


Research Article

## The Modernist's Criticism of The Sunnah Through Fabrication – A Critical Study

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Received : September 25, 2024  
Accepted : November 23, 2024

Revised : October 25, 2024  
Available online : December 27, 2024

**How to Cite:** Klaina, M., & Hanane Yachaoui. (2024). The Modernist's Criticism of The Sunnah Through Fabrication – A Critical Study. *Maklumat: Journal of Da'wah and Islamic Studies*, 2(4), 274-293. <https://doi.org/10.61166/maklumat.v2i4.42>

**Abstract.** This study addresses an important issue concerning the doubts raised by modernist Arab writers regarding the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah, particularly their claim that fabricated Hadiths have been mixed with authentic ones. These claims, presented as original ideas by their proponents, are in fact largely based on Orientalist studies. The significance of this study lies in defending the integrity of the Sunnah and demonstrating the methodology developed by Hadith scholars to preserve it. The research aims to explore these claims, trace their origins, and provide a well-grounded response to these assertions. The main challenge is to expose these misconceptions and clarify that the Sunnah has been carefully safeguarded. The study follows a historical, analytical, and critical approach, examining the claims of fabrication, the foundations upon which they are based, their origins, and offering a critique. The key findings reveal that these modern critiques are not based on strong evidence, but rather stem from Orientalist sources, which are generally characterized by a

lack of intellectual honesty. Furthermore, the research shows that Hadith scholars meticulously identified and classified fabricated Hadiths, ensuring the integrity of the Sunnah.

**Keywords:** Prophetic Sunnah, Hadith fabrication, Orientalism, Hadith sciences, Authenticity of the Sunnah.

ملخص. تتناول هذه الدراسة قضية مهمة تتعلق بالشكوك التي أثارها الكُتّاب العرب الحدائون حول صحة السنة النبوية، وخاصة ادعاءهم بأن الأحاديث الموضوعية قد اختلطت بالأحاديث الصحيحة. هذه الادعاءات، التي قُدمت على أنها أفكار أصلية لأصحابها، تعتمد في الواقع بشكل كبير على الدراسات الاستشراقية. تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في الدفاع عن سلامة السنة النبوية وإظهار المنهجية التي طورها علماء الحديث لحفظها. يهدف البحث إلى استكشاف هذه الادعاءات، وتتبع أصولها، وتقديم رد علمي قائم على أسس قوية. التحدي الرئيسي هو كشف هذه المفاهيم الخاطئة وتوضيح أن السنة قد حُفظت بعناية. تتبع الدراسة منهجًا تاريخيًا، تحليليًا، ونقديًا، حيث تقوم بفحص ادعاءات الوضع والأسس التي تقوم عليها وأصول الأفكار وتقديم نقد لها. وتكشف النتائج الرئيسية أن هذه الانتقادات الحديثة ليست مبنية على أدلة قوية. بل تعتمد بشكل أساسي على مصادر استشراقية تتميز عمومًا بعدم الأمانة الفكرية. علاوة على ذلك، يظهر البحث أن علماء الحديث قاموا بتحديد وتصنيف الأحاديث الموضوعية بدقة، مما يضمن سلامة السنة النبوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السنة النبوية، وضع الحديث، الاستشراق، علوم الحديث، صحة السنة النبوية.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, scholars of Hadith have dedicated themselves to safeguarding the Prophetic Sunnah, defending it against falsehoods and fabrications. They developed various sciences to protect the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), including *al-Jarh WA al-Ta'dil* (criticism and accreditation of narrators), which helps distinguish reliable narrators from unreliable ones, and the science of *'Ilal* (hidden defects in Hadith), which identifies subtle issues affecting the authenticity of Hadith that might otherwise appear sound. These sciences played a crucial role in preserving the Prophetic Sunnah by ensuring that only authentic narrations were transmitted while false ones were exposed.

Among the most significant contributions was the compilation of books dedicated to fabricated Hadiths, where scholars categorized false reports, exposed their fabricators, and meticulously traced the chains of transmission. This ensured that no false claim could be attributed to the Prophet Muhammad without its fabricator being revealed.

In recent times, however, certain groups have emerged with the aim of distorting the Prophetic Sunnah and casting doubt on its authenticity. They argue that false narrations have been mixed with authentic ones, while disregarding the rigorous methods developed by Hadith scholars to preserve the Sunnah. Therefore, it is essential to address this issue, to clarify the authenticity of the Prophetic traditions,

and to trace these modern claims back to their original sources, ultimately providing a refutation.

### **Importance of the Study:**

This study holds great significance in an era where misconceptions about Islamic traditions are increasingly being promoted. By clarifying the methodologies used by scholars to distinguish between authentic and fabricated Hadiths, this research highlights the integrity of the Sunnah. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of preserving the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad in their true form and counters modern efforts to undermine the Sunnah.

### **Objectives:**

1. To explore the claims of fabrication raised by modern critics of the Prophetic Sunnah.
2. To trace the origins of these doubts and identify their primary proponents.
3. To refute these claims by presenting the methodologies developed by traditional Hadith scholars for preserving the Sunnah.

### **Research Problem:**

The main problem addressed in this study is the spread of modern doubts about the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah. These doubts are often presented as original ideas by contemporary critics but are in fact borrowed from Orientalist scholarship. The challenge lies in exposing these misconceptions, demonstrating the strength of traditional Hadith sciences, and showing that the Sunnah has been meticulously preserved.

### **Key Findings:**

The study reveals that the modern critiques of the Prophetic Sunnah are not based on sound historical evidence but are largely inherited from Orientalist sources. It demonstrates that Hadith scholars were well aware of fabricated narrations and took great care to distinguish them from authentic ones. The research concludes that the Sunnah has been preserved with exceptional rigor, and the claims of its distortion are baseless.

This research will examine the explanation of the claim of fabricating Hadiths in the Sunnah and its proponents, followed by its roots, and then a refutation of the claim.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study follows a historical and analytical approach. It begins by investigating the claims of fabrication, tracing their origins to early Orientalist studies, and analyzing the methods used by traditional Hadith scholars to refute them. The research is divided into four main sections, each focusing on different aspects of the *debate*.

