

## A Study of John Burton's Theory on the Origins of the Hadith

### John Burton'ın Hadisin Kökenine Dair Teorisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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**Abstract:** Western scholars have been interested in the origins and historical reliability of hadith literature since roughly the third quarter of the XIX. century. There have been scholars whose works stand out because of their significance for further Hadith scholarship and originality. They all claimed crucial problems regarding the origins and transmission of Hadith and its literature, then struggled to solve them through the modern methods of literary and historical criticism. In this context, John Burton's (d. 2014) work seems to be highly influenced by his predecessors. Yet, his idea about the role of the Qur'an in the development of Hadith literature has still been considered original. Hence, Burton could be considered one of the authors whose ideas on Hadith scholarship have proven to be influential enough to raise discussions. Burton's views on the Qur'an and its history have been studied from different angles by Turkish researchers. But little is known about his theses on the Hadith literature. This article will focus on how his theory and method on the Qur'an manuscripts shaped his arguments in *An Introduction to the*

*Hadīth. First, there will be a brief introduction to John Burton's intellectual biography followed by an examination of his main theses regarding the classical Hadīth scholarship. Second, an evaluation and summary of Burton's ideas on the origins of Hadīth will be presented. Finally, his conclusions will be compared with the views of prominent Western Hadīth scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) and will be reviewed from the Islamic perspective.*

**Keywords:** *Hadīth, Orientalism, John Burton, Qur'ān manuscripts, the origins of the hadīth, hadīth literature, exegetical hadīth.*

**Öz:** *Batılı arařtırmacılar hadis literatürünün kökeni ve tarihî güvenilirliđi meselesiyle yaklaşık olarak XIX. asrın üçüncü çeyreğinden itibaren ilgilenmişlerdir. Bu bağlamda yapılan arařtırmalardan bazıları özgünlükleri ve sonraki arařtırmalara ilham vermeleri açısından öne çıkmaktadırlar. Söz konusu çalıřmalar hadislerin kökeni, rivayeti ve hadis literatürü ile ilgili son derece mühim meselelere dair temel iddialarda bulunmuş ve sonrasında modern dönem tarihî tenkit yöntemlerinden hareketle bu meseleleri anlamaya ve çözmeye çalıřmışlardır. Bu bağlamda John Burton'ın (öl. 2014) hadis literatürünün kökenine dair teorisi seleflerinden oldukça etkilenmiş görünmektedir. Ancak yine de Kur'an'ın hadis literatürünün oluşumundaki rolü hakkındaki düşünceleri bazı açılardan özgündür. Bu sebeple Burton hadise dair düşünceleri bakımından tartışılması gereken bir arařtırıcıdır. Burton'ın Kur'an ve tarihi üzerine düşünceleri Türkiye'de tefsir alanında uzman pek çok arařtırmacı tarafından farklı bakış açılarıyla incelenmiştir. Ancak hadis literatürü hakkındaki fikirlerine dair herhangi bir çalıřma mevcut değildir. Bu makalede, Burton'ın Kur'an yazmalarına dair teorisinin ve metodunun hadise dair düşüncelerini nasıl etkilediđi An Introduction to the Hadīth adlı kitabından hareketle ortaya konulacaktır. Öncelikle, onun teorisinin ortaya çıkmasına zemin hazırladıđı düşünölen entelektöel geçmiř özet bir biçimde ele alınacak ve hadis literatürünün kökenleri hakkındaki görüşlerinden bahsedilecektir. Ardından Burton'ın hadislerin kökenine dair görüşlerinin bir özeti ve deđerlendirmesi yapılacaktır. Son olarak, Batılı öncü hadis arařtırmacılarından Ignaz Goldziher (öl. 1921) ve Joseph Schacht (öl. 1969) ile Burton'ın fikirlerinin bir mukayesesi yapılacak ve görüşleri İslamî bir perspektiften yorumlanacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Hadis, Oryantalizm, John Burton, Kur'an yazmaları, hadislerin kökeni, hadis literatürü, tefsir hadisleri.*

## Introduction

Western scholars have been interested in understanding the Islamic history with the thought that it is the richest source for investigation of early Islamic History. They realised that the hadīth literature is the most important source for Islamic history. So, they also have been interested in the origins and historical reliability of Islamic hadīth literature since roughly the third quarter of the XIX. century. They had written crucial works, edited, and published many of the original hadīth works, translated some of them into their own languages and writ-

ten accomplished treatises and analytical articles on some of the sophisticated hadith problems. There have been scholars whose work stand out because of their significance for further hadith scholarship and originality, like A. Sprenger (d. 1893), I. Goldziher, T.W. Juynboll (d. 2010), J. Schacht, J. Horovitz (d. 1931), J. Robson (d. 1981). They made important contributions to the study of the Western hadith scholarship. Some others have still been engaged in the keen critical study of hadith literature and made important contributions to its history and criticism, like G. Schoeler, H. Berg, A. Görke, P. Pavlovitch. They all claimed crucial problems regarding the origins and the transmission of hadith and its literature, then struggled to solve them via the modern methods of literary and historical criticism.

John Burton could be considered one of the authors whose ideas on hadith scholarship have proved to be influential enough to raise discussions. While Burton's work is highly influenced by his predecessors, his idea about the significance of the Qur'an in the formation of Hadith literature has been considered original. The purpose of this article is to introduce to John Burton's views on the origins of Hadith literature and to discuss its consequences. Burton's views on the Qur'an and its history have been studied many times from various perspectives by some academics in the field of the Qur'anic exegesis in Turkey. But little is known about his theses on the Hadith literature, although he became prominent with his study on Hadith as a scholar "who has penetrating insight into Islamic Tradition."<sup>1</sup>

In this article, we will focus on how his theory and method on the Qur'an influenced his arguments in his book *An Introduction to the Hadith*. First, there will be a brief introduction to John Burton's intellectual biography followed by an explanation of his main thesis regarding the Hadith scholarship. Secondly, an evaluation and summary of Burton's ideas on the origins of Hadith will be provided. Finally, his conclusions will be compared with the views of the prominent Western Hadith scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht and will be examined from the Islamic perspective.

### **1. Burton's Intellectual Biography and Background**

John Burton (1929-2014) was a British Orientalist, scholar of Islamic Studies, and one of the most significant Western hadith scholars of the XX. century. He was a professor at the School of Modern Languages at the University of St. Andrews in the United Kingdom. He was a student of John Edward Wansbrough (d. 2002), an American historian at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of

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1 Uri Rubin, "Review of An Introduction to the Hadith by John Burton", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 59 (1996), 340.

the University of London.<sup>2</sup> However, he is known as the author of several books and articles in Islamic Studies.

