

# 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth— The Discipline of Ḥadīth Studies

The rich discipline of 'ulūm al-ḥadīth consists of over 50 separate branches of learning, in two broad categories:

1. *ʿIlm al-Riwāyah* [knowledge of narration]: the work of the traditionist (*muhaddith*), this science involves ensuring authenticity at the source and accuracy in the transmission and reporting of ḥadīth so as to prevent distortion and error, deliberate or otherwise.
2. *ʿIlm al-Dirāyah* [knowledge of the meanings of ḥadīth]: the process of ensuring the accuracy of the text of ḥadīth by paying attention to all the nuances of language and purpose of the text as well as any ruling it might contain, this science is more the work of jurists and legal scholars whose job is to deduct the rules of *Shari'ah* from the language of texts.

## Receiving and Transmitting Ḥadīth [ التَّحْمُلُ وَ أَدَاءُ الْحَدِيثِ ]

- Scholars traditionally viewed ḥadīth from the perspective of reception (*taḥammul*) and delivery (*adā*)
- Preconditions for reception are only one— intellectual discernment (*tamyiz*), while conditions for delivery are five— Islām, majority, sound intellect, just character (*ʿadālah*), and retentiveness (*dabt*)
- Ḥadīth transmitters are required to transmit ḥadīth in words that are indicative of the manner in which they received them
- Eight valid methods of reception (these apply to the classical period and are largely irrelevant today):
  1. **Direct hearing** [ السَّمْعُ ]: direct hearing is indicated by the use of terms such as *sami'tu*, *ḥaddathanā*, *akhbaranī*, *anba'ani*, etc., which inspire confidence in the accuracy of the message; direct hearing in the singular (*sami'tu*, *ḥaddathanī*, *akhbaranī*, *anba'ani*) is generally considered more reliable than the equivalent plural terms (*sami'nā*, *ḥaddathanā*, *akhbaranā*, *anba'anā*); these terms inspire confidence
  2. **Recitation/rehearsal** [ الغرض أو القراءة عَلَى الشَّيْخِ ]: disciple reads to the shaykh, from memory or record, for purposes of verification; the clearest expression to convey this mode of reception is *qara'tu 'alā fulān*, while other expressions are debated
  3. **Permission** [ الإِجَازَةُ ]: teacher grants permission to individuals to transmit ḥadīth from them in a specified or unspecified context even without direct hearing or recitation; this was in effect a license issued to trusted individuals; the common expression *'an* (عَنْ ) in *isnāds* is considered to be indicative of permission; there is debate over the validity of this method in the absence of direct hearing, but the general view is that it is accepted; the more specific the wording and type of *ijāzah*, the more reliable it is considered
  4. **Presentation** [ الْمُنَادَاةُ ]: teacher presents manuscript or record of ḥadīth to students for purposes of transmission, usually accompanied by formal *ijāzah*; presentation without formal permission is considered a weaker form of transmission but still essentially reliable
  5. **Correspondence** [ الْمُرَاكَبَةُ ]: a teacher writes or dictates ḥadīth to individuals, with or without formal permission; similar to presentation, but often involves letters or writings in the teacher's own handwriting
  6. **Declaration** [ الإِعْلَامُ ]: a teacher simply declaring his ḥadīth and their source to his students without specifying permission to transmit; generally considered valid since permission is implicit in the declaration as well as the nature of the teacher-student relationship
  7. **Bequest** [ الْوَصِيَّةُ ]: a rare form of ḥadīth reception, in which a teacher leaves instructions upon his death or departure from a region allowing a particular individual to transmit a book or collection from him; considered the weakest form of reception and some scholars have rejected it
  8. **Finding** [ الْوَحْدَانَةُ ]: a student discovers narrations or collections of his teacher and begins to transmit them; generally considered valid if the writings are in the teacher's handwriting; Imām Aḥmad's *Musnad* contains many examples of narrations discovered by his son 'Abdullah and subsequently included in the final compilation; initially a very rare method, today it is the most common form of learning and transmitting ḥadīth, with the rise of formal compilations

