

# THE COMPANIONS' UNDERSTANDING OF SUNNAH: THE EXAMPLE OF ʿABD ALLĀH IBN MASʿŪD

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## Abstract

An accurate understanding of the concept of the Sunnah is required to obtain accurate conclusions from assessments, discussions, and studies within the context of the Sunnah. This understanding is possible through comprehensive examination of the awareness of the Sunnah among the Companions (*řařābab*), who witnessed the age of the Prophet in every aspect. Indeed, current discussions and studies of the Sunnah highlight a single aspect of the problem. On some occasions, the concept “Sunnah” is presented within a reductive approach as narratives (*riwāyah*) that offer jurisprudential solutions for secondary problems. Other times, behavior-centered definitions transform the Sunnah into a domain that can be experienced only at the imitative level. Consequently, the multidimensional structure of the concept is restricted, and it becomes nonfunctional in terms of providing a way of thinking and a perception of the world. In this paper, due to the vastness of subject, this problem is examined on the basis of a single example, namely, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652), a prominent Companion.

*Key Words:* ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, the Companions, Sunnah understanding of *al-řařābab*, *ijtibād*, the Prophet Muřammad.

## Introduction

Every ideology, religion or similar formation requires an initial community to make its thoughts and principles tangible and to sustain their continuity by handing them down to the next generation. For Islam, this initial community was the Companions, whom the Prophet Muḥammad formed in every aspect, including thought and behavior. This initial community experienced the Prophet's (*nabawī*) teaching and comprehended the rules and principles of Islam in detail. Accordingly, they undertook the responsibility of communicating this understanding to subsequent generations. The Companions led a life in line with the values of their polytheist society; having embraced Islam, however, they immediately abandoned all past principles with regard to faith and deed. Nevertheless, the process of gaining the new doctrines brought by Islam was not that brief given the difficulties of adopting these doctrines in terms of thought and behavior. Consequently, this process required a long period, known as *the age of the Prophet*, in which He was personally involved at every stage.

Thanks to the example of the Prophet in this process, the Companions learned the rules and principles to establish a common perception. In this regard, the Sunnah falls under a common perception in the consciousness of the Companions. However, the Companions provided service to different areas of the Sunnah in different ways. Some Companions were occupied with communicating narratives (*riwāyah*), the material of the Sunnah, while others served in practical ways by means of decisions and reasoning during their administrative and judicial posts.

In this context, Ibn Mas'ūd displays a profile of service that includes both narratives and knowledge. Above all, his statements comprise a significant and comprehensive framework for the Sunnah. No other Companion has pointed out as clearly the issues Ibn Mas'ūd underlines. Therefore, Ibn Mas'ūd seems an accurate choice to study to see the nature of the Sunnah awareness among the Companions.

### I. The Companions' Understanding of Prophecy

To comprehend the perception of the Sunnah among the Companions, it is necessary to know their Prophet conception, which was provided for them in person by Rasūl Allāh during the age of the Prophet. Knowledge of issues such as the immunity and accountability

of the Prophet is particularly important since these issues may be directly influential on views regarding the information provided by the Sunnah.

### A. Immunity of the Prophet

In some speeches, the Prophet gave the explicit message that he was under divine protection against external factors. As quoted by Ibn Mas'ūd, the Prophet once said to the Companions, "Some *jinn*s are appointed to accompany every one of you without exception," underlining a fact that is valid for each human being. The Companions understood that this phrase indicated beings that are somehow influential for humans. Accordingly, they wondered about the Prophet, who taught them every religious subject, and asked, "O Rasūl Allāh! Is this the same for you?" In reply, the Prophet Muḥammad said, "Yes, for me too. I am protected only because Allah helps me against them. They have no other than good words to me now."<sup>1</sup>

According to another narrative, the Prophet states that his demon, who is naturally an unbeliever, is a Muslim.<sup>2</sup> At this point, the Prophet tries to instill in the Companions an awareness that unlike others, he will not be dragged into delusion via external seductions or indoctrinations. Accordingly, his teachings or words are free from any such negative influence.

The Prophet is also held immune from human weaknesses. The Companions saw the Prophet angry, joyful, sad, and even crying.

<sup>1</sup> Muslim, "Şifāt al-munāfiqīn," 69. For a similar narrative from Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), see Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, IV, 166. For another narratives see Muslim, "Şifāt al-munāfiqīn," 70; al-Tirmidhī, "al-Raḍā'," 17; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XXII, 226. Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149) indicates there is a consensus on the opinion that the tongue, body, and mind of the Prophet are preserved against Satan; see Abū l-Faḍl al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ ibn Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī, *Ikmal al-mu'lim bi-fawā'id Muslim*, ed. Yaḥyá Ismā'īl (al-Mansūrah: Dār al-Wafā', 1998), VIII, 351.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Khālīq al-Bazzār al-Baṣrī, *al-Baḥr al-zakkbār al-ma'rūf bi-Musnad al-Bazzār*, ed. Maḥfūz al-Raḥmān Zayn Allāh et al. (Medina: Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam & Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009), XIV, 249; Abū l-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī bi-sbarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī and Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfah, 1960), I, 439.

Evidently, they thought the Prophet may make decisions or hold attitudes under the influence of his emotions, just like any other human being. Some attempted to evaluate the words of the Prophet through such a human attitude and indicating that he talks when he was in anger or joy, whereupon the Prophet Muḥammad replied, “I swear that only truth comes out from me.”<sup>3</sup> The Prophet repeats a similar warning upon the death of his son Ibrāhīm. Some Companions saw Rasūl Allāh cry and found this behavior strange. Thereupon, Rasūl Allāh said, “This is due to compassion; the eyes water and the heart grieves,” pointing out that he was also a human. However, he immediately added, “However, we only say what our Lord will be content.”<sup>4</sup> In doing so, the Prophet attempted to prevent the conviction that the human conditions in the fulfilment of his duty as a messenger may produce negative effects. He was well aware that acceptance of the human condition as a criterion in understanding, accepting or refusing the Sunnah information may lead to inaccurate and arbitrary interpretations.

The immunity of the Prophet does not mean that he never erred or forgot. Nevertheless, the Companions did not allow for such situations in their conception of the Prophet, even if they witnessed them in person. Indeed, the Prophet cannot be considered in error or oblivion in the eyes of the Companions, even if he errs or forgets on some occasions. For example, Ibn Mas‘ūd never thought that any information provided by the Sunnah could be affected by human characteristics such as anger or obliviousness. On the contrary, Ibn Mas‘ūd says, “The Prophet (pbuh) is correct and informs correctly (وهو الصادق المصدوق),”<sup>5</sup> noting the incontestability of information proposed by the Sunnah. In fact, Ibn Mas‘ūd personally witnessed<sup>6</sup> how the Prophet’s decision about captives from the Battle of Badr was eventually corrected by means of revelation<sup>7</sup> and heard him say, “I am a man like all of you. I do forget as you do.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, like the other Companions, Ibn Mas‘ūd knew that the Prophet was under divine supervision and was corrected by divine warnings whenever he

<sup>3</sup> Abū Dāwūd, “al-‘Ilm,” 3; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XI, 57.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “al-Janā‘iz,” 42.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “Bad’ al-khalq,” 6; Muslim, “al-Qadar,” 1.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, “al-Tafsīr,” 9.

<sup>7</sup> Q 8:67.

<sup>8</sup> Muslim, “al-Masājīd,” 92.

erred or forgot. Thanks to this awareness, the Companions considered the Sunnah knowledge formed under divine control and not subject to the negative effects of the human condition and external factors.

## B. Accountableness

On many occasions, the Prophet reminded the Companions that he was accountable like any of them<sup>9</sup> and did not take kindly to be positioned in a superior position in this regard. Accordingly, he lived as any other subject among the Companions and tried to fulfil his responsibilities as a subject in the best possible manner. For example, Ibn Mas'ūd witnessed how the Prophet acted out of the desire to gain reward on the day of the Battle of Badr despite his seat and heard him say, "You are not stronger than I am, and I am not less in need of reward (*thawāb*) than you."<sup>10</sup>

The Prophet never allowed approaches against the understanding that he was an accountable subject and an ideal example for others. On one occasion, a Companion asked him the provision about "being impure until the morning despite having intended to fast." The Prophet replied that he also faced such situations and continued fasting after eventual bathing. Thereupon, the Companion said, "You are not like us. All your sins have been forgiven." Upon these words, Muḥammad became angry and replied as follows to correct the Companion: "My word! Among all of you, I am the one who fears Allah the most and who wants to know best the things to avoid."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, expressions such as the one from the mentioned Companion are based on the understanding that the Prophet could act how he liked in fulfilling religious duties and obeying orders and prohibitions.<sup>12</sup> This approach, no doubt, paved the way for extravagant comments about the practices of the Prophet, who set an example not only with his words but also with his deeds. According to a narrative that reveals actual evidence, a group of Companions, including Ibn Mas'ūd, consulted the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad to learn about and adopt his manner of worshipping. They probably did not get the answer they sought since

<sup>9</sup> For some narratives in which the Prophet underlines his being a human and subject, see Abū Dāwūd, "al-Sunnah," 11; Ibn Mājah, "al-At'imah," 6.

<sup>10</sup> See Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Muslim, "al-Ṣiyām," 79; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Ṣawm," 36.