## DISCUSSION

### Clarifying the Doubts about the Spread of Fabrication in the Sunnah and Its Claimants

#### Clarifying the Doubts of the Fabrication of the Prophetic Sunnah

The Orientalists, followed by some contemporary Arab writers, raised doubts about the documentation of the Prophetic Sunnah, whether by claiming that the Prophet forbade its writing or by asserting that its documentation was delayed until the beginning of the second century and was instead transmitted orally. This was aimed at amplifying the phenomenon of fabrication. However, the scholars of Hadith paid great attention to defending the Prophetic Sunnah, distinguishing between its authentic and weak narrations, and they clarified the fabricated ones so they would not mix with the authentic ones. They authored books to highlight these fabrications and mentioned, in the books of Jarh and Ta'dil (discrediting and accrediting), anyone proven to have lied so that nothing would be transmitted from them.

Additionally, some claimed that the Prophetic Hadiths were fabricated due to religious and political developments among Muslims; that is, the invention of Hadiths was driven by political and sectarian motives, with each group fabricating Hadiths to support its stance and legitimize its sect. They ignored the efforts of Muslims in analyzing the Hadiths to preserve the authentic ones and reject the fabricated ones (Sāsī, 2002, 1:489).

#### The Claimants of the Spread of Fabrication and the Invention of Hadiths

Contemporary Arab writers opposed to the Prophetic Sunnah claimed that Hadiths were fabricated and mixed with the authentic ones, leading to a lack of trust in the entire collection. They claimed that several reasons contributed to the spread of this phenomenon, including reliance on memory and oral transmission, or political and sectarian motives.

##### a. The Doubts About Reliance on Memory and Oral Transmission

Contemporary Arab writers hostile to the Sunnah considered that the authenticity or falsehood of a narration is tied to psychological and cognitive factors because relying on memory and oral transmission exposes the narrated news to distortion and fabrication, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

Among those who expressed this view is Tawfiq Sidqī, who believed that it is impossible to preserve oral transmission without altering its words or meanings, or without adding or omitting parts, especially if the narration is long or the narrator heard it only once (Sidqī, 1989, 9:639).

Abū Rayyah mentioned that the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the prominent companions, especially those known for giving religious opinions, were cautious about narrating from the Prophet and even avoided it, knowing that they could not convey everything they heard from the Prophet accurately. This was because memory could not preserve everything exactly as heard, and the original meaning or wording would inevitably be altered, despite efforts to maintain accuracy (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 30). He concluded, "There is hardly a Hadith in all the books, whether labeled as

authentic (Sahih) or acceptable (Hasan) that has been preserved exactly in the wording as the Prophet uttered it. What they consider authentic, by their standards, is only based on the understanding of certain narrators" (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 7-8).

Jamal al-Bannā claimed that each narrator narrated according to his understanding, not necessarily according to the meaning intended by the Prophet, peace be upon him. He stated that a statement from the Prophet could have both a specific and general meaning, but it might be heard by someone who did not understand its full context, leading them to interpret it incorrectly (al-Bannā, n.d., 2:95).

Abdel Majid Charafi argued that psychological and cognitive factors influence the degree of truth or falsehood in orally transmitted narrations. He stated, "We cannot trust a singular narration because there are psychological, social, and other motives that can lead not only to lying or fabricating but also to altering the content of the news, giving it a form unrelated to the original" (al-Charafi, 2014, 31-32).

#### **b. The Doubts About Fabrication of Hadiths Due to Political and Sectarian Motives**

Contemporary Arab writers hostile to the Sunnah claimed that rulers and princes used Hadiths to gain political legitimacy by fabricating Prophetic Hadiths for political reasons. On this subject, Jamāl al-Bannā said, "There is no doubt that the purpose of the Umayyad (Sunnah) was to distract people from discussing the issue of the caliphate, which they usurped... and to shift their attention from worldly matters to the afterlife" (al-Bannā, n.d., 2:12).

Abū Rayyah claimed that the writing of Hadiths did not occur until the second century, more than a hundred years after the Prophet's passing, and it was not driven by narrators but by political authorities (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 9). He asserted that the political climate during the reign of Mu'awiyah encouraged the fabrication of Hadiths, with narrators producing fabrications in support of him (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 99-100).

Similarly, Muhammad Shahrūr argued that the early jurists played a legislative role under the rulers, who exploited them to gain legitimacy through religion. He stated that these jurists developed rulings tailored to their societies' circumstances and were completely submissive to their rulers (Shahrūr, 1997, 566, and 2012, 191, and n.d., 25).

In the same vein, Muhammad Arkoun claimed that all information and reports regarding the Quran, the Prophet's biography, and the Hadiths were produced within a cultural environment where worldly goals were just as important as religious ones. He noted that both the Umayyad and Abbasid states needed these reports to form a religious orthodoxy and a cultural heritage necessary for solidifying the legitimacy of Islamic authority and maintaining its unity (Arkoun, 1996, 23).

Abdullah al-'Aroui asserted that jurists fabricated Hadiths to please the rulers (al-'Aroui, 2008, 135). Muhammad Abed al-Jābrī (2000, 303-304, and 2009, 67) and Hassan Ḥanafī (2013, 2:16) highlighted that political disputes led to doctrinal conflicts. These conflicts had a significant impact on the recording of Hadiths. Ḥanafī argued

that the writing of Hadiths was not an innocent process, as both Sunni and Shiite scholars wrote with political motives, either to support or undermine authority.

Finally, George Tarābīshī (1998, 47-48) claimed that the first person to compile Hadiths in service of the ruling authority in the Umayyad court of Abdul Mālik bin Marwan was Imām Ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī. He initially disliked the idea of recording knowledge, but when compelled by the ruler Hisham bin Abdul Mālik, he allowed people to write Hadiths. He is reported to have said, "We used to dislike writing down knowledge, but these rulers forced us to do so, and we saw no harm in allowing Muslims to write it".

Abū Rayyah also accused Abū Hurairah, a prominent companion, of fabricating Hadiths to support the Umayyad dynasty. He suggested that Abū Hurairah invented a Hadith about the virtue of praying at the Al-Aqsa Mosque to divert people from going to Mecca and Medina after the political conflict between Abdul Mālik and Ibn al-Zubayr (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 139-140).

