



1401-1981

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC  
PUBLISHING HOUSE  
AND  
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE  
OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT



ISSUES IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT (3)

# Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet

Akram Ḍiyā' al 'Umarī

Translated by:  
Hudā Khaṭṭāb

## Dr. Akram Diyā' al Dīn al 'Umarī



- Born at Mosul, in northern Iraq (1361/1942).
- BA (1382/1962) and MA (1386/1966) from Baghdad University in Islamic History.
- Ph.D. from 'Ayn Shams University, Cairo (1394/1974).
- Taught at Baghdad University (1386/1966—1396/1976).
- Chairman of the Department of Graduate Studies at the Islamic University of Madinah and Chairman of the Academic Council (1397/1977—1402/1982).
- Presently Professor of the History of the Sunnah at the graduate department of the Islamic University of Madinah.
- Dr. al 'Umarī has authored and edited nearly twenty works on Islamic history and, in particular, on the subject of the Prophet's *Sīrah*. Among the most important of those works are the following:

### Original Works:

- \* *Buḥūth fī al Sunnah al Mushriqah* (4 editions)
- \* *Al Mujtama' al Madanī fī 'Ahd al Nubūwah* (2 volumes) A later edition was published as *Al Sīrah al Nabawīyah al Ṣaḥīḥah*.
- \* *Al Risālah wa al Rasūl*
- \* *Qiyām al Mujtama' al Islāmī min Manẓūr Ḥaḍārī*
- \* *Al Turāth wa al Mu'āṣarah*

### Edited Works:

- \* *Al Ma'rifah wa al Tārīkh* by Ya'qūb ibn Sufyān al Fasawī
- \* *Azwāj al Nabīy* by Muḥammad bin Zubālah
- \* *Tarīkat al Nabīy* by Ḥammād ibn Ismā'īl al Anṣarī
- \* *Musnad Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt* by Ibn Khayyāt al 'Uṣfūrī al Baṣrī (d. 240 AH)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين  
والصلاة والسلام على خاتم الأنبياء والمرسلين

وفاي رب زدني علما

*In the Name of Allah,  
the Compassionate, the Merciful,  
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Universe,  
and Peace and Prayers be upon  
His Final Prophet and Messenger.*

*"... and say: My Lord!  
Cause Me to Grow in Knowledge."*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾  
أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ  
مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

(العلق: ١ - ٥)

Read in the name of your Sustainer, Who has Created man out of a germ cell. Read – for your Sustainer is the Most bountiful One. Who has taught (man) the use of the pen. Taught Man what he did not know.  
(Qur'an 96:1-5)

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(النحل: ٧٨)

And Allah has brought you forth from your mother's womb knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful.  
(Qur'an 16:78)

**Madīnan Society at the  
Time of the Prophet**

**Volume I**

**Its Characteristics and Organization**

**Volume II**

**The Jihād Against the Mushrikūn**

First Edition  
(1411 / 1991)

Second Edition  
(1416 / 1995)

The views and opinions expressed by  
the author are not necessarily those of  
the Institute.



نشر وتوزيع:

**الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي**

نشر وتوزيع الكتاب والشريط الإسلامي بسبعين لغة

الإدارة العامة: ص.ب. ٥٥١٩٥ - الرياض ١١٥٣٤

هاتف ٤٦٥٠٨١٨ - ٤٦٤٧٢١٣ - فاكس ٤٦٣٣٤٨٩

المكتبات: الرياض ٤٦٢٩٣٤٧ - جدة ٦٨٧٣٧٥٢ - ٢ / الخبر ٨٩٤٥٨٢١ - ٣

**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE**

**I. I. P. H.**

Publisher and Distributer of Islamic Books and Tapes in 70 Languages

HEAD OFFICE: P.O.Box 55195 - Riyadh 11534 - Saudi Arabia

Tel: (966-1) 4650818-4647213 - Fax: 4633489

BOOK SHOPS: Riyadh 1-4629347/Jeddah 2-6873752/Khobar 3-8945821

# **Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet**

Akram Ḍiyā' al 'Umarī

Translated by:  
Hudā Khaṭṭāb

**The International Institute of Islamic Thought  
Herndon, Virginia U.S.A.**

**1416 / 1995**

Issues in Islamic Thought (3)

© جميع الحقوق محفوظة  
للمعهد العالمي للفكر الإسلامي  
هرندن — فرجينيا — الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية

© 1411 AH / 1991 AC by  
The International Institute of Islamic Thought  
555 Grove St. (P.O. Box 669)  
Herndon, Virginia 22070-4705 U.S.A.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Al 'Umārī, Akram Ḍiyā': (1942 (1361) -

[*Al Mujtama' al Madanī fi 'Ahd al Nubūwah*. English]

Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet: Its Characteristics and Organization; an attempt to apply the muḥaddithun's methods of criticism to historical narratives / by Akram al 'Umari; translated by Huda Khaṭṭāb.

p. xvi, 152 cm. 15 x 22 1/2 — (*Issues in Islamic Thought*: 3)

Translation of: *al Mujtama' al Madanī fi 'Ahd al Nubūwah*.

Includes bibliography and indices (25 pages).

ISBN 0-912463-36-8: — ISBN 0-912463-37-6 (pbk.):

1. Medina (Saudi Arabia) — History — Methodology. 2. Jews — Saudi Arabia — Medinah — History. 3. Medina (Saudi Arabia) — History. 4. Islam — History — Methodology. 5. Hadith — Authorities. I. Title. II. Series.

DS248.M5U4613 1989

953.8—dc20

89-2185  
CIP



**Volume I**

***Its Characteristics and Organization***



# Table of Contents

## Volume . I

Preface . . . . .	ix
Introduction . . . . .	xi
Foreword . . . . .	1
Prologue on Methodology for Writing the History of the First Period of Islam . . . . .	3
<b>Chapter I</b>	
General Features of the Islamic Interpretation of History . . . . .	9
<b>Chapter II</b>	
The Necessity of Flexibility in Applying the Principles of the Hadith Scholars . . . . .	23
<b>Chapter III</b>	
Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet: Its Characteristics and Early Organization . . . . .	43
<b>Chapter IV</b>	
The Effect of Islam on Madīnan Society . . . . .	49
<b>Chapter V</b>	
The <i>Hijrah</i> and Its Effect on the Social Structure of Madīnah . . . . .	55
<b>Chapter VI</b>	
The System of <i>Muākhāh</i> (Mutual Brotherhood) at the Time of the Prophet . . . . .	63
<b>Chapter VII</b>	
The Bonds of Faith Are the Base of the Links Between Men . . . . .	73

## Chapter VIII

Love is the Foundation of Madīnan Society .....	79
---	----

## Chapter IX

The Rich and Poor Strive Together on Equal Terms .....	85
--	----

## Chapter X

The Announcement of the Constitution of Madīnah .....	99
---	----

## Chapter XI

The Jews' Breaking of the Treaty and Their Expulsion from Madīnah .....	123
--	-----

## Chapter XII

The Conquest of Khaybar and The Remaining Jewish Strongholds in al Ḥijāz .....	141
---	-----

## Appendices

Appendix One: Sources on the Topic of <i>Ahl al Ṣuffah</i> .....	155
---	-----

Appendix Two: Sources for Research on the Announcement of the Constitution of Madīnah .....	157
---	-----

## Indices

Index of Qur'ānic Verses .....	163
Index of Hadith References .....	165
Index of Proper Names .....	167
Index of Arabic Terms .....	175

## Preface

With the publication of the first English edition of Dr. Akram Ḍiyā al Ḍīn al ‘Umarī’s *Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet*, The International Institute of Islamic Thought continues to encourage serious scholarship into the sources of revelation, as such scholarship is vital to the reform of existing Muslim thought. The significance of the *sīrah* of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace, is that it constitutes the all-important historical framework against which the particulars of the Sunnah may be seen in their proper perspective. The study of the *sīrah* is therefore essential to a critical understanding of the Sunnah, and it is in this context that the work of Dr. al ‘Umarī assumes its importance.

