INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC REVEALED
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ANTI SUNNAH MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MUSLIM
UMMAH
BY
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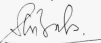(Second Examiner)

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Abstrack

This study is an attempt to observe the existence of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the Islamic history. It tries to analyze the stand of anti-*Sunnah* group, as well as their polemics against the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah*. This study comprised five chapters.

The first chapter provides a general overview of the study including a brief introducion, review of some literatures used in the study, scope of study, significance of the research and the methodology of research applied by the writers in completing this work.

The second chapter contains the theoretical discussion of the concept of *Sunnah* in Islam. In this chapter a deliberate attempt is made to develop a theoretical framework for the entire study. It gives a detailed background of the concept of *Sunnah* including the meaning of *Hadīth* and *Sunnah* regarding the views of the *Muhaddithūn*, the *Usūliyyūn* and the *Fuqahā'*, and the categories of *Sunnah*. This has been followed by the discussion of the authority of *Sunnah* as a legal source, and its role in relation to the Qur'ān.

Chapter three of this study deals with the historical background of anti-*Sunnah* movement and its development in the Islamic era. The materials provided in this chapter constitute the background of anti-*Sunnah* movement prevailed in the early centuries

of Islamic history, particularly in the second century of *Hijrah*. It also states the development of this movement in the following centuries, particularly in our recent century.

Chapter four is taken up by a discussion of some materials relating to the stand of anti-*Sunnah* movement. The central focus of this chapter is to give an exposure to the two eminent leaders of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the recent century, Rashad Khalifa of the United States of America and Kassim Ahmad of Malaysia, regarding their stand on *Sunnah*. This chapter also provides an answer to the stand of anti-*Sunnah* movement.

Chapter five, the concluding chapter, tried to analyze the impact of anti-*Sunnah* movement on the Muslim *Ummah*, particularly on the Muslims in Malaysia. This chapter also remarks a general summary and brief observation to the whole works of the study.

Transliteration

Consonant

ء	–	'	ض	–	d
ب	–	b	ط	–	ṭ
ت	–	t	ظ	–	z
ث	–	th	ع	–	'
ج	–	ḥ	غ	–	gh
ح	–	ḥ	ف	–	f
خ	–	kh	ق	–	q
د	–	d	ك	–	k
ذ	–	dh	ل	–	l
ر	–	r	م	–	m
ز	–	z	ن	–	n
س	–	s	ه	–	h
ش	–	sh	و	–	w
ص	–	ṣ	ي	–	i

Long Vowel			Short Vowel			Diphtong		
اى	–	a	´	–	a	و	–	aw
وي	–	u	و	–	u		–	uww
ي	–	i	´	–	i	ى	–	ay
							–	iyy

iii

Acknowledgement

the course of my study. Without this support it should be difficult for me to complete my study.

Special thanks also go to sister Asiah and my family for their patience and support to make the difficulties and uncomfort during my study be settled.

In the end, I would like to express my acknowledgement to many others who are directly and indirectly involved with my work. Without their help this endeavour will not take into shape.

Needless to say, all defects and faults in this study are actually from my own, and therefore I leave of my shortcomings and imperfections to those who are more competent to give the subject a comprehensive treatment by their scholarships.

May Allah reward all of them - Amin.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

One of the most important issues that faced the Muslim *Ummah*
throughout the Islamic centuries is that of the authority and the
authenticity of *Sunnah* and *Hadīth*. Considering that *Hadīth* and
Sunnah serve as an important source of Islamic law and teachings,
it is undoubtedly to say that the issues related to *Sunnah* will
contribute to pose a challenge to the Muslim *Ummah* in the future,
for the reason that there are indeed among the Muslim community who
are creating certain doubts on *Sunnah* and insisted on their
opposite direction to the stand of the general Muslims.

In fact, the issues and problems related to *Sunnah* are not a
new phenomenon in the Islamic history, since there are a few
intrusive persons among the early Muslim community, particularly in
the second century of *Hijrah* afterwards, as well as those exist in
the recent century, who came up with a slogan, calling for
dependence upon the Qur'ān alone, even by making doubts and
uncertainties about the existence of *Sunnah*, or by advocating some
polemics and vicious attacks against its authority and
authenticity, in order to cover up their hidden intentions and
their actual aims of rejecting both the authority and authenticity

1

of *Sunnah* as a source of Islamic law and teachings.

