

Another difficulty with Waqidi is that he avoids narrators who are known to be unreliable and inserts in their place other names. For instance, he reports a tradition on the authority of Ma'mar and Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah who said that Zuhri reported that Nabhan reported that Umme Salma related that she and Maymuna were the Prophet (peace be upon him) when Ibn Umm Maktum entered the premises (and it happened after the revelation of injunction regarding the seclusion of women (*hijab*)). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said she, 'asked us to observe hijab', whereupon we said, 'O Prophet of God (peace be upon him), he is blind, he cannot see us'. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Are you two also blind? Don't you see him.'<sup>75</sup> This tradition was reported by Yunus but Waqidi, as we have seen, eliminated the name of Yunus and inserted in its place the names of Ma'mar and Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Akhi al Zuhri. This mutilation was done, perhaps, to prove the authenticity of the tradition because we know that Yunus is one of those reporters (*Rawis*) whose traditions are not considered fully reliable.

Waqidi, while reporting a tradition sometimes does not mention a definite reporter from whom he heard the tradition; sometimes he does not tell who the eye-witness of the incident was and often he violates the chronological order in the names of his narrators. Sometimes he disconnects the actual link of the reporters and adds the clauses like, "some of our companions said", "a certain Shaykh has described", etc.

Moreover, when we go into the details of the main incidents described by Waqidi and try to find confirmation in the writings of his contemporaries, we find no reference to it-else-where.

Thus, coupled with his loose statements and his diversion from the general rules of tradition, Waqidi no longer stands in the line of standard authorities of tradition; and those who hold Waqidi to be unreliable are in the right.

description. In order to maintain the continuity of events, Waqidi adopted a new style of his own. He mentioned, at the outset, all the reporters in a single sequence and then reported the actual saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him). While so doing he is not careful about the chronological order of the reporters. Sometimes he ascribes, for example, the traditions of Ma'mar to Ibn Akhi az-Zuhri and vice versa.<sup>72</sup> Sometimes the narrators he mentions are obscure and doubtful, and very often he fabricates the chains of narrators (*Isnad*) as well as the text of traditions (*Matn*). To take an example, 'Ali ibn al-Madini reports on Waqidi's authority that he said that Malik had told him that Hisham ibn Sa'd related that Zayd ibn Aslam said that 'Iyad ibn 'Abd Allah replied that 'Abd Allah, son of 'Alqama ibn al-Ghafwa' told that Safiyya, the daughter of Abu 'Ubayd reported that Hafsa said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared, "Fosterage is established after ten sucklings."<sup>73</sup>

We find that in this *Hadith*, the name of Malik in the line of reporters is confusing. It is not clearly mentioned as to which Malik he refers to Malik if used without mentioning his father's name, will normally be considered as Malik ibn Anas the famous traditionist (d. 179 A.H.). But historically speaking, Waqidi's name is not mentioned in the list of Malik's *Ruwat*. This Malik, therefore, must be someone else or he is a product of Waqidi's own imagination.

He is also fond of narrating meaningless traditions which violate the principles of probability. For instance, he reports a tradition which says, "You are keeping fast when you are fasting, and you are breaking it when you are breaking the fast."<sup>74</sup> Apart from the omission of two lines and the difficulty of identifying Malik, the Prophet (peace be upon him) could not have made such a statement that has no significance.

238 A.H.) “Waqidi is one of those who concocted the traditions themselves and ascribed them to the Prophet (peace be upon him).<sup>61</sup> In Imam Hanbal’s words, “Waqidi is a liar who mutilates the traditions.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Bukhari, one of the greatest critics of tradition, Waqidi was a person whom traditionists have rejected,<sup>63</sup> and “His traditions have been discarded.”<sup>64</sup> Abu Dawud (d. 275 A.H.), too, has rejected him. He says, “Neither I take his traditions, nor do I report on his authority, for I believe that he concocts traditions.<sup>65</sup> Imam Nasa’i, dealing with the list of liars, enumerates Waqidi as one of those prominent liars who used to coin traditions themselves and ascribe them to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him).<sup>66</sup>

