting Islamic law based on their own ijtihad. Unfortunately, although these differences were minor in nature, followers of these great scholars and imams considered them to be major and eventually came to believe that their own particular imam's view was the right one and that of the others' wrong. Hence they condemned each other. To this extent, the controversy remained tolerable, but when these followers began to fabricate traditions in the name of the Prophet to not only support their respective schools of jurisprudence, but to also condemn prominent jurists by name, they crossed a limit the seriousness of which they should have been acutely aware. Examples of such fabricated traditions to support a particular view on a given matter are quoted below:

(1) The Prophet said that one who raised his hands in salah, his salah would not be accepted.⁴⁵ This tradition was fabricated to rebut what had been reported in authentic traditions that the Prophet and his

Companions raised their hands in salah. This is a striking example of prejudice on the part of the jurists' followers. Astonishingly they show little or no care for the sanctity of the Prophet's own genuine acts and utterances on the matter meaning that they gave greater value to the predominance of their respective school of jurisprudence. In other words if their blind approach cast aspersion on the authenticity of genuine traditions of the Prophet, it did not matter to them.

(2) Archangel Gabriel informed the Prophet that Allah commanded him to pray the salah in the manner of Gabriel and other angels in the seventh heaven: that is to "raise your hands in the beginning of prayer while saying *Allah Akbar*, and do the same while bending, and also while raising your head from a bending state. Verily, for everything there is a ladder; the ladder of salah is raising hands at each proclamation of *Allah Akbar*."⁴⁶ The supporters of raising hands in salah did not find the Prophet's and his Companions' practice in this regard sufficient and fabricated a tradition endorsing their view vehemently.

The insolent also boldly fabricated a tradition condemning the great jurist al-Shāfi'ī whilst admiring another Abū Ḥanīfah: "There will be a man namely Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī in my Ummah; he will be more harmful to my Ummah than Satan; and also there will be another man in my Ummah namely Abū Ḥanīfah; he will be the lamp of my Ummah, he will be the lamp of my Ummah."⁴⁷

5-Commercial Propaganda

Man is a material being and needs access to the resources of life. One of the ways to obtain these is to simply purchase them from someone else, and for this there needs to be an act of sale. From time immemorial man has been practicing the art of trade, buying and selling goods to meet the requirements of the market. All businesses, whether big or small, need some form of publicity to promote sales and where in modern times this takes the form of highly attractive and visually stunning advertisements both in electronic and print media, in the old days this system was not available. During the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries after hijrah, when Islamic rule had spread across the major part of the world, shopkeepers and businessmen needed to advertise their commodities and the only method available for commercial publicity was

verbal communication. It seems that businessmen resorted to using prophetic traditions for this purpose. Unfortunately, when they failed to find anything in Hadith literature to promote their goods, they dared to fabricate traditions in the name of the Prophet to make their businesses profitable and attract more and more customers. It is apparent in the sources that a number of traditions were fabricated in praise of pomegranates, date fruit, almonds, melons, grapes, bread, milk, vegetables, cucumbers, lentils, salt, dairy products, endives, chickens, egg-plants, woolen cloth etc. It is very likely that businessmen paid those capable of fabricating traditions in favor of their respective commodities. Even physicians followed suit, fabricating Hadith to promote sales of their medicine. Below are a few illustrative examples:

- (1) Every pomegranate fruit is injected with a seed of the heavenly pomegranate.
- (2) Watermelon is mercy and its sweetness like that of the melon in Paradise.
- (3) In the grape are things to eat and drink and to make raisins out of.
- (4) O Allah! Make us enjoy with Islam and the bread; if the bread was not there, we would not pray, fast, perform pilgrimage, and participate in war.
- (5) O ‘Alī! You must use salt because it serves as a cure for seventy diseases such as leprosy, white spots, and insanity.
- (6) After taking curd the Prophet used to utter these words: “O Allah! Grant us blessing in it and increase it for us.”
- (7) He who takes cucumber with meat is protected from leprosy.
- (8) You must use lentils because they soften the heart, increase tears, and seventy prophets blessed them.
- (9) Almond and cheese are both maladies, but after reaching the stomach they become a source of cure.
- (10) You must serve vegetables on the dining table because they chase Satan away.
- (11) On each leaf of endive is a drop of water from Paradise.
- (12) The eggplant is a cure for every disease and there is no harm therein.
- (13) If people knew the significance of dairy products, they would buy them even in exchange for gold in equal weight.

(14) The Prophet commanded the rich to take the goat and sheep and the poor the chicken.

(15) A man came to the Prophet and complained of a problem concerning his sexual prowess. The Prophet, then, advised him to take eggs and onion.

(16) Give your women during their menstruation period date fruit to eat; it will cause the baby thus born to be kind hearted; Mary took dates when Jesus was born; if Allah knew any other meal better than date fruit, He would have arranged it for her.⁴⁸

(17) You must wear woollen garments; it will give you the sweetness of faith in your hearts. You must wear woollen garments; it will help you feel less hungry. You must use woollen garments; you will realize its significance in the hereafter. The woollen garment causes the heart to think, and thinking leads to wisdom, and wisdom runs in the stomach like blood in the veins...⁴⁹

(18) He who has made a ring of carnelian stone and has engraved thereon – “This is but with the grace of Allah” – Allah will grant him all the good and the two angels who are always with him will love him.⁵⁰

(19) One who has made the stone of his ring out of ruby, Allah would keep the poverty away from him.⁵¹

(20) The stomach is the cistern of the body and all the veins are connected to it. If the stomach is healthy, the veins will remain healthy; if the stomach becomes sick, the veins will also become sick.⁵² This tradition was fabricated by a physician named Ibrāhīm ibn Jurayj. It seems he did so to promote his clinic and his services as a physician.⁵³

All these traditions have been fabricated in the name of the Prophet with a view to promoting businesses and attracting more and more customers.

6–Ambition to Earn a Livelihood and Acquire Fame

Some people prefer to earn a living in the easiest manner possible using their intelligence and creativity whilst at the same time seeking to build a reputation for themselves amongst the general populace as being somehow “knowledgeable” (scholars being highly regarded). They are by and large intrinsically lazy, hardly interested in working hard to

earn a respectable salary to meet their or their family's daily needs. During the peak of Islamic civilization, people of this nature would enter mosques and invite others to listen to them, relating stories of the past, including legends etc. In order to make the audience marvel at their oration, they would narrate traditions of their own making linked to the Prophet because in doing so they really succeeded in getting both money as well as praise. The Mosque was and still is a public place in Islamic society, in fact even more so during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods when the mosques were far more significant. Story tellers could easily gather a ready audience to listen to them and it was the wonderful nature of the stories and traditions that captured people's attention and gave story tellers an easy target. Islam teaches kindness towards the needy so when story tellers mesmerized audiences with the magic of their oration, people would donate generously. Much as today, people in the Islamic civilization developed a love for certain days and acts; if they came across prophetic traditions reflecting their own wishes and desires they would rejoice and story tellers all too aware of this human psyche exploited it well.

Once on the occasion of 10th of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, a story teller devoted his whole talk to the significance of that particular day. He did so in the name of the Prophet narrating a number of traditions. When asked as to the source of these traditions, he brazenly confessed that he had not learned them from any source but had fabricated them instantly.⁵⁴

One day Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn were praying in a mosque when they saw a story teller narrating a tradition in the name of the Prophet through a chain of narrators in which his direct sources, as he claimed, were themselves, Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Maʿīn. The tradition, which was so lengthy that it could cover twenty pages of a book, concerned making the declaration "There is no God but Allah," going on to say that Allah creates out of each word of the utterance a bird whose beak is made of gold and whose wings are made of coral. After he had finished, Ibn Maʿīn asked the story teller as to the source of the tradition he had just narrated. He cited, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, not actually knowing that the two were standing before him. Ibn Maʿīn then introduced himself and Ibn Ḥanbal making it very clear that the tradition the story teller had narrated on their authority

was unknown to them and hence a lie. The story teller, not prepared to be humiliated, argued that he had learned the traditions of the Prophet from some seventeen other sources with the same names, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn.⁵⁵ What a flagrant disregard for the sanctity of the chain of narrators in prophetic traditions!

