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**Scrutinising Historical Narrations:
Between Ibn Khaldūn and the Scholars of Ḥadīth Criticism**

Issah Abeebllahi Obalowu* , Yusuf Basirat Bolanle.**

ABSTRACT: ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī is a renowned Muslim scholar who has been considered by many researchers as the founder of the modern discipline of historiography. The uniqueness of his method of scrutinising historical narrations gives his works wide recognition. This paper intends to explore Ibn Khaldūn’s principles of scrutinising historical narrations and make a comparison between his principles and the principles of validating narrations in *‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, to figure out the extent to which Ibn Khaldūn has been influenced, in his discourse, by the principles of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. This paper represents a library-based research, hence, the qualitative method has been adopted. This study has revealed the fact that Ibn Khaldūn’s approach towards the scrutiny of the narrations is an extension of the previous principles laid down by the scholars of *ḥadīth*. However, the major difference between both parties lies in the fact that the principles of the scholars of *ḥadīth* address all types of the narrations, whether historical or non-historical narrations, without giving preference to the historical ones above the others, while Ibn Khaldūn was the first Muslim scholar who concentrated purely and strictly on scrutinising historical materials.

Keywords & Phrases: Ibn Khaldūn; *ḥadīth* criticism; historical reports; Islamic historiography; history and civilisation.

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Introduction

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī (732–808AH/1332–1406CE) is a well-known Muslim historiographer, who has been acknowledged by many researchers as the founder of the modern discipline of historiography.¹ His erudition, the uniqueness of his method of scrutinising historical narrations and the significance of his entire works are widely recognised among medieval and 19th-century European scholars. He is also regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages. Likewise, he has been considered as the one who established one of the earliest secular philosophies of history.² The most popular of his works is generally known as *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*. It is a well-known book to modern readers, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. The original title of the book is *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ wa al-Khabar fī Tārīkh al-ʿArab wa al-Barbar wa Man ʿĀsarahum min Dhawī al-Shaʾn al-Akbar* but it is commonly known as *The Muqaddimah*. In the introductory part of the book, Ibn Khaldūn outlined the importance of science and philosophy of history, the basic principles of civilisation, the reason for writing the book and the methodology used in the book for scrutinising the narrations.³ However, before the era of Ibn Khaldūn, great and relentless efforts have been made by the scholars of *ḥadīth*, towards the establishment of the main principles of scrutinising the narrations, to distinguish between the false and true information. The scholars of *ḥadīth* unanimously agreed upon five basic principles, through which the correct and incorrect information could be determined. These principles are discussed in almost all of the books of *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*.⁴ In this research, the principles of Ibn Khaldūn and that of the scholars of the *ḥadīth* will be discussed, to figure out the extent to which Ibn Khaldūn has been influenced in his

¹ Ibn Khaldūn, Walīy al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī, the Chief Justice. He was born in Tunisia, in the year 732-3 AH and died in the year 808 AH. He excelled in the sciences, arts, literature, writing, etc. He was a great philosopher of Islamic history, and one of the unique scholars of any period in terms of knowledge, civilisation, achievements and intelligence. He authored the popular book of history generally known as *al-Muqaddimah* (The Introduction). The Introduction is a segment from the whole book of history, but the book is popularly known with that name, to the extent that the name is always associated with the author by saying *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn* (The Introduction of Ibn Khaldūn). See: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abū Bakr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah Fī Tārīkh Miṣr Wa al-Qāhirah* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyyah, 1967), 1:462; ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab Fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), 1:71.

² Caroline Stone, “Ibn Khaldun and the Rise and Fall of Empires,” *Muslim Heritage*, 2010, <https://muslimheritage.com/ibn-khaldun-rise-fall-empires/>; Imadaldin al-Jubouri, “Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History,” *Philosophy Now*, 2005, https://philosophynow.org/issues/50/Ibn_Khaldun_and_the_Philosophy_of_History.

³ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ Wa al-Khabar Fī Tārīkh al-ʿArab Wa al-Barbar Wa Man ʿĀsarahum Min Dhawī al-Shaʾn al-Akbar* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 1:5-12.

⁴ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Nuzhat al-Nazar Fī Tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar Fī Muṣṭalah Ahl al-Athar*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr (Damascus: Maṭbaʿah al-Ṣabāh, 2000), 58–70; ʿUthmān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Taqīy al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifat Anwāʿ ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 11–15.

discourse by the principles of the scholars of the *ḥadīth*.⁵ Thus, the strictness, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and accuracy of the principles of the scholars of the *ḥadīth* will manifest.