There is, however, another critical aspect to Dr. al ‘Umarī’s work; a methodological aspect, and it is this aspect which has prompted the Institute to bring this book to the attention of the English-reading public.

Historically, the difference between the scholars of the *sīrah* and the scholars of the Sunnah has been in their critical methodology. Much of the material deemed acceptable by one group was rejected by the other, and the methods employed by hadith scholars to determine a particular hadith’s authenticity were often ignored by the biographers of the Prophet. Thus the works of *sīrah*, like many of the early works of history, were filled with material gleaned from narrations that were less than authentic from a purely technical perspective. Much of that material in fact, when measured against the stringent standards of the *muḥaddithīn*, appears dubious if not outright spurious.

The contribution of Dr. al ‘Umarī to this important field of *sīrah* scholarship has been to apply the traditional methods of hadith criticism to the material upon which the *sīrah* is based and then to use, from an Islamic perspective, the methods of modern Western historical research. Details of this process have been given both in the Introduction written by Dr. Khalid Blankinship as well as by the author himself in his *Prologue on Methodology for Writing the History of the First Period of Islam*.

In fact, the writing of Islamic history is arguably one of the most important tasks faced by contemporary Muslim scholarship. There is nearly general agreement that Islamic history has not received the kind of attention it deserves, especially in terms of documentation, verification, and analysis. The result of this neglect in the past was a clouded vision of Islamic history that led to the circulation of unfounded ideas in regard to several major Islamic issues and, in turn, to the destruction of unity among Muslims.

While it is true that the attention of Muslim scholars from the very beginning has been directed toward the first period of Islam, that attention has mainly been legalistic in nature. Thus, the narrations of *ḥadīth* dealing with legal matters were closely attended to, and the degrees of their authenticity or lack of it were carefully verified in accordance with rigid and sophisticated criteria. At the same time, however, narrations concerned with purely historical events and issues were treated with a great deal of leniency. This kind of indulgence led eventually to faulty and misleading



## Introduction

This work, *The Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet* (ŞAAS), by the contemporary Muslim scholar Akram Ḍiyā' al 'Umarī, makes a new and valuable contribution to the study of the earliest formative period of Islam by challenging some fundamental notions accepted by Western scholars of Islam and their counterparts in the Muslim world.

As Professor al 'Umarī's work shows, Western historical scholarship today faces a crisis of method in dealing with Islamic history, particularly the earliest period of Islam. Although the Western historical tradition in general insists on the highest standards of objectivity and makes the search for the truth its goal, its treatment of the formative period of Islam has tended to be influenced by its previous skeptical findings about other religious traditions, particularly the Judæo-Christian. This, coupled with the long adversarial relationship between Muslims and Europe, as well as the personal biases of some scholars, has made for a lesser degree of quality in many of the treatments of Islam than has been the case in Western studies of other non-Western history. Besides these difficulties peculiar to Western treatments of Islam, there is also the inherent requirement that Western scholars continuously produce something new; the more contrary to the received tradition any new studies are, the better. In the Islamic field, this tendency has also wreaked havoc by providing a platform for the most fantastic and improbable speculations that do not deserve the name of scholarship.

This is not to say that Western scholars have not produced much useful work concerning the Madīnan period of the Prophet's (ŞAAS) life. But even the best work usually contains two preconceived attitudes which not only clash with the Muslim point of view but are certainly open to doubt on scholarly grounds. One is the tendency to impute materialistic motives to all historical actors. This represents an ideological view rather than a historical reality. It overlooks the possibility that people in other times and places could have completely different mentalities than the Western one. Thus, the early Islamic conquests (*futūhāt*) are characterized as motivated by greed for booty. While the desire for booty was doubtless a motivation, as is amply attested in the Qur'ān itself, making booty the primary motive totally overlooks the possible importance of the stated goal of Islam: *to establish Allah's rule in all the earth*.<sup>1</sup> The tendency of the Umayyad caliphate to throw army after army of willing *mujāhids* into fruitless campaigns in extremely poor, bootyless mountain regions like Zābulistān witnesses to the sincerity with which many early

---

<sup>1</sup>Qur'ān, 2:193, 8:39.

Muslims went out to fight in Allah's path despite the slimness of the material prospects.<sup>2</sup>

A second difference of viewpoint between most Western scholars and Muslim opinion is of even more importance, as it concerns the sources of historical information rather than speculations about motives. This is the dispute about, first, the authenticity of the Muslim prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) and, second, its value as a historical source. This dispute is of the greatest importance for the Madīnan period of the life of the Prophet (ṢAAS), as nearly all the *ḥadīth* refer to that period.

Western scholars have tended to reject the *ḥadīth* as being of wholly later invention owing to the lateness of its recording and a presumably long period of oral transmission.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, they reject the critical research done by early Muslim scholars who established the standards for judging the truthfulness of different *ḥadīth* in the medieval times. It is true that these scholars did not enjoy the benefits of modern technology to aid them in their research. Nevertheless, it would be perverse to reject the results of their research out of hand, for they established severe criteria which resulted in the winnowing down of the bulk of the *ḥadīth* to relatively few reports that were regarded as adequately authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

The Muslim scholars' method of *ḥadīth* criticism in fact anticipated the method of historical criticism later developed in the West, and both methods had the same goal: to get at the truth. It was entirely reasonable for the Muslims to base their acceptance of reports in the first instance on their ability to trace them to reliable sources; Western historiography does the same today in trying to judge the veracity of Herodotus, Thucydides, or Tacitus. That the Muslim scholars made some mistakes does not imply that their method should be held invalid or worthy of ridicule. Indeed, it is often vindicated when particular instances are examined; thus, the notorious Sayf ibn 'Umar al Usayyidī, whose fabrications have been rightly decried by Wellhausen and his numerous Western successors, was already condemned by the medieval Muslims in the strongest terms centuries earlier, despite the pleasingly *sunni* appearance of his reports.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Jābir al Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al Buldān*, Cairo: Dār al Naḥḍah al Miṣriyyah, 1956-7, pp. 490-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, tr. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971, v. 2, pp. 18-9 and passim; J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950, pp. 4-5 and passim.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wellhausen, "Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams," in *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, Berlin, 1899, v. VI, pp. 3-7; L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islām*, Milan, 1905-24, v. II/1, pp. 550-1, 553-4, 568, 684-5, etc.; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, Leiden: Brill, 1937, suppl. I, pp. 213-4; Erling L. Petersen, *Alī and Mu'awiyah in Early Arabic Tradition*, Odense: University Press, 1964, pp. 78-82, 150-3; Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātīm al Rāzī (d. 327/939), *al Jarḥ wa al Ta'dīl*, Ḥaydarābād, India: Dā'irat al Ma'ārif al 'Uthmāniyyah, 1372/1952, v. II/1, p. 278; Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān (d. 354/965), *al Majruḥīn min al muḥaddithīn wa al du'afā' wa al matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, Ḥalab: Dār al Wā'ī, n. d., I, 345; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), *Mizān*