Burton's interest in Qur'anic scholarship is reflected in his book *The Collection of the Qur'an* (1977). Burton was also interested in the sources of Islamic law (*fiqh*) and in the concept of *naskh* (abrogation) in Islam. These topics are covered in his book *The Sources of Islamic Law Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (1990). He also edited *Kitāb al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh* of Abū 'Ubaid al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838) (2009) since Abu 'Ubaid's book represents the oldest yet recovered systematic application of abrogation theories to both Qur'an and Sunna when there is perceived to be a conflict between them. He published many articles and book chapters such as "The Interpretation of Q.", "Linguistic Errors in the Qur'an", "Qur'an and Sunna: A Case of Cultural Disjunction". If one searches his works, one can easily understand that his main field of study is the Qur'an, its history and abrogation in Islam. However, he published important works in the field of hadith. Burton explained the concepts of *Hadith* and *Sunna*, origins of Hadith literature in the above-mentioned works; however, he also wrote independently on the Hadith and its literature and transmission. One of them is his essay entitled "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna" (1984) and another one is his book entitled *An Introduction to Hadith* (1995). The present article's results are based on Burton's article "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna" and his book *An Introduction to Hadith*.

Like many twentieth-century Western hadith scholars, Burton was also influenced by the works of Ignaz Goldziher, the father of the modern Western Hadith scholarship and his influential successor Joseph Schacht. There had been Western scholars studying on the origins of ahadith since the final quarter of the XIX. century. But the two scholars were considered significant in the Western academia for their highly critical attitude toward the origins of Hadith. Their views are considered to be more skeptical towards the historical reliability of Hadith than the views of Muslim scholars that were also interested in investigating the authenticity of hadiths for religious purposes.<sup>3</sup> However, it was the scholarship of Goldziher and Schacht that actually put the emphasis on finding distortions or even forgeries in the Hadith traditions rather than finding those that could be considered reliable historical sources of early Islam and its central figure,

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2 Mohammed S H Alshahri, *A critical Study of Western Views on Hadith with Special Reference to the Views of James Rabson and John Burton*, (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Department of Theology and Religion, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011), 174.

3 Harald Motzki, "Introduction", *Hadith Origins and Developments*, ed. Harald Motzki, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 14-15. Actually Muslim scholars were interested both the Western scholars' claims on the origins and reliability of hadith and the hadiths itself in terms of an exemplary of the Prophet's life. To understand how the paradigm effects one's approach to the hadiths and his/her conclusions see. Fatma Kızıl, "In Pursuit of a Common Paradigm: Islamic and Western Hadith Studies", *Hikma: Journal of Islamic Theology and Islamic Education*, 6/10, (April, 2015), 11-32.

the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).<sup>4</sup> The works of Goldziher and Schacht led to a strongly skeptical view in the Western Hadith studies on the historical reliability of Hadith that is most clearly reflected in Schacht's conclusion that most of the hadiths did not originate at the time of the Prophet or his Companions and were fictitious, unless proved to be otherwise.<sup>5</sup>

Schacht's views caused different reactions from subsequent Western scholars whom Harald Motzki divides into three groups: 1) those who rejected them outright 2) those who embraced Schacht's criticism and followed him in the main points, and 3) those who, while was influenced by the criticism and considered some of its central points, still found it necessary to modify it.<sup>6</sup> Motzki considers John Burton belonging to the third group of scholars who accepted some but not all of Schacht's views and tried to make a distinction between the content and the form of the traditions.<sup>7</sup> Burton's position is best expressed in his article "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna" and his book *An Introduction to the Hadith*, which seems to develop his earlier thesis.

## **2. Burton's Perspective on His Predecessors Goldziher, Schacht and Wansbrough**

An examination of Burton's works shows that the discussion of his predecessors Goldziher and Schacht's arguments forms a basis of Burton's work. Burton reviews the beginnings of the Western scholarship of Hadith, emphasizing and appreciating the contributions of Goldziher and Schacht. He attributes the beginning of the Western scholarship of Hadith to Goldziher for hadith studies became a separate discipline rather than being a part of studies on Islamic history. It was Goldziher who first raised the question of the authenticity of Hadith literature to a significant level and revealed the reasons that caused many doubts about it.<sup>8</sup>

Burton seems to appreciate the works of Goldziher and Schacht. He points out that in Islamic tradition hadiths have a very significant authority in matters of theology, legislation, and everyday life. It was Goldziher who first observed that there are a number of hadiths that treat the same matters differently and whose instructions are incompatible.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, each of these hadiths provides an authoritative *isnād* – a chain of transmission that traces its origins back to the

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4 Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, translated by C.R. Barber, S.M. Stern, (London: Gerge Allen&Unwin Ltd., 1971), 2/17, 19; Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3, 35.

5 Schacht, *The Origins*, 149; Motzki, "Introduction", 23; Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, (London: Curzon Press, 2000), 14.

6 Motzki, "Introduction", 24. For another classification of this reaction against them see also; Berg, *The Development*, 18-31.

7 Motzki, "Introduction", 26.

8 John Burton, *An Introduction to Hadith*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 11.

9 Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2/19; Berg, *The Development*, 9; Motzki, "Introduction", 20.

Prophet or his Companions.<sup>10</sup> It was Goldziher who suggested that the differences in hadiths might be explained by the different interests of the rulers and even theological scholars of the first centuries of Islam. In this situation, according to Burton, it seemed natural to Goldziher (and later Schacht) to suspect that the production of Hadiths might be used for political purposes by each of the political groups of the first centuries of Islam.