### c. The Doubts About Fabrication of Prophetic Hadiths for Jurisprudential Purposes

Opponents the Sunnah from among contemporary Arab writers claimed that Hadiths were fabricated due to significant competition between the schools of *Ahl al-Hadīth* (People of Hadith) and *Ahl al-Ra'y* (People of Opinion). They alleged that Hadiths were employed for jurisprudential purposes because of the scarcity of Prophetic Hadiths that did not suffice them in confronting *Ahl al-Ra'y*, as stated by Ahmed Amin (1993a, 2:479). This same notion was also promoted by al-Jābrī (2009, 102).

### d. The Doubts of Preachers' Leniency in Fabricating Hadiths in the Category of Virtues and Encouragement/Discouragement

A number of contemporary Arab writers who oppose the Prophetic Sunnah have cast doubt on its authenticity based on what some pious individuals have done by fabricating Hadiths in the category of virtues and encouragement/discouragement. These individuals permitted the fabrication, filling the books of Hadith with virtues of certain people and the virtues of Quranic verses and chapters, under the pretext of seeking closeness to Allah. Among these writers are Ahmad Amin (1993b, 235), Abū Rayyah (1993, 111), and Jamal al-Bannā (n.d., 1:12).

### e. The Doubts About the Infiltration of *Isra'iliyyat* (Narratives from Jewish and Christian Sources)

Contemporary Arab writers have expressed doubts about the Prophetic Sunnah, arguing that many *Isra'iliyyāt* found their way into the Hadith literature and were falsely attributed to the Prophet (PBUH). They suggested that the scholars of the Ummah were unaware of this, and these narratives eventually became part of religious and historical accounts (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 121).

Among these writers is Ahmed Amin (1993a, 481), who criticized authentic Prophetic Hadiths, considering them taken from sacred scriptures. He stated: "Jews, Christians, Magians, and others from various religions introduced many elements

from their faiths and histories into the Hadiths, filling them with content from the Torah and its commentaries, as well as some Christian accounts."

**Abū Rayyah** also held this view (1993, 119), accusing **Ka'b al-Ahbār** of feigning Islam deceitfully while harboring Judaism in his heart. He believed that "Abū Hurairah was the most deceived among the Companions by him, the most trusting in him, and the most narrating from him and his peers, as he was the most prolific in narrating Hadiths. Upon investigation, it becomes clear that Ka'b al-Ahbār exerted his cunning over the simplicity of Abū Hurairah" (Abū Rayyah, 1993, 180). **Rashīd Riḍā (1368 H, 9:476)** had preceded him in this accusation when he said: "The two champions of *Isrā'īliyyāt* and the sources of myths are Ka'b al-Ahbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih".

### **Roots of The Doubts Regarding the Spread of Fabrication and Invention of Prophetic Hadiths**

All that these contemporary Arab writers opposing the Sunnah wrote and claimed about the lack of trust in the Prophetic Hadiths—due to the widespread fabrication for various reasons—has roots in the works of Orientalists. Their arguments are almost verbatim transfers, without attributing the statements to their original authors, misleading readers into believing they are original insights.

### **Roots of the Doubts Regarding Reliance on Memory and Oral Transmission**

Some Orientalists believe that the truthfulness or falsehood of a narration is related to psychological and cognitive factors that affect the recognition of the authenticity of narratives and the trust placed in them. In this context, **William Muir** (d. 1905) claimed that the Sunnah we have today relied in its transmission on the memory of those who narrated it, as well as their convictions and preconceived judgments. The general weakness of human memory renders belief in the authenticity of Hadiths invalid. Exaggerations and errors distort the oral transmission of many narrators. There are numerous indicators showing the presence of fabrication throughout the Prophetic Sunnah (Muir, 1858, xxxvi). He further added that due to the fragmented nature of the text, it is impossible to judge its authenticity. Each narrator in the chain (*Isnad*), despite claiming to re-narrate the authentic Hadith, is in reality providing an independent narration. This makes it impossible to determine to what extent the narration was accurate and free from additions or omissions by any of them. Even if we trust everyone's integrity, we are still unaware of their perspectives on how the Hadith was handled (Muir, 1858, xlvi). **David Samuel Margoliouth** (d. 1940) agreed with this view, asserting that the memory of those who transmitted the Hadiths was weak (Margoliouth, 1914, 79) and that human memory everywhere is unreliable. No narrator's memory is superior to another's (Margoliouth, 1914, 90).

### **Roots of the Doubts Regarding the Fabrication of Prophetic Hadiths for Political and Sectarian Motives**

Orientalists also raised the idea in their writings about the Prophetic Sunnah that certain Hadiths, considered authentic, were actually fabrications by narrators

serving the ruling authority and legitimizing its governance. For instance, **Ignaz Goldziher** (d. 1921) likened jurists and Hadith scholars to Jewish rabbis who were under Roman control and dedicated themselves to serving them. Allah-fearing elements of society considered these men their leaders, and these men established the Prophetic Sunnah upon which the Sharia and jurisprudence of the Islamic state should be built.

He also claimed that if the authorities wanted a certain opinion to gain general acceptance and silence opposition from religious circles, they needed to find a Hadith aligning with their viewpoint, doing as their opponents did: fabricating Hadiths. He believed that the Umayyads and their political followers had no qualms about spreading malicious lies in a sacred religious guise; their sole concern was finding trustworthy narrators willing to legitimize their rule (Goldziher, 1917, 41-44, 105, and 2008, 2:92-93). Goldziher alleged that **Imām Ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī** was compelled by the princes to document Hadiths, thus becoming the first to compile them. In reality, Goldziher borrowed this idea from Barthélemy d'Herbelot (d. 1695) (*al-'Aqīqī*, 1964, 1:173). In his encyclopedia, d'Herbelot noted that Imām'al-Zuhrī(d. 124 AH) was the first to compile the Hadiths or Sunnah of Muhammad at the request of Caliph 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and Imām Mālik, the founder of one of the orthodox Muslim sects, and that he transmitted them from him (d'Herbelot, 3:620).