Apart from these outstanding other critics like Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Bushshar Bundar (d. 252 A.H.), Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Ya’qub Jawzjani (d. 256 A.H.), Abu Bishr ad-Dulabi (d. 310 A.H.), Musa b. Hammad al-Uqayli (d. 322 A.H.), Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 327 A.H.), al-Daraqutni (d. 385 A.H.), Imam Nawawi (d. 676 A.H.) and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Baqi al-Zurqani (d. 1122 A.H.) have passed somewhat similar remarks about his unauthenticity, and unreliability. Bundar, for instance, remarked, “I have never seen a liar greater than Waqidi.”<sup>67</sup> Others have described him as unreliable,<sup>68</sup> *Da’if*,<sup>69</sup> the rejected, and one who forges traditions<sup>70</sup> etc. Imam Dhahabi (673-748 A.H.) after mentioning the opinions of other critics about Waqidi, himself remarked, “Al-Waqidi’s unreliability has been established by the consensus of opinion.”<sup>71</sup>

Let us now examine Waqidi from the point of view of his style of reporting events. The early biographers and historians used to relate every event and part thereof along with its narrators, and broke thereby the continuity of their

☆ اللہ بزرگ اللہ تلمش القلوب وتنعط الذنوب وبه یرضی علام الغیوب وبه تفرح الکروب. ☆

Ibn 'Adi,<sup>41</sup> Imam Shafī'i,<sup>42</sup> Yahya ibn. Ma'in,<sup>43</sup> 'Ali ibn al-Madini,<sup>44</sup> Ahmad ibn Hanbal,<sup>45</sup> Bundar,<sup>46</sup> Imam Bukhari,<sup>47</sup> Abu Dawud,<sup>48</sup> Tirmidihi,<sup>49</sup> Nasai,<sup>50</sup> and many other accepted authorities hold very poor opinion about Waqidi.

Abu Zar'a, his contemporary and one of the earliest authorities on Waqidi, remarks that 'Waqidi has been forsaken by other traditionists' and 'He is not careful in reporting traditions.'<sup>51</sup> According to Ibn 'Adi, another contemporary of Waqidi, "He is the cause of every trouble and his traditions are quite unreliable."<sup>52</sup> In Imam Shafī'i's words "Waqidi's books are bundles of lies"<sup>53</sup> and that "He was one of those seven liars of Medina who used to concoct the Isnad."<sup>54</sup> Yahya ibn Ma'in, a distinguished critic of tradition is of the opinion that Waqidi is *Da'if* and is unreliable.<sup>55</sup> When 'Ali ibn al-Madini came to Baghdad in 187 A.H., he called on various prominent authorities on tradition but was hesitant to attend the literary sitting of Waqidi and take the traditions from him. When his companions forced him to go to Waqidi, he consulted Ahmad ibn Hanbal asking him what place Waqidi occupied in the science of Hadith. Ahmad replied "It is not proper to take the traditions of Nabhan to Ma'mar."<sup>56</sup> Ibn Hanbal, thus, considered Waqidi as unreliable in *hadith*. 'Ali ibn al-Madini holds the same views when he remarks: Haytham ibn 'Adi (d. 207 A.H.) whose traditions are not agreeable to me, is more reliable than Waqidi.<sup>58</sup> This Haytham ibn 'Adi<sup>57</sup> had been declared as liar, unreliable and unauthentic by authorities like Bukhari, Abu Dawud and Nasa'i etc. 'Ali ibn al-Madini the teacher of Bukhari, further remarks, "Waqidi used to relate thirty thousand *Gharib* traditions."<sup>59</sup> Waqidi was to him so unreliable that he criticized not only his traditions, but was also unwilling to accept any statement made by him. Once he remarked, "I do not agree with him at all – neither in his traditions nor in *Ansāb*, nor in any other thing."<sup>60</sup> According to Ishaq ibn Rahwayh (d.

something about the woman who had administered poison in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) meal in the battle of Khaybar. The Imam, admitting his ignorance about the matter promised to satisfy the questioner after consulting some learned person. Later on, he got the information from Waqidi and related the matter to the questioner on Waqidi's authority.<sup>38</sup>

But the above story seems to be unreliable because Shayba is not able to give a satisfactory link of narrators, one of whom is missing. Moreover, the name of Waqidi is not to be found among the authorities from whom Malik related his traditions.

