

Introduction To Hadith



By: Ali Abdulaziz Alseddiqi رحمه الله
With the contribution of: Mohammed Alseddiqi

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With Contribution of Mohammad Alseddiqi

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Ali Abdulaziz Alseddiqi and Mohammad Abdulaziz Alseddiqi

and the book title, *Introduction to Hadith*, be mentioned when it is used

For Ali, may Allah have mercy on him.
Your light continues to guide those who seek
knowledge

I kindly ask every reader who benefits from these pages to remember Ali in their prayers, to ask Allah to forgive him, elevate his rank, and grant him a place among the righteous.

May this work be a source of ongoing reward for him, and a means of goodness for all who read, learn, and reflect.

About the Authors

Ali, may Allah have mercy on him, was born in Kuwait and raised in the United Kingdom, which gave him a natural command of both Arabic and English. He noticed early on how difficult Islamic studies can be for those who do not speak Arabic, so he dedicated himself to creating channels that simplify religious knowledge in both languages. He spent his time reading hadith collections and English Islamic texts to make their meanings clearer and easier for others to understand. This book grew out of that passion during his years studying medicine abroad.

Mohammed, also raised between Kuwait and the United Kingdom, shared with his brother Ali the advantage of growing up fluent in both languages. Ali would often rely on him for support while writing certain parts of the book. During the period in which this book was being developed, Mohammed was living in Kuwait, and whenever he wanted to deepen his understanding, he would seek guidance from trusted Islamic scholars there. His contributions reflect the same sincere desire to make knowledge clearer and more accessible.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Chapter Two: Listing the Six Mother Books and other collections

Al-Ummahut As-Sitt, or **The Six Mother Books**, refers to the following Compilations of Hadith:

- Sahih Bukhari (died 256 Hijri, or 870 AD)
- Sahih Muslim (d. 261 Hijri)
- Sunan An-Nasa'i (d. 303 Hijri, or 916 AD)
- Sunan Abi Dawud (d. 275 Hijri)
- Sunan Ibn Majah (d. 273 Hijri)
- Sunan At-Tirmidhi (d. 279 Hijri, or 893 AD)

These are the Six Major books of Hadith, all compiled between 200-300 Hijri. They were not the first collections of Hadith, nor were they the last⁴. **Collections preceding them** includes:

⁴ **Important to note** that the collections written above are not exactly in order of completion of the collection, but rather in order of the dates of death of their respective authors, on the Hijri Calendar. Completion dates are more difficult to pinpoint. The dates above on the Gregorian calendar are approximations calculated from the Hijri. I have mentioned some dates in this essay as they are on the Gregorian Calendar so as to facilitate the development of a timeline, and provide reference points in history.

- Muwatta Malik (d. 179 Hijri, or 796 AD)
- Musnad Al-Shafi'i (d. 204 Hijri)
- Musannaf As-San'ani (d. 211 Hijri)
- Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235 Hijri)
- Musnad Ahmed bin Hanbal (d. 241 Hijri, or 856 AD)

Collections formed **during** the time of the authors of Six Mother Books includes:

- Musnad Al-Bazzar (d. 292 Hijri)
- Musnad Abu Ya'la Al-Mawsili (d. 307 Hijri)
- Al-Adab Al-Mufrad (also by Al-Bukhari)

Collections formed **after** the time of the authors of Six Mother Books includes:

- Sahih Ibn Hibban (d. 354 Hijri, or 965 Hijri)
- Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabeer by At-Tabarani (d. 360 Hijri)
- Sunan Ad-Daraqutni (d. 385 Hijri)

- Shuabul Iman, Sunan Al-Kubra, and Sunan Al-Wusta by Al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 Hijri, or 1066 AD)

Evidently, there are many collections of Hadith, and there are many others I have not mentioned above. There are also collections formed largely by gathering Hadith from the above collections (mostly from the Six Mother Books).

