

The Introduction of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Luknawī

The introduction enumerates a number of key topics. These are set out below.

Topic One: How the writing of aḥādīth spread

In addition to the spread of aḥādīth, this topic will also touch on how the recording of the compilations began, the distinctions between them in purpose, variations in their implementations, and explanations as to their categories and classifications.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī said in *Hady as-sārī*, which is the introduction to his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* known as *Fatḥ al-bārī*,

Know – may Allah teach me and you – that the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ were not recorded in collections at the time of the Prophet ﷺ nor at the times of his Companions or of the great Followers, nor were they systematically organised, for two reasons:

Firstly, because initially it had been forbidden, as is firmly established in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* for fear that some of it would become mixed up with and confused with the Glorious Qurʾān.

Secondly, because of the depth of their capacity for memorisation and the copiously retentive nature of their intellects, and because most of them did not know how to write.

Then in the later time of the Followers (*Tābiʿūn*) traditions began to be recorded and arranged in chapters when the people of knowledge spread in the great cities, and innovations grew numerous such as the Khawārij, the Shīʿah and those who deny the decree. The first to gather them together was ar-Rabīʿ ibn Ṣabīḥ, Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūbah and others. They used to compile each chapter on its own, until

The Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Muḥammad

there appeared the major figures of the third level halfway through the second century who compiled the judgements (*aḥkām*). Imām Mālik compiled the *Muwaṭṭa'* intending to include exclusively the strong ḥadīth of the people of the Ḥijāz, combined with the sayings of the Companions, the Followers and those after them. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Jurayj compiled ḥadīth in Makkah, Abū ʿAmr ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Awzāʿī in Shām (Syria), Abū ʿAbdullāh Sufyān ath-Thawrī in Kūfa (ʿIrāq), Ḥammād ibn Salamah ibn Dīnār in Baṣra (ʿIrāq), Hāshim in Wāsiṭ, Muʿammar in the Yemen, Ibn al-Mubārak in Khurāsān and Jarīr ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in Ray (Bukhārā). All of these people lived at the same time, and we don't know which of them was first. Then many of their contemporaries followed them, weaving on their loom, until some of their imāms thought that they should specifically single out the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. It was at the end of the second century that they began to compile the collections called *musnad*¹. ʿAbdullāh ibn Mūsā al-ʿAbsī compiled a *musnad*, then Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād al-Khuzāʿī who resided in Egypt compiled a *musnad*, and then later the imāms followed in their steps in doing the same. There were very few imāms among the ḥadīth memorisers who did not compile his ḥadīth in a *musnad*, such as Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ishāq ibn Rāhwayh, ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shaybah and others. Some of them compiled them both in chapters [according to the fiqh rulings] and as *musnads*, such as Abū Shaybah. When al-Bukhārī saw these compilations and he realised that with respect to their constitution they comprised those which are ṣaḥīḥ and ḥasan as well as many which are weak, then it moved his resolve to collect only the ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth.”

Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī said in the introduction to his book *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*;

In compiling their collections people had very different purposes. Some confined their goal to compiling ḥadīth alone so that their

¹ Musnads are arranged according to the names of the narrators from the chains of transmission.

The Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Muḥammad

wordings could be memorised and rulings derived, as did ʿUbaydullāh ibn Mūsā al-ʿAbsī, Abū Dāwūd aṭ-Ṭayālīsī and others of the earliest imāms of ḥadīth, then came Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and those after him. They established the ḥadīth according to the chains of transmission of their narrators, and so they would mention the ḥadīth with chains of transmission [isnād] of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq, for example, and they would establish under that everything that was narrated from him. Then after him, they would mention the Companions one after another in this manner. Some established the ḥadīth in the places which indicate them, putting every ḥadīth in the chapter peculiar to it. If it was about the prayer then they would mention it in the chapter on prayer, and if it was about zakāh they would mention it in the chapter on zakāh, as Mālik ibn Anas had done in the *Muwaṭṭa'*, except that because there were a small number of ḥadīth, then there were few chapters. Those after him modelled themselves on him. When the matter reached al-Bukhārī and Muslim and the number of ḥadīth in their books were numerous, then the chapters and their sub-divisions became numerous. Those after them modelled themselves on them. This type is simpler for searching and study than the former in two ways:

“Firstly, a person may know the meaning for which he seeks the ḥadīth even if he doesn’t know its narrator, nor who he might be in the *musnad*. In fact, he might not need to know the narrator at all.

“Secondly, if the ḥadīth is narrated in the book on the prayer, the one who investigates it knows that this ḥadīth is the proof of that judgement on the prayer, and so he does not need to think any further about it.

“Some of them narrated ḥadīth containing linguistic ambiguities and confused meanings, compiling books dedicated to this in particular in which they confined themselves to explaining the ḥadīth, commenting on their unusual linguistic features, their grammatical analysis and their meanings, leaving aside mention of the rulings. This was done, for example, by Abū ʿUbaydah al-Qāsim ibn Sallām,