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# The Methodology of the Ḥadīth Critics (al-Muḥaddithūn) in Evaluating Narrations

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**Abstract**

The *muḥaddithūn*'s methodology of *ḥadīth* criticism served to safeguard the *Sunnah* against fabrication and error and support sound Islamic reasoning amid expanding transmission and increasing turmoil (*fitan*). This study examines the integrated structure, critical tools, and practical application of this methodology, focusing on how critics established criteria for accepting or rejecting reports and verified the accuracy of transmission chains and texts. An inductive, analytical, and comparative approach is employed to examine transmission practices, critical principles, and procedures of systematic comparison and preference (*tarjīḥ*), culminating in a case analysis of a textual addition transmitted by a single narrator. The analysis identifies four principal findings. First, *ḥadīth* criticism operates as an integrated verification system whose evaluative procedures are mutually reinforcing. Second, authenticity depends on a combination of coherence, narrator reliability, transmission precision, and freedom from *shudhūdh* and *ʿilal*, extending assessment beyond the apparent soundness of the *isnād*. Third, narrator trustworthiness does not preclude error, making comparison across transmission routes essential for identifying subtle discrepancies. Fourth, the applied case demonstrates that *tarjīḥ* proceeds through traceable evaluative indicators, clarifying how critical principles inform judgments concerning additions transmitted by individual narrators. These findings establish the importance of evaluating narrator credibility alongside comparative evidence from transmission chains and texts. The study contributes an integrated account of the relationship between methodological principles and


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practical judgment, positioning the *muḥaddithūn*'s critical tradition as a historical model of disciplined verification.

**Keywords:** *Ḥadīth* Criticism; *Muḥaddithūn*'s Methodology; *Isnād* Evaluation; Narrator Reliability; *Tarjiḥ*

## INTRODUCTION

In His wisdom, Allah- glorified and exalted be He- ordained that Islam should seal the succession of the heavenly religions, and that His Book should be preserved from addition, omission, and distortion, so that the proof might stand against all creation. He says: "Verily, it is We who have sent down the *Dhikr* (i.e. the Quran) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption)" (al-Ḥijr 15:9). Yet the preservation of the Qur'an for purposes of legal reasoning and exposition is inseparable from the preservation of the Sunnah of God's Messenger, peace be upon him, since the Sunnah elaborates what the Qur'an states in summary form, clarifies its rulings, and resolves what might otherwise remain ambiguous to the reader of its indications. It is for this reason that the Muslim community's concern for the Prophetic Sunnah grew ever greater: the Sunnah is an inseparable part of the Islamic religion, being the second source of legislation after the Noble Qur'an, and safeguarding its purity is a religious obligation, lest what does not belong to the Sharīʿah become intermingled with its rulings. The effort of the ḥadīth critics (al-*muḥaddithūn*) in protecting transmitted reports from narrators' error, liars' fabrication, and impostors' plagiarism found expression in a rigorous critical methodology that combined expertise in the transmission of reports with knowledge of the narrators (ʿilm al-*rijāl*), and that rested on verification, careful inquiry, and discernment.

The importance of this study lies in bringing to light the features of this ḥadīth-critical methodology, since it represents the scholarly bulwark that prevents what does not belong to the religion from being introduced into it, that establishes the soundness of legal reasoning, and that shows how the *isnād* - as the pathway along which a report is transmitted -was transformed into an epistemic instrument for controlling and protecting the text. This study further demonstrates that criticism among the *muḥaddithūn* did not stop at the narrator's "trustworthiness" in the sense of moral probity alone, but went beyond this to examine continuity of transmission, integrity, and precision, and then to test transmitted reports for

anomaly (*shudhūdh*) and hidden defect (*ʿillah*)- ensuring that judgment on a ḥadīth is never a mere impression, but the outcome of precise rules, standards, and comparisons.

The research problem can be summarized in one overall question, which is "how did the *muḥaddithūn* justify acceptance or rejection of narrations?" and "what were the key methods that they used in order to assure the authenticity of chain (*isnād*) and text (*matn*)?" Out of this overall question comes a variety of operational questions, such as:

1. What are the key criteria used by muḥaddithūn to identify a chain continuity, what are the signs of open interruption and hidden interruption, and what are the criteria to judge contemporaneity, meeting, and audition (*samāʿ*)?
2. How are the criteria of integrity (*ʿadālah*) established among the critics? What are the degrees of impugnment (*jarḥ*) and validation (*taʿdīl*)? What rules govern preference when the critics' statements conflict, and when is impugnment given precedence over validation, or vice versa?
3. What are the criteria of precision (*ḍabṭ*)? How are the lapses of otherwise trustworthy narrators practically uncovered through the collection and comparison of transmission routes? What is the effect of a narrator's cognitive decline (*ikhtilāṭ*) in old age, and how is a narrator's ḥadīth before this decline distinguished from that transmitted after it?
4. What is the concept of anomaly (*shudhūdh*) among the *muḥaddithūn*, and what are its limits? How is the criterion of a trustworthy narrator's contradicting one more trustworthy than himself applied in cases of conflict?
5. What are the characteristics of concealed defects (*ʿilal*), and how can one come to know them? What is the practical method by which hidden defects are known by inductively tracking the lines of transmission, identifying the common link of the chain (*madār*), and signs of disapprobation?
6. How are these rules translated into a practical procedure applied to a specific ḥadīth: from identifying the point of difficulty (singular transmission, an added clause, or divergence), through collecting the transmission routes, to weighing them and issuing a reasoned verdict?

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To articulate the general principles of the muḥaddithūn's methodology in criticizing narrations and to explain its scholarly rationale and its scope of application.

2. To present the critical tools that formed the core of their assessment process, including continuity of the chain, integrity of the narrators, their accuracy, lack of abnormality in the ḥadīth and its lack of concealed defect.
3. To illustrate the practical dimension of their critical methodology by means of an example that demonstrates how isolated transmissions and added phrases were treated, how transmission channels were gathered, and how preference for the preserved (*maḥfūẓ*) text was made.
4. To reinforce the reader's methodological understanding that ḥadīth criticism of the great scholars was not an eclectic enterprise but a coherent system that brought together narration investigation and narrators' knowledge under certain rules.

The study adopts an inductive-analytical-comparative methodology, resting on tracing the ḥadīth and its various transmissions, analyzing the criteria of judgment, then weighing the transmission routes against one another and exercising preference (*tarjīḥ*) in cases of conflict, concluding with a practical model that demonstrates the operation of criticism step by step.

In light of this aim, the plan of the study proceeds through six sections addressing, in turn, the elements of ḥadīth criticism: continuity of the chain, the narrators' integrity, their precision, then anomaly, then hidden defect, then an applied model- preceded by an introduction and preamble, and followed by a conclusion.

## Examining the Continuity of the Chain of Transmission *(Ittiṣāl al-Sanad)*

In criticizing a ḥadīth, the ḥadīth critic attends to examining the continuity of the chain from its beginning to its end, so that its continuity may be distinguished from its interruption; he therefore examines the chain of the ḥadīth to see whether it contains any form of overt or covert interruption. For this reason, he investigates the modes of reception and transmission (*ṣuwar al-taḥammul wa-l-adā'*), since these modes reveal how the narrator received the report. On examination, one finds that the modes of reception and transmission are either explicit in indicating audition (*samā'*), explicit in indicating the absence of direct reception, or ambiguous, admitting of both possibilities:

- If the narrators employed formulas that indicate the soundness of reception from the one transmitted from, this establishes the continuity of the chain.

- If, however, the narrator employed a formula that does not indicate soundness of reception, but rather contains explicit evidence that he did not take the report directly from the one transmitted from -having omitted an intermediary between them for some reason- then the chain is judged to be interrupted. This form of interruption is termed overt interruption (*inqiṭāʿ jalī*), owing to its clarity, which requires no strenuous reasoning to establish.
- If, however, the narrator employed a formula admitting of both audition and other possibilities, as in his saying "on the authority of so-and-so" (*ʿan fulān*) or "that so-and-so said" *(anna fulānan qāla*), we are then faced with four cases:

a. First case: the narrator is not known for *tadlīs* (concealment of a defect in the chain), and he transmitted from the one transmitted from using the formula *ʿan* or *anna*. Here one examines the birth date of the narrator and the death date of the one transmitted from: if it appears that he heard from him, his transmission is presumed to be continuous so long as no evidence indicates otherwise. If, however, it is established that the two could not possibly have met- as when the one transmitted from died before the narrator's birth, or when meeting between them was impossible owing to the difference of their homelands and the absence of any means of contact, or even where a journey by each to the other's country is established, but the dates of departure and return do not allow for a meeting between them-then, the impossibility of contact having been established, the ḥadīth is judged to be interrupted.

b. Second case: the narrator is not known for *tadlīs*, and he transmitted from the one transmitted from using *ʿan* or *anna*; the period was suitable for the narrator to have received from the one transmitted from, but it is established by evidence that the narrator took nothing from him, because he was not, during that period, occupied with seeking ḥadīth. In this case, too, the chain is judged to be interrupted.