1. Essence of History in The Discourse of Ibn Khaldūn

Ibn Khaldūn emphasized the significance of history. He argues that every individual of any nation and race, whether literate or illiterate, is always eager to know about the bygone events. The majority always find their pleasure in listening to history, since its understanding requires not any additional efforts and prerequisites other than listening. More so, history serves as a means of learning from the real-life experience of the past generation.⁶ According to him,

“...history is an art of valuable doctrine, numerous in advantages and honourable in purpose; it informs us about bygone nations in the context of their habits, the prophets in the context of their lives and kings in the context of their states and politics, so those who seek the guidance of the past in either worldly or religious matters may have that advantage.”⁷

This description is what the outer meaning of history tends to be. However, the inner meaning of history involves speculation and an attempt to discover the truth, an accurate explanation of matters and their principle, and deep knowledge of the events and how and why they occurred. Therefore, according to Ibn Khaldūn, the science of history is firmly rooted in philosophy, and it is worthy to be counted as one of its branches.⁸

2. Ibn Khaldūn's Appraisal And Commendation On The Previous Muslim scholars of History

Ibn Khaldūn emphasized the efforts of the earliest Muslim scholars of history and commended their efforts for the documentation of those historic events in their various voluminous books of history. He considered their works as comprehensive and complete references for the *ummah* on the affairs of its past generations and the events of their time since their writings encompassed different aspects of historical events. He stressed the fact that the primacy and preference of those scholars in this field are undeniable and highly appreciated. However, he realised the areas of weakness in their works and analysed the reasons why some of the earlier Muslim scholars of history narrated some fabricated information in their books. The main reasons for that lie in the general method of those scholars which was mainly based on the compilation of the narrations without thorough and sufficient investigations on the level of their authenticity, and without giving enough consideration to the extent of the coherence between the narrations and the circumstances revolved around them. More so, none of those books is free from the

⁵ On the early intersection between *ḥadīth* and historiography, see: Khairil Husaini Bin Jamil, “Early Sunnī Historiography: A Study of the *Tārīkh* of Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, by Tobias Andersson,” *Ilāhiyat Studies* 11, no. 2 (2020): 326–29, <https://doi.org/10.12730/13091719.2020.112.214>.

⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 6.

⁷ al-Jubouri, “Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History”; Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 13.

⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 13.

narrations which are suspicious and questionable, due to the lax review and interference of the ignorant people who knew nothing about history. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldūn argues that such lapses in the approach of the earliest Muslim scholars of history usually happen to the pioneers of every discipline. Such pioneers always build the foundation, upon which the coming generations could build their further efforts in the same field.⁹

The pioneers of history among the scholars of Islam, according to Ibn Khaldūn, include Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār (85-150AH), Muḥammad ibn al-Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310AH), Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī (110-204AH), Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Waqidī (130-207 AH) and Sayf ibn ʿUmar al-Asadī al-Tamīmī (90-180AH) and some others. These scholars and their likes among other distinguished Muslim scholars of history were the pioneers in the field of history who have cleared the road for the later generations.¹⁰

Some other later scholars of history that came after the aforementioned scholars followed the same path. So, Ibn Khaldūn strongly condemned their methods and considered their works to be a mere repetition and carbon copy of historical materials of the earlier scholars without considering any other additional factors and circumstances related to history.¹¹

The scope of the earlier Muslim scholars of history can be grouped into two different categories:

- i. The scholars whose books covered the history of their own time and the time of the generations who have lived before them, such as Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī (283-346 AH) and others.
- ii. Some other scholars of history limited the scope of their works to the time in which they lived. Thus, they only focused on the events of their nations, such as Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (654-745AH) the historian of Spain, and Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Qāsim al-Raḳīq al-Qayrawānī (d.420AH), known as Ibn al-Raḳīq the historian of Africa and the Qayrawānī dynasty.¹²

3. The Root of The Fabricated Narrations

Since history deals with the information about the different phases, through which human civilisation and development have passed. Likewise, it examines the features of those phases mainly based on the expression and composition of the reporters. So, Ibn Khaldūn argues that history, by its nature, is subjected to some false, misleading and distorting information, which is usually resulted from different factors, such as the following:

- a) Sectarianism: Sectarianism is a disease that affects both leaders and followers of a particular ideology. It often leads to the invention of fabricated narrations to promote

⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, 6–7.

¹⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, 6–7.

¹¹ Ibn Khaldūn, 7–8.

