

**The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449); a  
translation and critical commentary.**

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## **Abstract.**

This subject of this thesis is *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ Nukhbat al-fikar*, a manual written by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), outlining the science of prophetic traditions (*‘ilm al-ḥadīth*). The thesis aims to fulfill two tasks. Firstly, an accurate and accessible translation of the *Nuzhah* will be presented in English. Secondly, this will be coupled with a detailed and critical commentary of Ibn Ḥajar’s work. This commentary will assess the worth of the *Nuzhah* in many ways; the writings of Ibn Ḥajar will be analysed to learn what it said about the climate of the ninth Islamic century, by comparing it with the works of Muslim scholars before and after Ibn Ḥajar. Additionally, where the works of modern, non-Muslim scholars such as Schacht and Juynboll are mentioned, it will be with the purpose to show the interaction with their Muslim counterparts. Themes such as the use of technical terms in the discipline, the importance of seniority and the pedagogical nature of the *Nuzhah* will also be discussed.

# The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449).

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<b>Section 5.8.2.</b>	<i>A Summary of reports according to how they reached us.</i>
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## Transliteration Table.

### Consonants.

ا	A	ض	D
ب	B	ط	T
ت	C	ظ	Z
ث	Th	ع	‘A
ج	J	غ	Gh
ح	H	ف	F
خ	Kh	ق	Q
د	D	ك	K
ذ	Dh	ل	L
ر	R	م	M
ز	Z	ن	N
س	S	ه	H
ش	Sh	و	W
ص	Ṣ	ي	Y

ة -t in the construct state, -a in the non-construct state.

### Vowels.

**Short.** Fathā: a Kasra: i Damma: u

**Long.** ā : آ ī : ي ū : و

**Diphthongs.** preceded by a Damma: aw.  
preceded by a Fathā: ay.

Arabic broken plurals have been translated into English. So, for example, I have written *ḥadīths* rather than aḥādīth.

# **The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449); a translation and critical commentary.**

## **1.1. Introduction to the Thesis.**

*Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ nukhbat al-fīkar* is one of the most famous and respected manuals in the discipline of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth. Written by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852 A.H./1449 C.E.)<sup>1</sup>, it was one of the last major works on the subject, aimed at consolidating the vast array of literature that preceded it. The work is still revered today and continues to be taught in seminaries throughout the Muslim world.

*Nuzhat al-naẓar* is actually a detailed commentary of a much shorter treatise written by Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukhbat al-fīkar fī muṣṭalaḥ al-athar*. The latter consists of only a few pages. In his introduction to *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, Ibn Ḥajar explains that his contemporaries asked him to offer a brief overview of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥajar duly obliged in the form of *Nukhbat al-fīkar*, but he was then later asked to expand on this work. The result was *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ nukhbat al-fīkar*. Though in reality the *Nuzhah* is two separate works (*Nuzhat al-naẓar* and *Nukhbat al-fīkar*), Ibn Ḥajar wrote his final piece in an amalgamated style.<sup>2</sup> The result is that it can be read as if it is one piece of work.

As it will be shown in chapter three, the *Nuzhah* is only a small reflection of Ibn Ḥajar’s knowledge and academic contribution to the discipline of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth. He wrote

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<sup>1</sup> A.H. denotes ‘After Hijra’, the date from which the Muslim calendar commenced. C.E. denotes ‘Common Era’. All corresponding dates in this thesis have been taken from *The Muslim & Christian Calendars*. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville. Oxford University Press: London, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> What this means is that when Ibn Ḥajar embarked on writing the *Nuzhah*, he did not delete anything from the *Nukhbah*. Rather, he added the commentary in between.



individual treatises on countless areas in this field. But the accessibility of the *Nuzhah* is just one reason why the work has remained in the public domain for such a long period of time. The work strikes a perfect balance between being a sound appreciation of *‘ilm al-hadīth*, but without deviation and without stretching into volumes of work. It offers an excellent overview of the main terminologies used in the field, a simple and systematic presentation of the division of traditions and an invaluable insight into Ibn Ḥajar’s own methodology. In short, the importance of this work should not be overestimated and this is why an appreciation of it is required.

## **1.2. The Objectives of the Thesis.**

The primary aim of this thesis is:

- a. to offer an English translation of the *Nuzhah*.
- b. to couple this with a critical analysis and an evaluation of the work, through the means of an innovative commentary.

### **1.2.1. The translation.**

This work will present an accurate yet easily-accessible English rendition of *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ nukhbat al-fīkar*. The actual text of the *Nuzhah* will be presented in bold font throughout the chapter. In the *Nuzhah*, I have tried to keep the translation as literal as possible. In places, this is difficult not least because the *Nuzhah* itself is an amalgamation of two works. Therefore there are places where I have added words in square brackets that are not to be found in the original *Nuzhah*. This is for the sake of easier reading in English. Additionally I have sometimes added words in round brackets that are usually

the translation of certain terminologies that Ibn Hajar employs. Admittedly, there are places where the English translation of the *Nuzhah* does not flow as well as one could hope for, but as much as possible, I wanted the English to resemble the original Arabic. In translation terminology, there is a distinction between dynamic equivalence (which attempts to capture the thought and meaning at the expense of word order and grammatical features) and formal equivalence (which attempts literal fidelity at the expense of readability or even understanding). In practice translation tends to be a mixture of the two, and I think the same could be said for my translation of the *Nuzhah*. For the translation, I have depended upon the copy published by Mu'assasat Manāhil al-'Irfān, in Beirut, Lebanon (1990). This version has been edited by Muḥammad 'Abbās al-Ṣabbāgh.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.2. The Commentary.**

A thesis at this stage of academia needs to display an original contribution to knowledge. Certainly the translation of the *Nuzhah* into English will fulfil this aim, as this is, to my knowledge, the first time the *Nuzhah* has been translated in full into English at PhD level.<sup>4</sup> But it is in the commentary of the *Nuzhah* where I hope to display a unique understanding of the discipline, as well as show a degree of independent, critical and analytical skills. I intend to do this with the following points in mind:

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, I did not come across any information regarding the *Nuzhah* in original, manuscript form. Informally, I was told that it can be found at the al-Azhar University manuscript archives, in Cairo.

<sup>4</sup> I have not come across a full English translation of the *Nuzhah*. The shorter *Nukhbah* has been translated into English by Musa Furber in the appendix to G.F. Haddad's work, *Sunna Notes - Studies in Hadith & Doctrine Volume I; Hadith History & Principles*. (Aqsa Publications: UK. 2005)

- Muslim scholars after Ibn Ḥajar showed their admiration for the *Nuzhah* by penning detailed commentaries on it, of which several are in circulation today. Many of these works, such as al-Munāwī's contribution, provided an unreserved and uncompromising explanation running into volumes of work. However, the nature of these existing works on the *Nuzhah* has followed a routine pattern. For most part, they have commented on the *Nuzhah*, not necessarily critically assessed and evaluated it. The technical terms in the commentaries have been explained, but the wider implication of them has not been outlined. These works tell us little about the academic and social climate of the ninth Islamic century. Certainly, the likes of al-Qārī and al-Munāwī have not asked what the *Nuzhah* said about the development of *'ilm al-ḥadīth* as a whole.

This is precisely where I hope to contribute with a fresh input and show true originality. My purpose is not to comment on the *Nuzhah* for the sake of it. As much as possible and wherever appropriate, I will ask what the writings of Ibn Ḥajar tell us about his era and the nature of ḥadīth academia at the time. If there are areas in the *Nuzhah* that received more attention – areas such as *mutawātir*, *bid'a* and *marfū'* for example – then the possible reasons behind this will be assessed. Similarly, the emphasis will not be on what a particular technical term means, but more on what purpose it served in the discipline.

- The thesis is centred on a work written over five centuries ago. Yet there will be places where I will refer to recent, relevant literature stemming from non-Muslim, Western academics such as Burton (1994), Brown (1999), Goldziher, Guillaume (1924), Juynboll (1983, 1996), Muir (1858) and Schacht (1959). Wherever appropriate, I will compare the writings of Ibn Ḥajar with what non-Muslim academics have had to say. For instance, in

the section on *riwāyat al-akābir* ‘*an al-aṣāghir*’ (the narration of the seniors from the juniors), I will compare Ibn Ḥajar’s observations with that of Schacht on ‘family *isnāds*’. The issue of *aṣaḥḥ al-asānīd* (in particular, the strength of the *isnād* Mālik – Nafi‘ – Ibn ‘Umar) has been looked at in detail by Schacht (1959), and I will assess this in light of Ibn Ḥajar’s own writings on it. Leites (2000) analysed *bid’a* in considerable detail, showing how differences in reporter denomination were reflected in ḥadīth transmission. It is important to stress the reason why non-Muslim input will be mentioned in this thesis. It is not to entertain the authenticity debate over ḥadīth literature as such. It is not to answer whether Ibn Ḥajar’s opinion on family *isnāds* is correct or whether Juynboll’s is. Rather, my purpose is to show how the contrasting camps interact with one another, and what this tells us about Muslim academia. In places, I will show how the input of Westerners has been portrayed by Muslim and frequently, I will suggest that the convergence of views on a particular area is more apparent than one first assumes.

- In order to fulfil the above point, I believe that the methodological approach I intend to adopt for the commentary is pivotal to the quality of the work. My intention is to offer a unique commentary that attempts to show utmost impartiality. The commentary will attempt to neutrally assess the views held on the discipline by Muslim scholars<sup>5</sup> on the one hand and non-Muslim scholars on the other. This task will not be easy. To highlight the problem with this task, a brief example of *ṣaḥīfa* will be briefly presented.

Collections marking the earliest period of ḥadīth documentation took on the forms of small booklets, called *ṣaḥīfas*. At this stage, reports were simply put together in writing.

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<sup>5</sup> I accept that the term ‘Muslim scholars’ is a sweeping generalisation. In this thesis, ‘Muslim scholars’ will refer to the mainstream Sunni Muslims who trust the sources of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. This therefore excludes the likes of the Ahl al-Qur’ān movement and the Aḥmadīs.

Primarily, such works pertain to the Prophet's lifetime until the second Islamic century (Kamali 2005, 31).

One of the earliest *ṣaḥīfās* was 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr's (d. 65/684) *al-Ṣādiqa*<sup>6</sup>. When assessing the worth of this collection, one cannot fail to ignore the contrasting views from academics. Muslims view this work in a favourable light whereas non-Muslims do not. Al-Ṣāliḥ referred to it as 'one of the most reliable historical documents...' (in Kamali 205, 25) whereas Juynboll declared it to be the 'the fruit of someone's imagination' (1996, XI: 173-4). Such contrasting conclusions question the neutrality of both Muslim *and* non-Muslim academics to the discipline.

This partiality issue is further seen in the language employed in the field. When assessing the work of those who share a similar viewpoint, the tone is one of appreciation and respect. When the Muslims analyse the works of non-Muslims – and vice-versa – the temper and approach is dismissive and sometimes insulting. So Burton talks of 'Goldziher's magnificent insight' (1994, xvii) and Schacht of his 'brilliant investigations' (1994, xx). Al-Sibā'ī, on the other hand, describes Goldziher as 'the most dangerous of the Orientalists, the one with the longest hand, the most evil and corruptive in this field...' (1998, 213).

So to a large extent, the discipline is marked by two contrasting approaches in terms of interpreting early ḥadīth literature. Non-Muslim academics have generally shown doubt and suspicion, whereas Muslim academics have merely rebutted western observations and have not appreciated it, with Azami's *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan*

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<sup>6</sup> The work pertains to the family *isnād* 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr — father — (the latter's) grandfather — 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr — Prophet.

*Jurisprudence* being a prime example. Theoretically, the work of Edward Said on Orientalism is perhaps pivotal in understanding the conflicting conclusions reached by western academics on ḥadīth literature. He argued that the production of knowledge, especially western knowledge on the east, can never be impartial and value-free. Findings and conclusions are influenced by the author's own social, religious and political position. He implied that:

For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or an American first, as an individual second (1995, 11).

But the same applies to Muslims studying Islam too. They come up against their religion as a Muslim first, and then as an individual academic. This explains their robust rebuttal of any criticism directed at the second principal source of Islam.

My commentary – it is hoped – will avoid these two extremes. With western works on ḥadīth, I will attempt to *appreciate* their endeavours and not just refute them as many Muslim observers have done. With Muslims' works on the *Nuzḥah*, I will explore the rich commentary offered by the Muslim scholars like al-Munāwī and al-Qārī. Such works are crucially important because they offer an analysis of ḥadīth through the prism of *‘ilm al-*

*ḥadīth* literature. In order to do this, I will have to display impartiality and act as a researcher first and foremost, not as a Muslim.

In brief, through the means of the commentary I intend to:

- assess what the *Nuzhah* indicated about the social and academic climate of the ninth Islamic century.
- through comparison with earlier and later works, ask what the *Nuzhah* said about the development (or lack of it) of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* by that era.
- display a balanced criticism between the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars.
- enquire how the field of ḥadīth related to others such as fiqh using the *Nuzhah* as a basis.
- show the pedagogical nature of the work.
- ask what Ibn Ḥajar’s writings highlighted about the relationship between the *isnād* and *matn*, and what it said about the usage of technical terms.
- show how the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in the field has brought benefit and indeed loss.

### **1.3 Presentation of the thesis and chaptering.**

This thesis will consist of many chapters, all aimed at offering an extensive and useful overview of the *Nuzhah*. In order to reach this objective and to fully appreciate the work in the wider context, the thesis will commence with a brief overview of the life and works

of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. This will allow us to assess his authority in the field and will help answer wider questions on the importance of the *Nuzhah*.

Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī was preceded by a long line of ḥadīth masters who made invaluable contributions to the field. The richness and depth of the discipline we appreciate today was only possible thanks to the input of scholars like al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/970), al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and Ibn Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245). On this basis, it is only befitting that a section of the thesis is devoted to the ḥadīth works preceding the *Nuzhah*. The need for this is further amplified when we note that in his own introduction to the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar paid tribute to seven important milestone works that preceded him. The literature assessment will thus provide an insight into how important the *Nuzhah* is in the historical context of ḥadīth literature.

The following chapter will focus exclusively on the *Nuzhah*. It will be shown how this work relates to the *Nukhbah*, and where the work fits in with the development of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature between the third and ninth Islamic century.

The main section – chapter five – will primarily have two aims: to present a lucid translation of the *Nuzhah* and to offer a detailed commentary and analysis.

To fulfil these aims, the simplest and most effective method of presentation is to divide the works into two sections. The first section would offer the translation of the text void of additional notes and commentary. The second section would provide a detailed analysis of selected areas. The advantage of such a method is that the reader can easily



refer to the translation without being deterred by the commentary. If and when required, he/she can refer to the commentary in the second section.

However, after much deliberation and thought, I decided that the translation and commentary should be provided together (with the translation in bold font and the commentary in normal font). There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, in many areas of the *Nuzhah*, a detailed and lengthy commentary is not required, but rather a simple section to clarify key points. Without any deviation and distraction from the main translated text, the reader will be able to refer to this if required, rather than continuously referring to the second section.

Secondly, by adopting such an approach in the presentation, the work will resemble the method used by classic scholars in their commentaries, and indeed what Ibn Hajar used for his own commentary on the *Nukhbah*. Thus it is appropriate to assess a classic treatise, in a style and method favoured by the classics.

Thus the thesis will be divided into the following chapters:

1. Introduction to the thesis.
2. The life and works of Ibn Hajar.
3. The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Hajar; the Author's Introduction and the related literature.
4. The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Hajar.
5. The Main Section; a translation of the *Nuzhah*, with commentary and critical analysis.
6. Findings of the commentary.
7. Conclusion.

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It is sincerely hoped that the thesis will expose some very important points and display an original contribution to knowledge.

## 2.0. The Life and Works of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī.

### 2.1. Introduction.

*Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ nukhbat al-fikar* is one of the most famous and widely-used treatises on the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. The author of this important work was Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, who was born in 773 A.H./1372 C.E. In order to gain a fruitful insight into the *Nuzhah* – which is the primary focus of the thesis – it is important that an effort is made to understand the author behind the work. By assessing his ability, his other works and what he was like as an individual, we can better evaluate the significance of the *Nuzhah*, how it came about and how the era may have influenced the actual work.

### 2.2. His name.

Al-Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Miṣrī al-Qāhirī was born in Cairo on the twelfth of Sha‘bān in 773 A.H./1372 C.E. (al-Wajīdī 1996, 13: al-Qārī 1994, 26).

### 2.3. His parents.

Ibn Ḥajar’s father, Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī, was a Shāfi‘ī scholar who excelled in *fiqh*, Arabic, literature and poetry. Sources states that he was known for his knowledge, piety, trustworthiness and exemplary moral character. He died in 777/1375 in the month of

Rajab when Ibn Ḥajar was four years old (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 92; al-Wajīdī 1996, 13).

His mother died before this, and thus his sister Sitt al-Rakb assumed the responsibility to raise him (al-Wajīdī 1996, 13). She undertook this duty under the guardianship of the brother of his father's first wife, Zakī al-Dīn al-Kharrūbī, who was a renowned and affluent trader (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 93).

## **2.4. His education.**

Despite the early setback of losing both parents, Ibn Ḥajar's religious education was given utmost attention. At the age of five, his formal Islamic education commenced with the memorisation of the Qur'ān, and by the age of nine, he had completed it under the guidance of Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Saḥḥī (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 94).

The practice of the time (as indeed today) was to allow newly-graduated Qur'ān memorisers to recite it in its entirety in *tarāwīḥ* prayers during the month of Ramaḍān. Because laws of *sharī'a* stipulate that the imām must be mature (*bāligh*) to lead the Prayer, Ibn Ḥajar had to wait three years – when he reached the age of twelve – to fulfil this practice (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 94). His wait was rewarded when he received the honour of leading the Prayers at the Sacred Mosque in Makka, in the companionship of his early mentor and teacher Zakī al-Dīn al-Kharrūbī.

Thus by the age of twelve, Ibn Ḥajar reached a landmark achievement that the majority of other Muslims could only dream of. He led the *tarāwīḥ* prayers in the holiest mosque in Islam, a commendable accolade.

Ibn Ḥajar was fortunate to learn from the best scholars of his generation in a variety of Islamic disciplines. His astute memory and intelligence attracted the attention of the leading *shaykhs* of the time. After the demise of his early teacher Zakī al-Dīn al-Kharrūbī, Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Qaṭṭān<sup>7</sup> (737-813/1336-1410) took responsibility for his education. Ibn Ḥajar took jurisprudence and Arabic from him (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 96). Al-Qaṭṭān then entered him in the courses given by the great Cairene scholars al-Bulqīnī (d. 806/1403) and Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401) in Shāfi‘ī fiqh. He also benefited from the likes of Ibrāhīm Burhān al-Dīn al-Shāmī (709-800/1309-1397)<sup>8</sup>, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Dimishqī (751-833/1350-1429), known famously as al-Jazarī<sup>9</sup>, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Nīsābūrī (705-790/1305-1388)<sup>10</sup>, Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Tanūkhī (709-800/1309-1397)<sup>11</sup>, Nūr al-Dīn al-Miṣrī (735-807/1335-1405), known famously as al-Haythamī<sup>12</sup>, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Makhzūmī (751-817/1350-1414)<sup>13</sup> and Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Abnāsī (725-802/1324-1399)<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> He was proficient in several disciplines such as *qirā’a*, Arabic, jurisprudence and mathematics.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ḥajar recited the seven readings of the Qur’ān from the beginning to Sūrat al-Mufliḥūn with him, as well as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 103).

<sup>9</sup> He was one of the leading shaykhs of *qirā’a* of his era and the author of *Ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣīn* and *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā’*. He was born and brought up in Damascus, where he later laid the foundations of a school called *Dār al-Qur’ān* (al-Qārī 1994, 28). Though he excelled in jurisprudence too, Ibn Ḥajar learnt *qirā’a* from him. It was al-Jazrī who encouraged him to travel to Damascus to further his academic career (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 103).

<sup>10</sup> He was a ḥadīth master of Makka and one of the first teachers Ibn Ḥajar took ḥadīth from (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 103).

<sup>11</sup> He resided in Damascus, where over four hundred disciples gained permission to narrate from him in prophetic traditions (al-Qārī 1994, 28).

<sup>12</sup> After beginning his education with the memorization of the Qur’ān, he became the closest disciple of al-‘Irāqī. His most renowned works are *Majma’ al-zawā’id wa manba’ al-fawā’id*, *Tartīb al-thiqāt li Ibn Ḥibbān* and *Ghāyat al-maqṣad fī zawā’id Aḥmad* (al-Qārī 1994, 33).

<sup>13</sup> Al-Makhzūmī was an outstanding character who was known for his piety, good character and love for knowledge. He learnt the seven readings of recitation in his youth and adhered to teachers such as al-Allāma Shihāb al-Dīn and Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl (al-Qārī 1994, 31). Al-Makhzūmī was the first to teach Ibn Ḥajar the jurisprudence of ḥadīth in Makka. At the time, Ibn Ḥajar was only twelve years old.

<sup>14</sup> He was born in the Egyptian village of Abnās and moved to Cairo in his youth. He gained proficiency in fiqh and studied ḥadīth in Cairo, Makka and Syria. He later became a teacher and Muftī at al-Azhar

Importantly, it was the stature of these men which certainly shaped Ibn Ḥajar's own education, simply because each of these teachers were men of outstanding ability themselves. Ibn Ḥajar's student al-Sakhāwī (831-902/1328-1497) notes that it was precisely because of the academic support available to him that he was able to excel as a religious expert. He writes:

He amassed *shaykhs* which his contemporaries did not amass. All of his *shaykhs* were experts and renowned authorities in their respective disciplines. Thus al-Tanūkhī [was an expert] in qirā'a; al-'Irāqī in ḥadīth and related disciplines; al-Haythamī in prophetic texts; al-Bulqīnī in his outstanding memory and awareness: Ibn al-Mulaqqin in his countless written works... (in al-Qārī 1994, 33).

Perhaps the most renowned of these early teachers was Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Ḥusayn al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1403).<sup>15</sup> He spent approximately ten years studying ḥadīth with him (Ahmadayn 1958, 9; al-Barrī et al. 1995, 96). It was here he was given the title of *ḥāfiẓ*, as a tribute to his proficiency and expertise in ḥadīth (Anwar 2003, 21). Al-'Irāqī described him as his 'most learned disciple in ḥadīth' (al-Wajīdī 1996, 14).

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University (al-Qārī 1994, 29). Ibn Ḥajar acknowledged the vast contribution he made to his academic development on countless occasions (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 104)

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Ḥajar first became his disciple in 786/1384 and later studied under his guidance for ten years (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 103). Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-'Irāqī originated from Kurd and migrated to Cairo as a youngster. His extensive travels took him to the leading teachers of his time. His famous works are *Dhayl 'alā al-mīzān*, *al-Alfiyya*, and its commentary *Fath al-mugīth* (al-Qārī 1994, 31).

Ibn Ḥajar was able to excel in all fields not only because of the famous teachers behind him, but because he had a sustained love for learning. For example, on his first trip to Makka, his main intention was to perform the Ḥajj. Yet he also found time to memorise *‘Umdat al-aḥkām* under Ḥāfiẓ al-Jamāl ibn Zahīra, a renowned scholar of Ḥijāz (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 95). Like many great scholars, Ibn Ḥajar travelled extensively to learn. For instance, he travelled to Damascus and Jerusalem, where he studied under the likes of Shams al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 809/1406) and Badr al-Dīn al-Balīsī (d. 803/1400), as well as Yemen. Additionally, Ibn Ḥajar did not merely study the important books, but memorised them too. He memorised the text *Mukhtaṣar* of Ibn al-Ḥājiḥ on *uṣūl*, *al-Umda*, *al-Alfiyya* and *al-Ḥāwī al-ṣaghīr* (al-Qārī 1994, 26). Ibn Ḥajar as a teacher also depended heavily on his memory and in fact showed surprise to others who did not. He ‘reported as a novel practice that one of his biographees “used to teach law from a book!” (Makdisi 1981, 148).

## 2.5. His career.

Ibn Ḥajar occupied many important posts during his life. Firstly, he undertook the responsibility of delivering sermons in several mosques in Cairo, including the prestigious Azhar and ‘Amr (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 100; al-Wajīdī 1996, 14). Secondly, he taught numerous religious sciences in various seats of learning. For instance:

- i. At al-Madrasa al-Shaykhūniyya, a school founded by Sayf al-Dīn Shaykhū al-‘Umrī in 756/1355, he taught Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 121).

- ii. At al-Madrasa al-Jamāliyya, a school specializing in Ḥanafī *fiqh* founded by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Jamālī, he taught ḥadīth.
- iii. At al-Madrasa al-Ṣalāhiyya, which was built by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 121; al-Barrī et al. 1995, 102), he taught ḥadīth.
- iv. He also taught at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyya,
- v. He also taught at Jāmi‘ al-Qal‘a (founded by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwan in 718/1318),
- vi. At al-Madrasa al-Ḥasaniyya, he taught exegesis.
- vii. He also taught exegesis at al-Madrasa al-Ḥusayniyya and al-Manṣūriyya (al-Qārī 1994, 52).
- viii. He taught ḥadīth at al-Madrasa al-Zayniyya (al-Qārī 1994, 53)
- ix. He dictated ḥadīth at al-Madrasa al-Maḥmūdiyya (Ibid.).

Two points are worthy of mention here. Firstly, Ibn Ḥajar primarily occupied himself with the study and teaching of ḥadīth, though he was competent enough to teach other disciplines like jurisprudence and exegesis. He was known as a ḥadīth scholar first and foremost and certainly the extensive literature on ḥadīth and *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* he produced reflects this point too.

Secondly, the periods he spent in these numerous institutions were relatively short. This was normal practice for the time. Esteemed scholars were known to extend their knowledge and reach to as many places as possible. However, the exception was the ṣūfī lodges (*khanqah*) of Baybars in Cairo, where he taught for over twenty years. Perhaps the prolonged period here was a result of his love for the ṣūfī mystics and their way of life.



Ibn Ḥajar also served as the chief justice of Egypt for some time. He undertook this responsibility in the judiciary in 827/1423 and fulfilled this until 852/1449 (Aḥmadayn 1958, 10; al-Barrī et al. 1995, 102). His experience as a judge was not pleasant overall, as he was appointed, dismissed and re-appointed several times. More will be mentioned on this in section 5.19.

## **2.6. The climate of Mamluk Cairo.**

The outline of his career and the factors that shaped it were to some extent a product of the tense political atmosphere of Mamluk Cairo at the time. During Ibn Ḥajar's time, there was a degree of dependency between the all-important military elite and the religious scholars in Mamluk Cairo. The military provided the financial and material patronage to the scholars in return for legitimation and integration into Cairo's dominant Islamic environment (Broadbridge 1999, 85). But the frequent tensions at state level affected the position of the scholars and their proximity to the corridors of power. The death of a sultan provoked shifts in the power relations within the military rule and, by extension, could alter the way certain scholars were treated (Broadbridge 1999, 89).

Ibn Ḥajar's early career was a product of the good relationship with the power elite. Upon his return to Cairo in 806/1403-4, Ibn Ḥajar quickly established himself as a force in Cairene intellectual society under the son and successor of Barqūq, al-Nāṣir Faraj (Broadbridge 1999, 90).

Broadbridge notes that compared with other notable scholars of his time, al-Maqrīzī in particular, Ibn Ḥajar endured a relatively stable relation in a system that encouraged patronage (1999, 93). In 822/1419, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (815-24/1412-21) asked Ibn Ḥajar to judge in the case of al-Harawī, who had been accused of embezzlement. After Ibn Ḥajar's successful resolution of the case, he was appointed instructor of Shāfi'ī fiqh at the Mu'ayyadi mosque, which was one of the two most important mosques of Shaykh's regime in terms of patronage (1999, 95).

When relations were not at their best, he still persevered and seldom spoke out. He did not enjoy the best personal relationship with Barsbāy but that did not lead to public attacks on him. This was down to his character. He was a scholar who occupied a 'moral middle ground', as Chamberlain described it (in Broadbridge 1999, 97). He found it difficult to maintain his justness and politeness which he inherently had, in a corrupt and short-sighted political climate (ibid.)

## **2.7. His literary works.**

Ibn Ḥajar's ability is perhaps best reflected by the vast number of quality, literary works he produced during his lifetime. The majority of these works relate to ḥadīth and *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. Estimates vary, but it is clear he wrote over one hundred and fifty books and treatises (Anwar 2003, 21: al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 123). Many of his works are still highly regarded today by Muslim scholars. His student al-Sakhāwī wrote:

His works exceeded – of which most were in the disciplines of ḥadīth, *adab* and *fiqh* – more than one hundred and fifty. All were universally acclaimed, particularly *Fath al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (in al-Barrī et al. 1995, 106).

A list of his known literary works has been listed in Appendix A, at the end of the thesis.

Today, Ibn Ḥajar is primarily remembered in the Muslim world as the author of a detailed commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Imām al-Bukhārī. This work, called *Fath al-bārī*, is perhaps the *magnum opus* of his literary works. He began this project in 817/1414, as he taught the *Ṣaḥīḥ* to his ḥadīth students in Cairo. His disciples would record his dictations and soon these notes took on the form of a book. The work was not even complete yet it still warranted attention from leading figures around the Muslim world. In 833/1429, Timur's son Shāhrūkh sent a letter to the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy requesting several gifts, including a copy of *Fath al-bārī*. Ibn Ḥajar sent him the first three volumes. Similarly, the Moroccan sultan Abū Fāris ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥafṣī requested a copy before its completion. When it was finally finished in 842/1438, a great celebration was held in Cairo, in the presence of leading Cairean dignitaries, scholars and judges (al-Wajīdī 1996, 15). Ibn Ḥajar sat on a platform and read out the final pages of his work, after which poets recited eulogies.

The reputation of *Fath al-bārī* today is unquestioned in the Muslim world. But during his life, Ibn Ḥajar must have enjoyed semi-celebrity status for his masterpiece to attract attention from leading dignitaries, even before he had completed writing it.

There are a few points worthy of contemplation regarding his vast literary works.

a. Firstly, his works related to *fiqh* were not only focussed on his own school of thought (Shāfi'ī). *Al-Dirāya*, for example, identified the prophetic narrations used in the Ḥanafī manual on *fiqh*, *al-Hidāya*. This shows that Ibn Ḥajar had utmost respect for religious sciences in general, and was not prejudiced in favour certain categories of works and scholars.

b. Secondly, many of his works were geared towards supplementing the works of previous scholars. For instance, *al-Istidrāk 'alā al-Ḥāfiẓ al-'Irāqī fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Iḥyā'* was written to identify the original sources of the prophetic narrations used in the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* of Imām Ghazālī and *Takhrīj aḥādīth al-arba'īn li-al-Nawawī* did the same for the *Forty Ḥadīth* of al-Nawawī. This shows that as a Muslim, he had a degree of respect for scholars, classical and contemporary, and wished to advance the popularity of such works. Perhaps more importantly, it indicates the type of literary works that were popular and in demand in the ninth Islamic century. Rather than original and ground-breaking material, the scholars had resigned themselves to improving and editing existing works prior to them.

c. Thirdly, though he wrote works in all Islamic disciplines, the majority of his works related to *ḥadīth* and *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. This in turn means that the *Nuzḥah* is by no means a *true* reflection of the depth of his knowledge in *'ilm al-ḥadīth*; it is merely a manual covering the discipline in general. For instance, a very brief analysis of *muḍṭarib* is

offered in the *Nuzhah*.<sup>16</sup> The extent of his knowledge on this type of tradition is reflected in his separate treatise on the topic, *al-Muqṭarib fī bayān al-muqṭarib*. The same applies to his works like *al-Alqāb*, *Bayān al-faṣl bi-mā rujiḥa fīhi al-irsāl ‘alā al-waṣl* and *al-Ta’rīj ‘alā al-tadrīj*, to mention a few. These are all separate, detailed works on different areas of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth that he simply touched upon in the *Nuzhah*.

The *Nuzhah* is still significant however because it is the only work of his where he analysed the discipline of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth as a whole. Certainly, Ibn Ḥajar himself emphasised the importance of the *Nuzhah* from his vast literary works. He only expressed pride in a handful of his books, and the *Nuzhah* was one of them (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 27).

## **2.8. The moral development of Ibn Ḥajar; his outlook as an individual.**

To his contemporaries, Ibn Ḥajar was a simple and devout Muslim. He was known as a gentle man, who was inclined to charity and kind-heartedness. Those who knew him acknowledged his willingness to be good to those who wronged him and forgiving to those he was able to punish. He was very spiritually-centred as an individual. The extended time teaching in the ṣūfī lodge of Baybars for approximately twenty years must have played a role in determining his outlook. Alternatively, it could be argued that a lifetime of studying the traditions of the Messenger had imbued him with a deep love for his morally-upright example.

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<sup>16</sup> This will be referred to in Section 5.31.

Ibn Ḥajar's wife too played a role. When he reached the age of twenty-five, he married Ānas Khātūn (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 97), in 798/1395. She was the daughter of al-Qāḍī Karīm al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn 'Abd al-Azīz. Ānas was a ḥadīth scholar too, having studied under al-'Irāqī just like Ibn Ḥajar did. Observers note that she always surrounded herself with the poor, the old and the physically handicapped, whom it was her privilege and pleasure to support.

Ibn Ḥajar passed this love of Islam on to his children. His wife had four daughters with Ibn Ḥajar: Zayn Khātūn, Farḥa, 'Āliya and Fāṭima. Ibn Ḥajar had one son – Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad – from a later marriage (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 100). Ibn Ḥajar paid utmost attention to his religious education and development. He memorised the Qur'ān and led *tarāwīḥ* prayers in 826/1422. The book *Bulūgh al-marām min adillat al-aḥkām* was written by Ibn Ḥajar as a dedication to his son (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 101).

As far as the *Nuzhah* is concerned, there are places in the work where his moral outlook as a good Muslim is reflected in his writings as an academic. For instance, he sometimes corrects and refutes the opinions of previous ḥadīth scholars, mainly related to the use of certain ḥadīth terminologies. The tone and style employed by Ibn Ḥajar suggests subtlety and respect, even when he does not agree with someone.

## **2.9. Conclusion.**

The fame and acceptance that he enjoyed throughout his life extended to his demise too, since even his funeral turned into a major event. Following his death on the twenty-eighth of Dhūl Ḥijjah in 852/22<sup>nd</sup> February 1449 (Anwar 2003, 21), fifty thousand people, including the Sultan and Caliph, attended his funeral.

In relation to the *Nuzhah*, the analysis has indicated that:

- a. Ibn Ḥajar was first and foremost a hadith scholar. Therefore, this may suggest his preference to focus on this alone, rather than *fiqh* and other disciplines in the *Nuzhah*.
- b. Ibn Ḥajar was a spiritually-inclined Muslim. This may manifest itself in the *Nuzhah* via the non-confrontational approach he chooses to adopt.
- c. He lived in a turbulent political climate. His character helped immensely in overcoming such hurdles.
- d. Many of his literary works were improvements of previous literature in the Islamic sciences. This could indicate that Ibn Ḥajar lacked originality. Alternatively, it could say something about academia in the ninth century in that it was largely void of pioneers and original thinkers.

Where and when required, these themes will be referred to during the thesis.

To conclude, from the abundance of material we have on his life and works, it is explicitly clear that Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī was a famed and revered ḥadīth scholar. There is no shortage of praise from fellow Muslim scholars, who have described him with unique and outstanding qualities. Al-Munāwī (d. 1021/1612) praised him with the following words:

The unique of his time, the bearer of the flag of the *sunna* in his time...the jewel who has been a source of pride for many generations, the imām of this discipline and the forerunner of the army of ḥadīth experts, the resort of the people in [ḥadīth] authentication and dis-accreditation ... (1999, 1: 117)

Al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605) wrote a detailed commentary on the *Nuzhah*. He commenced it with the following words of praise for Ibn Ḥajar:

...our leader, the shaykh of our own *shaykhs*, our dependable, the finest of the outstanding scholars... Shaykh al-Islām, and the seal of the *ḥuffāz* and ḥadīth masters... Shaykh, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī... (1994, 118).

Many titles have been bestowed on him, to reflect his position in the discipline. Fellow Muslim scholars used the term *Shaykh al-Islām* and *Amīr al-mu‘minūn fī-al-ḥadīth* <sup>17</sup> when referring to him (al-Barī et al. 1995, 102). This latter title has usually been reserved for the elite of ḥadīth masters, such as al-Imām al-Bukhārī.

But it is the title of ‘the seal of the *ḥuffāz*’ (*khātam al-ḥuffāz*) which perhaps best indicates his rank. It is as if he was the last great ḥadīth master to have existed (and therefore the *Nuzhah* was the last great work on the subject). This title is a great compliment to Ibn Ḥajar because it reflects his expertise in ḥadīth. But for that era, the title can be interpreted as anything but complimentary. This is because it suggests that after Ibn Ḥajar, the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* resigned itself to apathy and passiveness. It suggests that by the era of Ibn Ḥajar, the field of ḥadīth had been deprived of fresh methodology and analysis of the prophetic traditions. He was the last great ḥadīth master, who himself resorted to improving, commentating and editing literature that preceded him by centuries.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Leader of the Faithful in ḥadīth.*



### 3.0. The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar; the Author's Introduction and the Related Literature.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the aims of this thesis is to assess the *Nuzhah* in light of the ninth Islamic century, namely the academic, religious and social climate of that period. This aim will be mainly fulfilled in section five, where a critical commentary will be offered of the *Nuzhah*. In part, however, the same issue will also be tackled in this section (albeit through a different approach) by looking at a brief, historical account of the *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature that preceded the *Nuzhah*.

A historical account of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature is pivotal towards us gaining a sound appreciation of the *Nuzhah*. Ibn Ḥajar's work was not the first work in the field, or the last. It was neither the shortest nor the longest. Yet it certainly was and still is one of the most popular. By assessing the literature that preceded him, we can understand why the *Nuzhah* became so popular. Moreover, such an account will help us evaluate whether the *Nuzhah* was filling a void that had hitherto been unaddressed by his predecessors. Or, alternatively, it can assist in answering whether the *Nuzhah* was merely one treatise on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, like the many before and after it.

In order to present a background to the literature in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* prior to the *Nuzhah*, I have used Ibn Ḥajar's own introduction to the *Nuzhah* as the basis in this chapter<sup>18</sup>, since

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<sup>18</sup> In this chapter and the main section, the translation of the *Nuzhah* has been presented in bold font.

he reviews key works that preceded him in this short introduction. Though he obviously does not mention *every* work that came before him, the books he does quote gives us an insight into the works which he personally saw as significant.

His introduction also indicates why he wrote the *Nuzhah*, and where this work lies in relation to his shorter work *Nukhbat al-fikar*. To conclude the chapter, I will assess the worth of the *Nuzhah* in relation to the development of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature throughout the centuries. Two opinions will be presented. One suggests that the *Nuzhah* holds a substantially important place in ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature. The second implies that the *Nuzhah* was typical of its era, and that the work highlighted the stagnant nature of the development of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature as a whole.

**The Shaykh, the Imām, scholar, practising [on what he knows], the Ḥāfiẓ<sup>19</sup>, the exceptional of his time, the unique of his generation, meteor of the religion, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-‘Asqālānī, famous by the title ‘Ibn Ḥajar’<sup>20</sup> – may Allāh reward him with Paradise, through His grace and favour – writes;**

**In the Name of Allāh, Most Merciful and Benevolent.**

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<sup>19</sup> The word *ḥāfiẓ* literally means ‘someone who memorises.’ In the discipline of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth, it refers to someone who has memorised over one-hundred thousand prophetic reports (Mighālwi 2003, 27). The writings of earlier scholars suggest that *ḥāfiẓ* and *muḥaddith* are synonymous terms. Later scholars explain a subtle difference; that a *ḥāfiẓ* is a title of higher rank. ‘Alī al-Qārī writes that it refers to a scholar who has memorised at least one-hundred thousand prophetic reports (Khalifa 2003, 42).

<sup>20</sup> It is not clear where the title Ibn Ḥajar originated. Some scholars believe it was a title he was given as he accumulated a small wealth of gold and silver. Others believe the title has a metaphorical connotation: his thought and astuteness was as rigid as stone. Another opinion is that the fifth generation down from his father’s side was called Ḥajar (Ṣabāgh 1990, p. viii). All these reasons are plausible.

All praise is to Allāh, Who remains the All-Knowing, All-Able, the Ever-Living, the Firm, the All-Listening, and All-Seeing. I testify that there is no god except Allāh, He is Alone with no partner and I glorify Him excessively.

I testify that Muḥammad ﷺ is His Servant and Messenger. May Allāh send blessings upon our Leader Prophet Muḥammad, who was sent to humanity in its entirety, as a bringer of glad-tidings and as a warner. And many salutations be upon his family and his Companions.

Undoubtedly, there is an abundance of literature in the science of ḥadīth, [written] by classical and contemporary scholars. Amongst the first to write in this area was al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad al-Rāmahurmuzī , his book called *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*. However, he did not complete this work. Then came al-Ḥākim Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī but the book was not ordered systematically or refined. He was followed by Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, who added to his predecessor’s works, and left out areas for those after him [to complete]. Then came al-Khaṭīb Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī. Thus he wrote *al-Kifāya* on the rules of narration and *al-Jāmi‘ li akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*, on the etiquettes of narration. [In fact] he wrote separate treatises on almost all areas of ḥadīth criticism. As al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr ibn Nuqṭa said: ‘Every impartial observer knows that all ḥadīth scholars after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī were dependant upon his books.’

Then after them came others and they took a portion from this knowledge. Thus al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ compiled a wonderful book which he called *al-Ilmā’* and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Mayyānishī wrote a pamphlet called *Mā lā yasa‘u al-muḥaddith jahluhū*.

Examples of these literary works which became famous are plentiful, (of which) some were detailed to offer comprehensive knowledge, and some were abridged (to make understanding easy).

(This was such) until al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Faqīh Taqī al-Dīn Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shahrūzūrī, resident of Damascus, appeared. He gathered his famous book when he took over teaching at al-Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya. He refined the fields of ḥadīth (in this piece) and dictated it bit by bit. For this reason, its order was not achieved in a suitable manner. He included the various works of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, gathering its antecedent points and adding selected beneficial points himself. In this book, he gathered what had hitherto been scattered in different books. For this reason, people adhered to it and followed its path. The book resulted in countless literature devoted to it, such as poems, abridged versions, commentaries, shortened versions and (indeed) critical literature.

### 3. 1. The Existing Literature.

Ibn Ḥajar begins the book – after the customary praise of Allāh and salutations and blessings upon Prophet Muḥammad – with a brief overview of the existing literature in the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. Though the works mentioned are by no means exhaustive, he does refer to the key works on this subject prior to him. The works and authors he refers to are;

i. *Al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil bayn al-rāwi wa-al-wā‘i*.

By Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Khallād al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/970).

Almost certainly, *al-Muḥaddith* was the first piece of work on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* that encompassed the discipline as a whole.<sup>21</sup> The works include discussions on areas such as the etiquettes of the narrator and ḥadīth master, methods of delivery and the efforts of ḥadīth masters in the pursuit of knowledge.

As Ibn Ḥajar notes, the pioneering work of al-Rāmāhurmuzī was not complete, precisely because it was the first treatise written specifically in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. More crucially, the timing of the book is important to note. It was the middle of the fourth century – when ḥadīth reporting and collecting was in its full swing – before an individual and exclusive treatise on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* first appeared. This indicates that to some extent at least, the *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* scholars had to write what had happened in the field and not what should happen. In other words, the work of al-Rāmāhurmuzī was in part descriptive rather prescriptive.

ii. *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*.

By Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014).<sup>22</sup>

Though it was not systematically ordered, the author addressed fifty sections relating to the rules of narration.

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<sup>21</sup> Although *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil* was most certainly the pioneering treatise on the discipline, it does not mean it was the first time the rules pertaining to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* were written down. Prior to this, treatises could be found on an array of individual topics, such as the words of accreditation and dis-accreditation, the narrations of seniors from juniors, and the biographical details of reporters. For example, the *Risāla* of al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (150/767-204/820) did contain random writings on *‘ilm riwāyat al-ḥadīth* (Siddiqi 1993, 108). Muslim’s (d. 261/874) introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* also contained various rules regarding the discipline (Khalīfa 1983, 10). Al-Tirmidhī included key *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* terminologies at the end of *al-‘Ilal al-mufrad* and at the end of his *Sunan* (Khalīfa 1983, 10). Al-Rāmāhurmuzī’s contribution was to attempt to amass these rulings into one document.

<sup>22</sup> Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamdawiyya al-Nīsābūrī, known as al-Ḥākim, was one of the most respected authorities in the field of ḥadīth. Author of the famous *al-Mustadrak ‘alā-al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, he was born in 321/933 and died in 405/1014. He was a prolific writer with approximately fifteen hundred books to his name, including *al-‘Ilal* and *Fawā'id al-shuyūkh*. His quest for knowledge took him to Ḥijāz and ‘Irāq. In 359 he was appointed as the judge of his birthplace Nīsābūr. (Migālwi 2003, 68-69).

iii. *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth ‘alā kitāb al-Ḥākim.*

By Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038).<sup>23</sup>

The term used by Ibn Ḥajar to describe this book in relation to the work of al-Ḥākim is that it is a *mustakhraj*.<sup>24</sup> This indicates that al-Iṣbahānī most certainly took the works of al-Ḥākim as his starting point, and wrote on areas he had left out, or expanded on parts which had been left brief. However, as Ibn Ḥajar points out, his efforts were incomplete. This indicates a theme that perhaps marks the discipline as a whole; dependency and improvements on the works of others and not a desire to innovate and think outside the box.

iv. *Al-Kifāya fī ‘ilm al-riwāya.*

v. *Al-Jāmi‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘.*

Al-Khaṭīb Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071).<sup>25</sup>

*Al-Kifāya* dealt primarily with the rules of narrations that disciples were expected to adhere to. *Al-Jāmi‘* was a more extensive treatise, covering areas such as how to respect the *muḥaddith*, who a disciple should avoid taking traditions from and the etiquettes of listening.

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<sup>23</sup> Abū Nu‘aym Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Iṣḥāq al-Iṣbahānī was one of the most celebrated classical scholars. He had permission to hear ḥadīth from his teachers at the age of six. He heard ḥadīth from – amongst others – al-Ṭabarānī and counts al-Khaṭīb Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī as one of his close disciples. Al-Iṣbahānī’s other works include *Ḥilyat al-awliyā*, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba*, *Kitāb dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, *Kitāb al-mustakhraj ‘alā al-Bukhārī* and *Ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā*. He died in 430/1038, at the age of 94 (al-Wajīdī 1996, 20).

<sup>24</sup> In ‘ilm al-ḥadīth terminology, this refers to when a ḥadīth master takes an existing book of ḥadīth and derives the *isnāds* for each narration himself (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 32).

<sup>25</sup> Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Thābit ibn Aḥmad ibn Mahdī al-Baghdādī was perhaps one of the most important figures in the field of ḥadīth ever to have existed. Born in 392 /1002, al-Baghdādī became a master of ḥadīth, History, Jurisprudence, Doctrines to mention but a few fields of knowledge (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 397). The historian al-Dhahabī described him as ‘the most peerless Imām, erudite scholar and mufti, meticulous ḥadīth master, scholar of his time in ḥadīth, prolific author, and seal of ḥadīth masters’ (1994, 31: 86). His most famous works were *al-Riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, *al-Kifāya fī ‘ilm al-riwāya* and *al-Jāmi‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*. He died in 463/1071.

vi. *al-‘Ilmā’ ilā ma ‘rifat al-riwāya wa taqyīd al-samā’*.

Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.<sup>26</sup>

This text was by no means a comprehensive one on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*; the book primarily dealt with the process of receiving and passing on narration (*al-taḥammul wa-al-adā’*).

Nevertheless the work was commended for its clarity and layout (Taḥḥān 2001, 10).

vii. *Mā lā yasa ‘u al-muḥaddith jahluhū*.

Abū Hafṣ al-Mayyānīshī (d. 580/1184).

This short work offered a brief yet precise guide to the technical terms used in the discipline.

viii. *Muqaddima (‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth)*.

By al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Faqīh Taqī al-Dīn Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shahrūzūrī (d. 643/1245).

Though the work is officially known as *‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*, it is popularly referred to as *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*. As Ibn Ḥajar notes, the book became an important milestone in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature due to its scope, clarity and comprehensiveness. He drew on the works of his predecessors, such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and gathered sections that had previously not been confined to one work. A minor criticism of the work – as noted by Ibn Ḥajar – was that the order was still somewhat unsystematic. The reason for this was that, according to Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ did not aim to write the book *per se*; the works were put together from his lecturing at al-Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya.

As a form of praise for this momentous work, Ibn Ḥajar writes in the introduction that *‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth* resulted in a surge of related works. These included *nāẓims* (poems) like

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<sup>26</sup> Abū al-Faḍl ‘Iyāḍ ibn Mūsā ibn ‘Iyāḍ, better known as al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, was an exceptional scholar of the fifth/sixth Islamic century. His masterpiece *Al-Shifā bi ta ‘rīf huqūq al-muṣṭafa* refers to the life of Muhammad, and is still universally revered and respected today. He died in 544/1149.

the efforts of Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Khalīl Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khūbī and al-Qaḍī Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥarbī (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 220). It also led to summaries (*mukhtaṣar*), like the two written by al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277). The first was called *al-Taqrīb*, upon which Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) later wrote a commentary entitled *Tadrīb al-rāwī fī sharḥ taqrīb al-Nawawī*. The second summary was called *Kitāb Irshād ṭullāb al-ḥaqā’iq ilā ma’rifat sunan khayr al-khalā’iq*, or *al-Irshād* for short. Al-Ḥafīz ibn Kathīr wrote his own summary upon the works of al-Nawawī (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: pp. 220-221).

*Mustadraks* (supplements) were also written on ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth*. This term refers to a literary work where a later author improves and adds to the existing, original work (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 29). Examples of such works on ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* are *Iṣlāḥ ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, by Maghlaṭai ibn Qalīj ibn ‘Abd Allāh (d. 762/1360) and *Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ* by al-Imām al-Bulqinī. In short, Ibn Ḥajar wanted to highlight the importance of ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth*. In fact it still remains a text of paramount importance today.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar deemed it important to mention these seven treatises that preceded him in the field of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*. There were other important works which he did not refer to, such as:

1. *Al-Iqtirāḥ fī bayān al-Iṣṭilāḥ* by Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd (d. 702/1302).
2. *Al-Khulāṣa fī uṣūl al-ḥadīth* by al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭībī (d. 732/1331).
3. *Al-Muqni’ fī ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* by ‘Umar ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401).
4. *Alfiyyat al-ḥadīth* by Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1403).

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<sup>27</sup> The text has recently been rendered into English, by Dr. Eerik Dickinson. (2006) *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith* (Garnet: Reading, UK).



Of these books, it is most surprising that he did not give his teacher's work, al-'Irāqī, a mention. Perhaps because this was based on the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, which he does mention in considerable detail, Ibn Ḥajar did not feel the need to refer to the *Alfiyya* separately.

## 4.0. The *Nuzhah*.

Some friends of mine asked me to offer a brief overview of the important parts of this book. Hence I wrote it in a few papers and I named it *Nukhbat al-fikar fī muṣṭalaḥ al-athar* with an order I produced and a style I pursued, adding unique and additional points. My friends re-approached me and asked me to write a commentary for it, which would unlock its secrets and open its treasures, and expose what had been hidden before. I duly obliged in hope of being included among the people of ḥadīth, and made extensive effort in explaining the hidden facets, since the homeowner knows best as to what is in his home. It became apparent to me that a comprehensive account was more suitable and an amalgamation (of the original and the commentary) was more useful. Hence, I adopted this rare style, and I say, seeking assistance from Allāh...

In the last part of the introduction, Ibn Ḥajar explains how his own book on the subject came about. It is clear from his own wording that he based his work on the writings of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, but aimed to offer a ‘brief overview of it.’ The result was a small manuscript which he named *Nukhbat al-fikar*, consisting of only a few pages.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, this summary was almost too brief since he was asked to elucidate on the *Nukhbah*. This second work was called *Nuzhat al-naẓar*. Rather than treating the two works separately, Ibn Ḥajar merged both works together, so it could be studied as one text. The uniqueness of the work is reflected by the fact that the *Nukhbah* can still be read individually.

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<sup>28</sup> The *Nukhbah* has been recently rendered into English, by Musa Furber, in *Sunna Notes; Studies in Hadith & Doctrine* (Haddad, G. F., 2005, Aqsa Publications, UK).

#### 4.1. The Relationship between the *Nuzhah* and *Nukhbat al-Fikar*.

The request for a small manual on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* by his contemporaries led to Ibn Ḥajar’s writing the *Nukhbah*. His second effort – a more-detailed commentary of the *Nukhbah* – followed and this was called the *Nuzhah*. What did Ibn Ḥajar do in the *Nuzhah* which was an addition and improvement on the original *Nukhbah*? Anwar (2003) comments that by comparing the original *Nukhbah* and the subsequent *Nuzhah*, it becomes clear that Ibn Ḥajar focused on improving and developing three areas:

1. Firstly, he geared effort towards what Anwar refers to as *tawḍīḥ maṭālib*, or clarifying the aims of the book (Anwar 2003, 33). For example, Ibn Ḥajar begins the *Nukhbah* with the division of different types of *khbar*. However, he does not mention in detail what is meant by the term *khbar* in the actual *Nukhbah* despite the importance of this term. Considerable detail is provided in the *Nuzhah*, where he provides us with how the term is used, its comparison with the term *ḥadīth*, and how the term is used in the Arabic language (section 5.2. of this thesis).

2. Anwar writes that the second aim of the *Nuzhah* was *tawjīḥ ‘ibāra*, or ‘attention to the text’ (2003, 33). Certainly, this is referring to how the reader is reminded of the meanings and derivations of certain words used in the *Nukhbah*. For instance, we are reminded that the word *ṭuruq* is the plural of *ṭarīq* on the template of *jam ‘kathra*. It must be noted however that as the book progresses, less emphasis is provided on points relating to the meanings of words in relation to syntax and etymology. Instead, Ibn Ḥajar provides this only in the earlier parts of the *Nuzhah*.

3. Thirdly, the purpose of the *Nuzhah*, as expressed by Anwar, was *izhār ishāra*, or ‘revealing of indications.’ Perhaps this refers to where Ibn Hajar gives his own preference over a disputed terminology, or where he expresses his dismay over commonly-misunderstood or misinterpreted matters. For example, Ibn Hajar highlights the fact that many have considered *i’tibār* a type of ḥadīth, basing this on the sub-heading *Ma’rifat al-i’tibār wa-al-mutābi‘āt wa-al-shawāhid* in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s *‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*. *I’tibār* – as he rightly points out – is not a type of ḥadīth; rather it is the means of investigation by which *mutābi’*s and *shāhids* are found.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.2. The Unique Qualities of the *Nuzhah*.

Ibn Hajar – as shown in the previous section – was a prolific writer in both *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* and other Islamic disciplines, writing over one-hundred and fifty works. His student al-Sakhāwī commented that of all his works, he showed pride in only a handful of his works. He writes:

I heard Ibn Hajar say: ‘I am not entirely content with any of my literary works, because I initially wrote them and felt the need for re-editing in all of them. The exceptions are *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, its introduction *al-Mushtabih*, *Tahdhīb [al-tahdhīb]* and *Lisān al-mīzān*.’

[Al-Sakhāwī added]: ‘In fact I have seen him on occasions praise his own *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Ta’līq* and the *Nuzhah*’ (in al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 27).

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<sup>29</sup> See section 5.13.

Al-Munāwī echoed the sentiments of Ibn Ḥajar when he identified key and outstanding qualities of the *Nuzḥah* (1999, 1: pp. 29-33). He highlighted the following unique attributes;

1. He gathered the most important elements of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*.
2. He arranged the *Nukhbah* in a pioneering manner not done by his predecessors.
3. He amalgamated the *Nukhbah* into the *Nuzḥah* in such a way that the *Nukhbah* can still be read and treated as a separate book.
4. Along with defining and explaining each type of ḥadīth, he supplemented it with examples of each from ḥadīth literature, as well as existing literary works on each particular type. There are exceptions however, like *mursal* and *mudallas*; for which he did not provide examples of such traditions, nor did he highlight the works of previous scholars on them.
5. Ibn Ḥajar mainly concentrated on the preferred opinion on disputed issues. There are places however where he did expand into other, weaker opinions on certain issues. For example, he felt the need to highlight and refute the weak opinion of certain scholars who defined a *ṣaḥīḥ* report as one which consists of at least two reporters in each generation.<sup>30</sup>
6. Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to stress certain points which he felt had been neglected by previous experts in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. When explaining the contrasting difference between *mursal* and *munqaṭi‘*, for example, he added how certain scholars considered the two types synonymous. And ‘very few are aware of this point’ he wrote.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See section 5.5.

<sup>31</sup> See section 5.8.1.

7. Ibn Ḥajar praised the works and efforts of previous Muslim scholars in his *Nuzhah*.

With regards to al-Imām al-Dhahabī, he praised him as a scholar ‘of complete competence in the criticism of [ḥadīth] reporters.’<sup>32</sup>

Al-Munāwī’s observations do give an indication of the target audience for the *Nuzhah*, something which will be addressed as this thesis progresses. It seems the work was primarily aimed to be an introduction to ‘ilm al-ḥadīth for young students wishing to learn about the discipline. This is because the *Nuzhah* defines each type of ḥadīth along with practical examples. Countless sections are concluded with an insight into further literature available and he is keen to highlight the correct opinion on areas that are sources of dispute. If this is true, then the ‘friends of mine [who] asked me to offer a brief overview’ could well have been fellow teachers, who wanted to provide their disciples with an introductory guide to the discipline.

The other point which is apparent from al-Munāwī’s observations is that the improvement was largely in the structure and detail, not necessarily in the content.

#### **4.3. The *Nuzhah* and the historical development of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature.**

The ‘ilm al-ḥadīth literature which Ibn Ḥajar provides in his introduction is useful in providing an insight into how the *Nuzhah* fits in historically with previous works, and what all this says about the development of the discipline as a whole. There are key observations that are crucial to mention:

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<sup>32</sup> See section 5.64.

- In its earliest form, *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature took the form of the merging of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* rules and principles within ḥadīth texts that mentioned chains and narrations. This commenced in the second Islamic century, up until the fourth century. Al-Imām al-Shāfi’ī’s *al-Umm* and the *al-Risāla* are two examples of works reflecting this stage. During the second half of the fourth Islamic century, texts on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* exclusively appeared for the first time, as the *Nuzhah* indicates in the introduction. Most agree that *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil* by al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360) was the pioneering work in this field. Thereafter, a pattern emerged in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature. After a period of individual treatises on all or part of the disciplines by various scholars, a milestone work would appear that would summarise, elucidate and edit the works preceding it. In the fifth century, *Ma’rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* of Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038) served this function and the next milestone work was most certainly the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245).

Between the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and the *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* literature continued to grow with the appearance of refined works, commentaries and summaries on existing works in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. But owing to the universal acceptance of the *Muqaddima*, most literature after it was based on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s work. For example, the *Alfiyya* of Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1403) was based on the works of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, as was al-Nawawī’s (d. 676/1277) *al-Taqrīb*.

The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar was the next important – and perhaps the last – milestone work on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. This is because in essence, subsequent works after it were based on it, just as the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ led to a surge of related literature before. Al-Munāwī (1999, 1: 34) identifies thirty-six works that are directly based on the *Nukhbah*

or the *Nuzhah*, in the form of commentaries, *hāshiyas* or *naẓms*.<sup>33</sup> Some were written by esteemed scholars in their own right.

So in essence, the discipline's literary development can be understood through two important works. The *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) became an important milestone because it summarised the previous important works on the discipline, and it became the foundation upon which many subsequent scholars based their works on. The extensive praise Ibn Ḥajar directs to it in his introduction indicates this fact amply.

Then the *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) acted as a summary of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's exceptional works and thereafter, a large majority of literature was based on this.

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<sup>33</sup> Here are some of the most-celebrated works written based on the *Nuzhah* or the *Nukhbah* (1) *Unwān ma'ānī nukhbat al-fikar fī muṣṭalah ahl al-athar* by Aḥmad ibn Ṣadaqa al-Qāhirī (d. 905/1499) (2) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Athīr al-Dīn (3) *Hāshiya 'alā nuzhat al-naẓar* by Ibrāhīm al-Shahrūzūrī (d. 1101/1689) (4) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī. (5) *Al-'Ālī al-rutba fī sharḥ naẓm Nukhbah* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās al-Shamnī (d. 872/1467) (6) *Naẓm li-matn nukhbat al-fikar* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Shihāb al-Dīn al-Tūkhī al-Qāhirī (d. 893/1487) (7) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Kawākbī (8) *Sharḥ naẓm al-nukhba* by al-Ashmūnī (9) *Aqd al-ḍurar fī sharḥ mukhtaṣar nukhbat al-fikar* by al-Ālūsī (d. 1342/1923) (10) *Zubdat al-naẓar fī sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Taqī ibn Shāh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Lāhorī (11) *A'lā al-rutba fī sharḥ al-nukhba* by Faṣīḥ al-Dīn al-Ḥaydarī. (12) *Qaṣab al-sukar fī naẓm nukhbat al-fikar* by Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Amīr al-Ḥasanī al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 1182/1768). (13) *Thamarāt al-naẓr fī 'ulūm al-athar* by Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Amīr al-Ḥasanī al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 1182/1768). This book only deals with the knowledge of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl* (14) *Istijlāl al-baṣar min sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd al-Azīz ibn Abd al-Salām al-'Uthmānī (15) *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd al-Azīz ibn Muḥammad al-Abharī (d. 895/1489) (16) *Sharḥ qaṣab al-sukkar naẓm nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Murād al-Atharī (17) *Hāshiyat laqṭ al-ḍurar bi-sharḥ matn nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn Khāṭir al-Samīn (18) *Naẓm li-nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Yamānī (d. 1196/1781) (19) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd Allāh ibn Faṭḥ Allāh. (20) *Al-Mukhtaṣar min nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Abī al-Barakāt al-Shāfi'ī al-Aḥmadī (d. 1150/1737) (21) *Bahjat al-baṣar li-nathar nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Uthmān ibn Sanad al-Baqarī (d. 1236/1820) (22) *Al-Ghurur sharḥ bahjat al-baṣar* by 'Uthmān ibn Sanad al-Baqarī (d. 1236/1820). (23) *Aqd al-ḍurar fī naẓm nukhbat al-fikar* and *Sharḥ 'aqd al-ḍurar fī naẓm nukhbat al-fikar* by Abū al-Maḥāsīn Abū Ḥāmid (d. 1052/1642) (24) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by 'Alī ibn Sulṭān al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605) (25) *Sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ṣā'igh (26) *Mukhtaṣar 'ulūm al-ḥadīth* by Ibn al-Wazīr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 840/1436). (27) *Manḥ al-nughba 'alā sharḥ al-Nukhba* by Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yūsuf Riḍā al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971/1563) (28) *Im'ān al-naẓar fī sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Muḥammad Akram ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sanadī al-Makkī (29) *Naẓm li-nukhbat al-fikar* by Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ḥusaynī al-Suyūfī (d. 856/1452) (30) *Taṣḥīḥ al-naẓar fī sharḥ nukhbat al-fikar* by Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn Hazāwārī.



It is quite possible to argue that after the *Nuzhah*, no independent, fresh and original treatise was written in the field. If it is argued that *Tadrīb al-rāwī fī sharḥ taqrīb al-Nawawī*, by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505), was regarded as an instrumental work after Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhah*, one can reply by pointing out that even this work was based on al-Nawawī's work, who based his work on the *Muqaddima*.

This analysis of Ibn Ḥajar and his *Nuzhah* thus explains why many scholars consider him as one of the last great *ḥāfiẓs*. In fact, by referring to him as *khātam al-ḥuffāẓ* (the seal of the ḥadīth masters), al-Qārī implicitly suggests that he marked the end of the period of great ḥadīth experts (1994, 118). Ibn Ḥajar's service to the discipline of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* could be viewed as the last major input; thereafter scholars in the field perhaps passively geared their efforts in consolidating existing works and offering commentaries on the books written by their predecessors. Undoubtedly, this further amplifies the importance of a critical and detailed analysis of his *Nuzhah*. But this is not to say that the *Nuzhah* is a true reflection of his in-depth knowledge of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*. As we have already shown, he wrote individual treatises on countless areas within the discipline. The *Nuzhah* is merely an indication to his true wealth of knowledge, not an accurate reflection.

- The introduction of the *Nuzhah* therefore provides a rough guide to the development of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* literature and how Ibn Ḥajar's own work fits in. However, the same introduction also indicates another important pattern. Even by Ibn Ḥajar's own admission, the literature in this field over the centuries largely depended on slightly improving the works of predecessors, rather than a radical review of it. Abū Nuʿaym's efforts were simply geared towards refining the work of al-Ḥākim, proven by the fact that it is referred

to as a *mustakhraj*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*, despite its importance, can be viewed as an attempt to simply gather the works of previous scholars into one book. There is little or no indication that as time went by, the classification and indeed authentication of prophetic reports was radically overhauled. Instead, it was mildly refined. The *Nuzhah* was a result of a personal request from Ibn Ḥajar's contemporaries, rather than an urgent requirement. Even he himself admits that only the approach of writing was original ('...with an order I produced and a style I pursued...'). Like what had gone on for centuries before, 'ilm al-ḥadīth literature never seriously questioned the issue of authenticity and never attempted to think outside the consensual norm.

Objectively-speaking, it is clear that there are only a handful of places where there is some real originality in the *Nuzhah* in comparison with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work. Al-Munāwī identifies only ten sections which feature in the *Nuzhah* and not in the *Muqaddima* (1999, 1: pp.32-3). Eight of them simply relate to how we group different names and *kunyas* (section 5.65.) such as 'reporters whose teacher's name coincides with their father's name'. This can hardly be described as pioneering and important. There are only two sections which are truly original, *muḥkam* (section 5.14.) and the reasons behind the ḥadīth (5.71.). Otherwise, the material, classification and even the examples are similar to the *Muqaddima*. Only the literary style is perhaps different.

On a wider scale, the fact that there are many similarities between the *Nuzhah* and the *Muqaddima* raise a more important question about whether the discipline ever really continuously developed throughout the centuries, or whether it suffered from academic passiveness. A case can be made for the latter, and proof for this can be found in the opinion of Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965), who said: '...I see that the [Islamic] disciplines are

all developing except this discipline [of ḥadīth]. For this is declining day by day' (in al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 4). Perhaps Ibn Ḥibbān wanted to highlight that as early as the fourth Islamic century, there was not enough original work being done in *'ilm al-ḥadīth*.

In short, the *Nuzhah*'s introduction suggests two themes. One suggests that milestone works appeared in the discipline every so often which proved to be the depended guide for scholars and disciples thereafter. Like the *Muqaddima*, the universal acceptance of the *Nuzhah* suggests this too received such an accolade. The fact that esteemed scholars such as al-Ālūsī (d. 1342/1923) and al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605) have written commentaries on the *Nuzhah* is undoubtedly a testimony to its acceptance and appeal. The other theme suggests that the discipline largely depended on the endeavours of the early scholars; thereafter there were modifications and slight alterations throughout the centuries. This reached a terminal end with the *Nuzhah*.

Only a critical analysis of the *Nuzhah* will identify which of these two opinions is closer to the truth. Therefore it is a theme which will be touched upon – where possible – throughout the thesis.

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## 5.0. The Main Section; a Translation of the *Nuzhah*, with the Commentary and Critical Analysis.

### 5.1. The Author's Introduction.<sup>34</sup>

*The author's introduction has been translated (in bold) and analysed in the previous section (4.0) and therefore it has not been duplicated here.*

### 5.2. *Khabar al-aḥād* and *mutāwatir*; The division of traditions according to how they reached us.

The *khabar* – according to the scholars of this field – is synonymous with [the meaning of] ḥadīth. It is said ḥadīth is that which derives from the Prophet ﷺ, and *khabar* is that which derives from others. Furthermore, it is said to a person who occupies himself with history and similar [disciplines] ‘*al-akhbārī*’, and a person who occupies himself with ḥadīth ‘*muḥaddith*’.<sup>35</sup> It is [also] said that the difference between them is ‘*umūm wa-khaṣūs muṭlaq*’<sup>36</sup>; thus every ḥadīth is a *khabar*, and not vice versa. It has been described here with *khabar* to be more encompassing.

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<sup>34</sup> Throughout section five, the translation of the *Nuzhah* is presented in bold font.

<sup>35</sup> To clarify the general usage of the two terms, Ibn Ḥajar writes that a person who occupies himself with the study of history and similar subjects is called an *akhbārī* and not a *muḥaddith*. Likewise, a person who occupies himself with the study of the Prophetic sunna is called a *muḥaddith*, and not an *akhbārī*.

<sup>36</sup> This terminology is derived from *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) and refers to when two things are related through generality and particularity. For example, ‘every football is round, but not every round object is a football’ and ‘every Messenger (*rasūl*) is a prophet (*nabī*), but not every Prophet is a Messenger. The other type is ‘*umūm wa-khaṣūs wajhī*’. This refers to a general statement from which some part has been made particular. For instance, the Prophet said ‘there is no Prayer after ‘*Aṣr* until the sun disappears.’

So according to consideration of how it reached us, the *khavar* either has *ṭarīqs*, namely many chains; because the plural of *ṭarīq* is *ṭuruq*. The word [on the template] of *faʿīl* pluralises on *fuʿul* for *kathra* – with two *ḍammas* – and *afʿila* for *qilla*. And what is meant by ‘*ṭarīqs*’ is chains [*isnāds*]. The *isnād* is the report of the path leading to the *matn*. The *matn* is the final text at which the chain finishes. And the ‘numerous chains’ is one of the conditions of *mutawātir* when it appears.

### Commentary

In this opening section, Ibn Ḥajar sets up the discussion for the forthcoming analysis on *mutawātir*. He begins with the definitions of oft-used technical terms which he employs throughout the book, namely *khavar*, ḥadīth, *ṭarīq*<sup>37</sup>, *isnād* and *matn*<sup>38</sup>. Owing to the dispute surrounding its definition, he offers three definitions for *khavar*, of which he prefers the first.<sup>39</sup>

Interestingly, Ibn Ḥajar opts for a more detailed analysis of the word *ṭarīq* by providing information about what its plural is too. The reason for the in-depth analysis of this

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(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ḥadīth no. 551; Book, the Times of Salāh; Chapter, Prayer is not performed before the sun sets.’) Here, ‘there is no Prayer’ is general and ‘after ‘*Aṣr*’ is particular (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, p. 37).

<sup>37</sup> *Ṭarīq* (pl. *ṭuruq*). Ibn Ḥajar writes that the plural for a word on the template of *faʿīl* falls under two possibilities- *fuʿul* if it is *jamʿ kathra* and *afʿila* if it is *jamʿ qilla*. The literal meaning of *ṭarīq* is path, but here it refers to the chains of narration, or *isnāds*.

<sup>38</sup> The intended dialogue and text.

<sup>39</sup> i. *Khavar* means the same as ḥadīth, an opinion which al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī inclines to (1988, 16). In other words, it is a narration ascribed to the Prophet ﷺ, regardless of whether this narration describes the words, actions or silent approvals of the Prophet. Commentators assert that this is the position which Ibn Ḥajar himself adheres to (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 36). The reason for this is that the latter two opinions are cited using the word *qīla* (‘it is said’), thus giving the indication that they are weaker opinions.

ii. Whatever originates from the Prophet ﷺ is called ḥadīth, and that which comes from others (such as the Companions) is called *khavar*. Under this position, it is not permissible refer to the sayings of the Companions or those after them using the word ‘ḥadīth’, except with further clarity. In other words, we would be required to say ḥadīth *mawqūf*, rather than just ḥadīth, when referring to the sayings of the Companions (al-Munāwī 1999, 1; 228).

iii. The third opinion cited is that the terms ḥadīth and *khavar* are related to one another through ‘*umūm wa-khaṣūṣ muṭlaq*. On this basis, a saying that stems from the Prophet ﷺ can equally be referred to as a ḥadīth or *khavar*, but a narration stemming from a Companion can only be referred to as a *khavar*.

particular word is that the number of chains is the fundamental difference between the first two types of reports he discusses in the *Nuzhah*. If the narration reaches us through numerous chains<sup>40</sup>, then it is classified as *mutawātir*. If there are limited chains, then it is *khābar al-āḥād*.

A few points are important to clarify regarding this opening section from Ibn Ḥajar:

- i. He only provides such detailed, linguistic analysis in the early parts of the *Nuzhah*. As the work progresses, less and less emphasis is given to the linguistic aspects of technical terms. This is not inconsistency on his part; rather it makes sense to provide a detailed definition for oft-used terms early on, which then creates ease for the reader for the rest of the book. Additionally, providing such detail does indicate that the target-audience of the *Nuzhah* was disciples embarking on ḥadīth studies for the first time, rather than the experts.
- ii. Ibn Ḥajar commences the *Nuzhah* with the term *khābar* rather than ḥadīth. This seems incorrect as the discipline is known as *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* rather than *‘ilm al-khābar*. He pre-empted this possible objection and therefore answers it himself. He writes that the word *khābar* is generally accepted to be more encompassing in referring to the traditions of the Prophet *and* others such as the Companions.<sup>41</sup> This indicates that he sees the study of

<sup>40</sup> *Sanad*, or *isnād* (pl. *asānid*). According to most ḥadīth scholars, the word *sanad* and *isnād* are synonymous. Ṭaḥḥān notes that *isnād* can mean ascribing a tradition to its origin through a chain, or it means exactly the same as *sanad* (2001, pp.13-14).

<sup>41</sup> The literal meaning of ḥadīth is ‘new’. The traditions of the Prophet are thus called to contrast it with the Qur’ān, which is considered as *qadīm* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 42 & Khalīfa 1983, 26).

We find that the Prophet ﷺ himself explicitly used the word ḥadīth or its derivatives to refer to his own sayings. For instance; (i) ‘Report from Banī Isrā’īl and there is no hindrance. Report (*haddithū*) from me and do not lie (*Musnad Ahmad*, ḥadīth no. 11111; Book, The chains of the remaining oft-narrators; Chapter, The Musnad of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī.) (ii) In a report narrated by Abū Hurayra, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Shall I not report to you a *ḥadīth* about Dajjāl...’ (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book; the Reports of the Prophets, Chapter, the Saying of Allāh, ‘Verily We sent Nūḥ to his people.’ Ḥadīth no. 3090). Azami notes that the word ‘ḥadīth’ has been used twenty-three times in the Qur’ān (1977, 1).

traditions as not just limited to the words and actions of the Prophet; it can refer to others too.

iii. Related to the above point is the fact that he chose not to define *sunna* here in the early part of the *Nuzhah*. Rather, he elaborates on this term much later on in the book (section 5.40). This could be because he wanted to begin with the relatively easier terms such as ḥadīth and refer to the more complex terms such as *sunna* later on. Alternatively, the reason could be because he viewed ḥadīth and *sunna* as two, entirely separate things. If this is the case, then his view is not dissimilar to the view of non-Muslim scholars on the issue. Schacht, for example, has suggested that the word *sunna* was a source of confusion amongst early Muslims. He writes that the likes of Mālik ibn Anas understood ‘*sunna*’ to mean the ‘living tradition’ of the community, rather than a term specific to the actions and sayings of the Prophet (1959, 62). More will be said about this in section 5.40, once we have identified what Ibn Ḥajar’s stance actually is on the term *sunna*.

iv. In his introduction, Ibn Ḥajar declared that the *Nuzhah* would be presented in a ‘rare style’. This is perhaps referring to the sequence adopted by him in presenting the different types of prophetic reports and their classification. What we notice is that the choice to begin with *mutawātir* differs with the scholars prior and just after him. For instance:

- a. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ began his *Muqaddima* with the division of prophetic reports according to its authenticity, thus categorising them into *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* and *ḍa‘īf* (1986, pp. 11-41).
- b. Al-Mayyānīshī began with an introduction on the importance and superiority of reporting prophetic reports, after which he outlined the different words used to relate them, such as *akhbaranā* (Librande 1982, 42).

c. Ibn Ḥajar's own teacher al-ʿIrāqī commenced with the division of reports into *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* and *ḍaʿīf* (1995, 7).

d. Al-Suyūfī too began with the division of reports into *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* and *ḍaʿīf* (1972, 62)

Ibn Ḥajar's choice to begin with *mutawātir* could be due to three reasons. Firstly, as he points out in the next section, *mutawātir* is not technically part of '*ilm al-ḥadīth*'.<sup>42</sup> Hence, he felt the need to define it at the beginning, and then dedicate the rest of the book to what is widely understood to be the field of '*ilm al-ḥadīth*'. Secondly, a plausible reason may be that he felt the need to commence with the strongest type of tradition, which is *mutawātir*. From the onset, Ibn Ḥajar wanted to alert the reader to the strong and authentic nature of ḥadīth material. Therefore it made sense to discuss *mutawātir* first. Finally, Ibn Ḥajar perhaps wanted to adopt a 'rare style' for the sake of it. If it could be shown that the *Nuzḥah* has largely repeated what fellow Muslim scholars have written in their works on '*ilm al-ḥadīth*' prior to him, then this certainly would support this opinion. Whether this is true or not will be highlighted throughout section five.

From this short, introductory section from the *Nuzḥah*, we can at least begin to gain an insight into Ibn Ḥajar's intentions and the character of the *Nuzḥah*. By defining the oft-repeated terms used in the field early on, he shows good literary skills and identifies his potential target audience. By choosing to refer to *mutawātir* first (and not *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* and *ḍaʿīf*), Ibn Ḥajar may be expressing originality for the sake of it. Alternatively, he could be making a statement of bold intent: to present a truly original and ground-breaking treatise in '*ilm al-ḥadīth*'.

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<sup>42</sup> He writes: 'And the conditions of *mutawātir* have not been mentioned in the original [text of the *Nukhbah*], because on this basis, it is not part of the discussions of '*ilm al-ḥadīth*.'



### 5.3. *Mutawātir*.

[Either the *khavar* has many paths but] without a specified number; rather, experience makes it impossible for them to collude on a lie. Additionally [it is impossible] to occur coincidentally [and] unintentionally. According to the correct [position], there is no requirement in specifying the number. Amongst them are those who have specified four<sup>43</sup> [as the minimum number of reporters required in each generation]; though five<sup>44</sup>, seven<sup>45</sup>, ten<sup>46</sup>, twelve<sup>47</sup>, forty<sup>48</sup>, seventy<sup>49</sup> and other figures have [also] been mentioned. Every advocate has held to some evidence that mentions that number, and thus gives knowledge. It is not necessary to repel other [opinions], due to the possibility of specification.<sup>50</sup> Hence, when the *khavar* is mentioned as such and this is coupled with the aforementioned number manifesting itself from the beginning to the end – and what is meant by this is that the aforementioned number does not lessen in some places, not that it increases, since an increase is desired by all means – and that the end information is a witnessed or

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<sup>43</sup> A minimum of four transmitters; this is on the basis that at least four witnesses are required to prosecute an adulterer (Anwar 2003, 36).

<sup>44</sup> A minimum of five transmitters; when a husband accuses his wife of adultery but has no credible evidence, then the Qur'ān outlines a procedure known as *li'ān*. Because the husband curses the wife on the fifth attempt, some scholars accept that the minimum amount should be five (Qur'ān, 24: 7-9).

<sup>45</sup> A minimum of seven transmitters; this is on the basis that this is the number of days in a week, as well as the number of heavens.

<sup>46</sup> A minimum of ten transmitters; in Arabic grammar, this is the minimum number of *jam' kathra* (the plural of plenitude).

<sup>47</sup> A minimum of twelve transmitters; in the Qur'ān, Moses delegated twelve representatives for his meeting with Allāh (Qur'ān, 7: 160).

<sup>48</sup> A minimum of forty transmitters; this is on the basis that when the verse 'O Prophet! Sufficient for you is Allāh and those who follow you from the believers' (Qur'ān, 8: 64), the number of the Prophet's followers were forty.

<sup>49</sup> A minimum of seventy transmitters; again, this has its roots from the Qur'ān (7: 155). Moses chose seventy people from his community for the place of meeting (Anwar 2003, 37).

<sup>50</sup> Ibn Hajar also suggests that other suggestions should not be ruled out, as this will lead to an objective definition of *mutawātir*. If, for instance, twelve were to be defined as the universal minimum number, a ḥadīth may be found that has this number in each generation, but still does not give the benefit of knowledge.

heard matter and not something proven by mere conjecture; thus when these four conditions are found – and they are a large number which makes it impossible for them to have colluded on a lie or coincidentally agreed on a lie; they narrate it from their likes from the beginning to the end; the last person witnessed the matter, and that their *khavar* gives the benefit of knowledge to its listener – then this is *mutawātir*. Anything that is short of giving the benefit of knowledge is *mashhūr* only. So every *mutawātir* is *mashhūr*, and not vice versa. It is said that when the four conditions are achieved it necessitates the attaining of knowledge. This is the case mostly, but it does not sometimes due to a hindrance. And by this, the definition of *mutawātir* is clear. The opposite [of *mutawātir*] sometimes appears with indefinite numbers too, but with the absence of other conditions.

[The *khavar* reaches us with numerous *isnāds*] or reaches us with a limit, of more than two; namely three or more, so long as it does not fulfill the conditions of *mutawātir*; or [it reaches us] with two only, or one only. What is meant by our saying ‘that it reaches us with two’ is that less than two is not found. Thus, if it appears with more than two in some places in one chain, it does not harm [it], since the minimum is considered in this field over the maximum. So the first is *mutawātir* with its conditions. This gives the benefit of certain knowledge (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*). [By mentioning this], this excludes controvertible knowledge (*‘ilm al-naẓar*), which will soon be explained. And ‘*yaqīn*’ is strong belief corresponding [to the truth]. This is the trusted opinion; that *khavar mutawātir* gives the benefit of definitive knowledge. This [knowledge] forces a person to accept it in such a way it is not possible to refute. It has also been said that [*mutawātir*] does not give knowledge except controvertible

knowledge. This is not so. The reason is that knowledge via *mutawātīr* is achieved by him who does not have the ability of contemplation (*naẓar*), like a layperson.

‘Contemplation’ (*naẓar*) requires the ordering of known or presumed facts, leading to [further] facts or presumptions. A layperson does not have the ability to do that. Thus, if [the result of *mutawātīr*] were controvertible knowledge, it would not be achieved for them. With this discussion, the difference between definitive knowledge and controvertible knowledge is clear; definitive knowledge gives benefit without evidence-building and controvertible knowledge gives benefit but with evidence-building. And controvertible knowledge can only be attained by the one who has the ability to contemplate.

The conditions of *mutawātīr* have not been mentioned in the original [text of the *Nukhbah*], because on this basis, it is not part of the discussions of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’, since ‘*ilm al-isnād*’ involves the investigation of the authenticity and weakness of the ḥadīth so it can be acted upon or discarded, in terms of the attributes of the narrators and the words of delivery. And the narrators are not investigated in *mutawātīr*, but rather it is compulsory to act upon it without investigation.

Note: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has mentioned that the examples of *mutawātīr* – based upon the aforementioned definition – are rare in existence, apart from what he claims for,

‘Whoever deliberately ascribes a lie to me, let him find a seat for himself in hell.’

What he has claimed of its rarity is unfound, as is the claim of other [scholars] who say that there are no *mutawātīr* at all. This is because [these opinions] stemmed from a lack of awareness of the excessive number of chains, the states of the narrators and the [other] characteristics required to repel experience from allowing them to

**collude on a lie, or for them to narrate the same coincidentally. The best explanation for proving the significant existence of such reports is that the famous, widespread books in the hands of the people of knowledge, east and west, that are definitively proven to be ascribed to their compilers, when these compilers agree on recording a ḥadīth, and their *isnāds* are sufficient to allow the impossibility of colluding on a lie, along with the other conditions, this gives definitive knowledge of correctly ascribing it to its speaker. Such examples in the famous books are plentiful.**

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar offers his definition of *mutawātir* (the multiply-attested), which literally means ‘widespread’.<sup>51</sup> Four principal conditions of *mutawātir* are identified. Firstly, the number of transmitters forms the primary element of a *mutawātir* ḥadīth – that the tradition must be reported by such a large number that realistically speaking, it would have been impossible for all the transmitters to have colluded on a lie, or that they all coincidentally happened to narrate the tradition correctly. However, this actual number is left ambiguous and subjective, as Ibn Ḥajar offers no definitive opinion on *how many* transmitters must appear in each generation for the tradition to be labelled as *mutawātir*. Rather he cites different opinions on the matter.

Secondly and importantly, this ‘large number’ must be found in all generations. If a particular tradition is reported by dozens of Companions, only to be reported by two or three in the generation of Successors (*tābi‘ūn*), the ḥadīth will not be classified as *mutawātir*. From the beginning to the end of the chain, the numbers must be maintained.

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<sup>51</sup> This word is derived from *tawātara*, meaning to be continuous or torrential (Taḥḥān 2001, 17).

Thirdly, the last person must have seen or heard the event (*ḥiss*) and the information in the report should not be mere conjecture or guesswork.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the ḥadīth gives the listener the benefit of knowledge.

Ibn Ḥajar does provide additional information which is related to *mutawātir*. In detail, he refers to the difference between definitive (*al-‘ilm al-yaqīnī*, also called *al-‘ilm al-ḍarūrī* and *al-‘ilm al-qat‘ī*) and controvertible knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-naẓarī*) and how *mutawātir* gives the benefit of the former. Owing to the strength of a *mutawātir* ḥadīth, this, he believes, gives definitive knowledge.

### **5.3.1. Conclusion.**

The section on *mutawātir* is long and extensive, and part of this is because of needless repetition. In full, he mentions the four conditions of *mutawātir* twice in the above text for no reason whatsoever. It is muddled too sometimes: his discussion on *al-‘ilm al-yaqīnī* and *al-‘ilm al-naẓarī* is more suited for an oral audience rather than for a written book, because he ventures into defining *yaqīn* rather than *al-‘ilm al-yaqīnī*.

This indicates that the *Nuzḥah* – or at least this section – may have been produced through the students’ notes gained from his lecturing. Ibn Ḥajar was known to employ this method; this was the case with *Fath al-bārī*. His disciples would record his dictations and soon the works took on the form of a book. Nor was he the first to adopt such a methodology: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), author of the renowned *‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*, did not aim to write the book *per se*; the works were put together from his lecturing at al-

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<sup>52</sup> In other words, the last narrator uses words which suggest he witnessed the event related to the *matn*. For example, the narrator would use words such as ‘I heard’, or ‘I saw’, and so on (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 18; al-Wajīdī 1996, 29).

Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya. Though dependency on students must have brought many benefits to Ibn Ḥajar – the time he could save, for example – it does expose a compromise in the quality of literary style.

There are other key observations to note from this section on *mutawātir*:

a. Ibn Ḥajar outlines the different opinions held on how many transmitters need to be found in each generation for a report to be deemed as *mutawātir*, four, seven, ten, twelve, forty and seventy. It is important to note that none of the aforementioned numbers has any direct link or affiliation with the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. Instead, they are merely numbers that have Islamic importance, mostly because these numbers have been mentioned in the Qur’ān or have other Islamic significance. There may be seven heavens, but this is no valid reason to affirm that the minimum number of transmitters in each generation must also be seven in a *mutawātir* ḥadīth. This view is further proved by the fact that some Muslim scholars have suggested that each generation should consist of at least three hundred and thirteen transmitters, based on the number of Muslims that fought in the Battle of Badr (Anwar 2003, 37). This is purely hypothetical since no ḥadīth exists with such a high number of transmitters in each generation.

Ibn Ḥajar asserts that a specific number of transmitters in each generation is not required, and this has led to some confusion. Simply stating that a ‘large number’ is required possibly leads to a particular ḥadīth being classified as *mutawātir* according to one scholar and not another. Al-Munāwī implicitly acknowledges this problem when he writes that:

Know that *mutawātir* is sometimes relative. So a *khavar* is *mutawātir* according to one community and not another (1999, 1: 246).

The fact that the exact number required is left ambiguous means defining *mutawātir* is a subjective exercise.

Moreover, do all scholars agree that *mutawātir* does not require a specific number? Al-Suyūṭī maintains the generally-held position that ‘there is no consideration for a specific number’, but then later writes that ten ‘is the chosen opinion’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 176-177).

To conclude, considering *mutawātir* is the strongest type of tradition, then it is surprising to see that even by the ninth Islamic century, there was still no clear guideline as to what exactly constitutes a *mutawātir* ḥadīth.

b. Compared to other Muslim scholars, Ibn Ḥajar does not divide *mutawātir* into *lafẓī* and *ma‘nawī*.<sup>53</sup> Al-Suyūṭī clearly divides and defines the two:

Verily, the people of uṣūl have divided *mutawātir* into *lafẓī* – and this is whose wordings are repeated – and *ma‘nawī*; this is when a group transmit a narration [to such an extent] it is impossible for them to have agreed on a lie, in different ways on a shared matter (1972, 2: 180).

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<sup>53</sup> If the words of the *matn* repeat *ad verbum* in all the narrations, then this is considered as *mutawātir lafẓī*. If the same meaning is found in all the narrations – though the actual wording differs from report to report – then this is *mutawātir ma‘nawī*.

Had Ibn Ḥajar done so, then he would not have the need to criticise Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for suggesting that ‘Whoever deliberately ascribes a lie to me, let him find a seat for himself in hell’ is the only *mutawātir* ḥadīth, adding that such an opinion stems ‘from a lack of awareness...’.

It seems Ibn Ḥajar may have simply misunderstood Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s statement. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was referring to *mutawātir lafẓī*, not *ma‘nawī*. And undoubtedly, most scholars are severely strained in producing a *mutawātir lafẓī* ḥadīth, other than ‘Whoever deliberately ascribes a lie to me, let him find a seat for himself in hell.’ In conclusion, Ibn Ḥajar assumed that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ denied the existence of *mutawātir ma‘nawī*, when in fact he questioned the existence of *mutawātir lafẓī*.

Regardless of this, Ibn Ḥajar – and indeed other ḥadīth scholars – all agree that *mutawātir* are very few in number. *Ad verbum*, there is only one *mutawātir* report and the *ma‘nawī* are hardly excessive in number.<sup>54</sup> Though *mutawātir* is undoubtedly strong in terms of authenticity for the Muslims, the almost non-existence of it means it is irrelevant. This may raise questions about the field of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth as a whole, something which Sayyid Aḥmad Khān certainly asked. Khān, a close admirer of Muir, rejected the authenticity of almost all prophetic reports and deemed only *mutawātir* as worthy of acceptance, which he counted as five (Brown 1999, 34).

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<sup>54</sup> For instance, (a) the ḥadīth related to the *hawḍ* (Fountain). Al-Suyūṭī writes that over fifty Companions have reported traditions on this topic (1972, 2: 179). (b) wiping on the *khuff* during ritual ablution. Al-Suyūṭī asserts that seventy Companions have reported traditions relating to this ruling (1972, 2: 179). (c) The raising of the hands in Prayer. According to al-Suyūṭī, fifty Companions have transmitted such traditions (1972; 2: 179). (d) The intercession of the Prophet (Anwar 2003, 41). (e) The ḥadīth, ‘the Qur’ān was revealed in seven *qirā’as*.’ Twenty-seven Companions transmitted this tradition (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 180).



c. Ibn Ḥajar makes no mention of the *matn* with regards to *mutawātir*. This suggests that he saw the soundness of a ḥadīth largely dependent on the *isnād* alone. Moreover, Ibn Ḥajar writes that with *mutawātir*, there is no need to investigate the *isnād* either. *ʿIlm al-ḥadīth* is widely defined as the study of the literature of the Prophet by analysing the text and chain in order to evaluate its authenticity. Ibn Ḥajar argues that since *mutawātir* are universally accepted, and additional research into the chain is not required, it is not technically ‘part of the discussion of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*.’ The often difficult and long-winded analysis required for other types of ḥadīth – *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* and *ḍaʿīf* for instance – is not required as all *mutawātir* are accepted unequivocally. In fact, in this section, Ibn Ḥajar actually refers to the discipline as *ʿilm al-isnād*, rather than *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, which clearly indicates the importance of the *isnād* in his view.

However, other Muslim scholars do not agree. Al-Munāwī implicitly suggests that the exact nature of the transmitters can make a difference. When discussing the issue of the requirement of the large number to be found in each generation, he writes:

Seven credible narrators – outwardly and inwardly – are like ten narrators who are [only] outwardly credible...sometimes seven pious learned people give the benefit of knowledge, whereas ten non-pious people do not. So what is meant is equality in the [benefit of] knowledge, not equality in numbers (1999, 1: 244).

Thus this gives some weight to the opinion that not all *mutawātir* are readily-accepted and that, like with other types of prophetic reports, *mutawātir* does require further analysis.

d. Fourthly, Ibn Hajar spends considerable effort in explaining that *mutawātir* gives the benefit of *al-‘ilm al-yaqīnī*, which thus adds to its credibility. Surely, if *mutawātir* gives the benefit of definitive knowledge, then it would be necessary to act upon it without question. Al-Suyūṭī asserts that ‘it is compulsory to act upon *mutawātir*’ (1972, 2: 176). But one can argue that not all *mutawātir* are acted upon (*ma ‘mūl bihī*). Ṭaḥḥān cites the raising of the hands in Prayer as *mutawātir*, but it is not universally acted upon. Fifty Companions have transmitted this ḥadīth, but Abū Ḥanīfa does not adhere to the position. He argues that the practice of raising the hands in Prayer – despite narrations on the matter being *mutawātir* – is abrogated (2001, 13). *Mutawātir* may give the benefit of definitive knowledge, but this does not guarantee it is acted upon.

On a wider scale, this suggests that Ibn Hajar was primarily focussing on ‘ilm al-ḥadīth in the *Nuzḥah*, to the exclusion of *fiqh*. This is because he does not refer to how a *mutawātir* report would manifest itself in the field of *sharī‘a*, when it came to being acted or not acted upon. He was only interested in how this report relates to ‘ilm al-ḥadīth.

e. Despite these points, there is one very important matter derived from the author’s explanation on *mutawātir* here. The text most worthy of attention in Ibn Hajar’s *Nuzḥah* is where he remarks:

And the best explanation for proving the significant existence of such [multiply-attested] reports is that the famous, widespread books in the hands of the people of knowledge, east and west, that are definitively proven to be ascribed to their authors, when they agree on recording a ḥadīth, and their chains are plentiful to allow the impossibility of colluding on a lie, along with the other conditions, this

gives definitive knowledge of correctly ascribing it to its speaker. And examples of that in the famous books are plentiful.

Ibn Ḥajar's argument here is that geography actually helps to prove the authenticity of traditions, not disprove them. In an age lacking fast and effective communication methods, the only way a reporter in Kūfa could have agreed with a reporter in Madina was if they had both heard an authentic report, stemming from the Prophet. Practically, it would have been all but impossible for them to have colluded on a lie from such a distance.

This argument is crucial for one particular reason: it is precisely this point that modern, Muslim scholars have used to defend the authenticity of ḥadīth literature against non-Muslim scholars. Muslims such as Azami argue that the geographical disparity of the reporters seriously question whether large-scale collusion could have occurred, not just for one report but for thousands. This is exactly what Ibn Ḥajar advocates here in the *Nuzḥah*. For instance, the ḥadīth commanding Muslims to wash their hands thrice when they awake consists of thirteen students reporting from Abū Hurayra, of which eight come from Madina, one from Kūfa, two from Basra, one from Yemen and one from Syria. In the next generation of reporters, the reporters spread to Khurāsan and Makka, in addition to the aforementioned places (Azami 1977, 34).

Ibn Ḥajar argues that certain traditions have been so widely reported – albeit with slightly different wording – that one cannot imagine the possibility of all transmitters colluding on a lie. Hence, such traditions are classified as *mutawātir*.

In short, the *Nuzhah* has helped modern Muslim scholars to convince the sceptics about the early ḥadīth literature with what they see as a very strong argument: that geography proves the impossibility of collusion. Azami writes:

To claim that hundreds of thousands of scholars spent their lives making forgeries in collusion and provided this literature with all biographical details is to show an utter disregard for human nature (Azami 1992, 92).