Such important collections include but are not limited to:

- Riyad As-Saliheen by An-Nawawi (d. 676 Hijri)
- The 40 Nawawi
- Bulugh Al-Maram by Ibn Hajr (d. 852 Hijri)

The Main Collections as far as we laymen are concerned:

There are many collections, and most of them are simply used as reference books, and not books that are typically read completely from beginning to end. To avoid being confused by the sheer number of collections, know that the Main Collections for us laymen to focus on are simply the following:

- Six Mother Books (and Al-Adab Al-Mufrad)
- The 40 Nawawi

Chapter Three: Details on Mother Books and Musnad Ahmed

In this chapter, basic details on The Six Mother Books and Musnad Ahmed will be shared. Brief biographies of the authors will also be provided. More detailed biographies of the authors can be found in books on the science of Hadith. Additionally, unless otherwise stated in a footnote below, the source used to derive information on the books and their authors is from *Mustalah Al-Hadith* by Ibn Uthaymeen.⁵

Sahih Bukhari

Al-Bukhari compiled this collection, which he named *Al-Jami' Al-Sahih*, by extracting Sahih Hadith from over 600,000 Hadith. Bukhari was extremely vigilant in selecting Hadith, and he would not place a Hadith in his collection except that he performed Ghusl and prayed two Ruku' to seek Allah's guidance as to whether he should place the Hadith in his collection, or not. Of the Six

⁵ There may be instances where I used a source other than *Mustalah Al-Hadith*, such as Darussalam's books, or just my own interpolations using knowledge from other lectures and sources, without actually stating the particular source or acknowledging the interpolation. But the information in this essay is as reliable as a layman like me could possibly make it. I truly have (figuratively) put blood and tears into producing and refining this Drive to be beneficial to the Muslims, for the sake of Allah.

Mother Books, Sahih Bukhari contains the highest percentage of Sahih Hadith. Sahih Muslim and then Sunan An-Nasa'i follow in order of authenticity.

Bukhari compiled this collection over a duration of 16 years, and then proceeded to show it to other Scholars of the time. Scholars that he showed his Sahih collection to include Titans of Knowledge such as Ahmed bin Hanbal, Yahya ibn Ma'in, Ali ibn Madani, amongst others. Imam Adh-Dhahabi⁶ said that after the Quran, Sahih Bukhari is the most authentic book.

As for the number of Hadith in Sahih Bukhari, Ibn Hajr said that they are 7397 in total (with repetitions of Hadith, showing variants and different chains for a given Hadith). Without repetitions, there are 2602 unique Hadith in Sahih Bukhari.

Biography of Al-Bukhari

His name is Muhammad ibn Ismail, given the Kunya of *Al-Bukhari* after the name of his hometown, Bukhara, Khurasan⁷, where

⁶ Adh-Dhahabi (d. 748 Hijri) is a Titan of Knowledge that is referenced frequently. I myself mention him multiple times in this essay. He is also a student of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 Hijri, or 1328 AD).

⁷ Khurasan is a region that approximately encompasses part of the region of Iran, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, but its exact borders are debated. More can be found on the Britannica Khurasan article in the bibliography.

Uzbekistan is today⁸. He was born in 194 Hijri, and died 256 Hijri in Khartak, a village near Samarqand⁹. His father died when Al-Bukhari was a child, and he was subsequently raised by his mother¹⁰

Bukhari began memorizing the Quran and some Hadith whilst still very young, and he began to travel in search of Hadith in the year 210 Hijri (aged approximately 16). Bukhari had incredible memorization capabilities, memorizing entire books with a glance (a first read). He traveled to the region of Hijaz¹¹, Ash-Sham¹², Egypt, and Al-Jazira¹³. He also traveled to Al-Basra, Al-Kufah, and Baghdad¹⁴.

Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal also stated: “*Khurasan has not brought out of it the likes of Mohammed ibn Ismail (before)*”, showing that Bukhari was truly a Titan amongst Titans of knowledge.

⁸ The story of his Kunya and his hometown is derived from Dr. Muhsin Khan’s translation of Sahih Bukhari, in the introduction of the first volume.

⁹ Samarqand was the first Capital of Uzbekistan when it was formed in 1924 . The Capital was moved to Tashkent in 1930 (Britannica, 2024).

¹⁰ The part of his father’s death is also from Dr. Muhsin Khan.

¹¹ A region in what is now Saudi Arabia. It includes Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah (Britannica, 2023).

¹² Also known as *The Levant* in English. This region encompasses approximately where Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are today.

¹³ Al-Jazira Al-Arabia covers the areas of the Gulf States.