Admittedly, *Hadith* and *Sunnah* play an important role in developing the Muslim legacies and heritages, as well as establishing the Islamic law and teachings and many other religious instructions. It also served as an important part in establishing the entire structure of Islamic way of life, and thoroughly supporting a great influence in the development of Muslim minds and Islamic thought. It further had keen interest of influencing the development and the progress of Muslim *Ummah* in the future. This matter of fact, as well as the fact that *Sunnah* serves as a second primary sources of Islam besides the Qur'ān, from which the Islamic law and teachings are drawn, in fact has been accepted universally by the believers.

Needless to say that the role of *Sunnah* and its position as a source of Islamic law and teachings and as a source of guidance in Islam, have been affirmed by the Qur'ān in the various statements of its verses, like (16:44), (33:21), and (59:47). In such of these verses and many other Qur'ānic verses, Allah (SWT) has affirmed that the Prophet (SAAS) is a model (*Uswah*) for the Muslim *Ummah*, who was sent to the mankind to provide guidance and instructions. The Qur'ān further affirmed that whatever related to the Prophet (SAAS) are based on the divine revelation.[1] Therefore, the believers have to follow his commands and to avoid whatever he forbids them from doing so. As a matter of fact, most of the

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See *al-Qur'ān*, Surah al-Najm, 53:3-4.

Prophet's commands and guidance conveyed and described by his *Sunnah*. This fact was also supported by the *Hadīth*, in which the Prophet (SAAS) has said:

> "I have left among you two things, that you would never go astray if you adhere these two things - the Book of Allah and His Prophet's *Sunnah*".

Moreover, there are none of the Muslim jurists and scholars who have undoubtedly in accepting the *Sunnah* or *Hadīth* as a second source of Islam besides the Qur'an, and indeed they have pointed out this acceptance by the way of *Ijmā'* (consensus), which is undoubtedly cannot be denied by any Muslim. It is further important to note that the acceptance of *Sunnah* as one of the valid and authoritative source of Islam is one of the prerequisites for the Islamic faith and belief. Consequently, no one can be considered as a Muslim or a *Mu'min* if he does not accept the role of *Sunnah*, its authority and authenticity as a source of Islamic law and teachings, and as a source of guidance in Islam.

However, there are several people who came up with their objections and rejections of *Sunnah* and its position in Islam. In fact, the issues related to *Sunnah* regarding its polemics and uncertainties are among the major issues which have been influenced and propagated by the Muslim enemies to achieve their attempts to deviate Muslims and Islamic faith from the right path for a long time ago. Therefore, ever since the past up till now, there are certain people among the believers who proclaimed themselves as the

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See Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭā'*, Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, Beirut, 1985, 3rd. ed., p. 785.

3

Muslims, but have misperceived the concept of *Sunnah*, and callously advocated their own literatures to create some doubts and uncertainties about *Sunnah*. Thus they became a group to the extent of rejecting its authority and authenticity as a source of Islamic law and teachings. Likewise, some of them went to the extent of challenging its existence or to the extent of denying the body of *Sunnah*. This situation in fact has been supervised and conducted by the Muslim enemies who have tried to achieve their aims to deviate the Islamic faith and disunite the Muslim community.

Nevertheless, it is not a big matter if the polemics against *Sunnah* and its rejection as an authoritative and authentic source of Islam are came from the non-believers. However, if the matters are created by the believers themselves, it is indeed a great issue which involved the problem of Islamic faith. Accordingly, from the Islamic viewpoint, those who rejected the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah* by itself are actually deviated from the right path.[2] Due to the existence of this unguided group, there are the Muslim scholars and *'Ulamā* who have endlessly went to defend the position of *Sunnah* and its role from being challenged by any attempt to reject its authority and authenticity.

With the above statements as a background, we return to the discussion of the main theme of this study, namely, the anti-

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See al-Suyūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Jannah Fī al-Iḥtijāj Bi al-Sunnah*. Maṭābi' al-Rashid. Medina. 1979. p.5; 'Abd al-Ghanī 'Abd al-Khāliq. *Ḥujjiyyat al-Sunnah*. al-Maʿhad al-'Alamī Li al-Fikr al-Islāmī. Washington. 1986. pp.252-255; al-Jassās, *Kitāb Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*. Dār al-Fikr. Beirut. <n.d.>. p. 149.

