

Reviewing and Criticizing the Repoets Indicating the Prohibition of the Writing of Hadith by the Caliphs

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Introduction

One of the common topics in the science of Hadith is the prohibitions regarding the writing of Hadith by the early caliphs. This issue has garnered significant support among both sects, particularly among Shiites, and is based on reports related to this matter. As a result, this topic has become, for many, an absolute truth and a widely accepted claim, influencing the documentation of Islamic history and the history of Hadith science in Islam. Some have also attributed certain problems related to Hadith, such as fabrication, weakness, and transmission issues, to this prohibition. However, what reports indicate this issue? What degree of credibility do they have? And what meanings do they convey—do they indicate an absolute prohibition or a relative one?

Materials and Methods

Considering that the theories regarding the prohibition of writing Hadith have been raised by Muslims in general and specifically by the early caliphs (the Rightly Guided Caliphs), and that these theories have been discussed by various Muslims since ancient times as well as by Orientalists, they are based on historical reports that include both chain and text. Therefore, this article aims to descriptively and analytically examine these reports, relying on library resources. Initially, it will gather the reports that pertain to the prohibition of writing Hadith by these caliphs. Subsequently, it will critically analyze them in terms of their chains of transmission and texts, as is customary in the science of Hadith, and will also date these reports. The goal is to determine the level of credibility of these reports and to ascertain whether they indicate a prohibition, and if so, how they convey this prohibition. Ultimately, it seeks to clarify whether the Rightly Guided Caliphs, collectively or individually, issued an absolute prohibition

against writing Hadith, and if such a prohibition existed, whether it is possible to adhere to and follow it.

Results and Findings

It is widely accepted among both Shiites and Sunnis that the early caliphs, particularly the first two caliphs, prohibited and forbade the writing of Hadith. This prohibition continued until the time of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (the seventh Umayyad caliph, d. 101 AH), when he lifted the ban. However, research, particularly the article titled "Examination and Critique of Reports on the Beginning of Hadith Writing by Order of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz," has demonstrated that such an order did not exist and that writing Hadith was already somewhat common before his time. Various reasons have been cited to justify the prohibition of writing Hadith by the caliphs, including: 1. Preventing people from being distracted by anything other than the Quran; 2. Fear of errors or alterations (distortion) in Hadith; 3. The caliphs' lack of comprehensive knowledge of religious rulings and their attempts to solidify their legal authority alongside religious governance; 4. Preventing the dissemination of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and distancing them from leadership in the community. The first caliph from whom a report regarding the prohibition of writing is attributed is Abu Bakr. According to one report, he destroyed 500 Hadiths he had written out of fear that they might be incorrect. However, this report is considered weak based on chain analysis, especially since it is not found in earlier sources. Furthermore, it contradicts reports from Abu Bakr that emphasize the importance of writing Hadith. Logically, to avoid mistakes, there was no need to destroy Hadith; he could have shared them with other companions for verification. Regarding Umar, numerous reports have been transmitted about his prohibition of writing Hadith, and even his practical actions to eliminate them during his time. In some of these reports, it is stated that the reason was to prevent people from focusing on Hadith at the expense of the Quran, suggesting that books could mislead them. However, chain analysis shows that these reports are weak, and they also face textual critiques. It is not the case that attention to Hadith distracts Muslims from the Quran; rather, they are complementary. Additionally, writing books does not lead Muslims astray from their faith, as Muslims have continuously engaged in writing throughout history. These reports indicate that writing Hadith was prevalent during Umar's time, and he was the only one opposed to it. Conversely, there are multiple reports indicating that Umar was indeed attentive to writing Hadith and even issued commands regarding it. As for Uthman, there are no reports indicating his prohibition against writing Hadith. However, a report attributed to Imam Ali (as) appears to suggest his prohibition against writing Hadith, but this report is weak in terms of chain and faces textual objections. Furthermore, such a report contradicts the numerous reports

indicating his commands to write Hadith, as well as his practical conduct and that of his family and companions in writing Hadith.

Conclusion

The reports regarding the caliphs' prohibition of writing hadith contain serious objections in terms of both chain and text. On one hand, they contradict reports indicating their commands to write hadith. Even if these prohibitive reports were to be accepted as accurate, they would at most reflect the personal views of the caliphs and might pertain to specific hadiths. It could be argued that these reports are fabricated to create a sense of virtue for those caliphs, which has, in practice, resulted in the opposite effect. Logically, legally, and conventionally, there is no justification for prohibiting or coercively preventing the writing of hadith, and such reports do not provide any virtue for them.

Keywords: Hadith, Writing, Prohibition, Caliphs.