<sup>12</sup> See Abū l-Walīd Sulaymān ibn Khalaf ibn Sa'd al-Tujībī al-Bāji, *al-Muntaqā sharḥ al-Muwāṭṭa'* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1914), II, 43.

they underestimated what was told to them and associated the answers with “absolute forgiveness of Allah towards the Prophet.” Thereupon, the Companions made decisions such as continuous fasting, spending nights in worship, and keeping away from women. The Prophet eventually became aware of their situation and warned the Companions that their path was contrary to his Sunnah.<sup>13</sup>

## II. Position and Exemplary Status of the Companions

The perception regarding the special bond between the Companions and the Sunnah is expressed as early as the lifetime of the Companions. Ibn Mas‘ūd presented the most explicit words on this matter. During a speech, Ibn Mas‘ūd spoke as follows:

Who wish to look up to someone among you should better look up to the Companions of the Prophet. They were the finest, best-informed, farthest from falsity, and ideal in attitude and path. They were a community chosen by Allah to be present in talks with His messenger. Therefore, acknowledge their virtue and follow their path. For sure, they were persons on the true path.<sup>14</sup>

Ibn Mas‘ūd thus praised the Companions, highlighting their significant function with regard to the Sunnah. Above all, Ibn Mas‘ūd emphasize that the Companions were chosen by Allah and attained an unreachable status by receiving the Sunnah firsthand. Thus, Ibn Mas‘ūd noted that the Companions were a peerless example for upcoming generations.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “al-Nikāḥ,” 1.

<sup>14</sup> Abū ‘Umar Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr al-Namarī, *Jāmi‘ bayān al-‘ilm wa-faḍlibī*, ed. Abū l-Ashbāl al-Zuhayrī (al-Dammām: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1994), II, 947. Despite some differences in wording, see Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas‘ūd al-Baghawī, *Sbarḥ al-sunnab*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāyīsh and Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūtī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), I, 214; Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ājurī, *Kitāb al-sbarī‘ab*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Sulaymān al-Dumayjī, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1999), IV, 1685; Abū l-Sa‘ādāt Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak ibn Athīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā’ūtī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥilwānī, 1969-1972), I, 292. ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar uttered similar sayings; see Abū Nu‘aym Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-asfiyā’* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1985), I, 305.

The true origin of Ibn Mas'ūd's words about the Companions is the Prophet himself, since he actually heard Rasūl Allāh saying, "Allah has never sent a messenger before me who did not have chosen helpers and friends to obey the Sunnah (of such messenger) within his community ..."<sup>15</sup>

In another speech, Ibn Mas'ūd repeats this chosen status of the Companions once again: "Allah looked into the hearts of His objects. He found the heart of the Prophet as the purest of all. He chose him and sent him as messenger. Then, again, He looked into hearts of His objects and found the hearts of the Companions of Rasūl Allāh as the purest. He chose them as helpers of His messenger and advocates of religion."<sup>16</sup> In the same speech, Ibn Mas'ūd adds, "Whatever Muslims consider good is good also in the presence of Allah. Whatever they consider evil is evil also in the presence of Allah,"<sup>17</sup> hinting that the Companions would always make decisions compliant with divine will thanks to their knowledge, training and experience gained through the Prophet's teaching.

Ibn Mas'ūd quotes the following ḥadīth indicating the superior status of the Companions among other generations:

"The most benevolent among the community (*ummah*) are those in my time. They are followed by the following generation and then their followers. Then comes such a community that their testimony contradicts their oaths and their oaths contradict their testimony."<sup>18</sup>

Continuously emphasizing the status of the Companions with regard to the Sunnah, Ibn Mas'ūd clearly tries to present the

<sup>15</sup> Muslim, "al-Īmān," 80.

<sup>16</sup> Pursuant to this approach, the Prophet addressed his Companions as follows: "فإنما بعثتم ميسرين، ولم تبعثوا معسرين" "You were sent as persons to make things easier and not more difficult." See al-Bukhārī, "al-Wuḍū'," 63; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Ṭaḥārah," 137; al-Tirmidhī, "al-Ṭaḥārah," 113.

<sup>17</sup> Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Jārūd al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad Abī Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī*, ed. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 1999), I, 199; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VI, 84; al-Bazzār, *al-Baḥr al-zakbbār*, V, 119; Abū l-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad ibn Ayyūb al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983) → Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1994), IX, 112; al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, I, 375.

<sup>18</sup> Muslim, "Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥābah," 210.

Companions as ideal and indispensable examples for posterity. According to Ibn Mas‘ūd, to follow the Companions is the Sunnah, and the contrary is a heretical innovation (*bid‘ab*).<sup>19</sup> The Companions are living practitioners of the Sunnah. Therefore, any attitude against them will be contrary to the Sunnah. Ibn Mas‘ūd was told that some people gathered in the *masjid* after evening prayer and performed *dbikr*; whereupon he immediately went to the *masjid*. Having seen the deeds contrary to the Sunnah, Ibn Mas‘ūd went into a rage: “I swear to Allah, you either fabricated an evil innovation or you are much better informed than the Companions of the Prophet.” After this warning, he wanted them to stop and leave the *masjid* immediately. One among the congregation tried to soothe Ibn Mas‘ūd, swearing they did not intend any heretical innovation or did not mean any superiority to the Companions. In response to these words, Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “You either abide by the Companions, who have clearly advanced far ahead of you, or head for clear heresy with irrelevant deeds.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, he reminded them that any path other than the lifestyle of the Companions would be perversion and heresy.

The importance attached to the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs by Ibn Mas‘ūd is another aspect of his perception of the Companions.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Mas‘ūd gives the following explanation: “Follow us and do not come up with innovations. This would be enough for you,” “Obey (us); do not allow heretical innovations. Each innovation is heresy.” Al-Dārimī, “al-Muqaddimah,” 23; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Waḍḍāḥ ibn Bazī‘ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Bida‘ wa-l-nahy ‘anbā*, ed. ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995), 36; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, IX, 154; Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Bayhaqī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-shu‘ab al-īmān*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Alī ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥamīd (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), V, 230; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Naṣr ibn Yaḥyá al-Marwazī, *al-Sunnah*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Baṣīrī (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āshimāh, 2001), 78.

<sup>20</sup> Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām ibn Nāfi‘ al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (along with Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid al-Ṣan‘ānī’s *Kitāb al-jāmi‘*); Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), III, 222; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, IX, 126. One day, ‘Imrān ibn Ḥusayn was asked by someone “to leave the Sunnah aside and to talk us about the Qur’ān!” Thereupon, he replied in parallel with Ibn Mas‘ūd and said, “O people! You will learn from us; otherwise, you will go astray.” See Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Thābit al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī ma‘rifah uṣūl ‘ilm al-riwāyah*, ed. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣṭafá al-Dimyāṭī (Meat Gamr: Dār al-Hudá, 2003), I, 83.



He describes the period as “first guidance” (*al-bady al-awwal*) and emphasizes the exemplary nature of this era under their leadership in the wake of Muḥammad’s demise. The related speech by Ibn Mas‘ūd goes as follows: “Now, you follow the Sunnah. In the near future, you will fabricate some inappropriate things and you’ll be presented some unusual things. Whenever you come across such things, stick by the first guidance.”<sup>21</sup> According to Ibn Rajab, the foregoing speech was given in the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Ibn Mas‘ūd considers this era, during which the Sunnah was implemented at the ideal level, a continuation of the age of the Prophet.

### III. Sunnah Comprehension

Evaluations by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd of the Sunnah and his views on the relation between the Sunnah and revelation, particularly the Sunnah and the Qur’ān, might help in understanding his conception of the Sunnah.

#### A. Parts of Sunnah

The expression “right way of guidance” (*sunan al-budā*) by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd is the clearest evidence that he divides the Sunnah

<sup>21</sup> Al-Marwazī, *al-Sunnah*, 93; Abū ‘Abd Allāh ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭah, *al-Ibānah ‘an sbarī‘at al-firqab al-nājiyah wa-mujānabat al-firaq al-madhmūmah*, ed. Riḍā ibn Na‘sān Mu‘ṭī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāyah, 1994), I, 329. In another narrative, Ibn Mas‘ūd once again defines his age for being strict followers of Sunnah, saying “فإننا اليوم على الفطرة”; see Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shaybah al-‘Absī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1989), VII, 271. For the “Sunnah” signification of the word, see Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nibāyah fi gharīb al-ḥadīth wa-l-atbar*, ed. Rā‘id ibn Ṣabrī ibn Abī ‘Alafah, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Amman: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, 2003), 698; Abū l-Fayḍ Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘arūs min jawābir al-Qāmūs* (Kuwait: Maṭba‘at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1965-2001), XIII, 331; Abū Ḥabīb Sa‘dī, *al-Qāmūs al-ḥabībī: luḡbat<sup>an</sup> wa-iṣṭilāḥ<sup>an</sup>*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 288. In explanation of the ḥadīth, “Human nature consists of five things or five things are of human nature (*al-ḥiṭrah kbams<sup>an</sup> aw kbams<sup>an</sup> min al-ḥiṭrah*)” (al-Bukhārī, “al-Libās,” 63; Muslim, “al-Ṭahārah,” 16). Ibn Ḥajar says that the word *al-ḥiṭrah* means Sunnah for most scholars (see al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, I, 168).

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Jāmi‘ al-‘ulūm wa-l-ḥikam*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt and Ibrāhīm Bājis (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 2001), II, 132.

into various categories.<sup>23</sup> In a narrative including this expression, he says, “Rasūl Allāh taught as the right way of guidance. This kind of the Sunnah includes performing *ṣalāb* in a masjid where *adbān* is recited.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Ibn Mas‘ūd indicates the importance attached by the Prophet to this kind of Sunnah and how the Prophet Muḥammad meticulously taught it to his Companions.

‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd uses the same expression in another narrative:

Whoever wants to come into presence of Allah as a Muslim should rigorously continue performing *ṣalāb* in a place where *adbān* is recited. Actually, Allah made *sunan al-budā* an order to your Prophet for you. *Sunan al-budā* also includes performing *ṣalāb* with congregation ...<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Mas‘ūd defines a practice of the Prophet as *sunan al-budā* and describes its abandonment as heresy. In this regard, he means the Sunnah that is considered the sign of the true path and the abandoning of which leads to heresy.

Ibn Mas‘ūd uses a different approach for practices other than *sunan al-budā*. On one occasion, he found inappropriate the position of feet of a man performing *ṣalāb* and said, “He does not act in line with the Sunnah; if he opened his feet a little more, I would have liked it much

<sup>23</sup> Certain Ḥanafī *fiqh* works report a narration specifically attributed to the Prophet: “*Ṣalāt* with congregation is among *sunan al-budā*,” showing that the term *sunan al-budā* was also used by the Prophet; see Burhān al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāyah sbarḥ Bidāyat al-mubtadī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Adnān Darwīsh (Beirut: Sharikat Dār al-Arḡam ibn Abī l-Arḡam, n.d.) I, 69; Abū l-Faḡl Majd al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Maḥmūd al-Mawṣilī, *al-Ikbtiyār li-ta‘līl al-Mukbtār*, ed. Zuhayr ‘Uthmān al-Ju‘ayd (Beirut: Sharikat Dār al-Arḡam ibn Abī l-Arḡam, n.d.), I, 78. According to al-Zayla‘ī (d. 762/1360), the narrative in the mentioned articulation has a single narrator (*gharīb*); see Abū Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf al-Zayla‘ī, *Naṣb al-rāyah li-ahādīth al-Hidāyah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāmah (along with *Bughyat al-alma‘ī fi takhrīj al-Zayla‘ī*; Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah li-l-Thaqāfah al-Islāmiyyah & Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Rayyān, 1997), II, 21. However, we could not find any ḥadīth source except for ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd that shows that this wording was used by the Prophet or a Companion.

<sup>24</sup> See Muslim, “al-Masājīd,” 256.

<sup>25</sup> Muslim, “al-Masājīd,” 257; Abū Dāwūd, “al-Ṣalāt,” 48; al-Nasā‘ī, “al-Īman,” 51; Ibn Mājah, “al-Masājīd,” 14.

more.”<sup>26</sup> Ibn Mas‘ūd’s behavior shows that he considers the Sunnah at a different level and value.

## B. Source of the Sunnah

The Companions in general and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd in particular were aware that the Sunnah was partially grounded in revelation (*waḥy*).<sup>27</sup> The foregoing saying, “Allah made *sunan al-budā* an order to your Prophet for you,”<sup>28</sup> shows that according to Ibn Mas‘ūd, certain Sunnah were directly obtained through revelation. In fact, it is not strange that Companions had this perception. Indeed, they witnessed in person some incidents in which the Sunnah was shaped by the direct intervention of divine will. On one occasion, Ibn Mas‘ūd states that they overslept and missed Morning Prayer, whereupon the Prophet said, “If Allah wished so, you would not oversleep and miss the prayer. However, Allah wanted this to be the Sunnah for those who oversleep or forget the prayer in the future.”<sup>29</sup>

The thoughts of Ibn Mas‘ūd about the relation between the Sunnah and revelation are reflected in his discourse. For example, he once saw al-Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah (d. 61/680), the governor of al-Kūfah, dawdle about leading the prayer, whereupon Ibn Mas‘ūd stepped up as *imām* to lead it and reproached the governor: “Neither Allah nor His

<sup>26</sup> al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 265; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 109; al-Nasā‘ī, “al-Ifitāḥ,” 13; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, IX, 270; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Mecca: Maktabat Dār al-Bāz, 1994), II, 288.

<sup>27</sup> Abū ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Quṭb al-Dīn Shāh Walī Allāh Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlawī, *Ḥujjat al-Allāb al-bāliḡbah*, ed. Maḥmūd Ṭu‘mah Ḥalabī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1997), I, 294.

<sup>28</sup> Muslim, “al-Masājid,” 257; Abū Dāwūd, “al-Ṣalāt,” 48; al-Nasā‘ī, “al-Īmān,” 51; Ibn Mājah, “al-Masājid,” 14.

<sup>29</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VI, 243; al-Nasā‘ī, “al-Siyar,” 169; al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, I, 294. The ḥadīth “For sure, I become or made forgotten to replace Sunnah” in *al-Muwaṭṭa’* by al-Imām Mālik approves it (see Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, “al-Sahw,” 331. For similar comments about these two narratives, see Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Fatḥ al-bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Maḥmūd ibn Sha‘bān ibn ‘Abd al-Maḥsūd et al. (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabā’ al-Athariyyah, 1996), II, 271; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tambīd li-mā fī l-Muwaṭṭa’ min al-ma‘ānī wa-l-asānīd*, ed. Sa‘īd Aḥmad A‘rāb et al. (Maghreb: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1992), XXIV, 375.

Messenger accepts us to retard prayer.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Ibn Mas‘ūd heard in person from the Prophet that the timely performance of prayer is a strong Sunnah decided by divine will. According to a narrative, the Prophet one day turned to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd and asked, “What if you have a ruler who wastes the Sunnah and retards prayer times?” Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “What would you want me to do, o Messenger of Allah?” The Prophet replied as follows: “O son of Umm ‘Abd! Are you asking me how to act? One cannot obey any creation in rebelling against Holy and Almighty.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, the Prophet Muḥammad states that it is Allah’s will who decides on the timely performance of prayer in particular and fulfilment of the Sunnah in general.

As a jurisprudent (*faqīh*) Companion, Ibn Mas‘ūd observed the strong relation between the Sunnah and revelation in the light of such words and incidents. However, Ibn Mas‘ūd did not believe the Sunnah was entirely obtained through revelation, even though he admitted it was shaped in line with divine will.

### C. The Relation between the Sunnah and the Qur’ān

The abovementioned attitude of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd about the relation between the Sunnah and revelation is also reflected, in a more particular context, in his views about the Sunnah and the Qur’ān. Above all, he saw no difference between an order, prohibition or recommendation communicated through the Qur’ān or the Sunnah. Instead, in his eyes, these two sources were so identical that he never allowed any approach against their identity and meticulously interfered in any such contradictory thoughts. The following narrative might help in understanding his approach:

“‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd said: ‘Allah curses those who change the women He created for the flirtatious ones who have tattoos on their body, remove hairs on their face, and thin their teeth for a better look.’ A woman called Umm Ya‘qūb from Banū l-Asad tribe overheard his words and immediately talked to Ibn Mas‘ūd: ‘I heard you cursing such and such women.’ Ibn Mas‘ūd replied: ‘Why wouldn’t I curse the women who are cursed in book of Allah and cursed by the Prophet as well?’ Then, the woman objected: ‘I swear I read the Book from the beginning to the end. But I never came across anything like you say.’

<sup>30</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 325.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Mājah, “al-Jihād,” 40; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VI, 432.

Thereupon, Ibn Mas'ūd answered: 'If you actually read (the Qur'ān), you would have seen' and asked her: 'Did not you read the verse, *'And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from?'*' For sure I did,' the woman replied. Ibn Mas'ūd continued: 'Indeed, (the Prophet) forbade these.' The woman continued discussion saying: 'I know that yours do some of these things.' Thereupon, Ibn Mas'ūd said: 'Then, go and have a look!' The woman left to look at her (Zaynab bint 'Abd Allāh al-Thaqafiyah, wife of Ibn Mas'ūd). Nevertheless, she could see nothing with wrong his wife to support her agreement and said this to Ibn Mas'ūd. He replied: 'If my wife were someone like you thought, I would not keep her with me for a second.'<sup>32</sup>

This narrative clearly shows that 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd attributed to Allah an issue for which the judgment is communicated through the Sunnah. In fact, he had actually heard how the Prophet damned the women garnished with the abovementioned methods.<sup>33</sup> However, Ibn Mas'ūd easily adopted the foregoing approach since he considered the problem within the integrity of the Sunnah and the Qur'ān. A closer look at the progress of the discussion may help us understand his approach in a better way. If we pay attention, the narrative begins with Ibn Mas'ūd saying it is Allah who curses the women garnished with the mentioned methods. Nevertheless, the woman attributes this deed to Ibn Mas'ūd. Then, Ibn Mas'ūd asks, "Why wouldn't I curse the women who are cursed in book of Allah and cursed by the Prophet as well?" referring to his previous words and to a similar expression by the Prophet, indicating that he is also in line with the Prophet. At this stage, Umm Ya'qūb did not ask, "What did Rasūl Allāh say?" Instead, she claims she found no Qur'ān verse cursing the garnished women and wanted to continue the debate over the Qur'ān. Ibn Mas'ūd considered it more necessary to correct her attitude of differentiating the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Reciting a Qur'ān verse, he showed how the judgments decided by the Sunnah can be attributed to the Qur'ān.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Al-Bukhārī, "Tafsīr al-Qur'ān," 310; Muslim, "al-Libās," 33; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Tarajjul," 4.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Nasā'ī, "al-Zīnah," 26; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII; 68; al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, I, 307.