In another incident a young man stood in the mosque of a small town with a view to seeking financial help from the people there. He made a statement on the significance of helping the needy Muslim, linking this to the Prophet and using the following chain for his narration: Abū Khalīfah, al-Walīd, Shuʿbah, Qatādah, Anas, the Prophet. He then claimed that his immediate source for the tradition was Abū Khalīfah. When asked by someone whether he had ever met Abū Khalīfah, his answer was in the negative. Upon this he was asked how he could possibly narrate from a source he had never seen. The young man felt humiliated and said: “Argumentation with me is against the normal etiquette; I have memorized this one chain of narrators; whenever I hear a tradition whatsoever, I use the same chain.”⁵⁶

Story tellers also used to fabricate traditions in which they exaggerated the position of previous prophets, the Prophet, some of his Companions, and also some prominent personalities in Islamic history. Some examples are given below in illustration:

(1) Anas ibn Mālīk reports that he and the Prophet met prophet Ilyās in a mountain pass where the Prophet talked to him for long; there came down, in the meantime, from heaven a tray full of dishes; after they took the food, a cloud appeared and in it went Prophet Ilyās toward Syria. He asked the Prophet whether the same kind of meal came down to him from heaven; he said that Archangel Gabriel brought him such a tray of food once every forty days.⁵⁷ Two reporters, Yazīd al-Mūṣalī and Abū Ishāq al-Jarashī, make this tradition unreliable.

(2) Shaykh ibn Abī Khālid fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet stating that on the ring stone of prophet Sulaymān was engraved the phrase: “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.”⁵⁸

(3) Maysarah ibn Ibrāhīm al-Khāḍīm fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet that every Friday Allah frees from hellfire one

hundred thousand people minus two persons who are from his Ummah; these two are deprived of their freedom from the fire because they hate Abū Bakr and ʿUmar; they are not Muslims...; and that a curse be on those who hate Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī.⁵⁹

Sources such as Muslim have recorded a Prophetic tradition on the authority of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that there will be a person in Yemen namely Oways al-Qaranī, and whosoever meets him should request him to ask Allah for his forgiveness.⁶⁰ This simple prophesy has been enlarged by the story tellers. The tradition thus fabricated runs at least the length of two pages. The beginning of this tradition as narrated by story tellers commences:

Once when the Prophet was in the courtyard of the Kaʿbah, Archangel Gabriel descended and informed the Prophet that in the near future there would be a man in his Ummah, who would be empowered by Allah to make intercession for as many people as the cumulative number of people in the tribes, Rabīʿah and Muḍar. When Gabriel advised the Prophet to ask him, in case he met him, to make intercession for his Ummah, the Prophet enquired about his name; the name, as told by Gabriel, was Oways.⁶¹

7—Overenthusiasm in the “Service” of Islam

Psychologically, religious minded people may be classified into three main categories: (1) those who keep their religiosity to their own selves, unmindful of others, (2) those who try their best to be religious in the real sense of the word and try to convey their religious message properly to others, and (3) those who impose too much religiosity on themselves and feel eager to attract others to opt for the same kind of strict spiritual life. It is the third category of people who go to excessive lengths to bring others into their fold. Muslim history is full of descriptions of such people who were very pious in a religious sense and who tried if they saw a differing level of practice in society to persuade people to be as religious as they were. Unfortunately, although they naturally used the Qurʾan and Sunnah for their call, it seems that they considered the exhortations in the Qurʾan and Sunnah to be inadequate and hence did not find it wrong to fabricate new traditions in the name of the

Prophet. These were concocted either to frighten people of the dire consequences of their belligerence toward piety (that is piety defined according to their own strict standards), or to lure them to the unexpectedly tremendous reward awaiting them for even minor religious deeds. It never entered their hearts that what they were doing in terms of fabricating prophetic traditions was in effect attributing lies to the Prophet and hence committing a great wrong.

In Baghdad there lived a very famous pious person by the name of Ghulām Khalīl. He was highly respected by both the people and the ruler of Baghdad so much so that upon his death the markets of Baghdad were closed in mourning. Yet, this same man when asked as to the source of his traditions from the Prophet had answered that he and others of his kind had fabricated them in order to soften the hearts of people.⁶² He did not even shudder at the warning of the Prophet concerning those who fabricated traditions in his name.

Noah ibn Abī Maryam was a man of knowledge and piety. Deeply concerned by people's indifference to the Qur'an he, in good faith, fabricated traditions in the name of the Prophet on the authority of 'Ikrimah from Ibn 'Abbās, pointing to the significance and great rewards of reading Qur'anic surahs, from *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* all the way to *Sūrah al-Nās*. Disturbed by these unheard of traditions scholars of Hadith requested Ibn Abī Maryam to verify the truth of his statements, at which point he categorically stated: "When I saw people turning away from the Qur'an and paying attention to the fiqh of Abū Ḥanīfah and the history of Ibn Ishāq, I fabricated these traditions in order to do right service to the religion."⁶³ Needless to say reading any portion of the Qur'an is hugely beneficial for mankind.

Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarī fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet that if one read from dawn to the time of the morning salah, *Subḥān Allah wa bi Ḥamdihi; Subḥān Allah al-ʿAẓīm; Astaghfir Allah*, a hundred times, the world would come to him subservient, and that Allah would create out of each word recited an angel who would pray for him to be rewarded until the Day of Judgment.⁶⁴

Ishāq ibn Wahb fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet that when Allah loves someone, He reserves him for Himself and does not let him become busy with his wife and children."⁶⁵ This tradition

was coined to advise people to cut their links with worldly affairs and to confine themselves with devotion to Allah.

Ibn al-Jawzī has recorded fabricated traditions in the name of the Prophet which describe the significance and reward of around thirty-six special kinds of Salah such as that on the nights of Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, *Ṣalāh al-Tasbīḥ*, that in the month of Rajab, that on 10th of Muharram, that in the middle of the month of Shaʿbān etc. He has declared all these traditions fabricated and rejected them as lies.⁶⁶ It is very clear that these traditions were fabricated to attract people to act upon them.

Ayyūb ibn Mudrik fabricated a tradition in the name of the Prophet which mentions that Allah and His angels shower their blessings upon those who wear a turban on Friday.⁶⁷

8—Avarice for State Patronage

In every society people vary in their approach to those in power, with some preferring to keep their distance except when unavoidable, and others preferring to keep a close watch on officials to keep them in check and rectify them when in error. There is another type however, who have a cynical approach to power, seeking personal gain through obsequious servility, and groveling flattery. During the Prophet's time and the reign of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs there was no room for sycophancy. However, under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, sycophants gained the opportunity to flourish and fabricated traditions in the name of the Prophet on subjects that would amuse the rulers and state governors. Amongst the fabricated traditions are those which praise particular acts associated with the ruling dynasty, and admire places related to those in power. In sum it seems that these traditions eulogizing cities and certain acts were fabricated in a bid to please certain rulers and authorities.