¹² Ibn Khaldūn, 7.

such ideology. Likewise, it prevents the moderation and objectivity towards the criticism and scrutiny of the information, even if the sign of falsehood is obvious in such narrations. Indeed, sectarianism is a spirit that often leads to the acceptance and spread of the news at the first hearing without any other consideration or confirmation of its authenticity.¹³ Since a long time ago, the scholars of *ḥadīth* have realised the danger of such narrations and therefore, thoroughly addressed it in their books. Ibn Ṣalāḥ stated that the fabricators of the narrations are of different categories with different objectives. The most dangerous of these categories are those who ascribed themselves to asceticism; those who fabricated narrations to promote the doctrine in which they have belief. Thus, the masses believe their narrations based on their confidence in their religiosity. Fortunately, the scholars of *ḥadīth* have uncovered all those fabrications and refuted the evil approach of the fabricators.¹⁴ In the science of *ḥadīth*, there are many signs of identifying the fabricated narrations, such as weak expression, nonsensical and ridiculous indication, random and outrageous verdicts and contradiction with the Qur'ān and Sunnah or other fundamental of Islam. The report of such narrations to the people is not permissible, except as a way of alerting them to their dangers.¹⁵

- b) Overconfidence in the reporters: Ibn Khaldūn himself affirmed that this problem has been solved a long time ago by the scholars of the science of *ḥadīth*, through the principles of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* (discrediting and endorsement of narrators) in the science of *ḥadīth*. So, if those principles are well and properly applied to any information, surely the fact of the events will reveal. Based on the principles of validating narrations in the science of *ḥadīth*, the trustworthiness of every reporter is questionable and unconfirmed except the companions of the Prophet PBUH whose credibility is confirmed by the Qur'ān in several verses.¹⁶ So, the credibility of any other narrator must be confirmed before accepting his/her narration. For the acceptance of any narration, the narrator must be a sane and adult Muslim that is free from the causes of immorality and distortion of dignity, and must also be an intelligent one, not a dunce. If he/she narrates from his memory, there should be no mistake, and if he paraphrases, the message must be well comprehended. The lack of any of these conditions renders the narration invalid.¹⁷
- c) The narration of events without having a full understanding of the aims and objectives of the occurrences: Some of the reporters and narrators of the events are mere carriers of the information without an understanding of what the information is meant for or

¹³ Ibn Khaldūn, 46–50.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ma'rifat Anwā' 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, 1986, 99.

¹⁵ Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Ikhtisār 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Māhir Yāsīn al-Faḥl (Riyadh: al-Maymān li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2013), 78.

¹⁶ See: al-Qur'ān, surah al-Faṭḥ: 18; al-Tawbah: 100, al-Baqarah: 143, 218 & Āl 'Imrān: 110, 172–174.

¹⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Ikhtisār 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, 92–107.

aimed at. They would just narrate what they have seen or heard and interpret the event based on their guess and supposition which might be incorrect.

- d) Ignorance of the method of relating events with the circumstances revolve around them. Indeed, the study and understanding of the circumstances that revolve around the event are very important in the interpretation of such an event. Thus, the same two occurrences that happened at different times may be interpreted differently due to the change of the circumstances.
- e) Seeking for the satisfaction of the leaders and influential figures in the society to gain money or post. There are some narrations fabricated by the people who wished to gain the attention of the rulers for their interest. Such narrations which consist of the flattery and deceitful attributes ascribed to some people are usually spread believed by the masses. According to al-Shawkānī, some narrators of the *ḥadīth* fabricated many narrations in favour of their leaders and ascribed them to the Prophet PBUH, because of worldly gain.¹⁸
- f) Ignorance of the characteristics and nature of culture and civilisation: According to Ibn Khaldūn, all incidents of the same nature must have the same features and characteristics, through which the recognition of the fact from the false will be very easy. He stressed the fact that awareness about the civilisation and cultural development of the people is one of the best and most effective ways of scrutinising any information related to their historical events. According to him, whenever natural factors and circumstances prove the impossibility of the content of any information, such information should be therefore automatically refuted, regardless of the level of the credibility and reliability of the reporters. In this regard, Ibn Khaldūn differentiates between pure historical narrations which can be simply assessed based on the level of their coherence and correspondence with social, geographical and other natural factors, and other divine narrations related to the prescribed and recommended way of worshipping Allah, injunctions and information about unseen matters. The latter categories of information consist of many narrations which must be believed and accepted based on *īmān*, even if we cannot comprehend the full wisdom behind them, due to the limitation of human knowledge compared to Allah's. Therefore, the principles of validating narrations in the science of *ḥadīth* should be mainly considered in this regard, to justify the authenticity of such narrations.¹⁹

4. Principles of Validating Historical Narrations In The Discourse Of Ibn Khaldūn

Ibn Khaldūn realised that many questions related to the historical contents in Islam are left unanswered.²⁰ Thus, the readers need external factors, additional explanations and more analyses to relate historical contents with reality. In order to fill

¹⁸ Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Shawkānī, *Adab al-Ṭalab Wa Muntahā al-Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2008), 86–87.