<sup>34</sup> Because of the mentioned meaning, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) cites this narrative in his *al-Kifāyah* under the title "Narratives with claim that the Qur'ān

Indeed, al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) dwells on the same problem; for him, Ibn Mas‘ūd attributes, in deep wisdom, a word of the Prophet to the Qur’ān during this conversation.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this approach, he means that the prohibitions imposed by the Sunnah on women with regard to tattoos, the removal of facial hair or changing the position of teeth are also present in the Qur’ān as judgments.<sup>36</sup> Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449) notes the progress of the debate between Ibn Mas‘ūd and Umm Ya‘qūb, concluding that judgments decided by the Sunnah can be attributed to the Qur’ān and that judgments obtained through reasonable inference can be orally attributed to both the Sunnah and the Qur’ān, pursuant to the approach of Ibn Mas‘ūd.<sup>37</sup>

Another narrative demonstrates that the attitude of Ibn Mas‘ūd against the approach that dissociates the Qur’ān and the Sunnah was not an instantaneous reaction but the outcome of a conscious preference. According to the narrative, a woman came to Ibn Mas‘ūd and spoke as follows: “I am a woman with thin hair. Could I add some to my hair?” Ibn Mas‘ūd replied, “No,” whereupon the woman wanted to find out the origin of his judgment: “You heard (this) from the Prophet or saw it in Book of Allah?” Then, again, Ibn Mas‘ūd reacted in a similar way: “I both heard it from the Prophet and see it in Book of Allah.”<sup>38</sup>

In fact, the addition of hair for women is forbidden by the Sunnah,<sup>39</sup> and there is no Qur’ān verse directly dealing with the problem. Nevertheless, the woman was not satisfied with the negative answer and asked the origin of the judgment on the basis of a separation between the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Just as in the previous example, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd opts for the *uslūb al-ḥakīm*<sup>40</sup> method, and his

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and the Sunnah are equivalent in the manner of obligating and binding.” See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah*, I, 59.

<sup>35</sup> Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Bahādur ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Tāmīr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994), I, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Qārī al-Harawī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ sharḥ Misbkāt al-maṣābiḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), VII, 2820.

<sup>37</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, X, 373.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Nasā’ī, “al-Zinah,” 23.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “Farḍ al-khumus,” 19; Muslim, “al-Libās,” 115.

<sup>40</sup> *Uslūb al-ḥakīm* means replying a question slight out of context and changing to a subject considered more useful by responder; see ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan

answer focuses on correcting her incorrect attitude rather than replying to her question.<sup>41</sup>

#### IV. The Sunnah Perspective with Regard to Information Therein

The words of the Companions reveal the comprehensive framework of information provided by the Prophet for them about almost every topic. For example, Abū l-Dardā' (d. 32/652) emphasizes the extensiveness of the information they obtained from the Prophet: "When Rasūl Allāh left us, he had given so much information even including the birds in the sky."<sup>42</sup> Likewise, Ibn Mas'ūd notes the capability of the Prophet to attain information through revelation: "The Prophet is granted key to information on every issue (*mafātīḥ kull shay'*) but five."<sup>43</sup> Evidently, this privilege of the Prophet is reflected in his Sunnah.

On the other hand, the Companions uttered words to indicate that the Sunnah comprises information that addresses different levels of

Ḥabannakah al-Maydānī, *al-Balāghah al-ʿarabiyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996), I, 498.

<sup>41</sup> Like Ibn Mas'ūd, Mu'āwiyah (d. 60/680) and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar (d. 73/692) also observed this tendency of dressing up among women and warned against these methods, some of which originally belonged to Jewish women; see al-Bukhārī, "al-Libās," 83; Muslim, "al-Libās," 33; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Tarajjul," 5; al-Nasā'ī, "al-Zīnah," 67; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, IV, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, I, 385; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XXXV, 346; Abū Ya'lá Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Muthanná, *Musnad Abī Ya'lá al-Mawṣilī*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn li-l-Turāth, 1984), IX, 46.

<sup>43</sup> Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr ibn Īsá al-Qurashī al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Musnad*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad al-Dārānī (Damascus: Dār al-Saqā, 1996), I, 220; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, VI, 317; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 232; Abū Ya'lá, *Musnad*, IX, 86. The five things in the narrative are mentioned in Q 31:34 "The Hour of Apocalypse, time of rain, what happens in wombs, what one will earn tomorrow and what land he will die." After referring to this *ḥadīth*, Ibn Ḥajar indicates that a similar narrative is quoted by Ibn 'Umar as *marfū'*; al-'Asqalānī, *Fathḥ al-bārī*, I, 124. According to Ibn Kathīr, the narrative complies with prerequisites established by the authors of *sunan*, but they exclude it from their works; see Abū l-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿazīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1999), VI, 353.

reason and that cannot be shared with everyone. The awareness among the Companions in this respect is apparent in the sayings by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (“Inform man about what he can understand. You would not want to see Allah and His Messenger being denied.”<sup>44</sup>) and Abū Hurayrah (“I memorized two vessels of information through Rasūl Allāh. I spread the first group; as for the second, my throat would have been cut if I shared it”<sup>45</sup>). Accordingly, Ibn Mas‘ūd says, “Do not communicate the words that the people cannot comprehend. Otherwise, they only bring along sedition.”<sup>46</sup> This is a general expression but worth noting with regard to the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet. Indeed, according to al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981), Ibn Mas‘ūd first mentions some narratives and then Qur’ān verses approving them in the awareness that the reports, which seem contrary to explicit declarations of the Qur’ān and definite in the Sunnah, should not be considered in their apparent meaning but interpreted in an appropriate manner within the scope of relevant possibilities.<sup>47</sup> The evil consequences of the interpretation of such information in the Sunnah only depending on their apparent meaning are a problem taken into consideration by scholars.<sup>48</sup>

This saying by Ibn Mas‘ūd can be understood as a warning to prevent any controversy about, at least, certain Sunnah.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, according to some, it is not unlikely that these words of the Prophet are misunderstood and thus denied. At the beginning of a narrative in which the Prophet talks about the phases of the fetus in its mother’s womb, Ibn Mas‘ūd states,<sup>50</sup> “وهو الصادق المصدق”,<sup>51</sup> after saying, “حدثنا

<sup>44</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “al-‘Ilm,” 50.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Muslim, “al-Muqaddimah,” 5.

<sup>47</sup> Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzī, *al-Fuṣūl fī l-uṣūl*, ed. ‘Ujayl Jāsim al-Nashamī (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf al-Kuwaytiyyah, 1994), I, 207.

<sup>48</sup> See al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, I, 225.

<sup>49</sup> Abū Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-qārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Munīr ‘Abdah Aghā l-Dimashqī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002), III, 417.

<sup>50</sup> See al-Bukhārī, “Bad’ al-khalq,” 6; Muslim, “al-Qadar,” 1.

<sup>51</sup> According to al-Ṭībī (d. 743/1343), the expression should be constructed as “opposing” rather than “condition.” Thus, the style in use should expand the meaning, indicating that the Prophet is not one who only says and instructs the truth in his speech; he also demonstrates the same characteristic in all his manners



”رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم”, to remind the audience that Rasūl Allāh is “a prophet equipped with the quality of perfect righteousness who only obtains correct information.”<sup>52</sup> In brief, Ibn Mas‘ūd thus reminds the audience that it is Rasūlullāh who is speaking, and he warns them not to have erroneous ideas by jumping to a conclusion regarding what they are about to hear.<sup>53</sup>

## V. Intellectual Aspect of the Sunnah

### A. Manner of Thought Foreseen by the Sunnah

The Companions were the earliest community to think on the basis of principles and methods put forth by the Sunnah. Thanks to *nabawī* training, the Companions resembled the Prophet not only in behavior but also in rational aspects.

The following narrative told by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd emphasizes the importance of thought: “The most virtuous man of all is who uses reason in religion and is head in terms of deeds; the most wise man of all is the one who, even if fails in his deeds, behaves with prudence in case of dispute and sees the truth.”<sup>54</sup> The Prophet thus encourages his Companions to contemplate religious matters and even to gain the capacity to find solutions to the problems of others. In addition, the Prophet explains two essential sources to nourish such thinking: “I am

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and behaviors. Al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451) believes such an approach fits well with the mentioned narrative and supports al-Ṭibī; see al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-qārī*, XV, 130.

<sup>52</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, XI, 478; Abū l-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Sindī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Sindī ‘alā Ibn Mājah* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.), I, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Ḥajar reports that according to al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149) and al-Imām al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), “this phrase is not employed for accrediting but for reinforcing the narrative.” For Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn Mas‘ūd thus emphasizes the correctness of information provided by the Prophet in his speech; al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, II, 181). Likewise, al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384) associates the expression with the content of the narrative; for him, Ibn Mas‘ūd thus opposes medical convictions of the day that contradict the aforementioned information; al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, XI, 478; al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-qārī*, XXIII, 145.

<sup>54</sup> Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (along with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī’s *Talkhīṣ al-Mustadrak*; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990), II, 522; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, II, 807; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-ṣaḡhīr* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī & Amman: Dār ‘Ammār, 1985), I, 372.

leaving behind two things. You will never go astray as long as you hold fast onto them: Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger.”<sup>55</sup>

At this stage, the linguistic characteristics of the Qurʾān and the words of the Prophet are worth noting. Indeed, thanks to its specific character, the Qurʾān has defied mankind,<sup>56</sup> while the Sunnah is actualized by the hand of a prophet, the most fluent of Arabs<sup>57</sup> who was capable of uttering the shortest expressions carrying the widest meanings (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).<sup>58</sup> Given the character of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah in relation to their manner of using the Arabic language, the calls by both sources for reasoning also stipulate a certain methodology. This manner of thinking, based on this methodology and specific to Islam, is expressed in the concept of *ijtibād*. Unlike its eventual terminological meaning, *ijtibād* corresponds not only to the effort to decide on the conclusion of a *fiqh* problem; it also includes associating any behavior and thought in social, political, cultural or other aspects of life with a principle from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. The following example is striking since it shows to what extent the Companions applied this manner of thinking. According to the narrative, ʿAlqamah (d. 62/682) was together with Ibn Masʿūd in Mīnā when ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 35/656) came, and they were together alone. Meanwhile, ʿUthmān asked Ibn Masʿūd, “What about if I married you a *jāriyah* to remind you of the old days?” Finding that the Caliph was with him for no special reason, Ibn Masʿūd called over ʿAlqamah, who sat nearby. Then, Ibn Masʿūd replied to ʿUthmān as follows: “You speak thus, but the Prophet said: ‘O the youth! Among you, those who can afford marriage should marry. Indeed, marriage is the ideal way to save the eye and honor. In addition, whoever cannot, should fast. Fasting will be a shield for those.’”<sup>59</sup> Apparently, Ibn Masʿūd could give an affirmative or negative answer to ʿUthmān; instead, he preferred to respond by reminding him of the words of the Prophet. This attitude shows that Ibn Masʿūd attempted to form his preferences and behaviors on the basis of knowledge or information taken from the Sunnah.

