

TWO: Compilation

1. Era of The Prophet

During the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) there was no pressing need to write down all of his various statements or record his actions because he was present and could be consulted at any time. As a matter of fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself made a general prohibition against writing down his statements which were other than the Qur'aan itself.¹ This was to prevent the possibility of mixing up the Qur'aan with his own words during the era of revelation. Consequently, the greatest stress regarding writing was placed on recording the Qur'aanic verses. However, there are many authentic narrations collected by the Scholars of *Hadeeth* that prove that *Hadeeth* were recorded in writing even during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ). For example, 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr said: "I used to write everything which I heard from the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) with the intention of memorizing it. However, some Qurayshites forbade me from doing so saying, 'Do you write everything that you hear from him, while the Messenger of Allaah is a human being who speaks in anger and pleasure?' So I stopped writing, and mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He pointed with his finger to his mouth and said: 'Write! By Him in whose hand is my soul, only truth comes out from it.'"²

Aboo Hurayrah said: When Makkah was conquered, the Prophet (ﷺ) stood up and gave a sermon [Aboo Hurayrah then mentioned the sermon]. A man from Yemen, called Aboo Shaah got up and said, "O Messenger of Allaah! Write it down for me." The Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) replied, "*Write it for Aboo Shaah.*"³ Al-Waleed asked Aboo 'Amr, "What are they writing?" He replied, "The sermon which he heard that day."⁴

Aboo Qaabeel said: We were with 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas and he

¹ *Saheeh Muslim*, zuhd, 72. This is the only authentic *hadeeth* on the topic and al-Bukhaaree and others considered it to be a statement of Aboo Sa'eed himself that was erroneously attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ). See *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*, p. 28.

² *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1035, no. 3639 and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood*, no. 3099. The collection of Hadeeth of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr is known as *as-Saheefah as-Saadiqah*.

³ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, no. 3641 and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood*, no. 3100.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3 no. 3642 and authenticated *Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood*, no. 3101.

was asked which city will be conquered first Constantinople or Rome? So ‘Abdullaah called for a sealed trunk and he said, “Take out the book from it.” Then ‘Abdullaah said, “While we were with the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) writing, The Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) was asked, “Which city will be conquered first, Constantinople or Rome?” So Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: “*The city of Heracilius will be conquered first,*” meaning Constantinople.”⁵

2. Era of The Sahaabah⁶

After the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) his saying and action took of a new importance because he was no longer there to consult when problems arose. The practise of narration on a large scale started during this period. For example, when the Prophet (ﷺ) died, the Sahaabah debated about where to bury him. This debate ended when Aboo Bakr told them “I heard the messenger say, “*No prophet dies but he is buried where he died.*”⁷ Thus a grave was dug immediately below the bed on which he died in the house of ‘Aa’ishah. In this period a number of the leading Sahaabah wrote down *hadeeths* of the Prophet (ﷺ).

The following are just a few of the leading narrators of the Prophet’s traditions who were known to have recorded them in writing.

Aboo Hurayrah to whom 5374 channels of *hadeeth* narrations are attributed, actually narrated 1236 *hadeeth*. Hasan in ‘Amr ad-Damaree saw many books in his possession.⁸

‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Abbaas to whom 1660 channels of narrations are attributed used to write whatever he heard⁹ and even employed his slaves to record for him.¹⁰

‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr ibn al- ‘Aas to whom 700 channels are attributed was

⁵ *Saheeh: Musnad Ahmad* (2: 176), *Sunan ad-Daarimee* (1: 126) and *Mustadrak al Haakim* (3: 422).

⁶ The disciples or the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), as-Sahaabah, are sometimes referred to as the first generation of Islaam. Any person who had the privilege of meeting the Prophet (ﷺ) and died believing in him is classified as a Sahaabee.

⁷ *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 688.

⁸ *Fat’h al-Baaree*, vol.1, p. 217.

⁹ *Tabaqaat ibn Sa’d*, vol. 2, p. 123.

¹⁰ *Tarateeb*, by al-Kattaanee, vol. 2, no. 247.

know to recorded books of *hadeeths* during the Prophet's lifetime with he titled *as-Saheefah as-Saheehah*.