But there is one point that Azami and other Muslim scholars have ignored. In the text of the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar suggests that one prophetic report found in the various ‘famous, widespread books in the hands of the people of knowledge’ is proof that the report cannot be forged. Most of these books that Ibn Ḥajar was referring to were compiled in the third and fourth century. By then, the fabrication and collusion, as depicted by Schacht, had already taken place and the compilers such as al-Bukhārī were merely compiling these reports by the time they appeared, and not verifying them. So though it seems like a strong argument to the likes of Azami, it is quickly dismissed by non-Muslim scholars because the efforts of al-Bukhārī and others came too late.

Therefore a contrasting view from the Muslim scholars on the one hand and the non-Muslim ones on the other is apparent. This gulf is epitomised perfectly with the one and only *mutawātir lafẓī* that the likes of Ibn Ḥajar refer to: ‘Whoever deliberately ascribes a lie to me, let him find a seat for himself in hell.’ For the Muslims, this report is undoubtedly sound in terms of authenticity. For non-Muslims, it is forged (Goldziher 1971, 127).

To conclude, Ibn Ḥajar's decision to begin his *Nuzhah* with *mutawātir* was owing to its importance and position. But we should also entertain another possibility, which would enable us to comprehend the importance of *mutawātir* in the ninth Islamic century. The purpose of *mutawātir* is not only to display that some reports were transmitted in a rigid and fool-proof manner throughout the early period of Islam. It had another purpose; to appeal to the Muslims of later times to participate in religious studies en masse (Graham 1993, 501). After all, this is the only method by which a report reaches such a lofty height of *mutawātir*.

#### **5.4. Mashhūr.**

The second – and this is the first division of *al-aḥād* – is that which has limited chains but more than two. This is *mashhūr*, according to the ḥadīth scholars. It is so called because of its apparentness. This is [also called] *mustafīḍ* based upon the opinion of a group of the *imāms* of the jurists. It is thus called because of its dispersion, from [the verb] *fāḍa al-mā' yaḥḍu fayḍ*. There are some who have differentiated between *mustafīḍ* and *mashhūr*; that *mustafīḍ* is where the beginning and ending are equal, and *mashhūr* is more general than that. Then there are some [scholars] who have differentiated them upon another basis; and this is not part of discussions of this field [of knowledge].<sup>55</sup> Then, *mashhūr* is the name given to what we have explained, and upon what is famous on the tongues. Thus, this [latter type]

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<sup>55</sup> This other basis, al-Qārī notes, is defining *mustafīḍ* as a report which the people accept without looking at how many people have reported it in each generation. Therefore, there is no difference between *mustafīḍ* and *mutawātir* (1994, 194). And because Ibn Ḥajar believes that *mutawātir* is not technically part of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*, he writes here that 'this is not from the discussions from this field [of knowledge].

can consist of that which has one *isnād* or more; in fact [it can refer to] that which does not have an *isnād* at all.

#### Commentary

##### **5.4.1. The division of *khavar al-āḥād* - *mashhūr*.**

In terms of sequence and arrangement, this section corresponds well with the previous one on *mutawātir*. Ibn Ḥajar explained earlier that any ḥadīth which does not reach the stage of *mutawātir* is called *āḥād*. The first type of this is *mashhūr*, which he defines as a ḥadīth which has more than two narrators in each generation. He also entertains the term *mustafīḍ*, which he indicates is used by the jurists. However, he does not elaborate on this much. There could be two reasons for this. Firstly, it is because *mustafīḍ* is a term used by the jurists and he wants to concentrate on terms used by the ḥadīth scholars. Secondly, it could be due to the fact that, quite simply, *mustafīḍ* hardly exists and hardly matters. *Mustafīḍ* is where the same number of narrators is to be found at the beginning and end of the chain, *mashhūr* is where the number may vary. No ḥadīth scholar has cited such an example of *mustafīḍ*, Ibn Ḥajar or others before and after him. Even if it did exist, then the fact that the same number of narrators is to be found at the beginning and the end does not in any way strengthen the report, particularly if there is a drop in the number in the middle of the *isnād*. This leads to the question as to whether there is any function of the term *mustafīḍ*.

Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥajar's section here on *mashhūr* is concise yet very clear. In a simple section, the reader is able to understand that the term *mashhūr* has two types: the

terminological type and the non-terminological type. As for the former, this is where in each generation there are more than two narrators (and does not reach the stage of *mutawātir*). The latter is where the ḥadīth is considered ‘famous’, regardless of how many narrators are to be found in each part of the chain. For instance, the ḥadīth ‘actions are judged according to intention’ can be referred to as *mashhūr* in the sense it is famous and known amongst the Muslims. But in terms of formal ḥadīth terminology, it is *gharīb*.<sup>56</sup> In fact, a ḥadīth can be classified as *mashhūr* in this sense if it only has one narrator, or does not even possess a chain and is thus fabricated. Al-Suyūṭī several traditions that he says are famous, but have no authentic basis such as ‘Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord’ and the ḥadīth *qudsī* ‘I was an unknown treasure...’ (1972, 2: 176). The fact that Ibn Ḥajar adds the words ‘according to the ḥadīth scholars’ after defining the technical term shows that he wants the reader to understand that this is not to be confused with non-technical term.

Importantly, this clear difference between the two types of *mashhūr* is missing from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s *Muqaddima*. In a long analysis of *mashhūr*, he dismisses the terminological definition entirely and only focuses on reports that are famous amongst the Muslims in general, or a particular group of Muslims like the jurists and the linguists (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, pp. 265-269). The clarity of Ibn Ḥajar’s explanation is perhaps best reflected by the fact that after him, al-Suyūṭī repeated the *Nuzhah*’s section on *mashhūr* almost in its entirety in his own *Tadrīb*. (1972, 2: 173).

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<sup>56</sup> Other examples of traditions, as al-Suyūṭī points out are; (i) ‘*Verily Allāh does not retract knowledge, he retracts it from the death of the scholars...*’ This tradition is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ*, in formal ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ terminology, and *mashhūr* too, because it is a famous and widely-known report. (ii) ‘*The seeking of knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim.*’ This is *mashhūr* in the sense of being famous, and *ḥasan* in ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ classification (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 174).

Ibn Hajar's section on *mashhūr* therefore highlights his skill as a writer and as a ḥadīth scholar. He presents the section in the correct place in terms of sequence. He identifies the term clearly and alerts the reader of its other usage. Though the section does without a practical example of *mashhūr*, it is still sufficient; Ibn al-Ṣalāh mentions several examples in his section yet it is still unconvincing.

To conclude this section, there are two points to raise.

a. Though Ibn Hajar differentiated between the two types of *mashhūr* in meaning, he does not do so in terms of technical terms. In order to prevent confusion, it would have been useful to lend separate names for the technical and the non-technical type. The only Muslim scholar to do this is Ṭaḥḥān, who uses the terms *mashhūr iṣtilāḥī* and *mashhūr ghayr-iṣtilāḥī* (2001, 20-21).

The opposite has seemed to happen with the term *mustafīd*: that a term has been coined for a type of report which is rare to find practically and serves little function.

b. The second point relates to non-Muslim interest in the discipline. Schacht was of the opinion that al-Shāfi'ī was the first jurist to identify the term '*sunna*' with the Prophet, and that prior to this, Muslims associated the term with the 'living tradition' of the community (1959, 80). In some sense, the non-terminological type of *mashhūr* has some overlap with this opinion. This is because this type of report shows how influential the opinion of the community can actually be, in that they can assume a saying to be from the Prophet when in fact it is not. Ibn Hajar's own disciple al-Sakhāwī wrote *al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana*, a large work listing all the prophetic reports that are well-known amongst Muslims.<sup>57</sup> There are many reports in this book that are famous, but have not been proven

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<sup>57</sup> *Al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana fī bayān kathīr min al-aḥādīth al-mushtahira 'ala al-alsina*. Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, Beirut (2003).



to be the words of the Prophet. In the same way, one could argue that certain practices prevailed in the Arab community which people automatically assumed to be the *sunna* of the Prophet, when in fact they were not. Schacht certainly seems to suggest that this is the case with many pre-Islamic and post-Muḥammad practices, like *mut'a* for example (1959, 266). He also wrote that Mālik ibn Anas preferred common practice to traditions stemming from the Prophet (1959, 64). For Muslims, the implication of this argument is that many of the legal practices they know today are more 'Arab' than they are 'Islamic'. The works of non-Muslim scholars is crucial in adding to the understanding of the discipline and adds another layer that is lacking in Muslim works. Plenty of examples are offered of the non-technical *mashhūr* by the Muslim scholars. Yet, nowhere do we find a discussion of a more pressing concern: how did prophetic reports become famous and dispersed amongst the Muslims whereas in reality, they were forged and fabricated? Mighālwi cites the tradition 'whoever smells a rose and does not send salutations upon me, then he has disowned me' (2003, 345). He admits it is most probably forged. Yet he does not elaborate on why this tradition reached a stage where it was assumed by the Muslims to have stemmed from the Prophet.

This is where the works of Schacht add an important dimension. By arguing that the term *sunna* may have simply meant the living tradition of the community and not particular to the example of the Prophet, we can now begin to appreciate how certain traditions may have become subject to confusion regarding its true source, the community or the Prophet. Thus, the work of non-Muslim scholars is important, even in understanding the *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar. Sometimes, their opinions are not totally different from that of the Muslims (as it has been shown here), and therefore they are possible to accommodate. This shows

that Oriental studies can be of worth to Muslims, if they overcome the stereotype they hold that all western interest in ḥadīth is negative. They add a level of analysis which is so lacking in Muslim works, even today.

## **5.5. ‘Azīz.**

The third is ‘azīz. This is where a minimum of two reporters narrate from two others. It is so called either because of its rare existence, or because it strengthens; in other words it strengthens with its appearance via another path.<sup>58</sup> ‘Azīz is not a condition for the *ṣaḥīḥ*, as opposed to whoever assumes so. This is Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī of the Mu‘tazila. The writings of al-Ḥākim Abū ‘Abd Allāh also indicate this opinion when he states: ‘The *ṣaḥīḥ* is that which is narrated by a Companion void of ambiguity who then narrates it to two; then the people of ḥadīth circulate it until our time, like the testimony upon the testimony.’ Also, al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī has clarified in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that this was the condition of al-Bukhārī.

In response to the argument presented to them, they offer a contentious answer. This is because they said, if it is said the ḥadīth ‘actions are judged by intentions’ is fard<sup>59</sup> [as] no one narrated it from ‘Umar except ‘Alqama, we say that ‘Umar narrated it on the pulpit in the presence of the Companions. If the Companions did not know of it, they would have surely questioned it; this is what they have said.

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<sup>58</sup> As Ṭaḥḥān explains, the word ‘azīz in Arabic has two meanings; ‘to be rare’ or ‘to be strong.’ If the former meaning is taken here, then the ḥadīth is so called because very rarely are such traditions to be found. Under the latter meaning, the ḥadīth is so called because it strengthens in terms of authenticity when it is supported by another chain (2001, 22).

<sup>59</sup> i.e. solitary.

This is followed up with [the response] that the silence [of the Companions] does not necessitate that they could not have heard it from someone else. [Moreover], though the argument can be accepted in [the case of] ‘Umar, it cannot be accepted in the singularity of ‘Alqama from him. Then Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm was solitary from ‘Alqama. Then Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd was solitary from Muḥammad, based upon the authentic, known [path] from the ḥadīth masters. Yes, supporting chains have appeared but they cannot be considered. Likewise we do not accept in the answer in other than the ḥadīth of ‘Umar. Ibn Rushayd states that it is sufficient to refute the claim of al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr (that it is a condition of al-Bukhārī) that this is the first ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī mentioned in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Ibn Ḥibbān has made the opposite of this claim. He said that the narration of two from two to its end cannot be found at all. I say, if he intends the narration of two *only* from two only cannot be found at all, then it is possible to accept. As for the form of ‘azīz that we have explained, thus it is present: that *less* than two do not narrate from two. Its example is that which the two Shaykhs have narrated from Anas – and al-Bukhārī from Abū Hurayra – that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘No one is a [true] believer until I become more beloved to him than his father, his son...[to the end of] the ḥadīth. From Anas, Qatāda and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Ṣuhayb have narrated it. Shu‘ba and Sa‘īd have narrated it from Qatāda. And Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Ulayya and ‘Abd al-Wārith have narrated it from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. Then a group have narrated it from each one [of them].

### Commentary

In the section on the second type of *khavar al-āḥād* – ‘*azīz* – Ibn Ḥajar covers a variety of different issues.

a. To commence, he offers a definition of ‘*azīz*, along with the possible origins of the name. In ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth* terminology, he writes that the definition of ‘*azīz* is when at least two reporters narrate the ḥadīth in each generation. Implicitly, this is a criticism of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. He writes:

We heard that the expert Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Manda al-Iṣbahānī said: ‘The rare [*gharīb*] is like those of al-Zuhrī, Qatāda and the other authorities whose ḥadīth are collected. When a single transmitter is alone in relating a particular ḥadīth from them, it is called ‘rare’ [*gharīb*]. When two or three transmitters relate from them and they all have a single ḥadīth, it is called ‘scarce’ [‘*azīz*] (1986, 270).

However, very few scholars have voiced this same opinion and certainly Ibn Ḥajar does not agree. If this definition of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ is accepted, then in some cases, there would be no difference between ‘*azīz* and *mashhūr*, since the latter is accepted as the existence of at least three reporters in each generation. In the previous section, it was noted that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s analysis of *mashhūr* concentrated on the non-terminological type entirely (1986, pp. 265-269). Here, we observe that his definition of ‘*azīz* indicates that he does not acknowledge that terminological type of *mashhūr* at all, since the term ‘*azīz* covers both.

b. The bulk of the section then refers to a debate that preceded the author; the argument as to whether a ḥadīth has to be at least ‘*azīz* to be deemed as *ṣaḥīḥ*. He cites the scholars who believe that it does have to be at least ‘*azīz*, Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/915) of the Mu‘tazilites,<sup>60</sup> al-Ḥākim Abū ‘Abd Allāh and al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148). Then in detail, he explains why this opinion is not correct, citing the ḥadīth ‘Actions are judged according to intentions’ as proof.<sup>61</sup>

c. Ibn Ḥajar also felt the need to supplement the definition of ‘*azīz* with the form it can take on. The reason for doing so is to refute the opinion of Ibn Ḥibbān, who wrote that no ‘*azīz* ḥadīth exists, namely two narrators in each generation. In reality, however, Ibn Ḥajar clarifies that ‘*azīz* is where a minimum of two are to be found in each generation, not that *exactly* two are found in each part of the chain. Then as evidence, he cites a prophetic report from al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, along with the names of the reporters in the first two generations.

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<sup>60</sup> According to the Mu‘tazila, a *khavar* is not accepted until it is reported by at least four narrators in each generation (Anwar 2003, 43). Al-Nawawī heard from the Qadariyya sect that they too only accept a ḥadīth when it is narrated by at least four narrators in each generation (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 283).

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Ḥajar explains their argument regarding the famous ḥadīth ‘Actions are judged according to intentions.’ When opponents argue that this ḥadīth is deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* despite the fact only ‘Umar narrated it in the Companion’s generation, the likes of Ibn al-‘Arabī reply by stating that this is difficult to accept, since he narrated this ḥadīth on the pulpit, in the presence of others. If they had only heard it for the first time, then they would surely have questioned him further regarding it. But this is a weak reply, since it is quite possible they all kept quiet individually, thinking that everyone else was familiar with the saying. Also, they may have remained silent because they all trusted ‘Umar and knew he would not narrate something unproven (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 59). Ibn Ḥajar adds that even if we accept it as being *gharīb* at this point of the chain, ‘Alqama was alone after ‘Umar, and after ‘Alqama, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm was the sole narrator, after which Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd was alone. This is the correct chain according to the scholars of ḥadīth. Other chains are to be found for this ḥadīth but they are not considered authentic enough to consider. Ibn Rushayd (d. 721/1321) states that it is sufficient to refute the claim of al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr when we remember that the first ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī is this ḥadīth of ‘Actions are judged according to intentions’, which is an ‘*azīz* ḥadīth.

### 5.5.1. Conclusion.

Three points can be deduced from this section on ‘*azīz* regarding the approach Ibn Ḥajar chose to adopt in the *Nuzhah*. Firstly, he provides clarification for what he saw as mistakes by his predecessors in the definitions and usage of the technical terms. This is shown when he refutes Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. This also indicates that Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to explain differences of opinion in the *Nuzhah*, even if he did not agree with them personally.

Secondly, only four types of reports have been analysed so far, but we can already appreciate the boundaries Ibn Ḥajar set in the *Nuzhah* with regards to what to include and what to exclude. The issue of whether a ḥadīth has to be at least ‘*azīz* in order to be deemed as sound touches upon the issue of the acceptance of *khābar al-āḥād* (or *khābar al-wāḥid*) and whether a lone reporter is sufficient to guarantee a report’s authenticity. Schacht shows that the acceptance of a lone reporter can be seriously questioned, since even ‘Umar was not content with the information of a single individual on a decision of the Prophet, but instead asked for conformation from a second source (1959, 50). Ibn Ḥajar sees such discussions as off-limit in the *Nuzhah*, despite its importance.<sup>62</sup> Earlier scholars such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī did include sections on the acceptance of *khābar al-āḥād* in their works (1988, pp. 26-31). Ibn Ḥajar may have felt that this discussion would have prolonged his treatise, which he felt needed to be a mere introduction to ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*. Alternatively, he may have excluded such discussions because they pertain more to the legal sphere. His treatise, as he makes clear, deals purely with ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*.

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<sup>62</sup> Two modern works are worthy of mention which comprehensively outline the issue of *khābar al-āḥād*: Pir Karam Shah in *Sunnat khayr al-anām* (1973: pp. 180-200) and G.F. Haddad in *Sunna Notes - Studies in Hadith & Doctrine Volume I; Hadith History & Principles*. (2005: pp. 111-133).

In the section on *mashhūr* (5.4.) we already noted his refusal to elaborate on *mustafīd*, which he noted was a term used by the *fiqh* scholars. Again, here he does not spend energy on issues (the acceptance of *khavar al-āḥād*) which, though important to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, could also be seen as more related to *fiqh*. So early on, we note his tendency to concentrate on purely *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* matters. As the analysis on the *Nuzhah* proceeds, we will observe whether this theme continues and ask the possible reasons behind it.

Finally, he acts as an arbitrator between contrasting views on ḥadīth classification, as shown in the dispute whether a ḥadīth has to be at least *‘azīz* in order to be deemed sound. The fact that he chooses to give this debate so much deliberation is interesting. Firstly, the argument was not topical since the likes of Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī lived six hundred years earlier. Secondly, the debate was not covered by other *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* scholars: Abū Hafṣ al-Mayyānīshī (d. 580/1184), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), al-Suyūfī (d.911/1505) and al-Irāqī (d. 806/1404) all skipped this debate in their works. So why did Ibn Ḥajar give it attention? The climate of Ibn Ḥajar is crucial in answering this. With the ceasing of finding genuinely new *ḥadīths*, the attention turned to consolidating the existing ones, and widening the pool from which scholars of law and dogma could work from. By stating that a ḥadīth has to be at least *‘azīz* in order to for it to be considered sound meant seriously diminishing the amount of ḥadīth literature available. This is why Ibn Ḥajar was insistent on clarifying this debate and giving the reader satisfaction that a ḥadīth could be reported by a solitary reporter, and still be considered as *ṣaḥīḥ*.

## 5.6/5.7. The Division of khabar al-aḥād into the ‘accepted’, the ‘rejected’ and the ‘paused upon.’

The fourth is *gharīb*. This is where one person is alone with its narration, regardless of where the singularity occurs in the *isnād*, [based] upon the forthcoming division into *gharīb muṭlaq* and *gharīb nisbī*. And all of them – namely the four aforementioned types, except the first which is *mutawātir* – are *āḥād*. Each one of them are [individually] called *khabar al-wāḥid*. *Khabar al-wāḥid* literally is that which is narrated by one person. In [ḥadīth] terminology, [it is] that which does not meet the conditions of *mutawātir*.

Amongst them – namely in *āḥād* – are the ‘accepted’. This is a report which is compulsory to act upon, according to the majority. Amongst them are [also] the ‘rejected’. This is a report where the truthfulness of the transmitter has not been established. [The division is such] because of the investigation [required] on the states of the narrators before using as evidence, to the exception of the first, which is *mutawātir*. Thus all *mutawātir* are accepted because of the certainty in the truthfulness of the *khabar*, as opposed to the other types of *khabar al-āḥād*.

But it is only compulsory to act upon the accepted of them. This is because either an essence of acceptance is found in it – and this is the proving of the transmitter’s truthfulness – or an attribute of rejection is found in it; and this is the proving of the untruthfulness of the transmitter. Thus [with] the first, the truthfulness of the *khabar* is overwhelmingly established, because of the truthfulness of the transmitter. [With] the second, the untruthfulness of the *khabar* is overwhelming established, because of the untruthfulness of the transmitter. Therefore it is repelled. When



**acting upon the *khavar* is paused upon, it becomes like the rejected [but] not because of the proving of an attribute of rejection, but because an attribute that necessitates acceptance is not found. And Allāh knows best.**

### Commentary

*Khavar al-āḥād* is divided into *mashhūr*, ‘*azīz* and *gharīb*, depending on how many transmitters are to be found in each generation. Having presented a discussion on *mashhūr* and ‘*azīz*, Ibn Ḥajar should ideally have dealt with the final type *gharīb*. However, even before concluding his analysis of all three types of *khavar al-āḥād*, here he introduces two other discussions on it. The first is the division of *khavar al-āḥād* into the accepted (*maqbul*), the rejected (*mardūd*) and the paused upon (*mutawaqqaf*). The second is again related to *khavar al-āḥād* and concerns how this can sometimes be coupled with advantageous, external factors that helps to strengthen a prophetic report. Ideally, he should have concluded the discussion on *gharīb* before pursuing these two new discussions. This is because these two discussions relate to *mashhūr*, ‘*azīz* and *gharīb*, not just *mashhūr* and ‘*azīz*. Therefore this is one of the places where Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nuzhah* suffers from inconsistency in presentation style.

Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥajar here is indicating that *khavar al-āḥād* can be subject to another form of division, not according to how many reporters there are in each generation, but whether the report is now worthy of acceptance or not. Worthy of attention in this section is the fact that Ibn Ḥajar almost explicitly suggests that the soundness of a ḥadīth is dependent solely on the ‘reporter’s truthfulness’. The rejected report, he writes, is

where ‘the truthfulness of the transmitter has not been established’. There is no mention here of what role the *matn* (text) plays in determining whether a report is deemed accepted or rejected. Certainly this is a criticism which the discipline of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ has found difficult to respond to. The likes of Schacht (1959, 3) have exposed how the ḥadīth masters restricted their investigations almost exclusively to the *isnād*, and largely ignored the importance of the *matn*. Ibn Ḥajar’s writings here suggest that he too views the authenticity of a report dependant on the men reporting it.

### **5.7.1. Advantageous Factors.**

Sometimes a factor is found in *khavar al-āḥād* – which is divided into *mashhūr*, *gharīb* and ‘*azīz* – that gives the benefit of controvertible knowledge, based upon the chosen opinion. This is as opposed to those who deny that. The dispute in reality is literal. This is because those who permit the benefit of knowledge specify that the knowledge [given] is controvertible; this is achieved from evidence. Then those who refute it specify the word of ‘knowledge’ to mean *mutawātir*, and other than that, it is controvertible. But this does not negate that those [traditions] marked by factors are more preferred than those void of it.<sup>63</sup>

The [advantageous] factors that can be attached to the *khavar* are of many types.

From them is that which the two *shaykhs* have recorded in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*, when it does not reach the stage of *mutawātir*. This [itself] is attached with many factors; amongst

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<sup>63</sup> Ibn Ḥajar writes that there are some scholars who argue that it does not give this type of knowledge. In reality, it seems there is no difference of opinion, but rather there are lingual differences as to which type of knowledge it gives; (i) Those who say it *does* give knowledge mean it gives *al-‘ilm al-naẓarī*. (ii) Those who say it *does not* give knowledge mean it doesn’t give *al-‘ilm al-qat’ī* or *mutawātir* knowledge. Hence both mean the same thing.

them is their rank in this field, their precedence in differentiating the *ṣaḥīḥ* from others and the scholars' acceptance of their books. [In fact] this acceptance alone is stronger in terms of giving the benefit of knowledge than mere numerous chains that are short of being *mutawātir*. However, this is specific to those [traditions] in the two books that have not been criticised by anyone from the experts, and to those [traditions] where a contradiction has not occurred between the two texts in the books, in such a way that one cannot be preferred; since it is impossible for two opposing facts to be truthful without preferring one over the other. With the exception of these two, the [scholarly] consensus exists upon accepting their authenticity. If it is said, the [scholars] have merely agreed on the necessity of acting upon them, not on their authenticity, we will disagree. The reason for disagreement is that they are unanimous upon the necessity of acting upon all [traditions] that are *ṣaḥīḥ*, even if the two *shaykhs* do not record it. Thus no uniqueness would remain for the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, though the consensus exists regarding their uniqueness.<sup>64</sup>

Amongst the scholars who clarify that whatever the two *shaykhs* have recorded gives the benefit of controvertible knowledge are the al-Shaykh Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'inī, and from the *imāms* of ḥadīth Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥumaydī, Abū al-Faḍl ibn Ṭāhir and others. It is possible to say that the aforementioned uniqueness refers to them being the most authentic of reports.

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<sup>64</sup> Some scholars suggest that the consensus is that it is *wājib* (compulsory) to act upon these reports from the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, not that they are authentic. If this position is maintained, then surely it is necessary to act upon all *ṣaḥīḥ* reports, whether Muslim and al-Bukhārī have narrated it or not. Thus, the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* would have no reason to be considered superior to other compilations.

Amongst [the factors] is the *mashhūr*, when it has clear, individual chains free from the weakness of narrators and hidden ailments. Amongst those who have asserted that it gives the benefit of controvertible knowledge are al-Ustādh Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī, al-Ustādh Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak, and others.

Amongst [the factors] is the continuous *isnād* consisting of the expert, competent *imāms*, in such a way that it is not *gharīb*. [For instance], like the ḥadīth narrated by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (when someone else partners him) from al-Shāfi‘ī (when someone else partners him), from Mālik ibn Anas. For undoubtedly it gives the benefit of knowledge with evidence to the listener, in view of the grandeur of its narrators, and because they have suitable attributes that make them necessary to accept, which equals that which is narrated by a large number from others. There can be no doubt for one who has the smallest knowledge of this field and of the information of people that if Mālik – for example – participates in a *khābar*, then he is truthful in it. When this is coupled with someone who is of that same rank, it increases in strength and the fearing of mistakes becomes distanced.

With these types that we have mentioned, the knowledge of its authenticity is not attained except for a scholar of ḥadīth, who is emerged in it study, learned of the states of the narrators and aware of the hidden ailments. Others will not attain the knowledge of its authenticity because of his lack of these mentioned attributes, though it will for the experts.

**The attainment of these three types we have mentioned – the first is that which is specific to the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, and the second is that which has many chains and the third is that which is narrated from the *imāms* – is possible in one ḥadīth. At this time, it will not be far from being definitive in its authenticity. And Allāh knows best.**

### Commentary

In the second discussion relating to *khavar al-āḥād*, the author asserts that they sometimes have additional, external factors attached to it which gives the benefit of *al-‘ilm al-naẓarī* and therefore allows them to have preference over other reports void of them. Three types are identified by the author; (i) a ḥadīth which al-Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*, when it does not reach the stage of *mutawātir* (b) a *mashhūr* ḥadīth, when they have clear chains, free from weak narrators and hidden ailments (c) a ḥadīth which the expert *imāms* continuously narrate, so long as they are not *gharīb*.

From these three factors, Ibn Ḥajar does not refer to *mashhūr* in detail, possibly because he has already presented a discussion on it (section 5.4.). He does elaborate on how a ḥadīth which both al-Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded in their *Ṣaḥīḥs* is given preferential treatment. This, he explains, is:

- i. Because of their status and rank as ḥadīth experts and as pious Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The title *Amīr al-mu‘minīn* is frequently used to refer to al-Bukhārī, which is perhaps the highest title that can be given to a ḥadīth scholar. Qutayba ibn Sa‘īd said: ‘People from the east and west came to me to seek ḥadīth, but no one was like al-Bukhārī.’ (Mighālī 2003, 253). Ibn al-Madīnī commented: ‘Al-Bukhārī himself never met anyone of equal calibre to himself.’ (Mighālī 2003, 253). His intellectual ability was also matched by his unparalleled piety. Al-Firabrī said: ‘Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl said to me: I never included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* a ḥadīth except I made a major ablution (*ghusl*) and prayed two *raka‘āt* before hand.’ (Haddad 2005, 105). Al-Imām Muslim’s teacher Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Farrā’ said of him: ‘Muslim is a treasure of knowledge; I have seen nothing but good traits in him’ (Mighālī 2003, 265).

- ii. Because of their advanced ability to differentiate authentic sayings from rejected ones over other scholars.
- iii. The scholar's acceptance of their work.

Ibn Ḥajar merely reinforces what Muslim scholars before him said on the exalted rank of these two masters and their works. Al-Ḥākim described the reports of the two *shaykhs* as the 'first grade of what is sound' (Robson 1953, 14) and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ too gave them his backing.<sup>66</sup>

Yet importantly, Ibn Ḥajar does not give their works an unequivocal backing. This is shown where he asserts that the reports mentioned in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* will only be considered as advantageous when: (a) any of the ḥadīth masters (*ḥāfiẓs*) have not criticised the ḥadīth in question (b) there are no contradictions between two reports found in them in such a sense that one cannot be favoured over the other.

On the lively debate as to whether the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* contain weak reports, the Muslim scholars fall into two groups. The first group accepts the rank of the works, but acknowledges some shortcomings. For instance, in his *Kitāb al-tatābbu'*, al-Dāraquṭnī argues that 78 weak reports are to be found in *al-Bukhārī*, 100 in *Muslim* and 32 that are to be found in both (Haddad 2005, 106).

The second group seem to defend al-Bukhārī and Muslim to the death, scholars such as al-Sūyūfī and al-Dhahabī. They argue that all the reports to be found in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*

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<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wrote: 'The highest (the sound ḥadīth recorded by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim) is the first, and it is the one scholars of ḥadīth often call 'agreed upon to be authentic.' When they apply that term without qualification, they mean by it the agreement of al-Bukhārī and Muslim on it, and not the agreement of the Muslim community. However, the agreement of the Muslim community on it necessarily follows from the agreement of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and is concurrent with it, because of the agreement of the Muslim community to receive with acceptance whatever al-Bukhārī and Muslim agreed upon' (1986, 28).

are *ṣaḥīḥ*, but not all of them reach the same high degree of *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>67</sup> Al-Dhahabī notes that none fall below the rank of *ḥasan*, which one can also view as the lowest rank of *ṣaḥīḥ* (Haddad 2005, 107). Haddad explains:

What al-Dāraquṭnī and others criticised is only on the basis that it did not reach the high criterion which each of them defined in their respective books. As for the [criterion of] soundness of the *ḥādīths* themselves, then both of them lived up to it (2005, 108).

Ibn Ḥajar seemingly belongs to the first group of scholars. Whilst he acknowledges the reputation and fame of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, he also accepts some deficiencies in their works.

The other factor which the author covers in detail is a *ḥadīth* which the expert *imāms* continuously narrate, so long as they are not *gharīb*. An example would be a *ḥadīth* which al-Imām Aḥmad narrates with another narrator. Then on the same topic, al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī narrates with another narrator, as well as al-Imām Mālik. Ibn Ḥajar gives three reasons for this in the *Nuzḥah*

But one can ask that if their rank stipulates their acceptance, then why does Ibn Ḥajar assert that *another* narrator must also be present with them? In the text itself, Ibn Ḥajar writes that such is their calibre and acceptance that their narration alone is equal in strength to several narrators. Surely a *gharīb* tradition narrated by one of the masters

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<sup>67</sup> As it will be shown later (section 5.9), the factors which deem a report as *ṣaḥīḥ* are to an extent relative and subjective and therefore two reports with varying authenticity can still both be declared as *ṣaḥīḥ*.

would still warrant its acceptance and preference, even if no other transmitter participates in the narration. No explanation is offered by Ibn Ḥajar.

Another criticism of this section is related to the last part in the *Nuzhah*. We are informed that sometimes, all three of these factors feature in just one ḥadīth. When this is the case, then the ḥadīth will be of great strength and not far from giving the benefit of *al-‘ilm al-qaṭ‘ī* (definitive knowledge). Despite this claim, an example of a particular tradition has not been offered by Ibn Ḥajar, or indeed any other scholar. Hence, this last statement is perhaps more hypothetical than practical. No narration of al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī is to be found in the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 317).<sup>68</sup>

To conclude, this section – along with some other, forthcoming sections<sup>69</sup> - touches upon the protectionism that certain famed, individuals hold in the discipline. Here, Ibn Ḥajar praises the piety of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Mālik<sup>70</sup> and sees this as a reason for accepting their works too. An impartial observer is confused when he compares the opinions of such individuals from the Muslim scholars on the one hand and the non-Muslim ones on the other. For example, Juynboll describes Mālik as a common-link transmitter, which can be translated as a forger (1996, VIII: 310). Elsewhere Juynboll notes that Mālik was often at the tail-end of family *isnāds*, ‘and that it is therefore not inconceivable – albeit far from proven, of course – that he brought the rumour about a *Ṣaḥīfa* of ‘Amr — father — great grandfather — into circulation.’ (1996, XI: 174).

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<sup>68</sup> The closest example is where Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi‘ī and Mālik have featured in the *isnād*. There is only one such ḥadīth and even this, as al-Suyūṭī notes, is in reality four separate reports merged as one (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 78).

<sup>69</sup> Sections 5.18, 5.22, 5.36 and 5.41.

<sup>70</sup> He writes: ‘And there can be no doubt for one who has the smallest knowledge of this field and of the information of people that if Mālik – for example – participates in a *khābar*, then he is truthful in it.’



Perhaps it is impossible to objectively judge what al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Mālik were really like as Muslims and as scholars, because they lived so long ago. Juynboll did not meet them but then nor did Ibn Ḥajar. But that has not prevented a *perception* being painted by others; the Muslims who see them as largely competent and pious and the non-Muslims who see them in a lesser light. The theory of Orientalism helps to answer the polemics of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. Edward Said explains:

For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it also must be true that for a European or American studying the Orient, there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second (1995, 11).

In other words, Ibn Ḥajar, as a Muslim, had a vested interest in defending the piety and ability of his fellow Muslims, and hence the positive review. The non-Muslims do not necessarily have this vested interest, and hence the more critical review. Sometimes it is not the empirical data in front of us that affects our conclusions, but our actuality. As the main analysis of the *Nuzhah* proceeds, there will be other places where the theory of Orientalism can play a role in our understanding of the discipline.

## 5.8. *Gharīb/Fard*.

Then the singularity is either at the root of the *isnād* – which is the place where the chain circulates and returns to, even if the paths to it are numerous; namely the Companion’s side – or it is not at the root of the *isnād*. This [latter form] is when the singularity occurs in its duration. [This is] like when more than one narrates from the Companion, then one person is alone in its narration. Thus the first is *fard muṭlaq*, like the ḥadīth of the prohibition of selling *walā’* and of its gift.<sup>71</sup> ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār was alone from Ibn ‘Umar. Sometimes one narrator is solitary from that single person, like the ‘Branches of Faith’ ḥadīth.<sup>72</sup> Abū Ṣāliḥ is alone from Abū Hurayra and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār is alone after Abū Ṣāliḥ. Sometimes the singularity continues throughout the transmission, or most of it. Many examples of such are in the *Musnad* of al-Bazzār and *al-Mu‘jam al-awsaṭ* of Ṭabarānī.

The second is *fard nisbī*. It is called *nisbī* because the singularity has occurred in relation to a specific person, even if the ḥadīth *per se* is *mashhūr*. Rarely is the term *fard* applied to *fard nisbī* though *gharīb* and *fard* are synonymous, literally and terminologically. However, the people of terminology have differentiated between the two in terms of frequent and infrequent usage. Thus *fard* is mostly applied to *fard muṭlaq* and *gharīb* is mostly applied to *fard nisbī*. This is in terms of their usage as nouns. As for their usage in terms of the derived verb, then they do not differentiate. Thus they say for *muṭlaq* and *nisbī*, *tafarrada bihī fulān* (‘x was solitary in reporting it’) or *aghraba bihī fulān* (‘x was solitary in reporting it’).

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<sup>71</sup> This is the narration in which the Prophet said, ‘*Al-walā’ laḥm ka-laḥm al-nasab...*’.

<sup>72</sup> The Prophet said: ‘Faith consists of seventy-something branches. The highest is to testify that there is no God but Allāh and the lowest is to remove a (harmful) object from the path. And modesty is a branch of Faith.’

Similar to this difference is *munqaṭiʿ* and *mursal*. Are they different or not? Most scholars [agree] upon its difference, but [only] in terms of its usage as a noun. As for usage as the derived verb, they use *irsāl* only. So they say *arsalahū fulān* (‘x made it discontinuous’), regardless whether that was *mursal* or *munqaṭiʿ*. Then there are numerous [scholars] who do not consider the place of its usage, in that they do not differentiate between *mursal* and *munqaṭiʿ*. And they are not the same, for the reasons we have explained. Only a few are aware of this point. And Allāh knows best.

#### Commentary

##### **5.8.1. Fard muṭlaq and fard nisbī.**

Ibn Ḥajar concludes his discussion on *mutawātir* and *khavar al-aḥād* with a look at the last type of the former. When the *isnād* contains a solitary reporter in a particular generation, then it is called *gharīb* or *fard*. There are two types, *fard muṭlaq* and *fard nisbī*.

Owing to the confusion surrounding the usage of these two terms, the author offers an excellent explanation of where each term is and should be applied. This particular part of the *Nuzhah* gives an indication of who his target-audience was. Ibn Ḥajar eradicates any confusion that exists between *gharīb* and *fard*, explains which is typically used to denote *fard muṭlaq* and *fard nisbī* and warns readers not to confuse the usage of the terms when they are used as a noun and when they are used as a verb. Certainly, this indicates that the *Nuzhah* was meant as an introductory text to the study of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth for the first time. Even today, the *Nuzhah* is largely used as an introductory treatise on the discipline in

Muslim universities and seminaries. The clarity shown by Ibn Hajar here indicates why the *Nuzhah* was and still is an indispensable guide for the field.

### **5.8.2. Conclusion.**

We previously briefly noted (section 5.7.1) that Orientalism can play a part in understanding why the Muslims and non-Muslims have reached such different conclusions in the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. In general, the Muslims have a more optimistic view on the authenticity of ḥadīth material. Noth epitomised the polemics when he remarked:

Leaving aside the fact that the autonomous Muslim *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* as well as Orientalist ḥadīth scholarship recognise the existence of ḥadīth forgery, the two groups do not seem to have much in common. The reason for this is that the burden of proof in the case of ḥadīth forgery is distributed differently: For Muslim ḥadīth scholars, it has to be proved that a ḥadīth is a forgery; for Orientalists, that it is genuine (in Motzki (ed.) 2004, 310).

Yet using the discussion presented by Ibn Hajar on *gharīb* and *fard*, it is possible to show how both Muslims *and* non-Muslims can benefit from one another, towards a better, more impartial and more objective appreciation of the discipline. Two issues will be raised here that are related specifically to *gharīb* and *fard*, one where the Muslims can learn from the non-Muslims, and one where the non-Muslims can learn from the Muslims:

**a. Where the Muslims can benefit.**

One of the prominent theories of Schacht is the idea of the Common Link (CL) transmitter. He argues that a common link in the chain of transmission indicates that the ḥadīth in question originated at the time of that common member (1959, pp. 171-172). This person is then responsible for providing a fictitious *isnād* back to the Companion and the Prophet.

I wish to show that his theory can be assessed in the light of Ibn Ḥajar's writings on *fard nisbī*, where the singularity occurs in some other part of the chain and not at the side of the Companion. Common sense dictates that the chains of transmission are usually expansive in nature rather than shrinking. In other words, as the *isnād* progresses, we expect to find more transmitters. But *fard nisbī* is where there are more people in the first part of the chain and then this shrinks to a solitary reporter later. This resembles the common link form that Schacht was keen to portray. Therefore the cases where the *isnād* becomes solitary in its duration, namely *fard nisbī*, is more likely to have been 'projected' backwards. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why a report, for example, was reported by two Companions and two Successors, only for them both to report to one solitary person in the generation thereafter. We would expect to see the *isnād* expand in its later part and not shrink. It can therefore be argued that Ibn Ḥajar and the scholars before him actually gave a name to the common link theory of Schacht in *fard nisbī*. Ibn Ḥajar explains the form that *fard nisbī* assumes in the *Nuzhah* but not *why* it takes on this shape. The lack of clarification from him and indeed other Muslim scholars adds to the suspicion surrounding this type. It is here where Muslims can re-assess the evidence after appreciating the issues presented by non-Muslim academics.

As a criticism of this comparison between the common link theory and *fard nisbī*, one important point is worthy of mention. A common link transmitter would certainly want his report to gain acceptance, and therefore he would only claim to have heard from reliable and trustworthy reporters. But then there are unexplainable cases where the person the report has supposedly been projected back to is weak and rejected. This can only be the case where the *isnād* is genuine. Otherwise, no right-minded transmitter would project the report back to weak reporters and thus have his report rejected.

**a. Where the non-Muslims can benefit.**

Importantly, Ibn Ḥajar writes that the cases where the singularity continues throughout the chain of transmission are not those reports which are recorded in the six canonical collection. Rather such reports are to be found in the lesser books of compilations, such as the *Musnad* of al-Bazzār.<sup>73</sup> This contrasts with the opinion of Juynboll who writes:

In other words, canonical Muslim tradition literature is first and foremost characterised by the feature that the transmission of a particular saying allegedly uttered by the Prophet travelled during the first sixty to one hundred and fifty years or so of its existence along a path of consecutive **single** individuals. (1996, VII: 172).

Juynboll's observations are part of his theory on the role of the *mu'ammārūn*, which will be dealt with in Section 5.51. Elsewhere, Juynboll gives an indication why he was keen to

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<sup>73</sup> He writes in the text: 'And sometimes the singularity continues throughout the transmission, or most of it. And many examples of such are in the *Musnad* of al-Bazzār and *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ* of Ṭabarānī.'

portray single individuals in a chain as the predominant norm in ḥadīth transmission; because he felt that ‘more often than not, [it is] a sure sign of its having been put together by the youngest person mentioned in that strand or possibly the latter’s master’ (XI: 154). But for our analysis here, we must first note that Ibn Ḥajar totally differs with Juynboll regarding where the bulk of *gharīb* reports are to be found. Juynboll believes that the works of Muslim, al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī and their likes are littered with them whereas Ibn Ḥajar believes they are confined to the lesser works like *al-Mu‘jam al-awsaṭ* of Ṭabarānī. Al-Mayyānīshī asserted that one of the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim was that *at least two* or more narrated from the Prophet, and then at least four narrate from each of these.<sup>74</sup> If this opinion is accepted, then it means that chains marked by a ‘path of consecutive single individuals’ was at the very least a rarity for two of the six major ḥadīth compilations, and not the norm.

Moreover, the works of Azami in particular cast doubts about the common nature of *gharīb* reports that Juynboll is so keen to depict. In his analysis of the works of Suhayl, he found that there were only five reports where the *isnād* featured one report from the Companion, transmitted to one Successor and then to one further reporter. There are eleven traditions where only one Companion has reported it to one Successor, but the report has been attested by other Companions. Thirty-two traditions take on the form where a certain Companion has more than one student and this is attested with similar-wording reports from other Companions. Azami identifies only a single tradition that takes the form of *fard nisbī*: namely where a report is transmitted from many Companions but later, there is only a single transmitter (Azami 1992, 236). In other

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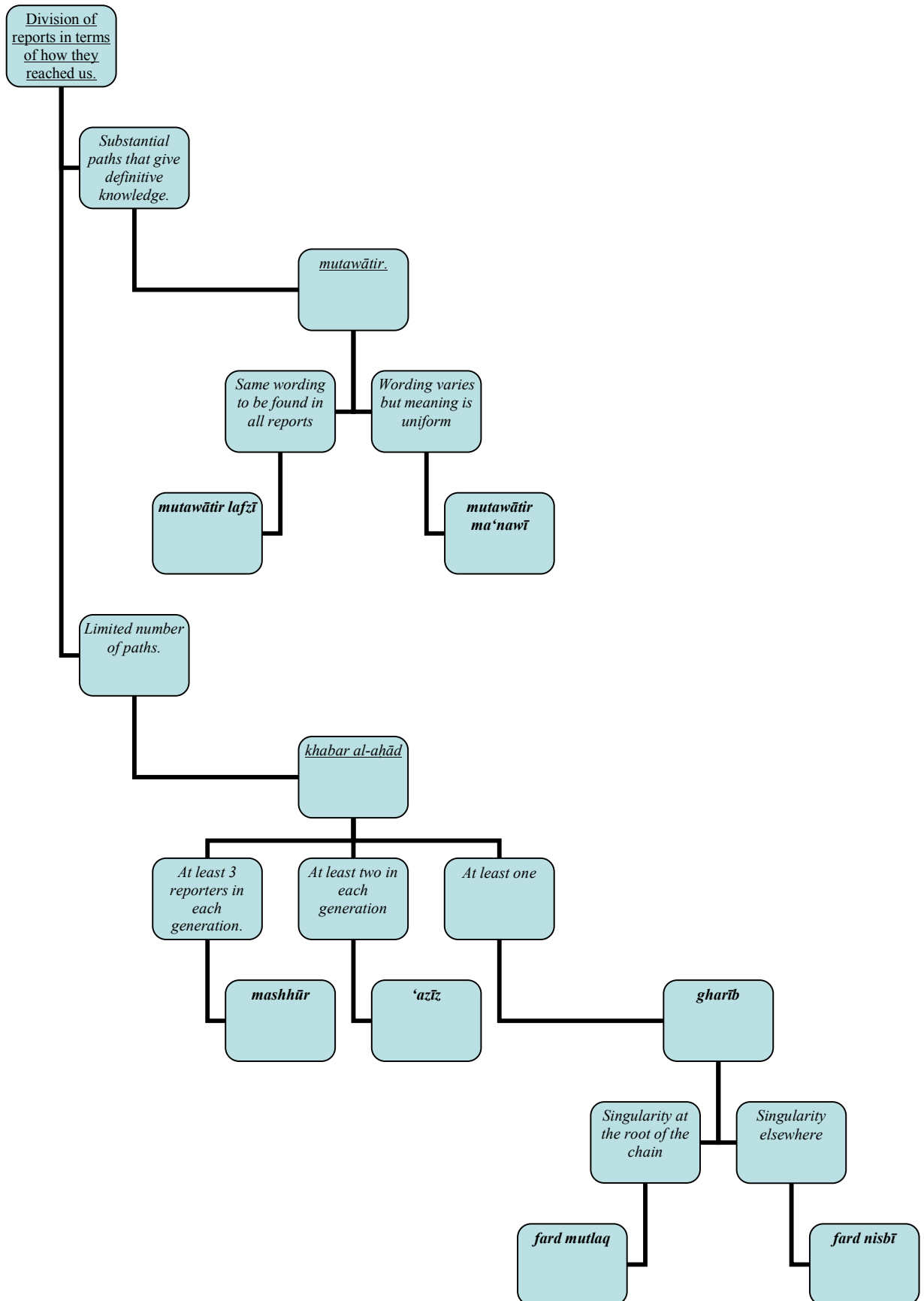
<sup>74</sup> See section 5.5.

words, most of the work is distinguished by *mashhūr* and *‘azīz* reports, rather than *gharīb*. And the semi-contentious *fard nisbī* is only found once in the works.

My approach here has not been to answer who is correct and who is not. Rather, it aims to show that our understanding of the discipline is best appreciated through knowledge, Muslim *and* non-Muslim knowledge. For too long, the scepticism (as highlighted by the quote from Noth) has acted as a barrier to both parties from accepting each other’s views. In short, the *Nuzhah* can help us to understand and answer new approaches laid down by non-Muslim scholars to some degree. Crucially, new approaches laid down by non-Muslim scholars can also help us to understand the *Nuzhah*, as shown with the similarity between Schacht’s view on Common Link (CL) transmitter and *fard nisbī*.



### ***5.8.3. Summary: Reports according to how they reached us.***



## 5.9. *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

The *ḵabār al-āḥād* with the transmission of upright and completely accurate [narrators], coupled with the continuation of the *isnād*, without it [being] *shādhḍh* or *mu'allal*, is [called] *ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih*. This is the first division of the accepted into four types. This [division exists] because either it consists of attributes of acceptance upon its highest form, or it does not. The former is *ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih*; and the second – if something is found which compensates for that shortcoming, like numerous chains – then it is *ṣaḥīḥ* too, but not *li-dhātih*. And where there is no compensating factor, then it is *ḥasan li-dhātih*. If an indication is found that gives preference to the side of acceptance in what was [previously] paused upon, then this is *ḥasan* too, but not *li-dhātih*. The dialogue for *ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih* has been preceded because of its high rank.

### Commentary

Perhaps owing to its importance, Ibn Ḥajar offers an extensive analysis on *ṣaḥīḥ*. The discussion commences with four divisions of the accepted (*maqbul*). They are;

- i. *Ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih*- the Sound *per se*. This is a tradition that fulfills the five conditions mentioned above, which the author elaborates on later.
- ii. *Ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih*- the Sound by other. In essence, this is a ḥadīth that is *ḥasan* in terms of grading. However it is promoted to the rank of *ṣaḥīḥ* due to the appearance of evidence that suggests its authenticity, like numerous, supporting chains. Since it was originally *ḥasan*, it cannot be labelled as *ṣaḥīḥ*

outright, and thus it is called *ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih*, or ‘Sound by other means’ rather than *per se*.

- iii. *Ḥasan li-dhātih* - the Fair *per se*. As Ibn Ḥajar later explains, this is a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth in all respects, except the accuracy of the narrator is not of the highest standard.
- iv. *Ḥasan li-ghayrih*- the Fair by other. Here, Ibn Ḥajar suggests that a ḥadīth which was previously not acted upon due to some weakness can be upgraded to the rank of *ḥasan*, when supporting evidence is found. Again, because it was not originally Fair, it is only given the title of *Ḥasan li-ghayrih*, or Fair by other means.

This opening section is very clear. It outlines the four types of the accepted and how they relate to one another. He then proceeds to offer a detailed commentary of the first type, *ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih*:

**What is meant by ‘upright’ is whosoever possesses a force that carries him upon the adherence of pious, courteous behaviour. What is meant by piety (*taqwā*) is the refraining from evil acts, namely polytheism, lewdness and innovation. ‘Accuracy’ is of two types; the accuracy of the chest; this is that he preserves what he has heard in a fashion such that he can present it when he wishes. [And the second type of accuracy] is accuracy of the book; this is protecting it in his possession from the time that he heard it, to verify it, until the point he gives it. Added is the condition of ‘completely’ to indicate the higher rank in that. ‘Continuation’ is that whose *isnād* is**

free from any drop, in the sense that all of them from the men have heard the narrated [text] from their shaykh. The ‘*sanad*’; its definition has been mentioned. ‘*Mu‘allal*’ literally is that which contains a defect. Terminologically, it is that in which there is a hidden, defamatory, defect. *Shādhah* literally means solitarily and terminologically, it is that [tradition] in which the narrator has been opposed by someone more preferred. And for it is another interpretation; this will soon come, if Allāh wills.

#### Commentary

##### **5.9.1. Defining *ṣaḥīḥ*.**

Ibn Ḥajar defines a *ṣaḥīḥ*<sup>75</sup> ḥadīth as the ‘transmission of upright and completely accurate [narrators], with the continuation of the chain, without it [being] *shādhah* or *mu‘allal*.’

For reasons that will become clear later, it is worth comparing this with what some other ḥadīth masters – before and after Ibn Ḥajar – have said regarding the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*.

a. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) defines the *ṣaḥīḥ* as ‘a supported (*musnad*) ḥadīth, the *isnād* of which coheres continuously throughout the transmission of one upright and accurate person from another up to its point of termination. The sound ḥadīth can be neither *shādhah* nor *mu‘allal*’ (1986, 11-12). Though worded slightly differently, it is in essence the same as the definition offered by Ibn Ḥajar, because he mentions the same conditions.

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<sup>75</sup> The term *ṣaḥīḥ* as used here to describe prophetic traditions metaphorically. This is because the word literally (*ḥaqīqa*) is used in Arabic to describe persons and bodies (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 64).

b. Al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1403), who was the teacher of Ibn Ḥajar, defines *ṣaḥīḥ* in his *Alfiyya* as ‘the continuously supported, with the transmission of the upright and accurate throughout the chain, without it being *shādhah* and without the existence of a hidden defect which harms it’ (1995, 7). Again, the definition is identical.

c. Al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) defined it as a ḥadīth ‘whose *isnād* in continuous with upright, accurate reporters, without it [being] *shādhah* or *mu‘allal*’ (1972, 1: 64).

From these definitions offered by the Muslim scholars, we can see notice the conformity quite clearly. The key elements mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar are to be found in the definitions offered by those before him and indeed after him. In fact, we note that even when Muslim scholars have offered a different definition, the others have suggested it still confirms with that of the majority. It is as differences are muted quickly. Two examples will be sufficient to prove this:

a. Al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998) defined *ṣaḥīḥ* as ‘*ma ittaṣala sanaduhū wa-‘addalat naqlatuhū*’, or ‘whose chain is continuous and whose transmission is verified reliable’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 64). Note that in this version, there is no mention of the transmitters being accurate and that the report must not be *shādhah* or *mu‘allal*. Rather than accepting his difference of opinion, the other Muslim scholars have attempted to show that at least implicitly, these three elements *are* to be found in his definition. Al-Suyūṭī believes this very fact, on the basis that he used the word ‘*addalat*’ rather than ‘*adalat*’. The former refers to when a narrator is verified as being reliable, by other marked scholars. ‘A

negligent, deserved of disregard is not described as being verified reliable by the companions of ḥadīth, though he may express ‘*adl* in his religion’, al-Suyūṭī writes (1972: 1: 64). Al-Nawawī too comes to the defence of the established definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* when he states that the comprehensiveness of the term ‘*adl* means it automatically negates the inaccuracy of the narrator. He writes:

The condition of ‘*adāla* stipulates the truthfulness of the narrator, the absence of negligence and the absence of disregard at the point of preserving the report (in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 64).

What this shows therefore is that though al-Khaṭṭābī’s definition is much shorter, it is still the same as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s and Ibn Ḥajar’s, or *made* to look the same as theirs.

b. Al-Ḥākim (d. 405/1014) writes in ‘*Uḥūl al-ḥadīth*’ that for a report to be considered sound, the reporter ‘must be known (*mashhūr*) for seeking ḥadīth’ (cited in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 69). This is an addition to what the likes of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Ḥajar have offered. But again, this addition is quickly portrayed as being no different to the established definition. Al-Nawawī believes that the condition of *ḍabt* encompasses this element, since being known for narrating simply means that he has great care and consideration for the task. Al-Sam‘ānī echoed this sentiment when he wrote:

The *ṣaḥīḥ* [reporter] is not merely known to narrate from the authoritative. It is being renowned for understanding, acknowledgment, excessive listening and revision (in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 70).

Therefore, even the slight variations to be found from some Muslim scholars can be interpreted and incorporated into the widely-accepted definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*.

The fact is that from the fourth Islamic century until Ibn Ḥajar's time, the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* has never really been questioned. It has been refined and tweaked, but not at all revamped and critically assessed. For some scholars, it is not just the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* that has suffered from stagnation, but the *entire* discipline of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. For instance, Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) said:

...I see that the [Islamic] disciplines are all developing except this discipline [of ḥadīth]. For this is declining day by day (in al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 4).

This quote from Ibn Ḥibbān suggests that even by the fourth Islamic century, ḥadīth scholars had succumbed to apathy and were happy to confirm to what their predecessors had written. In the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*, we can appreciate the point Ibn Ḥibbān was making.

For the sake of our analysis of the *Nuzḥah*, we find that Ibn Ḥajar does not deviate from the works of his predecessors in defining *ṣaḥīḥ*. Instead, he opted for uniformity.

What Ibn Ḥajar does do in the *Nuzḥah* is accept the widely-held definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* and then indulge in a pinpoint analysis of each important word found in it. So we are given a



detailed analysis of (i) *‘adl* (ii) *ḍabt* (iii) *tāmm* (iv) *ittiṣāl* (v) *sanad* (vi) *mu‘allal* (vii) *shādhah*. In fact, *‘adl* is given a two-tier analysis by him. This is because he defines *‘adl* as ‘a force that carries him upon the adherence of *taqwā* and *marūwwa* (or *marū’a*). He then proceeds to define *taqwā* and *marūwwa* too. Perhaps the added detail on *‘adl* from Ibn Ḥajar was so that he could show that a reporter must be known for his *taqwā* as much as his ability to transmit accurately; he reminds readers that *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* has a religious worth and not just an academic one. In transmitting the words and actions of the Prophet, reporters are expected to follow his model too.

Ibn Ḥajar did not want to question the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* which he inherited from his predecessors in the field. He accepted it unequivocally. This definition was almost like an unchangeable constitution, engraved in stone. His duty, it seems, was to elaborate and laud it, as the next part of the *Nuzḥah* suggests.

**Note: His saying ‘and the *ḵabar al-āḥād*’ is like the *jins* and the remaining conditions are like *faṣl*. His saying ‘with the transmission of upright’ excludes what is transmitted by non-upright [reporters]. His saying ‘it’ [*huwa*] is called *faṣl* <sup>76</sup>; it appears between the predicate and the news. It states that whatever appears after it is the news for what is before it, and is not its description. And his saying ‘*li-dhātih*’ excludes that which is *ṣaḥīḥ* through an external matter, like it has passed.**

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<sup>76</sup> The *ḍamīr huwa* appearing in between clarifies that the two parts of the sentence are not related through the means of *mawṣūf* and *ṣifa* (the described and the description) (al-Wajīdī 1996, 54).

Here, Ibn Ḥajar comments on the literary style employed in defining *ṣaḥīḥ* from a grammatical perspective. The definition takes on the form of *jins* and *faṣl*, where a general, universal statement is made followed by a more precise description of who or what is excluded from it.

This text of the *Nuzḥah* does not in any way add to our understanding what *ṣaḥīḥ* is. It is merely a grammatical analysis of the widely-accepted definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*.

So we see that in this section on *ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn Ḥajar meticulously elaborates on *ṣaḥīḥ*. But it is hardly thought-provoking, critical or evaluative. It is quite a superficial analysis. Had it have been more critical, then he may questioned the absence of reference to the *matn* in the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*. Had it been more reflective of his climate, he may have highlighted the fact that elevation – which was so preciously sought in his time – is not a condition for *ṣaḥīḥ* (Dickinson 2002, 491). What he does do is show the dependency on the men reporting the report as a means of establishing its authenticity, as the next section suggests.

### **5.9.3. The ‘most sound of chains’.**

The ranks of *ṣaḥīḥ* differ, according to the varying attributes that are required for authenticity in terms of strength. For indeed when it gives the benefit of overwhelming thought – upon which is the basis of soundness – this stipulates that for it will be stages, some higher than others in accordance to the strengthening matters. When the matter is as such then that [report] whose transmitters are of the highest calibre in reliability and accuracy and all of the other attributes that necessitate soundness, will be more authentic than what is void of this. Thus from

the highest rank in that [matter] is that which some *imāms* have declared as the most sound of chains; like al-Zuhrī — Sālim ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar — his father; and like Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn — ‘Ubayda ibn ‘Amr — ‘Alī; and like Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī — ‘Alqama — Ibn Mas‘ūd. Less than that in rank is like Burayd ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Abī Burda — his grandfather — his father Abū Mūsā; and like Ḥammād ibn Salama — Thābit — Anas. Less than that in rank is like Suhayl ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ — his father — Abū Hurayra; and like ‘Alā’ ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān — his father — Abū Hurayra. For verily all of them comprise the name of integrity and accuracy, except that in the highest stage are preferred attributes that stipulate precedence over the ones which are next. In the next stage are strengths of accuracy that stipulate precedence upon the third. And this [third stage] is preceded upon the ones which are considered as Fair only, like Muḥammad ibn Ishāq — ‘Āsim ibn ‘Umar — Jābir; and [like] ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb, from his father, from his grandfather. Perform analogy with these stages with that which is similar to it in [terms of] preferred attributes. The highest rank is that which some *imāms* have declared as the ‘most sound of chains.’ The depended [opinion] is the non-declaration [with this title] to a specific chain. Yes, the chains that the *imāms* have mentioned [as such] are deserved of precedence over the chains they have not declared as such.

### Commentary

We have already seen in this main section that Ibn Ḥajar largely refers to the *isnād* rather than the *matn*. For him, the credibility of the reporters plays a paramount role in determining the acceptance and rejection of a report. In this section, Ibn Ḥajar explains

the issue of the *aṣaḥḥ al-asānīd*, or the ‘most sound of chains.’ Again, it indicates how important the *isnād* was for him.

If, the author explains, a report has a chain of highly-credible reporters then this adds to its validity. Ibn Ḥajar offers examples of such chains, such as al-Zuhrī — Sālim ibn ‘Abd Allāh — Ibn ‘Umar, which is considered the ‘most sound of chains’ by Ishāq ibn Rāhawiyya and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 77). He also offers examples of chains which are considered slightly less in terms of credibility, such as the family *isnād* of Burayd ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Abī Burda.

The lively discussion on *aṣaḥḥ al-asānīd* goes back to the early period of ḥadīth compilation. Other than the ones mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar above, examples are Mālik — Nāfi‘ — Ibn ‘Umar, vouched for by al-Imām al-Bukhārī (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 78), and al-Zuhrī — ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn — his father — ‘Alī, vouched for by Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shayba (Ibid.).

Is there benefit to be derived from listing certain chains as the most sound? In principal, Ibn Ḥajar believes there is. The chains can be used as a litmus paper test to examine the worth of other chains.<sup>77</sup> Also, as al-‘Uthaymin points out, knowing the ‘most sound of chains’ is useful when two reports contradict one another; the report with the higher grade of reporters is one factor by which a report can be preferred (2002, 110).

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<sup>77</sup> This is shown where Ibn Ḥajar says: ‘And perform analogy with these stages with that which is similar to it in [terms of] preferred attributes.’

But interestingly, Ibn Ḥajar does not give the practice unequivocal backing.<sup>78</sup> Firstly, Ibn Ḥajar's main reservation – it seems – is that people may begin considering these chains are authentic *without doubt*, to the exclusion of all other chains that are not classified as such. The conditions of acceptance for a particular report depend on many factors and not just the reliability and accuracy of the narrators. Al-‘Alā’ī voices this sentiment when he writes:

‘As for the chain, a group has classified them as such (namely the most sound of chains’). As for the ḥadīth [in its entirety], it is not explicitly stated from anyone from the experts of ḥadīth that such and such ḥadīth is unequivocally the most sound of reports. This is because the chain being the most sound of chains does not necessarily mean the *matn* will be as such too’ (cited in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 77).

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<sup>78</sup> It is clear that Ibn Ḥajar has followed the steps of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ when refraining from decreeing a chain as the ‘most sound’ in general. The latter writes: ‘The grades of sound ḥadīth vary in potency according to the degree that the ḥadīth possesses the aforementioned characteristics upon which soundness is based. In view of this, sound ḥadīth can be categorised into innumerable subcategories. For this reason, we think it is better to refrain from judging any chain or ḥadīth to be the absolute most sound, although a number of authorities have ventured into this matter and their opinions were therefore contradictory. We heard that Ishāq ibn Rāḥawayh said: ‘the soundest of all chains is al-Zuhrī, from Sālim [ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar], from his father.’ We also heard something similar from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. We heard that ‘Amr ibn ‘Alī al-Fallās said: ‘the soundest chain is Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, from ‘Ubayda ibn ‘Amr from ‘Alī.’ We heard something similar from ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī and this view was related from others too. There are some who specify the narrator from Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, some making him Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī and others Ibn ‘Awn. One of the things we hear from Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn is that he said: ‘the finest chain is al-A‘mash from Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, from ‘Alqama from Ibn Mas‘ūd.’ We heard that Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shayba said: ‘the soundest of all *isnāds* is al-Zuhrī, from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, from his father, from ‘Alī.’ We heard that Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Bukhārī – the author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* – said: ‘the soundest of all chains is Mālik, from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar.’ The expert Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī extrapolated from this that the most exalted chain must be al-Shāfi‘ī from Mālik from Nāfi‘ from Ibn ‘Umar, and he cited as proof the consensus of the scholars of ḥadīth that there was no transmitter from Mālik more exalted than al-Shāfi‘ī. And God knows best.’ (1986, pp. 14-16)

In other words, there is an acceptance that the best possible reporters do not mean the best possible ḥadīth. A ḥadīth consists of two parts, the *isnād* and *matn*. Having the ‘most sound of chains’ tells us little about the *matn*.

Secondly, the practice may lead to academic apathy. Once a tradition has the ‘most sound of chains’, the observer may accept it unequivocally and refuse to investigate its authenticity any further.

Thirdly, Ibn Ḥajar’s refusal to give this practice total backing could be due to an epistemological reason. The discipline of *‘ilm al-rijāl* is not an exact science since ultimately the authenticity of a report lies largely with the interaction and rationality (or irrationality) of the reporters. Even if all the reporters of a particular chain are of the highest calibre, there is still no guarantee that they did not slip or err in reporting it. Perhaps this is why Ibn Ḥajar wrote that the ‘depended [opinion] is the non-declaration [with this title] to a specific chain.’ Quite simply, this is because *‘ilm al-rijāl* cannot be made scientific. Siddiqi writes:

The Muslims not only gave a scientific form and basis to the system of *isnād*, but also tried to make a comparative study of the various *isnāds* deployed in the literature, with a view of establishing their relative value. It is said that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ma‘īn and Ibn al-Madīnī once gathered together with some other traditionists and debated which was the most authentic of all *isnāds*...the consensus among later traditionists, however, was that it is impossible to qualify any *isnād* as the best of all (1993, 81).

Certainly, *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* has often been translated as ‘the science of ḥadīth.’ Most scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims, have assumed this to be the correct definition for it. Daniel Brown has repeatedly used this terminology (1999, pp. 9, 28, 93, 99, 110) as has Ṣiddīqī (1993, pp. 38, 84, 108, 115). Perhaps the reason for this is that ‘science’ is characterised by a high-level of precision, objectivity, and the ability to prove or disprove rigid hypotheses. Brown and Ṣiddīqī may have translated *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* as a science because of the existence of formal rules and procedures laid down by ḥadīth scholars to determine the authenticity of narrators and reports. If the narrator – for example – is found to be neglectful and has a short memory, then his reports will not be accepted. If he is trustworthy, pious and intelligent, then his report will be accepted. If the *matn* consists of a ruling which complies with the Qur’ān perfectly, then it is accepted. If the *matn* refers to a matter which does not fit with the established and consensual doctrines of Islam, it is to be rejected. To a considerable extent, therefore, it is simple to see why *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* is described as a ‘science of ḥadīth’; because it is marked with a level of formality and objectivity, just like physics and chemistry is.

However, the issue of the ‘most sound of chains’ has highlighted the certain frailties in describing *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* or *‘ilm al-rijāl* as a ‘science.’ Though the discipline is marked with strict procedures and analytical methods, it is ultimately the study of men, and men do not behave like compounds and elements in chemistry. This explains why Ibn Ḥajar acknowledged the practice of labelling certain chains as the ‘most sound’, but stopped short of giving it unequivocal backing.

This analysis of the ‘most sound of chains’ here in the *Nuzhah* does show some insight and evaluative skills from the author. Whereas in the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* he shows rigid conformity to his predecessors, Ibn Ḥajar does at least question a practice that they indulged in. More importantly, he steps back and accepts that men are fallible. And if this is the case, then he is also implicitly accepting that ḥadīth literature can be subject to changes, shortcomings, alterations and indeed forgery.

Ibn Ḥajar indicates a lukewarm reservation on the ‘most sound of chains.’ But he does not question them empirically. The findings of the non-Muslim academics do. Schacht argues that the chain Mālik — Nāfi‘ — Ibn ‘Umar, which incidentally al-Bukhārī personally sees as the ‘most sound of chains’, is dubious. Based on the birth and death-dates of Mālik and Nāfi‘, Schacht doubts whether they could have exchanged reports first-hand and believes that his reporting from him was perhaps based on written reports. Secondly, because Nāfi‘ was the freedman of Ibn ‘Umar, the *isnād* is now a ‘family *isnād*’, which he sees as a ‘general indication of the spurious character of the tradition in question’ (Schacht 1959, pp. 176-177).

In response, the Muslim scholar Azami (1996) has revealed some shortcomings in Schacht’s views. Firstly, Schacht writes that Nāfi‘ died in 117 and Mālik in 179, meaning their association could only have been when ‘Mālik was little more than a boy’ (1959, 177). Azami points out that the bibliographical works state that Mālik was born in 93, with other variations putting the date as 90, 94 and 97. But there is no one who suggests he was born later than this. Therefore ‘Mālik was at least twenty years old, if not 24 or 27, when Nāfi‘ died’ (Azami 1996, 171). Moreover, both lived in the same city, which meant



their exchanges were more likely to have been in person rather than through written reports. Secondly, the ‘family *isnād*’ can be viewed in two ways. Schacht believes it was ‘only a device for securing its appearance’ (1959, 170), whereas it can also be viewed as a more rigid form of reporting. Family members engaged in ḥadīth narration will enjoy extensive companionship and this prolonged company will mean more opportunities to check and revise the ḥadīth from the source.<sup>79</sup>

Despite Azami’s response to Schacht, questions still remain regarding the chain Mālik — Nāfi’ — Ibn ‘Umar. Juynboll’s detailed analysis of the position of Nāfi’ in ḥadīth literature shows that the *isnād* ‘cannot be maintained as a historically feasible chain of transmission’ (1996, IX, 241). Like Schacht, he questioned whether Mālik could have heard from Nāfi’ directly. Firstly, all the biographical information available to us on Nāfi’ is from Mālik himself, which, for Juynboll, raises suspicions (1996, IX, 219). Secondly, he cites reports which show that Mālik was a *shābb* or *fatā* (youth or boy) in the year 134/752, which seems to suggest that Mālik was born in the year Nāfi’ died. Thirdly, Juynboll shows through his ‘*isnād* bundle analysis’ that Nāfi’ is the common link transmitter in *isnād* strands, thus suggesting the lack of ‘tangible evidence’ for the respect and popularity this chain holds (1996, IX: 238). If Juynboll’s findings are accepted, then the entire debate surrounding the ‘most sound of chain’ is thrown into jeopardy. This is because if the most famous sound chain, Mālik — Nāfi’ — Ibn ‘Umar, is questionable and suspect to fraud, then this raises questions about the other ones too. It also raises questions about the authority of al-Bukhārī and al-Shāfi‘ī, who vouched for the soundness of this particular *isnād*.

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<sup>79</sup> More will be said on ‘family *isnāds*’ in section 5.50.

Viewed from afar, this is an example where the debate has taken place on empirical evidence and the Muslim scholars and the non-Muslim ones are engaged in a healthy debate. There is more reliance on facts than perception. This suggests that the interaction between them can be of great benefit to both parties.

#### **5.9.4. The superiority of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī.**

Related to this superiority is that which the two *shaykhs* have agreed upon in [recording it in their] compilations, in relation to what [only] one of them has recorded. [This is followed by] what al-Bukhārī has recorded in relation to what Muslim has recorded alone. [This is] because of the agreement of the scholars after them of taking their books with acceptance. There is a dispute regarding which one of them is preferred; [though] what they both agree on is more preferred in this respect over what they have not agreed upon. The majority has clarified the precedence of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī in terms of soundness. The opposite claim (that *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim is preferred) has not been found from anyone. As for what has been reported from Abū ‘Alī al-Nīsābūrī that ‘there is nothing under the sky more authentic than the book of Muslim’, he did not state that it is more authentic than the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. This is because he merely negated the existence of a book *more* authentic than the book of Muslim, since the negated fact here – by use of the term *af‘al* – is a book similar to Muslim’s in authenticity. He did not negate

the [possible] equality [of the two in terms of authenticity].<sup>80</sup> Similar to this is what has been reported from some scholars of the west (North Africa) in giving superiority to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim over the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. This [statement] refers to the good style, excellent placing and arrangement; no one has said that this superiority refers to its authenticity.<sup>81</sup>

### Commentary

In this detailed section, Ibn Ḥajar highlights how in the same way that the ‘most correct chains’ have certain superiority over reports that are void of this quality, a report mentioned by the two *shaykhs* al-Bukhārī and Muslim also have qualities of acceptance and preference. Two general statements are purported by Ibn Ḥajar;

a. A ḥadīth recorded by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim is preferred to a ḥadīth that is not recorded by anyone of them. This is because the scholars of ḥadīth have for long accepted

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<sup>80</sup> In answer to Abū ‘Alī al-Nīsābūrī’s opinion, Ibn Ḥajar believes that his statement does not contradict the overwhelming opinion that al-Bukhārī is more authentic. Abū ‘Alī only negated that there is a *more* authentic book than Muslim. Hence he could mean that al-Bukhārī is the *same* as Muslim in terms of authenticity. Al-Suyūṭī provides a clear literary example to prove this grammatical point: ‘And that which indicates the customary usage of such quotes is the saying of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: ‘There is no one in Baṣra more learned than Bishr ibn Mufaddal. As for equal to him, then possibly’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 94). Also, al-‘Uthaymin adds that even if the opinion of Abū ‘Alī al-Nīsābūrī was to be interpreted to mean that the book of Muslim alone was superior to all others – including the book of al-Bukhārī – then this would not affect the opinion of Ibn Ḥajar regarding the superiority of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. This is because: ‘this is his own opinion on an issue...and when only one person has an opinion on an issue in contrast to what the majority say, then...it is not worthy of consideration’ (2002, 113).

<sup>81</sup> As for the opinion expressed by the scholars of the Maghreb, Ibn Ḥajar writes that the superiority expressed is regarding the good layout, clear presentation and excellent arrangement of the chapters found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim. Undoubtedly, Muslim has won many admirers for his clarity and simplicity. Al-‘Uthaymin expresses a commonly-held view when he writes that Muslim has arranged reports on a certain event or issue in a more accessible manner than al-Bukhārī has. This in addition to the excellent introduction Muslim wrote for his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, something that is not found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 113). However, there is no mention that this superiority is in terms of the greater soundness of the reports in the works of Muslim. Al-Suyūṭī writes: ‘Maslama ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī – from the generation of al-Dāraqutnī – said: ‘No one has compiled the likes of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim. And this is in terms of excellent placing and outstanding ordering, and not in terms of soundness’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 91).

the high standard and rigid methodology employed by these two scholars. A report mentioned by both is classified as *muttafaq* ‘*alayh*, or ‘agreed upon.’

b. Of the two scholars, the reports of al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* are deemed as more preferred than those of Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

In the next part of the text, he offers a comprehensive account on why the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī is preferred in general over the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim. The above text also indicates a common theme found in the *Nuzḥah*. The author himself champions the preference of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, but he acknowledges the *ikhtilāf* surrounding this issue. Why this point is considered important will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

**Were they to maintain [the claim], then the clear reality would refute them. For instance, the attributes upon which the soundness rotates is more complete and rigid in the book of al-Bukhārī than in the book of Muslim. His conditions in it are stronger and firmer. As for preferring al-Bukhārī in terms of the continuity [of the *isnād*], his condition is that the meeting of the reporter from whom he heard from must be proven, even if it is [only] once. Muslim merely depended on them being contemporaries. As a result, al-Bukhārī has been objected upon that he should be required not to accept *mu‘an‘an* at all. This objection directed upon him is not valid, because when the meeting of a narrator has been proven once, the possibility that he has not heard from him no longer exists. And if he has not heard from him, then it follows that he is a *mudallis*; and this matter is regarding other than the *mudallis*.<sup>82</sup>**

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<sup>82</sup> Al-Bukhārī’s condition is that the reporter and the shaykh must have met, even if it was only once. Muslim says that being contemporaries is sufficient. A possible objection results from this difference in

As for his preference in terms of the credibility and accuracy [of the reporters], the men who have been criticised from the men of Muslim are more in number than the men of al-Bukhārī, along with the fact that al-Bukhārī did not utilise them often. In fact, most of them are his own *shaykhs* who he [directly] took from and was familiar with their reports. [This is] as opposed to Muslim in both matters. As for [al-Bukhārī's] preference in terms of not being *shādhdh* or *mu'allal*, the reports of al-Bukhārī that have been criticised are less than the reports of Muslim that have been criticised. This along with the consensus of the scholars upon the fact that al-Bukhārī was more competent than Muslim in the disciplines, more learned in ḥadīth and that Muslim was his student and graduate who continued to take benefit from him and follow his steps. To the extent that al-Dāraquṭnī said: 'If al-Bukhārī had not [existed], there would never have been Muslim.'

#### Commentary

In detail, Ibn Ḥajar offers evidence as to why the compilation of al-Bukhārī is considered more authentic than Muslim's. He identifies four reasons; (i) in terms of the continuity of the *isnād* (ii) in terms of the credibility and accuracy of the reporters employed (iii) in terms of not being *shādhdh* or *mu'allal* (iv) in terms of knowledge and ability. With all four of these reasons, al-Bukhārī is stronger. For instance, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, there

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methodology: if al-Bukhārī maintains this stringent condition, then it necessitates that he should not accept a *mu'an'an* ḥadīth at all. This is because with such a ḥadīth, the term '*an*' is used throughout as the word of delivery, and in some cases the meeting of the reporter with his shaykh is not proven. Ibn Ḥajar replies by dismissing such an objection. He writes that once it has been proven that the reporter has met the person he is reporting from once, then the possibility that he has not heard from him no longer exists. If he *does* now narrate from him by using his name, though in fact he has not heard the particular report from him, then he is labelled a *mudallis*. (This is someone who changes the chain or text of the ḥadīth with malicious intent. This type will be covered later in section 5.21.) And here the question is regarding the *mu'an'an* and not the *mudallas* ḥadīth.

are more objected-upon narrators than there are in al-Bukhārī's. Al-Suyūṭī elucidates when he writes that the number of reports that al-Bukhārī has used to the exclusion of Muslim are approximately 430 men. Of these, about eighty men are of dubious nature. Muslim on the other hand as used 720 reporters who have not been used by al-Bukhārī, of which 160 are reported to have some weakness (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 92). In general, the disputed narrations that are to be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim amount to approximately two hundred and ten; the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī only contains eighty from this number. Clearly, this highlights that the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī is more sound than the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 93).

In section 5.7.1., we observed how Ibn Ḥajar considered the existence of a report in the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as an advantageous factor. The reason, he explained, was because of their piety, the scholars' acceptance of their works and their academic ability. With precision, he mainly concentrates on this last reason here and shows why from the two grand masters of ḥadīth, al-Bukhārī is given preference.

This point is important. The reason is that other Muslim scholars too have highlighted the exalted nature of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. But it seems they have ascribed this superiority to their piety, rather than their academic ability. Ibn Ḥajar's analysis here focuses almost entirely on their academic ability, particularly that of al-Bukhārī's. The *Nuzḥah* systematically points to al-Bukhārī's precision in rooting out the sound from the weak. On the other hand, others tend to remember his status as a good Muslim. Al-Suyūṭī writes:

The first compilation in only sound ḥadīth is the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. And the reason for that is what Ibrāhīm ibn Ma‘qil al-Nasafī reports, who said: ‘We were with Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh and he said: ‘If you were to gather a brief book for the sound of the *sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ.’ Al-Bukhārī said: ‘Thus this thought occurred in my heart and I began to compile the compendium of the sound.’ He also said: ‘I saw the Prophet ﷺ [in a dream] as if I was standing over him and repelling [something] with a fan in my hand. And so I asked some experts in dreams about this. And they told me ‘you are repelling the lies from him.’ Hence this is what drove me to compile the compendium of the sound (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 88).

Al-Suyūṭī asks us to reflect on al-Bukhārī’s rank as a man who saw the Prophet in his dream, a man blessed with a divine touch. Ibn Ḥajar asks us to reflect on his excellent methodology and attention to detail. For Ibn Ḥajar, being a good Muslim is an asset in the field of ḥadīth but more important is being a great academic.

Why does this point matter? Simply because piety is not a guarantee against forgery. As we shall see later (in section 5.24.4), all Muslim scholars, including Ibn Ḥajar, admit that one of the main forgers in early Islam were the pious traditionists. The ḥadīth scholar Yaḥya ibn Sa‘īd (d. 198/813) said: ‘I have not witnessed lying about the Prophet more than I have seen it in those known for ascetism and piety’ (Brown 2009, 73). Ibn Ḥajar here accepts al-Bukhārī’s status but he ascribes it to his ability. This certainly shows his common sense and why the *Nuzḥah* is important compared to other works on the discipline.

From this – namely from the aspect of the preference of al-Bukhārī’s conditions over others – the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī is preferred over others from the books written in ḥadīth; then the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, because of its coupling with al-Bukhārī in the agreement of the scholars of accepting their books, other than those which are *mu‘allal*; then preferred in terms of soundness is that which complies with both of its conditions, because what is meant by this is their reporters with the present of their conditions. And the consensus has been reached in accepting their reporters as credible by the means of necessity; thus they are preferred over others. This is a principle that cannot be reversed except with evidence. If [the narration] complies with both of their conditions together, it will be less than what Muslim narrates or his likes. If [the narration] complies with one of their conditions, then the report that complies with al-Bukhārī alone is preferred over the one that complies with Muslim alone, following the principle for each. Thus, derived from this [account] are six types that differ in rank of soundness. Then there is a seventh type; and that is what complies with neither of their conditions, collectively and individually. And this ranking is merely in view of the aforementioned method. If, for instance, one type is preferred over another through a means which necessitates preference, then it is preceded, as sometimes a factor features which makes it higher in ranking. Like [for example] a ḥadīth with Muslim that is *mashhūr* though short from the stage of *mutawātir*, that possesses a factor which makes it give the benefit of knowledge; undoubtedly this is preferred to a ḥadīth that al-Bukhārī records alone. Similarly a ḥadīth that neither have recorded but has been deemed as the ‘most sound of



chains' like Mālik, from Nāfi', from Ibn 'Umar; for indeed this is preferred over that which only one of them records, especially when their *isnād* contains a reporter in which there is doubt.<sup>83</sup>

### Commentary

Based on his analysis highlighting the exalted nature of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works, the author draws a general list of the compilations which are considered the most reliable.

The order is;

1. That which both al-Bukhārī and Muslim record.
2. Al-Bukhārī.
3. Muslim.
4. That ḥadīth which complies with the condition of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
5. That ḥadīth which complies with the condition of al-Bukhārī.
6. That ḥadīth which complies with the condition of Muslim.
7. That ḥadīth which complies with neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim.

As a criticism, Ibn Ḥajar's list here does not explain what the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were. The reason for the lack of explanation here is because they themselves were very abstract and vague about what conditions they laid down for a report to be considered *ṣaḥīḥ*. 'Ajlān writes:

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<sup>83</sup> The author here means that this order is by no means exhaustive. If a strengthening factor or indication is found in a ḥadīth, then it will be preferred. For example, if a ḥadīth recorded by Muslim is *mashhūr* (but not *mutawātir*), but a factor is found which means it gives the benefit of *al-'ilm al-yaqīnī*, then this is preferred to a narration from al-Bukhārī, when it is only *fard*.

The scholars of this field are unanimous that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not clarify in writing that ‘these are my conditions’. Their conditions have merely been outlined from later research [from other scholars] (1999, 63)

One cannot expect to utilise this list if one is unaware of what exactly the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were.

To conclude this section on *ṣaḥīḥ*, one cannot fail to notice the vast amount of literature and emphasis that Ibn Ḥajar gave here in the *Nuzḥah* to the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, in particular to al-Bukhārī’s superiority. In general, few Muslim scholars have dared to question their authority in the field and Ibn Ḥajar does not venture into this either.

The extensive analysis can be explained via different means. First, the lengthy discussion reflects his personal admiration for al-Bukhārī, which is shown elsewhere by his commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, *Fath al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Secondly and perhaps more plausibly, the admiration for al-Bukhārī was really a result of the religious and academic climate of the ninth Islamic century. Brown notes:

Commentaries attained an important station in the late 1300s, when writing one on al-Bukhārī’s or Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* became the principal means for scholars throughout the Sunni Muslim world to interact with the ḥadīth tradition. At the peak of intellectual activity in Mamluk Cairo in the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries, almost every ḥadīth scholar or note wrote a commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (2009, 53).

Before, during and after Ibn Ḥajar's time, writing a commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was in fashion. Al-Kirmānī (d. 796), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911), 'Alā' al-Dīn Mughulatāy (d. 792), al-Bulqīnī (d. 995), Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795) and Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī (d. 855) had all written commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. A strong defence of al-Bukhārī's position was now required to defend this academic activity during this period. This is the reason why the *Nuzḥah* gave such a strong backing to al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the former in particular. It also clearly shows how Ibn Ḥajar's work was affected by the academic climate he resided in.

But this section – which praises the rank of al-Bukhārī and Muslim – does raise an important question. Clearly, the starting point for reliable, authentic ḥadīth literature in Ibn Ḥajar's mind is the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim. If this is true, then what does this say about the vast ḥadīth literature that preceded these two grand *shaykhs*? We could interpret this as an acknowledgement from Ibn Ḥajar that the early *ṣaḥīḥas* were not reliable, or that the *Muwatta'* of Mālik was not truly a ḥadīth compilation. The emphasis on al-Bukhārī's methodology in sifting the sound from the forged could indeed suggest that Ibn Ḥajar believed this was ineffective prior to him.

## 5.10. Ḥasan.

If the accuracy is lighter – namely less; it is said *khaffa al-qawm khufūf*, when it decreases – and what is meant here is with the presence of the remaining aforementioned conditions in the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*, then this is *ḥasan li-dhātih*, and not by other. *Ḥasan* is a report whose [grade of] fairness is because of compensating factors, like, for example, a *mastūr* ḥadīth when its paths become numerous. By mentioning the remaining conditions of [*ṣaḥīḥ*], the weak is excluded. This type of *ḥasan* is synonymous to *ṣaḥīḥ* in terms of usage as evidence, though it is less than it [in rank]. It is [also] synonymous to it in its division into ranks, some above others. And with numerous chains, it becomes sound. It is declared as sound with more chains because the collective form now has a power by which the lack of accuracy of the fair narrator is compensated for. Then [the term] sound is called upon the chain which is *ḥasan li-dhātih*, when the chains become numerous. And this is [only] when the attribute is solitary.

After a comprehensive account of the sound, *ṣaḥīḥ*, the author identifies *ḥasan*, and in particular *ḥasan li-dhātih*. This is identical to *ṣaḥīḥ* in all aspects but one. Whereas the accuracy of the narrator in *ṣaḥīḥ* is expected to be of the highest calibre, *ḥasan li-dhātih* is where the accuracy can be somewhat lighter, or less. Therefore the difference between *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* is trivial rather than fundamental.

Nothing more is said on the issue of *ḥasan* in the *Nuzḥah*. The rest of the section on this type is devoted to a problem regarding the terminology of al-Tirmidhī, which he employed in his *Sunan*.

Thus if they both gather, namely *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* in one description; like the saying of al-Tirmidhī and others: ‘[this is a] *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth’, then this results in confusion for the *mujtahid* in its transmission. Does it entail the conditions of *ṣaḥīḥ* or not? This is the case when the report in question is solitary. And it will be clarified in this [discussion] the answer to those who deem it difficult to reconcile between the two attributes and who say ‘*ḥasan* is less than *ṣaḥīḥ*’ like it is known from each of the definitions. So in gathering the two attributes is an affirmation for that shortcoming and its negation.

#### Commentary

Here Ibn Hajar tackles the long-standing debate regarding al-Tirmidhī’s (d. 279/892) unique terminology used in his *Sunan*. As it has been identified, there is a marked difference between *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*. In the former, the accuracy of the narrator is of the highest standard, whereas with the latter, there is more leniency permitted.

In his *Sunan*, al-Tirmidhī transmits a report and usually follows it with a statement regarding its rank in ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*. For example, he will say ‘this is a sound ḥadīth’ or ‘this is a fair ḥadīth.’ However, there are several places where one solitary ḥadīth will be described as being ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’, ‘*ḥasan gharīb*’ or so on. This results in confusion; how can one narration be described as being sound and fair simultaneously? The problem is amplified when the particular narration in question only has one variant. Referring to a ḥadīth as both *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* proves its accuracy *and* disproves it.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Implicitly, Ibn Hajar acknowledges that though al-Tirmidhī is the most famous scholar to refer to one report with two descriptions, he is not the only one to do so. In the text, Ibn Hajar writes ‘like the saying of al-Tirmidhī and others.’ Al-Munāwī clarifies that other scholars who declared reports as ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’,

The summary of the answer [to this] is that it is required from the *mujtahid* not to describe it with one attribute [to the exclusion of the other].<sup>85</sup> Thus it can be said ‘*hasan*’ with consideration of its attribute according to one community, ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’ with consideration of its attribute according to another community. The conclusion of this is that the particle of doubt (i.e. ‘or’) has been omitted. This is because he should have said ‘*ḥasan or ṣaḥīḥ*’. This is similar to how the particle of conjunction has been omitted from the type described after this.

Upon this [basis], that which is described as being ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’ is less in rank than that in which is described as ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’, because conviction is stronger than doubt. This is when the report is solitary. When it is not, namely when the narration is not solitary, then the calling of two attributes simultaneously on one report is done according to it possessing two chains; one of them is *ṣaḥīḥ* and the other is *ḥasan*. And upon this [basis], that which is described as being ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’ is higher in rank than that in which is described as ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’ only when it is *fard*, because numerous chains strengthens [the report’s validity].

If it is said that al-Tirmidhī has clarified that the condition of *ḥasan* is that it is narrated by more than one path, then how can he say in some reports, ‘*ḥasan gharīb*, we do not know of it except by this path’? The answer is that al-Tirmidhī did not define *ḥasan* in general; he merely defined it specifically for his book. This is for

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‘*ḥasan gharīb*’ and so on were the likes of Ya‘qūb ibn Shayba, Ibn al-Madīnī and Abū ‘Alī al-Tūsī, in his book *al-Iḥkām* (1999, 1: 396-397).

<sup>85</sup> In his reply, Ibn Ḥajar begins by stating that an observer cannot simply say that one term (from *ḥasan*, *ṣaḥīḥ* and *gharīb*) is applicable to the exclusion of the others. There must be a reason by al-Tirmidhī chose to declare a certain report as ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’ rather than just ‘*ḥasan*’ or ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’. This is proven by the fact that there are countless reports in his *Sunan* that are declared as ‘*ḥasan*’ only or ‘*ṣaḥīḥ*’ only.

when the report is '*ḥasan*' without another attribute [attached to it]. In [describing] some reports, he says '*ḥasan*' and in some '*ṣaḥīḥ*' and in some '*gharīb*' and in some '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*' and in some '*ḥasan gharīb*' and in some '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*'. His definition [of *ḥasan*] only applied to the first (*ḥasan*). His writings suggest that when he said at the end of his book:

And a ḥadīth described as ḥasan in our book, we merely intend it to mean *ḥasan* in terms of its chain according to us. Every ḥadīth which is narrated by people who have not been accused of lying, and is narrated by more than one chain of its like, and is not *shādhah*, this is considered as *ḥasan* according to us.

Hence it is deduced from this that he only defined that ḥadīth which is called '*ḥasan*' only. As for that for which he says '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*' or '*ḥasan gharīb*' or '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*' he did not indulge in its definition, like he did not indulge in the definition of '*ṣaḥīḥ*' only or '*gharīb*' only. It is as if he left out defining these because of lack of need, as they were known by the people of this discipline. He sufficed on the definition of '*ḥasan*' only either because of its ambiguity or because it was a new terminology. And that is why he added 'according to us' to his definition and he did not ascribe it [universally] to the people of ḥadīth, just as al-Khaṭṭābī did.

With this analysis many objections that lengthen the discussion and do not lead to a preferential view are repelled. *So for Allāh is praise upon what He has inspired and taught.*

### Commentary

Ibn Hajar adopts great detail and clarity in explaining the apparent confusion resulting from al-Tirmidhī's unique usage of technical terms. But it is not an academic answer, but rather a practical and easy one. In essence, Ibn Hajar gives two answers. The first answer offered regards those reports that have only one variant. Quite simply, al-Tirmidhī may have meant to say '*ḥasan or ṣaḥīḥ*'; that according to one set of scholars, the report in question has been declared '*ḥasan*' whereas another set of scholars have declared it as '*ṣaḥīḥ*'.

The second answer is where the report in question has two variants. Ibn Hajar believes that if a particular report is declared as '*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*', then this means that according to one chain, the report is '*ḥasan*' and according to the other chain, it is '*ṣaḥīḥ*'. Again, this is perhaps a display of shorthandness from al-Tirmidhī since he should have said '*ḥasan and ṣaḥīḥ*'.

The *Nuzḥah*'s outline of this debate raises some crucial points worthy of closer analysis.

- a. Ibn Hajar's lengthy-analysis suggests that he desired the *Nuzḥah* to be an arbitrator and clarifier of difficult terminologies. Perhaps this gives us an indication that the text was not aimed at experts in the field, but for the new disciples. It was a guide for readers to alert them of terms they would come across as their reading and research developed.
- b. Ibn Hajar does not question the terms used by al-Tirmidhī such as *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*. If they are confusing, it is because *we* do not understand them, not because of any deficiency in al-Tirmidhī. The task of scholars like Ibn Hajar is to make sense of the works of the



previous greats, not to question their work. Owing to his seniority in the field, al-Tirmidhī is protected by later scholars like Ibn Ḥajar.

c. Having said this, Ibn Ḥajar is perhaps admitting the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī does contain weaker reports, in relation to the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. This is because he interprets ‘*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*’ as possibly meaning ‘*ḥasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ*’. In other words, the scholars are divided as to whether the report has reached a sound standard. This is the opinion that Goldziher reached. Because the aim was to gather a ‘proof or argument for a lawyer in legal practice’, the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī was much more liberal (1971, 231) and the transmitters used were either weak or too distant (in time or place) to have heard from one another. This, Goldziher writes, led to this new classification of reports using terms such as *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* (1971, 232). What this shows is that there are occasions when the findings of Muslim scholars and non-Muslim ones are similar. Despite this, Muslims tend to belittle the observations and research of the non-Muslims. Why this occurs will be taken up in detail in section six.

d. Upon concluding the discussion explaining the difficulty in interpreting al-Tirmidhī’s terminology, Ibn Ḥajar praises his own analysis. He writes that the *Nuzḥah* here has repelled ‘many objections that lengthen the discussion and do not lead to views of preference’ and therefore ‘for Allāh is praise upon what He has inspired and taught.’ Ironically though, Ibn Ḥajar has merely plagiarized the views of his predecessors in explaining al-Tirmidhī’s terminology. The majority of the views aired are from his predecessors; he only amalgamated and edited the opinions of other scholars. Al-Munāwī notes:

And this, all of it, is an amalgamation of three answers; from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ<sup>86</sup>, Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd and Ibn Kathīr. And the author [Ibn Ḥajar] merely gathered, ordered and summarised it. (1999, 1: 407-8)

### **5.10.1. Conclusion.**

This final point needs closer deliberation. If, as al-Munāwī notes, Ibn Ḥajar merely re-wrote the views of his predecessors on the terminology of al-Tirmidhī, we need to establish why this happened. Two possible reasons are plausible here.

a. The intellectual climate of Ibn Ḥajar’s time.