Burton also appreciated Schacht's investigation of Hadith in the context of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>11</sup> Schacht's views on the development of Islamic law and the theories of *isnad* had great impact on Burton's works and methodology. Burton agreed with him in his general scepticism of the historical reliability of the Hadith and the claim that a large part of the Islamic *sunna* originated from exegesis of the Qur'an.<sup>12</sup> However, Burton rejected his idea that there were no traditions going back to the first century of Islam. According to Burton hadiths are not genuine in the sense that they do not represent the actual historical sayings or practice of the Prophet and his Companions, but they have roots in the time of them, so they provide raw material from their time.<sup>13</sup>

Burton criticized that the studies of Goldziher and Schacht gave rise to a more skeptical approach to the Hadith scholarship in the West. He points out that their unfavorable judgments have almost brought Hadith studies to a halt as if there were nothing more to add.<sup>14</sup> However, Burton does not accept all their conclusions. He disagrees with Goldziher's conclusion that the production of Hadith itself was motivated by a purely political agenda. Burton makes the argument that Goldziher's portrayal of the Umayyad dynasty, as being only motivated by power and indifferent to religion has been uncritically accepted from biased sources. Burton also considers Goldziher's tone emotionally charged, not to say condescending, when considering the attitudes and interests of early Islamic Hadith collectors.<sup>15</sup> While appreciating the contribution of Goldziher and Schacht's scholarship, Burton emphasizes the need for a neutral, honest investigation of the question of the origins of Hadith called as "a Theory of Tradition" by him, that is not overshadowed by "received truths" of previous scholarship.<sup>16</sup> While not being a Muslim scholar, he seems to be mindful of the fact that the Western scholars might have some bias about the emergence of the Hadith literature. In Burton's opinion, both Goldziher and Schacht were quite clear on what Sunna was *not*: "For them it was not the inherited knowledge of the views and the prac-

10 Burton, *An Introduction*, 11.

11 Burton, *An Introduction*, 20-24.

12 Burton, *An Introduction*, 24-25; Motzki, "Introduction", 27.

13 John Burton, "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna", *Hadith Origins and Developments*, ed. Harald Motzki, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3-17; idem, *An Introduction*, 181; Motzki, "Introduction", 27.

14 Burton, "Notes", 40.

15 Burton, *An Introduction*, 13.

16 Burton, "Notes", 40; Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, 5-6.

tices of Muhammad and his contemporaries who had formed the first generation of Muslims".<sup>17</sup> Burton points out that their approach was a reaction against the Muslim view. While Burton does not adhere to the Muslim's view of Hadith literature, he emphasizes the need for a neutral and critical scholarship.<sup>18</sup>

Burton offers an argument against the view that Hadith has emerged purely for the sole purpose of gaining power. If Hadiths were produced only for political gain they could not have gained the authority of theological sources that they have in the Islamic community: "If hypocrisy lies precisely in the adoption of the external demeanor of the pious and the counterfeit testifies to the existence of the genuine coin, pseudo-Hadith imitates real *Hadith*, otherwise the exercise is pointless."<sup>19</sup> While Burton does not deny the fact that there were probably some forgeries of hadiths, he believes that Schacht's supposition that the practice of falsifying hadiths was widespread is unfounded.<sup>20</sup> Burton also emphasizes that, while there are significant differences between the views of Hadiths scholars, there are also quite important agreements that should be taken into account.<sup>21</sup>

Another scholar that has been important for Burton's views on Hadith is John Wansbrough, an American revisionist historian who is known for his highly controversial thesis that Islam emerged as a Judeo-Christian sect and that many hadiths were created in order to justify the identity of the new religion.<sup>22</sup> While Burton disagrees with this claim, the ideas of Wansbrough might have directed his attention to Muslims' relationship with adherents of other Abrahamic religions and the role that this relationship might have played in the production of the texts of early Islam.

### 3. John Burton's Main Theses on the Origins of Hadith

One of the major contributions of Burton in Hadith studies is that he separates the form of Hadith from its contents. Therefore, while Burton mainly agrees with Schacht that the final form of many hadiths is later than it purports to be, that does not necessarily mean that the contents of it could not be earlier than

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17 Burton, "Notes", 39.

18 For a survey that examines the reason of the different approaches of Muslim and the Western hadith scholars to hadith literature and asserts the premises which they based upon their studies see Kizil, "In Pursuit of a Common Paradigm", 11-32. To this survey, for Western scholars it is almost impossible to have an unbiased approach because of pursuing different paradigms. Actually, same is true for Muslim scholars.

19 Burton, *An Introduction*, 12.

20 Burton, *An Introduction*, 148-149. It can be clearly seen that Burton like almost all other Western Hadith scholars never went much beyond the simple scepticism which put forward by Goldziher and Schacht about the authenticity of the hadith literature. The impact they made has been felt deeply for a long period of time, and indeed their observations became the basis of the study on Hadith in the West and also partially in the East. For a detailed study on how Western hadith studies have been perceived in one of the Eastern country, Turkey see. Fatma Kizil, "The Reception and Representation of Western Hadith Studies in Turkish Academe", *Modern Hadith Studies Continuing Debates and New Approaches*, Belal Abu-Alabbas et al. (UK.: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

21 Burton, "Notes", 39.

22 Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views on Hadith*, 174-175.

the final form. While acknowledging the contribution of his predecessors, Burton points out that they did not seriously consider a significant factor in their research: the role of the Qur'ān and its exegesis in the emergence of Hadīth literature. Burton proposes a thesis that distinguishes him from other Western Hadīth scholars and that is considered to be important in the study of Hadīth.<sup>23</sup> Like Henri Lammes (d. 1937) Burton argues that the origins of hadīth literature are exegetical, including the entire *fiqh* tradition.<sup>24</sup> So, hadīths represent, "the documentary precipitation of an academic exercise, a paper war whose raw materials had been supplied by the exegesis of a document, the Holy Qur'ān. Hence, *Fiqh* is not law. It is exegesis aspiring to become law."<sup>25</sup> Consequently, he rejects the idea that the differences between hadīths could be explained by different political groups struggling for power and producing self-justifying hadīths accordingly. Instead, Burton states that Hadīth production is less connected to the pragmatic issues of life than it has been previously considered. According to Burton, there are substantial reasons to believe that at least some hadīths were produced from the attempts of exegesis of the Qur'ān.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly their production should be viewed less as an attempt to solve a practical political problem and more like "academic exercises" that attempted to find the best way to interpret some passages of Qur'ān. The outline of his idea can be found in his article "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna."

In "Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna" Burton introduces the question of the origins of Islamic *sunna*. Sunna could be said to be basically a synonym of hadīth literature; more precisely, it could be said that hadīth is the literature that contains sunna, the sayings, deeds and stories of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Burton emphasizes that hadīth literature together with the Qur'ān forms the basis of Islamic theological, moral, juridical and practical teachings.<sup>27</sup> Sunna, together with the Qur'ān, is the source of normativity in Islamic community, although the two texts do not have the same status while

23 Daniel Brown, "Review of *An Introduction to the Hadīth* by John Burton", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31/2 (1999), 275.