## Ḥadīth Compilations

- Many Companions were known to have kept written compilations known as *Ṣaḥīfah* collections, which survived for many years but were mostly absorbed into later compilations
- *Ṣaḥīfat Madīnah*: The Constitution of Madīnah written by the Prophet upon his migration was an early document that has survived in its entirety
- *Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Ṣādiqah* of 'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ (d 65H): one of the best known early collections, containing 1000 ḥadīth, its manuscript did not survive but its contents almost entirely absorbed into the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad
- *Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* of Hammām b. Munabbih (d 101H): a surviving work of 138 ḥadīth compiled by a student of Abū Hurayrah, it has been rediscovered in modern times from manuscript form by Muhammad Hamidullah.
- *Muwatta'* of Imām Mālik: earliest of the comprehensive ḥadīth collections, it was written and revised over a period of 40 years in response to a request by the 'Abbāid Caliph al-Manṣūr, and arranged in a legal fiqh-oriented manner
- *Musnad* of Imām al-Shāfi'ī
- *Al-Āthār* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī: this work did not survive but was considered to have been absorbed into other works
- *Muṣannaf* of Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d 154H)
- *Musnad* of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d 204H)
- *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Humām al-Ṣan'ānī (d 211H)
- *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad (d 241H): a massive compilation that took 20 years to complete, it contains 40,000 ḥadīth including 10,000 repetitions by about 700 Companions; consolidated and arranged by his son 'Abdullah
- *Musnad* of Ibn al-Najjār (d 262H)
- *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* of Imām al-Bukhārī (d 256H): Compiled over 16 years through extensive research and travel and from over 1,000 teachers, it is the single-most authoritative ḥadīth collection, containing 9,082 ḥadīth (2,602 discounting repetitions) arranged in 106 books and 3,450 chapters. Of his 430 narrators, only about 80 have been questioned or labeled as weak, and about 89 of his ḥadīth have been identified to have some defect. This collection stands out for the in-depth knowledge and insight it provides concerning ḥadīth (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-ḥadīth*).
- *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Nīsābūrī (d 261H): Containing 10,000 ḥadīth (3,030 without repetitions) and having took 15 years to complete, it is considered the second most authoritative work (or ranked first by some) and is considered to be better consolidated, with superior thematic arrangement and easier to use than Bukhārī's work. It is also considered more precise from the perspective of the wordings of ḥadīth. Critics have raised questions over 160 of Muslim's 620 narrators, and questioned about 100 ḥadīth from the collection.
- *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d 275H): A comprehensive collection of 5,274 legal ḥadīth (4,800 without repetitions), he included both weak and authentic narrations but took great effort to identify them as such, recording critical comments on each ḥadīth, including sources, varying versions and the various points of strength and weakness of each. It is generally ranked third after Bukhārī and Muslim and is considered to be so legally comprehensive that it was deemed "sufficient for the mujtahid to obtain the knowledge of ḥalāl and ḥarām."
- *Sunan Ibn Mājah* of Ibn Mājah (d 273H): Containing 4,341 ḥadīth (including 1,329 recorded by him alone among the *Authentic Six*), in both authentic and weak— even fabricated narrations, it was initially not included in the *Authentic Six Compilations* until the 6<sup>th</sup> century when it replaced the *Muwatta'* in this group. It is a refined and elegant work that is arranged and classified very well.
- *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* of al-Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d 303H): Containing 5,000 legal ḥadīth in a superior classification and arrangement, many of which appear in previous works, and very little of which are weak. It combines many of the salient features of the other works.

- *Mustakhrāj Muslim* of Ya'qūb b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Isfarā'īnī (d 316H): A *mustakhrāj* work in which the author attempted to identify alternate chains to the ḥadīth of Muslim.
- *Mustakhrāj 'ala'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* by Ibn al-Akhram (d 344H): A *mustakhrāj* work identifying additional chains for the ḥadīth of Bukhārī and Muslim.
- *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* of al-Ṭabarānī (d 360H): Contains 25,000 ḥadīth, arranged alphabetically by Companions.
- *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ, al-Mu'jam al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Ṭabarānī (d 360H)
- *Mustakhrāj* of Abū Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Isma'īlī (d 371H): A supplementary work to al-Bukhārī, it identified additional, alternate chains for all his ḥadīth.
- *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* of al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī (d 405H): Comprehensive collection in which the author attempted to use only narrations that were practiced and in use by prominent jurists and scholars (which makes the collection reasonably clear or spurious and fabricated ḥadīth) and made many valuable critical comments to each ḥadīth, including existence of alternate chains of transmission and methodological comments on ḥadīth sciences.
- *Mustadrak 'ala'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* by al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī (d 405H): A supplementary work to Bukhārī and Muslim meant to identify additional ḥadīth narrations that meet their criteria of authenticity, it has been criticized as being lax and not living up to its intended purpose, often utilizing weak ḥadīth.