Aboo Bakr was reported to have written down over 500 different sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Ibn al-Jawzee, who provides a list of all the companions who related traditions, gives the names of about 1,060 together with the number of *hadeeths* related by each. 500 related only 1 *hadeeth* each; 132 related only 2 each; 80 related 3; 52 related 4; 32 related 5; 26 related 6; 27 related 7; 18 related 8; 11 related 9; 60 related between 10 and 20; 84 related between 20 and 100; 27 related between 100 and 500 and only 11 related more than 500 of which only 6 related more than 1,000 *hadeeth*, and they are commonly referred to as the *mukaththiroon* (the reporters of many traditions). Today, a graduate of the college of *hadeeth* in the Islamic University of Madeenah is required to memorize 250 *hadeeth* during each of the four years of his study (i.e., a total of 1,000 *hadeeths*).

From the above, it can readily be seen that fewer than 300 companions related the vast majority of traditions.¹¹

3. Era of The Taabi'oon¹² (1st Century Hijrah)

After Islaam had spread into the Middle East, India, North Africa and the narration of *hadeeth* had become widespread, there arose people who began to invent *hadeeths*. To combat this development, Caliph 'Umar ibn Abdul-Azeez (reign 99 to 101 AH - 718 to 720 C.E.) ordered the scholars to compile the traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ). The scholars had already begun composing books containing biographical data on the various narrators of *hadeeth* in order to expose the liars and fabricators. Aboo Bakr ibn Hazm (d.120/737) was among those directed by the Caliph to compile the *hadeeth*. Caliph 'Umar requested him to write down all the *hadeeths* of the Prophet (ﷺ) and of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab and to pay particular attention to gathering the *hadeeths* of 'Amrah bint 'Abdir-

¹¹ *Hadith Literature*, pp. 18-19.

¹² The generation which followed the companions studying under them are referred to as the *Tabi'oon* (followers or successors) e.g. Aboo Haneefah and Mujaahid.

Rahmaan, who was at that time the most respected custodian of the narrations of ‘Aa’ishah. Sa’d ibn Ibraaheem and Ibn Shihaab az-Zuhree were also requested to compile books and az-Zuhree became the first compiler of hadeeth to record the biographies of the narrators with particular reference to their character and honesty. In this period the systematic compilation of hadeeths was begun on a fairly wide scale.

However, among the students of the companions, many recorded hadeeths and collected them in books. The following is a list of the top 12 narrators of hadeeths among the Prophet’s companions and their students who had their narrations in written form.

Aboo Hurayrah (5374)¹³: Nine of his students were recorded to have written hadeeths from him.

Ibn ‘Umar (2630): Eight of his students wrote down hadeeths from him.

Anas ibn Maalik (2286): Sixteen of his students had hadeeths in written form from him.

‘Aa’ishah bint Abee Bakr (2210): Three of her students had her hadeeths in written form.

Ibn ‘Abbaas (1660): Nine of his students recorded his hadeeths in books.

Jaabir ibn ‘Abdillaah (1540): Fourteen of his students wrote down his hadeeths.

Aboo Sa‘eed al-Khudree (1170): None of his students wrote.

Ibn Mas‘ood (748): None of his students wrote.

‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (700): Seven of his students had his hadeeths in written form.

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (537): He recorded many hadeeths in official letters.

‘Alee ibn Abee Taalib (536): Eight of his students recorded his hadeeths in writing.

Aboo Moosaa al-Ash‘aree (360): Some of his hadeeths were in the possession of Ibn ‘Abbaas in written form.

¹³ The total number of hadeeths or more properly, channels of narration of hadeeth ascribed to the companion.

Al-Barraa ibn ‘Aazib (305): Was known to have dictated his narrations.