24 Lammens also argued that the sirah tradition arose from the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān rather than conveying the actual events so they have not independent value. Kızıl, "Oryantalistlerin Akademik Hadis Araştırmaları", 182.

25 Burton, *An Introduction*, xix; xxiii.

26 Burton, "Notes", 41. Burton called it a major weakness of the works of Goldziher and Schacht that they failed to take adequate account of the underlying pressure exerted on all branches of Islamic intellectual activity in the earliest period by the looming presence of the Qur'ān, or, rather, of the preparatory work on the interpretation of the sacred texts that had already reached quite advanced positions on questions of cult, ritual and theological attitudes and even legal questions, before the appearance of what Schacht called the ancient schools of law. See. Burton, *An Introduction*, 149. He also says: "they (ahadith) sprang from the words and the lay out of the Qur'ān." John Burton, *Kitab al-Nasikh wa-I mansukh of Abu Ubayd Al-Qasim b. Sallam* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1987), 32.

27 Burton, *An Introduction*, ix.



the Qur'ān is considered to be dictated by God, hadith and accordingly Sunna is attributed to a man, the Prophet, whose life is still considered the example to be emulated.

Burton describes his approach by emphasizing the need to construct what he calls a "Theory of Tradition". In his approach in the analysis of the origins of hadith literature, it is necessary to consider three main branches of Islamic literature: 1) the standard medieval collections of the hadith and the basic *fiqh* works, 2) their principal commentaries 3) the exegetical literature, the *tafsīr*.<sup>28</sup> Burton's this theory is important and fascinating in the sense that it provides a useful corrective to the theories of Goldziher and Schacht. Yet, there is not much detail on what his theory of tradition would be and how it would work. All we know about this theory is the limited examples he gave.

Burton demonstrates the application of his theory by providing a case study of a topic that is treated in several types of Islamic literature, most importantly, the Qur'ān and a hadith: the practice of fasting. He quotes a passage from the Qur'ān dealing with this topic: "Believers, fasting is [hereby] imposed upon you, as fasting was imposed upon those before you. a [limited] number of days..." [Q. 2/183]. He indicates that the same passage is quoted in one of the hadiths attributed to Mu'adh b. Jabal, one of Companions of the Prophet: "The Companion Mu'adh b. Jabal is said to have stated: The ritual prayer underwent a three-fold series of developments, and the Islamic fast, similarly, passed through three successive stages. The Prophet came to Medina and proceeded to fast three days in every month. In addition, he fasted on the Ashura. Subsequently God imposed upon Muhammad the [Islamic] fast, revealing the verse: 'Believers, fasting is [hereby] imposed upon you, as fasting was imposed upon those before you ...'<sup>29</sup>

First of all, Burton seems to emphasize the fact that the hadith has a reference to the Qur'ān in it, thus suggesting that the production of hadith was not independent from the Qur'ān. Much of Burton's further analysis consists of quoting various Muslim authors' comments on these passages of the Qur'ān and hadith. It seems that with these comparisons Burton attempts to emphasize that there was a lively debate about interpretation of the Qur'ānic quote that was not separated from the production of the quoted hadith.

As can be seen, the early commentators have offered different explanations as to what the fast mentioned in the quoted Qur'ān passage was. Burton shows that in different texts there were different options as to what the fast in question was: was it Ramadān or perhaps another kind of fast, such as Ashura or another

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28 Burton, "Notes", 40.

29 Burton, "Notes", 40. For another examples of this theory see. Burton, *An Introduction*, 148-149.

fast that lasted for three or other limited number of days. According to Burton, despite early differences of opinion, authoritative commentators have mainly agreed that the passage refers to Ramadān.<sup>30</sup>

Connected to this is the discussion as to what is meant by “those before you” mentioned in the passage. Burton shows that there are two main lines of interpretations of this phrase. The first approach is to identify the “those before you” as first Muslims, consequently identifying “you” as the (post-Prophetic) addressees of the passage. The second approach is to identify “those before you” as the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book), meaning the adherents to other religions who are based on “divine books”, such as Jews, Christians and perhaps few other groups. This interpretation would suggest that the fast mentioned in Qur’ān was imposed on Jews and Christians before Muslims. Burton shows how the second interpretation has created another set of interpretive difficulties. For example, if Ramadān (that is probably referred to in the Qur’ānic quote) was imposed to Christians, it could be asked, why do Christians fast for a slightly longer time than Ramadān. Burton further attempts to show that another set of Islamic interpretations has been introduced to account for this difference.<sup>31</sup>

Another interpretation of the Qur’ānic passage was that the fast of “those before you” was Ashura or another fast of a limited number of days. As there were some suggestions that the Ashura fast was originally a Jewish practice, this line of interpretation might lead to the conclusion that Prophet had adopted a practice that originated in the Jewish community. Burton points out that it would be unacceptable for Muslims to think that a pious practice of the Prophet originated in imitation of Jews. Therefore, some other hadīths were introduced to break the link between the practice Prophet Muhammad and the practice of Jews.<sup>32</sup>

By offering this example of similarities in Qur’ān and hadīth passages Burton seems to be making the following point. In Muslim scholarship it has become a mainstream position that the hadīth quoted provides historical information about the practice of the Prophet Muhammed upon his arrival in Medina: that he observed the Ashura fast and another three-day fast. Subsequently the Ramadān

30 Burton, “Notes”, 47. There seems to be some confusion over what Burton really tried to confirm. While he suggested the Mu’adh wording is just a technical not a historical report, he based upon another reports to prove that all hadīths are actually exegesis of Qur’ān, then they became sira and historical hadīth or fiqh. See below some of his references.