Goldziher expanded his accusation against Imām al-Zuhrī, claiming he served the Umayyad princes and pleased them by promoting Prophetic Hadiths. He alleged the existence of a narration, transmitted through various chains from **Abd al-Razzāq** (d. 211 AH), stating that **Ma'mar ibn Rashid** (d. 153 AH), one of al-Zuhrī's students, narrated that the Umayyad **Ibrahim ibn al-Walid** (without specifying whether he was the later ruler) came to al-Zuhrī with a scroll, requesting permission to narrate it from him. Al-Zuhrī granted him permission, enabling the Umayyad to circulate the content as texts narrated from al-Zuhrī. This narration purportedly confirms al-Zuhrī's desire to advance the interests of the ruling dynasty through religious means. Undoubtedly, due to his piety, he sometimes felt pangs of conscience but could not resist the pressure of the ruling circles indefinitely. Ma'mar quoted al-Zuhrī as saying: "These princes compelled us to write Hadiths." This narration can only be understood by assuming al-Zuhrī's willingness to lend his esteemed name, respected in the broader Islamic community, to the government's desires (Goldziher, 2008, 2:46-47).

**Alfred Guillaume** (d. 1965) echoed this sentiment, stating that if any external evidence is needed regarding the fabrication of Hadith during the Umayyad era, it can be found in al-Zuhrī's explicit statement: "The princes compelled us to write Hadith" (Guillaume, 1924, 50).

Goldziher further accused Imām'al-Zuhrī of fabricating the Hadith about prayer at the Dome of the Rock at the behest of Caliph **Abd al-Mālik**, who feared competition from **Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr**. Abd al-Mālik aimed to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem due to his concern that his rival might force Syrians to travel to the holy places in the Hijaz, thereby honoring him. He issued a decree stating that circumambulating the sacred site in Jerusalem was equivalent to circumambulating the Ka'ba as prescribed in Islamic law. He tasked the pious scholar al-Zuhrī with justifying this politically motivated change by



attributing a Hadith to the Prophet (PBUH) that states “There are three mosques to which journeys should be undertaken: Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem” (Goldziher, 2008, 2:44).

While Goldziher considered Imām'al-Zuhrī responsible for fabricating this Hadith to curry favor with the ruler, **Abū Rayyah** attributed its fabrication to **Abū Hurairah**, as previously discussed.

In the same context, Alfred Guillaume noted that simply declaring that circumambulating the Holy House in Jerusalem was equivalent to doing so in Mecca was sufficient. This was reinforced by a Hadith, with a chain of transmission back to the Prophet (PBUH), stating, 'Journeys are only undertaken to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), the Prophet's Mosque (in Medina), and the Mosque of Jerusalem.' This biased Hadith is how it appears in al-Bukhārī. The fabricator is al-Zuhrī, who took it from Abū Hurairah. This Hadith contradicts what is also found in al-Bukhārī: "Prayer in my mosque is better than a thousand prayers elsewhere, except the Sacred Mosque" (Guillaume, 1924, 47-48).

**Henri Lammens** (d. 1937) also raised the issue of Hadith fabrication by political and religious factions that emerged in early Islam to serve their own objectives (n.d., 94).

As for **Joseph Schacht** (d. 1969), he believed that the Sunnah originally had a political, not legal (jurisprudential), significance in its Islamic context (Schacht, 1982, 17). This view was shared by the Orientalist **Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb** (d. 1971), who attributed the abundance of fabricated Hadiths to political and religious conflicts. Religious and political factions demonstrated a readiness to fabricate statements and attribute them to the Prophet (PBUH) in defense of their own beliefs (Gibb, n.d., 75). He claimed that the princes compelled Ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī to document the Hadiths, making him the first to compile them.

**Johann Fück** (d. 1974) mentioned that in the year 81 or 82 AH, **Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī**, the most distinguished student of 'Urwah, went to Damascus. He spent his youth in Medina, gained fame, and wielded influence due to his extensive knowledge, which he utilized in the service of the Umayyads (Fück, 2004, 102). He noted that many like al-Zuhrī supported the ruling authorities.

### **Roots of the Doubts of Fabrication Prophetic Hadiths for Jurisprudential Purposes**

Orientalists claimed that there was significant competition between the *Ahl al-Hadīth* (People of Hadith) and *Ahl al-Ra'y* (People of Opinion) schools, leading to the fabrication of Hadiths for jurisprudential purposes. According to **Goldziher**, the scarcity of Prophetic Hadiths did not suffice the *Ahl al-Hadīth* in matters of jurisprudence, forcing them to fabricate Hadiths to support their position (Goldziher, 2008, 2:80-81).

**Joseph Schacht** (d. 1969) addressed the same topic, influenced by his teacher Goldziher. He discussed the relationship between the proliferation of Prophetic Hadiths and the development of Islamic jurisprudence, describing the movement of *Ahl al-Hadīth* as a natural result and continuation of a religious and ethical opposition movement against the jurisprudential schools. He also considered these

jurisprudential schools as representing Islamic opposition to popular and administrative practices under the late Umayyad rule. The opposition group, which evolved into the *Ahl al-Hadith* movement, focused on promoting this tendency; presenting detailed reports or "Hadiths", they claimed to be auditory or visual accounts of the Prophet's sayings or actions, transmitted orally through an unbroken chain (*Isnad*) of trustworthy individuals. Schacht asserted that none of these Hadiths related to religious or jurisprudential matters could be considered historically authentic (Schacht, 1982, 34-36).

Based on this, Schacht concluded that the inflation of Hadiths attributed to the Prophet, which cannot be trusted for their authenticity, was due to the pressure exerted by Hadith scholars on the jurisprudential schools, forcing them to base their rulings on the Prophet's Sunnah and, thus, following the same path as the *Ahl al-Hadith*.