c. Third case: the narrator is not known for *tadlīs*, and he transmitted from the one transmitted from using *ʿan* or *anna*, but the scholars differed over whether the narrator's audition from the one transmitted from is established. Here the critic traces the narrator's transmissions from that *shaykh* in the hope to finding an explicit statement confirming direct audition, thereby resolving the issue. This may be established in several ways: first, where the chain of the particular report is beyond reproach; second, where evidence confirms the narrator's direct audition from the shakh, as when al-Bukhārī includes the

report in his *Ṣaḥiḥ*, since he required verified direct audition before accepting a narration; or third, where the scholar affirming the audition is more knowledgeable regarding the issue than those who deny it. In such cases, the affirmative judgment is given precedence over the negative one, because positive knowledge carries greater evidentiary weight than mere denial.

d. Fourth case: the narrator is known for *tadlīs*, and he transmitted from the one transmitted from using *ʿan* or *anna*. Here one examines the other transmission routes of the ḥadīth that are explicitly connected to the one transmitted from: if an explicit statement of his audition is found in a chain beyond reproach, his transmission is judged continuous, and the suspicion of *tadlīs* is lifted from him with respect to this particular ḥadīth. It may happen that we do not find any transmission in which he explicitly states his audition from the one transmitted from, yet find within the chain itself an indicator that the report belongs among what he actually heard -as when the one who transmits from him transmits, via his route, only what he is known to have heard. This is the case, for instance, with Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī's transmission from Jābir: Abū al-Zubayr practiced *tadlīs*, since he transmitted from Jābir, using ʿan, reports he had not heard from him; yet when al-Layth ibn Saʿd transmits from him, then whether or not Abū al-Zubayr explicitly stated his audition of the report in question from Jābir, it is presumed to have been heard, because al-Layth ibn Saʿd transmitted from him only those ḥadīths beside which he had marked, in his written copy, a sign indicating that they belonged among what he had heard from Jābir. Where, however, explicit evidence of audition is absent, and no indicator points to it, the report is presumed to be discontinuous on account of the suspicion of *tadlīs* attached to the narrator, and the chain is not, on this basis, judged continuous.

On this basis, knowledge that a narrator did not hear from the one transmitted from may be established through any of the following means:

1. The absence of any sound textual establishment of audition, as in ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī's statement concerning Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī:

*"He did not meet any of the Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him." Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Barāʾ said to him: "What of ʿĀʾishah?" He replied: "This is something reported only by Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūbah, from Abū Maʿshar, from Ibrāhīm -and Abū Maʿshar is weak. Al-Nakhaʿī did see Abū Juḥayfah, Zayd ibn Arqam, and Ibn Abī Awfā- that is, ʿAbd Allāh- but did not hear from them"* (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1937: 9, no. 19).

2. The narrator's own acknowledgment that he did not hear from the one transmitted from, as in al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah's saying to Hushaym: "Did you hear from al-Zuhrī?" He said: "Yes." He said: "But I heard nothing at all from him" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1937: 47); and as in Shuʿbah ibn al-Ḥajjāj's statement: "I was with Abū Isḥāq al-Hamdānī when a man said to him: 'Shuʿbah says you did not hear from ʿAlqamah.' He replied: 'Shuʿbah spoke truly'" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1937: 145, no. 525).

3. The impossibility of a meeting between the narrator and the one transmitted from because the latter's death preceded the former's birth, as in Makḥūl's report that

*"ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Allah be pleased with him, treated mineral deposits (al-maʿdin) as equivalent to buried pre-Islamic treasure (rikāz), subject to the fifth (khums)"- concerning which al-Bayhaqī said: "This is discontinuous; Makḥūl did not reach the time of ʿUmar, God be pleased with him"* (al-Bayhaqī, 1999: 4/154, no. 7431).

4. The narrator's reliance, in transmitting the ḥadīth, on a mode of reception that indicates he did not hear from the one transmitted from, as in Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's statement in a letter to his son ʿAbd Allāh:

*"Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn did not hear from Ibn ʿAbbās; in every instance he would say, 'I was informed [nubbiʾtu] on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās'"* (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 186, no. 679).

5. A statement by one or more scholars explicitly denying the soundness of the narrator's audition from the one transmitted from, as in the explicit statements of Yūnus ibn ʿUbayd, Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, ʿAlī ibn Zayd ibn Jadʿān, Bahz ibn Ḥakīm, Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī, Abū Zurʿah, and Abū Ḥātim, all affirming that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī did not hear from Abū Hurayrah (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 35-36).

6. Scholars' statement that everything the narrator heard from the one transmitted from is limited to a specific, enumerable set of ḥadīths, the remainder of what he transmits from him via *ʿan* being presumed discontinuous -or that most of his transmissions from him were heard, save for an enumerable, limited set. This is the case with Shuʿbah ibn al-Ḥajjāj's account of al-Ḥakam's transmission from Miqsam: he transmitted a great deal from him, yet heard from him no more than a small, enumerated set of ḥadīths- four, according to one report; and in Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd's report from Shuʿbah, he said that al-Ḥakam's audition from Miqsam comprised five ḥadīths, which Shuʿbah enumerated: the ḥadīth of the *witr* prayer,

the ḥadīth of the *qunūt*, the ḥadīth of the pronouncement of divorce (*ʿazmat al-ṭalāq*), the ḥadīth on the recompense for livestock killed [in a state of consecration], and the ḥadīth of a man who has intercourse with his menstruating wife (Ibn Rajab, 1987: 2/849-850).

7. Establishment that the narrator encountered (*adraka*) the one transmitted from without establishment of audition from him, as in Abū Ḥātim's statement:

*"Al-Zuhrī did not hear anything from Abān ibn ʿUthmān- not because he did not encounter him, for he did encounter him and others older than him, but because his audition from him is not established- just as Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit's audition from ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr is not established, though he heard from those older than ʿUrwah; but the ḥadīth scholars have agreed on this, and their consensus on a matter constitutes a proof"* (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 192, no. 703).

8. Establishment that the narrator saw (*raʾā*) the one transmitted from without establishment of his audition from him, as in Abū Ḥātim's statement concerning Abū Isḥāq:

*"Abū Isḥāq did not hear from Ibn ʿUmar; he only saw him"* (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 146, no. 526), *and his statement concerning al-Zuhrī: "Al-Zuhrī's audition from Ibn ʿUmar is not soundly established; he saw him but did not hear from him, and he saw ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar but did not hear from him"* (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 192, no. 706).

9. Historical evidence negating the establishment of his audition from him, as when the narrator was born after the death of the one transmitted from, as in Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's statement: "Ibrāhīm ibn Abī ʿAblah did not encounter ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 11, no. 29); or when the narrator was a small child, and his reception from the one transmitted from is not established by any of the recognized means of reception for a minor, such as *ijāzah*- as is the case with Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab's transmission from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Al-Dūrī said to Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn: "He says, 'I was born two years into the caliphate of ʿUmar,'" to which Yaḥyā replied: "Can an eight-year-old child memorize anything?!" (Ibn Maʿīn, 1979: 2/208). Similarly, Ibn Abī Ḥātim states: "Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā did not hear from his father; his father died while he was still a child" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 185, no. 671). Likewise, in the case of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Zurʿah al-Rāzī was asked whether he had heard from any of the Companions who fought at Badr, and he replied: "He [merely] saw them—he saw ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān and ʿAlī." Ibn Abī Ḥātim asked: "Did he hear any ḥadīth from either of them?" He said: "No. Al-Ḥasan al-

Baṣrī was fourteen years old on the day allegiance was sworn to ʿAlī, Allah be pleased with him; he saw ʿAlī in Medina, but then ʿAlī departed for Kūfah and Baṣrah, and al-Ḥasan never met him again" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 31, no. 92).

10. A difference of homelands, with no established journey allowing contact between the two, as in Abū Ḥātim's statement concerning Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, when asked about his audition from Abū al-Dardāʾ: "He encountered him, but I do not think he heard from him; the one was in Syria, the other in Baṣrah" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 187, no. 683). Similarly, concerning Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab's transmission from Abū al-Dardāʾ, from the Prophet, peace be upon him, "that he forbade every snatching, every plundering, and every fanged beast of prey," al-Dāraquṭnī states: "Suhayl transmits it from Abū Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Saʿdī, that he asked Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab about the hyena, whereupon an elder present said, 'Abū al-Dardāʾ related to us, from the Prophet, peace be upon him…,' and Saʿīd confirmed him. Ṣafwān ibn Sulaym also transmits it from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab from Abū al-Dardāʾ, and Abū Ayyūb al-Ifrīqī alone transmits it from Ṣafwān, as related from him by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Sulaymān. The ḥadīth of Suhayl ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ appears closer to the correct version, and Saʿīd's audition from Abū al-Dardāʾ is not established, for the two never met" (al-Dāraquṭnī, 1985: 6/203, no. 1070).

11. The narrator's use of a formula that indicates the negation of his audition from him, such as "I was told" (*ḥuddithtu ʿanhu*), "I was informed" (*nubbiʾtu ʿanhu*), or "it reached me" (*balaghani*), or the like- as in Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn's transmission from ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, concerning which Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said: "Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn did not hear from Ibn ʿAbbās; in every instance he says, 'I was informed on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās'" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1397: 186, no. 679).

12. The appearance of an intermediary between the one who uses *ʿan* and the one transmitted from, in other, sound transmission routes: if a narrator transmits a ḥadīth from another without establishing audition or meeting between them by an explicit statement that he met or heard from him, and then another route appears in which an intermediary is found between them, this indicates that an interruption has in fact occurred in the chain between them. On this, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states, in his account of the covert *mursal* (al-*mursal* al-khafī), that among its forms is a case where the judgment of its being *mursal* is grounded in its coming, by another route, with the addition of one or more persons at the point alleged to be *mursal*.