Of Aboo Hurayrah’s nine students known to have written *hadeeths*, Hammaam ibn Munabbih’s book has survived in manuscript form and has been edited by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah and published in 1961 in Hyderabad, India.¹⁴

4. Era of The Taabi‘ut-Taabi‘een¹⁵ (2nd Century)

In the period following that of the Taabi‘oon, the *hadeeths* were systematically collected and written in texts. One of the earliest works was *al-Muwatta* composed by Maalik ibn Anas. Other books of *hadeeth* were also written by scholars of Maalik’s time by the likes of al-Awzaa‘ee who lived in Syria, ‘Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak of Khurasaan, Hammaad ibn Salamah of Basrah and Sufyaan ath-Thawree of Kufah. However, the only work which survived from that time is that of Imaam Maalik. It could be said that in this period the majority of the *hadeeths* were collected in the various centers of Islaam.

The reason why these three generations have been given special consideration is because the Prophet (ﷺ) was reported to have said, “*The best of generations is my generation, then the one which follows them, then the one that follows them.*”¹⁶ It was through these three generations that *hadeeth* was first transmitted orally and in writing, until they were compiled into collections on a wide and a systematic scale.

5. Era of The Saheehs (3rd Century Hijrah)

There arose in the third century scholars who undertook the job of critical research of the *hadeeths* that were narrated and compiled in the first two

¹⁴ *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, p. 38.

¹⁵ The generation of students of the successors, Taabi‘oon are referred to as successors of successors Taabi‘ut-Tabi‘een e.g. Maalik ibn Anas.

¹⁶ *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim*

centuries. They also grouped the *hadeeth* which they considered to be accurate according to the branches of Islaamic Law. E.g. From this period is the book *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree* containing 7,275 *hadeeth* which al-Bukhaaree (died- 870 C.E.) chose from 600,000 and *Saheeh Muslim* which contains 9,200 *hadeeths* which Imaam Muslim selected from 300,000. Besides these two works of Hadeeth, there are four other works which became famous during this period. They are the four sunan of Aboo Dawud (died 889 C.E.), at-Tirmitheer (died 893 C.E.), an-Nasaa'ee (died 916 C.E.) and Ibn Maajah (died 908 C.E.).

Stages of writing

1. The first stage covers the period of the first century A.H. which began in July 622 C.E. or the early part of the century C.E. It was the age of the companions and their successors often referred to as the age of the *Saheefah*, that is, a sheet or some sort of writing material such as shoulder blades or parchments on which a number of *hadeeth* were written. E.g. *Saheefah* Aboo Bakr and *Saheefah Saadiqah* of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr. The aim of the first stage was mainly recording the *hadeeth* without any particular format.
2. The second period covers the middle of the second century A.H. is referred to as the stage of *Musannaf* (i.e. classified organized work). The second stage represents a planned compilation of *hadeeth* grouped under headings denoting their subject matter. E.g. *Muwatta* Maalik
3. The third stage known as the stage of *Musnad* (compilation of *hadeeth* according to the companion's names). This stage began at the close of second century A.H. e.g. *Musnad Ahmad*.
4. The fourth and most important stage is known as the stage of *Saheeh*. This stage began during the first half of the third century A.H. (9th century C.E.) and overlaps the period of the musnad e.g. *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, *Saheeh Muslim* and *Saheeh Ibn Khuzaymah*.

The Companion-Narrators

ABOO HURAYRAH. Aboo Hurayrah stands at the head of the list of *hadeeth* transmitters, due to the sheer bulk of his narrations. He had been regarded by the Prophet himself as the most anxious of all Muslims to acquire knowledge of *hadeeth*. Belonging to the tribe of Daws, an offshoot of the great clan of Azd, he came to Medina in the seventh year of the Hijra, and on being told that the Prophet was at Khaybar, went there and accepted Islam. Since that time, and until the death of the Prophet, he kept his company constantly, attending him and memorising his words during the day, thereby sacrificing all worldly pursuits and pleasures. We are told that he divided his nights into three parts: one for sleeping, one for prayer, and one for study. After the death of the Prophet, he was appointed governor of Bahrain for a while during the caliphate of ‘Umar and acted as governor of Medina under the early Umayyad caliphs. He died in 59/678.