¹⁴ Al-Basra, Al-Kufa, and Baghdad are in Iraq.

Sahih Muslim

Imam An-Nawawi said, *“He (Imam Muslim) chose methods that were near perfect, and he was very cautious with his acquaintances, of which no one could accomplish except a few of his time.”*

Amongst Muslim’s closest acquaintances was Bukhari himself, with whom he would often discuss Hadith with, though Muslim compiled his own collection separately, and the presence of the same Hadith in both Sahih Bukhari and Muslim (As-Sahihayn) is often due to them both having similar strict methodologies in Hadith collection¹⁵.

Sahih Muslim has, with repetition, 7275 Hadith, and without repetition, around 4000 unique hadith¹⁶.

Biography of Muslim

His name is Muslim bin Hajjaj Al-Nisabori. He was born 204 Hijri in Nisabor¹⁷, Khurasan, and died in 261 Hijri in the same city. In search of Hadith, he traveled to similar places as Bukhari, such as Hijaz, Ash-Sham, Iraq, and Egypt. When Imam Al-

¹⁵ The part after the quote and before the number of Hadiths is my interpolation.

¹⁶ As said by Ibn Uthaymeen in Mustalah Al-Hadith

¹⁷ Nisabor is its Arabic name. It is now a city in Northeastern Iran, and is also spelled as Neyshabur. (Britannica, 2018).

Bukhari visited Nisabor, he spent much of his time with Imam Muslim, where Muslim learned and adopted much of the methodology of Bukhari.

Imam Muslim¹⁸ first began studying Hadith at age 18, where he learned from Yahya bin Yahya At-Tamimi. In 220 Hijri, he traveled to Mecca for pilgrimage¹⁹ and learned from Abdullah bin Salama Qa'nabi (himself a revered student of Imam Malik), who became the principal teacher of Muslim. He also studied in Kufah, and then learned from the scholars of Egypt, where the system of hearing Ahadith reportedly included both hearing and writing of these Hadith.

Darussalam, in their extensive biography of Imam Muslim, shows the strength of his methodology of Hadith collection and authentication, and the strength of his character. They show Imam Muslim being open to criticism, and show that he learned alongside other Titans.

Referencing the book *Tadhkiratul-Huffaz*, Darussalam wrote that Muslim was a student of the scholar Abu Zur'ah²⁰, and that other students of

¹⁸ Darussalam provides a short biography of Imam Muslim in their translation of Sahih Muslim, and I quote from them for the remainder of this brief biography of Muslim.

¹⁹ Darussalam did not specify whether this pilgrimage is Hajj, or the shorter pilgrimage of Umrah.

²⁰ Imam Muslim studied from over 200 different scholars, including Ahmed bin Hanbal. More on his teachers in Darussalam's translation of Sahih Muslim, in the introduction of Volume 1.

Abu Zur'ah includes Legendary scholars like the other authors of the Six Mother books, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, An-Nasa'i, At-Tirmidhi, amongst many other very prominent scholars.

Imam Muslim's biography is much longer and more magnificent than what I presented, but I will conclude his biography here, for the sake of brevity. The Sahihayn (of Bukhari and Muslim) will be revisited in the section of "Science of Hadith."

Sunan An-Nasa'i

Imam An-Nasa'i first produced a large collection of Hadith that is befittingly named *As-Sunan Al-Kubra*²¹, and then he summarized it and extracted the more Sahih Hadith found in it, to produce what he called *Al-Mujtaba*. This second collection, *Al-Mujtaba*, is what we refer to as *Sunan An-Nasa'i*, or alternatively as *As-Sunan As-Sughra*²². An-Nasa'i in his first compilation had collected both Da'if (weak) and Sahih, and in his *As-Sunan As-Sughra*, he concentrated the more Sahih narrations.

In Mustalah Al-Hadith, Ibn Uthaymeen commends the authenticity of Sunan An-Nasa'i, saying that it

²¹ Not to be confused with *As-Sunan Al-Kubra* by Al-Bayhaqi, previously listed above.

²² The details on naming of the book is my interpolation, but facts are derived from Ibn Uthaymeen and Darussalam.

is second only to the Sahihayn in authenticity (as stated above).

