

SANKORE'



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَي سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, may Allah send blessings upon our master Muhammad, his family and all his Companions.

Says the most bereft slave in need of the mercy of his Forgiving and Loving Lord, the Possessor of the Tremendous Throne – Abu Alfa Umar Muhammad Shareef bin Farid:

All praises are due to Allah who distinguished our master Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace with the best of merits, and established his prophethood with the best of evidences in order to bring us out from darkness into the light, and extract us from repugnant character into the overflowing illuminations and spiritual bounty. To continue: the *Amir* of our national *Jama`at* asked me to clarify for him the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace regarding wearing rings. My desire was to respond to his command immediately, due to the order of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace as it was related by the two *Shaykhs* (al-Bukhari and Muslim), Ibn Jareer, and Ibn Abi Hatim on the authority of Abu Hurayra who said that the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace said:

((مَنْ أَطَاعَنِي فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ أَطَاعَ أَمِيرِي فَقَدْ أَطَاعَنِي، وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَقَدْ عَصَى اللَّهَ وَمَنْ عَصَى أَمِيرِي فَقَدْ عَصَانِي))

“Whoever has obeyed me has obeyed Allah. Whoever has obeyed my *Amir* has obeyed me. Whoever has disobeyed me has disobeyed Allah. Whoever has disobeyed my *Amir* has disobeyed me.” However, preoccupation with worldly affairs diverted me from fulfilling the request of the *Amir*. Fearing that Allah ta`ala would exclude me from those about whom the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said as related by at-Tabarani on the authority of Ibn Abass:

((أحب الأعمال إلى الله بعد الفرائض إدخال السرور على المسلم))

“The most beloved action to Allah after performing the obligations is causing happiness to enter upon a Muslim”; also fearing to be included among those about whom the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said as it was related by Abu Dawud on the authority of Abu Hurayra:

((مَنْ سُئِلَ عَنْ عِلْمٍ فَكَتَمَهُ أَلْجَمَهُ اللَّهُ بِلِجَامٍ مِنْ نَارٍ))

“Whoever is asked about some knowledge, and then conceals it, Allah will bridle him with a bridle of fire”; I decided to fulfill his request, hoping for Allah’s forgiveness and that it will be of benefit to those who come across it in this life.

I have named it:

At-Taṣweer'l-Aatim Fee Sunna Labs'l-Khaatim

(The Complete Description Regarding the Sunna of Wearing Signet Rings)

I say: and success is with Allah that wearing signet rings is a confirmed *Sunna* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and has been the custom of the righteous exemplars from the earliest times until our present day.

The Prohibition of Wearing Gold Jewelry

As for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace it has been related to us that he had possessed in his lifetime many silver rings. Some of them had a stone face, while some had a silver face. Some of the signet rings he wore and some he gave as gifts to others, or as alms. While some of his signet rings he did not wear and only used them to seal his correspondences to dignitaries. At one time in the early period of Islam the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear a gold ring, but later prohibited this, as it was related by Muhammad ibn `Ubaydullah on the authority of Ibn Umar who said: “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to utilize a signet ring made from gold and wore it on his right hand. The people then followed him in that and also wore gold rings. Thus, he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace flung his away and said:

((لا ألبسه أبدا))

“I will never wear this again.” As a result the people flung away their gold signet rings as well.” This prohibition of wearing gold rings or gold jewelry was an injunction which applied to men only and not women, because it is permissible for Muslim women to wear gold jewelry.

The Sunna of the Wearing Silver Signet Rings

Ibn Khaldun said in his *Tarikh*: “As for the signet ring it is from the demarcations of sovereignty and the functions of governmental authority. The sealing of correspondences and documents was well known among the kingdoms prior to Islam and after it. It is established in the two *Saheeh* collections that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace when he desired to dispatch a letter to the Caesar, it was said to him that the foreigners do not accept letters except if they are sealed. Thus, he took a signet ring made of silver and which was engraved with the words: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’.” It has been related by Qutayba ibn Sa`id on the authority of Ibn Shihaab on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said:

كان خاتم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من ورق، وكان فصه حبشيا

“The signet ring of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was made of silver and its stone was of Abyssinian origin.” This establishes the permissibility of men wearing silver rings and it corroborates that there existed enduring trade between Abyssinia and the *Hijaz*.

The reference to Abyssinian is that it was a stone whose origin was from Abyssinia because it was there that the stone was extracted. In the *Rawdat'l-Ahbar* it states that the stone was of black agate. It is said that it was made of black onyx. *Shaykh* Ali ibn Muhammad al-Malaa said in his *Jamu`l-Wasaa'il*: “It is said that the referent ‘Abyssinian’ is used to indicate both the agate and onyx because these two stones come to the *Hijaz* by way of Yemen, which at the time was considered a district under the sovereignty of Abyssinia.” Other jurists said that it was called ‘Abyssinian’ because it came directly from Abyssinia; or because of its black color like the skin color of the Abyssinian; or because it was an Abyssinian who made the

ring; or because the ring was actually molded and made in Abyssinia. Ibn Hajr interpolated the referent to mean all of the above; that is to say, that the stone was extracted from the soil of Abyssinia, and was brought to the *Hijaz* from Abyssinia by way of Yemen, and the ring was crafted by an Abyssinian. It is said that the face of the black agate stone is a blessed stone which negates poverty, and the one who wears it will remain in good as it was cited by *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Qaasim Jassus in his al-Fawaa'id'l-Jaleela'l-Bahiyya. This is corroborated by the words of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

((تَخْتَمُوا بِالْعَقِيقِ فَإِنَّهُ مُبَارَكٌ))

“Wear as rings the onyx stone because it is blessed.” It is for this reason the jurists have said that wearing rings made of onyx and silver is a *Sunna*.