An example is the ḥadīth transmitted from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, from al-Thawrī, from Abū Isḥāq, from Zayd, from Ḥudhayfah, who said: the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "If you appoint Abū Bakr over you, he is strong and trustworthy"- this ḥadīth was judged to be discontinuous and *mursal* between ʿAbd al-Razzāq and al-Thawrī, since it is also transmitted from ʿAbd al-Razzāq as: "al-Nuʿmān ibn Abī Shaybah al-Janadī related to me, from al-Thawrī, from Abū Isḥāq"; and it was likewise judged *mursal* between al-Thawrī and Abū Isḥāq, since it is transmitted from al-Thawrī, from Sharīk, from Abū Isḥāq (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 1997).

From all of this we may conclude that the *muḥaddithūn* devoted the utmost care to tracing the states of the chains, the auditions of the narrators, and their varying circumstances -a fact that reveals the precision of their judgments on narrations. This precision is evident in the works they composed in this field, which are counted among the authoritative sources for judging narrations; one may point here to their compositions on trustworthy narrators (al-*thiqāt*), weak narrators (al-*ḍuʿafāʾ*), *mursal* reports, and hidden defects- all of which confirm the extreme rigor with which they treated the states of the narrators in their scholarship.

## Examining the Integrity of Narrators *(ʿadālat Al-Ruwāh)*

Alongside their examination of the chain's continuity, the muḥaddithūn undertake to investigate the narrators' integrity (*ʿadālah*), in order to distinguish an acceptable narration from a rejected one. For this reason, it is fitting that we first acquaint ourselves with what is meant by the two terms *ʿadālah* (integrity) and jarḥ (impugnment).

## Defining *ʿAdālah* (Integrity)

Linguistically, *ʿadālah* derives from the root ʿadula (with ḍammah on the dāl); one says *rijāl ʿadl* (with *sukūn* on the *dāl*), meaning "men accepted as reliable in testimony." The original form of *ʿadl* does not take the dual or plural; where it is dualized or pluralized, this is by way of using it adjectivally rather than as a verbal noun. *ʿAdl* is also used as the antonym of *jawr* (injustice/oppression); to "adjust" (*taʿdīl*) something means to set it upright so that it is not inclined to one side (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: s.v. *ʿ-d-l*).

The root *ʿ-d-l* occurs in a number of Qur'anic verses. Allah, exalted be He, says: "Let a scribe write it down in justice between you [*bi-l-ʿadl*]" (al-Baqarah 2:282). He also says: "…

and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice [bi-l-ʿ*adl*]" (al-Nisāʾ 4:58). He, glorified be He, says: "Verily, Allah enjoins justice *al-ʿadl* (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allah Alone – Islamic Monotheism) and *Al-Ihsan* (i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allah, …" (al-Naḥl 16:90). He also says: "And take as witness two just [ʿ*adl*] persons from among you (Muslims)" (al-Ṭalāq 65:2). From this it becomes clear that all the senses of ʿ*adālah* revolve around uprightness and the possession of qualities that render a person accepted and trustworthy in the eyes of others.

As a technical term, several definitions of ʿ*adālah* and ʿ*adl* are found. Among them is Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī's statement that "the just person (al-ʿ*adl*) among Muslims is one in whom no suspicion is presumed," and, in another report from him, "the just person among Muslims is one in whom no suspicion appears" (al-Khaṭīb, n.d.: 78). ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, for his part, specified the qualities the just person must possess and the conduct he must avoid, saying: "[He is] one who possesses five qualities: he attends the congregational prayer, does not drink this [intoxicating] beverage, has no defect (*kharibah*) in his religion, does not lie, and has nothing amiss in his intellect" (al-Khaṭīb, n.d.: 79). The substance of all the definitions cited revolves around uprightness and piety.

The majority of the *muḥaddithūn* further distinguished between degrees among those validated (*al-muʿaddalīn*), saying "so-and-so is ʿ*adl*, and so-and-so is more ʿ*adl* than he," with a view to strengthening the transmission of one over that of the other in cases where narrations conflict. Integrity is constituted by the following: (1) being Muslim; (2) having reached majority; (3) possessing sound reason; (4) freedom from moral corruption (*fisq*); and (5) freedom from what compromises manly dignity (*murūʾah*).

The examination of integrity applies specifically to narrators other than the Companions; as for the Companions, they are all deemed just by the testimony of God and then the testimony of His Messenger, peace be upon him. Once a person's status as a Companion is established, he is deemed just even if unnamed. For this reason the scholars say: "Ignorance of the identity of a Companion is of no consequence [to his acceptance]" (al-ʿAynī, n.d.: 6/151; Shams al-Ḥaqq, 1995: 9/96; al-Munāwī, 1356 AH: 2/402; al-Qārī, 2001: 6/134, 9/473, 11/410, and elsewhere).

## The Meaning of *Tajrīḥ* (Impugnment)

Linguistically, *tajrīḥ* derives from *jarḥ*, the verbal noun of *jaraḥa/yajraḥu*. It carries two meanings (Ibn Fāris, 1999: 1/451; Ibn al-Athīr, 1979: 1/255): the first, physical, relating to inflicting a wound or laceration on the skin; the second, moral, relating to a person's acquiring, through his deeds, blame consequent upon committing what contravenes the Sharīʿah -Allah, exalted be He, says:

*"It is He who takes your souls by night (when you are asleep), and has knowledge of all that you have done (jaraḥtum) by day" (al-Anʿām 6:60), and also says: "Or do those who earn evil deeds (ijtaraḥū al-sayyiʾāt) think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, in their present life and after their death? Worst is the judgement that they make" (al-Jāthiyah 45:21).*

Accordingly, it is essential that the narrator be clearly identifiable to the ḥadīth critic without any possibility of confusion with another narrator; otherwise, erroneous judgments may be passed concerning him. Various obstacles may impede the critic's ability to identify the intended narrator correctly while examining the bibliographical circumstances of transmitters. These obstacles may be summarized as follows:

a. Miscopying (*taṣḥīf*): the critic may take a single narrator to be two different persons because ibn ("son of") has been miscopied as *ʿan* ("on the authority of"), or may take two distinct narrators to be a single person because *ʿan* has been miscopied as ibn. Tracing the various transmission routes of a ḥadīth can be of great help in resolving such difficulties, followed by returning to the biographical dictionaries (*kutub al-tarājim*) to ascertain the narrators' teachers and students, leaving no room for doubt that a copyist's miscopying has occurred. One may likewise benefit from the works devoted to "parts" (*aṭrāf*) of ḥadīth collections, such as al-Mizzī's *Tuḥfat al-Ashrāf*, in order to establish the matter clearly, since such works indicate the opening clause of the ḥadīth, part of the chain by which it was transmitted, and which collector recorded it- sometimes with an accompanying comment.

b. Shared names or *kunyahs*: if a narrator is referred to only by the element of his name shared with others, this creates real difficulty in identifying precisely who he is. Knowledge in this domain is therefore essential; it is a highly intricate discipline in which even eminent scholars have erred, to the extent that al-Khaṭīb observed:

*"If Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn- despite his firm footing in this science- was not safe from error over the slightest ambiguity arising from some statement that reached him, how then must the state be of one beneath him, when two names occur that agree in genealogy, designation, generation, and transmission?!"* (al-Khaṭīb, 1997: 1/111).

For this reason, the ḥadīth scholars gave close attention to this dimension, so as to avoid confusing narrators when passing judgment on any one of them, and composed numerous works in what is termed al-*muʾtalif* wa-*l-mukhtalif* (names similar in written form but different in pronunciation, and vice versa), al-*muttafiq* wa-l-*muftariq* (identical names belonging to different persons, and similar names belonging to the same person), al-*mutashābih*, and al-*mushtabih* al-*maqlūb*.

This rigor is necessary lest the critic weaken a trustworthy narrator, or validate a weak one, without realizing it. For this reason, al-Shāfiʿī, as related from him by al-Zaʿfarānī, said: *"Whoever learns a science must be precise, lest he lose the fine points of that science"* (al-Bayhaqī, 1404 AH: 285), *and Baqiyyah related, on his own audition from al-Awzāʿī, his saying: "Learn what you will not act upon, just as you learn what you will act upon"* (Ibn al-Qaysarānī, 1411 AH: 1/24).

After all this scrutiny, it remains for the critic to examine the scholars' statements concerning the narrator, whether by way of impugnment or validation: whoever they validated is a proof (*ḥujjah*); whoever they impugned is not; and where they differed in their judgment, the critic examines the cause of that disagreement. The scholars adopted a set of rules governing this matter, reducible to the following:

1. Reasoned impugnment (al-*jarḥ al-mufassar*) takes precedence over validation (*taʿdīl*).
2. Considered validation (al-*taʿdīl al-muʿtabar*) takes precedence over vague, unreasoned validation.
3. No weight is given to statements made by peers about one another [where rivalry may be suspected].
4. No weight is given to statements whose source is enmity or estrangement.
5. One must verify that no miscopying has occurred in transmitting the scholars' judgments.
6. One must ascertain the precise sense intended by the critics' technical expressions of impugnment and validation, by identifying what they meant by their specific wording.

