

**Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhi: Life, Works, and Intellectual Legacy**

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**Abstract**

This article offers complete research on Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhi, a significant Tābi‘ī historian, hadith transmitter and scholar of the second century AH. It considers his life, family, scholarly lineage, teachers, students and literary works, particularly his contributions to the development and transmission of early Islamic historical narrative. The study pays special attention to his specialisation in maghāzī (Prophetic campaigns) and siyar (biographical history of the Prophet ﷺ) where he is acknowledged by classical scholars as a prominent scholar. The research also draws attention to his place in the wider field of hadith sciences, particularly the assessments of jarḥ wa ta‘dīl (critique and endorsement) literature, in which scholars' opinions about his credibility range from acceptance to rejection. The study also examines his contributions in both Medina and Baghdad, his engagement with leading scholars of his era, and his narrations of historical events that later became primary sources for renowned historians like Al-Tabari. Moreover, it explores his lineage from a scholastic point of view, revealing how his family carried on his academic legacy for almost a hundred years and contributed to the transmission of hadith and Islamic scholarship. The article concludes that while there is scholarly difference of opinion about his accuracy in narrating hadith (due to memory problems in his old age), his accuracy in Islamic historical narration is well recognized and of crucial importance. Thus, Abū Ma‘shar al-Sindhī is significant both in hadith and historical sciences, as he was an important figure in the early dissemination of Islamic knowledge.

**Keywords:** Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhi, Maghāzī, Hadith, Islamic historiography, Tābi‘īn

**Introduction**

The science of Hadith is one of the most important Islamic sciences. The words, deeds, and silent approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are referred to as Hadith. Most fortunate are those who heard the words of the Prophet ﷺ, memorised them in their hearts, and then devoted themselves to passing them on to their students. Such people are called ruwāt al-ḥadīth (narrators of Hadith).

In the history of Islam, there have always been many upright intellectuals and students who have dispersed the darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge. Sindh has also been home to numerous such personalities. One of these luminaries is the great Sindhi Hadith scholar, Abu Ma‘shar Najīh bin Abdul Rehman Al-Sindhi Al-Madani.

## **Name and Lineage**

Najīḥ al-Sindhī (رحمه الله), known as Abu Ma‘shar, was a prominent historian, hadith scholar, jurist and a Tābi‘ī (one who followed the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ). His name was Najīḥ, Abu Ma‘shar (kunya/ honorific title) being his father's name ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. He was well-known as Abu Ma‘shar.

It seems that the name of his daughter might have been "Ma‘shar", and he became known as such. His grandson, the jurist, al-Ma‘sharī was the son of the same daughter.<sup>i</sup>

He bears several attributive names (nisbahs) such as al-‘Ajamī, al-Sindhī, al-Madanī, al-Hāshimī and al-Baghdādī. He was a non-Arab (‘ajamī al-aṣl) by birth but a Sindhī (Sindhī al-nasl) ethnically, and was known as an "Ajami Sindhī".

He was captured in Sindh and taken to Medina, where he was enslaved for some time. He was bought and sold several times and eventually emancipated. He eventually stayed in Medina, where he was educated, lived and worked as a scholar for more than 50 years. For this reason, he was also known as al-Madanī.

During the last decade of his life, he migrated with his family to Baghdad and stayed until he passed away. As a result, he was also known as al-Baghdādī or Nazīl al-Baghdād (resident of Baghdad).<sup>ii</sup>

He was a client (mawlā) of Banū Hāshim, so he was also known as al-Hāshimī, and his family became clients of Banū Hāshim.<sup>iii</sup>

His full name is:

Abu Ma‘shar Najīḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sindhī al-Madanī al-Hāshimī al-Baghdādī.

He was fair, had blue round eyes and was obese. He was stubborn and a tailor by profession.<sup>iv</sup>

He also suffered from a speech impediment (luknah) and sometimes pronounced words incorrectly, such as using the letter "qāf" in place of "kāf", and saying "Q‘ab" instead of "Ka‘b”.<sup>v</sup>

## **Birth**

There is no dispute among historians about his death: they all agree that Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī (رحمه الله) died in Baghdad in Ramadan 170 AH.