¹⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 46–50; al-Jubouri, "Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History."

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 8.

this gap and provide a rational answer to the outstanding questions, Ibn Khaldūn laid down some principles to be considered while studying the materials related to historical events and highlighted the necessary steps and corrective measures to be taken to avoid previous mistakes while addressing historical events.²¹ al-Jubouri argues that

“Ibn Khaldūn’s method relied on criticism, observation, comparison and examination. He used scientific criticism to analyse accounts of historical events, the sources of these accounts and the techniques used by historians, examining and comparing different accounts to get rid of falsifications and exaggerations and obtain some objective idea of what had actually happened.”²²

The following are the essential steps to be taken while dealing with historical matters:

1. Studying and consideration of the causes and circumstances revolving around the historical events.
2. An understanding of the rules of politics and the nature of people.
3. An understanding of the current time and an ability to relate it with the past.
4. Understanding of the nature of the environment and its gradual changes throughout the times and places.
5. A thorough investigation of the chain of the narrators and the content of the narration.
6. Acquisition of other disciplines that serve as a complement to the proper understanding of history.
7. Understanding of the roots and motives of states and sects, their declared doctrines, their policies and main events in their histories.
8. Consideration of social factors i.e., customs, culture, political and social systems.²³

Ibn Khaldūn highlighted and explained the conditions of civilisations, urbanization, and some recurrent events that usually occur in the human social organization, much of which explain the reasons and circumstances of the phenomena. With the understanding and applications of these elements, a historian will be able to comprehend the situations of the previous generations and forecast the likely scenario of the incoming generations. Likewise, he will have a good account of the present time and not befall prey to any form of mythology.²⁴ A historian needs to know the rules of politics, the nature of existence, the differences of nations, regions, and eras in their lives, morals, customs, religions, sects, and all other conditions. He should also understand the present situation, to compare it with the past in order to derive the areas of convergence and

²¹ Ibn Khaldūn, 13 & 37.

²² al-Jubouri, “Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History.”

²³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtada*, 13 & 37.

²⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, 13 & 37.

divergence and their reasons. Likewise, he is required to comprehend the origin of the nations and religions, and the conditions of the people, so that he comprehends the reasons for each of his reports. Then, he would be able to evaluate the historical narrations based on these principles and theories. So, if these narrations correspond with the principles, that shows their correctness, otherwise, they are false. Ibn Khaldūn affirmed that this theory had been used by the previous scholars of *ḥadīth*, such as al-Bukhārī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Ishāq.²⁵

5. Empirical Application of ibn Khaldūn's Principle

Ibn Khaldūn figured out some errors in the books of history, much of which could have been avoided if the above principles have been properly considered. The two of those errors will be addressed in the following discussion.

- a) The total number of adults fitted for carrying weapons among the Israelites, which was said to be 600,000 or above during the period of their wandering: According to Ibn Khaldūn, if the landmass of Miṣr and Shām and the possibility of accommodating that huge number of soldiers have been considered, that kind of narrations might have been refuted by the scholars that reported them. More so, the whole territory of Miṣr at that particular period would be too small for an army of that size to march or fight as a unit, especially when the rows would be too many and long. Based on this fact, Ibn Khaldūn argues that reality has proven the claim wrong. Besides, the Persian empire and its territories were greater and bigger than that of Israelites, as Nebuchadnezzar's victory over Israelites attested to the claim. The total of the Persian army never reached that number, as the Persian troops during the war of al-Qādisiyyah did not exceed 120,000. Furthermore, if the interval between the time during which Jacob, who was named Israel, lived and the time of Moses is considered, as well as the total of Israelites when they first migrated to Miṣr to join Joseph, even if the counting should be started from the time of Solomon upwards, their population would not have reached that amount. So, considering the observable present phenomena and well-known nearest historical facts, the total number of Israeli soldiers stated in the narration is wrong.²⁶
- b) *Akhbār al-Tabābi'ah* (the kings of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula) is another untrue and un-investigated story that was widely transmitted by historians: It was reported that the soldiers of this dynasty used to travel from their land in Yemen to raid Africa and Berbers of the Maghrib. It was even reported that Afrīqish ibn Qays ibn Ṣayfiy, one of their great earlier kings who lived in the time of Moses or somewhat earlier than that, was the one who gave the name to the Berbers²⁷ when he heard them speaking

²⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, 37.

²⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, 14–16.

²⁷ Berber, self-name Amazigh, plural Imazighen, any of the descendants of the pre-Arab inhabitants of North Africa. The Berbers live in scattered communities across Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania. They speak various Amazigh languages belonging to the Afro-Asiatic family

and he said what is this *Barbarah*. So, since then, they have been called with the name. According to Ibn Khaldūn, if the geographical and other natural factors have been considered, this kind of narration would have been refuted by the historians. It should be known that the long distance between Yemen and Maghrib made it very difficult for any troops from Yemen to invade Maghrib. More so, Arabian Peninsula is surrounded by the ocean across its three sides: the Indian Ocean in the south, the Persian Gulf jutting out of the Indian Ocean to *al-Bṣrah* in the east, and the Red Sea jutting out of the Indian Ocean to Suez in Egypt in the west. Therefore, how can it be possible for the troops from Yemen to raid Africa?²⁸

The above illustration shows that, aside from vetting the credibility of the narrators and correctness of the narrations, Ibn Khaldūn chiefly relies on the law of coherence and correspondence between the narrations and the nature and structure of the cultural and social life of the people and the coincidence between the narration and the natural and environmental factors of their places for scrutinising historical narrations. Thus, he argues that no essence in investigating the credibility of the narrators to validate narration except if the occurrence of the event reported is really possible, otherwise, there is no point in the investigation. Impossibility of the occurrence of the content of a report and its irrational interpretation are considered to be among the faults of the narrations, however, the preference is given to the credibility of the narrators in the reports related to the religious matters, since most of them are divine. As for the narrations related to the events, they must be coherent with reality. Since the authenticity of historical narrations is not mainly derived from the report itself, but also from the external factor, which is the consistency of the report with the reality. So, the law of distinguishing true reports from false ones is the level of possibility and impossibility of the event in human society, by distinguishing between the permanent situation of the society, its features, temporary conditions and impossibilities. This is the accurate standard and factual evidence that is undoubted for ascertaining the condition of narrations, which should be adopted by every historian. This is the main aim and objective of writing Ibn Khaldūn's book of history.²⁹ The scholars of *ḥadīth* also testified to this fact a long time ago. It is known in the science of *ḥadīth* that any information that contradicts nature, common sense and general feelings are usually considered to be invalid, except in some aspects related to unseen matters. Thus, you find some scholars of *ḥadīth* refuting narrations at first hearing, even before assessing the chain of transmission.³⁰

According to Ibn Khaldūn, the issue discussed in his book of history is an independent discipline that addresses *human civilisation and sociology* by examining the circumstances that revolve around the matters one after the other, such as the case of all

related to ancient Egyptian. See: Michael Brett, "Berber," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Berber>.

²⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtada'*, 16–18.

²⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, 49.

³⁰ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rāwī Fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawawī*, ed. Abū Qutaybah Naẓār Muḥammad al-Fāriyābī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 2006), 1:323–332.

practical and rational disciplines. He argues that the general approach used in the book to scrutinise historical narrations is pioneered by him. So, because the approach used in the book addresses a precise subject, which is the human civilisation and society, besides the subtopics of the subject i.e., analysis of the features, conditions, and stages of human development, such approach is deserved to be considered as a whole subject, such as the nature of all other independent academic subjects.³¹

6. Principles of Validating Narrations In The Science of Ḥadīth

6.1 Definition of Ḥadīth

Ḥadīth literally means a statement or new. Technically in the *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, it refers to any statement or action ascribed to the Prophet PBUH, as well as his direct and indirect endorsement over a matter, and his behavioural and physical descriptions.³² More so, the narrations that are ascribed to *Ṣaḥābah* (companions of the Prophet) are also known as *ḥadīth mawqūf*, while the ones that are ascribed to *al-Tābiʿūn* (successors of the Prophet's companions) are known as *ḥadīth maqtūʿ*.³³ This is a general definition of any *ḥadīth* regardless of its level and grade, whether authentic, sound, weak or fabricated.