**The following compilations considered to be weak and not generally relied upon:**

*Al-Kabīr, al-Ṣaḥīḥ, and al-Awsaṭ* by al-Ṭabarānī  
*Al-Afrād* by al-Dāruquṭnī (d 385H)  
 All ḥadīth compilations of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī  
*Ḥilyat al-Awliyā' wa Ṭabaqāt al-Asfiyā'* by Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī

**The Companions**

- Last living Companion— Abū Ṭufayl 'Amir b. Wāthilah al-Laythī (died 100H in Makkah)
- Last Follower to meet him— Khalaf b. Khalīfah (d 188H)
- *Mukthirū'l-Ḥadīth*— about 7 Companions who narrated the bulk of ḥadīth from the Prophet— Abū Hurayrah (5,374), Ibn 'Umar (2,630), Anas b. Mālik (2,286), 'Ā'isha (2,210), Ibn 'Abbās (1,660), Jābir b. 'Abdullah (1,540) and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (1,170)
- Most learned Companions—'Umar, 'Alī, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thābit, Abū'l-Dardā' and Ibn Mas'ūd
- Abū Bakr narrated only 142 ḥadīth due to his early death

**Some Specific Branches of Ḥadīth Sciences:**

**'Ilm tārikh al-ruwāt** (biographies of transmitters): also known as **'Ilm al-rijāl al-ḥadīth** and **asmā' al-rijāl** and **ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt** (classes of narrators)

**Ma'rifat awṭān al-ruwāt wa buldānīhim** (localities and domiciles of narrators— stresses the theme that knowledge of the locations of narrators and where they received ḥadīth enhances the reliability of the isnād)

**Ma'rifat al-Ṭabaqāt** (knowledge of the generations— Companions, Successors, etc.)

**Ma'rifat al-akābir min al-aṣāghir** (knowing the senior and junior figures in each generation)

**Ma'rifatu mā dhukira bi asmā' aw ṣifāt mukhtalifah** (knowledge of the names of the ḥadīth transmitters who are known by multiple names, a phenomenon not uncommon due to the use of multiple names, nicknames, titles and kunyahs common in Muslim tradition)

**Ma'rifat al-mu'talif wa'l-mukhtalif min al-asmā' wa'l-ansāb** (knowledge of the look-alike but different names and genealogies— which discusses names written similarly but pronounced differently)

**Ma'ifat al-muttafiq wa'l-muftariq min al-asmā' wa'l-ansāb** (knowledge of concordant and discordant names and genealogies— deals with narrators with identical names)

**Ma'rifat al-mubhamāt** (knowledge of the obscure— clarifying obscure references to individuals that are mentioned in ḥadīth)

**Ma'rifat al-ansāb al-latī baṭīnuhā 'alā khilāf zāhirihā** (knowledge of genealogies who appearance is contrary to what they actually are— identifying and clarifying names which are not as they might appear to be, for instance, a Companion identified as al-Badrī though he did not witness al-Badr, or al-Taymī not from the Taymī tribe)

**'Ilm muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth** [the lexicon of ḥadīth]: Technical terms, names and phrases that the discipline of ḥadīth studies has developed over time

- The sum-total of the rest of the ḥadīth sciences, it represents the cumulative scholarship of the men of learning over the history of developments in ḥadīth studies and seeks to bring all other fields of ḥadīth sciences into focus
- *sunnah*: normative and exemplary conduct of the Prophet
- *ḥadīth*: verbal carrier of the Sunnah; the words or phrases in which the sunnah has been communicated and expressed
- *khabar*: report or verbal communication from others concerning the Prophet
- *athar*: all that is attributed to the Prophet, Companions and other leading figures
- *isnād*: chain of transmitters for a ḥadīth
- *rāwī*: narrator of ḥadīth
- *musnad*: ḥadīth that is supported by a chain of transmission (isnād) all the way to the Prophet
- *matn*: text of a ḥadīth

*alqāb al-muhaddithīn* (rankings of ḥadīth scholars):

1. **Musnid**: simple narrator of ḥadīth
2. **Ṭālib al-ḥadīth**: active seeker of ḥadīth
3. **Muhaddith**: one learned in ḥadīth sciences and familiar with the six works, and has memorized at least 1,000 ḥadīth
4. **Ḥāfiẓ**: one with wide and extensive knowledge of ḥadīth, including the memorization of all sound ḥadīth (or at least 100,000 according to some)
5. **Hujjah**: comprehensive and insightful knowledge of ḥadīth and, according to some, the memorization of 300,000 ḥadīth
6. **Ḥākim**: the highest level of ḥadīth competency and literacy, plus one who has memorized all ḥadīth on record with their chains

**'Ilm al-jarh wa'l-ta'dīl** [impugment and validation]: concerned mainly with the reliability or otherwise of ḥadīth transmitters and their formal classification and codification

**Ranks of Validation:**

1. Companions [highest level]
2. *Thiqāt ḍābitūn*: unwaveringly trustworthy
3. *Thiqāt*: trustworthy and inspires confidence
4. *Ṣadūq*: truthful
5. *Ṣadūq yahīm*: truthful but prone to mistakes
6. *Maqbūl*: accepted *inshā'allāh*