It has been related by Abu as-Shaykh in his Akhlaaq'l-Mustafa from a narration of `Ar`ara on the authority of `Arza ibn Thabit on the authority of Thumaama on the authority of Anas who said:

كَانَ فَصُّ خَاتَمِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَبَشِيًّا مَكْتُوبٌ عَلَيْهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

“The face of the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was of Abyssinian stone engraved on it was: There is no deity except Allah Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” However, this narrative is considered obscure by Ibn al-Medini who said `Ar`ara was weak, but other traditionists consider him veracious.

It has also been related by Qutayba ibn Sa`id on the authority of Nafi` on the authority of Ibn Umar who said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اتَّخَذَ خَاتَمًا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ فَكَانَ يَخْتَمُ بِهِ وَلَا يَلْبَسُهُ

“The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to utilize a signet ring made of silver. He would seal his correspondences with it, but would not wear it.” *Shaykh* al-Malaa said that the meaning of his words: ‘...but would not wear it’: “It means that he wore signet rings generally, but was not wearing it at the time; meaning that he would seal his correspondences with the signet ring when he was not wearing it. This cannot be taken as evidence that he did not wear signet rings at all. The secret of him removing the ring was in order to manifest his humility and to avoid the impression of arrogance. This is because the one who seals his correspondence while the signet ring remains on his finger is rarely free of arrogance and snobbishness. It is permissible to interpolate his making the phrase ‘...but would not wear it’ a conjunctive of the words ‘He would seal his correspondences with it...’ in order to indicate that he did not wear the ring constantly all the time, but only during the times of necessity when he was required to seal his correspondence, as it was stated explicitly in some of the prophetic narrations. It is also conceivable that what the narrator meant by this phrase was to clarify that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace originally utilized the signet ring for sealing his correspondences and not merely for attire and adornment. This is because the wearing of signet rings was not a normal custom of the Arabs, as al-Khataabi indicated. This was corroborated by what was understood from the prophetic tradition since it was narrated in the section ‘On the Reason for Utilizing Signet Rings’ and Allah knows best.”

This prophetic tradition along with the one narrated prior regarding the black agate stone is proof that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him

peace had at least two signet rings and that the two narrations are not a referent to the same signet ring. The reason this is because the ring which he used to seal his correspondences with was engraved with ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’ which is difficult if not impossible to engrave upon agate stone. This is corroborated by another narration of Mahmud ibn Ghaylaan on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said:

((كَانَ خَاتَمُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ فَصْنُهُ مِنْهُ))

“The signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was made from silver and its face was of silver as well.” In another narration by Abu Dawud by way of Zuhayr that he said: “...was made completely from silver.” This establishes that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace also wore signet rings which had a silver engraved face without a stone. These two prophetic traditions establish that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace did not simply utilize signet rings for adornment, but for its utility in sealing correspondences. It also establishes that sending letters to others is a confirmed *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and is one of the fundamental rites of the government (*diwaan*). From the above cited prophetic traditions we know that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace had at least two signet rings: one was silver with a black agate stone face from Abyssinia, and a signet ring made entirely of silver and was engraved with ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’. It has also been reported in sound narratives that he, upon him be blessings and peace possessed and iron signet ring as it was related on the authority of Mu`ayqeeb, as we will explain, Allah willing. Two of the three rings had engraved on its face ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’. There is some disagreement among the scholars regarding whether it is prohibited for anyone besides the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace or the *Khalif* to wear a signet ring engraved with ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’.

This is further corroborated by what was related by Is`haq ibn Mansuur on the authority of Qatada on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said:

لَمَّا أَرَادَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ إِلَى الْعَجَمِ قِيلَ لَهُ أَنَّ الْعَجَمَ لَا يَقْبَلُونَ إِلَّا كِتَابًا عَلَيْهِ خَاتَمٌ فَاصْطَنَعَ خَاتَمًا اضْطَرَبَ كَأَنِّي أَنْظُرُ إِلَى بَيَاضِهِ فِي كَفِّهِ

“When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace wanted to correspond in writing to the non Arabs; it was said to him: ‘The non Arabs only accept correspondence which has a seal.’ Thus, he had a signet ring made; and it is as if I can see the brightness of its gleam in the palm of his hand now.” Here Anas establishes that the usage and wearing of the signet ring had its origin with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace around the 6th year of the *hijra* when he began to send dispatches to the different kingdoms, after the Treaty of Hdaybia. The fact that Anas recalled the shining of the silver ring on his palm is clear indication that he, upon him be peace was wearing the signet ring as a form of adornment, but that its original function was for the purpose of sealing his correspondences to foreign rulers, so that no one would read them except them, as Ibn Hajr explained. This is evidence that it was not lawful for anyone else to utilize the exact same signet ring as the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace during his lifetime. What is also apparent in this narration is that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to often turn the face of the ring inward towards his palm, out of humility and to avoid shallow vanity.

There is disagreement whether the signet rings worn by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace were triangular in shape, circular or square. *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Qaasim Jassus said: “The square signet ring is the nearest of them which can be engraved properly and with which one can seal correspondences, as al-Minowi cited.”

In another narration of Abu `Amr ibn Ali on the authority of Qatada on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَتَبَ إِلَى كِسْرَى وَقَيْصَرَ وَالنَّجَاشِيِّ قَبِيلَ: لَهُ إِنَّهُمْ لَا يَقْبَلُونَ كِتَابًا إِلَّا بِخَاتَمٍ فَصَاغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَاتَمًا حَلَقْتُهُ فِضَّةً وَنُقِشَ فِيهِ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

“The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace composed letters for the Kisraa, the Caesar and the *an-Najaashi* and it was said to him: ‘They normally do not accept letters except with a seal.’ Thus, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace had a mold made for a ring. He made its ring from silver and had it engraved with the words: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’.” al-Hanifi said in his *al-Mughrib* that the title ‘Kisraa’ is the name which was given to the rulers of Persia and was originally pronounced Kasraa, which meant the one who possessed a vast kingdom. Al-Malaa said that the title ‘Caesar’ was the cognomen given to the rulers of Rome, and had the same meaning as the titles ‘Pharaoh’ for the Egyptians, ‘Tubbi`a’ for the rulers of Himyar and Yemen or Khaaqaan for every ruler of the Turks. The title *an-Najaashi* is an arabized form of the original Guz title ‘Nagaas’ and means ‘king’. The person who cast the mold for the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was Ya`ala ibn Umayya ibn Abi `Ubayda at-Tamimi who accepted Islam on the day of the victory over Mecca in the 8th year of the *hijra*. This was corroborated by ad-Daraqutni in his *al-Afrad* from a prophetic tradition of Salama on the authority of `Ikrama on the authority of Ya`ala ibn Umayya who said:

