al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah:
The History and Methodology of the Hadith Encyclopedia

By SHAYKH AL-İSLĀM MUFTİ TAQİ AL-‘UTHMĀNI

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Translator's Foreword:
The following is the first formal introduction to al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah: The Hadith Encyclopedia in the English language.

It has been formulated based on the Arabic preface penned by Shaykh Mufti Taqī al-‘Uthmānī at the beginning of al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah, the Urdu introduction by our esteemed shaykh that was published in al-Balagh Urdu Monthly (Nov 2017), and his speech given at “Taqrīb-i Shukr” ceremony (Dec 5, 2017) at Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi, the transcription of which has also been published in al-Balagh Urdu Monthly (Jan 2018).

This translation aims to provide in the English language a comprehensive introduction of this historical work with the latest information available at the time.

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful and the Ever Merciful.

All praises are due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon Allah’s Noble Messenger, his household, and all of his noble companions.

Since 2002, Dār al-'Ulūm Karachi has been undertaking an important project in the field of hadith compilation, and by Allah’s mercy and blessings, we have reached an important milestone. The first volume of the hadith encyclopedia has been published under the title, al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah lil-aḥādīth al-Marwiyyah ‘an al-Nabī al-Karīm ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

By the grace of Allah, this project has been in progress without any publicity. Since the first volume is now published, however, the time is now ripe on this joyous occasion that a concise introduction be presented for all the people of knowledge.

The Preservation of Hadith:

For indeed, Allah Most High has chosen the nation of Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to preserve the details of His beloved Messenger’s noble life. This is so because the Noble Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was sent with the Divine Guidance for all of humanity until the Day of Judgment. Therefore, Allah Most High has taken upon Himself to protect the Qur’ān. Allah Most High says:

"إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزْلَنَا الْذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ"

*We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur’ān), and We are there to protect it. (al-Ḥijr, 15:9)*

Furthermore, the protection of the Qur’ān entails the preservation of the sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) because Allah the Exalted had sent him to teach and explain the Book of Allah. He says:

"وَأَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ الْذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيَّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نَزَّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"

*We sent down the Reminder (the Qur’ān) to you, so that you explain to the people what has been revealed for them, and so that they may ponder. (al-Nahl, 16:44)*

Allah Most High says:

"وَقَدْ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَلَى اlemenٰؤُمِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْنَيْهِ وَيَزْكِيْهِمْ وَيَعْمِلُهُمْ عَدْلًا حَكَّامًا وَإِنْ كَانَوا مِنْ قَبْلِ لَفِي ضُلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ"

*Allah has surely conferred favor on the believers when He raised in their midst a messengers from among themselves who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them*

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1 The English translation of the verses of the Qur’ān are taken from “The Meanings of the Noble Qur’ān” by Shaykh al-Islām Muftī Taqī al-‘Uthmānī.
Therefore, Allah Most High chose some among His servants to preserve the sunnah of His Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). They dedicated their lives in preserving the sunnah by memorizing, writing, teaching, explaining, and propagating it. They spared no effort in preserving the text and the chains of narrators of hadith, in scrutinizing the narrators to separate the reliable narrators from the unreliable, in the writing and compiling of hadith, in explaining and extrapolating from them, and in expanding this science while preserving it, the likes of which is unprecedented in human history.

It is no secret to the people of knowledge that the manner in which Muslims have served the hadith of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is unparalleled and incomparable with any other nation or religion. Innumerable compilations of hadith have been written in different styles, and each one of them possesses incredible benefit.

A brief perusal of the history of the hadith sciences will reveal numerous compilations that attempted to collate the renowned hadith works. 'Allāmah Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazārī, for example, collated the six canonical collections known as “al-Sīhah al-Sittah” (also known as “al-Kutub al-Sittah”) in his Jāmi’ al-Uṣūl, although it included Imam Mālik’s al-Muwatta’ instead of Ibn Mājah’s Sunan. Later ‘Allāmah al-Ḥaythamī compiled his Majma’ al-Zawā'id in which he compiled the hadith of the Six Works, along with Ahmad b. Ḥanbal’s Musnad, al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Mu’jam, and Abū Ya’lā’s Musnad. This was followed by the Jam’ al-Fawāid in which Jāmi’ al-Uṣūl and Majma’ al-Zawā'id were collated, in addition to the narrations exclusively found in Sunan Ibn Mājah and Sunan al-Dārīmī.

