Islam in contemporary Malaysia: Rules pertaining to comparison of narrations with established historical facts according to Ibn Al-Qayyim

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Abstract

Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and is practised by some 60 per cent of its population. As such it is not surprising that the proper study of Islam is organic in the everyday life of Malaysian Muslims. One area of ardent concern is the process of evaluating Hadith in particular, the stringent efforts undertaken by the Islamic scholars in order to ensure the authenticity of narrations. Various parameters were adopted to execute the task. One of the most significant methods used to preserve the authenticity was by making comparison and testing it with established historical facts. In this case, Ibn al-Qayyim was a prominent scholar to apply such method in his magnificent book *Zad al-Ma'ad*. This study took a closer look at the Ibn al-Qayyim's approach using the aforementioned method to evaluate the narrations of al-Maghazi and al-Siyar. It mainly utilised Zad al-Ma^{c}ad as the principal source in order to examine the contents pertaining to the comparison of narrations and historical facts. The findings revealed that there were various methods applied by Ibn Al-Qayyim in confirming historical events, namely, referring to the consensus of the scholars of battles and biographies, using their silence as evidence, and considering the continuation of acting upon the essence of the narration at the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Keywords: al-Maghazi and al-Siyar, historical facts, Ibn al-Qayyim, methods, textual criticism, *Zad al-Ma^{c}ad*

Introduction

The narrations of *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar* (battles and Prophet's history) are part of the main pillars of the science of *Hadith*. They reflect practical sides of Islamic teaching, rather than theoretical parts. Hence, the companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him – pbuh) in early period of Islam have paid great attention to preserve the narrations and conveyed it to the later generations. For historical studies, particularly, there are many resources to investigate an event such as written and oral sources (Rahilah Omar & Siti Fathihah, 2012). Comparing narrations based on established historical facts is considered a part of the process of examining the text which comes from these particular sources. Similarly, for *Hadith*, the narrations of *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar* are the written and oral resources elaborating events occurred during the period of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They contained detailed narratives of every major event for instance pertaining to battles and covenants during the prophet hood. Nonetheless, the soundness of the chain of narrators (i.e. *al-sanad*) alone does not necessarily confirm the soundness and reliability of the text (i.e. *al-matan*). Therefore, critics need to examine the text in order to assure the soundness of the narration from irregularities and defects.

Comparing the narrations of battles and biographies with the established historical facts according to Ibn Al-Qayyim

By examining Ibn Al-Qayyim's reaction in dealing with the narrations of *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar* in his book *Zād Al-Ma`ād*, conclusively, the first criterion used by Ibn Al-Qayyim in criticising the narrations was to check them with established historical facts. Some contemporary scholars wrote books exploring the issue of criticising narrations by comparing them with historical facts (Al-ᶜAkāylah, 2005). However, those books did not focus on those narrations criticised by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book *Zād Al-Maᶜād*. In this study, the methodology of Ibn Al-Qayyim in comparing the narrations of *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar* with established historical facts will be given emphasis.

It should be stressed that in this regard historical facts alone could not be a criterion for criticising *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar's* narrations unless those events are regarded by the scholars as historical facts. In such case, history becomes an indisputable reality, making it stronger than those narrations. Ibn Al-Qayyim has followed various approaches in confirming historical events.

Methods of comparing the narrations with the historical facts

The first method: Referring to the consensus of historians

The first method followed by Ibn Al-Qayyim in confirming the authenticity of narrations in his book *Zād Al-Maᶜād* is to refer to the consensus of historians. This is known in Islamic study as *al-Ijmaᶜ*. When the narrations of *al-Maghazi* conflict with the consensus of historians, Ibn Al-Qayyim would judge such narrations as being weak and irregular. Some examples for this are:

i. The Prophet (pbuh) informing Hudhayfah and `Ammār about the names of the hypocrites (*al-Munafiqun*):