But historians have failed to ascertain his birthdate, and have given different accounts of his birthplace.

There are two famous opinions about his birthplace:

### **Born in Sindh**

He was born in Sindh and then taken to the Hijaz by his parents.<sup>vi</sup> A report from Abu Nu‘aym that he found it hard to pronounce some Arabic words suggest he may have been a native of Sindh. This could suggest that he was from Sindh and learned Arabic in Arabia.

His inability to utter certain Arabic words, such as "Q‘ab" instead of "Ka‘b", is used to demonstrate his lack of fluency in Arabic, perhaps because of his Sindhī background.

### **Born in Arabia (Yemen)**

Some historians believe that while he was of Sindhī ancestry, he was born in Arabia. In this view, his father or grandfather was taken from Sindh to Arabia and he was born there. He was then captured and taken to Medina.

This view is supported by a narration from his grandson. He claims that his original name before his capture was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Walīd ibn Hilāl. He was then sold in Medina where he was given the name Najīḥ by a group from the Banū Asad tribe. He was subsequently bought by Umm Mūsā, the mother of the caliphs al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd and eventually emancipated by her.

In another version of his story, it is said that he was from Yemen and captured during the expeditions of Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab in the districts of Yamāmah and Bahrain.

These accounts notwithstanding, his connection with Sindh is so prominent that he is known as al-Sindhi. He is referred to by this title in the works of eminent historians such as Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Al-Dhahabi, Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli and others.

Likewise, Sindh's scholars, such as Maulana Amir Ahmad Makhdoom, Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri and others, have acknowledged him as one of the greatest hadith scholars from Sindh.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Migration (Leaving His Hometown)**

There is no specific reference in the history as to when and why Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi (رحمه الله) left his country. There is little or no information about his life in Sindh. Questions such as:

- Where in Sindh did he live?
- From which tribe was he?
- When did he leave Sindh?
- Why did he leave?

Many things about Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi remain unanswered because historical sources do not talk about them. However, historians do say that there were fights between Arab forces and Sindh. It is very likely that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was taken captive during one of these fights and brought to the Hijaz, where he was made a slave and sold times.

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was owned by a woman from Banū Makhzūm in Medina at one point.<sup>viii</sup> Imam Bukhari says that he was a servant of Umm Salamah.<sup>ix</sup> Later Umm Mūsā bint Manṣūr al-Himyarīyah, the mother of the Abbasid caliphs al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd bought Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi for 20,000 dirhams. Then set him free.<sup>x</sup>

After Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was set free he decided to live in Medina for good, where he spent most of his life teaching and learning. The ten years of his life he moved to Baghdad. Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was very proud to be associated with Banū Hāshim.<sup>xi</sup> Is reported to have said: "Being a client of Banū Hāshim is more beloved to me than having lineage among Banū Ḥanzalah."

Al-Jurjānī in his book al-Kāmil fī Du'afā' al-Rijāl quotes Muḥammad ibn Abī Ma'shar as saying: "My father, Abū Ma'shar was a client of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās." This means that Muḥammad ibn Abī Ma'shar's father told him that he was affiliated with the family of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh, who was a descendant of Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>xii</sup>

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi spent a part of his life in Madinah, where he taught and learned. The ten years of his life he spent in Baghdad.

### **The Honor of Being a Tābi'ī**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi did not study under any Companion of the Prophet in a way. However, he did meet a Companion, Abu Umamah Asad ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf, who died in 100 AH. Because of this meeting Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi is considered one of the disciples of companions.

Some scholars, like Maulana Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti think that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi should be classified as one of the Taba' Tābi'īn.<sup>xiii</sup> This view is not widely accepted. Many historians clearly state that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi met Abu Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf, who was definitely a Companion.

Abu Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf was born during the Prophet's lifetime. Was taken to him as a baby. The Prophet saw him. Named him As'ad and also gave him the kunyah "Abu Umamah." So Abu Umamah became a Companion and Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi became a Tābi'ī.