In short, academic originality had dried up by the time of Ibn Ḥajar in the ninth Islamic century. The period of ḥadīth compilation had ceased centuries ago and was replaced by an era of consolidation and analysis. New work was in reality the work of the predecessors arranged in a different matter. We have the compilation of Zayn al-Dīn al-Zābidī (d. 893/1488) called *Tajrīd al-ṣaḥīḥ*, a small one-volume digest of all the reports to be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (Brown 2009, 57). Then there is the attempt to amass all of the ḥadīth corpus into one book by al-Suyūṭī, which he called *Jam‘ al-jawāmi‘*. In such a climate, new, original ideas and approaches were the exception, not the norm. In this particular section on al-Tirmidhī’s terminology, the *Nuzḥah* too has fallen victim to this apathy.

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<sup>86</sup> The similarities between the *Nuzḥah* and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s *Muqaddima* are quite blatant in places. For example, the latter wrote: ‘The statement of al-Tirmidhī and others, ‘this is a fair and sound ḥadīth’ is problematic because the fair ḥadīth is inferior to the sound, as was explained above. The conjunction of these two states in a single ḥadīth is the conjunction of the negation and assertion of this inferiority. The answer here is that the expression concerns the chain. When a single ḥadīth is related with two chains, one of them fair and the other sound, it may be properly called a ‘fair and sound ḥadīth’; that is, it is fair in relation to one chain and sound in relation to the other’ (1986, 39).

b. The lack of copyright laws.

If Ibn Ḥajar was guilty of copying the works of his predecessors, it was because there was nothing stopping him from doing so. There were no laws or agreements to prevent plagiarism. Goldziher notes:

Oriental authors always accepted much latitude in respect of literary ownership. An index of plagiarists would contain many important names...In the seventh century, ‘Imād al-Dīn b. al-Athīr simply copied the historical commentary of Ibn Badrūn and passed the work off as his own without even mentioning the true author (1971, 246).

There is no reason why both these points could have been applicable to the time of Ibn Ḥajar. Importantly, the observations of Goldziher are important to adding to our understanding of the *Nuzhah* and in fact, are not radically different to that of Ibn Ḥajar. The *Nuzhah* suggests that al-Tirmidhī’s innovative terminology suggested some degree of weakness and this is the same conclusion that Goldziher reached. The difference is in the perception. Because most Muslims have already made their mind up about Goldziher, his views are rejected as blasphemous, even if they converge with respected Muslim scholars like Ibn Ḥajar. A genuine appreciation of Goldziher cannot be made if al-Sibā‘ī describes him as ‘the most dangerous of the Orientalists, the one with the longest hand, the most evil and corruptive in this field...’ (1998, 213). So in search of a better appreciation of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth, knowledge as a universal entity needs to be respected, not just Muslim knowledge.

### 5.10.2. The Addition of Reliable Narrators.

The addition of their narrators, namely *ḥasan* and *ṣaḥīḥ*, is accepted so long as it does not contradict the narration of someone more authoritative who has not mentioned that addition. [This is] because the addition is either such that it does not contradict between it and between the report that does not mention it. Thus this is generally accepted, because it is like the principle of a solitary ḥadīth which an authoritative narrator has reported alone and no one else reports it from his shaykh. Or either it contradicts it in the sense that accepting this one will necessitate rejecting the other narration. Thus this is the one in which comparison is required between it and the one opposing it; so the more preferred will be accepted and the other will be rejected.

There is a famous opinion from the scholars that the addition is unequivocally accepted without detail. This [opinion] cannot make sense from the [same] ḥadīth scholars who identify the condition in *ṣaḥīḥ* that it must not be *shādhah*. They then define *shādhah* as the opposition of a reliable narrator of someone more authoritative. It is surprising to see such negligence from them though they accept the condition in *ṣaḥīḥ* of not being *shādhah*, as well as in *ḥasan*. Examination of the addition when deciding its worth has been transmitted from the classical ḥadīth masters, like ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī (d. 198/814), Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198/813), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn (d. 233/847), ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī (d. 234/848), al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī (d. 264/877), Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938), al-Nasā‘ī (d. 303/915), al-Dāraqūṭnī (d. 375/985) and others. It is not known from any of them to accept the addition unequivocally.

More surprising is the opinion of some Shāfi'ī scholars who unequivocally accept the addition, though the text of al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī indicates otherwise. For indeed he said, when describing the state of a narrator's accuracy, that:

...and when one of the *ḥāfiẓs* share the report he does not oppose them. If it does, and the ḥadīth is shorter, then this is proof upon the authenticity of the source of the ḥadīth. And when it is not shorter [but exists some other shortcoming] then this proves the inaccuracy of the ḥadīth.

The [text] stipulates that when the report contradicts another and it is longer, this can harm the [authenticity of the] ḥadīth. This indicates that the addition of a reliable narrator according to him does not necessitate acceptance unconditionally; merely it is accepted from the *ḥāfiẓs*. For he has considered [and preferred] the shorter ḥadīth than the ḥadīth of the one he opposes from the *ḥāfiẓs*; and he has made the shortcomings of this narrator's ḥadīth evidence of its authenticity since it indicates precaution. Then he has made what is other than that harmful for the ḥadīth. So if it was accepted unequivocally according to him, it would not be harmful for the narrator of the ḥadīth.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī writes, when describing the state of a narrator's accuracy, that a narration is accepted when a narrator does not oppose the *ḥāfiẓs*. If it does, and the ḥadīth is shorter, then this is proof of the authenticity of the source of the ḥadīth.

Al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī means that when a narrator has a longer narration, then this is sometimes harmful for the ḥadīth. What this thus proves that al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī did not accept the additions unequivocally, but only from the *ḥāfiẓs*. He considers that the ḥadīth must be shorter for it to be accepted, as it is a sign of more precaution. If al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī believed that additions are accepted unconditionally, then the addition would not have been rejected.

### Commentary

Ibn Hajar explains the principle of *ziyādat al-thiqa*, or the addition of reliable narrators. When extra words sometimes occur in a *ḥasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth, then they are accepted as long as they do not oppose the narrations of those who are more authoritative (who have not mentioned these extra words). Two possible cases can result, both which are clearly explained in the *Nuzhah*.

This section gives considerable emphasis to the dispute surrounding the issue. Ibn Hajar here refutes those scholars who claim that the extra words of narration will be accepted unconditionally, without explanation or detail. He does so via two means. Firstly, he reminds readers that the established definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* states that the ḥadīth must not be *shādh*. *Shādh* is when an authoritative narrator is opposed by a more authoritative narrator. Secondly, he lists names of esteemed scholars who were of the opinion that the extra words are not accepted unconditionally. This suggests that Ibn Hajar saw their opinions as trustworthy evidence. This shows that for the author, there are two ways of supporting an argument in ḥadīth studies; through empirical means and through referring the matter to the opinion of esteemed scholars in the field. It reminds the reader of the role seniority plays in this discipline. It is also an indication that the *Nuzhah*'s task was not only to present the overwhelming opinion on a matter, but also to alert the reader of minority views too.

## 5.11. *Shādhah* & *maḥfūẓ*- The Preserved and the Anomalous.

Thus if it is opposed (i.e. the narrator of a *ḥasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ*), because [in contrast] a narration is to be found which has more accuracy in the narrator, or more in number or other reasons of preference are found, then the preferred is called *maḥfūẓ* and the rejected is called *shādhah*. An example is that [narration] which al-Imām al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Māja recorded from Ibn 'Uyayna, from 'Amr ibn Dīnār from 'Awsaja from Ibn 'Abbās that 'a man passed away in the time of the Prophet ﷺ and did not leave a heir except for a slave which he had freed...' <sup>88</sup> *Mutāba'a* <sup>89</sup> has been done for its continuation for Ibn 'Uyayna by Ibn Jurayj and others. Ḥammād ibn Zayd has opposed this narration as he narrated it from 'Amr ibn Dīnār from 'Awsaja and did not mention Ibn 'Abbās. Ibn Abī Ḥātim said 'the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Uyayna is *maḥfūẓ*.' So Ḥammād ibn Zayd is from the narrators of accuracy and trustworthiness; despite this Ibn Abī Ḥātim gave preference to the narration which has more numbers. It is thus deduced from this explanation that *shādhah* is where an accepted narrator is opposed by someone more authoritative. This is the established definition of *shādhah* according to [ḥadīth] terminology.

### Commentary

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<sup>88</sup> The text of Ibn Ḥajar only mentions part of the ḥadīth. The full report is; 'A man died and did not leave a heir except for a slave he had freed. The Prophet asked, 'Does the man have anyone?' They said, 'No, except the slave for him that he had freed.' So the Prophet made the inheritance for him.' This has been recorded by Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Māja.

<sup>89</sup> This is the process of finding a similar supporting chain for a ḥadīth. The explanation is provided later in section 5.13.

In this brief section, the author explains the difference between *shādhah* and *mahfūz*. The former is where an authoritative narrator's report is not accepted, either because a more authoritative narrator opposes him (by reporting the *isnād* or *matn* differently), or because a report more in number is to be found. The latter is the name given to the report that in contrast is accepted.

The example offered by Ibn Ḥajar in the *Nuzhah* (of Ḥammād ibn Zayd) relates to *shādhah* according to the chain. However, a report can be considered *shādhah* by virtue of the *matn* (text), which is then called *shādhah al-matn*. Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī have narrated from the ḥadīth of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Ziyād, from al-A‘mash, from Abū al-Ṣāliḥ, from Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet ﷺ said:

When one of you performs the two units of *fajr* [prayer], he should then lie down on his right side.

Bayhaqī writes that this version of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid opposes many authoritative narrators. This is because they have recorded this as an action of the Prophet, rather than his saying. Therefore this particular version of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid is deemed as *shādhah* (Mighālwi 2003, 437).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Likewise there is a report in which the Prophet said: ‘The days of *tashrīq* are the days of eating and drinking.’ Mūsā ibn ‘Alī ibn Rbāḥ - from his father, from ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir – added the words ‘and the day of ‘Arafa’ too. But because all reports exclude this addition, it is considered as *shādhah* and thus is not accepted.



### 5.11.1. Conclusion.

It has already mentioned (in section 5.9) that the definition of a *ṣaḥīḥ* report almost exclusively centres on the *isnād* to the exclusion of the *matn*. One of the conditions of a *ṣaḥīḥ* report is that it must not be *shādhah*. Ibn Ḥajar only explained *shādhah al-isnād* here with an example and did not elucidate at all on *shādhah al-matn*. Implicitly, this suggests that even *shādhah* mainly relates to the *isnād* and not the *matn*. The analysis of *shādhah* and *mahfūz* shows the dependency on men as well as the importance of seniority in the field; a higher authority is automatically ‘preserved’ and the less-renowned one is rejected.

Moreover, *shādhah* also highlights the lack of clarity in the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*. We are informed that a *ṣaḥīḥ* report must not be *shādhah*, but there is a difference of opinion as to what exactly *shādhah* is. For instance, it is said that *shādhah* is a report that only has one *isnād*, which is reported solitarily by an authoritative shaykh. Others have understood by the term ‘*shādhah*’ (which literally means ‘alone’) that this refers to a report that has only been reported by one authoritative narrator. Even Ibn Ḥajar seems to accept the variety of definitions by writing that his view on *shādhah* is ‘the established definition’, thus suggesting that variations do exist.

Despite this, most scholars after him do accept the definition offered by Ibn Ḥajar. This itself suggests his authority in the field. So in essence, *shādhah* is where an authoritative reporter is opposed by someone who is *more* authoritative. Otherwise, the ḥadīth ‘actions are judged merely by intentions’ would be considered as *shādhah* and no Muslim scholar adheres to this opinion.

## 5.12. *Ma'rūf* & *munkar*- the Familiar and the Unfamiliar.

If the opposition occurs with the weak [reporter], then the preferred is called *ma'rūf* and the opposing one is called *munkar*. Its example is that which is reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ḥubbayb ibn Ḥabīb, the brother of Ḥamza ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt al-Muqrī, from Abū Ishāq, from al-ʿĪzār ibn Ḥurayth from Ibn ʿAbbās from the Prophet ﷺ who said: 'Whoever performs Prayer, gives zakāt, performs the ḥajj, fasts and is hospitable to guests, will enter Paradise.'

Ibn Abī Ḥātim said: 'This tradition is *munkar* because others from the reliable narrators have recorded the tradition as being from Abū Ishāq only <sup>91</sup>, [and not up to the Prophet]. This is the *ma'rūf* narration.'

It is known from this that between *shādhdh* and *munkar* is [a relation of] '*umūm wa-khuṣūṣ min wajh*,<sup>92</sup> because between them there is similarity in terms of opposition and there is difference in that *shādhdh* is the narration of an authoritative or truthful and *munkar* is the narration of a weak. Ignorant are those who made them synonymous. And Allāh knows best.

### Commentary

Following the discussion on *shādhdh* and *mahfūz*, Ibn Ḥajar refers to *ma'rūf* and *munkar* in this section. The reason for this is because there is a close resemblance between the two. Whereas *shādhdh* is the report of a reliable narrator being opposed by those who are

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<sup>91</sup> i.e. *mawqūf*.

<sup>92</sup> Because of the similarity between *shādhdh* and *munkar*, Ibn Ḥajar describes the relationship between the two as one of '*umūm wa-khuṣūṣ min wajh*. This means that they in some form, they share some similarity and in some form it does not. *Shādhdh* and *munkar* are similar in the sense that both involve the rejection of the report because of the existence of a higher authority or because of more numbers. They are different because the reporter of the *shādhdh* is deemed reliable (*thiqa*) whereas the reporter of the *munkar* is weak.

more reliable or more in number, *munkar* is where the report of a *weak* narrator is being opposed by someone who is more reliable.

At the end of the discussion on *ma'rūf* and *munkar*, Ibn Ḥajar shows his dismay to the scholars who do not differentiate between *shādh* and *munkar* when he comments, 'And ignorant are those who made them synonymous.' The target of his criticism is Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, though he does not mention him by name. In his '*Ulūm al-ḥadīth*', he divides *munkar* into two types; (i) the isolated ḥadīth (*munfarad*) which contradicts what the reliable transmitters relate (ii) the isolated ḥadīth (*fard*) in which the transmitter does not possess the reliability and exactitude to narrate by himself (1986, 80, 82). Clearly, neither of these definitions comply with the one offered by Ibn Ḥajar.

Perhaps the criticism of Ibn Ḥajar is somewhat severe; this is because not all ḥadīth scholars adhere to the given definition of *munkar*. In fact Ibn Ḥajar himself acknowledges that the term has divided scholars. Later in the *Nuzhah*, he defines *munkar* as:

The ḥadīth in which the chain is a reporter whose mistakes are common, or his negligence is severe or his lewdness (*fisq*) is apparent (section 5.26.)

Mighālīwī cites the opinion of Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr Bardījī from *al-Wāsiṭ* who defines *munkar* as:

The ḥadīth whose *matn* is not known except from its [lone] reporter (2003, 431).

By the time of Ibn Ḥajar, the majority of the technical terms used in the discipline were harmonised. *Munkar* is one of the few exceptions. What can also be deduced from this section is that purpose of the *Nuzhah* is also to analyse contrasting definitions on a particular ḥadīth terminology and offer the correct or most-trusted opinion on it. This is seen with *munkar* as well as with *shādhdh* and *i'tibār* (which is explained in the next section). Finally, the fact that Ibn Ḥajar singled out Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for criticism also shows that he saw his work as the benchmark and standard-marker in the discipline. This criticism here regarding *munkar* and *shādhdh* is hardly devastating. But perhaps Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to mention it to show how his own *Nuzhah* did not merely copy the views of those before him, but did in fact introduce new ideas and correct previous mistakes.

### 5.13. *Mutābi'*, *shāhid* & *i'tibār*- the Parallelisms, the Attestations and the Analysis.

[With regards to] what has been mentioned regarding *fard nisbī*; if it is found – after assuming that it was solitary – that others have agreed with it, then this is *mutābi'*, with a *kasra* on the *bā'*. *Mutāba'a* has stages; if the agreement is with the [original] narrator, then it is [called] *tāmma*. And if it occurs for his shaykh or whoever is below him, thus it is *qāṣira*. The benefit of this is strengthening. The example of *mutāba'a tāmma* is that which al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī narrated in *al-Umm*, from Mālik, from 'Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār, from Ibn 'Umar ؓ that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: 'The month is twenty-nine days. Thus do not fast until you see the crescent [of the

moon] and do not cease [the fasts] until you see it. Therefore if it is cloudy upon you, then complete (*fa-akmilū*) the period [of] thirty.’ So this ḥadīth with these words, a group thought that al-Shāfi‘ī was alone in narrating it from Mālik, thus counting it as one of his *gharīb*s (solitary reports). This is because the companions of Mālik have transmitted from him with the word ‘therefore if it is cloudy upon you, then count (*faqdirū la-hū*) for it.’ But we have found a *mutābi‘* for [the report of] al-Shāfi‘ī. And this is ‘Abd Allāh ibn Maslama al-Qa‘nabī – this is how al-Bukhārī has recorded it – from Mālik. This is *mutāba‘a tāmma*. We have also found for it *mutāba‘a qāṣira* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Khuzayma, from the narration of ‘Āṣim ibn Muḥammad, from his father Muḥammad ibn Zayd, from his grandfather ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ with the word ‘thus complete (*fa-kammilū*) thirty.’ And [also] in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim from the narration of ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar with the word ‘thus count (*faqdirū*) thirty.’ In this *mutāba‘a*, there is no condition that the exact words [are mentioned], regardless of whether it is *tāmma* or *qāṣira*. Rather, if it is transmitted with [mere] meaning, it is sufficient, though the condition is that it is from that [same] Companion.

If a *matn* is found that is narrated from another Companion that resembles it in wording and meaning, or meaning alone, then this is *shāhid*. The example is al-Nasā’ī’s version of the same ḥadīth which we have mentioned, from the narration of Muḥammad ibn Jubayr, from Ibn ‘Abbās, from the Prophet ﷺ; thus he mentioned the likes of the ḥadīth of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār, from Ibn ‘Umar equally. This is in terms of wording. As for in terms of meaning, then it is that which al-Bukhārī has reported, from the narration of Muḥammad ibn Ziyād, from Abū Hurayra with the

words: ‘therefore if it is cloudy upon you, then complete the period of Sha‘bān thirty.’

A group [of scholars] have specified *mutāba‘a* with that [report] which occurs [the same] in wording, regardless of whether it is from that [same] Companion or not, and that *shāhid* is that [report] which occurs [the same] in meaning. Moreover sometimes *mutāba‘a* is applied to *shāhid*, and vice versa. The matter in it is easy.<sup>93</sup>

Know that the examining of chains, from the *jāmi‘*s, the *musnads* and the *juz‘*s, to know whether that ḥadīth which was assumed to be solitary does in fact have a *mutābi‘* is called *i‘tibār*. The statement of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ ‘Knowing the *i‘tibār*, the *mutāba‘āt* and the *shawāhid*’; some have assumed that *i‘tibār* is a division like the [other] two. That is not the case; rather it is the means of attaining the two.<sup>94</sup> The benefit of the division of everything that has passed from the types of the accepted is preference when there is conflict. And Allāh knows best.

### Commentary

Here, Ibn Ḥajar introduces three technical terms; *mutābi‘*, *shāhid* and *i‘tibār*. In essence, these are not terms used to describe a ḥadīth *per se*, rather they are terms used to

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<sup>93</sup> Ibn Ḥajar is aware of the different definitions that exist for *mutābi‘* and *shāhid*. Some scholars have said that *mutābi‘* is when the agreement occurs in terms of the words, regardless of whether the Companion is different or not. *Shāhid* is where the agreement occurs in terms of the meaning, regardless of whether the Companion is the same or not. Others have inversed the definition of both. Ibn Ḥajar dismisses the importance of the exact definition of each (when he writes *the matter in it is easy*) because both *mutābi‘* and *shāhid* serve exactly the same purpose; to strengthen reports that are first deemed solitary.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wrote as a sub-heading in his book ‘Knowing the *i‘tibār*, the *mutābi‘āt* and the *shawāhid*.’ Some people have understood from this text that *i‘tibār* is a type of ḥadīth, though this is not the case. In fact it is the means and process by which we discover *mutābi‘* and *shāhid*. In defence of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, it must be mentioned that he merely mentioned this as a sub-heading for the fifteenth type, and his actual writings in the section do not indicate a failure to understand that *i‘tibār* is the name given to the means of investigation (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, pp. 82-85). In fact, al-Suyūṭī uses exactly the same words (‘Knowing the *i‘tibār*, the *mutābi‘āt* and the *shawāhid*’) in the sub-heading of his *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* manual, *Tadrīb* (1972, 1: 241).

describe the resulting outcome when scholars attempt to find supporting narrations for a solitary report.

Considerable emphasis is given by Ibn Ḥajar to this section. It is one of the few places in the *Nuzhah* where he cites a ḥadīth with its full chain of narration. This very fact reflects his maturity as a teacher and writer; the reason being that *mutābi‘*, *shāhid* and *i‘tibār* is perhaps best understood through a practical example.

Implicitly, we deduce four things from this section. Firstly, Ibn Ḥajar is accepting that a *fard* (solitary) report is deficient in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. If it was not, then there would be no need to indulge in the practice of *i‘tibār* to find supporting narrations. The section here only suggests a need for seeking supporting narrations for a solitary report, not a *mashhūr* or *‘azīz* one.

Yet at the same time, the section also suggests that Ibn Ḥajar wanted to highlight the strength and authenticity of ḥadīth literature. This is because the process of *i‘tibār* helps to find support for existing material. The chain Nāfi‘ from Ibn ‘Umar is cited as an example in the *Nuzhah*. By finding supporting chains for it from other Companions (Ibn ‘Abbās & Abū Hurayra), a case can now be made for its authenticity. So the author uses the section, with a detailed example, to show what tools the ḥadīth masters had at their disposals to vouch for existing solitary reports.

Thirdly, this section indicates the direction ḥadīth studies did take on by this period though. By the ninth Islamic century, finding new, undiscovered *ḥadīths* was not possible. The aim was of *i‘tibār* was to support and authenticate existing reports and perhaps more importantly, promote weak and solitary reports to acceptable levels through corroborative research. This in turn would extend the pool of resources scholars of that period could

work from. It is here we see a marked difference between Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Ḥajar in terms of methodology. The former was of the opinion that ‘these days, it is no longer feasible for someone to apprehend sound ḥadīth on his own my merely examining *isnāds*’ (1986, 25). This was because of the decline in reporter standards by his time. By Ibn Ḥajar’s time, the reporter standards must have worsened much more, but he was of the opinion that a qualified scholar could authenticate ḥadīth material not previously authenticated. *I’tibār* could help immensely in this respect. When Dickinson wrote that the abstract mechanism of collective acumen replaced the reliability of the individual transmitters as the guarantor of the authenticity of ḥadīth texts in later times (2002, 488), he was referring to mechanisms such as *i’tibār*.

Thirdly, by outlining *mutābi’*, *shāhid* and *i’tibār* in detail, Ibn Ḥajar is suggesting that knowing the different research techniques was important, even in the ninth Islamic century. Rather than passively accepting the knowledge gathered by the ḥadīth masters of the past, the *Nuzḥah* here suggests that new research in the field – finding supporting narrations and re-checking the paths – was indeed still desired and possible. In short, he wanted to show ḥadīth studies still mattered, even in the ninth Islamic century.

However, the reality was that fresh-thinking and original research was rare during the time of Ibn Ḥajar. Most of Ibn Ḥajar’s own literature was based on earlier works, in the form of commentaries, compilations and collections. New research was an exception rather than the norm. Instead, the serious and academic form of ḥadīth studies was viewed as dull and hardly thought-provoking in his time. Makdisi notes:



The atmosphere of a classroom of a ḥadīth differed dramatically from that of a classroom on law. Ḥadīths were copied word for word from dictation. The process was tedious and dull. Teachers of ḥadīth were praised in biographical notices for their patience. Notices mention the complaints of teachers regarding the bad behaviour of students in class, talking and distracting other students: no doubt because some took dictation faster than others, and ḥadīth classes were usually much more crowded than law classes (1981, 115).

This contrasted with law classes, which was marked by ‘controversy, argumentation and debate’ (Makdisi 1981, 115).

Owing to such a climate, it is feasible to suggest that the section here on *mutābi‘*, *shāhid* and *i‘tibār* was an appeal from Ibn Ḥajar that ḥadīth studies could still be engaging, thought-provoking and interesting in the Mamluk period. In short, that ḥadīth studies still mattered.

#### **5.14. & 5.15. *Muḥkam* (the Clear) and the *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* (the Contradictory Tradition)**

Then the accepted can also be divided into the acted upon and the non-acted upon. This [division exists] because if it is immune from opposition – in the sense that a report contradicting it does not appear – then it is *muḥkam*. Its examples are plentiful. If the report is opposed, then either the opposing is accepted just like it or it is rejected. As for the latter [case] there is no effect for it, since the strong is not

affected by the opposition of the weak. If the opposing [report] is equal to it, then either it is possible to harmonise between the two meanings without deviation, or it is not. Thus if harmonisation is possible, then it is the type called *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has given the example of the ḥadīth: ‘There is no contagion or evil fortune’ with the ḥadīth ‘Flee from a leper as you would from a lion.’ Both of them are sound and are apparently contradictory. The form of harmonisation is that illnesses do not infect by their nature. But Allāh has made the mixing with the ill a reason for a sound person to become ill, but then sometimes He does not, like with other causes. This is how Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has harmonised between the two, in similar fashion to others. The best [opinion] in harmonisation between the two is to say that the negation from the Prophet ﷺ remains in its generality. For it has been authenticated from him ﷺ that he said: ‘Nothing infects another’ and that he refuted the one who remarked that an ill camel mixes with sound camels and thus becomes ill by saying: ‘Then who infected the first?’ In other words, Allāh initiated the illness in the second just as He did in the first. As for the order to flee from the leper, it is to stop the means [of wrongful thought]; that if a person mixes with the ill, then this [has occurred] with the will of Allāh originally, not from the negated contagion. Lest in which case he will think that mixing with the ill was the reason for his illness, and that he will [now] believe contagion does exist and thus he will occur in sin. So he is ordered to stay away to prevent such thought. And Allāh knows best.

**Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī has written a book in this type called *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, but he never intended to cover all aspects. After him, Ibn Qutayba, al-Ṭahāwī and others have also compiled literature.**

### Commentary

In this new section, Ibn Ḥajar offers a different way of dividing the accepted (*maqbul*), based on whether the ḥadīth is acted upon.

The particular section can only truly appreciated when one reflects upon the intellectual period Ibn Ḥajar was residing in. By the ninth Islamic century, the process of ḥadīth reporting with the full chains of transmissions had long ceased. Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) declared that all the reports that could reliably be attributed to the Prophet had been documented by his time (Brown 2009, 42). The likes of al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) had resigned to the fact that no new, previously-undetected ḥadīth would be unearthed by his contemporaries. So by the ninth century, the emphasis moved to sifting the sound from the weak from the gathered material. Additionally, the scholars turned their attention to commenting on the material and understanding its application in *sharī‘a*.

This is where *muḥkam* and *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* matters. In essence, this was the process of focussing on the *matn* and see what could be acted upon and what could not. Whereas the emphasis before in the *Nuzhah* was on the *isnād*, here the attention turns to the *matn*, to see whether the rich existing material on any given subject matter largely complied with one another or conflicted. Therefore this particular section in the *Nuzhah* is where the *matn* comes to the forefront in terms of importance.

In the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar does admit that reports do exist that contradict one another (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*). But he also implicitly dismisses the *extent* of contradictory reports in ḥadīth literature. This is shown in many ways.

- a. Firstly, he asserts that the bulk of ḥadīth literature is *muḥkam*. The thousands of reports gathered on the Prophet's life during the early period of Islam seamlessly complement and support one another. This, Ibn Ḥajar is implying, is an indication of its authenticity.
- b. Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar gives the same example of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* which Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has offered in his *Muqaddima* (*‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth*), as indeed al-Sūyūṭī has cited in *Tadrīb* (1972, 2:197). In fact, al-‘Irāqī too cites the same example (1995, 335). The two contradictory reports in question are ‘There is no contagion or evil fortune and ‘flee from a leper as you would from a lion.’<sup>95</sup> It may simply be a coincidence that Ibn Ḥajar cited the same example as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-‘Irāqī before him. Another possible interpretation is that by citing the same example, Ibn Ḥajar was trying to suggest that finding contradictory reports was so difficult and hard to come by, that the *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* masters were pressed to find such examples and had resigned to using the same one everyone else had. This interpretation may not be so far-fetched when we observe that

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<sup>95</sup> Seemingly, the two reports contradict one another and both have been recorded in the celebrated works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. But it is possible to arbitrate between the two in the sense that both can be acted upon, and that it is not necessary to disregard one in favour of the other.

Ibn Ṣalāḥ states that in essence, there is no such thing as contagious diseases. This is supported by a similar ḥadīth of the Prophet where he said that nothing spreads from one host to another. Allāh does cause a person to sometimes catch a disease by mixing with a person who suffers from a particular ailment. But we also know that this is not always the case; a person can stay with a person with such a disease for a long period of time and be perfectly fine. This is how Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had offered reconciliation between the two prophetic reports (1986, 284-5).

Ibn Ḥajar offers an answer from a slightly different angle, but agrees with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ in that in essence, there is no basis to contagious diseases. The Prophet ﷺ once refuted a person who argued that a healthy camel usually becomes ill by mixing with ill camels, by asking ‘then who infected the first camel with the disease?’ It was Allāh, and He infected the second camel like He did with the first.

The question remains as to why the Prophet ﷺ ordered to flee from the leper. The scholars write that this was a precautionary measure, so that a person does not think he was infected by the leper (and that he would never have been infected otherwise), but instead appreciates that everything occurs through the fate of Allāh. The Prophet himself was reported to have shared a meal with a leper (al-Wajīdī 1996, 93).

only in the last section on *i'tibār*, *shāhid* and *mutābi'*, Ibn Ḥajar chose a different example (the crescent moon sighting) from that of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ on the same subject matter (tanning) (1986, pp. 84-5). Now, using a different example served the purpose of showing the soundness of ḥadīth material; that supporting evidence in the form of *shāhids* and *mutābi'*s could be found for countless examples and not just for one.

c. Thirdly, the nature of the example given in the *Nuzhah* suggests its unimportance.

Knowing whether to flee from a leper or not is hardly a matter affecting the fundamental faith of a believer. This is typical according to Muslim scholars like al-Sibā'ī. He indicates that the subject area of the contradictory reports all relate to relatively trivial matters in *sharī'a*. None relate to the fundamental beliefs of Islam (1998, 229)

d. Fourthly, the previous section on *mutābi'*, *shāhid* and *i'tibār* was given an extended analysis, which we suggested may be an indication of its importance to the author for that particular time. On the other hand, Ibn Ḥajar's treatment of *muḥkam* and *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* is brief and concise. This is a surprise to some extent; the *Nuzhah* tends to cover matters of significance and controversy with more detail <sup>96</sup>, this is perhaps one of the rarer occasions where the subject matter's significance is not matched with the same emphasis by Ibn Ḥajar.

Why is *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* important? It is important because it touches upon a theological problem that the Muslim scholars have had to deal with; is it possible for the Prophet to have contradicted himself in his dialogues?

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<sup>96</sup> For example, the section on *bid'a*, *mawḍū'* and *ṣaḥīḥ* are widely regarded as important areas in the discipline, and the length of analysis in the *Nuzhah* reflects this fact.

The response from Muslim scholars on the issue – past and present – has been simple and straightforward. We are reminded that the words of Muḥammad are semi-divine and approved by God himself. The Qur’ān affirms:

Your companion (Muḥammad) has neither gone astray nor has erred. Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only an Inspiration that is inspired. (53; 2-4)

Therefore, Muslims should not for a moment entertain the idea that he contradicted himself.

Following on from this, the scholars explain that if the words of Muḥammad are seemingly contradictory, then this is because of *our* misunderstanding and misinterpretation, rather than the fallibility of Muḥammad. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ highlights this when he writes:

We heard that the authority Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzayma said: ‘I am not aware that two [genuinely] antithetical (*mutaḍāddayn*) ḥadīth with sound chains were related from the Messenger of God (peace be upon him). Whoever has seemingly contradictory ḥadīth, let him bring them to me for me to harmonise.’ (1986, 285)

We have seen this protectionism before, when discussing al-Tirmidhī’s unique terminology such as *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* (section 5.10). If it is confusing, it is because *we* do not

understand it, not because of any deficiency in al-Tirmidhī. Here, if there are any contradictory reports, it is *our* shortcomings, not the Prophet's.

This mindset of the Muslim scholars produces a very clear set of results. The Prophet could not have been wrong because he is flawless and perfect. The way the reports got to us cannot be wrong because they have sound chains supporting them. Therefore the scholars are left to take the seemingly contradictory material and employ a vast array of factors to prefer one narration over another. Al-Suyūfī reminds us that there are over such fifty factors and in fact, according to others, over one hundred factors (1972, 2:198).<sup>97</sup> If the sayings and actions of the Prophet seem to oppose one another, we simply need to apply one (or more) of these factors to the texts and reach a suitable conclusion.

The Syrian scholar al-Sibā'ī follows a very similar approach to the Muslims before him. He does not view the contradictory material from the Prophet as an indication of forgery or contradiction. Rather, he suggests that these inconsistencies were sometimes deliberate and mostly understandable. Such an approach allows him to protect the Prophet and the scholars after him. In short, al-Sibā'ī shows that contradiction can occur:

- a. Because the Prophet performed an act twice, in two different circumstances. One Companion reported one occurrence whereas the second Companion reported the other. An example of that is the dispute whether the minor ablution breaks when a person touches the genitals.
- b. Because the Prophet performed an act twice differently to show its permissibility. An example of this is where the Prophet performed the evening *witr* prayer. Some

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<sup>97</sup> For example, the general rule is that a reporter known for excessive narration is favoured over someone who narrates less frequently, the shorter chain over the long chain, the reporter who is known for his expertise in judicial matters over the one who is not, the report which mentions words of delivery expressing certainty (like 'I heard') over the one using lesser words (such as 'from'), the precedence of a Madinan report over a Makkan report, and so on.

Companions reported the number of units of this prayer to amount to three, whereas others reported seven, nine and eleven. The Prophet read all of these numbers to show its permissibility.

c. Because one report is acting as an abrogation of the other (which Ibn Hajar covers in section 5.16).

d. Because the Companions were reporting an act from the Prophet which they could not know the full extent of. For example, there is a difference of opinion regarding the exact type of ḥajj the Prophet performed before his demise; was it *tamattu'*, *mufrad* or *qirān*.

Al-Sibā'ī believes that because this ritual related largely on one's *niyya* (intention), no one could know for sure which type of ḥajj it was (al-Sibā'ī 1998, pp. 229-231).

Muslims therefore entertain the possibility that perhaps the Prophet *meant* to show variation in his sayings and actions, which has subsequently been wrongly interpreted as contradiction. Al-Sakhāwī reports that the Prophet said: 'The *ikhtilāf* (difference of opinion) of my Companions is mercy for my *umma*' (2003, 46). In other words, the conformity of his practice may have led to theological apathy after him. To avoid this, he deliberately showed 'contradiction' which would then allow Muslims after him to make the effort to study his sayings and actions. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz too agreed that difference was not necessarily a bad thing when he said:

It would not have pleased me to learn that the Companions of Muḥammad never differed. This is because if they did not differ, there would be no room for *rukḥṣa* (concession) for us (al-Sakhāwī 2003, 46).



In short, the section here on *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* symbolises how the Muslims deal with inconsistencies in the field. Disciples are taught to prefer one report over the other, using the countless factors available to them. Muslims are taught that the Prophet could not have been inconsistent, for this is a sign of weakness. In fact, it is better to believe that the inconsistencies were deliberate from the Prophet, for the sake of his believers. The Muslim approach on *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* does not radically question the authenticity of the material, as the non-Muslim approach does. Muir is of the opinion that the existence of contradictory reports (allegedly) stemming from the Prophet was extensive proof of forgery and fabrication. His research on the numerous traditions of the Prophet on his *Signet Ring* points out that there are reports suggesting that the Prophet wanted a ring made from pure silver, whereas other reports suggest that Khālīd ibn Saʿīd had a ring made from iron, which he appropriated to his own use. A third report suggests that the ring was purchased for him from Abyssinia. There are also conflicting reports regarding what was inscribed on the ring. In fact, Muir writes, there are reports that suggest that he never had a ring (1858, I: LXXVI).

Goldziher and Schacht offer a simple answer as to why contradictory prophetic reports do exist; because the Prophet never uttered the words in the first place. Rather the opposing reports were fabrications, as a reaction to the political and doctrinal tensions that existed in the first two centuries. Goldziher writes:

If [the ruling power] wished an opinion to be generally recognised and the opposition of pious circles silenced, it too had to know how to discover a ḥadīth to suit its purpose. They had to do what their opponents did: invent, or have invented,

ḥadīths in their turn...it is not surprising that, among the hotly debated controversial issues of Islam, whether political or doctrinal, there is none in which the champions of the various views were unable to cite a number of traditions, all equipped with opposing *isnāds* (1971, pp. 43-4).

Schacht's own observations are not radically different from Goldziher's when he writes that every legal tradition is in reality a 'fictitious expression of a legal doctrine formulated at a later date' (1959, 149). Elsewhere, Schacht writes that 'traditions are formulated polemically with a view to rebutting a contrary doctrine or practice' (1958, 152). Competing geographical centres fought with one another through these fabrications. For example, the reports about Funeral prayers inside the mosque were directed at refuting the Medinese practice.

To conclude, *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* seemingly suggests a large gulf between the western academics on the one hand and the Muslim scholars on the other. Muslims are faced with the crisis of defending the Prophet – the *Ṣādiq* – from discrepancies and inconsistencies, and their views on the subject reflect the seriousness of such a charge. For the western observers, *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* is further proof that there remains real doubt over the authenticity of ḥadīth literature. Even if Muslims maintain that the contradictory reports to be found are over trivial matters in *sharī'a*, the western scholars suggest that they still call into question the whole edifice of ḥadīth as sources for Islamic law. Yet viewed from another angle, the difference between the two camps is smaller than depicted. Both agree

on the existence of *ikhtilāf*, the disagreement lies in the extent of it and the reasons behind it.

## **5.16. *Nāsikh* & *mansūkh*- the Abrogating and the Abrogated.**

If harmonisation is not possible, then there are possibilities; either the date is known [of the tradition] or not. If the date is known and one is proven as being later, or it is clarified [elsewhere], then this is *nāsikh* and the other is *mansūkh*. *Nuskh* is lifting the principle of a proof from *sharī'a* with a later proof from *sharī'a*. *Nāsikh* is that which indicates this mentioned lifting. Calling it *nāsikh* is metaphorical, because the abrogator in essence is Allāh Almighty.<sup>98</sup>

The abrogation is identified by [several] means; the clearest of them is the clarification in the text. [This is] like the ḥadīth of Burayda in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [that the Prophet said] : ‘I had forbidden you to visit graves. Visit them; for indeed it reminds of the hereafter.’ Amongst [the means of identification] is that which the Companion states is the latter. [This is] like the saying of Jābir رضي الله عنه, ‘The last of the two orders from the Messenger of Allāh was the abandoning of ablution for what is touched by fire.’ The Companions of the *Sunan*<sup>99</sup> have recorded this. Also amongst [the means of identification] is that which is known by the date; these are plentiful. Not included is that which is narrated by a Companion who accepted Islām late opposing that which is reported by someone who preceded him, because of the

<sup>98</sup> The author here means that in reality, the force behind *nuskh* is Allāh; He abrogates a certain verse with another from the Qur’ān or inspires His Messenger to replace a ruling with another.

<sup>99</sup> This means the works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Mālik and al-Tirmidhī (al-Wajīdī 1996, 96).

possibility that he heard it from a Companion [even] older than the one he is opposing, or like it and he made it *mursal*. However, if clarification occurs of him hearing it from the Prophet ﷺ then it directs it towards it being the abrogating, with the condition that he did not narrate anything from the Prophet ﷺ before his Islām. As for the Consensus (*ijmā'*), thus this may not abrogate, but rather it indicates that.

### Commentary

One of the most important types of prophetic reports to know and understand is analysed in this section, the abrogating (*nāsikh*) and the abrogated (*mansūkh*). Naskh is the process of replacing one ruling from *sharī'a* and replacing with a latter one, provided that the latter is of a subsequent origin and the two rulings are enacted separately from one another (Kamali 2005, 127). Ibn Ḥajar's analysis here is short yet very comprehensive. He explains well how it relates to the previous section on *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*<sup>100</sup>, defines the terms involved and he offers different ways the scholars have differentiated the abrogating from the abrogated. A brief word on the role the *ijmā'* plays in abrogation concludes the section.

Like with *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, this discipline is reserved for the most skilled and experienced scholars. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes:

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<sup>100</sup> In essence *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* are a type of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, because there are two reports which seemingly contradict one another and there is a means of arbitrating between them. The difference however is that with *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, both reports are still acted upon whereas with the abrogating and the abrogated, only one report – the latter one – is acted upon.

This discipline is important and regarded as difficult. We heard that al-Zuhrī said, ‘It wears out legal scholars and makes it impossible to distinguish the abrogating ḥadīth from the abrogated’ (1986, pp. 276-7).

He warns further on:

Some of the scholars of ḥadīth who have occupied themselves with this discipline have included in it what does not properly belong, because of the obscurity of the meaning of abrogation and what it constitutes. (1986, 277)

If this is the case, then the *Nuzhah* here does not venture into the difficulties surrounding it and instead portrays the issue as relatively straightforward. Ibn Ḥajar argues that in identifying the abrogating and the abrogated, a researcher sometimes does not need to do anything, because a clear statement exists from the Prophet or the Companions identifying which ruling is *nāsikh* and which is *mansūkh*.<sup>101</sup> Ibn Ḥajar also suggests that the dates too can be of great help in differentiating the *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* and requires little effort. The only difficulty a researcher may come across is when the report stems from a Companion who accepted Islam late on.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The *Nuzhah* provides the example of Jābir to show how the statements of the Companions can help to identify the abrogating and the abrogated. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ offers another example of the abrogated by the statement of the Companion when he writes: ‘Examples of this are the ḥadīth which al-Tirmidhī and others have related in which Ubayy ibn Ka‘b said: ‘The major ablution was optional in the case of a seminal emission in the beginning of Islam and then the option was forbidden’’ (1986, 277).

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Ḥajar explains in the *Nuzhah* that if a ḥadīth narrated by a Companion who accepted Islam late contradicts a Companion who accepted Islam early on, then the former’s narration will not necessarily be accepted as abrogating. This is because there is a possibility that he heard the narration from a Companion who is even older than the one he’s opposing, or he may have narrated it as *mursal al-ṣaḥābī* (This is where the Companion ascribes a report to the Prophet, though he did not hear it himself; rather he heard it from another Companion, who heard it directly from the Prophet).

In reality, it is the role of the *ijmā'* (scholarly consensus) in abrogation that is most difficult to comprehend, yet Ibn Hajar gives it the least emphasis. He simply states that this cannot *per se* act as an abrogator, though it does indicate as to when a certain act is abrogated. There are two reasons offered by the scholars as to why the Consensus (*ijmā'*) cannot act as an abrogating element. Firstly, the Consensus is merely the consensus of the scholars, and this is not strong enough in *sharī'a* to outweigh the *sunna* of the Prophet. Secondly, the Consensus only came into effect after the Prophet passed away, after which time, the abrogation had ceased.

Ibn Hajar has favoured an over-simplified outline of the abrogation, rather than an appreciation of its difficulty and indeed the controversy surrounding it. Burton has amply highlighted the controversy attached to *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* (1994, 85-88, 113-115).

With references to the verses 2:234 and 2:240, he shows that the abrogation performed in the Qur'ān do not address a common issue (1994, 113). Then there is evidence to suggest that the rulings related to the penalty for illegal sexual relations imply that the Qur'ān can be abrogated by the *sunna*, something which many Muslim scholars feel uncomfortable with (1994, 114). Goldziher's observations too question the role the *ijmā'* in relation to *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*. He argues that the *ijmā'* is 'a counterweight to the attempt of traditionists to reform existing customs according to their own views and to oppose sharply the customary laws of society' (1971, 88). Put simply, it was a political tool used by early Muslims to promote or demote certain principles.

As with many other sections covered so far, Ibn Hajar may have avoided detailed discussions on the abrogation because it does technically fall outside the sphere of *'ilm*

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If he does clarify, however, that he heard it directly from the Prophet, then this can be accepted as *nāsikh*, as long as he did not narrate anything before he accepted Islam.

To summarise, Ibn Hajar clarifies that the abrogating report must be later in date than the abrogated.

*al-ḥadīth*. It is more related to *fiqh*. Alternatively, the section can be complimented for acting as a satisfactory introduction to *nuskh*, ideal for first-time students. The term is defined, examples are given and the means of spotting it is mentioned too. Nevertheless, the works of Burton do highlight the controversy surrounding *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* which are simply not addressed in the *Nuzhah*.

### **5. 16. 2. The Paused Upon.**

If the date is not known, then there are possibilities. Either it is possible to prefer one report over the other by the many means of preference that pertain to the *matn* or *isnād*, or it is not possible. If harmonisation is possible, the preferred is specified. And if not, then it is not. Thus in reports in which there is apparent contradiction, it materialises in the following order; harmonisation if possible, then consideration for the abrogation and the abrogated, then preference if specified, then the paused upon from acting on one of the two reports. Describing it as ‘paused upon’ is better than describing it as ‘dropped’, because the impossibility of preferring one over the other is only in relation to the researcher at that [particular] moment. [There exists a] possibility that what is hidden becomes apparent [later] for someone else. And Allāh knows best.

In this last section, Ibn Ḥajar states that there will be circumstances where two contradictory reports cannot be harmonised by declaring one as an abrogating. If this is

the case, then there are many means by which one report can be preferred over another.<sup>103</sup>

As mentioned earlier, such factors are numerous; al-Suyūṭī wrote that there are over such fifty factors and in fact, according to others, over one hundred factors (1972, 2:198).

In the rare case where one report cannot be preferred over another, then this is shelved in a category called *tawaqquf*, or paused. Though this now means the report is not acted upon, it is not to say that the report is rejected. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that later scholars may be able to arbitrate between the reports which, for some reason, is unachievable by the earlier scholars. This itself is a moral statement from the ḥadīth scholars to say that they are fallible. The Companion Ibn Mas‘ūd once said that for a man to say: ‘I do not know’ in a matter he is ignorant of is in fact a sign of knowledge (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 151).

### **5.16.2.1. Conclusion.**

The last point in the preceding section needs further deliberation. The existence of *tawaqquf* implicitly suggests that no Muslim scholar claims to know all there is to know in ḥadīth literature. Al-Imām Shāfi‘ī said:

We know of no one who possesses knowledge of all the *sunnas* without failing to have a portion of it. So if the knowledge of all the scholars is gathered, the entire *sunna* would be known. However, if the knowledge of each scholar is taken

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<sup>103</sup> For example: (i) Preferring the report declared as *ṣahīḥ* over *ḥasan* (ii) Preferring the *marfū‘* over the *mursal* (iii) Preferring the *riwāya bi-al-lafẓ* over the *riwāya bi-al-ma‘nā* (transmission by words over transmission by meaning).



separately, each might be found lacking in some portion of it (in Azami 1996, 186).

This point is important because Schacht argues that:

The best way of proving that a tradition did not exist at a certain time is to show that it was not used as a legal argument in a discussion which would have made reference to it imperative, if it had existed (1959, 140).

His theory is based on the assumption that one scholar's ignorance of a particular ḥadīth is sufficient proof that the ḥadīth did not exist, and the emergence of it later proves that it was later forged. But *tawaqquf* suggests otherwise. The simplest reason for the scenario Schacht describes is that the earlier scholars did not perhaps have knowledge of that ḥadīth. It is not necessary that *all* reports were apparent and available to *all* scholars at *all* times. Due to geographical differences, some could not have heard reports that others knew well.

Additionally, Azami points to what he sees as shortcomings in Schacht's thesis. Firstly, he cites examples where the ḥadīth is to be found in earlier works but not later ones (1996, 119), such as the ḥadīth about ablution and touching the genital organs. This is the inverse of the pattern Schacht describes. Secondly, Schacht's work is littered with references such as x ḥadīth was known to y and x ḥadīth was unknown to y<sup>104</sup>. What does 'unknown' mean? Does it mean the scholar in question did not know it or did not record it? For instance, al-Bukhārī recorded only approximately four-thousand reports in his

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<sup>104</sup> For example, (1959, 141).

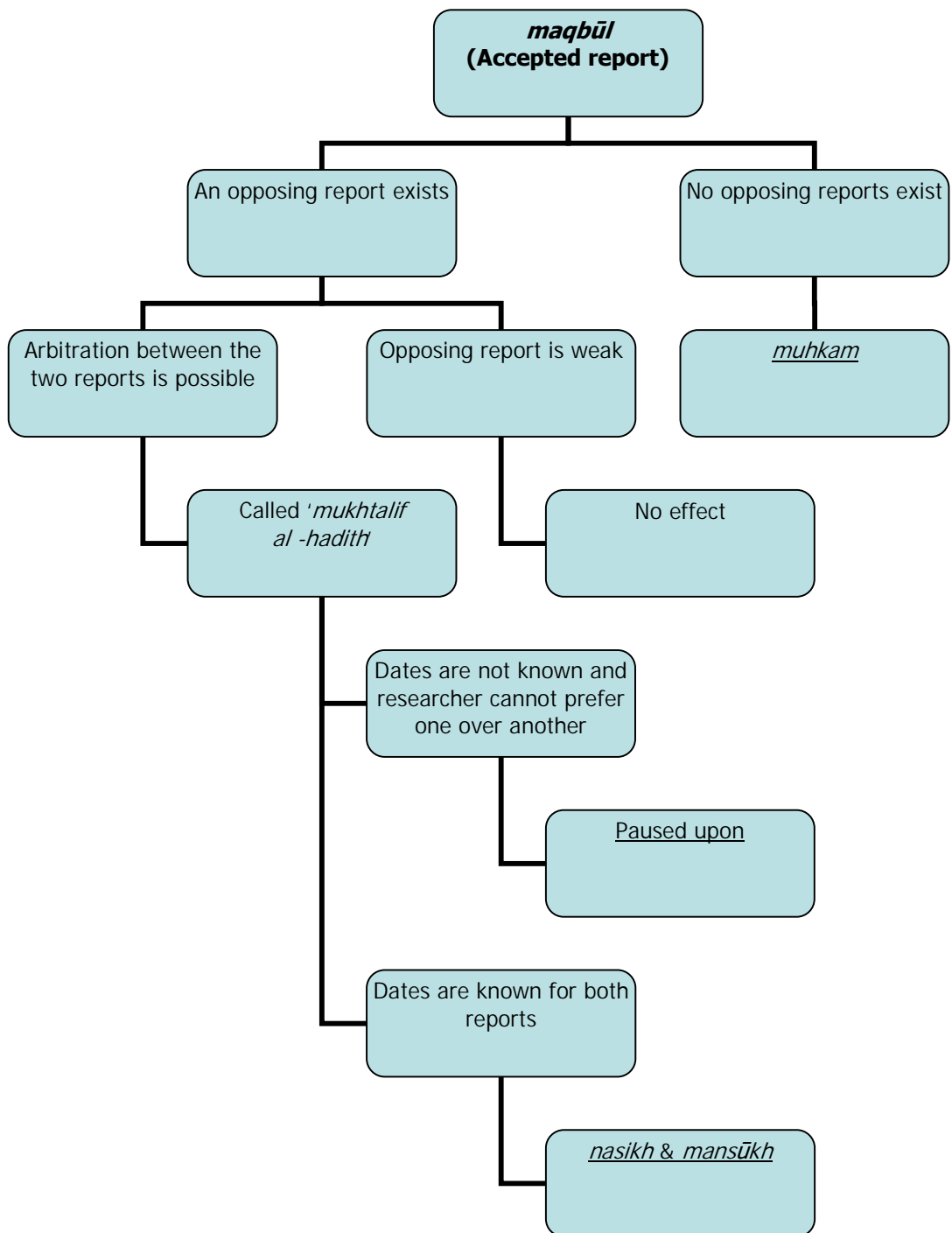
celebrated works, but knew in the region of seven-hundred thousand prophetic reports.

There is no clarification from Schacht as to what he meant by ‘unknown’ to x; either it means the scholar in question knew it but did not record it in writing, or he did know of it at all.

In general, Azami dismisses Schacht’s observations because they are based on:

...the *e silentio* principle, which assumes that if any one scholar at any given time was ignorant of a particular ḥadīth or failed to mention it or, rather, that if it is was not mentioned by later scholars that earlier scholars used that particular ḥadīth, then the ḥadīth did not exist at that time. If the ḥadīth is first found with incomplete *isnād*, and, later, with complete *isnād*, then the *isnād* has been ‘improved’, in other words, fabricated. In a *Reductio ad absurdum*, this argument would mean that if writer in the Middle East failed to mention London as one of the major cities in the world, then all the writers who mentioned it later would be guilty of collusion in creating a fictional city (1996, pp.115-6).

### **5.16.3. Summary of the accepted reports.**



## 5. 17. *Mardūd*- the Rejected and the reasons for rejection.

Then the rejected and the reasons that necessitate it is either because of a drop in the *isnād* or because of defamation in the narrator; according to the varying reasons for defamation that are more general than for a matter pertaining to the narrator's piety and his accuracy. Thus the drop is either at the beginning of the *isnād* from the actions of the compiler or at the end, after the Successor, or other than that.

### Commentary

In this prolonged and important section, Ibn Ḥajar focuses on rejected narrations (*mardūd*), and the reasons for their rejection. In principle the factors which necessitate the rejection of a ḥadīth are two;

- a. A drop in the chain.
- b. Defamation in the character of one of the narrators.

According to the number of drops and where the drop occurs, there are different types of rejected traditions. Likewise, there are different traditions according to the varying degrees of shortcomings in the narrator. Ibn Ḥajar commences with the *mu'allaq*, a rejected ḥadīth due to a drop at the beginning of the chain.

Again, it seems that the *isnād* plays the pivotal role in the acceptance and the rejection of a prophetic report, not the *matn*. Both factors identified by Ibn Ḥajar have nothing or very little to do with the *matn*.

## 5.18. *Mu‘allaq*- the Suspended.

Thus the first is *mu‘allaq*, regardless of whether the drops are one or more. Between *mu‘allaq* and *mu‘ḍil*, that will soon be explained, is *‘umūm wa-khuṣūṣ min wajh*.

Thus in terms of the definition of *mu‘ḍil* – that two or more narrators are dropped – it resembles *mu‘allaq* in some cases. In terms of specifying *mu‘allaq* that it is [a result] of the actions of the compiler at the beginning of the chain, then it is different to *mu‘ḍil*, as that is more general.<sup>105</sup>

Amongst the forms of *mu‘allaq* is that the entire chain is omitted and it is said, for example, ‘the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said x.’ Another form is that it is [all] omitted except the Companion, or the Successor and the Companion. Another form is that the person the report is reported from is omitted and it is ascribed to the one above. If the one above is the shaykh for the compiler, then there is a dispute; is it called *mu‘allaq* or not? The correct opinion in this matter is that detail [is required]. If it is known through textual evidence or investigation that the one doing this is a *mudallis*, then it is declared as such. Otherwise, it is [declared as] *mu‘allaq*.

*Mu‘allaq* has been mentioned in the section of the rejected because of the ignorance surrounding the omitted narrator. However, sometimes it is declared as sound if the [same] report is mentioned elsewhere with the narrator named. If someone says ‘everyone that I have omitted are authoritative (*thiqa*)’ then the issue of ‘authentication by ambiguity’ arises. According to the majority, it will not be

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn Hajar cites a scenario where one ḥadīth can be categorised under two different terminologies; *mu‘allaq* and *mu‘ḍil*. The former is where there are one or more consecutive drops at the beginning of the chain, and the latter is where there are two or more consecutive drops, irrespective of where exactly in the chain. Thus, when there are two consecutive drops at the beginning of the chain, the ḥadīth can be labelled *mu‘allaq* and *mu‘ḍil*. If there is only one drop at the beginning, then it will be classified as *mu‘allaq*, and if there are two consecutive drops in the duration of the chain (and not at the beginning), then it will be categorised as *mu‘ḍil*.

accepted until he names them. However, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ said here: ‘If the omission occurs in a book devoted to authentic traditions only, like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, then if the words of narrations are words of conviction and certainty, then it will be accepted and [it will be assumed] that he omitted the chain for a [genuine] reason from the various reasons. And if the words of narration are not words of conviction, then there is a dispute. I have explained such examples in *al-Nukat ‘alā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.

### Commentary

The first type of the rejected which Ibn Ḥajar explains in this new section is *mu‘allaq*, a ḥadīth where one or more narrators are missing at the top part of the chain, namely the side of the compiler. After outlining how this compares with *mu‘dīl*, he shows some of the forms it can assume,<sup>106</sup> followed by a discussion on its principle. A clear indication is given from the author that the *Nuzḥah* is not intended as the final word on the discipline, but rather an introductory text. Like we shall see elsewhere in this section, Ibn Ḥajar sometimes asks the reader to extend his/her sights on his other more detailed works on a

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<sup>106</sup> Ibn Ḥajar outlines the different forms *mu‘allaq* can assume;

- i. Sometimes the whole *isnād* from the beginning is omitted, and the compiler first mentions the words ‘The Prophet ﷺ said x’.
- ii. Sometimes the whole *isnād* is omitted except the Companion (*ṣaḥābī*).
- iii. Sometimes the whole *isnād* is omitted except the Companion (*ṣaḥābī*) and the Successor (*tābi‘ī*).
- iv. Sometimes only the narrator’s shaykh is missing and it is ascribed to the person after him. This practice is frowned upon because some narrators have omitted the shaykh for fraudulent purposes, which in ‘ilm al-ḥadīth terminology is called *tadlīs* (A full explanation for *tadlīs* is offered later by the author, covered here in section 5.21.). Thus Ibn Ḥajar writes that if it is known that the narrator commits *tadlīs* through evidence and investigation, then the ḥadīth will be classified as such. Otherwise, it will be considered as *mu‘allaq*.
- v. There have been cases where the reporter has refused to explicitly name the chain and instead merely says that all of his omitted men are authoritative. This, as Ibn Ḥajar writes, is called *ta‘dīl ‘alā al-ibhām* (authentication by ambiguity). Such a statement from the narrator is not sufficient to warrant the authenticity of the ḥadīth. Rather the majority of scholars adhere to the opinion that his men must be named before the report can be accepted. This is because the men may be considered authoritative according to him, but not to other scholars (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 491).

particular area, or that of the esteemed scholars. Here, he writes that a more detailed discussion on the ruling of *mu‘allaq* can be found in *al-Nukat ‘alā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.

All scholars unanimously agree that in principle, *mu‘allaq* is rejected. The reason is simple: the absence of one narrator or more means the chain is now discontinuous. And as outlined earlier, one of fundamental prerequisites for a sound report (*ṣahīḥ*) is that the *isnād* is continuous.

However, like scholars before him, Ibn Ḥajar offers to make an exception to this general rule. If *mu‘allaq* appears in a compilation reserved for authentic traditions only, like *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣahīḥ Muslim*, then it will be accepted if reported with words suggesting certainty. This means that the compiler uses words such as *qāla* (he said) rather than *qīla* (it was said).

In effect, Ibn Ḥajar is bailing out al-Bukhārī, whose *Ṣahīḥ* is full of *mu‘allaq* reports.<sup>107</sup>

By including this exception, one can still readily accept the authenticity of his *Ṣahīḥ*, despite the existence of *mu‘allaq* reports in it. In addition to this bail-out, the Muslim scholars have gone on to justify the frequent inclusion of *mu‘allaq* reports in his *Ṣahīḥ*.

For instance:

a. One reason offered is that he often names a chapter or sub-chapter using the words of a ḥadīth. Because it was merely acting as a heading, he did not see the need to mention the full *isnād*. An example of this is ‘Chapter: the ears are from the head.’

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<sup>107</sup> From the different forms of *mu‘allaq* mentioned in the *Nuzḥah*, many are to be found in the works of al-Bukhārī. As an example where al-Bukhārī omitted the entire chain, he includes a ḥadīth where he simply states: ‘The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘The most beloved religion to Allāh is the moderate, tolerant one’ (Book of Faith; Chapter; ‘the religion is easy’). In other instances he has omitted the entire chain except the Companion. For example, he writes: ‘Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ covered his thighs when ‘Uthmān entered.’ (Book of Prayer; Chapter; what has been mentioned regarding the thighs.)

b. Another answer is that he mentioned the same report repetitively in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. There are 7275 prophetic reports in the work of al-Bukhārī, but excluding the repetitions, this number falls to four thousand. So because he mentions one ḥadīth in his works with the full chain named, he did not see the need to mention the same ḥadīth with the full chain again elsewhere. Rather he shortened it and simply wrote ‘the Prophet said’, without mentioning the full *isnād* again (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 488).

But it seems that the Muslim scholars after al-Bukhārī have fallen somewhat short of offering a credible and fool-proof reason for the large scale inclusion of *mu‘allaq* reports in the works of al-Bukhārī. According to al-Suyūṭī, there are one hundred and sixty reports in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that are *mu‘allaq* and have not been mentioned elsewhere with the full *isnād* in his works (1972, 1: 117). It was the later scholars who analysed these reports and mentioned the full chain for them, like al-Nawawī in his treatise *Tawfīq* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 117).

More importantly, no scholar has entertained the idea that perhaps the *mu‘allaq* reports in his work should simply be rejected, owing to the drop in the *isnād*. Because of the prestige and esteem attached to his work, it seems that the scholars, including Ibn Ḥajar, dare not declare the *mu‘allaq* reports in his works as inadequate and short of the standard of *ṣaḥīḥ*. In short, the scholars are saying that *mu‘allaq* should certainly be rejected, but only if it is not in the prized works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Leading on from this, we can see that the *Nuzḥah* is descriptive of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth* and not prescriptive. Ideally, Ibn Ḥajar wanted to declare *mu‘allaq* rejected but he had to incorporate a ruling for it which justified al-Bukhārī’s large-scale inclusion of such



reports. To some extent therefore, the *Nuzhah* laid down the laws of what *had* occurred and not what *should* occur.

In conclusion, we can note the protectionism given by later scholars (like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar) to the ḥadīth masters such as al-Bukhārī. We have already seen this in section 5.7 too. This section on *mu‘allaq* shows that the later scholars started with the assumption that al-Bukhārī was correct, and that if there are discrepancies, it is because of our shortcomings. By the time of Ibn Ḥajar, it was the duty to defend the works of their predecessors’ endeavours, not question their methodology and results. So this section on *mu‘allaq* works on many levels. In its simplest form, it is an informative account of what *mu‘allaq* is, what forms it can take on and what the ruling for it is, all of which is suitable for a disciple wishing to learn about *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* for the first time. On another level, it is an attempt by Ibn Ḥajar to defend his field, his climate and indeed his personal circumstances; as noted in section 5.9.4, the ninth Islamic century was a time when writing a commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was in vogue (Brown 2009, 53). Ibn Ḥajar’s *magnum opus* was the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* called *Fath al-bārī*. It would be seen as contradictory on his part to present a prized and coveted work relating to the great al-Imām al-Bukhārī, and then seriously question his material.

## 5.19. *Mursal*- the Loose

The second – and this is where there is a drop after the successor (*tābi‘ī*) – is *mursal*. And from its forms is that the *tābi‘ī* will say – regardless of whether he is a senior or junior *tābi‘ī* – that ‘the Prophet ﷺ said x’, or ‘did x’ or ‘x was done in his presence’ or its likes.

*Mursal* is mentioned in the types of rejected traditions because of ignorance surrounding the missing reporter. This is because it is possible the missing person is a *ṣaḥābī* or a *tābiʿī*. In the latter case, then he could be weak or authentic. In the case of him being authentic, he could have narrated it himself from a *ṣaḥābī* or from a fellow *tābiʿī*. And in the latter case, the previous possibility returns and multiplies. As for in theory, this pattern could continue endlessly. In practice, this has occurred up to six or seven times; this is the most found where Successors have narrated from one another.

If it is known from the habit of a *tābiʿī* to drop only from an authoritative narrator, then the majority of ḥadīth scholars are of the opinion of *tawaqquf* (pausing) because of the [aforementioned] existing possibility. This is one of the opinions of al-Imām Aḥmad رحمته الله. His second opinion – which is also the opinion of the Mālikīs and Kūfīs – is that it will be accepted unequivocally. Al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī said that if support is found in another ḥadīth – whether this second supporting narration is continuous or *mursal* – then this favours accepting the ḥadīth and assuming the missing person is authoritative. It has been reported from Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (from the Ḥanafīs) and Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (from the Mālikīs) that when the narrator performs *irsāl* from authoritative narrators *and* other than them, their *mursal* report will unanimously not be accepted.

#### Commentary

Of the rejected traditions based on a drop in the chain, *mursal* is perhaps the type which has led to most disagreements, something which Ibn Ḥajar touches upon:

**a. Disagreement in the definition.**

i. Ibn Ḥajar simply describes *mursal* as where the drop occurs after the Successor, namely the *tābi* ‘ī. He does not elaborate on the age of this Successor and therefore, according to him, this can be a senior or junior *tābi* ‘ī.<sup>108</sup>

ii. According to the scholars of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *mursal* is defined in a more general way. Any type of disconnection is called *mursal* according to them, regardless of where and what type of disconnection it is. This is also the opinion of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 52).

iii. Bayqūnī also offers another variation on the definition. He writes that *mursal* is where the ‘Companion is dropped in the chain’ (in al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 161). Technically, this is not always the case, as Ibn Ḥajar clearly indicates in the *Nuzḥah*.<sup>109</sup>

iv. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr believes that the Successor’s age is of paramount importance in the definition of *mursal*. He writes that when the likes of al-Zuhrī, Abū Ḥāzim and Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī – all junior Successors – say ‘The Prophet ﷺ said...’ then their ḥadīth is not called *mursal* but *munqaṭi*’. This is because they only met a handful of Companions and most of their reports originate from fellow Successors. Only the reports of the senior Successors are classified as *mursal* (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 52-3). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ too *implicitly* suggests that the age of the Successor must be taken into consideration with a *mursal* report when he writes:

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<sup>108</sup> A senior *tābi* ‘ī is defined as one who spent a considerable amount of time with the Companions, such as Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim and Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab. A junior *tābi* ‘ī refers to someone who spent only a short period of time in the Companions, like Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī.

<sup>109</sup> The Successor’s missing narrator is usually a Companion because this is the next logical generation after theirs. But as Ibn Ḥajar points out, the person who he missed could be a *tābi* ‘ī or it could be a *ṣaḥābī*. Therefore, Bayqūnī’s definition does not case for the unconventional cases where a Successor takes from a fellow Successor, rather than from a Companion.

The form of the *mursal* ḥadīth about which there is no disagreement is the ḥadīth of a *senior* (my italics) Successor – like ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Adī ibn al-Khayyār, Sa‘īd ibn al-Mussayab and those like them who met a number of the Companions and attended their classes – when he says, ‘the Messenger of God said (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 52).

**b. Disagreement regarding its ruling.**

i. *Mursal* is deemed as weak and rejected according to the majority of the ḥadīth scholars (Mighālīwī 2003, 393). In the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Imām Muslim states that ‘a *mursal* tradition does not constitute a *ḥujja* on the basis of the principles of our doctrine and of the doctrine of the tradition experts’ (Juynboll (ed.) 1996, III: 296, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 55). They maintain that the missing narrator could be other than a Companion, and thus could be weak (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 54-55).

ii. The *Nuzḥah* states that *mursal* is considered as a rejected ḥadīth because the *isnād* is not continuous. One would assume that if the Successor reports a ḥadīth and ascribes it directly to the Prophet, then the missing person would only be a Companion. But Ibn Ḥajar warns that this is not the case. It could be that he heard from a fellow Successor who then heard from a Companion in which case there are two reporters missing.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> There have been examples in the past where the number of reporters between the Successor who is doing the *irsāl* and the Prophet is six or seven. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cites a tradition from a reporter belonging to the Successors in which there were six more reporters before it reached the wife of Abū Ayyūb. He commented that: ‘If the wife of Abū Ayyūb was a Companion, then there are six people missing. If she is not, then there are seven missing’ (cited in al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 500-1).

However, Ibn Ḥajar deems it important to mention the cases where the Successor omits the person he narrated from, but he is known only to report from authoritative reporters. As clarified in the text, the majority of ḥadīth scholars state that we will pause upon it, since the possibility still remains that he did not narrate from an authoritative person in this case. However, some scholars – like the Mālikīs and Kūfīs – state that it will be accepted without question.

Seemingly, this position contradicts with the ruling made in the section on *mu‘allaq*. There, Ibn Ḥajar clearly affirms that when a narrator does not name his sources and instead merely says that all of his omitted men are authoritative, then this is not accepted. Rather the majority of scholars adhere to the opinion that his men must be named before the report can be accepted. Thus on this basis, the report of a Successor who omits a narrator should also be rejected until the source is named. Why is it that some scholars will accept this unequivocally, like al-Imām Aḥmad in one of his two opinions on the issue and like the Mālikī and Kūfī ḥadīth scholars? Ibn Ḥajar offers no answer to this change in opinion.

The answer to this question lies in the fact that with *mursal*, if the missing reporter *is* only one Companion, then his ambiguity does not affect the authenticity of the ḥadīth. This is because all Companions are deemed credible and reliable in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. As a result, therefore, the scholars of ḥadīth are willing to offer more leniency in the principle of *mursal*.

The idea of the ‘*adāla* (integrity) of the Companions is not new. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī elucidates on it in *al-Kifāya*. He states that it is necessary to ask about the character of all narrators in an *isnād*, except the Companions. This is – as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī maintains – because their ‘*adāla* is ‘proven and known by the confirmation of Allāh Almighty, by informing us of their purity and worthiness in the Qur’ān’ (1988, 46). Thus, questioning their rank is on a par with questioning the opinion of Allāh and His Prophet on the matter.

Therefore, the ruling for *mursal* and *mu‘allaq* differs on this basis. With the *mu‘allaq* the missing reporters do not belong to the generation of Companions and thus they must be explicitly identified and investigated. As for *mursal*, because there is a possibility that only a Companion is missing, the scholars are willing to loosen the ruling governing it.<sup>111</sup>

ii. According to the three *imāms* of *fiqh* – Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik and Aḥmad<sup>112</sup> (in a famous report from him) – *mursal* is accepted and used as evidence so long as the person doing the *irsāl* is authoritative and only reports from authentic narrators. Their justification is that an authoritative Successor would not consider it permissible to say ‘the Prophet ﷺ said x’ except when they heard it from someone authoritative (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 54-55: Mighālwi 2003, 393).

<sup>111</sup> More will be mentioned on the integrity of the Companions in section 5.41.

<sup>112</sup> According to al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī it is accepted but under certain conditions. The conditions are four; three concerning the narrator (*mursil*) and one concerning the actual ḥadīth. They are (a) that the narrator is from the Senior Successors (b) when he does name his source, he names someone authoritative (c) when he narrates alongside the renowned *huffāz*, he does not oppose them. The fourth condition must be from one of the following (i) The ḥadīth is narrated via another *isnād* which is continuous. (ii) That ḥadīth is narrated via another *isnād* which is *mursal*, but the narrators are different from the original *mursal* ḥadīth. (iii) The ḥadīth complies with the saying of a Companion. (iv) That the scholars decree in compliance with the meaning of the ḥadīth.’ (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 54-55). It is also reported that al-Shāfi‘ī was of the opinion that only the *mursal* reports of Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab are worthy of acceptance. Al-Suyūṭī believes that this is not true and people have misunderstood his text in *al-Umm* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 199).

So in short, the *fiqh* scholars are more lenient in accepting *mursal* whereas the ḥadīth scholars are stricter. The reason for this is simple; a large degree of prophetic reports which relate to *fiqh* (such as worships and dealings) are *mursal*. If the *fiqh* specialists such as Abū Ḥanīfa chose to reject *mursal* like the ḥadīth scholars did, then this would seriously diminish the number of prophetic reports they could use for evidence. Burton writes that:

Attitudes to the *mursal* ḥadīth varied, although the greatest scholars, especially those engaged in codifying the Law, view it with indulgence, this type of ḥadīth being the source of a great quantity of badly-needed material (1994, 112).

Goldziher agrees when commenting on the *Muwattaʿ* of Mālik:

A proper *isnād* chain is not considered an absolute necessity, and nearly a third of the sayings employed by Mālik are *mursal* or even *maqṭūʿ*, i.e. they do not go as far back as the Prophet but end the chain with the name of a Companion... (1971, 202).

For example, the jurists have struggled to find *marfūʿ* (namely, a report proven as the actions or sayings of the Prophet himself) reports that legitimise the recitation of the Qurʾān in congregational prayer behind the imām. Abū Ḥanīfa argues that the person behind the imām is not required to perform recitation, based on the report ‘whosoever has

an imām, then the imām's recitation is considered his recitation too' (Sa'īdī 2009, 196).

This report is *mursal* but Abū Ḥanīfa happily accepts it as evidence.

So *mursal* shows how the scholars in the past disagreed according to their respective specialty, *fiqh* and ḥadīth in this example. It also suggests like, with *mu'allaq*, that the ruling applied to a particular type of ḥadīth (*mursal* in this instance) was based on convenience and necessity, rather than objectivity. Ideally, *mursal* should be rejected because of the absence of a reporter in the *isnād*, but applying this ruling would leave the *fiqh* scholars with less resources to work with. We noted a similar theme in the discussion on 'azīz in the *Nuzhah*. In order to protect and widen the ḥadīth literature available, rulings were made to increase the amount of material, not to lessen it. That is why the *Nuzhah* discarded the argument that a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth has to be at least 'azīz for it to be accepted. Here, in a similar fashion, rulings are made that ensure the ḥadīth literature pool is as wide as possible and so *mursal* is accepted.

Secondly, one could argue that Ibn Ḥajar's approach was centred towards ḥadīth rather than *fiqh*. Any discussions that technically felt outside this sphere, he perhaps felt, were not his jurisdiction.

### **5.19.1. Conclusion.**

Though less than a third of the *Nuzhah* has been looked at so far, we can already appreciate the author's insistence on focusing on *'ilm al-ḥadīth* only, to the exclusion of



*fiqh*. Sometimes, the refusal to extend his analysis to such areas has hindered a true portrayal of the ḥadīth type in question, like with *mursal*.

It is hard to dismiss this as a mere coincidence; that matters relating to *‘ilm al-fiqh* are largely ignored or only touched upon. What is the reason behind this? Why did Ibn Ḥajar focus on ḥadīth matters only? The real answer may be difficult to find, but what follows is a few plausible suggestions:

1. From the onset, the *Nuzhah* was meant to be a simple treatise, with no excess and no needless deviation from *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. As mentioned in his introduction, his contemporaries asked for a brief book on ḥadīth not *sharī‘a*. Had he indulged in debates such as the acceptance of *khabar al-āḥād*, it would have prolonged what was meant to be an introductory short treatise to the field.
2. As a skilled author, Ibn Ḥajar did not want overlap with his literary works. He had authored twenty-eight books on *fiqh*-related matters (al-Qārī 1994, pp. 48-49). It made sense to him to discuss *fiqh* matters in such books, rather than ḥadīth ones.
3. Ibn Ḥajar may have possessed a possible distaste for *fiqh*. Or to word it differently, his own personal circumstances affected his literary works. He served as the chief justice of Egypt for some time. He undertook this responsibility in the judiciary in 827/1423 and fulfilled this until 852/1449 (Aḥmadayn 1958, 10; al-Barrī et al. 1995, 102).

Ibn Ḥajar himself admitted that he reluctantly undertook this responsibility. The reason was that countless students and disciples eager to learn from him would travel from afar to meet and learn from him. But because of his preoccupation with judicial duties, many could not meet him (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 102). Other commentators write that lack of

autonomy was the reason for his reluctance (al-Qārī 1992, 53).<sup>113</sup> Mulla ‘Alī al-Qārī suggests that he did not enjoy this responsibility:

Ibn Ḥajar maintained that he would not enter into the judiciary. He turned down the post of deputising Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Munāwī before 800. He was then offered the post independently in the days of Mu’ayyad, which he refused. His colleagues pressed him to take up the position and so he eventually accepted it. He was appointed the justice for the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* in the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 827/1423. He showed increasing regret for taking up the position because the representatives of the state did not differentiate between the scholars and others, and because they refused to accept the scholars’ proposals, though the proposals were compliant with *ḥaqq* (truth). His absence from the office became more and more apparent, until he tendered his resignation in 852/1449 after twenty-one years of service. Because of his persistence on the truth and his refusal to pay lip-service [to the state], the post became too difficult for him (al-Qārī 1992, 53).

Ibn Ḥajar was not acting indifferently by showing reluctance to fully engage with this post. Makdisi notes that ‘many jurisconsults of high repute are known to have refused to accept an appointment in spite of the insistence of the caliph.’ Others, Makdisi notes, only accepted it with ‘certain conditions’ (1981, 200). Broadbridge notes that it was not only Ibn Ḥajar who found it difficult to hold positions of importance during that period: the likes of al-‘Aynī and al-Maqrīzī had similar problems (1999, pp. 88-90).

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<sup>113</sup> More will be said about this in section 5.36.

Implicitly, this suggests that Ibn Ḥajar may have been affected by the political climate of his era, in his teaching and in his literary works too.

To summarise this section on *mursal*, there are countless different rulings of *mursal*<sup>114</sup> and it is here where one can appreciate how different scholars in their respective specialist areas offer different opinions. Ibn Ḥajar's analysis is narrowly-focussed on *mursal* from a ḥadīth perspective, not a *fiqh* one.

## **5. 20. *Mu'dil* & *munqaṭi'*- the Problematic and the Interrupted.**

**The third type pertaining to the drop in the chain; if it is two drops or more consecutively, then it is *mu'dil*. And if it is not [consecutive], namely that the drops are two inconsecutively in two [separate] places, for example, then it is *munqaṭi'*. Similarly, if there is one single drop only, or there is more but with the condition of being inconsecutive [then this is also *mu'dil*].**

### Commentary

The third and fourth type of ḥadīth based on the drop in the *isnād* are mentioned here, *mu'dil* and *munqaṭi'*. Little commentary or explanation is offered regarding its forms and

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<sup>114</sup> Al-Suyūṭī summarises the scholars' different opinions on *mursal*: (i) used as evidence unequivocally (ii) not suitable for evidence at all (iii) used as evidence if the *irsāl* is done from a reporter belonging to the first three generations (iv) used as evidence if done by someone credible (v) accepted only from Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab (vi) used as evidence only if no other report in the subject area (of the *matn*) exists (vii) used as evidence in a *mustahabb* (preferred) manner, not in an obligatory manner (viii) used as evidence only if the *irsāl* is done by a Companion (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 201).

principle, though sufficient is mentioned to outline its appearance. What is clear is that *mu‘ḍil* is worse than the other types in this category because there are at least two, consecutive missing reporters.

As for *munqaṭi‘*, modern ḥadīth scholars state that this is the name given to a general drop in the chain when it does not take on the appearance of other types of ḥadīth. In other words, for a ḥadīth to be classified as *munqaṭi‘*, the drop must not be;

(i) At the beginning of the chain, as this is categorised as *mu‘allaq*.

(ii) After the Successor, as this is called *mursal*.

(iii) Two consecutive ones, as this is referred to as *mu‘ḍil*.

Only when the ḥadīth avoids the above three scenarios is it classified as *munqaṭi‘* (Taḥḥān 2001, 57).

The other opinion regarding *munqaṭi‘* is the one held by earlier scholars; that *any* type of drop is called *munqaṭi‘*. Al-Suyūṭī writes:

The correct opinion towards which the jurists, al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī], Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and others from the ḥadīth masters have inclined to is that *munqaṭi‘* is that whose chain is not continuous in any form. And most commonly it is used for the report of those beneath the Successors from the Companions (1972, 1: 208).

Therefore it seems the exact definition of *munqaṭi‘* differs according to earlier and later scholars. In a literal sense, both interpretations are feasible as the word means to ‘be cut-off’. However, the word should not be confused with *maqṭū‘*<sup>115</sup>, which is a term that

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<sup>115</sup> This will be referred to in section 5.43.

relates to the *matn* rather than the *isnād*. It seems that Schacht fails to acknowledge this difference, and sees the two as synonymous. He writes:

...Shaibānī and al-Shāfi‘ī confront each other objections to their respective traditions because they are *maqṭū‘*, which means the same as *munqaṭi‘* (1959, 38).

This section shows how the technical terms in the discipline developed throughout the centuries. During the early period, one term (such as *munqaṭi‘*) would be sufficient to encompass a multiple of scenarios. By the time of Ibn Ḥajar, the technical terms had flourished to cover all possible outcomes and scenarios.

The introduction of new terms such as *mu‘ḍil* did not increase the authenticity of prophetic traditions. What it did do was portray the discipline as a very intricate and multi-layered one, with a plethora of terms to cover each and every possibility. This itself did add to the authenticity debate in some form. The reason is because it portrayed the discipline as a rigid, objective and professional field, able to cope with the task of sifting the sound from the forged. The method in which Ibn Ḥajar has so far presented the rejected traditions in the *Nuzḥah* suggests that he too was keen to the discipline in such a manner.

## **5. 21. *Mudallas*- the Misrepresented.**

**Then the drop in the chain is sometimes visible so all [observers] can identify it, because the narrator – for example – is not a contemporary of the one he narrated from; or sometimes the drop is hidden. Thus this cannot be identified except by the**

expert *imāms* who are aware of the [different] paths of the ḥadīth. Thus the first – the visible one – is identified by the non-meeting between the narrator and the shaykh as he did not live in his time, or he did live in his time but he did not meet him and he did not have permission from him or discovery.<sup>116</sup> For this, historical records are required as they consist of the birthdates of the narrators, their death-dates, the dates of their studies and their travels. Verily groups [of reporters] have achieved notoriety by claiming to have narrated from their *shaykhs*, only for historical records to refute their claims.

The second type – the hidden one – is *mudallas* (with a *fathā* on the *lām*). [This is] so called because the narrator has not named the one he heard from and has created doubt in hearing the ḥadīth from someone he did not narrate from. Its origins is from ‘*dalas*’ with a *ḥaraka* [on the *lām*]; and this means ‘the mixing of darkness’.<sup>117</sup> This [type of ḥadīth] is so called because both involve concealment. The one committing *tadlīs* mentions it with the words of delivery that give the possibility of the occurrence of the meeting between him and the one he ascribes it to, like ‘*an* and like *qāla*. When it occurs with the words of certainty, he will be [classified as] a liar. The ruling for the reliable narrator for whom it is proven that he has committed

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<sup>116</sup> Ibn Ḥajar acknowledges that there can be certain cases where the report of the narrator from the shaykh can be proven as sound even if they lived in two different times and places. This can be the case when the shaykh delivers his traditions in written form to the narrator and grants him permission to report them further. This is called *ijāza*. Secondly, it can be where the narrator finds a script of traditions in which the compiler has granted permission to narrate to all. This is called *wijāda* (see section 5.57). Neither of these cases relates to *mudallas*, as suggested in the text when Ibn Ḥajar writes, ‘he did live in his time but he did not meet him and he did not have permission from him or discovery.’

<sup>117</sup> This term comes from the root word *dalas*, which literally means ‘a mixture of darkness’, like when the night first falls. When a person sells a good to someone and hides a defect to be found in it, then the Arabs say that the seller has committed *dalas* (al-Wajīdī 1996, 109; al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 167). This ḥadīth is so-called because of this resemblance to the root meaning; the narrator has hidden a certain quality of the report.

***tadlīs* is that he will not be accepted until he clarifies he heard the report, according to the most correct opinion.**

### Commentary

In this section, Ibn Ḥajar refers to *mudallas*. This term refers to when on previous occasions, the reporter has heard reports from his shaykh. In the particular report in which he is committing *tadlīs*, he has not heard from him and he reports it with such words of delivery that give the impression he did hear from him.<sup>118</sup>

To understand how delicately the author has treated this section on *mudallas*, it is important to outline how the matter has divided the experts. Only then can we appreciate the skill employed by Ibn Ḥajar as an author here.

In short, *mudallas* is finely balanced. For some, it is a serious problem which highlights the tricks used by the forgers to escape detection whereas for others, it is an exaggerated problem. Ibn Ḥajar's analysis of *mudallas* in the *Nuzhah* captures these two moods well, thus indicating his good skills as a writer.

## **5. 21. 1. The seriousness of *mudallas*.**

Rather than simply acknowledging its rejection, the Muslim scholars have gone to considerable descriptive detail to highlight how vile *tadlīs* is. For example, Shu'ba said:

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<sup>118</sup> This can be such as 'x said' (*qāla*) or 'from x' (*'an*), as opposed to words such as 'I heard' (*sami'tu*) or 'x informed me' (*akhbaranī*). Using the latter words of delivery would necessitate him being a liar, something the person committing *tadlīs* wants to avoid (al-'Uthaymin 2002, 168).

Committing adultery would be more beloved to me than performing *tadlīs* (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 16).

Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī said:

*Tadlīs* is the brother of the lie (in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 74).

Brown sees *tadlīs* as large-scale *isnād* forgery (1999, 98) and similar expressions and statements are offered almost universally condemning this practice.

Ibn Ḥajar only refers to one type of *tadlīs* that is *tadlīs al-isnād*.<sup>119</sup> Scholars such as al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ have identified a second variation called *tadlīs al-shuyūkh* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 223; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 74). This is where a narrator narrates a ḥadīth from a shaykh whom he has heard from. He then refers to him with a name, title or description that others are unfamiliar with, so that his status remains ambiguous. For example, Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid once said: ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī ‘Abd Allāh told us...’ He meant Abū Bakr ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 61). One reason why a reporter may commit such an act is to hide the embarrassment that he is reporting from someone younger than him, or from his own son. There are other instances where the reporter has changed the name because the one he is reporting from is considered weak (al-Munāwī 1999, 17-18). Al-Suyūṭī adds that the reporter may have narrated from one particular shaykh excessively and thus he alters the name to give the impression that he has a variety of sources (1972, 1: 231). These factors certainly give us an insight into the

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<sup>119</sup> Perhaps the reason why Ibn Ḥajar does not mention *tadlīs al-shuyūkh* in this section is because he mentioned it further on in the book, under the name of *jahāla*. See section 5.35.



subjective side of ḥadīth transmission. Rather than an objective academic exercise where a report is heard and passed on to others, the practice of *tadlīs* shows that sometimes, reporters had to consider the personal and social impact of whom they narrate from would have.

### **5. 21. 2. The over-precaution surrounding mudallas.**

Closer analysis and insight can reveal that the issue of *tadlīs* is not as serious as depicted by the Muslim scholars. Firstly, the issue of *tadlīs* was never a universal problem. According to al-Ḥākim, the issue of committing *tadlīs* was particular to certain areas. He said:

The people of Ḥijāz, the two Sanctuaries, Egypt, ‘Awālī, Khurāsān, al-Jibāl, Iṣbahān, the countries of Fārs and Khūzistān; we do not know any of their imāms to commit *tadlīs*. Most of *tadlīs* stems from the inhabitants of Kūfa and a small percentage from the inhabitants of Baṣra. As for the inhabitants of Baghdād, *tadlīs* has not been reported from any of them bar Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Bāghandī al-Wāsiṭī: he was the first to commit *tadlīs* there. If anyone thereafter did commit *tadlīs* then it was because of his precedent (in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 232).

Secondly, the *mudallis* (one committing *tadlīs*) is not technically a liar. He is declaring that a senior said x (*qāla*) which is true. All that is disputed is whether he heard him say this directly or indirectly. Azami writes:

This is similar to the modern situation when we say that the king or the President said so and so, though we have not had the opportunity to hear him directly, except through press or TV etc. But this expression may be used in direct hearing as well (1977, 63).

Brown notes:

*Tadlīs* did not always occur for insidious reasons. If a student had to leave a dictation session to answer nature's call, for example, he would hear the *ḥadīths* that he had missed from a class-mate. When narrating those *ḥadīths*, however, he might leave out the classmate's name and simply say 'Teacher so-and-so said.' Because *tadlīs* was often innocuous, very few transmitters were totally innocent of it (2009, 91).

This last point from Brown can be shown from the example given by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ in his *Muqaddima*:

'Alī ibn Khashram said: 'We were with [Sufyān] Ibn 'Uyayna and he said, 'al-Zuhrī said'. He was asked: 'Did you hear from al-Zuhrī?' He fell silent and then said, 'al-Zuhrī said.' Then someone asked him, 'Did you hear it from al-Zuhrī?' He replied: 'No, I did not hear it from al-Zuhrī nor from whoever heard from al-Zuhrī. 'Abd al-Razzāq told me from Ma'mar from al-Zuhrī.'

Hence in this example, Ibn ‘Uyayna dropped two narrators between himself and al-Zuhrī though he gave the impression he did by saying ‘al-Zuhrī said’ (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 73-74).

Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyayna committed *tadlīs* when purporting to have heard from al-Zuhrī. This was a one-off example from him and, generally, it did not tarnish his reputation. It cannot be said that committing *tadlīs* once renders all of the reporters’ narrations null and void. It is well known amongst the Muslims that the two *Sufyāns* (Ibn ‘Uyayna and Thawrī) are credible reporters (Kamali 2005, 105), to the extent that Muslim declares him as one of the ‘*imāms* of tradition’ in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Juynboll 1996, III: 270). In the same text, al-Imām Muslim implicitly suggests that *tadlīs* is to some extent tolerable:

‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak said: ‘What an excellent man Baqīya ibn al-Walīd is! If he could only refrain from his habit of calling transmitters by their *kunyas* when they are better known by their names, and calling transmitters by their names when they are better known by their *kunyas*. In the past he transmitted traditions from Abū Sa‘īd al-Wuḥāzī; when we looked into this, we found that he referred to ‘Abd al-Quddūs ibn Habīb’ (Juynboll 1996, III: 290)

As the above explanation has shown, this practice is known as *tadlīs al-shuyūkh*. But the comments of Ibn al-Mubārak suggest that Baqīya did not deserve to be discredited on this basis alone.

### **5. 21.3. Conclusion.**

Whilst acknowledging the depth of criticism directed at *tadlīs* by the likes of al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, an equal case could be made for their over-precautiousness. The unease surrounding the acceptance of *tadlīs* is on the basis that the *mudallis* may not have heard the report directly. So as a precaution, the ḥadīth masters prefer to dislike such a practice. Whilst a case can be made for the fraudulent nature of *tadlīs*, an equal one can be made suggesting an over-cautious nature of the ḥadīth masters.

In explaining this type, Ibn Ḥajar skilfully admits both opinions. In the *Nuzhah*, he does this by firstly dividing the drop in the chain into the hidden drop and the concealed drop. In doing so, he is showing the vast array of tools and methods that were available to the ḥadīth masters in stopping fraud and forgery. This suggests confidence in the system employed by his predecessors.

For instance, a check on the biographical information of the shaykh and narrator can identify whether the two reporters lived in the same period and whether they lived or visited a certain area. Historical sources can be analysed to check the dates of birth, when they passed away, when they studied and the period and place of their travels. An example of spotting an apparent drop is provided by al-Munāwī when he writes:

Ḥākim said: ‘When Abū Ja‘far al-Kasshī came to us and claimed that he had reported from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥumayd, I asked him of his birth-date. He mentioned that it was in 260. I said to our companions: ‘This shaykh heard from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥumayd thirteen years after he died!’ (1999, 2: 8)

But importantly, in explaining the concealed drop (to which *mudallas* belongs), Ibn Ḥajar is accepting that there were cases where such tools were insufficient to stop the forgers. Sometimes, checking the biographical information of the reporters did not help in identifying the genuine cases of transmission from the fraudulent ones. This can be viewed as a very pragmatic stance from Ibn Ḥajar and an admission of his realism. Whilst accepting the sincerity of the methods employed by early Muslims, he also admits their fallibility. And when we read the text of the *Nuzhah* – which was most likely aimed at readers of ḥadīth for the first time – then we appreciate the fine line that he took as a writer. He wanted the reader to be aware of the skills employed by the early Muslims in stopping *isnād* fraud, but to also warn of how sometimes the forgers were a step ahead. In short, the *Nuzhah*'s section on *mudallas* is a fine balance between an admission of forgery in the system, and a willingness to uproot it. It is also an indication of Ibn Ḥajar's skill as a good writer in that he captures *mudallas*, the positive and negative of it, in a delicate manner.

## 5. 22. *Mursal khafī*- the Hidden Loose.

Also [rejected] is *mursal khafī* when it emits from a contemporary who has not met the one he reports from, but rather between him and the [alleged] reporter is a gap [of another reporter]. The difference between *mudallas* and *mursal khafī* is intrinsic; this explanation can be outlined with that which is mentioned here. *Tadlīs* is specific to the narration from someone he is known to have met. As for when he is the contemporary of him and his meeting with the narrator is not known, then this is *mursal khafī*. Whoever has added in the definition of *tadlīs* of 'being a contemporary

even if they have not met' has thus necessitated including *mursal khaṭf* in the definition [too], though the correct [opinion] is that there is a difference between the two. The evidence that indicates consideration of having met in *tadlīs* – and not just being mere contemporaries – is the agreement of the people of knowledge in ḥadīth that the reports of the *mukhadḍamūn*, like Abū 'Uthmān al-Nahdī and Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim, from the Prophet ﷺ are classified as *irsāl* and not *tadlīs*. If being the contemporaries was sufficient in *tadlīs*, then these [people] would be *mudalliss*, because they certainly lived in the time of the Prophet ﷺ but it is not known if they met him or not. Amongst the scholars who have agreed with the [condition of] meeting in [the definition of] *tadlīs* are al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī and Abū Bakr al-Bazzār and the writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in *al-Kifāya* stipulate this. This is the trusted opinion.

The absence of meeting is identified by the reporter himself informing such, or by the firm statement of a versed imām.<sup>120</sup> It is not sufficient that an addition of one reporter or more occurs in some variations, because of the possibility that this is an addition.<sup>121</sup> Thus in this form, a definitive ruling will not be applied because of the conflicting possibility of continuation and discontinuation [of the *isnād*]. Verily al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] has compiled a book on this called *al-Taḥṣīl li-mubham al-marāsīl* and *al-Mazīd fī mutṭaṣil al-asānīd*.

<sup>120</sup> For example, Ibn Māja narrated from 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz from 'Uqba ibn 'Āmir up to the Prophet that 'May Allah have mercy upon the guard of the army'. Al-Mizzī writes in *al-Aṭrāf* that 'Umar did not meet 'Uqba (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 26)

<sup>121</sup> One may assume that when comparing two reports – one with an additional reporter in the chain and one with the absence of that person – it must mean that the latter report is *mursal khaṭf*. Ibn Ḥajar warns against jumping to such a swift conclusion in such circumstances. This is because the ḥadīth with an additional reporter may simply have an extra reporter in the chain, which is called *al-mazīd fī mutṭaṣil al-asānīd* (section 5.30). Thus, it is difficult in such cases to decree the report as being continuous or discontinuous until stronger evidence arises.

**And with this, the types based on the drop in the chain conclude.**

### Commentary

#### **5. 22. 1. Mursal khafī and how it differs from mudallas**

Ibn Ḥajar explains that there is a slight difference between *mursal khafī* and *mudallas*. In *tadlīs*, the narrator has met the narrator, whereas in *mursal khafī* the narrator is a contemporary of the missing person, but he has not met him.

The *Nuzhah* accommodates the other minority opinions on the issue too. Some scholars have said that *tadlīs* is where they are contemporaries, even if they have not met. But Ibn Ḥajar rightly points out that if this definition is accepted, then it is the same as *mursal khafī*. Perhaps it is out of respect that he does not mention who these people are; it is in fact his teacher al-‘Irāqī and al-Nawawī (al-Qārī 1994, 425).