His other supporters state vaguely and in general terms that he was reliable without substantiating their remarks with concrete evidence. This shows that they were not sufficiently critical in assessing his worth. Besides, none of them figures among the eminent critics of tradition. It is remarkable that even some of his own supporters could not rely upon him in later years when it became obvious to them that the traditions related by him were incorrect and misleading. Among them can be enumerated: Isma'il ibn Zakariya (d. 173 A.H.), Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 182 A.H.), Ibn Namir (d. 199 A.H.), and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 A.H.)<sup>39</sup> Ibn Sa'd, his own disciple and scribe, though he devoted to Waqidi nine pages of the fifth volume of his book, '*Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* two pages of the seventh, had nothing to say about his reliability or authority. This omission on the part of Ibn Sa'd is not without significance. Knowing fully well the facts about his teacher, he seems to have refrained from making any comment on him.

In contrast to Waqidi's supporters there are other prominent authorities on tradition who have severely criticized him. Men like Abu Zar'a,<sup>40</sup>

Waqidi is said to have possessed a highly retentive memory. He himself claims: 'There are others whose books are greater than their memory while my memory is greater than my books are greater than their memory while my memory is greater than my books.'<sup>34</sup> Agreeing with him 'Qaymaz al-Dhahabi remarks: 'Waqidi had reached the perfection of his memory in the Maghazi and the Traditions etc.'<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Mujahid ibn Musa (d. 244 A.H.) remarks that he had taken his traditions from Waqidi who possessed the greatest memory. But in spite of his claim regarding highly retentive memory,<sup>36</sup> it is strange to learn that he could not memorize a small chapter of the Qur'an – the 'Surat al-Jumu'a. Ma'mun, it is said, once asked him to lead the Friday Prayer and recite that chapter in it. Although the Caliph along with 'Ali ibn Salih' (d. 229 A.H.) helped him in memorizing the passage, Waqidi could not do so.<sup>37</sup>

Waqidi has handed down many traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, the authenticity of these traditions and Waqidi's reliability has been challenged. Among his supporters are 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad ad-Darawardi (d. 187 A.H.), 'Abd Allah ibn al-Namir al-Hamadani (d. 199 A.H.), Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Musayyibi (d. 236 A.H.), Mus'ab ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Mus'ab ibn Thabit al-Zubayri (d. 236 A.H.), 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-'Azim Abu al-Fadl al-'Anbari al-Basri (d. 246 A.H.), Yazid ibn Harun (d. 260 A.H.), Ya'qub ibn Shayba (182-262 A.H.), Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Saghani (d. 270 A.H.) and Ibrahim ibn Ibrahim al-Harbi (198-285 A.H.).

According to Ya'qub ibn Shayba Waqidi was so great a traditionist that Imam Malik, one of the greatest authorities on traditions, had accepted him as an authority. Ya'qub relates the story in this way, The Imam was asked to tell

Waqidi has enjoyed a considerable reputation as a scholar. According to Muhammad ibn Salam al-Jumahi (d. 231 A.H.), "He was a great scholar of his time, was well versed in Islamic learning and wrote many books on different branches of knowledge like *Maghazi*, *Hadith*, *Tabaqat*, Biographies and Jurisprudence etc."<sup>25</sup> These books, according to him, were read not only in Baghdad but were carried away by travelers to the far off corners of the world as well.<sup>26</sup> He is reported to have employed two scribes who were continuously busy in copying manuscripts for his library<sup>27</sup> and writing the dictation of Waqidi day and night.<sup>28</sup> No wonder, therefore, that at his death he left a library of six hundred chests full of books.<sup>29</sup>