<sup>55</sup> Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwattaʿa*, “al-Qadar,” 3338; al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, I, 171.

<sup>56</sup> Q 2:23-24.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunnab*, IV, 202; al-ʿAynī, *Umdat al-qārī*, XVI, 65; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, X, 455.

<sup>58</sup> Muslim, “al-Masājid,” 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Mājah, “al-Nikāḥ,” 1; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VI, 72.

Another feature of the form of thinking that the Prophet wanted to instill in the Companions is that the methods established by the Sunnah can produce different and even opposing facts. Given the relevant examples, the Companions made dissimilar and even opposite decisions about a certain problem before they attained such a level of consciousness. In such cases, they went to the Prophet asked him for the correct decision. Rasūl Allāh approved both decisions.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the Prophet wanted to bring them to the awareness that it is natural to obtain different conclusions by means of the *ijtibād* methods foreseen by the Sunnah on a given topic. Indeed, Ibn Mas'ūd displayed this approach, which he learned from the Prophet, before his disciples Jundab and Masrūq (d. 63/683), who presented dissimilar *ijtibāds* about the same issue. Accordingly, he said that both disciples were right. Nonetheless, he also indicated that if he were to decide in person, he would opt for the *ijtibād* by Masrūq.<sup>61</sup>

Another perception provided by this attitude is the ability to approach different thoughts in a broad-minded manner. Ibn Mas'ūd is an exemplary personality in this regard. Ḥudhayfah (d. 36/656) saw those retreating for worship (*i'tikāf*) in al-Kūfah masjid, whereupon he reproached as follows: "Are you not surprised to see this group that thinks they retreat for worship between your and Abū Mūsā's house?" In response, Ibn Mas'ūd said, "Maybe I am wrong and they are right. Maybe I forgot, but they remember."<sup>62</sup> His attitude reflects the principle that it is necessary to avoid hasty conclusions since some apparently controversial decisions and practices might also have valid grounds.

<sup>60</sup> For further examples, see al-Bukhārī, "Ṣalāt al-khawf," 4; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Ṭahārah," 131-32.

<sup>61</sup> Abū Bakr Shams al-a'immah Muḥammad ibn Abī Sahl al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūt* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993), II, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Abū Muḥammad Muwaffaq al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, *al-Mughnī*, ed. Ṭāhā Muḥammad al-Zaynī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1968), III, 190. Ibn Mas'ūd also emphasizes that there is no place for sentimentalism on this matter and that it is necessary to seek the truth in any case: "Accept whoever brings you the truth, even if he is distant and unpleasant. Do not accept whoever calls you to the void, even if he is a close friend"; Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm al-Qurṭubī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1983), IV, 570.

## B. Relation between the Sunnah and *İjtibād*

*İjtibād* is a key concept to present ways and methods for resolving problems that are not clearly concluded by the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. The most distinct framework to show the meaning and status of the concept is observed during a conversation between Muʿādh ibn Jabal (d. 17/638) and the Prophet Muḥammad. He asked him, “What would you do about a problem without a given solution in the Qurʾān or the Sunnah?” Ibn Jabal replied, “I apply independent reasoning (*ijtibād*).” The Prophet was very pleased with this response.<sup>63</sup> His positive reaction to the foregoing response means that this attitude toward solving a problem is approved by the Sunnah (*taqrīr al-sunnab*).<sup>64</sup> In addition, with regard to a problem not covered by the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, Muʿādh ibn Jabal did not simply say, “Allah and His Messenger know best” and does not simply ask, “What would you say?” Instead, he is confident enough to say, “I apply independent reasoning.” This behavior shows that the Prophet directly or indirectly taught this method beforehand.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, because the Prophet never stipulated this order of priority before, the fact that a Companion so easily suggested *ijtibād* among two principal sources, the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, can only be explained through the level of consciousness brought to them by the Prophet. In fact, the same order of priority is seen in the letter by ʿUmar (d. 23/644) to Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 80/699), qāḍī of al-Kūfah,<sup>66</sup> and in another speech by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd.<sup>67</sup> These statements are clear evidence of the collective consciousness of the Companions about the mentioned perception.

In this regard, *ijtibād* appears as a significant form of the Sunnah taught to the Companions by the Prophet. The method expresses the association of behavior and thought with a *sharīʿah* rule not only in legal issues but in all aspects of life. The Prophet taught these methods

<sup>63</sup> Abū Dāwūd, “al-Aqdiyyah,” 11; al-Tirmidhī, “al-Aḥkām,” 3; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XXXVI, 382.

<sup>64</sup> For a similar comment, see Muḥammad Ibrāḥīm al-Ḥifnāwī, *Dirāsāt uṣūliyyah fī l-sunnab al-nabawiyyah* (al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 1991), 14.

<sup>65</sup> For a collection of examples supporting this argument, see Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Shalabī, *Taʿlīl al-aḥkām* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyyah, n.d.), 23-34.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Nasāʾī, “al-Qaḍāʾ,” 11; al-Dārimī, “al-Muqaddimah,” 23.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Nasāʾī, “Ādāb al-quḍāt,” 11.

to the Companions while solving their problems or answering their questions.

The Prophet also encouraged his Companions to make use of these ways and methods of the Sunnah to solve any kind of problem. For example, he said, "One who applies reasoning (*mujtabid*) is rewarded regardless of he is right or wrong,"<sup>68</sup> indicating that any conclusion based on *ijtihad* procedures will be worth rewarding. At the same time, his saying points to the value of *ijtihad* in any condition.<sup>69</sup> According to the Prophet Muḥammad, however, independent reasoning is valuable on the condition that it is grounded in knowledge.<sup>70</sup> Those who draw conclusions without grounding in knowledge will pay a heavy price for their misconduct in the Hereafter. Therefore, the expression "I apply independent reasoning" by Mu'adh does not signify an arbitrary comment but a comparison with a rule derived from the Book or the Sunnah.<sup>71</sup>

The *ijtihad* practice of the Companions matches well with the foregoing framework. They attempted to resolve any problem primarily and directly within the framework of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. If there was no direct mention of a given problem in the Qur'ān or the Sunnah, they looked for a principle in these two original sources to establish some kind of causality or relation. They compared the problem in question with this principle and tried to establish an

<sup>68</sup> Al-Bukhārī, "al-I'tisām, 21"; Muslim, "al-Aqḍiyah," 15.

<sup>69</sup> According to al-Ṣindī (d. 1138/1726), al-Nawawī reports that the *mujtabid*, on the first instance, is rewarded for reasoning and accuracy, while he is, on the second instance, only rewarded for reasoning. Therefore, it apparently supports the argument that reasoning is valuable in any case; see Abū l-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Hādī al-Sindī al-Tatawī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Sindī 'alā Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (along with al-Nasā'ī's *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* and al-Suyūṭī's *Sharḥ [Zabr al-rubā fī sharḥ al-Mujtabā]* in *Sunan al-Nasā'ī bi-sarḥ al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī wa-Ḥāshiyat al-Imām al-Sindī*; Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyyah, 1986), VIII, 224.

<sup>70</sup> See Abū Dāwūd, "al-Aqḍiyah," 2.

<sup>71</sup> Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma'ālim al-Sunan wa-buwa sharḥ Sunan al-Imām Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Ṭabbākḥ (Aleppo: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1932), IV, 165; Abū l-Ṭayyib Muḥammad Shams al-ḥaqq ibn Amīr 'Alī al-Diyānuwī al-'Azīmābādī, *'Awn al-ma'būd sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), IX, 368; al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunnah*, X, 117.

“overcoming conviction” (*ẓann ghālib*).<sup>72</sup> The Caliph ‘Umar summarized this approach as follows: “Our opinions are merely convictions and strained.”<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, it is worth noting that a conviction attained through independent reasoning is not a simple estimate but expresses a certain intellectual effort and endeavor.<sup>74</sup>

Words by Ibn Mas‘ūd about the methodology to be followed in identifying the resolution for a problem are similar to the *ḥadīth* with Mu‘ādh. Ibn Mas‘ūd says,

We lived such an age when neither nor opinions were asked nor our names were mentioned. Then, Allah brought us to the point you see. Now, whoever is addressed a question from now on should decide on the basis of the Book of Allah. If he cannot find the resolution in the Book of Allah, then he should decide on the basis of the Sunnah of Rasūl Allāh. If there is no resolution about such matter in both the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, then he should decide on them through resolution by the wise. None of them should ever fear or shy away. Indeed, what is *ḥalāl* and what is *ḥarām* is certain. There are uncertainties between the two. Then, abandon what makes you doubt and head for what makes you sure.<sup>75</sup>

Ibn Mas‘ūd addresses the hierarchy of evidence in general terms in his speech. Accordingly, he gives an order, “the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, and consensus (*ijmā‘*),” and presents *ijtibād* as the fourth method to apply during inference (*istinbā‘*). According to Ibn Mas‘ūd, a performer of *ijtibād* (*mujtabid*) will be more involved in this final option thanks to his knowledge and experience. Therefore, he should courageously address and resolve problems without hesitation. For this purpose, he refers to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet<sup>76</sup> and tells the *mujtabid* to act in awareness about “certainty of what is *ḥalāl* and what is *ḥarām*.” He recommends that they abandon more doubtful opinions and opt for more reliable ones. Moreover, Ibn Mas‘ūd promotes

<sup>72</sup> Abū Zayd Walī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar: Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn al-musammā Dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-l-khabar fī tārīkh al-‘Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man ‘āṣarabum min dbawī l-sha’n al-akbar*, ed. Khalīl Shihādah (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 573.