Two pieces of evidence are provided for this majority opinion by Ibn Ḥajar. Firstly he writes that the narrations of the *mukhaḍramūn*<sup>122</sup> – those who lived in the time of the Prophet and prior to it in the time of *jāhiliyya* but were not known to have physically met him – are unanimously considered as *mursal khafī*, and not *tadlīs*. If for *tadlīs* being mere contemporaries was sufficient, then they would be termed as *mudallises*, because they were contemporaries of the Prophet ﷺ, but never met him. But no one refers to them with this term.

Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar cites the opinions of previous scholars who agree with him on this issue, such as al-Imām Shāfi‘ī, Abū Bakr al-Bazzār and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.

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<sup>122</sup> See Section 5.42.

This last ‘evidence’ needs closer analysis. We have observed places in the *Nuzhah* already where Ibn Ḥajar cites the opinions of past, ḥadīth masters in order to show how his own views correspond with theirs. For instance:

- a. In section 5.7.1., he argues that what the two *shaykhs* have recorded gives the benefit of controvertible knowledge, and that al-Ḥumaydī, Abū al-Faḍl ibn Ṭāhir and others too agree to this.
- b. In the same section, he writes that a *mashhūr* report is considered an advantageous factor. This complies with the opinion of Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī and Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak, he asserts.
- c. In the section on the addition of reliable narrators (5.10.2.), he shows that his opinion is the same as many of the classical ḥadīth masters, like Yahyā al-Qaṭṭān, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Yahyā ibn Ma‘īn, ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī, al-Bukhārī, al-Nasā’ī, al-Dāraqūṭnī and others.

Realistically speaking, there could be two reasons for Ibn Ḥajar cites the opinion of his predecessors on contentious matters. Firstly, it could be simply a sign of good academia. The issues he refers to in the *Nuzhah* have been debated for centuries and so it makes sense to alert the reader of past opinions on the matter.

Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar is alerting the reader of the importance of seniority in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. The fact that scholars like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Yahyā ibn Ma‘īn and ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī have agreed (or disagreed on a matter) is as good as empirical and objective evidence. In this particular section on *mursal khafī*, this is precisely what Ibn Ḥajar has done; *mudallas* is different from *mursal khafī* because al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Bakr al-Bazzār



and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said so. As an introduction to the discipline, the *Nuzḥah* encourages the disciple to respect the classical ḥadīth masters and their opinions. Though seemingly not important, this point has larger ramifications felt elsewhere in the discipline. For example, should a Muslim feel uncomfortable with the fact that the *Muwaṭṭaʿ* contains 1720 reports, of which 295 are simply the opinions of Mālik? Most Muslims would not. After all, they will argue, he was a pious, ḥadīth master whose endeavours in Islam will forever be appreciated. Therefore, his opinion is of great significance. To the non-Muslim observer, it is more of a concern.

## **5. 23. Reasons for defamation in the tradition.**

Then the defamation is with ten things, some are worse than others in severity. Five from them pertain to the integrity (*ʿadāla*) [of the reporter] and five pertain to the accuracy (*dabt*). Care for the [separation] of each type has not been done [here in the text] for a reason; this is to arrange [these ten] from the worse in terms of rejection downwards. [The division varies] because the defamation is either because of the lying of the narrator in a Prophetic report, in that he deliberately narrates something from the Prophet which he did not say. Or [the rejection is due to] accusation of lying, in that the ḥadīth has not been reported except by him and that it contradicts known principles; and similarly the reporter is known to lie in his [everyday] conversation though his lying has not been proven in Prophetic traditions. This [type] is less than the first [in terms of severity]. Or [the rejection is due to] his obscene mistakes, meaning plentiful [mistakes]. Or [the rejection is due to] his negligence of accuracy. Or [the rejection is due to] his lewdness in action or

**sayings when it does not reach the stage of disbelief. Between this and the first (i.e. the lie) is [a difference] of generality. The former has been mentioned separately because the defamation in it is worse in this discipline [of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*]. As for lewdness in terms of doctrine, its explanation will follow soon. Or [the rejection is due to] his doubts, in that he reports ambiguously. Or [the rejection is due to] is opposition, namely of the authoritative narrators. Or [the rejection is due to] his ignorance, in that his credibility or lack of it is not identified clearly. Or [the rejection is due to] his innovative beliefs; and this is belief in something which contradicts the established from the Prophet ﷺ, not out of conviction but with a shade of doubt. Or [the rejection is due to] is bad memory, an expression to mean his mistakes are more than his corrections.**

### Commentary

The above paragraph serves as an introduction to the next section. The author writes that there are ten primary reasons for defamation in the narrator; five are related to the integrity (*'adāla*) of the narrator and five are related to his/her accuracy (*ḍabt*).

The five related to integrity are;

- a. Lying.
- b. Accusation of lying.
- c. Lewd behaviour.
- d. Ignorance of the narrator.
- e. Innovation.

The five related to accuracy are;

- a. Severe mistakes.
- b. Negligence.
- c. Opposing authoritative narrators.
- d. Bad memory.
- e. Excessive doubt.

Ibn Hajar writes that in his forthcoming explanation of each type, he will not present them in order of those rejected on the basis of lack of integrity and then those rejected based on the lack of accuracy. Rather, as he clarifies in the text, he prefers to mention them in order of the most severe to the least severe, commencing with the fabricated or forged tradition.

## **5. 24. *Mawḍūʿ* - the Forged.**

Thus the first type – and this is defamation due to the lying of the reporter in the Prophetic tradition – is *mawḍūʿ*. The declaration of forgery is merely by the means of overwhelming evidence and not definitive [knowledge], since [even] the liar sometimes tells the truth. [To combat forgery] the people of knowledge in [*ʿilm*] *al-ḥadīth* possess a strong ability to differentiate the reports [from the sound]. Only those scholars whose knowledge is comprehensive, whose intellect is penetrating, whose insight is complete and whose knowledge of the different indications of forgery is sound can stand [successfully] in this field.

Sometimes the forgery is identified by the admission of the forger. Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd said: ‘But that [confession] will not be considered definitively due to the possibility

of him lying in the confession.’ Some have understood from this [statement] that his confession will not be acted upon *at all*, because he is a liar. But this is not what he meant. He only negated accepting it definitively. And negating it definitively does not result in negating its ruling, because a ruling can be made with overwhelming evidence, as is the case here. If this was not the case, then it would not be permissible to apply capital punishment to the confessor of murder, nor to the confessor of adultery, due to the possibility of their lying in their confession.

Amongst the indications by which the forged is identified is that which is found in the state of the reporter, like what occurred to Ma’mūn ibn Aḥmad; in his presence the debate of whether Ḥasan has heard from Abū Hurayra was mentioned. Thus he read an *isnād* immediately to the Prophet ﷺ, who [allegedly] said: ‘Ḥasan heard from Abū Hurayra.’ Similar to this is what occurred with Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm when he entered upon al-Mahdī who was playing with his pigeons. Immediately, he read an *isnād* up to the Prophet ﷺ, who [allegedly] said: ‘There is no competition except in archery, camel racing, horse racing and pigeon racing.’ He had added the words ‘and pigeon racing’ [himself]. Al-Mahdī knew that he had lied for his sake and thus ordered the pigeons to be killed.

Amongst the indicating factors [by which the forged is identified] is the state of the text, such as contradicting the text of the Qur’ān or the *mutawātir sunna*, or the firm consensus or the clear, common sense in a manner that [harmonising] interpretation is not possible.

Then the reporter sometimes invents the text and sometimes he takes the dialogue from others [and then ascribes it to the Prophet], like [the words of] some of the

pious predecessors, or the ancient wise or from biblical sources. Or he sometimes takes a weak-chained ḥadīth and invents a sound *isnād* for it so it can circulate. The reasons for the forger to fabricate are either the absence of religion, like the *zindīqs* (disbelievers); or the prevalence of ignorance, like some worshippers; or some adherents [to a *madhhab*]; or in pursuit of pleasing some leaders; or rarity with the intention of attaining fame. All such acts are forbidden by consensus of [all the scholars] considered in it. However, it has been reported from some Karrāmiyya and some Ṣūfīs the permissibility of lying in the area of *targhīb* and *tarhīb* (instilling virtue and inspiring fear). This is the mistake from the one who does it and it stems from ignorance. This is because *targhīb* and *tarhīb* too are part of the rulings of *sharīʿa*. The scholars are unanimous that deliberately ascribing a lie to the Prophet ﷺ is from the major [sins]. Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī has over-emphasised [this ruling] by decreeing the deliberate forger a disbeliever. The scholars have agreed on the prohibition of reporting a forged report, except by explaining its forgery, due to the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘If anyone narrated a ḥadīth from me which he knew was fabricated, then he is one of the liars’. Al-Imām Muslim reported this.

#### Commentary

##### **5.24.1. Forged (Fabricated Traditions); an introduction.** <sup>123</sup>

No field of ḥadīth literature has been the focus for non-Muslim academics, or a cause for concern for Muslims more than *mawḍūʿ*, forged (or fabricated traditions). It is, for most

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<sup>123</sup> The section on the Forged is in part taken from ‘*The Characteristics of a Ḥadīth Narrator, with reference to the al-Jāmiʿ of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071)*’ a thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, by Ather Hussain in November 2005.

part, the Achilles heel for Muslims. From a very early period, up until today, the subject has roused a vast array of opinions and controversy.

This extensive section will begin with a definition of *mawḍūʿ* and a brief explanation of how it differs from *ḍaʿīf*. Then, there will be a short outline of when forgery in prophetic traditions began, who the fabricators were and the methods they employed. Then it will be shown what was done to stop and detect fabricated traditions, and prevent its circulation. The chapter will conclude by assessing the extent of *mawḍūʿ*'s in ḥadīth literature.

### **5. 24. 2. Defining *mawḍūʿ*.**

A *mawḍūʿ* is a fabricated or forged tradition, a report which cannot be described as a saying or action of the Prophet. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ defines it as *al-mukhtalaq al-maṣnūʿ*, meaning 'created and fabricated' (1986, 98) and al-Suyūṭī defined it too with these same words (1972, 1: 274).

It is imperative that a distinction is made between *ḍaʿīf* (weak) and *mawḍūʿ* (fabricated traditions). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ defines the former as 'any ḥadīth which does not fulfill the aforementioned conditions of *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*' (1986, 41). In other words, a *ḍaʿīf* tradition does have some foundation to its authenticity, whereas a *mawḍūʿ* has no foundation or basis whatsoever. This is the reason why some Muslim scholars do not consider *mawḍūʿ* as a type of ḥadīth at all, and consider it external to the discussion on ḥadīth criticism. Al-Ṣāliḥ, for instance, writes that *mawḍūʿ* can only be labelled as a type of ḥadīth in the investigative stage, when one is determining whether there is any

authenticity in the report. Once it has been established as forged, then it should be referred to as *mawḍūʿ* and not *al-ḥadīth al-mawḍūʿ* (1999, 142).

The fundamental difference between *ḍaʿīf* (weak) and *mawḍūʿ* (fabricated traditions) is most apparent when the ruling concerning its narration and transmission is analysed. It is, according to most scholars, permissible to narrate and circulate *ḍaʿīf* traditions. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes:

According to the scholars of ḥadīth, it is permissible to adopt leniency in the *isnād* and in the narration of *ḍaʿīf* traditions, other than *mawḍūʿ* traditions, without having to explain its weakness. This is not [however] where the text deals with the attributes of Allāh, or Islamic rulings like the forbidden and permitted things. It is [only] permissible where the text refers to admonition, stories, the superiority of certain actions and in all areas of preaching [*al-targhīb wa-al-tarhīb*]. Amongst the scholars who have reported leniency with such narrations are ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (1986, 103).

So, for example, a Muslim would be allowed to use *ḍaʿīf* narrations to extol the virtues of charitable donations but not to prove a fundamental tenet of Islam.

With *mawḍūʿ* however, all scholars unanimously agree that transmitting such narrations is strictly forbidden. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī confirms this fact in the chapter entitled ‘The *Prohibition* of narrating fabricated tales and the necessity of discarding forged traditions’ (my italics) (1996, 2: 134). Later scholars too reiterated this view, including Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (1986, 98), al-Suyūṭī (1972, 1: 274) and Ibn Ḥajar here in the *Nuzḥah*.

It seems the distinction between *ḍa‘īf* and *mawḍū‘* has been a source of long-standing confusion, rather than an issue which has come to light recently. Al-Suyūṭī condemned Ibn al-Jawzī on his work on fabrications, *al-Mawḍū‘āt*. Al-Suyūṭī writes:

[Ibn al-Jawzī] has exaggerated the number of fabricated traditions in his two-volumed book *al-Mawḍū‘āt*, which contains many traditions which have no basis to be referred to as fabricated, but *ḍa‘īf*, *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*. Stranger still is the fact he has included a ḥadīth of Muslim [as being fabricated] (1972, 1: 280).

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was reported to have showed similar dismay with the findings of Ibn al-Jawzī (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 99). What this tells us is that historically, certain scholars have erroneously confused the two.

To conclude therefore, a clear distinction must be made between the usage of the terms *ḍa‘īf* (weak) and *mawḍū‘* (fabricated traditions). The former is rejected though it can be used in certain areas of preaching. The latter is rejected too but cannot be used at all and in fact has no real right to be referred to as a prophetic tradition.

### **5.24.3. When did the forging of traditions begin?**

There is no unanimous opinion on when exactly the practice of forging traditions began. William Muir believed it began in the caliphate of ‘Uthmān (cited in Siddīqī 1993, 32). Siddiqi writes that intermittent examples of fabrications were found in the time of the



Prophet and during the caliphate of Abū Bakr (1993, 32).<sup>124</sup> On the basis of the prophetic report ‘Let whoever tells lies about me deliberately take his place in hell’, Brown concludes that ‘...this can be taken to mean that Muḥammad knew that there were those among his Companions who were spreading lies about him’ (1999, 85).<sup>125</sup>

Al-Sibā’ī believes that the year forty was the dividing point between the ‘purity of the *sunna* from lies and forgery’ (1998, 92). He adds that it is extremely difficult to believe that the Companions would forge traditions on a large scale, in the time of the Prophet and immediately after. Instead, it was the subsequent events between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya which resulted in the first serious assault on the *sunna* of the Prophet (1998, 93-5). Muir too voices a similar opinion (1858, I: xxxix), as does al-Ṣāliḥ when he said that forgery begun in the year forty one, in the Caliphate of ‘Alī. (al-Ṣāliḥ 1999, 266). Goldziher points out that al-Muhallab (d. 83/702) forged traditions, which, if true, makes him one of the earliest fabricators of ḥadīth (1971, 52).

It is perhaps easier to identify when fabricated traditions became a major issue in Islam, rather than attempting to pinpoint when exactly it started. Mālik (d. 179/795) did not allow fabricators under the guise of story-tellers into the Prophet’s Mosque in Madina (Ṣiddīqī 1993, 35). Ḥammād ibn Zayd (98/716-179/795) famously said that the heretics had fabricated fourteen thousand traditions (al-Suyūṭī 1972 1: 284). What is clear from

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<sup>124</sup> The example he refers to is recorded by al-Suyūṭī, which describes a man called Jadjad who desired to marry a woman from a far-off tribe. He approached the tribe leaders and told him he had authority from the Prophet in Madina. The tribe leaders checked the authenticity of the report by sending someone to the Prophet to enquire further. When the falsity of the report became apparent, the Prophet ordered his followers to find the liar. If they were to find him alive, they were to kill him. If they were to find him dead they were to burn his body. Before the followers of the Prophet reached him, Jadjad was killed by a snake bite (al-Suyūṭī 1998, 2: 136).

<sup>125</sup> The integrity of the Companions will be discussed in detail in section 5.41.2.

both of these references is that by the middle of the second Islamic century, forgery was a serious problem.

In light of all the vast arrays of opinion regarding when exactly forgery began, it can be said with some certainty that other than a handful of sporadic examples, the forgery of prophetic traditions was not widespread in the lifetime of the Prophet, or immediately after it. By the end of the first Islamic century however, it was evident enough to be considered a source of anxiety for ḥadīth scholars.

#### **5.24.4. *Who were the fabricators?***

Clearly, the culprits who forged traditions did not fit a particular description and instead took on a number of different disguises. The main categories of fabricators were;

##### **a. The pious traditionists.**

Al-Sibā'ī writes that a considerable number of Muslims who were known for their piety and devotion to Islam fabricated traditions. The aim was to encourage people to perform righteous actions (1998, 104). Ordinary Muslims would judge their outwardly character and consequently accept their tales as authentic. How could someone accuse a Muslim of fabricating traditions, when, like the example of Abū Dāwūd al-Nakḥa'ī, they would spend the entire night in Prayer and the entire day in fast? (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 283). For this reason, the ḥadīth masters considered this category of fabricators as the worst, because of their contradiction between outlook and practice (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 281; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 99).

There are no shortages of such examples. Al-Suyūṭī writes that Nūḥ ibn Abī Maryam had fabricated several traditions, by falsely using the chain of Ibn ‘Abbās. Most of the reports he forged were regarding the superiority of different chapters of the Qur’ān. When the ḥadīth specialists uncovered his antics and asked what had driven him to such behaviour, he replied: ‘I saw people turning away from the Qur’ān and becoming immersed in the *fiqh* of Abū Ḥanīfa and the *Maghāzī* of Ibn Ishāq. So I fabricated these traditions’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 282; Azami 1977, 69).<sup>126</sup>

This oft-repeated quote from Nūḥ does not comply with the writings of Goldziher, who wrote that the early Umayyad period was marked by ‘the promotion of profane literature’ (1971, 189). He adds that Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ‘had the merit of diverting the princes from occupying themselves with books that were of no use and turning their attention to the conquests of the Prophet, his mission and the beginning of creation’ (1971, 190). Nūḥ disagrees because he noted the lack of attention to prophetic literature was because of the unhealthy obsession with the *Maghāzī* of Ibn Ishāq. For Goldziher, Ibn Ishāq marked the return to the ḥadīth literature; for Nūḥ he marked the diversion from it.

This aside, however, the Muslim and non-Muslim academics agree: that the pious traditionists did forge reports. Where they differ is the reason behind it. The above analysis shows that the Muslim academics believe they forged them for religious purposes. The Westerners, particularly Goldziher, believe that they forged reports to fight the tyrant Umayyad regime.

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<sup>126</sup> Maysara ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi was another devout character who forged fabrications. To the ordinary masses, he was known as an ascetic and pious Muslim. In fact, on the day he died the shops of Baghdad closed in his respect. Despite this, he forged countless traditions relating to the superiority of certain chapters of the Qur’ān and the superiority of ‘Alī (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 282).

**b. Heretics (*zindīqs*).**

In an attempt to confuse unrest and confusion, many non-Muslims – often of Manichean leanings (Siddiqi 1993, 33) – forged traditions and diluted them into the mainstream sayings and traditions of the Prophet. Ḥammad ibn Zayd comments that the *zindīqs* fabricated in the region of fourteen thousand traditions in the name of the Prophet. ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Abī al-‘Awjā was caught and as he was about to be executed, confessed that he personally had forged four-thousand traditions (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 284).

**c. Story-tellers (*quṣṣās*)**

This category of fabricators probably gained prominence early on in the history of Islam. To attract a larger audience as possible and to achieve fame and fortune, the story tellers would attempt to narrate the strangest and most amusing stories. Often this meant forging reports and attributing them to the sayings of the Prophet (Siddiqi 1993, 34). Al-Sibā‘ī adds that unfortunately, rather than ousting them from the public eye, the Muslims merely fuelled their antics by attending such events (1998, 104).

**d. Sectarian groups.**

Al-Sibā‘ī writes that political and religious indifferences was perhaps the main catalyst in the diffusion of fabricated traditions (1998, 96). The Rāfiḍīs and Shī‘as were undoubtedly responsible for seeking assistance for their innovative beliefs by the fabrications of traditions. Ḥammād ibn Zayd once said that a shaykh from the Rāfiḍīs had personally told him that they would hold gatherings to fabricate traditions (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 275).

One Muslim belonging to a sectarian group reverted from his beliefs and confessed: ‘Pay attention to whom you take narrations from, for when we adopted any opinion, we would forge it into a ḥadīth’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 275). Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī too was aware of the Rāfiḍīs’s tendencies to forge traditions and warned they were the most likely to ascribe lies to the Prophet (cited in al-Sibā’ī 1998, 96).

**e. Other categories of fabricators.**

The above four categories account for the majority of the fabricators in early Islam. There were however other groups who were spurred by other motives. Some for instance forged traditions to achieve proximity to political personalities. Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm, an associate of al-Mahdī, forged a tradition regarding racing pigeons to please him (al-Sibā’ī 1998, 105). In the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar mentions this example and adds that one of the reasons why Muslims in the past fabricated was ‘in pursuit of pleasing some leaders.’ Therefore there is substantial substance in Goldziher’s view that politics played a major role in the fabrication of prophetic reports. Azami, on the other hand, totally dismisses such a possibility. When discussing the different types of forgers that existed, he wrote:

Scholars mention a class of fabricators who used to fabricate for the sake of rulers. It is very remarkable that one finds only one example [i.e. Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm’s pigeon-racing report] of this sort which has been repeated by the scholars (Azami 1977, 69).

Another minor group of fabricators were those who forged traditions to support a particular school of thought, or a particular disputed religious issue. For example, one person forged a tradition proclaiming Abū Ḥanīfa as the ‘lantern of the umma’ and simultaneously degrading al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī as ‘more harmful than the devil’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 278). Another forged tradition claimed that a person who denies that the Qur’ān was created (*makhlūq*) exits the fold of Islam (al-Sibā’ī 1998, 105).

In short, it is clear that the ḥadīth masters had an additional problem in dealing with forged traditions in that they did not fit any one particular category. The above analysis shows they often came from all walks of life, with various motives.

#### **5. 24. 5. The method of the fabricators.**

Ibn Ḥajar comments in the *Nuzḥah* that the fabricators had two main methods. Either they would forge the text themselves, or would take a saying of pious individuals, traditional leaders or Christians and Jews and ascribe it to the Prophet. Most forged traditions were of the former type (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 277).

#### **5. 24. 6. Fabricated Traditions; A problem out of control?**

It is easy to readily assume that the issue of forged traditions spiralled out of control and the ḥadīth masters had no means to prevent it spreading. This is the conclusion many have made including Brown. He writes:

...the *muḥaddithūn*, no matter how dedicated, were simply too distant from the time of the Prophet, and forgery had become too rampant, for authentic ḥadīth to be recovered (1999, 96).

However, one must not neglect the fact that the ḥadīth masters had several means to detect fabrications and to sift the authentic sayings from the forged ones. If the problem of forgery was extensive, the ḥadīth masters' efforts to identify them were also extensive and long-reaching. Also, as it will be shown, perhaps many have exaggerated (Muslims and non-Muslims) the extent of the problem.

So far, an account has been given of who the fabricators were and the methods they employed. It has been conclusively shown that the ḥadīth masters were up against a vast array of fabricators who did not fit one particular description. Moreover, the ḥadīth masters had to deal with a century or more of forgeries. In this next section, it will be shown how the ḥadīth masters tackled the problem, and how, for Muslims at least, the problem was not as epidemic as many assumed.

#### **a. Confessions of the fabricators.**

Quite often, the guilty narrators themselves confessed to their crimes and gave themselves up to the authorities. Nūḥ ibn Abī Maryam fabricated countless traditions relating to the superiority of different chapters of the Qur'ān. Eventually, he came forward and confessed to the fabrications (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 282; al-Sibā'ī 1998, 105; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 100). Maysara, another narrator who forged traditions concerning the

Qur'ān, too confessed (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 274). Hence, occasionally the ḥadīth masters did not have to do anything to tackle the problem of forgeries.

#### **b. Biographical research by the ḥadīth masters.**

This method was to check the validity of the report by investigating when the narrator heard the tradition from the shaykh. The ḥadīth master would then cross-reference the claim with each of the individuals' birth dates, dates of travel and death date. History testifies that this was an exceptionally useful tool to prevent fabrications. For example, Ma'mūn ibn Aḥmad al-Harawī claimed that he had heard from Hishām ibn 'Ammār. Ibn Ḥibbān asked him when he went to Syria to take the narration. He replied in the year 250. Ibn Ḥibbān replied: 'The Hishām you heard from died in 245' (al-Sibā'ī 1998, 115). 'Abd Allāh ibn Ishāq al-Kirmanī reportedly heard from Muḥammad ibn Abī Yā'qūb. He was told that Muḥammad died nine years before he was born (al-Sibā'ī 1998, 115-6).

There are many such examples given by the Muslim scholars. It shows how *'ilm al-rijāl* did play a role in the prevention and detection of fabrications. *'Ilm al-rijāl* never claimed to cover every aspect of a reporter's life. But it did certainly help in providing the basic biographical dates of the reporters, which then helped immensely in validating claims of transmission. It may have been 'only an approximate science' and sometimes 'flawed', like Brown described it (1999, pp. 96-7), but this field of knowledge did serve some function.

Perhaps the saying of Sufyān al-Thawrī epitomises the usefulness of applying historical data to identify forgery. 'When the narrators began lying' he remarked, 'we began using history against them' (cited in al-Sibā'ī 1998, 115).



### **c. Indication in the narrator.**

Ibn Ḥajar writes that the condition and circumstances of the narrator sometimes suggests the ḥadīth is fabricated. He cites the example of Ghiyāth who forged a tradition regarding pigeon racing. Al-Mahdī was playing with pigeons at the time. Al-Suyūṭī writes that if the *matn* of the ḥadīth is regarding the family of the Prophet, and the narrator is a Rāfiḍī, then this also gives reasons for the ḥadīth master to believe the report is fabricated (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 276). For example, one report they forged was where the Prophet was supposed to have said: ‘When you see Mu‘āwiya on the throne, kill him’ (al-Sibā‘ī 1998, 98).

Thus sometimes the circumstances of the narrator clearly suggest that tradition has no basis.

### **d. Indication in the *matn* of the ḥadīth.**

Muslims assert that if one assumes it was simple to fabricate a few words and then simply ascribe it to the Prophet, it was most certainly not easy to fabricate a few words which *resembled* the words of the Prophet. After all, the Prophet was gifted with a unique command of the Arabic language, able to convey a message with striking effect and eloquence (‘Iyāḍ 2002, 48). What this meant was that more often than not, the words of the Prophet could be easily distinguished from the word of others.

The ḥadīth scholars had many ways of detecting forgeries from looking at the text of the ḥadīth. These included;

- a. The text contradicts the Qur'ān, the established and proven *sunna*, the unanimous consensus and common sense (Ibn Ḥajar 1995, 71; Siddiqi 1993, 114) Earlier it was mentioned how the heretics (*zindīqs*) had forged fourteen thousand traditions. For most part, they contradicted the basic tenets of Islam and thus its forgery was readily identifiable, even by the most amateur of scholars. For example, one tradition claimed that Noah's Ark circled the Ka'ba seven times and read two units of Prayer at the Station of Ibrāhīm (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 279, al-Sibā'ī 1998, 117). Clearly, this defies logic and common sense.
- b. The text refers to a substantially large reward for a relatively small action, or refers to a severe punishment for a relatively trivial error (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 276). Storytellers were identified earlier as known forgers, and very often their crime were uncovered because of the blatant discrepancy between action and reward. An example is the forged tradition:

When someone reads 'there is no God but Allāh', Allāh then creates a bird for him which has seventy thousand tongues. Each tongue of the bird can speak seventy thousand languages and they all seek forgiveness for the person (al-Sibā'ī 1998, 120).

Al-Sibā'ī adds that the fabrications of storytellers were simple to identify because the meaning was far-fetched and contrary to common sense (1998, 103). Muir believes that fabrications could be identified by:

...the attempts of narrators to exaggerate their labours and exploits, and to multiply their losses and perils, in the service of the Prophet and of Islam. (Muir 1858, I; LX)

- c. Traditions which contain detailed prophecies of future events, equipped with dates (Siddiqi 1993, 114).
- d. Traditions in which the *matn* violate the basic rules of Arabic grammar and style (Ibid.).
- e. Traditions that describe the excellence of certain chapters of the Qur'ān and mention the superior virtues of persons, tribes and particular places should also be viewed with some scepticism, according to Siddiqi (1993, 114).

What this proves is that *matn* criticism did exist in some form. Brown quotes Sayyid Aḥmad Khān who argues that the ḥadīth masters were so concerned only with the continuity of transmission and the character of the transmitters that they completely ignored the subject matter of the traditions and failed to look at either internal or historical evidence (1999, 97). A similar opinion has been voiced from Schacht (1959, 3). But what the above analysis shows is that the ḥadīth masters did take *matn* criticism on board, and that it played some role in rooting out the authentic reports from the forged. This is certainly the case with the reports extolling the virtue of certain chapters in the Qur'ān (Azami 1977, 69).

Likewise, when a report mentioned a specific event, the scholars could validate it by analysing whether it complied with the proven dates. For example, one ḥadīth reports that

the Prophet levied tax (*jizya*) on the people of Khaybar but spared them doing unpaid labour, upon the testimony of Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh and written advice of Mu‘āwiya. History testifies that this report must be fabricated: *jizya* was not introduced in the year of Khaybar, but after the Battle of Tabūk. Moreover, Sa‘d died before this and Mu‘āwiya did not accept Islam until much later, at the conquest of Makka (al-Sibā‘ī 1998, 118).

**e. The intuitive method.**

So far, the formal and objective methods of detecting forged traditions have been mentioned. However, perhaps the most useful yet unscientific tool the ḥadīth masters possessed in the fight against forgery was the intuitive method.

The ḥadīth masters had accumulated and learnt thousands of traditions of the Prophet. Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn had written six-hundred thousand prophetic reports (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2: 255). Abū Zur‘ā had written two-hundred thousand prophetic reports (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2: 256). Al-Bukhārī knew in the region of seven-hundred thousand traditions. In fact, most of the ḥadīth masters had learnt over one-hundred thousand traditions. This had enabled them to develop an acute appreciation of the style of prophetic speech and his actions. Years of studying the sayings and actions of the Prophet had bestowed them the instinctive ability to identify his sayings and differentiate them from the sayings and actions of others. Thus, the detection of forgery became second nature. Their intuition could immediately help to identify which sayings could be accurately described as being prophetic.

Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd was an early advocate of this method. He stated that owing to the depth and length of their studies, the ḥadīth masters could easily appreciate what the Prophet

could and could not have said (al-Sibā'ī 1998, 116-7). Al-Imām Bulqīnī too was of the same opinion when he said that when a servant serves a master for a number of years, he gains an understanding of what the master likes or dislikes. When someone claims that the master likes a certain object, the slave can instantly and instinctively vouch for the authenticity of the claim (al-Suyūfī 1972, 1: 276; al-Sibā'ī 1998, 117). Azami writes:

Scholars who spent a great deal of their lives with the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet developed a sense which they could use instantly in detecting error. Their example was like that of a man who lived with a beloved friend for scores of years, knew him very well in every situation and so could easily say which statement belonged to him and which not. Similarly, a literary critic who studies a poet for a long time and becomes fully acquainted with his style can, on the basis of his perception and personal experience, easily detect a poem which does not belong to the poet (1977, 71).

Therefore, the ḥadīth masters did not have a huge task on their hand in detecting forgery. Along with the objective tools, their own intuition and instinct was a significant asset. Al-Rabī' was most probably referring to the value of the intuitive method when he remarked: 'the ḥadīth has a light as bright as daylight which helps to identify it...' (in al-Ṣāliḥ 1999, 264). It also explains Ibn al-Mubārak's response when he was asked about the extent of fabrications. He coolly remarked, 'the fabrications live with the experts; *Indeed we revealed the Remembrance and verily We are its protectors*'<sup>127</sup> (al-Suyūfī 1972, 1: 282).

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<sup>127</sup> Qur'ān, 15; 9.

### **5.24.7. Conclusion.**

No scholar – Muslim or non-Muslim – would dare to suggest the problem of forgery in prophetic traditions was of minor significance. It sometimes left the ḥadīth masters baffled and it distorted the portrayal of the *sunna*. In reply however, one must not neglect the extent of the effort employed by the ḥadīth scholars to fight forgery. Their dedication and devotion in sifting the authentic traditions from the fabricated is unquestioned. Many non-Muslim writers have overlooked their effort and argued that by the time forgery had become common practice, it was too late to save the *sunna*. In response to this claim, Brown raises an interesting point:

Who are we to judge, when we are so much farther removed from the events than they [the ḥadīth masters] were? The experts in ḥadīth certainly knew much more than we do. All the research in the world will not turn up anything new that the *muḥaddithūn* did not take into account; any reassessment will therefore amount to nothing but personal opinion. New research cannot change past events (1999, 99).

An additional point to highlight is the discussion of *how* the issue has been portrayed by Muslims. Undoubtedly, the Muslim scholars took the issue of fabrications very seriously and this was reflected by the effort they exerted to detect it. Perhaps no type of ḥadīth received as much interest and investigation than fabricated traditions. Ibn Ḥajar's own lengthy analysis reflects how important he viewed it. It is easy therefore to misinterpret

the extent of the problem, because of the large amount of care and attention it received from Muslim scholars.<sup>128</sup>

Ḥadīth scholars were marked by a large degree of precaution in their work and analysis. Even the slightest doubt was sufficient for a scholar to decree a tradition as not authentic. Perhaps this precaution also resulted in the misinterpretation of the extent of the problem of forged traditions. This is certainly the case with the works of Ibn al-Jawzī, who was severely criticised by al-Suyūṭī<sup>129</sup> and others for including several authentic traditions in his book devoted to fabricated traditions. Included in this number were traditions to be found in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, *Sunan Ibn Māja* and even *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 278-9). Part of the problem of Ibn al-Jawzī's work was that he based a large part of it on *al-Abāṭil*, by al-Jūzqānī, who was known to deem any ḥadīth contrary to the *sunna* as fabricated (al-Ṣāliḥ 1999, 271). The other factor was that he was prone to rash generalisations. Because *some* forged traditions did certainly exist on the merits of individuals, tribes or towns, he decreed that all or most traditions of this genre too were forged (Kamali 2005, pp. 40-1). This is despite the fact that a large array of authentic traditions do exist on the merits of certain individuals and places.

Likewise, we learn that the likes of al-Aṣmā'ī, Shu'ba and al-'Abbās ibn al-Mughīra held the view that anyone who studies ḥadīth without learning Arabic grammar is categorised as a forger (Siddiqi 1993, 85). In other words, there are numerous ways a report has been classified as forged when it is clearly not.

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<sup>128</sup> The Muslim scholars have in fact compiled individual anthologies on forged traditions, the most famous being the works of Ibn al-Jawzī, Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī and al-Shawkānī.

<sup>129</sup> Al-Suyūṭī wrote a book criticising him entitled *al-Ta'aqqubāt 'alā al-mawqū'āt*.

Scholars have frequently categorised a certain ḥadīth as *mawḍūʿ*, though in reality it belongs to another type. This too obscures the extent of the problem of forgery. An example of this is *mudraj*, where a text has been mistakenly inserted by one of the narrators<sup>130</sup>. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has viewed this type of ḥadīth as a forgery (1986, 100). In his book, he writes: ‘...sometimes forgery happens unintentionally, as what happened to Thābit ibn Mūsā al-ʿĀbid al-Zāhid in the ḥadīth: ‘Whosoever performs Prayer by night, his face is beautiful by day’ (1986, 100).

Scholars are quick to point out that this occurrence falls under the category of *mudraj*, not *mawḍūʿ* (al-Ṣalāḥ 1999, pp.272-3).<sup>131</sup>

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wrote that labelling a report as *ṣaḥīḥ* merely guarantees that the stated conditions are to be found in it (1986, pp.13-14).<sup>132</sup> Likewise, when a report is labelled as ‘not *ṣaḥīḥ*’ it means that the one or all of the conditions are missing, and not that the report is baseless (Ibid.). Unfortunately, when a particular report has been declared as ‘not *ṣaḥīḥ*’, some have jumped to the conclusion that it is therefore forged. This, however, is simply not the case, since it could mean it is Fair or Weak. Certainly, Muir (1858) is one such academic who has seemingly fallen into this trap. He cites the famous fact that al-Bukhārī knew six-hundred thousand prophetic reports and deduces that only four thousand from them were authentic, since that is how many he included in his own *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1858, I; xliii). Muir does not entertain the fact that by not being *ṣaḥīḥ*, the reports could

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<sup>130</sup> *Mudraj* will be discussed in section 5.28.

<sup>131</sup> The full story is that Thābit ibn Mūsā al-ʿĀbid al-Zāhid entered upon Sharīk whilst he was dictating traditions. As he finished reading a chain, he paused so the auditor could finish writing. When he saw Thābit he said ‘Whosoever performs Prayer by night, his face is beautiful by day’, as a praise of his ascetic qualities and piety. Listeners however thought the words linked to the *isnād*, and began narrating it as one ḥadīth.

<sup>132</sup> In section 5.9.2.



have been fair or weak, rather than forged. When something is described as ‘not being black’, it does not automatically mean it is white: it could be grey, red or blue. Al-Bukhārī made it explicitly clear that he knew of thousands of more sound reports than what he included in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, but did not include them because he feared the compilation would be too long (Khalīfa 1983, 57).<sup>133</sup>

There is further evidence to suggest the problem of fabrications was not as extensive as suggested. Earlier, it was mentioned that the heretics had fabricated thousands of traditions, including ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Abī al-‘Awjā who confessed to fabricating four thousand traditions. Azami writes that one should be cautious in accepting such confessions, particularly since he was about to be hanged. ‘After [the] confession’, writes Azami, ‘we grade him as a liar. And it might be part of a conspiracy that when that person was unable to destroy the faith of the people in the *sunna* of the Prophet, he used this final trick’ (1977, 69). Hence, Azami suggests that the heretics perhaps did not fabricate as many traditions they claimed to have.

On a last note, Muslims take comfort in the fact that paradoxically, *mawḍū‘* ‘proves the authenticity of ḥadīth literature. The existence of *mawḍū‘* is the biggest proof that early Muslims did not fabricate traditions on a grand-scale as depicted by Schacht and Goldziher. As Robson asks, ‘why were some men blamed for acting dishonestly while others were allowed to do the same thing without any attention being drawn to the fact?’ (in Azami 1992, 243). Or as al-Sibā‘ī bluntly asks:

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<sup>133</sup> Kamali offers an alternative explanation. He writes that the figure of 600,000 was reduced to 9,082 because ‘he has repeated aḥādīth which had more than one chain of *isnād* as the strength and reliability of the *isnād* is deemed to increase with the plurality of its chains of transmission. When such repetitions are taken into account, the original figure of 600,000 is also likely to be drastically reduced. For a single ḥadīth is sometimes transmitted through ten different chains of transmission all of which in the end establish just one ḥadīth.’ (2005, 33).

The pious scholars of Islam in the Umayyad period; did they collude with the scholars of Madina in fabrication? And how did this happen? And where did the conference to enact this tactic take place? And if they did not collude with the scholars of Madina, why did they remain silent (about their supposed mass fabrication) and why did they take prophetic reports from them? (1998, 225).

## 5. 25. *Matrūk* – the Discarded.

**The second type from the rejected [traditions] is by reason of the narrator being accused of lying, [which is called] *matrūk*.**

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar does not expand on the *matrūk*, and in fact Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ did not mention this type at all. However from other sources, we learn that a ḥadīth can be categorised as *matrūk* for two possible reasons. Firstly, a narrator narrates a tradition which no one else has mentioned, and the meaning of the text contradicts established, practiced laws.<sup>134</sup>

Secondly, a narrator lies in his everyday speech, though it has not been established as to whether he has lied in narrating prophetic reports.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> For example, ‘innocent till proven guilty.’

<sup>135</sup> An example of such a ḥadīth is provided by Ṭaḥḥān, when he cites the case of ‘Amr ibn Shimar al-Ju‘fī al-Kūfī al-Shī‘ī, from Jābir, from Abū Ṭufayl, from ‘Alī and ‘Ammār who said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ would perform *qunūt* at *fajr* Prayer, and he would perform *takbīr* on the day of ‘arafa after *fajr*, and stop at ‘*asr* on the last day of *tashrīq*.’ Al-Nasā’ī, al-Dāraqutnī and others have said that the ḥadīth of ‘Amr ibn Shimar al-Ju‘fī is *matrūk* (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 70).

## 5. 26. *Munkar*.

The third is *munkar* according to the opinion of those who do not add the condition of opposition in *munkar*. And similarly, the fourth and the fifth [is also called *munkar*]. So whoever makes severe mistakes, or whose negligence is excessive, or his lewdness is apparent, then the ḥadīth is *munkar*.

### Commentary

The author previously defined *munkar* in the section on *ma'rūf* and *munkar* (section 5.12). It is where the report of a weak narrator is opposed by someone who is more reliable. The report which is accepted is then called *ma'rūf*.

Not everyone adheres to this definition of *munkar*. Here, Ibn Ḥajar cites the definition of *munkar* according to those who do not agree with the above definition. He writes that the third, fourth and fifth reason for rejection all have the same name – *munkar*. These reasons are severe mistakes by the reporter, negligence and open lewdness. Any of these three reasons results in classifying the report as *munkar*.

Perhaps *munkar* is the most ambiguously defined type of ḥadīth amongst the scholars. In essence, a ḥadīth labelled as *munkar* can be (i) because a weak narrator has opposed someone more authoritative (ii) because the reporter makes severe mistakes (iii) because the reporter is negligent (iv) or because the reporter is of lewd character. There is even a

fifth definition from Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr Bardījī who defines *munkar* as ‘the ḥadīth whose *matn* is not known except from its [lone] reporter’ (Mighālīwī 2003, 431).<sup>136</sup>

It is however possible to harmonise between these different views when one utilises the views of al-Imām Muslim as a backdrop. In the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, he refers to *munkar* in detail and identifies how this type can be identified; when the reporter’s transmissions are compared with reliable reporters and it contradicts them (Juynboll 1996, III: 269). It is quite possible that the other views on what constitutes *munkar* – the severe mistakes, the reporter’s negligence and his lewd conduct – is directly as a result of his opposition of more reliable reporters. This contradiction is a clue that he did not take it from the sources he claims to have done so, or that he did not show the same precautions his contemporaries did.

Additionally, the section on *munkar* does indicate a reversal of what is otherwise a prevalent trend in the *Nuzḥah*; the abundance of technical terms. Here we find that one term – *munkar* – is sufficient to cover an array of scenarios.

## 5. 27. *Mu‘allal*- The Defective.

**Then the doubt – and this is the sixth type; and it has been clarified by name because of the long explanation of it<sup>137</sup> – if the doubt in it is known through the**

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<sup>136</sup> For example, al-Nasā’ī and Ibn Māja have recorded from Abū Zukayr Yahyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Qays, from Hishām ibn ‘Urwa, from his father, from ‘Ā’isha *marfū‘an*: ‘Eat unripe dates with ripe dates. For when man does so, the devil becomes angry.’ Al-Nasā’ī remarked: ‘This ḥadīth is *munkar*. Abū Zukayr is alone in narrating this. He is a pious shaykh as [al-Imām] Muslim uses him in supporting narrations, but he has not reached the point where he can be trusted to narrate alone’ (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 72).

<sup>137</sup> Ibn Ḥajar did not elaborate on *munkar* and *matrūk*. In fact the original *Nukḥbah* merely reads: ‘...and the second type is *matrūk* and the third is *munkar* according to an opinion. And so *munkar* is [also] the fourth and fifth.’ This is why at the beginning of this section on *mu‘allal*, he writes that the reason for

means of indicating factors, such as making the *mursal* or the *munqaṭiʿ* continuous , or such as inserting a ḥadīth into another or harmful acts similar to these; and this is identified by intensive investigation and the gathering of the [numerous] chains, then this is [called] *muʿallal*. This is one of the deeply [ambiguous] types [to uncover] in *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* and one of the most intrinsic. No one can aspire to [tackle it] except he whom Allāh Almighty has favoured with a penetrating understanding, a vast memory, a complete awareness of the different ranks of reporters and a strong grasp of chains and texts. For this reason, only a few have spoken on the issue from the people of this field, like ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Yaʿqūb ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū Zurʿa and al-Dāraquṭnī. Sometimes the investigator of *muʿallal* falls short from establishing evidence for his claim [that a particular report is *muʿallal*], like a money exchanger in deeming counterfeit *dirhams* and *dīnārs*.

#### Commentary

As a technical term, *muʿallal* needs close analysis before we proceed to look at Ibn Ḥajar's discussion on it. *Muʿallal* as a term does not appear in the works of al-Mayyānīshī's (d. 581/1185) in his treatise on *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* (Librande 1982). In al-Suyūṭī's *Tadrīb* we are told who can tackle this field ('the men of memorization, information and penetrating understanding'), what an *illa* is literally ('a hidden defamatory defect which looks sound apparently'), where it can appear (mostly in the *isnād* though sometimes in the *matn*) and the different forms it can assume, which is the

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elaborating on this type (*and it has been clarified by name because of the long explanation of it*) is due to its importance and thus the extra explanation required.

same as what is mentioned in the *Nuzhah* (1972, 1: pp. 251-3). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ again informs us that it is a discipline reserved for the most competent scholars (1986, 89). He gives an example of how it can occur in the *matn* and *isnād* and how the term can be used in different ways (1986, pp. 90-1). Al-Irāqī's *Alfiyya* refers to whether the correct term is *mu'allal* or *ma'lūl*, where it can occur (*isnād* and *matn*) and how it can be spotted (by intense investigation) (1995, pp. 100-103).

In all of these discussions, the detail is present but it is still difficult to pinpoint what exactly *mu'allal* is. It seems that the ḥadīth scholars have tried to give an objective portrayal of *mu'allal* though in reality it is anything but. Other terms pertain to a particular problem and scenario and can easily be differentiated from others. *Mawḍū'*, *matrūk*, *munkar*, *mursal* and *bid'a* are easy to define and their over-whelming feature can be explained. *Mursal* is a drop after the Successor. *Munkar* is the opposition of an authoritative. This is totally missing in *mu'allal*. It can occur in the *matn* and the *isnād*. It can come about because of issues related to the continuity of the *isnād* or because of a hidden defect in the narrator. In my opinion, it is a term coined for when the ḥadīth masters cannot objectively explain why it is rejected. It is an 'ad hoc' term used when it cannot categorised as *mawḍū'*, *matrūk*, *munkar*, *mursal*, *bid'a* and so on. When al-Bukhārī and the other experts declare a report as rejected (based on their intuition) and later scholars cannot objectively see how they reached that decision, then it is conveniently labelled *mu'allal*. This explains why the *Nuzhah* states that a *mu'allal* report does not need to be justified for its rejection, in the same manner a money exchanger does not need to give proof why he thinks the *dirhams* and *dīnārs* in front of him are counterfeit.

This point is important for two reasons. Firstly, *mu'allal* shows that the later ḥadīth scholars did not fully know the methodology of al-Bukhārī when it came to declaring reports sound or otherwise. If they did, then there would be no need for a type called *mu'allal*. Secondly, it indicates how important the technical terms were for the ḥadīth scholars. Even in the absence of technicality and objectivity and in the presence of intuition and 'gut-feeling', they still gave a technical feel to the discipline. It was a scientific term to an intuitive method and an attempt to define something vague. This shows how the technical terms in the field were used for different, covert purposes.

Proceeding to the *Nuzhah* on *mu'allal*, we see that Ibn Ḥajar offers only a glimpse into it. One of the reasons perhaps is because he defined it earlier in the text on the section on *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>138</sup> There he wrote:

And '*mu'allal*' literally is that which contains a defect. And terminologically, it is that in which there is a hidden, defamatory, defect.

In this section, the text does inform us that;

- i. This type of ḥadīth is based on the premises of doubt. For example, a reporter may try to pass a *mursal* or *munqaṭi* ' ḥadīth off as continuous when in fact it is clearly discontinuous.
- ii. Finding such faults is extremely difficult. This is the reason why only a handful of scholars can claim proficiency in this type of ḥadīth, such as 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī.

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<sup>138</sup> See section 5.9.

iii. Even such experts sometimes fail to present evidence as to why a particular report is *mu'allal*. Instead they intuitively justify their opinion, rather like an experienced money-exchanger who can pass a judgement on a currency note being fake, without objectively explaining why.

These two last points, it seems, relate to one another. A prominent theme that we have already observed throughout the *Nuzhah* is the appeal to respect authority and to accept the opinion of past, great ḥadīth masters. Here again, Ibn Ḥajar is highlighting this theme, but in a more intense manner. The *Nuzhah* is informing the reader that it is the task of the great ḥadīth masters like 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and al-Bukhārī to analyse *mu'allal*. In fact, their authority is so great that they sometimes do not even need to empirically prove why a particular report is defective. Rather, like a money-exchanger who cannot objectively explain why he feels a currency is counterfeit, we do not require an explanation why the past ḥadīth masters have declared a report as *mu'allal*; their decree is simply sufficient.

Again this section highlights the primacy of seniority in the discipline. It also questions whether the methods employed by the early ḥadīth were indeed empirical and scientific. Ibn Ḥajar is suggesting that sometimes, their mere opinion and intuition is sufficient as evidence for us.

## **5. 28. *Mudraj*- the Material Interpolated.**

**Then the opposition – and this is the seventh type – if it occurs by reason of the changing of the text or the changing of the *isnād*, then that alteration is *mudraj al-isnād*. And this is of many types. The first is that a group reports a ḥadīth with different chains. Then one from them reports it by gathering all into one chain from**



the numerous chains and then does not explain the variation. The second is that a narrator has the text except part of it. The remainder he has with a different *isnād*. He then reports the entire text using the first *isnād*.<sup>139</sup> And from [this type too] is that the narrator hears a text from his shaykh and hears the rest of it indirectly. He then narrates it collectively with the omission of the indirect [reporter]. The third is that the reporter has two reports with two different chains. He then reports both of the reports using one of the chains only, or he narrates one of the reports with its own specific chain and adds in the second text that which is not found in the first. The fourth is that the narrator reads an *isnād* and is then distracted, after which he says something himself. Some of the listeners think the [distracted] dialogue is the text for that chain and then narrates it [to others] as such. These are the types of *mudraj al-isnād*. As for *mudraj al-matn*, this is when dialogue occurs in the *matn* that does not belong to it. Sometimes it is at the beginning of the *matn*, sometimes in the middle and sometimes in the end, which is the most common because it occurs by joining a sentence to the next. Or [*mudraj* can be] by the merging of a *mawqūf* from the speech of the Companions or those after them into a *marfūʿ* from the speech of the Prophet ﷺ without clarification. This is then *mudraj al-matn*. The interpolated can be identified by the appearance of a detailed report highlighting the interpolated part, or [it can be identified] by the statement from the reporter or from some of the versed *imāms*, or [it can be identified] due to the impossibility that

<sup>139</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ offers an example of this scenario:

‘An illustration of this is the ḥadīth of Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna and Zāhida ibn Qudāma from ‘Āṣim ibn Kulayb from his father from Wā’il ibn Ḥujr concerning the description of the prayer of the Messenger of God, at the end of which we find: ‘He came in the winter and saw them raising their hands under their cloaks.’ The correct version is the transmission of those who related from ‘Āṣim ibn Kulaib under this chain the description of the prayer by itself and kept separate from it the reference to their raising their hands. They related the [second part] from ‘Āṣim ibn Kulayb from ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Wā’il from one of the members of his family from Wā’il ibn Ḥujr’ (1986, 98).

the Prophet ﷺ could have said it. Al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] has compiled a book on *mudraj*, and I have summarised it and added to it twice or more than what he mentioned.<sup>140</sup> And for Allāh is praise.

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar sees *mudraj* as important, which is reflected here by the fact he spends considerable effort in explaining its division (*mudraj al-isnād* and *mudraj al-matn*) and the forms it can assume. This is in addition to the fact that he alerts the reader of his work specifically on this topic, which he asks readers to consider.

It does not require substantial effort to deduce why the author sees *mudraj* as important, in particular *mudraj al-matn*. Ibn Ḥajar wants the reader to appreciate how crucial it was to keep the text of the ḥadīth pure from additional and alien input. If mechanisms are not found to root out *mudraj*, then it can lead to forgery or at the very least, confusion over what the Prophet said and what others (like the Companions reporting it) said in one report.

Additionally, Ibn Ḥajar here is implicitly adding weight to the ḥadīth authenticity debate. The existence of *mudraj*, and in particular *mudraj al-matn*, is a clear indication of the ḥadīth scholars' expertise and awareness. They had the ability to study one text and deduce which part belonged to the Prophet's words and which belonged to the Companions or other transmitters. If they could sift the prophetic words from the non-prophetic from *one* text, surely they could identify texts in which *all* of it did not stem from the Prophet, namely a forged report. So in essence, the complexity of the system

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<sup>140</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote a treatise on the subject, which he later edited and improved on. Al-Khaṭīb's text is called *al-Faṣl li-al-waṣl al-mudraj fī- al-naqal*. Ibn Ḥajar's book is called *Taqrīb al-manhaj bi tartīb al-mudraj*.

laid down by the ḥadīth scholars was a means of refuting those who doubted it and the *Nuzḥah* here reflects this sentiment. For Muslims, this is a running theme which brings comfort and reassurance. The dialogue of the Prophet was so extraordinary that others simply could not imitate his sayings. Al-Rabī‘ remarked that ‘the ḥadīth has a light as bright as daylight which helps to identify it...’ (in al-Ṣāliḥ 1999, 264).

## 5. 29. *Maqlūb*- the Mixed-up.

If the opposition is due to preceding and delaying, namely in the names like Murra ibn Ka‘b and Ka‘b ibn Murra, as the name of one of the two is the name of the father of the other, then this is *maqlūb*. For al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] is a book on this [called] *Rāfi‘ al-irtiyāb*.<sup>141</sup> The mixing sometimes occurs in the text too, like the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra ؓ recorded by al-Imām Muslim, regarding the seven who Allāh will shade on the Day of Judgement beneath His throne which includes ‘a man that gives charitable donations discreetly to the extent that that the right hand does not know what the left hand has spent.’ This has been mixed up by one of the narrators; in reality it is ‘to the extent the left hand does not know what the right hand has spent’, as it is recorded in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*.

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar explains *maqlūb* here, a ḥadīth where the existing text does not have any omission in the text or chain, but one part has been altered and swapped for the other.

<sup>141</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s treatise on the subject is called *Rāfi‘ al-irtiyāb fī-al-maqlūb min al-asmā’ wa -al-ansāb* (The Removal of doubt in the maqlūb from the names and ancestries).

As Ibn Ḥajar highlights, this alteration can occur both in the text or chain.

*Maqlūb* can take on various degrees of severity in terms of weakness, as mentioned below:

a. That a narrator swaps a narrator for someone else, with the intention of making the ḥadīth rare. An example is a ḥadīth from Sālim, which one narrator swapped for Nāfi‘ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 291).

This has been the practice of forgers in the past, such as Ḥammād ibn ‘Amr al-Naṣībī, Ismā‘īl ibn Abī Ḥayya al-Yasa‘ and Buhlūl ibn ‘Ubayd al-Kindī (al-Qārī 1994, 476).<sup>142</sup>

A person who performs this type of *qalb* is known to have ‘stolen the ḥadīth’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 291)

b. That a narrator swaps a narrator’s name with his father’s. For example, Ka‘b ibn Murra has been erroneously reported as Murra ibn Ka‘b.

c. That the narrator precedes and delays some words of the ḥadīth. In the text, Ibn Ḥajar gives the example where a reporter swapped the ‘right hand’ for the ‘left hand’.<sup>143</sup>

d. That the narrator takes the full chain of one ḥadīth and places it on another *matn*, with the intention of testing someone, like what famously happened to al-Imām al-Bukhārī when he first visited Baghdad.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> In one example, Ḥammād ibn ‘Amr al-Naṣībī narrated from al-A‘mash, from Abū Ṣālih, from Abū Hurayra: ‘When you meet the polytheists in the streets, do not greet them first.’ Ḥammād made this ḥadīth *maqlūb*. Though he said it was from al-A‘mash, it was in fact from Suhayl ibn Abī Ṣālih, from his father, from Abū Hurayra, as Muslim recorded it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>143</sup> Al-‘Uthaymin writes that frequently the swapping does corrupt the meaning of the ḥadīth and this report is one such example. The reason is because the Prophet encouraged his followers to perform righteous actions with their right hands. The *maqlūb* version of the report suggests giving charitable donations with the left is permissible (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 218).

From these four forms, Ibn Ḥajar mentions the second and third form in the *Nuzḥah*. He does not mention the swapping done for the sake of testing (d) and the alteration with the intention of making the ḥadīth rare (a).

This omission, however, is justified. He does not mention form (d) here because Ibn Ḥajar refers to this type as *mudṭarib*, which he explains later in the *Nuzḥah*. Though it seems that this type should also be called *maqlūb* (as a form of swapping and mixing has occurred, which is what *maqlūb* means), scholars such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (1996, 1: 207-8), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (1986, 101), al-‘Irāqī (1995, 132), al-Suyūṭī (1972, 1: 292) and Ṭaḥḥān (2001, 80) prefer to label this as a type of *maqlūb*. Al-Munāwī explains that this is also the opinion voiced by al-Nawawī (1999, 2: 90).

As for form (a), that a narrator swaps a narrator for someone else, with the intention of making the ḥadīth rare, Ibn Ḥajar does not mention it here in the *Nuzḥah* because for him, this is now a *mawḍū‘* ḥadīth, not *maqlūb*. Therefore, this short section on *maqlūb* does cover all the forms, though not necessarily all in this section.

This aside, *maqlūb* can be due to an innocent mistake. But it can also come about due to malicious intent. What this shows is that the forgers and fraudulent reporters had a vast

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<sup>144</sup> In *al-Jāmi‘ li akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that in order to test the academic potency of the ḥadīth scholar, testing him by swapping the text and chain of reports is permissible. Perhaps one of the most famous tests was when al-Imām al-Bukhārī came to Baghdad. Ten ḥadīth scholars changed the *isnāds* and text of one hundred traditions and read them to al-Bukhārī. After hearing each scholar reading ten traditions each, he told them that he had no knowledge of the traditions. He then proceeded to correct each scholar and his narrations, so that the *isnād* and *matn* matched (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 101; al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 293). Al-Bukhārī faced a similar test in Samarqand and again he succeeded in highlighting his proficiency and outstanding intellect (Siddiqi 1993, 55). Al-Imām Muslim too was put through similar tribulations (Ibid.), as was al-‘Uqaylī (Ibn Ḥajar 1995, 82).

As for the permissibility of such a practice, it seems the scholars of ḥadīth do not encourage it. Al-Suyūṭī cites the opinion of al-‘Irāqī who believes the swapping the ḥadīth’s chain and text for the sake of testing is a deviant practice, because in the swapped state, the report can no longer be considered a ‘ḥadīth’ (1972, 1: 294). Ḥaramī said in disgust to Shu‘ba when he swapped the reports in order to test Abbān ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh: ‘Most vile is that which you have done. Is this permissible?’ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 294).

array of means at their disposal to tarnish the discipline. It also implicitly shows the frailty of attempting to understand fabricated traditions ḥadīth just by looking at *mawḍūʿ*. Ill-practice took on different forms (such as *qalb*, *tadlīs* and *muʿanʿan*) and only a holistic approach to the discipline can address the problem.

### **5. 30. *Al-Mazīd fī muttaṣil al-asānīd*- the Addition in Continuous Chains.**

Or if the opposition is due to the addition of a narrator in the duration of the *isnād* – and the narrator who does not include the addition is more reliable – then this is *mazīd fī muttaṣil al-asānīd*. Its condition is that clarification of hearing it [is found] in the place of addition. If not, then when it is *muʿanʿan* for example, the addition will be preferred.

#### Commentary

*Mazīd fī muttaṣil al-asānīd* is a rejected ḥadīth due to the addition of a narrator in the continuous *isnād*. This type will only be rejected when the words of delivery suggest clarification (such as ‘I heard’ rather than ‘*an* (from)’) in the place where the addition is assumed. Also, the report must be compared with other ones to see whether the narrator who does not include the addition is more authoritative (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 94). When these two conditions are met, then the ḥadīth is declared as an addition. Otherwise, if both

or one of these conditions are not found, then the report with the addition will be accepted and the contrasting report will be deemed as a hidden drop (Anwar 2003, 461). No example is offered in the text of this type of ḥadīth from Ibn Ḥajar. Moreover, the author does not elaborate on why an extra reporter would appear in a chain.<sup>145</sup>

### 5. 31. *Mudṭarib*- The Disrupted.

Or if the opposition is with the changing of a narrator and there is no means of preferring one report over the other, then this is *mudṭarib*. This usually occurs in the chain and sometimes occurs in the text. But rarely does a ḥadīth master declare a ḥadīth as *mudṭarib* in relation to the text (*matn*) rather than the *isnād*. Sometimes the changing happens deliberately for whom is intended to be tested, like what happened to al-Bukhārī, ‘Uqaylī and others. The condition [for such a practice] is that the report should not remain [in that altered state]. Rather the practice should stop as the need for it ceases. If the alteration occurs intentionally and not for a certain purpose, like to make the report rare for example, then this is from the types of forgery. If it occurs due to a mistake, then it is from the *maqlūb* or *mu‘allal*.

<sup>145</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cites that which Ibn al-Mubārak narrated who said Sufyān told us, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd, from Busr ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh, from Abū Idrīs, from Wāthila from Abū Marthad, from the Prophet ﷺ who said: ‘Do not sit on graves or pray towards them’ (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 286-7). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ explains the addition in this example:

‘The mention of Sufyān in this chain is an addition and a mistake, just as the mention of Abū Idrīs is. The mistake of mentioning Sufyān was made by someone after Ibn al-Mubārak. This is because a number of reliable narrators related it from Ibn al-Mubārak directly from Ibn Jābir himself. Some of these narrators made explicit use of the phrase ‘He informed us’ (*ikhbār*) between them there. The mention of Abū Idrīs in the chain is a mistake attributable to Ibn al-Mubārak. This is because a number of reliable narrators related it from Ibn Jābir and they did not mention Abū Idrīs between Busr and Wāthila. Some of them explicitly mention there the audition of Busr from Wāthila’ (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 287).

### Commentary

As mentioned earlier (5.29.), there is a difference amongst the scholars with regards to what exactly *muḍṭarib* is. Ibn Ḥajar writes here that *muḍṭarib* is where changing of some form has occurred and one report cannot be preferred over the other. Most scholars such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (1996, 1: 207-8), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (1986, 101) and al-Suyūṭī (1972, 1: 292) are of the opinion that when the *isnād* and *matn* have been swapped, as in order to test someone, then this is labelled as *maqlūb*. Ibn Ḥajar believes that such a type is called *muḍṭarib*. Because they see the testing form as *maqlūb*, the other scholars entertain a different definition of *muḍṭarib*. For instance, al-Suyūṭī writes that *muḍṭarib* is a ḥadīth which is narrated in different contradicting ways, in a manner that one cannot be given preference over the other (1972, 1: 262).

Confusion over its exact definition is amplified further when we note that Ibn Ḥajar does not give an explicit definition or an example of such type of ḥadīth. This could possibly be the case because prior to the *Nuzhah*, he had completed the independent treatise on *muḍṭarib*, called *al-Muḍṭarib fī bayān al-muḍṭarib*. He felt that a prolonged discussion on this type was not therefore required in the *Nuzhah*. But this also points to some inconsistency on the author's part. So far we have seen that when Ibn Ḥajar has an independent work on a particular ḥadīth type, then he alerts the reader of it in the relevant section. He did this with *mu'allaq* (section 5.18.) and *mudraj* (5.28). Here, despite a separate work on *muḍṭarib*, he does not mention it in the *Nuzhah*.

Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥajar does make an interesting point regarding *muḍṭarib* here.

Previously in the section on *muhkam* and *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* (5.14. & 5.15.), the author



was keen to stress that prophetic reports which contradict one another (in terms of the *matn*) hardly exist, and that the ḥadīth masters had tools at their disposal to harmonise seemingly contradictory reports. Once again, he makes the same point when he writes ‘rarely does a ḥadīth master declare a ḥadīth as *muḍṭarib* in relation to the text (*matn*) rather than the *isnād*.’ He alerts the reader that deficiencies found in a ḥadīth normally relate to the *isnād*, not the *matn*.

An example of *muḍṭarib* given by the Muslim scholars highlights this point amply.

Al-Tirmidhī narrated from Sharīk, from Abū Ḥamza, from Sha‘bī, from Fāṭima bint Qays, who said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ was asked about Zakāt and he said: ‘Indeed there is a right in wealth except Zakāt’. Ibn Māja narrates it through the same means with the words: ‘There is no right in wealth except Zakāt’. Al-‘Irāqī notes: ‘This ḥadīth is *muḍṭarib*, and impossible to interpret’ (al-‘Irāqī 1995, 109).

Whereas al-‘Irāqī believes the *matn* is impossible to interpret, al-Suyūṭī writes that this ḥadīth as an example of *muḍṭarib* is not correct, because harmonisation is possible and the text of the ḥadīth is possible to interpret so that both versions make sense. The affirmed ‘right’ in the wealth refers to the *mustaḥabb*, and the negated ‘right’ refers to the necessary (*wājib*). Moreover, because the shaykh of Sharīk is rejected and weak as a reporter, the contrasting report is given preference (al-Suyūṭī 1972, pp. 266-7).

What this example shows is that the ḥadīth masters exerted great effort in portraying contrasting texts from the Prophet as reconcilable. The explanation for this is the religious aspect of it. Accepting deficiencies in the *matn* suggests that the Prophet himself had erred, something which no Muslim ḥadīth master would want to acknowledge, even implicitly. Accepting deficiencies in the *isnād* on the other hand was tolerable, because

now the blame is on the men reporting it, not the Prophet directly. This indicates why the ḥadīth scholars like Ibn Ḥajar preferred *isnād*-based investigations rather than *matn*-ones. The *isnād*-based investigations could unearth discrepancies and defects in the reporters at most. The *matn*-based investigations however could expose Prophet Muhammad as contradictory and inconsistent. The fact that *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* has for long been accused of focussing on the *isnād* only and not the *matn* is well known. Importantly, this section indicates *why* this has been the case.

### **5.32. *Muṣaḥḥaf* & *muḥarraḥ*- the Misread and the Misspelling.**

If the opposition is due to the changing of a letter or several letters though the form of the word remains the same; then if the changing is because of the dots [on the letter] then it is *muṣaḥḥaf*. If the changing is because of the form [of the word], then [it is] *muḥarraḥ*. Knowing this type is important. Indeed al-Imām al-‘Askarī <sup>146</sup>, al-Dāraquṭnī and others have compiled books on this. It most often occurs in the text and sometimes occurs in the names [to be found] in the chains.

#### Commentary

In this relatively simple text, Ibn Ḥajar explains that two types of rejected reports can result due to the misspelling of a word;

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<sup>146</sup> The name of this book is *Taṣḥīfāt al-muḥaddithūn*. Other scholars to have written on this topic are al-Khaṭṭābī and Ibn Jawzī (al-Wajīdī 1996, 136).

(i) If there is a change in the dots (with the actual letter remaining the same), then this is called *muṣaḥḥaf*. For example, the name Shurayḥ (with the letter *shīn*) is erroneously read or written Surayḥ (with the letter *sīn*).

(ii) If the changes are because of a change in the actual letter then this is called *Muḥarraḥ*.

In other words, the word in question is mis-spelt due to the wrong letters. For example, Ḥafṣ is erroneously read Ja‘far.

Ibn Ḥajar’s classification here differs from that of his predecessors:

a. Scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ have classified the *muṣaḥḥaf* and *muḥarraḥ* according to whether the mistake has occurred due to a reading error or an audible error (1986, 283).

b. Others choose to categorise it according to whether the mistake occurred in the chain or in the text.

c. A third possible division is according to whether the change has occurred in wording or in terms of meaning. In the latter case, it will be called *muḥarraḥ*. The famous linguist Ibn Manzūr writes that the word *muḥarraḥ* derives from the root word *tahrīf*. This means ‘to change the meaning of the word’ (in Anwar 2003, 111).

As a guide to this section, it would have been useful to provide examples of mis-readings in the text or *matn*, as al-‘Irāqī does (1995, pp. 332-3). Ibn Ḥajar does not do so. Had he had done so, then it would have given the reader an idea of how mistakes could occur, and more importantly, how it could sometimes distort the meaning of the report. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ gives an example where Zayd ibn Thābit reported that ‘the Messenger of Allāh was cupped (*iḥtajama*) in the mosque.’ Instead it should read, ‘He made an enclosure (*iḥtajara*) in the mosque’ (1986, 280).

### **5.32.1. Conclusion.**

For many observers, the fact that the early Muslims preferred and favoured oral transmission over written records has been difficult to fathom. Aḥmad Amīn argued that precisely because prophetic reports were left to memory and were not recorded on paper, fabrication and corruption began very early, perhaps during the lifetime of the Prophet himself (Brown 1999, 89).

But this section does amplify the primacy of audible reports over written reports. This is because an error committed from audible reports is easier to rectify as one can refer to the original shaykh the report was taken from. The same cannot always be said for written reports. Moreover, Aḥmad Amīn fails to acknowledge the remarkable memory of the Arabs (Azami 1992, 20), as well as the fact that written records too have their pitfalls and disadvantages. Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī pointed out that ‘whoever writes becomes dependent on it’ (Azami 1977, 29). But perhaps most importantly, the early Arabs saw nothing wrong with dependence on oral transmission, like perhaps we do today. They simply never saw books as a necessary advantage. This is what Goldziher was referring to when he remarked: ‘[For the early Muslim] it was not desired to learn from books. Books are for practical use; he who wishes to gain the merit of seeking for the Prophet’s words must hunt these out from the mouth of the carriers’ (1971, 169).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> More will be mentioned on oral transmission and its worth in section 5.55, 5.61 and 5.68.

### **5. 33. *Ikhtiṣār al-ḥadīth* and *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā***

#### **Shortening the ḥadīth and transmission by meaning.**

It is not permissible to deliberately change the form of the *matn* at all, or shorten it with deletions, or by changing a word with an equivalent one, or by changing it to divert the meaning, except by a scholar aware of the indications of the words, according to the correct opinion in both issues [of shortening and transmission by meaning].

As for the shortening of the ḥadīth, the majority [of scholars] express its permissibility with the condition that the one shortening it is an expert. This is because the expert will not omit except that which has no link with the remaining text [and he will do it] in such a way that the indicated meaning will not differ and the explanation will not suffer from shortcomings, to the extent that the included and the excluded will be like two [independent] reports, or that which is included will [at least] indicate that which is excluded. This is as opposed to the ignorant, for he may omit that part which holds significance, like omitting the exception.

As for transmission by meaning, thus the difference [amongst the scholars] is well-known. Most are also of the opinion of its permissibility. Their strongest proof is the consensus on the permissibility of commentaries on *sharī'a* [sources] done by non-Arabs undertaken by their experts. So when it is permissible to change it into another language, then changing it into Arabic is [certainly] allowed.

It is said that transmission by meaning is only permissible with solitary words and not sentences. It is also said that it is permissible for he who knows the original words so that he can revert to it. Additionally, it is said it is only permissible for he

who had memorised the ḥadīth but then forgets it and the meaning still remains firm in his mind. Thus for him is the permissibility to narrate by meaning in order to explain a ruling, as opposed to someone who knows the ḥadīth by its wording. Everything here that has been mentioned concerns the permissibility and impermissibility of it. [However] there is no doubt that it is preferred that the ḥadīth is reported with its [exact] words without change. Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ said: ‘It is desirable that the practice of transmission by meaning is stopped so that those who think that they are good at it but are not do not become prevalent, as it has happened with reporters in classic and modern times. And Allāh is the provider of guidance.

#### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar refers to two issues here; shortening the ḥadīth and transmission by meaning. It is important to note that both are not part of the discussion on the rejected traditions on the basis of defamation of the narrator. Rather it seems Ibn Ḥajar has included this section unsystematically, though it does seem to have some similarity with the previous section on *muṣaḥḥaf* and *muḥarraḥ*, since both involve alteration.

### **5. 33. 1 Ikhtisār al-ḥadīth – The shortening of the ḥadīth.**

Narrators are expected to narrate the entire text of the ḥadīth, as they heard it from their source. However, circumstances can arise where the ḥadīth as a whole does not need to be mentioned. This could be because the reporter wants to highlight a certain ruling and needs to quote a ḥadīth for reference purposes. He may feel that this function can be served by only quoting part of the text. The shortening method has been employed by

classical scholars; al-Bukhārī frequently mentioned only part of the ḥadīth as the sub-headings to his compilation.

However, allowing the practice in general could open the gate to the mass distortion of the ḥadīth. As Ibn Ḥajar highlights, an un-skilled reporter could leave out critical parts of the text which would then divert the listener from the ḥadīth's true meaning.

Goldziher, it seems, has fallen to victim to this. In an attempt to show that al-Zuhrī was willing to lend his name to politically support the Umayyad regime through mass fabrication, Goldziher writes that al-Zuhrī himself had asserted that 'these Emirs forced us to write *ḥadīths*' (1971, 47). The full text of al-Zuhrī's statement exposes the true, intended meaning:

We did not originally approve of the written recording of religious knowledge until these Emirs obliged us to do so. Then we decided we should withhold it from none of the Muslims (cited in al-Sibā'ī 1998, pp. 248-9).

Not only does this quote show that the early Muslims preferred oral transmission and disliked the dependence on books alone, it also highlights the stark dangers in selectively picking one part of a quote, to the exclusion of the rest. Even Burton expresses dismay over Goldziher's tactics:

This [statement from al-Zuhrī] has nothing to do with the formation of a ministry of propaganda where, behind closed doors, officials engaged in concocting false *ḥadīths* to be disseminated among the public to further the regime's public

relations. The remark occupies its own place in the academic quarrel over the legitimacy or otherwise of preserving and transmitting the *ḥadīth* in writing (1994, 51).

This shows that sometimes the facts are there in front of us. What's crucial is how one shapes and evaluates it.

So on this basis, the *ḥadīth* scholars dislike the practice of shortening the *ḥadīth* in general, but as Ibn Ḥajar points out, it has been permitted for the skilled scholars who are well-versed. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ voiced the same sentiments in his *Muqaddima* (1986, 216), as does al-Suyūṭī in *Tadrib* (1972, 2: 103).

### **5.33.1. *Riwāya bi-al-ma'nā – Transmission by meaning.***

A constant theme that the *Nuzhah* has so far highlighted is the importance of the *isnād*. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the authenticity of a *ḥadīth* largely depended on the chain of transmission, epitomised by the fact that the conditions of a *ṣaḥīḥ* report centre around the reporter. Little is said about the conditions pertaining to the *matn*.

In this section, the *matn* comes to the forefront. After thirty-three sections, this is only the second time that the *Nuzhah* focuses entirely on the *matn* (the other was section 5.14/5 on *muḥkam* and *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*). The author clarifies the ruling on how to report the *matn*; does it have to be reported in exactly the correct form the Prophet said the words, or can it be worded differently by the reporter?



Common sense dictates that during transmission, the reporter must use the exact words he himself gained the report. As most Muslims believe, the words of the Prophet are considered as revelation (*waḥy*), attested by Allāh himself (al-Mahdī 1989, 23; Burton 1994, 17). Surely therefore, narrators are required to transmit the *exact* words of the Prophet as they heard them. Otherwise, they would be guilty of distorting the commands of Allāh.

Moreover, if each individual was permitted to use his own words when passing on the report, then undoubtedly the message and meaning would be affected. Allowing the practice of *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* would mean that by the time the report trickled down to al-Bukhārī, for example, it would not tally with what the Companions reported from the Prophet initially. Seen from this angle, one would expect a rigid ruling concerning *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*: that it should be outlawed to protect the *matn*. Instead, we find that Ibn Ḥajar here is torn between ideal and reality.

Ibn Ḥajar does show he is aware of the dangers relating to the practice. In the *Nuzḥah*, the opinion of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1139) is cited, who comments that it is preferable to prevent non-literal narration altogether. Otherwise, granting Muslims the free hand to relate the words of the Prophet would lead to a mass distortion of his message. Therefore the author does suggest that ideally, it should not be permitted.

But Ibn Ḥajar's analysis here deals more with the reality: that *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* did flourish in the early period of Islam. For example, al-Zuhārī (d. 124/742) said: 'When you have expressed the meaning [of the ḥadīth], then there is no objection' (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2: 22). Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777) said: 'Were we required to narrate traditions of the Prophet exactly as we heard it, we would not transmit a [single] saying

of his' (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2: 23). Ibn Sīrīn was reported to have said: 'I used to collect traditions from ten [narrators]; the meaning was one but the wording differed' (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 206). These three quotes show that during the earliest period of ḥadīth collection and transmission, *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* was rampant.

The practice of it meant its justification too was required. Again, early scholars suggested why *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* was acceptable. One supporting evidence cited by al-Suyūṭī is ascribed to al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī. He argues that the Qur'ān was revealed in seven *qirā'as*, and the Prophet gave permission to the Muslims to choose whichever recitation they found the easiest. The seven *qirā'as* differ slightly in wording. So, if permission is granted with the Qur'ān, then naturally it should be permissible in the ḥadīth of the Prophet (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 99). Ibn Ḥajar in the *Nuzhah* suggests that it is theoretically impossible to deny the legitimacy of *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*. If translating religious texts in other languages is perfectly legitimate – by consensual agreement – then it must be permissible to change the words of the Prophet into the Arabic language.

In fact, Muslims went to extremes to justify the practice. Take, for instance, the following example cited by al-Suyūṭī in his ḥadīth manual *Tadrīb al-rāwī*. As proof for *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*'s permissibility, he cites the incident of 'Abd Allāh ibn Sulaymān, who once said to the Prophet:

'O Prophet of Allah! I hear your sayings but I am not able to transmit it to others in exactly the same form as you said it; a letter is added or omitted'. The Prophet replied: 'So long as you do not make forbidden things legal, or legal things

forbidden, and you express the meaning, then there is nothing wrong' (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 99).

This report is not sufficient to prove the legitimacy of *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*. Firstly, we do not know as to whether the Prophet was making 'Abd Allāh ibn Sulaymān the exception to the rule, owing to his unique circumstances. Secondly, al-Sakhāwī classifies this very narration as *mudṭarib*, which is rejected (Ibn a-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 94). In fact, some scholars have also suggested that the narration is fabricated (Latīf in al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 99). Even if it is not fabricated, it is still interesting that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī – a strong, early advocate of transmission by meaning – did not mention the same narration in *al-Jāmi'*. Put simply, it is an indication of how fabrication was used for religious purposes, something which non-Muslim academics like Goldziher have for long suggested. The result of this conflict between ideal and reality is that the *Nuzḥah* lacks conviction on *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*. The section falls short of offering a rigid verdict on its ruling and instead cites different opinions on the matter. Perhaps this is a reflection of how the Muslim scholars have approached the issue with indecision and uncertainty. On the one hand, al-Suyūṭī writes that traditions relating to a specific occurrence have passed down to us, but the wording from the various Companions who heard it differs slightly. This, therefore, indicates that to narrate according to the meaning was common practice amongst the Companions (1972, 2: 99). Yet on the other hand, there is ample evidence to suggest that the Companions would narrate a ḥadīth of the Prophet, in exactly the form they heard it, but would still take precaution by reminding the auditors that this was according to how they heard it. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that 'Abd Allāh would

narrate a saying from the Prophet, and then say ‘or like that’, or ‘to that effect’ or ‘similar to that’. Even then, he would tremble in fear (1996, 2: 26). Anas ibn Mālik too would tremble after narrating the words of the Prophet (1996, 2: 28). What this tells us is that they would go to extreme lengths to transmit the words of the Prophet in exactly the same form they heard it themselves. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī adds: ‘...They [the Companions] would only add these words at the end to prevent distortion, as they knew the possible dangers of narrating by meaning. And Allāh knows best’ (1996, 2: 25-6).

### **5.33.2. Conclusion.**

With such a vast array of opinions on whether one can report traditions by meaning, clarity on the issue is essential. Daniel Brown quotes several Muslim modern scholars who advocate that *riwāya bi-al-ma‘nā* led to an influx of unsound traditions in ḥadīth literature. For instance, Aḥmad Khan believes this practice is a serious flaw in the process of transmission (cited in 1999, 88). Jayrājpūrī (1881-1955) writes that:

Since the Companions had not written ḥadīth down when they were with the Prophet, nor consciously memorised his words, the best that they could do was to transmit what they remembered. As a result, the muḥaddīthūn had no choice but to accept such transmissions (cited in Brown 1999, 89).

Ibn Ḥajar does at least attempt to offer that clarity. He states in the *Nuzhah* that the whole discussion revolves around the *permissibility* of *riwāya bi-al-ma‘nā*. All scholars agree

that ideally, the practice of *riwāya bi-al-lafz* is preferred. Hence, most scholars see *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* as an option and not a norm.

Secondly, the *Nuzhah* tries to offer clarity by allowing the practice, but with strict conditions. Here, Ibn Ḥajar depends on the writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī who suggests that practice of *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* is permissible, but with strict conditions.

These conditions are:

- i. That the narrator is well-versed with meanings of the word (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2: 25-6).
- ii. He has ample insight into the topic of the narration (Ibid.).
- iii. He has a firm understanding of Arabic in all of its variations and dialects (Ibid.).
- iv. That the text being transmitted must be clear and known. If the meaning of the ḥadīth is hidden, ambiguous and open to interpretation, then it is not permissible to narrate by meaning (Ibid.).
- v. That the narrator is permitted to change individual words but not whole sentences
- vi. It is said that it is only permissible for he who can recall the exact words so that he can use them if needed (Ibid.)
- vii. It is also said that it is permissible for he who remembers the ḥadīth, forgot the words, but still remembers the meaning well (Ibid.)
- viii. Some scholars have allowed the practice when the saying refers to someone other than the Prophet (al-Suyūfī 1972, 2: 99).

In my opinion, the issue is much clearer than Ibn Ḥajar has depicted and indeed many other ḥadīth scholars. Quite simply, we must venture into the precise *type* of ḥadīth which

is subject to this practice. This is instrumental in determining the permissibility and non-permissibility of *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā*. Numerous scholars – classical and contemporary – have divided the traditions according to nature of whether it is a saying, action or affirmation of the Prophet. Al-Mahdī writes:

The *sunna* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) encompasses his sayings, actions, affirmations and descriptions of his physical and moral characteristics (1989, 11).

When the Companions reported the actions, affirmations and characteristics of the Prophet, they used their own words, which is why narrations relating to the same theme differed in wording. However, when the Companions reported the actual *sayings* of the Prophet, they took utmost care to narrate the transmission exactly as they heard it from the Prophet. This also explains why many Companions would tremble as they related the words of the Prophet; it was an expression of how important they deemed it to report his words exactly as he said them. This also explains why many experts expressed leniency in allowing individuals to transmit narrations using their own words; it specifically referred to non-verbal traditions of the Prophet.

To prove this thesis, consider the following example. The Prophet said:

If Allah wishes good for a person, then He grants him the understanding of religion.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Man yurid Allāh bihī khayran yufaqqihhu fī-al-dīn.*

This is a verbal ḥadīth of the Prophet (*al-ḥadīth al-qawlī*). Al-Bukhārī <sup>149</sup>, Muslim <sup>150</sup>, al-Tirmidhī <sup>151</sup>, Ibn Māja <sup>152</sup>, al-Dārimī <sup>153</sup>, Aḥmad <sup>154</sup> and Mālik <sup>155</sup> have all reported this tradition. The wording of each narration is identical, with no addition or omission. All narrations express exactly the same meaning with exactly the same words. This is because it was a saying of the Prophet (rather than his action) which therefore led to the reporters expressing *more* accuracy in how they reported it.

Even in prophetic reports that are not considered his sayings but a description of his actions, the reporters still showed a considerable amount of uniformity. Take the example of the ‘method of revelation’ tradition, which describes how divine revelation would descend upon the Prophet. Al-Imām al-Bukhārī records the following ḥadīth as the second entry in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*:

Narrated ‘Ā’isha, that al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām asked Allāh's Apostle: ‘O Allah's Apostle! How is the Divine Inspiration revealed to you?’ Allah's Apostle replied: ‘Sometimes it is (revealed) like the ringing of a bell, this form of Inspiration is the most difficult of all and then this state passes off after I have grasped what is inspired. Sometimes the Angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I

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<sup>149</sup> P. 26. al-Bukhārī in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 1. (Book, of Knowledge). Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

<sup>150</sup> p. 719. Muslim in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 4. (Book of Zakāt). Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

<sup>151</sup> p. 26. al-Tirmidhī in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 14. (Book of Knowledge). Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

<sup>152</sup> p. 80. Ibn Māja in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 17. (Introduction). Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

<sup>153</sup> p. 74. al-Dārimī, 1: 74. in Introduction; ‘the necessity to follow scholars’.

<sup>154</sup> p. 92. Aḥmad in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 22. (Chains of the Syrians). Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

<sup>155</sup> p. 901. Mālik in *al-Kutub al-Sitta*. Vol. 20. (Book of Fate) Dār al-Da‘wa Publications, Istanbul, Turkey, 1981.

grasp whatever he says.’ ‘Ā’isha added: ‘Verily I saw the Prophet being inspired divinely on a very cold day and noticed the sweat dropping from his forehead [as the Inspiration was over].

This same ḥadīth has been recorded by several scholars of ḥadīth, including Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, Aḥmad and Mālik. The wording and sequence in each of these compilations slightly differ, but each ḥadīth in all of these sources;

- i. Compare the revelation to the ‘ringing of a bell’. In fact all narrations describe this phenomenon with exactly the same words (*salsala al-jaras*)
- ii. Mention that this form of revelation is the hardest for the Prophet to endure (*wa huwa ashaddu ‘alayya*).
- iii. Use the same verb (*wa ‘ā*) to describe how the Prophet would ‘grasp’ the revelation that had come to him.

These approach of mine can help mute the large barrage of criticism *riwāya bi-al-ma’nā* leads to. Some observers have suggested that *riwāya bi-al-ma’nā* was an ideal opportunity for fabricators to inundate ḥadīth literature with forged traditions. In theory at least, such suggestions seem to have some basis. The formal and universal writing of prophetic traditions also would have ensured that *riwāya bi-al-ma’nā* would not have to exist at all.

To conclude, the section serves as a reminder that knowledge is not the prerogative of Muslims exclusively or non-Muslims exclusively. They both possess it and they both



have an equal right to earn it and indeed share it. Ibn Ḥajar warns against the practice of the shortening a report that leads to its distortion and Goldziher did exactly that. Goldziher warned that the early period of ḥadīth collection was marked by forgery for religious purposes and the report of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sulaymān suggests exactly that.

### **5.34. *Sharḥ al-gharīb*- the Commentary of the Rare Words.**

Thus if the meaning is unclear – that the word is used rarely – then the compiled books in the commentary of rare words are required, like Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām’s work; and this is unarranged. Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma arranged the book in order of letters. The most comprehensive book is the book of Abū ‘Ubayd al-Harawī. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī edited this work and made improvements to it. And by al-Zamkhasharī is a book called *al-Fā’iq* [which is] arranged well. Then Ibn al-Athīr gathered all in *al-Nihāya*; this is the easiest book to use as a reference, with only a few places where additional help is required.

If a particular word is used often, but [in the ḥadīth] it is used in a specific context, then compiled works like *Sharḥ ma‘ānī al-akbār* (commentaries on the meanings of the report) and *Bayān al-mushkil* (explanation of the difficult) are needed. Many scholars have written books in this field, like al-Ṭahāwī, al-Khāṭṭabī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and others.

### Commentary

This section certainly amplifies the opinion that Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhah* was aimed at students embarking on ḥadīth studies for the first time. It explains which types of works one can refer to find the explanation of rare words found in the text of prophetic reports, and some of the scholars who have authored such works.<sup>156</sup>

One may reach the conclusion that the existence of reference books called *Sharḥ al-gharīb*s suggests that the prophetic reports are generally difficult to understand and fathom. The Muslim scholars reply that to a large extent, this is not the case. Firstly, the Prophet himself ensured that his words were not to subject to misunderstanding and would often repeat a sentence thrice (Azami 1977, 9). Secondly, it was the rapid expansion of Islam to non-Arab lands that really led to the need of such supporting literature, in the third generation of Muslims (Kamali 2005, 123). This is reflected by the fact that the first works on reference books called *Sharḥ al-gharīb* appeared in the first part of the second Islamic century.

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<sup>156</sup> Scholars who have written on the commentary of rare words include:

(i) Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim's (d. 224/838) book, though this was not arranged in order. It took him forty years to compile this book (Mighālī 2003, 582). Later, Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) arranged the book in order. (ii) Abū 'Ubayd al-Harawī's (d. 401/1010) book, which is more comprehensive than the above. Al-Ḥāfiz Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī (d. 581/1185) edited this work and made improvements to it. (iii) Al-Zamkhasharī's (d. 538/1143) book called *al-Fā'iq*, which Ibn Ḥajar praises for its good, systematic order. (iv) Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1209) then gathered all previous works in the field into one book, called *al-Nihāya*. Later, al-Suyūfī summarised this work and improved on it in *al-Durr al-nathīr fī talkhīs nihāyat Ibn al-Athīr*.

Scholars with works in this field not mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar include; (v) al-Imām al-Ḥāfiz al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl Ibn Kharsha al-Baṣrī (d. 203/818) with *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*. He is thought to be the first person to write on this discipline (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 126, al-Suyūfī 1972, 2: 185). (vi) Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthanna (d. 209/824). (vii) al-Imām Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) in *Iṣlāḥ al-khaṭa'* (Mighālī 2003, 582). (viii) 'Abd al-Ghāfir ibn Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd al-Ghāfir (d. 529/1134). His book was called *Majma' al-gharā'ib* (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 127). (ix) Qāsim ibn Thābit ibn Ḥazm al-Sarkasī (d. 313/925). His *al-Dalā'il* covered those difficult prophetic reports not to be found in the compilations of Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim and Ibn Qutayba (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 128).

Scholars who have written on the commentary of difficult texts include: (i) al-Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī in *Sharḥ ma'ānī al-āthār*. (ii) al-Khaṭṭābī in *Ma'ālim al-sunan* and *I'tām al-ḥadīth 'alā al-Bukhārī*. (iii) Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Tamhīd* and *al-Istidhkār*. (iv) Ibn Fūrak (Mighālī 2003, 582).

### 5.35. *Jahāla* - the Unknown.

Then the unknown [state] of the reporter – this is the eighth reason for defamation – can appear for two reasons. One of them is that the narrator has numerous [means of] references, like [his] name, lineage, title, occupation, description or ancestry. He becomes known by one of them, only then to be mentioned with a name he is not known with, for one reason or another. So it is thus assumed it is someone else [when in fact it is the same person]. Hence, his state becomes unknown. The scholars have written in this discipline *al-Muwaddāh li-awhām wa-al-tafrīq*; al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] has done excellently in it. He was preceded by ‘Abd al-Ghanī, then al-Ṣawrī<sup>157</sup>. An example [of an unknown narrator] is Muḥammad ibn al-Sā’ib ibn Bishr al-Kalbī. Some have ascribed his name to his grandfather and have said ‘Muḥammad ibn Bishr’. Others have named him Ḥammād ibn al-Sā’ib. Some have ascribed him to his son [by calling him] Abū al-Naḍr and Abū Sa’īd and Abū Hishām<sup>158</sup>. It became [to the point] where it was assumed these were a group of reporters, though it is one. He who is not aware of the reality of the matter will be oblivious of this.

The other [reason] is that the reporter sometimes only narrates rarely and thus reports are not taken from him often.<sup>159</sup> The scholars have written [compilations called] *waḥdān*; namely those reporters from whom only one narrate, even if he is

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<sup>157</sup> This is Ibn Sa’īd al-Azdī al-Misrī (d. 441/1049), one of the teachers of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī ; the name of the book is *Īdāh al-ishkāl* (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 131).

<sup>158</sup> Al-Munāwī adds that he has also been referred to as ‘Aṭya al-‘Awfī (1999, 2: 132).

<sup>159</sup> Abū al-Ashrā’ al-Dārimī, for example, rarely reported narrations and only Ḥammād ibn Salama was known to report from him (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 89: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 322). Waḥb ibn Khanbash al-Ṭā’ī, ‘Āmir ibn Shahr, ‘Urwa ibn Muḍarris, Muḥammad ibn Safwān, Muḥammad ibn Ṣayfī are all examples of Companions from whom only Sha’bī reported from (al-Munāwī 1999, 135). Muḥammad ibn Abī Safwān al-Thaqafī from the Successors only reported to Thawrī (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 322).

named. From [the scholars] who have compiled [in this area] are Muslim, al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān<sup>160</sup> and others.

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar returns to the division of reports based on defamation in the reporters. *Jahāla* is where the ḥadīth is rejected because of surrounding confusion regarding who the reporter actually is. The author indicates two reasons why this ignorance may come about, too many names and lack of ḥadīth reporting.

Ibn Ḥajar's short account of *jahāla* avoids the controversy surrounding the area. The impression given by his writings is that the obscurity of the reporter is of no or little fault of himself. Rather, he is a victim of the mistake of others.

What is clear however from other scholars is that the practice of naming a reporter with an unclear name is sometimes done with ill intent. This is called *tadlīs al-shuyūkh* (see section 5.21.1). Forgers too can indulge in this practice to avoid detection. Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Shāmī had fifty different aliases, and as al-Munāwī writes, possibly one hundred (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 133).

Perhaps because the ill-intent now causes it to be classified as a separate type of ḥadīth such as *mawḍūʿ* and *tadlīs*, Ibn Ḥajar chose not to expand on the cases where *jahāla* takes on a more contentious form.

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<sup>160</sup> Al-Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿĀmir (d. 303/915).

### 5.36. *Mubham* – The Obscure.

Or the [ambiguity of the reporter can occur] because the reporter is not named from the one he is reporting from due to short hand, like ‘such and such informed me’ or ‘the shaykh informed me’ or ‘the man informed me’ or ‘the son of such and such informed me’ and its likes. Identifying the obscure [person’s] name is achieved by his mentioning in another *isnād* with his name. The scholars have written *mubhamāt* in this field. The ḥadīth of the obscure is not accepted until he is named, because the condition of acceptance is the credibility of the reporter. When a person whose name is obscure cannot be identified, how will his credibility be known? And similarly, the report will not be accepted when his name is obscured with a credible title, like ‘the authoritative informed me’. This is because he may be credible according to him but not to others. This is the most correct opinion in the matter. Because of this point, the *mursal* is not accepted, even if a reliable person does the *irsāl* with certainty. It is said that the ḥadīth will be accepted, in adherence to the apparent state, since defamation (*jarh*) is not the default state. It is [also] said that it is accepted if the one doing it is a [reputed] scholar or someone who shares the same school of thought. This is not part of the discussions on ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*. And Allāh provides religious guidance.

If the reporter names the source, and one reporter is solitary in reporting from him, then this is *majhūl al-‘ayn*. This is like *mubham* [in that it is rejected] unless someone other than him verifies him, according to the most sound opinion. Likewise, it will be accepted if the sole person reporting from him is an authority.

**If two or more report from him but he is not verified as credible, then this is *majhūl al-ḥāl*, [also called] *mastūr*. A group of scholars have accepted such a narration without condition, though the majority has rejected this [stance]. The detail is that the narration of a *mastūr* and its likes in which there is possibility will neither be unequivocally accepted or rejected. Rather it is paused upon until its state is clarified, as Imām al-Ḥaramayn has asserted and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ regarding someone who defames someone without a detailed reason.**

*Commentary*

Three different types of rejected reports are identified here by Ibn Ḥajar; *mubham*, *majhūl al-ʿayn* and *majhūl al-ḥāl*. *Mubham* is where the narrator is not clarified in the ḥadīth. *Majhūl al-ʿayn* is where the narrator's name is mentioned, but only one person narrates from him. Examples are such reporters include ʿAmr Dhū Murr, Jabbār al-Ṭāʾī and Saʿīd ibn Dhū Ḥuddān: only Abū Ishāq al-Sabīʿī has reported from these men (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 113). *Majhūl al-ḥāl* (also called *mastūr*) is where two or more narrate from an individual, but he is yet to be authenticated. Three crucial points are worthy of closer inspection in this particular section in the *Nuzhah*.