7. One must know the methodologies of the individual critics in impugnment and validation, since among them are those excessively severe in impugnment, those balanced in validation, and those lenient therein.

## Ascertaining the Precision (*Ḍabṭ*) of Narrators

The critic's next task is to ascertain the degree of the narrators' precision (*ḍabṭ*), the strength of that precision, and its consistency over time. A narrator may lack precision in memory yet possess an accurate written copy (*ṣaḥīḥ al-kitāb*); the critic distinguishes between these two states when judging his ḥadīth.

To ascertain a narrator's precision, the following methods are employed:

1. Comparing the narrator's transmissions with one another and with those of other narrators in both *isnād* and *matn* enables the critic to access the narrator's precision and determine whether he agrees with trustworthy narrators or diverges from them. The proportion of agreement to divergence gives us an indication of the strength of his precision.

2. The narrator's own acknowledgment that he erred in what he transmitted, and his retraction of the error, withdrawing what he had erred in- as in the case of Mūsā ibn al-Ḥasan al-Thaqafī, who related:

*"Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar al-Ḥawḍī related to us, from Shuʿbah, from Abū al-Zubayr, from Jābir, 'that the Prophet, peace be upon him, forbade wrapping oneself entirely in a single garment (ishtimāl al-ṣammāʾ) during prayer, and forbade a man's draping his garment about himself in a manner leaving nothing between him and the sky.'"*

Al-Khalīlī comments:

*"Shuʿbah transmits nothing at all from Abū al-Zubayr; this is an error on the part of this Mūsā ibn al-Ḥasan. I asked ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qāḍī about it, and he said: 'Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣaffār related to us: Mūsā ibn al-Ḥasan related to us: Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar related to us: Shuʿbah related it to us thus.' Then [al-Ṣaffār] said: 'Ismāʿīl al-Ṣaffār related it to us from Mūsā thus, then he returned to us in a second session with his written copy and said: I erred; Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar in fact related it to us from Hishām al-Dastawāʾī, from Abū al-Zubayr, from Jābir'"* (al-Khalīlī, 1409 AH: vol. 2/part 4/495–496).

Al-Khalīlī also related from Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb al-Aṣbahānī, who said:

*"Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī came to us and dictated to us from memory a hundred thousand ḥadīths, erring in seventy places; when he returned to Baṣrah he wrote to us that he had erred in seventy places, and instructed us to correct them"* (al-Khalīlī, 1409 AH: vol. 1/part 1/240).

3. Scholarly statements explicitly affirming the narrator's precision; where there is impugnment, one examines the matter further:

• If the impugnment concerns all of the narrator's states in a manner that undermines reliance on his transmission altogether, then no reinforcement is gained by the ḥadīth's appearing through another route of comparable precision, given the severity of his weakness.

• If, however, a narrator is known to be weak only when transmitting from a particular *shaykh*, certain *shaykhs*, or the scholars of particular locality, while remaining trustworthy in transmissions from others, the critic must determine whether the narration under examination belongs to one of those categorises. This is established by identifying the shaykh from whom the narrator received the report. If that *shaykh* belongs to those whose ḥadīth this narrator transmits precisely, his transmission is fit to be cited as evidence; likewise if he transmits from the people of a locale whose ḥadīth he transmits precisely. Otherwise, his transmission is not cited as evidence. This is the case, for example, with Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAyyāsh: he is trustworthy in what he transmits from the Syrians, but weak in what he transmits from others- the Ḥijāzīs, Baṣrans, and Kūfans. Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shaybah said of him:

*"Trustworthy in what he transmits from the Syrians; as for his transmission from the people of the Ḥijāz, his written copy was lost, and confusion entered his memorized transmission," and Muḍar ibn Muḥammad al-Asadī said of him: "When he transmits from the Ḥijāzīs and Iraqis, believe as little of it as you wish"* (Ibn ʿAdī, 1997: 1/291-300, no. 127; al-Mizzī, 1980: 3/163-181; Ibn Ḥajar, 1404 AH: 1/280-283, no. 584).

It is therefore incumbent on the critic, upon encountering a narrator of this description, to investigate from whom he is transmitting, in order to ascertain the reliability of the particular transmission at hand.

As for the narrator who was trustworthy but subsequently underwent cognitive decline (*ikhtilāṭ*) -meaning that his precision changed owing to advanced age, the loss of his written

copies, or a shock he suffered- the critic must investigate the time at which this narrator transmitted the ḥadīth in question: whether it was before his decline, in which case it is relied upon, or after it, or whether the timing cannot be determined at all, in which case it is not cited as evidence (al-ʿAlāʾī, n.d.: 3; Ibn al-Kayyāl, 1999: 62). In this matter, the critic identifies the narrator who transmits from this person of impaired memory, and investigates his biographical entry in the works on narrators, hoping to find an indication of whether he transmitted from him before or after his decline, so that the ruling on the ḥadīth's acceptance or rejection may become clear; he likewise draws on the works specifically devoted to narrators who underwent such decline. In this connection we find ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtbah ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd al-Hudhalī al-Masʿūdī, brother of Abū al-ʿUmays, one of the great scholars, of whom Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn and others said: trustworthy- except that Imām Aḥmad mentioned that he underwent cognitive decline in Baghdad, and that whoever heard from him there [after the decline] is worthless, whereas whoever heard from him in Kūfah, his audition is sound. Al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbd Allāh mentions, in his *Kitāb al-Muzakkīn li-l-Ruwāh*, that Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn said: "Whoever heard from al-Masʿūdī during the time of Abū Jaʿfar [al-Manṣūr], his audition is sound; whoever heard from him in the days of al-Mahdī, his audition is worthless." Ḥanbal ibn Isḥāq relates from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal that he said: the audition of ʿĀṣim ibn ʿAlī and Abū al-Naḍr Hāshim from al-Masʿūdī came after his decline (Ibn al-Kayyāl, 1999: 54). ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, author of *al-Muṣannaf*, likewise underwent decline late in life owing to the loss of his eyesight; when he narrated from memory, confusion crept in. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal relates from Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, concerning his own transmission from ʿAbd al-Razzāq: "I never wrote down a single ḥadīth from ʿAbd al-Razzāq except entirely from his written copy" (Aḥmad, 1988: 2/606, no. 3882), and, in another report from him: "I never wrote down a ḥadīth from ʿAbd al-Razzāq at all except from his written copy" (Aḥmad, 1999: 2/606, 3/15). Ibn Ḥajar noted the criterion for distinguishing whoever transmitted from him before his decline from whoever did so after it, saying: "The rule for whoever heard from him before his decline is: whoever heard from him before the [Islamic] year 200; as for after that, his condition had changed" (Ibn Ḥajar, 1402 AH: 418). It follows from this that Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn's transmission from ʿAbd al-Razzāq is precise, since he transmitted from his written copy, which was sound. Likewise, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAbd al-Majīd ibn al-Ṣalt ibn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Abī al-ʿĀṣ al-Thaqafī, counted among the Baṣrans, the ḥāfiẓ, trustworthy, cited as evidence by al-

Bukhārī and Muslim- Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn affirmed his trustworthiness outright, though he noted that he underwent decline three or four years before his death. ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī said: "His written copy, from Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd, is the soundest of copies." Al-Dhahabī said: "But his decline did no harm to his ḥadīth, for he related nothing during the period of his decline," citing in support Abū Dāwūd's statement: "Jarīr ibn Ḥāzim and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Thaqafī underwent decline, so people ceased attending their sessions" (Ibn al-Kayyāl, 1999: 60).

One may also find evidence that a narrator, although he did undergo cognitive decline, nonetheless transmitted nothing further, because his children barred people from access to him and prevented him from narrating, so as to preserve his scholarship- as in the case of Ibrāhīm ibn Abī al-ʿAbbās (also given as Ibn al-ʿAbbās) al-Sāmirī, who was accused of decline, but of whom Muḥammad ibn Saʿd said: "He underwent decline at the end of his life, so his family confined him to his house until he died" (Ibn Saʿd, 1957: 7/346). Al-Dhahabī comments: "So his decline did him no harm; most people who die undergo some decline before death. What weakens a *shaykh's* transmission is his narrating something during the period of decline itself" (al-Dhahabī, 1963: 1/39). The same applies to Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl ʿĀrim, of whom al-Dhahabī says: "Trustworthy, a proof; he underwent decline late in life, but this did no harm to his ḥadīth, for, as far as I know, he did not narrate at that time" (al-Dhahabī, 1992: 162, entry 72).

The ḥadīth scholars composed valuable works clarifying these matters, among them:

- *Kitāb al-Mukhtaliṭīn* ("The Book of Those Who Underwent Decline"), by al-ʿAlāʾī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Kaykaldī al-Dimashqī (d. 761 AH).
- *Al-Ightibāṭ bi-man Rumiya bi-l-Ikhtilaṭ*, by Sibṭ Ibn al-ʿAjamī, Burhān al-Dīn Abū Isḥāq (d. 841 AH).
- *Al-Kawākib al-Nayyirāt fī Maʿrifat man Ikhtalaṭa min al-Ruwāh al-Thiqāt*, by Ibn al-Kayyāl al-Shāfiʿī (d. 939 AH).

