

MODERN ISSUES IN QUR'AN AND SUNNAH STUDIES

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The Authority of Sunnah as a Source of Islamic Law in Imam al-Shafi`i School of Thought

Dr. Ismail Abdullah*

Abstract

This paper highlights the authority of Sunnah as a source of Islamic law. It makes a comparative analysis of the opinions of the scholars about the origin, authority and authenticity of Sunnah. The paper lays down the views of Islamic scholars of all schools of law as well as the Orientalists about the authority of Sunnah in Islamic *Shari`ah*, then focusing on Shafi`i school of law as Imam Shafi`i has clearly stated that the Sunnah of the Prophet is undoubtedly regarded source of Islamic law, including the *Sunnah Aahad*, or solitary practices of the Prophet.

Keywords: *Sunnah, hadith, authority, schools of law, Shafi`i, shari`ah*

Introduction

The authority of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are regarded to be the basis to comprehend the *Shari`ah*. The authority and the authenticity of the Qur'an are accepted without questions. Since the Qur'an contains the words of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., it serves as proof of Muhammad's prophethood, as well as an authoritative guide for Muslims, and as a source of the *Shari`ah*. Muslims are obliged to believe in the whole of the Qur'an. There is no question of its accuracy since Allah has guaranteed its protection from any corruption. Allah proclaims that "We Have, without doubt, Sent down the Message; And We will assuredly Guard it (from corruption)".⁸⁹

The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad is considered as the second source of *Shari`ah*, next only to the Qur'an. In number of places, the Qur'an advocates reliance upon Prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds. It is said in the Qur'an that the Prophet did not speak according to his own will, but his utterances were inspirations from God.⁹⁰ In fact, Muslims are obliged to refer to God and the Messenger in the judgment of any dispute.⁹¹ In al-Shafi`i's view, the act of referring judgment of a dispute to God means

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⁸⁹ Al-Qur'an, 15: 9.

⁹⁰ Al-Qur'an, 53: 3 – 4.