- a. The rulings related to these three types of report do suggest the rigidity employed by the ḥadīth masters. This is certainly shown with *majhūl al-ḥāl*. Two people are known to report from him, yet the majority say the report is still rejected, or at least paused upon.
- b. As it has already been shown in the *Nuzhah*, this section reflects the role seniority plays in the discipline. *Majhūl al-ʿayn* is rejected, unless, Ibn Ḥajar writes, 'the sole person reporting from him is an authority.' Once an individual reaches a certain status and ability, then he becomes protected and enjoys a different set of rules to others. In

particular, the ‘authorities’ being protected with the ruling of *majhūl al-‘ayn* are al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ notes that al-Imām al-Bukhārī has included the reports of those from whom only one has narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: only Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim has reported from Mirdās al-Aslamī. The same can be said of Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: only Abū Salma ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān has reported from Rabī‘a ibn Ka‘b al-Aslamī (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 113). This suggests that the rule of rejection is not universal but particular to individual cases and circumstances, based on seniority. As with the ruling on *mu‘allaq*, everyone is expected to adhere to one rule and the likes of al-Bukhārī and Muslim enjoy another.

c. Thirdly, Ibn Ḥajar’s analysis refers to cases where the name of the reporter is not clarified in the ḥadīth. The section does not go beyond this and no real explanation is offered as to *why* such circumstances arise. Nor is he the only Muslim scholar to offer such an objective approach to the obscurities in names: the same can be said of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and of al-Munāwī.

The answer to the question – to some extent – is politics. Due to political unrest and fear of persecution, some ḥadīth reporters were sometimes fearful of mentioning their source (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 236).

### **5.36.1. Conclusion.**

To conclude, an appreciation of the discipline in light of the political and social climate of the time would help us understand *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* better. The loss of such an approach is undoubtedly shown in this section on the obscurities, where, as it has been suggested, the political climate can have ramifications on the method of ḥadīth transmission.

One can appreciate why the *Nuzhah* did not expand on such crucial issues. It was meant to be an introduction to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, not to historical studies. If Ibn Ḥajar’s approach was so narrowly focussed on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* – remember that he hardly ever entertains discussions related to *fiqh* in the *Nuzhah* – there was clearly no need to discuss why reporters often hid their sources due to political reasons.

The target audience is perhaps another factor. As an introduction to the discipline for students embarking on the studies for the first time, discussions on politics would perhaps cause unease and alarm for the reader. Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nuzhah* was there to express the perfection and rigidity of the field, not to explore the darker side of it.

But importantly, did Ibn Ḥajar at least acknowledge the effects of politics on ḥadīth transmission? In his works, he hardly did. The only place where politics gets a mention in the *Nuzhah* is where the author acknowledges that forgery was done ‘in pursuit of pleasing some leaders.’

This, in many ways, was typical of most Muslim scholars. They were eager to paint a dividing line between religion and politics and to play down the importance of politics in ḥadīth transmission. A divorce from political life was the norm for the ḥadīth masters, according to Siddiqi and his likes. Siddiqi points out that none of the Companions known for ḥadīth transmission participated in the civil unrests that erupted after the Prophet passed away. He adds that:

Abū Dharr, Muḥammad ibn Maslama, Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, Abū al-‘Āliya, al-Muṭarrif, al-Ḥasan ibn Yasār, Masrūq and many other Companions and Successors kept entirely out of politics. Some preferred prison and torture to



lending support to any of the warring factions against their own conviction. Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, for instance, was flogged by Ibn al-Zubayr... al-Imām Mālik was whipped on the orders of al-Manṣūr, because some of his legal judgements did not suit the Caliph (1993, 39).

Similarly according to Azami, the discipline of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* as a whole worked independently from the field of politics. He cites the example of Ibn Ḥanbal and his clash with the creeds of the Caliph and Muʿtazila sect. He asked the Caliph to bring forward a single ḥadīth of the Prophet that supported the official view. But the Caliph was unable to do so. Azami purports that if fabrication was so widespread, and – in the opinion of Schacht (1959, 164) – prophetic reports were produced and forged on demand to prove a particular religious point – then certainly the Caliph would not have struggled to prove Ibn Ḥanbal wrong by producing evidence (Azami 1996, 2).

However, the reality is somewhat different. There were cases where politics did mix with religion. Ever since the Prophet passed away, politics has always been a source of dispute and indeed bloodshed for the Muslims. The restriction of political power to Quraysh, the hints of nepotism from ʿUthmān and his violent death, the Companions fighting one another in the ‘Battle of the Camel’, the stand-off between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī and the tragedy of Karbalā - who can confidently claim that these political and violent clashes did not affect the theological affairs of Muslims? Al-Sibāʿī wishes to dismiss the relationship between ḥadīth and politics, but also admits that the political tension between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī was the starting point for forgery in ḥadīth (1993, 93). ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam was known to forge prophetic reports in favour of the Umayyads, whereas other

traditionists – though not necessarily forgers – did enjoy limited patronage from the state, such as ‘Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, Rajā’ ibn Ḥayawayh and Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī (Siddiqi 1993, 90).

These examples are the ones which Muslim scholars will admit to. Then there are the cases highlighted by non-Muslim scholars like Goldziher, which highlight the close interaction between politics and the transmission of ḥadīth. He suggested that the Umayyad regime used ḥadīth as a vehicle to strengthen and consolidate their grasp on power. The fact the some reporters were unwilling to name their sources suggests that Goldziher may have had some basis to his research. He famously suggested that al-Zuhrī forged the report encouraging Muslims to visit the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem in order to help ‘Abd al-Malik against his political opponent ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr (1971, II: 44-5).<sup>161</sup> In fact, Goldziher suggested that ḥadīth literature told us very little about the

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<sup>161</sup> Goldziher wrote:

‘When the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival ‘Abd Allāh b. Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he found recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious hajj of Qubbat al-Ṣakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Ka’ba ordained in Islamic Law. The pious theologian al-Zuhrī was given the task of justifying the politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying back to the Prophet, according to which there are three mosques to which people may make pilgrimage; those in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. This ḥadīth shows its sharp tendentiousness in an addition which, apparently, belonged to its original form but was later neglected by leveling orthodoxy in this and related sayings ‘and a prayer in the Bayt al-Maqdis of Jerusalem is better than a thousand prayers in other holy places’ i.e. even Mecca and Medina’ (1971, pp. 44-45).

Guillaume made a similar claim in his works too (1924, pp. 47-48).

In reply, the Muslims have tried to mute the seriousness of this claim. Al-Sibā’ī makes several important remarks regarding Goldziher’s observations. Firstly, ‘Abd al-Malik did not build the Dome of the Rock; his son al-Walīd did, according to historians such as Ibn ‘Asākir, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Kathīr. Secondly, the supposed forged ḥadīth extolling the virtue of travelling to Jerusalem could not have been forged by al-Zuhrī. This is because identical reports have been recorded in the six canonical collection, with chains of transmission featuring reporters other than al-Zuhrī. Thirdly, if the ḥadīth was supposedly forged by al-Zuhrī to encourage people to perform the Pilgrimage at Jerusalem, the *matn* of the report hardly suited and assisted this objective. The report only mentions how the mosque should be visited and how prayers should be held in it. If, as Goldziher suggests, the place was meant to be a rival to Makka

Prophet, and more about the Muslims wrestling with their political and social circumstances in the first and second century.

So despite reassurances from the Muslim academics, it is difficult to dismiss the importance politics played in early ḥadīth transmission. Like many treatises on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, such controversies are avoided by Ibn Ḥajar in the *Nuzḥah*, in favour of an objective portrayal of the discipline. We are told of the great rank of pious traditionists such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and Mālik ibn Anas, but there are no clues why they all faced political trouble or even persecution by their respective state leaders. Such accounts are left to the history compilations rather than the ḥadīth books.

## **5. 37. *Bid‘a* – The Innovation.**

**Then the innovation – and this is the ninth reason for defamation in the narrator – either it necessitates disbelief, in that he believes in something which results in disbelief, or the innovation necessitates *fisq* (deviance). Thus the majority do not accept the first, though it is said that it is accepted unequivocally and it is [also] said that it is accepted if the person does not believe in the permissibility of lying to assist his opinion. The reality is that every report of the *mubtadi‘* that leads to disbelief will not be rejected. This is because every sect claims that the opposing party is heretical and sometimes they exaggerate the claim by declaring them disbelievers. If this opinion was to be accepted generally, then it would necessitate that all sects are disbelievers. Hence the trusted opinion is that the narration of someone who denies**

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for ḥajj, why was there no mention of *when* the mosque should be visited, namely in the season of the Pilgrimage? (al-Sibā‘ī 1998, 243-7)

the multiply-attested (*mutawātir*) matters of *sharʿīa*, known in religion through conviction will be rejected. And similar is the case for one who does the opposite (in that he believes in something which is definitively known to be forbidden in *sharʿīa*). As for someone who is not of this attribute, coupled with the fact that he is careful in what he reports with awareness and piety, then there is no hindrance to accepting his report.

In the second – namely the one whose innovative beliefs do not lead to disbelief – there lies a dispute too in accepting and rejecting it. Thus it is said that it is unequivocally rejected. This opinion is far-fetched. The most common reason given for its rejection is that narrating from him will be promoting his belief and will be an approval of it. If this is the case, then the report of a *mubtadiʿ* in which a non-*mubtadiʿ* also features should also be rejected. It is also said that the report of the agent is accepted in general, except if he believes in the permissibility of lying, like what has already been mentioned. It is also said the *mubtadiʿ*'s report is accepted if he does not propagate his *bidʿa*. This is because appeal to his innovation may result in distorting the narrations [in his favour] and moulding it to comply with the requirements of his innovation. This is the most correct opinion. Ibn Ḥibbān has deviated by claiming the consensus on accepting the agent's report without further investigation, when he does not propagate it. Yes, most are of the opinion of accepting such a report, but if he reports that which strengthens his innovation, then it is rejected according to the preferred, majority opinion. This is what al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Yaʿqūb al-Jurzjānī, the shaykh of Abū Dāwūd has clarified, as well as al-Nasāʾī in his book *Maʿrifat al-ʿilal*. In this he said when describing the

different grades of a narrator, of which one of these is ‘turning away from the truth’ (*zā’igh ‘an al-ḥaqq*):

If such a person speaks the truth and his ḥadīth is not *munkar*<sup>162</sup>, even if he is a *mubtadi*’, then there is nothing to stop us from accepting his narration as long as he does not promote his innovative beliefs openly.

This opinion is strong because the reason why we reject a sectarian’s ḥadīth is when the text of the ḥadīth apparently promotes his own innovative beliefs, even if he is not an open propagator. And Allāh knows best.

#### Commentary

The author tackles the debate regarding the narration of an agent of *bid’a* (*mubtadi*’) by dividing the innovation into two types. The first, *bid’a mukaffara*, is where the belief in question is so severe and deviant that it can no longer be considered as part of Islam. For instance, if a person believes that Muḥammad is not the last Messenger of God, a matter which is proven by unanimous consensus in Islam, then the innovation is deemed as *bid’a mukaffara*. The second, *bid’a mufassaqa*, is where the belief in question leads to deviance or wrongdoing but not disbelief, like believing in the created nature of the Qur’ān (*khalq al-Qur’ān*). Implicitly, this also shows the role the *ijmā’* plays: that to some extent, the consensus decides what is considered as innovation and what is not. Owing to the importance of this issue, it is necessary to first begin with outlining the seriousness of *bid’a* amongst the ḥadīth scholars. This is so we can evaluate whether Ibn

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<sup>162</sup> This is where a weak narrator has been opposed by someone more authoritative.

Ḥajar's own writings on the issue reflect this. To conclude we will reflect on the strengths of his arguments as well as the weaknesses.

### **5.37.1 The seriousness of *bid'a*.**

It is impossible to offer a full picture of how serious the issue of *bid'a* has been viewed in *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. A few points will be presented to at least show how a ḥadīth containing a *mubtadi'* reporter in its *isnād* is one of the most problematic in the discipline.

a. Ibn Sīrīn famously remarked:

People never used to ask others to name the *isnāds*. But when the discord (*fitna*) happened, they said: 'name your men.' Thus the people of the *sunna* would be viewed and their reports would be accepted, and the people of *bid'a* would be viewed and their reports would be discarded.<sup>163</sup>

Two points can be deduced from this remark. Firstly, *isnāds* *did* exist before Ibn Sīrīn's (d. 110/729) time. This is because he only negated the naming of the *isnād*, not the existence of them.<sup>164</sup> Secondly, and importantly for our analysis here on *bid'a*, the remark explicitly ascribes the rise of ḥadīth examination to the appearance of heretical Muslims.

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<sup>163</sup> The Introduction to *Sahih Muslim*. Cited in Khalifa 1983, 10.

<sup>164</sup> This saying has attracted more attention than it perhaps deserves, because many western observers see it as the pivotal means by which one can identify when the use of *isnāds* began. Schacht writes that the *fitna* (civil war) being referred to was the killing of Umayyad Caliph Walīd ibn Yazīd (126) (1959, 37). Juynboll believes that 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr's seizing control of Hijaz, which came to an end in 73/692, was the *fitna* being referred to. Conveniently, he dismisses a report from al-Bukhārī which clearly identifies the 'first *fitna*' as the killing of 'Uthmān (in 35/656) as forged (1996, III, 305). Azami shows that al-Shawkānī's work contained 42 spurious traditions about the Prophet, 38 regarding the first three caliphs, 96 about 'Alī and Fāṭima and 14 about Mu'āwiya (1992, 217). This suggests that the *fitna* started much earlier than otherwise depicted. Thus the quote is far from conclusive in suggesting that the *fitna* led to the use of *isnāds* amongst Muslims. Ibn Sīrīn could have easily meant that the *isnād* became common practice after

b. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī refers to a confession made by a shaykh from the Khārijites who said:

...look whom you take your religion from. For when we used to create a forged lie, we turned it into a ḥadīth. (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 1:210)

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī suggests that the people of innovation should be abhorred since they were the one of the main culprits of forgery. On this basis, if there is any type of ḥadīth which requires precaution and close examination on the part of the ḥadīth masters, it is *bid'a*.

c. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cites Sufyān al-Thawrī, who said: 'Allāh will not benefit someone from what has been heard from an innovator. And he who dictates from an innovator is diminishing Islam bit by bit' (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 1: 210).

### **5.37.2. The Nuzhah on *bid'a*.**

Ibn Ḥajar's section on *bid'a* is a prime example of his diplomacy and pragmatism. He suggests that despite its seriousness, one cannot simply avoid reports from heretical Muslims. He explains that every sect accuses the other sect of being heretical and deviant from the truth. Sometimes they even exaggerate their claims and refer to the opposing groups as infidels. So if the ḥadīth was not to be accepted, then sects would not accept most reports since each sect would deem the others as disbelievers. A vast amount of

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the *fitna*, and that they did exist in less stringent form before this point. The quote certainly does not translate as 'they used not to bother to ask for the *isnād*...', like Burton has suggested (1994, 106). For an in-depth analysis of the origins of chains, the works of Azami (1992, 212-217), Juynboll (1996, III: 303-311) and Robson (1955) are worthy of mention.

ḥadīth literature would be disregarded purely on the basis that each sect considered the other as unworthy of acceptance. ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī highlighted this point clearly when he remarked that if all Kūfans narrations were to be rejected [i.e. the Shī‘as], then the ḥadīth of the Prophet would all but disappear (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 129). Not the first time in the *Nuzḥah*, we see that the rulings in the discipline aim to create a larger source as possible for ḥadīth literature. In this particular section, it means that the report of a *mubtadi‘* is treated with cautionary acceptance.

This is not to say that the reports of all heretical Muslims are accepted. Rather, Ibn Ḥajar offers guidelines to clarify whose reports can be accepted and whose reports should be avoided. For example, he states that the report of a heretic will be accepted, so long as the reporter firmly believes in the prohibition of lying in prophetic narrations, since all scholars agree that the report of someone as such will be rejected. On this basis, the narrations of the Khaṭṭābiyya sect are not accepted.<sup>165</sup> Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfa stated that to use the testimony of the people of innovation (*ahl al-ahwā’*) is permissible, except from a specific group of the Rāfida (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 125-6). Abū Yūsuf allowed the narrations of innovators, except the Khaṭṭābiyya and Qadariyya sects (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 126).

This condition shows insight and sense from Ibn Ḥajar. On the one hand, it allows ḥadīth masters to use the reports from heretical Muslims (except the most serious ones) which then extends the pool of material they can work from. On the other hand, the refusal to accept all their reports shows the seriousness they attached to *bid‘a*.

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<sup>165</sup> This was a group named after their leader, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb from Kūfa. He was of the belief that ‘Alī was a senior deity and that Ja‘far al-Šādiq was a junior deity.



### **5.37.2. The Shooting Stars traditions.**

However, it is the second condition which Ibn Ḥajar mentions that is more problematic. The *Nuzhah* states that the agent's report is accepted if he does not openly propagate his bid'a.<sup>166</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī records a saying attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak, which shows how this condition works in practice:

...Yaḥyā ibn 'Uthmān narrates from Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād who said: 'I heard Ibn al-Mubārak say when asked why he left the narration of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd but accepted the narration of Hishām al-Dustawā'ī and Sa'īd [though all were innovators], “‘Amr used to propagate his beliefs” (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1998, 127).

A similar expression is recorded from Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who again accepted the innovators who did not openly propagate their beliefs but rejected those who did (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, no guideline or methodology has been offered by the ḥadīth scholars as to how one can establish whether an innovator *is* promoting his beliefs in the narration. Presumably, traditions relating to the Islamic doctrines will be rejected, and ones relating to less important matters – perhaps on the respect for parents for instance – will be accepted. But there will inevitably be a grey area in between where it becomes difficult to establish whether a covert attempt to promote a certain belief is being attempted. In short,

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<sup>166</sup> An example of propagation would be when a narrator belonging to the Rāfiḍī sect narrates a ḥadīth extolling the virtue of 'Alī when no one else has reported its likes (al-'Uthaymin 2002, 239).

there is no clear method one can employ to establish whether there is a correlation between the *matn* and the narrator's own belief and doctrine.

Adrien Leites has exposed this frailty quite comprehensively (in Motzki (ed.) 2000, 49-66). By analysing the 'Shooting Stars' traditions, he has argued that the different beliefs held by the opposing Sunnis and Shī'as about the nature of the Prophet has been expressed in subtle differences in various narrations.

Leites begins his analysis by citing the works of Tor Andrae, whose works showed that the figure of Muḥammad gave rise to two different conceptions of his prophethood (2000, 54) amongst Sunni and Shī'a scholars. According to the former, the Prophet is a mere man invested with the function of prophethood at a certain point in his life. According to the latter, Muḥammad is a superhuman being invested with the attribute of prophethood through an election preceding his terrestrial existence. This dichotomy forms the basis of Leites's own interpretations.

With these two conceptions in mind, Leites offers an analysis of the traditions relating to the Shooting Stars. The Shooting Stars traditions relate to the practices which used to occur before the emergence of Islam. In the period prior to the appearance of the Prophet, the demons had a certain amount of autonomy to roam throughout the skies, but with the appearance of Islam, their powers were neutralised by shooting stars. Leites shows that the many traditions relating to this event and all have slight variations in the words of narration. But it is possible to divide them into two categories; those which state that the demonic powers ceased when the Prophet was born and secondly, those which state that it ceased when Muḥammad officially was bestowed with prophethood, at the age of forty (Ibid.).

Interestingly, Leites notes that the traditions which state that the ‘old order’ of demonic powers ceased with the prophethood of Muḥammad (i.e. when he reached forty) consist of mainly Sunni narrators (in Motzki (ed.) 2000, 55). For instance, the report by Yūnus ibn Bukayr and Ziyād ibn ‘Abd Allāh from Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the words of narration read ‘When the Messenger of God was about to receive his call and when his mission was about to start’ (Ibid.). A report by Ibn Sa’d mentions the same meaning, as does a further report by Abū Nu‘aym (The words are ‘When the day came on which the Messenger of God started the prophecy’).

Leites identifies that the only Sunni report which links the shooting stars with the birth of Muḥammad is via the chain of the Mawlā of ‘Uthmān Ma‘rūf ibn Kharrabūdh. The words of the tradition are:

Iblīs used to travel across the seven heavens. When Jesus was born, he was debarred from [entering] the three [upper] heavens but still had access to the four [lower] heavens. When the Messenger of God was born, he was debarred from [entering] the seven heavens, and the devils were pelted with stars (2000, 55).

The Sunni reports ascribe the occurrence of the shooting stars when Muḥammad was bestowed with prophethood at the age of forty, but Leites shows that all the Shī‘a reports ascribe the same occurrence with the birth of Muḥammad. For example, in a report adduced by Ibn Bābawayh, with a chain going back to Abān ibn ‘Uthmān (a disciple of Ja‘far al-Šādiq and Mūsā al-Kāzim), Āmina tells the story about the day Muḥammad was born:

When he fell onto the earth, he protected himself against [its impurities] with his hands and knees, and raised his head towards the sky. A light came out of me which illuminated what is between the heavens and the earth. The devils were pelted with stars, and they were debarred from [entering] the heavens (Ibid).

A question remains over the sole Sunni report of Ibn Kharrabūdh, which states that the shooting stars are associated with the birth of Muḥammad. This report aside, the pattern is uniform in that all the Sunni reports refer to the shooting stars with prophethood, and all the Shī‘a reports refer to it with the birth of Muḥammad. But Leites shows that Ibn Kharrabūdh himself has Shī‘a tendencies, thus completing the symmetry of the two contrasting camps of narrations. He writes:

In Sunni *rijāl* literature, Ibn Kharrabūdh appears as a rather controversial figure, although it is his mere reliability as a transmitter that seems to have been questioned. It is Shī‘a *rijāl* literature that provides us with a decisive piece of information, namely that Ibn Kharrabūdh was a disciple of Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, and that he played an important role in the transmission of their teaching. On the basis of this evidence, and in the view of the ascription of al-Barqī’s report, we may conclude that the present report was originally transmitted by Shī‘a scholars on the authority of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, perhaps ultimately from him, and through a channel starting from Ibn Kharrabūdh (Leites 2000, 60).

In short then, Leites has found a degree of frailty in the conditions laid down by ḥadīth scholars like Ibn Ḥajar. Leites has shown it is difficult to determine whether a narrator is promoting his doctrine in the wording of the tradition. More importantly, the analysis from Leites shows how western writers can contribute to areas which the likes of Ibn Ḥajar have outlined. Muslims frequently dismiss the findings of non-Muslims in ḥadīth studies quite simply because it stems from non-Muslims. Leites' extensive research shows there is no reason to adopt such a stance, since he has merely given a practical manifestation of a ruling that the *Nuzhah* itself outlines.

### **5.37.3. Conclusion.**

The *Nuzhah*'s analysis does seem to treat *bid'a* with considerable leniency, when compared with other types of rejected traditions. This leniency is exposed through many means:

- a. Firstly, when introducing the section on the rejected traditions on the basis of defamation of the narrator (section 5.23), Ibn Ḥajar clarifies that he has listed them in order of the most severe to the least severe. On this basis, he believes that *bid'a* is only the ninth worse type of ḥadīth from ten.
- b. Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar's preference to pragmatism means that in essence, there are few reports stemming from a *mubtadi'* that are rejected outright. So long as a reporter does not openly propagate his beliefs and does not believe in the permissibility of lying in traditions – which very few Muslims sects do – then the report is accepted.

c. Thirdly, in Ibn Ḥajar's definition of *ṣaḥīḥ*<sup>167</sup>, he clarified that the reporter must be known for his *taqwā*, namely his ability to refrain from forbidden acts. Mighālī (2003, 353) writes that the term *taqwā* stipulates that the reporter must refrain from *bid'a*. Yet, here we are led to believe that a reporter known for innovation is not rejected outright.

It can be argued therefore, that the stance taken by Ibn Ḥajar and his likes is a clear break from the early Muslims (like Ibn Sīrīn), who viewed the traditions of *mubtadi*'s very seriously. This argument is supported by the fact that Mālik (d. 179/795) did not accept the narrations of an agent of *bid'a*, regardless of the nature of his *bid'a* (Kamali 2005, 190). In the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Imām Muslim gives many examples of traditionists who were rejected because of their ill-beliefs.<sup>168</sup> The classic masters attached importance to the close scrutiny of the *isnād* and *matn* precisely because of such people and their antics.

A case can thus be made to suggest that *bid'a* has perhaps not been viewed with the required seriousness by Ibn Ḥajar it should have. It could be argued that Ibn Ḥajar was torn between practice and ideal when discussing the issue of *bid'a*. Perhaps owing to the severe nature of *bid'a*, as highlighted from the famous quote from Ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Ḥajar ideally would have desired to adopt a firm stance against the innovators and curb their influence in ḥadīth literature. But he also had to acknowledge the practice that preceded him. Many ḥadīth scholars prior to him *had* accepted the reports of an agent of *bid'a*. Al-Imām al-Bukhārī relied on the innovator 'Imrān ibn Ḥittān. Likewise Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn

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<sup>167</sup> Section 5.9.

<sup>168</sup> For example, Abū Ghassān Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Rāzī — Jarīr: 'I met Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī but I did not write any traditions down from him for he believed in [the heresy of] the 'return' (*raj'a*) of 'Alī. (Juynboll 1996, III: 283).

and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal validated ‘Abd al-Ḥāmid ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Himmānī, who actively propagated his deviant beliefs (Kamali 2005, 191). Ibn Ḥajar found himself in a compellingly-difficult situation: a desire to highlight the seriousness of *bid‘a* along with an acceptance that ḥadīth masters before him did take reports from such men.

Not only did he have to acknowledge the practice that preceded him, but the reality of his time. Ibn Ḥajar lived in a turbulent political era that affected the religious climate too. Tensions were high between different denominations in Cairo and sometimes between different *madhhabs* (Broadbridge 1999, 89). Viewed from this angle, the section on *bid‘a* in the *Nuzḥah* was the perfect antidote to the tense religious atmosphere he lived in, because he appeals to unity and tolerance.

Nor is this the first time we have seen this dilemma confront Ibn Ḥajar. In the section on *mu‘allaq* (5.18), we saw how Ibn Ḥajar had to simultaneously declare *mu‘allaq* as rejected and defend al-Bukhārī’s large-scale inclusion of such reports in his own *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Owing to a drop in the chain, there is no real justification to accept a *mu‘allaq* report. But taking such a hard-line stance would mean that hundreds of *mu‘allaq* reports in al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* would have to be declared as rejected. Due to his rank and position in the Muslim world, very few scholars would want the task of making such a statement. The solution taken by Ibn Ḥajar therefore was to reject such reports in general, but allow a loophole to cover al-Bukhārī’s large-scale inclusion of such reports. So Ibn Ḥajar observed the practice that had occurred before him and created the rulings attached to it accordingly.

Leading on from this, we can see that the *Nuzḥah* is descriptive of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* and not prescriptive. By the time Ibn Ḥajar wrote this manual, the process of reporting and

sharing traditions had ceased for half a millennium. The *Nuzhah* therefore laid down the laws of what *had* occurred and not what *should* occur.

### **5. 38. *Mukhtalaṭ*- the Merged.**

Then the bad memory – and this is the tenth reason for defamation in the reporter; and what is meant by this is the narrator’s ability to be correct is outweighed by his tendency to be incorrect – is of two types. If this attribute is permanent for the reporter in all states then this is *shādhah* according to the opinion of some people of ḥadīth. Or if the bad memory is sudden on the reporter, either because of old age, or loss of sight or the burning of his books or its loss; in that he used to depend on them, reverted to memory and found that it worsened, than this is *mukhtalaṭ*. The principle for it is that what was reported before the loss is accepted when one can [clearly] identify it [as belonging to the period before the loss]. And that which cannot be identified is paused upon, as is that in which it cannot be known either way. This is only identified by investigating those who took from him.

#### Commentary

In this last section on the rejected due to defamation in the reporters, Ibn Ḥajar refers to *mukhtalaṭ*, where the ḥadīth is rejected due to the memory loss of the reporter. He explains that this can take on two forms and clearly explains the principle for each.

A third scenario is also described; where the ḥadīth scholars cannot clearly identify which period the ḥadīth in question belongs to – before or after memory loss. Ibn Ḥajar writes



that such a report will be paused upon until further evidence comes to light. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ also adheres to this stance (1986, 392).<sup>169</sup>

### 5.38.1 Conclusion.

To conclude this section of the *Nuzhah* that discusses all of the different types of rejected traditions, Ibn Ḥajar's deserves praise for the overall clarity of the analysis. It is for most part well-arranged and well-defined. In particular, the length and depth of Ibn Ḥajar's analysis of *mawḍū'* is worthy of credit.

What the *Nuzhah* does quite effectively is shows that the Muslim scholars did not totally deny shortcomings and deficiencies in the system. In sufficient detail, the *Nuzhah* accepts that reporters were sometimes cheats, deceitful and forgetful. It accepts the mechanisms in place to preserve the ḥadīth corpus were sometimes not rigid enough. This itself is a great statement from the Muslim scholars; that they were fallible.

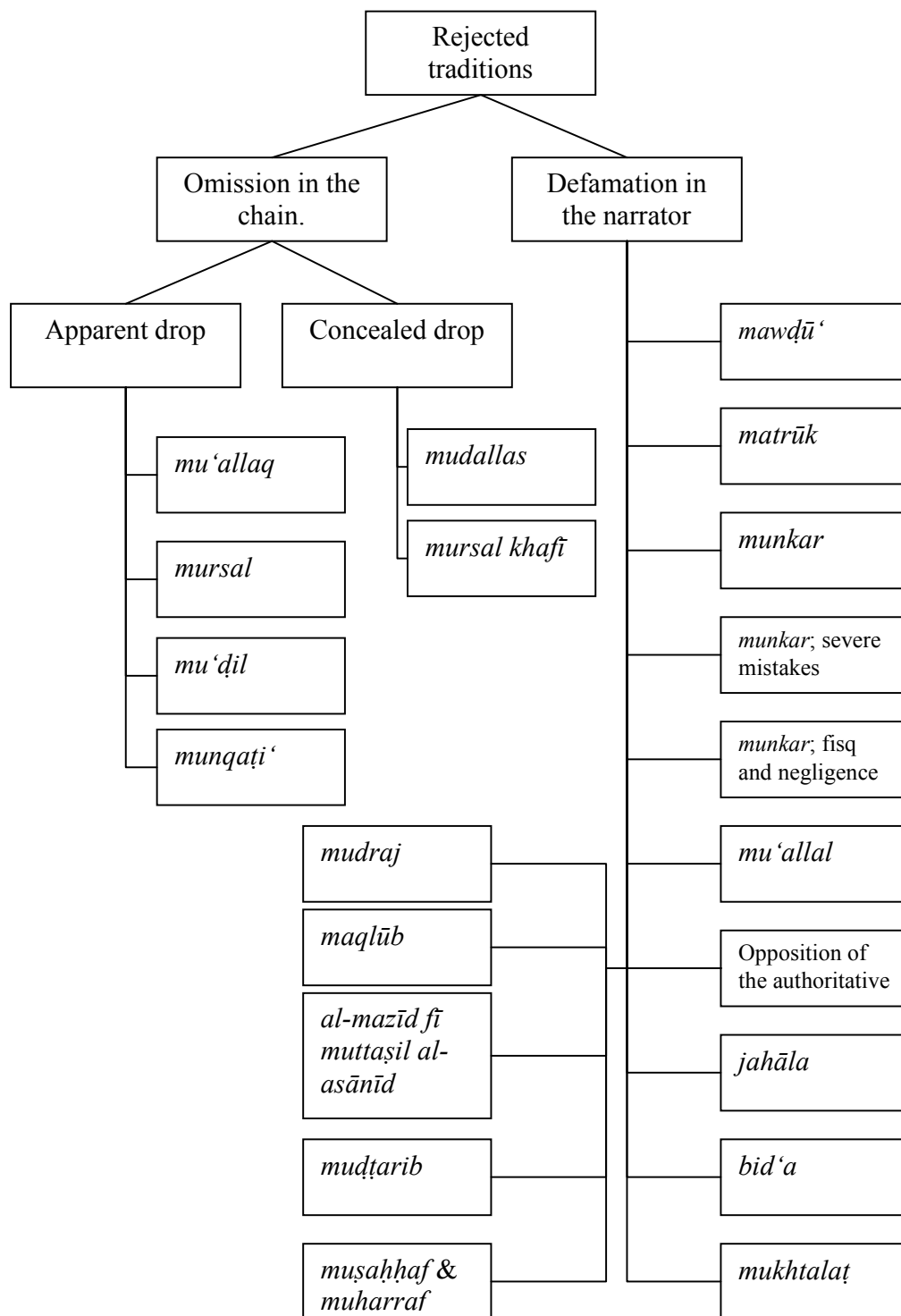
As a renowned ḥadīth master, Ibn Ḥajar did not want to highlight the shortcomings in '*ilm al-ḥadīth per se*. After all, this would be a source of embarrassment rather than pride. But instead, he wanted to show that paradoxically, the existence of rejected traditions proved the existence of authentic ones too. This is shown in his analysis of *mawḍū'*.

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<sup>169</sup> In a very useful section in his *Muqaddima*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ lists several narrators who did suffer from memory loss later in their life. Included in this list are the following: (i) 'Atā' ibn al-Sā'ib. He suffered from memory loss late in his life and for that reason, only the reports of the elders (*akābir*) such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shu'ba are accepted. (ii) Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'ī. Abū Ya'lā al-Khalīlī writes that Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna heard from him after the memory loss. (iii) Sa'īd ibn Iyās al-Jurayrī. (iv) Sa'īd ibn Abī 'Arūba. Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn remarked that he suffered from memory loss from 142/759 onwards. The reports of Yazīd ibn Hārūn from him are however legitimate. (v) Ḥuṣayn ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kūfī. This is according to al-Nasā'ī and others. (vi) Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna. Yaḥyā ibn Qaṭṭān was reported to have said: 'I testify that Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna suffered from memory loss in 197 A.H. Thus whosoever heard from him in this year and after it, then it is of no worth.' Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna died in 198 A.H. (vii) 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said: 'he went blind at the end of his life. He used to be prompted and he responded to it, but his reports after the blindness are worthless.' (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 392-6).



### ***5.38.2 Summary of the rejected traditions.***



## 5. 39. *Ḥasan li-ghayrih*

When supporting attestations from someone above him [in rank] or equal, but not less, is found for a reporter suffering from memory loss, or for a *mastūr* report, or for a *mursal* ḥadīth, or likewise for a *mudallas* report when the omission is not known, then the ḥadīth becomes *ḥasan li-ghayrih*, not *li-dhātih* (*per se*). This is because each type of report has an equal chance of being correct and incorrect.

When a supporting narration is found for one of them from the attesters, then one of the two possibilities is preferred and this then indicates that the ḥadīth is preserved. Thus it is promoted from the rank of ‘paused upon’ to the rank of the accepted. And Allāh knows best. Though it is promoted to the rank of accepted, it is short of the rank of *ḥasan* (and thus is called *li-ghayrih*), though some scholars have refused to call this type *ḥasan*.

And this concludes the discussion on that which pertains to the *matn*, in terms of acceptance and rejection.

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar first identified the four types of accepted (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātih*, *ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih*, *ḥasan li-dhātih*, *ḥasan li-ghayrih*) in section 5.9, where he offered an in-depth analysis of the first. He then discussed *ḥasan li-dhātih* briefly in section 5.10. Now, twenty-nine sections later, he identifies *ḥasan li-ghayrih*.

Seemingly, this is bad arrangement from Ibn Ḥajar since it would have made sense to discuss the four accepted together in one section. But in fact, it makes good sense to

mention *ḥasan li-ghayrih* here, after the discussions he has covered in-between. The reason is because there are certain grades of report which are neither wholly accepted nor rejected, and are thus classified as ‘paused upon.’ Examples are like:

- When a ḥadīth is reported by someone who suffered from memory loss (5.38), and it cannot be identified when exactly the ḥadīth in question was reported, before or after memory loss.
- A *mursal* ḥadīth (5.19), namely where the reporter after the Successor is missing.
- A *mudallas* ḥadīth (5.21), when the omission is not known.

Such reports can be accepted and promoted from ‘paused upon’ to *ḥasan li-ghayrih*, when supporting narrations are to be found for it. So Ibn Ḥajar delays the discussion on *ḥasan li-ghayrih* (and mentions the paused upon and the rejected types in between) to show how they can be upgraded to this type of the accepted.

The section on *ḥasan li-ghayrih* also indicates how the technical terms were used to serve certain purposes in the era of Ibn Ḥajar. Before explaining how, it is important to note that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Mayyānīshī did not explicitly divide *ḥasan* into *li-dhātih* and *li-ghayrih* and nor did al-‘Irāqī. Ibn Ḥajar was the pioneer in this respect. As the above commentary has shown, finding a corroboration for a *mursal* or a *mudallas* report (and similar types which are normally rejected) means there is more chances of its authenticity. Rather than giving this newly-promoted type a new name, it has been given the name of *ḥasan*, albeit *li-ghayrih*. This is deliberate. Giving it a new, unrelated name would suggest that in terms of rank and ruling, it differs from the accepted *ḥasan*. Though in reality it was weak and rejected, labelling it as *ḥasan (li-ghayrih)* suggests that it is

perfectly acceptable and fit for use in Islamic law and dogma. In short, the technical terms were used precisely by Ibn Hajar to dress the weak with a cloak of acceptance. This in turn would increase the pool of acceptable reports Muslims could claim to have access to.

At the end of this section, Ibn Hajar declares that this outline of *ḥasan li-ghayrih* ‘concludes the discussion on that which pertains to the *matn*, in terms of acceptance and rejection.’ In reality, references to the *matn* up until this point in the *Nuzhah* have been almost non-existent.

## **5. 40. *Marfū‘* – The Raised.**

Then the *isnād* – this is the path leading to the *matn*; and the *matn* is the dialogue at which the *isnād* terminates – either ends at the Prophet ﷺ, and the wording suggests either explicitly or implicitly that the transferred text is from his sayings ﷺ, or from his actions and from his silent approvals.

An example of an explicit (*taṣrīḥ*) *marfū‘* from his sayings is that the Companion says: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say x’, or ‘the Messenger of Allāh informed us (*ḥaddathana*) ﷺ of x’ or the Companion or someone else says: ‘The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said x’, or ‘from (*‘an*) the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that he said x’ and its likes.

An example of an explicit (*taṣrīḥ*) *marfū‘* from his actions is that the Companion says: ‘I saw the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ do x’, or the Companion or someone else says: ‘the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ used to do x.’

An example of an explicit (*taṣrīḥ*) *marfū‘* from his silent approvals is that the Companion says: ‘I did x in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ’ or the Companion or someone else says: ‘such and such person did x in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and he did not object to it.’

An example of an implicit (*ḥukm*) *marfū‘* and not explicit from his sayings is when the Companion – who does not take biblical reports (*isrā’īliyyāt*) – says something which does not concern his independent thought (*ijtihād*) and has no reference to an ambiguous word or commentary of a rare word. [For instance] informing of past events like the beginning of creation and the occurrences of the [previous] prophets (peace be upon them), or informing of future events, like the [forthcoming] calamities and events, and the descriptions of the Day of Judgement. And likewise, [when the Companion gives] information of an act which results in a specific reward or specific punishment, [this too will also be considered as *marfū‘* implicitly].

This is given the ruling of *marfū‘* because the information stipulates that there must be an informer for it, and in that in which there is no link to independent thought, it also demands that there is an informer for it. There is no informer for the Companions except the Prophet ﷺ, or [possibly] some people who report from the old scriptures. For this reason precaution is taken against it being the second type. When it is as such, then for it is the ruling as though he said: ‘The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said x’. This is *marfū‘* regardless of whether it originates from the one who heard from the Prophet [directly] or from him through a means.

An example of an implicit (*ḥukm*) *marfū‘* from his actions is that the Companions does something that has no link with his own independent thought, and it becomes



manifest that this action stemmed from the Prophet ﷺ. [This is] like what al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī said about the Prayer of Eclipse performed by ‘Alī ؑ in which each unit consisted of more than one bowing.

An example of an implicit (*hukm*) *marfū‘* from his silent approvals is that the Companion informs others that they used to perform a certain act in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. For indeed this has the ruling of being *marfū‘* in the sense that it is clear the Prophet told them of it, as they had the full means to question him on religious affairs. Moreover, this was the period of divine revelation; no wrongful action occurred from the Companions on a continual basis except it was prohibited. Indeed Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh and Abū Sa‘īd (may Allāh be pleased with them) used this point to prove the permissibility of the withdrawal method [of contraception], in that they used to perform this whilst the Qur’ān was being revealed. If it was from the actions which were prohibited, then the Qur’ān would have outlawed it.

[Also] applicable to my saying ‘implicitly’ [in the text] is that which is mentioned through an indirect word (*kināya*) in the place of a direct word (*ṣarīḥ*), in relation to the Prophet ﷺ. [This is] like the saying of the Successor from a Companion: ‘he raises the ḥadīth (*yarfa‘*)’, or: ‘he narrates the ḥadīth’ (*yarwī*) or: ‘he ascribes the ḥadīth’ (*yanmī*), or: ‘the narration’ (*riwāya*) or: ‘he reaches it to’ (*yablughu biḥī*) or: ‘he narrates it’ (*rawā*).

Sometimes they suffice with the saying with the omission of the speaker, and they intend the [omission to be the] Prophet. [This is] like the saying of Ibn Sīrīn from Abū Hurayra who said: ‘you will fight with a community...’ In the works of al-

Khaṭīb al-[Baghdādī] is the suggestion that this is the specific terminology of the people of Baṣra.

Amongst the possible words [of delivery] is the saying of the Companion: ‘from the *sunna* is x’. Thus most of the scholars are of the opinion that this is *marfū‘*. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr has transmitted a consensus on this matter. He said: ‘And when someone other than the Companions says this, then it is as such (namely *marfū‘*), so long as it is not ascribed to another person, like ‘the *sunna* of the two ‘*Umars*.’<sup>170</sup>

In saying that there is a consensus on this is contentious, as al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī has two opinions on this issue. Abū Bakr al-Ṣayrafi has said that such a saying is not *marfū‘*, along with Abū Bakr al-Rāzī from the Ḥanafīs and Ibn Ḥazm from the Ahl al-ẓāhir. Their evidence is that the [word] *sunna* can be used for the Prophet and others. The answer to this is that the possibility of the *sunna* of other than the Prophet being meant is far-fetched. For al-Imām al-Bukhārī has recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the ḥadīth of Ibn Shihāb, from Sālim ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, from his father; in the story of the pilgrims when he said: ‘If you intend the *sunna*, then leave before the Prayer.’ Ibn Shihāb said: ‘I asked Sālim: ‘Did the Prophet do this?’ He replied: ‘And what do they mean by *sunna* except his *sunna*?’ So Sālim transmitted – who is one of the seven jurists from the people of Madina and one of the *ḥāfiẓs* from the Successors – that when the Companions use the term ‘*sunna*’ they only mean the *sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ.

As for the opinion of some, that if it is *marfū‘*, then why do they not say: ‘the Prophet ﷺ said’, then the answer is that they left [the words of] conviction due to piety and precaution. An example of this is the saying of Abū Qilāba, from Anas

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<sup>170</sup> The *sunnas* of the two ‘*Umars* refers to the example of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.

that: 'From the *sunna* is that when a man marries a virgin over a non-virgin, then he stays with the virgin for seven days.' This report has been recorded in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*. Abū Qilāba said: 'If I wished, I could have said that Anas reported this *marfū*' from the Prophet ﷺ.' In other words, had he said such, he would not have lied, because saying 'from the *sunna*' implies this, but it is better to mention it with the [exact] words the Companion did.

From the forms of *marfū*' [also] is the saying of the Companion 'we were ordered x' or 'we were prohibited from x'. The dispute in this is the same as the previous dispute, because the generality of the statement apparently ascribes it to the one who orders and prohibits, and this is the Messenger ﷺ.

A group [of scholars] have disputed this and have held on to the possibility that what is meant is something (or someone) other than the Prophet, like the order of the Qur'ān, or the order of the Consensus or the order of some of the caliphs or the order of the derived ruling. The answer given is that the default position is the Prophet and anything else is [merely] a possibility. It is most likely to be the Prophet since whosoever is under the rule of a leader, when he says 'I have been ordered' it is not understood from this except that the one ordering is the leader.

As for the opinion of those who say that the Companion could think something which is not an order, as an order, then there is no specification in this matter and in fact is possible when there is clarification in when he says: 'the Prophet ﷺ ordered us x.' This is a weak possibility because [all of] the Companions are credible and competent Arabic speakers. They would not say such a thing except after assurance.

Also from the forms of *marfū*‘ is their saying: ‘we used to do x’. This too has the ruling of *marfū*‘, like it has been mentioned.

From the forms of *marfū*‘ is when the Companion decrees an action as being the obedience of Allāh and His Messenger, or the disobedience. [This is] like the saying of ‘Ammār: ‘Whosoever fasts on the day of doubt, then he has shown disobedience to Abū al-Qāsim ﷺ.’ This has the ruling of *marfū*‘ too because it apparently seems he has taken this from him ﷺ.

### Commentary

Having completed the discussions relating to the *matn* (text), Ibn Ḥajar proceeds to analyse aspects relating to the *isnād*. To commence this section, he offers a detailed explanation of *marfū*‘, which perhaps is the longest section in the *Nuzhah* devoted to a particular type.

In its simplest form, *marfū*‘ is a ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet ﷺ, regardless of whether this is a saying, action or silent approval.<sup>171</sup> Though in essence, *marfū*‘ is of three types<sup>172</sup> – the Prophet’s words, actions or silent approvals – Ibn Ḥajar’s analysis clearly shows that *marfū*‘ can take on numerous forms. Indirectly, the text indicates that like before (with ‘*azīz* and *mursal*), the *Nuzhah* lays down rulings that extend the ḥadīth literature pool, not reduce it. At first sight, *marfū*‘ should only be that which stems from the Prophet. But the wording used by the Companion (or someone else) and the nature of the

<sup>171</sup> There is no difference whether the actual chain is continuous or not. Hence, a *marfū*‘ ḥadīth can also be *mawṣūl*, *mursal*, *muttasil* or *munqati*‘ (al-Suyūṭī 1971, 1: 184; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 45). There is also no difference if the last narrator is a Companion or someone below him. However, al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr ibn Thābit is of the opinion that a report is only classified as *marfū*‘ when the Companions report it. On this basis, he does not consider a *mursal* from a Successor as *marfū*‘ (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 45). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī too voices the same opinion in *al-Kifāya* (1988, 58).

<sup>172</sup> Al-Suyūṭī mentions a fourth type; when the Companions describe the physical and moral characteristics of the Prophet, then this too is considered as *marfū*‘ (1972, 1: 187).

text can help us declare a ḥadīth as *marfūʿ* though it apparently seems otherwise. The definition and forms of *marfūʿ* offered in the *Nuzḥah* suggests that there is an extensive and vast pool of material available, not a restricted one.

In this long text, the first six forms of *marfūʿ* outlined by Ibn Ḥajar can be summarised as follows:

Type	Sub-Type	Example.
<i>Marfūʿ</i>	1. <i>Qawl taṣrīḥ</i>	The Prophet said: ‘From the sign of a good person’s faith is leaving that which does not concern him.’
	2. <i>Qawl ḥukm</i>	Ibn Masʿūd said: ‘Whosoever approaches a magician or fortune-teller, then he has disbelieved in that which has been revealed to the Prophet.’ Similarly, those sayings that do not have any link with the reporter’s own independent thought, and when it stems from a Companion not known to take biblical reports.
	3. <i>Fiʿl taṣrīḥ</i>	‘The Prophet used to accept gifts...’
	4. <i>Fiʿl ḥukm</i>	‘Alī performed the Eclipse Prayer in an unconventional manner in that he performed the bowing ( <i>rukūʿ</i> ) more than once in each unit of Prayer. Similarly, those actions from the Companions that cannot be ascribed to his/her independent thought.
	5. <i>Taqrīr taṣrīḥ</i>	The report mentioning that a lizard was consumed

		in the presence of the Prophet.
	6. <i>Taqrīr ḥukm</i>	The sayings of the Companions that they would consume sacrificial meat in the time of the Prophet.

The above table shows suggests a rigid pattern since the three main types (*qawl*, *fi'l* and *taqrīr*) are further divided into two types, explicit and implicit. Furthermore, these six make some religious points which perhaps the author felt were important to reflect. These points are that:

- a. The Prophet was aware of everything that his Companions did and said.
- b. The Companions' only source of guidance in *sharī'a* affairs was the Prophet.
- c. Also, it works on the notion that their *ijtihād* and independency counted for very little, in comparison to the Prophet. This is why the *Nuzhah* states that 'Alī performed the Eclipse Prayer in an unconventional manner in that he performed the bowing (*rukū'*) more than once in each unit of Prayer. Ibn Ḥajar asserts that such an action could only have stemmed from a source, namely the Prophet.<sup>173</sup>

Viewed from this angle, we can appreciate the multi-faceted analysis employed by Ibn Ḥajar for *marfū'*. It allows the reader to understand what constitutes *marfū'*. In the wider context, it shows the flawless nature of the Prophet, his all-encompassing wisdom and knowledge and the exalted ranks of the Companions, for whom guidance meant prophetic guidance only.

<sup>173</sup> Al-Munāwī writes that al-Baqā'ī is of the opinion that the Prayer being referred to by al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī was the Prayer performed during an earthquake, not an eclipse and thus a misunderstanding exists on the matter. The eclipse prayer has been proven directly from the actions of the Prophet (when his son passed away) and thus the legitimacy of it is proven from the Prophet explicitly, not through the means of 'Alī's prayer (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 184).

However, not all Muslim scholars agree with the three points mentioned above. For example, al-Ḥākim and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī point out that a possibility exists that the Prophet did not know of the Companions' actions (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 186). For example, it may not have been possible for the Prophet to know that Jābir practiced the withdrawal method of contraception. Likewise, Haddad lists several religious acts performed by the Companions in which they applied their *own ijtihād* (2005, pp. 94-102), including the raising of the hands in the *witr* prayer for the *qunūt*. This shows that the definition of *marfū* 'sketched by Ibn Ḥajar is not without reservations from Muslim scholars, let alone non-Muslim ones (which shall be addressed later). Further clarity is required, especially with the case when the Companions perform an act.

Al-Suyūṭī has provided some of that clarity. He writes that if the Companions report that they used to perform a certain action and they ascribe it to the time of the Prophet (for example, 'we used to do x in the time of the Prophet'), only then will it be considered as *marfū* '. Mighālīwī cites the report mentioned in al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Māja where the Companions affirmed:

We used to eat horse meat in the time of the Prophet ﷺ (2003, 498).

If they merely say 'we used to do x' with no ascription to the time of the Prophet, then this is deemed as *mawqūf* (the actions of the Companions). For example, Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh reports that:

When we used to climb upwards, we would say *Allāh Akbar*, and when we used to descend we would say *Subhān Allāh*.

Here, Jābir did not ascribe this to the time of the Prophet and therefore it is declared as *mawqūf* rather than *marfūʿ* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 185).

Other than these six types, Ibn Ḥajar does mention four other forms of *marfūʿ*, two of which are certainly more contentious:

- a. When the Successor refers to a Companion and states ‘he raises the ḥadīth (*yarfaʿ*)’, or ‘he narrates the ḥadīth’ (*yarwī*) or similar words. This, the author writes, is considered as *marfūʿ* by virtue of the words of delivery employed.
- b. Also considered as *marfūʿ* is when a Companion decrees an action as being the ‘obedience of Allah and his Prophet’, or his ‘disobedience’.
- c. When the Companion states that ‘we were ordered x’ or ‘we were prohibited from x’.

Ibn Ḥajar works on the assumption that when a Companion makes such a comment in the passive state, then it must mean the Prophet. This assumption, again, is based on the idea that the Companions’ only source of guidance in religious affairs was the Prophet.

Both from Muslims and non-Muslim observers, this assumption is questionable. Al-Suyūṭī writes that such a statement is not given the ranking of *marfūʿ*, because the one ordering could be the Qur’ān or one of the caliphs (1971, 1: 188). Goldziher asks us to entertain the possibility that early Muslims held a different meaning of *sunna*, namely ‘all that corresponded to the traditions of the Arabs, and the customs and habits of their



ancestors' (1971, 25). On this basis, when a Companion says 'we were ordered x', it does not automatically mean the Prophet ordered it, rather it could have meant the living tradition of the Arabs.

d. When the Companion says: 'from the *sunna* is x.' An example is the quote of 'Alī who said:

From the *sunna* is to place the palm on the [other] palm in Prayer beneath the navel. (in al-Suyūfī 1971, 1: 188).

It is this last type that needs further analysis, owing to the rich debate around it. For Ibn Ḥajar what does *sunna* mean and what does it encompass?

In principle, the *Nuzhah* indicates that when the Companion says 'from the *sunna* is x', then it is given the ruling of *marfū* ' , meaning it can safely be ascribed to the Prophet.

Therefore Ibn Ḥajar saw the *sunna* reflective of the Prophet's own example. In order to suggest the strength of this, he cites the opinion of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in the *Nuzhah*, who states that a consensus exists on the fact that such a statement is deemed as *marfū* ' .

However, the *Nuzhah* cautiously accepts this general observation because it suggests that the term *sunna* does not always mean prophetic *sunna*. This is because Ibn Ḥajar writes when a non-Companion uses the phrase 'from the *sunna* is x', then we have to evaluate whether he has ascribed it to someone else, like the '*sunna* of 'Umar' or the '*sunna* of Abū Bakr.' Hence, it is an indirect acceptance that *sunna* does not always mean prophetic *sunna*. In fact, the *Nuzhah* clarifies that many scholars actually say that when someone says 'from the *sunna* is x' it is not *marfū* ' . They include Abū Bakr al-Ṣayrafī, Abū Bakr

al-Rāzī and Ibn Ḥazm. These scholars write that the word ‘*sunna*’ can refer to other beings too, not just the Prophet.

But again, Ibn Ḥajar treads cautiously. Yes, *sunna* can mean many things, but the chances of it referring to someone other than the Prophet are small. The *Nuzhah* wanted to highlight this fact, by citing the example of al-Bukhārī, who narrates a ḥadīth describing the Prayer on the day of ‘Arafa. Ibn ‘Umar informed the pilgrims: ‘If you intend the *sunna* then leave before the Prayer’. Someone asked: ‘is this what the Prophet did?’ Ibn ‘Umar replied ‘By saying *sunna*, could it refer to anyone else?’

In other words, when early Muslims used the term *sunna*, in particular the Companions, then the chances that they meant something other than the prophetic *sunna* were virtually non-existent.

#### **5.40.1. Conclusion.**

The importance of identifying what is considered as *marfū* ‘ and what is not cannot be over-emphasised. Without a clear indication and dividing line, there is no means by which we can identify what is rightly attributed to the Prophet as his saying or action and what is not. Ibn Ḥajar’s analysis goes a long way in explaining what exactly *marfū* ‘, and subsequently what *sunna* encapsulates.

We note some indecision and lack of certainty from Ibn Ḥajar regarding what the *sunna* encapsulates. I believe this indecision is totally justified. This is because in reality, what the term means exactly is very difficult to pinpoint. No one – Muslim or non-Muslim scholar – has really been able to provide a definite answer. At best, a rough guide can be provided and the *Nuzhah* has done well to provide that.

Literally speaking, there are difficulties with the term. The '*sunna*' merely means 'path' or 'example' and is not used exclusively to refer to the example of the Prophet.

Even the Prophet himself said: 'Adhere to my *sunna* and the *sunna* of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs', thus suggesting the actions of others too can be classified as '*sunna*'.

But viewed in a different light, this ḥadīth actually proves that the dispute over the term *sunna* is purely academic. Implicitly, the Prophet indicated that his *sunna* and the Companions' *sunna* are the same thing, that following 'Umar was in essence following the Prophet. The Prophet himself encouraged Muslims to emulate the examples of his Companions, precisely because he knew they were following his footsteps.<sup>174</sup>

The wide-ranging use of the term *sunna* too has led to confusion. According to Schacht, the term '*sunna*' only came to refer to the Prophet thanks to the efforts of al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī (Brown 1999, 7) and that prior to this period, the Muslims took the literal meaning of '*sunna*' and thus applied it to refer to anyone's example. But it is possible to acknowledge al-Shāfi'ī's efforts *and* believe that Muslims held value to the Prophet's *sunna* from an early period. As Brown himself acknowledges, al-Shāfi'ī was largely responsible for developing 'a coherent system of jurisprudence' (1999, 7). In order to differentiate between the different sources of Islamic law, al-Shāfi'ī restricted the term '*sunna*' to the Prophet's sayings and actions, so that extracted laws could be systemically ascribed to the Qur'ān, *sunna* or scholarly consensus. Additionally, more confusion is likely when the jurists use the term to describe an act as *sunna*, as opposed to *mandūb*, *ḥarām* or *mubāḥ* in the field of *sharī'a*.

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<sup>174</sup> 'Adhere to my *sunna* and the *sunna* of the rightly-guided caliphs...' *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Book of Knowledge, Chapter: what has been mentioned about adhering to the *sunna* and refraining from bid'a. ḥadīth no. 2600.

Besides the analysis in the *Nuzhah*, we should seriously entertain the possibility that early Muslims differentiated between *sunna* and *al-sunna*. Azami points out that:

Sometimes the Arabic definite article (*Al*) was affixed to the word *sunna* to denote the *sunna* of the Prophet, while the general use of the word continued, though decreasing day by day. At the end of the second century it began to be used exclusively in the legal books for the norms set by the Prophet or norms deduced from the Prophet's norm (1977, 4).

Azami's interpretation is useful in allowing us to accommodate the view of Brown and Schacht, as well as maintaining the view that early Muslims did use the term *sunna* to refer to the actions and sayings of the Prophet. If Muslims did use *sunna* to refer to the example of other prominent people other than the Prophet in the first century, they used the term *sunna* rather than *al-sunna*.

The writings of non-Muslims suggest the gulf between the *sunna* of the Prophet and the *sunna* of the Companions. Juynboll highlights examples where 'Umar acted contrary to the *sunna* regarding the spoils of war (1996, V:101). In my opinion, such opinions have come about because all of the Companions have been treated with equal regard. As the next section will highlight, some Companions were known for their judicial insight more than others. This is why 'Umar acted with more autonomy than, for example, Abū Hurayra.

A closer look reveals that Juynboll is actually in closer agreement with Muslims than one perhaps first assumes regarding the usage of the term *sunna*. Though he advocates the

varied use of the term *sunna* in the first one hundred and fifty years – to mean the example of Muḥammad and others – he does also accept that divorcing the term from him is all but impossible:

...But since it is inconceivable, given the existence of the concept *sunna* and given the prestige the Prophet had acquired especially towards the end of his life, that Muḥammad's actions would not inspire his associates to follow his example, we can safely assume that at least a significant part of the *sunnas* – preserved in later *ḥadīth* collections and allegedly instituted during his lifetime – were indeed his (1996, V: 100).

Moreover, he accepts that in *ḥadīth* literature, the use of the term *sunna* overwhelmingly refers to the *sunna* of the Prophet (1996, V: 101). He successfully shows the term can be applied in many different ways, but this is not from *ḥadīth* literature, instead it is from the *awā'il* literature (1996, V: 103) and from the *kalām* compilations (1996, V: 104).

Muslims too would not doubt that this is the case. No Muslim suggests that *sunna* is exclusive to the Prophet alone. But in *ḥadīth* literature, the default meaning is *sunna al-nabī* like the *Nuzḥah* indicates. On this point, Juynboll agrees. Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-'arab* lists many meanings of the word (1988, x: pp. 234-8). The Qur'an mentions the word sixteen times, mostly to refer to the 'way' God has dealt with the disobeying people. The Prophet himself used the word to refer to a 'bad practice'.<sup>175</sup> Azami quotes nine different ways the term *sunna* has been used in early *fiqh-ḥadīth* literature (1996, pp. 31-33). Thus if a case is being made to suggest that *sunna* does not necessarily refer to the

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<sup>175</sup> *Man sanna fī-al-Islām sunna sayyi'a...*

example of the Prophet, there is no disagreement. Here, the Muslims and the non-Muslims converge.

Where the disagreement lies is in the implications. The western scholars' extensive observations on the concept *sunna* are aimed at proving that early Muslims had no real idea that they had to follow the example of the Prophet, and instead they preferred to continue old practices, the 'living tradition'. This is why Juynboll suggests that the verse describing the Prophet as a 'perfect example'<sup>176</sup> is particular to a certain incident; aimed at those who did not march with the Prophet against the Confederates (Juynboll 1996, V: 107). This is the reason why Juynboll wants to suggest that *hikma* in the verse<sup>177</sup> translates as 'knowledge and insight' rather than the *sunna* of the Prophet. This is why he makes the point to indicate that the Qur'ān mentions *sunna* sixteen times, but none refer to the *sunna* of the Prophet (Juynboll 1996, V: 101). This is why Schacht translates *sunna* as the 'living tradition' of the community, which is unrelated to the model behaviour of the Prophet (1959, 29). And this is why Goldziher is keen to suggest that the ḥadīth had a 'troubled existence' in the first Islamic century and that it was the likes of 'Umar II who set out the task to revive the *sunna* and abolish the *bid'a* (1971, 43). Paradoxically, this last observation from Goldziher actually proves the existence of the *sunna* of the Prophet in the first Islamic century. This is because *sunna* and *bid'a* are opposing terms; one can only abolish the *sunna* if one knows the *sunna* originally. Additionally, one can only revive the *sunna* if it existed in the first place.

There are implications for the Muslims too. Confusion surrounding the term *sunna* suggests that early Muslims had no real role model in the Prophet, that the Qur'ān gave

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<sup>176</sup> The Qur'ān, 33:21.

<sup>177</sup> *Wa yu'allimuhum al-kitāb wa'l hikma* (2:129). (Juynboll 1996, V: 106-7).

no weight to his precedence, and that it was only al-Shāfi'ī who saved Muslims from this confusion. There would be no meaning to the countless verses in the Qur'ān which stress the need for Muslims to express obedience to the Prophet (33:21, 4:64, 3:32, 3:132, 4:59, 4:65, 59:7). Because this is difficult for the Muslims, they assert that the word *sunna* as the model of the Prophet came into existence during the lifetime of Muḥammad (Azami 1996, 31). They show that the uniformity in the core aspects of rituals and worships could only have come about if the Muslims took their example from one source, Prophet Muḥammad.

What this shows is how the starting point for the Muslims and the non-Muslims affects the end conclusion. Because some non-Muslim academics start with a negative assumption about Muḥammad, it affects the direction of the research. And because Muslim academics start with the positive assumption that Muḥammad was the mercy for all mankind, the most perfect of God's creation and the final Messenger of God, then this too affects the nature and direction of the research.

On a final note, we return to the *Nuzhah* in particular. It was mentioned in section 5.2.1 that Ibn Ḥajar had chosen to define ḥadīth in the opening section on *khabar*, but left the discussions on *sunna* much later on in this section. Having analysed both sections, it seems that owing to the complexity surrounding *sunna*, it made sense to define it much later in a book designed for first time readers of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. It also shows that perhaps Ibn Ḥajar did agree with Goldziher in some respects. This is because Ibn Ḥajar defined ḥadīth in a much narrower sense whereas his analysis of *sunna* suggested a much-wider

scope. Goldziher agrees when he suggests that ḥadīth is *sunna* though not every *sunna* is a ḥadīth (1971, 24).

#### **5.41. *Al-Ṣaḥābī*- the Companions.**

[The *isnād* either ends at the Prophet] or at the Companion (*Ṣaḥābī*) in a similar fashion. In other words, like what has passed in that the wording clarifies that the transmitted [text] is from the saying of the Companion, or from his actions or from his silent approvals. Not all of the types previously mentioned are applicable to this, but rather most of it. Similarity does not entail resemblance in every aspect. Since this short treatise covers all of the branches of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, I have embarked on offering a definition of the Companions and who they are. Thus I say [that a *Ṣaḥābī* is] “he who met the Prophet ﷺ as a believer in him<sup>178</sup> and [then] died as a Muslim<sup>179</sup>, even if he became an apostate in between, according to the most correct opinion.” What is meant by meeting the Prophet is a more general application than sitting with him, walking with him and going to one another; even if they did not talk to one another [he is still considered as a Companion]. Inclusive in this is one seeing the other, regardless of whether this occurs through his own means or through the means of someone else.

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<sup>178</sup> The person in question must have seen the Prophet as a Muslim and as someone who believed in him as a Prophet. This thus excludes the disbelievers like Abū Jahl and excludes those who met him, but as a believer in previous prophets like Jesus.

<sup>179</sup> He must then have died as a Muslim for him to be classified as a Companion. This excludes the apostates such as ‘Abd Allāh ibn Jahsh, Rabī‘a ibn Umayya and Ibn Khaṭl (Mighālwi 2003, 517).



Referring it with ‘meeting’ rather than ‘seeing’ [the Prophet] is preferred, because with the latter, the definition would not include Ibn Umm Maktūm and his likes from the blind, as they are undoubtedly [classified as] Companions.<sup>180</sup>

‘Meeting’ in this definition here is like the *jins*<sup>181</sup> and my saying ‘as a believer’ is like a *faṣl* that excludes those who achieved the meeting but as a disbeliever. My saying ‘in him’ is the second *faṣl* that excludes those who met him as a believer but in the state of believing in someone else from the [previous] prophets. But does this exclude he who met the Prophet as a believer [prior to the public announcement of Prophet-hood] and knew he would be declared a Prophet [later], and then did not live until the announcement? In this is a dispute.<sup>182</sup>

My saying ‘and [then] died as a Muslim’ is the third *faṣl* which excludes those who became apostates after meeting him as a believer and then subsequently died as a disbeliever, like ‘Abd Allāh ibn Jaḥsh and Ibn Khaṭl.

My saying ‘even if he became an apostate in between’ – namely between meeting the Prophet as a believer and between dying as a Muslim – means the attribute of Companionship still remains, irrespective of whether he reverted to Islam during the Prophet’s life [or not] or whether he met the Prophet again [as a reverted Muslim] or not.

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<sup>180</sup> Ibn Hajar chose deliberately not to define a Companion as someone who ‘saw’ the Prophet, because that would then exclude the likes of Ibn Umm Maktūm, who was blind.

<sup>181</sup> Ibn Hajar employs terminology from *balāgha* (prose) to explain how he has expressed the definition of a Companion. A *jins* is like a general statement and any exceptions are expressed through the means of a *faṣl*. For example, ‘all the Muslim, male students came to class’ is a general statement regarding who came to class. From the statement, we readily understand that no non-Muslims came to class, no females did and no non-students did. These three points are classified as the *faṣl* for the *jins*.

<sup>182</sup> Disputed are the group of people who saw the Prophet before he officially announced his Prophet-hood and knew he was a Prophet, like Baḥīra the monk.

My saying ‘according to the most correct opinion’ is an indication of the dispute [that exists] regarding the issue [of defining the Companion]. The story of al-Ash‘ath ibn Qays gives preference to the first opinion; for he is from the ones who became an apostate and he was brought to Abū Bakr as a prisoner. He then reverted to Islam and Abū Bakr accepted it and he married him to his sister. No one [from the scholars or other Companions] refrained from calling him a Companion and no one refused to mention his *ḥadīths* in the *musnads* and other sources.

Two notes: One of them is that there is no hiding the fact of the preferred rank of him who adhered to the Prophet ﷺ for a long time, fought with him or died under his commandership over one who did not stay with him for long, did not participate with him in the [key] events, or spoke to him or walked with him only rarely, or saw him as a child. This is despite the fact that the honour of Companionship is still applicable to all of them.

The *ḥadīth* of one who did not hear from him is *mursal* in terms of narration, though they themselves are classified as Companions, as they attained the honour of seeing him.

The second of the two notes is that a person’s Companionship is known by the means of *mutawātir*<sup>183</sup>, through the dispersed and famous nature of this fact<sup>184</sup>,

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<sup>183</sup> For example, the fact that Abū Bakr was a Companion is known by definitive means, as he was the one being referred to with the Prophet in the verse: ‘For Allāh did indeed help him, when the Unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion; they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Have no fear, for Allāh is with us"' (9: 40). All Qur’ān experts are unanimous that the ‘companion’ being referred to here is Abū Bakr. Likewise, Zayd ibn Ḥāritha is known as a Companion through the means of *tawātur*, as he is the only Companion mentioned explicitly in the Qur’ān, in the verse: ‘Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her...’ (33: 37)

<sup>184</sup> Mighālīwī writes that Ḍamām ibn Thalaba and ‘Akāsha ibn Muḥsin are deemed as Companions through this mean (2003, 519).

through the means of another Companion informing such<sup>185</sup>, through the means of a credible Successor informing such or through the means of the person affirming it himself, when his claim is plausible.<sup>186</sup> A group of ḥadīth scholars have expressed concern over this last means in the sense that such a claim from someone is akin to someone claiming ‘I am credible’ and [thus] this requires [further] analysis.

### Commentary

As Ibn Ḥajar notes in the text of the *Nuzḥah*, it is important to identify and know who the Companions were. One benefit is being able to identify the *mursal* from the *muttaṣil* ḥadīth (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 206). Owing to the importance of this issue, Ibn Ḥajar firstly offers a comprehensive definition of the Companion (*Ṣaḥābī*) and then offers his own commentary and analysis of the definition. The definition he adheres to for a *Ṣaḥābī* is as follows:

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<sup>185</sup> For instance, when Ḥamama ibn Abī Ḥamama died as a result of a stomach illness during the caliphate of ‘Umar, Abū Mūsā remarked that he heard the Prophet once inform him that he would die as a martyr (Mighālī 2003, 519). In Islam, there are several types of ‘martyr’. In a report recorded by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet affirmed that a person who dies in a plague, who dies through drowning, who dies under a collapsed building and dies due to a stomach illness are all considered as martyrs (*shahīd*).

<sup>186</sup> Precisely, this means that if someone claimed to be a Companion one hundred years after the Prophet, it would be rejected. The Prophet himself was reported to have said to his Companions: ‘Do you observe this very night? For verily, one hundred years after tonight, no one present here will remain on the face of the earth.’ (cited in Mighālī 2003, 520-1). According to the report narrated by Jābir, the Prophet said these words one month prior to his demise (Mighālī 2003, 521).

Some people did erroneously claim to be Companions when in fact they were not, such as Abū Dunyā al-Ashajj and Ratan Hindī (Mighālī 2003, 520). The scholars’ research and the above prophetic report were critical in rejecting such claims.

Not all scholars believe that the person’s own statement is sufficient to determine whether he is a Companion or not. This is because if someone says ‘I am credible’, his opinion on himself is not accepted. Hence, scrutiny is essential.

A *Ṣaḥābī* is he/she who met the Prophet ﷺ as a believer in him and [then] died as a Muslim, even if he/she became an apostate in between, according to the most correct opinion.

Two important facts are crucial to analyse with regards to the Companions. Firstly, in terms of religious rank, Muslim scholars accept that all Companions hold an equal, exalted rank, as testified by the Prophet himself and the Qur’ān. Secondly, it is agreed that the conventional investigations required to establish the accuracy and credibility of a ḥadīth reporter are waived for the Companions.<sup>187</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar and other ḥadīth scholars have treated these two points as fundamentally related. We do not need to check the accuracy of a reporter precisely because their character is described as exemplary by the Qur’ān. But an observer can argue that the two points need to be treated differently as in reality, they belong to different spheres. The Companions’ exalted rank is due to their *religious* sacrifice and assistance to Islam. This is different to their *academic* capability as ḥadīth reporters. Certainly, it is not contentious to decree all Companions as equal in terms of religious worth, but the same cannot always be said regarding their academic and intellectual capability. The following points show why a strong case can be made to treat the Companions differently; theologically and academically.

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<sup>187</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes: ‘It is not necessary for anyone to analyse their character once Allāh has done so, He Who knows their inner state’ (1988, 46).

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes: ‘...[*Mursal al- Ṣaḥābī*] has the same principle of a ḥadīth which is connected, because the narrator took the ḥadīth from a Companion. And not knowing from which Companion the ḥadīth was taken is not defamatory, because all Companions are ‘*udūl* (credible)’ (1986, 56). See also al-Suyūṭī (1972, 2: 215-6).

- a. Firstly, some Companions stayed with the Prophet longer than others. Though this may not affect their spiritual position, it will certainly affect their ability to comprehend what they are transmitting. It is strange that Ibn Hajar accepts that some Companions were better than others because the amount of time they spent with the Prophet<sup>188</sup>, but then does not elaborate on the ramifications of this fact in the sphere of ḥadīth reporting.
- b. Secondly, some Companions were known as specialists in *sharī'a* affairs whereas others were not. The most experienced in religious decrees was Ibn 'Abbās, as certified by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (Mighālwi 2003, 526). He is followed by the senior Companions, who Masrūq classifies as six; 'Umar, 'Alī, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Zayd ibn Thābit, Abū al-Dardā' and Ibn Mas'ūd (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 218; Mighālwi 2003, 527). Needless to say, this suggests that not all were academically equal.
- c. Kamali is of the opinion that the development of *jarḥ & ta'dīl* can be traced back to the prominent Companions such as Abū Bakr, Ibn 'Abbas, Anas ibn Mālīk and 'Alī (2005, 81). What this implicitly means is that they felt the need to evaluate and analyse each others' statements. If all the Companions were academically equal, then there would be no need for them to approve or disapprove each others' reports.
- d. The Companions' *'adāla* (credible nature) is not synonymous with their immunity from mistakes. Al-Bukhārī reports the statement of the Prophet, delivered when some news broke out in Madina that considerable wealth had arrived from the collection of jizya. He said:

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<sup>188</sup> He writes in the *Nuzḥah*: 'there is no hiding the fact of the preferred rank of he who adhered to the Prophet ﷺ for a long time, fought with him or died under his commandership over one who did not stay with him for long, did not participate with him in the [key] events, or spoke to him or walked with him only rarely, or saw him as a child. This is despite the fact that the honour of Companionship is still applicable to all of them.'

By God! I do not fear poverty for you. I only fear that when this material world has been opened to you, as was opened to those who came before you, it may distract you from the right path, just as it distracted them (*fa-tulhikum kamā alhathum*).

In another version of the same report, the last three words have been recorded as *fatuhlikukum kamā ahlakathum* (it will destroy you as it destroyed them). The two variations are most probably due to two different Companions hearing the words of the Prophet differently, as both variations sound the same and can apply to the context (Kamali 2005, 98-99). What this shows is that the Companions may be dedicated servants of Islam, but they were still human and were thus prone to mistakes.

In short, my thesis is that the Companions as religious men and the Companions as ḥadīth reporters needs to be viewed separately, but it seems that very few Muslim scholars have departed from the official view that all Companions are credible, regardless of age and academic ability. With difficulty, I have come across three such scholars only who indirectly suggest that not all the Companions are equal. One of these exceptions is al-Māzarī, when he wrote:

By the statement ‘All Companions are credible’, we do not mean every person who saw the Prophet on one occasion, or visited him momentarily and met him [briefly] for a moment. What we mean are those people who stayed with the

Prophet for a considerable amount of time, served him and assisted him. (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 214).

Perhaps al-Māziri's definition was an acknowledgement that intellectually, the rank of those Companions who stayed with the Prophet for a longer period is much greater, and thus their capacity as ḥadīth reporters will therefore also be greater. But al-Māziri's opinion is not considered strong amongst the Muslim scholars. Al-ʿAlāʾī was quick to refute al-Māziri because holding such a view excludes prominent Companions who only stayed with him for a short period of time, like Wāʾil ibn Ḥujr and Malik ibn al-Ḥuwayrith (Ibid.).

Another possible exception is Saʿīd ibn Musayyab. He refuses to define Companions in such a general state as most of the scholars have. He argues that a *Ṣaḥābī* is one who stayed with the Prophet for at least two years, and participated in at least one battle with him (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 211).<sup>189</sup> Finally, there is al-Wāqidi (d. 207/822-3), who only considered those who reached adulthood during the lifetime of the Prophet to be Companions (Brown 2009, 87).

The argument I have presented above has at least been touched upon in the *Nuzḥah*, but it has certainly not been critically assessed. The guidelines set down for who is considered a Companion in the *Nuzḥah* are very loose and far-ranging. A Muslim can be deemed a *Ṣaḥābī* if he saw the Prophet just once, even unintentionally and without any conversation of any form. In other words, all of them enjoy this nobility of the title of Companion, regardless of the extent of his/her interaction with the Prophet.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes that this definition is more likely to be according to the legal theorists, rather than the ḥadīth masters. If Saʿīd's opinion is accepted, then Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh would not be classified as a Companion (1986, 293).

Yet he also intricately points out that the status of a Companion who stayed with the Prophet for a considerable length of time and fought alongside him in battles is clearly greater than those Companions who only momentarily met him, despite the fact all are labelled as ‘Companions.’ This duality is accepted therefore by Ibn Ḥajar in some form. Hence a balance is required; this is only realistically possible when we view the Companions differently, according to their religious rank on the one hand and according to their ability to fully fathom the Prophet’s words and accurately pass it on to others on the other.

Perhaps owing to the sensitivity of the issue, some scholars, including Ibn Ḥajar, have chosen to imply that the theological status of the Companions automatically vouches for their academic ability too. After all, no Muslim would want to be smeared with the charge of questioning the rank of the Companions in any form. In the ninth Islamic century, Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī stated that anyone who criticised a Companion was a heretic (Brown 2009, 87), clearly indicating that questioning their rank was off-limit.

More recently, Mawdudī wrote that ‘even the noble Companions were overcome by human weakness, one attacking another.’ This comment led to a barrage of criticism from his Muslim contemporaries who saw the remarks as nothing short of slanderous (Brown 1999, pp.86-87).

The protectiveness enjoyed by the Companions and the sensitivity surrounding criticising them has affected the nature of the debate regarding the Companions. Rather than dealing with these sensitive issues, the Muslim scholars opt for the less controversial ones in their analysis and commentaries. A prime example of this is the dispute as to whether someone



is considered as a Companion if he saw the Prophet after his demise before he was buried.

Mighālīwī and al-Munāwī are of the opinion that such people will not be considered as

Companions.<sup>190</sup> Another example is the dispute as to whether small infants who the

Prophet saw are considered as Companions.<sup>191</sup> Ibn Ḥajar does exactly the same here in

the *Nuzhah* when he touches upon whether Baḥīra the monk was a Companion or not.

Muslim scholars are content to analyse such discussions because it is not blasphemous in

any way. On the other hand, separating the religious and academic rank of the

Companions is controversial at the very least, if not blasphemous.

If Muslims are not willing to hear criticism about the Companions from Muslims, it is

obvious that they will not desire to hear it from non-Muslims. A few examples of their

constructive remarks are mentioned below:

a. Brown has suggested that even the Prophet did not ‘completely trust all those who could be called Companions’ (1999, 85). After quoting the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet said: ‘Let whoever tells lies about me deliberately take his place in hell’, he concludes that:

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<sup>190</sup> Mighālīwī writes: ‘According to aforementioned definition (which is the same as Ibn Ḥajar’s), such a person will not be classified as a Companion who saw the Prophet after his demise but before his burial. For example, Abū Zuwayb Khuwaylid ibn Khālīd Hazlī accepted Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet, but did not attain the honour of meeting him. He appeared in Madina on the day the Prophet passed away’ (2003, 517). See al-Munāwī (1999, 2: 206) too.

<sup>191</sup> ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥārith ibn Nawfal was brought to the Prophet as a newborn child, for whom he performed the ceremonial *tahnīk* and supplicated for him. Al-‘Alā’ī does not count him as a Companion. However, al-Munāwī voices the opinion of the majority when he asserts that small children such as the above example are included under the definition (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 201 & 210).

...this can be taken to mean that Muḥammad knew that there were those among his Companions who were spreading lies about him (1999, 85).<sup>192</sup>

b. Brown also notes that there were ‘reports of conflicts and mutual accusations among the Companions’ (1999, 86).

c. In fact, Brown suggests, the Companions were marked by mistrust and dispute to the extent that ‘Umar felt the need to confine three Companions to Madina to keep them spreading traditions (Ibid.).

In response to such remarks, Muslim scholars have felt the urgent need to mute such voices, precisely because it questions the most dedicated men of Islam.

Over sixty Companions narrated ‘Let whoever tells lies about me deliberately take his place in hell’ from the Prophet, including those figures whom the Prophet promised a

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<sup>192</sup> Brown’s opinion clearly shows the wide discrepancy of western scholars on this tradition (*Let whoever tells lies about me...*). By suggesting that the Prophet *did* say these words to his Companions, he implicitly suggests that there is some authenticity to the report. This is in stark contrast to other western academics who strongly assert that the hadith is forged. Guillaume, for example, writes, ‘A most remarkable feature of the reaction [of increased forgery] was that the theologians borrowed the weapons of the liars. In order to combat false traditions they invented others equally destitute of prophetic authority. An extra ordinary number of Companions are cited as witnesses that the Prophet said, ‘whoever shall repeat of me that which I have not said, his resting place shall be in Hell’ (1924, pp.78-79)

Several points must be raised with regards to Brown’s objection;

Firstly, the logic of his reasoning is not conclusive. Merely because the Prophet warned of lying against him does not automatically mean that the Companions *were* lying. Instead, the saying can be seen as a reminder to those around him that his words are to be reported with utmost accuracy and integrity. If x warns y to refrain from lying, it does not necessitate that y is *already* indulging in lying; it could mean that x is asking y to refrain from lying as he has done in the past.

Secondly, the ḥadīth itself, as classical scholars agree, is not directed at the Companions but at the generations thereafter. In other words, the saying is a prophecy of what will occur after the Companions’ times. Several traditions exist which do not address the Companions but those who come after them. For example, the Prophet was reported to have said: ‘Do not insult my Companions. For I swear by Allāh, if you were to spend the weight of Mount Uḥud in gold [in Allāh’s path], you would not even reach their sight, nor half of it’ (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1998, 48). Clearly, this is directed to those after the Companions. The ḥadīth warning against lying against the Prophet is to be interpreted in the same light.

place in paradise during their lifetime. It seems illogical – to say the least – that for the same group of people, the Prophet would be promising a place in Paradise, as well as warning them of entering into Hell-Fire.

Without doubt, the Muslims admit that conflicts did arise between the Companions, but the nature of these disputes has been misinterpreted by certain observers. More often than not, the dispute centred on which traditions were to be acted upon and which would not, in terms of abrogation for example. The nature of the disputes was not because the Companions did not trust one another in terms of their character, honesty and ability to accurately transmit what they had heard from the Prophet.<sup>193</sup> The supposed report<sup>194</sup> alleges that ‘Umar confined the three Companions because they narrated too many traditions. But the three Companions in question were not known for their excessive narration. Ibn Mas‘ūd narrated 848 traditions, Abū al-Dardā’ narrated 179 and Abū Dharr narrated 281. (Şiddīqī 1993, 18) As Pīr Muhammad Karam Shah asks, why did ‘Umar not confine Abū Hurayra (5374 reported traditions), Ibn ‘Abbās (1660 traditions) or his own son ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar (2630 traditions)? (1973, 114) There are at least twenty-one Companions who narrated more traditions than Abū al-Dardā’, but ‘Umar did not take any action against them.

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<sup>193</sup> For instance, the Ḥanafī Jurist al-Shāshī (d. 335/946) cites the dispute that occurred between Abū Hurayra and Anas as to whether it was necessary to perform ablution again after eating cooked meat. Conflicting traditions exist on the matter; some state that ablution must be performed whereas others state it is not necessary. The dispute between the two Companions on the matter was with regards to which tradition had been abrogated. It was not because they questioned the authenticity of each others’ narration.

<sup>194</sup> The actual narration which supposedly claims that ‘Umar prevented three Companions from narrating traditions is very weak. Abū Shuhba quotes Ibn Ḥazm who has shown the report has a discontinuous chain. According to his investigations, Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf could not have heard from ‘Umar. This is because Ibrāhīm died in either 95/713 or 99/717, at the age of seventy-five. He was born in either 20/640 or 24/644, at the end of the caliphate of ‘Umar. Hence, according to the dates of each, Ibrāhīm was only three years old when ‘Umar died, an age at which it would have been impossible to hear and transmit narrations (Abū Shuhba 1996, 280, al-Sibā’ī 1998, 83).

### **5.41.1. Conclusion.**

This section on the Companions reflects the polemics that marks the study of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. The Muslims dare not question the integrity of these servants of Muḥammad whilst the western scholars highlight the tension and accuracy that existed between them. The truth – it seems – lies in between these two spectrums. The Companions were religiously credible but not necessarily academically equal, as my analysis has shown. Like with many other sections in the *Nuzḥah*, it highlights the protectionism that certain individuals and groups hold. Muslims cannot and should not question the rank of the Companions, even if the result of its absence is a blurred understanding *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*.

### **5.42. Al-Tābi‘ī and al-Mukhaḍramūn.**

[The *isnād* either ends at the Prophet, at the Companion (*Ṣaḥābī*)] or at the *Tābi‘ī* (Successor). The *Tābi‘ī* is the one who met the Companion(s) with the same detail as before (as a believer in the Prophet, and then died as a Muslim), except the condition of faith in the Companion, as this is specific to the Prophet ﷺ only. This is the chosen opinion, as opposed to those [scholars] who add the condition of extensive adherence for the Successor [to the Companion], the validity of hearing from him or the condition of acknowledgement.

There lies between the Companions and the Successors a group upon which there is a dispute regarding which of the two [aforementioned] categories they belong to. These are the *Mukhaḍramūn*, who lived through the period of Ignorance and the period of Islam, but did not see the Prophet ﷺ. Thus Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr has

[seemingly] classified these as Companions and ‘Iyād and others have claimed that Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr has explicitly said such. In this opinion lies doubt, because Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr clarified in the introduction of his book that he included the mentioning of the *Mukhaḍramūn* so that it could entail all those who lived in the first generation. The correct opinion is that they are classified as the senior Successors, irrespective of whether it is known one of them became a Muslim in the time of the Prophet ﷺ – like al-Najāshī<sup>195</sup> – or not.

However, if it is proven that the all of the people of the earth were unveiled to the Prophet ﷺ on the Night of Ascension and he observed them all, then the *Mukhaḍramūn* should be classified as among those who believed in him during his lifetime, even if he did not meet them as [conventional] Companions, since the seeing has been achieved by the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>196</sup>

#### Commentary

<sup>195</sup> He was the king of Abyssinia, who became a Muslim in the time of the Prophet. When he died, the Prophet described him as a ‘pious man’ (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, pp. 285-6).

<sup>196</sup> Ibn Ḥajar himself is inclined to the opinion that the *Mukhaḍramūn* are deemed as senior Successors rather than Companions. He does however raise an interesting point which could suggest that they are in fact Companions. Muslims believe that on the Night of Ascension, the Prophet saw the entire people of the world. As previously mentioned in the definition of a Companion, it does not matter if the Prophet saw the person in question and not vice versa; he will still be considered as a Companion. On this basis, the *Mukhaḍramūn* should be classified as Companions. Al-Wajīdī believes this is insufficient evidence to classify them as Companions. On the night of Ascension, the Prophet observed all the people of the earth in the ‘*ālam ghayb*’ (the unseen realm), whereas the matter here pertains to the ‘*ālam shuhūd*’ (the visible realm) (al-Wajīdī 1996, 178). Additionally, al-‘Uthaymin writes that if such a line of argument is maintained, then all the previous prophets and messengers too should be classified as ‘Companions’, because the Prophet met (and conversed with many of them) them too on this night (2002, 289). But of course, no scholar adheres to such an opinion.

### **5.42.1. The Successors.**

Ibn Hajar effectively defines the Successors (*Tābi‘ī*) in relation to the Companions. In the same manner a Companion is defined as someone who met the Prophet as a Muslim and then died in such a state, a Successor is one who met one of the Companions as a Muslim and died as a Muslim. As Ibn Hajar highlights, the part which is not applicable to the Successors is actually ‘believing’ in the Companion, as this is only a requirement for the Prophet.

In the previous section, it was shown that Muslims have dealt with the issue of Companions with great sensitivity, lest it insult the closest men to the Prophet. This section from Ibn Hajar too suggests a similar theme, albeit in a different manner.

When outlining his definition of a Companion, Ibn Hajar’s is cautious not to exclude anyone; if a person even saw the Prophet from afar, he is still considered a *Ṣaḥābī*. The likes of Sa‘id ibn Musayyab – it was noted – suggest that a person has to have extensive companionship with the Prophet before he is deemed a *Ṣaḥābī*. Ibn Hajar in the *Nuzhah* steered clear from any condition as such.

However, in this section, the *Nuzhah* offers the definition of a *Tābi‘ī* and then does mention how some scholars add ‘the condition of extensive adherence for the Successor [to the Companion], the validity of hearing from him or the condition of acknowledgement’. He does at least entertain such conditions, even though he does not agree with them.

What is the reason behind this difference? Because adding such conditions to the definition of a Companion may exclude certain individuals as being a *Ṣaḥābī*, which is quite a sensitive exercise. That sensitivity does not exist with the Successors and

therefore there is nothing wrong with suggesting that a *Tābi* ʿī needs to have extensive companionship in order to have this title.

This interpretation reflects a theme that we have noted before in the *Nuzhah*; that certain groups and individuals are protected in the discipline. For Ibn Ḥajar, we can question the conditions surrounding the definition of a *Tābi* ʿī. But for the Companions, such discussions are off-limit.

#### **5.42.2. The Mukhaḍramūn.**

This term refers to the Muslims who lived in the time of Ignorance<sup>197</sup> and Islam, but did not meet the Prophet. There is a dispute amongst the scholars regarding whether they are classified as Companions or Successors. The word derives from the Arabic '*khadrama*' to mean 'cut off' (al-ʿUthaymin 2002, 285).<sup>198</sup> They are so-called because they were cut-off from the Muslims who resided with the Prophet.

Al-Imām Muslim has declared that the *Mukhaḍramūn* were twenty in total, which include Abū ʿUmar Shaybānī, Saʿd ibn Iyās al-Shaybānī, Sharīḥ ibn Hānī, Suwayd ibn Ghafala, Bashīr ibn ʿAmr ibn Jābir, al-Aswad ibn Yazīd al-Nakhaʿī, ʿAmr ibn Maymūn al-Azdī, Abū ʿUthmān al-Nahdī, Abū al-Ḥilāl Rabīʿa ibn Zurāra al-ʿAtakī, al-Aswad ibn Hilāl al-Muḥāribī and Maʿrūr ibn Suwayd. Most scholars believe there are more however. Al-Suyūṭī includes ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUkaym and Aḥnaf ibn Qays, Abū Muslim Khawlānī as well as Uways al-Qarnī. (1972, 2: 239).

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<sup>197</sup> The time of Ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) refers to the period prior to the Prophet. A minority opinion is that it is the time before the Conquest of Makka.

<sup>198</sup> Al-Suyūṭī writes that the root word can also mean 'confused.' The Arabs say *lahm mukhaḍram* to describe meat when it is not known whether it derived from a male or female animal. (1972, 2: 238).

It has already been observed how the *Nuzhah* acts an arbitrator between disputed technical terms in the discipline. Here in this section is an example of how Ibn Ḥajar helps us to overcome misunderstandings that have existed between Muslim scholars. In his biographical account of all the Companions *al-Istī‘āb fī asmā’ al-ashāb*<sup>199</sup>, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr did include the biographies of the *Mukhadramūn*. Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ used this to suggest that he considers them as Companions. But Ibn Ḥajar believes that Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr included them in his account so that his works could comprehensively cover all those who lived in the first generation, not necessarily because he firmly believes they are technically classified as Companions.

### 5.43. *Marfū‘, mawqūf, maqtū‘ and athar.*

Thus the first type – in what has passed from the three types – and that is where the end of the *isnād* concludes at the Prophet ﷺ, is called *marfū‘*, irrespective of whether that is with a continuous *isnād* or not. The second is *mawqūf*; and that is what ends at the Companion. And the third is *maqtū‘*: and that is what ends at the Successor and those beneath the Successors, namely the Followers of the Successors (*atbā’ al-tābi‘īn*) and those after them. It is equal in terms of naming it *maqtū‘*, namely that which is from the Successor and that which is from those after them. And if you like, you can say: ‘[the report is] *mawqūf* to such and such.’

So there is a difference in terminology between *maqtū‘* and *munqaṭi‘*: the latter relates to the *isnād*, like it has already been mentioned, and the former relates to the

<sup>199</sup> *The Comprehensive, in the name of the Companions.*



***matn*, as you can see. Some [scholars] have placed one in the place of the other, contrary to the [correct] terminological use. And the last two, namely *mawqūf* and *maqṭūʿ* are [also] called *athar*.**

### Commentary

In this short section, the author summarises the previous discussion on the Companions and the Successors by highlighting what a report narrated by their likes are called in ḥadīth terminology. Variations do exist on the above definitions. For example, Abū Bakr ibn Thābit defines *marfūʿ* as that report in which the Companion informs of a saying, action or silent approval of the Prophet (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 45). On this basis, he does not consider a *mursal* report as *marfūʿ*.

Owing to the fact that both derive from the same root word, Ibn Ḥajar reminds the reader that there is a clear difference between *maqṭūʿ* and *munqaṭiʿ*. *Maqṭūʿ* is used to describe the actual text, in that it stems from the Successors or those after them. *Munqaṭiʿ* on the other hand refers to a report which has a discontinuation in the *isnād*. This is the renowned definition for both, though the author does acknowledge that some scholars have inverted the two. It seems that it is the earlier scholars who have deviated from the definition offered by Ibn Ḥajar, such as al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 47). This is somewhat excused, because they lived at a time when the terminology of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth* was still in its infant stage. Such discussions on the technical terms and their usage display why the *Nuzhah* is an ideal guide for disciples embarking on prophetic studies for the first time.

## 5.44. *Musnad*.

The *musnad* – in the saying of the ḥadīth master ‘This is a *musnad* ḥadīth’ – is a *marfū‘* [through the means of the] Companion with a chain that it is visibly continuous [leading to the Prophet]. Thus my saying ‘*marfū‘*’ is like a *jins* and my saying ‘[through the means of the] Companion’ is the *faṣl* that excludes that which the Successor raises [to the Prophet]. That [will be declared as a report which] is *mursal* and [if the report is raised by] someone below the Successor, then that is *mu‘ḍil* or *mu‘allaq*. My saying ‘visibly continuous’ excludes that which apparently looks discontinuous, and includes that report which seemingly looks continuous. Clearly, that which is in reality continuous [though looks otherwise] will also be included in *musnad*. It becomes apparent from the condition of ‘visibly looking continuous’ that a hidden discontinuation – like the ‘*an‘ana* from a *mudallis* and the contemporary for whom the meeting [with his shaykh] has not been proven – does not exclude a report from being *musnad*, by virtue of the fact that the *imāms* [of ḥadīth] have recorded *musnads* upon this form.

This definition complies with the saying of al-Ḥākim [when he writes]: ‘The *musnad* is that which a ḥadīth master reports from his shaykh in which he seemingly heard from him, and likewise so has his shaykh from his shaykh, continuous to the Companion and to the Prophet ﷺ.’

As for al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī], [he says that the] *musnad* is continuous. For this reason, then the *mawqūf*, when it is reported with a continuous chain, is called *musnad* according to him. However, he says that this [terminology] is used rarely.

Far-fetched is the remark of Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr when he said: ‘The *musnad* is the *marfū‘*’ with no consideration for the continuity of the *isnād*. This definition then will also befit the *mursal*, the *mu‘dīl* and the *munqaṭi‘*, when the text (*matn*) is raised [to the Prophet]. There is no one [else] of this opinion.

### Commentary

In essence, the *musnad* is the term which refers to a perfect ḥadīth. What this means is that the ḥadīth is marked by the following attributes:

- The *isnād* leads to the *matn* that expresses the sayings, actions or silent approvals of the Prophet. In other words, it is *marfū‘*.
- The Companion reports the saying or action of the Prophet in the *musnad* report. This therefore excludes *mursal*, in which the reporter after the Successor (which is usually the Companion) is missing (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 296).
- There are no visible breaks in the *isnād*. This means that it cannot be *mursal*, *mu‘dīl* or *munqaṭi‘*. However, by saying ‘visible’, it means that the *isnād* can have an invisible break in the *isnād*. On this basis, the term *musnad* can still be employed to describe a ḥadīth that is *mu‘an‘an*, *mudallas* or *mursal khafī*. As proof for this opinion, Ibn Ḥajar reminds the reader that such reports are included in the works of the ḥadīth masters and are still declared as *musnads*. Also, the definition offered by al-Ḥākim lends firm support to Ibn Ḥajar’s definition.