Abbasid rulers in general and Hārūn al-Rashīd in particular were very fond of concubines, and it is most likely that traditions concerning the significance of slave girls, such as those fabricated by ʿUthmān ibn ʿAṭāʾ and Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar, were meant to cause delight to those who could afford them. One such fabricated tradition reads: "You must take care of concubines because they have highly blessed wombs and they are excellent in conceiving and giving birth to children."⁶⁸

Many traditions were fabricated in praise of the Abbasid dynasty. It seems the objective behind such fabrications was to seek the pleasure of Abbasid rulers. Some examples are given below.⁶⁹

- (1) The Prophet said about his uncle al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib: “This is my uncle, the father of forty Caliphs such as al-Safāḥ, al-Mansūr, and al-Mahdī.”
- (2) The Prophet said that the Abbasid dynasty would have a double edge over Umayyad rule in terms of duration.
- (3) The Prophet said: “Once Archangel Gabriel came down with a black robe and black turban. I asked as to the wisdom behind that dress. The angel said: ‘This is the dress of the rulers from the descendents of your uncle al-ʿAbbās.’ I, then, asked him whether they would be right. The angel said: ‘Yes.’” The Prophet then prayed in favor of al-ʿAbbās and his descendents.
- (4) The Prophet said: “al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib is my father, my uncle, my guardian, and my successor.”

As mentioned, traditions in praise of certain cities seem to have been fabricated in order to please certain sections of society. Some examples are given below:⁷⁰

- (1) In praise of Jeddah: “Four gates of Paradise are opened into the world, Alexandria, ʿAsqalān, Quzwayn, and Jeddah; the position of Jeddah is superior to these cities just as the House of God in Makkah is superior to all the other mosques in the world.”
- (2) In praise of Asqalan: “Allah will raise from the cemetery of Asqalan seventy thousand martyrs who will be empowered to intercede for as many people as the population of Rabīʿah and Muḍar tribes. Asqalan is the bride of Paradise.”
- (3) In praise of Naṣībayn: “The Prophet was introduced to a city which he liked very much and asked Archangel Gabriel as to the name of the city. When the Archangel referred to its name as Naṣībayn, the Prophet prayed: ‘O Allah! Expedite Muslims’ victory over it and put therein blessing for the Muslims’.”
- (4) In praise of Basra: “The Prophet advised Anas ibn Mālīk to settle in a city known as Basra and take care of its mosques and markets.”

- (5) In praise of various cities of Khurasan: Ibn al-Jawzī has recorded a long tradition in praise of various cities of Khurasan such as Merv, Taliqan, Bukhara, and Khwarizm etc. This tradition might have been fabricated to earn the pleasure of any particular ruler of Khurasan or several rulers of that state.

The Contribution of Muslim Scholars in Identifying Fabricated Traditions

Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ are the heirs of the Prophet and as such they have always been entrusted with the task of continuing his mission. As history bears witness, the knowledgeable in Muslim societies throughout the world have always risen to the occasion and done their best to perform their duty. One of the tasks the Prophet Muhammad carried out in his life was the differentiation between truth and falsehood. His successors have to further this cause, constantly identifying the true from the false. When the practice of fabrication surfaced, the ‘*ulamā*’ took immediate action and did their utmost to protect the sacred heritage of prophetic traditions from any form of corruption.

Muslim scholars took this attempt at falsification as a challenge, and their services in this regard may be classified into six categories:

- (1) development of the *sanad* system in the Prophetic traditions
- (2) campaigning for Hadith narration only from the most reliable sources
- (3) investigation of the reporters of Hadith
- (4) biographical dictionaries about the reporters
- (5) compilation of works on genuine traditions of the Prophet, and
- (6) compilation of works containing unreliable and fabricated traditions.

1–Development of the Sanad System in Prophetic Traditions

In the beginning Hadith narration was not based on a chain of narrators. Mere reference to the Prophet in a statement was considered sufficient evidence for its genuineness. None questioned the sources of Hadith. However, when narration of Hadith became a virtual fashion with almost everything reasonable or unreasonable being narrated in

the name of the Prophet, great figures of the Muslim Ummah immediately proposed a viable solution: each hadith was to be prefaced by a chain of narrators along with the text of the narration. Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn declared this requirement of knowledge, that is provision of a chain of narrators (*sanad*), as *dīn* (Islamic way).⁷¹ ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubārak stated that in the narration of Hadith there were pillars (chains of narrators) which stood between scholars and the people in general.⁷²

2–Campaign for Hadith Narration to come only from Reliable Sources

Some people asked one of the great sons of ‘Umar, al-Qāsim ibn ‘Ubayd Allah ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar concerning a matter. When he expressed his inability to answer the question, Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd took exception to this coming as it did from a descendent of the family of ‘Umar. Yaḥyā said to al-Qāsim that it was quite strange that he could not answer the question for he was after all the son of two great leaders of knowledge, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar. Upon this, al-Qāsim said: “The most reprehensible thing in the eyes of the knowledgeable is that I say something without knowledge or that I narrate from those who are unreliable.”⁷³

The *‘ulamā’* stressed in their sermons, private meetings, and public addresses the need to narrate Hadith only from reliable sources. The basis of this campaign was the Prophetic warning, as reported by Abū Hurayrah that: “Sometime later, liars and charlatans will narrate *aḥādīth* which you or your fathers never heard of; so be careful, keep away from them lest they should make you deviate from the right path and put you in trouble.”⁷⁴

Bushayr al-‘Adawiyy went to ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās and narrated *aḥādīth*. When he noticed indifference on the part of the Companion, he complained to Ibn ‘Abbās about his inattention to his narrations. Upon this Ibn ‘Abbās remarked:

We narrated Prophetic traditions with conviction that no lie could ever be attributed to the Prophet. But when people began going to anyone and everyone, whether informed or ill informed, we maintained extra care in the narration of Hadith from the Prophet; we did not take Prophetic traditions except from those whom we knew very well.⁷⁵

A document containing ʿAlī's judgments was presented to ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAbbās; he erased most of the information contained therein because it had nothing to do with ʿAlī.⁷⁶ After ʿAlī's death, the ʿulamā' never accepted any report concerning the fourth Caliph except through the students of ʿAbd Allah ibn Masʿūd.⁷⁷

Although Abū al-Zinād knew around a hundred narrators of Hadith in Madinah, who were all pious, he and others never took Prophetic traditions from them because they were declared as unsuitable sources.⁷⁸

Saʿd ibn Ibrāhīm stated: "It was not appropriate to narrate from the Prophet except through the most reliable sources (*thaqāt*)."⁷⁹ Ṭāūs ibn Kaysān advised Sulaymān ibn Mūsā to narrate Prophetic traditions only from those who were known to him for a long time.⁸⁰

3—Investigation of Hadith Reporters

Hadith experts launched a movement to establish who exactly the individuals being cited in the multitude chains of narrators in Prophetic traditions actually were. Investigating the life of these narrators was a very delicate task, as was the issue of declaring whether they were authentic, weak, unreliable, or fabricators. Initially, some scholars hesitated to pronounce judgment on anyone's character, especially declaring someone to be a liar. This was due to the Islamic injunction to abstain from backbiting and accusing others of lying. However, they later reasoned that exposing a narrator's identity was necessary for the sake of maintaining the sanctity of *aḥādīth*. For instance, Shuʿbah ibn al-Ḥajjāj often invited his friends to investigate the identity of narrators with this statement: "Let us backbite for the sake of Allah." He was, at times, advised to refrain from doing this, but would reply: "Refraining from inquiry into the identity of narrators is not an option because it is a religious matter."⁸¹

Al-Jurjānī discussed the issue with Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal confiding that he found it hard to declare that this or that narrator was weak or a fabricator. Ibn Ḥanbal consoled him with the advice: "If you and I keep silent on this matter, how will people in general know which narration is authentic and which problematic?"⁸²

Muslim scholars were of the view that those introducing new and foreign ideas to Islam and fabricating traditions in the name of the

Prophet were more formidable than open opponents because the latter harmed Islam openly whereas the former attempted to corrupt Islam from within.⁸³

Quite a considerable number of scholars were engaged in investigating the position of the narrators of Hadith. The most prominent among them were: Shu‘bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Wakī‘ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubārak, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī, Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath Abū Dāwūd, Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn, Murrah al-Hamdānī, Ḥammād ibn Zayd, Ḥammād ibn Salamah, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī.