The historian Al-Dhahabi writes that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi saw Abu Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf, who died in 100 AH.<sup>xiv</sup> Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi reports that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi himself said: "I saw Abu Umamah ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf applying henna (color) and his hair reached his ears." This shows that the Prophet himself had seen Abu Umamah, which confirms his status as a Companion.<sup>xv</sup>

### **Education, Teaching and Scholarly Network**

Despite being a slave, Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi kept learning. Even got more passionate about acquiring knowledge. He learned from leading scholars among the Tābi'īn, especially jurists and hadith experts and he became an expert in many fields.

Over time Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi became very good at understanding the Qur'an, hadith, jurisprudence and history. He was especially known for his knowledge of hadith and maghāzī which's the study of the Prophets military campaigns. People started calling him "Ṣāhib al-Maghāzī" which means the authority on maghāzī.

When Abu Ma'shar al-Sindh's son was asked how his father became so knowledgeable about maghāzī he explained: "The Tābi'īn would sit with their teachers discussing the accounts of the campaigns and memorizing them."<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi's Teachers**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi studied hadith under famous scholars. Some of his notable teachers were:

- \* Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib
- \* Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi
- \* Hishām ibn Mūsā ibn Yasār
- \* Abu Burdah ibn Abu Musa
- \* Sa'id ibn Abī Sa'id al-Maqburī
- \* Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir
- \* Nāfi', the freed servant of Ibn 'Umar
- \* Hishām ibn 'Urwah
- \* and many others

### **Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi's Students**

After completing his studies Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi became a teacher of hadith. Many distinguished scholars learned from him including:

- \* His son, Muhammad ibn Abī Ma'shar
- \* Sufyan al-Thawri
- \* Al-Layth ibn Sa'd
- \* 'Abdullāh ibn Idrīs
- \* Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ
- \* 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī
- \* Hushaym ibn Bashīr
- \* Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani
- \* Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī
- \* and many others

### **Establishment of Darul Hadeeth**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi started a teaching circle, in Medina, where he taught hadith, maghāzī and other Islamic sciences. This institution helped students and fulfilled the intellectual needs of people who wanted to learn.

According to Dr. Muhammad Ishaq, Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi founded a study circle in Madinah where he regularly taught hadith, maghāzī and fiqh.<sup>xvii</sup> He kept teaching in Madinah until around 160 AH. In the ten years of his life he moved to Iraq, where he continued spreading knowledge. Both Madinah and Iraq benefited from his scholarship.

Maulana Muhammad Aslam notes that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindh's home became a center of learning, a Dār al-Ḥadīth because of his work. Every member of his household learned hadith. Helped preserve this intellectual legacy.

Maulana Muhammad Aslam says that his home became a place where people came to learn. This was because of his work. Every person in his household knew a lot about hadith. Helped to keep this knowledge alive.

Dr. Muhammad Ishaq thinks that Abu Ma'shar made his whole family very knowledgeable. His descendants kept this tradition of learning alive for generations.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **Scholarly Status and Titles**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was a respected scholar. He was given titles, such as:

- \* Imām, which means leader
- \* Muḥaddith, which means hadith scholar
- \* Ṣāḥib al-Maghāzī, which means authority on maghāzī
- \* Imām al-Tafsīr
- \* Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥadīth, which is a person who has memorized a lot of hadith

He knew a lot about tafsīr, hadith, fiqh and history.

A famous scholar named Al-Dhahabi said that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was very knowledgeable. He called him a "vessel of knowledge".<sup>xix</sup>

To be a Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥadīth you have to memorize at 100,000 chains of transmission. Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi did this, which is why Al-Dhahabi thought he was one of the hadith memorizers.<sup>xx</sup>

The historian Ibn Sa'd listed Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi among the generation of the Tābi'īn.

He was especially good at Sīrah and Maghāzī that's why he was known as the Imam of Maghazi. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi and Al-Dhahabi have declared him the greatest of scholars in the field of Maghazi.