#### **5.44.1. Other definitions for *musnad*.**

Ibn Ḥajar's task in the *Nuzhah* was to offer a brief overview of the discipline and inform the reader of the different names and terms used in the discipline. This section shows that he also felt it important to highlight the *ikhtilāf* that exists too, when he included the definition of *musnad* according to other scholars. The importance of *ikhtilāf* in the *Nuzhah* will be referred to in detail in chapter six. For now, we can see how he refers to *musnad* according to the understanding of others:

1. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that a *musnad* report is that which is continuous even if it falls short of the Prophet (1988, 58). However, he admits that this usage for the term is rare.
2. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr holds *musnad* to be synonymous with *marfū'* in *al-Tamhīd* (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 43). Ibn Ḥajar's remarks suggest that his definition is wholly contrary to general usage and more far-fetched than al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's variation. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ does acknowledge that this is not the only definition offered by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr. In another variation, he adheres to the definition offered by Ibn Ḥajar (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 43).

#### **5.45. 'Uluww - The Elevated.**

**If the numbers are less – namely the numbers of the people of the *isnād* – then either it ends at the Prophet ﷺ with that small number, in comparison to the another *isnād* for that same ḥadīth that has more numbers; or either it ends to a highly-attributed**

imām from the *imāms* of ḥadīth, such as [attributes of] memorisation, accuracy, literary works and so on from the demanded attributes for the sake of preference, like Shu‘ba, and Mālik, al-Thawrī, al-Shāfi‘ī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and other [highly-decorated] *imāms*. Thus the first type, and that is what ends at the Prophet ﷺ, is *‘uluww muṭlaq*.

If coincidentally the shorter *isnād* is sound, that will be the most desired [matter]. If it is not, then the form of *‘uluww* is still present in it, so long as it is not forged; for this is synonymous to non-existence.<sup>200</sup>

The second [type], is *‘uluww nisbī*. This is where the numbers are less leading to that imām, even if the number from that imām to the end of the chain is numerous.

Certainly, the efforts of the earlier reporters have been great in seeking the elevation (*‘uluww*) to the extent that this has deviated them from more pressing matters. This elevation is [dearly] sought because it is closer to authenticity and nearer to fewer mistakes. This is because there is not a reporter in an *isnād* except the possibility of error exists for him. As the means increase and the *isnād* extends, then the possibility of errors greatens. As this decreases, so do the chances of errors. If a distinction exists in the non-elevated *isnād* that is not to be found in the elevated *isnād* – like the men of the *isnād* are more authoritative, or more outstanding in memorisation or more learned in jurisprudence, or that the continuation is more apparent – then there is no hesitation in deeming the non-elevated *isnād* as better.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>200</sup> In other words, a shorter chain for a report that is forged is of no significance whatsoever.

<sup>201</sup> Ibn Hajar is quick to point out that this is the general rule and not the universal one. There may be cases where despite the existence of a shorter *isnād* for a particular report, the longer may still be preferred. For instance, the latter may consist of more reliable and authoritative reporters than the shorter one. The words of delivery employed may suggest more accuracy in the longer chain (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 303). In such cases, the shorter *isnād* is still deemed as *isnād ‘ālī* (the elevated chain), but the longer one will be preferred. Based on this principle, al-‘Uthaymin writes that there are two types of *‘uluww*; in terms of

**As for those people who prefer the non-elevated in general because the extensive analysis demands more hardship which subsequently results in more reward, then this is showing preference owing to an alien matter, not linked to the soundness and weakness [of a ḥadīth].**<sup>202</sup>

### Commentary

Continuing his discussion specifically on the *isnād*, Ibn Ḥajar introduces the term '*uluww*', which means 'elevated'. When a ḥadīth specialist possesses an *isnād* for a report, then it is desirable for him to seek elevation for it. This means he seeks means by which he can shorten the chain, and thus minimise the chances of error. Al-ʿUthaymin explains:

For instance, a reporter possesses a ḥadīth in which there are two men between himself and al-Imām Mālik. The reporter would then go to the furthest land to ensure no reporter remained between himself and Mālik, by hearing the reporter directly from him (2002, 302).

Ibn Ḥajar states the obvious when he indicates why the elevated chain is a matter which carries great importance. If the *isnād* consists of five narrators, then the chance for error

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attributes (*sifa*) and in terms of number. The former is where the narrators are marked by more accuracy and a higher degree of memorization and integrity. The latter is simply where there are less reporters in the chain compared to another (2002, 302).

<sup>202</sup> A minority opinion exists from some scholars suggesting that the low *isnād* is better. Perhaps Ibn Ḥajar implies the opinion of Ibn Khallād, who argued that the non-elevated chain is better (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 264). This is on the basis that more narrators in a chain requires more analysis and investigation, which thus results in more religious reward. Ibn Ḥajar dismisses this opinion by saying that reward lies in differentiating the sound from the weak, not in investigation and analysis *per se*. And if seeking an elevated chain leads to more authenticity then there is no reason why a non-elevated chain should be accepted. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ voices the same sentiment when he writes: 'Indeed, we heard ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī and Abū ʿAmr al-Mustamlī al-Nīsābūrī say, 'Lowness (in chains) is a calamity' (1986, 264).

is much greater in an *isnād* for the same report that only contains three narrators. The shorter the chain, then the less room for error. Here is an implicit indication from Ibn Ḥajar that the discipline depends on men and can therefore never be totally soundproof: reporters of even the highest calibre can make mistakes. The decreased chance of error is the simple reason why ḥadīth specialists occupied their time with seeking elevation over other matters.

But was the purpose of seeking elevation purely for the sake of increased authenticity? Seemingly not. This is shown implicitly in two parts of the *Nuzhah*. Firstly, Ibn Ḥajar writes that the elevation can be of two types. The first is called '*uluww muṭlaq*' and is marked by an attempt to shorten a report that leads to the Prophet. The second, '*uluww nisbī*', is where the disciple attempts to shorten the *isnād* that leads to a renowned ḥadīth master, irrespective if the *isnād* thereafter (namely, from that imām to the Prophet) is long (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 257). The existence of '*uluww nisbī*' suggests the idea that prestige is more important than authenticity. This is because it leads to a closeness not to the Prophet, but to one of these celebrated men of ḥadīth 'like Shu'ba, and Mālik, al-Thawrī, al-Shāfi'ī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and other [highly-decorated] *imāms*.'

The second part where Ibn Ḥajar suggests that seeking an elevated *isnād* had a function other than ḥadīth authenticity is where he notes that 'certainly, the efforts of the earlier reporters have been great in seeking the elevation (*uluww*) to the extent that this has deviated them from more pressing matters.' The 'pressing matters' Ibn Ḥajar is referring to here is ḥadīth authenticity. But he acknowledges that past Muslims sometimes saw the elevated *isnād* as the goal, not the means. This makes sense when we remember that the *isnād* also provided a connection to the Prophet and established a person as part of the

Muslim scholarly class. As a result, one's proximity to the Prophet in the *isnād* and access to reports that other scholars lacked served as marks of precedence in the scholarly community (Brown 2009, 47). Owing to this prestige, seeking an elevated *isnād* became a goal in its own right, rather than the goal of ḥadīth authenticity. Brown observes:

As in any society, Muslim religious scholars and pious individuals established a system of honors and valuable items that individuals could earn or attain; like educational degrees. Muslim scholars sought out shorter and shorter *isnāds*, rarer and rarer *ḥadīths*, as a way to gain precedence, fame and respect in their religious culture (2009, 47).

A prime example of someone who gave preference to elevated chains rather than ḥadīth authenticity was al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) in his three *Mu'jams*. Some of the *isnāds* he mentioned were unbelievably short, calling into question what the aim of his work actually was. Whereas al-Bukhārī only included twenty-eight instances that contained three men in the chain, a hundred years later al-Ṭabarānī regularly included chains with four men (Brown 2009, 48). His entire intention is further questioned when we observe that after each ḥadīth, he would add a comment on how rare the report is, not how authentic it was.

The desire for a direct link to the Prophet and the absurdity surrounding this quest is perhaps best epitomised by al-Zabīdī (d. 1791). He claimed to have heard a ḥadīth via an *isnād* of two *jinn*s (supernatural beings) from the Prophet (Brown 2009, 48).



This section suggests that not all Muslims that occupied themselves in ḥadīth studies were doing so for religious reasons. For some, it was a social pastime and a means of gaining status in society. This was also the reality in Mamluk Cairo too, as we shall explain in section six.

#### **5.46. *Muwāfaqa* & *badal*- the Agreements and Substitutions.**

In it – namely ‘*uluww nisbī*’ – is *muwāfaqa*. This is reaching one of the *shaykhs* of compilations<sup>203</sup> through another [independent] means, namely the path that leads to that specific compiler. Its example is that al-Bukhārī has reported a ḥadīth from Qutayba from Mālik. If we narrate it through his means then there will be eight [reporters] between him and Qutayba. And if we report that same ḥadīth through the means of Abū al-‘Abbās al-Sarrāj, from Qutayba, for example, then there will be seven [reporters] between him and Qutayba. So *muwāfaqa* has been achieved with al-Bukhārī with his own shaykh, along with the elevated *isnād* to it.

Also in it – namely ‘*uluww nisbī*’ – is *badal*. This is reaching the shaykh of his shaykh in a similar fashion. An example is the same *isnād* through another means to Qa‘nabī, from Mālik. Thus Qa‘nabī will be in the substitute place for Qutayba.

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<sup>203</sup> This means the compilers of the six canonical compilations.

**[The terms] *muwāfaqa* and *badal* are mostly applied when it couples with elevation (*‘uluww*). If it does not occur with elevation, then the term *muwāfaqa* and *badal* is still applied, [even] in the absence of elevation.<sup>204</sup>**

### Commentary

The introduction of the terms *muwāfaqa* and *badal* is directly related to the previous section where *‘uluww nisbī* was outlined. Ibn Ḥajar here gives a practical example to show how the terms are used. In this brief paragraph, one cannot ignore the fact that the terms *muwāfaqa* and *badal* are very similar (*badal* is like *muwāfaqa*, except that the elevation has been attained to the shaykh of the shaykh). The ḥadīth scholars’ introduction of such terms served to show the exactness of the discipline.

Additionally, no indication is given here as to how shortening the chain to a celebrated imām adds to the authenticity of a report. Elevation is not a condition for *ṣaḥīḥ*. This adds to the suspicion – as highlighted in the previous section – that seeking an elevated *isnād* (*‘uluww nisbī*) had a prestige attached to it which Muslims sought to gain.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibn Ḥajar notes that these two terms are usually applied when the process leads to an elevated chain. In other words, *muwāfaqa* and *badal* should be sought along with the intention of minimising the number of reporters in the chain. If the elevation is not attained during this process, then the scholars do still refer to it with these terms.

## 5.47. *Musāwāh* & *muṣāfaḥa*- the Equivalent and the Hand-Shaking.

In it – namely ‘*uluww nisbī* – is *musāwāh*. This is equalling the number in the *isnād* from the reporter to its end, namely in the *isnād* of ‘*uluww nisbī*, with the *isnād* of one of the compilers. Like for example, [al-Imām] al-Nasā’ī reports a ḥadīth in which between him and the Prophet ﷺ are eleven people. The same ḥadīth with another *isnād* has come across us in which there are eleven people between us and the Prophet ﷺ. Hence we have equalled al-Nasā’ī in terms of number, in exclusion to that specific *isnād* of al-Nasā’ī’s.

Also in it – namely ‘*uluww nisbī* – is *muṣāfaḥa*. This is the equalling with the disciple of that compiler in the aforementioned form. It is called *muṣāfaḥa* because it is usually a habit for two people to handshake when they meet. And we in this form have almost met al-Nasā’ī; thus it is as if we have shook hands.

The opposite of ‘*uluww* with its aforementioned types is *nuzūl*.<sup>205</sup> So each type of ‘*uluww* has an opposite form from *nuzūl*, as opposed to those who assume that ‘*uluww* does not have its contrasting type in *nuzūl*.

### Commentary

In theory, ‘*uluww muṭlaq* is of greater importance for the authenticity of a ḥadīth than ‘*uluww nisbī*. This is because the former is an attempt to shorten the *isnād* to the Prophet whereas the former is an attempt to shorten it to a renowned ḥadīth master. In portrayal, it

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<sup>205</sup> In contrast to the ‘*uluww* is the *nuzūl*, or ‘low’. When referring to the actual *isnād*, the scholars apply the term al-*isnād al-‘ālī* (the elevated chain) and the al-*isnād al-nāzil* (the low chain).

seems *‘uluww nisbī* is more important for Ibn Hajar. Four additional terms have been introduced related to *‘uluww nisbī* – *muwāfaqa*, *badal*, *musāwāh* and *muṣāfaḥa* along with practical examples to show how they work. In contrast, none of these four terms relate to *‘uluww muṭlaq*. This is an indication that the *isnād* was not merely a connection to the Prophet, but membership to a scholarly elite. Additionally, it is a clue into how the technical terms in the discipline were used. The terms were not just to define and differentiate different types of prophetic reports. The terms also gave an indirect insight into what scholars saw as more important in the field. Here, the fact that *‘uluww muṭlaq* have no related terms and that *‘uluww nisbī* have four suggests that a connection to a renowned scholar was of greater importance than to the Prophet, perhaps more so in the ninth Islamic century.

## 5.48. *Aqrān*- the Contemporaries.

If the narrator shares similarities with the one he reported from in a matter from the matters pertaining to narration, such as age or taking reports from the same *shaykhs*, then this a type which is called the narration of the *aqrān*, so called because the narrator is of his like. Thus when each one from the contemporaries report from the other, then this is *mudabbaj* – this is more specific than the first as every *mudabbaj* is *aqrān* and not every *aqrān* is *mudabbaj*.

Verily al-Dāraquṭnī has compiled [a book] on the latter<sup>206</sup>, and Abū al-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī has compiled [a book] on the former.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> This book is called *al-Mudabbaj*.

<sup>207</sup> This book is called *Riwāyat al-aqrān*.

When the shaykh reports from his disciple, it is true that each one has [now] reported from the other. So is it called *mudabbaj*? In this is a debate. Apparently, it is not [called *mudabbaj*] because it is [considered as] the reporting of the seniors from the juniors. *Tadbīj* is derived from the *dībāja* (cheeks) of the face. So this suggests that each one should be equal on both sides. So it does not appear as such [with the case of the shaykh taking from the student].<sup>208</sup>

#### Commentary

*Aqrān* and *mudabbaj* in essence is where similarities are to be found between two narrators. As the *Nuzhah* indicates, this similarity can take on different forms. For instance, they both can be of approximate similar age, which is then deemed as *aqrān*. Likewise, the two can be similar in terms of the fact that both have often relied on one particular shaykh.

At first it may seem that *mudabbaj* and *aqrān* are not directly related to the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* and are merely an academic exercise of little worth. However, Muslim scholars state there are cases where knowing the two can help us to differentiate the authentic report from the non-authentic. Al-‘Uthaymin explains:

Sometimes, a disciple forgets a ḥadīth that he took from his shaykh. His contemporary may have better memory than him who has not forgotten the ḥadīth.

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<sup>208</sup> *Mudabbaj* is where similarities are to be found between the two reporters and it is known that they have reported from another. There is a dispute amongst the scholars as to whether the term *mudabbaj* is applied when a shaykh reports from his disciple. Ibn Ḥajar believes that this comes under the reporting of the senior from the junior, rather than *mudabbaj*. He argues from a linguistic perspective. Because the word *mudabbaj* derives from *dībāja* which means cheeks, then when a shaykh takes from the disciple, this should not be referred to as *mudabbaj*, because they are not equal in terms of narrating from another, just like the cheeks of the face are. In terms of rank, the shaykh is clearly greater than the disciple (in most cases) and so the exact similarity has not been achieved. The narrations in the form of *mudabbaj* include the reporting of Abū Hurayra from ‘Ā’isha and vice versa, the reporting of al-Zuhrī from ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz and vice versa and the reporting of Mālik from al-Awzā’ī and vice versa (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 309).

So the disciple can take the ḥadīth from the contemporary, who has heard it from the shaykh (2002, 312).

Moreover, when two contemporaries feature in the *isnād*, one after the other, then this can give us assurance that they are not an addition in the *isnād*<sup>209</sup>, but rather have actually narrated from one another (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 151). Also, knowing the *mudabbaj* and *aqrān* can help us overcome difficulties in writings. If two narrators are mentioned in an *isnād* and it is not known whether the report says ‘from’ (*‘an*) or ‘and’ (*wa*) in between them, then information gained regarding the *mudabbaj* and *aqrān* can help us solve this dilemma.

On a final note, the section here indicates the type of debate that existed in Ibn Ḥajar’s time surrounding *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. One gets the impression that a radical overhaul of the discipline or a serious critical evaluation of it was not on the agenda during the ninth Islamic century. Rather, there were minor concerns like whether the shaykh reporting from his disciple is termed *mudabbaj* or *riwāyat al-akābir ‘an al-aṣāghir*.

## **5.49. *Riwāyat al-akābir ‘an al-aṣāghir*- the Narration of the Seniors from the Juniors.**

**If the reporter narrates from someone who is less than him in age<sup>210</sup>, or in terms of [frequency of] meeting<sup>211</sup> or in terms of rank<sup>212</sup>, then this type is the narration of the**

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<sup>209</sup> When this happens, it is called *Ziyādat al-ruwāt*.

<sup>210</sup> This was the case with al-Zuhrī and Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī with Mālik (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 307).

<sup>211</sup> For example, a disciple takes a ḥadīth from someone who has stayed with his shaykh for two years, though he himself has spent twenty years with the same shaykh (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 313).

seniors from the juniors. This [application of the term] includes narration of the fathers from the sons<sup>213</sup>, the Companions from the Successors<sup>214</sup>, the shaykh from his disciple and its likes. The opposite of [these forms] is common<sup>215</sup> because this is the overwhelming form of narration. The benefit of this is differentiation between the different ranks and putting people in their place. Verily al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] has written a book on the narration of the fathers from the sons<sup>216</sup> and has dedicated a beautiful treatise on the narration of the Companions from the Successors.

#### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar here refers to the area in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* known as the narration of the seniors from the juniors. This can take many forms, as highlighted in the *Nuzḥah*.

One of the benefits of this identification is to prevent a person from assuming the *isnād* has been swapped (*qalb*). Al-‘Uthaymin explains:

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<sup>212</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cites the example of Mālik in his relation with ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ishāq ibn Rāḥawayh in their relation to ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Mūsā (1986, 308).

<sup>213</sup> For example, al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib took a ḥadīth from his son al-Faḍl regarding the combining of two Prayers at al-Muzdalifa (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 313; al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 254).

<sup>214</sup> For instance, the *‘Abd Allāhs* and other Companions took from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 308). Al-Suyūṭī notes that prophetic reports were narrated by the Companions from the Successors, and not just biblical and *mawqūf* reports (1972, 2: 388).

Note: The *‘Ibādalah* refers to anyone whose name was ‘Abd Allāh from the Companions, which are approximately two hundred and twenty in number (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 220). However, specifically it refers to four prominent Companions who were called ‘Abd Allāh. According to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal they are; (i) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar (ii) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās (iii) ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr (iv) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. These four are prominent and famous because they passed away late and thus diffused knowledge to the Muslims (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 155). ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Mas‘ūd does not feature under this classification because he passed away relatively quickly (Mighālī 2003, 528; al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 219). Other scholars have different opinions regarding the *‘Ibādalah*. Al-Imām Jawharī confined the *‘Ibādalah* to three, omitting ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr. Al-Nawawī classified ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Mas‘ūd as one of the four in the place of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (Mighālī 2003, 529).

<sup>215</sup> In other words, cases where the junior narrates from the senior, the Successor narrates from the Companion and the son narrates from the father are common-practice and the normal, expected mode of reporting (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 314).

<sup>216</sup> The name of this treatise is *Riwāyat al-Ābā’ ‘an al-Abnā’*.

When a narrator reports a ḥadīth and finds a narration of a father from the son, then what will he initially think? He will assume that it has been swapped, because normally the son narrates from the father (2002, 314).

A detailed list of people who have reported from their sons can help us to differentiate the swapped reports from the un-swapped ones.

The other benefit, as Ibn Ḥajar notes, is to ‘put people in their place’. What this means is that people do not automatically and arrogantly assume their elevated rank because they are the more senior in narration. Rank stems from integrity and accuracy in the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* rather than from age and academic rank. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ reflects this opinion when he writes:

It has been established that ‘Ā’isha said: ‘The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ ordered us to put people in their proper place’ (1986, 307).

So in this short section, Ibn Ḥajar is making two statements, an academic one and a religious one. The academic one is that the men in the chain took on all different forms, with fathers sometimes reporting from their sons and the seniors narrating from the juniors. Ibn Ḥajar is suggesting that this could only come about if the chains were genuine. The religious one is that the men engaged in ḥadīth transmission also had a duty to uphold the teachings of the Prophet. This meant respecting the men of knowledge, regardless of age, background and social esteem.



## 5.50. *Riwāyat al-Abnā' 'an al-Ābā'* - the Narration of the sons from the fathers.

From [the opposite of] this [form] is he who reports from his father, from his grandfather. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-‘Alā’ī from the later scholars has compiled a large volume in identifying those who reported from their father, from their grandfather, from the Prophet ﷺ<sup>217</sup>. He has divided them into types; that from which the *his* in the statement ‘from his grandfather’ refers to the narrator<sup>218</sup>, and that from which the *his* in the statement ‘from his grandfather’ refers to the narrator’s father.<sup>219</sup> He has explained it and has evaluated it, as well as referred to the ḥadīth to be found in each form. Indeed I summarised the aforementioned book and added many other variations. The most number to be found where there is the continuous narration from the father to the son is fourteen fathers.<sup>220</sup>

### Commentary

In this straight-forward section, Ibn Ḥajar describes the common cases where the sons narrate from their fathers.<sup>221</sup> This is following a theme reflected in the previous sections where readers are informed of the novel factors which are shared between reporters.

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<sup>217</sup> The name of this book is *al-Waṣy al-mu‘allam fī man rawā ‘an abī ‘an jaddihī, ‘an al-nabī ṣalla Allāh ‘alayhi wa sallam*.

<sup>218</sup> For example, there is a sanad which reads: ‘Bahz ibn Ḥakīm from his father, from his grandfather, from the Prophet.’ This means the report stemmed from Bahz ibn Ḥakīm ibn Mu‘āwiya, from his father Ḥakīm and then from his grandfather Mu‘āwiya (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 259).

<sup>219</sup> An example of this is the *sanad* ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb, from his father, from his grandfather. This means the report of ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, from his father Shu‘ayb, from his grandfather ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 257).

<sup>220</sup> This is the prophetic report *Laysa al-khabar ka-al-mu‘āyana*, from ‘Alī which al-Qārī has quoted with its full *isnād* in his commentary of the *Nuzḥah* (1994, 644-5).

<sup>221</sup> Al-Munāwī notes that also included in the category of narration of the sons from the fathers is the narration of daughters from the mothers, though he admits this is extremely rare (1999, 2: 261).

Ibn Ḥajar suggests this issue is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, as explained in the *Nuzḥah*, the *isnād* sometimes mentions a reporter's name followed by the remark 'from his father, from his grandfather'. This can lead to ambiguity since it is not clear whether the statement 'from his grandfather' refers to the reporter's grandfather or the father's grandfather (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 256; Mighālīwī 2003, 550). So knowing this subject area can create clarity.

Secondly, one of the primary reasons for the rejection of a ḥadīth is the discontinuity of the *isnād*. In numerous ways, a report sometimes faces rejection because it cannot be proven that the disciple heard from whom he claims to have done so. To a large extent, the 'family *isnāds*' help us overcome this problem. The researcher will find that if the reporter is the father and the reported-to is the son, it is now difficult to reject such a ḥadīth on the basis of the non-meeting.

Thirdly, 'family *isnāds*' can mean more accuracy. Family members engaged in ḥadīth narration will enjoy extensive companionship and this prolonged company will mean more opportunities to check and revise the ḥadīth from the source.

Fourthly Ibn Ḥajar in this section is perhaps drawing on his own personal experiences. He himself married a ḥadīth scholar (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 97), in 798/1395. Ānas Khātūn was the daughter of al-Qāḍī Karīm al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn 'Abd al-Azīz, and studied under al-Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī just as Ibn Ḥajar did. Ibn Ḥajar had one son – Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad – from a later marriage (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 100). Ibn Ḥajar paid utmost attention to his religious education and development. He memorised the Qur'ān and lead *tarāwīḥ* Prayers in 826/1422. The book *Bulūgh al-marām min adillat al-aḥkām* was written by Ibn Ḥajar as a dedication to his son (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 101). This shows

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that as Muslims passed on *ḥadīths* through the family in previous times, Ibn Ḥajar continued this religious duty within his own family too.

This last observation shows that viewed in a religious light, the narration of sons from their fathers was a reflection of the care and importance people took in the field of *ḥadīth*. Ensuring that their sons inherited knowledge and not just property and wealth was of paramount importance to early Muslims.

Along with these positive notes related to the ‘family *isnāds*’, there are some negatives. In early times, it was used as a means of deceitfully enhancing the appearance of the chain. Schacht writes:

There are numerous traditions which claim an additional guarantee of soundness by representing themselves as transmitted amongst members of one family, for instance from father to son (and grandson)...whenever we come to analyse them, we find these family traditions spurious and we are justified in considering the existence of a family *isnād* not an indication of authenticity but only a device for securing its appearance (1959, 170).

Goldziher shows distrust to the *ṣaḥīfa* of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr al-‘Āṣ precisely because it was passed down through his family (1971, 23). Even Azami accepted cases where reporters used such chains to circulate forged traditions (1996, 197).

Overall, I believe that the observations of Schacht and others on ‘family *isnāds*’ does not deter one from its significance. In fact, Schacht is actually acknowledging the security

surrounding it. By writing that forgers would use it to secure the chain's appearance, this proves that it was seen as rigid; otherwise forgers would not use 'family *isnāds*'.

Secondly, if a family *isnād* was a means of 'securing its appearance' then surely we would see the existence of such chains more widespread in ḥadīth literature. The relatively small ratio of family chains compared to conventional ones therefore does not lend support to Schacht's theory. Burton agrees when he notes that in terms of ḥadīth text statistics, the family *isnāds* are 'of infrequent occurrence' (1994, 111). Perhaps Robson strikes the correct balance when he remarked:

Was the family *isnād* invented to supply apparent evidence for spurious traditions, or did genuine family *isnāds* exist which later served as models? It seems better to recognise that they are a genuine feature of the documentation, but to realise that people often copied this type of *isnād* to support spurious traditions. Therefore, while holding that family *isnāds* do genuinely exist, one will not take them all at face value (1955, 23).

To conclude, this section shows that Muslims and non-Muslims do sometimes agree on an issue in the discipline. Their view points on family *isnāds* are not radically different, as both agree it was used for fraudulent purposes and both agree on its strengths too.

### **5.51. *Sābiq* & *lāḥiq*- the Preceding and the Reaching.**

If two reporters share [in reporting] from one shaykh, and one's death precedes the other's, then this is *sābiq* and *lāḥiq*. The most we have come across between two

reporters in terms of death is one hundred and sixty years. This is as such because Abū ‘Alī al-Burdānī heard a ḥadīth from al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Silafī who was one of his *shaykhs*. He narrated from him and died in 500/1106. Then the last from the companions of al-Salafī to hear from him was his grandson Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Makkī, who died in 650/1252. An older example is that of al-Bukhārī who heard from his disciple<sup>222</sup> Abū al-‘Abbās al-Sarrāj some reports on history and its likes. He died in 256/870. The last to hear from al-Sarrāj was Abū al-Ḥasan al-Khaffāf, who died in 393/1002.

The most common reason for this gap is that of the two reporters who have heard from the shaykh, one lives for a considerable time after the other. Then in the final days of the shaykh’s life, the other reporter (of lesser age) hears a report from him and lives for a long period thereafter. This results in the large time gap. And Allāh provides assistance.

#### Commentary

The terms *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* refer to when two disciples have narrated traditions from one shaykh and there is a considerably large period in between. The one who dies first is referred to as the *sābiq* and the one who dies later (and heard from the same shaykh) is called *lāḥiq*. Through experience of narration, the largest gap between the *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* to be found was one hundred and fifty years. In the *Nuzḥah*, the example of al-Bukhārī and al-Khaffāf is given, with their shaykh, Abū al-‘Abbās.

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<sup>222</sup> Al-Munāwī writes that the text should read his shaykh and not his disciple (1999, 2: 265).

Another example is al-Zuhrī and Aḥmad ibn Ismā‘īl, who both heard from Mālik. Al-Zuhrī died in 124/742 and Aḥmad died in 259/872, a gap of one hundred and thirty five years (Mighālī 2003, 553).

The last few sections of the *Nuzhah* seem to touch on novelty factors related to the men of transmission in an *isnād*. *Sābiq* and *lāḥiq* seems to be following this same pattern. It is difficult to justify such studies and how it helps ḥadīth authentication.

But a closer analysis shows that *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* does have an academic function. The benefit of this is to prevent the wrongful assumption that there is a drop in the chain (al-‘Irāqī 1995, 385). It also touches upon the issue of older transmitters, which Juynboll has analysed in detail and used to deduce the fraudulent nature of prophetic reports.

Juynboll draws attention to ‘the frequent occurrence of transmitters reportedly blessed by God with unusually advanced ages’ (1996, VII: 156), particularly in Kūfa. These *mu‘ammarūn* served an important function; they were introduced, or invented, to span the large gap between the common link reporters (present at the end of the first century) and the alleged Companion the report was supposed to have stemmed from (1996, VII: 160). Because this span would be for more than sixty years, and because it would be more acceptable if the *isnād* was shorter, it made sense for the person to be one, old, solitary person.

Juynboll’s interesting findings do question ḥadīth transmission activities in the first century, particularly in Kūfa. But there are several matters which he overlooks. Firstly, his thesis is based on the premise that the majority of chains for the majority of prophetic reports consisted of sole reporters. He writes that:

In other words, canonical Muslim tradition literature is first and foremost characterised by the feature that the transmission of a particular saying allegedly uttered by the Prophet travelled during the first sixty to one hundred and fifty years or so of its existence along a path of consecutive **single** individuals. (1996, VII: 172).

There are thousands of reports to be found in the canonical collection that are either *mashhūr* or *‘azīz*, namely where there are at least two transmitters in each generation. Secondly, Juynboll explicitly writes that the common link transmitters would routinely create false biographical information about the *mu‘ammarūn*, and that there were a ‘number of *mu‘ammarūn* who are invented, lock, stock and barrel, complete with their miraculously advanced age of death.’ (1996, VII: 175). As it will be shown in 5.64, any reporter in an *isnād* must be authenticated by at least two people according to many ḥadīth masters, or one reliable ḥadīth master at the very minimum. If Juynboll’s theory is accepted, then it means that the ḥadīth masters were authenticating imaginary figures, and were all part of the mass collusion to fill the gaps of forged chains. No indication is given from Juynboll as to how and why all the people in the field of sunnī ḥadīth literature, for centuries, all kept quiet and did not feel the need to become whistle-blowers.

Thirdly, there is another explanation for the wide gap between reporters sharing the same teacher. As the centuries progressed, the age at which reporters were allowed to sit in ḥadīth circles formally became younger (more will be said about this in section 5.67) Fourthly and most importantly, Ibn Ḥajar’s analysis here shows that early Muslims did not have to span the gap between two reporters that were parted by a large number of

years. This is because the concept of *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* could explain the large gap. So this shows that to some degree at least, there was a justification to include a section on *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* in the *Nuzhah*.

### **5.51.1. Conclusion.**

Throughout his work, Ibn Ḥajar's analysis of ḥadīth classification has shown the wide variety of forms the *isnād* would assume. As *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* clearly shows, the *isnāds* would sometimes feature two reporters who were divided in age by a number of years. Elsewhere we have seen that the dispersed nature of the report means that there are several people in each generation, like *mashhūr* or *'azīz*. Some chains did not follow the conventional path of Prophet to Companion to Successor; his analysis of *mursal* has shown that the chain can pass amongst several Successors before eventually reaching the Companion.<sup>223</sup> Common sense dictates that the usual pattern would be that the juniors would report from the elders, but *riwāyat al-akābir 'an al-aṣāghir* shows that this pattern too can be broken.<sup>224</sup> In short, there was no typical pattern of an *isnād*. Juynboll gives the impression that common link transmitters were persistent in creating an *isnād* in a typical and common manner, and that is where the *mu'ammārūn* came in. But *sābiq* and *lāḥiq* shows that there was no typical and common *isnād*, and that some justifiably took on the form where there would be a gap of a hundred years between two reporters.

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<sup>223</sup> See Section 5.19.

<sup>224</sup> See Section 5.49.



## 5.52. *Muhmal* – the Obscure.

If a reporter narrates from two people who share the same name, or have the same father's or grandfather's name, or the same ascription and one cannot be differentiated from the other; then if both are credible then it does not harm [the authenticity of the ḥadīth]. An example is that which occurred with al-Bukhārī in his narration from 'Aḥmad' – who is not described further – from Ibn Wahb. This is either Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ or Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā. Or [the example of] 'Muḥammad' – who is not described further – of the people of 'Irāq. For this is either Muḥammad ibn Salām or Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Dhuhālī. Verily I have encompassed these [obscurities] in the introduction to the Commentary of al-Bukhārī.<sup>225</sup> Whosoever desires a comprehensive and accurate means by which one is identified from the other and one from the two is specified, then *muhmal* [as a means] is required. When one is not clear from the other in that the descriptions are shared by both, then this [results] in severe difficulty. One then must resort to [external] factors and overwhelming evidence.

### Commentary

In *'ilm al-ḥadīth*, there are some technical terms which have a very close overlap with other terms in the discipline and *muhmal* is one such example. There is only a subtle difference between *muhmal* and *mubham*.<sup>226</sup> As explained earlier, *mubham* is where the person's name in the chain has not been mentioned at all and instead the reporter merely says 'such and such informed me' or 'the credible one informed me.' *Muhmal* is slightly

<sup>225</sup> This is *Fath al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar's detailed commentary on the compilation of al-Bukhārī.

<sup>226</sup> Section 5.36.

different in that the person's name has been mentioned but because there are several people with the same name, it is still not clear who the reporter in question is.

Along with showing the close overlap with certain technical terms in the discipline, the section also serves to indicate the nature of research in the ninth Islamic century. As Ibn Ḥajar mentions, he included a section on *muhmal* in his introduction to *Fatḥ al-bārī*, thus suggesting its importance. Knowing that Sulāyman reported the ḥadīth is not sufficient for the scholar. If this refers to Sulāyman ibn Dāwūd al-Khawlānī, then he is credible. If however it refers to Sulāyman ibn Dāwūd al-Yamāmī, then he is deemed a weak reporter (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 165). This research will take on the form of analysing other reports where the reporter and the one who he is reporting from is mentioned (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 343). *Muhmal* therefore indicates more detail, intricacy and assurance. It aims to clarify any vagueness in the reporters of the *isnād*.

However, *muhmal* also suggests that Ibn Ḥajar did not question the actual *isnāds* mentioned by al-Bukhārī. His duty was to gather additional information on the reporters who shared the same names so one could be clearly differentiated from the other. His duty was not to question whether the *isnāds* were actually fictitious.

Overall though, Muslim desired to show the exactness employed by their scholars and *muhmal* for them performs this function well. Muslims believe that based with such intricate levels of research on the reporters, it is perhaps difficult to believe that common-link transmitters simply 'invented' their authorities (Juynboll 1996, VII; 158). Ibn Ḥajar's analysis of *muhmal* shows that a person could not simply say 'Sulāyman reported to me' and expect the report to gain acceptance. There would be extensive checks to identify

which Sulāyman the reporter is. In many ways, Muslim scholars argue that it is the detail which refutes the ‘mass collusion’ argument, like *muhmal* highlights.

### **5.53. *Man ḥaddatha wa nasiya* – The one who narrated and then forgot.**

If the reporter narrates a ḥadīth from a shaykh and the shaykh then denies reporting it; then if he rejects it outright in that he says: ‘he lied to me’ or ‘I did not report this to him’, and a rejection occurs from him for that report, then this means one of them has lied, not specifically [one of them]. [Moreover] this will not be detrimental for any one of them, because of the contradiction [found in the verification]. If he rejects it with uncertainty in that he says ‘I do not remember this’ or ‘I do not know’, then the ḥadīth will be accepted according to the most correct opinion. This is because the shaykh may have forgot. It is also said that the ḥadīth will not be accepted, because the peripheral (i.e. that the disciple took it from the shaykh) follows the core (i.e. that the shaykh possessed the ḥadīth originally) in affirming the [authenticity of the] ḥadīth. In other words, when the core (shaykh) affirms the ḥadīth, the reporting of the peripheral (disciple) is proven. Similarly, it is therefore desirable that the same is applied in terms of verification. This opinion is refuted by the fact that the credibility of the periphery (disciple) stipulates his truthfulness, and the fact the core does not know of it will not negate it. Thus, affirmation is preceded over negation.<sup>227</sup> As for analogy with the testimony, this is

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<sup>227</sup> Or, to rephrase it, the certain is preceded over the uncertain and conviction is preferred over doubt.

invalid because the testimony of the witness of the witness (periphery) is not heard over the testimony of the original witness when he is able to do so, as opposed to ḥadīth narration. Hence they are different [cases].<sup>228</sup>

In this discipline, al-Dāraqūṭnī has compiled a book called *Man ḥaddatha wa nasiya*. In it is that which offers support for the correct opinion. This is because there are many [cases mentioned in this book] where reporters narrated traditions. When these traditions were presented to them, they did not recall [reporting them]. But because of their trust with those who heard from them, they began to hear from those they had reported to. [This is] like the ḥadīth of Suhayl ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ, from his father, from Abū Hurayra as a raised report in the story of the testimony and the oath.<sup>229</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Muḥammad al-Darāwardī said: ‘Rabī‘a ibn Abī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān informed me, from Suhayl. He said: ‘I met Suhayl and asked him of it. He did not know of it. I said to him, verily Rabī‘a informed me of it from yourself.

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<sup>228</sup> The line of argument purported by scholars who say the report will not be accepted is that in terms of proving the ḥadīth’s authenticity, the shaykh is the core and the disciple is the periphery. If the ḥadīth cannot be affirmed from the core, then surely it cannot be proven authentic from the periphery, namely the student. The same applies to when declaring a report as non-authentic. The disciple here follows the lead of the shaykh. When the shaykh is refusing to affirm the ḥadīth, it is implausible to suggest that the disciple can (Anwar 2003, 153).

Moreover, in a testimony, when the original witness expresses uncertainty regarding the testimony given, then the witness of the witness too is put into doubt. For example, Zayd testifies that he witnessed a car crash and Suhayl testifies that Zayd was there at the scene. If later, Zayd expresses his doubt or uncertainty over whether he actually was there at the scene or not, this brings Suhayl’s testimony into dispute too. The same analogy is thus applicable to the shaykh and the disciple.

Ibn Ḥajar refutes this line of argument by stating that the credibility of the disciple suggests that he must also be truthful. This position cannot be overridden simply because the shaykh cannot remember whether he reported it to him or not. When there is no clear denial from the shaykh, then the conviction of the disciple is preferred over uncertainty of the shaykh (Anwar 2003, 153).

As for the testimony analogy, it is not applicable to the discipline of narration for several reasons. Firstly, when the core witness is able to bear witness, then the witness of the witness is not even considered. This is not the case with reporting prophetic traditions. Secondly, conventional testimonies can only be taken from free individuals; narrating traditions can be taken from slaves too. Thirdly, the testimony of two women is equal to one man in conventional testimonies; this is not the case with *riwāya*. Fourthly, conventional testimonies require two witnesses; *riwāya* can be accepted from one (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 276).

<sup>229</sup> This is referring to the famous case when the Prophet accepted one testimony and an oath, rather than the conventional two witnesses.

Thereafter, Suhayl used to say: ‘Rabī‘a informed me that I reported it to him, from his father.’ Examples as such are plentiful.

#### Commentary

This section refers to the cases where a disciple has taken a report from a shaykh, who thereafter expresses doubt over the occurrence. The author explains that this can take on two forms and outlines the rulings for each.

As a moral statement, this section is an acknowledgement from the ḥadīth scholars that no human is perfect, and that mistakes and forgetfulness can occur from anyone.

The task of the scholars is to accept this weakness and devise mechanisms to minimise its effect on ḥadīth literature. For Muslims, the rarity of such cases also points to the authenticity of ḥadīth literature. This is because it is liars who tend to forget, not the truthful.

### **5.54. *Musalsal*- the Enchained.**

If the narrators coincide with one another in a chain from the chains in terms of words of delivery – like ‘I heard x who said I heard x’ or ‘x reported to me who said x reported to me’ and similarly other words of delivery – or in terms of other verbal forms – like ‘I heard x say I bear witness with Allāh that verily x reported to me’ to the end of the chain – or in terms of an action – like ‘we entered upon x and he gave us a date to eat’ to the end of the chain – or in terms of the same words and actions together – like their saying ‘x reported to me whilst holding his beard saying ‘I believe in fate’ to the end, then this is [called] *musalsal*. This pertains to the

description of the *isnād*. Sometimes the enchaining occurs in most of the *isnād*, like the ḥadīth with *Awwaliyya*.<sup>230</sup> The enchaining ends at Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna only. Those who report [this tradition] enchain to its end have erred.<sup>231</sup>

### Commentary

*Musalsal* refers to when a similar attribute is to be found in all of the narrators of the report, or most of them. Ibn Ḥajar shows that this can take on three forms: similar in terms of words of delivery, similar in terms of action and similar in terms of words and action.

Other than the ones mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar, *musalsal* can take on other forms. If all the reporters share the same name – for instance, all are called Muḥammad – then this too will be referred to as *musalsal* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 188). Similarly, all the reporters can originate from the same town or country or all can be renowned jurists.

Largely, *musalsal* simply adds to our knowledge of the reporters of the ḥadīth. When the *isnād* is *musalsal* in terms of action, it can lead to increased accuracy in the sense that one can appreciate that the disciple did not merely hear the ḥadīth, but also noted each and every action of the shaykh. Similarly, when the *isnād* is continuous with jurists or renowned scholars, this gives the impression of more accuracy (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 286).

In fact, earlier in the *Nuzḥah*, Ibn Ḥajar writes that a ḥadīth which the expert *imāms*

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<sup>230</sup> Literally, this means ‘the firsts’. Here, it means where all the reporters (or most of them) state that the report was the first they heard from the shaykh in question (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 285).

<sup>231</sup> Some scholars such as Abū al-Muẓaffar Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Ṭabrī al-Shaybānī have erroneously assumed that the enchainment of Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna is *musalsal* throughout, from beginning to end. This is not the case as the author points out (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 285).

continuously narrate gives the benefit of *al-‘ilm al-naẓarī*, so long as the report is not *gharīb*.<sup>232</sup>

Conversely, it could be argued that musalsal reflects *less* accuracy and authenticity, not more. The continuous usage of ‘*ḥaddathanī*’ (x reported to me) through the *isnād* may be a sign of carelessness from a forger.

### **5.55. *Ṣiyagh al-adā’*- the words of delivery.**

The words of delivery that indicate reporting are of eight stages. The first is *sami‘tu* and *ḥaddathanī*. Then *akhbaranī* and *qara’tu ‘alayhi* – and this is the second stage.

Then *qurī’a ‘alayhi wa-ana asma’* – and this is the third. Then *anba’anī* – and this is the fourth. Then *nāwalanī* – and this is the fifth. Then *shāfahanī*, namely with *ijāza*, and this is the sixth. Then *kataba ilayya*, namely with *ijāza*, and this is the seventh.

Then ‘*an* and its likes from the words of delivery that can possibly mean listening or *ijāza*, or [even] not hearing it. This is like with the words *qāla* and *dhakara* and *rawā*.

Thus the first two words from the words of delivery – *sami‘tu* and *ḥaddathanī* – are suitable for when he hears it alone from the words of the shaykh. The

[terminological] specifying of *taḥdīth* for what he hears from the words of the shaykh (from memory) is famous amongst the people of ḥadīth. Literally, there is no difference between *taḥdīth* and *ikhbār*.

There is severe hardship in claiming a difference between the two (*taḥdīth* and *ikhbār*). However, since they have become established [as being synonymous] in terms of terminology, it has become a reality through customary use. Thus this

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<sup>232</sup> See section 5.7.1.3.

opinion is preceded over what they mean literally. Moreover, this terminology [citing the difference between the two] has merely stemmed from the eastern scholars and those who follow them. As for the majority of the western scholars, they have not employed this terminology; rather for them *taḥdīth* and *ikhbār* have the same meaning.

If the narrator uses the plural form – namely he brings forth the first two words in the plural sense by saying *sami'nā* and *ḥaddathanā* – then this is evidence that he heard the ḥadīth in the presence of others. Sometimes the *nūn* is for respect [and not to say he heard it with others] but this is seldom applied. The first of the two (namely *sami'nā* or *sami'tu*) is the clearest [word of delivery] to clarify the speaker heard it, because it does not result in the possibility of an [additional] source [in between], and because the word *ḥaddathanā* is sometimes said in *ijāza* with *tadlīs*. The highest [form of words of delivery] is that which occurs through *imlā'*, because it entails [added] accuracy and memorisation.

The third – and this is *akhbaranī* – is like the fourth which is *qara'tu 'alayhi* for whosoever reads himself to the shaykh. If he uses the plural form in that he says *akhbaranā* or *qara'nā*, then this is like the fifth, which is *quri'a 'alayhi wa-ana sāmi'*. It is known from this [analysis] that when he has read it [to the shaykh] referring to it with *qara'tu 'alayhi* is better than *akhbaranī*, because it better indicates the actual state.

Note: According to the majority [of scholars], reading in the presence of the shaykh is one of the forms of receiving reports. Distanced [from the correct opinion] are



those who have denied this, from the people of ‘Irāq.<sup>233</sup> Verily al-Imām Mālik and other scholars of Madīna have vehemently refuted such an opinion to the extent that some have ranked *qara’tu ‘alayhi* higher than *sami’tu* from the words of the shaykh. A large group of scholars – from them al-Bukhārī [as mentioned] in the beginning of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* who cites from the *imāms* – have opted for the opinion that listening from the words of the shaykh and recitation to him are equal in terms of authenticity and strength. And Allāh knows best.

*Inbā’* – literally and terminologically – is the same as *ikhbār* according to the earlier scholars, though the later scholars use it for *ijāza* (licensing) like ‘*an*.

The scholars have referred to verbal licensing as *mushāfaha*. Similarly, they have referred to written licensing as *mukātaba*; and this is common-practice in the texts of the later scholars, as opposed to the earlier scholars. For they only call it *mukātaba* when the shaykh writes the ḥadīth for the disciple, irrespective or whether he permitted him to narrate it or not. They do not call it *mukātaba* when the shaykh writes to him with licensing alone.

The scholars have placed the condition of permission to narrate for the legitimacy of a narration of *munāwala*. When this is achieved, then it constitutes the highest form of *ijāza* (licensing), because it entails specification and [exact] personage. Its form is that the shaykh gives his original manuscript or its equivalent to the disciple, or the disciple is presented with the shaykh’s original manuscript, and in both forms he

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<sup>233</sup> Some scholars from Iraq have actually questioned whether reciting to the shaykh constitutes a form of reporting. Ibn Hajar expresses grave reservations about the validity of such an opinion. He cites al-Imām Mālik and other scholars of Madīna who vehemently refuted such an opinion. In fact some such as Abū Ḥanīfa and Layth went to the extent to rank *qara’tu ‘alayhi* higher than *sami’tu* from the words of the shaykh (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 295). Al-Bukhārī, the scholars of Ḥijāz, al-Sakhāwī and Zarkhashī did not rank *qara’tu ‘alayhi* higher than *sami’tu* but did suggest that they are at least equal in terms of authenticity and strength (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 295).

says: ‘these are my narrations from x, so narrate them from me.’ Its [other] condition is that he has control over the manuscript, either through ownership or lease so that he may transfer it and study it. And if not, namely the student takes it and it is taken back immediately, then this is no longer the highest form, though it still has some distinction over the specified licensing (*ijāza mu‘ayyana*); this is when the shaykh grants permission to narrate a specific book of his and [also] specifies the method to narrate them.

When the *munāwala* is void of permission, then according to the majority of scholars it will not be considered [worthy of narration]. Those scholars who have permitted this have compared it to sending a book from one country to another. Hence a group from the *imāms* of ḥadīth have deemed such a practice as correct, even if this sending is not coupled with permission. It is as if the [actual] sending itself of the books is an indication of permission. I do not see a strong difference between the shaykh giving the book to the disciple and between sending the book from one place to the other, when both are void of permission.

### Commentary

*Ṣiyagh al-adā’* refers to the words employed by the ḥadīth reporters to express how they received their reports. Ibn Ḥajar offers a detailed section here on the words employed by ḥadīth transmitters and divides these various words into eight categories in terms of strength. They are:

- (i) *Sami‘tu* (I heard x) and *ḥaddathanī* (x transmitted to me).
- (ii) *Akhbaranī* (x informed me) and *qara‘tu ‘alayhi* (I recited to x).

- (iii) *Quri'a 'alayhi wa-ana asma'* (It was recited to x whilst I was listening).
- (iv) *Anba'anī* (x told me).
- (v) *Nāwalanī* (x transferred to me).
- (vi) *Shāfahanī bi-al-ijāza* (x shared with me with licensing).
- (vii) *Kataba ilayya bi-al-ijāza* (he corresponded with me with licensing).
- (viii) *'An* (from), *dhakara* (he mentioned), *rawā* (he narrated) and other words which can indicate he actually heard it directly or not.

For a first-time reader, the section is an excellent overview of *ṣiyagh al-adā'*. The grading is mentioned in order, along with a brief description of the disputed terms. Certainly the extensive analysis given by the author suggests its importance. An important question is why Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to discuss *ṣiyagh al-adā'* in such detail. The reason is not because it still mattered greatly in the ninth Islamic century. The words of delivery mattered more in the early period of Islam, before the documentation of the prophetic reports into collections like the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (Kamali 2005, pp.13-14). As time progressed, it became less and less important. This is reflected by the fact that in al-Mayyānīshī's (d. 581/1185) treatise on *'ilm al-ḥadīth*, discussions on the words of delivery come early on in the text (Librande 1982, pp.42-43). In Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhah*, the discussion comes near the end of the work.

Instead, it is plausible to suggest that the reason for the extensive coverage of *ṣiyagh al-adā'* in the *Nuzhah* was to indicate the meticulous exactness and accuracy employed by the early transmitters in recording the traditions of their Prophet. For Muslim scholars, *ṣiyagh al-adā'* symbolised how ḥadīth scholars covered all aspects of the field. They

were not content with a simple guarantee that x took the report from y. Rather, they wanted assurances of how exactly that report was received; was it done individually or in a group? Did the ḥadīth master dictate it from memory or from his written records? Did the disciple read the traditions back to the ḥadīth master or did he simply listen? The rich literature surrounding *ṣiyagh al-adā'* helped us to answer these important questions. The extensive section in the *Nuzhah* therefore aimed to give comfort and assurance to the reader of the exactitude of early Muslims in recording early ḥadīth literature.

Indirectly, Ibn Ḥajar's coverage of *ṣiyagh al-adā'* in the *Nuzhah* also indicates the primacy of oral transmission. This is proven by the fact that transmission through written forms alone is generally seen as inferior. More will be said on this in the conclusion of this section.

The attention given by the early and later ḥadīth scholars on *ṣiyagh al-adā'* cannot be overlooked. For example, 16% of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *al-Kifāya* is devoted to such matters (1988, pp. 283-355). Despite this, there are inconsistencies that even Muslim scholars admit to regarding *ṣiyagh al-adā'*. A few are mentioned below:

a. The ḥadīth scholars noted the words of delivery for each part of the chain. The exception was the Companions on how they took the report from the Prophet. Kamali notes:

When a Companion narrated a ḥadīth from the Prophet, he or she was not normally faced with the question of how he or she actually received it from the Prophet (2005, 14).

This indicates two possible things. Firstly, attention to *ṣiyagh al-adā'* did not exist in the Companion's time and it only developed later. Secondly, it supports the notion of the '*adāla*' of the Companions; that because Allāh had vouched for their integrity and truthfulness in the Qur'ān, there is no need for ḥadīth scholars to scrutinise them. But scrutiny is ideally required even for the Companions. Abū Hurayra only spent a short time with the Prophet. As a result, most of his reports commence with 'the Prophet said' rather than 'I heard the Prophet (Brown 2009, 19). If such a word featured elsewhere in the chain (after the Companions), it would have been questioned by the Muslim scholars. Because it stems from a Companion here, it is not.

b. Perhaps the most pressing concern was that *ṣiyagh al-adā'* was a rough guide to how the reporter actually took the ḥadīth, not an exact description. There were too many exceptions to the rule and inconsistencies for the area to be considered exact and scientific. The *Nuzhah* implicitly too suggests this reality. A few examples will highlight this fact:

i. Like other scholars before him, Ibn Ḥajar writes that *ḥaddathanī* is the strongest word of delivery. However, it can still be misused according to the *Nuzhah* for fraudulent purposes. Ibn Ḥajar writes that 'the word *ḥaddathanī* is sometimes said in *ijāza* with *tadlīs*.'

ii. There is no consistency with the grading of these words. According to Ibn Ḥajar, saying *qāla* and *dhakara* falls in the eighth category, indicating its relative weakness. It was known of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) that he did not narrate anything without directly

hearing it himself. Yet most of the reports from him simply state ‘*qāla* Ibn Jurayj’. So from these two opening observations, we see that the strongest word could be used for fraudulent purposes and the weakest word could be used for certainty.

iii. There are lingual inconsistencies too. *Anba’anī* stems from the Arabic word *naba’*, which means ‘news’. In this respect, there should be no difference between *anba’anī* and *akhbaranī*, because the latter derives from *khavar*, which also means ‘news’. In fact, it could be argued that *naba’* is stronger than *khavar* since the former means ‘news of grave importance’ (Ibn Manẓūr 1988, iv: 8). Earlier scholars did hold the two as synonymous but later scholars preferred *anba’anī* to refer to cases where the report has been taken through the means of *ijāza* (licensing) (Anwar 2003, 159). So literally, *anba’anī* and *akhbaranī* are at least the same but in practice, the latter is considered much stronger.

Based on these observations, *ṣiyagh al-adā’* could help to spot real forms of transmission but it was not foolproof. It was a rough guide to how each person heard the report. At the same time, the fact that *ṣiyagh al-adā’* mattered so much is an indication of the scholars’ endeavours. At face level, it did indicate the ḥadīth masters’ close scrutiny of matters pertaining to the *isnād*.

### **5.55.1. Conclusion.**

What is clear from this analysis is that *sami’tu* (I heard x) and *ḥaddathanī* (x transmitted to me) are the highest words of transmission. The weakest forms of transmission are where written manuscripts are void of permission from the shaykh. This indicates that

according to Ibn Hajar and ḥadīth scholars, oral transmission holds a much greater rank and worth than the mere written form.

For many observers the primacy of oral transmission has been difficult to comprehend. The secure safeguarding of prophetic traditions seems difficult to argue when for at least one hundred years, written transmission and records were rare to say the least, or in the words of Muir, ‘meagre, suspicious and contradictory’ (1858, I: XXXII). Sidqi writes:

It is evident in every era and in every nation that people find it hard to preserve traditions, when they are lengthy or numerous and especially if they are reported only once, without corruption of the words and the meaning and without changes, additions or mistakes (in Brown 1999, 89).

In defence of oral transmissions, it must be noted that owing to their own experiences, non-Muslim observers have not fully appreciated how oral transmission can actually be viewed as *more* accurate rather than less. Certainly, the remarkable memory of the Arabs has been under emphasised (Azami 1992, 20). As Brown admits, ‘remarkable powers of memory are common among illiterate peoples, and the ability to memorise large amounts of information with precision was especially well developed among the Arabs’ (1999, 90). Secondly, an assumption is made that written records are far superior and more immune from forgery and change. This is not necessarily the case. Brown writes:

Regardless of whether reference was made to a written record, a report could only be transmitted by direct contact between master and student. Just as in legal

matters documentary evidence carried little weight, so too in ḥadīth transmission, a written account was worthless without oral attestation (1999, 83).

Specific proof for Brown's comments can be shown. In his analysis of the *'ard* method of transmission, Azami notes that the student would possess a copy of the traditions, as provided by the teacher. Whenever a student finished the reading of a ḥadīth he made a sign in the circle or somewhere else to show that this ḥadīth had been read to the teacher. This was necessary because even when a student knew *ḥadīths* through books, he was not entitled to use those materials for teaching or for his own compilation till he received them through properly recognised methods of learning. If one did not follow this method, he could be accused of 'stealing a ḥadīth', (*sāriq al-ḥadīth*), which meant that a scholar used material that he obtained through an incorrect manner (Azami 1977, 19). In other words, a written form still needed oral authentication.

Sidqi doubted whether the exact words of the Prophet could be preserved especially when they were mentioned only once. Along with his clear style of speaking, the Prophet did not merely relay his dialogue once, but deliberately repeated his remarks thrice. 'Ā'isha has been quoted to have said that 'the Prophet spoke in such a way that if one were to count his words, they could be counted' (Kamali 2005, 11). Anas observed that when the Prophet spoke a word he repeated it three times until it was understood (Ibid.). Moreover, Sidqi does not evaluate *how* the Companions took steps to memorise them. It is well documented that the Companions set aside time for the oral memorisation of what they had heard and seen from the Prophet. An example is that of Anas ibn Mālik's statement:



We sat with the Prophet, maybe sixty persons in number and the Prophet taught them ḥadīth. Later on when he went out for any necessity, we used to memorise it amongst us, when he departed it was as if cultivated in our hearts (Azami 1977, 13).

To conclude, when analysing the issue of oral transmission, because *we* see learning by memory alone as a defect, it does not necessarily mean the same for the early Muslims. In other words, a cultural gap exists which hinders us from understanding the issue entirely. Even today, thousands of Muslims throughout the world memorise the Qur’ān and are able to recite it on demand. In fact, Muslims who depended solely on their books were actually viewed in a lesser light by ḥadīth scholars. The lowly rank of *wijāda*<sup>234</sup> proves this point implicitly. Brown makes an interesting point which makes it easier for us in the west to appreciate why the Muslims never felt the need for written records in the early period:

...[T]he Companions more often recounted their memories of the Prophet in oral form only. Even to modern readers accustomed to writing everything down, this is understandable to an extent; to them the Prophet was a contemporary figure whose words and deeds lived on in their memories as freshly as we remember our own teachers or parents. Only rarely do we put down these memories on paper (2009, 21).

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<sup>234</sup> Section 5.57.

This remark from Brown indicates that non-Muslims have not understood how special Muḥammad was to his immediate followers. They did not need paper to register and record his sayings and actions. Their love for him meant very little about him escaped their memories.

Ibn Ḥajar's work did not defend the practice of oral transmission over written reports to any great lengths openly in the *Nuzhah*. The fact that the issue did not arouse questions amongst early Muslims proves that oral transmission was a virtue and not a vice.

### **5.56. *Mu'an'an* – the continuous '*an*'.<sup>235</sup>**

The statement of '*an*' from the contemporary is deemed as an audible report (*samā'*), as opposed to a non-contemporary, as this is *mursal* or *munqaṭi'*. Therefore the condition for deeming it as *samā'* is the proof of being contemporaries, except from the *mudallis*; this is not deemed as *samā'*. It is said that the condition for deeming the *mu'an'an* as *samā'* from the contemporary is evidence of the meeting between the shaykh and the disciple, even if it is once. This is so immunity is achieved from the report being *mursal khafī*. This is the chosen opinion, in compliance with 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī, al-Bukhārī and the other scholars.

#### Commentary

*Mu'an'an* is where '*an*' is used as a word of delivery throughout the chain, with no clarification as to whether this delivery was through the means of *samā'*, *taḥdīth* or

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<sup>235</sup> In the *Nuzhah*, this brief section appears between the discussion on *inbā'* and *mushāfaha*.

*ikhbār* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 214). Because of the lack of clarity in the word, the scholars have long disputed as to whether it should be assumed the person heard the report directly (*samāʿ*) or not. Frequently, it has been the method of those who misrepresent the *isnād* (*mudallis*) to give the impression of *samāʿ* by employing words such as *ʿan*. Similarly, it has been used in *mursal khaṭī* reports.<sup>236</sup>

In the *Nuzhah*, the author touches upon the dispute between al-Bukhārī and Muslim on this very issue. Al-Imām Muslim wrote in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that when the *muʿanʿan* report does not contain a *mudallis* reporter and each narrator could have theoretically met the other, then it is accepted. He added that the requirement of proof of meeting was something his predecessors had never asked for (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 215). The opinion of al-Bukhārī, (and Ibn al-Madīnī)<sup>237</sup> was that proof was needed to show the two actually met. The detail of this debate has been meticulously explained by Goldziher in his works (1971, pp. 228-9). This is certainly an indication that non-Muslims understood the intricate details of the discipline excellently. The question then arises as to why the Muslims are more sceptical to accept an opinion from the likes of Goldziher, even when it is clear they have some credible input to offer and when they understand the issue in question well. The answer is perception; because Muslims largely see the endeavours of non-Muslims aimed at degrading Islam, they do not welcome their views. To an extent, the Muslims do not focus on what is being said, but who is actually saying it. And when it stems from a non-Muslim, their mindset and intention is automatically questioned. Siddiqi shows this when he writes:

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<sup>236</sup> This is where a person narrates from someone – who is a contemporary of his or whom he has met – something which he has not heard, with words of delivery which suggest that he could have heard from him, like *ʿan*.

<sup>237</sup> It is said that al-Bukhārī did not see this as a condition for a prophetic report to be deemed as *ṣaḥīḥ*; rather this is a requirement he adhered to alone for his own compilation (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 216).

We do not need Foucault to remind us that academic discourse is a product of power relationships: Goldziher's diary gives us very adequate proof that scholarly theories, especially those involve the assessment of one culture by a historical rival, can easily be deconstructed into their psychological, historical and political constituents. The point is often noted, too, that American scholars, whose government has had no direct colonial involvement in Muslim countries, have in the past been somewhat more sympathetic to Islamic culture and its scholarship than their European colleagues (1993, pp.134-5).

#### **5.56.1. Conclusion.**

*Mu'an'an* can be viewed in two contrasting ways. Firstly, the presence of *'an* throughout the *isnād* points to the weakness of it, because the reporter is avoiding words such as *akbaranī* (x informed me) which show conviction that he heard the report. *'An* can be thus seen as a loophole by which contentious and even fraudulent reporters can avoid detection and forgery since the usage of this term suggests non-committal.

Secondly, a case could be made for the depth and rigidity of the ḥadīth scholars' investigations. Not only is the reporter himself subject to analysis, but *how* exactly he heard the report and which term is used to affirm this hearing. *'An* is thus suspicious because one cannot wholly establish the continuity of the *isnād*.

## 5.57. *Wijāda* & *waṣīyya*– The Discovery and the Bequest.

Similarly, the scholars have laid down the condition of permission with *wijāda*; this is when he finds [the book] with the handwriting of one he knows. Thus he says: ‘I found with the handwriting of x’. By finding it, he cannot merely say ‘x informed me’ (*akhbaranī*) except when he has permission to narrate from him. Some people have used this term [of *akhbaranī* when one finds the book] and by doing so have erred.

Similar is the case with *waṣīyya*; this is when the shaykh bequeaths the book or books at the time of his death or at the time of travelling, to a specific person. Verily a group from the earlier *imāms* has allowed the narration merely by the means of the bequest. The majority have not permitted the narration, except when it is coupled with permission.

### Commentary

The sequence chosen by Ibn Ḥajar here is crucial to appreciate because it allows us to appreciate the development of *ṣiyagh al-adā*. In section 5.55, the *Nuzhah* highlighted the eight grades of words, which overall suggested the rigidity of the system. This section on *wijāda* and *waṣīyya* suggests the relaxation that crept in to the system. Then the next section on *i‘lām* highlights how the system became open to abuse and allowed some absurd situations to arise. For this reason, Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nuzhah* and the section sequence is useful in painting the gradual decline in the importance of *ṣiyagh al-adā*.

Ibn Ḥajar indicates the weakness surrounding *wijāda* quite openly. Whereas before (in section 5.55), the importance of face-to-face transmission was applauded, *wijāda*

encourages a system where a reporter can take possession of reports without even sitting with the shaykh. Instead, he merely needs to be able to identify the handwriting. More worrying is the fact that Ibn Ḥajar states that some Muslims would use the highest word of delivery – *akhbaranī* – to indicate taking possession of reports through this means. Again, like we highlighted in section 5.55, the strongest words were used to describe transmission in the weakest form. The *Nuzhah* indicates the disliked nature of *wijāda* but it does not condone it outright. Interestingly, al-Suyūṭī notes that there are many reports to be found in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal which take on the form of *wijāda* (1972, 2:61).<sup>238</sup>

*Waṣīyya* is where the shaykh gives his ḥadīth manuscripts to a particular person as he approaches death, or as he embarks on a journey. This too was problematic because it was often void of permission. Some earlier scholars however argue that the shaykh would only give the book if he wanted others to report it after his demise or disappearance. In other words, the fact that the book has been handed over itself is a form of permission. The majority of scholars – which include the likes of al-Nawawī (Mighālī 2003, 570) – do not accept this argument; he may have bequeathed the *book* but he did not give permission to narrate it (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 125).

In short therefore, it seems that according to the Muslim scholars, both *waṣīyya* and *wijāda* are only legitimate when there is clear evidence of permission to narrate. Or to rephrase, when there are more checks in place to ensure the bequeathed fully

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<sup>238</sup> Moreover, al-Suyūṭī identifies three reports in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim where the *isnād* features *wijāda*: This *isnād* is ‘Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shayba informed us who said, I found in the book of Abū Usāma, from Hishām, from his father...’ However, al-Rashīd al-Ṭāʾir quickly points out that these three reports have also been mentioned through another supporting *isnād*, through the means of Hishām and Abū Usāma without *wijāda* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 61-2).

comprehends what has been given to him. Again, this highlights the benefits of oral transmission over written ones.

## **5.58. *I'lām* – The declaration.**

Similarly the scholars have specified the condition of permission in *i'lām*; this is when the shaykh informs one of his disciples that he has narrated book x from person y. If this is coupled with permission, then it is considered. And if not, it is not, just like the *ijāza 'āmma* (general permission) in which he says: 'I grant permission to all Muslims' or 'to everyone who is a contemporary of mine' or 'to the people of x territory' or 'to the people of x country.' [This last form] is closest to correctness because of more restriction. Likewise [permission is required] for the *ijāza majhūl*, in that he states an unidentified person or unidentified book. Similarly [permission is required] for the *ijāza ma'dūm*, in that he says: 'I give permission to whom shall soon be born'. It is said that specifying a living person is correct, in that he says: 'I give permission to you and whoever you bore'. The opinion closest to the correct position is that it is not legitimate either. And similarly [permission is required] for the permission to the present or non-existent which is dependant on the wish of others, in that he says: 'I give you permission if x wishes' or 'I give permission to whomever x wishes', as opposed to when he says: 'I give you permission if you wish'. This is the correct opinion in all these cases [that it will not be considered]. Verily al-Khaṭīb has permitted all of these forms bar the [*ijāza*] *majhūl* when the person [or book] is not specified. He has cited the permissibility from a group of his *shaykhs*. From the classical scholars, *ijāza ma'dūm* has been employed by Abū Bakr ibn Abī

**Dāwūd and Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Manda. The attached [form of permission] has been used too, by Abū Bakr ibn Abī Khaythama. Many scholars have permitted *ijāza ‘āmma* (general permission); some of the *ḥāfiẓs* have gathered these forms in a book in alphabetical order due to their sheer number.**

**All of these forms, as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states, are a disliked leniency. This is because there is a severe dispute in accepting the specified *ijāza*, though the later scholars accept this form. This is less than the audible (*samā’*) unanimously, so how less in rank will the aforementioned forms be? Verily, it will be much weaker. However, these forms are still better than narrating them as *mu‘ḍil*.**

**With this, the discussion on the words of delivery has ended.**

### Commentary

If anything, *i‘lām* indicates the end of any importance attached to *ṣiyagh al-adā’*. The *Nuzhah* gives clear indication of the abuse it resulted in, statements such as ‘I give permission to whom shall soon be born’ ‘I permit ‘Abd Allāh to report from me’, (when there is no clarification which ‘Abd Allāh is being referred to) and ‘I give permission to all my contemporaries to report from me’. In fact, Ibn Ḥajar highlights how some scholars actually agreed with such forms, like Abū Bakr ibn Abī Dāwūd and Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Manda.

The problems with *i‘lām* are stark. When a shaykh gives universal permission to report from him, one cannot expect this transmission to be void of shortcomings and discrepancies. If the person receiving the report does not fully understand the ḥadīth in



question, or cannot comprehend the text in the book, there is no real means of verification available to him. Goldziher reports that Ibn Waḍḍāḥ said:

‘Abd al-Malik b. Habīb visited me and brought a load of books which he put before me saying, “This is your contribution to scholarship. Grant me *ijāza* to teach it all in my turn.” I granted his request, but he never himself has ever heard a word from me personally and I have never lectured to him (1971, 177).

Admittedly, the majority of scholars frowned upon such forms of transmission. Ibn Ḥazm described reporting in these forms as a ‘disallowed innovation’ (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 315). But the scholars’ rejection of this method simultaneously tells us that it did exist.

### **5.58.1. Conclusion.**

Progressively, *ṣiyagh al-adā*’ became less and less important. Early discussions held by ḥadīth scholars centred on how exactly the person received the report from the visible shaykh. By the fifth Islamic century, *ijāza in absentia* (*ijāza ma’dūm*) had become normal (Goldziher 1971, 177). The early period of ḥadīth collection was marked by zealous travels by eager disciples. Later, *ijāza* was a factor in the decrease of such journeys. Goldziher observes:

*Ijāza* became a surrogate for those Muslims who were eager to obtain *ḥadīths* but either did not think long journeys convenient or when they did go on *ṭalab* travels

were not able to stay long enough in the home town of the ‘carrier’ of the *ḥadīths* to receive them directly from him (1971, 176).

In the early period, the disciple’s ability was assessed to see whether he was capable of carrying and understanding the words of the Prophet. As time passed, seeking *ijāza* became a social pastime which enhanced a Muslim’s standing in the community. In fact, others turned to the system to make material profit from it (Goldziher 1971, 178).

Ibn Ḥajar does not describe the abuses associated with *ṣiyagh al-adā’* in great detail, like, for example, Goldziher does. But I believe he says enough in the section to reflect the benefits *and* drawbacks of it. He is honest, even if it is only indirectly, about how *ṣiyagh al-adā’* reached absurd stages with *i’lām* and *ijāzat ma’dūm*. And he is also clear about how the system was an indication of the great care early ḥadīth scholars took in recording and preserving the ḥadīth literature.

### **5.59. *Muttafiq* & *muftariq*- The homogeneous and the non-homogeneous.**

Then the reporters; if their names and the names of their fathers upwards are the same and they are [in reality] different people – regardless of whether two share the same name or more – and likewise when two or more share the same *kunya* and *nisba*, then this is a type which is called *muttafiq* and *muftariq*. The benefit of this [discipline] is to [prevent] the fear of assuming two different people being one.

**Verily al-Khaṭīb has compiled a vast book on this. I summarised this and added much more.**

**This type is the opposite of the type which has passed called *muhmal*. With *muhmal*, it is feared that one person is actually two. With this type, it is feared that two people are really one.**

### Commentary

*Muttafiq* and *muftariq* refers to the case one name of the reporter is shared by two or more different individuals. It is so called because it is agreeing (*muttafiq*) in terms of the name and it is different (*muftariq*) in terms of the persons it refers two. The purpose of this area is simple; to prevent people from seeing one name and assuming it only refers to one individual when it reality it refers to two or more.

This type does share some similarity with *muhmal*.<sup>239</sup> The difference is subtle; with *muhmal* there is a chance that one person is assumed to be two different individuals. With *muttafiq* and *muftariq*, there is a chance that two people are assumed to be one.

An example of *muttafiq* and *muftariq* is the name Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī.

This is the name of two individuals; Qāḍī Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī from whom al-Bukhārī took reports, and Abū Salama Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, who is considered a weak reporter (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 362).

The section is a reminder of how the ḥadīth scholars coined technical terms for all types of cases and scenarios where the need was actually minimal. With only a small difference between *muttafiq* and *muftariq* on the one hand and *muhmal* and the other, there was perhaps not a requirement to add more terms to the discipline. The section also points to

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<sup>239</sup> This has been mentioned previously in section 5.52.

the great care the ḥadīth scholars took in ensuring each and every reporter could be reasonably differentiated from another. The fact that Ibn Ḥajar wrote a separate book on this topic area suggests that it was still deemed important, even by the ninth Islamic century.

### **5.60. *Mu'talif* & *mukhtalif* – the similar and the different.**

If the names are the same in terms of writing but differ in pronunciation, irrespective of whether this difference is in terms of the dots or the form, then this is *mu'talif* and *mukhtalif*. Knowing this is one of the most important [parts] of this discipline [of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*]. This is to the extent that 'Alī ibn al-Madīnī said: 'The most errors [in reading] occur in the names.' Others have explained that [there is severe difficulty in correctly reading the names] because identifying it cannot be based on analogy, nor is there something prior or after the text to indicate [the correct form].

Verily, Abū Aḥmad al-'Askarī compiled a book on this field but he amalgamated it to another book compiled on spelling errors (*taṣḥīf*). Then 'Abd al-Ghanī ibn Sa'īd wrote an independent treatise on it and he included in it two books; one [mentioning] the confusing names and one [mentioning] confusing ascriptions. Then the shaykh [of 'Abd al-Ghanī ibn Sa'īd] al-Dāraquṭnī compiled a comprehensive book on the topic. Then, al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] completed this book. Thereafter, Abū Naṣr ibn Mākūlā gathered all of the previous works in his book *al-Ikmāl*. In another treatise, he gathered all of the obscure names not mentioned in previous works and offered an explanation for each. His book is the most comprehensive [of the ones prior to

him] and thus is the depended source for ḥadīth scholars after him. Names which Abū Naṣr missed out or the new names [of obscurity] were compiled in a large volume of work by Abū Bakr ibn Nuqṭa. Then, Maṣṣūr ibn Salīm – with a *fathā* on the letter *sīn* – completed this in an outstanding volume. Similarly, Abū Ḥāmid ibn al-Ṣābūnī also offered a completion of this work. Al-Dhahabī also wrote a very brief treatise on the discipline. He depended on mere indication when writing the exact pronunciation and thus there are many mistakes and clear errors in it, which therefore contradict the purpose of the book. Allāh has enabled ease for us in clarifying this in a book which I named *Tabṣīr al-muntabih bi taḥrīr al-mushtabih*. This consists of one volume and I have arranged the names alphabetically in a manner worthy of praise. In it, I added a considerable amount which al-Dhahabī did not include or did not come across. Praise is for Allāh in this.

#### Commentary

According to the *Nuzḥah*, *mu'talif* and *mukhtalif* is certainly one of the most important and difficult areas of *'ilm al-ḥadīth* to comprehend. It refers to when a name looks identical in terms of writing, but differs in terms of pronunciation. For example, the name Salām can also be read Sallām; when written they look identical (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 161). Similarly, when it is written without the dots on the letters, the name al-Bazzār and al-Bazzāz look identical. As Ibn Ḥajar explains, identifying the correct pronunciation in the names is made harder by two factors. Firstly, the names cannot usually be identified by the means of analogy. In other words, one cannot exert his own thought to evaluate whether the name is Salām or Sallām. Secondly, when there is an ambiguous word in the

*matn*, one can examine the text surrounding the word and reach a reasonably-rigid conclusion as to what the word is. However, the same cannot be done when there is an ambiguous word in the *isnād*. Moreover, al-‘Uthaymin writes that the problem was more severe in earlier times when the writings did not include the dots and *ḥarakas* on the letters (2002, 351).

There are some shortcomings in this section from Ibn Ḥajar. Firstly, he does not mention the methods used by scholars to identify the correct pronunciation for unclear names. For this, there are two main methods. Firstly, the scholars have analysed which names are used for a particular compilation. For instance, it is said that the name Yasār has featured as a reporter in all of the reports to be found in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* and the *Muwattaʿa* of Mālik (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 162). Secondly, the scholars have identified the common and oft-used pronunciation for a particular name and have then alerted the reader of the few exceptions. For example, it is said that wherever it is found, the correct pronunciation is Salām; then the reader is informed of the handful of exceptions where it is in fact Sallām (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 162).

Secondly, there are no examples given of *muʿtalif* and *mukhtalif* in the *Nuzḥah*, which is not typical for the author. In contrast, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s own analysis is littered with over twenty examples (1986, pp. 344-358). Instead, Ibn Ḥajar uses the section on *muʿtalif* and *mukhtalif* to provide a comprehensive historical list of books and compilations on this topic. Perhaps the reason for this is so he could explain the literature background for his own work on the topic, *Tabṣīr al-muntabih bi taḥrīr al-mushtabih*.<sup>240</sup> The way Ibn Ḥajar

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<sup>240</sup> (a) On this topic area, Abū Aḥmad al-‘Askarī wrote a book called *Sharḥ ma yaqaʿ fīhi al-taṣḥīf wa-al-taḥrīf*. However, because this was an amalgamation with another treatise of his called *Taṣḥīfāt al-*

has done this in the *Nuzhah* indicates three things. Firstly, it highlights his humility. Before highlighting his own literature, he acknowledges the endeavours of his predecessors and their influence in shaping his own work. Secondly, it indicates how literature on a particular topic area within ḥadīth studies developed through the ages. Like with so many other areas within the discipline, it was the fourth and fifth century scholars who pioneered the research, and later scholars merely refined the works. Finally, Goldziher remarked that: ‘Nobody is allowed to say: ‘because the *matn* contains a logical or historical absurdity I doubt the correctness of the *isnād*’ (1971, 141). This section, which highlights the preoccupation with the *isnād*, confirms what many non-Muslim scholars like Goldziher believed.

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*muḥadditīn* his work cannot be considered as an independent work on mu’talif and mukhtalif exclusively. (b) It fell on ‘Abd al-Ghanī ibn Sa‘īd (d. 409/1018) to write an independent book on mu’talif and mukhtalif. This work was split into two main parts; unclear names and unclear ascriptions (*nisba*). (c) Al-Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995), who was the teacher of ‘Abd al-Ghanī ibn Sa‘īd, also wrote a book on this topic called *al-Mu’talif wa-al-mukhtalif*. (d) The completion of this previous work was fulfilled by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 462/1071) in his *al-Mu’tanif fī takmilat al-mu’talif wa-al-mukhtalif*. (e) All the previously-mentioned works were gathered by Abū Naṣr ibn Mākūlā (d. 475/1082) in his work *al-Ikmāl*, consisting of seven volumes. (f) Abū Naṣr ibn Mākūlā then wrote a second book called *Tahdhīb mustamirr al-awhām* in which he included names that had not been mentioned by his predecessors. As Ibn Ḥajar notes, this work became the basis upon which later scholars based their works. (g) Abū Bakr ibn Nuqṭa’s work *Takmilat al-ikmāl* served two functions. Firstly, it covered the names left out by previous works and secondly, it included new names that had become the source of ambiguity. (h) Then Maṣṣūr ibn Salīm and Abū Ḥāmid ibn al-Ṣābūnī edited and completed the previous works. Maṣṣūr ibn Salīm’s work was entitled *Dhayl kitāb mushtabih al-asmā’ wa-al-nasab al-muzīl ‘alā kitāb ibn Mākūlā*. Al-Ṣābūnī’s book was called *Takmilat ikmāl al-ikmāl*. (i) Al-Imām al-Dhahabī wrote a condensed version of this, which he called *al-Mushtabih*. Ibn Ḥajar singles out this work for criticism; he writes that because he did not include the dots and *ḥarakas* on the names, it actually confused the matter rather than clarify it. (j) Finally, Ibn Ḥajar wrote his own book on the topic called *Tabṣīr al-muntabih bi-taḥrīr al-mushtabih*. In this one-volumed work, he corrected the mistakes of al-Imām al-Dhahabī, as well as refined the order to make finding the names simpler.

### 5.61. *Mutashābih* – The Similar.

If the names resemble one another in [terms of] writing and pronunciation; and the [name of the] father's differ in terms of pronunciation though similar in writing – like Muḥammad ibn 'Aqīl (with a *fathā* on the 'ayn) and Muḥammad ibn 'Uqayl (with a *ḍamma*), the first being Nīsābūrī and the second being Faryābī who are both famous and of the same generation – or the opposite occurs; namely that the [actual] name differs in terms of pronunciation and is different in writing, and the [name of the] father's is the same in pronunciation and writing – like Shurayḥ ibn al-Nu'mān and Surayj ibn al-Nu'mān (the first is read with a *shīn* and *ḥā*'; he is a Successor who reported from 'Alī , and the second is read with a *sīn*; he is one of the *shaykhs* of al-Bukhārī) – then this a type which is called *mutashābih*. The same is said if the name and father's name is similar but there is difference in the *nisba*.

Verily, al-Khaṭīb [al-Baghdādī] has written an outstanding book which he called *Talkhīs al-mutashābih*. He then added that which he had previously not mentioned [in a new book] which is of great benefit.

Many categories are generated from this type (namely *mutashābih*) and the one before it (namely *mu'talif* and *mukhtalif*). From these categories is when the resemblance occurs in the name and the father's name, for instance, except in a letter or two. This is then of two types; either the number of letters in the names is the same but there is difference in one or two letters, or the number of letters is not the same in one name compared to the other. The example of the first type is Muḥammad ibn Sinān (with a *kasra* on the *sīn* and two *nūns* divided with an *alif*) can refer to a group of [possible] individuals. From them include al-'Awaqī (with a



*fatha* on the ‘*ayn* and *alif*) who is the shaykh of al-Bukhārī. From this type also include Muḥammad ibn Sayyār (with a *fatha* on the *sīn*, a double *yā*’ followed by a *rā*’) who can also refer to many individuals, which include al-Yamāmī who is the shaykh of ‘Umar ibn Yūnus. From this type includes Muḥammad ibn Ḥunayn (with a *ḍamma* on the *ḥā*’ and two *nūns*, the first having a *fatha*, and divided with a *yā*’); he is a Successor who reported from Ibn ‘Abbās as well as others; and Muḥammad ibn Jubayr (with a *jīm*, followed by a *bā*’ and *rā*’) along with Muḥammad ibn Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im, the renowned Successor.


Amongst these types include Mu‘arrif ibn Wāṣil, the famous Kūfan, and Muṭarrif ibn Wāṣil (with a *ṭā*’ in place of the ‘*ayn*), who is another shaykh from which Abū Ḥudhayfa al-Nahdī has reported. Also from this type is Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn, companion of Ibrāhīm ibn Sa‘īd as well as others, and Aḥyad ibn Ḥusayn, which is similar to the first name except there is a *mīm* in place of the *yā*’. He is the shaykh of al-Bukhārī, from which ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Baykandī has reported. From these types is also Ḥaṣṣ ibn Maysara, the famous shaykh from the generation of Mālik, with Ja‘far ibn Maysara, the shaykh of ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Mūsā al-Kūfī. The first is read with a *ḥā*’, *fā*’ and *ṣād* and the second is read with a *jīm*, ‘*ayn* and then a *rā*’.

And the example of the second type<sup>241</sup> is ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zayd, who can be [referring to] many; of them from the Companions include the one who reported the ḥadīth regarding the call to Prayer (*adhān*) whose grandfather’s name was ‘Abd Rabbih, and the one who reported the ḥadīth on ablution whose grandfather’s name was

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<sup>241</sup> Namely, where the number of letters are not the same in the names in question.

‘Āṣim. Both were Anṣār<sup>242</sup>. [Then there is] ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd (with an extra *alif* in the name of the father, and a *kasra* on the *zā*’), which too can refer to many [individuals]. Of them from the Companions include al-Khaṭmī, who was given the *kunya* Abū Mūsā and whose ḥadīth can be found in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*. [The name ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd also] includes al-Qārī, who is mentioned in the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’isha. Some have deemed him to be al-Khaṭmī, in which there is doubt.

From this type include ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yaḥyā, which again refers to many, and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Nujayy (with a *ḍamma* on the *nūn* and a *fatha* on the *jīm* and a double *yā*’); he is a famous Successor who reported from ‘Alī .

[Also included in the category of mutashābi is where] there is similarity in terms of writing and pronunciation, but there is difference and confusion in terms of preceding and delaying. This is either in both names or its likes, in that the preceding and delaying happens in one name in relation to some letters. The example of the first<sup>243</sup> is al-Aswad ibn Yazīd and Yazīd ibn al-Aswad, and this is apparent.<sup>244</sup> And [another example of this is] ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd and Yazīd ibn ‘Abd Allāh. The example of the second is Ayyūb ibn Sayyār and Ayyūb ibn Yasār; the former is a famous resident of Madīna who is not strong and the latter is unknown (*majhūl*).

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<sup>242</sup> This means they belonged to the group of Companions who did not migrate from Makka but originally resided in Madina.

<sup>243</sup> Namely where the name has been preceded and delayed.

<sup>244</sup> The author means that it is apparent that al-Aswad ibn Yazīd is referring to the Successor and that Yazīd ibn al-Aswad is referring to the Companion.

### Commentary

In this detailed and self-explanatory section, the author refers to *mutashābih*. This is where the names are very similar sounding and hence results in possible confusion. As with the previous type, the problem is perhaps amplified when one remembers that earlier works were void of the *ḥarakas* and dots on the letters.

Four points are worthy of mention here. Throughout the book, Ibn Ḥajar has never felt the need to mention numerous examples to explain a certain classification of ḥadīth. In fact, there are a handful of places where no examples at all are offered, such as with *munkar* (section 5.26) and indeed the previous section. It is interesting to note that in this section, Ibn Ḥajar offers more than one example for each of the different variations of *mutashābih*.

It is apparent that this inconsistency in detail is quite deliberate from Ibn Ḥajar.

This is because this type of ḥadīth is perhaps best described by real, practical examples rather than an outline of how to spot such a ḥadīth. Without actually showing how names have been wrongly and rightly attributed to the actual person, it is difficult – if not impossible – for the disciple to grasp the importance of *mutashābih*. Certainly, this indicates Ibn Ḥajar's maturity and originality in his teaching methods.

Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar shows here that *mutashābih* – as well as *mu'talif* and *mukhtalif* – implicitly supports the argument that oral transmissions amongst the ḥadīth scholars were preferred and more reliable. The difficulty in deciding whether it is Salām or Sallām is amplified in the absence of a shaykh and it is solved in his presence. A written report is only of worth and significance if it is backed up by oral transmission. The first revelation to Muḥammad in the Cave of Ḥirā was done orally (from the Archangel Gabriel) and not

in written form. Symbolically this teaches Muslims that the true method of teaching and receiving knowledge is through a shaykh, and not just mere dependence on a written scripture. As *mutashābih* shows, the written form (without oral support) is sometimes inadequate and creates more problems than it solves.

Thirdly, the difference between *mu'talif*, *mukhtalif* and *mutashābih* is very nominal. One could seriously question whether such an abundance of technical terms was really required to cover such a narrow topic area. In the early period of the discipline, there was a real need to standardise the terms; several examples have been offered of these types in the *Nuzhah* already. But a time eventually appeared when terms were introduced for the sake of it, not because of real requirement. For ḥadīth scholars, this equalled development and academic progress. By the time of al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1403), (the teacher of Ibn Ḥajar), the excessive technical terms became the goal *per se*, reflected by the fact that al-'Irāqī's book on 'ilm al-ḥadīth was called *Alfiyya*, the Thousand. Judging by the title, the aim of the book was to laud the state of the discipline with its thousand technical terms and definitions, rather than subjectively and critically assess the field.

Fourthly, the detail and precision of this section may have been a product of Ibn Ḥajar's time and climate. There were ḥadīth transmitters in the ninth Islamic century who had sacrificed accuracy for elevation (Dickinson 2002, 500). The true carriers of ḥadīth were marked by the correct pronunciation of names, especially similar-sounding ones. The depth of this section was thus a statement from Ibn Ḥajar that he belonged to the very best of ḥadīth transmitters of his era.

## 5.62. Conclusion; Knowing the generations of the reporters, their birth-dates, their death-dates and their places of origins and travels.

Important for the ḥadīth masters is knowing the generations (*ṭabaqa*) of reporters. The benefit of this [discipline] is immunity from possible confusion, the increased chances of identifying the *tadlīs* and uncovering the essence of what is meant from the ‘*an‘ana*. The *ṭabaqa* in the ḥadīth masters’ terminology is used to refer to a group who are similar in age and in meeting the *shaykhs*. Sometimes, one individual belongs to two generations through two different factors, like Anas ibn Mālīk. For in terms of companionship with the Prophet ﷺ he is regarded as the generation of Ten.<sup>245</sup> And in terms of his young age [when he met the Prophet] he is classified as from the generation thereafter. Thus whosoever views the Companions according to ‘companionship’ has made all of them as one generation, like what Ibn Ḥibbān and others have done. And whosoever has viewed them in terms of additional factors, like in terms of when they accepted Islām, or participation in the excellent events or the Migration, has thus made the Companions into many generations. This is what Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d al-Baghdādī has inclined himself to. His book is the most comprehensive of all in this field.<sup>246</sup>

The same applies to those after the Companions, and they are the Successors. Those who have viewed them in terms of taking [reports] from some Companions have made them one generation, as Ibn Ḥibbān has done. And those who have viewed

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<sup>245</sup> Namely, the ten Companions who were given glad-tidings of Paradise during their lifetime.

<sup>246</sup> This work is called *Ṭabaqāt ibn Sa‘d*.

**them in terms of meeting have divided them, as Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d has done. For each one of them is a reason [for their particular methodology.]**

**Also important is knowing their birth-dates and their death-dates, because by knowing this, the truth is achieved from the claim of someone that he met another, when in reality, he did not. Also important is knowing their countries; the benefit of this is safeguarding oneself from confusion in two similar names that are different in terms of affiliation.**

### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar offers a brief overview of *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt*, or the generations of reporters. In ‘ilm al-ḥadīth terminology, this is the area which looks to classify reporters according to certain elements, mainly when they lived, when they died and which *shaykhs* they heard ḥadīth from (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 2: 381).

It seems that here, Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to defend the rich literature compiled by his Muslims predecessors on the reporters. He points out in the text that it serves many important functions. Firstly, when an *isnād* features the consecutive ‘*an*’ as a word of delivery, then knowing which generation each reporter belongs to can help us identify whether each part of the *isnād* is based on actual hearing or not. The same applies to when a reporter attempts to misrepresent the ḥadīth through the practice of *tadlīs*.

Secondly, as the previous section has highlighted, the ḥadīth scholars sometimes experience difficulty in pinpointing which reporter is which when two or more share the same name or similar sounding names. The discipline of *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt* is a useful tool in differentiating such individuals.

What Ibn Ḥajar does not defend is why the same type of work was duplicated several times by his predecessors, albeit in slightly different form. The ḥadīth masters fulfilled the same purpose but merely presented the work in different ways. Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Sa‘d and al-Ḥākim all compiled works on the Companions, but presented it differently.

Whereas Ibn Ḥibbān treated all the Companions as one category, al-Ḥākim divided the Companions into twelve sub-divisions (Mighālī 2003, pp. 530-1).<sup>247</sup> This is an indication of the academic stagnation that unfortunately marked the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*.

There is also a rare academic mistake from Ibn Ḥajar in the *Nuzḥah* in this section. When referring to Anas ibn Mālīk, he writes that in terms of companionship with the Prophet, he is regarded as the generation of Ten, namely the ten individuals given glad-tidings of paradise during their lifetime. This is incorrect as Anas is not part of this group. The ten Companions in question were in fact Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās, Sa‘īd ibn Zayd and Abū ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ.

By using the example of Anas ibn Mālīk and the Companions, Ibn Ḥajar gives the impression that *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt* mattered more for the early Muslims. The section also indicates the *academic* reasons behind this area, which he states is ‘immunity from

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<sup>247</sup> (i) The Companions who accepted Islam early on in Makka, like the four Rightly-guided Caliphs. (ii) Those Companions who accepted Islam before the consultation with the Makkans in Dār al-Nadwa. (iii) The Companions who migrated to Abyssinia. (iv) The Companions who accepted Islam on the occasion of the *First ‘Aqba*. (v) The Companions who accepted Islam on the occasion of the *Second ‘Aqba*. (vi) The Companions who migrated to Madina prior to the Prophet’s own migration there. (vii) The Companions who took part in the Battle of Badr. (viii) The Companions who migrated to Madina between the Battle of Badr and the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya. (ix) The Companions who participated in the Pledge of Ridwān during the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya. (x) The Companions who migrated to Madina between the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya and the conquest of Makka. (xi) The Companions who accepted Islam on the occasion of the conquest of Makka. (xii) The young Companions who saw the Prophet late in his life, as on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage (Mighālī 2003, 530-1).

possible confusion, the increased chances of identifying the *tadlīs* and uncovering the essence of what is meant from the ‘*an ‘ana*’. What he totally avoids here is how *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt* may have had social benefits, not for early Muslims, but Muslims of his time. As this section in the *Nuzhah* has indicated, the classification of reporters was not necessarily based on dates, but ‘meeting *shaykhs*’. Or to word it differently, what was stressed was not which year a reporter was born in, but which place he occupied in the chain in terms of elevation. Regardless of when a person was born or when he died, the focus was on how many intermediaries existed between him and the Prophet and this meant, as al-‘Irāqī indicated, using the *isnād* as the basis for deciding which generation a person belonged to (Dickinson 2002, 504). In Ibn Ḥajar’s time, the earlier children could attend ḥadīth sessions and have their presence recorded officially in the registers, the easier it was for them to be included in earlier *ṭabaqas* with fewer intermediaries. Dickinson writes that:

It is interesting to note that the word used for “generation”, *ṭabaqa*, is the same as the one most commonly applied to the document commemorating the audition of a text (2002, 504).

This analysis shows that *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt* in its simplest form was a means of gathering information on reporters. In a more complex form, it perpetuated the obsession with seeking elevation, particularly for later generations like Ibn Ḥajar’s era.



### 5.63. *Marātib al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl*- The stages of accreditation and dis-accreditation.

Also important is knowing the reporters' state in terms of discrediting, accrediting and [whether his actual state is] unknown. This is because either the reporter is known for his integrity, for his lewdness or nothing is known about his state. After knowing this, it is important to know the stages of discrediting and accrediting, because the scholars sometimes defame a person with something that does not necessitate rejecting all of his reports. Indeed we have explained the reasons for defamation previously and have confined them to ten reasons, along with a detailed commentary for each. The purpose here is to mention the words which indicate the different stages according to the ḥadīth masters' terminology.

For discrediting there are stages. The worst is that word which indicates exaggeration in the matter and features the word in the form of *af'al*<sup>248</sup>, like *akdhab al-nās* (the greatest of the people in lying), or when they say *ilayhi al-muntahā fī al-waḍ'* (he is the last word in fabrication), or *rukn al-kidhb* (the pillar of lying) and its likes. Then [words like] *dajjāl* (compulsive liar), or *waddā'* (excessive fabricator), or *kadhdhāb* (excessive liar). [These form the next stage] because even though they contain indications of exaggeration, they are still deemed less than the first stage. The most lenient words of discrediting is when they say x is *layyin* (lenient), or *sayyi' al-ḥifz* (bad memory), or *fīhi maqāl* (in him is dispute). Between the first [which is the worst] stage and the most lenient stage are [further] stages, like their saying

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<sup>248</sup> In Arabic, a word that features on the template of *af'al* is called *ism tafḍīl*, or the noun of superiority. In essence, it delivers the meaning of 'most' or 'greatest'. For example, *aṣghar* means smallest.