<sup>73</sup> Abū Dāwūd, “al-Aqḍiyah,” 7; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, X, 200.

<sup>74</sup> Al-‘Aẓīmābādī, *‘Awn al-ma’būd*, IX, 365.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Dārimī, “al-Muqaddimah,” 23; al-Nasā’ī, “Adab al-qaḍā’,” 11.

<sup>76</sup> See Al-Bukhārī, “al-Īmān,” 37; Muslim, “al-Musāqāt,” 107.

cautious behavior in doubtful situations, saying that “*ḥarām* shall overcome *ḥalāl* if the two are present together.”<sup>77</sup>

In another speech, Ibn Mas‘ūd highlights the enormous responsibility and effort required for inference. If a *mujtabid* cannot attain a resolution on the basis of *shar‘ī* references, Ibn Mas‘ūd encourages him to make a decision on the basis of personal experience and *fiqh* perception, saying, “If you are helpless, you make an explanation and do not hesitate.” Then, he strictly warns him to express arbitrary opinions without grounding in any principle and underlines the necessity of grounding in a principle at every stage of *ijtibād*: “If it hadn’t been for any of them (the Qur‘ān, the Sunnah, the views of pious men, and your appropriate reasoning), do not be ashamed and avoid what is beyond.”<sup>78</sup>

For Ibn Mas‘ūd, it is not sufficient only to make use of tools and methods provided by methodology while evaluating an injunction (*naṣṣ*). Indeed, he says, “Embrace knowledge before it fades away. Avoid concentrating on useless matters, falling into innovation and heading into compulsory comment. Your duty (in this subject) is to obey the tradition (which the Companions followed).”<sup>79</sup> Thus, he emphasizes that *ijtibād* does not mean making inappropriate comments on injunctions;<sup>80</sup> on the contrary, it means the conscious,

<sup>77</sup> Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, VII, 199.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 301; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, VIII, 187.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Dārimī, “al-Muqaddimah,” 23; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘d ibn Manī‘ al-Zuhrī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), IX, 170; al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, XI, 252; Abū l-‘Abbās Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *al-Fatḥ al-mubīn fī sharḥ al-Arba‘īn*, ed. Aḥmād Jāsim Muḥammad and Quṣayy Muḥammad Nawras al-Ḥallāq (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2008), 495. Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) explains the expression “وَعَلَيْكُمْ وَبِالْعَتِيقِ” through “ما كان عليه الصحابة رضي الله عنهم”, as the method, path etc. followed by the Companions. Given the context, we chose the word “tradition” for translation; see Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Jāmi‘*, II, 171.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī makes the following assessment about the semantic framework Ibn Mas‘ūd might intend with the mentioned words: “*Ījtibād* takes place in two manners about issues where no general or particular evidence is available. First method is to take into account the concepts and content of the matter and to analyse the injunction under which it should be included through a clear and accurate comparison. This is the primary task of *mujtabid* in determining *shar‘ī* judgment. The second manner is overconcentration on unimportant aspects

appropriate, and accurate use of tools and methods provided by the methodology. With the final sentence, Ibn Mas‘ūd points out the methods applied by the Companions as the way to save *mujtabid* from such outrageous attempts. Thus, he instructs posterity that the methodological aspect of the Sunnah can only be learned through the practice of the Companions.

In addition to his sayings, some attitudes of Ibn Mas‘ūd provide significant data regarding his conception of *ijtibād*. In this context, we can consider the *ijtibād* about a woman who was married before the bride wealth was set and whose husband died prior to the wedding night. Ibn Mas‘ūd indicated that he had no knowledge about this specific example. Accordingly, he initially asked his respondents to consult another person. However, since they could not obtain a conclusion for a month, he said, “On this matter, I will talk grounding completely on my own reasoning. If my opinion is accurate, it comes from Allah; if it is wrong, then it comes from me and Satan. Allah and His Messenger are released from erroneous reasoning.” Having heard the reasoning by Ibn Mas‘ūd, some members of the Ashja‘ Tribe said, “We attest that in this matter, you have passed the judgment which the Prophet passed for another woman, called Barwa‘ bint Wāshiq, from our tribe.” Thereupon, Ibn Mas‘ūd determined that his reasoning was compliant with the Sunnah, and he became very content.<sup>81</sup>

It is interesting that Ibn Mas‘ūd felt the need to say, “I will talk grounding completely on my own reasoning,” before answering the question. In consideration of the entire narrative, he thus implies that his reasoning about the problem is grounded primarily on experience and reason. Therefore, he wanted to express that he would think

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to distinguish two similar matters or collective assessment of two dissimilar issues grounding on irrelevant distant similarities. Many *fiqh* scholars have opted for this wrong path.” According to Ibn Rajab, the true method is deductions in line with the methodology of the Companions (see Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Jāmi‘*, II, 171). It is not improbable that Ibn Mas‘ūd thought so. Indeed, he indicates that the Prophet, on three occasions, said, “هالك المتطعون” “whoever chose falsity in words and deeds perished” (see Muslim, “al-‘Ilm,” 7). Pursuant to this argument, Ibn Ḥajar quotes the abovementioned explanation by Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, mentioning certain imāms, and indicates that the words by the Prophet are compliant with the second and incorrect method given by Ibn Rajab (see al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 267). Therefore, Ibn Mas‘ūd might be explaining these words of the Prophet.

<sup>81</sup> Abū Dāwūd, “al-Nikāḥ,” 33; al-Nasā‘ī, “al-Nikāḥ,” 69.



before trying to make a resolution to the extent of his capacity.<sup>82</sup> Ibn Mas'ūd continued his words: "If my opinion is accurate, it comes from Allah; if it is wrong, then it comes from me and Satan. Allah and His Messenger are released from erroneous reasoning." Thus, he emphasized that he would display any necessary effort to identify the verdict of the Legislator (*Shāri'*) on the question, and any possible error would arise from his own weakness and shortage of knowledge. Indeed, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah include a judgment for almost every problem, either implicitly or explicitly.<sup>83</sup>

Therefore, Ibn Mas'ūd ascribes to reason during *ijtibād* a role that reveals a judicial connection between an injunction and an occurrence and not one that invents judgments or conclusions. His pleasure in the coincidence between the judgment by the Prophet and his reasoning is due to the fulfilment of his objective in an accurate manner.<sup>84</sup>

Another issue about *ijtibād* is when the *mujtabid* should apply this method. Above all, the Companions agree that *ijtibād* cannot be applied to problems where the judgment is clearly indicated through injunctions.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, it is impossible for the *mujtabid* to know all injunctions. In the previous example, Ibn Mas'ūd has opted for his personal reasoning about an issue for which he was unaware of the resolution by the Sunnah.

The attitude of Ibn Mas'ūd toward the reasoning by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 42/662) in a similar case provides remarkable data regarding the demonstration of various aspects of the matter. The narrative goes as follows: "Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī was asked about respective shares in heritage of daughter, daughter of son and sister of a deceased man. He replied, 'Half of the heritage belongs to the daughter of the deceased, and half belongs to his sister.' Thus, the daughter of his son was deprived of his inheritance. Abū Mūsā told the questioner, "Now go to 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (ask him too); his response would be like my decision." They then brought up the matter

<sup>82</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ādam ibn Mūsā al-Athyūbī al-Wallawī, *Sharḥ Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-musammā Dhakbīrat al-ʿuqbā fī sharḥ al-Mujtabā*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Mi'rāj al-Dawliyyah li-l-Nashr, 2003), XXVIII, 80.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma'ālim al-sunan*, III, 213; al-'Azīmābādī, *ʿAwn al-ma'bud*, VI, 105.

<sup>84</sup> Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāmah al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1994), XIII, 351.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *al-Fuṣūl*, II, 319.

to Ibn Mas‘ūd, reporting the judgment by Abū Mūsá and declaring it was him who sent them. Ibn Mas‘ūd approved Abū Mūsá, saying, “If I do so, for sure I will be in perversion and go astray from the true path. In this matter, I will pass a judgment which was passed also by the Prophet. The daughter of the deceased takes half of heritage, the daughter of his son gets one-sixth and completes two-thirds of the amount. The rest is the share of his sister.” Learning the answer by Ibn Mas‘ūd, Abū Mūsá al-Ash‘arī approved him: “You needn’t consult me anymore as long as this wise man is with you.”<sup>86</sup>

Abū Mūsá al-Ash‘arī conducted reasoning on a problem without knowing the previous judgment on a similar matter by the Prophet. He thought his judgment would be approved by Ibn Mas‘ūd. Nevertheless, Ibn Mas‘ūd shared the resolution by the Prophet and showed that Abū Mūsá passed a judgment about an issue that was not available for reasoning.