On the authority of Ibn Lahī`ah, through Abū Al-Aswad, `Urwah said, "And the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh) returned in a caravan from Tabūk to Madīnah. When they reached to a place, some of the accomplices set a plot against the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh), so they planned to throw him down from the top of the mountain. When they reached that place they attempted to cross it together with him. But when the Prophet of Allāh (pbuh), approached them, he was informed of this news, and said, 'Whomsoever among you wishes to cross the bottom of this valley may do so, since it is wider for you'. So the Prophet (pbuh), took the route of the top of the mountain, while the people began to go along the bottom of the valley, except the group that plotted against the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh). When they heard this they prepared themselves and covered their faces, plotting for a grievous action. The Messenger of Allāh (pbuh), called Hudhayfah bin Al-Yamān and `Ammār bin Yāsir, so they both walked with him. He ordered `Ammār to hold the camel's reins, and ordered Hudhayfah to guide it. While they were walking they suddenly heard people behind them ambushing. The Messenger of Allāh (pbuh), became angry and ordered Hudhayfah to confront them. Hudhayfah noticed the anger of the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh), so he returned with a stick, approached the faces of their camels, and beat his camel continuously with the camel-stick, while he noticed that the faces of those people were covered, for none would notice that unless they were travelling. Allāh cast fear into them when they saw Hudhayfah, and they realised he had discovered their plot, so they hastened back among the people. Hudhayfa then approached the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh). When he reached him, he said, 'Beat the camel, Hudhayfah, and you may go, `Ammār'. They hastened until they reached the top of the mountain and passed it waiting for the people. The Prophet (pbuh) said to Hudhayfah, 'O Hudhyafah, did you recognise which group or those travellers or any one of them were?' Hudhayfah said, 'I recognised the camel of some one', and he added, 'The night was dark, so I approached them while they had their faces covered'. He (pbuh),

then asked, 'Were you aware of the matter of those travellers or what they wanted?' They both said, 'No, we swear to Allāh, O Messenger of Allāh' He said, 'They had plotted to walk along with me, and once all was dark at the top of the mountain they would throw me down' They said, 'Would you summon them, O Messenger of Allāh, when the people approach, and cut off their necks?' He said, 'I hate that the people would start to speak and say that Muḥammad kills his companions'. He then named them for them both, and then said, 'Keep their names secret' (al-Baihaqi, 1988).

Ibn Al-Qayyim noticed a mistake in this narration, since it stated that the Messenger, (pbuh), told Hudhayfah and `Ammār the names of the hypocrites during the battle of Tabūk. This narration contradicts an established historical fact, namely that only Hudhayfah bin Al-Yamān knew the names of the hypocrites. That is why Hudhayfah was named as the secret keeper as they were known by no other than him. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986) The following arguments prove such contradiction:

1. On the authority of Abū Naḍrah, Qays said, "I said to `Ammār, 'Do you reckon the action you did regarding `Alī, was it a opinion of yours or something delegated to you by the Messenger of Allāh, (pbuh)?' He said, 'The Messenger of Allāh (pbuh) did not delegate something to us that he did not delegate to the people as a whole; however, Hudhayfah informed me that the Prophet (pbuh) said, 'Among my companions are twelve hypocrites, eight of whom will not enter Paradise until a camel crosses through the eye of a needle, and eight of whom will be sufficed by the dubaylah[1]'". (Muslim bin al-Hajjaj) In the context of this narration, it becomes evident that the Messenger (pbuh) has informed Hudhayfah about the names of the hypocrites, and Hudhayfah mentioned to `Ammār that their number was twelve.
2. Ibn Isḥāq narrated this story, and mentioned that the Messenger (pbuh) informed only Hudhayfah about the names of the hypocrites (al-Baihaqi, 1988).
3. On the authority of Ibrahim Al-Nakha`ī, who said, "`Alqamah travelled to the Levant, and when he entered the mosque, he said, 'Oh Allāh, bring me a good person to sit with. So he sat with Abū Al-Dārdā'. Abū Al-Dārdā' said, 'Where are you from?' He said, 'From the people of *al-Kufah*. He said, 'Is not among you or from you the secret keeper who knows (the names of hipocrytes) that known by none other than him, referring to Hudhayfah?' I replied, 'Yes' (al-Bukhari, 1987).
    This narration also proves that Hudhayfah was the only one who knew the names of the hypocrites, so he was called the secret keeper.