### **Roots of the Doubts of Preachers' Leniency in Fabricating Hadiths on Virtues and Encouragement/ Deterrence**

Orientalists claimed that scholars were lenient in fabricating and narrating Hadiths as long as they served religious purposes. In this regard, **William Muir** (d. 1905) alleged that "pious forgery" was not condemned according to the principles of Islam. He claimed that deception, according to Islamic theology, was permissible under certain circumstances and that the Prophet himself encouraged the idea of permissible lying on some occasions. He asked what situations could be considered justifiable for lying that serves the interests of Islam. He argued that early Muslims assumed it appropriate to support the divine religion with miraculous evidence, believing they were doing a service to Allah (Muir, 1958, lxxiii-lxxiv).

**Goldziher** also adopted this view, stating that "pious fabrication" by those who invented Hadiths was met with tolerance in all aspects, whether the Hadiths were related to ethics or worship. However, the stricter religious scholars adopted a more serious stance, particularly regarding ritual practices and legal rulings derived from Hadiths, as these were not always the primary basis for making religious judgments in jurisprudence and the judiciary (Goldziher, 1917, 50). When it came to virtues, the fabricators did not feel ashamed of their actions when confronted by Hadith scholars, but rather, they admitted it (Goldziher, 1917, 147). He further claimed that this fabrication, especially regarding Hadiths on asceticism and virtues, was endorsed by the **Karramiyyah** theological school and was then adopted by ignorant people who called themselves ascetics to encourage good deeds. Those who supported the notion of fabricating Hadiths for ethical purposes tried to find theological justifications for their views (Goldziher, 2008, 2:146).

### **Roots of the Doubts Regarding the Proliferation of Hadiths Due to the Infiltration of *Isrā'iliyyāt***

Orientalists cast doubt on the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah due to the infiltration of many *Isrā'iliyyāt* (Judeo-Christian narratives) into Hadith literature, falsely attributed to the Prophet. In this matter, **Aloys Sprenger** (d. 1893) stated that those who converted to Islam from Judaism and Christianity entertained believers

with endless myths, mostly from the Torah, and many of the legends in Arab history attributed to Muhammad go back to **Wahb ibn Munabbih** or **Ka'b**, a Jew who converted to Islam. Some myths were invented by **Ibn al-Sawdā** (Abdullah ibn Saba), who also converted to Islam during the reign of **'Uthman** (Sprenger, 1851, 140-141).

**William Muir** (d. 1905) also criticized the authentic Hadiths, considering them derived from sacred scriptures, claiming that what is presented as authentic Hadiths were borrowed from the Bible and rabbinical traditions (Muir, 1958, 1:1xx). **Goldziher** (d. 1921) added in the same context that phrases from the Old Testament and the Gospels found their way into Muhammad's sayings (Goldziher, 2008, 2:149-150, 156, 348).

**Alfred Guillaume** (d. 1965) mentioned, after reviewing a set of Hadiths, that the origin of many of them was from *Isrā'iliyyāt*, initially circulated as reports from *Sahabah* (Companions of the Prophet) but later elevated to the Prophet by dropping one or two transmitters (Guillaume, 1924, 142). Among the Jews responsible for this were **Abdullah ibn Salam** (d. 43 AH), **Ka'b al-Ahbār** (d. 32 AH), and **Wahb ibn Munabbih** (d. 114 AH) (Guillaume, 1924, 81). These narrations spread widely among ascetics, virtuous people, and the general public, gaining attention in discussions of the Prophetic Sunnah despite their weak chains of transmission. Later narrators accepted them because of their influence on morals (Guillaume, 1924, 81-82).

### **Response to Those Claiming Fabrication and Invention of Prophetic Hadiths**

After examining the roots and sources from which the opponents and skeptics of the authenticity of the Prophetic Hadiths drew their arguments, it becomes clear that they consider fabrication as the default in the Prophetic Sunnah and the exception as authentic. They neglect the efforts made by the great scholars of this Ummah to combat fabrication in Hadith with a precise scientific and critical methodology.

### **Refuting the Claiming that Narrators Relied on Memory and Oral Transmission**

This claim is not well founded. Looking back at historical evidence, we find in the field of poetry that **Abū Nawās** (d. 198 AH) memorized the collections of sixty Arab women poets, in addition to those of men. He also memorized seven hundred *rajaz* (rhymed metrical verses), as well as poems from the pre-Islamic, early Islamic, and early modern periods (**Ibn al-Mu'tazz, n.d., 194, 201**). **Abū Tammām al-Ta'i** (d. 231 AH) was said to have memorized fourteen thousand *rajaz* of the Arabs, in addition to other poems, fragments, and more (Ibn Khellikān, 2000, 2:12). **Abū al-Ala al-Ma'arri** (d. 449 AH) was known to memorize everything he heard, and he had students who would read to him various literary works, including poetry and language, and he rarely forgot anything that passed by his ears (**al-Qiftī, 1982, 1:87**). There are many such examples, alongside cases where poets were accused of fabricating poetry, such as **Hammad al-Rawiyah** (d. 155 AH), who was accused of fabricating poetry. On the other hand, there were reliable narrators, such as **Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā** (d. 154 AH), **al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī** (d. 168 AH), **Abū 'Amr al-Shaybānī** (d. 213 AH), **al-Asma'i** (d. 216

AH), Ibn al-A'rabī (d. 231 AH), Abū 'Ubaydah Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 211 AH), and Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244 AH). Among those who specialized in scrutinizing poetry and distinguishing between the authentic and the fabricated was Abdullah ibn Sallam al-Jumahī, one of the great critics of poetry. His critical spirit is evident in his book *Tabaqat Fuhūl al-Shu'arā* (The Classes of Eminent Poets). Through their efforts, they preserved the history of the Arabs, as poetry was used to record significant events.

In the field of Hadith, scholars were known for their levels of memorization and precision. One of the conditions for an authentic Hadith is that the narrator must be reliable, which means possessing strong memory and accuracy. The Companions of the Prophet and those who followed would frequently review Hadiths to ensure their memorization, understanding, and correctness, and they would test each other to assess the reliability of narrators (Klaina, 2002, 42-56). Anas ibn Mālik said, "We used to be with the Prophet (PBUH), and perhaps around sixty people would gather. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would teach us, and then leave and we would review what he taught us, as if it had been planted in our hearts" (al-Khaṭīb, 1975, 2:127). Hadith narrators were known for their memorization skills, and al-Dhahabi compiled a book titled *Tabaqat al-Muhaddithīn* (The Classes of Hadith Scholars), as did al-Suyūṭī. These examples are many and well known, so much so that they need no further elaboration.