**Ranks of Impugment:**

1. *Majhūl al-hāl*: integrity unknown, but also nothing negative known; acceptable if two upright persons narrated from him
2. *Da'if*: weak
3. *Majhūl*: unknown person, either no one, or a single person, narrated from him
4. *Matrūk*: abandoned, discredited by reliable authorities
5. *Muttaḥam bi'l-kadhib*: accused of forgeries and lies
6. *Kadhhab*: known liar, or *waḍḍā'*: forger

**'Ilm gharīb al-ḥadīth** [unfamiliar expressions in ḥadīth]

**'Ilal al-Ḥadīth**: science of studying the less-than obvious defects of apparently sound narrations.

- Considered to be the most meticulous of the ḥadīth sciences, its experts likened to keen craftsmen, because it deals with sifting out the hidden defects in those narrations that are apparently sound and have not been rejected by the majority of traditionists
- These type of defects are not infrequent even in the major collections
- Types of defects: *raf' al-mawqūf* (mistaken elevation of a suspended narration), *ittiṣāl al-mursal* (connecting a disconnected narration), *idrāj* (insertion of words or phrases into the text by a narrator), *idkhal al-ḥadīth fi'l-ḥadīth* (insertion of one narration into another), *tadlīs* (deliberate concealment of elements of the isnād, or deliberate ambiguities in the names or identifications of ones' teachers or names of locales, etc.)
- Many otherwise reputable scholars committed lesser types of *tadlīs* ambiguities which are still generally accepted: Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah and Sufyān al-Thawrī, Qatādah, Hasan al-Baṣrī, al-A'mash and even Ibn 'Abbas, who narrated many ḥadīth from the Prophet though he heard only a handful of them directly; The general principle is that if a person is known to be trustworthy and reliable, and the *tadlīs* is not major, then the narrations are acceptable
- *Tadlīs* is generally considered less acceptable than *mursal* narrations, which are omissions of links in the chain that are not deliberate
- *Tadlīs* relates to the science of **ma'rifatu mā dhukira bi asmā' aw ṣifāt mukhtalifah** (knowledge of the names of the ḥadīth transmitters who are known by multiple names)

**Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth** (or **Mushkil al-Ḥadīth**): Science of resolving conflict and clarifying difficulties in ḥadīth

General principles in order of preference:

1. conflicting narrations are first attempted to be reconciled (*al-jam' wa'l-tawfiq*) by analyzing their context and application
2. if reconciliation is not possible, then their chronological order is identified and the principle of abrogation (*naskh*) is applied
3. if no reconciliation nor chronological order is possible, then one is simply preferred to the other (*al-tarjih*) on various grounds

- if preference is not possible, then the narrations are suspended and not applied (*al-tawaqquf*)

**Al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh fī'l-Ḥadīth:** Abrogation in ḥadīth

- This field is perhaps the most controversial and disputed, and least understood, of the ḥadīth sciences
- It refers to the abrogation of one legal ruling by another of subsequent origin
- Applies only in the case of conflicting narrations of legal import (does not apply to morals or historical or factual narrations) that have a clear chronological demarcation
- 4 types of abrogation in ḥadīth: 1. that which is explicitly known from the ḥadīth text itself (*al-naskh al-ṣarīh*), 2. that which is known from the statements of the Companions, 3. that which is known through a historical or chronological sequence of events, 4. that which is known through general consensus (*ijmā'*)

**Ziyādat al-Thiqāt:** Additional elements added to ḥadīth by reliable narrators

- this field deals with the quite common scenario of multiple versions of the same narration in varying lengths and details
- these additions and discrepancies can occur in both the text as well as the chain of ḥadīth
- these may represent a narrator summarizing a lengthy ḥadīth on occasion, or adding some details from oneself for purposes of elaboration or clarification, or may be due to the varying retentive abilities and memories of the recipients of ḥadīth, or may actually represent different ḥadīth uttered on different occasions
- General principles:
  - if the details are not conflicting but of the same essential nature, then there is no real issue
  - if the details are conflicting, or add additional—even minor—juridical implications, then the principles of preference (*tarjīh*) are to be applied
- More credibility is given to the versions narrated by greater numbers of individuals
- According to some scholars, in cases of doubt shorter versions of narrations should be given preference over longer ones to minimize the likelihood of error