6.2 A Brief Historical Survey on the Documentation of Ḥadīth

Based on the above definition, it is evident that the *ḥadīth* is the comprehensive record of the Prophetic biography and beyond. The Qur'ān which is the word of Allah and the primary source of theology and legislations in Islam was revealed to the Prophet PBUH. Therein, are some verses that required more explanation, much of which has been given to the Prophet PBUH alone. More so, there are some other enactments and guidance originally initiated by the Prophet PBUH with the permission of Allah, much of which cannot be found stated in the Qur'ān. Thus, *ḥadīth* comprises the information about all forms of those matters. Allah says: "And We revealed to you the message, that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them, and that they might give thought."³⁴ The Prophet PBUH perfectly and completely conveyed the message of Allah to the *ummah*. Some verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* testify to this fact. The whole Qur'ān was documented during the lifetime of the Prophet PBUH in his presence. On the other hand, the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet PBUH that comprises of the explanation of the Qur'ān, legislations and injunctions, moral and ethical instructions, Prophetic traditions and different historical events of the early period of Islam were not documented. Most of this information was memorized by the companions during the time of the Prophet PBUH. The companions were enjoined at the early stage of the revelation of the Qur'ān to focus and concentrate on the documentation of the Qur'ān alone, to prevent all kinds of mixing up between the

³¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-Mubtada'*, 50.

³² Abdullah Yusuf al-Judaie, *Taḥrīr ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Rayyān, 2003), 1:17; Mohammad Shafi, "The HADITH - How It Was Collected and Compiled," daralislam.org, accessed April 29, 2019, <http://daralislam.org/portals/0/Publications/TheHADITHHowitwasCollectedandCompiled.pdf>.

³³ Ṭāriq ʿAwad Allāh, *Sharḥ Luḡat al-Muḥaddith* (Egypt: Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah, 2002), 76.

³⁴ *al-Qur'ān*, sūrat al-Nahl: 44.

Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.³⁵ Prophet PBUH told his companions: "Do not write down anything from me, and he who has written down any of my statements except the Qur'ān should efface that which he has written. Narrate from me, for there is no harm in the narration, and he who deliberately attributed any falsehood to me, he should find his abode in the Hellfire."³⁶ However, when the main reasons for the initial ban faded away the permission was given to the companions. So, some of his traditions were late written down during his lifetime. It is reported that some of the companions, i.e., Anas ibn Mālīk, Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amru, and others, have their own records where they documented the statements of the Prophet PBUH. Narrated Abū Hurayrah: "There is none among the companions of the Prophet PBUH who has narrated more *ḥadīths* than I, except 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amru who used to write them, and I never did the same."³⁷ In another *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amru, he said:

I used to write everything which I heard from the Messenger of Allah PBUH. I intended (by it) to memorise it. The Quraysh prohibited me from doing such saying to me: Do you write everything that you hear from him while the Messenger of Allah PBUH is a human being: he speaks in anger and pleasure? So, I stopped writing and mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah PBUH. He signalled with his finger to his mouth and said: Write, by Him in Whose hand my soul lies, only right comes out from it.³⁸

Likewise, the Prophet PBUH himself ordered some of his companions to write some parts of his speech for a companion who could not memorize it. In a narration, Abū Shāh, a Yemenite, stood up when Prophet PBUH finished his speech during the conquest of Makkah and said, "O Allah's Messenger! Get the speech written for me". Allah's Messenger PBUH said to some of his companions, "Write it down for Abū Shāh."³⁹

It is clear from the above discussion that the largest part of the prophetic traditions was not written down during his lifetime. Besides the initial ban from the Prophet, the Arabs were also well known for their sharp memory, which always served as their main means of keeping information. In addition, things were very easy and simple during the time of the Prophet PBUH, where he could be easily and directly consulted by any of his companions at any time to ask the question and seek guidance on any arising issue. Therefore, there was no necessity for writing down all Prophetic traditions during his lifetime.

³⁵ Yahyā ibn Sharaf Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1972), 18:130.

³⁶ Ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī Muslim, *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar Min al-Sunan Bi Naql al-'Adl 'an al-'Adl Ilā Rasul Allah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ta'sīl, 2014), ḥadīth no. 3004.

³⁷ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl Abū 'Abd Allah al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar Min Umūr Rasul Allah Wa Sunanihi Wa Ayyāmihi*, ed. Muhammad Zuhair al-Nasir (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 2001), ḥadīth no. 113.

³⁸ Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdī al-Sajistānī Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awwāmāh, 1st ed. (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Rayyān, 1998), ḥadīth no. 3646.

³⁹ al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ḥadīth no. 2434.