أَنَا صَنَعْتُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَاتَمًا لَمْ يُشْرِكْنِي فِيهِ أَحَدٌ نَقَشْتُ فِيهِ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

“I was the one who manufactured the mold for the signet ring of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; and no one assisted me in that. I engraved on it: Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” This means that when he was commissioned to cast the mold he was not yet a Muslim because the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace sent out letters calling the foreign rulers to Islam in the 6th year of the *hijra* after the Treaty of Hudaibia. This is evidence that it is permissible to commission non Muslim craftsmen to produce and manufacture jewelry with *Qur`anic* verses engraved on them, and explains why some of the *khulafa* commissioned non Muslims to cast the official gold *Dinar* and silver *dirham* utilized by the Muslim kingdoms.

In another prophetic tradition of Muhammad ibn Yahya on the authority of Thumaama on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said:

كَانَ نَقَشَ خَاتَمِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مُحَمَّدٌ سَطْرٌ، وَرَسُولٌ سَطْرٌ، وَاللَّهُ سَطْرٌ

“The signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was engraved with ‘Muhammad’ on one line, ‘Rasul’ on a line, and ‘Allah’ on a line.” This means that the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah was engraved with three lines. These prophetic traditions establish the permissibility of making molds for rings, and that this craft was a well known and acceptable vocation among the Muslims. This narration of Abu `Amr establishes the permissibility of engraving a *Qur`anic* verse on the face of rings; because the expression ‘*Muhammadun rasuulullahi*’ is

from the Chapter *al-Fat'h* (The Victory). In this regard it has been related by Ibn Sa`d on the authority of al-Hajjaj ibn Abi Uthman who said: “Al-Hassan was once asked about a man who wears a ring on which is engraved a Name from among the Names of Allah and enters with it into the latrine. He said: ‘Was not the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace engraved with a verse from the Book of Allah?’; meaning by that: ‘*Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*’.”

**محمد
رسول
الله
صلى الله عليه
وسلم**

It has been related in a prophetic tradition on the authority of Sa`id ibn `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`Aas who said:

دَخَلَ عَمْرُو بْنُ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْعَاصِ حِينَ قَدِمَ مِنَ الْحَبَشَةِ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ: ((مَا هَذَا الْخَاتَمِ فِي يَدِكَ يَا عَمْرُو؟))، قَالَ: هَذِهِ حَلَقَةٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: ((فَمَا نَقَشُهَا؟))، قَالَ: مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: فَأَخَذَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَكَانَ فِي يَدِهِ حَتَّى قُبِضَ، ثُمَّ فِي يَدِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ حَتَّى قُبِضَ، ثُمَّ فِي يَدِ عُمَرَ حَتَّى قُبِضَ، ثُمَّ لَيْسَةُ عُمَانَ فَبَيْنَمَا هُوَ يَحْفَرُ بئْرًا لِلْأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ، يُقَالُ لَهَا بئْرُ أَرِيْسٍ، فَبَيْنَمَا هُوَ جَالِسٌ عَلَى شَفَتِهَا يَأْمُرُ بِحَفْرِهَا سَقَطَ الْخَاتَمُ فِي الْبئْرِ، وَكَانَ عُمَانُ يُكْتَبُ إِخْرَاجَ خَاتَمِهِ مِنْ يَدِهِ وَإِدْخَالَهُ فَالْتَمَسُوهُ، فَلَمْ يَفْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ

“After arriving from Abyssinia `Amr ibn al-`Aas entered onto the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace who said to him: ‘What is that signet ring on your hand O `Amr?’ He said: ‘It is ring O Messenger of Allah.’ He said: ‘Then what is engraved on it?’ He said: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ Sa`id said: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace then took it and it remained on his hand until he died. Then it was worn on the hand of Abu Bakr until he died. Then it was worn on the hand of Umar until he died. Then Uthman wore it, until one day he was having a well dug for the people of al-Medina, called the well of Arees. At the time he was sitting on the edge of the well over seeing the digging of the well, when the signet ring fell into the well. The reason for this was that Uthman used to often remove the signet ring from his hand, replace it and touch it. When it fell the people were unable to retrieve it.’” What is meant here by Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman wearing the signet ring on their hands, is that they wore it but also used it to seal their correspondences to their officials and foreign rulers; but also in order to take from the *baraka* of the vestiges of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This is evidence for the lawfulness of taking blessing with the vestiges of the righteous and the lawfulness of wearing their clothing. This prophetic tradition establishes that the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, was not only a lawful adornment for him, but was a symbol of his authority, which was passed down after him to those who were appointed over the Muslims. It also establishes that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace cannot be inherited from, because if it were so, the signet ring would have been given to his descendents.

However, because those who possessed the authority after him required his signet ring for the purpose of official correspondences, it was passed down through them.

Imam as-Suyuti said in his at-Tawseeh from some of the scholars: “There was in the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace something of divine secrets, just as the signet ring of Sulayman upon him be peace contained secrets. For just as when Sulayman loss is signet ring his kingdom elapsed; similarly when Uthman loss the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace then the affair infringed for him, there appeared the *Khawaarij*, which was the first of the tribulations of this world and the Next to began, and which led to his assassination, and which was connected to End of Time.”