31 Burton, “Notes”, 42.

32 Burton, “Notes”, 44-45. Unlike his predecessors Goldziher and Schacht, Burton didn’t define the similar fasting practice in Islam with those of Christianity and Judaism as *borrowing*. But saying “These reports sowed the seed of the notion that the Prophet had adopted the Ashura fast in direct imitation of the Jews of Medina.” He implied that Prophet Muhammad borrowed this practice from another religions. see. Burton, “Notes”, 43. Sunna functioned as a tool for Islamization of the borrowed material. For more considerations on borrowing claim of Goldziher and Schacht see Fatma Kızıl, “Oryantalistlerin Akademik Hadis Araştırmaları: Ana Eğilimler, Yerleşik Kabuller ve Temel İddialar”, *Hadis ve Siyer Araştırmaları V/1* (2019), 196; *Müşterek Râvi Teoris ve Tenkidi*, (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2019), 92-102.

fast was introduced, and the previous fasts were either abandoned or ceased to be obligatory. Burton's view seems to be that contrary to many scholars' views, the original message of the hadith must have been significantly different. Burton thinks that the hadith was produced out of the need of interpretation of the Qur'an passage that is quoted in it. Burton seems to be saying that the point was to make it clear that the Ashura and three-day fast that was (allegedly) practiced by some Muslims was not commanded in Qur'an but was different from it and belonged to the *sunna*. Therefore, the information given in the hadith is technical rather than historical to clarify the passage of the Qur'an.<sup>33</sup>

Burton draws attention to the fact that there are several hadiths dealing with Ashura fast. This seems peculiar to him because in Muslim practice Ashura fast is not obligatory and is considered somewhat "antiquarian". This suggests that the hadiths were not referring to a practice of the Prophet that was significant to the Muslim community. In Burton's view the fact that there are still many hadiths on this topic further convinces that the purpose of these hadiths was academic and exegetical; they dealt with the interpretation of the Qur'an.<sup>34</sup>

He states that at the second quarter of the second century AH there was already some confusion as to the origins of some texts. Therefore, sometime after they originated, these suggestions were accepted as if they were part of the *sunna* – the example of the Prophet. Burton says: "Suggestions that had first occurred in the realm of Qur'an-commentary, had found their way into the *sira* [the biography of the Prophet – A.B.]. That is to say, they passed from the exegesis into the realm of history they became part of the Sunna."<sup>35</sup> In this way, it seems, the suggestions found in this hadith retained their significance, however not as obligatory duties (*wājib*), but as suggestions (*sunna*). As they turned unsuccessful among Islamic scholars as interpretation of Qur'an, according to Burton, "it was their relegation to the Sunna that, however, guaranteed their survival".<sup>36</sup> In sum, to Burton the sunna's connection to the Qur'an is exegetical.

In the article Burton provides only one case study of a hadith (and some hadiths dealing with the same topic) and its connection to Qur'an exegesis and concludes that there is "at least one" case where the emergence of hadith can be convincingly linked to Qur'an exegesis. However, he still seems to be making a more general point than merely showing the origin of this hadith or even some other hadiths. In the conclusion of the article, he seems to be making a

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33 Burton, "Notes", 42.

34 Burton, "Notes", 46.

35 Burton, "Notes", 48.

36 Burton, "Notes", 48. Burton claims that the term *Sunna* of the Prophet was not mentioned till the second half of the second century AH. He argues that the use of the term *Sunna* from early Islam until this century had the original meaning of pre-Islamic usage which referred to "...the tribal tradition transmitted of the approved manners and customs of their ancestors and forbears to serve as the unquestioned basis and sanction of the conduct of the succeeding generations." see. John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 12; Introduction, 49.

more general conclusion about the origins of hadith literature in. The issue is addressed also in Burton's later book *An Introduction to Hadith* where he reiterates his thesis about the origins of hadith literature in the exegesis of Qur'an.

In the book Burton repeats the statement that in the middle of the second century there was already a confusion as to the sources of different texts. Burton emphasizes that there are a number of topics in hadith other than fasting, such as "opinions on *tamattu'*, of the *hajj* [pilgrimage made to the Kaaba A.B.], or 'temporary marriage', or washing/wiping the feet in the *wudu* [Islamic procedure of ritual purification; ablution - A.B.], and developing from this, the arguments on making do with merely wiping the footwear, questions on shortening the ritual prayers on a journey, or of combining two of the ritual prayers under certain conditions" that in his opinion scholars have failed to connect to the interpretation of Qur'an, and that they instead "took refuge in attributing them to a second source, '*the sunna*'".<sup>37</sup> This suggest that Burton thought that the exegesis of Qur'an is closely connected to the emergence of a larger number of hadiths or the hadith literature as such. As for the historical reliability of these hadiths Burton says:

If, as we suspect, our reports are more exegetical than "historical", they are mere academic exercises which cannot be relied upon to yield usable information on actual historical "practice". We may now cease to concentrate our attention upon the question of the 'authenticity' of the *sunna*, in the sense of its alleged historical connection with the person of the Prophet, or with the persons of his contemporaries, the Companions, or with those of their immediate successors.<sup>38</sup>

When commenting the time of origin of the hadiths, Burton emphasizes that while the texts themselves might be comparatively late, the 'raw material' of the hadiths might reach into the beginnings of Islam:

Insofar as the discussions we have here reviewed set out from a starting-point provided by the Qur'anic texts, to that extent, it set out from documents coming down from the time of the Prophet and his contemporaries. To be sure, the participants in our discussion were not contemporary with the Prophet, although the "raw material" on which they exercised their ingenuity undoubtedly reached them from Islam's earliest beginnings.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting to note, as Daniel Brown points out in his review, that in his book *An Introduction to Hadith*, Burton has included a chapter on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad in which, despite all the effort to discourage viewing

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37 Burton, *An Introduction*, 149.

38 Burton, *An Introduction*, xii.

39 Burton, *An Introduction*, 149.

hadiths as historical documents, he himself does exactly that, using them as reliable sources for reconstructing the biography of the Prophet. Brown therefore considers this chapter to be highly uncritical while the approach of Burton is inconsistent.<sup>40</sup>

Burton seems to place less emphasis on *isnāds* in his analysis of the origins of hadiths. While Burton's works and methodology surrounded that of Schacht, particularly his views on the development of Islamic law and theories of *isnād* it is quite interesting that he never referred to or mentioned his common link theory.<sup>41</sup> Mohammad Alshahri also states that Burton's views on *isnāds* were influenced by Schacht that until the second century AH scholars did not consider *isnāds* of great importance, but he did not give any examples.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. The Evaluation of the Burton's Theses

One of the complications of attempting to grasp Burton's position is that his argumentative strategy at times seems slightly obscure. Several scholars have mentioned the fact that Burton uses quotations from numerous sources in his works, while not reflecting clearly on the type of these sources and his aim for using the quotations. This fact is mentioned in Daniel Brown's review of Burton's book on hadith.<sup>43</sup> This view is repeated by Mohammed Alshahri in his doctoral dissertation "A Critical Study of Western Views on Hadith with Special Reference to the Views of James Robson and John Burton".<sup>44</sup> While evaluating Burton's ideas in the book *An Introduction to Hadith*, Alshahri also points out that Burton's main thesis in this book is integrated in his discussion of the views of Goldziher and Schacht rather than being stated clearly and independently of the views of other scholars. Therefore, it needs reconstruction.<sup>45</sup>

It might be necessary to study Burton's views more carefully to determine to what extent Burton thinks his theory applies to the origins of Hadith literature in general, not just to individual hadiths. In case Burton attempts to explain the origins of Hadith literature in its entirety, it might be necessary to consider that not all hadiths contain clear references to Qur'an passages. It also must be consid-

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40 Actually Brown criticizes harshly saying that "The major flaw that Burton's work exposes is the tendency to take hadith too seriously as history." Besides he says "...The origins of hadith is not a historical but a literary reality." Brown, "Review", 275.