People said that Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was very smart. Hafiz Al-Dhahabi said: "I have not seen anyone in Madinah intelligent than Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi."

Abu Nuaim said that he was very wise and knew a lot about hadith.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal thought highly of Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi. Said: "He was deeply knowledgeable in the field of maghāzī."<sup>xxi</sup>

Ibn Sa'd has mentioned in al-Ṭabaqāt that alongside Muhammad ibn Ishaq, Musa ibn Uqbah, and Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, he also included the name of Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi and wrote that in the field of siyar (biographical history of the Prophet ﷺ) and maghāzī (accounts of battles), there is no scholar greater than these four. Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi was also very good at fiqh. Al-Dhahabi called him a jurist.

### **Authorship and Literary Contributions**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi wrote books and taught people. He is known as an author and a leading authority in maghāzī.

He was one of the historians to write down Islamic history. He wrote about the time of the Prophet, the Guided Caliphs, the Companions, the Tābi'īn and the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi preserved the Prophets biography and accounts of his campaigns. This made him very respected among scholars and historians.

The historian al-Wāqidī said that although Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi may not have been the best at transmitting hadith he was reliable and truthful when it came to history and maghāzī.

Al-Khalīlī said: "He held a position in knowledge and history and leading scholars relied upon his historical works in their writings."<sup>xxii</sup>

### **His Works on Maghāzī and History**

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi wrote books about maghāzī and history. Some of these books are:

**Kitāb al-Maghāzī**

Kitāb al-Maghāzī is Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī famous book. It is about the Prophets campaigns. The bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm said that Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī was very knowledgeable about events and the Prophets campaigns.

Ibn al-Nadīm also said that Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī wrote a book called Kitāb al-Maghāzī. Later Ibn al-Nadīm mentioned that Al-Tabarī used parts of Kitāb al-Maghāzī in his history book, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk. It seems that the Maghazi work of Abu Ma‘shar resembles the work of Musa bin Aqabah.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The historian Al-Waqīdi also used Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī scholarship in his work.

### **Kitāb Tārīkh al-Khulafā’**

Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī also wrote a book called Kitāb Tārīkh al-Khulafā’. This book is about the history of the caliphs.

The hadith scholar al-Mizzī said that Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī son, Muhammad ibn Abī Ma‘shar transmitted not Kitāb al-Maghāzī but also other writings from his father.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Al-Sam‘ānī mentioned Kitāb Tārīkh al-Khulafā’. Provided its chain of transmission.

Unfortunately, Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī original writings are now lost. This is a loss for scholars.

### **Narrations (Marwiyāt)**

Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī transmitted narrations. These narrations are about:

- \* Jurisprudence
- \* Qur’anic exegesis
- \* History and maghāzī
- \* The biography of the Prophet
- \* Ethics, supplications, virtues and spiritual teachings

If all his narrations were compiled, they would form a book. More than 400 narrations have been found, with thousands of chains of transmission.

His narrations are about:

- \* Pre-Islamic Arabia
- \* Tribal histories
- \* The Makkān and Madīnan periods of Prophethood
- \* The era of the Guided Caliphs
- \* The Umayyad and Abbasid periods

These narrations are lengthy. Some are short while others are long.

### **Major Narrators from Him**

Many people transmitted narrations from Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī including:

- \* His son, Muhammad ibn Abī Ma‘shar
- \* Muhammad ibn Bakkār
- \* Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī
- \* ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī
- \* Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- \* Sa‘īd ibn Manṣūr
- \* Yazīd ibn Hārūn
- \* Al-Tabarī
- \* Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī

His narrations are found in classic books, such as Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa‘d, Tārīkh Dimashq, Musnad Aḥmad, Mu‘jam al-Ṭabarānī, Tārīkh Baghdād and others. Among the writers of Sihah-e-Sittah (the most authentic books of Hadith) all scholars except Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim have transmitted from him.