The reason that the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace took the signet ring from `Amr ibn al-`Aas was so that no one would utilize the same seal as his, since this seal was utilized in his official correspondences. It is for this reason that he forbade others to engrave their rings with the expression ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’; as it was related by Muhammad ibn Umar on the authority of Ibn Umar who said:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اتَّخَذَ خَاتَمًا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَجَعَلَ فِيهِ مِمَّا يَلِي كَفَّهُ وَنَقَشَ فِيهِ
مُحَمَّدَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَنَهَى أَنْ يَنْقُشَ أَحَدٌ عَلَيْهِ

“The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to utilize the signet ring made of silver. He would turn the face of the ring towards his palm. It was engraved with ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’; and he forbade anyone to engrave their rings with that expression.” It was this ring which fell into the well of Arees. Because the practical purpose of the signet ring is in order to seal one’s correspondence, it was forbidden during the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the time of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman to engrave a signet ring with the expression ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’, because this was the official seal of the supreme Muslim authority. However, after the ring fell into the well of Arees during the time of Uthman, the jurists differ regarding whether this prohibition is still valid. The majority of the scholars say that this interdiction was valid in the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, only. This is because Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman wore his ring and utilized it in their correspondences. It is also reported that when Uthman failed to find the ring in the well, that he commissioned another one like it to be made. This is evidence that the interdiction was restricted to the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Allah knows best.

It has been related by Ibn Sa`d in his Tabaqaat’l-Kubra on the authority of Ibn Sireen who said:

كان في خاتم رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم: "بسم الله محمد رسول الله"

“The signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace had transcribed on it: ‘In the name of Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’.” This is evidence that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace possessed many silver signet rings; some were not engraved, some were engraved with: ‘There is no deity except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’; some with; ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’; and some with: ‘In the name of Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace also possessed iron signet rings intermixed with silver.

It has been related by Abu Dawud and an-Nisaai' on the authority of Iyaas ibn Harth ibn Mu`ayqeeb on the authority of his father on the authority of his grandfather who said:

كَانَ خَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ مَلُويٍّ عَلَيْهِ فِضَّةٌ ، فَرُبَّمَا كَانَ فِي يَدِي

“The signet ring of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was made of iron with silver intertwined in it. Sometime it was in my hand.” *Shaykh* Ali ibn Muhammad al-Malaa explained the reason that this signet ring was sometimes in the possession of Mu`ayqeeb: “Mu`ayqeeb was responsible for the signet ring of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; meaning that he was entrusted with it.”

In a similar narration by Ibn Sa`d on the authority of Is`haq ibn Sa`id who said:

أَنَّ خَالِدَ بْنَ سَعِيدٍ أَتَى رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَفِي يَدِهِ خَاتَمٌ لَهُ، فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ((مَا هَذَا الْخَاتَمُ؟)) فَقَالَ: خَاتَمٌ اتَّخَذْتَهُ، فَقَالَ: ((اطْرَحْهُ إِلَيَّ))، فَطْرَحَهُ، فَإِذَا خَاتَمٌ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ مَلُويٍّ عَلَيْهِ فِضَّةٌ، فَقَالَ: ((مَا نَقَشَهُ؟))، فَقَالَ: "مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ"، قَالَ: فَأَخَذَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَلَبَسَهُ فَهُوَ الَّذِي كَانَ فِي يَدِهِ

“Khalid ibn Sa`id once came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and on his hand was a signet ring. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said to him: ‘What is this ring?’ He said: ‘It is a ring which I have taken to wear.’ He said: ‘Toss it to me.’ He then tossed the ring to him, and it was made of iron mixed with silver. He said: ‘What is engraved on it?’ He said: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace took it and wore it, and was the one he wore on his hand.” These two prophetic traditions establish that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace had a third ring made of iron intermixed with silver, with which he sealed his correspondences. One of them he wore and one did not wear; and was entrusted to one of his servants.

However, in another similar narration it has been reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace had a third ring which he wore made of silver which also had transcribed on it: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ It has been related by Ibn Sa`d on the authority of `Amr ibn Uthman who said:

أَنَّ مَعَاذَ بْنَ جَبَلٍ لَمَّا قَدِمَ مِنَ الْيَمَنِ حِينَ بَعَثَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، إِلَيْهَا قَدِمَ وَفِي يَدِهِ خَاتَمٌ مِنْ وَرَقٍ نَقَشَهُ: "مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ"، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ((مَا هَذَا الْخَاتَمُ؟)) قَالَ: "يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ أَكْتُبُ إِلَى النَّاسِ فَأَفْرُقُ أَنْ يَزَادَ فِيهَا وَيَنْقُصَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّخَذْتُ خَاتَمًا أَخْتَمُ بِهِ"، قَالَ: ((وَمَا نَقَشَهُ؟)) قَالَ: "مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ"، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ((أَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ مَعَاذٍ حَتَّى خَاتَمِهِ!))، ثُمَّ أَخَذَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَتَخْتَمَهُ.

“When Mu`adh ibn Jabal arrived from Yemen when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace sent him there; he came to him and on his hand was a signet ring made of silver and was engraved with the words: ‘Muhammad is he Messenger of Allah’. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said to him: ‘What is this ring?’ He said: O Messenger of Allah I used to write to the people and in order to distinguish from them adding something or deleting something from it, I therefore took to utilizing the signet ring with which I seal my

correspondences.’ He said: ‘What is it engraved with?’ He said: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: ‘Everything from Mu`adh has true belief, even his signet ring.’ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace then took it, wore and sealed his correspondences with it.” In this prophetic tradition and those similar cited before it is clear evidence that many of the Companions took the initiative of making signet rings which were engraved with: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ This indicates that although the Prophet may Allah bless him and grant him peace banned anyone utilizing this signet ring as a seal for correspondences, yet the ban was a temporary one and was not an absolute prohibition. The fact that he, upon him be peace attributed the signet ring of Mu`adh to him by his words: ‘...even his signet ring’, indicates that he was not displeased with him engraving his signet ring with the phrase: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’; nor did he criticize him for using it to seal his correspondences when he was in Yemen. Thus, the only reason he took the ring from Mu`adh was so that no inconvenience would occur while he was in al-Medina by Mu`adh sealing his correspondence with the same seal with which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace sealed his correspondences; and Allah knows best.