Biography of An-Nasa'i

His name is Abdurrahman Ahmed bin Shu'ayb bin Ali An-Nasa'i. The title of "An-Nasa'i" is likely attributed to the city of Nisa²³, in Khurasan. He was born 215 Hijri, in Nisa' of Khurasan, and died 303 Hijri, in Ramlah, Palestine. Like the previously mentioned authors of the Six Mother Books, An-Nasa'i also traveled across the Muslim world to gather many Hadith. He did not only author compilations of Hadith, but also books on the science of Hadith.²⁴ Another compiler of Hadith

²³ Nisa' itself has an interesting history. Nisa' was a town located Southwest of Ashgabat, the current Capital of Turkmenistan, but the city has since expanded and Nisa is part of it. Some scholars say Nisa is not related to the Arabic word, Nisa', which means women. Other scholars share a far more interesting story. The story is that the Arabs conquered this region around 651 AD, or 29 Hijri, and when they arrived, the men of the town had fled and only the women had stayed to fight, hence the name Nisa'. Whether or not the city is named after such an event remains a topic of debate. Sources for this include Darussalam's introduction in Sunan An-Nasa'i, as well as a 2023 Britannica article on Ashgabat, and Allah knows best.

²⁴ An-Nasa'i's biography was the most difficult for me to summarize, because of how rich, dense, and extensive it is. There are also many details about him and his books that I did not include because there is a lot that is debated and disagreed upon, and I did not want to make this introduction too confusing, as even I was stunned with confusion reading some of his biography.

mentioned in the lists above, At-Tabarani, was actually a student of An-Nasa'i as well.²⁵

There is a popular story that is told about why An-Nasa'i decided to form *As-Sunan As-Sughra*, and the story revolves around an Amir asking An-Nasa'i if his *As-Sunan Al-Kubra* was all Sahih, to which An-Nasa'i replies that it is not all Sahih. So the Amir tells him to compile the smaller and more Sahih collection of *Al-Mujtabah*. As nice as the story is, Darussalam²⁶ claims that most scholars do not consider it to be an authentic story.

Sunan At-Tirmidhi

Also known as *Jami' At-Tirmidhi*, this collection is considered the most well-organized amongst the Ummahut As-Sitt. *Sunan At-Tirmidhi* and the 4 Sunan Books²⁷ are actually collections of Hadith mostly focused on matters of Fiqh. At-Tirmidhi would often actually provide explanations of why certain Hadith he collected are Da'if (Weak), Hasan (Sound, Fine or Good), and Sahih (Correct, or Authentic). Darussalam²⁸ wrote that At-Tirmidhi would also at times actually write what the views of

²⁵ Found in Darussalam's first volume of *Sunan An-Nasa'i*.

²⁶ In Volume 1 of their translation of *Sunan An-Nasa'i*.

²⁷ The 4 Sunan being the other 4 books of Al-Ummahat As-Sitt. That is, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Sunan At-Tirmidhi*, and *Sunan An-Nasa'i*.

²⁸ In Volume 1 of their translation of *Sunan At-Tirmidhi*.

the main 4 schools of Fiqh²⁹ ³⁰ are regarding certain Hadith and rulings.

Biography of At-Tirmidhi

His name is Abu 'Eesa Muhammad bin 'Eesa At-Tirmidhi³¹. He was born in 209 Hijri³² in Tirmidh³³, Khurasan. At-Tirmidhi became blind in his old age, and died in 279 Hijri. In search of Hadith, he traveled to Hijaz, Iraq, as well as other parts of Khurasan. However, it does not seem like he traveled to Egypt like other scholars of Hadith did³⁴.

At-Tirmidhi learned from many scholars, including Bukhari himself. He narrated some Hadith from

²⁹ These 4 schools of Fiqh being the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools of Fiqh.

³⁰ Fiqh is *Jurisprudence* in English, pertaining to Law, Rulings and so on. Aqeedah, mentioned above, is translated to *creed*, referring to beliefs, or a system/school of beliefs. Schools of Aqeedah include the *Athari/Salafi* school (which is the one upon truth), the *Ash'ari*, *Maturidi*, *Mu'tazili* and many others. Note that *Salafi* is also used to refer to a methodology of Fiqh as well, one that does not involve strictly adhering to a particular school of Fiqh like the 4 schools mentioned in footnote 29.