When the Prophet had died, and information about religion and legal judgements had to be sought indirectly, Aboo Hurayrah (who instructed more than 800 students in *hadeeth*) poured out the store of knowledge he had so meticulously accumulated. At times he was taken to task for reporting certain traditions which were unknown to other Companions. But he would reply that he had simply learnt what the Ansaar had missed because of attending to their lands and properties, and what the Emigrants had failed to learn because of their commercial activities. Once, when he was taken to task by ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar for relating a particular *hadeeth*, he took him to Aa’ishah who bore witness to the truth of what he had related. His knowledge and memory were also tested by Marwaan, who, having written down some traditions related by him, wanted him to relate the same after a year. He found them to be exactly identical to his earlier narration.

Bearing in mind Aboo Hurayrah's intense dedication to learning *hadeeth*, his devotion to the Prophet, and the various tests which were applied to his memory and scholarship by his contemporaries during his life, it is inconceivable that he would have fabricated any *hadeeth*. This does not mean, however, that material was not falsely imputed to him at a later date. The fact that he narrated a uniquely large number of traditions itself did make inventing *hadeeths* in his name an attractive proposition.

‘ABDULLAAH IBN ‘UMAR. The second most prolific narrator of *hadeeth*, he was the son of the second Caliph. He had accepted Islam simultaneously with his father, and emigrated to Medina with him. He took part in many battles during the

Prophet's lifetime, and in the wars in Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt, but maintained strict neutrality in the conflicts that erupted among the Muslims following the assassination of Uthmaan. Despite the immense esteem and honour in which he was held by all Muslims, who repeatedly asked him to become caliph (an offer which he refused), he kept himself aloof from factional strife, and throughout those years led an unselfish, pious life, setting an example of an ideal citizen just as his father had set an example of an ideal ruler. He died in Mecca in the year 74/692 at the age of 87.

‘Abdullaah's long association with the Prophet, his kinship with Hafsa Umm al-Mu'minin, and with certain other Companions, offered him a superb opportunity to learn hadeeth; and his long peaceful life gave him time and leisure enough to teach and spread hadeeths among the Muslims who assiduously sought them.

He was renowned for the extreme scrupulousness with which he related hadeeths. Ash-Sha‘bee remarks that he did not hear a single hadeeth from him for a whole year. When he related hadeeths, his eyes filled with tears. His activities in the service of Islam, his austere life, his straightforward and honest character, and his careful treatment of the hadeeths, render the material we have from him of the highest value.

ANAS IBN MALIK. At the age of ten, Anas was presented by his mother, Umm Sulaym, to the Prophet (ﷺ), following his migration to Madeenah. From that time until the Prophet's death, he was his favourite attendant, and afterwards he was appointed by Aboo Bakr as a tax-collector at Bahrayn. Towards the end of his life he settled at Basra, where he died in the year 711, at the age of over a hundred.

During the ten years he spent in the Prophet's service, he was able to memorise a large number of his words, of which he later also learnt a good deal from Aboo Bakr, Umar, and many other Companions.⁵⁵ His knowledge of hadeeth was so copious that his death was regarded as a death-blow to half of the entire mass of traditions.

The traditionists accept him as one of the most prolific narrators of hadeeth.

‘AA’ISHAH UMM AL-MU’MINEEN. ‘Aa’ishah occupies the fourth place among the *mukaththiroon*. She enjoyed the constant company of the Prophet for about eight and a half years.⁵⁷ She died in 57/676 at the age of 65.

Aa’ishah was naturally endowed with a retentive memory and a developed critical faculty, having memorised a large number of the ancient Arab poems, on

which she was a recognised authority. During her lifetime she was also honoured for her expertise in medicine and in Islamic law. Regarding the *hadeeth*, she had not only learnt a large volume of these from her husband, she also showed a critical appreciation of them, and corrected the mistakes in understanding of many Companions. When, for instance, Ibn ‘Umar related that the Prophet had said that the dead are punished in their graves on account of the wailing of their relatives, she pointed out that the Prophet had said that while the dead are punished in their graves for their sins, their relatives wept for them.