On distinguishing narrators' errors, *Imām* Muslim said:

*"… Know -may Allah guide you- that the identification of error in the transmission of a report's transmitter, when transmitters differ over it, revolves around two aspects. The first: the transmitter transmits a ḥadīth by its chain, attributing to a well-known man, in the chain of his report, a lineage other than his true lineage, or naming him by a name other than his actual name- an error not hidden from scholars when it reaches them, as when al-Nuʿmān ibn Rāshid, transmitting from al-Zuhrī, said 'from Abū al-Ṭufayl*

*ʿAmr ibn Wāthilah,' whereas it is known among ordinary scholars that Abū al-Ṭufayl's name is ʿĀmir, not ʿAmr; and as when Mālik ibn Anas, transmitting from al-Zuhrī, said 'from ʿAbbād, of the descendants of al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah,' whereas he is in fact ʿAbbād ibn Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyān, whose lineage is well known to genealogists, and who has no connection whatsoever to al-Mughīrah; and as in Maʿmar's transmission when he said 'from ʿAmr ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn Muṭʿim,' whereas he is in fact ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Jubayr ibn Muṭʿim- an error beyond doubt to the genealogists of Quraysh and others who know their lineages, for Jubayr had no brother known as ʿAmr. What I have described of this category of error in chains is likewise found in the texts of ḥadīths, in ways the discerning listener recognizes when they reach his hearing. Similarly, in the transmission of one who miscopied and said, 'The Prophet, peace be upon him, forbade al-taḥayyur,' intending al-najash [artificially inflating a price during an auction]; and as another related, 'The most hateful of people to God, exalted be He, are three: one who deviates [mulḥid] in his craft [al-ḥirfah], and such-and-such,' intending mulḥidan fī al-ḥaram ['one who commits sacrilege within the sanctuary']…"* (Muslim, 1410 AH: 170–171).

These, then, have been some observations on how a narrator's precision is ascertained. I ask Allah, exalted be He, to make its understanding easy for those wishing to learn it.

## Ascertaining the Ḥadith's Freedom from Anomaly (*Shudhūdh*)

I begin by indicating the meaning of *shādhdh* (anomalous), before discussing how it is identified.

Linguistically, *shādhdh* means "isolated from the group"; one says *shadhdha yashuddu/yashiddu*, *shudhūdh*, of one who breaks away from the majority (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: s.v. *sh-dh-dh*, 3/494).

As a technical term, al-Ḥākim relates by his chain, from Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, from al-Shāfiʿī, his statement:

*"The shādhdh in ḥadīth is not that a trustworthy narrator transmits what no one else transmits- this is not shādhdh. Rather, the shādhdh is that a trustworthy narrator transmits a ḥadīth that contradicts what other people [i.e., other trustworthy narrators] transmit: this is the shādhdh in ḥadīth"* (al-Ḥākim, 1977: 119).

Anomaly is identified as follows:

1. A trustworthy narrator transmits from al-Zuhrī or another leading authority a ḥadīth that differs from the version transmitted by a group of *ḥuffāẓ* or narrator more trustworthy than

himself, either whether in the *isnād*, the *matn*, or both. Provided that the *ḥuffāẓ* agree on their version, such divergence constitutes evidence that the narrator has erred.

2. Or a narrator transmits a ḥadīth by a certain chain, whereas it is well known, and preserved (*maḥfūẓ*) among the trustworthy narrators, by another chain, this narrator's version being unsupported by anyone else.

3. Or he alone contradicts someone more trustworthy than himself, or a group of trustworthy narrators, in part of the ḥadīth, even while agreeing with them in the rest of it - as in the case of a ḥadīth in which ʿAbd Allāh ibn Lahīʿah fell into a gross error, saying:

*"Mūsā ibn ʿUqbah wrote to me, saying: Busr ibn Saʿīd related to me, from Zayd ibn Thābit, that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was cupped [ḥtajama] in the mosque." Muslim comments:*

*"… This is a report corrupt from every angle, grossly erroneous in both text and chain together; Ibn Lahīʿah has miscopied its text and confused its chain. The [correct] ḥadīth is rather that the Prophet, peace be upon him, screened off a space (iḥtajara) in the mosque with a palm-mat or reed mat, in which he would pray…"* (Muslim, 1410 AH: 187).

An example of anomaly in the text (*matn*) is found in the ḥadīth of Abū Isḥāq, who said: I asked al-Aswad ibn Yazīd about what ʿĀʾishah had related concerning the prayer of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him; she said:

*"He would sleep at the beginning of the night and stay awake at its end, and if he needed his wife he would satisfy that need and would not touch water before sleeping."*

*Imām Muslim comments: "… This transmission from Abū Isḥāq is erroneous, for al-Nakhaʿī and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aswad transmit contrary to what Abū Isḥāq transmitted…" In the ḥadīth of Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, from al-Aswad, from ʿĀʾishah, she said: "When the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, was in a state of ritual impurity [junub] and wished to eat or sleep, he would perform his ablution as for prayer." And in the ḥadīth of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aswad, from his father, from ʿĀʾishah, she said: "The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, would become ritually impure, then perform his ablution as for prayer, then sleep until morning." And in the ḥadīth of Ibn Shihāb, from Abū Salamah, from ʿĀʾishah, "that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, if he wished to sleep while ritually impure, would perform his ablution as for prayer before sleeping"* (Muslim, 1410 AH: 182).

An example of anomaly in the chain is what is said of al-Aʿmash, as related from ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī: "He did not hear from Anas ibn Mālik; he merely saw him once in Mecca,

praying behind the Station [of Abraham]. As for al-Aʿmash's transmission routes from Anas, he transmits them only from Yazīd al-Raqqāshī, from Anas… And Ibn Maʿīn said: everything al-Aʿmash transmits from Anas is *mursal*…" In the section (*juzʾ*) of al-ʿĪsawī, by the route of Abū Jaʿfar al-Bakhtarī, who said:

*Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-ʿUṭāridī related to us: Ibn Faḍīl related to us, from al-Aʿmash, who said: "I saw Anas, Allah be pleased with him, urinate, then wash his private part thoroughly, then perform ablution and wipe over his leather socks, then lead us in prayer and narrate to us in his house." This ḥadīth is anomalous, and Aḥmad al-ʿUṭāridī is a subject of scholarly criticism- even though al-Dāraquṭnī said of him "no harm in him"- so his sole transmission cannot be relied upon* (al-ʿIrāqī, 1999: 135, 139).

## Ascertaining the Ḥadith's Freedom from Hidden Defect (*ʿIllah*)

The science of hidden defects (*ʿilal*) is among the most subtle and difficult matters with which the master critics among the *muḥaddithūn* concerned themselves. For this reason, those who spoke authoritatively on it were few in comparison with those addressing the other topics treated by ḥadīth studies.

Given the importance of this science, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak said: "That I should know the hidden defect of a single ḥadīth is dearer to me than that I should write down twenty ḥadīths I do not [yet] possess" (al-Ḥākim, 1977: 112).

## The Meaning of *ʿIllah*

Linguistically, one says *ʿallahu yaʿilluhu ʿallan wa-ʿalalan, and aʿallahu iʿlālan*, meaning "he gave it the second watering." Al-Aṣmaʿī said: "When camels come to water, the first watering is called *al-nahl*, and the second *al-ʿalal*." One also says of food that has been eaten from, "*ʿulla minhu*." One says *taʿallala bi-l-amr*, meaning "he occupied and distracted himself with the matter." *Banū al-ʿAllāt* refers to sons of different mothers by the same father, so termed because the woman he married after an earlier wife had, before her, already been "watered" (*nāhil*), and he then "watered" (*ʿalla*) from this second one.

*ʿIllah* is also applied to any condition that afflicts a place [or a body] such that its state is altered by it; illness is termed *ʿillah* for this reason, since through its occurrence the state changes from strength to weakness. One says *aʿallahu Allāhu bi-kadhā*, meaning "Allah afflicted him with such-and-such an ailment," so that he becomes *muʿall* and *ʿalīl* [afflicted,

ailing]. The term is likewise applied to a ḥadīth that occupies its transmitter and distracts him from its correct form, and, more generally, to whatever is the cause of something (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: s.v. ʿ-l-l; al-Zabīdī, 1306 AH: s.v. ʿ-l-l, 8/31–33).

As a technical term, we may distinguish two orientations. The first orientation concerns the criterion of effect: legal-theoretical *taʿlīl* (identifying the ratio legis, *ʿillah*, of a ruling) regards the *ʿillah* as that which impugns the soundness of the ḥadīth, whereas ḥadīth-critical *taʿlīl* does not require it to be impugning in this sense. The second orientation concerns the criterion of apparentness: the scholars of the East (*al-mashāriqah*) generally require the *ʿillah* to be hidden (*khafiyyah*); hence Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states: "The *muʿallal* [defective] ḥadīth is that in which a defect is discovered that impugns its soundness, even though its outward appearance is one of soundness" (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 1977: 89). Al-Nawawī, in turn, defines it: "The *ʿillah* is an expression for an obscure, impugning cause, even though the outward appearance is one of soundness" (al-Nawawī, 1987: 35). When, however, we turn to the scholars of the West and al-Andalus (al-Maghāribah wa-l-Andalusiyyūn), we find that they apply the term *ʿillah* to any impugning cause, whether hidden or apparent. On this broader construal of *ʿillah*, Ibn Ḥazm, discussing Ibn al-Mubārak's transmission from Thawr ibn Yazīd, who said,

*"I was told, on the authority of Rajāʾ ibn Ḥaywah, from the secretary of al-Mughīrah, that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, wiped over the tops and undersides of his leather socks," states: "It is thus established that Thawr did not hear it from Rajāʾ ibn Ḥaywah, and that it is mursal, without mention of al-Mughīrah. And there is a third ʿillah: that the secretary of al-Mughīrah is not named"* (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d.: 2/114).