41 As Schacht's invention of common-link theory is a turning point for Hadith scholars in the West, they need to refer it by refusing or accepting. Actually it seems that the common link is still the predominant and prevailing theory in the Western Hadith study and plays a decisive role that the Western Hadith scholars still use and try to develop this theory. To learn more about this theory, its critique and how to apply from the point of a Muslim scholar see. Kızıl, *Müşterek Râvi*, 65-504.

42 Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views*, 175.

43 While Brown points out the importance of his main argument that deserves full treatment, he says, "Burton gives it much less than this. Most of the book has nothing to do with the author's primary thesis." Brown, "Review", 276.

44 Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views*, 197.

45 Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views*, 194.

ered that references to Qur'ân might be found in hadiths even if they contained historical accounts of events as well.

Another aspect to consider is the change in perspective on the historical reliability of hadiths that might be stimulated by more recent research. For example, Alshahri criticizes Burton's view for relying too readily on Schacht's criticism and not considering more recent discoveries (the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) of hadiths that were not available to Schacht and other previous scholars. According to Alshahri, these discoveries show that it is more likely that hadiths can be reliable as historical sources than it had been thought before.<sup>46</sup>

It is quite clear that Burton put all his efforts into understanding the history of the Qur'ân, especially the source of the Qur'ân, its authenticity, the collection of the Qur'ân and its textualization process. So, his works and views on the Qur'ân had a great impact on his views on the origins of Hadith and its literature. He claimed that the origins of hadiths are exegetical and *sunna's* relation to the Qur'ân was also exegetical. To support this argument, Burton cited Shâfî'î (d. 204/820) many times and his role on gaining prominence of the *sunna* and *hadith*.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, there is an open question of how to contextualize Burton's views among the views of various Western and Muslim scholars. While Burton's theory seems to criticize the highly skeptical attitude of his predecessors towards the historical reliability of hadith literature and motivations of its collectors, he still makes the point that it would not be appropriate to expect a significant level of historical reliability from it. While compared to skeptical scholars such as Goldziher or Schacht, Burton's views might seem to offer a different perspective that does not dismiss the theological significance of hadith, for a Muslim scholar who considers it crucial for the Islamic faith that the origins of hadith can be traceable to the actual sayings and deeds of the Prophet, Burton's views might still seem pretty close to those of his predecessors in their skepticism.

### Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this investigation. First of all, in the West Burton is an outstanding figure known for his studies on the history of the Qur'ân, in the context of the Qur'ânic history in particular, and his achievement in investigating the process of the development of the Qur'ânic texts and its far-reaching history after the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). Burton

46 Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views*, 230. His dissertation presents a critical discussion of Burton's views, partially on the terms of *Sunna* and *Hadith*, *Sunna* of the people of Madinah in *Muvatta'* of Malik b. Anas (d. 179/795), origins of Hadith, abrogation and Hadith, and his examples for this views. See. Alshahri, *A Critical Study of Western Views*, 177-224.

47 Actually he argued that the emergence of the term *Sunna of the Prophet* was due to the intellectual efforts of al-Shafî'î who endorsed the general sense of the term *sunna* to be specifically associated with the Prophet's legal and religious practices and Traditions. See. Burton, *The Sources*, 40; *Introduction*, 153-177.

has a unique position among the Western scholars in terms of trying to connect the issue of *jam al-Qur'an* with the *nash* and attended to separate concepts of Qur'an and Mushaf. Yet, his theory on the history of Qur'an is based his views on Hadith literature and he claimed that the origins of the hadith literature were exegetical.

At first glance, Burton seems to offer an alternative and original perspective on the origins of hadith literature. However, it seems that Burton's approach to the origins of hadith literature, its evaluation and its theory might not be entirely clear and thoroughly consistent, though more careful examination of his other works would be needed to state this with certainty. Burton seems to be strongly influenced by the work of Goldziher and Schacht in the sense that, like them, he does not think that the historical origins of hadith can be found in the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. In this sense it could be said that Burton does not seem to consider hadith literature as genuine or historical. However, he also rejects Goldziher's position of reducing the motivation to create hadiths to political struggles for power.

Burton seems to express distaste for views that bluntly label hadiths as fictitious and disregard the possibly pious motivation of its collectors. Instead, Burton offers the idea that at least some hadiths originated as attempts at exegesis of the Qur'an. He argues for his thesis by demonstrating that there are hadiths that contain references to the Qur'an and that by involving other significant Islamic texts in the analysis, it can be demonstrated that these hadiths serve the purpose of explaining Qur'anic passages. Burton therefore designates them as purely "academic" or "literary" in purpose, instead of historical. This does not mean, however, that they are fictitious in the sense of being merely later fabrications. As Burton notes, the production of Hadiths is probably as old as the attempts to understand Qur'an, therefore they might originate in the time of Prophet and his Companions. While Burton's theory seems to be more moderate than the criticism of Goldziher and Schacht and offers a different point of view on hadith literature, it seems quite be close to the highly skeptical view of his predecessors. Scholarship dealing with more recent discoveries of hadiths might be necessary to evaluate Burton's accomplishment.

Burton's book, entitled *Introduction to Hadith*, promises both a comprehensive introduction to hadith and a systematic presentation of Burton's views on hadith. But his apparent aims for this book fail to do so. He cites long hadith texts with almost no explanations and conclusions. Actually, they are referred to as examples of *ahadith* having exegetical sources but there are no clues provided to show his points in listing such a number of *ahadith* and Qur'anic verses. If these are cited to support his theory, then there should be some explanation or a reasoning to demonstrate his point. This is a common feature of his book. This hinders to understand his actual point and argument. As Brown points out sever-

al times in his review on *Introduction to Hadith* saying that “The limitations of the book are best illustrated by those chapters which are most clearly introductory in intent.”, “The whole chapter is a muddled morass that no teacher would be likely to ask a student to read, except as an example of the very worst in academic writing. The impression given is of a rather hasty emptying of files, the results cobbled together without any significant attempt to develop a coherent structure or argument.”, “The flaws in this book are serious, almost fatal.”, “But those who have wished for a true introduction to the hadith literature must continue to wish. A book worthy of title remains to be written.”