Later compilations would include, for example ‘Allāmah al-Suyūṭī’s Jam’ al-Jawāmī’ and ‘Ali Muttaqi al-Hindī’s Kanz al-‘Ummāl, although in these compilations, hadith were collected with their matn (text) alone, leaving out their isnād (chain of narrators).³

Thus every generation has served the Prophetic Traditions by facilitating the search for hadith from the large compilations, details of which are well-known to the people of knowledge. In this Information Age, various software applications have been made available for researching hadith, the importance of which cannot be denied. However, new methods of serving the Prophetic Traditions continue to manifest.

Background:

Approximately fifteen years ago a friend of mine - who would prefer to remain anonymous - proposed that all the Prophetic Traditions should be assigned a unique international

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² The six books of “al-Sīhah al-Sittah” (also known as “al-Kutub al-Sittah”) are Ṣahih al-Bukhari, Ṣahih al-Muslim, Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Abi Dāwūd, Sunan al-Nasā’i, and Sunan Ibn Mājah.

³ Matn: “The matn (text) is the wording of the hadith by which meanings are formed.” Isnād: “Isnād is [the act of] reporting the chain of the text. By this it is clear that the text is the point at which the chain of transmission ends.” (al-Uthmānī, Zafar. “Qawā'id fi 'Ulūm al-Hadith,” pg. 45. London: Turath Publishing, 2014)
number. The current method of citing hadith entails either making reference to the page number of the work, or by mentioning the hadith number found in that collection. However, such references differ quite often due to the differences in the manuscripts and publications and their variant numbering schemes. Hence, such a method is not ideal for the location and citation of hadith. In addition, during takhrīj, narrations of some works may be missed.

Without drawing an exact similitude to the Qur’ān, just as each Qur’ānic chapter and verse are numbered, and it is enough to cite the chapter and the verse number that doesn't differ with different prints, the proposal suggested each hadith to be assigned a unique number that could be used to cite as a reference comprising of all the details (pertaining to it) in a single place.

I found this proposal agreeable, and it was obvious that it would require thorough research to compile a new hadith encyclopedia consisting of all the traditions that are attributed to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), i.e. marfū’ hadith. None among the compilers of hadith have claimed that they have only included hadith after a close study of all the narrations that are found in all of the hadith works in the world.

Along with its importance, the sheer volume of work required an insight of a scholarly body. For this reason, the gentleman who had presented this proposal wanted to host a meeting of scholars who were learned and experienced in dealing with the sciences of hadith and it’s cataloging.

**The First Meeting:**

On 5th and 7th of Ramaḍān, 1422 (A.H.) a meeting was held in Makkah al-Mukarramah that comprised of scholars who had expertise in hadith, especially in the compilation, arrangement, and preservation of hadith.

The most prominent among them was Shaykh Dr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al-Aʿzamī, who was the first to computerize hadith, amongst his other extensive contributions to the hadith sciences. His work in the digitization of hadith had earned him the King Faisal International Award.

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, who is currently residing in Qatar, was also invited because he is a world renowned academic.

The Grand Mufti of Pakistan Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Rafī‘ al-ʿUthmāni, the Principal of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi in Pakistan and a hadith lecturer there was invited as well.

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4 Takhrīj: Referencing hadith from the classical sources.

5 Marfū’: “The marfū’ (raised) is that which is specifically ascribed to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) [through his] words, deeds, or tacit approvals whether or not it is uninterrupted or interrupted.”

(al-ʿUthmāni, Zafar. Pg. 50)

6 He received the 1980 King Faisal International Award under the category of Islamic Studies for his monumental contribution to the Hadith Sciences, “Studies of the Prophet’s Hadith.”

<http://kingfaisalprize.org/professor-mohamad-mustafa-al-aazami/>
Also present was Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Mālik bin Bakr al-Qāḍī, a Riyadh-based scholar and the author of Diwān al-Sunan wa al-Āthār, who in 1422 AH (2001 CE) had personally begun to collect all the available hadith with their texts and the chains. He had presented to me a sample from his work in the form of Kitāb al-Zakāt, seeking my advice and recommendations. I had found that his work was missing the books of the Hanafi school, for example Imam at-Taḥawi’s Sharḥ Ma’ānī al-Āthār, Imam Muḥammad’s al-Muwaṣṣa’, and Imam Abū Yūsuf’s Kitāb al-Āthār. I wrote to him in response objecting to how his work could be called “al-Jāmi’” (a comprehensive collection) when it did not include such works. He responded stating that he would include them as well. At the time we had no intention to initiate our own project. However, now that we were meeting in Makkah, he was invited as well so that we could benefit from his experience.