As a result of rigorous investigations into the identity of Ḥadith narrators, a very clear picture emerged of those who were trustworthy and those who were not. So rigorous was this analysis in fact that not a single narrator was left unidentified as to his position, that is of being either authentic, weak or a fabricator. Bearing in mind the variations which existed in the views of investigators concerning narrators (whose number runs into around a million), we can divide their classification into four main categories: (1) those whose authenticity is unanimous, (2) those whose weakness is non-controversial, (3) those concerning whom there exists controversy among scholars, and (4) those who have been unanimously declared as liars and fabricators.

The list of those narrators who have been identified unanimously as fabricators or unreliable is long. Prominent among those declared as liars and fabricators are: Wahb ibn Wahb al-Qaḍī, Muḥammad ibn al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī, Muhammad ibn Marwān al-Suddī, Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd al-Shāmī, Abū Dāwūd al-Nakha‘ī, Ishaq ibn Najīḥ, Ghayāth ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, al-Mughīrah ibn Sa‘īd al-Kūfī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Juwaybārī, Ma’mūn ibn Aḥmad al-Harawī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Ukāshah al-Kirmānī, Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Kānkānī, Muḥammad ibn Tamīm al-Fārābī, Muḥammad ibn Ziyād al-Yashkurī, Noah ibn Abī Maryam, Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju‘fiyy.

Scholars not only identified the position or the credibility of the reporters but also announced their findings in every academic meeting, relevant forum, and discussion concerning Hadith. They did this to

make ordinary people, as well as students of Islamic disciplines, aware of the identity and reliability of Hadith narrators.

4-Biographical Dictionaries of Hadith Narrators

Despite their achievements Muslim scholars nevertheless felt dissatisfied. Their painstaking investigations into exposing the identity of Hadith narrators needed to be consolidated and put into writing for wide dissemination. Rather than leaving information scattered in Hadith collections, as had initially been the case, investigation reports were formally compiled into a huge database composed of proper biographical dictionaries. These collections consist of two types: those on narrators in general, and those specifically on narrators considered to be weak, fabricators or liars.

Among the most remarkable biographical dictionaries to have been compiled on narrators in general were:

- (1) *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Muḥammad ibn Saʿd (d.230 AH).
- (2) *Al-Tārikh al-Kabīr* by Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d.256 AH).
- (3) *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* by Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d.327 AH).
- (4) *Al-Taqrīb* by Yaḥyā ibn Sharf al-Nawawī (d.676 AH).
- (5) *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmāʾ al-Rijāl* by Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (d.742 AH).
- (6) *Mīzān al-Iʿtidāl* by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahbī (d.748 AH).
- (7) *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* by Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d.852 AH).

The most widely respected works on weak reporters and fabricators of Hadith are:

- (1) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Madāʾinī (d.234 AH).
- (2) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Barqī (d.249 AH).
- (3) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī.
- (4) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Ibrāhīm ibn Yaʿqūb al-Jūzjānī (d.259 AH).
- (5) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa al-Matrūkūn* by Saʿīd ibn ʿAmr al-Bardhaʿī (d.292 AH).

- (6) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Abū Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Jārūd (d.299 AH).
- (7) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa al-Matrūkūn* by Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (d.303 AH).
- (8) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Zakariyyā ibn Yahyā al-Sājī (d.307 AH).
- (9) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dūlābī (d.310 AH).
- (10) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr al-ʿUqaylī (d.322 AH).
- (11) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Abū Nuʿaym ʿAbd al-Malik al-Jurjānī (d.323 AH).
- (12) *Al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tamīmī (d.333 AH).
- (13) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Saʿīd ibn ʿUthmān ibn al-Sakan (d.353 AH).
- (14) *Kitāb al-Majrūḥīn* by Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān (d.354 AH).
- (15) *Kitāb al-Kāmil fī Ḍuʿafāʾ al-Rijāl* by Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAdī ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d.365 AH).
- (16) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Azdī (d.374 AH).
- (17) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa al-Matrūkūn* by ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar al-Dārquṭnī (d.385 AH).
- (18) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn Shāhīn (d.385 AH).
- (19) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥākim (d.405 AH).
- (20) *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī (d.597 AH).

5—*Compilations of Genuine Prophetic Traditions*

Goldsmiths well know that gold excavated from mines is not fully pure, but rather a coarse mixture of gold elements and non-gold components. They prefer to concentrate on the separation of the gold from the entire mass and sideline the remaining elements. Muslim scholars can be likened to goldsmiths. In much the same way, their approach is to sift through all the traditions attributed to the Prophet and isolate the genuine from the rest. To do so they have developed certain criteria to check the authenticity of reports and to distinguish the original from the fake. Their efforts have resulted in the compilation of authentic Hadith works. However, although great in number not all these compilations are of the same level of authenticity, and the most authentic among them are:

- (1) *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī.
- (2) *Al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī (d.261 AH).
- (3) *Sunan* by Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath (d.275 AH).
- (4) *Sunan* by Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d.279 AH).
- (5) *Sunan* by Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī.
- (6) *Al-Muwatta'* by Mālik ibn Anas.

6—Compilations of Fabricated Traditions

Traditions fabricated in the name of the Prophet should have been discarded centuries ago, yet they were not. Instead and despite labeling them as such, Hadith scholars memorized and transferred them to the next generation with a clear message that they were lies attributed to the Prophet. Later generations of scholars preserved them with a view to reminding future scholars and students of what had been fabricated, how and by whom. These compilations are few in number, with some not surviving the vicissitudes of time. The most famous among existing compilations are:

- (1) *Al-Mawḍū'āt* by Abū Sa'īd Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Aṣḥānī (d.414 AH).
- (2) *Tadhkirah al-Mawḍū'āt* by Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d.507 AH).
- (3) *Al-Abāṭīl* by Abū 'Abd Allah al-Ḥusayn ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jūzqānī (d.543 AH).
- (4) *Al-Mawḍū'āt* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī.
- (5) *Al-Asrār al-Marfū'ah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḍū'ah* by Nūr al-Dīn Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī (d.1014 AH).
- (6) *Al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'ah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḍū'ah* by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī (d.1250 AH).

Each work contains detailed and solid evidence to prove that the traditions recorded therein were apocryphal, and fabricated by liars, paying special attention to the chain of narrators cited in each recorded tradition. They further demonstrate how fabricators used the names of reliable sources in their chains of fabrications.

The Contribution of Muslim Scholars to the Authentication of Hadith

The *Sanad* and *Matn* of Hadith

AS DEFINED EARLIER THE HADITH consist of reports containing information about the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, deeds, decisions, and tacit approvals, as well as eyewitness descriptions of his personal features. Another term used as an alternative for Hadith is *Sunnah* which literally means way, manner, habit, practice, custom etc, and technically denotes the ways and practices of the Prophet. At times, the term Hadith is also used to refer to sayings and doings attributed to the Companions of the Prophet. Technically, each hadith is comprised of two components: a chain of narrators (*sanad*) and content/text (*matn*). The *sanad* or chain refers to the names of the sources through whom the utterances or practices of the Prophet have been reported and this chain can be long or short. The words of the report, which communicate what the Prophet said or did, constitute the *matn* or text. *Matn* may also be long or short.