## Narrations in Sihah-e-Sittah

### Abu Dawood

حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ مَنْصُورٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مَعْشَرٍ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا، قَالَتْ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: " لَا تَقْطَعُوا اللَّحْمَ بِالسِّكِّينِ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ صَنِيعِ الْأَعَاجِمِ، وَأَنْهَسُوهُ فَإِنَّهُ أَهْنَأُ وَأَمْرَأُ " <sup>xxv</sup>

### Al-Tirmidi

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ بْنُ مَرْوَانَ الْبَصْرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ سَوَّاءٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مَعْشَرٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: " تَهَادَوْا فَإِنَّ الْهَدْيَةَ تَذْهَبُ وَحَرَ الصَّدْرِ، وَلَا تَحْقِرَنَّ جَارَةَ لِجَارَتِهَا، وَلَوْ شِقَّ فُرْسِنِ شَاةٍ " <sup>xxvi</sup>

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَبِي مَعْشَرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: " مَا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ قِبْلَةٌ " <sup>xxviii</sup>

### Al-Nasai

أَنْبَأَ قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ أَبِي مَعْشَرٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ الْمُقْبَرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: " لَوْلَا أَنْ أَسْأَلَ عَلَى النَّاسِ لِأَمْرَتِهِمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ بِوُضُوءٍ وَمَعَ الْوُضُوءِ بِالسِّوَاكِ " <sup>xxviii</sup>

### Ibn-e-Majah

حَدَّثَنَا أَنَسُ بْنُ عِيَاضٍ، عَنْ أَبِي مَعْشَرٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ، وَمُوسَى بْنِ يَسَارٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ: " مَنْ حَمَلَ عَلَيْنَا السِّلَاحَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا " <sup>xxix</sup>

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ إِدْرِيسَ، عَنْ أَبِي مَعْشَرٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ الْمُقْبَرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: " الرَّبَا سَبْعُونَ حُوبًا أَيْسَرُهَا أَنْ يَنْكَحَ الرَّجُلُ أُمَّهُ " <sup>xxx</sup>

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى الْأُرْدِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا هَاشِمُ بْنُ الْقَاسِمِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى النَّبْسَابُورِيُّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَاصِمُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مَعْشَرٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: " مَا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ قِبْلَةٌ " <sup>xxxi</sup>

## Critical Evaluation (Jarḥ wa Ta'dīl)

Abu Ma'shar al-Sindhi is one of the hadith narrators about whom we have both critical (jarḥ) and approving (ta'dīl) statements. He was criticised by some narrator experts, but validated by many other prominent scholars. As such, there are varying opinions about his state. We can divide these into: (1) expressions of praise, (2) expressions of condemnation, and (3) criticism of these statements.

### Scholarly Praise (Ta'dīl)

Abu Ma'shar was a prominent scholar and a well-respected narrator of hadith. His particular fields of expertise were maghāzī (Prophetic battles) and sīrah. He was considered as one of the most proficient scholars in maghāzī by scholars such as Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, and Al-Dhahabi also acknowledged him as being proficient in the field.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal considered him credible and recognised his expertise in maghāzī, even considering him to be truthful and reliable. Likewise, he was regarded as ṣadūq (trustworthy), but not the best narrator by scholars like Abu Hatim and Abu Zur'ah.

He was narrated from by many prominent figures such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and al-Layth ibn Sa'd, suggesting his acceptance by early scholars. Though he had some memory deficiencies, he was known as a great reservoir of knowledge. He was known for his intelligence, trustworthiness and academic achievements.

### Scholarly Criticism (Jarḥ)

On the other hand, some of the prominent scholars - such as Al-Bukhari, Yahya ibn Ma'in, and others - regarded him as weak in hadith. Al-Bukhari did not transmit from him, and considered

some of his narrations munkar (irregular). He was also accused of making mistakes in the chains, and having a poor memory.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Some reported that while he reported reliable reports from some teachers, he also reported weak or unacceptable reports from others. Some even claimed that he transmitted unreliable reports (particularly in his old age).<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### **Critical Analysis**

A closer look into these views reveals that the main criticism against Abu Ma‘shar was his poor memory rather than dishonesty. Crucially, scholars explained that this was only during his later years, especially the last period of his life when he was afflicted with memory loss (ikhtilāt).