Normally, after the death of the Prophet PBUH another alternative ought to be provided, for that avenue that was usually used to consult the Prophet PBUH during his life. The most ideal alternative then was the compilation of the traditions of the Prophet PBUH for referencing purposes. So, the official documentation of the *ḥadīth* began in the earlier period of the second century after hijrah, when caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ordered Abū Bakr ibn Ḥazm to compile the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet PBUH in a separate book to prevent it from being vanished with the death of the scholars who memorized it. Imam al-Bukhārī reported that: "'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz wrote to Abū Bakr ibn Ḥazm, 'Look for the knowledge of *ḥadīth* and get it written, as I am afraid that religious knowledge will vanish and the religious learned men will pass away (die). Do not accept anything except the *Ḥadīths* of the Prophet. Circulate knowledge and teach the ignorant, for knowledge does not vanish except when it is kept secretly (to oneself).'"⁴⁰ According to Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī:

"The beginning of official documentation of the *ḥadīth* can be derived from the above report. However, the Muslims used to rely on their memory before then, but when caliph 'Umar realised the possibility of losing knowledge of Sunnah, which might result from the death of the scholars who memorized it, he suggested the documentation of the prophetic traditions to preserve it for the present and coming generations."⁴¹

In order to accomplish the mission, the scholars of the *ḥadīth*, in particular, have developed and laid down some basic principles and conditions which must be fulfilled by every single report and narration before it can be accepted and considered to be authentic or sound information. Whether the information is ascribed to the Prophet PBUH or any other person i.e., *Ṣaḥabah*, *al-Tābi'ūn*, and others, it must be scrutinised based on the said principles and conditions. Since every information consists of two parts: (1) *al-Isnād* (narrators of the information), and (2) *al-Matn* (the content of the narration), the principles laid down by the scholars of the *ḥadīth* thoroughly and critically address both parts of the narrations. This claim can be simply justified by referring to any book that addresses the science of the *ḥadīth*.

6.3 Principles of Validating Narrations in the Science of *Ḥadīth*

'*Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (Sciences of *Ḥadīth*) is an independent discipline that many other disciplines depend on; *mufasssīr* needs a certain level of understanding of the science of *ḥadīth* to avoid explanation of the Qur'ān based on the weak and fabricated *ḥadīth*, likewise, the *faqīh*, historian and others need the same thing. Scholars of *ḥadīth* unanimously agreed upon five basic principles for validating narrations. Based on these principles, the general states of the narrators as well as the conditions of the narrations are becoming known and exposed in order to distinguish between genuine, weak and false narrations.⁴² Any narration must fulfil these five basic principles for the confirmation of its genuineness.

⁴⁰ al-Bukhārī.

⁴¹ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1959), 1:194.

⁴² 'Awad Allāh, *Sharḥ Lughat al-Muḥaddith*, 54.

However, the scholars of *ḥadīth*, at times, disagree on the extent of the fulfilment of these conditions by some narrations. Such disagreement comes from their different perspectives. Nevertheless, whenever the scholars of *ḥadīth* agree upon the authenticity of narration, there should not be an atom of doubt about their verdict, for such narration has been actually fulfilled the required conditions. In some cases, the scholars of *ḥadīth* do disagree on the genuineness of some narrations that appear to be fulfilled the conditions based on some other external factors that might distort the authenticity.⁴³ All these measures indicate the level of the precautions taken by the scholars of *ḥadīth* for the confirmation of the authenticity of any narration.

6.4 Five Basic Principles of Validating Narrations in the Science of *Ḥadīth*

- 1) *Ittiṣāl al-Isnād* (connection of the chain of transmitting reports): Based on this principle, the extent of the connectivity between the transmitters of the information is examined. There should not be any form of disconnection or break between the transmitters of the report from the primary source of the information till the last destination. i.e., every reporter in the chain of transmission must receive the information directly from the above. According to this principle, any kind of disconnection or break in *isnād* rendered the narration invalid.
- 2) *ʿAdālah al-ruwāt* (integrity and credibility of the narrators): Integrity is required from the reporter for the acceptance of his report. Based on this principle, every individual in the chain of transmission must be credible and possess high integrity. The level of one's abstention from the major sins and consciousness of minor ones reveals the level of his integrity. However, every son of Adam is liable to sin, but the quick and hasten repentance is the sign of the righteous ones whenever they mistakenly sin. This condition also requires the narrators to be well-known to other scholars, free from telling lies and being a suspect of telling lies.
- 3) *Ḍabt al-ruwāt* (accuracy of the information given by the reporter): Based on this principle, every narrator is required to convey the message in the exact way he heard it or received it from the source, without any addition or reduction. So, any slight mistake while conveying the message renders the information invalid.
- 4) *al-Salāmah min al-Shudhūd* (to be free of oddity and abnormality): Based on this principle, there should be no contradiction between narration and another narration that is more authentic in one way or the other. Under this principle, if a single or few narrators report an event, of such which it should be reported by several narrators, considering the feature and generality of the event, such a narration might be rejected regardless of the fulfilment of all conditions. More so, the disagreement of a narrator with another narrator that is more intelligent than him, or the contradiction between the narration and nature might distort the genuineness of the narration.
- 5) *al-Salāmah min al-ʿillah* (free of illness): According to the scholars of *ḥadīth*, *al-ʿillah* is a hidden and vague factor that tamper the genuineness of narration that appear to be