Quite aside from Muslim confidence in the literal validity of *ḥadīth* reports in the six accepted collections, particularly those of al Bukhārī and Muslim, the *ḥadīth* collections as they exist, whatever one may think of their ultimate veracity, are as old or older than most of the "historical" sources for the Prophet's (ṢAAS) life. The five most important "historical" works in chronological order are those of al Wāqidi (d. 207/823), Ibn Toman *Hishām* (d. 218/834), Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), al Balādhuri (d. 279/892), and al Ṭabarī (d. 311/923).<sup>5</sup> The collections of *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) are contemporary with the period during which these historical works were written. Other collections containing *ḥadīth* such as those of Mālik (d. 179/794) and Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) are even earlier.

Actually, it is doubtful if any distinction can be drawn between "historical" and *ḥadīth* works in favor of the former as sources on the excuse that the latter are more biased ideologically, for all of these works were produced by members of the same scholarly class. Rather, it would seem that the *ḥadīth* works represent a greater attempt at historical authentication through examination of the chain of authorities. While this may not guarantee their infallibility, it ought at least to gain them a place among the historical sources worthy to be considered and evaluated. Indeed, it would appear reasonable to examine reports with the best and complete *isnāds* first because these are precisely the ones that can be most easily checked for source.

Therefore, it is most refreshing that in the present work Professor al 'Umarī restores the balance to the study of the Prophet's (ṢAAS) lifetime by giving the *ḥadīth* its proper place as a historical source for that period. Following the methods developed by the medieval Muslims, al 'Umarī establishes the credibility of each report about an event by referring to the quality of its chain of transmission. This he accomplishes first of all by relying on those collections which early Muslims regarded highly, such as al Bukhārī and Muslim, as their reports are generally regarded as *ṣaḥīḥ*. A large proportion of *Ṣaḥīḥ* al Bukhārī in particular is devoted to historical reports, especially those of the *maghāzī*. But al 'Umarī also brings in many other collections of *ḥadīth* and sundry other historical sources. In order to judge the quality of their reports, he turns to the medieval works on the grading of transmitters of tradition, the *rijāl* books, and frequently gives extensive annotation on his findings. By these means, he attempts to establish the most creditable versions of events.

Al 'Umarī's work falls into two books. Volume One, subtitled *The Jihād against the Mushrikūn*, deals entirely with the Prophet's (ṢAAS) military campaigns (*maghāzī*). This also covers most of the political events of the Madīnan

---

*al Itidāl fī Naqd al rijāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al Bajāwī, Cairo: 'Īsā al Bābī al Ḥalabī, n. d., v. II, p. 255; Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al 'Asqālānī (d. 852/1448), *Tahdhīb al tahdhīb*, Ḥaydarābād, India: Dā'irat al Ma'ārif al 'Uthmaniyyah, n. d., v. IV, p. 295.

<sup>5</sup>This is the opinion of J. M. B. Marsden Jones, personally communicated to me in 1977.

period, as the chronological order established by the early scholars of the *sīrah* was based on the campaigns. In a brief introductory chapter on historical method, the author acknowledges the need for a combination of the traditional Muslim method of *ḥadīth* criticism with modern-style criticism derived from Western models. Following a chapter on the meaning of the principle of *jihād* in Islam, al 'Umarī discusses the campaigns themselves one at a time, examines the value of reports relating to each of them, and then describes which rules of Islamic law or practice were established during each one. This volume deals only with the campaigns against the pagan Arabs and the Byzantines, as the struggle with the Jews is included in the next volume.

Volume Two of *The Medinan Society at the Time of the Prophet* (ṢAAS) treats several diverse matters in well-constructed chapters. The first two chapters deal at length with the best historical method for treating the *sīrah* and *ḥadīth*. While al 'Umarī applies the principles of *ḥadīth* criticism to history, he acknowledges that it is necessary to be flexible in the use of these principles, because the *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan ḥadīth* alone are not sufficient to reconstruct even the main course of events. Thus, according to al 'Umarī, recourse must be had to weaker versions, but these may be used as long as they are not being cited to establish rules of law or practice (*aḥkām*), for which only *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* reports are acceptable. Owing to the relative dearth of authenticated reports and conflicts among the weaker ones, a fair amount of disagreement may exist about certain historical points in the *Sīrah*. It is in discussing these points that al 'Umarī shows his greatest virtuosity as a scholar, marshalling material from numerous sources for analysis and sometimes acknowledging a version of events other than the well-known one. His work clearly shows how muslim scholars are able to achieve high standard of objectivity and scholarship.

The middle chapters of the second volume (III-X) examine various aspects of the life of the original Muslim polity in al Madīnah. Certain special subjects are dealt with, including the system of mutual brotherhood (*mu'ākhāh*), the poor Muslims who lived in the mosque (*ahl al Ṣuffah*), and the document generally known as the Constitution of al Madīnah. These essays are among the best of al 'Umarī's work. His treatment of the *mu'ākhāh* emphasizes that its purpose was to unite the immigrant Makkans (*muhājirūn*) with the natives of al Madīnah (*anṣār*), so that the alleged mutual brotherhood between the Prophet (ṢAAS) and 'Alī falls out and could not have occurred at the time of the *hijrah*, despite its being vouched for by famous sources. In dealing with the *ahl al Ṣuffah*, the author uses the detailed list of those included in it given by Abū Na'im's (d. 430/1039) *Ḥilyat al Awliyā'* to establish that some otherwise quite unknown persons were numbered among them. This would tend to rebut the Orientalist charge that the *ahl al Ṣuffah* were a later invention.<sup>6</sup> In his treatment of the Constitution of al Madīnah, the author carefully

<sup>6</sup>See Watt's article in *ET*, s.v. *Ahl al Suffah*.

distinguishes between an agreement made with the Jews and another with the non-Jews there.

Finally, in his last two chapters (XI-XII), al 'Umarī covers the struggle with the Jews which led to their expulsion from al Madīnah. Here his discussion follows the traditionally established version of events. He does not accept recent attempts to deny the expulsion of the Banū Qaynuqā' or the execution of the Banū Qurayzah.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most impressive aspects of the al 'Umarī's work is his use of the sources. In his bibliography and notes, one finds not only the standard "historical" *sīrah* works already mentioned, but also a plethora of other works as well. He refers to the Qur'ān whenever possible to throw light on the history of the Madīnan period. His command of the books of *ḥadīth*, which often have valuable information culled from other sources now lost, is remarkable. This is especially true of Ibn Ḥajar al 'Asqalānī's massive *Fath al Bārī*, which al 'Umarī cites with great frequency. Al 'Umarī furthermore makes extensive use of often neglected historical sources, including Ibn Kathīr, as well as the very early and important Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854). He discusses at several points the weakness of al Wāqidi, who, despite his earliness, seems to contain much legendary material showing signs of tendentious elaboration. He points out that al Wāqidi's student Ibn Sa'd was aware of his mentor's faults and tried to avoid them.