**al-Mutāba'ah** [The Science of Confirmation and Follow-up]

- the science of identifying additional support for solitary narrations through alternate chains of transmission
- al-Mutābi'*—a confirming report involving the same chain as the original ḥadīth through another narrator; *al-Shāhid*—a confirming report through an entirely different chain that expresses the same or similar meaning as the original ḥadīth
- Mutāba'ah Tāmmah* (complete follow-up)—when another narrator at the lowest level (i.e. the level in question) confirms the identical chain in question; *Mutāba'ah Nāqishah* (deficient follow-up)—when support is found through a narrator higher in the chain, for instance, through a different Companion

**Ḥadīth Classification**

*Classification based upon broad categories of authenticity:*

- Ṣaḥīḥ** (Sound): continuous chain, upright narrators, free of hidden defects (*'ilal*) and outlandish elements (*shudhūdh*)
  - Two categories: a. that which is inherently sound (*ṣaḥīḥ li dhātihī*), b. that which is not intrinsically sound but becomes so based upon extraneous, supporting evidences (*ṣaḥīḥ li ghayrihī*)
- Ḥasan** (Fair): does not meet the full criteria of *ṣaḥīḥ* nor weak enough to fall under *ḍa'īf*
  - Also can be sound intrinsically (*li dhātihī*) and extrinsically (*li ghayrihī*)
  - This categorization developed later, and earlier scholars recognized only authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and inauthentic (*ḍa'īf*) categories, and so placed these types of narrations in the *ṣaḥīḥ* category
- Ḍa'īf** (Weak): doesn't meet all of the criteria of authenticity above, either in the text or chain
  - there are many degrees of weakness, some of them slight and do not preclude acting upon the ḥadīth while some are severe and warrant outright rejection
  - general principle: *overall acceptability of a ḥadīth is based upon its weakest element*
  - Types of weak narrations:
    - Mursal** (disconnected): broken link at the level of the Companions
      - Degrees: Mursal of the Companions (a Companion quotes the Prophet but his direct hearing of the ḥadīth from the Prophet is not proven; very common as many junior Companions would learn ḥadīth from other more senior Companions), Mursal of the Follower (*tābi'*) who embraced Islam in the time of the Prophet but never saw him (there are 20 such individuals mentioned), mursal of the prominent Followers, mursal of the less prominent Followers
      - Only the mursal of the Companions are generally accepted by most scholars
      - After the Companions, the soundest *mursal* report is considered to be that of Sa'd b. al-Musayyib (d 99H) in Madinah, who was the son of a Companion Musayyib b. Ḥuzn, as well as a student of the major Companions and one of the 7 jurists of Madīnah
    - Munqaṭi'** (broken): missing or ambiguous link in the isnād anywhere below the level of the Companions
    - Mu'dal**: two consecutive broken links in the isnād
    - Matrūk** (abandoned): transmitter suspected of lying
    - Maqlūb** (reversed): any type of reversal in the isnād or text
    - Mudraj** (inserted): insertion of the words of a transmitter into the text of a ḥadīth
    - Munkar** (evil): narrators of doubtful reliability while text contradicts more authentic narrations
    - Shādh** (irregular): a ḥadīth with trustworthy narrators but it contradicts stronger narrations or narrations supported by greater number of trustworthy narrators
    - Muḍṭarīb** (confounded): a ḥadīth which contradicts other narrations that cannot be reconciled nor can any of them be preferred over another
  - there are many views on the usability of the weak narrations, but the safest approach and that adopted by most contemporary scholars is that their use be severely restricted so as to preserve the purity of the Sunnah and not undermine its credibility
- Mawḍū'** (Forged)
  - Forgeries affected many disciplines, including tafsīr, fiqh and morals
  - Fiqh works known to contain weak and forged ḥadīth: al-Marghinānī's *Hidāyah* (which prompted al-Zayla'ī (d 762H) to compile a work devoted to clarifying its ḥadīth sources), *Sharḥ al-Rāfi'* (which prompted Ibn Ḥajar to write a critical review on its ḥadīth references)
  - Tafsīr works affected by forgeries: *Tafsīr Zamakhsarī* (al-Zayla'ī published a critique on it), *Tafsīr* of al-Tha'ālibī (d 875H), al-Wāhidī (d 468H), even Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī to some extent (al-Ṣuyūṭī's *al-Durr al-Manthur* is a critique of that)
  - Imām Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* also affected by forgeries (Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī, d 806H, published a critique of its ḥadīth)
  - Signs of ḥadīth forgery: historical discrepancies in the isnād, ill reputations of transmitters, crude language not characteristic of the Prophet, corrupt meanings, clear opposition to the Qur'ān, clash with historical reality, scholastic fanaticism, a ḥadīth reported in solitary fashion though it should have been known to vast numbers of people, promise of disproportionate rewards and over-harsh punishments
  - Interestingly, the khārijite sect was known for their harsh bluntness and devotion to the truth as they saw it and were thus innocent of ḥadīth forgeries