Lastly, it could be pointed out that curiously, Burton completely ignores G. H. A. Juynboll’s two important works, i.e. *Muslim Tradition* and “Nāfi’, the Mawlā of Ibn ‘Umar, and his Position in Muslim Hadith Literature”, in which Juynboll attempted a serious revision of Goldziher and Schacht and his common link theory. Actually, apart from Goldziher and Schacht, there is only a single reference to Nabia Abbott in his book. Even the chapter titled “The Western Approach to Hadith” consists of two parts. In the first part, there are references to Goldziher’s and Schacht’s views and in the second part, it is mentioned about not a Western scholar but Shāfi’ī and his views on sources of knowledge. Generally speaking, he also does not seem to put emphasis on the role of *isnāds* in his study of the origins of hadith literature.

### Geniřletilmiř Özet

İslam üzerine arařtırma yapan Batılı akademisyenler incelendiđinde XX. asrın bařlarından itibaren řüpheci ve revizyonist řeklinde iki ana yaklařımın hakimiyeti görülecektir. Kur’an tarihi üzerine yaptıkları alıřmalarıyla John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone revizyonist akımın bu asırda öne ıkan isimleri arasında yer almıřtır. Wansbroug’un öđrencilerinden John Burton da yine revizyonist bir bakıř aısıyla Kur’an’ın yazmaları ve geliřimi üzerine yaptıđı alıřmalar ve bu alıřmalarında dile getirdiđi özđün iddialarıyla kendinden söz ettiren Batılı İslam arařtırmacıları arasında yerini almıřtır. Burton’ın Kur’an tarihi ile ilgili iddiaları Batılı arařtırmacılar tarafından hem takdir görmüş hem de eleřtirilmiřtir. Bugün elimizde mevcut mushafın bizzat Hz. Muhammed’e ait olduđu iddiası ile iinden geldiđi revizyonist yaklařımından farklı bir tutum sergilemesi bazı Batılı arařtırmacılar tarafından takdir toplamıřtır. Halbuki revizyonistler Kur’an’ın Hz. Peygamber’den sonraki süreçte ortaya ıktıđını iddia etmektedirler. Öte yandan mushaf ile Kur’an arasında ayırım gözeten Burton Kur’an’a sonraki süreçte bazı ayetlerin eklendiđini söyleyerek revizyonist çizgiye yakın bir tutum sergilemektedir. Burton’ın erken dönem kaynakları kullanmaması ve bazı rivayetleri eksik/yanlıř nakletmesi kasıtlı bir hata görülerek eleřtirilmiřtir. Burton Kur’an ile ilgili iddiasını temellendirmek iin Kur’an’ın toplanması ve redaksiyon sürecine dair nakledilen hadislerin tama-



minı kurgusal kabul ederek, rivayetlerin Hz. Muhammed ile ilişkisini reddetmiştir.

Alan Jones, Burton'ın hadislere karşı aşırı şüpheci yaklaşımında Goldziher ve Schacht'ın etkili olduğunu söylemiştir. Harald Motzki ise Schacht'ın şüpheciliğini genel olarak kabul etmekle birlikte bazı noktalarda ona itiraz ederek Burton'ın Schacht'ın düşüncelerini değiştirmeye/uyarlamaya çalıştığı kanaatindedir. Nitekim Burton rivayetlerle ilgili şekil/içerik (*form/content*) ayrımı yapmıştır. Böylelikle o Schacht'ın hadislerin geç tarihli olduğu genel iddiasını kabul etmekle birlikte, hicrî I. asra ait güvenilir hiçbir rivayetin olmadığı iddiasını reddetmiştir ki bu onu revizyonist oryantalistlerden ayıran önemli bir husustur. Burton sünnetin, büyük ölçüde Kur'anı tefsir etmek maksadıyla ortaya çıktığını iddia etmektedir. Hadis metinlerini daha çok akademik çabanın birer ürünü olarak gören Burton, hadislerin Hz. Peygamber ve sahabenin tarihî uygulamalarına dayanmadığını ve bu anlamda gerçek olmadıklarını iddia etmektedir. Ancak yine de rivayetler Hz. Peygamber zamanı için olmasa da en azından hemen sonrasındaki Kur'an asrı denebilecek dönemdeki Müslümanların düşünme biçimine dair malzemeyi/bilgiyi ihtiva eder. Dolayısıyla ona göre hadis literatürü erken dönem İslam tarihini anlamak için kullanılabilir ham maddeye (*raw material*) sahiptir. Zira hadislerin Hz. Peygamber ile ilişkisi Şâfiî'nin sünnet vurgusundan sonra gerçekleşmiştir. Hadis külliyatı sonraki neslin (sahabe, tabiîn) Hz. Peygamber'in 'yazdığı' Kur'an'ı anlama ve yorumlama çabalarından müteşekkildir. Bu anlamda hadis literatürünün tamamı tefsir rivayetlerinden oluşur. Örneğin fıkıh aslında hukuk değil, fıkıh olma amacıyla yapılmış Kur'an açıklamalarıdır. Burton bu iddiasını, Kur'an âyetleri ile hadisler arasındaki benzerlikleri göstermek suretiyle delillendirmeye çalışmaktadır.