From these different narrations it establishes the basis for the disagreement among the jurists regarding the lawfulness for anyone other than the supreme Muslim ruler or government officials wearing signet rings. *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Qasim Jassus said in his al-Fawaa'id 'l-Jaleela: “Realize that wearing signet rings of silver is highly recommended (*mustahab*), even for the one who has no need to seal correspondences. It is also said that it is reprehensible (*makruuh*) except for the one who possess some authority based upon the prophetic traditions narrated regarding that; like the judge because it is required of him to seal his legal documents with it. However, the first opinion is the more famous opinion. Ibn `Arafa, on the other hand said: ‘It is only highly recommended if he does so to follow the *Sunna*. As for the people today, no one does it, for the most part, except those who possess little or no virtuous character; those who intend by it some evil design. Thus, my opinion is that it is not permissible for people such as these to wear the silver signet ring.’ Based upon that if wearing the silver signet ring becomes an emblem of ignoble people and those who possess little or no virtuous character from the people of buffoonery and corruption, then it is not lawful because in this case abandoning a *Sunna* by which something honorable is protected is then obligatory. However, it was cited in Nawaazil'l-Mi`yaar in the book of general legal rulings: ‘Once `Izza'd-Deen was asked: ‘Is it lawful to abandon the *Sunna* which becomes associated with a heretical innovation?’ He answered: ‘It is not lawful to abandon the *Sunna* for that reason, because the scholars and the righteous continued to establish the *Sunnan* even when they knew that these had become associated with the people of heretical innovation. For, if this were allowed, then it would also be lawful to abandon the call to prayer (*adhaan*), the *iqaama*, and superogatory *Sunnan*’.”

On Wearing the Signet Ring on the Right and Left Hands

There is disagreement among the jurists regarding the lawfulness of wearing the signet ring upon the right or left hands. Their disagreements are based upon the different prophetic narrations regarding that. It has been related by Muhammad ibn Sahl and Abdallah ibn Abd'r-Rahman on the authority of Ali ibn Abi Talib who said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَلْبَسُ خَاتَمَهُ فِي يَمِينِهِ

“The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear a signet ring on his right hand.” Ahmad ibn Saalih narrated a similar prophetic tradition on the authority of Shareek ibn Abdallah ibn Abi Nimr. This prophetic tradition establishes that it is the *Sunna* to wear the signet ring on the right hand.

It has been related by Ahmad ibn Mani` on the authority of Himaad ibn Salma who said:

رَأَيْتُ ابْنَ أَبِي رَافِعٍ يَتَخْتَمُ فِي يَمِينِهِ يَتَخْتَمُ فِي يَمِينِهِ عَنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ رَأَيْتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ جَعْفَرٍ يَتَخْتَمُ فِي يَمِينِهِ، وَقَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ: كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَتَخْتَمُ فِي يَمِينِهِ

“I once saw Ibn Abi Raafi` with a signet ring on his right hand. So I asked him about that and he said: ‘I saw Abdallah ibn Ja`far wearing a signet ring on his right hand. Abdallah ibn Ja`far said: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear the signet ring on his right hand’.” A similar narration was related by Zayd ibn Yahya on the authority of Jaabir ibn Abdallah.

It has been related by Abu Dawud on the authority of Muhammad ibn Is`haq who said:

رَأَيْتُ عَلَى الصَّلْتِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ خَاتَمًا فِي خِنْصَرِهِ الْيُمْنَى، فَقَالَ: رَأَيْتُ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

“I saw a signet ring on as-Salt ibn Abdallah. It was on the little finger of his right hand. He said about that: ‘I saw Ibn Abass who mentioned this on the authority of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.’” In another narration he said: “I saw Ibn Abass used to wear the signet ring on his right hand and never removed it except that he said: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear the signet ring on his right hand’.”

However in another narration from Ibn Sa`d in his *Tabaqaat'l-Kubra* on the authority of Ja`far as-Saadiq ibn Muhammad al-Baqir on the authority of his father who said:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، طَرَحَ خَاتَمَهُ الذَّهَبَ، ثُمَّ تَخْتَمَ خَاتَمًا مِنْ وَرَقٍ فَجَعَلَهُ فِي يَسَارِهِ

“The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace once threw away his gold ring, and then wore a signet ring made of silver, which he placed on his left hand.”

It was related by Muslim on the authority of Anas who said:

كان خاتمته صلى الله عليه وسلم في هذه، وأشار له لخنصر يسراه

“His signet ring, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was on this”; and he indicated with the little finger of his left hand. In another narration of Abu Dawud on the authority Ibn Umar who said:

كان صلى الله عليه وسلم يتختم في يسراه

“He may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear his ring on his left hand.”

This is evidence that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace wore the signet rings on both the right and left hands. In another similar narration from Qutayba ibn Sa`id also on the authority of Ja`far ibn Muhammad on the authority of his father who said:

كَانَ الْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا يَتَخْتَمَانِ فِي يَسَارِهِمَا

“Al-Hassan and al-Hussayn used to wear signet rings on their left hands.” It is related in the *al-Ilam* that signet ring of *Imam* al-Hussayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib was engraved with the word: “Allah causes His affairs to be achieved.” He also said regarding *Imam* al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib that he wore silver signet ring engraved with the words: “Allah is the Greatest and it is with Him I seek assistance.”

It is clear from the above that there is dispute among the scholars regarding wearing the signet ring on the right hand or left hand, and upon which finger it should be worn. *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Qasim Jassus said quoting an-Nawwawi: “There is disagreement regarding which is better, because many of the early community used to wear the signet ring on the right hand, and many of the early community used to wear the signet ring on their left hand.” He went on to say: “A large group of the jurists consider both equal and used to join the conflicting prophetic traditions by wearing a signet ring on both the right and left hands.”