Western readers should find al 'Umarī's work useful because it attempts to clarify what modern Muslims believe to be true or probable about the Madīnan period of the Prophet's (ṢAAS) mission according to the received principles of *ḥadīth* criticism. In doing this, al 'Umarī attempts to produce a more accurate history by relying on what medieval Muslim scholars had determined were the most reliable reports, or at least to use their elaborately developed and refined criteria for determining which reports were most reliable. No other work in English has these features. And although many medieval Arabic works on the *sīrah* attempt to get at the truth, they usually contain a mixture of strong and weak traditions, as al 'Umarī points out extensively in his notes. Although the overall picture painted by al 'Umarī follows the traditional rendition of the *Sīrah* in its main lines, the reader will find that the author has simplified the facts to a certain extent by omitting poorly-authenticated reports or relegating them to the notes in order to give the strongest, most well-authenticated rendition of events possible.

Khalid Yahya Blankinship

Seattle, Washington

24 Rabī' al Awal 1409/3 November 1988

---

<sup>7</sup>On this, see especially Barakat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A re-examination*, New Delhi: Vikes Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1979, passim, though al 'Umarī does not cite him. Ahmad follows the same Islamic historical criteria as al 'Umarī (see Ahmad, p. 5).



## Foreword

Praise be to Allah, who is worthy of all praise directed to Him. May blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muḥammad, after whom there will be no Prophet, and upon his family and companions and whoever espouses his call to Allah, until the Day of Judgement.

I wrote this study over a long period and have reviewed it carefully. I tried to apply the method of criticism of the *ḥadīth* scholars to historical reports and I believe that, with Allah's help, the attempt has been useful. However, a full-time and long-term undertaking will be required in order to complete the writing of all stages of the *al Sīrah al Nabawīyah* and the early Rightly-guided Caliphs in accordance with the manner in which this study has been carried out. I hope that this will be realized soon and that researchers and students of Islamic history will discuss and critically appraise this study. We shall benefit from their views for we are at the beginning of the road as far as applying the methodology of the *ḥadīth* scholars to critical studies of historical narratives is concerned. This is a difficult task which requires a good, precise grasp of *ḥadīth* terminology, and flexibility in dealing with and understanding historical reports. I have directed and supervised a number of theses, for both Master's and Ph.D. degrees in the Department of Postgraduate Studies, which deal with the criticism of the historical reports contained in the books of *ḥadīth*, *al Maghāzī* (military expeditions) and the *Sīrah*. The aim of this research was to verify the information we have on the life of the Prophet. Some of these theses have already been completed, while others are still being researched.

In my opinion, this project, which has been carried out by the Department of Postgraduate Studies at the Islamic University of al Madīnah al Munawwarah during the past six years, should be regarded as the greatest achievement in the documentation of the *Sīrah* to date, notwithstanding the difficulties which normally attend any pioneering efforts. I am very hopeful that we shall be able to develop this project further, so that the *Sīrah* in all its aspects will be completely re-written with full documentation of the historical reports, while giving full recognition to the Islamic concepts of motives and characteristic features.

Allah encompasses all intentions, and He is the guide to the straight path.

Dr. Akram al 'Umari



## Prologue on Methodology for Writing the History of the First Period of Islam

The need to re-write the history of Islam is one of the issues to which Muslim scholars have been directing their attention since the 1960s. These scholars were of the opinion that any such reformulation should take place in accordance with the Islamic concepts of movement and interpretation of history. It must also be carried out along the lines of the *ḥadīth* scholar's methodology in the study of Islamic history. It is indeed a most difficult undertaking to offer suggestions for the reformulation of the history of Islam which spans fourteen centuries. This is because of the length of the period itself, on the one hand, and because of the diversity of the sources, on the other. This diversity is due to the ways in which the various sources were arranged and the different aspects which they emphasized at any particular time. The difficulty is further compounded by the emergence from an early period, of distortions in the political sphere, followed in later periods by distortions in other spheres, such as the social, economic, and educational. More serious distortions in the basic beliefs and principles and in the *Sharī'ah* have appeared during the twentieth century. All this influences the interpretation of motives for the movement of Islamic history.

For this reason, I limit this work to the reformulation of the first period of Islam. This period consists of the *Sīrah* and the era of the Rightly-guided Caliphs, when the influence of faith was at its most powerful in shaping the motives of the Muslims. Our original sources use the method of transmission of reports, where, in the manner of the *ḥadīth* scholars, these are usually preceded by the names of their narrators. The history of the first period of Islam is of the utmost importance because it is the age when the comprehensive teachings of Islam were truly implemented. The first period of Islam is the prototype and the ideal which we strive to emulate in our contemporary Islamic societies. In this work I also attempt to outline certain features of the Islamic perspective on the interpretation of history. Then I discuss the methodology of historical research in accordance with the principles of *muṣṭalah al ḥadīth*. This will be preceded by an introduction stating the need for Islamic history to be written by Muslim scholars. The history of other nations has ultimately been written by people belonging to those nations, even

though others may have contributed to that end. Thus, we Muslims should bear the responsibility of writing Islamic history by and for ourselves. We must acquaint ourselves with our civilization, ideology and values, according to our understanding of these concepts. Outsiders may make some contribution, but that must remain limited in its scope. It cannot be the mainstay of our concept of history, nor should it constitute the only exposition of our heritage to the world.

What has actually taken place, however, is the exact opposite of what ought to be the case. The backward state of civilization in the Muslim world today is reflected in its inability to appraise and document its own history. The majority of those concerned with historical studies in the Muslim world fall into two distinct categories. The first consists of those who hate their Islamic legacy, believing that it is the cause of the cultural backwardness which is prevalent in Muslim lands. They even hold this legacy responsible for their repeated defeats at the hands of the Zionists in Palestine. This category of Muslim historians firmly believes that it is necessary to forge a wedge between the past and the present; the new generation must cut off and totally isolate itself from Islam and its literary heritage and civilization. The second category is a group of inactive professional writers of historical essays. They write unimaginative works in which they depend heavily upon the translated works of Orientalists, without making any real effort to undertake their own investigations, check the original sources, and put forward their own ideas. They do not care if any poisonous ideas posited by the Orientalists reach the Muslim society through their writings.

This state of affairs—the neglect of Islamic history—has been exacerbated by the weakness of the intellectual movement in the Muslim world and by its inability to keep pace with the trends of world thought. It results from the cultural disparity between the East and West which dates from the days of the European Renaissance. One very rarely finds a serious historical study written by a Muslim scholar during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Little wonder, therefore, that most historical studies produced by Muslim writers during this period are mere echoes and reflections of Orientalist studies, and of their views and ideas.

The true believers in Islam, those working to strengthen the ties which bind the new generations of Muslims to their faith and heritage must, therefore, fulfill their great responsibility in this field of historical research. They alone are capable of disseminating the true concepts of Islamic history and of Islamic society. They have tasted the sweetness of true belief, and have experienced its influence on their conduct. They are in a better position to understand the true motives behind the actions of sincere Muslims and the tendencies of truly Islamic societies, and are therefore better qualified to understand the direction and movement of Islamic history.