ii. Mentioning Bilāl in the incident of Baḥīrah the Monk

It was narrated by `Abdul-Raḥmān bin Ghazwān, through Yūnus bin Abū Isḥāq, through Abū Bakr bin Abū Mūsā, through Abū Mūsā, the story of the Prophet (pbuh) with Baḥīrah the Monk prior to the revelation. The following is mentioned in it: "He continued to appeal to him until Abū Ṭālib responded, and Abū Bakr sent Bilāl with him (Prophet), and the monk provided him with food and oil". (al-Tirmizi)

Ibn Al-Qayyim criticised it because Bilāl was mentioned in this story. Bilāl, said Ibn Al-Qayyim was not there when the event took place. Even if he had been there, he was not with Abū Bakr. This is the consensus of the scholars. (al-Hakim, 1990) Ibn Al-Qayyim was not alone in judging this narration as contradicting, but supported by other scholars of narrations, in contrary to Al-Ḥākim and Al-Ḥalabī. (al-Hakim, 1990, Al-Ḥalabī, 1427H).

The critics who judged the narration as being contradictive had disputed the soundness of the incident. There are two views pertaining to this:

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[1] Dubaylah means calamity. It refers to an ulcer that forms in the stomach. In some narrations, it is mentioned that a dubaylah is a growth that forms on the shoulders. Perhaps what is meant here is a sore tumour that develops on the shoulders since its heat and intensity is similar to a lanterns of fire. (Al-Mullah `Alī Al-Qārī, 2002).

The first view:
Those who believe that the story is false. This is the view of Al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, and Al-Maqrīzī. (Al-Dhahabī, 2003, Ibn Kathīr, 1988, and Al-Maqrīzī,1999) They refuted this narration because the narration is classified among the rejected narrations of `Abdul-Raḥmān bin Ghazwān, and because it also contradicts with established historical facts.

The second view:
The advocates of this view believe the story as true. The contradictive aspect is only in Bilāl's involvement. This is the view of the majority of scholars, such as Ibn Ḥajar Al-`Asqalānī, Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Diyār Al-Bakrī, and Ibn Al-Qayyim. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986, Ibn Ḥajar Al-`Asqalānī, 1412H, Al-Suyūṭī, 1985) They consider `Abdul-Raḥmān bin Ghazwān to be trustworthy. Ibn Ḥajar views that mentioning Bilāl is an addition to the narration; just because it is mentioned does not necessarily make the whole narration rejected (Ibn Ḥajar Al-`Asqalānī, 1412H). As for Ibn Al-Qayyim, he views that there is some *al-Tashif* (the mistake due to similar form of some words) in the narration, due to that Al-Bazzār narrated this too and mentioned *rajul* (i.e. a man) instead of Bilāl (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986).

Apparently, the views that consider there to be distorted is fragile because the word Bilāl (بلال) is not similar to the word *rajul* (رجل), making the occurrence of *al-Tashif* very unlikely. (Akram al-ʿUmari, 2009) Some researchers opined that the story is true because of appearance of many chains of narrators. (Akram al-ʿUmari, 2009) The researcher opts to the view that this story is not confirmed, because all of the chains of narrators are either categorised as being *mursalah* or *muʿḍalah*, hence they are not acceptable for authenticating miracles, just as the narration of the shadow of the cloud that shaded the Messenger (pbuh) and the dangling (*tahaṣṣur*) of the tree branches over him. (Ibn Kathīr, 1988) Had this incident been confirmed, it would have been mentioned numerous times by Quraysh and should be popularly known by them.

iii. The narration about the Prophet's (pbuh) marriage, with Umm Ḥabībah

It was narrated by `Ikrimah, through Abū Zamīl, through Ibn `Abbās, who said, "The Muslims would not look at Abū Sufyān and would not seek to sit with him, so he said to the Prophet (pbuh), 'O Prophet of Allāh, give me three' He replied, 'Yes' He said, 'I have the best and most beautiful of the Arabs, Umm Ḥabībah daughter of Sufyān, and I will give her to you in marriage'. He replied, 'Yes' He said, 'And Mu`āwiyah, to make him a scribe of yours' He replied, 'Yes' He said, 'And to give me leadership so I can fight the non-Muslims just as I used to fight the Muslims' He replied, 'Yes'. Abū Zamīl said, 'Had it not been that he asked such from the Prophet (pbuh), he would not have been given it, since he would not be asked something without him replying with yes'" (Muslim bin al-Hajjaj).

