

Are There Any Early Hadīths?

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Assalamu-alaikum wa rahamatullahi wa barakatuhu:

Introduction

It is frequently claimed by the Christian missionaries that there are no hadīth collections from the first century of hijra. According to them the first hadīth collections were written around 250 years after hijra.

We will show the evidence of existence of hadīth collections from first century of hijra.

Examples Of First Century Hadīth Collections

The Sahīfa Of Hammâm bin Munabbih: This is perhaps one of the earliest known hadīth collections. Hammâm bin Munabbih was a student of Abû Hurairah and well-known among the scholars of the hadīth to be trustworthy. The book [Arabic Literature To The End of Ummayyad Period](#) informs us that:

An example is the Sahīfah of Hammâm bin Munabbih, (d. 110/719), a Yemenite follower and a disciple of companion Abû Hurrayrah, (d. 58/677), from whom Hammâm wrote this Sahīfah, which comprises 138 hadīth and is believed to have been written around the **mid-first AH/seventh century**.^[1]

The author went on to say:

It is significant that Hammâm introduces his text with the words: "Abû Hurrayrah told us in the course of what he related from the Prophet", thus giving the source of his information in the manner which became known as "sanad" or "isnâd", i.e., the teacher of chain of teachers through whom an author reaches the Prophet, a practice invariably and systematically followed in Hadīth compilations.^[2]

We can see that of the 138 narrations in the Sahīfa, 98 of them are faithfully witnessed in the later collections of al-Bukhârî and Muslim, both through narrations of Abû Hurairah and witnessing narrations from other Companions.

We also see that all but two of the narrations are found in one section of the [Musnad](#) of Imâm Aḥmad, again witnessing the preservation of ḥadīth and that earlier works were faithfully rendered in later documents.^[3]

Using the first century [Sahīfa](#) of Hammâm bin Munabbih as a "control group" Marston Speight compared it (i.e., the [Sahīfa](#)) with about the 1500 variant readings of the same aḥādīth found in the collections of Ibn Ḥanbal ([Musnad](#)), al-Bukhârî ([Sahīh](#)) and Muslim ([Sahīh](#)); the last three collections date from 3rd/9th century. Speight says:

... the texts in Hammâm and those recorded in Ibn Ḥanbal, Bukhârî and Muslim with the same isnâd show almost complete identity, except for a few omissions and interpolations which do not affect the sense of the reports. On the other hand, the same aḥādīth as told by other transmitters in the three collections studied show a rich variety of wording, again without changing the meaning of the reports.^[4]

Further he comments about the reports of Hammâm found in the later compilations of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhârî and Muslim by saying that:

... I have found practically no sign of careless or deceptive practices in the variant texts common to the [Sahīfa](#) of Hammâm bin Munabbih.^[5]

In other words, it shows the meticulous nature of ḥadīth transmission as well as high moral and upright characters of the transmitters as well as collectors of the ḥadīth; a fact that Islamic traditions had always asserted and now the western scholarship endorses it.

The Muṣannaf of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣan‘ânî:^[6] An article appeared in the [Journal of Near Eastern Studies](#) that mentioned about the the [Muṣannaf](#) of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣan‘ânî as a source of **authentic aḥādīth of the first century AH**. Since the article is quite huge (21 pages), we will deal with only the conclusions of the author.

While studying the [Muṣannaf](#) of ‘Abd al-Razzâq, I came to the conclusion that the theory championed by Goldziher, Schacht, and in their footsteps, many others - myself included - which in general, reject ḥadīth literature as **a historically reliable sources for the first century AH**, deprives the historical study of early Islam of an important and a useful type of source.^[7]

Some important ḥadīth collections from second century of hijra are the following:^[8]

The Muwaṭṭa' of Mâlik bin Anas: Mâlik bin Anas (d. 179/795) was the founder of Maliki school of jurisprudence. The Muwaṭṭa' of Mâlik was compiled in **mid-second century AH**. And this need not be discussed any further.

Muṣannaf of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150 AH)

Muṣannaf of Ma'mar bin Rashid (d. 153 AH)

A detailed report on ḥadīth can be seen at ʿAbdur Raḥīm Green's [Debate Material](#).

And Allah knows best!

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References

- [1] A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith (Ed.), [Arabic Literature To The End of Ummayyad Period](#), 1983, Cambridge University Press, p. 272.
- [2] *Ibid.*
- [3] More information can be obtained from the book [Ṣaḥīfa Hammâm bin Munabbih: The Earliest Extant Work On The Ḥadīth](#), 1979, M. Hamidullah, Centre Cultural Islamique.
- [4] R. M. Speight, "A Look At Variant Readings In The Ḥadīth", 2000, [Der Islam](#), Band 77, Heft 1, p. 170.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- [6] ʿAbd al-Razzâq b. Hammâm al-Ṣarʿânî (ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmân al-Aʿzamî), [Al-Muṣannaf](#), 1970-72, 11 Volumes, Beirut.
- [7] Harald Motzki, "The Muṣannaf Of ʿAbd al-Razzaq Al-Ṣarʿânî As A Source of Authentic Ahadith of The First Century A.H.", 1991, [Journal Of Near Eastern Studies](#), Volume 50, p. 21.
- [8] Beeston *et al.*, [Arabic Literature To The End of Ummayyad Period](#), *Op.Cit.*, pp. 272-273.