Additionally, Shaykh Dr. Maḥmūd al-Taḥḥān, Dr. ‘Abd al-Sattār Abū Ghuddah7, Dr. Sayyid Muḥammad Sayyid Nūḥ, Shaykh Nizām al-Ya‘qūbī, and I were present at the meeting.

With the blessings of the month of Ramaḍān and the two sanctified cities (al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn), everyone was receptive to the proposal, analyzed its different aspects, and encouraged it. We discussed the different ways it could be achieved. The first meeting was concluded by forming a four-member committee to further brainstorm the methodology for the project and how it may be implemented. The four members of this committee were Dr. Muhammad Muṣṭafa al-A’zāmī, Muḥammad Taqī al-‘Uthmānī, Shaykh Dr. ‘Abd al-Mālik bin Bakr al-Qāḍī, and Dr. ‘Abd al-Sattār Abū Ghuddah.

The Second Meeting:

This committee convened its meeting on the 25th and 26th of Shawwāl, 1422 A.H. in Makkah al-Mukarramah, where the structure of this project was discussed.

Since Shaykh ‘Abd al-Mālik bin Bakr al-Qāḍī had a head start, even though his work was missing some books, he presented his methodology in compiling hadith. Listening to his experience, it dawned upon the committee members that this project would require at least forty personnel. It was also suggested that these forty personnel should be divided into two equal groups, one based in Karachi under the supervision of Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi and another group in Cairo under the supervision of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Mālik bin Bakr al-Qāḍī.

The Suggestion of Dr. Muṣṭafa al-A’zāmī:

When the project’s finances were estimated, we were astounded. I mentioned to Dr. Muṣṭafa al-A’zāmī that with such an estimated expense, it would not seem possible to have forty people in two groups working on the project in two different cities, to which he agreed.

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7 Nephew of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Faṭṭāḥ Abū Ghuddah. He is an active member of Islamic Fiqh Academy and the Accounting & Auditing Standards Board of Islamic Financial Institutions. He teaches Fiqh, Islamic studies and Arabic in Riyadh and has done a valuable task of researching and compiling information for the Fiqh Encyclopedia in the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Kuwait. He was a member of the Fatwa Board in the Ministry from 1982 to 1990. Dr. Ghuddah holds a Phd. in Islamic Law from Al-Azhar University Cairo, Egypt.
I also told him that if we were to undertake this project it would be in the footsteps of our elders in simplicity. We would do however little we can and we will leave it upon Allah subhānahū wa ta’ālā to make it reach its completion.

Dr. Mușṭafa al-A’zamī agreed, and he proposed that the project be entrusted to Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi under my humble supervision, that it should not be publicized, and that with reliance and trust upon Allah Almighty, the work should begin.

**Initial Investment:**

In order to initiate this project, some investment was nevertheless needed. An individual from Dubai approached us and offered to single-handedly sponsor all the finances of this project. I did not think it wise to rely on an individual for the finances of this project; rather I felt that we must solely rely upon Allah subhānahū wa ta’ālā. Therefore, it was made clear to him that he may assist out of his own will for as long as he wishes, while we trust in Allah to arrange the needed finances.

Allah Almighty showed us that the individual who wanted to single-handedly sponsor the entire project would back out within four months of his claim. We believed that this project was purely for the sake of Allah, because it was in service of the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), therefore, Allah Most High would continue the project to operate out of His Mercy.

Whatever of little finances we had, we continued to operate with it. Since this project was not zakat eligible, zakat funds could not be allocated to this project.

**The Department of Mawsū‘at al-Ḥadith:**

Henceforth, a separate department by the name of “Mawsū‘at al-Ḥadith” (موسوعة الحديث) was established within Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. A small group of researchers was formed so that by working on this project they could gain hands-on experience in researching hadith.

After laying down its methodology, the project needed a leader with rigorous qualifications: he had to be experienced, intimately familiar with the Hadith Sciences, skillful in the art of writing scholarly publications, as well as proficient in the use of computers. Praise be to Allah that Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf⁶ was appointed for this position, may Allah bless his life, knowledge, and endeavors.