As such, Abu Ma‘shar's reports do not need to be rejected altogether. The اصول (principles of hadith criticism) accepts reports from before his memory deterioration, but not those during or after.

This is confirmed by al-Nawawi who clarifies that when a trustworthy narrator becomes confused because of old age or other reasons, only the reports he narrated prior to this are accepted.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Even comments such as al-Bukhari not narrating from him are due to caution rather than a complete rejection of his credibility. His reliability was not completely dismantled, as others still narrated from him.

### **Defense Against Severe Criticism**

Some harsh criticisms, like his being an unlettered person (ummī), are baseless. The fact that he is acknowledged by eminent scholars as a jurist, historian, and hadith master refutes such accusations. His extensive scholarly career in Arabia, writing and teaching in Arabic to the most prominent scholars also contradicts this claim. And his appointment as a teacher of Islamic Sciences by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi in Baghdad shows his prestige. It is hard to believe that an incompetent person would be appointed to such a post.

### **Migration from Medina to Baghdad**

Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī spent most of his life in Medina, where he taught and spread knowledge. The Abbasid caliph Al-Mahdi met Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī during a visit to Medina. Was impressed by his knowledge. He invited Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī to move to Baghdad and offered him a stipend of 1,000 dinars. Abu Ma‘shar al-Sindhī accepted the invitation. Moved to Baghdad with his family. There he continued teaching. Gained respect from the caliph, scholars and the general public.<sup>xxxv</sup>

### **Family and Legacy**

Abū Ma‘shar al-Sindhī raised the social status of his family with his scholarly prominence and rank. His family left Medina with him for Baghdad. This family went on to produce great scholars of ḥadīth, memorizers (ḥuffāz) and intellectuals. His sons and grandsons actively transmitted knowledge for almost a hundred years, leaving a great legacy.

### **Notable Family Scholars**

#### **Muḥammad ibn Abī Ma‘shar al-Sindhī (148–247 AH / 765–861 CE)**

He was born in Medina, studied with the leading teachers, and migrated to Baghdad with his father. There were few teachers in Baghdad at that time, so his father taught him. He became a master of ḥadīth and maghāzī (Prophetic campaigns).

He followed in his father's footsteps and became a great teacher, with disciples like Al-Tirmidhi, Abu Hatim al-Razi, Ibn Abi al-Dunya and Al-Tabari. He was considered a reliable (thiqa) and truthful (ṣadūq) narrator and lived to the age of 99.

#### **Husayn ibn Muḥammad al-Sindhī (d. 275 AH / 888 CE)**

Muḥammad's eldest son, Abū Bakr, continued the family's tradition of excellence in ḥadīth. He learned from his father and others, and then travelled to Khurasan where he died. He was known as a reliable narrator.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

#### **Dāwūd ibn Muḥammad al-Sindhī (d. c. 280 AH / 892 CE)**

The grandson of Abū Maʿshar, Abū Sulaymān. He transmitted his grandfather's famous book Kitāb al-Maghāzī via his father. He was also trusted by other scholar such as Ibn Ḥibbān.

#### **Qāsim ibn ʿAbbās al-Maʿsharī (d. 273 AH)**

He was a grandson (female line), Abū Muḥammad. He was a jurist (faqīh), austerity practitioner and a pious scholar. He studied with eminent teachers, and had eminent students. He was commended for his trustworthiness by scholars like al-Dāraqutnī.

Abū Maʿshar al-Sindhī established not only his own scholarly career but also a family and multi-generational legacy of learning. His family became:

- A transmitter of hadith and a center of learning
- A lineage of teachers for prominent Islamic scholars
- A transmitter for historical (including maghāzī) works
- A scholarly family for almost 100 years

To put it simply, he turned his family into a family of scholars, whose fame spread across the main scholarly centers (Medina, Baghdad, Khurasan), and whose students played an important role in shaping the fields of Islamic history and hadith sciences.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### **Death and How Long He Lived**

Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī passed away in the month of Ramadan in the year 170 AH in the city of Baghdad. The Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid led the prayer at his funeral, which shows how much people respected him. We do not know the date of his birth but from what historians have found it seems that he lived a very long life, probably more than 90 years. As he got older his memory was not as good as it used to be.