While Ibn an-Nadim (d. 235 A.H.) in his '*Al-Fihrist*'<sup>30</sup> and Yaqut (d. 626 A.H.) in '*Mu'jam al-Udab*'<sup>31</sup> ascribe 27 and 28 books respectively to Waqidi, other scholars related that he was the author of 32 books.<sup>32</sup> If these authorities are believed, the question arises why these books are unknown to the early historians. The reason, perhaps, is this that they have treated his short articles and small treatises as independent books and increased thereby their number. Moreover, the titles themselves suggest that they are small essays rather than books. To take for instance, the titles like 'Sadifa and the allegiance of Abu Bakr', 'On the battle of the Camel', 'On the battle of Siffin', 'The demise of the Prophet', 'The Martyrdom of Husayn, and 'The biography of Abu Bakr', etc. are not likely to have been given to books. Only an article or a booklet is sufficient for each topic. Thus we find that there is not much probability of the number of Waqidi's books rising to twenty-eight or thirty-two. Truly speaking, 'The only book available and complete in all respects is '*Maghazi Rasul Allah* or 'History of the military Campaigns of the Prophet.'<sup>33</sup>

Harun or Mamun. The story about his receiving the office of Qadi first appears in Yaqut's *Mujam al-udaba* without a source being given.<sup>16</sup> Another report to this effect has been provided by one Abu Yahya Harun ibn 'Abd Allah al-Zuhri (d. 232 A.H.), a judge of Egypt, while describing the friendly relations of Waqidi with Ma'mun, he mentions a letter sent by the former to the latter asking for some favors from him. Ma'mun, says Abu Yahya, wrote a note on the back of this letter, wherein a passing reference was made to Rashid's reign when Waqidi was holding the post of Qadi.<sup>17</sup> Further we are told that Waqidi was holding this post in 187 A.H. in the reign of Caliph Harun ar-Rashid. Ahmad ibn Mansur al-Ramadi (d. 265 A.H.) reports his meeting with 'Ali ibn al-Madini in 187 A.H. and says that Waqidi at that time was the Qadi of Baghdad.<sup>18</sup>

These reports tend to show that he was a *qadi* during the reign of Harun al-Rashid. But there are other sources too which prove that he was appointed to this post by Caliph Ma'mun.<sup>19</sup>

These authorities are unanimous on the point that Waqidi was appointed Qadi of 'Askar al-Mahdi,<sup>20</sup> a locality situated on the eastern quarters of Baghdad. Ibn Khallikan has wrongly ascribed to Ibn Qutayaba the statement that Waqidi was *qadi* of the Western side of Baghdad.<sup>21</sup> Ibn Qutayba only says in agreement with Ibn Sa'd that the *qadi* of the Western side conducted Waqidi's funeral services.<sup>22</sup>

Because Waqidi died in 207 A.H. holding the office of Qadi<sup>23</sup> and as he held this post for four years.<sup>24</sup> It can be inferred that he remained Qadi of the Eastern quarters of Baghdad from 203 to 207 A.H. If we must reconcile the reports of different authorities, it is possible that Waqidi was appointed to this post first by Harun and then in his later years, by Mamun.



describes how he proceeded to 'Iraq and not finding Yahya there went to Riqqa.

There are two different versions about his meeting with Yahya at Riqqa. Ibn Sa'd reports on Waqidi's authority that Yahya was very much moved to see Waqidi so shabbily dressed, received him with open arms and helped him with enormous wealth to get rid of this poverty.<sup>8</sup> Another report given by Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Anbari, based on the same authority, relates the above story in a different way. According to this version, on reaching Riqqa Waqidi waited at Yahya's doorsteps, cultivated his attendants and through them found an access to Yahya. After introducing himself, he apprised him of his miserable financial condition whereupon Yahya showed him favor and gave him a liberal present. He advanced him a sum of 200,000 dirhams to go back to Medina and to settle there and pay off his debts.<sup>9</sup>