Here Ibn Ḥazm counts a narrator's being unidentified- an apparent, impugning defect- as an *ʿillah*; whereas his ruling of *mursal* transmission, made after citing the connected version, is what the ḥadīth scholars of the East technically term *ʿillah*, namely a hidden impugning cause (Klaina, 1988: 2/579; 1993: 2/522–523; 1995: 58–59).

## How a Hidden Defect Is Uncovered

Although ascertaining a narrator's integrity and precision is comparatively straightforward for the ḥadīth critics, the science of hidden defects is fare more demanding,

because it focuses on the transmissions of trustworthy narrators. It begins only after the investigation of the narrator's reliability has been completed, when their transmissions appear outwardly free from signs of weakness. Yet the *muḥaddithūn* did not simply accept what a narrator transmitted without subjecting his report to rigorous testing. In this they relied, on the one hand, on their prolonged practice of the ḥadīth of Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him, and, on the other, on their tracing and comparison of the various transmissions. No one, then, could shoulder such a burden except one whom God had endowed with a faculty (*malakah*) enabling him to call to mind chains and texts and weigh them against one another, much as a money-changer distinguishes sound coin from counterfeit. On this, ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī said: "If the routes of a chapter are not collected, its error will not become clear" (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 1977: 91).

From this, we may identify the methods by which the *muḥaddithūn* uncover hidden defects:

1. Collecting the various transmissions of a ḥadīth to ascertain the narrators' agreement, by way of comparison; where they differ, preference (*tarjīḥ*) is exercised by one of the recognized preferring factors- such as the narrator's having enjoyed longer companionship with the one transmitted from, or being more precise, or being supported by a larger number of transmitters, or the like.

2. Identifying the narrators' associates and generational cohort, and the extent of their precision and specialization in transmitting from them; one who is renowned for transmitting from a particular figure, and for prolonged association with him, is accordingly given precedence.

3. Identifying names, *kunyahs*, and epithets, in order to distinguish between narrators whose names are similar but whose identities differ, when dealing with chains of transmission.

4. Identifying the narrators' homelands, and the dates of their births, journeys, and deaths, in order to establish the extent of a narrator's meeting with the one transmitted from -or whether, despite being contemporaries who met, he benefited from him only in a limited, enumerable set of ḥadīths, or did not hear from him at all.

5. Identifying narrators who are weak when transmitting from a particular person or the people of a particular locale, while being precise when transmitting from others- as in the case of Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAyyāsh, who is a proof when transmitting from the Syrians, but

frequently in error, and not cited as evidence, when transmitting from others among the Ḥijāzīs, Baṣrans, and Kūfans.

6. Distinguishing between a narrator's precisely transmitted reports and those not precisely transmitted.

7. Identifying narrators whose memory deteriorated because of old age, the loss of their written copies, personal trauma, or other causes, such as ʿAṭāʾ ibn al-Sāʾib, who experienced memory decline late in life. Accordingly, the reports he transmitted before his decline are accepted, whereas those transmitted afterward are not relied upon. When it cannot be determined whether a particular report was transmitted before or after his decline, its agreement with trustworthy narrators indicates that it most lokely belongs to the earlier period, whereas its divergence suggests that it belongs to the later period. If the report is uniquely transmitted by him, no definitive judgment can be made regarding it.

8. Identifying practitioners of *tadlīs* (concealment) and the specific points at which they practice it; their use of ʿ*an* is accordingly not accepted unless they explicitly state audition, or unless it is known that whoever transmits from them is known for exercising due diligence and transmitting from them only once their audition of the report is established- in which case explicit statement and its absence are equivalent, as in the case of al-Layth ibn Saʿd's transmission from Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī, from Jābir: Abū al-Zubayr is a *mudallis*, yet al-Layth transmitted from him only those ḥadīths he had heard from Jābir, as al-Layth himself explained.

9. Attending to the statements of the critics concerning a given ḥadīth, especially since even a trustworthy narrator may err in what he transmits- so that recourse to their statements is of great importance, provided, of course, there is corroborating evidence for the matter in question. An example is the error into which ʿAbd al-Majīd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Abī Rawwād al-Makkī fell, concerning the ḥadīth transmitted by Mālik and a great many others from Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Anṣārī- the judge of Medina- from Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Taymī, from ʿAlqamah ibn Waqqāṣ, from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, from the Prophet, peace be upon him: "Actions are but by intentions," a ḥadīth foundational to the religion, whose common link (*madār*) is Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd. ʿAbd al-Majīd said- erring in doing so- "Mālik informed us, from Zayd ibn Aslam, from ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār, from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, from the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'Actions are but by intentions.'" This version was

transmitted from him by Nūḥ ibn Abī Ḥabīb and Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAtīq, and it is not preserved (*maḥfūẓ*) as a transmission of Zayd ibn Aslam by any route whatsoever- this being an instance of a trustworthy narrator's erring in transmitting from another trustworthy narrator (al-Khalīlī, 1409 AH: 1/167; and see his biographical entry at 1/233, no. 63, where he states: "trustworthy, but he erred in some ḥadīths," citing this ḥadīth of "Actions are but by intentions" as an example).

10. Comparing chains and texts together, so that the text is never overlooked; a chain may appear sound on its surface, while the text nonetheless contradicts what the *ḥuffāẓ* preserve.

These procedures assist the critic, in his study of reports, to identify the hidden defects that afflict them. Yet there remain indicators difficult to put into words, though present within the critic himself, which he acquires through his extensive practice of the craft of ḥadīth criticism- a point expressed by Ibn Rajab:

*"The expert critics among the ḥuffāẓ, on account of their extensive practice of ḥadīth and their knowledge of the narrators and of each one's ḥadīths, possess a particular understanding by which they perceive that a given ḥadīth resembles the ḥadīth of so-and-so and does not resemble the ḥadīth of so-and-so, and thereby identify defects in ḥadīths on this basis. This is something that cannot be conveyed in words that fully capture it; those who possess it rely simply on the understanding and knowledge with which they, alone among the rest of the scholars, have been singled out"* (Ibn Rajab, 1987: 390–391).

Identification of defect (*taʿlīl*) takes multiple forms, among them:

1. Identification of defect on the grounds of absence of audition.
2. Identification of defect on the grounds of *mursal* transmission, for what has [elsewhere] been transmitted with a connected (mawṣūl) chain.
3. Identification of defect on the grounds of a stopped (*mawqūf*) attribution, for what has [elsewhere] been transmitted as raised (*marfūʿ*) to the Prophet.
4. Identification of defect on the grounds that the narrator named his *shaykh* in one chain, while leaving him unidentified in another.
5. Identification of defect on the grounds that a ḥadīth is transmitted from one Companion, whereas it is in fact known to belong to another Companion, or to some unnamed Companion.
6. Identification of defect on the grounds that the narrator transmits a ḥadīth with a chain that diverges from the well-known (*maʿrūf*) version.

7. Identification of defect on the grounds of conflating one ḥadīth with another.

These efforts, to which I have alluded, present a picture of the work of the *muḥaddithūn* in their criticism of narrations, in both chain and text, and constitute a blessed methodology unprecedented in the preservation of reports generally, and, in particular, in the safeguarding of the ḥadīth of God's Messenger, peace be upon him.

**An Applied Model of the Muḥaddithūn's Criticism of Narrations**

In this section, I present a model of the *muḥaddithūn*'s work in criticizing narrations, in both chain and text, so that the picture may become still clearer.

We wish to determine the grade of the ḥadīth of ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, who said: "The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, was leading the people in prayer while a man was reciting behind him. When he finished, he said, 'Who is it that is disputing the *sūrah* with me?' - and he forbade recitation behind the imam."

We begin by tracing the ḥadīth's various transmission routes so that we may compare the narrations and study the states of the chain and the narrators. The following transmissions have been located:

1. Muslim relates: Saʿīd ibn Manṣūr and Qutaybah ibn Saʿīd related to us, both from Abū ʿAwānah -Saʿīd said: Abū ʿAwānah related to us- from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, who said:

*"The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, led us in Zuhr -or 'Asr – prayer and he said:'Which of you recited: Sabbih isma Rabbika al-a'la (Glorify the Name of your Lord the Most High) behind me? A man said: 'I did, but I did not intend anything but good thereby.' He said: 'I knew that one of you was competing with me in it'"* (Muslim, 2007: ḥadīth 887 "47").

2. He also relates: Muḥammad ibn al-Muthannā and Muḥammad ibn Bashshār related to us, both saying: Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, who said: I heard Zurārah ibn Awfā narrate from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn

*"that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, offered Zuhr prayer, and a man started to recite: Sabbih isma Rabbika al-a'la (Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High) behind him. When he had finished, he said: 'Which of you the reciter?'-or, 'Which of you was the reciter?' A man said: 'I thought that one of you was competing with me in it.'"* (Muslim, 2007: ḥadīth 888 "48").