The Islamic interpretation of history stems from the Islamic concept of the universe, life and man, and is based upon belief in Allah, His books, His Messengers, the hereafter and destiny, with both its good and bad aspects proceeding from Allah. Thus, the Islamic interpretation of history does not lie beyond the circle of Islamic religious tenets. Rather, it is based on the understanding of motives and incentives for human behavior as exemplified in the first Muslim society in Madinah. The distinctive character of the direction and course of Islamic history distinguishes itself from universal history because of the influence of divine revelation. This is achieved by pointing out that in Islamic history the properties of true *imān* dominate other properties. Nor is the Islamic interpretation of history a materialistic interpretation in which material factors such as the means of production are portrayed as the sole influence on the movement of human history, as in the case with the Marxist ideology. Nor is it a material interpretation which ascribes historical change to external factors such as the influence of the physical environment, climate, geography, economy, etc. This is the Western material interpretation. The Islamic interpretation clearly indicates man's responsibility and role in effecting social and historical change within the framework of the divine will. The Islamic interpretation cannot be racial, emphasizing only the role of a particular race or people. It acknowledges the roles of all Islamic peoples in proportion to their real contribution. Nor can the Islamic interpretation be said to be sectarian, interpreting history to the advantage of any particular sect to the detriment of historical fact.

All these ideas need to be further clarified in greater detail, but there is no scope for this in this book. However, I shall attempt to outline some of these issues and hope to deal with the details in the future.



# *Chapter I*



## General Features of the Islamic Interpretation of History

### Consideration of the facts explicitly stated in the Qur'ān: The origin of human belief was *tawhīd*, not *shirk*

*Tawhīd* was the norm from the days of Adam until *shirk* emerged. Allah says in the Qur'ān: "Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings . . ." (*al Baqarah* 2:213). That is, mankind was one nation (*ummah*) whose religion was that of pure *tawhīd*. When mankind abandoned *tawhīd* and turned away from it, Allah sent the Prophets to bring them back to it. This event is affirmed in the Qur'ān. But when we turn to the books of ancient history, we find the Muslim historians stating that which contradicts the Qur'ān. They state that the original religion of mankind involved the worship of animals, trees and natural forces, and then, as a result of intellectual evolution, man arrived at *tawhīd*. These scholars consider the Pharaoh Akhenaton to be the earliest monotheist, because he advocated the worship of the sun to the exclusion of all other Egyptian deities. This fallacy is due to two reasons:

1. The first reason is that certain Muslim historians reject the authenticity of divine revelation (*al wahy*) and Prophethood, believing that religious belief evolved from the worship of many gods to the worship of the one true God as a result of human endeavor, manifesting itself through the intellectual and cultural evolution of mankind.
2. The second reason is that the Muslim historians have been influenced by Darwin, and have applied his theory of evolution and the origin of species to the field of religious belief.

A Muslim historian is required to assimilate the basic Qur'ānic concepts of human history, and then to observe them strictly when he is writing about history. If he encounters any theories which contradict these Qur'ānic principles, then it is his duty to challenge those theories, so long as they are merely theories and not established facts.

However, most inferences about ancient history are based upon the results of archaeological excavations. Such efforts yield limited information which is not sufficient to bridge the huge gaps which exist in our knowledge of ancient history. Whereas the non-Muslim historian has nothing at his

disposal except the material results of these excavations with which to derive information, the Muslim historian is able to rely upon the Qur'ān, where "no falsehood can approach it from before or behind it" (*Fuṣṣilat* 41:42). The Qur'ān is the only divine book which has not been altered or tampered with. It is a great blessing which Allah has bestowed upon the Muslims for preserving His book. Muslims in every age recite it just as it was revealed, assured in their hearts that it is "the speech of Allah." This certainty has the most profound effect upon their souls, minds, conduct and character. It has also deeply influenced the nature of their society and civilization. This blessing has never been bestowed upon any nation other than the Muslim *Ummah*.

### The interpretation of the behavioral motives among Muslims in the early period of Islam

In an Islamic society in which the basic beliefs and principles are both deeply-rooted and dominant, behavioral motives are greatly influenced by the aspiration to please Allah and gain His reward in the hereafter. The best Muslim believers do not include any other motive for their actions. It is essential for the Muslim to ensure that his intention in all his deeds is aimed solely at pleasing Allah, be they acts of *jihād*, self-purification, or any social, economic, or political activities. The activities of a Muslim in all spheres of life must be directed towards pleasing God. The Muslim knows well that if he were to include anything else in his intention besides God, then his deed would be unacceptable, as stated in the *ḥadīth*: "Allah does not accept any deed except that which is purely intended for Him and is done for His sake." If this way of thinking is guiding many conscientious Muslims even today, then what was its influence on the generations of the companions of the Prophet and those who followed after them (*tābi'ūn*), who were the best of all generations?

The knowledge of the effect which Islam exerted on the education of its followers in the first period of Islam—and on the purification of their souls, the polishing of their minds, the sincerity of their religious belief, together with their directing their worship to God alone—makes it abundantly clear that their participation in the military campaigns known as *al futūḥ* (the conquests or 'opening up' of other lands) was not primarily motivated by any worldly ambition. Rather, it was the compelling desire to propagate Islam, to enable it to take firm root in these lands and to organize and administer the newly-conquered territories. It was the wish to solve the economic problems of these lands, and any new problems which might arise, in accordance with the true teachings of Islam. The Muslims were not motivated by any desire to dominate those peoples or to acquire their wealth, nor were they attempting to escape from the hardship of life in the desert, as has been maintained by Caetani and other Orientalists.

Al Ṭabarī narrated that Rabīʾ ibn ʿĀmir entered the court of Rustum, the Persian leader, who asked him: “What brought you here?” Rabīʾ said: “God sent us, and He brought us here in order to lead whom He wills from the worship of man to the worship of God alone; from the narrowness and oppression of this world to the space and abundance of the hereafter; and from the injustice of other religions to the justice of Islam. He has sent us with His religion of His creation, to call them to Him.”

What Rabīʾ ibn ʿĀmir, the representative of the Muslims, said to the Persians was not only the expression of his personal feelings. Rather, it voiced the thought which was predominant among the Muslim leadership and most of the *Mujāhidīn*. This does not exclude the possibility that some of the Bedouin who had participated in the military expeditions had been attracted by the prospects of material gains and booty, in addition to the desire for *jihād*; but these Bedouin did not represent either the leadership of the movement or its motivating spirit. We must state this because the Muslim society is a human society. In it are found the elite who are committed to the highest moral and spiritual ideals, with their intentions directed purely towards God, who are desirous of earning His good pleasure and who direct their efforts towards achieving this end. But there are also lesser classes of Muslims who take it upon themselves to maintain the minimum standards which will entitle them to call themselves Muslims.