*Classification based upon the origin of the ḥadīth:*

- Marfū'** (raised): a ḥadīth that is determined to be ascribed to the Prophet, though it may be a statement of a Companion; versus **Mawqūf** (suspended): a ḥadīth that stops at the level of the Companion and is not evidently attributed to the Prophet
  - Marfū'* narrations include those clear and explicit statements and actions of the Prophet as well as the statements of the Companions concerning events during his lifetime, his personal descriptions and attributes, and statements of the Companions concerning matters of belief and other unseen matters (*ghaybiyāt*) which are presumed to have only originated from the Prophet himself
  - Mawqūf* narrations are not wholly dismissed as weak and unreliable but each case must be judged on its own merits based upon the principles of ḥadīth
- Muttaṣil** or **mawṣil** (connected, i.e. with continuous unbroken isnād) versus **Maqṭū'** (broken): a ḥadīth suspended at the level of the Followers
  - Maqṭū'* narrations are generally considered to be very weak, though some scholars advocate accepting those of the senior Followers
- Mu'an'in** (on the authority of), **Mu'annan** (that), **Mu'allaq** (hanging)
  - Mu'an'in*: a ḥadīth whose links in the isnād are connected with the linking particle 'an ("on the authority of") which does not specify the manner of ḥadīth reception; there has been much debate over its acceptability, but the general view of leading experts including Ibn Ḥajar is that these are acceptable and considered to be connected (*muttaṣil*) unless there is evidence to the contrary; others hold that actual encounters or direct hearing between the links must be proven for the chains to be acceptable

- *Mu'annan*: a ḥadīth whose isnād includes the linking particle *anna* ("that he said . . .") which also introduces an element of ambiguity; some have considered the above two to be equivalent
- *Mu'allaq*: a ḥadīth quoted with omission of the entire isnād or significant portions of it; this manner became common in later times as ḥadīth compilations matured and became widespread
- These three types are not considered to be intrinsically or categorically weak, but must be evaluated on their merits

Classification based upon the number of narrators:

1. *Fard*: a ḥadīth narrated by a single Companion, though it may be subsequently narrated by a large number
  - Can be absolute (*al-fard al-muṭlaq*)—narrated by a single person, or relative (*al-fard al-nisbī*)—narrated by multiple individuals but who all belong to one group or locality (i.e. people of Kūfa)
2. *Gharīb*: a ḥadīth that is narrated by a single individual at any level of its isnād
  - every *fard* ḥadīth is thus *gharīb* but not vice versa
  - both these categories do not automatically render a ḥadīth weak but it must be evaluated individually, but most *gharīb* narrations are likely to be weak; some scholars even precluded both these categories from a fully sound ḥadīth (*ṣaḥīḥ*) on the grounds that such a paucity of transmitters cannot allow for a ḥadīth to be fully acceptable
3. 'Azīz: a ḥadīth with at least 2 transmitters at every link in the isnād, *Mashhūr*: at least 3 transmitters at each link
4. *Mutawātir* (multiplicitous): a ḥadīth narrated by such a large number of individuals at each link of the isnād that it becomes inconceivable that they could have collaborated to perpetuate a lie; versus *Āḥād*: those ḥadīth that do not meet the criteria of *tawātur*
  - No exact numbers specified to meet the criteria of *mutawātir*, though numbers from 4 to several hundred have been proposed
  - Two types:
    - Verbal *Mutawātir* (*mutawātir lafẓī*): verbatim transmissions of the Prophet in a *mutawātir* manner; very few such examples
    - *Mutawātir* by Meaning (*Mutawātir Ma'nawī*): various reports through different channels which support a common theme and meaning
  - *Āḥād* narrations are not necessarily weak according to the dominant opinion but must be evaluated according to the principles of ḥadīth evaluation, and if deemed to be sound, impart certain knowledge; others deem them less than decisive even if authenticated
  - It is also generally agreed that in matters of belief and creed, *āḥād* narrations are not acceptable