It was on account of her extensive knowledge of *hadeeth* and Islamic law that even the most important Companions sought her advice on legal problems. A long list of those who related *hadeeth* on her authority may be found in Ibn Hajar's book *Tahtheeb at- Tahtheeb*.

‘ABDULLAAH IBN AL-‘ABBAAS. He was born three years before the Prophet’s migration to Madeenah, and was thirteen years old at the time of his death. He was greatly loved by the Prophet, as is apparent from the *hadeeths* which concern him. He died in 68/687 at the age of 71.

It appears that despite his youth he learnt a few *hadeeths* from the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. Ibn Hajar (quoting Yahyaa ibn al-Qattaan) refers to the assertion that Ibn ‘Abbaas related only four or ten traditions from the Prophet (ﷺ), and adds that this estimate is incorrect, because the *Saheehs* of Bukhaaree and Muslim alone contain more than ten traditions related by him directly from the Prophet (ﷺ). There is, however, no doubt that the number of *hadeeths* related by him directly from the Prophet (ﷺ) is very small in comparison to what he related via other Companions. These *hadeeths* he learnt through years of hard labour: If I expected to learn any *hadeeth* from a Companion,' he remarked, I went to his door and waited there, until he came out and said: “Cousin of the Prophet, what brings you here? Why did you not send for me?” And I would reply that it was only proper that I should go to him. Then I learnt the *hadeeth* from him.

Ibn ‘Abbaas was held in universal awe for his intellectual powers and capacity for memorisation. He was entirely devoted to the study of the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah*, and was loved and respected for his scholarship by all the first four Caliphs and his contemporaries. He collected a large body of traditions, which he wrote down in books, and delivered lectures on them to his disciples. His *tafseer* of the Qur’aan which was handed down by his student Mujaahid is well-known, and has been referred to by numerous later commentators.

JAABIR IBN ‘ABDILLAAH. One of the early Madeenan converts to Islaam, he was present at the second meeting with the Prophet (ﷺ) at Makkah. He took part in nineteen expeditions in the Prophet’s company, and died in Madeenah in about the year 74/693 at the age of 94.

He learnt the Prophet’s *ḥadeeth* not only from him, but also from many of his important Companions, including Aboo Bakr, ‘Umar and others. He also studied under some of the Successors, including the famous Umm Kulthoom, the daughter of Aboo Bakr. He used to teach *ḥadeeth* regularly in the mosque at Madeenah.⁷¹

ABOO SA‘EED AL-KHUDREE, Sa’d ibn Maalik. Another early Madeenan convert, his father was killed at Uhud. He himself took part in twelve of the battles fought during the Prophet's lifetime. He died in Madeenah in 64/683.

Like Aboo Hurayrah, he had been one of the People of the Veranda', those who lived on the porch of the Prophet's dwelling by the mosque in order to dedicate themselves to an austere life of prayer and learning. He learnt the *Sunnah* from the Prophet, as well as from his important Companions such as Aboo Bakr, ‘Umar and Zayd ibn Thaabit. He was considered the best jurist among the younger Companions.

‘ABDULLAAH IBN ‘AMR IBN AL-‘AAS. An early convert to Islaam, who had suffered for its cause, had enjoyed the company of the Prophet for many years, and lived long enough after he was gone to transmit the *ḥadeeths* which he had learnt from him. Ibn ‘Amr, although he lived during the period of the civil war, resembled Ibn ‘Umar in keeping himself aloft from factional strife. He was, however, present at the Battle of Siffeen, at the insistence of his father; however he took no active part in it, deeply regretting in later life that he had been present at all.⁷⁵

His interest in perpetuating the way of the Prophet (ﷺ) was intense. He wrote down all the Traditions which he had learnt from him, collecting a thousand of them in a *Saḥeefah* which he called *as-Saadiqah*. When he settled at Mecca, students of *ḥadeeth* flocked to him in droves. But as he lived for the most part either in Egypt or at at-Taa’if, and since he occupied himself more with prayer than with the teaching of *ḥadeeth*, the later generations of Muslims received fewer traditions from him than from Aboo Hurayrah, ‘Aa’ishah and others.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Hadith Literature*, pp. 19-23.