We must explain clearly that the interpretation of the course of Islamic history during the first period of Islam can only be undertaken by a Muslim who repeats daily what God said to his Prophet: “Say: ‘Truly my prayer and service of my sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for God, the cherisher of the worlds: No partner hath He; this am I commanded . . .’” (*al Anʿām* 6:162-163). This is the Muslim whose mind and emotions have been affected by the Qurʾān and the *Sunnah*, who has felt their impact in molding his personality and determining his actions and conduct. This is why Westerners and Orientalists have failed to understand the true motives for the actions of Muslims during the first period of Islam. For example, when Henri Lammens, a well-known Orientalist, discussed the incident of the *Saqīfah* of Banū Sāʿidah (an early example of the application of the *Shūrā*, in which the majority was persuaded by the minority) his judgment of this incident was impaired by his recollections of the conspiracies at the French court of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which distorted his eventual depiction of the incident. He concluded that the outcome of the meeting of *Saqīfah* came about as the result of a conspiracy woven by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān, who, in the *Saqīfah* of the Banū Sāʿidah, had agreed to seize the caliphate and succeed one another.

The studies of the Orientalists are numerous, and differ in their levels, quality, and freedom from religious and racial prejudice. However, these studies are usually carried out by scholars who live in environments which are remote

from Islam, and which have their own philosophies and cultures. It is difficult for them to appreciate Islam and consequently, it is difficult for them to understand the true reasons for a Muslim's conduct, both individually and socially. When they seek to interpret the history of Islam, they draw analogies with European history, despite the very different natures of the two histories. We must not forget, moreover, that the Europeans cannot but help looking at the world from their own perspective, which is militarily and technologically superior. Thus they tend to ascribe every possible merit to themselves, while ascribing defects to others. When Toynbee wrote his history of world civilization, he allotted only a small space to the history of Islam, a space which was not commensurate with the size of Islam's real contribution to world history.

The most glaring deficiency of the Orientalists' studies is their failure to arrive at a correct understanding of Islam, its true spirit, and its effect on an Islamic society and on the course of that society's history. This is a grave deficiency which prevents our acceptance and approval of these studies, especially those which are concerned with the *Sīrah* and the era of the Rightly-guided Caliphs, when the practical implementation of Islamic theory coincided with the theory itself and faithfully reflected it.

### Appraising a civilization

The Muslim historian does not judge any civilization on the basis of its material achievement only; he also takes into consideration the extent to which it has realized the basic objective ordained by God, the Creator, for His creatures. Allah said: "I have only created *Jinns* and men, that they may serve Me" (*al Dhāriyāt* 51:56).

Thus a noble civilization is one which creates a suitable environment—political, social, economic, cultural, and material—that will enable man to direct himself toward the worship of God alone and to adhere strictly to His commandments in all his activities, unimpeded by the institutions of the society. These institutions should not be permitted to cause any contradiction between religious belief and conduct, nor should they put pressure on anyone to deviate from his obligations toward Allah, Lord of the worlds. No matter how advanced a civilization may be in its sciences, literature, and arts; no matter how colorful its achievements in architecture, furniture, clothing, and cuisine; no matter how far a civilization has advanced in material progress; in the opinion of the Muslim historian, it still remains "backward" and "deficient" so long as it falls short of creating an environment appropriate to the worship of God and the observance of His commandments as embodied in the *Sharī'ah*.

Islamic civilization itself has passed through several stages, and undoubtedly most of its material achievements were not realized during its early period. Major achievements came in the third and fourth centuries AH. For this reason,



we find the Western historian Adam Mitez voicing the opinion that the fourth century of the *hijrah* represents the peak of Islamic civilization, because this period was the most appropriate for the worship of God alone. When compared with the behavior of the Muslims in the fourth century of the *hijrah*, the behavior of the Muslims in the first century was clearly more in accordance with the teachings of the *Sharī'ah*. The Prophet alluded to this when he said: "The best of generations is my generation, then those that come after them, then those that come after them."

This logic seems strange indeed to the minds of non-Muslim historians, because they have accepted the criteria and values of Western civilization. But for the Muslim historian who has managed to break free of the domination of Western values, criteria and concepts, the whole matter appears self-evident. The Muslim has been able to achieve this new vision due to the new wave of Islamic awareness, the effects of which are now quite visible throughout the contemporary Islamic world. One of these effects has been the breaking away of the young Muslim generation from the clutches of Western civilization. Islam and *imān* have inspired them with feelings of superiority, self-confidence, and independence, both spiritual and intellectual. This is significant because it represents the first correct step in the direction of establishing a new civilization, God willing.

### **"Apology and justification" cannot serve as a basis for the interpretation of early Islamic history**

This logic is a result of the psychological and intellectual oppression created in our minds by the cultural invasion of the West. One aspect of the logic is the apologetic approach which some Muslim historians use when they discuss the issue of *jihād* in Islam, or the Islamic conquests (*al futūḥ al islāmiyyah*). They view these military expeditions as having been launched in defense of the Arabian Peninsula against the incursions of the Romans and Persians. Even the military expeditions of the Prophet himself have not escaped this apologetic approach, which portrays them as being waged in defense of the state of Madīnah. Professor Muḥammad Shalabī al Nu'mānī's study of the *Sīrah*, despite his excellence, has also committed this error.

Some Muslim historians have even gone so far as to reject some well-known and well-documented incidents because they were unable to produce the apologetic justification they needed. For example, one such writer denies Ibn Ishāq's reports concerning the slaughter of the warriors of Qurayzah, although these reports are confirmed in the books of *ḥadīth*, *Sīrah* and history. It is as if he doubts the fairness of killing them. The Islamic interpretation of history

is not apologetic, nor is it a defensive justification. It is based on the conviction that Islam is the truth, and whatever contradicts it is falsehood. Whatever God has legislated in Islam, be it *jihād* or anything else, is right and has no need of apology or justification, however strange or unacceptable it may appear to the dominant Western mentality of the twentieth century. We should not modify Islam and its history to suit the tastes and ideologies of people in any particular age. What people commend at one particular time may be distasteful at another, and what is considered good by people in one place may be regarded as bad by the people of another place. Only God can truly judge or evaluate anything and this is reflected in His law, the *Sharī'ah*. True judgment cannot come from the whims, desires and subjective personal opinions of mere mortals. God is victorious over what he ordains.

### The use of *Sharī'ah* terminology in writing history

The use of legal (*Sharī*) terminology is necessary when writing the history of Islam from the Islamic perspective. Legal terms have clear and specific meanings, and function as criteria of Islamic legal concepts which are of significant value in judging people and events. For example, the Qur'ān divides people into three categories: *mu'min* (believer), *kāfir* (disbeliever) and *munāfiq* (hypocrite). Each of these three words has a precise meaning, which cannot be tampered with. We should not refrain from using these terms, and we should not adopt the alternative terminology which has developed in non-Muslim circles, such as "leftist," "rightist" or any other such non-Islamic terms which contradict the *Sharī'ah* and which are vague and ambiguous. It is also important to use Islamic terminology when cultural and civilizational achievements are being judged. Islamic juristic terms such as *al khayr*, *al sharr*, *al haqq*, *al bāṭil*, *al 'adl*, *al zulm*, must be used in the place of Western terminology such as "progressive," "reactionary," etc.

Some Muslim writers have fallen into the trap of using terminology that cannot be found in an "Islamic dictionary". Herein lies the danger that Islam may dissolve into *Jāhili* thought and be lost in its terminology, which would rob us of our independent identity.