Hence they began the work fifteen years ago with very limited resources, having trust only in Allah Almighty. Since then Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf has been dedicating three hours a day supervising the work. After every Zuhr prayer he brings the draft of hadith of that day for my review; I give any needed suggestions regarding it, which are then accounted for, and then

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⁶ He specialized in hadith under Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rashīd al-Nu‘māni. He is also intimately familiar with the Science of Hadith, skillful in the art of writing scholarly publications, for example, his researched and edited works include *Sharḥ at-Ṭibī* (شرح الطبي) in 12 volumes and *al-Muḥiṭ al-Burhānī* (المحيط البرهاني), an encyclopedia of the Hanafi juristic school in 25 volumes.
the hadith are brought for my further review the next day. The finalized hadith get included into the encyclopedia after my signature approval. This is how the work has been progressing on a daily basis, all thanks are due to Allah Almighty.

**The Methodology:**

The intended purpose of the project is to include in *al-Mudawwanah* all the marfūʿ hadith⁹ that are available in print or in manuscript form anywhere in the world, and assign a unique number to them along with their variations in the chain of narrators.

The total number of source works have reached 910 - comprising of primary and secondary books of hadith, the books of *tafsīr*, *takhrīj*, and *shuruḥ al-hadith⁴⁰*. From these, 80 books are the primary sources of hadith because of their original *sanad* and *matn*, while the rest are being used as supplementary sources for attesting the primary hadith. These eighty books are the most commonly-referenced works in the field of hadith, as most hadith are found within them, and their authors have narrated them on the authority of their own chain of narrators. If any unique hadith is found in the secondary sources then they are also given a unique number.

An additional feature of *al-Mudawwanah* is that we are mentioning the grading of hadith with their *sanad* by mentioning the statement from the *mutaqaddim* (early) scholars when available. When a comment from the *mutaqaddim* scholars is unavailable, we do not mention our own comment on the hadith or of our contemporaries unless if there is a pressing need, in which case the grading of hadith is added in the footnote.

**The Arrangement of al-Mudawwanah:**

Regarding the arrangement of hadith, we considered whether it should be alphabetically or thematically arranged. We decided against alphabetical arrangement because hadith, specifically the *ḥādīth fīliyyah* (narrations of prophetic actions)¹¹, have significant differences in their text and chain. Hence, *al-Mudawwanah* is being arranged thematically. However, care is being taken that the chapter titles and themes do not reflect any particular juristic or theological school.

**Al-Ḥadith al-Mukhtār:**

Under each chapter, the first hadith is declared as *al-ḥadith al-mukhtār* (الحديث المختار), which is a marfūʿ hadith that is mentioned with its complete chain and has the strongest chain of narrators. This hadith is assigned the unique international number.

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⁹ See footnote #5.

¹⁰ Out of the total 910 source works, 80 are the primary books of hadith that are commonly referred to; while the remaining 830 are the secondary source works, of which 111 are the books of *tafsīr*, *takhrīj*, and *shuruḥ al-hadith*.

¹¹ The Prophetic Traditions that refer to the practice of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).
The second hadith is *at-Ṭarīq al-Ajma‘* (الطريق الأجمع) and it is also brought with its full chain. The benefit of this second hadith is that it often provides the complete background and context of the narration of *al-Hadith al-Mukhtar*.

After mentioning *al-ṭarīq al-ajma‘*, all the different chains that are found in the books that are narrated from the Companion of *al-ḥadith al-mukhtar* are mentioned, along with any important variations in their wordings.

Next, different *mutūn* (texts) of the hadith that are reported from other noble Companions are therefore brought as *shāhids* (corroborating evidence) and these reports are assigned subsidiary numbers.

**Example: The Famous Ḥadith al-Niyyah**

In order to explain this by example, the first volume of *al-Mudawwanah* is *Kitāb al-Imān* (the Book of Faith), and it begins with the ḥadith al-niyyah: “ إنَّ الأعمال بالنيات”.

The strongest chain for this hadith is the one narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and recorded in *Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī*. Therefore, this report is declared “*al-ḥadīth al-mukhtar*”, and it is mentioned with its complete chain and assigned a unique international number of hadith #1.

Following it are 43 different chains of transmission of this hadith that are reported from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, which are found elsewhere within *Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī* and other compilations, along with any variations in their wordings.

Moreover, ḥadīth al-niyyah (the hadith of intention) is also narrated by other Noble Companions, which are brought as shawāhid (corroborative narrations) and are assigned subsidiary numbers.