On Entering the Latrine, and Places to Relieve Oneself While Wearing Signet Rings

The jurists disagree regarding the lawfulness of entering the latrine, the toilet, the water closet or any place where one relieves oneself while wearing a signet ring engraved with the Name of Allah, one of the Names of Allah or a verse from the *Qur'an*. Some of the scholars say that it is reprehensible, while others say it is forbidden. It has been related by Is`haq ibn Mansuur on the authority of az-Zuhri on the authority of Anas who said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا دَخَلَ الْخَلَاءَ نَزَعَ خَاتَمَهُ

“Whenever the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace entered the latrine he would remove his signet ring.” In another narration he said: “...he put down his signet ring.” This was because the signet ring was engraved with a verse from the *Qur'an*, as we mentioned. This establishes that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace wore the signet ring, and that he made it taboo to carry the *Qur'an* or a single verse from it into the latrine or when relieving oneself in an open space, because the expression ‘*khalaa*’ in Arabic refers to both the open spaces where people relieve themselves or the water closets, latrines and toilets designated for that. He removed the ring in order to show esteem for the name of Majesty, the name of a Prophet from among the Prophets of Allah, and an attribute from the attributes of any of the Messengers, or a depiction of a sentence from a *Qur'anic* sentence. Al-Huṭaab said that which sums this up: “It is unanimous agreement

regarding it being highly recommended (*istihaab*) to avoid making remembrance of Allah in the latrine (*kaneef*) and to enter with anything that the remembrance of Allah is written on, such as paper, a gold coin or a signet ring into the latrine. What is meant by permissibility in what proceeded is the absence of prohibition, not that both entering and not entering with these are equally permissible. Then realize that there is disagreement regarding the remembrance of Allah if it is not the *Qur'an* and if it is remembrance of Allah in it with other than the *Qur'an*. The opinions regarding this are divided into two. It is said that it is lawful in the latrine, and what is meant by lawfulness, is the absence of strong reprehensibility. It is said that it is taboo (*mamnuu`*). But what is meant by this phrase is forbidden (*tahreem*), which seems to be the apparent meaning of some of the jurists or it is a confirmed reprehensibility (*kiraaha mu'akida*), which is the apparent meaning of the majority of the jurists. As for as reciting the *Qur'an* in the latrine; it is also taboo (*tamana`u*). However, if what is meant by taboo, is what is reprehensible (*kiraaha*) or forbidden (*tahreem*), then the latter is the more apparent meaning. All of this is based upon choice. As for the one who is required to make remembrance of Allah out of fear, or enters the latrines with something upon which the remembrance of Allah is written or the *Qur'an*, because if he removes it from his person it will be harmed or there is no one who can hold it for him, then it is lawful to enter the latrine with it.”

This also raises the issue of the lawfulness of purifying the private parts (*istinjaa*) while wearing a signet ring. Some of the Maliki scholars such as Ibn'l-Qaasim held that it was lawful (*jawaaz*) and did so based upon his words: “Indeed this is what I do.” Some of the Maliki scholars hold that it is reprehensible (*kiraaha*) based upon what was understood from the words of Malik himself in three places in the *al-Utubiyya* as well as from al-Lakhmi. Some of the Maliki scholars hold that it is forbidden (*tahreem*) which is what is understood from the *at-Tawdeeh*, as well as Ibn Abd's-Salaam and Ibn al-`Arabi in his *al-Aarida* where he said: “It is not lawful for a Muslim to make *istinjaa* wearing a signet ring upon which is engraved the Name of Allah. And what was narrated on the authority of Malik concerning the lawfulness of that, its narration is repudiated with the people of the Maliki school of thought, especially the latter of them who consider this narration false.” I say: what is intended here by making *istinjaa* is washing and touching the private parts and the places of impurity with the hand on which there is a signet ring with the Name of Allah, and not merely holding the water container and pouring the water with that same hand; and Allah knows best.

On the Righteous Who Wore Signet Rings and On What Was Engraved on Them

It goes without saying that the early community went to the extremes in following and imitating anything which was confirmed to be apart of the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. They did so following the command of Allah ta`ala to imitate and obey Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace in all he did, in his character, religious and worldly acts; out of love for him and earnestness to arrive at what he arrived at with his Lord.

Shehu Uthman ibn Fuduye` narrates to us in his *Ihya's-Sunna*: “Abdallah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with both of them, was once seen riding his she-camel in place around a tree. When asked about that, he replied: ‘I really do not know. Verily I saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, do it, so I did it.’” If this were the case with something as mundane as imitating the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace in riding his she-camel around a tree; it is more so important to imitate him in the wearing of the signet ring, especially if

this is done in order to revive the *Sunna*, and to attain the gnosis which results from adherence to it. The historical data proves that the best of the Companions, the *Taabi`uun*, the *Taabi` t-Taabi`een* followed the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace in wearing the silver signet ring.

Abu Nu`aym related in his Ma`rifat as-Sahaaba that Abu Bakr as-Sideeq wore a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "The luxuriant life is the result of the Omnipotent One - Allah." He said: "The silver signet ring of Umar ibn al-Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him was engraved with the words: 'Death is sufficient as a reminder O Umar'." He said: "There is disagreement regarding the silver signet ring of Uthman. It is said that it was engraved with the words: 'I have believed in Allah sincerely.' It is said it was engraved with: 'I have believed in the One who created and then set in order.' It is said it was engraved with: 'You should be patient or your will regret'." The above narrations are proof that it was the custom of the Companions to wear two rings, because it is well known as we cited above that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman also used to wear the signet ring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

It says in the Tarikh'l-Khulafa Ibn Asaakir related on the authority of `Amr ibn Uthman ibn `Afan who said: "The signet ring of Ali ibn Abi Talib was engraved with the words: "The kingdom belongs to Allah."