The use of Islamic juristic terminology in the rewriting of Islamic history is utterly vital for the preservation of the independent character of the Islamic methodology and the promotion of its identity. Furthermore, Islamic juristic terminology is much more precise than Western terminology.

We may ask: What is meant by conducting research in Islamic history in accordance with the methodology of the *ḥadīth* scholars?

The *ḥadīth* scholars have certain methods of criticizing *ḥadīth* and placing them into categories such as *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍa'īf*. How may we use these methods in criticizing historical reports which deal with the first period of Islam? These

reports resemble the *ḥadīth* in that they are preceded by an *isnād* (chain of narrators) which is affixed to their *matn* (text). Thus, the critic may know the names of the men who narrated the incident, and in which order they narrated it. Information about these narrators may be found in the books of *‘ilm al rijāl* (literally, ‘the science of men’), which specializes in giving details about these men, such as their circumstances and status as regards reliability. For example, the condition for accepting a *ḥadīth* as *ṣaḥīḥ* is that it should be narrated by an *al ‘adl al ḍābiṭ* (a trustworthy Muslim known to have an excellent memory), who must in turn narrate it from *al ‘adl al ḍābiṭ*, and so on along the chain of narrators. There must not be any defect or oddity in the chain. Likewise, the condition for a historical report to be *ṣaḥīḥ* is that all its narrators—up to and including the eye-witness—must be men of correct piety (with an excellent memory which is not susceptible to error) who either know the report by heart or have recorded it precisely in their books. In addition to this, the narrative must agree with similar narratives by other narrators, who are also known to excel in the skills of documentation. If, however, it disagrees with these narrators, it will be regarded as “odd,” and will be outweighed by better versions. The historical narrative must not suffer from any hidden defects, such as subtle lying, *irsāl* (a link missing from the chain of narrators) or an inconsistency in its *matn*. If an historical report does not qualify as *ṣaḥīḥ* according to these methods of the *ḥadīth* scholars, then the *isnāds* must be examined. All the versions dealing with any particular incident must be collected and checked to find out whether they agree or disagree. If any one version is narrated via a number of *isnāds*, then this would tend to strengthen the possibility of its authenticity, especially if it is deemed impossible that so many narrators would conspire in lying or would do so by chance.

The methods of the *ḥadīth* scholars must be observed when dealing with historical narratives. The *ḥadīth* scholars themselves are lenient when they narrate historical reports. We may notice this even in the most trustworthy of early Muslim historians, such as Ibn Ishāq, Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt and al Ṭabarī. They all give many historical reports which are either *mursal* or *munqatī‘*. Al Ṭabarī also often reports historical reports on the authority of very weak and untrustworthy narrators, such as Hishām ibn Kalbī, Sayf ibn ‘Umar al Tamīmī, Naṣr ibn Mazāḥim, and others.

Undoubtedly, the fact that the earlier historians accepted historical reports without subjecting them to the same rigorous criticism of the *ḥadīth* places a heavy responsibility upon the contemporary Muslim historian. The earlier historians were content to put their trust in the narrators mentioned in the *isnāds*. This means that the contemporary Muslim historian must make a tremendous effort to determine which historical reports are *ṣaḥīḥ*. He needs to understand the methods of the *ḥadīth* scholars and to apply them to the historical reports in the same way as they were applied to the *ḥadīth*. This

is no longer such an easy task as it was for Khalīfah ibn al Khayyāṭ or al Ṭabarī, because they were well-versed in the methodology of the *ḥadīth* scholars in criticizing historical reports.

We do not wish to detract from the credit that is due to the early historians, nor from the contribution they have made. They collected for us the primary material, along with the *isnāds*, which enable us to judge it, however difficult this may be. What should be the next step after separating the *ṣaḥīḥ* reports from the defective ones?

We should accept the *ṣaḥīḥ* reports, then the *ḥasan* ones, and then those *daʿīf* reports which are supported by other independent *isnāds*, and hence are known as *al muʾaḍḍadah* (the supported one). In this way, a picture of the events of early Islamic history can be reconstructed. If any contradiction arises, then the strongest *ḥadīth* must always be followed, but weak *ḥadīth* which are not supported or otherwise strengthened may be used to fill any gaps not covered by either *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan ḥadīth*. However, this may only be done when the issue concerned is not related to either *ʿaqīdah* or *Sharīʿah*. The general rule is that one must be stringent in matters relating to basic beliefs and principles or *Sharīʿah*. We cannot fail to notice that the age of the *Sīrah* and the Rightly-guided Caliphs is full of legal precedents. The Rightly-guided Caliphs used to exert themselves in order to direct life in accordance with the teachings of Islam. They are examples to be followed in the decisions they made concerning issues that emerged after the expansion of the Islamic State in the wake of their military victories and conquests.

The writer is permitted to be lenient when dealing with reports which describe the construction of cities, monuments, irrigation canals, or which deal with battles and reports of the courage and sacrifices of the *Mujāhidūn*.

Since we have accepted this principle of applying *ḥadīth* methodology, we may now make extensive use of the *ḥadīth* books in studying the *Sīrah* and the era of the Rightly-guided Caliphs. We may do so because the books of *ḥadīth* have been more closely examined by the critics than the books of *Sīrah* or of general history. For example, the books of al Bukhārī and Muslim have been defined as being authentic, and every *ḥadīth* contained therein is regarded as being *ṣaḥīḥ*. After many studies of these two books, both by ancient scholars with excellent memories and by modern scholars, even small details in the two books have firmly resisted criticism because their origins are well-known, and are not confined only to al Bukhārī and Muslim. If this is the case, we may therefore accept as authentic whatever al Bukhārī and Muslim have reported concerning the *Sīrah* and the era of the Rightly-guided Caliphs. We may then consider the other four books of *ḥadīth*, and the *Muwattāʾ* of Imām Mālik, which have also received a great deal of attention, even though these books do not attain the same level of authenticity as the two *ṣaḥīḥs* (i.e., al Bukhārī and Muslim), and are not totally free from *daʿīf ḥadīth*.

The *ḥadīth* books contain a great deal of information about the *Sīrah*, although they do not cover all of its events. Thus the importance of *ḥadīth* methods of criticism and of applying them to the reports of *Sīrah* and general history becomes apparent. When some of the major *ḥadīth* scholars, such as al Ḥāfiẓ ibn Sayyid al Nās in *ʿUyūn al Athar fī al Maghāzī wa al Shamāʾil wa al Siyar*, and al Ḥafīẓ al Dhahabī in *Tārīkh al Islām*, wrote about the *Sīrah*, they relied largely upon the Six Books, namely al Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al Tirmidhī, al Nasāʾī and Ibn Mājah. However, they also referred to the books of *Sīrah* and general Islamic history.