From this, it is evident that the opponents' criticism of the narrators based on reliance on memory is based on mere speculation, detached from reality. Furthermore, the narrators did not solely rely on memory; they combined memorization with writing, verifying what was written, and contributing significantly to the science of manuscript verification (Klaina, 2002, 21-40).

### **Refuting the Doubts of Fabricating Hadiths for Political or Jurisprudential Sectarian Purposes**

The allegations by these Orientalists and their contemporary Arab followers accusing Hadith scholars of fabricating Hadiths to support rulers and enhance their authority, thereby using this claim as a basis for attacking the Prophetic Sunnah, are based on mere whims and misinterpretations of evidence, or quoting from unreliable sources, as will be clarified below:

1) As for those who criticize the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah based on the claim that political and jurisprudential sects permitted the fabrication of Hadiths and falsely attributed them to the Prophet (PBUH) to support their views and positions, their aim was to undermine trust in the scholars of the Ummah. They also sought to discredit trustworthy narrators by alleging that Hadiths were fabricated to please rulers and legitimize their rule with religious authority. They accused the leading figures, leaving no one trustworthy, despite the fact that Islam was transmitted through them. This would lead Muslims to underestimate and neglect the Prophetic Hadith.

**Goldziher** attempted to distort the image of **Imām'al-Zuhrī** by discussing his writing for the sons of the prince. However, the incident as narrated by **Abd al-Razzaq** on the authority of al-Zuhrī states: "We used to dislike writing down knowledge until these princes forced us to do so, and we saw no harm in allowing it

for all Muslims" (Abd al-Razzaq, 1403 H, 11:258, No. 20486). Al-Zuhrī's words reflect his honesty and dedication to spreading knowledge, as he refused to provide rulers with what he withheld from the general public. **Goldziher** tries to present an opposite image, suggesting that al-Zuhrī was forced to lie about the Prophet (PBUH), which is far from the truth.

The accusation that al-Zuhrī fabricated the Hadith: "Journeys should not be undertaken except to three mosques..." at the request of the Umayyads seems to be based on Goldziher's interpretation. He relied on Al-Ya'qūbī's *Tarikh*, which mentioned that Abd al-Mālik prevented the people of Syria from performing Hajj because Ibn al-Zubayr would make them pledge allegiance to him during the pilgrimage. When Abd al-Mālik saw this, he prevented them from going to Mecca. The people protested and said, 'You are preventing us from Hajj to the Sacred House of Allah, which is an obligation from Allah!' Therefore, he told them: This is Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī narrating to you that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Journeys should not be undertaken except to three mosques: The Sacred Mosque, this mosque of mine, and the Mosque of Jerusalem.' He explained that the Rock, which is said to have been stepped on by the Messenger of Allah during his ascension to heaven, serves the same purpose as the Ka'ba. Abd al-Mālik then built a dome on the Rock, hung silk curtains on it, appointed guardians for it, and ordered people to circumambulate it just as they would circumambulate the *Ka'ba*. This practice continued during the Umayyad era" (al-Ya'qūbī, 1358 H, 3:7-8). However, what **al-Ya'qūbī** mentioned in his *Tarikh* cannot be found in any reliable Islamic source ('Ajjāj, 1988, 503-504). Neither **al-Ṭabarī**, **Ibn Sa'd**, **Ibn al-Athīr**, **Ibn Kathīr**, nor **al-Dhahabī** explicitly mentioned anything similar to Al-Ya'qūbī's claim, nor did he provide a source for this information.

It is also well established that trusted historians unanimously agree that the one who built the Dome of the Rock was **al-Walid ibn Abd al-Mālik**, as mentioned by **Ibn 'Asākir**, **al-Ṭabarī**, **Ibn al-Athīr**, **Ibn Khaldun**, **Ibn Kathīr**, and others. None of them mentioned even a single narration attributing its construction to **Abd al-Mālik**. Certainly, if **Abd al-Mālik** had built it to serve as an alternative to the Ka'ba for Hajj, it would have been one of the most significant and noteworthy events in the history of Islam, and it would be inconceivable for these historians to overlook it! Their habit was to record even the less significant events, such as the deaths of scholars or the appointments of judges. If **Abd al-Mālik** had built it, they would have mentioned it, but instead, they all attributed its construction to **al-Walid**. These historians are trustworthy in recording historical facts ('Ajjāj, 1988, 243-244).

**Al-Damīrī** mentioned an account that contradicts Al-Ya'qūbī's narrative, stating "The claim that **al-Walid** built the Dome of the Rock is questionable. Rather, it was built by **Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwan** during the *fitnah* of **Ibn al-Zubayr**... and the people used to stand at the Dome of the Rock on the day of 'Arafah" (al-Damīrī, n.d., 1:91).

Furthermore, historical sources clearly indicate that during **Ibn al-Zubayr's** time, al-Zuhrī had not yet known **Abd al-Mālik** or met him. **Al-Dhahabī** states that al-Zuhrī first visited **Abd al-Mālik** around the year 80 AH, while **Ibn 'Asākir** records that this occurred in 82 AH. Therefore, al-Zuhrī's first encounter with **Abd al-Mālik**

took place several years after **Ibn al-Zubayr's** death. At that time, al-Zuhrī was still a young man, and **Abd al-Mālik** tested him and then advised him to seek knowledge from the homes of the **Ansar**. Thus, the claim that al-Zuhrī fabricated this Hadith to please **Abd al-Mālik** during **Ibn al-Zubayr's** reign is baseless (al-Sibā'ī, n.d., 245).