Ibn Al-Qayyim criticised the abovementioned narrations because it contradicts the consensus of the scholars, that the Prophet (pbuh) married Umm Ḥabībah before the Conquest of Makkah, which was prior to Abū Sufyān embracing Islām (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986). Al-Bayhaqī commented on this narration by saying:

> Regarding this narration about the story of Umm Ḥabībah, may Allāh be pleased with her, the scholars of al-Maghazi and al-Siyar have a consensus in contrast to it. They did not dispute that the marriage of Umm Ḥabībah, may Allāh be pleased with her, occurred before the return of Ja`far bin Abū Ṭālib and his companions from Abyssinia; rather, they returned during the incident of Khaybar, therefore the marriage of Umm Ḥabībah was before that, and Abū Sufyān bin Ḥarb had embraced Islām during the time of the Conquest of Makkah... (Al-Bayhaqī, 1988).

The views of the scholars pertaining to this narration divided into three views:

The first view:
The advocates of this view deemed that the narration is sound, and interpreted it in a way that it does not conflict with historical facts. However, they differed over its interpretation:

1. Ibn Ṣalāḥ regarded that it was possible that Abū Sufyān asked the Messenger (pbuh) to renew the contract of marriage, as an attempt towards winning the Prophet's heart and in consideration that his embracement of Islām necessitates him to renew the contract (al-Nawawi, 1392H). Ibn Ḥajar inclined towards the second interpretation (Ibn Hajar, 1412H). However, there is none in this narration indicating that the Messenger (pbuh) told him that there is a need to renew the contract (al-Nawawi, 1392H).
2. Al-Bayhaqī viewed that the first request made by Abū Sufyān was while he was a non-Muslim, while the second and third requests were made following his embracement of Islām, whereas all of these requests were mentioned together in a single narration (Al-Bayhaqī, 1994).

The second view:
Ibn Ḥazm exaggerated in considering this narration as being fabricated by `Ikrimah. (Ibn Hazm) However, this view is refuted by saying that no evidence exists indicating `Ikrimah had fabricated this narration, and no scholar has attributed such fabrication to `Ikrimah (al-Nawawi, 1392H).

The third view:
Some scholars regard that mentioning of Umm Ḥabībah in this narration is a mistake made by the narrator. This is the view of Ibn Athīr and Ibn Al-Jawzī, and also that of Ibn Al-Qayyim and Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Athīr, 1993, Ibn Al-Jawzī, Ibn Al-Qayyim, 1986, Ibn Kathīr, 1403H). Ibn Al-Qayyim inclined towards the possibility that the narrator wanted to mention `Izzah, the sister of Umm Ḥabībah, but became confused (Ibn Al-Qayyim, 1986).

The most likely is that mentioning Umm Ḥabībah is a mistake by the narrator, who sought to mention ᶜIzzah, the sister of Umm Ḥabībah, but became confused. As for the Prophet (pbuh) replying to the requests of Abū Sufyān by saying 'yes', while keeping in mind that marrying two sisters is not permissible, does not indicate that he approved such action but rather indicating that he was following the speech of Abū Sufyān, like nodding to someone while having conversation. It is part of familiarity and courtesy, especially considering that Abū Sufyān had just embraced Islām (Al-ᶜAkāylah, 2005).