At this point, it is essential to state an important fact which, if ignored, could lead to misgivings about our concept of the *Sīrah* and our knowledge of the early caliphate. Actually, the *ḥadīth* books confirm what is reported in the books of *Sīrah* and general history. This is especially true in the case of two *Sīrah* books, namely the books of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yassār (d. 151 A.H.) and Mūsā ibn ʿUqbah (d. 26 A.H.). The former book has reached us under the titles of *Sīrat Ibn Hishām*; the latter, which is a counterpart of Ibn Hishām, is contained within the *Maghāzī* of al Wāqidī, who was charged by the *ḥadīth* scholars with fabricating reports, and whose authority was, therefore, considerably weakened, despite the fact that the *ḥadīth* scholars acknowledged the richness of his knowledge of the *Sīrah*. In truth, a careful study of al Wāqidī will reveal that what the *ḥadīth* scholars say about him is true: many of the narrators upon whom al Wāqidī relied are not to be found in the books of *ʿIlm al Rijāl*.

There is a mistaken tendency among some Orientalists (in which some Muslim historians have acquiesced) to upgrade al Wāqidī's *Maghāzī*, and to prefer it even to the *Sīrah* of Ibn Ishāq. The *Sīrah* of Ibn Ishāq is actually more precise and more authentic than al Wāqidī's work. The information given by Ibn Ishāq agrees in many aspects with that found in the books of *ḥadīth*. The main difference between the books of *ḥadīth* and the books of *Sīrah* is that the *Sīrah* books include many reports in which the *isnād* is either *mursal* or *munqaṭiʿ*; but these same reports are often found in *ḥadīth* books with complete *isnāds*, a fact which tends to confirm the information found in *Sīrah* books.

However, we shall certainly need to make some amendments and omissions from the *Sīrah*, as a result of checking the *Sīrah* books against the *ḥadīth* books and of applying the rules of *ḥadīth* criticism to the historical reports. In the following chapters, we shall discuss some results obtained by applying the *ḥadīth* methodology; results which have become apparent to me during my study of this topic:

#### 1. Certainty about the Authenticity of our knowledge of the *Sīrah*.

This is indeed an aspect of the mercy of God toward His servants, in that He has preserved for them the *Sīrah* of His Prophet so that they may take him as an example and emulate him.

## 2. The addition of new information.

These new additions, which are given by the books of *ḥadīth*, are important because the *Sīrah* and history books were limited to dealing with the *Maghāzī*, and did not give many details of the social, economic, and administrative aspects of the *Sīrah*.

## 3. The clarification of certain topics.

The historians and *ḥadīth* scholars disagree, for example, about the campaign against Banū al Muṣṭaliq. Al Bukhārī mentions, in his *ṣaḥīḥ*, that the Prophet took them completely by surprise when he attacked them. The books of *Sīrah*, however, state that he had given them a warning, that they had prepared themselves for fighting, and that the fighting had actually taken place around the well of al Muraysī.

In such a situation we need to know the correct Islamic position on the issue of warning the enemy. We find three distinct opinions among the jurists:

- (a) That it is not at all obligatory to warn the enemy of an imminent attack. This is the opinion favored by al Māziri and al Qādī 'Iyād.
- (b) That it is obligatory under all circumstances to warn the enemy. This is the opinion favored by Imām Mālik and others.
- (c) That it is obligatory to warn those to whom the message of Islam had not been sent, but it is not obligatory to warn those whom the message of Islam has reached (and who have rejected it). This is the opinion favored by the Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām al Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and their followers, and is the strongest of the three.

Insofar as Banū al Muṣṭaliq were among those who had received the call of Islam, the version of Imām al Bukhārī, that the Prophet had attacked them and taken them by surprise, is in complete agreement with the opinion, which is the most reliable. There is no need to prefer the version of Ibn Ishāq and other *Sīrah* writers, arguing that it is the more favorable, for that of al Bukhārī's version, which contradicts the Qur'ānic verse: "If you fear treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, so as to be on equal terms . . ." (*al Anfāl* 8:58).

## 4. Some amendments are necessary in certain topics of the *Sīrah*.

These may have been somewhat misunderstood in contemporary studies based only on the *Sīrah* and history books. Examples of these are "the system of brotherhood," and "the document which the Prophet wrote as a constitution for Madīnah at the beginning of the *hijrah*." However, we should not exaggerate the amount of amendment which will affect the shape of the *Sīrah*

as presented by the early writers and as it has been known among Muslims for 1,400 years. Indeed, a comparative study will reveal a concurrence between the books of *ḥadīth* and *Sīrah* in a vast number of details. This is a sign that God has preserved the *Sīrah* of His Prophet so that it will remain a light to guide Muslims in every time and place. God caused some of the outstanding *ḥadīth* scholars among the *tābiʿūn* and their students to record the *Sīrah* at an early date, drawing upon the resources of the companions who had witnessed and participated in those events. Thus there is no gap between the events of the *Sīrah* and the recording of those events. If such a gap had existed, it would have led to the loss of texts, or distortions of, and additions to those texts. Moreover, if we examine the names of the *Sīrah* authors, we shall find that most of them were also *ḥadīth* scholars. They are not merely literary figures or story-tellers. This is significant because they were known to be deeply concerned with documentation and had developed clear and critical methodologies. Their style was sober and completely free from exaggeration, pedantry, repetition and imaginative accounts.





# **The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)**

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is a cultural intellectual foundation. It was established and registered in the United States of America at the beginning of the fifteenth Hijrah century (1401/1981) with the following objectives:

- To provide a comprehensive Islamic outlook through elucidating the principles of Islam and relating them to relevant issues of contemporary thought.
- To regain the intellectual, cultural, and civilizational identity of the Ummah through the Islamization of the humanities and social sciences.
- To rectify the methodology of contemporary Islamic thought in order to enable it to resume its contribution to the progress of human civilization and give it meaning and direction in line with the values and objectives of Islam.

The Institute seeks to achieve its objectives by:

- Holding specialized academic conferences and seminars.
- Supporting and publishing selected works of scholars and researchers in universities and academic research centers in the Muslim world and the West.
- Directing academic studies toward furthering work on issues of Islamic thought and the Islamization of Knowledge.

The Institute has a number of overseas offices and academic advisors for the purpose of coordinating and promoting its various activities. The Institute has also entered into joint academic agreements with several universities and research centers.

**International Institute of Islamic Thought  
555 Grove Street, (P.O. Box 669)  
Herndon, VA 22070-4705 U.S.A.  
Tel: (703) 471-1133 • Fax: (703) 471-3922**



## About This Book

*Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet* (ŞAAS) is a work that brings out the most important aspects of life in the early Muslim community. Its author, the renowned scholar of *Sīrah* and Sunnah Studies Professor Akram Ḍiyā' al 'Umārī, has expended a great deal of effort to make this book more than just a mere recitation of the historical record. The result is a breakthrough in historiographical methodology, as Dr. al 'Umārī has effectively succeeded in combining the strict methodological guidelines used by traditional Muslim scholars of the *Sunnah* and *uṣūl al ḥadīth* with modern methods of historical criticism.

Volume One presents an accurate description of the society brought about through the efforts of the Prophet (ŞAAS) and his Companions, the society viewed by every successive generation of Muslims as the ideal in terms of temporal and spiritual values.

Volume Two deals with the relations of the struggling new community with the forces that threatened it. Without doubt, the exemplary behavior of the Prophet (ŞAAS) and his Companions during their long years under attack has remained a continued source of inspiration for all Muslims. Its contemporary relevance and significance is obvious to all who are concerned with the current plight of the Ummah.