4

Sunnah movement. This term composed of three words, in which the word *anti* means in the opposite direction to,[1] or pursuing an opposite policy.[2] The word *Sunnah* is used for whatever came from the Prophet (SAAS) by his sayings, deeds and tacit approvals.[3] It is also popularly known as *Hadith*. Although some scholars and Muslim jurists have identified that the words *Hadith* and *Sunnah* are two different things carrying different meanings,[4] but for the purpose of this study both *Hadith* and *Sunnah* are used to be synonymous. Meanwhile, the word *movement* means action or activity.[5] The combination of these words into the term of Anti-*Sunnah* Movement bears the meaning of several people or a group of people who have an attempt to deny the position and the role of *Sunnah* in Islam, as well as to reject its authority and authenticity as a source of Islamic law and teachings. This unguided group did not only denied the role of *Sunnah* and rejected its authority and authenticity, but also went to extent of challenging its existence. They further try to influence the Muslim community with their views and their perception by propagating certain issues and problems

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[1]   Longman (firm). *Longman Dictionary of English Language*, Longman Group UK Ltd., England. 1984, p.61.

[2]   *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. G & C Merriam Co., USA, 1980, p. 48.

[3]   This meaning is given by the *Usūliyyūn*. See ʿAbd al-Ghānī ʿAbd al-Khāliq. *op.cit.*, p. 68.

[4]   See Mohd Shabbir. *The Authority and Authenticity of Hadith as A Source of Islamic Law*. Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 1989, p.2.

[5]   A.S. Hornby. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford University press, 1989, p. 811.

5

related to *Sunnah*, as well as advocating certain literatures which illustrated their rejection of *Sunnah*. Furthermore, they claimed that *Sunnah* has only been innovated by the Muslim jurists after the death of the Prophet (SAAS), particularly in the second century of *Hijrah*, in order to support their own schools. From this account, they insisted that the only authoritative source of Islam was bound on the Qur'ān, and nothing else but the Qur'ān. Thus the other sources besides the Qur'ān, including *Sunnah* are rejected.[5]

Due to the previous statements, the writer has chosen the title of *Anti-Sunnah Movement and Its Impact on The Muslim Ummah* as his subject matter of the study. The study indeed has intended to expose the existence of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the Islamic history throughout the centuries. It further intends to evaluate the impact of this movement on the Muslim *Ummah*, as well as to reply to their polemics against the authority of *Sunnah* and their rejection of its authenticity as a source of Islamic law and teachings. It is hoped this study will contributes certain significance for the Muslims in general, and the writer in particular, to understand the position and the role of *Sunnah* as a source of Islamic law and teachings, and as a source guidance and religious instructions in Islam.

1.2 Review of Literature

There are a number of sources which provide very useful

Cf. al-Khudārī, *Tārikh al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī*, Dār al-Fikr, 1981, 7th ed., p. 183; Muhammad Luqmān al-Salafī, *al-Sunnah Wa Makānatuhā Fī al-Islām Wa al-Radd 'Ala Munkirihā*, Maktabat al-Aimān, Medina, 1989, p.256.

information for the subject of this study. Among these primary sources is a book entitled *Jimā' al-'Ilm.* which is based on a chapter from *al-Umm* by al-Shāfi'ī under the heading *Bāb Jimā' al-'Ilm.* It was edited by Muhammad Ahmad 'Abd al-'Azīz. This work can be regarded as the early account of the existence of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the Islamic history, particularly for the event in the second century of *Hijrah*. In this book, al-Shāfi'ī has elaborately stated his discussion and debate with a person represented the group of anti-*Sunnah* on that particular time. However, he does not mentioned who was that person or that group who rejected the authority of *Sunnah*.

Thoroughly, the work left by al-Shāfi'ī created certain conjectures for the later scholars in order to identify the identity of the person or the group of anti-*Sunnah* as been mentioned by al-Shāfi'ī in his book. Among them is Sheikh Muhammad al-Khudārī in his book entitled *Tārikh al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī.* According to al-Khudārī, the person who debated with al-Shāfi'ī was among the Mu'tazilites.

There is another important book concerning this matter which entitled *Hujjiyyat al-Sunnah.* It was composed by Dr. 'Abd al-Ghānī 'Abd al-Khāliq. The central focus of this book is the argument to prove the authority of *Sunnah*. The book describes in detail how *Sunnah* used to be an authority, with clear overviews and explanations. The book also discusses the author's opinion about the existence of anti-*Sunnah* movement, especially for the occurance in the time of al-Shāfi'ī. In this book, the author

7

illustrated his disagreement with the historical conjecture made by al-Khuḍārī and other scholars who agreed with him. According to Dr. ʿAbd al-Ghānī, the person or the group who rejected the authority of *Sunnah* on that time was not among the Muʿtazilites, but they should be among the other group, especially the *Rāfidah*.