Imam ad-Dhahabi said in his Seer `Alaam `n-Nubawa that the Companion of the Prophet, `Imraan ibn al-Hussein al-Khuzaai` who was appointed by Umar as the judge of Basra used to wear a silver signet ring which had the face of a man engraved on its face. Ibn Sireen said that the Companion Abdallah ibn Umar wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with his name: 'Abdallah ibn Umar.' Abu Nu`aym said that Abdallah ibn Umar had another silver signet ring which was engraved with the words: "Abdallah belongs to Allah." Ibn Sireen also said that the Companion Anas ibn Malik wore a silver signet ring engraved with a kneeling lion. It is conceivable that Anas saw no harm in this since it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace possessed a similar signet ring as well. It was related by Abd'r-Raaziq on the authority of Ma`amir on the authority of Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn `Aqil that he brought out a signet ring and claimed that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to wear it. It was engraved with an image of a lion. Ma`amir said: "Some of our companions used to wash it and drink the water." Qatada also reported that Anas wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with the image of a crane with two heads. Al-Baghawi said that the Companion, Hudhayfa al-Yamaani used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the image of two cranes.

Ma`amir related on the authority of Qatada that the Companion Abu Musa al-Ash`ari wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with the image of a lion between two men; and that the Companion Abu `Ubayda ibn Jaraah wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with the words from the *Qur'an*: "*The fifth of the spoils is for Allah.*"

Muhammad ibn Sireen and others related that the Companion, Jareer ibn Abdallah wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with the words: "Our Lord is Allah." Muhammad ibn Sireen, himself wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with his honorific name: 'Abu Bakr' and Qurra ibn Khalid said he used to wear it on his left hand. The Umayyad *Khalif* Mu`awiya ibn Yazid used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "This world's life is a deception." The Umayyad *Khalif* al-Walid ibn Abd'l-Malik ibn Marwan used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "O Walid indeed you will die." The Umayyad *Khalif* Abu

Ayyub Sulayman ibn al-Hakam ibn Abi'l-`Aas ibn Ummaya used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "I believe in Allah sincerely." The Abbasid *Khalif* Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn al-Mansuur al-Hashimi al-Abbasi used to wear a silver signet ring which was engraved with the words: "Allah is the reliance of Muhammad, and it is in Him that we believe." His grandson the *Khalif* Abu'l-Abbasi Abdallah ibn Haruun ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mansuur wore a silver signet ring engraved with the name: "Abdullah ibn `Ubaydallah." The Abbasid *Khalif* Abu'l-Mudhaffir Yusef ibn Muhammad ibn al-Abbasi used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words of a poem: "Whoever loves his soul, he acts on its behalf." His grandson, the Abbasid *Khalif* Abu'l-Abbasi Ahmad ibn al-Hassan ibn Yusef used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "My hope from Allah is that He pardons me." The Abbasid *Khalif* al-Mu`ataṣim Billahi used to wear a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "All praises are due to Allah whom there is nothing like."

In the *Hiliyat'l-Awliyya* it is related on the authority of Hatim ibn Isma`il on the authority of Abu Ja`far Muhammad al-Baqir who said: "My father wore a signet ring which was engraved with the words: 'All strength is with Allah'." Muṭṭraf ibn Abdallah and others related that the silver signet ring which *Imam* Malik wore had a black stone on its face and was engraved with the words of Allah ta`ala: "*Allah is enough for me, and the Best of Guardians.*" He used to wear it on his left hand and sometimes he wore it on his right. Al-Hakam said that *Imam* as-Shafi` wore a silver signet ring which was engraved with the words of Allah ta`ala: "Allah is the reliance of Muhammad ibn Idris." He also said: "We saw Abd'l-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn `Adiy and his silver signet ring was engraved with the words: 'Allah is the reliance of Abd'l-Malik ibn Muhammad'." He also said: "We saw ar-Rabi`a and his silver signet ring was engraved with the words: 'Allah is the reliance of ar-Rabi`a ibn Sulayman'."

The *Imam* of the People of *Tasawwuf* Abu'l-Qaasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi wore a silver signet ring engraved with the words: "If you have false hope in it, do not feel safe from it." The *Sultan* of the *Awliyya*, our master, *Muhy'd-Deen* Abd'l-Qadir al-Jaylani wore a signet ring engraved with the words: "The guide of the spiritual Path and the mine of divine gnosis *Shaykh* Abd'l-Qadir al-Jaylaani, may Allah ennoble his secret."



On the Use of the Silver Signet Ring as A Symbol of Cultural Unity

Shehu, may Allah be merciful to him said in his last testament to the *Jama`at* called al-Wasiyya:

“...it is necessary and obligatory for every reasonable believer to follow the traces of their believing ancestors, to follow the Way of their righteous grandfathers and imitate them. For this reason, I have chosen to imitate my grandfathers in adhering to the *Sunna* strongly so that I can be a guide to what is good like they were. For the one who guides to what is good is like the one who does that same good and will attain the reward of those who act on it”

Not only was the wearing of the silver signet ring among the confirmed practices of the early Islamic community, it was also a practice which enslaved African Muslims initiated in their quest for a historical consciousness and a sense of cultural unity which assisted them in their struggle for self determination. The collective memories, and symbols preserved by a people constitute the key ingredients for their survival in the face of cultural aggression. Even in matters which are mundane such as attire, jewelry, and the patterns which adorn a peoples' dwellings constitute the last line of defense when an oppressed people are under sustained attack by outsiders. These extraneous cultural symbols take on extremely fundamental meaning under such dire circumstances. However, when these same mundane ancestral customs have the authority of being connected to the Living *Sunna* of the Master of Creation, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then what was expendable and superfluous, as a result becomes indispensable and crucial.

In the early seventeenth century more than 6 million African Muslims were kidnapped, or sold into chattel slavery. They were brought into the western hemisphere and stripped clean of everything except their skin color which they could not escape and which became the singular symbolic trait with which their oppressors were able to maintain their oppression. A systemic psychological and physical punitive instruction of containment was developed in order to gut the African Muslim of every vestige of his *fitra*, his connection to his Islamic African past, and what these bequeathed to him from the Living *Sunna* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. For many centuries the dominant culture considered that they had accomplished their mission of creating a new creature – THE NEGRO. However, as Herbert Aptheker, Sterling Stuckey, Vincent Harding, Clyde Ahmed Winters, Terry Alford, Allen Austin, Sylviane Diouf, Michael Gomez, Robert Dannin and many others have painstakingly unearthed in their researches – that African Islamic traditions survived the Middle Passage and actively informed the nature of the survival and resistance which enslaved Africans had to undertake.