Authentication of Hadith: Brief Historical Background

During the time of the Prophet and around three decades after he passed away not a single question was raised concerning the chain of narrators (*sanad*). During this period entire focus was placed on the text of Hadith (*matn*) only. Verification of Hadith can be traced back to the time of the first Muslim Caliph, Abū Bakr (d. 13 AH) who refused

to accept any hadith narrated by one single Companion unless confirmed by another Companion; this was to safeguard against the possibility of any intentional or unintentional error(s) creeping into a report made by only one source.¹ This approach continued during the Caliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (13–23 AH) who was more strict than his predecessor in accepting a hadith. For instance, in one particular case Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī (d.50 AH) narrated a hadith to ʿUmar stating that “The Prophet said: ‘One who asks for permission three times and gets no response should leave’.” ʿUmar however refused to accept this without corroboration and requested Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī to provide a witness to verify the Prophetic statement, only being satisfied once the witness, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d.65 AH), had been produced.² ʿUmar explained his actions to Abū Mūsā stating that he was extraordinarily careful about narrating Hadith of the Prophet.³ Scholars from the generation of the Companions hesitated in accepting a hadith without further verification.⁴

ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (d.68 AH) mentions that “in the beginning we used to listen attentively to any hadith narrated to us, no matter by whom, but when people narrated all kinds of things attributing them to the Prophet, we did not accept any report aside from that which we recognized to be authentic.”⁵ It seems that this careful approach was adopted by the Companions as a result of the explosive situation which developed after the murder of the third Caliph, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d.35 AH), and the civil war that erupted between factions which supported ʿAlī and those which supported Muʿāwiyah. This situation was in turn exploited by those with vested interests who fabricated *aḥādīth* on the authority of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.40 AH).⁶ The *ʿulamāʾ* were not oblivious to the realities of events occurring around them, and acted swiftly, doing their best to verify traditions attributed to the Prophet. If a report was narrated on the authority of ʿAlī, the knowledgeable (*ahl al-ʿilm*) did not accept it until it had been confirmed by the disciples of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d.32 AH), one of the most knowledgeable Companions in the field of *tafsīr* and Hadith. Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d.110 AH), a highly acclaimed scholar of *tafsīr* and Hadith, mentions very clearly concerning the authentication of Hadith after the civil war that:

People never asked about the chain of narrators, but after the civil war requested reporters to identify their sources. If the chain consisted of names from the *ahl al-sunnah* [the orthodox], the hadith was accepted as authentic; if the chain comprised people from the *ahl al-bid'ah* [the innovators], it was rejected as unreliable.⁷

Scholars from later generations categorized a hadith as authentic only when they had established that all its narrators were highly authentic. Ṭā'ūs ibn Kaysān (d. 106 AH) exhorted his students to accept *aḥādīth* only from those who were reliable.⁸ Abū al-Zinād (d. 130 AH) mentions that there were around a hundred well-known pious figures in Madinah during his time, but they were not considered reliable in Hadith.⁹ From the second half of the first century after hijrah the chain of narrators assumed a significant place in Hadith authentication. It is this significance of the chain that 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181 AH) refers to in his comment: "The chain of narrators holds religious sanctity. Had the chains not existed, anyone would have uttered anything he wished."¹⁰

Once he rejected a tradition attributed to the Prophet as unreliable merely on the grounds that the last narrator in its chain, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār (d. uncertain, probably in the 2nd century after hijrah), had not disclosed the sources that lay between him and the Prophet.¹¹ Towards the end of the first century after hijrah scholars had developed a fully-fledged discipline of knowledge directly related to the study of Hadith, known as the *'ilm asmā' al-rijāl* (biographical dictionaries). This knowledge of narrators of Hadith was then extensively used to check the authenticity of a chain. If a chain was found to be reliable, the text reported through that chain was identified as authentic. In case of any problem in the chain, the report was classified as weak or unreliable. Hadith authentication remained in verbal form for around 140 years after hijrah. The first works written on authentic traditions were those compiled by Sa'īd ibn Abī 'Arūbah (d. 156 AH) and al-Rabī' ibn Ṣabīḥ (d. 160 AH).¹² These works were followed by a number of compilations of traditions, the most prominent among them being those compiled by Mālik ibn Anas, Ibn Jurayj (d. 150 AH), al-Awzā'ī (d. 157 AH), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161 AH), Ḥammād ibn Salamah (d. 167 AH), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and Ishāq ibn Rāhwayh (d. 238 AH).

By the time we come to the era of al-Bukhārī, innumerable compilations of traditions existed. However, these works were full of problems. Al-Bukhārī embarked upon a mammoth task, to produce a work comprising the most authentic *aḥādīth* available, and for which he had to select traditions from a mass of 600,000 *aḥādīth*.¹³ Likewise Muslim selected *aḥādīth* for his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from a bulk of around 300,000 reports.¹⁴ The works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were followed by many others. All these compilations of Hadith have one feature in common, the authentication of Hadith through authentication of their chain of reporters (*sanad*). However, one cannot identify any work of Hadith in which reports have been recorded based on both verification of text as well as authentication of chain. Scattered comments and observations on certain *aḥādīth*, from a textual perspective, can be attributed to some scholars, but, on the whole, serious efforts are missing from the scholastic legacy.

Evaluation of Chain and Text

Hadith experts developed five universally acceptable criteria to determine the credibility and authenticity of Hadith:

- (1) continuity of the chain (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*),
- (2) integrity of narrators' character (*al-ʿadālah*),
- (3) precision of the report (*al-ḍabt*),
- (4) non-deficiency (*ghayr al-ʿillah*), and
- (5) non-aberrance (*ʿadm al-shudhūd*).¹⁵

The first three criteria are exclusively concerned with verifying the chain of a hadith whilst the remaining two are applicable to both the chain and the text. If a hadith fulfils all these five criteria, it is declared authentic. If it contains any defect failing to meet any of these five criteria, it is described as weak. Ibn Kathīr summarises this succinctly when he states that the authentic hadith is the one whose chain of narrators are all continuously connected to each other, possess integrity of character, and demonstrate powerful memory, and one which is free from any aberrance and defect.¹⁶ As for the weak hadith, it is simply one which remains short of fulfilling the conditions of the authentic one.¹⁷

Given their importance we will now examine these five criteria in a little more detail.

Continuity of the Chain: The chain of transmitters must be unbroken in order for the hadith to be acceptable. That is, none of the transmitters must be missing from the chain of narrators. Furthermore, each transmitter must also have heard the hadith in question directly from the transmitter before him. Each chain must link directly back to the Prophet or any of his Companions.¹⁸ The position of the Companion in the chain is obvious in that he/she would have met the Prophet and learned from him. The only thing to be verified concerning the transmitter reporting from the Prophet is whether he is a Companion or not. Once it is confirmed that he/she is a Companion of the Prophet, nothing further is checked concerning the transmitter. Other narrators after the Companion are thoroughly investigated as to their connection with their respective immediate sources; scholars minutely scrutinize when and where the two narrators met each other, who was born when and died when etc. For example, if we construct a theoretical chain consisting of the letters A-F we see that: A reports from B who reports from C who reports from D who reports from E who reports from F who reports from the Prophet himself. In terms of the criteria, continuity of the chain denotes that A really met and interacted with B who did the same with C who did the same with D who did the same with E who did the same with F who is a Companion of the Prophet. If investigation confirms that, for instance, there is a gap of time or space between E and F, then this means that E is transmitting a lie that he heard from F, at which point the hadith concerned is considered doubtful as to its authenticity.

Integrity of Character (al-ʿAdālah): The narrator in a chain must be a believer in the real sense of the word, a physically and mentally mature person, free from iniquity with no sign of any human indignity in his character or in his practice.¹⁹ The criterion is comprehensive. Disbelief or hypocrisy, as well as insanity and biological immaturity, on the part of any narrator render him unreliable as to integrity of character. The narrator should not have been reported to have done anything wrong to anyone on any occasion. If a narrator does not pray (salah), does not fast, commits some sin, is found to be involved in

frivolous acts, or begs from the public, he is immediately disqualified from fulfilling the criterion of integrity of character.