3. He also relates: Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah related to us: Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUlayyah related to us. And [by another chain] Muḥammad ibn al-Muthannā related to us: Ibn Abī ʿAdī related to us- both from Ibn Abī ʿArūbah, from Qatādah, by this chain, "*that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, offered Zuhr prayer and said: 'I knew that one of you was competing with me in it*'" (Muslim, 2007: ḥadīth 888 "49").

4. *Imām* Aḥmad relates: Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, who said: I heard Zurārah ibn Awfā narrate from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn

*"that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, offered Zuhr prayer, and a man began reciting 'Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High' behind him; when he said: 'Which of you recited?' - or, 'Which of you was the reciter?' - a man said: 'I did.' He said: 'I thought that some of you were disputing it with me'"* (Aḥmad, 1999: 4/441, ḥadīth 19975).

5. Al-Rūyānī relates: Muḥammad ibn Bashshār related to us: Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, who said: I heard Zurārah ibn Awfā narrate from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn

*"that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, offered Zuhr prayer, and a man began reciting 'Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High' behind him; when he finished, he said: 'Which of you was it who recited?'-or, 'Which of you was the reciter?'- a man said: 'I did, O Messenger of God.' He said: 'I recognized that some of you were disputing it with me'"* (al-Rūyānī, 1416 AH: 1/118, ḥadīth 106).

6. Abū Dāwūd relates: Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭayālisī related to us: Shuʿbah related to us. And [by another chain] Muḥammad ibn Kathīr al-ʿAbdī related to us: Shuʿbah informed us -the wording being to the same effect- from Qatādah, from Zurārah, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn,

*"that the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed Zuhr and a man came and recited behind him: 'Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High' When he had completed the prayer, he asked: 'Who among you recited?' They replied, "A man (among us). He said: "I knew that some of you were trying to snatch it from me." Abū Dāwūd said: In his narration, Abū al-Walīd said: "Shuʿbah said: 'So I said to Qatādah: Is not the opinion of Saʿīd that one should listen silently to the Quran?' He replied: 'That is only when (the Imam recites aloud.'" In his narration, Ibn Kathīr said: "I (Shu'bah) said to Qatādah: 'It appears he (the Prophet, peace be upon him, disliked it.' So he (Qatādah) replied: 'If he disliked it, he would have prohibited it.'"* (Abū Dāwūd, 2008: ḥadīth 828).

7. He also relates: Ibn al-Muthannā related to us: Ibn Abī ʿAdī related to us, from Saʿīd [ibn Abī ʿArūbah], from Qatādah, from Zurārah, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, *"that the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, led them in Zuhr. When he had finished, he said: "Who among you recited, Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. A man replied: "I did." So he said: "I knew that some of you were trying to snatch it from me."* (Abū Dāwūd, 2008: ḥadīth 829).

8. Al-Nasāʾī relates: Muḥammad ibn al-Muthannā informed us: Yaḥyā related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, who said:

*"The Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed Zuhr and a man behind him recited: Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. When he had finished praying, he said: 'Who recited: "Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High"?' A man said: 'I did.' He said: 'I realized that some of you were disputing it with me over it'"* (An-Nasāʾī, 2007: ḥadīth 918).

9. He also relates: Qutaybah informed us: Abū ʿAwānah related to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn

*"that the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed Zuhr or 'Asr, and a man was reciting behind him. When he had finished, he said: 'Which of you recited "Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High"?' A man among the people said: 'I did, but I did not intend anything but good.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'I realized that some of you were disputing with me over it'"* (An-Nasāʾī, 2007: ḥadīth 919).

10. Ibn Ḥibbān relates: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Junayd informed us: Qutaybah ibn Saʿīd related to us: Abū ʿAwānah related to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn,

*"that a man recited behind the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the noon or afternoon prayer, and he said: 'Which of you recited "Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High"?!' A man among the people said: 'I did.' He said: 'I recognized that some of you was disputing it with me'"* (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993: ḥadīth 1845).

11. He also relates: Abū Yaʿlā informed us: Khalaf ibn Hishām al-Bazzār related to us: Abū ʿAwānah related to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, who said:

*"A man recited behind the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the noon or afternoon prayer -Abū ʿAwānah being uncertain which- and he said: 'Which of you recited "Glorify the name of your Lord, the*

*Most High"?' A man among the people said: 'I did.' He said: 'I recognized that some of you was disputing it with me'"* (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993: ḥadīth 1846).

12. He also relates: ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Hamdānī informed us: Muḥammad ibn Bashshār related to us: Muḥammad [ibn Jaʿfar] related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, who said: I heard Zurārah ibn Awfā narrate from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn

*"that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, offered Zuhr prayer, and a man began reciting 'Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High' behind him; when he turned around, he said: 'Which of you was it who recited?'—or, 'Which of you was the reciter?'—a man said: 'I did, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'I recognized that some of you was disputing it with me'"* (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1993: ḥadīth 1847).

13. Al-Bayhaqī narrated: Abū Saʿd al-Mālīnī narrated to us: Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAdī al-Ḥāfiẓ narrated to us: ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣaffār and Ibn Ṣāʿid narrated to to us, both said: Yūsuf ibn Mūsā narrated to us: Salamah ibn al-Faḍl narrated to us: al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah narrated to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, who said:

*"The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was leading the people in prayer while a man was reciting behind him. When he finished, he said, 'Who is it that is disputing the sūrah with me?'- and he forbade recitation behind the imam." Ibn Ṣāʿid comments: "His statement 'and he forbade recitation behind the imam' is a clause transmitted alone [tafarrada bihi] by al-Ḥajjāj. Shuʿbah, Ibn Abī ʿArūbah, Maʿmar, Ismāʿīl ibn Muslim, al-Ḥajjāj [in a different transmission], Ayyūb ibn Abī Miskīn, Hammām, Abān, and Saʿīd ibn Bishr transmitted the ḥadīth from Qatādah, and none of them said what al-Ḥajjāj alone transmitted. Shuʿbah said: 'I asked Qatādah: It seems he disliked it? He said: Had he disliked it, he would have forbidden it!'"* (al-Bayhaqī, 1996: ḥadīth 2732).

14. He also relates: Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdān informed us: Aḥmad ibn ʿUbayd al-Ṣaffār informed us: ʿAbbās ibn al-Faḍl related to us: Abū al-Walīd related to us: Shuʿbah related to us, from Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Abī Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn,

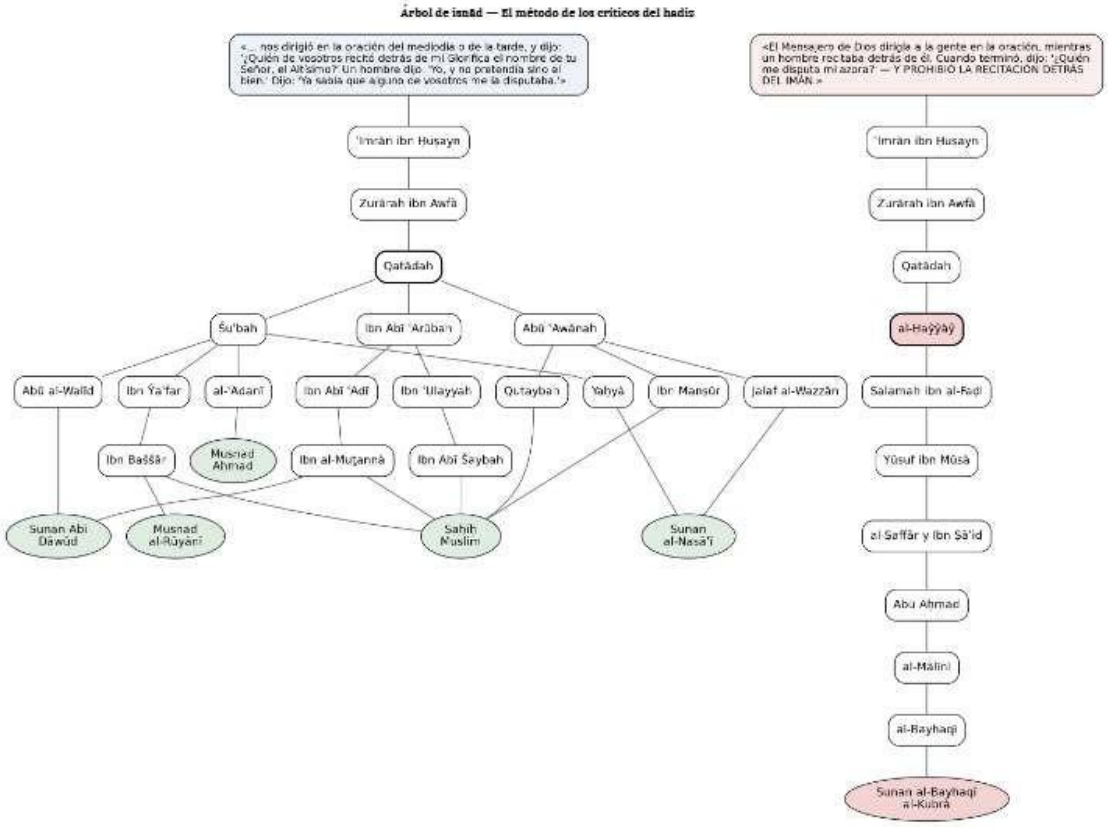
*"that the Prophet, peace be upon him, one day, he performed the Zuhr prayer, and a man came and recited 'Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High' behind him; when he finished, he said: 'Which of you is the reciter?' He said: 'I am.' He said: 'I thought that some of you was disputing it with me.'" Muslim transmitted this in his Ṣaḥīḥ, to this same effect, from the ḥadīth of Shuʿbah, Abū ʿAwānah, and Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūbah, from Qatādah* (al-Bayhaqī, 1996: ḥadīth 2733).