In this study, particularly when dealing with the stand of anti-*Sunnah* movement, there are in fact a number of materials which supported a clear and very useful information for a central discussion of this study. Among these materials is a book entitled *The Computer Speaks : God's Message to The World* by Rashad Khalifa, who was known as the leader of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the modern age. This book has been published together with his other work entitled *Qur'ān : The Final Scripture*. The author claimed that this book is based on his discovery of what he called "Coded Message" or Code 19 in the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, this book has clearly illustrated the author's intention to reject the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah* as a legitimate source in Islam. The author also claimed that his discovery had generated physical, indisputable proof, showing that the Qur'ān is complete, perfect and shall be the sole source of religious statutes and commandments; therefore any other sources including *Hadīth* or *Sunnah* cannot be accepted as a legal source. For him, the *Hadīth* is only a false doctrine sponsored by satan. Furthermore he quoted certain Qur'ānic verses which he misinterpreted and misconstrued to support his lie.

In another book entitled *Qur'ān, Hadīth and Islam*, the author

8

also advocated the same views which exposed his polemics against *Sunnah*. This book in fact contained certain arguments based on a selected number of Qur'ānic verses which he misinterpreted to fit his views in order to support his rejection of the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah*.

Another work concerning this issue is a book entitled *Hadis: Satu Penilaian Semula (Hadith : A Reevaluation)* by Kassim Ahmad. There are many controversial statements the author used in this book to guide the readers on important facts regarding his rejection of *Hadīth* which he considered as a false teaching contributed to the Prophet Muhammad. According to the author, the only source of Islamic law and theology is the Holy Qur'an. This book in fact had a general condemnation from many quarters among the Muslim community in Malaysia and in July 1986 it was banned by the government.

In another occasion, the author has published another book entitled *Hadis : Jawapan Kepada Pengkritik (Hadīth : An Answer to Critic)*. The book is a continuation of his previous work. It was composed in order to reply to the criticisms and condemnations of his previous book. These two books have clearly illustrated the author's stand against *Sunnah*. In fact, most of the arguments contained in these books have been taken from the work of Rashad Khalifa, especially his book entitled *The Computer Speaks : God's Message To The World*.

There is an article concerning the subject of this study entitled *Al-Hadīth, Its Authority and Authenticity* by Prof. Dr.

9

Muhammad Abdul Rauf. This article was presented at a seminar organized by the Faculty of Law, International Islamic University in Petaling Jaya on July 26, 1986. Obviously, this article was intended to be an answer to the controversial books written by Rashad Khalifa and Kassim Ahmad, which rejected the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah*. In this article, the author exposed academically and logically the false allegations made by both Rashad and Kassim in their polemics and vicious attacks against *Sunnah*.

Another relevant book is *Irrationality of The Anti-Hadīth Heretics* by Dr. Abdul Rauf. This little book has been composed in order to reply the stand of anti-*Hadīth* movement. This book provides simple and easy explanations on many issues concerning the authority and authenticity of *Hadīth*. It also exposed the irrationality of anti-*Hadīth* dogma advocated by the anti-*Sunnah* movement, particularly by Rashad Khalifa and Kassim Ahmad.

Clearly, the issue of the authenticity and authority of the *Sunnah* is both ideological as well as an issue that has much to do with theosophy. Thus, this study will focus on both ideological stands and theosophical arguments given by the anti-*Sunnah* movement and its opponents.

1.3 Scope of Study

The discussion of this study tries to expose the history of the existence and development of anti-*Sunnah* movement throughout the centuries of Islamic era, and its impact on the Muslim *ummah*

10

particularly to the Muslims in Malaysia.

The study starts with the theoretical discussion of the concept of *Sunnah* in Islam comprising various definitions of *Hadīth* and *Sunnah* according to the *Muhaddithūn*, the *Usūliyyūn* and the *Fuqahā'*. It is followwed by the history and the development of anti-*Sunnah* movement from the early century of the Islamic era to the recent century.

The stand of the anti-*Sunnah* movement especially with regards to the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah* as a source of Islamic law has become a controversial issue whereby it has led to a heat debate among the Muslim scholars. Thus, this study tries to point out the views and the principles held by the groups of anti-*Sunnah* by refering to their two eminent leaders: Rashad Khalifa and Kassim Ahmad. The study also tries to give a reply to the stand of anti-*Sunnah* movement, especially their rejection of the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah* as a source of Islamic law and teachings.

The study ends by analyzing the impact of this movement on the Muslim *ummah*, particularly on the Muslims in Malaysia.

