

The Compilation of Hadith

The history of compilation of hadith can be divided into five periods. The efforts and the endeavours of the Muslims in gathering together and preserving hadith is one of the greatest achievements of the Muslims. The care and honesty with which this task was carried out by the scholars is the brightest chapter of Muslim history. We can be justly proud of them.

The First Period

The first period obviously begins with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) himself. During this period he emphasized the importance of his Sunnah. ***'Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not amongst us.'*** (Bukhari) Consequently, the Sahaba followed the Sunnah in minutest detail and eagerly memorised his sayings. Several Sahaba had written ahadith during the Prophet's life. Furthermore, the Prophet himself dictated many letters and other documents. Thus the compilation of hadith had already started.

The Second Period

The second period extends from the Prophet's death to the end of the first century Hijra. The Sahaba were very cautious about relating anything to the Prophet, since they had heard him say, 'Whoever lies about me, let him take his place in the hell fire. Many Sahaba had compiled small books of hadith. Some prominent ones are Abu Huraira, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Umar, Zaid bin Saabit and Abdullah bin Amr.

The Third Period

The third period begins from the turn of the second century Hijra and is spread over a period of fifty years. This is a formative period of science of hadith. Due to political and sectarian divisions, many ahadith were fabricated. So the scholars began to exercise great care in accepting a hadith. They developed methods of verifying the authenticity of a hadith. A set of terminology was devised for this purpose. Books of hadith were being compiled in major Islamic cities; Mawatta of Imam Maalik in Madina, Jama`e Sufiyan Sauri in Kufa etc.

The Fourth Period

The fourth period extends from the middle of the second to the fifth century Hijra. The Muhaddiseen had up till now relied heavily on memory, but with an ever increasing number of hadith coupled with the danger of fabrication, the Ulama evolved an elaborate system of verifying the authenticity of a hadith. Thus they developed the science of hadith. During this period, many voluminous books of hadith were compiled, some of them were:

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| Musannaf Abdul Razzaq | 211 AH |
| Musnad Abu Dawud Tialsi | 204 AH |
| Musnad Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Shaiba | 225 AH |
| Musnad Imam Ahmed Bin Hanbal (A compilation of 30,000 ahadith) | 241 AH |
| Musnad Abdullah Ibn Hameed | 243 AH |
| Musnad Haras Ibn Usama | 280 AH |
| Musnad Abu Bakir Bin Bazzaz | 296 AH |

- Six Canonical Books (Al-Sihah al-Sittah)

The third century Hijra is aptly known as '*The Golden Period of Hadith*'. During this period, scored of voluminous books of hadith were compiled. However six of these books called 'The Six Canonical Books' or 'Al-Sihah Al-Sittah' are very famous:

| <u>The author</u> | <u>No. of hadith</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Imam Muhammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari | 7200 | 256 AH |
| Imam Muslim Bin Hajjaaj Al-Qushairi | 7000 | 261 AH |
| Ahmed Bin Shoaib Al-Nasai | 5761 | 303 AH |
| Abu Dawood Sulaimaan Bin Ash`ath | 4800 | 275 AH |
| Abu Eesa Muhammad Bin Eesa Tirmazi | 4600 | 274 AH |
| Muhammad Ibn Yazeed Ibn Maja | 4341 | 273 AH |

The Fifth Period

This period is the completion of compilation of Hadith. The major objective of the compilers of the six canonical books was authenticity of the hadith, consequently they compiled only a fraction of the ahadith they knew. For instance, Imam Bukhari knew 600,000 ahadith but only compiled 7200 in his Sahih. However, the later compilers wanted to preserve all the ahadith irrespective of their authenticity, so we have voluminous collections in this period. The following are major works of this period:-

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| Musnad Imam Abu Yaala | 307 AH |
| Musnad Imam Tahawi | 321 AH |
| Sahih Ibn Hibaan | 354 AH |
| Tabraani | 360 AH |
| Daara-Qutni | 386 AH |
| Imam Haakim | 405 AH |
| Imam Baihaqi | 458 AH |
| Ibn-e-Huzaima | 311 AH |

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