15. He also relates: Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Fūrak related to us: ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar informed us: Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb related to us: Abū Dāwūd -that is, al-Ṭayālisī- related to us: Shuʿbah related to us. And [by another chain] Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī informed us: Abū Bakr ibn Dāsah informed us: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī related to us: Muḥammad ibn Kathīr al-ʿAbdī related to us: Shuʿbah narrated to us, with the same meaning as the narration of Abū al-Walīd, with, at its end, Shuʿbah's statement: "I said to Qatādah: It seems he disliked it? He said: Had he disliked it, he would have forbidden it." Al-Bayhaqī continues:

*"It is likewise related to us, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, that he said: 'No prayer is valid without the Opening Sūrah [al-Fātiḥah]'- so it seems that what the Prophet, peace be upon him, disliked about the reciter behind him was the audible recitation itself, not recitation as such- similar to what Abū al-Ḥusayn ibn Bishrān al-ʿAdl in Baghdad informed us: Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr al-Razzāz informed us: Yaḥyā ibn Jaʿfar related to us: Wahb ibn Jarīr informed us: my father informed me, from al-Nuʿmān ibn Rāshid, who heard him relate from al-Zuhrī, from Abū Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from Abū Hurayrah, 'that ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥudhāfah led the prayer and recited aloud, whereupon the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said to him: "O Ibn Ḥudhāfah, do not make me hear when you should be making God, exalted be He, hear""* (al-Bayhaqī, 1996: ḥadīth 2735).

Examining these ḥadīths transmitted from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, the critic finds that they fall within the category of a narrator's singular transmission (*tafarrud*) of part of the ḥadīth- so to what extent is this additional clause sound, given that Muslim recorded the ḥadīth in his Ṣaḥīḥ without this addition?

To facilitate the study, we set out these ḥadīths in a transmission tree (*shajarat al-isnād*), as follows:




On examining these numerous narrations and weighing them against one another, it becomes clear to the critic that their chains converge on Qatādah, from Zurārah ibn Awfā, from ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn.

Shuʿbah, Abū ʿAwānah, and Ibn Abī ʿArūbah all agree, in their transmission from Qatādah, in not transmitting from him the clause "and he forbade recitation behind the imam," whereas al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah diverges from them by transmitting this clause from him alone.

This requires the critic to investigate this clause transmitted alone by al-Ḥajjāj, given that the ḥadīth without this addition is a sound ḥadīth recorded by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

The critic accordingly focuses his investigation on the narrator responsible for the singular transmission: can his singular transmission be accepted? And is there any indicator pointing to the acceptance or rejection of this addition?

Returning to the transmission uniquely attributed to al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah, one finds that he transmits it from Qatādah using *ʿan*, without explicitly stating his audition of this

particular ḥadīth from him. The scholars criticized al-Ḥajjāj for *tadlīs*, and his *tadlīs* is of the objectionable variety, since he practices concealment specifically regarding weak narrators. Abū Ḥātim, as related from him by his son, said: "Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah is truthful (*ṣadūq*); he conceals [defects] regarding weak narrators; his ḥadīth is recorded, and when he says *ḥaddathanā* ['he related to us'], he is reliable, and there is no doubt as to his truthfulness and precision, provided he specifies audition." Abū ʿAbd Allāh relates from his father Aḥmad that he said: "Al-Ḥajjāj was among the *ḥuffāẓ*." [Ibn Abī Ḥātim] asked: "Why, then, is he not held in the same regard as others among the people?" He said: "Because his ḥadīth contains additions not found in other people's versions; there is hardly a ḥadīth of his without some addition" (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1952: 3/154–156, entry 673). Ibn ʿAdī said of him: "What people criticized in al-Ḥajjāj ibn Arṭāʾah was specifically his concealment of defects in his transmission from al-Zuhrī and others, and he sometimes erred in some of his transmissions…" (Ibn ʿAdī, 1997: 2/223–228, entry 406).

From these statements and the ḥadīths cited, three matters may be observed:

1. Al-Ḥajjāj practices concealment specifically regarding weak narrators -an objectionable form of *tadlīs* among the ḥadīth scholars- and in this particular transmission he uses *ʿan* without stating audition; this weakens his transmission.

2. Al-Ḥajjāj transmits this addition, from Qatādah, alone; and his singular transmission cannot be accepted, given what has been said of his concealment regarding weak narrators, and of his tendency to err in some transmissions.

3. Returning to the texts of the various transmissions recorded, the critic finds a statement by Qatādah himself that contradicts what al-Ḥajjāj transmits from him: Shuʿbah, after transmitting the ḥadīth from him, asked him, "It seems he disliked it?" and Qatādah replied, "Had he disliked it, he would have forbidden it." This text indicates that al-Ḥajjāj, in his transmission, relates from Qatādah something contrary to what Qatādah himself said in response to Shuʿbah's question.

In the end, one has no choice but to judge this addition, transmitted alone by al-Ḥajjāj from Qatādah, as weak, on account of his practice of concealment and the divergence of his transmission from what Shuʿbah himself transmits from Qatādah. This is evidently an error into which al-Ḥajjāj fell. For this reason, Ibn Ṣāʿid said:

*"His statement 'and he forbade recitation behind the imam' is a clause transmitted alone by al-Ḥajjāj; the ḥadīth was transmitted from Qatādah by Shuʿbah, Ibn Abī ʿArūbah, Maʿmar, Ismāʿīl ibn Muslim, al-Ḥajjāj [elsewhere], Ayyūb ibn Abī Miskīn, Hammām, Abān, and Saʿīd ibn Bishr, and none of them said what al-Ḥajjāj alone transmitted. Shuʿbah said: 'I asked Qatādah: It seems he disliked it? He said: Had he disliked it, he would have forbidden it!'"* (al-Bayhaqī, 1996: ḥadīth 2732).

The ḥadīth, without the addition, is sound; it was transmitted from Shuʿbah, from Qatādah, by this chain, by each of Imām Aḥmad (1988: 4/441, ḥadīth 19975), Muslim (2007: ḥadīth 398), Abū Dāwūd (2008: ḥadīth 828- which includes Shuʿbah's aforementioned question to Qatādah), al-Nasāʾī (2007: ḥadīth 917), al-Rūyānī (1416 AH: ḥadīth 106), and Ibn Ḥibbān (1993: ḥadīth 1847).

It was likewise transmitted from Abū ʿAwānah by each of Muslim (n.d.: ḥadīth 398), al-Nasāʾī (1986: ḥadīth 918), and Ibn Ḥibbān (1993: ḥadīth 1846).

And it was transmitted by the route of Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūbah by each of Muslim (2007: ḥadīth 398) and Abū Dāwūd (2008: ḥadīth 829).

## Conclusion

This study was an attempt to shed light on the methodology of the muḥaddithūn in the criticism of narrations. This is a methodological framework that is characterized by rigorous verification of the continuity of the chain, investigation of the integrity of narrators and their ranks, evaluation of their exactness and stability, and detection of both explicit and implicit defects. This was done to save the Sunnah from illusion and interpolation and establish rulings based on credible narrations. This was not limited to the field of ḥadīth alone but established a tradition of verification and citation that permeated all fields of Islamic studies. The methodology of isnād, comparison, and preference (*tarjiḥ*) was transferred into works in jurisprudence and its foundations, exegesis of the Qur'an, history, linguistics, and literature, among others. Standards of attribution, ranking of chains, precise demarcation of differences, and corroboration of witnesses and chains became part and parcel of scholarship, especially since most of the scholars engaged in multiple disciplines in the process of their education.

And it follows from this that the method of the muḥaddithūn is not only a set of techniques. It is also a mode of thought, which makes every statement depend upon its proofs, bases opinion on the full array of signs, grades the establishment of a statement according to degrees, places preference on the preserved (*maḥfūẓ*) in the event of contradiction, and will not allow itself to be taken in by simple trustworthiness without testing. And it is also a mode of behavior, which involves scholarly integrity, fairness, circumspection in ascribing statements, and awareness of responsibility for one's own words. That is why the methodology continues to remain relevant. It can be applied to the evaluation of reports, testimonies, and narrations in circulation, as well as scholarly investigation and documentation. The pertinent techniques are derived directly from the ḥadīth sciences-verification, accumulation of corroboration, knowledge of the rank of sources relative to each other, and discovery of illusions. But these techniques did not develop abstractly; they arose from real practice of dealing with reports.

And yet, the underlying premise of the criticism itself continues to be one that connects theory and practice: "If you are transmitting, then transmit with soundness; if you are making a claim, then back it up with proof." Such a dictum needs to be established as a norm in both academic and daily living. It helps in putting an end to faulty logic and empty rhetoric, and establishes an ethical epistemology through which both individual and society can be saved.

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