The foregoing expressions, which are clearly well chosen by Ibn Mas‘ūd, show how the latter assessed the situation from the perspective of Abū Mūsá and himself. Ibn Mas‘ūd did not make a negative remark about reasoning by Abū Mūsá, showing that the *mujtabid* may apply reasoning in line with general religious objectives and principles even though he is unaware of the relevant injunction.<sup>87</sup> This attitude does not contradict the abovementioned recommendation by Ibn Mas‘ūd that “*mujtabid* should not shy away from matters about which he is not well-informed, and should avoid what is beyond.” Indeed, when the Companions had to make a decision on the basis of their opinion, they grounded it on a principle taken from the Qur‘ān, the Sunnah or consensus, not only from reason.<sup>88</sup>

On the other hand, Ibn Mas‘ūd acted in awareness of his privileged position and disapproved of a decision by Abū Mūsá al-Ash‘arī to

<sup>86</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “al-Farā’iq,” 8.

<sup>87</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Khalaf Ibn Baṭṭāl al-Qurṭubī, *Sharḥ Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī li-Ibn Baṭṭāl*, ed. Abū Tamīm Yāsir ibn Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), VIII, 351.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Aḥmad al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār ‘an uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Muḥammad ‘Umar (along with Abū l-‘Umr al-Bazdawī’s *Uṣūl al-Bazdawī*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997), III, 221.

deprive the daughter of the son of the deceased of the heritage to avoid contradicting the explicit Sunnah.<sup>89</sup> This is why, according to Ibn Mas'ūd, his declaration of an opinion in line with the expectations of Abū Mūsā despite his knowledge of the Sunnah is “perversion.” Consequently, Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī abandoned his reasoning through the expression of his admiration for Ibn Mas'ūd's level of knowledge.<sup>90</sup>

## VI. Social Aspect of the Sunnah

On many occasions, the Prophet underlined the strong connection between the concepts of the Sunnah and community. For example, talking to Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān about future seditions, the Prophet stated that “a society to abandon the Sunnah will come up” and ordered them “to abide by Muslim community and their leader when such time arrives.”<sup>91</sup> In another narrative, the Prophet talked about cases in which the sins of a Muslim shall be forgiven, adding the “association of Allah with others, violation of act and abandonment of the Sunnah” as exceptions. He was then asked, “O Rasūl Allāh! We understand why the association of Allah with others cannot be forgiven, but what does ‘violation of act and abandonment of the Sunnah’ mean?” Thereupon, Prophet Muḥammad replied, “Violation of act means to stand with a sword before a person whose hands you held onto and whom you obeyed. Abandonment of the Sunnah means leaving the community.”<sup>92</sup> Ibn Mas'ūd quotes some words of the Prophet about the religious consequences of leaving the community. On one occasion, the Prophet ordered, “Kill one who leaves the community.”<sup>93</sup> Another time, Ibn Mas'ūd saw the Prophet stand up and say,

My word to the One except Whom there is no God, shedding the blood of a Muslim who says ‘There is no God but Allah. Muḥammad is His

<sup>89</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, XII, 17.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Bukhārī, “al-Manaqīb,” 25; Muslim, “al-Imārah,” 51.

<sup>92</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XII, 30; al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, I, 207. Al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) claims the ḥadīth is authentic; see Abū ‘Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Talkbīṣ al-Mustadrak*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (along with al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī's *al-Mustadrak*; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990, I, 207).

<sup>93</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-faḥīḥ wa-l-mutaḥaqqiq*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Ādil ibn Yūsuf al-‘Azzāzī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1996), I, 416.

messenger,' is never *ḥalāl*. There are three exceptions: One who abandons his religion and leaves his community, a married man who commits adultery, and one who will be slain against the life of another.<sup>94</sup>

Ibn Mas'ūd always called the attention of his audience to issues such as principles for maintaining the Muslim community and the responsibilities of an individual toward the community. Thus, he laid special stress on social unity. During a speech, he claimed that "obedience" is the principal character of Muslim society, saying:

O people! To obey and to act together with community is your responsibility. They are the rope which Allah orders us to hold. Whatever you find evil in community and obedience is better than whatever you will like in case you leave them.<sup>95</sup>

In line with his social responsibility, the Prophet primarily taught the Companions the principle of "commanding right and forbidding wrong." Indeed, Rasūl Allāh held a meeting that particularly focused on this subject matter, and approximately forty Companions, including Ibn Mas'ūd, attended his speech. The Prophet stated, "Indeed, you are a community to achieve victories, booty, and conquests." Then, he warned, "Those who attain such days among you should fear Allah, order the good and forbid the evil" before adding, "Whoever invents a lie on my behalf should get ready for his seat in hell."<sup>96</sup> Thus, he clarified that good is what is considered appropriate by the order he taught them, while evil is heretical innovations forbidden by his orders. Accordingly, Ibn Mas'ūd said, "The fact is, the Sunnah is what every community abandons first as to religion."<sup>97</sup> Ibn Mas'ūd stated that a society in which good is not ordered and evil is not avoided will go astray from the path of the Prophet.

<sup>94</sup> Muslim, "al-Qasāmah wa-l-muḥāribīn," 25; al-Tirmidhī, "al-Diyāt," 10; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Ḥudūd," 1.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, III, 83. Al-Dhahabī indicates the narrative fulfils the prerequisites stipulated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim; see al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ al-Mustadrak*, III, 83.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, "al-Fitan," 73; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 220.

<sup>97</sup> Al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, IV, 564. Al-Dhahabī considers the narrative compliant with prerequisites stipulated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim; see al-Dhahabī, *Talkhīṣ al-Mustadrak*, IV, 564.

In this regard, Ibn Mas'ūd also quoted the following words by the Prophet: "The first event to start collapse of Children of Israel occurred when they came across a person (who made a practice of evil) and said to him, 'Man! Fear God and do not do what you are doing anymore, since it is not halal for you,' but then spent time and ate together with this man the following day. As they behaved so, Allah assimilated their hearts to one another (made their hearts dark and firm). Then, the Prophet recited the Qur'ān verse: 'Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary.'<sup>98</sup> Then, he added, 'I swear to Allah that you shall order the good and avoid the evil. You shall prevent whoever does wrong and turn him back to truth and not allow him deviate from truth ever again. Otherwise, Allah shall assimilate your hearts to one another and curse you, as He did them'.<sup>99</sup>

On another occasion, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd associated the subsistence of the Sunnah on the social level with the qualities of scholars and rulers. According to him, if these classes and groups neglect their responsibilities, heretical innovations will become widespread and replace the Sunnah in the course of time. Consequently, the generations raised in such an environment will take the innovations of the Sunnah and defend them erroneously, leading to inevitable social collapse.<sup>100</sup>

## VII. Political Aspect of the Sunnah

The Sunnah provides the framework for numerous important future problems. One of the most significant is the arrangement of relations between rulers and subjects in the wake of the Age of the Prophet. Ibn Mas'ūd is a remarkable figure to help us understand this aspect of the Sunnah. Indeed, he is a person who was addressed by the Prophet himself as follows: "If I were to leave behind someone as a ruler without consultation, I would have left Ibn Mas'ūd."<sup>101</sup> Ibn Mas'ūd was

<sup>98</sup> Q 5:78.

<sup>99</sup> See Abū Dāwūd, "al-Malāḥim," 17; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, X, 146; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Jāmi'*, X, 44.

<sup>100</sup> Abū l-'Ulā Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī bi-sbarḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), VI, 374.

<sup>101</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, "al-Manāqib," 107; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, II, 10; Ibn Mājah, "al-Īmān," 21; al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, III, 359.

so well informed about political and administrative dimensions of the Sunnah that he deserved such praise by the Prophet.

In terms of relations between a ruler and subjects, Ibn Mas‘ūd primarily focuses on the political unity of Muslim society and the avoidance of problems that may prejudice this unity. In this regard, the most important question is inappropriate deeds by those in power. In fact, the Prophet provided prospective warnings about this problem. According to a narrative quoted by Ibn Mas‘ūd, the Prophet said, “After my days shall come up some rulers who say what they haven’t done and who do what they are not ordered to do,”<sup>102</sup> declaring the advent of some rulers who would abandon their responsibilities (in other words, the ruling approach established by the Sunnah) and would behave arbitrarily in line with their own will. In another narrative through Ibn Mas‘ūd, the Prophet said, “After my days shall come up rulers who make use of public assets and interests for their personal good<sup>103</sup> and shall appear some other affairs which you will dislike.” The Companions asked him what he commanded to those to saw those days. In reply, the Prophet said, “Do your part and ask Allah for your due,”<sup>104</sup> encouraging Muslims to abide by their rulers.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, revolt against political authority may lead a society to unforeseeable catastrophes.<sup>106</sup> The Prophet twice refrained from answering a question about rulers who require their subjects to obey them despite behaving unfairly before, on the third occasion, explaining, “Listen and obey. Indeed, both they and you are held responsible for what you are responsible.”<sup>107</sup> In the eyes of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), the

<sup>102</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 374.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Nawawī points to the different meanings of the word “أثرة” in the narrative before explaining it as “the exploitation of state treasury by rulers in line with their personal interests.” Abū Zakariyyā’ Yaḥyá ibn Sharaf ibn Mūrī al-Nawawī, *al-Minbāj fī sbarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1997), XII, 232.

<sup>104</sup> Muslim, “al-Imārah,” 45.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Nawawī, *al-Minbāj*, XII, 232.

<sup>106</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 6-7.