Precision of the Report (al-Ḍabt): It must be verified that the narrator is in possession of a strong and sound memory, and not suffering from weakness in this regard. In addition he should not be found making gross mistakes in his delivery but must convey information accurately; he should not be forgetful or unconscious of what he takes from his source; and he should also not have too much illusions.²⁰ Any kind of defect in the precision and accuracy of the report, whether from memory or documented material, renders the narrator weak and unreliable.

Non-Deficiency (Ghayr al-ʿIllah): For a hadith to be declared authentic there should be no deficiency within it, whether in text, chain of transmission or both. A deficiency or defect (*ʿillah*) in a hadith denotes something obscure, hidden, or reprehensible in either its chain of narrators or in the text of its report, even though the hadith may initially have appeared to be free of any faults. This deficiency might be due to any one of the following or other factors: (1) a particular narrator in the chain is detected to be alone in making the report concerned, (2) the text of a report stands in contrast to others, (3) a *Tābiʿī* narrator reports directly from the Prophet, (4) the report contains sayings or doings of a Companion, and not of the Prophet, and (5) a Hadith enters another Hadith (meaning that two different traditions get mixed with each other or someone else's statement is inserted into that of the Prophet).²¹

Al-Khair Abadi explains that deficiency in the text can be of various kinds: (1) the text of a tradition goes against the Qur'an, (2) the text is in contrast with the very objective of Islam, (3) the text clashes with established history, (4) the text appears to be irrational, (5) the text contradicts general observation, (6) the text contains information about reward and punishment disproportionately, and (7) the text comprises unsound words and meanings.²²

Non-Aberrance (ʿAdm al-Shudhūdh): Aberrance (*shudhūdh*) in Hadith means non-conformity, that is a report transmitted by an authentic narrator which contains something contrasting with other traditions narrated by contemporaries who are either stronger than, or on a par with him in memory or in the precision of the report.²³

Obviously, this defect is related to the text of the report. Aberrance can be in five forms: addition (*ziyadah*), inversion (*qalb*), confusion (*iḍtirāb*), insertion (*idrāj*), and mispronunciation (*taṣḥīf*).

Addition (*ziyadah*) refers to some addition in the original statement of the Hadith because of which the very nature of the Prophetic command changes. For example, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar decreed that the Prophet prescribed one standard cup (*ṣā‘*) of date fruit or barely as *zakāt al-fiṭr* (an obligatory charity at the end of the month of Ramadan) for all people from the Muslim community.²⁴ But upon investigation it was discovered that the last words “from the Muslim community” were an addition made by some narrator.

Muslim has recorded the same tradition by Ibn ‘Umar through five chains of narrators, three of which contain the addition and two of which do not.²⁵ With these additional words the nature of the command changes. Without the addition the command of *zakāt al-fiṭr* becomes compulsory for all; with the addition however, it remains confined to only Muslims. Such a defect in the text renders the hadith unreliable.²⁶

Inversion (*qalb*) signifies change in the word order of a Hadith. For example, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah Muslim has recorded a tradition of the Prophet concerning the divine protection of seven categories of people on the Day of Judgment. The sixth category mentioned states: “The one who did charity work and concealed it to the extent that his right hand did not know what his left hand spent in charity.” According to known practice, the right hand was used to give charity, but this tradition also mentions the left hand as a giver of charity. A narrator has changed the word order in the report. The original statement might have been: “...that his left hand did not know what his right hand spent in charity.”²⁷

Confusion (*iḍtirāb*) can be defined as variations in reports on the same matter through the same source. For instance, al-Khair Abadi gives five traditions on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās which he believes refer to the same case but because the reports vary from each other have led to the occurrence of confusion. All five traditions are quoted below:

- (1) A man checked with the Prophet whether he should do compensatory fasting on behalf of his mother who had passed away. The Prophet's answer was in the affirmative.
- (2) A woman consulted the Prophet on whether she should do compensatory fasting on behalf of her dead sister. The Prophet allowed her to do so.
- (3) A woman asked the Prophet whether she could observe fasting on behalf of her mother who was dead. The Prophet permitted her to do this.
- (4) Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah enquired of the Prophet whether he could fulfill the vow his mother could not fulfill before her death. The Prophet gave him permission.
- (5) Sa'd asked the Prophet as to what kind of charity work he should do on behalf of his dead mother. The Prophet advised him to build a source of water for public consumption.²⁸

Insertion (*idrāʿi*) can be defined as the inclusion of a non-Prophetic statement into a hadith. For example, the Prophet taught 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd *al-Tashahhud* for salah and said: "after reciting *al-Tashahhud*, you may remain seated if you wish; you may also leave if you wish to do so."²⁹ Al-Nawawī claims that the last part "after reciting *al-Tashahhud*, you may remain seated if you wish; you may also leave if you wish to do so" is Ibn Mas'ūd's statement, which became inserted in the text as a statement of the Prophet.³⁰

Mispronunciation (*tashīf*) refers to the misunderstanding of a word or words in a hadith. For example, the Prophet prohibited people from gathering in circles (*ḥilaq*) before Friday prayer. But the word *ḥilaq* is pronounced by many reporters and *muḥaddithūn* as *al-ḥalq* (shaving of the hair).³¹ Obviously, due to the change of pronunciation the word changed in form as well as meaning.

The Role of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

Any history of Hadith compilation remains incomplete without mention of al-Bukhārī (194 AH–256 AH) and Muslim (204 AH–261 AH). Although other scholars of Hadith such as al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal are given great recognition for their

contributions to the preservation of Hadith, al-Bukhārī and Muslim are held in special regard. Ranked as two of the most eminent and respected Hadith scholars of all time, their method of classification and examination, based on well-defined criteria, laid the foundation of Hadith authentication and methodology as we know it today and as followed by others who came after them. It is little wonder therefore that al-Bukhārī and Muslim hold the status of teachers and pioneers in the field of Hadith authentication.

Imam al-Bukhārī

Al-Bukhārī was born in the city of al-Bukhara (in what is today known as Uzbekistan). His great grandfather al-Mughīrah was originally a Magian (fire worshipper) by religion but became the first person in the lineage of al-Bukhārī to become a Muslim when he converted to Islam at the hands of the governor of Bukhara. His father, who was also a student of Hadith, had the privilege to meet and hear from Mālik ibn Anas. Al-Bukhārī began to acquire knowledge at a very tender age memorizing both the Qur'an and the Hadith in addition to investigating the latter. By the time he was sixteen, he had not only memorized the books of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak and Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāh but also developed a true understanding of their content. His in depth study of Hadith began in Makkah at the age of sixteen where, within a year or two of his stay, he commenced compiling the verdicts and statements of the Companions and their disciples. It was in Makkah that al-Bukhārī composed his work "*al-Tārīkh*." Once someone suggested to al-Bukhārī's teacher, Ishāque ibn Rāhwayh, to compile a book containing the traditions of the Prophet. Al-Bukhārī was inspired by this request and decided to embark on the project himself. He recorded nine thousand and eighty two traditions of the Prophet in a masterpiece entitled, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. This selection was in itself distilled from a colossal six hundred thousand *aḥādīth* he had memorized, a staggering feat by any standard. In fact, the actual number of traditions cited in the book is two thousand six hundred and two, but as he repeats his traditions, the total number swells to almost four times higher. The work contains ninety-seven chapters arranged along *fiqhī* themes. Before including any Prophetic traditions in his work al-Bukhārī subjected each and every tradition to the strictest possible

scrutiny in terms of its chain of narrators. It is for this reason that his work of Hadith is taken as the most authentic compiled on the Prophetic traditions. Despite this rigor, some Hadith experts such as al-Dārquṭnī challenged the position of around seventy of the traditions recorded by al-Bukhārī. Ibn Ḥajar has proved al-Dārquṭnī's criticism untenable.