*matrūk* (discarded), or *sāqiṭ* (dropped), or *fāḥish al-ghalaṭ* (maker of blatant mistakes), or *munkar al-ḥadīth* (one whose ḥadīth is rejected), which is more severe in discrediting than when they say *ḍaʿīf* (weak), or *laysa bi-al-qawī* (he is not strong), or *fīhi maqāl* (in him is dispute).

Also important is identifying the stages of accrediting. The highest form is also the one which indicates exaggeration and features the word in the form of *afʿal*, like *awthaq al-nās* (the most reliable of people), or *athbat al-nās* (the most proven of people), or *ilayhi al-muntahā fī-al-tathbūt* (he is the last word in dependency). Then [the next stage is] when an attribute of accreditation is stressed, or when there are two attributes [mentioned collectively], like *thiqa thiqa* (reliable, reliable), *thabt thabt* (proven, proven) or *ʿadl ḍābiṭ* (just, accurate) or its likes. The lowest form [of accreditation] are the words which indicate leniency in accrediting, like *shaykh*, and *yurwā ḥadīthuhū* (his ḥadīth is reported), *yuʿtabaru bihī* (he is considered) and its likes. Between these two stages [of the highest and the lowest] are [other] stages.

### Commentary

It is the task of the ḥadīth masters to not only offer an in-depth account of each reporter featured in a ḥadīth, but to term them so that other scholars can readily understand the strength of each person in question. This area is known as *marātib al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl*, or the stages of discrediting and accrediting which Ibn Ḥajar briefly highlights in this section.

Certainly, this discipline has attracted considerable attention, most of which is contentious. Firstly, Islam warns of the dangers of backbiting and the Qurʾān in fact

describes this evil trait synonymous to ‘eating the flesh of one’s dead brother.’<sup>249</sup> The practice of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* will inevitably include referring to someone with attributes they would condone or deny, which is what backbiting is.

Secondly, the practice of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* seems too subjective. One ḥadīth master may deem a person credible and appropriate whereas another may have an entirely different opinion of the same person. Is it possible that reporters can unanimously be graded with one particular attribute?

In response, the ḥadīth scholars however have allowed the practice of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl*, purely because it serves a greater good; to protect the sayings of the Prophet from inaccuracy and forgery. Though it may seem unfair to criticise individuals with terms they would disapprove of, the scholars have overlooked this in favour of identifying what can truly be attributed to the Prophet and what cannot. In fact, some have sought to justify *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* from the Qur’ān directly, where believers are asked to verify the report of a lewd person when he brings important news.<sup>250</sup>

### **5.63.1. The stages of discrediting.**

Ibn Ḥajar does not offer a comprehensive list of all of the terms used to discredit someone; rather he mentions the worst stage and the subsequent one, and then suffices with a few examples of the most lenient words used to discredit someone. The stages are presented in a table, so that it can be easily compared with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s opinion.

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<sup>249</sup> The Qur’ān, 49:12.

<sup>250</sup> The Qur’ān, 49:6.

Stage	Ibn Ḥajar	Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, who took the works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938) as his foundation (1986, 121-7).
i. The worst stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>akdhab al-nās</i>.</li> <li>• <i>ilayhi al-muntahā fī-al-waḍʿ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>rukṇ al-kadhib</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>dhāhib al-ḥadīth</i>.</li> <li>• <i>matrūk al-ḥadīth</i>.</li> <li>• <i>kadhḥāb</i>.</li> </ul>
ii. The next stage in terms of severity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>dajjāl</i>.</li> <li>• <i>waddāʿ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>kadhḥāb</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ḍaʿīf al-ḥadīth</i>.</li> </ul>
iii. The intermediary stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>matrūk</i>.</li> <li>• <i>sāqiṭ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>fāḥish al-ghalaṭ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>munkar al-ḥadīth</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Laysa bi-al-qawī</i>.</li> <li>• <i>layyin al-ḥadīth</i>.</li> </ul>
iv. The next intermediary stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ḍaʿīf</i>.</li> <li>• <i>laysa bi-al-qawī</i>.</li> <li>• <i>fīhi maqāl</i>.</li> </ul>	
v. The most lenient words of discrediting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>layyin</i>.</li> <li>• <i>sayyiʿ al-ḥifẓ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>fīhi adnā maqāl</i>.</li> </ul>	

The table highlights the discrepancies in the terms used to grade reporters. According to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *matrūk* is considered the worse grade of *al-jarḥ*, whereas Ibn Ḥajar classifies it in the third stage. Similarly, there is no agreement on which stage terms like *ḍa'īf*, *layyin* and *kadhḥāb* belongs to. Owing to these differences, it is quite possible that a researcher may choose to grade a report higher or lower than he actually is.

### 5.63.2. The stages of accrediting.

Stage	Ibn Ḥajar	Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, who took the works of Ibn Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938) as his foundation.
i. The highest stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>awṭḥaq al-nās</i>.</li> <li>• <i>athbat al-nās</i>.</li> <li>• <i>ilayhi al-muntahā fī-al-tathbīt</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>thiqa</i>.</li> <li>• <i>mutqin</i>.</li> <li>• <i>thabt</i>.</li> <li>• <i>ḥujja</i>.</li> <li>• <i>ḥāfīz</i>.</li> <li>• <i>ḍābiṭ</i>.</li> </ul>
ii. The second stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>thiqa thiqa</i>.</li> <li>• <i>thabt thabt</i>.</li> <li>• <i>'adl ḍābiṭ</i>.</li> <li>• <i>thiqa ḥāfīz</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ṣadūq</i>.</li> <li>• <i>maḥalluhu al-ṣidq</i>.</li> <li>• <i>lā ba'sa bihī</i>.</li> </ul>

iii. The intermediary stage.		• <i>shaykh</i> .
iv. The lowest form of accreditation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>shaykh</i>.</li> <li>• <i>yurwā ḥadīthuhū</i>.</li> <li>• <i>yu ‘tabaru bihī</i>.</li> </ul>	• <i>ṣāliḥ al-ḥadīth</i> .

Again, there is disagreement over which stage certain terms belong to and an observer will experience considerable difficulties in understanding the grades.

### 5.63.3. Conclusion.

At the very least, there is a lack of consensus amongst the scholars regarding the terms employed to accredit or discredit someone. In the worse scenario, it can lead to serious confusion. For instance, Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn was asked to comment on someone whom he had graded as *laysa bihī ba’s* (there is no objection with him). He explained that such a comment meant the reporter is deemed *thiqa* (reliable). According to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s grading, the two comments (*laysa bihī ba’s* and *thiqa*) belong to different stages (1986, 124). Similarly, *ṣadūq* (very truthful) and *maḥalluhū al-ṣidq* belong to the same stage according to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. Al-Dhahabī believes that *maḥalluhū al-ṣidq* is lesser in rank than *ṣadūq*. This is because *ṣadūq* is a noun of exaggeration whereas this quality is not to be found in *maḥalluhū al-ṣidq* (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 344-5).

Nor are there are a set number of stages within either accrediting or discrediting. Al-Dhahabī classified them into four, al-‘Iraqi into five and Ibn Ḥajar into six (al-Suyūṭī 1972, 1: 342).

Additionally, the rating also frequently does not make sense from an Arabic language perspective. For example, *akdhab al-nās* (the greatest of the people in lying) is deemed worse than *dajjāl* (the anti-Christ) according to the ḥadīth masters, though linguists may actually deem the latter term as infinitely worse.

The other problem is agreeing on what is considered good grounds to accredit someone or to discredit them. Again, this is a largely subjective exercise. Ibn al-Mubārak believed that – amongst other factors – attendance to congregational prayer was pivotal in establishing a person’s credibility as a ḥadīth reporter (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 79). Similarly, Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn identified four qualities in an acceptable narrator, of which one was ‘refraining from the major sins.’ Depending on which verse is analysed, which prophetic report is viewed and which scholar’s opinion is considered, there can be from seven to seventy major sins. In one ḥadīth for example, we are informed there are seven major sins (polytheism, sorcery, murder, usury, devouring the property of orphans, fleeing from Jihad and slanderous accusations), whereas others include disobedience to parents (Kamali 2005, 86-7).

Then there are the excessive terms have been used within each stage. For instance, *thiqa* (reliable), *mutqin* (firm), *thabt* (proven), *ḥujja*, *ḥāfiẓ* and *ḍābiṭ* (accurate) are all terms of the highest stage according to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. Perhaps it would have been easier for the sake of the researcher if steps had been taken to limit them to just one or two words in each stage. This issue touches on a pattern which is seen elsewhere in the *Nuzḥah* too (and will

be discussed in detailed in section six) – that the technical terms in the discipline sometimes did more than just define a type of report. In this section, the excessive terms used within each stage did not add to our clarification in any way, and perhaps made the area more confusing. They may have simply been introduced to give the impression of development and progress in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, the more terms equalled the more exactitude of the discipline.

In defence of the terming, firstly, one must not forget the richness of the Arabic language which may have played a part in the multiple terms in each stage. The fact that the highest stage of accreditation can be described with so many different terms may simply be down to the vast vocabulary available at the researcher’s disposal. Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar does not venture into the possible geographical reasons behind the vast arrays of terms used within each stage. It may well be that scholars of a certain locality – for example, Madīna – preferred to use *thiqa* as the highest stage rather than *thabt*.

Nevertheless, whereas a large portion of the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* terminology went through a process of harmonisation as the discipline developed, the terms employed in *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* have perhaps not been subject to the same uniformity.

In short, at best the terms give us a good but not a definitive guide to the rank of different reporters. At worst, the vast array of terms used can lead to considerable dispute as to whether someone is fit for reporting or not.



## 5.64. Other rulings relating to *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl*.

These are the rulings pertaining to accrediting and discrediting. I have mentioned [further detail] to complete the benefit and thus I say: the accreditation is accepted from the one who knows the reasons [behind accrediting and discrediting], and not from one who does not know of the reasons. This is to prevent one from accrediting someone from the apparent state without expertise and analysis. [This is the case] even if the accrediting stems from one creditor, according to the most authentic opinion. This [opinion] contrasts with those who specify that the accrediting will not be accepted except from two (men), like it is necessary in a [conventional] testimony. The difference between the two is that accrediting is the same as a ruling (*ḥukm*) and so therefore there is no condition of numbers for it. [Moreover] the testimony occurs from the witness in the presence of a ruler (*ḥākim*) [and therefore it is not the same as a ruling] and thus differs.

If it is said to differentiate between when the accrediting in the narrator stems from the creditor's own independent thought (*ijtihād*) and when it stems from ascribing the accrediting to others, then there is a case [for dispute]. This is because in the first form [where the opinion stems from the creditor's own independent thought], there is no condition of number, since it is the same as a ruling (*ḥukm*). If it is the second form [where the creditor ascribes the opinion to another person] then there is a difference of opinion. It is apparent however that in this second form, there is no condition of number. This is because when the core did not require the condition of

number, the periphery should not require the condition of number either. And Allāh knows best.<sup>251</sup>

It is desirable that the discrediting and accrediting is not accepted except from a reliable and acquainted person. Therefore the discrediting is not accepted from one who shows prejudice in the matter and thus criticises the *muḥaddith*'s ḥadīth with something that does not deserve rejection. Likewise, the accrediting is not accepted from one who relies merely on the apparent state and decrees on this basis. Al-Dhahabī – who is one of the people of outstanding competence in the criticism of men – said:

Two scholars from this discipline have never agreed on deeming a weak reporter reliable and a reliable reporter as weak.

It is for this reason that the position of al-Nāsa'ī was not to discard the ḥadīth of a man until all the scholars [of this discipline] rejected him.

The agent in this field should be wary of leniency in discrediting and accrediting.

This is because if he accredits someone without due care, then it is as if he has affirmed a disapproved ruling. It is then feared such a person will be considered in the group of people who authentically report narrations, though in reality he thinks of the ḥadīth as false. [Conversely] if he discredits someone without precaution, then

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<sup>251</sup> If there are disputes, then it centres on how exactly the ḥadīth master reaches his opinion. If he deems someone weak on the basis of his own research and independent thought, then his situation is rather like a judge in a court case: his *ḥukm* (ruling) will be accepted without a requirement of numbers (al-'Uthaymin 2002, 362). If the ḥadīth master deems someone weak not on the basis of his own analysis, but upon the opinion of scholars prior to him, then this does not resemble a *ḥukm* (ruling) but *ikhbār* (informing). In other words, he is merely relaying the opinion of others. According to some scholars, in such a case there must be a minimum of two.

he has inflicted defamation on an innocent Muslim and has coloured him with an evil trait that will remain with him forever.

Prejudice sometimes occurs [in accrediting or discrediting someone] due to ill-behaviour or corrupt motives, [though] the opinions of the earlier scholars is mostly free from this. Sometimes it occurs due to disagreement in Islamic creed, and this is widespread in earlier and later times. It is not desirable to use this [alone] as a means of discrediting; we have previously mentioned the discussion on the narration of an agent of *bid'a*.

Discrediting is preceded before accrediting and a group [of scholars] have said this is the case unequivocally. However [the correct opinion is that] discrediting is preceded when it is explained in detail from one who knows the reasons of defamation. This is because if the discrediting is without detail, it will not be defamatory in someone whose integrity has been proven. Also, if the discrediting stems from someone who does not the reasons for defamation, it will not be considered.

According to the chosen opinion, if the defamed was void of accreditation before being discredited, then the discrediting will be accepted [when expressed] in a brief form without requiring the reasons for defamation, if the opinion stems from an expert. This is because when he has not been accredited, he is deemed as one whose state is unknown. And [then in such a case] acting upon the opinion of the one who defames [the reporter in question] is better than ignoring the opinion. In this case, Ibn al-Şalāḥ has inclined to pausing [on decreeing the state of the reporter].

### Commentary

As a detailed addition to the discussion, Ibn Hajar refers to certain rulings and principles related to *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl* (discrediting and accrediting). In summary, he covers the following important areas;

- Who is permitted to decree whether a reporter is weak or reliable?
- Is the opinion of one expert sufficient to accredit or discredit someone?
- What guidelines should the scholars adopt when accrediting and discrediting someone?
- What is the default state: *al-jarḥ* or *al-ta'dīl*?
- What factors sometimes lead to inaccuracy in accrediting and discrediting?

#### **5.64.1. Who is permitted to decree whether a reporter is weak or reliable?**

Owing to the importance of the task, Muslim scholars have explicitly suggested that the graders were men of utmost reliability and integrity. We are informed that the task of accrediting or discrediting someone does not fall upon the shoulder of all ḥadīth scholars – rather this duty is confined to the ḥadīth masters who are comprehensively aware of the different stages of narrators, the ranks used in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* terminology to grade reporters and the reasons why a reporter can be discredited. Such masters must be marked by integrity, fairness and must not be known to adopt unjustified leniency (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 363). Siddiqi notes that of the Companions who became specialists in ḥadīth reporting and ḥadīth criticism, all kept out of politics and thus were un-swayed by political pressure from either the Umayyads or Abbasids. This includes the likes of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and Abū Dharr (1993, 39).

### **5.64.2. Is the opinion of one expert sufficient to accredit or discredit someone?**

In essence, the opinion of one is sufficient to accredit or discredit someone. This is the position favoured by Ibn Ḥajar, Āmidī, Ibn al-Ḥāḥib, al-Hindī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 358).

The quote from al-Dhahabī on the matter suggests that the ḥadīth masters worked harmoniously with one another. He said:

Two scholars from this discipline have never agreed on deeming a weak reporter reliable and a reliable reporter as weak.

At first sight, the claim seems to suggest that the ḥadīth masters always agreed with one another when declaring the status of a reporter. But the quote merely affirms that they never declared a weak (*ḍaʿīf*) reliable (*thiqa*) and vice versa. Owing to the contrasting grades within discrediting and within accrediting, this is not difficult to do. Within *taʿdīl* for example, a person can be *thiqa*, *awthaq al-nās*, *thābit*, *ḥāfīz*, *dābit*, to mention but a few grades. What al-Dhahabī is claiming is that when declaring the status of one reporter, the ḥadīth masters have always kept within these parameters. What he is *not* claiming is that when one ḥadīth master declares someone *thiqa*, all the ḥadīth masters have followed suit and used the same grade for him. This would certainly then be a testimony to the ḥadīth masters' accuracy and conformity.

Seen in another light, the statement of al-Dhahabī could be interpreted as a sign of a loss of vigour in the discipline. As time went on, ḥadīth masters merely conformed to the opinions given by their predecessors rather than embarking on fresh investigations on any given reporter.

### **5.64.3. What is the default state: *al-jarḥ* or *al-ta'dīl*?**

If the situation arises where a particular reporter is accredited by some ḥadīth masters and discredited by others, then the opinion inclining to the reporter's discrediting will be accepted. However, as Ibn Ḥajar highlights, this is only the case when the master clarifies the reason for his opinion. If he merely deems someone as weak, without offering an opinion as to why, then such a statement carries no value. Al-ʿUthaymin explains why the opinion discrediting the reporter will be preferred:

An example is a man called ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlī al-Nīsābūrī who one of the ḥadīth masters (*ḥāfiẓs*) has criticised as possessing bad memory. None of the other ḥadīth masters have declared him good, or of good memory. Here we accept the opinion of the one discrediting him. Why? Because since no one has accredited him, then his state is deemed *majhūl* (unknown). So when someone discredits him, it is necessary to accept the opinion, because it is an opinion stemming from someone who has the capability to make such a statement and it does not oppose the opinion of anyone else on that reporter. Therefore we must give the statement consideration (2002, 367).

#### **5.64.4. What factors sometimes lead to inaccuracy in accrediting and discrediting?**

Despite an assurance from Ibn Ḥajar that only the most competent and impartial ḥadīth masters are permitted to perform *al-jarḥ* or *al-ta'dīl*, he does warn of certain factors which sometimes result in prejudice when declaring the rank of a particular reporter. Firstly, a reporter is sometimes wrongly aspersed due to corrupt motives, namely that the master has a personal grudge against the reporter he is accrediting or discrediting (al-'Uthaymin 2002, 366). Ibn Ḥajar believes this is a problem not usually associated with the experts of ḥadīth. However, al-Munāwī writes:

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Barr narrates with his chain from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: 'Listen attentively to the opinions of the scholars. But do not believe them in opinions of one regarding another...' Mālik ibn Dīnār said: 'The opinions of the scholars and recitation experts are taken in everything except their opinion on each other.' And in *Mu'īn al-aḥkām*, by Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Mālikī, it states: 'It is not permissible for a scholar to bear testimony on his colleagues. For indeed they are the most severe in terms of envy, hatred and animosity [for one another] (1999, 2: 369).

Later, he cites the opinion of Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd who said:

‘The objecting of Muslims to one another is a pit from the pits of the Hell-Fire. Two groups stand on its banks; the *muḥaddithūn* and the judges (*ḥākims*)’ (1999, 2: 375).

These two references certainly raise the question whether the opinions of ḥadīth masters should be entirely trusted.

Secondly, and more commonly, a reporter is judged in a prejudiced manner due to differences in doctrine and denomination. This may be where the ḥadīth master belongs to the mainstream sunni denomination and the reporter in question is a shī‘a (al-‘Uthaymin 2002, 366).

Despite these objections, Muslims argue that the large majority of the ḥadīth masters conducted their research with impartiality and religious devotion. Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd was on his death-bed when he asked an attendee what the people of Baṣra thought about him. ‘They admire you, but they are only afraid of your criticism of the scholars.’ Yaḥyā replied: ‘Listen to me. In the Hereafter I would prefer to be opposed by anyone rather than have the Prophet saying: “You heard a ḥadīth attributed to me, and it came to your mind that it was not true but you did not criticise it”’ (Azami 1977, 47).

#### **5.64. Conclusion.**

Despite the best efforts of the ḥadīth masters, the discipline of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* has many shortcomings, which have been exposed in classical and modern times. Ibn Ḥajar largely steers clear of such aspects and instead attempts to highlight its worth and validity. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān questions whether a reliable and objective account of reporters can



be given, since ‘it is difficult enough to judge the character of living people, let alone those long dead’ (Brown 1999, 98). Opinions as to what exactly constitutes *jarḥ* vary from person to person. When al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī learned that someone had discredited a reporter because he urinated in the standing position, he asked why his prophetic reports should be rejected as a result. He informed the imām that the urine would splash onto his clothes and praying in such clothes became questionable. Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī then asked the man whether he had actually seen the accused in such clothes, to which the man replied ‘no’. Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī then remarked that a learned man would not discredit another on such weak grounds (Kamali 2005, pp.93-94).

As the above quotes have shown (in 5.64.4.), we can seriously question the worth of the scholars, no matter how esteemed, on what they had to say on fellow colleagues in the field. Broadbridge showed that even Ibn Ḥajar himself had indifferent opinions of his fellow scholars like al-‘Aynī (1999, pp. 99-103). In short, the ḥadīth masters were given the task of accrediting and discrediting the reporters, but who accredits the ḥadīth masters? Certainly, the grading differed from scholar to scholar. While some like Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn and Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd were strict in their assessment of the reliability of the narrators, others like al-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim were not strict (Kamali 2005, 82). In the same way that actual prophetic reports were sometimes subject to forgery, there are not sufficient assurances from Ibn Ḥajar that the biographical reports were immune to forgery.

But this shortcoming is not in any way specific to the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. This is because questions have always been raised whether a science of human behaviour is at all possible. Can we quantify the behaviour of reporters in the same way we can with conforming atoms in a cell, like positivists would perhaps argue? Thus, it could be argued,

that early ḥadīth masters – when they cast doubt upon their own opinions on others – were in fact acknowledging that a true science of humans was not possible.

On the other hand, however, one must not ignore the efforts of the ḥadīth masters in attempting to address the important area of reporter credibility. If Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845) had not compiled the *Ṭabaqāt* consisting of the biographical detail of over four thousand reporters, if al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) had not investigated the state of eleven thousand individuals in his *Mīzān al-i‘tidāl* and if Ibn Ḥajar had not provided data on fourteen thousand reporters in *Lisān al-mīzān*, then certainly we would have *more* reasons to doubt the credibility of prophetic reports. Even the most basic information on reporters, like their birth and death dates, can help us identify whether the *isnād* is continuous or not and whether a reporter’s claim of hearing a report from a person is feasible or not. So despite the shortcomings highlighted above, the field of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl* nonetheless is important in sifting the sound reports from the weak. This is because some information about the reporters is better than none at all. What perhaps would be required from the researcher – in order to offset the discrepancies in the grades of accreditation and dis-accreditation and the sometimes unreliable opinions of ḥadīth scholars on colleagues in the field – is reliance on several biographical dictionaries rather than one. This would be instrumental in identifying if the ḥadīth masters had shown partiality based on sectarian or geographical grounds when grading a particular reporter.

## 5.65. Knowing the paidonymics of the reporters and other related matters.

Important in this field [of ḥadīth] is knowing the paidonymics (*kunya*) of the named [reporters], from those who are renowned by their names but they have a *kunya*.

One is not immune from the situation where in some narrations, he is mentioned by his *kunya*, lest that one assumes he is someone else.<sup>252</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing the names of those called by their *kunya*.

This is the opposite of the aforementioned case.<sup>253</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing he whose name is his *kunya*. Such instances are rare.<sup>254</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing those reporters in which there is a difference of opinion regarding the *kunyas*. Such instances are common.

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters who have several *kunyas*, – like Ibn Jurayj; he has two *kunyas*, Abū al-Walīd and Abū Khālīd – or has several descriptions (*ṣifa*) and several *laqabs*.

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters whose *kunya* is the same as the name of their father, like Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Madanī, one of the Successors of the Successors. The benefit of knowing this is to prevent mistakes from one who ascribes it to his father and says: ‘Ibn Ishāq informed me’ and by

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<sup>252</sup> The author writes that there are certain cases where a reporter is known by his actual name, though he does a semi-renowned *kunya* too. It is important to know by his name *and* his *kunya* in case he is mentioned by his *kunya* in a particular report, which may lead to some assuming it refers to another person.

<sup>253</sup> This case refers to when a person is usually called by his *kunya*, rather than his actual name. Again, one must be acquainted with both to ensure the person is not assumed to be two separate individuals.

<sup>254</sup> A rare case where this has occurred is Abū Bilāl al-Ash‘arī, the son of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 386).

doing so makes an error; the correct form is ‘Abū Ishāq informed me’. The opposite case [should also be known where the name of the reporter is the same as the *kunya* of the father] like Ishāq ibn Abī Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī.

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters whose *kunya* is the same as the *kunya* of the wife, like Abū Ayyūb and Umm Ayyūb who are two renowned Companions.<sup>255</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters whose shaykh’s name corresponds with the father’s name, like ‘Rabī‘ ibn Anas, from Anas’. This is how it appears in some narrations. It is assumed [sometimes] that he is reporting from his father, similar to what has occurred in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* [of al-Bukhārī]: ‘from ‘Āmir ibn Sa‘d, from Sa‘d’ who is his father. Anas, the shaykh of Rabī‘, is not his father but rather his father is Bakarī and his shaykh is Anṣārī. The aforementioned Rabī‘ is not from his children, [namely Anas ibn Malik’s].<sup>256</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters who are ascribed to someone other than their fathers, like Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. He was ascribed to al-Aswad al-Zuhrī because he was his *mutabanna*<sup>257</sup> though his real name is al-Miqdād ibn ‘Amr.

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters who are ascribed to their mothers, like Ibn ‘Ulayya. He is Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Miqṣam, one of the reliable [reporters]. ‘Ulayya was the name of his mother and he became famous with this

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<sup>255</sup> Another example is Abū al-Dardā’ and Umm al-Dardā’ (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 391).

<sup>256</sup> The author here gives two examples from parts of a chain. In the first - ‘from ‘Āmir ibn Sa‘d, from Sa‘d’ which is to be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī - ‘Āmir is the son of Sa‘d, from whom he narrated. The second example, ‘Rabī‘ ibn Anas, from Anas’, is not a case of the son narrating from the father. Rabī‘ here narrates from the famous Companion Anas ibn Mālīk al-Anṣārī and not his father who is Anas Bakarī.

<sup>257</sup> It was common for Arabs to informally adopt someone as their child, which is referred to making one a *mutabanna*. Islam later put an end to this practice (Qur’ān 33:4).

name. He did not like being called Ibn ‘Ulayya; for this reason, al-Shāfi‘ī would say:

‘Ismā‘īl – who is known as Ibn ‘Ulayya – informed me.’

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters who are ascribed to something that does not make apparent sense, like [Khālid] al-Ḥadhdhā’ (shoemaker). Apparently, it seems it is a reference to his manufacturing or business, though this is not the case. Merely, he used to keep the company of shoemakers and so he was ascribed accordingly. Similarly, [the case of] Sulaymān al-Taymī; he was not from [the clan of] Banū Taym but rather resided with them.

Likewise [it is important to know] those who have been ascribed to their grandfather so that confusion does not arise when a person’s name and his fathers is the same as the grandfather’s.<sup>258</sup>

[Also important in this field is] knowing the reporters whose own name, father’s name and grandfather’s name are the same, like Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allāh be pleased with them. Sometimes this similarity of name occurs more frequently, and [thus] is a type of *musalsal*.<sup>259</sup> Sometimes the name of the reporter and the name of his father is the same as the grandfather’s, like Abū al-Yumn al-Kindī, whose full name is Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan.

[It is important to know the cases where] the reporter’s name coincides with the name of his shaykh and his shaykh’s shaykh upwards, like ‘‘Imrān, from ‘Imrān from ‘Imrān’. The first is known as ‘Imrān al-Qaṣīr, the second is Abū Rajā’ al-

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<sup>258</sup> For example, Muḥammad ibn Bishr and Muḥammad ibn al-Sā’ib ibn Bishr are two, separate individuals. The former is deemed reliable whereas the latter is deemed weak (Anwar 2003, 184).

<sup>259</sup> *Musalsal* is where an attribute is to be found in all or most of the reporters of the chain. It has been discussed in section 5.54.

‘Uṭāridī and the third is Ibn Ḥusayn, the Companion ﷺ. Likewise is the example of ‘Sulaymān, from Sulaymān, from Sulaymān’. The first is Ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭabarānī, the second is Ibn Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī and the third is Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimishqī, renowned with the name Ibn bint Shuraḥbīl.

[The similarity between the reporter’s name and his father’s] sometimes occurs in the reporter and his shaykh collectively, like Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Hamadhānī al-‘Aṭṭār, known for narrating from Abū ‘Alī al-Iṣbahānī al-Ḥaddād. Both of them share the name al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad. They are similar in this respect but differ in *kunya*, *nisba* to their country and occupation. Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī has written a comprehensive treatise on this.

[Also important in this field is] knowing the cases where the name of the reporter’s shaykh coincides with the one he reported from. This is a unique form which Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ did not come across. The benefit of knowing this is immunity from assuming repetition or swapping in the chain. From such examples is al-Bukhārī, who narrated from Muslim and also narrated to Muslim. Thus his shaykh is Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farādīsī al-Baṣrī and the one who reported from him is Muslim ibn al-Ḥujjāj al-Qushayrī, compiler of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The same case occurred for ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd; he reported from Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm and Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj narrated from him in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* with this exact chain [featuring the aforementioned Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farādīsī al-Baṣrī]. From this [form] is [also] the example of Yaḥyā ibn Abī Ibn Kathīr. He reported from Hishām and Hishām also reported from him. Thus his shaykh is Hishām ibn ‘Urwa who was from his generation and the one reporting from him is Hishām ibn Abī ‘Abd Allāh al-Dastawā’ī. From this is also

[the example of] Ibn Jurayj; he narrated from Hishām and Hishām reported from him. The higher (shaykh) is Ibn ‘Urwa and the lower (disciple) is Ibn Yūsuf al-Ṣan‘ānī. From this is also [the example of] al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Utayba<sup>260</sup>; he reported from Abū Layla and Abū Layla reported from him. The higher (shaykh) is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and the lower (disciple) is the aforementioned Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Dimishqī]. Such examples are plentiful.

Also important to know in this field are the solitary names.<sup>261</sup> A group of scholars have gathered [compilations] on this. Some have compiled them without differentiation, like Ibn Sa‘d in *Ṭabaqāt*, and Abū Khaythama and al-Bukhārī in their *Tārīkh*, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl*. From the scholars are those who have singled out the credible [reporters who have solitary names], like ‘Ijlī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn Shāhīn. From the scholars are those who have singled out the defamed [reporters who have solitary names], like Ibn ‘Addī and again Ibn Ḥibbān. From the scholars are those who have singled out the reporters from a specific compilation, like the reporters of al-Bukhārī; done by Abū Naṣr al-Kalābādīh, and the reporters of Muslim; done by Abū Bakr ibn Manjūya, and the reporters of both [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]; done by Abū al-Faḍl ibn Ṭāhir, and the reporters of Abū Dāwūd; done by Abū ‘Alī al-Jayyānī. Likewise the men of al-Tirmidhī and the men of al-Nasā’ī; which has been done by a number of western scholars, and the men of the six canonical collection – the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī and Ibn Mājjā – done by ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī in the book *al-Kamāl*. This work was then refined by al-Mizzī in *Tadhīb al-kamāl*. I summarised this work and also added

<sup>260</sup> In some scripts, this has been written as ‘Uwayna rather than ‘Utayba.

<sup>261</sup> This refers to when reporters are known by a single, solitary name rather than ‘x son of y’ and so on.

many new aspects to it, and I named it *Tadhīb al-tadhīb*. This is an additional one-third to the original [aforementioned] work.

Also important is to know the unique names.<sup>262</sup> Verily, al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Hārūn al-Bardījī compiled a work on this. He wrote many things in it which were [later] criticised. From these criticisms is his mentioning Ṣughdī ibn Sanān, one of the weak reporters. This is with a *ḍamma* on the *ṣād*, changed from a *sīn*, and with a *sukūn* on the *ghayn*, followed by a *dāl* and a *yā'* similar to one used for *nasab* (affiliation). This is a common [name] and is not unique. For in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl* there is a reporter named Ṣughdī al-Kūfī, who has been deemed credible by Ibn Ma'īn. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has differentiated between him and [the previously-mentioned] Ṣughdī ibn Sinān, who he considers as weak. Also, in *Tārīkh al-'Uqaylī* there is a Ṣughdī ibn 'Abd Allāh who reported from Qatāda. Al-'Uqaylī said of him: 'His reports are not preserved.' I believe it is the same person which Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentioned. As for al-'Uqaylī and the fact that he mentioned him as one of the weak reporters, it is because of the ḥadīth he reported from him. The weakness is not because of him; rather it is due to the reporter 'Unaysa ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān [who is in the *isnād*]. And Allāh knows best.

From such examples is that of Sandar, on the same template as Ja'far. He is the *mawlā* (client) of Zinbā' al-Judhāmī, who has companionship [of the Prophet] and narrations [from him]. He is known with the *kunya* Abū 'Abd Allāh. This is a unique name not to be found in others according to our knowledge but Abū Mūsā has mentioned in *al-Dhayl 'alā ma'rīfat al-ṣaḥāba* by Ibn Manda a reporter called Sandar Abū al-Aswad and has reported a ḥadīth from him. This [opinion of Abū

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<sup>262</sup> *Al-Asmā' al-mufrada* means names that are rare and are not shared by others.



Mūsā] is refuted by the fact that he is the same Sandar mentioned by Ibn Manda.

Muḥammad ibn al-Rabī‘ al-Jīzī has mentioned that same ḥadīth in the historical account of the Companions who took residence in Egypt, under the section mentioning Sandar Mawlā Zinbā’. I have clarified this in my book on the Companions.

Likewise it is important to know the *kunyas* that are solitary and are unique, as well as knowing the unique *laqabs*. This sometimes occurs with the name, sometimes with the *kunya*, sometimes with a defamatory reason – like al-A‘mash<sup>263</sup> – and sometimes with the occupation.

Similarly, knowing the *nasab*<sup>264</sup> is important. This sometimes occurs through the tribes – this is more common in the older names than the modern ones – and sometimes through the place; this is more common-practice in the later names than the older ones. *Nisba* can refer to the town, rural area or temporary residence. It can also occur through occupation, like *al-khayyāt* (tailor) or trade, like *bazzār* (cloth merchant).

The *nasab* can be subject to similarity and ambiguity like it does in names.

Sometimes the *nasab* is mentioned as a *laqab*, like Khālīd ibn Makhlad al-Qaṭawānī; he was Kūfī and was given the *laqab* of al-Qaṭwānī which he disliked.

Also important is to know the reasons for the nicknames and *nasabs* which are contrary to the apparent. Also it is important to know the *mawlās* (clients) in terms of the higher and lower, by reason of slavery or by reason of clientage through

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<sup>263</sup> His real name was Sulaymān ibn Mihrān. Literally, a‘mash means blear-eyed.

<sup>264</sup> *Nasab* means a person’s lineage.

**alliance and protection, or by reason of accepting Islam.<sup>265</sup> Both forms are called *mawlā* and one cannot be identified from the other except through contextual evidence.**

**[Also important in this field is] knowing the brothers and sisters. The classical scholars have compiled works on this, like ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī.**

### Commentary

This section is largely self-explanatory. Implicitly, what the section does do is perhaps highlight the intended, target-audience for the work. By identifying these different areas which Ibn Ḥajar feels one needs to know, it seems he is offering advice to the young disciples intending to embark on a study of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* for the first time. His intended readership was those students wishing to gain their first insight into the discipline.

The section also reflects the area of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* in particular that Ibn Ḥajar excelled in, which is *rijāl* literature. Not only is this section littered with many examples for each type mentioned, but he often provides additional information on the reporter in question, like his other names, where he resided and from whom he took reports from. There are certain sections that are longer in the *Nuzḥah* owing to their importance. This section could be longer, not because of its importance, but because of the author’s added expertise in it.

Inadvertently, Ibn Ḥajar may have added more detail than he actually thought.

Alternatively, the extensive emphasis on the men in the *isnād* could be for a religious reason. Ibn Ḥajar wanted to indicate that it is not just the *matn* which is sought in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* but the men who carry it too. By virtue of carrying the words of the Prophet, these

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<sup>265</sup> For instance, Abū ‘Alī al-Hasan ibn ‘Īsā was a Christian who accepted Islam at the hands of Ibn al-Mubārak. Thereafter, he was known as Mawlā ibn al-Mubārak.

men now carry a spiritual blessing (*baraka*) that is of value too. This is what led Ibn Wahb to comment that: ‘What we acquired from the mannerisms of Mālik was greater than what we learnt from his knowledge’ (al-Dhahabi 1985, 8: 113).

## **5.66. Knowing the etiquettes of the shaykh and disciple.**

Also important is to know the etiquettes of the shaykh and disciple. Both share the [requirement of] the correct intention, purity from the distractions of the world and sublime morals. The shaykh’s requirement [alone] is that he reports when he is required to do so, he should not report when there is a more senior ḥadīth master in the town but rather should refer [the disciple] to him and he should not refuse to relate prophetic traditions to anyone on the basis of a corrupt intention. [Moreover], he should perform ritual purity (before relating the traditions) and sit with dignity; he should not report whilst standing, whilst in a hurry or in the streets unless he is compelled to. He should resign from reporting when he fears alteration and forgetfulness, due to illness or old-age. When he reports in a gathering using dictation, he should employ an alert *mustamlī*.<sup>266</sup>

The disciple’s requirement [alone] is that he respects the shaykh and does not trouble him. He should inform others of what he has learned from the shaykh. He should not cease deriving benefit on the basis of embarrassment or pride. He should accurately record in writing what he has heard and take due care in recording the *ḥarakas* to it. He should revise the recordings often so it remains rigid in his mind.

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<sup>266</sup> A *mustamlī* is employed in a gathering, particularly a large one. Such a person has the task to relay the shaykh’s words to those who cannot hear him directly (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 242).

### Commentary

In the introduction of the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar acknowledged the vast contribution of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) to the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. His works such as *al-Kifāya* on the rules of narration and *al-Jāmi‘ li akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘* on the etiquettes of narration became important, milestone works. Ibn Ḥajar praised him by citing al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr ibn Nukta’s quote:

Every impartial observer knows that all ḥadīth scholars after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī were dependant upon his books.

This small yet informative section on the moral requirements expected from the shaykh and the disciple is based largely – if not exclusively – on the works of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, thus showing the dependency of later scholars on the works of earlier ones. Ibn Ḥajar touches on just a few expected etiquettes here that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī otherwise covers in great depth in *al-Jāmi‘*. For instance, Ibn Ḥajar writes that both shaykh and disciple require the correct intention; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī includes a thirteen-page section on this area in *al-Jāmi‘* (1996, 1:pp. 123-136). Similarly, the need to adopt sublime morals (1996, 1:215), to respect the shaykh (1996, 1: 271), to listen with the full presence of the heart (1996, 1:354) and to revise the traditions (1996, 1: 363) are all covered in considerable detail in *al-Jāmi‘*. So this is the first function of this section; to pay respects to the previous, ḥadīth masters and their endeavours.

The second function is a religious point; that listening to prophetic traditions and then passing it on to others was seen as a religious exercise, not just an academic or even political one. The Muslims – particularly the early ones – saw indulgence in this discipline as a form of worship. Ḥadīth scholars often cite the example of al-Imām Mālik as most worthy of mention to highlight this point: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes:

When Mālik ibn Anas wanted to transmit prophetic traditions, he used to perform his ablution, sit on the edge of his bed and comb his beard. He sat erect, displaying gravity and reverence and then transmitted. He was asked about that and he replied: ‘I like to honour the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allāh. I transmit only in the state of ritual ablution and sitting up straight.’ He used to dislike transmitting ḥadīth in the street, while standing or in haste...It is also related that he would perfume his beard before transmitting. If someone raised his voice in his gathering, he would scold them saying: ‘Allāh said [in the Qur’ān], ‘O believers! Do not raise your voice over that of the Prophet.’<sup>267</sup> Whenever someone raises their voice during the recitation of the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allāh, it is as if he has raised his voice over that of the Messenger of Allāh (1986, 240).

For Muslims, this attitude to the field was helpful in reassuring their faith in Mālik as a scholar. If he treated in each and every ḥadīth of the Prophet with such care and dignity, it meant he would never include sub-standard and forged reports in his works. On the other hand, a reporter with ill-motives would care less for understanding the words and wisdom of the Prophet. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī reflected this point when he said:

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<sup>267</sup> Qur’an, 49:2.

When a man used to seek knowledge [of ḥadīth] it was apparent in his humbleness, his conduct, his tongue, his sight and in his hands (cited in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 1: 216).

Ibn Ḥajar therefore wanted the *Nuzḥah* to teach new disciples the etiquettes the previous greats adhered to, in the hope they too adopt such morals. In the section on the forged (5.24.), he did openly accept that piety is not a total guarantee of genuineness; after all, some of the worst forgers were the pious Muslims. But this section was important in a religious sense, that learning ḥadīth meant applying its teachings and spiritual dimensions too to one's faith and character.

## **5.67. The age of hearing and delivering reports, and the reports of a non-Muslim and a Muslim wrong-doer.**

Also important is to know the method of receiving and delivering [the reports]. The most correct opinion on receiving it is at the age of 'differentiation'. Verily, the muḥaddithūn made it customary to bring their children to the gatherings of ḥadīth and recorded their attendance. It is necessary to seek permission from the shaykh [if the child, after reaching the age of maturity, desires to narrate the reports].

The most correct opinion on seeking ḥadīth himself is that he possesses the ability to do so. The receiving of the non-Muslim is correct too when he delivers it after his

**Islam.<sup>268</sup> The same therefore applies to the wrong-doer (*fāsiq*) for sure, when he delivers it after his repentance and his credibility is proven [once again].<sup>269</sup>**

**As for delivering the ḥadīth, for it has already been mentioned that there is no specific age for it, but instead [the criteria is] his requirement to deliver it and his ability to do so. This (age) differs from person to person. Ibn Khallād said: ‘When he reaches fifty [he is fit to deliver to others] and he cannot be criticised if he does so as forty.’ This has been criticised as Mālik reported before this age.<sup>270</sup>**

### Commentary

In this small section, Ibn Ḥajar outlines some of the conditions that pertain to the process of taking and delivering prophetic reports. The terms used by the author are *taḥammul* – which means taking the ḥadīth by one of the established means – and *adāʾ*, which refers to passing it on to others (Mighālīwī 2003, 558). In particular, Ibn Ḥajar refers to three areas; (i) the age of competence for hearing reports (ii) the age when the reporter is fit to

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<sup>268</sup> Ibn Hajar affirms that a non-Muslim can hear prophetic reports before accepting Islam, so long as he delivers them after accepting Faith. For instance, both al-Bukhārī and Muslim have included the report of Jubayr ibn Muṭʿim in their *Ṣaḥīḥs*, in which he reported that the Prophet would recite Sūrat al-Ṭūr in Maghrib prayer. At the time of this actual event, he was a captive from the Battle of Badr (al-Qārī 1994, 796).

<sup>269</sup> Once the scholars have accepted the reports of a non-Muslim, there is little room for controversy in accepting the reports of a Muslim who is a wrong-doer, after he repents from his mistakes and his credibility is proven.

<sup>270</sup> Ibn Hajar cites the opinion of Ibn Khallād, who believed the age was forty or fifty. Perhaps he is implicitly referring to the Qurʾānic verse where the age of forty is referred to as the age of ‘full strength’ (46:15). But again, Ibn Ḥajar states that owing to the different ability of people, a definitive age cannot be set. He then reminds the reader that Mālik ibn Anas was delivering prophetic reports at a very younger age; according to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, at the age of seventeen (1986, 237). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ too seems to agree that setting an exact age is difficult when he writes: ‘There used to be disagreement over the age when it becomes suitable for a transmitter to take up teaching ḥadīth and to be appointed to relate them. Our view is that when the need arises for the ḥadīth in his possession, it becomes desirable for him to take up relating and spreading them, no matter what his age his... There is nothing wrong with his transmitting at forty because that is the threshold of maturity and the zenith of perfection. The Messenger of Allāh was informed of his mission when he was forty. At forty, a person’s resolution and strength reach their peak and his intellect becomes abundant and his judgement is improved’ (1986, 236-8).

pass it on to others (iii) and whether the reports of a non-Muslim and a Muslim wrongdoer are accepted. Owing to the controversy surrounding the age of competence, it is certainly worthy of more analysis.

### ***5.67.1. The age of competence for hearing reports.***

In order to listen to prophetic reports, it seems that the many scholars seem to suggest that a reporter can be very young in order to fulfill this task. Al-Qārī writes that al-Iṣbahānī<sup>271</sup> himself explains that he memorised the Qur’ān by the age of five. When he was just four, he was taken to the ḥadīth gathering of Abū Bakr al-Muqrī. Some attendees objected to his presence. Abū Bakr al-Muqrī asked him to recite Sūrat al-Kāfirūn which he did so without error. Al-Muqrī allowed him to remain in the gathering and took responsibility for his presence (al-Qārī 1994, 793). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that a child is permitted to learn prophetic reports once he can differentiate between a cow and a donkey (1988, 64).

Perhaps with such cases in mind, Mighālīwī and al-Munāwī have suggested that the person can be as young as five (2003, 559 & 1999, 2: 424) and implicitly, al-Bukhārī believes this age is suitable. This is because under the chapter ‘When it is legitimate to allow the minor to listen’ (al-Munāwī 1999, 2: 424-5), he includes the report of Maḥmūd ibn al-Rabī‘, who was four or five at the time when he heard traditions. Certainly, Ibn Ḥajar too suggests a young age when he points out that ḥadīth scholars would bring their young children to such gatherings and then ensure their presence was formally recorded.

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<sup>271</sup> Al-Hāfiẓ Abu Muḥammad Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Iṣbahānī.



However, allowing the hearing of reports at such a young age is not without its problems. Firstly, it seems strange that a Muslim is not required to perform the obligatory prayers until the age of puberty, yet he is permitted to listen to prophetic reports. Secondly, there is a substantial difference between *hearing* reports and *understanding* them. For instance, Abū Mūsā al-‘Anazī once said:

We are a privileged tribe. We are from ‘Anaza. The Prophet ﷺ read towards us  
(Mighālīwī 2003, 467).

Abū Mūsā thought the report meant that the Prophet prayed for their tribe. In fact, ‘*Anaza* is a spear. The Prophet ﷺ read Ṣalāh with a spear in front so people could pass by ahead of him. If grown men can make such mistakes, then children certainly can.

Thirdly, it is also doubtful that children can fully appreciate the task they are involved in and subsequently display maturity. Al-Qārī mentions how one child was brought to the gathering of Ma’mūn. He recited the Qur’ān when requested but he would cry when he felt hungry (1994, 793).

Fourthly, the customary order of seeking Islamic education does not begin with listening to prophetic reports but in fact commences with mastery in other fields. ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī disliked disciples seeking ḥadīth before the memorisation of the Qur’ān and before studying the *farā’id* (al-Qārī 1994, 792). Azami notes that after the Qur’an, students were expected to gain expertise in ‘Islamic Law, religious practices and grammar’ before indulging in ḥadīth studies, typically at the age of twenty (1977, 23).

Al-Thawrī went as far as to suggest that a person should ‘worship Allāh for twenty years’

before seeking ḥadīth (al-Qārī 1994, 792-3). Ibn Ḥajar's own experience also points to this very fact. Before embarking on ḥadīth studies, he memorised the Qur'ān, followed by studies in jurisprudence, Arabic and mathematics. He studied the *Mukhtaṣar* of Ibn al-Ḥājjib on *uṣūl* and took *lughā* from al-Fīrūzabādī (Aḥmadayn 1958, 9; al-Wajīdī 1996, 13). In short, there are a number of disciplines that must precede ḥadīth studies in order for a disciple to fully comprehend the words and actions of the Prophet. By allowing children as young as five to attend ḥadīth circles, it either means the child must have studied disciplines like fiqh and Qur'ān before this, or the child simply did not study them at all.

Fifthly, we learn that seeking ḥadīth at a small age resulted in some reporters being branded weak. Azami notes that the likes of 'Amr al-Bayrutī and Hishām ibn Ḥassān were considered weak precisely because they took their reports from their teachers at too young an age (1977, 23).

Sixthly, it could be argued that socially, ḥadīth gatherings were the place to be seen. People attached significance to scholarly circles, and tried to add to their rank in society by taking their children to such gatherings. Al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), for example, noted that the youngest student he came across was Ibn 'Uyayna, who was fifteen years old. Al-Thawrī (d. 161/777) identified twenty as the ideal age for commencing ḥadīth studies (Azami 1977, 23). But as time progressed, these restrictions were lifted so that infants could attend these gatherings. By the late second century, people brought their children to these circles for the social benefits rather than its academic one. This partially explains why Ibn Ḥajar wrote 'the *muḥaddithūn* made it customary to bring their children to the gatherings of ḥadīth *and recorded their attendance*.' Actually understanding the reports

from the shaykh was preceded by a desire to simply be counted as members of an elite, scholarly circle. This bizarre situation reached its peak when, as Azami notes, ‘the attendance of a child to such lectures entitled him to a certificate which gave the name of the child, if he was under five, as proof that he attended the lectures’ (Azami 1977, 23). Despite all of these points, it must be noted that Ibn Ḥajar steers clear from explicitly stating a minimum age. Rather, he states that the person must be at a stage of *tamyīz*, or ‘differentiation’. In essence, this means that the reporter must be at such an age where he now possesses sound intellect and understanding, by which he can clearly differentiate between right and wrong. Moreover, it means he is at a stage where he can differentiate between the words of the Prophet and ordinary, everyday talk and is able to record the shaykh’s words, either through memory or written records (Mighālīwī 2003, 559). To evaluate the debate, it is clear that in order to avoid controversy and in order to reflect the importance of the hearing prophetic reports, it is perhaps better to analyse each individual case, rather than state a particular age at which he can attend ḥadīth gatherings. Al-Munāwī indicates towards this opinion when he writes:

When the person can understand dialogue and can reply competently, then his listening to ḥadīth is correct, even if he is at an age less than five. And if he does not possess such qualities, then his listening is not correct, even if he is fifty (1999, 2: 425).

In other words, the minimum age debate should be deemed a relative exercise.

The scholars (such as al-Qārī and al-Bukhārī) who wished to highlight the certain cases where children of a very young age were listening to prophetic reports chose abnormal and exceptional cases. Otherwise for the majority of periods and places, the thought of five-year olds sitting in ḥadīth circles was un-entertained.

In defence of the ‘social circle’ debate mentioned earlier, Azami notes that the awarding of certificates to five year olds was not as bizarre as it seems, and in fact served an important purpose. He writes:

The main use of this certificate was to mark the purity and authenticity of the text itself. The graduate’s name was put in the certificate of reading which was not written on a sheet of paper but either on the margin of the book or at the end of the book. After growing up, he was not entitled to read any copy of the same book. No, he must read from the same manuscript or from a copy transcribed from the book which bore his name and which was checked carefully. Therefore by this very mean, the scholars were able to safeguard the purity of the text while keeping the *isnād* ‘*ālī*, that is, the least number of scholars between the reader and the Prophet (1977, 24).

This shows that the attendance of the infants was to protect the texts rather than teach the children at that age. The attendance of infants served another purpose too, to keep the chain as short with fewer intermediaries as possible. This proves that actually understanding the reports was not the purpose for these infants.

To conclude, Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhah* is in places timeless. He provides a clear definition and example which makes sense for all readers in all ages. Other sections are influenced heavily by the nature of ḥadīth activity of his time. This section falls under the latter. We know this because the young age of students that were coming to ḥadīth circles was a problem during his time (something which will be analysed in detail in chapter six). In this exact section, he also highlights whether the report of a non-Muslim is accepted. This too was a product of his era. Ibn Ḥajar's student al-Sakhāwī noted that non-Muslims attended the recitation of texts and their names were recorded with the Muslim auditors in the hope they would one day accept Islam (Dickinson 2002, 503). So the *Nuzhah*, as far as this section is concerned, is largely a product of its time.

## **5.68. Knowing the method of writing and recording.**

**Also important is to know the method of writing the correct letterings in the book, and the method of recording it in it. This is that he writes the ḥadīth clearly and with explanation, adding the ḥaraka to the difficult words and the dots. The remaining text [when something has been missed] should be written on the right-hand margin as long as there is space to do so; otherwise on the left margin.**

**He should know the correct means of presentation; this is reading the written text to the shaykh, or with a reliable person or with himself bit by bit.**

**He should know the correct way of listening to reports, in that he does not occupy himself with matters that distract him, like copying, talking and tiredness.**

### Commentary

Ibn Hajar tenders simple yet informative advice to the disciple on how exactly to record the traditions he has heard from the shaykh. This includes writing the full vocalisation on the words, particularly the difficult ones, revising the texts and expressing full awareness when listening to the shaykh.<sup>272</sup> If the *Nuzhah* felt the need to ask students to avoid distraction whilst listening to reports, then perhaps this is something which was a problem during that particular period. Makdisi writes that because the ḥadīth classes were more crowded than *fiqh* ones, and because some students could copy the dictations to paper quicker than others, distraction became a marked feature of ḥadīth gatherings (1985, 115).

## **5.69. Travelling in pursuit of ḥadīth.**

**Also important to know is the attributes of traveling for ḥadīth, in that the disciple commences with the reports of his town and encompasses them all, then travels to acquire that which he does not already have. His desire for excessive reports should outweigh his desire for excessive *shaykhs*.**

### Commentary

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<sup>272</sup> Interestingly, Ibn Hajar offers specific advice in that omitted comments should be added to the right hand margin, and should only be written on the left if there is no space on the right. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ elucidates: 'The preferred method of including textual omission in the margins is for the student to make a line going up from the spot of omission in the line of text and then curve it for a short distance between the two lines of text in the direction of the spot in the margin where he will write the addition....let that be in the right margin' (1986, 193-4).

The advice to insert the addition on the right-hand margin can be interpreted in two ways; firstly, it may simply be a reference to the Islamic teaching which encourages Muslims to prefer the right over the left in their affairs. Secondly, as al-ʿUthaymin notes, it perhaps is because writing on the left may be unclear, owing to the middle binding and stitching of the book (2002, 383).

As the *Nuzhah* draws to an end, Ibn Hajar reminds disciples that part of the expected etiquettes from the ḥadīth master is to possess a real and lasting desire to seek knowledge from all the *shaykhs* available to him at his disposal. In a short paragraph of only a few words, the *Nuzhah* indicates that traveling is important and also warns of the danger and pitfalls associated with it. In this sense, Ibn Hajar's description is very accurate, because in reality traveling served good purposes as well as bad ones.

Religiously, *riḥla* was important for Muslims. The Prophet amply highlighted the importance of knowledge and the need for Muslims to gain it from all possible persons and places (Goldziher 1971, 165). To hear prophetic reports first hand was also an important reason for Muslims to travel. If a disciple wished to seek an 'elevated'<sup>273</sup> *isnād* for a ḥadīth that he already possessed, then he was encouraged to travel (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 2:333). Abū Ayyūb, for example, travelled from Madīna to Egypt in order to refresh his memory of a ḥadīth which he had already heard directly from the Prophet (Ṣiddīqī 1993, 40). Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh travelled for an entire month to Syria for the sake of one ḥadīth (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1988, 2: 336-7, Pīr Karam Shah 1973, 122). In both cases, they could have perhaps heard the same report indirectly from the locals. However, they chose to make the journey in order to hear the report first-hand.

There are no shortages of such eager-travellers. In fact, many became known precisely for their extensive travels. Masrūq (d. 63/682) 'travelled so widely for the sake of learning that he was known as 'Abū al-Safar'' (Ṣiddīqī 1993, 41).

The *Nuzhah* indicates the darker side of travelling too. The author warns that disciples should seek knowledge, not a reputation. Travelling merely for the sake of travelling and an interest in accumulating *shaykhs* rather than reports is fruitless. On this basis, he

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<sup>273</sup> This has been covered in detail in section 5.45.

advises the disciple not to travel until he has heard from the *shaykhs* that reside in his own town. Also, his aim should be amassing different reports rather than amassing a reputation of having heard from a variety of sources. Al-‘Uthaymin explains:

Some people have an interest in boasting that ‘I have heard from the scholars of Makka’ or ‘I have heard from the scholars of Cairo’. They begin to compete with one another in numbers and in who has heard from the furthest place. This is a great error on their part (2002, 375).

The early Muslim scholars certainly did learn from a variety of sources and places. Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) had 1,100 teachers, Mālik ibn Anas had nine-hundred and Hishām ibn ‘Abd Allāh learnt from 1,700 teachers (Siddiqi 1993, 41). But for most part, their primary intention was to seek knowledge, not to boast about the number of *shaykhs* they acquired knowledge from. Of later generations, the same cannot be guaranteed. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī lambasted those who travelled but had no desire to learn and appreciate the Prophet’s message (1988, 3). Others who possessed exotic reports made a paying business out of eager travellers who came to hear such reports (Goldziher 1971, 169). In short, travelling became a mere sport.

In the ninth Islamic century, was there still any function behind travelling? Like many great scholars, Ibn Ḥajar himself travelled extensively to learn. For instance, he travelled to Damascus and Jerusalem, where he studied under the likes of Shams al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 809/1406) and Badr al-Dīn al-Balīsī (d. 803/1400), as well as Yemen.



Up until the sixth century, disciples of ḥadīth did have to travel extensively but the appearance of new high schools for ḥadīth put that to an end. Dār al-ḥadīth Nūriyya was established in Damascus by Nūr al-Dīn Mahmūd ibn Abī Saʿīd Zengī (d. 569). This led to the establishment of similar schools elsewhere in the Muslim world (Goldziher 1971, 174).

To conclude, *riḥla* is an area where there was a convergence of views from Ibn Ḥajar and Goldziher more than perhaps anywhere else. But by citing the example of Aḥmad ibn Mūsā al-Jawālīqī, even Goldziher acknowledged the dedication and sincerity which drove these narrators:

Aḥmad ibn Mūsā al-Jawālīqī from Ahwāz (210-306), usually known as ‘Abdān, travelled to Baṣra every time he heard of a tradition transmitted by Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, in order to obtain these traditions from men who gathered them immediately at the source. Altogether he made that journey eighteen times (1971, 167).

Elsewhere, he observes how *riḥla* served corrupt purposes. In the *Nuzḥah*, Ibn Ḥajar follows a similar argument. He reminds readers of its importance and warns against the pitfalls associated with it.

## **5.70. Types of ḥadīth compilations.**

**Also important to know is the types of compilations. This can either be in [the form of] *musnads*, in that the compiler gathers the reports of each Companion**

individually. If he wishes he can then arrange them according to their precedence [to Islam], or if he wishes, he can arrange them alphabetically, which is then easier for reference purposes. Or [the compilation can be done] in chapters of jurisprudence or its like, in that he gathers all the reports that affirm or negate a certain principle. It is better to suffice on that which is deemed as *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*: if he does include all, then he should explain the reason for the [inclusion of] weak reports.

Or [the compilation can be done] through the means of *‘ilal*. He mentions the *matn* with its path, along with the different variations [of the *isnād*]. It is best to arrange them according to chapters so that it is easier for reference purposes.

Or [the compilation can be done] through the means of *aṭrāf*: here he mentions part of the ḥadīth which is [sufficient] to indicate the remainder, and then gathers the *isnāds* for it, either comprehensively or particular for specific books.

### Commentary

In the penultimate discussion, Ibn Ḥajar outlines the different forms the compilation of ḥadīth can take on. This includes: (a) *musnad*<sup>274</sup> (pl. *masānīd*), *sunan*<sup>275</sup> (pl. *sunna*),

<sup>274</sup> This is a compilation where the reports are gathered and arranged according to the top narrator, namely the Companion (al-Munāwī 1999, 1:442) and can take on two contrasting forms, which Ibn Ḥajar clearly highlights in the above text. Goldziher writes that this type of compilation is better suited for ‘an individual achievement, a repertory for private use’ (1971, 214). This therefore suggests that this not ideally suited for public use.

<sup>275</sup> This is where the compilation is according to the topic of the ḥadīth’s text. In other words, all reports relating to Prayer are recorded in one chapter, all the reports on ablution in a separate chapter and so on. The Six Canonical Collection are all arranged in this format, with only slight differences in methodology. Because the nature of such a compilation is also useful in acting as a book of jurisprudence, Ibn Ḥajar writes that the compiler should try to avoid weak reports in such a compilation. This is because a ḍa‘īf ḥadīth cannot be used to prove or disprove principles relating to *sharī‘a*. If he does include them, then he must clearly label them as weak, and inform the reader the reason behind its inclusion.

‘*ilal*<sup>276</sup> (pl. ‘*illa*) and *aṭrāf*<sup>277</sup> (pl. *ṭaraf*). Ibn Ḥajar only mentioned these four types of compilations, though other forms do exist. The most common forms are: *jāmi*‘ (pl. *jawāmi*‘)<sup>278</sup>, *mu‘jam* (pl. *ma‘ājim*)<sup>279</sup>, *juz*‘ (pl. *ajzā*‘)<sup>280</sup>, *mustadrak*, *mustakhraj*<sup>281</sup> and *ṣaḥīfa*. This last type refers to collections marking the earliest period of ḥadīth documentation. At this stage, reports were simply put together in writing. Primarily, such works pertain to the Prophet’s lifetime until the second Islamic century (Kamali 2005, 31). The authenticity of such works can be viewed in two contrasting manners. Firstly, they can be viewed reliable because they originated from such an early period. Secondly, they can be seen as suspect because of the absence of proper chains for them.

<sup>276</sup> This is a less-established way of compiling prophetic reports. It involves recording the reports that have some form of hidden weakness in them. Having mentioned the text of the ḥadīth and the various chains pertaining to it, the compiler then explains the reasons behind the weakness in them (Anwar 2003, 197). Al-‘Uthaymin writes that one benefit of such a form of compilation is to allow disciples to systemically study reports that contain hidden weaknesses, and understand the reasons behind their rejection (2002, 387). Works in this format include the compilations of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Dāraqutnī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim (Aḥmadayn 1958, 92).

<sup>277</sup> Literally, this means ‘part’. It is where the compiler does not mention the full ḥadīth but instead abbreviates it to a shortened form. This abbreviation is then sufficient to allow the reader to understand which particular ḥadīth is being referring to.

<sup>278</sup> This is where the compiler includes chapters on areas pertaining to Islamic doctrines, worship, dealings, moral and social teachings, the exegesis of the Qur’ān, the biography of the Prophet, the virtues of esteemed individuals, calamities and events relating to the Day of Judgement (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 129; al-Munāwī 1999, 1:442). The most famous example of such is the *al-Jāmi*‘ of al-Bukhārī. The difference between this type of compilation and sunan is that the latter usually concentrates on *sharī‘a* rulings, to the exclusion of areas such as Islamic doctrines and the virtues of esteemed individuals.

<sup>279</sup> This is where the compiler arranges the book in order of the names of his *shaykhs*, usually in alphabetical order (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 129). The most famous example is the *Mu‘jams* of Ṭabarānī – *al-Kabīr*, *al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Ṣaḡhīr*.

<sup>280</sup> This refers to smaller compilations where the compiler has recorded all the reports of one narrator, or has gathered all the reports on a particular topic area (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 129). An example is al-Bukhārī’s small treatise on raising the hands in Prayer.

<sup>281</sup> Works on ḥadīth literature have sometimes taken on the forms of *mustadrak* and *mustakhraj*. The former is where the author includes reports that meet the conditions set down by an existing author – for example, al-Bukhārī – into a new compilation which the original author missed, such as the works of Ḥākim on the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* (Ṭaḥḥān 2001, 129). A *mustakhraj* is where the author compiles the same reports mentioned by the original author, but with a different chain leading to the text. For example, the work of Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī on the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* is in this format.

### 5.70.1 Conclusion.

The section is a simple and useful account for ḥadīth disciples, informing them what type of collections they are likely to come across and what benefit they can derive from them.

Where this chapter appears in the *Nuzḥah* is also crucial: as his own book on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* concludes, Ibn Ḥajar introduces other works of ḥadīth for the disciple to explore.

This section is therefore a transitional introduction to the next steps in ḥadīth studies which the disciple should embark upon.

Despite its apparent simplicity, the section does raise important points. Firstly, Ibn Ḥajar only mentions four types of collections and does not, for example, touch upon *ṣaḥīḥas*.

The fact that he chose to dismiss this type may be read as an indication that he does not consider the authenticity of this type, perhaps because they lack proper chains.

Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar does not offer an historical account of how *sunan* and *jāmi‘* collections came about, which would have been most useful. Muslims would argue that after the *musnads*, the *sunans* and *jāmi‘*’s were a natural progression. The extent of the ḥadīth literature available in the third century meant it was now possible to categorise them into different chapters in an all-binding treatise on the *sunna* of the Prophet. This view contrasts with that of Goldziher. He writes that the *muṣannaf* type of collections were preceded by works such as the *Muwatta‘a*’ which depended on *ra‘y* (opinion) more than ḥadīth material. Al-Bukhārī and other members of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* needed to ‘point to the importance of the ḥadīth for religious and legal practice and to bring practical proof that every chapter of the *fiqh* could be filled with clear ḥadīth material.’ (Goldziher 1971, 216). As evidence, he notes that al-Bukhārī depended almost entirely on ḥadīth rather than *ra‘y*, the latter being more prevalent in Mālik’s work (1971, 216).

Moreover, the first *muṣannaḥ* originated from Iraq, ‘where the theoretical conflict was most violent’ (ibid).

Thirdly, the text of the *Nuzhah* indicates that these types of compilations are for reference and research purposes available to the disciple. Ibn Ḥajar is not advocating the production of new material. The proof for this is the fact that he mentions sunan. As a form of compilation, this had ceased five hundred years earlier and no new work appeared thereafter. Goldziher comments:

The science of tradition also past its prime with its first classics. With the closing of that literature which we have just described as the canonical one, boundless compilation began to gain ground. It is true that ḥadīth literature in its very nature could be little else but the fruit of collection and compilation. (1971, 246)

In fact many of Ibn Ḥajar’s countless literary works were in reality improvements, completions (*takmila*) and additions to famous, existing works. *Al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya min riwāyat al-masānīd al-thamāniya* was a work compiled by him that merely gathered the reports of eight famous *musnad* collections. Al-Qārī, who himself wrote a commentary of the *Nuzhah*, notes that a large bulk of Ibn Ḥajar’s works were nothing but completions. *Fath al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* too is a case in point; it is but a commentary on an existing work.

So whilst this section can be seen as a useful guide to further reading and research in the field of ḥadīth, it also serves as a grim reminder of the academic drought that had set in by the time Ibn Ḥajar appeared in the ninth Islamic century.

## 5.71. The reasons behind the ḥadīth.

Also important is to know the reasons of ḥadīth. On this, the shaykh of al-Qādī Abū Ya‘lā ibn al-Farrā’ al-Ḥanbalī has compiled a book, namely Abū Ḥafṣ al-‘Ukbarī. Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd said that some scholars of his generation began writing on this topic area, perhaps because they were unaware of Abū Ḥafṣ al-‘Ukbarī’s existing work.

### Commentary

In theory at least, knowing the reason why prophetic reports came about is of paramount importance for Muslims. Firstly, it could assist in dispelling any doubts about the authenticity of a ḥadīth. Not only would Muslims possess the saying of the Prophet, but they would be aware of the events that perhaps led up to the saying. Using *sīra* literature, the events and the characters involved could be verified. For example, the famous report ‘Actions are merely judged by intention’ stems from a story where a Companion wished to migrate to Madina to marry a woman rather than to seek the reward of migration for the sake of Islam (al-Suyūfī 1972, 2: 394). Knowing the name of the man and woman involved in the story would certainly add weight to the authenticity of the story and the actual ḥadīth.

Secondly, knowing the background to the ḥadīth can help us to overcome sectarian differences between Muslims. The ḥadīth ‘He for whom I am his master (*mawlā*), then ‘Alī is his master’ is such an example.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> The Shī‘as maintain that this prophetic report is the basis for the Imāmate of ‘Alī after the demise of Muḥammad. They cite the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās that Allāh ordered the Messenger to openly publicise the caliphate of ‘Alī. The Prophet was [supposedly] scared that people would criticise him for handing

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, it would help Muslims to defend the charge from western observers that ḥadīth criticism ignored the *matn* almost entirely. Schacht, for instance, noted that ‘the criticism of traditions as practiced by Muhammadan scholars was almost invariably restricted to a purely formal criticism of *isnāds* on these lines’ (1959, 3). Studies on the background to how a ḥadīth came about would help refute this charge, and show the sceptics that Muslims treated the *matn* with equal regard as the *isnād*.

But having said this, this short section in the *Nuzḥah* implicitly suggests that knowing the reasons behind the report was not particularly important to Ibn Ḥajar. No explanation is offered as to how this can help with the study of ḥadīth. No examples are offered either. Rather he simply refers to the existing literature on the topic area. Certainly, the practice of investigating the reason behind the ḥadīth has not received the same focus employed

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leadership to such a close tie of his. So Allāh revealed the verse ‘*O Messenger! Proclaim the message that has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message*’ (5:67) on the day of Ghadīr Khumm, after which the Prophet took the hand of ‘Alī and proclaimed: ‘He for whom I am his master (*mawlā*), then ‘Alī is his master’ (Ālūsī, Part VI, 193).

The Sunnis give a very different background to this ḥadīth. The Prophet was told that some Muslims had criticised the heavy-handedness of ‘Alī in Yemen. Yazīd ibn Ṭalḥa reports that when ‘Alī was returning from Yemen to meet the Prophet in Makka, he wanted to meet the Prophet urgently and so he parted from his caravan and made one man the deputy of the group. This man adorned each person a garment that belonged to ‘Alī. When ‘Alī met up with the group once more nearer to Makka, he saw the garments. ‘Alī asked: ‘What is the reason behind these garments?’ The man replied: ‘I adorned the people with this so they would look good when the people greet them.’ ‘Alī ordered them to remove the garments before the Prophet reached them. So they removed the garments. In defence of ‘Alī, the Prophet said these words to show his support to him. This was on the eighteenth of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. (Ālūsī, Part VI, p. 193.) Support for this version is to be found in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad, from Ibn ‘Abbās, from Burayda al-Aslamī that:

‘I took part in the military expedition with ‘Alī in Yemen, where I witnessed his heavy-handedness. Thus when I came to the Prophet I mentioned ‘Alī and somewhat belittled him. I saw the face of the Prophet change colour as he remarked: ‘O Burayda! Am I not the closer to the believers than their own selves?’ I said: ‘Of course O Messenger of Allāh!’ He then said: ‘He for whom I am his master (*mawlā*), then ‘Alī is his master.’ (*Musnad Ahmad*. The Ahadīth of Burayda al-Aslamī, Hadīth no. 21867)

This is further supported by the report of Zaynab bint Ka‘b – who was with Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī – from Abū Sa‘īd that:

‘The people complained about ‘Alī. So the Prophet stood amongst the people ordering the people not to complain about him.’ (Ālūsī, Part VI, p. 194)

These authentic reports clearly show that background to the famous saying ‘He for whom I am his master (*mawlā*), then ‘Alī is his master’ was the events of Yemen.

by the scholars on the Qur'ān (al-'Uthaymin 2002, 389). There are several works compiled by early scholars that examine the reason and story behind the revelation of certain verses in the Qur'ān, called *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

The fact that Ibn Ḥajar largely dismissed the reasons behind the ḥadīth may be simply because of the nature of the *Nuzhah*. If this manual was indeed aimed at disciples embarking on the study of ḥadīth for the first time, then the basic classification and grading of ḥadīth is more important than knowing the reasons behind it. The latter is investigated and studied after a student has grasped the fundamentals. Or to use the correct terminology, students needed to fathom ḥadīth *riwāya* before *dirāya*.

Alternatively, Ibn Ḥajar did not give this section extensive coverage because of the lack of interest in it in his time. Muslims were not interested with the details of the ḥadīth and its background. They were more interested in elevation and the prestige attached to ḥadīth gatherings.

**The scholars have compiled works on most of the types that we have touched upon in this concluding [section]. We have merely introduced the types by defining them and have not given their examples. Including them all [in this work] is difficult. Therefore, one should refer to the more comprehensive treatises in order to understand their true reality.**

#### Commentary

Ibn Ḥajar asks the reader here to extend his sights to the countless books and treatises that have been written specifically on the areas covered in the concluding section of his own



works. Owing to the difficulty in highlighting them all with examples, he writes that he has defined each type briefly, and that readers who require a fuller explanation should refer to these works. For example, Ibn Ḥajar swiftly refers to the need for the disciple to travel for the sake of ḥadīth in a few lines. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has written an entire book on this subject, entitled *Al-Riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*.<sup>283</sup> Again this implicitly suggests that the *Nuzhah* acts as an introduction to the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, rather than the final word.

## 5.72. Final Supplication.

**And Allāh is the provider of religious-assistance, the Guide to the truth. There is no God but He. Upon Him we trust, and to Him we return. Sufficient for us is Allāh and great is He as a Guardian. All Praise is for Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds. And salutations be upon the best of His creations, the Prophet of mercy Muḥammad; and salutations be upon his family, his Companions, his wives, his lineage till the Day of Judgement.**

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<sup>283</sup> ‘Travel in Pursuit of the Ḥadīth’.

## 6.0. The Findings.

In this thesis, I have presented a lucid translation of the *Nuzhah*, coupled with a detailed and original commentary. Despite my sincere efforts, I acknowledge that there is a wealth of material that has been neglected in this study, from both Muslim scholars and non-Muslim ones. This has mainly resulted because of the limitations in terms of the length of the thesis.

However, I believe the analysis has gone some distance in offering an original and useful way of viewing the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. In particular, there are certain general findings that have become apparent in the course of the thesis. In brief, these findings and reflections will be mentioned below. I have expressed these findings at the end of the thesis because many of them relate to different areas of the discipline, not just one.

Therefore it made sense to express them collectively once an overview of the entire *Nuzhah* had been presented. Collectively, these findings indicate why an appreciation of the *Nuzhah* was so important. Ibn Ḥajar’s work can be viewed as merely a simple manual on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. But these points show that the work can be interpreted as an important work that still has significance in today’s academic field.

## 6.1. *Matn criticism.*

By observing Ibn Hajar's *Nuzhah*, one can allude to the general criticism that has always haunted the discipline; that ḥadīth criticism is largely focussed on the *isnād* to the exclusion of the *matn*. In the *Nuzhah*, this is apparent in many ways. The conditions of a *ṣaḥīḥ* report (section 5.9.) largely centre on the men transmitting the report, not the actual message itself. The rejected traditions are such because, as Ibn Hajar identifies, there is a drop in the *isnād* or some defaming attribute in the reporter (section 5.17.). In section 5.11., Ibn Hajar refers to *shādhah al-isnād* but totally avoids a mention of *shādhah al-matn*. Of the seventy-two sections in the *Nuzhah*, only two can be viewed as being entirely *matn*-centred, *muḥkam* (5.14) and the reasons behind the ḥadīth (5.71). The lack of *matn* criticism is perhaps the primary reason why the likes of Muir dismissed the methods of early ḥadīth criticism methods (1858: lxxxvii). To many western observers, the absence of attention given to the text gives the impression that the early ḥadīth masters' methodology was not entirely adequate.

However, there is a limit, religiously, to how far *matn* criticism can go, and in my opinion, that is why the Muslims did not indulge in it too much. They faced a very serious dilemma; to what extent could they decide whether the Prophet's words were 'contrary to reason' or not? Under which criteria could they assess the possibility of the words emitting directly from the Prophet? Owing to the Prophet's rank, who were the humble Muslims to decide whether the *matn* was worthy of acceptance or not? Certainly Muslims are encouraged to resort to their own reason, but does this extend to the Holy Prophet too?

In a field where seniority means so much, which Muslim would want to question the Prophet's guilt-edged words?

A prime example of the difficulty in *matn* criticism is the 'laughing in Prayer' report. Ṭabarānī reports that after some Companions laughed loudly in congregational prayer, the Prophet instructed them to repeat their prayer and ablution. Abū Ḥanīfā acts upon this report and declares that laughing in prayer invalidates the ablution. Al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī, on the other hand, criticises this report on the basis of the *matn* (al-Jazīrī 2001, 54). Some form of bodily discharge is the primary reason why the ablution breaks, so how can laughing in prayer invalidate the ablution?

Brown cites the example of the Muslim Khwāja Aḥmad Dīn Amritsarī, one of the originators of the Ahl al-Qur'ān movement, who began to show scepticism towards the authenticity of ḥadīth when he came across a report suggesting that Moses knocked out the eye of the angel of death (1999, 95). If the Muslims dismiss such *ḥadīths* because they defy logic, it pushes them down a slippery slope where they begin to question all areas of religion. The miraculous night journey of the Prophet (*al-Isrā' wa-al-mi'rāj*) should also then be rejected, as this seems even more unlikely and contrary to common sense. Are we in a position to correct the Prophet, who came as a teacher and guide from his Lord?

So perhaps because of the sensitivity of *matn* criticism, Muslim scholars have avoided the area or at least indulged in it with great care. Criticising the reporters of the ḥadīth in question does not have wider implications on one's faith. Questioning the *matn* does. Westerners, who are oblivious of Muslim sensitivity on the issue, have then assumed that ḥadīth criticism was only centred on *isnād* criticism.

Though the *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar has very little to say on *matn* criticism – the exception is perhaps in the section on *mawḍūʿ* ‘where we are informed of means by which a fabricated report can be identified by the weak wording of the text – there is at least some indication in the works of other Muslim scholars that *matn* criticism did exist in some form. In fact, some reports in the universally-accepted works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim faced criticism because of the *matn*, not because of weakness in the *isnād* or the unreliability of the reporters. There is a ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī’s works which state that the verse of the Qur’ān ‘And if two parties of the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them’ (49: 9) refers to the conflict between the sincere Companions and the followers of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy. Ibn Baṭṭāl points out that the verse actually refers to a quarrel between two groups of Muslims, whereas Ibn Ubayy had not accepted Islam when the verse was revealed (Siddiqi 1993, 115). Similarly, a ḥadīth in the works of Muslim – in which the Prophet instructed Abū Ḥudhayfa’s wife to allow the fully-grown man Sālim to suckle her – has been severely criticised by scholars for the contents of the *matn*, not because of any doubts surrounding the *isnād* (Kamali 2005, 208). Forged reports regarding the superiority of certain chapters of the Qur’ān were detected by the *matn*, not the *isnād* (Azami 1977, 69).

But such examples are sporadic and relatively rare. And more crucially, there is a pattern found in the reports that are criticised on the basis of the *matn*. In the rare instances where ḥadīth scholars have rejected a report on the basis of the *matn*, they have interpreted it in such a way that it still protects the dignity of the Prophet. Or to word it differently, the Muslims were carefully selective in which types of reports could be criticised on the basis of the *matn* and which could not. Abbott reached the conclusion that Muslim scholars

dealt with reports on *al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb* with much more leniency than reports on *sharī'a* (1967, 77). What this shows that if they had genuinely wanted to, they could have looked into *matn* criticism for all types of reports. Their piety prevented them from doing so.

### **Or was the *isnād* over-emphasised?**

The above analysis has approached the matter suggesting that the *Nuzhah* did not give enough attention to the *matn*. This same matter can be approached differently which involves asking: why *too* much emphasis on the *isnād*? So rather than observing the limited emphasis given to the *matn*, we can instead ask why a substantial emphasis was given to the *isnād*. What did Ibn Ḥajar see in the *isnād* which made it such an integral part of his *Nuzhah*? Four theories of proposed:

### **His personal position.**

Ibn Ḥajar was an expert in *rijāl* literature and he allowed this proficiency to manifest itself in the *Nuzhah*. *Al-Iṣāba fī asmā' al-ṣaḥāba*, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina* and *Lisān al-mīzān* are all, well-known literary works by Ibn Ḥajar. All relate to '*ilm al-rijāl*'. It is quite natural for an author to over-expand a certain area in a book because he has more expertise in it. As an expert in *rijāl* literature, Ibn Ḥajar did exactly that. The longest section in the *Nuzhah* is devoted to 'knowing the paidonymics of the reporters and other related matters' (5.65). Other extensive sections in the *Nuzhah* such as *mutashābih* (5.61) again relate to the *isnād* and the men in them. So

therefore Ibn Ḥajar's academic actuality affected his *Nuzhah* in many ways and led to the extra emphasis on the *isnād*.

### **New research.**

Ibn Ḥajar gave considerable emphasis to the *isnād* in the *Nuzhah* because he genuinely thought that new research still could be done in this area. Admittedly, this 'new' research took on the form of correcting the mistakes of his predecessors. For instance, in section 5.65, Ibn Ḥajar felt the need to correct al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Hārūn al-Bardījī over the issue of whether Ṣughdī was in fact a unique name or not. Nevertheless he saw gaps in the field which had not been addressed by those before him. This is proven by the fact that of the ten completely original sections found in the *Nuzhah* and not to be found in the influential *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, eight of them relate to *rijāl* literature. These are: (i) knowing the reporters whose *kunya* is the same as the name of their father (ii) where the name of the reporter is the same as the *kunya* of the father (iii) knowing the reporters whose *kunya* is the same as the *kunya* of the wife (iv) knowing the reporters whose shaykh's name corresponds with the father's name (v) knowing the reporters whose own name, father's name and grandfather's name are the same (vi) knowing where the reporter's name coincides with the name of his shaykh and his shaykh's shaykh upwards (vii) knowing the cases where the name of the reporter's shaykh coincides with the one he reported from (viii) knowing the reporters whose name is their *kunya* (ix) knowing when the name of the reporter and the name of his father is the same as the grandfather's.

Ibn Ḥajar saw this new addition as important, shown by the fact that with form vii, he adds the words ‘This is a unique form which Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ did not come across.’ This suggests that maybe Ibn Ḥajar was not underselling the *matn*; rather he was addressing areas that needed modification and introduction, of which many did still relate to the *isnād*.

### **A continued tradition.**

Previous ḥadīth masters continued to rate and review reporters to people living in their own time too. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) reviewed reporters belonging to generations before him, as well as people occupied in ḥadīth during his own time. Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176) too reviewed the men of the discipline until his own era, as well as al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348). Ibn Ḥajar continued the tradition by showing interest in transmitter evaluation, just like his predecessors had.

### **The *isnād* as a means of ittiṣāliyya.**

There is another theory, voiced by William Graham<sup>284</sup>, which can answer why Ibn Ḥajar gave so much attention to the *isnād*, but it requires us to step back for a moment from the idea that the *isnād*’s only function is to support the ḥadīth’s authenticity.

Graham commences with the observation that for the Islamic world, traditionalism has played a much greater role than in largely industrialized and developed countries. All great figures that are highly regarded in Islam made a similar call; a return to the early Islam, the abhorrence of *bid‘a* and a desire to protect the early heritage. As we get to the end of time, this is the time when Muslims will find it harder to practise their religion, it

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<sup>284</sup> *Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation* (1993).



is the time when fasād will set in. In all this, the *isnād* helps immensely to create a sense of belonging to the earlier times. Graham writes:

One particular element of this Islamic traditionalism is pervasive, even indispensable: a “sense of connectedness”, or to coin an Arabic neologism for this, *ittiṣāliyyah* – the need or desire for personal “connection” across the generations with the time and the personages of Islamic origins – something that has been a persistent value in Muslim thought and institutions over the centuries (Graham 1993, 501).

Graham asks us to entertain the possibility that the *isnād* was much more than just a chain of men reporting an incident. We must remember that ḥadīth was not just an authoritative maxim used to elaborate Islamic law and dogma; it was also a ‘form of connection to the Prophet’s charismatic legacy’ (Brown 2009, 15). The Qur’an and *Sunna* may provide the fundamental basis of Islam, but it ‘is the *isnād* system of documenting the authenticity of all transmission of knowledge that provides the specific model for various forms of unbroken “connection” with the first generation of the *Salaf*, the idealized Muslim *Ummah*’ (Graham 1993, 506).

This idea of *ittiṣāliyyah* therefore focuses on touching the previous greats and the men of learning via the means of the *isnād*. Clearly, the *matn* is of pivotal importance to the Muslims, particularly when it is ascribed directly back to their Prophet. But the men who carried that message also hold something for us too. Graham writes:

What is crucial here is the fundamental presupposition that truth does not reside in documents, however authentic, ancient, or well-preserved, but in authentic human beings and their personal connections with one another. Documents alone, without a line of *persons* possessed of *both* knowledge and righteousness to teach and convey them across the years, are useless as instruments of authoritative transmission (Graham 1993, 507).

The fact that early ḥadīth works were in the form of *musnads* suggests the importance of this connection because this type of collection concentrates on *whom* one heard from, as well as what one heard.

This observation of Graham can only be worthy of mention here if we can link it to Ibn Ḥajar and prove that he believed in *ittiṣāliyya*, and thus that is why the *isnād* was the focus of so much attention in his *Nuzḥah*. There is sufficient evidence that indicates that the *isnād* did have more than an academic function to him. For instance:

a. It was noted in chapter two that Ibn Ḥajar taught in a number of institutions in Mamluk Cairo. He did not teach in most of these places for an extended period of time. However, the exception was the ṣūfī lodges of Baybars in Cairo, where he taught for over twenty years. Perhaps the prolonged period here was a result of his love for the ṣūfī mystics and their way of life. This point is crucial because the ṣūfī attach great importance to the *isnād*, not so much in the ḥadīth authenticity sense, but more in its spiritual sense. After the first three centuries, Sufism began to develop into discreet teaching traditions, or

paths (*ṭarīqas*), all of which could be linked back to a grand teacher. These paths themselves then could be ascribed back to the Prophet's Companions, most notable 'Alī. Therefore at the centre of the Sufism lied 'the key concept of an initiatory *isnād* of spiritual guides or masters that is most commonly referred to as a chain or *silsilah*' (Graham 1993, 515). Brown writes that Sufism believed in two types of *isnāds*; *isnād al-tazkiya* (also called *isnād al-ṣuḥba*) and the *isnād* as a vehicle to transmit and pass on esoteric knowledge (2009, pp. 188-9). Either way, the fact is that for the ṣūfīs, the *isnād* was all important and from what we know about his life, Ibn Ḥajar was close to Sufism.

b. Ibn Ḥajar spent approximately ten years studying ḥadīth with al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1404) (Aḥmadayn 1958, 9; al-Barī et al. 1995, 96). His teacher was known to conduct occasional *amālī* sessions (Brown 2009, 46). The reason why this took place is answered by Brown when he writes:

It is evident from these developments that by the eleventh century the transmission of *ḥadīths* and books via a living *isnād* possessed little practical value. Why then did it continue? Simply put, the foundational principle of the Islamic tradition, that authority comes through a connection to God and His Prophet, still dominated Muslim scholarly culture. The *isnād* was that chain that connected a scholar to the Prophet and allowed him to act as an authoritative interpreter of Islam. Hearing a ḥadīth or a book of *ḥadīths* by an *isnād*, even if by *ijāza*, breathed a soul into otherwise lifeless pages and rendered the book legally compelling (2009, 45).

Academically speaking, there was little point in such sessions conducted by al-‘Irāqī. It was done more for the sake of the spiritual benefit, or to use Graham’s terms, to give a sense of *ittiṣāliyya* to the earlier times. Perhaps such sessions made Ibn Ḥajar realise that the *isnād* held a special place in his religion.

c. Ibn Ḥajar dedicated a whole section in the *Nuzhah* appealing to students to adopt the correct outlook and etiquettes when engaged in ḥadīth studies section (5.66). The section was in essence an appeal to understand that studying ḥadīth was more than just the science of it. Rather, it involved immersing oneself in the religious and spiritual benefit to be derived from it, and becoming part of a long chain of pious men dedicated to preserving Islam’s heritage.

Graham’s theory is important because it bridges the cultural gap that is otherwise sometimes missing in the works of non-Muslim academics (this will be referred to later on in this section). For our analysis here on the *Nuzhah*, it supports the idea that perhaps Ibn Ḥajar did not give too little emphasis on the *matn*, but too much emphasis on the *isnād*. Graham’s essay answers why someone like Ibn Ḥajar would choose to adopt such a stance. Because he was further away from the Prophet’s time than, for example, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, it allows us to appreciate why the *Nuzhah* concentrated on matters related to *rijāl* literature more than the *Muqaddima*. It also allows us to appreciate why *dār al-ḥadīths* had limited success during that period than compared to schools related to *fiqh*. In short, ḥadīth was about the *shaykhs*, his personality and his *baraka* and not the places he taught. Additionally, Graham’s observations allow us to answer why Ibn Ḥajar dedicated so much of his literary efforts on *rijāl*-related literature such as *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* and *al-*

*Durar*. For Graham, such literature is important to highlight how much emphasis Muslims gave to not just to knowledge, but the carriers of it too. It was not just a matter of creating a *who's who* account for the sake of it. Rather, the idea behind such works was to show that 'the history of the Islamic community is essentially the contribution of individual men and women to the building up and transmission of its specific culture' (Gibb in Graham 1993, 509). Finally, it shows that the *isnād* meant authority in the ninth Islamic century just as much as it did in the fourth Islamic century. Even today, the *isnād* gives Muslims a sense of attachment. The twentieth century scholar Aḥmad al-Ghumarī (d. 1960) recited *ḥadīths* with full chain of transmissions back to the Prophet in dictation sessions in Cairo's al-Ḥusayn mosque (Brown 2009, 46). Such a practice would only make sense if the *isnād* is a timeless mechanism that allows Muslims of all times to connect to the 'best of generations'.

## **6.2. The technical terms.**

The technical terms served many functions in *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. First and foremost, they existed to differentiate one type of *ḥadīth* from the other, with the aim of creating ease for the reader. In the early period of *ḥadīth* studies, there was less harmonisation between the terms and so this need was felt more. Sometimes, the lack of clarity could matter dearly. Like it has been shown in 5.43., there was no clear dividing line between *maqṭū'* and *munqaṭi'* early on, two terms which are quite different since one pertains to the *isnād* and the other to the *matn*. Sometimes, these variations were small and trivial. For instance, some treatises used the work *saqīm* in the place of *ḍa'īf*, like al-Mayyānīshī's (d. 580/1184) work, *Mā lā yasa'u al-muḥaddith jahluhū* (Librande 1982, 39). This also

suggests that the terms did not always follow common-sense; literally speaking, *saqīm* is more correct than *ḍa'īf* because the opposite of *ṣaḥīḥ* is *saqīm*, and the opposite of *qawī* is *ḍa'īf*.

With this function in mind, the *Nuzhah* was not so pivotal. Most observers would agree that the *Nuzhah* was not instrumental in laying down the technical terms used in '*ilm al-ḥadīth*'. That honour fell to the *Muqaddima*, which led to 'agreement on the meaning of each term by ḥadīth specialists' (Librande 1982, 34). Even Ibn Ḥajar had accepted that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had cemented the foundation and basis for the technical terms. This is evident because:

- a. He did not question his technical terms largely, except in a handful of places. Even then, the difference could hardly be described as devastating. For instance, Ibn Ḥajar indirectly criticised Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for suggesting that *shādhdh* and *munkar* were synonymous (section 5.12).
- b. Ibn Ḥajar did not introduce any *new* term that had not mentioned in the *Muqaddima*. The lone exception is *muḥkam* (5.14.).

However, I think the thesis has indicated other purposes the technical terms served, many which relate to the ninth Islamic century. The analysis of the *Nuzhah* has shown the following in relation to the terms:

1. The vast array of technical terms was used to display the exactitude of the discipline. Certainly in the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar used this tactic to highlight the rigid, scientific and complex system painted by his predecessors in '*ilm al-ḥadīth*'. Both *muhmal* (5.52) and

*mubham* (5.36) refer to when the name of the reporter is unclear and one term perhaps would have been sufficient. But giving each situation its own name and definition served to show the complexity of the field. The difference between *mu'talif*, *mukhtalif* (5.60) and *mutashābih* (5.61) is hardly noticeable yet each one is meticulously differentiated from the other. Even when a type lacked objectivity, like with *mu'allal*, it was given a scientific and objective feel to it. For someone reading *'ilm al-ḥadīth* for the first time, this theme suggested that the ḥadīth scholars were aware of all the differences and variations they came across in their research, and possessed the correct tools to analyse them.

2. The use of technical terms indicated what area was considered more important than others. In the *Nuzhah*, the prime example of this was explained in section 5.47. For terms relate to *'uluww nisbī – muwāfaqa, badal, musāwāh* and *muṣāfaḥa*, and none to *'uluww muṭlaq*. It seems that by the ninth Islamic century, the social and scholarly rank associated with an *isnād* was more important than the main and underlying purpose of the *isnād*: to prove the authenticity of a ḥadīth.

3. Following on from the above point, it seems that in some form, the technical terms became the goal *per se* by the time of Ibn Ḥajar. Just prior to him, his teacher al-'Irāqī penned the *Alfiyya*, a poem-based work lauding the thousand terms and rulings related to the discipline. In the sixth century, al-Mayyānīshī's influential work – which Ibn Ḥajar mentions in the introduction to the *Nuzhah* – only mentioned fourteen; *ṣaḥīḥ, saqīm* (weak), *ḥasan, mashhūr, shādhidh, gharīb, mu'dīl, musnad, mawṣūl, mufrad, mawqūf*,

*munqaṭi* ‘, *mursal* and *maqṭū* ‘. This indicates that an appreciation of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ was possible minus the plethora of terms. Judging by the attention given to the terms in the *Nuzḥah*, Ibn Ḥajar preferred the use of as many terms as possible.

The stagnant nature of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ by the eighth and ninth Islamic centuries may have well been the catalyst to this. The scholars saw few fresh, innovative and original avenues to explore as far as research was concerned. In this academic drought, scholars such as al-‘Irāqī and Ibn Ḥajar turned their attention to fine-tuning established terms and praising their predecessors’ exactness.

4. One final aim of the technical terms, in my opinion, was to extend the pool of material that ḥadīth scholars could work from. The deliberate use of certain words gave the impression that the scholars had a wide source of sound, acceptable traditions to work from. This was highlighted clearly in section 5.39. Ibn Ḥajar could have used a different word for *ḥasan li-ghayrih*, but doing so would mean suggesting that it was different to *li-dhātih*, and therefore should be treated differently in terms of ruling. On the other hand, using the same term would give the impression of a close resemblance to *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*. The term *ḥasan li-ghayrih* was deliberately used and introduced to conceal the fact that in essence, it was weak and rejected.

Undoubtedly, the technical terms coined and employed by the ḥadīth masters were wonderful and a testimony to their hard work. For most part, the terms were clear, concise and eventually harmonised by the time of Ibn Ḥajar. But my analysis here has avoided this portrayal entirely, purely because it was been voiced and promoted by



Muslim scholars for centuries and needs no repeating here. What does need to be evaluated is the other implicit and covert functions behind the terms, which has been the purpose of this overview here. This is missing in the analysis of Muslim scholars – classic and contemporary ones. The four points I have elaborated above show that by the ninth Islamic century, there were more to the terms than meets the eye.

### **6.2.1 The use of the technical terms in *Fatḥ al-bārī*.**

The previous section on the technical terms suggests they were used in different circumstances to serve different purposes. Just as important as this discussion is whether the technical terms had any practical importance. The *Nuzḥah* offers a comprehensive account of the technical terms, their usage and for most part, examples for each. But was this just merely an academic exercise? Did Ibn Ḥajar felt bound to define the terms because they were part of the tradition? Or did he elaborate on the terms in the *Nuzḥah*, knowing and expecting them to be useful to critics and readers in his own time and after?

In order to answer these questions, the following section is an analysis of the technical terms employed in Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The first eight chapters of the *Fatḥ* have been observed (*kitāb bad' al-waḥy*, *kitāb al-īmān*, *kitāb al-'ilm*, *kitāb al-wuḍū'*, *kitāb al-ghusl*, *kitāb al-hayḍ*, *kitāb al-tayammum* and *kitāb al-ṣalāh* until *kitāb sujūd al-Qur'ān*) to note the frequency, reasons and purpose behind the usage of the terms that have been outlined in the *Nuzḥah*.