<sup>107</sup> Muslim, “al-Imārah,” 49.

understanding of obedience in the foregoing narratives is one of the most essential principles of Islam.<sup>108</sup>

During a speech in this context, Ibn Mas'ūd expressed in person the abovementioned approach of the Prophet: "Indeed, the ruler represents a seat for which you are tested. If he is fair, his share is reward and your share is gratitude; if he is cruel, his share is sin and your share is patience."<sup>109</sup> On another occasion, Ibn Mas'ūd gave a similar answer to a difficult question with regard to obedience to rulers. He was asked, "What would you say about a person who has girded his weapons, went for battle together with his commanders and then compels us to some affairs beyond our limits?" Ibn Mas'ūd replied as follows: "I swear to Allah that I don't know what to say. However, the Prophet never held us responsible for something else until we fulfilled his previous order. Indeed, you will attain benevolence as long as you forbear from Allah."<sup>110</sup> Another time, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd expressed his general approach with the words, "It is bad to come into conflict (*al-khilāf sbar*")."<sup>111</sup> Practicing this principle in his deeds, Ibn Mas'ūd abided by a reasoning of 'Uthmān even though he disapproved of it, and he even warned 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf (d. 32/652) about the same issue and made him obey the Caliph.<sup>112</sup> Again, when the Caliph 'Uthmān dismissed him from his post in al-Kūfah and called him to Medina, some told him "not to go; we will protect you and prevent any unfavorable thing from happening to you." Nevertheless, he refused these offers of help, saying, "Indeed, his right upon me requires my obedience. In addition, certain affairs and seditions might occur in the

<sup>108</sup> Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib wa-l-wara' wa-l-shubhab wa-bayān mubāḥibā wa-maḥzūrībā wa-ikhtilāf al-nās fī ṭalabibā wa-l-radd 'alā l-ghālīṭin fihī*, ed. Nūr Sa'īd (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1992), 64.

<sup>109</sup> Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, VII, 468; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Jāmi'*, IX, 475.

<sup>110</sup> Al-Bukhārī, "al-Jihād wa-l-siyar," 111.

<sup>111</sup> Al-Ṣan'ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, II, 516; Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥabīb ibn Sa'd al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-āthbār*, ed. Abū l-Wafā' al-Afghānī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 30; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Manāsik," 7; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, III, 205.

<sup>112</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Āmulī al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1967), IV, 268.

future. I would never like to be the first person to open the door for such occurrences.”<sup>113</sup>

Expressions such as “Listen and obey” by the Prophet are understood by Ibn Mas‘ūd as the need to not revolt against final decisions by rulers despite adverse opinions, criticisms, and warnings and to take part with a ruler by appreciating obedience to the ruler as a religious duty. An example of this approach occurred during apostasy (*riddah*) events. A group that included prominent Companions such as Ibn Mas‘ūd and ‘Umar objected to the decision of war by Abū Bakr.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, upon persistence by the Caliph, they fulfilled their respective tasks. As an opponent, Ibn Mas‘ūd also obeyed the order and was within the crew that undertook the duty of protecting significant locations in Medina.<sup>115</sup> In the wake of the events, Ibn Mas‘ūd and numerous Companions closely witnessed how *riddah* revolts, the most serious problem faced by the post-Prophet rule, were resolved thanks to this method. Ibn Mas‘ūd admitted that the Companions who agreed with him were wrong and that Abū Bakr made a vital move for the survival of the Muslim community thanks to his persistent attitude against Ibn Mas‘ūd and others.<sup>116</sup>

Other narratives clarify what the Prophet meant by obedience to a ruler. For example, according to a narrative, Rasūl Allāh heralded the

<sup>113</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr al-Shaybānī, *Uṣd al-ghābāb fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994), III, 286; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf et al. (Beirut: Mu‘assasāt al-Risālah, 1985), III, 300; al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah*, ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994), IV, 201.

<sup>114</sup> For relevant objections by ‘Umar, see Abū Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn Wāqid al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-riddah ma‘a nabdhah min Futūḥ al-‘Irāq wa-dbtkr al-Mutbannā ibn Ḥārithab*, ed. Yaḥyá al-Jabūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 48-53.

<sup>115</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Ṭabarī*, II, 245; al-Dhahabī, *Tārikh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-masbābir wa-l-a‘lām*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003), III, 28.

<sup>116</sup> See Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá ibn Jābir ibn Dāwūd al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1988), 99-100; ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārikh*, ed. ‘Umar Abd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1997), II, 201.



advent of rulers to object the *sharīʿah* criteria in the future. He wanted the strong to react with their power and the weak to react with their hearts. Moreover, he strictly warned them to tolerate the misdeeds of such rulers and to follow them. Nevertheless, when a Companion asked him, "Should we fight against them?" the Prophet replied, "No, as long as they perform *ṣalāt*,"<sup>117</sup> calling his community to patience in the face of a ruler who, in a sense, fulfilled his religious responsibilities, albeit at minimum level. In another narrative, Muʿādh ibn Jabal asked the Prophet, "O Rasūl Allāh! What would you say if we are ruled by persons who do not abide by your Sunnah and disregard your orders?" Muḥammad replied, "There shall be no obedience to one who does not obey Allah"<sup>118</sup> and said that obedience to the ruler is out of the question if he acts against the Sunnah.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, Ibn Masʿūd was aware that the misdeeds of rulers, if not duly reacted to in the right time, would be copied by the masses in the course of time. Consequently, the Sunnah would become innovation and vice versa, and the acknowledged (*maʿrūf*) would become the rejected (*munkar*) and vice versa.<sup>120</sup> Advising the community about the vital importance of warning the rulers for the survival of the Sunnah, Ibn Masʿūd showed his finger (as a sign of smallness) and said, "You will be ruled by rulers who will reduce the Sunnah to so little. If you leave them to their own devices, they will cause huge catastrophes."<sup>121</sup>

All the previous examples show the conviction of Ibn Masʿūd that the relations between rulers and subjects in the Muslim community can advance on the basis of absolute obedience. The only exception is cases in which rulers make requests that require revolt against Allah. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd said, "Obedience to anyone is out of question in regard to revolt against Allah."<sup>122</sup> In such a case, the community

<sup>117</sup> Muslim, "al-Imārah," 62; al-Tirmidhī, "al-Fitan," 78; Abū Dāwūd, "al-Sunnah," 31. For explanation of the ḥadīth, see al-Nawawī, *al-Minbāj*, XII, 243; Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raʿūf ibn Tāj al-ʿārifīn ibn ʿAlī al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣagbīr*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1972), IV, 99.

<sup>118</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, XX, 442.

<sup>119</sup> For an example about the attitude of Ibn Masʿūd, see Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, VII, 325.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *al-Bidaʿ*, 160.

<sup>121</sup> Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, IX, 298; al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, IV, 564.

<sup>122</sup> Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā bi-l-āthbār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bindārī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), V, 342. For ḥadīths constituting the basis for the words by ʿAbd

cannot abide by the rulers. He practically showed that “disobedience” cannot be construed as “revolt against the rule.”<sup>123</sup>

### Conclusion

The Companions’ understanding of the Sunnah reflects the exemplary behaviors of the Prophet Muḥammad as well as his way of thinking. Indeed, the Prophet provided the Companions not only with attitudes to be imitated but also taught them the essential principles and methods of understanding the Qur’ān and the Sunnah while generating opinions or searching for resolution to a problem in any aspect of life. Thus, the criteria for resembling and obeying the Prophet appeared not only in behavior but also in thought. Ibn Mas‘ūd lived during the best part of the Age of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and took significant posts in those days. Indeed, this era was a continuation of the Age of the Prophet since both aspects of the Sunnah, particularly its intellectual dimension, were reflected in daily life at the ideal level.

Our paper initially proposes the necessity to review behavior-centered definitions of the Sunnah and to redefine the Sunnah to include thought. Such a definition takes into account the historical function of the Rightly Guided Caliphs era and will become more precise by means of studies that address the roles of jurist Companion Ibn Mas‘ūd in the process. Thereupon, it will be understood that the principle of compliance with the Sunnah is also a prerequisite for methods to comment on and understand religious (*sbar‘i*) injunctions.

According to the perception of the Sunnah by Ibn Mas‘ūd, the Prophet Muḥammad is a protected and accountable subject of Allah who is equipped with all kinds of knowledge. In this regard, the Prophet is the most reliable source to learn the Sunnah. The Companions were his chosen assistants during the Age of the Prophet and therefore the essential sources to learn the Sunnah for posterity.

On the other hand, Ibn Mas‘ūd particularly highlights the integrity of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, a point meticulously emphasized by the Prophet himself. As a result of this approach, Ibn Mas‘ūd sees no

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Allāh Ibn Mas‘ūd, see al-Bukhārī, “al-Aḥkām,” 4; Muslim, “al-Imārah,” 39; Abū Dāwūd, “al-Jihād,” 97; al-Tirmidhī, “al-Jihād,” 29.

<sup>123</sup> For an actual example by Ibn Mas‘ūd on the issue, see al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, III, 80.

difference in authority between the Qurʾān and the Sunnah and can easily attribute Sunnah-based judgments to the Qurʾān. Whenever he came across any discourses that differentiated these two sources or only took the Qurʾān into account, he called the attention of his respondent to this point and tried to provide him with the proper perspective.

The awareness provided by the Prophet Muḥammad to his Companions regarding “the necessity of grounding all deeds and thoughts on a religious principle” is also reflected in the *ijtibād* understanding of Ibn Masʿūd. In the practice of Ibn Masʿūd, *ijtibād* includes religious injunctions and principles through this methodological form of the Sunnah for understanding and interpreting any situation and incident. Accordingly, Ibn Masʿūd applied reasoning by seeking a religious ground for the matter regardless of the severity of the problem.

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