The second method: Using the abstinence of historians in transmitting a particular event as evidence

This is also a method applied by Ibn Al-Qayyim to criticize the historical narrations. On this basis, Ibn Al-Qayyim would not approve any narration that mentioned events not transmitted by any of the early scholars of *al-Maghazi* and *al-Siyar*. The abstinence of these historians in transmitting a particular event gives a strong justification indicating that it was not historically established. Some examples of such are as follows:

i. The narration of Abū Sufyān's request from the Prophet (pbuh) to give him command of battles

It was mentioned earlier the Ibn Al-Qayyim had criticised the narration of Abū Sufyān, narrated by Muslim, about the Prophet's marriage (pbuh) with Umm Ḥabībah. There is another mistake in the narration that was noticed by Ibn Al-Qayyim, namely the request of Abū Sufyān from the Prophet (pbuh), to give him leadership so he could fight against the non-Muslims, and the Prophet (pbuh) approving such. In his critique of the narration, Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "Also, it is mentioned in this narration that he asked

him, 'And to give me leadership so I can fight against the non-Muslims just as I used to fight the Muslims' He replied, 'Yes'. It is not known that the Prophet, may be peace upon him, ever granted Abū Sufyān a leadership role" (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986).

Ibn Al-Qayyim regarded that since the scholars did not report on the incident of granting Abū Sufyān leadership in battling the non-Muslims, then it serves as evidence that there was a mistake in this narration.

ii. Al-Zuhrī mentioning Hilāl bin Umayyah and Marārah bin Al-Rabī` who witnessed the battle of Badr

Ibn Al-Qayyim criticised Al-Zuhrī when he mentioned in his narration through Ka^cb bin Mālik that Hilāl bin Umayyah Al-Wāqifī and Marārah bin Al-Rabī` Al-^cĀmirī are among those who witnessed the Battle of Badr. His refutation was mentioned by Al-Zuhrī, that the early historians did not mention them both among those who had witnessed the Battle of Badr. Ibn Al-Qayyim (1986) said:

> And he said (i.e. Ka`b) that 'they mentioned to me two pious men who witnessed the Battle of Badr who are both examples for me'. This statement is considered to be one of Al-Zuhrī's distortions, since it is not known from any of the scholars of battles and biographies at all who mentioned these two men among the people of the Battle of Badr, not from Ibn Isḥāq, or Mūsā bin `Uqbah, or Al-Amawī, or Al-Wāqidī, or anyone who listed the people of the Battle of Badr.[2]

However, Ibn Al-Qayyim is not the first to mention that Al-Zuhrī had made a distortion in this narration. Ibn Al-Jawzī also opted for this before him, since he considered Al-Zuhrī to have confused them among the people of the Battle of Badr, because the scholars of battles and biographies have not mentioned this. Ibn Al-Jawzī (1992) said, "His (i.e. Ka^cb) saying 'two men who witnessed Badr' is considered a mistake made by Al-Zuhrī, since they both did not witness the Battle of Badr".

iii. Mentioning that Sa^cd bin Abū Sarḥ Witnessed the battle of Tabūk

Ibn Isḥāq mentioned that Sa^cd bin Abū Sarḥ was one of the hypocrites who had participated in the Battle of Tabūk (al-Baihaqi, 1988). Ibn Al-Qayyim criticised Ibn Isḥāq, because it was unknown that Sa^cd bin Abū Sarḥ embraced Islām. Since the scholars of battles and biographies were silent about him becoming a Muslim, then it indicates that he could not have been among the hypocrites (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986).

The third method: Looking into the continuation of acting upon the essence of the narration at the time of the rightly guided caliphs

The last method followed by Ibn Al-Qayyim in confirming historical events was by looking into the continuation of acting upon the essence of the narration at the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The period of the Prophet (pbuh) was a time of legislation, and if such incident was historically established then acting upon it would still be effective until the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, with the exception of actions that have been abrogated or those which are specifically for the Prophet (pbuh). This method is confined to narrations pertaining to religious regulations. Ibn Al-Qayyim pointed out this method by saying, 'When certain narrations are disputed to have come from the Prophet (pbuh), then one looks into the actions of his companion after him. Among what was mentioned earlier was the actions of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, their households, and other companions regarding to the act of *muzāra`ah*" (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1415H). Another example for this is Ibn Al-Qayyim's reply to those who establish that the Prophet (pbuh), prayed for some of his martyrs. He said (1986):

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[2] Ibis, vol 3, p 505.