Furthermore, the Hadith "Journeys should not be undertaken except to three mosques..." has been transmitted through numerous different chains of narration, apart from the one narrated by al-Zuhrī. **Al-Bukhārī** included it in his *Sahih* without relying on al-Zuhrī, through **Abū al-Walīd**, from **Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj**, from **Abd al-Mālik**, from **Qaza'ah**, the freedman of **Ziyad**, from **Abū Sa'īd al-Khudri (al-Bukhārī, 1997, 2:172, No. 1197)**. **Muslim** recorded it through two chains: one through al-Zuhrī (Muslim, 2007, No. 511-1397), and another through **Harun ibn Sa'īd al-Ayli**, from **Ibn Wahb**, from **Abd al-Hamid ibn Ja'far**, from **Imran ibn Abi Anas**, who reported that **Salman al-Agharr** narrated it after hearing it from **Abū Hurairah (Muslim, 2007, No. 513-1397)**. **Ahmad**, **Abū Dāwūd**, **al-Nasā'ī**, **al-Tirmidhī**, **Ibn Mājah** also recorded it through al-Zuhrī and others (Ahmad, 2:234, No. 7191..., Abū Dāwūd, 2:216, Al-Nasā'ī, 2:37, No. 700, al-Tirmidhī, 2:147, No. 326, and he said about it: "This is a good and authentic Hadith", and Ibn Mājah in his Sunan narrated it through two chains of transmission, one through al-Zuhrī, and the other through **Yazid bin Abi Maryam**, from **Qaza'ah**, from **Abū Sa'īd** and **Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-'As.**, 1:452, No. 1409 and 14010).

Thus, it is clear that al-Zuhrī was not the sole narrator of this Hadith, as **Goldziher** claimed, nor did he fabricate it to please **Abd al-Mālik**. Other major Companions, **Tābi'ūn**, and their successors also transmitted this Hadith. The claims made by **al-Ya'qūbī** and **Goldziher** are therefore baseless and lack any foundation. This Hadith "was narrated by al-Zuhrī from his teacher **Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib** and it is known that **Sa'īd** would not have remained silent if al-Zuhrī had fabricated this Hadith to suit the whims of the Umayyads. **Sa'īd** himself suffered persecution from them and was beaten. He passed away in 93 AH, twenty years after **Ibn al-Zubayr's** death, so how could **Sa'īd** have remained silent for all this time when he was known to be a towering figure of strength in speaking the truth, fearing no one but Allah?" (al-Ṭabarī, n.d., 246).

It seems that **Goldziher's** claim, which he derived from **al-Ya'qūbī**, is what led **Abū Rayyah** to accuse the esteemed Companion **Abū Hurairah**, since al-Zuhrī narrated this Hadith from him.

2) As for their claim about the competition between **Ahl al-Hadīth** and **Ahl al-Ra'y**, each group allegedly fabricating Hadiths to support their views and rulings, this argument does not hold. Such competition arose during a later period of sectarian fanaticism by some jurists, but Islamic legal rulings were not based on such fabricated reports. Scholars of Hadith wrote books on fabricated Hadiths, warning against those who were known to lie, and their works did not rely on such fabrications. If a fabricated Hadith is found in some books, it is often included to alert readers to everything said on the subject, whether authentic or not. Researchers are responsible for verifying its authenticity, as narrations are often provided with their chains of transmission so that their veracity can be examined, similar to **al-Ṭabarī's** approach in his *Tarikh*. He said: "If any of the reports in this book seem strange to the reader or

shocking to the listener because he does not find it credible or true, let him know that it did not come from us, but from those who transmitted it to us. We simply transmitted it as it was transmitted to us" (al-Ṭabarī, n.d., 1:13). The scholarly rule is: "Whoever transmits with a chain has cleared himself of responsibility". Therefore, readers should examine the narration before accepting it. Such books were written for researchers, not the general public. As for the books of Hadith, some focus exclusively on authentic reports, free from any fabricated material, while others include *Hasan* (acceptable) and *Da'if* (weak) reports. Fabricated Hadiths are sometimes found in these collections, but scholars of Hadith have clarified their status so that no one is misled. Additionally, they compiled specialized books on fabricated Hadiths, exposing them. This means that the scholars of Hadith themselves addressed this issue, and what the Orientalists and their contemporary Arab followers claimed stems from ignorance or fanaticism.

### **Refutation of the Doubts Regarding Preachers' Leniency in Fabricating Hadiths on Virtues and Admonitions**

The Orientalists and their contemporary Arab followers claimed that preachers were lenient in fabricating Prophetic Hadiths concerning the virtues of deeds to encourage people to do well. Based on this claim, they argued that fabricated Hadiths were abundant, mixed with authentic ones, and difficult to distinguish. This claim is baseless, as Hadith scholars exposed these fabrications and warned against them. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ mentioned this in his discussion of the types of fabricators: "The fabricators of Hadith are of different types. The most harmful of them are those attributed to ascetics who fabricated Hadiths, claiming that they did so out of devotion. People accepted their fabrications, trusting them and relying on them, until the great Hadith scholars exposed their flaws and removed their disgrace—praise be to Allah" (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 99). Al-Suyūṭī (1415 H, 1:332-333) also addressed the fabricators among ascetics, stating: "Although their fabrications were hidden from many, they were not hidden from the great Hadith scholars and their critics".

Thus, it is clear that the fabricated Hadiths propagated by some liars were identified by Hadith scholars, who clarified them to the people to prevent anyone from being misled. As a result, these fabrications did not influence Islamic teachings.

### **Refutation of the Doubts About the Proliferation of Prophetic Hadiths Due to the Infiltration of *Isrā'iliyyāt***

The Orientalists and their contemporary Arab followers used *Isrā'iliyyāt* (narratives from Jewish and Christian sources) as a pretext to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah, claiming that these *Isrā'iliyyāt* were mixed with and incorporated into the Prophetic Hadiths when the Companions transmitted their Hadith knowledge. They argued that there was no distinction between what originated from the Prophet (PBUH) and what came from Muslim converts from the People of the Book. However, it is important to note that "the Arabs' borrowing from Jewish culture at the time was limited and narrow, as the Arabs' narrow cultural horizons before Islam did not pave the way for broad cultural integration nor encourage it" (al-Dhahabī, 1998, 15-16).