1.4 Significance of Research

The issues and problems of *Sunnah* is one of the intended fields which has been influenced by the anti-*Sunnah* movement. Yet the phenomena of this group have been exclusively focussed and discussed by many Muslim quarters in different seminars, symposiums, conferences and literatures, particularly in the decade of 80's. Since the position of anti-*Sunnah* movement indicates the

need of discussion and justification, it is hoped that this study will contributes certain significance to all Muslims.

Accordingly, the specific significance of this study can be seen from the following purposes:

i.   This reseach tries to give a wide exposure and deep understanding to the Muslims about the role of *Sunnah* and its position in Islam, so that they can understand properly the true place and right conception of *Sunnah* in Islam as a source of Islamic law and teachings, and as a source of guidance. In addition, that they can realize the contents and teachings of *Sunnah* and follow its guidances in their lives.

ii. By knowing the true place of *Sunnah* and its role as an authoritative and authentic source of Islam, it would inspire and help the public to detect that the arguments and polemics against *Sunnah* advocated by the anti-*Sunnah* movement were merely a deception, and it is in fact based on their ignorance and that they did not understand properly the concept of *Sunnah* and its role in Islam.

iii. This study is an attempt to reply the stand of anti-*Sunnah* movement and their rejection of *Sunnah* as a source of Islamic law and teachings.

iv. To visualize the public that any doubt or suspicion on *Sunnah* can be considered by itself as a suspicion of Islam. Nevertheless, it also tries to show that this doubtfulness was actually came from the Muslim enemies and their followers who always tried to take the opportunity to deviate Muslims from

12

the right path.

v.   This reseach is also essential to the Muslims in order to
     remind them that they could be exposed to the influence of
     anti-*Sunnah* movement in their attempts to spread out their
     unguided views and misunderstandings. Therefore, it needs to
     be refuted and rejected.

vi. It is also hoped that this study can raise up consciousness
     and awareness among the Muslim community to further uphold and
     defend the authority and authenticity of *Sunnah* from being
     condemned and challenged by any attempt which tried to deviate
     Muslims from the right path.

1.5 Methodology of research

The method of this study comprises both empirical and non-
empirical reseach yielding the background data which examine the
concept of *Sunnah* in Islam, as well as its authority and
authenticity as a source of Islamic law and teachings.
Nevertheless, the main method of this study is library research.
The thorough inquiries are based upon the assessment and study on
any literature available. It also involves some data collections in
order to figure out the existence of anti-*Sunnah* movement in the
Islamic world throughout the centuries of the Islamic era, as well
as their literatures in order to expose their polemics and vicious
attacks against *Sunnah*. Clearly, then, this endeavour needs a
profound understanding of historical and textual method in order to
reconstruct a balanced picture.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF *SUNNAH*

2.1. The Meaning of *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*

The word *Ḥadīth* literally has a large number of meanings. Primarily, it means *Jadīd* or new, which is opposed to the word *Qadīm* or old. It is further used for the meaning of speech, report, narration, communication, conversation, story, event and statement:[1] The word *Ḥadīth* and its plural *Aḥādīth* are used in the Qur'ān twenty eight times. In all of these cases it is used in the sense of statement or message,[2] story,[3] tale or legend,[4] a fact

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M.Z. Siddiqi. *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin. Development. Special Features and Criticism.* Calcutta University. 1961, p.1: See also Muḥammad 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb. *al-Sunnah Qabl al-Tadwīn.* Dār al-Fikr. Beirut. 1981. 5th. ed., p. 20.

[1] See Cyrill Glasse. *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam.* Stancey International. London. 1989. p.141: Hasanuddin Ahmad. *An Easy Way To The Understanding of The Qur'ān.* Iqra' International Education Foundation. Chicago. 1987. p.46: M.M. Azami. *Studies in Ḥadīth Methodology and Litrature.* Islamic Teaching Center. Indiana. 1977. p.1: Muḥammad Azizullah. *Glimpses of Ḥadīth.* The Crescent Publication. 1980. p.1.

[2] See *al-Qur'ān.* Surah al-Nisā'. 4:87: al-A'rāf. 7:185: al-Kahf. 18:6: al-Zumar. 39:23: al-Ṭūr. 52:34: al-Najm. 53:59: al-Wāqi'ah. 56:81: al-Qalam. 68:44: al-Mursalāt. 77:50.

[3] *Ibid.* Surah Ṭāhā. 20:9: al-Dhāriyāt. 51:24: al-Nāzi'āt. 79:15: al-Burūj. 85:17: al-Ghāshiyah. 88:1.

[4] *Ibid.* Surah Yūsuf. 12:111: al-Mu'minūn. 23:44: Luqmān. 31:6: Sabā'. 34:19.