⁴³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifāt Anwāʿ ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, 1986, 11–15; Ibn Kathīr, *Ikhtisār ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, 22.

free of error. The scholars of *ḥadīth* have different internal and external factors upon which they depend to figure out the error of that nature in the narrations.⁴⁴

7. A Comparison Between The Principles Of Ibn Khaldūn And The Scholars Of *Ḥadīth*

Ibn Khaldūn addresses only historical narrations, hence he chiefly relies on the law of coherence and correspondence between the narrations and the nature of the cultural and social life of the people for validating historical narrations. No point in vetting the credibility of the narrators if the occurrence of the event reported is impossible, except in some issues related to divine messages. While the principles of the science of *ḥadīth* address all kinds of narrations. The law of coherence mentioned by Ibn Khaldūn had been also considered by the scholars of *ḥadīth* for validating narrations. Thus, you see them refuting narration based on oddity and incoherence with what is usual.

Ibn Khaldūn is considered to be the pioneer of the philosophy of history. He himself argues that the issue discussed in his book is an independent discipline that addresses Human Civilisation and Sociology, and affirms that the general approach used in the book to scrutinise historical narrations is pioneered by him.⁴⁵ This is the case in terms of philosophy of history and full concentration on scrutinising historical materials. However, the scholars of *ḥadīth* have preceded him in establishing the principles of validating narrations. No means of validating narrations that have not been applied in the science of *ḥadīth*. Ibn Khaldūn also affirmed that his theory of validating narrations had been used by the previous scholars of *ḥadīth*, such as al-Bukhārī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Ishāq.⁴⁶ If the principles of validating narrations in the science of *ḥadīth* are applied to the narrations refuted by Ibn Khaldūn, the result will be definitely the same. Ibn Khaldūn's efforts on scrutinising historical narration are actually an extension and complement of the efforts of scholars of *ḥadīth* since the only source for his judgement on the narrators is the verdicts of the scholars of *ḥadīth* stated in the books of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*.

Conclusion

The paper addresses the principles of Ibn Khaldūn for scrutinising historical narrations and makes a comparison between his principles and the principles of validating narrations in *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (Sciences of *Ḥadīth*). The approach of Ibn Khaldūn for scrutinising historical narrations can be considered as the extension and complement of the efforts of the scholars of *ḥadīth* since he only relies on their verdicts to determine the credibility of the narrators. Likewise, all his principles have been previously applied in one way or the other by the scholars of *ḥadīth*. However, Ibn Khaldūn is considered to be the pioneer of the philosophy of history and the first Islamic scholar that fully concentrated

⁴⁴ ʿAwad Allāh, *Sharḥ Lughat al-Muḥaddith*, 122–23; ʿUthmān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Taqīy al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifāt Anwāʾ ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Māhir Yāsīn al-Faḥl and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Humaym (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2002), 11–15; Tuan Mohd Sapuan Tuan Ismail et al., “The Matan and Sanad Criticisms in Evaluating the Hadith,” *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 21 (October 2014): p152, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ASS.V10N21P152>.

⁴⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Diwān al-Mubtadaʾ*, 50.

⁴⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, 37.

on scrutinising historical materials, unlike the previous scholars whose main objective was the compilation of historical narrations in their books without giving much attention to examining the authenticity of the narrations. The principles of Ibn Khaldūn are only applicable to historical narration, while the principles of the science of *ḥadīth* are applicable to any kind of narration. Therefore, the major difference between Ibn Khaldūn and the scholars of *ḥadīth* lies in the fact that the principles of the scholars of *ḥadīth* address all types of narrations, whether historical or spiritual narrations, without giving special attention to the historical ones, while Ibn Khaldūn was the first Muslim scholar that purely concentrated on scrutinising historical materials. So, if such recognition is given to Ibn Khaldūn by Western scholars based on the accuracy of his method, more acknowledgement and recognition should be given to the principles of scholars of *ḥadīth* for validating narrations. Especially, when it is academically proven that Ibn Khaldūn's approach is an extension of the efforts of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. Hence, this proof should serve as (a) great evidence for the solidity, preciseness, thoroughness and accuracy of the principles of the scholars of the *ḥadīth* for scrutinising narrations, (b) clear evidence for the refutation and falsification of any doubt and accusation made against the genuineness of the method of the scholars of *ḥadīth*.

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