Imam Muslim

Muslim was born in Nīsāpur, a city in the Razavi Khorasan province in northeastern Iran. He began studying Hadith at the age of twelve, learning from such eminent scholars as Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā and Ishāque ibn Rāhwayh. His ardent study of Hadith led him to travel widely and considerably to such places as Makkah, Madinah, Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, Syria, Balkh, Egypt, and Rayy etc. Out of the many works he authored, the most important is indisputably *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ* containing a collection of around four thousand traditions. Imam Muslim followed the same rigorous and painstaking methodology of Hadith examination as al-Bukhārī, the only difference being in their grading of some reporters; al-Bukhārī felt that some of Muslim's chains of narrators were not perfectly safe from criticism. In addition Hadith critics suggest there are more problems in Muslim's work than those in al-Bukhārī's. Nevertheless, the beauty of Muslim's work lies in its particular arrangement of traditions, recording as it does all authentic reports on the same subject in one place, and not scattering them in different areas as al-Bukhārī had done.

Authentication of Hadith from a Textual Perspective

It cannot be claimed in any manner possible that al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and other Hadith authorities, ever examined the texts of *aḥādīth* against certain universally established criteria. Convinced that establishing the authenticity of a hadith's chain of narrators ensured authenticity of its text, their major focus was therefore squarely on authentication of Hadith through a rigorous examination of the chain of narrators. Even when Hadith works have been criticized, particularly those believed authentic, this has been carried out from the perspective and analysis of the chain only. This is not to say that scholars of *ʿUlūm*

al-Hadīth have paid no attention to content. References to problems contained in the texts of some of the traditions recorded in authentic Hadith works, including al-Bukhārī and Muslim, have been made in places. Yet a truly serious attempt is largely absent. There exist at least three, to an extent, serious contributions towards the authentication of Hadith through examination of text: (1) Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Mawḍū'āt*, (2) Ibn al-Qayyim's *al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍa'īf*, and (3) al-Dumaynī's *Maqāyīs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah*.

Al-Mawḍū'āt by Ibn al-Jawzī

Ibn al-Jawzī's work, *al-Mawḍū'āt* is a compilation of fabricated traditions spread over fifty themes. Once again, his classification of recorded traditions as fabricated has been based not on analysis of text but examination of chain only, although all the traditions compiled in this work could easily have been rejected merely on the basis of text alone, without having to look at the position of the chain. Despite this, the book's headings speak volumes of Ibn al-Jawzī's inclination towards authentication of tradition from a textual angle, although he remains short of declaring any tradition in his work to be fabricated in terms of textual analysis. In terms of the latter he does, at times, interestingly state: "The hearts' aversion to the liars' fabrication constitutes sufficient criterion for the rejection of fabricated traditions."³² Ibn al-Jawzī has classified the traditions mentioned in the authentic collections of Hadith, including al-Bukhārī and Muslim, into six categories: (1) Those traditions, which are unanimously authentic. (2) Those traditions which are authentic but have only been recorded by al-Bukhārī or Muslim. (3) Those traditions which are claimed to be authentic but neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim have recorded them. (4) Those traditions which are weak in nature. (5) Those traditions which are extremely weak. (6) And those traditions which are nothing but lies fabricated in the name of the Prophet.³³

Al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍa'īf by Ibn al-Qayyim

Ibn al-Qayyim (d.751 AH) was the first to categorically construct some level of criteria for authenticating Hadith through analysis of text. Those criteria developed by him are: (1) the hadith must not contradict the Qur'an, (2) the hadith should not go against highly authentic

aḥādīth, (3) the hadith should not negate true observation, (4) the hadith should not describe reward and punishment in a disproportionate manner, (5) the hadith should not contain an unsound statement, and (6) the hadith should not praise or condemn illogically any place, person, profession, or thing. Ibn al-Qayyim's book *al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍa'īf*, contains fifty sections under each of which he records traditions declaring them to be unreliable in terms of both the chain and the text. The total number of traditions recorded is three hundred and forty seven.

Maqāyīs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah by al-Dumayni

Misfir Gurm Allah al-Dumayni is the first scholar to have written a comprehensive book on the importance of Hadith analysis from a textual perspective. His work was originally a doctorate thesis submitted to and approved by Umm al-Qurā University, Makkah. It is comprised of an Introduction and three chapters. The three chapters, briefly outlined below, are entitled (1) "Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah by the Companions," (2) "Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah by Hadith Scholars," and (3) "Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah by Jurists."

*Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah
by the Companions*

This chapter discusses three criteria for textual examination of the Sunnah: the Qur'an, the highly authentic traditions, and reason. Al-Dumayni emphasizes that the Companions used these criteria to further authenticate traditions reported in the name of the Prophet, although they did not doubt the integrity of their colleagues.³⁴ The Companions were acutely aware that any statement made by the Prophet could not oppose the Qur'an because they believed that both the Qur'an and the Sunnah were from God; if this occurred they would reject it. Al-Dumayni has advanced eight concrete examples to illustrate the Companions' practice of examining Hadith with reference to the Qur'an. For instance, 'Alī heard the following tradition reported by Mi'qal ibn Sinān al-Ashja'ī in the name of the Prophet: "The Prophet decided in the case of Barwa' bint Wāshiq who became a widow before

her husband could consummate the marriage with her, stating: ‘She is entitled to the dower and the inheritance from the deceased’s property, and also she has to observe a waiting period (*‘iddah*)’.” ‘Alī rejected the report as the narration of a Bedouin because it had contradicted the Qur’anic statement: “And unto those with whom you desire to enjoy marriage, you shall give the dowers due to them...” (4:24). ‘Alī was of the view that this *āyah* (4:24) makes the dower due by the husband applicable only after the marriage has been consummated.³⁵ The Companions also exercised the practice of comparing an unknown tradition with a known one, not because they wanted to reject the Prophetic tradition but because they guessed that there existed some problem on the part of the reporter. Under this section al-Dumayni has given eleven examples of this type. For example, a tradition in the name of the Prophet was read before ‘Ā’ishah mentioning that the dog, the donkey, and the woman make the prayer invalid. ‘Ā’ishah forthrightly disapproved this report referring to her own proximity to the Prophet at times whilst he prayed, i.e. occasionally while he prayed she would be lying on the bed in front of him, and if answering the call of nature would gently pull away from very close to his leg.³⁶ Under the criterion of “reason” to verify the authenticity of a hadith text al-Dumayni gives twelve examples. For instance, he mentions that once Abū Hurayrah reported from the Prophet that ablution should be repeated after eating anything cooked with fire. Ibn ‘Abbās did not accept the genuineness of this tradition and objected on the ground that several things can come into contact with fire such as oil and hot water. He did not think that if hot water was taken or oil used, ablution would have to be repeated.³⁷

Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah by Hadith Scholars

Under this chapter al-Dumayni has traced the criteria employed by the *muḥaddithūn* in identifying problems in Hadith. He mentions seven criteria that Hadith scholars used in verifying the genuineness of Prophetic traditions: (1) the Qur’an, (2) non-aberrance (*‘adm al-shudhūd*), (3) relatively authentic traditions, (4) established history, (5) freedom from unsound words and meanings, (6) fundamental rules

and principles of Islamic law, and (7) freedom from abomination and impossibility.