By looking at accounts scholars think that:

- \* Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī was probably born around 70-80 AH either in Sindh or Yemen
- \* He went to Medina before 95 AH, when he was 15-20 years old
- \* Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī spent than 60 years in Medina
- \* He spent the 10 years of his life in Baghdad

From what we know we can say that Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī:

- \* Moved from Sindh to another place in the century AH or his family did
- \* Was born in the late first century AH
- \* Spent than 60 years studying in Medina
- \* Lived in Baghdad for his few years with the support of the Abbasid caliphs
- \* Lived for more than 90 years
- \* Passed away in Ramadan 170 AH

Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī is still a figure, in the early days of Islamic history and the study of the Hadith especially when it comes to Maghazi.

### **Findings**

This research on Abu Maʿshar al-Sindhī reveals the following:

#### **Authority in Maghāzī and Siyar**

Abū Ma‘shar al-Sindhī stands out as an authority in the realms of maghāzī (biography of the Prophet's campaigns) and siyar, and he was recognised as such by early scholars and often cited in historical texts.

### **Moderate Stance in Jarḥ wa Ta‘dīl**

The criticism of his narrations demonstrates a moderate approach. Some considered him as a person of high credibility (ṣadūq) while others despised his narrations because of his weakness in memory, showing that the اختلاف (difference) is not denial, but rather a methodological approach.

### **Main Criticism: ضعف الحفظ (Weak Memory)**

The most significant weakness of his hadith according to critics is memory impairment, especially in the later part of his life (ikhtilāt). There is no solid evidence to doubt his honesty and integrity.

### **Temporal Nature of Weakness**

The research confirms that he was not permanently weak (weakness), but his weakness occurred only in the final years of his life, which is in line with the established rule in the أصول حديث genre of distinguishing pre- and post-ikhtilāt narrations.

### **Acceptability in Limited Fields**

His narrations were not discounted in other fields, especially in history and maghāzī, and were used by prominent figures like Al-Tabari.

### **Strong Scholarly Legacy**

Abū Ma‘shar al-Sindhī was able to build a scholarly family tree, which contributed to the field of hadith and Islamic sciences for almost a hundred years.

### **Sindh's Role in Hadith Sciences**

His epithet “al-Sindhī” points to the early and important contribution of Sindh to Islamic studies, and dispels the view that hadith sciences were restricted to Arab lands.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the above discussion, the following suggestions are put forward for consideration:

### **Contextual Evaluation of Narrators**

Students of the past should follow a contextual approach in assessing narrators such as Abū Ma‘shar, separating early authentic narrations from later influenced ones, rather than casting them aside in a sweeping manner.

### **Reassessment of Early Historians**

Early historians and maghāzī writers need to be re-evaluated within their respective sciences, rather than simply evaluating their books based on hadith criteria.

### **Research on Ikhtilāt Narrators**

Further الدراسات (studies) should be conducted on narrators affected by ikhtilāt to develop clear classification models for their narrations.

### **Documentation of Regional Contributions**

Research should pay more attention to the non-Arabic world, especially in places such as Sindh, to give a more balanced view of the history of Islamic thought.

### **Critical Editing of Primary Sources**

Critical editions of manuscripts and books of Abū Ma‘shar (e.g., Kitāb al-Maghāzī) should be published with proper authentication of chains.

### **Integration in Modern Curriculum**

The works of Abū Ma‘shar should be introduced in Islamic Studies and Hadith curriculum, particularly in South Asian universities, to acknowledge indigenous scholarship.

### **Comparative Analytical Studies**

Comparative studies between Abū Ma‘shar and his peers (e.g., Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī) should be conducted to enhance understanding of historical documentation methods in early Islamic writings.

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