From the analysis I have conducted, the ten oft-used technical terms in *Fatḥ al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (that can be found in the *Nuzḥah* too) are:

1. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
2. *Marfū‘*
3. *Mawṣul*
4. *Mu‘allaq*
5. *Ḍa‘if*
6. *Ḥasan*
7. *Mursal*
8. *Mudallas*
9. *Mu‘allal*
10. *Muṣaḥḥaf*.

After offering an analysis of some of these terms specifically, the section will conclude with some general observations on the use of technical terms in *Fatḥ al-bārī*.

### ***Ṣaḥīḥ***

Owing to the fact that *Fatḥ al-bārī* is a commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* – a work dedicated to gathering the sound reports – it is no surprise that the term *ṣaḥīḥ* has featured the most.

Interestingly, the term is often used to describe the *isnād* rather than the entire ḥadīth. So for example, Ibn Ḥajar will alert the reader of other variations of the report listed by the words *bi sanad ṣaḥīḥ*. This could suggest two things. Firstly, the report in question has a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*, not necessarily a *ṣaḥīḥ matn*. Secondly, and perhaps more plausibly, because the conditions of a *ṣaḥīḥ* report mainly pertain to the *isnād*, he has used this phrase.

### ***Mursal***

Typically, Ibn Ḥajar highlights the other reports to be found (in other compilations) to support the existing one to be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. There are several places where these supporting narrations are *mursal*. Importantly, this suggests that though *mursal* is in essence rejected, Ibn Ḥajar believes they do carry weight in the sense they can be used to support existing sound reports. Explicitly, he voices this opinion in *Fath al-bārī* when he writes:

The *mursals* are suitable for evidence according to the opposition (in this case, the Ḥanbalis) and according to us too (Shāfi'īs), when it is supported (by other chains) (2004, 1:310).

In the chapters related to *fiqh* in *Fath al-bārī*, the term *mursal* is more frequent than the chapter on faith. Practically, this supports the general observation made by many researchers that prophetic traditions in the *fiqh* genre are frequently *mursal*. I have

already noted this in the thesis on the section on *mursal* (section 5.19). For instance, the term *mursal* has been used in *kitāb al-īmān* six times. In *kitāb al-wuḍūʿ* alone, the same term has been used thirteen times. Perhaps more significantly, there are three places in *kitāb al-wuḍūʿ* where Ibn Ḥajar clarifies the ruling of *mursal* in some detail (2004, 1: 310, 351 & 387).

### ***Muʿallaq and mawṣul***

The term *muʿallaq* too has featured often in the *Fath* and again for understandable reasons. This thesis has already highlighted (section 5.18) how *muʿallaq* is usually rejected though the scholars have made an exception when such reports feature in a compilation dedicated to the sound, like the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. It is well documented that the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī contains many *muʿallaq* reports. In the chapter on knowledge alone, one-hundred and two reports are included, of which eighteen are *muʿallaq* (2004, 1: pp.172-280).

Ibn Ḥajar therefore uses the term *muʿallaq* (and *taʿlīq*) to alert the reader of the places where al-Imām al-Bukhārī has included such reports in his compilation. Coupled with this is the frequent use of *wa-ṣa-la* when Ibn Ḥajar wants to show where the full, uninterrupted report is to be found. In this regard, *wa-ṣa-la* may be different to the technical noun (and not verb) *mawṣūl*.

## *Marfū‘*

*Marfū‘* is used often too. However, I think there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Ibn Ḥajar did not always mean the technical term per se, but rather a means of short-handing the text. For example, Ibn Ḥajar writes:

It has been proven in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* through another chain, from ‘Ā’isha *marfū‘*:  
‘I did not see him – namely Jibrīl – in the form that he was created in except on two occasions’ (Ibn Ḥajar 2004, 1: 30).

Ideally, he should have written ‘from ‘Ā’isha, from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)’...

There are only a handful of places where it seems he has used *marfū‘* in its correct, technical usage. For instance, he writes:

Salīm ibn ‘Āmir said: I saw Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān consume [food] that had been touched by fire and they did not perform the minor ablution [after it].’  
We have reported this from many paths, from Jabir as *marfū‘* and as *mawqūf*...’  
(2004, 1: 371).

Here the term has been used correctly, namely a report that stems from the Prophet, as opposed to a report stemming from the Companions (*mawqūf*).

## ***Mu'allal***

In the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar chooses the term *mu'allal* to refer to a ḥadīth that has a hidden, defamatory weakness in it (section 5.27). However, in his *Fath al-bārī* he uses the term *ma'lūl* instead, and for the verb he uses *a'alla*.

The scholars of the discipline have for long discussed which term is more suitable; *ma'lūl* or *mu'allal*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ begins his section in the *Muqaddima* with the title *ma'rifat al-ḥadīth al-mu'allal*, but immediately points out that the experts of ḥadīth also call it *ma'lūl* (1986, 89) and that this is more appropriate from a linguistic perspective. Al-Suyūfī too discusses which term is more suitable from a grammatical perspective and also indicates which ḥadīth scholars use the term *ma'lūl* (1972, 1: 251).

In my opinion, there are two possible reasons why Ibn Ḥajar used *ma'lūl* rather than *mu'allal* in *Fath al-bārī*. Firstly, he preferred the term that had more resonance with experts and non-experts in *ilm al-ḥadīth*, and that was *ma'lūl*. *Fath al-bārī* was aimed at a more universal audience and therefore it made sense to use terms that could be understood more easily from a grammatical perspective.

Secondly, al-Suyūfī writes that al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraqūṭnī preferred *ma'lūl* rather than *mu'allal* (1972, 1: 251). Perhaps because *Fath al-bārī* was a commentary of al-Bukhārī's work, he deemed it appropriate to use the term al-Bukhārī preferred.

In short, this is an example where his opinion in the *Nuzhah* on the terms differs from his choice of terms in his other written works.

### ***General observations***

● Overall, the use of technical terms in *Fath al-bārī* is infrequent. Therefore, I do not believe that a reader who has little or no knowledge of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* will find his ignorance is a major hurdle to understanding *Fath al-bārī*. The reason for this opinion is two-fold:

a. Firstly, the presentation skills employed by Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-bārī* are exemplary. After each ḥadīth, he includes the relevant information and commentary in a systematic order. Typically, he (i) why al-Imām al-Bukhārī has included the ḥadīth in the relevant section (ii) provides information on the men in the *isnād*, like important biographical information and their rank in ḥadīth reporting (iii) a word by word analysis of the words in the *matn* (iv) the derived rulings and observations from the ḥadīth as a whole. In addition to this, each *kitāb* ends with an overview of the type of reports (in terms of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* terminology) found in the section. For example, the chapter on *adhān* – which also features prophetic reports on congregational prayers and imamate – concludes with the title *fā’idah*, under which Ibn Ḥajar writes:

The chapters on congregational prayers and imamate consist of one hundred and twenty-two *marfū’ ḥadīths*. Of them, ninety-six are *mawṣūl* and twenty-six are *mu’allaq*. The repeated reports (elsewhere) are ninety and the non-repeated are thirty-two. [Al-Imām] Muslim has recorded the same reports [in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*] except for nine of them’ (2004, 2: 252).

Owing to this good ordering, a reader can quickly and effortlessly refer to the section which he needs for his research or reading. A person who is not versed with *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* simply does not have to read the section relating to the *isnād* or the concluding section analysing the type of reports featured in the chapter.

b. Secondly, *Fath al-bārī* is a work of *dirāya* rather than in *riwāya*. In other words, it concentrates much more on the message of the ḥadīth rather than the science behind it. For instance, the commentary provided in the chapter on Friday prayers (2004, 2: pp. 407-491) concentrates more on the ruling, principle and method of this prayer, rather than the ranking and strength of each prophetic report.

- There are rare places where Ibn Ḥajar does not just mention technical terms but explains the detail of some of the rulings related to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* in *Fath al-bārī*. Overall, this has happened for two reasons.

a. In places, there is an obvious need for it. For example, there are several sub-sections in *kitāb al-‘ilm* where discussions on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* are totally unavoidable in the commentary, precisely because the section pertains to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* rulings specifically. Al-Imām al-Bukhārī has included sub-sections in *kitāb al-‘ilm* such as ‘the saying of the ḥadīth master *ḥaddathana* or *akhbarana* or *anba’ana*’ (Ibn Ḥajar 2004, 1:175), ‘*al-qirā’a* and *al-arḍ* upon the ḥadīth master’ (Ibid. 1: 181) and ‘when it is legitimate to allow the minor to listen’ (Ibn Ḥajar 2004, 1: 208). Naturally, the commentary from Ibn Ḥajar in these sections was centred around discussions on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* almost entirely.



b. There are other instances where he offers an elaboration of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* rulings in order to prove or disprove a certain opinion, particularly when it relates to the *ikhtilāf* between the different schools of judicial thought. A prime example is on the discussion on whether the head needs to be wiped once or thrice during the minor ablution (Ibn Ḥajar 2004, 1:313). Ibn Ḥajar cites the opinion in the commentary of al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, who believes it is better (*mustaḥabb*) to perform the wiping thrice. As a follower of the Shāfi‘ī school, Ibn Ḥajar too gives preference to this opinion. He writes:

Abū Dāwūd has reported from two variations – Ibn Khuzayma and others have verified one of them as sound – the ḥadīth of ‘Uthmān [which supports the] wiping of the head thrice. And the addition from a *thiqa* is accepted (2004, 1:313).

The last sentence is a rule of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* which Ibn Ḥajar has expanded on in the *Nuzḥah* (section 5.10.2). The only purpose of mentioning in the section of wiping is to support the practice of wiping the head thrice and thus supporting the opinion of his *madhhab*. So the rules of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* have been mentioned in the *Fath* sometimes for reasons other than explaining the inner-workings of the actual discipline.

Another example is that of *mursal*. Ibn Ḥajar in the *Fath* deems it important to outline that *mursal* can be used as evidence (2004, 1: 310). The reason why he explained this ruling here is owing to the rich debate between the different schools of thought on what can and cannot be used for *istinjā*. The same ruling regarding *mursal* is mentioned again

(2004, 1: 351) on the discussion on what part of the head needs to be wiped during the minor ablution.

- Ibn Ḥajar does sometimes deviate from conventional *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* terms in favour of simpler ones. We have noted this already with his preference to *ma ‘lūl* rather than *mu ‘allal*. The reason for opting for simpler terms is so the appeal of *Fath al-bārī* extends beyond the reader of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* specifically and reaches a far wider audience. In the section on *marfū‘* in the *Nuzhah* (section 5.40), Ibn Ḥajar uses terms such as *taṣrīḥ* and *ḥukm* to explain the different forms *marfū‘* can take on. In a much simpler manner, he explains the same idea in *Fath al-bārī* (2004, 1: 358). When describing the *isnād*, terms such as *ḥasan*, *ḍa‘īf* and *ṣaḥīḥ* are standard practice. There are instances in *Fath al-bārī* where he used unconventional words like *sāqiṭ* and *ṣāliḥ* to describe the *isnād*. This, in my opinion, is for the purpose of ease for the average reader.

In the same manner the excellent arrangement of *Fath al-bārī* favours a universal audience, the language and terms employed too sometimes portrays the work as a non-elitist and accessible commentary. As a writer, this shows the skill Ibn Ḥajar possessed. He could express the same idea in different ways, depending on the intended audience.

To conclude the analysis of the technical terms in *Fath al-bārī*, for most part they are rare. The terms that have been used frequently are for most part famous, such as *ṣaḥīḥ*. To understand *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* through a manual such as the *Nuzhah* before reading a detailed commentary like *Fath al-bārī* is ideal and commendable. However, in my opinion, it is not an essential prerequisite and it is not a major deterrence.

### 6.3. Over-protectionism.

For early Muslim ḥadīth literature to be taken seriously by non-Muslim scholars, it must move from the over-protectionism shown to certain individuals and groups related to the discipline. The *Nuzhah* is a simple manual on ‘ilm al-ḥadīth but there is still indication of prejudice and partiality in places. Just by evaluating the *Nuzhah*, we have shown that:

a. The works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim have been given semi-divine status in the *Nuzhah*.

Ibn Ḥajar devotes an entire section on the esteemed works of these scholars. Only a passing mention is given to the fact that their works do contain sub-standard reports (section 5.7.1.).

b. *Mu‘allaq* (section 5.18) is rejected. But when featured in the exemplary works of al-Bukhārī, the scholars defend his inclusion of them, rather than question whether the reports are of acceptable standard or not.

c. The likes of Mālik are described as ‘truthful’ in the *Nuzhah* (5.7.1.) without a full explanation why. The likes of Schacht, on the other hand, view him as a mass fabricator.

d. Ibn Ḥajar informs us that there is a slight difference between *mursal khafī* and *mudallas*. In *mudallas*, the narrator has met the narrator, whereas in *mursal khafī* the narrator is a contemporary of the missing person, but he has not met him (section 5.22.1.). The reason why this opinion is to be accepted, Ibn Ḥajar writes, is that al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī said so.

e. In section 5.36.1.2, *majhūl al-‘ayn* was defined and explained. This is where the narrator’s name is mentioned, but only one person narrates from him. Its principle is that

it will not be accepted, until he is authenticated. But Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ does highlight the fact that al-Imām al-Bukhārī has included the reports of those from whom only one has narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Only Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim has reported from Mirdās al-Aslamī. The same can be said of al-Imām Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*; only Abū Salama ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān has reported from Rabī‘a ibn Ka‘b al-Aslamī (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 113). Again, we see that a report should ideally be rejected or seriously questioned at the very least, but because it features in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, it is conveniently overlooked.

f. The Companions are above criticism in ḥadīth transmission, because Allāh and His Messenger have vouched for their honesty and integrity. As I have shown in section 5.41, their religious outlook and honesty can be seen as something entirely different to their academic ability.

g. In section 5.27 on *mu‘allal*, we are ordered to trust the ḥadīth master’s intuition when he declares a report as defective, even if he does not explain his decision.

These seven examples from the *Nuzḥah* show that there are certain individuals and groups that Muslims see as above criticism. Religiously, one can appreciate the difficulty for Muslims in indulging in open criticism of such esteemed figures. Who will want to impugn al-Bukhārī when he claimed he saw the Prophet in his dream instructing him to write his *Ṣaḥīḥ*? (Saidi 1977, 195) How can we question the sincerity of al-Bukhārī when he would perform *istikhāra* prayer for every ḥadīth he included in his compilation? (Pīr Karam Shah 1973, pp.163-4). If Muslims begin to seriously question the integrity of the Companions, then it means they are seeking a second opinion after Allāh’s.

In order to portray their efforts as an impartial and neutral assessment, Muslim scholars must identify whether the celebrated figures, like al-Bukhārī, Mālik and the Companions, are such because of their religious piety or because of their outstanding ability. If they believe that they are unique because of their piety, then this is not sufficient to warrant their immunity from criticism. This is because piety alone is not a safeguard against forgery and mistakes. The worse fabricators were the pious, something which even Muslim scholars, including Ibn Hajar, admit to (section 5.24.4.a.). In fact, Goldziher makes this one of the central pillars of his works; that the tension between the *pious* traditionists and the rulers was the reason for the appearance of fabrications.

Therefore, in order to add weight to their detailed contribution to the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, Muslim scholars need to move away from this over-protectionism and instead they need to stress that the reputation of certain individuals is due to ability and potency. They need to show that Mālik is respected in the discipline because of his ability to sift the sound from the unsound. The fact that he saw the Prophet every night in his dreams is a religious quality (Pīr Karam Shah 1973, 152). Many Muslims see the two as intricately related, but for non-Muslim academics, piety means much less.

I am not suggesting that criticism is totally absent in Muslim works. The *Nuzhah* shows partial criticism of al-Bukhārī and warns that not all reports in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* are of the highest stage of soundness (section 5.7.1.). *Al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl* is akin to backbiting but the Muslim scholars have allowed it because it serves a greater good (5.63).

But generally, Muslims have to write sometimes with their minds and not their hearts. They have to detach themselves from their religious background and behave like impartial observers. Only then can they be taken seriously by the non-Muslim academic world.

#### **6.4. The *Nuzhah*; between stagnation and development.**

In section 4.3, we presented two theories regarding the *Nuzhah*. The first suggested that like the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), the *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar became a milestone work that left a lasting impression on the field right up until this very day. The second theory suggested that ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ largely depended on the endeavours of the earlier scholars, and that the later middle ages marked slight modifications and alterations, but no serious development and originality. After an analysis of the *Nuzhah* in section five, we are now in a better position to assess which observation is closest to the truth.

There are indications that up until the ninth Islamic century, the field of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ did develop and continue to advance to some extent. Many of the terms took on a more definitive and exact meaning. We saw in section 5.20 how *munqaṭi* ‘ had a very loose application early on, but took on a very specific meaning later. The *Nuzhah* of Ibn Ḥajar provided much more detail, explanation and examples for types of reports that his predecessors had merely outlined. Certainly, the later works like the *Nuzhah* provided readers with more accessibility as a result of these changes and modifications.

Overall however, it is extremely difficult to maintain a strong argument for the continued development of ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ up until the ninth Islamic century. Scholars like Ibn Ḥajar

displayed the late-medieval tendency to refine earlier knowledge, not to enquire into epistemological questions of importance. Goldziher observed that:

In the fifth century of Islam, the literature, especially in the religious field – al-Ghazālī is the last author with independent ideas – shows few original concepts or independent attitudes; compilation and writing of commentaries and glosses is in full swing. (1971, 245)

Specifically in the field of ḥadīth, he noted that the period of compilations like the canonical collections quickly gave way to ‘dry and lifeless compilation’ (1971, 245).

By analysing the *Nuzhah*, we can understand his viewpoint. What follows is just a small indication of how Ibn Ḥajar’s work reflected the stagnant nature of the discipline.

- a. In section 5.9, I amply highlighted how the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* has never really been questioned. From the fourth Islamic century onwards, it has been mildly refined but never questioned. Moreover, the variations of *ṣaḥīḥ* to be found from the few scholars who question it are viewed to be no different to the standard, accepted version.
- b. After an excellent account of *ṣiyagh al-adā’* in section 5.55, the *Nuzhah* refers to *wijāda* (5.58) and *i’lām* (5.59). Ibn Ḥajar’s account of these three clearly indicate how the importance of this area did not develop at all, but rather declined drastically until ḥadīth reporting became more of a social pastime.

- c. In section 5.62, Ibn Ḥajar reviews the various works pertaining to *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt* written by his predecessors. He refers to Ibn Ḥibbān's work as well as Ibn Sa'd's on the Companions. In almost explicit terms, the *Nuzhah* indicates that scholars duplicated works on this area, and that only the arrangement and sequence of these works differed.
- d. In section 5.70, Ibn Ḥajar outlines the different forms of compilation that disciples can refer to. He does not advocate the need for new, original material.
- e. In fourteen sections of the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar informs the reader of other more-detailed works on the particular type being discussed. For example, in the section on *mudraj* (5.28), he refers to his own work on the subject, a treatise called *Taqrīb al-manhaj bi-tartīb al-mudraj*. In five of these fourteen sections, he specifically asks readers to consider the works of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) on the relevant subject matter. In fact, Ibn Ḥajar's work on *mudraj* is nothing but a slight improvement on al-Khaṭīb's *al-Faṣl li-al-waṣl al-mudraj fī-al-naql*. This implicitly suggests that Ibn Ḥajar is admitting that even by the ninth Islamic century, the best works available were written five hundred years earlier. If there had been better, more developed and improved works on *mudraj*, *maqlūb*, *mursal khaṭī*, *jahāla*, *mutashābih* and *riwāyat al-akābir 'an al-aṣāghir*, Ibn Ḥajar would have asked the reader to refer to them. Not once in the *Nuzhah* does he ask readers to refer to the works of his teacher al-'Irāqī. Instead, the stagnant nature of the discipline meant the best works belonged to the likes of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī five hundred years earlier.
- f. Of the commentaries that were written on the important works like the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, all of them felt the need to explain the text, not to critically assess it. The



authors of these had accepted the endeavours of their pious ancestors and geared their effort towards explaining their work in a better manner.

This pattern is more of a concern in the modern period. During the thesis I utilised the writings of recent Muslim scholars like Aḥmadayn, Anwar, Mighālī and al-‘Uthaymin, all notable experts in *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. None showed a desire to question the methodology of the earlier works in the field. In *Diyā’ ‘ilm al-ḥadīth* (2003) Mighālī offered his own account of the discipline, which included an explanation of all of the technical terms and a brief biographical account of the early ḥadīth masters. Almost all of the definitions were taken from the *Nuzhah* directly, word by word.

In this sense, this is precisely what I feel differentiates my commentary on the *Nuzhah* from the many available ones in the Arabic and Urdu language. Whereas others have merely repeated and re-phrased works like the *Nuzhah*, I have asked more engaging and critical questions that tell us more about the discipline and the era these works were produced in.

Based on these observations, it is clear that the *Nuzhah* did indicate a decline in academic activity in ḥadīth studies at that period. The *Nuzhah* itself is an indication of that decline in so many ways. Once we have established the relative stagnancy of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* at that time, we need to ask why this happened. A few plausible explanations are offered below:

a. *‘Ilm al-ḥadīth* declined because ḥadīth declined. Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) declared in his time that all the prophetic reports that could be reliably attributed to the Prophet had been

documented, and thus any previously unrecorded reports should be considered *de facto* forgeries (Brown 2009, 42). This was the case by the fifth Islamic century. By the eighth, ‘not even the greatest ḥadīth scholars of their day such as Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Jamāl al-Dīn Mizzī (d. 742/1341) would dare to claim that they were in possession of a ḥadīth reliably said by the Prophet that had gone unnoticed until their time’ (ibid.). If there was no new material to classify, study and comment on, then there was no need for a radical overview of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth either. So by the ninth Islamic century, ‘ilm al-ḥadīth scholars like Ibn Ḥajar had no choice but to follow and adhere to their pioneers in the field. They genuinely believed that they could not add anything new to the field.

Related to this is the way ḥadīth were gathered and compiled after the six canonical collection. The emphasis shifted away from unearthing new reports, to simply categorising existing ones for easier access. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) gathered the prophetic reports on different times and forms of supplications in *Adhkār*. He also compiled *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*, a collection of ḥadīths aimed at encouraging pious and ethical conduct. There were no new prophetic reports in this collection, but instead drew its sources mainly from the Shaykhayn. Other scholars concentrated on gathering ḥadīths in the *shamā’il* genre, like al-‘Iyād’s *al-Shifā* and al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-Kubrā*. In all of these works (and indeed others that have not been mentioned here), the material was not new. Rather it had been re-arranged for easier access. Novelty, not originality, was the key essence.

‘Ilm al-ḥadīth went through a similar process. After the sixth Islamic century, the scholars succumbed to presenting the same material, but in a different arrangement. Al-

‘Irāqī’s *Alfiyya* was merely the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, but in poem form. The *Nuzhah*, even by Ibn Ḥajar’s own admission in his introduction, was a ‘brief overview of the *Muqaddima*’ (section 4.0).

In contrast, the fields of *fiqh* and *tafsīr* continued to develop during this same period. *Fiqh* developed because new scenarios and circumstances continuously arose which required original thinking from the *fuqahā*. *Tafsīr* too continued to show originality. In the area of *tafsīr bi-al-athar*, there was little room for manoeuvre, areas where the explanation of a verse could be directly linked to a saying of the Prophet on the matter. But through the avenue of *tafsīr bi-al-ra’y*, the Qur’ān experts could write commentaries based on the climate they resided in.

b. Like discussed in section 5.10.1, the lack of copyright laws meant that an academic climate prevailed that did not frown upon plagiarism. It was perfectly acceptable to copy the views and findings of other scholars. In the *Nuzhah* (section 5.10), we saw how Ibn Ḥajar explained al-Tirmidhī’s complex terminology using the precise answer that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd and Ibn Kathīr had given previously. When explaining a certain type of ḥadīth, the *Nuzhah* often gives the same example that al-‘Irāqī gave in his *Alfiyya*. Then al-Suyūṭī after Ibn Ḥajar simply copied large pieces of text from the *Nuzhah* for his *Tadrīb*. If a climate existed that viewed plagiarism as a major academic crime, we may have witnessed fresh thinking during the later middle ages of Islam. But the absence of it meant apathy and laziness. Goldziher is right when he observes:

When an Arab critic points to the tenth century as the period in which there are hardly any more authors but merely copyists he is too lenient towards the

preceding five hundred years. Al-Muqaddasī (fourth century) was already able to say that some of his predecessors were but compilers (1971, 245).

c. The above two points indicate why *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* struggled to develop after the golden period in the fifth and sixth Islamic century. In my opinion, the biggest factor was what I have described in detail in the previous sub-section, the seniority and over-protectionism that marked the discipline. Even if they wanted to, the later scholars like Ibn Ḥajar knew their reputation would be smeared if they chose to critically assess and re-evaluate the work of Mālik, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* transcended from being a book of academic significance to being a book of ritual relevance. Brown writes:

In cities from Damascus to Timbuktu the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would be read in mosques as part of celebrations culminating in the month of Ramadan. Al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* in particular was read as a cure for illness from Egypt to India, and the great Moroccan conqueror Mawlā Ismā‘īl (d. 1727) had a copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* carried in front of his army ‘like the Ark of the Children of Israel’ (2009, 40).

With such an esteem attached to the early works, critical assessment became impossible. More damaging would be the choice to question the *‘adāla* of the Companions, a well-established cornerstone of ḥadīth studies. The only alternative therefore was to ‘toe the line’. The victim in this climate was *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*.

To conclude this section, the seniority attached to certain individuals and groups made it difficult for the discipline to evolve. Ibn Ḥajar at least tried to circumvent that by developing areas that would not lead to religious and social outcry. The *rijāl* literature is an example of that. Other than the three reasons cited above, there is a simpler reason why the discipline did stagnate to a large extent. Quite simply, the further away one is from the time of compilation, the more difficult it becomes to add something new. Kamali touches upon this fact when he writes:

There is clearly little scope for any new methodology or research that would add anything substantial and useful to the work that has already been done by people who were better positioned and qualified for what they attempted and achieved (Kamali 2005, 202).

Seen from this viewpoint, we must commend Ibn Ḥajar for writing a book in a dull climate that led to universal acceptance, up until this very day.

Additionally, we should remember that what we see as development and progress in the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* may not have been what Ibn Ḥajar saw as development. In fact, it may have been decline for him. For example, modern scholars may ask for a reassessment regarding the *‘adāla* of the Companions. As the author of *al-Iṣāba* and after an extensive section on the Companions in the *Nuzḥah*, I cannot see how Ibn Ḥajar would see that as fruitful and an indication of development. This links in with the idea of traditionalism that Graham referred to. The Islamic world was one where ‘greater value is

still placed upon continuity with perceived traditional norms of great antiquity' (1993, 499). What non-Muslims see as development and re-assessment is not the same as what the Muslims see them to be. Therefore when we talk about development and stagnancy in *'ilm al-ḥadīth*, we have to analyse such words more carefully and ask what they mean to non-Muslim academics on the one hand and traditional scholars like Ibn Ḥajar on the other.

Finally, we should also remember Ibn Ḥajar's position in Mamluk Cairo too. As a senior member of the religious elite, there was no need to display radical and therefore possibly controversial ideas in his *Nuzḥah*. His commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī became famous before he had even completed it. He had become a leading authority on the biographies of others, including men of his own generation. He occupied some of the best posts in Cairo. This fame meant he did not have to present something radical in his *Nuzḥah* that would lead to fame and attention; he already had this in abundance. Therefore the status quo was ideal for him.

### **6.5. Islamic and non-Islamic thought on ḥadīth; between convergence and divergence.**

The analysis of the *Nuzḥah* in section five has undoubtedly shown that Muslims are no strangers to *ikhtilāf* in the field of *'ilm al-ḥadīth*. Independent treaties on the discipline first appeared in the fourth Islamic century. Five hundred years later, a large degree of harmonisation for the technical terms and their rulings did exist, but by no means did it

reach a consensual stage. Of these differences, some were major whereas others were petty. The Muslim ḥadīth scholars only disagreed on the name for the case when the *matn* and *isnād* had been swapped with the purpose of testing; for some it is called *maqlūb* and for some it is *mudṭarib* (section 5.29 & 5.31). Areas such as *mursal* (5.19) show a much wider degree of difference, in both definition and ruling. Throughout the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar mentions the majority opinion as well as outlining other views. We saw this clearly with ‘*azīz* (section 5.5.), *ziyadāt al-thiqa* (5.10), *mursal khaṭī* (5.22), *bid’a* (5.37) and *musnad* (5.44). In fact, right from the onset of the book, Ibn Ḥajar defines *khavar* according to his understanding, and also entertains two other variations of it according to others.

The fact that Ibn Ḥajar does mention the *ikhtilāf* in the field is important. He shows in the *Nuzhah* that they deserve an audience, even if he personally does not agree with them. Throughout the *Nuzhah*, the author attempts to offer a consistent opinion on terms and rulings, but he does accommodate the view of others. In short, Ibn Ḥajar did believe in *ikhtilāf*.

But what is the result when a difference of opinion stems from a non-Muslim academic? In the same manner Ibn Ḥajar at least acknowledges the opinions of others in the *Nuzhah*, have Muslims in the past two centuries accommodated the views of westerners? Largely, they have not. Their views have been treated differently and in a less-appealing light. For instance, Schacht’s observations on Mālik have been totally dismissed by Muslim scholars as bordering on the insulting. If a rich tradition of *ikhtilāf* can and has existed between Muslims – like the *Nuzhah* highlights – why is this now rejected when it stems

from non-Muslims? Three gaps in my opinion exist which at least begin to answer why the Muslims are less accommodating to the views of non-Muslims in the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*.

### **The cultural gap.**

Muslims assert that there are certain practices, norms and values associated with their lifestyle that have not been truly appreciated by the west. They have not been able to step into the shoes of Muslims to fully grasp their viewpoint. In the discipline of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* specifically, there are certain areas that do not arouse suspicion amongst Muslims, but are seen in a very different light by western academics.

A prime example is the primacy of oral transmission, which the *Nuzhah* touches upon indirectly (section 5.32, 5.55 & 5.61). Many non-Muslim academics, mainly western ones, studying ḥadīth view oral transmission by narrators as insufficient and saw it as a reason to cast doubt over the authenticity of ḥadīth literature. Because common practice in the West was to give preference to written testimony over oral testimony, western academics assumed that Muslims too should follow suit. Westerners have totally ignored the fact that in the Middle East, oral transmission was actually preferred. Brown writes:

Classical scholarship portrays the process of ḥadīth transmission as primarily oral, or at least through the first century. Even after written collections of ḥadīth were compiled, oral transmission remained the ideal. Orality, in this system, was a virtue rather than a vice. Just as Islamic jurists belittled documentary evidence,



preferring direct oral testimony, so the scholars of ḥadīth insisted on the superiority of direct, personal, and oral transmission of ḥadīth (1999, 88).

Western scholars dismissed the accuracy of oral transmission because *they* saw it as inadequate. They did not appreciate its value and rank in Arab society. For Muslims, this is the case with the vast majority of Orientalists studying Islam and thus a reason to reject their findings outright. Their own methods and approaches are described as ‘advanced’ ‘civilized’ and ‘modern’, whilst others, particularly Eastern ones, are ‘backward’ ‘primitive’ and ‘traditional’ (Tucker in Munck & O’ Hearn (eds.) 1999, pp. 5-6). If the practice or approach does not originate from the west, it is automatically declared as inadequate. This is reflected in the way Juynboll rejects how the *mustamlīs*<sup>285</sup> could dictate traditions to thousands of people at a time, not on the basis that there is no record of such events happening, but because his own intuition says it was impossible. Juynboll observes:

Visualising sessions such as this with many dozens of *mustamlīs* moving about, shouting the traditions down to the last rows of eager ḥadīth students may lift the reader into the realm of 1,001-night fantasies, but in whatever way you look at it, it is difficult to take accounts like that seriously (cited in Siddiqi 1993, 133).

Whether Juynboll is right or not here is almost irrelevant. Muslims like Siddiqi argue that it is the evidence of ‘of an impairing cultural distance’ (1993, 133) that is more worrying.

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<sup>285</sup> A *mustamlī* is employed in a gathering, particularly a large one. Such a person has the task to relay the shaykh’s words to those who cannot hear him directly (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 242).

### The academic gap.

For Muslims, studying Islam is *their* prerogative, to the exclusion of all others. In particular, Muslim ḥadīth scholars based in the Middle-East (like al-Sibā'ī) have shown utmost disbelief and dismay that English-speaking and European scholars have embarked on ḥadīth studies. Their inability to even understand Arabic is sufficient for the Muslims to reject their findings. How can Goldziher be taken seriously, when he cannot differentiate between *tadwīn* and *kitāba*, asks al-Sibā'ī?<sup>286</sup> (1998, 237)

### The religious gap.

Even if the non-Muslims can overcome the academic and cultural hurdles, the religious ones still remain. Put simply, the Muslim scholars argue that the westerners' writings on Islam cannot be taken seriously because they have never really understood Muḥammad.

This is the reason why their views are inadequate. Specifically in the field of *'ilm al-*

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<sup>286</sup> Muslims assert that the Companions did write down the *sunna* of the Prophet during his time. As Ṣiddīqī points out, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr would write the sayings of the Prophet, and the same has been proven from 'Alī, Samura ibn Jundab, Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh, 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī 'Awfā and Ibn 'Abbās (1993, 24). Pīr Karam Shah too cites several examples of writing during this period (1973, pp.107-110) as does Guillaume (1924, 16).

It was the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz who implemented the project of compiling and gathering these scattered works, during his reign between 99-101/717-19. In 100, he wrote a letter to Abū Bakr ibn Ḥazm, the governor of Madina, asking him to find the traditions of the Holy Prophet, and gather them systematically (Karam Shah 1973, 140). In response, numerous scholars answered his call and began this divine project to protect the second source of Islam. They included Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhrī, al-Imām al-Awzā'ī, Ma'mar ibn Rashīd, Ḥammād ibn Salama (d. 167/783), 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (121/738- 181/797) and Jarīr ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 188/803) (al-Mahdī 1989, 122). Al-Mahdī, along with several other scholars, classified this period as the period of *tadwīn* (1989, 120). Some non-Muslim scholars such as Goldziher (1971, 195) have misinterpreted this word and assumed it means the same as 'writing'. As a consequence, they understand that al-Zuhrī was the first to write the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet. The word *tadwīn* actually means 'to gather'. The famous linguist Ibn Manẓūr offers a detailed account of the word. A *dīwān* (which derives from the same root word) for instance, is a compilation of papers. However, of the various ways the word can be used, he does not include 'writing' as one of them (1988, 4: pp.451-2). Other reports use the word to describe al-Zuhrī as the first to initiate *taṣnīf*. Ibn Manẓūr defines this as 'differentiating one element from another'. To do the *taṣnīf* of something is to place them in groups and orders (1988, 7: 423). Again, the word does not mean 'writing'. In this context, it means that al-Zuhrī was the first to compile the ḥadīth systematically, not to write it. Guillaume too implicitly accepts that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz was the first to *collect* traditions, not write them (1924, 18). He writes: 'The earliest date which Muhammadans give for the *collection* of hadith... (my italics) (1924, 18). Writing took place in a much earlier period, in the time of the Prophet.

*ḥadīth*, Muslims state that once an observer has truly understood Muḥammad, only then can one appreciate the high and protected rank of the Companions. These are the men who followed every step of their Messenger, who loved him immensely and recorded each and every aspect of his life. They knew precisely how many white hairs he had in his beard. How can we now accuse these men of neglecting his *sunna*, to the extent that they had no real idea in the first century how to implement his law-based rulings? When al-Imām Mālik wanted to transmit prophetic traditions, he used to perform his ablution, sit on the edge of his bed and comb his beard. He used to dislike transmitting ḥadīth in the street, while standing or in haste (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 240). How can we now believe that he was a mass-fabricator? A *faqīh* is an honourable title given to those who spend their life studying Islamic law and applying it themselves in practice. Would it be feasible to suggest that mere story-tellers developed into fully-fledged *faqīhs*? (Juynboll 1996, XI: 159-170). Muslim observers are outraged by such a remark and have viewed this as a sufficient reason to dismiss Juynboll's writings outright. On the one hand, he portrays the jurist Mālik as a forger and on the other, he suggests money-seeking street-entertainers developed into effective jurists, with 'some sort of general expertise' (1996, XI:191). Muslim scholars have never really accepted the findings of non-Muslims because they feel they have never fully comprehended the exalted status Muḥammad and his immediate followers hold in their religion.

These are the stumbling blocks that exist for Muslim academia that prevent a fair, impartial and realistic appreciation of the non-Muslim views in ḥadīth studies. What I have tried to show in the analyst of the *Nuzḥah* is that if Muslims are open to *ikhtilāf*

within their own circles, then they should be open to it from others too. In short, that these gaps mentioned above may not be as vast as depicted. The starting point for such an acceptance is to acknowledge two facts, both of which can be related to the *Nuzhah*.

**Western academics *are* skilled and competent.**

It is naïve for Muslims to think that the westerners are not capable enough to study ḥadīth, owing to an academic gap. This is precisely why in section 5.56, I deemed it important to mention that Goldziher had explained the dispute between al-Bukhārī and Muslim over *mu'an'an* reports quite brilliantly. In fact, it is a much better attempt to understand this complex argument than many Muslim experts. Muslims who reject the input of all westerners needs reminding of the translation of several classics by Western scholars from Arabic into English, which has helped Muslims living in the west immensely, such as James Robson's *Mishkāt*. One of the greatest contributions has been the *Concordance and Indices of Muslim Tradition*. This is an easy reference guide to all the prophetic reports to be found in the six most prominent collections, together with the *Sunan* of al-Dārimī and the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. More recently, Juynboll's translation of Muslim's introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is – quite simply – phenomenal.<sup>287</sup> It is proof that western scholars can understand even the most difficult of classical Arabic texts. If there are a few cases of prejudice in the writings of western scholars, Muslim scholars should not see this as a reason to reject *every* comment and analysis that stems from the west.

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<sup>287</sup> 1996, III, 263-311.

**Western academics *are* studying the same area.**

Admittedly, there are certain areas in the discipline which arouse suspicion for the Muslim scholars. They feel that non-Muslim academics are deliberately studying their religion through the wrong spectrum, which has then affected their conclusions. For instance, Muslims argue that:

- a. Muir (1858) is seen as a pioneer of ḥadīth criticism but according to Siddiqi, his main aim was to slander ‘Mahomet’, rather than criticise ḥadīth specifically. It was in essence, he says, a biographical account of the Prophet, which was ‘rather hostile’ and a ‘now outclassed biography of the Prophet’ (1993, 124).
- b. Schacht made it abundantly clear that he intended to ‘concentrate as much as possible on the legal sphere’ (1959, v), though his work looks at *isnāds* (which is related to the sphere of ḥadīth) in detail.
- c. Daniel Brown acknowledged the importance of defining the ‘position of *sunna*’ but his methodological approach seems to defy this objective. In his studies, he deliberately chose sources that were ‘mostly connected with a handful of controversies over *sunna*’ (1999, 5).
- d. Schacht himself accepts that *maghāzī* and *sīra* lacks proper *isnāds* (1959, 139), as does Goldziher (1971, 192), but this is the source which many western scholars, particularly Juynboll, have based their works on. Muslims argue that the study of *isnāds* is best appreciated in ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ manuals such as the *Nuzhah*, not in *sīra* and *fiqh* papers.

Whilst acknowledging these instances, my analysis has also reminded Muslims that the non-Muslim academics have looked at the same issues which the likes of Ibn Ḥajar have analysed in his *Nuzhah*. For example, Ibn Ḥajar writes that ‘the *mubtadi*’s report is accepted if he does not propagate his *bid‘a*’ (section 5.37). I have shown that this is exactly the same area that Leites analysed via the Shooting Stars traditions (5.37.2) and made some very commendable observations. There is overlap between the non-terminological type of *mashhūr* and the idea of the ‘living tradition’ (5.4). If western academics have called into question the meaning and usage of *sunna* in early Islam, Ibn Ḥajar did exactly the same thing (5.40). Burton showed a deep understanding of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* (5.16), an area which Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes is so difficult that it ‘wears out legal scholars (1986, pp.276-7).

This is the reason why in many places during the commentary of the *Nuzhah*, I have presented the views of the non-Muslim academics. The purpose has not been to compare and contrast the views with the intention of concluding which view is correct. The purpose has not been to analyse the authenticity debate *per se*. My aim has been to show that Muslims should appreciate the ability of the western scholars and understand that they are interested in exactly the same area. In short, that their input is of value too.

### **Then why the distrust?**

If the non-Muslim academics are skilled and are studying the same area, then why the distrust? Earlier, I mentioned the cultural, academic and religious gap that acts as hurdles which all play a part. The biggest gap however, in my opinion, is the gap in terms of perception. The way that Muslims define Orientalists and Orientalism, coupled with the

history of Islam and the west means that they find it very difficult to accept the views of westerners.

Take, for example, the definition of Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said. He writes that:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it, making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient (1995, 3).

The definition is biased and makes a negative sweeping judgement about all western studies.

Shāhīn (1998, pp.75-7) shows his distaste for non-Muslim studies on Islam when he clarifies the main aims and objectives of Orientalists.

- a. To give a wrong impression of everything related to Islam, its goals and intentions.
- b. To give a false impression of Muslims in general, and of the scholars and renowned figures in particular.
- c. To portray the Islamic community throughout history – in particular the first generation of Muslims – as a disassembled community who often killed one another.

- d. To portray the Islamic civilization negatively, to belittle its status, to insult its heritage and ignore its contribution to human development.
- e. To propagate ignorance of the nature of Muslim society, and to perceive it according to what the Orientalists know of their own culture and norms.
- f. To intentionally distort the Islamic texts, by creating a feel of uncertainty and doubt.
- g. To have their own way in choosing the sources they wish to use. For example, they use sources of Arabic Literature (*adab*) as a basis to judge the *sunna* of the Prophet, or they use historical sources to judge matters of judicial law.

Some of this ill-feeling is justified. For example:

- i. In the commentary, I highlighted in section 5.33 that Goldziher distorted the text regarding al-Zuhri and his relationship with the state.
- ii. The coverage of *'ilm al-hadith* by western academics is uneven and disproportionate sometimes. Both Schacht and Juynboll criticise the family *isnads* to considerable depths, but they are rare, as even Burton admits.
- iii. Burton notes that the language employed by Goldziher in *Muslim Studies* bordered on the insulting. He writes:

Serious issue...must be taken with his generous use of emotive, not to put too fine a point upon it, pejorative language. Consider the frequency with which he interlards his most penetrating analyses with vocabulary of deception and conspiracy, using, for instance, such terms as 'fraud', 'fabrication', 'invention', 'falsification' – even 'lies' (1994, xii).



Similar remarks have been made about the tone Juynboll adheres to in his works (Siddiqi 1993, 134). For Muslims, this is an indication that the aim of the Orientalists' interest in Islam is to degrade the religion, not to study it.

iv. Goldziher's key findings were that the ḥadīth does not tell us anything about Muḥammad, but the political, social and theological context that it appeared in during the first and second Islamic century. Muir deemed traditions to be untrustworthy if the text furthered a common bias to all Muslims and if the narrator appears to have a special interest or prejudice (Muir 1858, liii). But Muslims say that surely this same argument can be turned on its head and used to criticise the context Muir and Goldziher found themselves in. Both were writing in the nineteenth century, a time of colonialism, enlightenment and the academic ascendancy of the west, coupled with a general decline in the east. If a ḥadīth narrator cannot detach himself from a special interest he holds, theological or political, it also means we can dismiss the works of Muir because he worked as a Christian missionary in India, and the works of Goldziher, because he was the secretary at the Hebrew Congregation in the Hungarian city of Pecs.

On the other hand, a large proportion of this ill-feeling is not justified and this is what I tried to show in the commentary of the *Nuzḥah*. Merely because the view stems from 'them' and not 'us', it is refuted, rejected, rebuked and dismissed by Muslims. And this is where we return to the very first comment in this particular section; that Muslims do and can accept dispute, and are no strangers to *ikhtilāf*. The Muslims' own research shows

doubt, uncertainty and difference of opinion. If they can accept it from within, they must learn to accept it from others too.

With reference to the *Nuzhah*, take the example of al-Tirmidhī's innovative terminology (5.10). Ibn Ḥajar suggests some degree of weakness in his reports and this is the same conclusion that Goldziher reached. The *Nuzhah* indicates how some Muslims travelled for the sake of fame and fortune and again, this is not radically different to the conclusions Goldziher made (5.69). Ibn Ḥajar warns of the problems associated with *riwāya bi-al-ma'nā* and so have non-Muslim academics (5.33).

Precisely because treatises like the *Nuzhah* indicate a variety of opinions on any given issue, there is room for more of a convergence between Muslims and non-Muslims. It does not have to be viewed as 'them' versus 'us'. This is not an argument that they both agree entirely; rather once the perceptions and presumptions are put to one side, there is room for better dialogue. At the moment, the polemics is a result of perception more than it is facts. I deemed it important to note that on the issue of *aṣaḥḥ al-asānīd* (5.9), the debate between Muslims and non-Muslims were based more on empirical facts than it was perception. There is no reason why other areas too can be treated similarly. Brown too makes a similar call to base findings on facts rather than perception when he calls for a more 'accurate approach' of ḥadīth studies that accepts:

...the ḥadīth tradition is so vast and our attempts to evaluate its authenticity so inevitable limited to small samples, that any attitudes towards its authenticity are necessarily based more on our critical worldview than on empirical fact (2009, 198).

Unfortunately, it seems that often, one empirical data is producing two very different conclusions. In the *Nuzhah* (5.24.4.e.), the author mentions how some Muslims forged reports ‘in pursuit of pleasing some leaders’, citing the example of Ghiyāth. Azami is adamant that this was a one-off occurrence, proved by the fact that almost all ‘*ilm al-ḥadīth*’ scholars have used the same example. Goldziher too cites the story of Ghiyāth. But he reaches the conclusion that this story was typical of the era and pointed to an endemic problem (1971, 74). Brown sums up the contrasting conclusions from one event when he writes:

Sunni ḥadīth critics reviled Ghiyāth b. Ibrāhīm as a forger and referred to the incident as an example of how one person forged a ḥadīth and how the network of critics immediately caught it. Goldziher, on the other hand, uses a story to illustrate an exception to represent the rule (2009, 209).

To conclude, how does all this relate to this thesis on the *Nuzhah*? There are areas where Ibn Ḥajar does explain an issue which can help us to understand it better, in light of the writings of westerners. I showed this in section 5.51 with *sābiq* and *lāḥiq*, in light of what Juynboll observed with regard to the *mu‘ammarūn*. But as I have already stressed, the *Nuzhah* helps because it shows that *ikhṭilāf* is customary in this discipline. It is irrelevant whether its stems from Cairo or Berlin, because knowledge is the prerogative of all, not just Muslims. And Muslims need no better way to believe this than the saying of their Messenger:

Ḥikma is the lost-property of the believer. So wherever he finds it, he is most worthy of it.<sup>288</sup>

The key word in this ḥadīth is *wherever*. When knowledge stems from a non-Muslim, then at the very least, it deserves to be entertained and appreciated. If it is appreciated, then this will result in benefits in another area which we have brought up during the analysis of the *Nuzhah*, the stagnation of the discipline by the ninth century. A convergence of thought between Muslims and non-Muslims will perhaps spark a real, new development in the field for Muslim scholars which, otherwise, has been largely missing since the time of Ibn Ḥajar.

## **6.6. The pedagogical nature of the *Nuzhah*.**

Though the *Nuzhah* is only one book of the hundreds written by Ibn Ḥajar, the commentary has allowed us to some extent to reflect on the teachings methods of the ninth Islamic century, as well as indicate the nature of authorship at that particular period. So in this section, we will highlight the pedagogical nature of the *Nuzhah*.

### **6.6.1. How did the *Nuzhah* come about?**

Importantly, we need to first establish whether Ibn Ḥajar actually wrote the book. What this means is to enquire whether the *Nuzhah* was the result of his lectures and the subsequent notes from his students, or whether he actually dedicated time to pen the book

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<sup>288</sup> *Sunan Ibn Māja*, Book of *Zuhd*.

personally. There is no explicit indication from Ibn Ḥajar himself or later scholars commenting on the *Nuzhah* that provides an answer to this question, and therefore our own investigation is required.

There are clues to suggest that the *Nuzhah* was the direct result of him teaching ḥadīth in the various institutions, rather than direct authorship. For instance:

- a. In section 5.3.1, we first entertained this possibility, upon the observation that the section on *mutawātir* was muddled, repetitive and excessively detailed. In short, the wording in the *Nuzhah* suggested that it had been dictated rather than hand-written personally.
- b. He is not uniform in detail. For instance, at the beginning of the *Nuzhah*, he meticulously defines *ṭarīq*, *isnād* and *matn*, including the grammatical background to the word. The same attention is not given later during the book. In section 5.65, he gives five to six examples in detail where the name of the reporter's shaykh coincides with the disciples. In the same section, the other variations are not given the same attention.
- c. There is precedence for such methodology in the work of Ibn Ṣalāḥ, *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth*. In the introduction to the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Ḥajar notes that Ibn Ṣalāḥ's book came about:

When he took over teaching at al-Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya. He refined the fields of ḥadīth (in this piece) and dictated it bit by bit. For this reason, its order was not achieved in a suitable manner.

In other words, Ibn Ṣalāḥ did not intend to write '*Ulūm al-ḥadīth per se*'; rather it was gelled together from his lectures. Ibn Ḥajar's own *Fath al-bārī* came about from public teaching sessions.<sup>289</sup> It is quite possible that the *Nuzhah* was formed in a similar manner.

d. It would have been easier and more time-saving to produce the books from lecturing. In chapter two, it was shown how Ibn Ḥajar wrote over one hundred and fifty books and treatises (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 123), including the lengthy *Fath al-bārī*. He also spent much of his adult life teaching in various institutions and fulfilling judicial duties. Rather than lecturing and writing on ḥadīth, he merged the two duties with the help of some students.

My own opinion is that Ibn Ḥajar did actually intend to write the *Nuzhah* as a book *per se*, based on the following observations:

- a. Certainly the section on *mutawātir* is muddled and repetitive, but the same cannot be said for the remaining book. The rest of the book does follow a set pattern, with little deviation from the subject matter.
- b. Ibn Ḥajar clarifies in the introduction of the *Nuzhah* (section 4.0) that his friends approached him, requesting a brief overview of the discipline. This first resulted in the *Nukhbah*, which only consists of a few pages. The significantly short-length of the *Nukhbah*, I believe, made it impossible for it to have resulted from lectures.
- c. The lack of uniformity in the *Nuzhah* is largely justified. The decision to define *ṭarīq*, *isnād* and *matn* meticulously at the beginning made sense because these were terms that would be repeated often throughout the rest of the *Nuzhah*. Therefore it made sense to clarify their meaning and usage early on, to create ease for the reader for the rest of the

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<sup>289</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III: 778.

book. Certain sections are longer than others. But for the most part, this was due to the importance of the subject area, not because of inconsistency. The sections on *ṣaḥīḥ*, *bid‘a*, *riwāya bi-al-ma‘nā* and *mawḍū‘* are longer but they are also more important.

d. Certainly, Ibn Ḥajar was a busy man and must have found it difficult to find quality time to pen the *Nuzḥah* individually. But he was also known to work fast. For example, he finished *al-Mu‘jam al-ṣaghīr* of Ṭabarānī in one sitting between *Zuhr* and ‘*Aṣr* (al-Qari 1994, 52).

e. The precedence of Ibn Ṣalāḥ’s ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* as a book written from lecture notes is questionable, despite Ibn Ḥajar’s insistence on it. According to Ibn Ḥajar, because Ibn Ṣalāḥ ‘dictated it bit by bit’ he feels ‘its order was not achieved in a suitable manner’. But I believe that the order and sequence of ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* has few shortcomings and rarely does the work suggest it came about due to lecture notes. Dr. Eerik Dickinson reached the same conclusion. He translated the entire ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* into English and wrote articles on Ibn Ṣalāḥ. He believes that ‘it is unclear to me what evidence Ibn Ḥajar had at his disposal indicating that Ibn Ṣalāḥ wrote the book in the Ashrafiyya’ (2002, 484 (footnote 19). On this basis, Ibn Ḥajar may have been mistaken. Only the timing may have coincided between ‘*Ulūm al-ḥadīth* and teaching at al-Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya.

This debate may be seen as trivial, but it perhaps gives an insight into early Muslim academia and methodology. It indicates that the scholars of that period felt the need to provide education not only to their contemporaries through lectures, but for future generations too in the forms of books and treatises. Religiously, we can say that Ibn Ḥajar wanted to leave *ṣadaqa jāriya* for later generations, an act during his lifetime that would

bring him benefit, reward and indeed fame after his lifetime. Politically, Ibn Hajar's climate meant that he could not depend on teaching and high-profile posts to enhance his reputation alone. He did occupy respected posts in Cairo, but the competition between fellow religious scholars and the changing hands in power at state level meant a lack of continuity and real success (Broadbridge 1999, pp. 87-8). Writing books gave him a sense of independency, where the success would lie in his own hands, not in the hands of the ruling elite.

#### **6.6.1. The target audience of the *Nuzhah*.**

During the Mamluk period, ḥadīth studies was still important. There were many notable seats of learning during this period in Cairo, such as al-Madrassa al-Shaykhūniyya, al-Madrassa al-Jamāliyya, al-Madrassa al-Ṣalāhiyya and al-Madrassa al-Kāmiliyya. Ibn Hajar taught ḥadīth to large crowds in all of these places. The list of renowned scholars that were produced under the guardianship of Ibn Hajar – the likes of al-Sakhāwī (d. 902) for example – suggests his success as a teacher.<sup>290</sup>

However, like it was shown in section 5.67 and 5.45, there was also an interest in ḥadīth studies for social reasons. Hearing ḥadīth from esteemed scholars was the path to upward social mobility in an otherwise rigid class system.

Of the two, it seems the *Nuzhah* was aimed at the madrasa crowd, rather than the general public who saw only the social benefits of the discipline. This is mainly, I believe, because of the depth of the book. Admittedly, it is a foundational book in the discipline

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<sup>290</sup> Al-Qārī (1992) provides a detailed list of his most famous students (pp. 33-37).



but in many places, the text seems to appeal to an audience who will go on to develop a long-term and real interest in ḥadīth. This is why:

- In approximately a fifth of the topic areas he covers in the *Nuzhah*, Ibn Hajar asks readers to refer to additional books and treatises on that particular type. Implicitly, the *Nuzhah* is suggesting that the book is the first step on the road, not the end destination.
- Two sections refer to *balāgha* terms like *jins* and *faṣl*, section 5.9., on the definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* and in section 5.41., on the definition of *Ṣaḥābī*. Understanding this requires added proficiency in other fields of knowledge too. Similarly the section on *khbar* (5.2) covers matters pertaining to Arabic grammar, which again suggests the *Nuzhah* targeted a higher calibre of an audience.
- Some sections required a good, retentive memory. This is particularly the case for the concluding sections that mention different aspects of the narrators. The section ‘Knowing the paidonymics of the reporters and other related matters’ (5.65) contains dozens of narrator names that require learning.
- Perhaps the biggest indication that he did not aim the *Nuzhah* at laymen is that he indirectly criticizes them in his book. When highlighting the difference between *al-‘ilm al-naẓarī* and *al-‘ilm al-qat’ī*, he writes that laypersons do not ‘have the ability of contemplation (*naẓar*)’. Elsewhere in *al-Durar*, Ibn Ḥajar’s writings as a biographer did show some dismay towards commoners. Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, a low class commoner, did not impress Ibn Ḥajar at all. In *al-Durar*, he shows his feelings towards him when he describes his death in 823. ‘And in this year, God freed us from him’, he wrote (Perho 2011, 32).

In the ninth Islamic century, Muslims were interested in ḥadīth studies for different reasons. The *Nuzhah*'s sequence and excellent layout suggests it was aimed at the genuine students of ḥadīth, not the ones who saw the financial and social benefit in the practice. Had it been aimed at the commoners, it may have been much shorter in length and certainly less detailed. In section 5.66, Ibn Hajar mentions the etiquettes the shaykh and disciple should adopt when studying ḥadīth. Again the section appeals to the genuine seekers, not the ones seeking fame and fortune through ḥadīth. In his work *Talbīs Iblīs*, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) was critical of the ḥadīth students 'who spent as much as fifty years on writing, memorizing and collecting *ḥadīths* without understanding their contents (Makdisi 1981, 212). The *Nuzhah* aimed to eradicate this lack of understanding, not perpetuate it.

To conclude this sub-section, there is sufficient indication in the *Nuzhah* to highlight the good authorship undertaken during the ninth Islamic century. It was written for a public audience, not a private one. In the past, ḥadīth scholars were required to write for dignitaries and kings. For example, al-Hākim's *al-Iklīl* on ḥadīth was written for an amīr. The *Nuzhah* was not written with such an audience in mind. In terms of length, the *Nuzhah* shows wisdom and care. It is not long and over-detailed like the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, nor is it too short like al-Mayyānī's *Mā lā yasa'u al-muḥaddith jahluhū*. Rather it strikes a good balance between accessibility and required detail. The book indicates that ḥadīth studies in the ninth Islamic century was arranged well and structured logically. In the *Nuzhah*, all the rejected traditions are mentioned together, the accepted together and all the matters related to the *isnād* are mentioned together too. Where there

is an apparent lack of sequence, it is justified. I indicated in section 5.39 how the discussion on *ḥasan li-ghayrih* was delayed by Ibn Ḥajar for a legitimate and very good reason.

The fact that the *Nuzhah* is still used today in Islamic seminaries throughout the world as an introduction to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* tells us two things. My feeling is that this is a testimony to the *Nuzhah*'s clarity, good arrangement and its balanced length. Alternatively, it could be an indication of apathy from Muslims after Ibn Ḥajar to re-think and re-structure *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*.

### **6.7. The climate of Ibn Ḥajar's time and its influence on the *Nuzhah*.**

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the *Nuzhah*, not Ibn Ḥajar himself. If the intention was to analyse him personally, then certainly a biographical account would have been the better option, a thesis that enquired into his life, works and personality in detail. Rather my aim has been to focus on one particular work of his, and ask what this indicates of the ninth Islamic century. Was the *Nuzhah* reflective of the type of material being produced during that period? Who was the target audience of this important work? Was it his own people or did he intend the work to be a universal treatise on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* for all people living in all times? So in this sub-section, an overview will be presented of the climate of Ibn Ḥajar's era and how this may have affected his *Nuzhah*.

Before we proceed, there is a degree of precaution that needs to be considered.

Methodologically, there are two problems that we must keep in mind as we commence this section:

a. Ibn Ḥajar lived to a ripe age of seventy-nine. He was known to be swift in teaching and writing. Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote that he was known to have completed the teaching of *Sunan Ibn Māja* in just four sittings (al-Wajīdī 1996, 14). When we combine these two facts, then it means that the *Nuzhah* as a literary project made up only a very small part of his life in particular, and his era in general. Therefore we must show precaution in making sweeping generalisations about him and his era, based on the *Nuzhah* alone.

b. Ibn Ḥajar wrote over one hundred and fifty books during his lifetime. Larger projects such as *Fath al-bārī* took up a large amount of his time. Other works of his were much shorter in length. Therefore it is difficult to make statement x about Ibn Ḥajar and his time on the basis of statement y in the *Nuzhah*. The *Nuzhah* was only one of many books he penned.

Despite these two constraints, an attempt will be made to highlight how the *Nuzhah* gave us an insight into the Mamluk period during the ninth Islamic century. At the same time, I will be cautious, owing to the two points mentioned above. Also, I will not in this particular section indulge in what the *Nuzhah* told us about the *academic* climate of the ninth Islamic century. The reason is because this has been covered in section 6.4 (The *Nuzhah*: between stagnation and development).

In my opinion, the *Nuzhah* indicated the following about the ninth Islamic century:

2. The *Nuzhah* indicates that the *isnād* was used as a social tool during that period.

In section 6.1 of this chapter, it was mentioned how the *Nuzhah* – like so many other ‘ilm al-ḥadīth works – did not give the *matn* its due attention. The section also entertained the possibility that rather than underselling the *matn*, the *Nuzhah* oversold the *isnād*.

Different reasons were given for the possible over-emphasis of the *isnād*, including the idea of ittiṣāliyya. This idea looked at the *isnād* as a religious and spiritual tool. Here, we view the *isnād* as a social tool.

The first point to note is that during the Mamluk period in Cairo, upward social mobility was very difficult (Perho 2011, 19). Using Ibn Ḥajar’s own *al-Durar* to assess the climate, Perho suggested that ‘a commoner (‘*āmma*) only rarely reached the status of a notable’ (2011, 19). Elsewhere he describes the commoner’s ascent as ‘difficult and infrequent’ (2011, 21). However, there was an exception to this general rule. If there was any class of people who could shatter the glass ceiling, it was the transmitters of traditions, the *muḥaddiths*, whose ‘fame rested in their ability to memorize ḥadīths and pass them onto others’ (Perho 2011, 21). In his conclusion, he observes that ‘most of the commoners who gained prestige in scholarly circles were *muḥaddiths* (2011, 34).

It was not only the social status at stake. Ḥadīth was also lucrative for the fortunate few. Transmitters who possessed a rare ḥadīth or a shorter, elevated *isnād* could charge substantial fees to transmit in esteemed seats of learning. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ asserted that a

ḥadīth master possessing elevated *isnāds* that wished to teach at al-Ashrafiyya would be given two *dirhams* every day, and upon completion, would receive thirty *dinars*, each worth seven *dirhams* (Dickinson 2002, 490).

For the majority of the Muslims in that era, it was the elevated chain (*'uluww*) that became the social pastime. Certainly the pursuit of elevated chains was not something unique to the Mamluk period, but in fact it had been a problem for many centuries. It was a precious commodity even in the third Islamic century (Dickinson 2002, 491). Al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/970) wrote about it in detail in his ḥadīth manual *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*. The fact that it had now become a means of social upward mobility during Ibn Ḥajar's time suggests it had become more endemic than ever before. The masses were interested in ḥadīth for a very superficial reason and had neglected its religious value. The purpose was no longer to serve the primary function of the *isnād*, which is the *matn*. Owing to this climate – where seeking elevation became a social pastime and where ḥadīth studies became undermined – Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhah* was a plea for the Muslims to take the discipline seriously once again. There are many sections which implicitly at least, tell us that the *Nuzhah* tried to mute those who viewed ḥadīth in a social pastime. For example:

i. One of the enduring practices of Muslims throughout the middle and later medieval period was to bring their children to ḥadīth circles and then to ensure their attendance was duly recorded. The problems associated with this practice have been amply highlighted in section 5.67. The reason behind it was so that the child could enjoy the highest degree of elevation (Dickinson 2002, 498). Taking the children to such circles meant there were

fewer intermediaries in the *isnād*. Hardly no consideration was given as to whether the child could understand what he was participating in and whether, in fact, he knew what was being recited. Dickinson cites Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ in giving one appalling case where ‘a student tells of attending a class without even knowing which of those present was granting the audition (2002, 498).

Owing to the depth in which Ibn Ḥajar covered this in the *Nuzhah*, the attendance of absent-minded children was still a persistent problem during his period too. Interestingly he does not prohibit it outright, most probably because it had become such a common feature during his time that outlawing it would lead to controversy and outcry. Discreetly, he reminds the reader that reports that a child takes in his youth still requires the shaykh’s permission when he eventually passes it on. In a similar fashion, he steers clear from providing a definitive age after which a child can attend ḥadīth gatherings, though he does ask Muslims to enable youngsters to reach an age of *tamyīz*, or differentiation. Were it not for the prevailing practice of taking young children to ḥadīth gatherings for the purpose of elevation, it is seriously questionable whether this discussion would have been even mentioned in the *Nuzhah*. In the early period of collection and compilation, children attending such ḥadīth circles was unheard of and certainly unproductive. The great-grandfather of Abū al-Qāsim al-Baghawī (d. 241/829) started to take the latter to ḥadīth classes when he was ten and a half, which for that period was seen as the youngest age (Dickinson 2002, 498). Early ḥadīth masters ensured that their attendees had mastered disciplines like ‘Islamic Law, religious practices and grammar’ before sitting in ḥadīth gatherings (Azami 1977, 23). It is only because of it developing into a social practice did

it now warrant a mention in the *Nuzhah*. Therefore, the discussion in the *Nuzhah* on the age of reporting was a product of its time.

ii. Ibn Ḥajar's section on *ṣiyagh al-adā'* (5.55), *wijāda* (5.57) and *i'lām* informs us how the practice of hearing a report and passing it on to others started as a very rigid system, only for it to develop into a farce. In the early days, hearing a ḥadīth from an established shaykh and reciting it to him for verification purposes was the lauded practice. Anything else was frowned upon. The Caliph 'Umar was reported to have said:

Whenever one of you finds a book containing knowledge that you did not hear from a scholar, place it in a container of water and soak it in there until the black ink [of the pen] becomes mixed with the white [of the paper] (Dickinson 2002, 488).

By the seventh Islamic century, *ijazā* from a teacher took on a very vague form (Dickinson 2002, 488) and by Ibn Ḥajar's time, a ridiculous one. This is shown by the fact that in the *Nuzhah*, he discusses the ruling for when someone says 'I give permission to whom shall soon be born' 'I permit 'Abd Allāh to report from me', (when there is no clarification which 'Abd Allāh is being referred to) and 'I give permission to all my contemporaries to report from me'. Ibn Ḥajar would have only felt the need to discuss these forms of *ijazā* if they existed in the first place. And there are sufficient examples to show that these absurd for permission did prevail in his time. Again, this shows how the contents of the *Nuzhah* were shaped by the sorry state of affairs during that period.



iii. Ibn Ḥajar's section on travelling in pursuit of ḥadīth (5.69) is admittedly short. But it is still indicative enough to criticise those who sought 'excessive *shaykhs*' rather than 'excessive reports'. Again, it suggests that the Mamluk period was one where ḥadīth studies was in demand for the wrong reasons. Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) acknowledged this when he commented:

The young and old, the poor and rich, and the ignorant and the learned all participate in it... [though] the study of ḥadīth [had become] something other than ḥadīth (Dickinson 2002, 489).

Rather than the disciple travelling to seek the shaykh, the shaykh would sometimes travel extensively to seek the largest and most-lucrative crowds (Dickinson 2002, 495). Again, it shows how ḥadīth had become a sport in the later medieval ages.

iv. Near the end of the *Nuzḥah*, a section is included which outlines the required etiquettes of the shaykh and disciple (5.66). Undoubtedly, this advice was tendered from the very early beginnings of ḥadīth reporting and collection and so in this respect, Ibn Ḥajar continued this important teaching. But the exact nature of the advice given in the *Nuzḥah* suggests that he was criticising his contemporaries who had lost the religious value attached to ḥadīth. As it was mentioned in section 5.66, Mālik attached great importance to his gatherings and ensured he and his audience were fully aware in the importance of the subject material. Acts like applying perfume and performing ritual ablution before ḥadīth reporting was standard practice back then. By Ibn al-Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) time, the gatherings were occupied by Muslims falling asleep and talking to

one another (Dickinson 2002, 498). Based on the fact that Ibn Ḥajar in the *Nuzhah* reminds readers to ‘sit with dignity’ and ‘not to report whilst standing’ or ‘in the streets’, it would be accurate to say that standards had declined drastically by his era.

This was the case with the students of ḥadīth and in some cases, the state of the teacher was no better. Ibn Ḥajar’s student al-Sakhāwī complained of inept readings from uncollated texts stemming from incompetent teachers during his time. But he also adds that it was tolerated in order to perpetuate the custom of the using the *isnād* (Dickinson 2002, 501).

v. The section on ‘knowing the method of writing and recording’ (5.68) could be interpreted as an appeal to the masses to pay due attention to the ḥadīth circles. In this part, he asks readers to avoid distractions like ‘copying, talking and tiredness’. In earlier times, Muslims went to ḥadīth gatherings to learn. It seems that by the ninth Islamic century, Muslims went to be seen. Ibn Ḥajar’s advice in the *Nuzhah* attempted to correct this feature.

vi. The section on *i’tibār* (5.13) too can be viewed as reflective of Ibn Ḥajar’s time. Here was an appeal to engage in finding corroborations for existing reports and to actively engage in cross-checking different reports. This, for Ibn Ḥajar, was the real purpose of ḥadīth studies in the ninth Islamic century. It was not a social pastime that attracted the ignorant and short-sighted.

To conclude, the pursuit of elevation during the era of Ibn Ḥajar had resulted in some damning repercussions on the discipline. Undoubtedly, this was not specific to his time, but it had become an unhealthy obsession for many centuries prior to him. The

justification for it was sought on religious and spiritual grounds since there was no means by which it could be justified academically. Al-Sakhāwī voiced this sentiment when he said that ‘those who acquire an elevated *isnād* as children hope in their old age to belong to a generation better than the one they are in or the one after it and following it’ (Dickinson 2002, 504).

2. Forgery and weak reports were still a problem during that period. This is due to the fact that a large proportion of his work was dedicated to the rejected traditions and the reasons behind them. The added emphasis and clarification from Ibn Ḥajar on this area suggests that the public still did not fully understand what constituted a rejected report and why they could not be used for evidence. In *al-Durar*, Ibn Ḥajar includes the entry of Waḍḍāḥ who in 753, claimed that he was a Prophet (Perho 2011, 33). This shows that in the eight and ninth century, there was a degree of religious turbulence and indeed ignorance. One of the tricks of such imposters was to justify their claims through prophetic traditions. An example was the forged report:

I am the last Prophet. There is no Prophet after me. Unless Allah wills.

Within the section on the rejected in the *Nuzḥah*, extensive emphasis is given to *bid‘a*. Ibn Ḥajar’s feeling on *bid‘a* is one of tolerance and leniency. He suggests that in spite of sectarian differences, Muslims should collectively take transmissions from one another for the sake of a common goal, namely the protection of ḥadīth literature. In a similar style, the presence of different sectarian groups during his time may have been

encouraged to put aside their differences for the sake of a common goal, a harmonious society. Ibn Ḥajar displayed this attitude of tolerance himself; he took knowledge from the Zāhirīs (literalists) (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 87).

After the documentation of *ḥadīths* centuries earlier, is it possible that forgeries still presented a problem and a matter for grave concern for the likes of Ibn Ḥajar? In my mind, absolutely. In fact, it is still a major problem for Muslims within themselves in this day and age. Different denominations refute and counter-refute the beliefs of their counterparts by frequently deeming reports as forgeries. A good example of this is the practice of kissing the thumbs and placing them on the eyes upon hearing Muḥammad's name, based on a ḥadīth which reports that Abū Bakr did this in the presence of the Prophet. The ḥadīth does have some authenticity to it, as declared by al-Sakhāwī in *al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana*. But because it is a practice which today has become a means of differentiating the Sufī Muslims from their Wahhabi counterparts, the latter have declared the report has a blatant forgery (Zaheer 2011, pp. 140-1).

3. Particularly in the early parts of the *Nuzhah*, there was a marked absence of *fiqh*-related matters. Three possible reasons behind this were outlined in the section on *mursal* (5.19). Of these reasons, it is possible that Ibn Ḥajar's own personal experience in *fiqh*-related matters was the main catalyst behind its absence in the *Nuzhah*. In short, *fiqh* became a source of embarrassment for Ibn Ḥajar. The manner in which he was recruited for judicial positions only then to be ousted was disruptive at even comical. At the very least, there was no continuity whatsoever. The Encyclopaedia of Islam informs us that:

A judgeship, which he did not accept, was offered to him in the Yemen in his early years. Reluctantly, he had been holding an associate judgeship in conjunction with Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī when his great opportunity came on 27 Muharram 827. He was dismissed for the first time less than eleven months later, but the office of Chief Judge of Egypt (and Syria) remained his for a combined total of about twenty-one years. He was reinstated on 2 Rajab 828; dismissed on 26 Ṣafar 833, and reinstated on 26 Jamāda I 834; dismissed on 5 Shawwāl 840, and reinstated on 6 Shawwāl 841; dismissed in Muharram 844, and reinstated on 26 Ṣafar 844; dismissed on 15 Dhū al-Qa‘da 846 and reinstated after two days (followed by another even briefer period out of office in Rabī‘ I 848); dismissed on 11 Muharram 849 (after the collapse of a minaret with much loss of life, when attempts were made to hold the office of the Chief Judge responsible for the safety of the structure), and reinstated on 5 Ṣafar 850; dismissed in Dhū al-Ḥajja 850, and reinstated on 8 Rabī‘ II 852. He lost the office finally on 25 Jamāda II 852. A few months later... he died. (vol. III, 777)

This experience contrasts widely with the discipline of ḥadīth. Beginning with al-Shaykhūniyya in 808/1405 until Zayniyyah in 851/1447, Ibn Ḥajar had a trouble-free time in teaching ḥadīth. At the ṣūfī lodges (khanqah) of Baybars in Cairo, he taught ḥadīth for over twenty years. His most prized work was *Fath al-bārī*, a product of teaching ḥadīth. This brought him unparalleled fame and fortune, even before he had completed it. The kings and dignitaries of the time requested his *Fath al-bārī* for their

scholars to learn and teach. It is said that it was then sold for three hundred *dinārs*. When it was finally finished in 842/1438, a great celebration was held in Cairo, in the presence of leading Cairean dignitaries, scholars and judges (al-Wajīdī 1996, 15).

Thus this love for ḥadīth and distrust of the judiciary (and not necessarily *fiqh per se*, as he did write many books on *fiqh*-related topics) may have seriously affected the contents of the *Nuzhah* and shaped its final form. This theory has weight when we observe the lengthy praise he directs to al-Bukhārī and his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the *Nuzhah*.

4. There are other instances where Ibn Ḥajar as a person influenced the *Nuzhah*. The above point regarding the judiciary centres more on his experiences. Upon analysing his personality, character and outlook, there are indications that these traits found themselves way into the *Nuzhah*.

To a considerable extent, Ibn Ḥajar was a man of good traits. In *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, al-Atabākī described him with words such as ‘dignity, radiance and deliberation’. He added that:

He rarely spoke to a person in a manner that would be disliked by him. In fact he would behave well and forgive the one who was evil towards him (1992, 15: 259).

His student al-Sakhāwī noted his excellent manners and his veneration of the elderly (2: 39). The *Nuzhah* too has won admirers for displaying similar traits. It is largely non-confrontational and not provocative. When he disagrees with an opinion, he refutes it

mildly and with respect. In fact, there are places where he mentions the actual criticism minus the person who advocated it. In this respect, it did differ from earlier works of the same genre. Dickinson writes:

Almost all of the works in the genre of *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* begin with condemnations of the sorry state into which ḥadīth scholarship had fallen. The *Muqaddima* [of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ] does too... (2002, 485).

Rightly so, Dickinson also points to al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *al-Kifāya* as an example of a treatise bemoaning the moral outrage of his time in ḥadīth affairs (2002, 485). There is no indication of such condemnation in the *Nuzḥah*. In fact, his work commences with praise of the efforts his predecessors exerted in the discipline.

5. Related to the above point is the political climate he resided in. Undoubtedly, it was a turbulent time, when a scholar's success depended on his proximity to the state. His character was key in overcoming these hurdles and focussing on religious matters as much as possible.

## 7.0. Conclusion.

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out to provide an accessible and accurate translation of the *Nuzhah*, coupled with a critical commentary. The translation, I believe, is an accurate rendition of the original Arabic. The benefit and result of the commentary has been outlined clearly in the previous chapter. The themes that I referred to there – *matn* criticism, the technical terms, seniority, between stagnation and development, the convergence and divergence of Muslim and non-Muslim thought, the pedagogical nature of the *Nuzhah* and the climate of the ninth Islamic century – could only have been unearthed by mostly reading between the lines of the *Nuzhah*. They were all intricate and hidden points that needed close attention and analysis. With confidence I can say that this is what differentiates my commentary from the many produced by Muslim scholars on the *Nuzhah*. The likes of Aḥmadayn, al-Munāwī, Mighālī, al-Qārī, al-‘Uthaymin and al-Wajīdī all wrote highly-coveted works specifically on the *Nuzhah*. None really questioned the material in front of them but merely set about directing undiluted praise at the work. I too agree that it is a brilliant piece of work. But reading between the lines and setting the work within its climate tells us show much more about Ibn Ḥajar, the field of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* and why the work has stood the test of time academically. In comparison to non-Muslim works on *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, again I believe my work shows a fresh outlook and originality. This is because this work has analysed *‘ilm al-ḥadīth* in a holistic manner that covers all aspects of it, not just on a particular area like the forged reports or *rijāl* literature.



I will admit that in many parts of the main section, I have been overtly critical of the *Nuzhah*. In many of these places, Ibn Ḥajar is not at fault. He merely outlined a discipline that he inherited from his ancestors. If seeking elevation distracted Muslims from the real purpose of ḥadīth in his time, then this was also a problem in centuries before him. The respect for senior figures in ḥadīth studies (and then the subsequent acceptance of their findings without question) had existed from the early period of ḥadīth collection. If Ibn Ḥajar openly praised the brilliance of al-Bukhārī, then so did al-‘Iyāḍ, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Ḥākim before him.

In spite of these shortcomings and criticisms, the *Nuzhah* does offer a brilliant, holistic account of the discipline. We know that the *Nuzhah* is not a true reflection of Ibn Ḥajar’s knowledge of ḥadīth; he wrote separate treatises on countless areas of the discipline which are only mentioned briefly in the *Nuzhah*. But he showed great skill as a writer to condense his vast expertise and authority in the field into one, accessible and relatively-brief book, which is perfect – to this very day – as an introduction to *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*. Most observers will agree that it is easier to expand, harder to shorten and summarise. On this basis alone, Ibn Ḥajar deserves praise for providing such a clear guide to the discipline in a short work. Deliberately, I presented three diagrams that (i) summarised how the reports reached us (section 5.8.2.) (ii) summarised the *maqbul* reports (5.16.3) (iii) summarised the rejected traditions (5.38.2). The purpose was to show how simple the *Nuzhah* is. Over 70% of the book can be easily condensed into three brief and clear diagrams. This is a sign of good authorship (especially for a book that is five hundred years old) and indicates why from London to Lahore, the *Nuzhah* is still in demand in

Muslim seminaries. Perhaps this is the primary reason why Ibn Ḥajar himself was proud of the *Nuzhah*. He wrote hundreds of books during his lifetime, but according to his disciple al-Sakhāwī, he only showed pride towards a handful; *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, its introduction *al-Mushtabih*, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, *Lisān al-mīzān* and the *Nuzhah* (al-Munāwī 1999, 1: 27).

The tone of the *Nuzhah* too is worthy of mention too. It is straight-forward and un-confrontational. His criticism of the field in general or certain individuals is rare. In this sense, it has some similarities with the *Mā Lā Yasa'u* of al-Mayyānīshī (d. 581/1185), which Librande says presents 'no controversy or variant or opposing points of view for his readers' (1982, 39). Primarily, I think this has come about because of his character and good personality, which then trickled itself into his works.

Every work, even if it is to the smallest extent, is a product of its time and place. This thesis itself would have been different in contents had it been written three hundred years ago or in modern-day Cairo. The same can be said of the *Nuzhah* too. Undoubtedly, he did live in a politically turbulent time. But Ibn Ḥajar's outlook and character was pivotal in dealing with the state in a largely fruitful manner and more importantly for our purpose, allowing little of this to affect his writings in the *Nuzhah*. We learn a substantial amount about the era in which the *Nuzhah* was produced, socially and certainly academically and less so about the political climate from the *Nuzhah* alone. Perhaps a work like *al-Durar* would have been more useful for this purpose.

Personally, the thesis has been a great learning curve. In particular, I have appreciated that good authorship requires a person to ‘step-back’ from his own actuality in order to produce a fair and impartial piece of work. Many Muslim scholars have showed great scepticism towards the non-Muslim literature on ḥadīth, because it is quite critical. This is understandable. A Muslim believes wholeheartedly in the truth of Muḥammad and the religion he bequeathed. This certainly affects his/her academic judgement as it becomes difficult to hear anything that in any way lessens his God-given stature.

I have tried to overcome these hurdles and work as a researcher first and foremost. And I truly believe that Muslims can benefit immensely from non-Muslim interest in ḥadīth. This thesis has gone a long way in persuading me that knowledge is important, produced from Muslims *and* non-Muslims equally.

At the moment, Muslims to a large extent find this a hard pill to swallow. Many Muslim scholars argue that the western academics’ only intention is to belittle Islam, not study it. But the Muslim academics only want to *refute* the western works on Islam, and not appreciate and digest it. In short, if a case is to be made for the importance of Orientalism in the study of *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, then the presence of Occidentalism must also be accepted. If the western academics are guilty of using derogative language against the Muslims, so are the Muslims. Siddiqi writes that Goldziher’s thesis on early ḥadīth was ‘in many ways a characteristic product of his troubled and instinctively polemic mind’(1993, 125). This view itself is difficult to prove and it seems that Siddiqi misunderstood the text.<sup>291</sup> If

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<sup>291</sup> The assertion from Siddiqi is that Ignaz Goldziher ‘privately acknowledged the superiority of Islam’ while remaining a synagogue official. I contacted Professor Gordon Campbell (International Office, the

Azami is to be wholly believed, then Schacht ‘misunderstands the text he quotes’ (1996, 3), he ‘quotes out of context’ (ibid.) and is guilty of ‘frequent methodological errors’ (1996, 17). The name of his book (*On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*) suggests his intention is only to rebuke him.

Non-Muslims too can learn. By observing the *Nuzhah*’s coverage, it can also be deduced that Muslim ḥadīth masters accepted their own fallibility and that of early transmitters. Nowhere do we find a suggestion of perfection. Quite the contrary, the *Nuzhah* extensively refers to reports that have some form of imperfection in them, and how they can be identified. There are twenty categories of the rejected. We are informed of how reports were either mis-spelt or misread. Ibn Ḥajar devotes a large part of his work explaining how to avoid confusion over the names of different reporters. This shows that Muslim ḥadīth masters were critical of the discipline centuries before the appearance of serious western interest. And this point also thus amplifies the need for a work like the *Nuzhah* to be taken seriously by western scholars.

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University of Leicester) regarding this. He believes Siddiqi’s view is a hostile oversimplification. Campbell explained that:

‘The point could usefully be asserted by reference to the famous passage in his Tagebuch:

‘Ich lebte mich denn auch während dieser Wochen so sehr in den mohammedanischen Geist ein, dass ich zuletzt innerlich überzeugt wurde, ich sei selbst Mohammedaner und klug herausfand, dass dies die einzige Religion sei, welche selbst in ihrer doktrinär-offiziellen Gestaltung und Formulierung philosophische Köpfe befriedigen könne. Mein Ideal war es, das Judentum zu ähnlicher rationeller Stufe zu erheben. Der Islam, so lehrte mich meine Erfahrung, sei die einzige Religion, in welcher Aberglaube und heidnische Rudimente nicht durch den Rationalismus, sondern durch die orthodoxe Lehre verpönt werden.’

Here it is in English:

‘In those weeks, I truly entered into the spirit of Islam to such an extent that ultimately I became inwardly convinced that I myself was a Muslim, and judiciously discovered that this was the only religion which, even in its doctrinal and official formulation, can satisfy philosophic minds. My ideal was to elevate Judaism to a similar rational level. Islam, as my experience taught me, is the only religion, in which superstitious and heathen ingredients are not frowned upon by rationalism, but by orthodox doctrine.’ This is a complex position, but I think that he is saying that Judaism could be enriched by drawing on the insights of Islam; Siddiqi’s suggestion of hypocrisy is misplaced.’

My final word is on Ibn Ḥajar and his *Nuzhah*. At the beginning of the thesis, I explained how *Nuzhat al-naẓar* was an expansion on another work of his, *Nukhbat al-fīkar fī muṣṭalaḥ al-athar*. In my mind, the relationship between the *Nuzhah* and the *Nukhbat* captures what the discipline went through as a whole. In the same manner the *Nuzhah* simply added detail to the *Nukhbat*, the later scholars merely added detail to the work of the earlier ones. Ibn Ḥajar marked the terminal end to this process, as his ‘life work constitutes the final summation of the sciences of ḥadīth’<sup>292</sup> And on this point, it is only befitting we remind Muslims of one of the titles associated with Ibn Ḥajar, *Khātam al-ḥuffāẓ* (the seal of the ḥadīth masters). This title is a great compliment to Ibn Ḥajar because it reflects his expertise in ḥadīth. But for subsequent Muslims, the title is anything but complimentary. This is because it suggests that after Ibn Ḥajar, the discipline of ‘ilm al-ḥadīth resigned itself to apathy and passiveness.

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<sup>292</sup> Encyclopaedia of Islam, III:776.

## 8.0. Appendix A; Ibn Ḥajar's Literary Works.

What follows is a list of his known literary works (al-Barrī et al. 1995, 106-111);

1. *Al-Āyāt al-nayyirāt li-al-khawāriq al-mu'jizāt.*
2. *Ittibā' al-athar fī riḥlat Ibn Ḥajar.*
3. *Ithāf al-mahara bi-aṭrāf al-'ashara.*
4. *Al-Itqān fī faḍā'il al-Qur'ān.*
5. *Al-Ajwiba al-mushriqa 'alā al-as'ila al-mufriqa.*
6. *Al-Ihkām li-bayān mā fī al-Qur'ān min ibhām.*
7. *Asbāb al-nuzūl.*
8. *Arba'ūn ḥadīth.*
9. *Al-As'ila al-fā'iqa bi-al-ajwiba al-lā'iqa.*
10. *Al-Istibṣār 'alā al-tā'in al-mu'thār.*
11. *Al-Istidrāk 'alā al-Ḥāfiẓ al-'Irāqī fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Iḥyā'.*
12. *Al-Istidrāk 'alā al-Kāfi al-Shāfi'.*
13. *Al-Iṣāba fī asmā' al-ṣaḥāba.* This is a highly-used and respected biographical dictionary of the Companions of the Prophet.
14. *Aṭrāf al-mukhtāra.*
15. *Aṭrāf al-Ṣaḥīḥayn.*
16. *Aṭrāf al-musnad al-mu'talī bi-aṭrāf al-Musnad al-Ḥanbalī.*
17. *Al-I'jāb bi-bayān al-asbāb.*
18. *Al-I'lām bi-man dhukira fī al-Bukhārī min al-a'lām.*
19. *Al-I'lām bi-man Wallā Miṣr fī al-Islām.*
20. *Al-Iṣṣāḥ bi-takmil al-nukat 'alā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ.*
21. *Al-Afnān fī riwāyat al-Qur'an.*
22. *Iqāmat al-dalā'il 'alā ma'rifat al-awā'il.*
23. *Al-Alqāb.*
24. *Amālī Ibn Ḥajar.*
25. *Al-Imtā' bi al- Arba'īn al-Mutabāyina bi Sharḥ al-Samā'.*
26. *Al-Ināra fī al-ziyāra.*
27. *Inbā' al-ghumr fī anbā' al-'umr.*
28. *Al-Intifā' bi-tartīb al-Dāraquṭnī.*
29. *Intiqāḍ al-i'tirāḍ.* In this book, Ibn Ḥajar answers certain objections made by 'Aynī in his commentary of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Imām al-Bukhārī.
30. *Al-Anwār bi-khaṣā'is al-mukhtār.*
31. *Al-Īnās bi-manāqib al-'Abbās.*
32. *Al-Bidāya wa-al-nihāya.*
33. *Badhl al-mā'ūn bi-faḍl al-tā'ūn.*
34. *Al-Baṣṭ al-mabthūth fī khabar al-Barghūth.*
35. *Bulūgh al-marām min adillat al-aḥkām.* This relates to Shāfi'ī Fiqh.
36. *Bayān al-faṣl bi-mā rujiḥa fīhi al-irsāl 'alā al-waṣl.*
37. *Tabṣīr al-muntabih bī-taḥrīr al-mushtabih.*
38. *Tabyīn al-'ajab bi-mā warada fī faḍl Rajab.*
39. *Tajrīd al-tafsīr.*
40. *Taḥrīr al-mizān.*

41. *Tuhfat ahl al-ḥadīth ‘an shuyūkh al-ḥadīth.*
42. *Tuhfat al-zurrāf bi-awhām al-aṭrāf.*
43. *Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Adhkār li-al-Nawawī.*
44. *Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Arba ‘īn li-al-Nawawī.*
45. *Takhrīj aḥādīth Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Hājib.*
46. *Takhrīj al-Arba ‘īn al-Nawawīyya bi al-asānīd al-‘aliyya.*
47. *Al-Ta’rīj ‘alā al-tadrīj.*
48. *Tarjamat al-Nawawī.*
49. *Tasdīd al-qaws fī Mukhtaṣar Musnad al-Firdaws.*
50. *Al-Taswīq ilā waṣl al-muhimm min al-ta’līq.*
51. *Taṣḥīḥ al-rawḍa.*
52. *Ta’jīl al-manfa‘a bi-riwāyat rijāl al-a’imma al-arba‘a.*
53. *Al-Ta’rīj al-Awhād bi Awhām man Jama‘a Rijāl al-Musnad.*
54. *Ta’rīj ūlī al-taqdīr bi-marātīb al-mawṣūfīn bi-al-tadlīs.*
55. *Ta’rīj al-fī‘a bi-man ‘āsha mi‘a.*
56. *Ta‘aqqubāt ‘alā al-mawḍū‘āt.*
57. *Ta’līq al-ta’līq.*
58. *Taqrīb al-taqrīb.*
59. *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb.*
60. *Taqrīb al-manhaj bi-tartīb al-mudraj.*
61. *Taqwīm al-sinād bi-mudraj al-isnād.*
62. *Al-Tamyīz fī Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Wajīz.*
63. *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb.* This is an encyclopaedia of ḥadīth narrators.
64. *Tadhhīb al-mudraj.*
65. *Tawālī al-ta’sīs bi-ma‘ālī Ibn Idrīs.*
66. *Tawḍīḥ al-mushtabih li-al-azdī fī al-ansāb.*
67. *Al-Tawfīq bi-ta’līq al-ta’līq.*
68. *Al-Jawāb al-jalīl ‘an ḥukm balad al-khalīl.*
69. *Al-Jawāb al-shāfi‘ ‘an al-su‘āl al-khāfi.*
70. *Al-Khiṣāl al-mukaffara li-al-dhunūb al-muqaddama wa-al-mu‘akkhara.*
71. *Al-Khiṣāl al-wārīda bi-ḥusn al-ittiṣāl.*
72. *Al-Dirāya fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Hidāya.*
73. *Al-Durar.*
74. *Al-Durar al-kāmina fī a’yān al-mi‘a al-thāmina.* This is a biographical dictionary of leading figures of the eighth century.
75. *Dīwān shi‘r.*
76. *Dīwān manzūr al-durar.*
77. *Dhayl al-durar al-kāmina.*
78. *Radd al-muḥrim ‘an al-Muslim.*
79. *Al-Risāla al-‘izzīya fī al-ḥisāb.*
80. *Raf‘ al-iṣr ‘an quḍāt Miṣr.*
81. *Al-Zahr al-maṭlūl fī bayān al-ḥadīth al-ma‘lūl.*
82. *Al-Zahr al-naḍir fī anbā’ al-khaḍir.*
83. *Al-Saba‘ al-nayyirāt fī saba‘ as’ila ‘an al-sayyid al-sharīf fī mabāḥith al-mawḍū‘.*
84. *Salūt thabat kalūt.*
85. *Sharḥ al-Arba ‘īn al-Nawawīyya.*

86. *Sharḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. He never completed this work.
87. *Sharḥ manāsik al-minhāj*.
88. *Sharḥ minhāj al-Nawawī*.
89. *Shifā' al-ghilal fī bayān al-'ilal*.
90. *Al-Shams al-muthīra fī ma'rifat al-Kabīra*.
91. *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*.
92. *'Arā'is al-usās fī mukhtaṣar al-asās*.
93. *'Ashāriyāt al-ashyākh*.
94. *'Ashara aḥādīth 'ashāriyya al-isnād*.
95. *'Ishrat al-āshir*.
96. *Faṭḥ al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.<sup>293</sup>
97. *Faḍā'il shahr rajab*.
98. *Fihrist marwiyyāt*.
99. *Fawā'id al-iḥtiṣāl fī bayān aḥwāl al-rijāl al-mazkūrīn fī al-Bukhārī*.
100. *Al-Fawā'id al-jumma fī man yujaddid li-hādhihī al-umma*.
101. *Qadhā al-'Ayn min naẓm gharīb al-bayn*.
102. *Al-Qaṣāra fī al-ḥadīth*.
103. *Al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb 'an al-musnad*.
104. *Al-Kāff al-Shāff fī taḥrīr aḥādīth al-Kusshāf*.
105. *Kashf al-siḥr 'an ḥukm al-ṣalāḥ ba'd al-witr*.
106. *Ladhdhat al-'aysh bi-jam' turuq ḥadīth al-a'imma min Quraysh*.
107. *Lisān al-mīzān*.
108. *Al-Majma' al-mu'assas fī al-mu'jam al-mufahris*.
109. *Mukhtaṣar al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya li-Ibn Kathīr*.
110. *Mukhtaṣar tahdhīb al-kamāl*.
111. *Al-Marjama al-Ghaythiyya fī al-Tarjuma al-Laythiyya*.
112. *Mazīd al-naf' bi mā ruḥjiḥa fī hi al-waqf 'alā al-rafa'*.
113. *Al-Musalsal bi al-awwaliyya bi-turuq 'aliyya*.
114. *Al-Musnad al-mu'talī bi aṭrāf al-Ḥanbalī*.
115. *Al-Mushtabih*.
116. *Al-Maṭālib al-'āliya min riwāyat al-masānīd al-thamāniyya*.
117. *Al-Maṭālib al-'āliya fī zawā'id al-thamāniyya*.
118. *Al-Muqtarib fī bayān al-muḍtarib*.
119. *Al-Maqṣid al-aḥmad fī man kunyatuhū Abū al-Faḍl wa-ismuhū Aḥmad*.
120. *Al-Mumti' fī mansak al-mutamatti'*.
121. *Al-Minḥa fīma 'allaqa bi-hī al-Shāfi'ī 'alā al-ṣiḥḥa*.
122. *Mansik al-ḥajj*.
123. *Al-Naba' al-anba' fī binā' al-Ka'ba*.
124. *Nukhbat al-Fikar fī muṣṭalah ahl al-athar*.
125. *Nuzhat al-albāb fī al-ansāb*.

<sup>293</sup> This is perhaps the *magnum opus* of his literary works, a detailed commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām al-Bukhārī. He began this project in 817/1414, as he taught the *Ṣaḥīḥ* to his Ḥadīth students in Cairo. His disciples would record his dictations and soon the works took on the form of a book. Fifteen years after he began this work, the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy requested a copy of the works, and the first three volumes were duly sent to him by Ibn Hajar. When it was finished in 842/1438, a great celebration was held in Cairo, in the presence of leading Cairene dignitaries (al-Wajīdī 1996, 15).



126. *Nuzhat al-qulūb fī ma‘rifat al-mubdal ‘an al-maqlūb.*
127. *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawdīḥ nukhbat al-fikar.*
128. *Al-Nukat al-ḥadīthiyya ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ.*
129. *Nihāyat al-taqrīb wa-takmīl al-tahdhīb bi-al-tahdhīb.*
130. *Al-Nayyirāt al-sab‘ dīwan Ibn Ḥajar.*
131. *Hidāyat al-ruwāt ilā takhrīj al-maṣābīḥ wa-al-mishkāṭ.*
132. *Hady al-sārī li muqaddimat fath al-bārī.*

Al-Munāwī – in addition to the aforementioned works – has also ascribed the following to Ibn Ḥajar (1999, 1: pp. 123-46);

133. *Nuzhat al-sāmi‘īn fī riyāwat al-ṣaḥāba ‘an al-tābi‘īn.*
134. *Tabayyun al-‘ajab fīmā warada fī ṣiyām Rajab.*
135. *Zawā‘id al-adab al-mufrad li-al-Bukhārī.*
136. *Tartīb al-mubhamāt alā al-abwāb ma‘ al-asānīd.*
137. *Al-I‘lām bi-man summiya Muḥammad qabl al-Islām.*

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