### Aṣḥḥ al-Asānīd (The Best Chains)

- Two types of chains with respect to proximity to the Prophet:
  1. Elevated chains (*al-isnād al-'ālī*): fewest links to the Prophet, vertical transmission only
  2. Descended chains (*al-isnād al-nāzil*): multiple links, often with horizontal transmission (between individuals in the same level or generation *ṭabaqah*)
- Best chains of Abū Hurayrah:
  - Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī → Sa'd b. al-Musayyib → Abū Hurayrah [considered the best isnād of Abū Hurayrah]
  - Abū'l-Zanād → al-A'raj → Abū Hurayrah
  - Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr → Abū Salama → Abū Hurayrah
- Best chain of Abū Bakr: Isma'īl b. Abī Khālid → Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim → Abū Bakr
- Best isnād of 'Umar: al-Zuhrī → Sālim → *his father* Ibn 'Umar → *his father* 'Umar
  - Best isnād of 'Ā'isha: 'Ubaydullah b. 'Umar → al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr → *his aunt* 'Ā'isha
  - The Golden Chain: Imām Aḥmad → Imām al-Shāfi' → Imām Mālik
  - Other strong chains:
    - Muḥammad b. Sīrīn → 'Ubaydah b. 'Amr → 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
    - Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī → 'Alqamah b. Qays → Ibn Mas'ūd
    - Imām Mālik → Nāfi' → Ibn 'Umar

## ANTHOLOGY OF ḤADĪTH LITERATURE

### General works on 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth

Early works that laid the foundations of a methodology of ḥadīth evaluation:

*Kitāb al-Ḍu'afā'* by Imām al-Bukhārī and al-Nasā'ī: discussed weak transmitters

*Kitāb al-Ḍu'afā'* by Imām al-Nasā'ī: discussed weak transmitters

*Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Ibn Sa'd (d 230H): detailed biographical work on transmitters

*Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt* by Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d 354H/965CE): a more specialized work in which he only mentioned the reliable transmitters

Later works that consolidated earlier ones:

*Al-Muḥdith al-Fāṣil Bayn al-Rāwī wa'l-Wāṭi* by al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Rāmhumuzī (d 360H): landmark work that combined and consolidated all aspects of ḥadīth studies for the first time, but still fell short of being a fully comprehensive work

*Ma'rifat 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* by al-Ḥākim Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī (d 450H): another landmark consolidating work that discusses fifty branches of ḥadīth sciences, but remained poorly consolidated and less-than-comprehensive according to Ibn Ḥajar

*Al-Kifāyah fī Ma'rifat Uṣūl 'Ilm al-Riwāyah* and *al-Jāmi' li Ādāb al-Shaykh wa'l-Sāmi'* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d 463H)

*'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d 643H): widely acclaimed reference work in the field of ḥadīth studies

*Al-Bā'ith al-Ḥathīth ilā Ma'rifat 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* by Ibn Kathīr (d 774H): another major reference that built upon the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ

### Works on biographies

*Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* by Ibn Sa'd al-Zuhrī (d 230H/845CE): A 15-volume seminal work that was one of the earliest on this topic, containing biographies of more than 4,000 traditionists as well as a rich mine of history and genealogy, including the Seerah.

*Tārīkh al-Kabīr* by al-Bukhārī (d 256/871): The next landmark in this field, this was a biographical work arranged alphabetically of over 40,000 traditionists, which exists today in fragments.

*Mashāhīr 'Ulamā' al-Amṣār* by Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d 354H/965CE)

*Tārīkh Baghdād* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d 463H): short biographies of 7,831 individuals

*Uṣd al-Ghābah* by Ibn al-Athīr (d 630H/1230CE): Authoritative work on biographies of 7,554 Companions.

*Ṭabaqāt al-Huffāẓ* by al-Ḥafīẓ al-Dhahabī (d 748H)

*Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah* by Ibn Ḥajar (d 852H): Comprehensive and authoritative work on the biographies of the Companions

*Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* by Ibn Ḥajar (d 852H): 10-volume biographical work in alphabetical order of 12,415 traditionists.

*Mīzān al-'itidāl* by Ibn Ḥajar (d 852H): Another biographical work of 14,443 traditionists.

*'Ayn al-Iṣābah* by al-Ṣuyūṭī (d 911H): summary of Ibn Ḥajar's work

*Al-Risālah al-Mustatrafah* by Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Kattānī (d 1345/1927)

### Works devoted to Mursal Ḥadīth

*Kitāb al-Marāsīl* by Abū Dāwūd (d 275H)

*Marāsīl* by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d 277H)

### Works on Weak Narrators

*Al-Majruḥīn min al-Muḥaddithīn wa'l-Ḍu'afā' wa'l-Matrūkīn* by Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d 354H)

### Works on Forgeries in ḥadīth

*Tadhkirat al-Mawḍū'āt* by Abū'l-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ṭāḥīr al-Maqdisī (d 507H)

*Al-Mawḍū'āt* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d 597H): renowned work on forgeries, but has been criticized as including many good narrations as forgeries

*Al-Mughni 'an al-Ḥifẓ wa'l-Kitāb* by Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Badr al-Muṣālī (d 622H): identified themes and chapters that had become liable to forgeries