In Jamaica African Muslims corresponded with their coreligionists in Arabic. In South Carolina, African Muslims helped fuel and organized insurrections. In Georgia African Muslims composed *Qur'ans* and seminal Islamic legal text from memory. In Florida and the Spanish territories African Muslims confederated with the warriors of the First Nations of the Americas and waged prolonged wars against Antebellum colonial societies and the post constitutional United States. In Mississippi African Muslims utilized Arabic to gain their freedom and lay the seeds for African reversion to Islam. In Trinidad African Muslims created viable Muslim communities in the southern region of the island. In Cuba, Guatemala, and the Honduras the African Muslims organized and fueled slave revolts and insurrections. In all these cases, the symbols of cultural survival were witnessed. From the wearing of the white turbans of the *Qaadiriyya* brotherhood, the white *agbadas*, the carrying and utilization

of the *tasbeeh*, the collective eating and feeding of food, the manumission of co-religionists to organized armed struggle under the banner of *jihad*.

In none of these examples of the persistence of African Islamic traditions does the Living *Sunna* stand out more clearer than in the African Muslim slave revolts of Bahia Brazil from 1806 to 1837. It was here that the practice of the *Sunna* took on an extremely revolutionary and social transformative mode. I make particular reference to the utilization of the silver signet rings. This confirmed *Sunna* was utilized by the free and enslaved population of African Muslims to establish an identifying mark among themselves. The silver signet rings were given to new Muslims as a symbol of belonging and brotherhood. They were also engraved with symbols which identified rank, position and authority in the Islamic communities. In addition to this these rings enfolded the '*hatumere*' (khaatim –mystical secrets) which the Muslims used to instill confidence in the hearts of their co-religionists. In the revolt of 1816, one of its leaders, a freedman by the name of *Shaykh* Dandara of Hausa origin was reported by a 'mulatto' of distributing silver signet rings to would be Muslim revolutionaries.

"I often saw him distributing rings and books with unknown writings...and several times I saw him with a big rosary, praying and rubbing it against his hands and shouting to the sky."

He was assisted by his wife, who would give the same silver signet rings to new converts and cook large meals feeding African Muslims and non Muslims alike. During the trial against the thwarted Muslim revolts, the chief prosecutor, Augusto Moniz da Silva said:

"...the leaders of the insurrection indoctrinated their followers in the principles of the religion of their country, instructed them in the writing of Arabic characters, and distributed to them papers written in these characters, along with (silver) rings of a certain shape, as well as robes and hats,...which in their belief would insure without risk a victory over the obstacles and forces opposed against them."

The African Muslims developed a proactive innovation upon a confirmed *Sunna* practice and adopted the use of the silver signet rings as a way of identifying one another. These rings functioned as "Male badges" as a symbol of belonging to the Muslim community of Bahia. These customs united the African Muslims and were evidence that there was the persistence of a historical consciousness among the Muslims of Bahia. This historical consciousness unified the disparate elements of the African Muslims and made them into a whole. It engendered in them qualities that made them distinguished from the larger population of Bahia. This distinction did not in any way alienate them from the non-Muslims of African descent, but worked to attract other Africans of various ethnic origins who might have lost their sense of historical consciousness as a result of the system and trauma of slavery. Thus, these extraneous customs such as wearing the signet ring became one of the means for the large conversions of many Ibo, Yoruba, Serer, Asantehena, Bambara, Angolan and Wolof ethnicities to the call of Islam. It was the revival of the *Sunna* of wearing signet rings which lay the seed for what would eventually grow to be fully grown and fruitful trees of resistance and revolution in every region in the western hemisphere where African Muslims were held captive. What the researches and the present anthropology proves is that the project of the dominant culture failed; and the fresh plant of African Islamic traditions broke through the stultifying concrete of 500 years of Judeo-Christian culture, and today like a fresh green creeping/crawling/climbing plant is growing every where upon the collapsing walls of western civilization.

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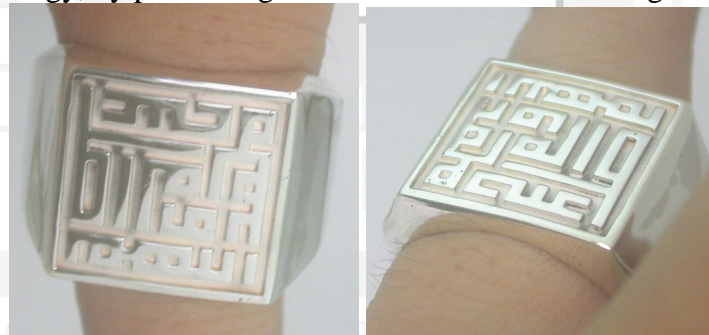
It is not the custom of the SIIASI to ask for donations or financial support, because we believe strongly that our Islamic culture should not be placed back on the slave blocks to be marketed and sold for a price. However, like our African Muslim scholarly ancestors who supported their efforts through long distance trade and commerce, we are offering for your support highly hand crafted silver signet rings which exemplify our persistent culture and rich civilization.



The first of the many rings that we will have available is a beautiful yet simple design engraved with the words:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ

“O Allah send blessings upon Muhammad and his family.” It is our intention of making the same design available for earrings and necklaces, and will eventually introduce the design with the blessed Abyssinian black onyx stone praised on the tongue of the Beloved Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Please assist us in the ongoing work of uncovering and reviving our authentic African Islamic anthropology, by purchasing one of these blessed silver signet rings.



Thank you for your support
Shaykh Muhammad Shareef bin Farid
Director of SIIASI