> The martyr of a battle is not prayed for, because the Messenger of Allāh, (pbuh) did not pray for the martyrs of the Battle of Uḥud, and it was not known from him that he had prayed upon any of those who were martyred with him during his battles, likewise his Rightly Guided Caliphs and their successors after them.

It is clear that Ibn Al-Qayyim regarded the actions of the Rightly Guided Caliphs as a criterion to criticise some historical incidents. What is evident to the researcher is that Ibn Al-Qayyim changed his stance, because he once regarded that the Caliph has the choice of either praying for the martyrs or not, due to the narrations related to this topic, as mentioned in his book *Tahdhīb Al-Sunan* (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1415H). Ibn Al-Qayyim reorganized his book *Zād Al-Maᶜād* after writing it, and what proves such is that he referred some issues in *Zād Al-Maᶜād* to his other book *Tahdhīb Al-Sunan*. This proves that the reorganizations of *Zād Al-Ma`ād* came later.

The view of scholars of prophetic narrations in comparing narrations of al-Maghazi and al-Siyar with established historical facts

Whoever focuses their attention on the books of narrations will find that since an early time of Islam, scholars have used the method of comparing with established historical events as a criterion to examine the narrations of battles and biographies. While mentioning the critique of Ibn Al-Qayyim regarding some incidents, the researcher pointed out some views of the scholars of narrations, such as Al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Al-Jawzī, and Al-Munāwī who agreed with Ibn Al-Qayyim in classifying such narrations conflicting the established historical events as being weak (*ḍaᶜīf*). The following reveals a few other examples indicating the application of this method:

1. It was narrated by Yaḥyā bin Muḥammad Al-Tajīyī, through Ḥarmalah, through his uncle, through Ibn Wahb, through Nāfi`, through Ibn `Umar, may Allāh be pleased with him, through a missing narrator, that, "I saw the city of Kūfa on the night of *Isrā'*, and I entered its *masjid* and prayed four *rak`ah* there". Al-Ṭabarī said, "This narration is fabricated, it is a lie" (Ibn Hajar, 1986). Dr Khālid `Allāl `Allāmah (2003) clarified the status of the narration, in that it conflicts with established historical events, namely that Kūfa was only conquered by the Muslims after the time of the Prophet (pbuh) and during his time there was no *masjid* there.
2. Ibn Saᶜd said that he was informed by Qubayṣah bin `Uqbah Abū `Āmir Al-Sawāᵻī, through Sufyān bin Sa`īd Al-Thawrī, through `Alqamah bin Mirthad, through Ibn Buraydah, through his father, that he said, "When the Messenger of Allāh (pbuh) conquered Makkah, he approached a grave and sat there, and the people sat around him. His appearance was like that of someone being spoken to. Then he stood, crying. `Umar approached him, as he was the most straightforward among the people towards him. He said, 'I sacrifice my father and mother for you, O Messenger of Allāh, what made you cry?' He replied, 'This is the grave of my mother. I asked my Lord for more, so He gave me permission, and I asked him to forgive [her], but he did not give me permission, so I remembered her, felt sorrow, and cried' And there was not a day he was seen crying more than that day (Ibn Saᶜd, 1968). Ibn Saᶜd (1968) criticised this narration, and judged it as distorted due to it contradiction with the consensus of the scholars of battles and biographies, namely that the mother of the Prophet (pbuh) was buried in Al-Abwā', not Makkah. Ibn Saᶜd (1968) said, "This is a mistake, since her grave is not in Makkah, it is in Al-Abwā'".

Conclusion

To sum up, the research explicated that among the advantages that can be mentioned by implementing this method in examining the narrations of battles and biographies is guaranteeing their soundness from fabrication and distortion. There are various methods applied by Ibn Al-Qayyim to confirm historical events, namely by referring to the consensus of the scholars of battles and biographies, using their silence as evidence, and considering the continuation of acting upon the essence of the narration at the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Examining narrations of battles and biographies in comparison with established historical events was applied by the scholars of narrations in early times and contemporary times.

And to conclude, we thank Allāh, the Lord of the Universe.

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