*Al-Ta'aqqubāt 'alā'l-Mawḍū'āt* by al-Ṣuyūṭī (d 911H): follow-up work to Ibn al-Jawzī's work

*Al-La'ālī al-Maṣnū'ah fī'l-Āḥādīth al-Mawḍū'ah* by al-Ṣuyūṭī (d 911H): summary of Ibn al-Jawzī's work

*Al-Mawḍū'āt* by Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī (d 1014H)

*Al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'ah fī'l-Āḥādīth al-Mawḍū'ah* by al-Shawkānī (d 1250H)

## Asānīd works

*Thulāthiyāt al-Bukhārī* by Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d 852H): work identifying all the trilateral chains in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (those consisting of three links)  
*Thulāthiyāt Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal* by al-Safārīnī

## Works on ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth (Hidden Defects)

*Al-Tārīkh wal-ʿIlal* by Yahyā b. Maʿīn (d 233H)  
*ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth* by Imām Aḥmad (d 241H)  
*Al-ʿIlal* by al-Tirmidhī (d 279H)  
*ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d 327H)  
*Al-ʿIlal al-Wāridah fī l-Aḥādīth al-Nabawīyyah* by al-Dāruquṭnī (d 385H)

## Works on Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth (Resolving Conflict in Ḥadīth)

*Ikhtilāf al-Ḥadīth* by Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d 204H): written on the margins of *Kitāb al-Umm* to provide a basic set of guidelines for reconciliation and preference  
*Taʿwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* by Muḥammad Ibn Qutaybah al-Daynūrī (d 271H); Extensive work on subject, including defending against criticisms of ḥadīth by Muʿtazilites and others  
*Mushkil al-Āthār* by Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭahāwī (d 321H): a 4-volume authoritative work on the subject  
*Mushkil al-Ḥadīth wa Bayānuhu* by Abubakr al-Iṣfahānī (d 406H)

## Works on Gharīb al-Ḥadīth (Rare and Difficult Expressions in Ḥadīth)

An early small work by Abū ʿUbayd Maʿmar al-Taymī (d 209H)  
*Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa l-Āthār* by Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. al-Sallām (d 224H): a highly acclaimed and comprehensive work that was a result of 40 years of scholarship  
*Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* by Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Anbārī (d 328H)  
*Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* by Ibn Qutaybah al-Daynūrī (d 271H): supplemented the earlier work of Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. al-Sallām  
*Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa l-Āthār* by Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d 606H): combining and consolidating previous works, it is considered a standard reference in the field, and has subsequently been the subject of numerous commentaries and supplements  
*Al-Durr al-Nathīr Talkhīs Nihāyat Ibn al-Athīr* by al-Ṣuyūṭī (d 911H): summary of Ibn al-Athīr's work  
*Al-Kifāyah fī Naẓm al-Nihāyah* by Abū l-Fidā al-Baʿlabakī al-Ḥanbalī (d 785H): Ibn al-Athīr's work in prose form  
*Al-Fāʾiq li Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* by al-Zamakhsharī: considered to be another standard reference in the field

## Works on al-Nāsikh wa l-Mansūkh fī l-Ḥadīth (Abrogation in Ḥadīth)

*Nāsikh al-Ḥadīth wa Mansūkhuhū* by al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Athram (d 261H): written by a friend and contemporary of Imām Aḥmad in 3 small booklets  
*Nāsikh al-Ḥadīth wa Mansūkhuhū* by al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Aḥmad al-Baghdādī, also known as Ibn Shāhīn (d 385H)  
Aḥmad b. Iṣḥāq al-Tānūkhī (d 318/930)  
Muḥammad b. Baḥr al-Iṣfahānī (d 332/934)  
ʿUmar b. Shāhīn al-Baghdādī (d 385/995)  
*Al-Iʿtibār fī l-Nāsikh wa l-Mansūkh min al-Āthār* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥamdānī al-Ḥāzimī (d 584H): comprehensive work

## Works on Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth (Study of the Occasions of Occurrence of Ḥadīth)

*Al-Bayān wa l-Taʾrīf fī Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* by the Damascene traditionist Ibrāhīm Muḥammad b. Kamāl al-Dīn, also known as Ibn Ḥamzah al-Ḥusaynī (d 1120H): comprehensive 2-volume work arranged alphabetically according to persons and events

## Works on Ziyādat al-Thiqāt (Additional elements added to ḥadīth by reliable narrators)

*Kitāb al-Tamyīz al-Mazīd fī Muttaṣil al-Asānīd* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d 463H): work on additions to chains of ḥadīth, that has been criticized by many, including Ibn al-Ṣalāh, for some its conclusions



Compiled by Abu Zayd, [www.studentofislam.com](http://www.studentofislam.com)

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