Goldziher ve Schacht'ın hadislere yönelik aşırı şüpheci ve genellemeci yaklaşımını Müslümanlara karşı muhalif bir tavır olarak yorumlayan Burton, onların bu şüpheciliğinin Batı'daki hadis çalışmalarını sekteye uğrattığına inanmaktadır. Ona göre bazı Batılı araştırmacılar onların çalışmalarına eklenecek bir şey kalmadığını düşünmüş, diğer bazıları nasıl davranacağını bilemediğinden rivayetlerden tamamen uzak dururken bazıları ise rivayetleri hiç dikkate almamayı tercih etmiştir. Bir diğer grup ise hicrî I. asırdan gelen rivayetlere dahi gerçekten tarihî ve güvenilir kaynaklar gözüyle bakmayı tercih etmiştir. Ona göre ortaya çıkan tabloda araştırmacılar kendi hadislerini özenle seçerek güncel, kabul görmüş hakikatler ışığında kabul veya reddetmişlerdir. İşte bu noktada Burton'a göre gerçek bir hadis teorsine ihtiyaç (*theory of tradition*) vardır. Bu teoriyi inşa etmek için ise İslam literatürünün üç temel alanını aynı anda dikkate almak ve eş zamanlı incelemek gerekmektedir. Birincisi temel hadis külliyatını ve ikincisi temel fıkıh çalışmalarını büyük şerhleriyle birlikte, üçüncü olarak ise tefsir literatürünü beraberce ele alıp değerlendirmek önemlidir. Burton'ın bu teorsine göre sadece Müslüman âlimlerin farklı düşündükleri hususlar değil; aynı zamanda belli meseleler ve temel ilkeler hatta oldukça ayrıntılı noktaları içeren diğer konulardaki

görüş birliklerini de araştırarak not etmek gerekmektedir. Hem ‘tamamen yasal’ hem de ‘tamamen dinî’ alanlardan seçilen bazı kilit konuların İslamî tartışmasının gelişiminin incelenmesi için, namaz; evlilik ve boşanma; miras; satış, takas ve krediler, vb. konuları ihtiva eden üç temel alanın kaynaklarından seçilen tek bir bölüm tartışmanın anlaşılmasını kolaylaştıracaktır. Soruşturma, hammaddeleri olarak hadislere dair ortak bir güveni paylaşan üç temel kaynak arasındaki ilişki hakkında bir sonuç ortaya çıkana kadar sürdürülecektir. Burton ortaya koyduğu teorisini sadece oruç meselesi üzerinden örneklemiştir.

Bu makalede, John Burton’ın Kur’an ile ilgili çalışmalarının hadis literatürüne bakışını nasıl etkilediği, hadislerin kaynağı ve kökeniyle ilgili temel iddialarının neler olduğu ve bu iddialarının Batı’daki hadis çalışmaları arasındaki yeri ve önemine dair meseleler ele alınmıştır. Burton’ın hadislerin anlaşılması ile ilgili önerdiği yöntemin özgünlüğü ve işlerliği makalenin bir diğer meselesidir. Nihayet buradan hareketle Burton’ın kendinden önceki Batılı hadis araştırmacıları arasındaki yeri ve önemi ayrıca hadislere bakış açısı itibarıyla hangi oryantalistler arasında (şüpheli, revizyonist, mutavassıt) yer aldığı da değerlendirilecektir.

Burton’ın Kur’an ve onun tarihi üzerine düşünceleri Türkiye’de tefsir alanında uzman pek çok araştırmacı tarafından farklı bakış açılarıyla incelenmiştir. Ancak hadis literatürü hakkındaki fikirlerine dair herhangi bir çalışma mevcut değildir. Bu makalede John Burton’ın yukarıda bahsedilen hadislerle ilgili temel iddiaları eleştirel bir yaklaşımla incelenmiştir. Bunun için öncelikle Burton’ın söz konusu teoriyi anlatıp örneklediği makalesi “Notes Towards a Fresh Perspective on the Islamic Sunna” ve hadis ilmine bir giriş maksadıyla yazdığı *An Introduction to the Hadith* adlı kitabı esas alınmıştır. Ayrıca Burton’ın hadis ve sünnetten de bahsettiği *The Collection of the Qur’an* ve *The Sources of Islamic Law* adlı iki temel çalışmasından da istifade edilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra Harald Motzki’nin editörlüğünü yaptığı *Hadith: Origins and Developments* ve Herbert Berg’ün *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam* gibi Burton’ın iddialarına yer veren Batı’daki temel hadis çalışmaları ve doğrudan Burton’ın kitaplarına yazılmış inceleme yazıları da bu çalışmanın kaynakları arasında yer almaktadır.

Bu makalede Burton’ın hadislerle ilgili çalışmalarının, bu çalışmalarda ortaya koyduğu iddialarının kendinden önceki araştırmacılardan etkilenmiş olsa da farklı yönleri olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Burton’ın özellikle “Theory of Tradition” diye nitelendirdiği yöntemi ile Batılı araştırmacılar arasında özgün bir yere sahip olduğu söylenebilir. Hadis literatürünün kaynağı ve kökenine dair ortaya koyduğu teorisini seleflerinden oldukça etkilenmiş görünmektedir. Zira o da Goldziher ve Schacht gibi hadislere şüpheli yaklaşmakta ve güvenilir olmadığını kabul etmektedir. Ancak o uydurma olduğu gerekçesiyle hadislerin tamamının reddedilmesine itiraz ederek, lafız itibarıyla olmasa da içerik olarak erken dönem İslam tarihini anlamak için hammadde olarak kullanılmaları gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Yine Burton’ın Kur’an’ın hadis literatürünün oluşumundaki rolü hakkındaki

düşünceleri özgündür. O sünnetin Kur'an'la ilişkisinin tamamen onu anlamak ve yorumlamak olduğunu savunarak bütün hadisleri tefsirle ilişkili görmektedir. Bu iddiası son derece genellemecidir. Zira hadis literatürü bunun dışında gündelik yaşam, ahlâk, temizlik gibi pek çok konu ile ilişkilidir. Nitekim Burton bu iddiasını temellendirecek örneklere de yer vermemektedir. Öte yandan Burton "Theory of Tradition" (Hadis Teorisi) diye ortaya koyduğu yönteminin ayrıntılarına yer vermemiştir ve hadise giriş kitabında bu yöntemi ne kullanmış ne de açıklamıştır. Burton bir yandan hadislerin gerçek olmadığını savunurken bir yandan da eleştiri veya yorum yapmaksızın Hz. Muhammed'in (s.a.v.) hayatını bu kaynaklara dayanarak doğrudan aktarmaktadır. Hadis literatürünün kaynaklarına dair yaptığı açıklamaları aynı şekilde İslamî kaynaklardan doğrudan aktarmaktadır. Bu anlamda onun hadisle ilgili iddiaları kendi için tutarlı gözükmemektedir.

Son olarak Burton'ı oryantalist paradigma içerisinde Kur'an hakkındaki düşünceleri bakımından revizyonist, hadislerle ilgili iddiaları açısından şüpheli diye nitelendirmek doğru olacaktır. Zira o revizyonistlerin aksine hicrî I. asrı anlamada hadislerin hammadde olarak kullanılabilceğini savunmaktadır.

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