A subsidiary number of 1/1 is assigned to a report narrated by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī as recorded by Imam Abū Nu‘aym in *Hilyat al-Awliyā*; 2/1 is assigned to a report that is narrated by Abū al-Dardā’ and recorded by Imam al-Ṭabarānī in his al-*Muṣjam al-Kabīr*; 3/1 is a report that is recorded in *Ṭārīkh Dimashq* of Ibn ‘Asākir on the authority of Anas; 4/1 is assigned for a report in *Ṭārīkh Nisābūr* of al-Ḥakim on the authority of Abū Hurayrah. 5/1 is a hadith reported by Muḥammad bin Yāsir al-Jiyānī on the authority of ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib; 6/1 is a report on the authority of Hizāl bin Yazīd that is recorded in *Ṭārīkh Nisābūr*; and 7/1 is a report that Ibn Bakkār has narrated as a *mursal hadith* on the authority of Muḥammad bin Ibrahīm bin al-Ḥārith, which is recorded in *Khaṣā’īs al-Madīnah*.

In summary, wherever this hadith is found in the available classical hadith sources (*masādir*), they are detailed in *al-Mudawwanah*. Moreover, each *sanad* is cited with its complete reference, i.e. the name of the book, the volume and page number, and the chapter heading and hadith number found within it.

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12 *Mursal*: When a Tābi‘ī (Follower) narrates a hadith saying, “The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said such-and-such or he did such-and-such” and by doing so omits the name of the Companion, is called a *mursal* hadith.
Therefore, now it will suffice to cite, “al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah, Hadith #1”, while making a reference to hadith al-niyyah., as al-Mudawwanah al-Jāmi‘ah will provide all the pertinent details regarding this hadith and all of its different chains of transmission in a single place.

**The Digitization of al-Mudawwanah:**

When Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf presented the very initial draft of al-Mudawwanah to the honorable advising committee, it was well received and approved. Furthermore, Dr. Muṣṭafa al-A‘zamī suggested that this work should be digitized. We felt this suggestion quite appropriate and relevant to the needs of our time.

Therefore Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf drafted a layout for data entry software for the project and hired a company. By the grace of Allah, the database software is in the Arabic language and fully capable of handling the data entry, searching and reporting, and more importantly, the composing needs of the project.

**The Work Accomplished Thus Far:**

Thus far, all thanks are due to Allah Almighty that 17,334 hadith have been worked upon along with their 340,499 different chains of transmission.

The first volume of al-Mudawwanah, consisting of the complete Kitāb al-Imān, has been published in high quality with the help of Dār al-Qalam, a Beirut publishing house.

The Kitāb al-Imān of al-Mudawwanah consists of 445 unique hadith with their 9,423 chains of transmission, whereas, additional 515 are those hadith that have been brought as shawāhid (corroborating evidences). Hence, the total number of hadith under Kitāb al-Imān has reached 960\(^\text{13}\).

The work is in constant progress with additional hadith and their chains being added. By the Will of Allah, al-Mudawwanah is expected to have at least 40 volumes.

I have personally reviewed each and every hadith, their chain of narrators, accompanied by my comments and recommendations. Each hadith was only included in al-Mudawwanah after my signature approval.

The researchers in service of al-Mudawwanah under the leadership of Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf deserve our heartfelt congratulations for their effort, endurance, and dedication with which they worked on this project. May Allah accept their services and bestow upon them increased tawfiq, Āmīn.

\(^{13}\) Shaykh Na‘īm Ashraf: “All thanks are due to Allah, we are not aware of any book that contains such a large number of only marfū’ hadith on the topic of Imān alone.”

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Their names are:
Mawlāna Mukarram Ḥusayn Akhtar,
Mawlāna Muḥammad ‘Abbās al-Derwī,
Mawlāna ‘Abd al-Rahmān Uways al-Marghūzī,
Mawlāna Maḥmūd Ḍasan al-Kumillā‘ī,
Mawlāna ‘Ināyat al-Rehmān Waḥīd,
Mawlāna ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Hamīdī,
Mawlāna ‘Abd al-’Azīz al-Sindī,
Mawlāna Muḥammad Taqī al-‘Uthmānī,
Mawlāna ‘Ubayd Allah Anwar al-Multānī,
Mawlāna Muḥammad Ṭayyīb al-Husaynī.

The readers are requested to supplicate to Allah Almighty for this project to reach its completion with sincerity and trust.

Since it is after all a human effort, the reason behind the publication of the first volume is for the people of knowledge, specifically those familiar with the Hadith Sciences, to review this volume and share with us any beneficial recommendations.

We ask Allah Almighty to bestow His blessings upon this humble effort, and make it a historical milestone in the service of the noble hadith, and make this encyclopedia the most comprehensive reference work in hadith for the generations to come. Āmīn.

Muḥammad Taqī al-‘Uthmānī
Jumāda al-Thānī 1439 A.H. (March 2018)
Karachi, Pakistan.

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