For the application of the first criterion, the Qur'an, al-Dumayni advances thirteen examples. For instance, Ibn Kathīr has shown how Hadith scholars rejected the tradition – “One who eats with someone already blessed with divine forgiveness is also forgiven” – on the basis of *āyah* 66:10 of the Qur'an which reads: “Allah sets forth an example for the non-believers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot: they were respectively under two of Our righteous servants but they betrayed their husbands, and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but they were told: ‘Enter the fire along with others’.”³⁸

For the criterion of “non-aberrance” the author gives twenty examples. Incidentally al-Dumayni has not used the term “non-aberrance” for the criterion but rather the words “comparison among solitary traditions,” although the examples he advances are all of “non-aberrance.” Under this principle he puts forward examples of insertion (*idrāj*), confusion (*iḍtirāb*), inversion (*qalb*), mispronunciation (*taṣḥīf*), and addition (*ziyādah*) categorising all these as under “aberrance” (*shudhūdh*). He cites the following in illustration:

Insertion (idrāj) – According to al-Suyūṭī, the tradition “For the slave is a double reward; by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, if it were not for jihad in the cause of Allah, pilgrimage, and taking care of my mother, I would prefer to die the death of a slave” is problematic in terms of insertion. The first part, “For the slave is a double reward,” seems to be a hadith, but the later part represents Abū Hurayrah’s own wish, later taken to be the genuine statement of the Prophet.³⁹

Confusion (iḍtirāb) – Al-Tirmidhī has recorded a Prophetic tradition on the authority of Fāṭimah bint Qays which states that “In wealth there is indeed the right besides zakah”; Ibn Mājah has recorded the same tradition differently: “In wealth there is not any right except zakah.” Due to the obvious contradiction both reports are rendered weak and hence unreliable.⁴⁰

Inversion (qalb) – Al-Bukhārī has recorded a Prophetic tradition on the authority of Abū Hurayrah which states: “As for the fire, Allah increases it for whomever He wills; and with regard to Paradise, Allah will not do anything wrong to anyone.” Al-Ṣanʿānī identifies a change

of word order therein and suggests that the tradition should in fact have read like this: “As for Paradise, He increases it for whomever He wills; as regards the fire, Allah will not do anything wrong to anyone.”⁴¹

Mispronunciation (taṣḥīf) – Anas ibn Mālik reports from the Prophet that “And whoever said, ‘None has the right to be worshipped but Allah’ and has in his heart good [faith] equal to the weight of an atom (*dharrah*) will be taken out of Hell.” Shu‘bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj says that the word is not *dharrah* (atom) but rather *dhurah* (maize).⁴²

Addition (ziyādah) – The same example as that for Mispronunciation is applied.⁴³

For the criterion of “relatively authentic tradition” al-Dumaynī has not given any concrete example but has rather noted twenty-two principles outlining how the Prophetic traditions can be checked as to their authenticity.⁴⁴

Under the criterion “established history,” he has given nine examples including the following. According to al-Tirmidhī, when the Prophet entered Makkah in victory, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah was present with him. Ibn al-Qayyim rejects this report on the ground that Ibn Rawāḥah had been martyred in the battle of Mu’tah, four months before the victory of Makkah.⁴⁵

Under the criterion “freedom from unsound words and meanings,” al-Dumaynī has quoted seventeen traditions in illustration including one “Looking at a beautiful face is a devotional act (*‘ibādah*)” which Ibn al-Qayyim rejects, on the basis that the content of the report is unsound.⁴⁶

Under the criterion “fundamental rules and principles of Islamic law,” al-Dumayni cites twenty traditions as illustration. In one particular example Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī is shown to have considered the tradition, “Due to a person’s addiction to adultery his wife will be afflicted with the same habit,” as absolute rubbish based on the Islamic principle cited in *āyah* 53:39 of the Qur’an: “And for man is nothing but what he strives for.”⁴⁷

Under the criterion “freedom from abomination and impossibility” he has given nineteen examples. One such example is the tradition: “Nine angels are entrusted to the sun, [they] throw snow on it every

day, otherwise the sun would have burnt everything which came into contact with it.” Al-Albānī brushes this aside considering it something akin to a Judeo-Christian tradition and against the principles of astronomy according to which earth’s 150 million kilometer distance from the sun prevents it from being burnt.⁴⁸

Criteria of Textual Examination of the Sunnah by Jurists

When exploring the approach of Muslim jurists to Hadith texts, al-Dumayni identifies seven criteria: (1) the Qur’an, (2) the Sunnah, (3) consensus of the Ummah, (4) practice of the Companions, (5) logical analogy, (6) general principles, and (7) the impact of solitary tradition.

Under the criteria of the Qur’an twenty-one examples have been discussed including the following: “Along with a woman as wife her paternal or maternal aunt cannot be taken by the husband as wife at the same time.” The Ḥanafites and other jurists do not find the tradition of Muslim to be against *āyah* 4:23–24 of the Qur’an:

Prohibited to you (For marriage) are: Your mothers, daughters, sisters; father’s sisters, Mother’s sisters; brother’s daughters, sister’s daughters; foster-mothers (Who gave you suck), foster-sisters; your wives’ mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in, – no prohibition if ye have not gone in; (Those who have been) wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful; Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess: Thus hath Allah ordained (Prohibitions) against you: Except for these, all others are lawful...

Jurists are of the view that the tradition specifies the limits placed by the Qur’an.⁴⁹

Under the criterion of Sunnah only four examples have been mentioned. For instance Ḥanafites do not find the tradition “the Prophet decided a case on the basis of a witness and an oath” practically valid because they find this clashes with a more authentic and famous tradition that “the evidence is due on the petitioner and the oath is due on the defendant.”⁵⁰

Under the criterion “consensus of the Ummah,” nine traditions are given. For example, Mālik ibn Anas recorded a report which stated that al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad used to sell all the date fruits grown in his garden with the exception of some weight of fruit. Mālik ibn Anas concluded that the practice of al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad was in line with the consensus of the Ummah.⁵¹

Under the criterion the “practice of the Companions,” al-Dumayni gives ten traditions. For example, Ibn ʿUmar reported that the Prophet used to raise his hands before and after bowing (*rukūʿ*) in prayer (*salah*). A *Tābiʿī*, Mujaḥid reports: “I prayed behind Ibn ʿUmar, he did not raise his hands in the prayer except at its beginning.” According to al-Ṭaḥāwī, the practice of Ibn ʿUmar is a valid reason to consider the tradition of the Prophet abrogated.⁵²

Under the criterion “logical analogy,” we have nine examples i.e. Abū Dāwūd has recorded a tradition which states that “If a person forced his wife’s slave girl to have sex with him, the slave would be freed and he would give her replacement to his wife; if the slave girl herself solicited him for sex, she would fall under his possession and he would give her replacement to his wife.” Ibn Taymiyyah claims that logical analogy favors the authenticity of this tradition.⁵³

Under the criterion of “general rules,” we are given six examples of traditions i.e. Mālik ibn Anas rejects the tradition, “If a dog inserts its mouth inside a ware, it is to be washed seven times,” on the basis of a general principle in the Qur’an: “...And as for those hunting animals which you train by imparting to them something of the knowledge that God has imparted to yourselves – eat of what they seize for you, but mention God’s name over it and remain conscious of God: verily, God is swift in reckoning.” (5:4)⁵⁴

Under the criterion “the impact of solitary tradition,” al-Dumayni has given in illustration four traditions. In one of these Abū Mūsā reports that once many people laughed whilst in prayer (*salah*) behind the Prophet; after the prayer he commanded them to make fresh ablution and repeat the prayer. Ḥanafites reject this tradition on the basis of it being a solitary one which if taken as authentic would put the people in difficulty.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Right from the time of the Companions, Muslim scholars have paid special attention to the preservation as well as authentication of Prophet Muhammad's traditions. Initially, *aḥādīth* were examined from both the angles of their chain of narrators as well as the text of hadith. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries when great Hadith works were compiled Hadith scholars developed some criteria in which the examination of the chain remained the focal point. It was scholars of *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* who also talked in principle about textual examination of Hadith. As for the textual examination of Hadith, the most prominent works are Ibn al-Jawzī's, Ibn al-Qayyim's, and al-Dumaynī's.