Waqidi himself gives a detailed account of the Vizier's generosity towards him and makes no secret of his gratitude even after the fall of the Bermicides (187 A.H.)<sup>10</sup> Ibn Sa'd, while mentioning various examples of Yahya's magnanimity, quotes Waqidi as saying:

"How can I be reprimanded for my love for Yahya ibn Khalid who is the most well behaved person I have ever met."<sup>11</sup>

Waqidi came to 'Iraq in the year 180 A.H., and settled down in Baghdad. Before his settlement there he undertook journeys to Riqqa, Rusafa and Damascus. Later, he was appointed Qadi of 'Askar al-Mahdi,<sup>12</sup> a suburb of Baghdad, by Caliph Mamun.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, a report that Harun ar-Rashid had assigned him this post<sup>14</sup> in 187 A.H.<sup>15</sup> Thus the opinions are confounded whether he was appointed by

History, etc.<sup>2</sup> Regarding his love of acquiring information about the Muslim heroes, it is reported that whenever he met the descendants of a Companion (*Sahabi*) or a martyr, he enquired about the graves and burial places of their forefathers and used to visit these places personally.<sup>3</sup> During his early days at Medina he was so famous for his antiquarian knowledge that when Caliph Harun al-Rashid wanted a guide to show him the historical places of Medina, Waqidi was strongly recommended for this job. It is reported that after performing the Hajj (Pilgrimage) in 170 A.H.,<sup>4</sup> when Caliph Harun visited Medina and asked Yahaya ibn Khalid, his tutor and adviser, to find out a guide who could show him the important historical places, the Medinites recommended the name of Waqidi as the most suitable person for this task. The Caliph, thereupon, appointed him as his guide who reportedly showed him the graves of the martyrs, the places where Gabriel used to descend with the Revelations, the direction from which he used to descend and many similar things.<sup>5</sup> But Waqidi in these reports seems to have drawn liberally upon his imagination because there is little record of this kind of information. His meeting with the Caliph did, however, provide a fine opportunity for Waqidi to introduce himself to the Caliph and Yahya al-Barmaki which proved very fruitful in later years of his life.

Waqidi's real career begins from the date of his arrival in Baghdad. It is reported that in Medina he was a poor corn dealer, running his business on a borrowed capital of 100,000 dirhams.<sup>6</sup> He occasionally met with financial difficulties,<sup>7</sup> which ultimately compelled him to proceed to Iraq. It is mentioned that when he was reduced to straits due to heavy debts in Medina, his wife reminded him of Yahya ibn Khalid whom he had met earlier, and advised him to go and ask for some favor from him. Waqidi

## Waqidi as a Traditionist

By  
Imtiaz Ahmad

Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi is one of the early writers on the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him). His greatest work on the subject is '*Maghazi Rasul Allah*' which gives a detailed account of the holy wars of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Its interesting style and graphic description of events made the book popular among the 'Abbasid Caliphs. But while on the one hand Waqidi, through his '*Maghazi*', was appreciated by the 'Abbasid Caliphs and the Bermicides, he has been severely criticized by the scholars of traditions, *Tabaqat* and Jurisprudence. The main reason for this criticism was Waqidi's unprecedented approach to the fully developed discipline of *Hadith*. Thus, while writing *Maghazi*, he did not follow the recognized rules of reporting and was not scrupulous in the matter of *Isnad*. Opinions are, however, divided about his credibility in reporting the Traditions.

Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn Waqid al-Aslami al-Madani, popularly known as Waqidi, was a client of the tribe of Banu Sahn. He was born in the later period of Marwan ibn Muhammad in 130 A.H. at Medina. His mother was a great granddaughter of Sa'ib kha'ir, the first of discover the *Lihn Thaqil*, a new rhythm in Arabic *Qasida*.<sup>1</sup> Waqidi, according to Ibn S'd, his own pupil and scribe, was well-versed in *Maghazi*, *Siyar*, *Ahkam*, Schools of traditionists, and