With the advent of Islam and the close proximity between the People of the Book and Muslims, there was dialogue between the two groups. Some Jews asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) questions and sought his judgment on certain matters, and some of them embraced Islam and their conversion was genuine, such as **Abdullah ibn Sallam** and **Abdullah ibn Sūyā**. After the death of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), **Ka'b al-Ahbār** embraced Islam, and they were held in high regard. Some Muslims also asked the People of the Book about their knowledge out of scientific curiosity, not based on the belief that what they said was true. **Atā ibn Yasār** narrated: "The Jews used to speak to the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), and they would listen as if they were astonished. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) then said: Do not believe them or deny them (and say): We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our Allah and your Allah is one, and we are Muslims" (Abd al-Razzaq, 6:111, No. 161).

Those accused of spreading *Isrā'iliyyāt* and fabrications include **Abdullah ibn Sallam**, **Ka'b al-Ahbār**, and **Wahb ibn Munabbih**, who were accused of deception and manipulation, pretending to be Muslim while secretly intending to undermine Islam. This accusation likely stems from a failure to distinguish between these men, who were known for their knowledge and piety, and the storytellers (*Qussas*) who engaged in lying and exaggeration to create exciting material for their audiences. Hadith scholars advised their students to avoid these storytellers and exposed their falsehoods.

**Abdullah ibn Sallam** was "the scholar, Abū Yusuf al-Isra'ili, may Allah be pleased with him, an ally of the **Ansār**. He accepted Islam when the Prophet (PBUH) arrived in Medina. His name was al-Husayn, but the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) named him **Abdullah**. He witnessed the Prophet's proclamation that he was promised Paradise. The verse (Al-Ahqaf: 10) was revealed about him: (and a witness from among the Children of Israel testifies that this Quran is from Allah)". He was the most knowledgeable of the People of the Book in his time in Medina" (al-Dhahabī, 1998, 1:26). **Al-Bukhārī** recorded his Hadith of accepting Islam, and the Jews testified that he was the most knowledgeable among them (al-Bukhārī, 1997, 5:154-157, No. 3911). Although he transmitted *Isrā'iliyyāt*, he did not attribute them to the Prophet (PBUH); it was a matter of scientific curiosity.

As for **Ka'b al-Ahbār**—one of the trustworthy *Tābi'ūn*—the Hadith critics confirmed his trustworthiness. **Al-Dhahabi** said about him: "He is **Ka'b ibn Mātī' al-Himyārī**, a great scholar and one of the leading scholars of the People of the Book. He embraced Islam during the time of **Abū Bakr** and came from Yemen during the reign of **Umar**. He narrated from the Companions and transmitted from the book and the Sunnah. He died during the caliphate of **Uthman**. A group of *Tābi'ūn* narrated from him indirectly. He has narrations in **Sahīh al-Bukhārī** and elsewhere" (al-Dhahabī, 1998, 1:52). **Al-Nawawī** mentioned him in his *Tahdhīb*, saying: "He was praised by **Abū al-Dardā**, who said that he had vast knowledge. There was consensus on his extensive knowledge and trustworthiness (al-Nawawī, n.d., 2:68-69). None of the Hadith critics accused him of lying; rather, they affirmed his trustworthiness.

As for **Wahb ibn Munabbih**, he was a trustworthy and devout follower (*Tabi'i*), a scholar of the people of Yemen, their most knowledgeable and respected figure, and



the judge of the city of Sana'a. He had extensive knowledge of the scriptures of the People of the Book and history, in addition to his knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Abū Zahu, 1984, 183-184). **Al-Dhahabī** said about him: "He was trustworthy, possessed extensive knowledge, and was compared to **Ka'b al-Ahbār** in his time" (al-Dhahabī, 1998, 1:101). **Al-'Ijli** said: "He was a trustworthy **Tabī'i**." Abū Shu'bah remarked "We do not deny that some false **Isrā'iliyyāt** and fabricated stories entered the books of exegesis due to his influence. However, we do deny that he himself fabricated or invented them" (Abū Shuhbah, 1407 H, 105).

Therefore, using **Isrā'iliyyāt**, as a pretext to cast doubt on the Companions and trustworthy **Tābi'ūn** is inappropriate because they accepted only what conformed to the Qur'an and Sunnah, rejected what contradicted them, and refrained from affirming or denying what had no basis. Moreover, they did not transmit from the People of the Book in matters of creed or Islamic rulings, only in storytelling. Scholars have clarified all of this in the books of *al-Jarh WA al-Ta'dil* (discrediting and accrediting), as well as in the books on fabricated Hadiths and **Isrā'iliyyāt**, leaving no room for claims of mixing these with the Prophetic Sunnah.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the doubts raised by several contemporary Arab writers who oppose the Prophetic Sunnah and openly declare their enmity towards it, are in fact ideas they attribute to themselves, though they are borrowed from Orientalists. They merely repeat these claims, aiming to spread them among Muslims. In this era, the Islamic religion is under attack through various means, and these writers have become convenient tools for the West to propagate what they have previously failed to promote. They present their suspicions in a way that appears to the average reader as being based on strong evidence, but these arguments do not hold up under thorough and critical analysis, as demonstrated in this study.

It has become evident that Orientalists based their arguments on narratives that are historically questionable and lack reliability. These narratives were reported by individuals whose transmissions and accounts are considered untrustworthy and lacking credibility in the scholarly tradition. Furthermore, the Orientalists interpreted texts according to their own whims, offering a crude interpretation that contradicts historical facts. They took isolated instances and generalized them, leading to their judgment that the Prophetic Sunnah is invalid because of the fabricated narrations allegedly mixed with it. They also based their arguments on a view rejected by scholars, regarding lying about the Prophet (PBUH) in matters of virtues, encouragement, and warning. However, the Prophet (PBUH) said in a *mutawatir* (mass-transmitted) Hadith: "Whoever lies about me intentionally, let him take his seat in the Hellfire."

Moreover, they claimed that scholars were unaware of fabricated Hadiths and **Isrā'iliyyāt**, while in reality, scholars meticulously investigated these matters, identified the fabricated narrations, and compiled them in specialized books so that people could distinguish them. Additionally, they attempted to cast doubt on prominent figures like Imām al-Zuhrī, aiming to erode trust in anyone, because they view Islam as a threat that must be eliminated by any means.

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