³¹ I gathered most of the info on At-Tirmidhi's biography from Darussalam's translation.

³² The actual birth year of At-Tirmidhi is disputed. In *Mustalah Al-Hadith*, Ibn Uthaymeen says 209, but others put his birth year as 205 or 200.

³³ Tirmidh is currently in Uzbekistan, near its border with Afghanistan.

³⁴ The part about him not traveling to Egypt is from Ustath Abdurrahman Hassan on YouTube. Video titled *Biography of Imam At-Tirmidhi*.

Bukhari³⁵, and vice versa. Bukhari actually learned from At-Tirmidhi, showing that Bukhari had the humility to learn from his own student. At-Tirmidhi also met and learned from both Muslim and Abu Dawud.

At-Tirmidhi was not simply one of the biggest narrators of Hadith, but he was also one of the greatest teachers of the Science of Hadith, authoring many books on the science. Another book that At-Tirmidhi produced is *Shama'il At-Tirmidhi*³⁶, also known as *Ash-Shama'il Al-Muhamadiyya*. The book contains many Hadith describing Mohammed ﷺ, in his physical appearance, his character, his behavior etc..

At-Tirmidhi greatly developed the field of the Science of Hadith, introducing the famous term of “Hasan”, used as a grading of Hadith.

Sunan Abu Dawud

Also written as *Sunan Abi Dawud*, this collection is possibly the most authentic after An-Nasa'i's *As-Sunan As-Sughra*. The scholar of Hadith, Abi Dawud, produced this collection by gathering

³⁵ Such as At-Tirmidhi narrating, “I heard Mohammed bin Ismail (Al-Bukhari) saying”, for example. This part is also from Darussalam's translation.

³⁶ It's common names are mentioned above, but it is also known by its original name of *Ash-Shama'il An-Nubuwiya Wal-Khasa'il Al-Mustafawiya*.

mostly Sahih (or near Sahih) Hadith, extracted from a total of around 500,000 Hadith.

Abi Dawud himself said about his collection that any Hadith he has not graded himself, should be considered “upright”. The meaning of upright is actually debated. Ibn Kathir says that this means they are Hasan, and Ibn Salah echoes a similar view. Abi Dawud reportedly presented his collection to Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal, who praised it as a fine piece of scholarly work.

Abu Dawud’s collection was also (likely) the first Hadith collection to have a commentary book produced on it³⁷. The commentary is called *Ma’alim As-Sunan*, authored by the scholar Al-Khattabi.

Biography of Abu Dawud

He is Abu Dawud Sulayman As-Sijistani, born 202 Hijri in a village in the region of Sijistan³⁸, and died in 275 Hijri at the age of 73. He learned from Bukhari and Muslim, as well as Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal, and met At-Tirmidhi. He also traveled

³⁷ Taken from Darussalam’s first volume of their translation of *Sunan Abu Dawud*

³⁸ Sijistan, also called Sistan, is a region that encompassed some parts of Iran and Afghanistan. It is currently located in the Southeastern portion of Iran.

extensively in search of Hadith, and was known for his strict methodology in gathering Hadith.

Sunan Ibn Majah

This is the collection produced by Ibn Majah, containing around 4341 Hadith. It is probably the least authentic³⁹ amongst the Six Mother Books, and a Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah but not the other six authors of the Ummahat As-Sitt is typically considered Da'if by default, with some Hadith being rejected totally. Most of the Hadith in *Sunan Ibn Majah* can be found in the other Six Mother Books however, which automatically strengthens their status.

Ibn Uthaymeen states that Ustadh Mohammed Fu'ad Abdul Baqi says that *Sunan Ibn Majah* contains 1,339 Hadiths found only in *Sunan Ibn Majah* and not the other Six Mother Books.

Biography of Ibn Majah

He is Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Majah ar-Raba'i Mawlahum Al-Qazwini. Born 209 Hijri in Qazwin, and died 273 Hijri. He traveled to Al-

³⁹ Least authentic compared to the other Six Mother Books, not that Ibn Majah's collection as a whole is considered weak or rejected.

Basra, Kufa, Baghdad, Ash-Sham, Egypt, and Hijaz. He is one of the great and revered scholars of Hadith, enough so that they included his collection in the Ummahat As-Sitt.

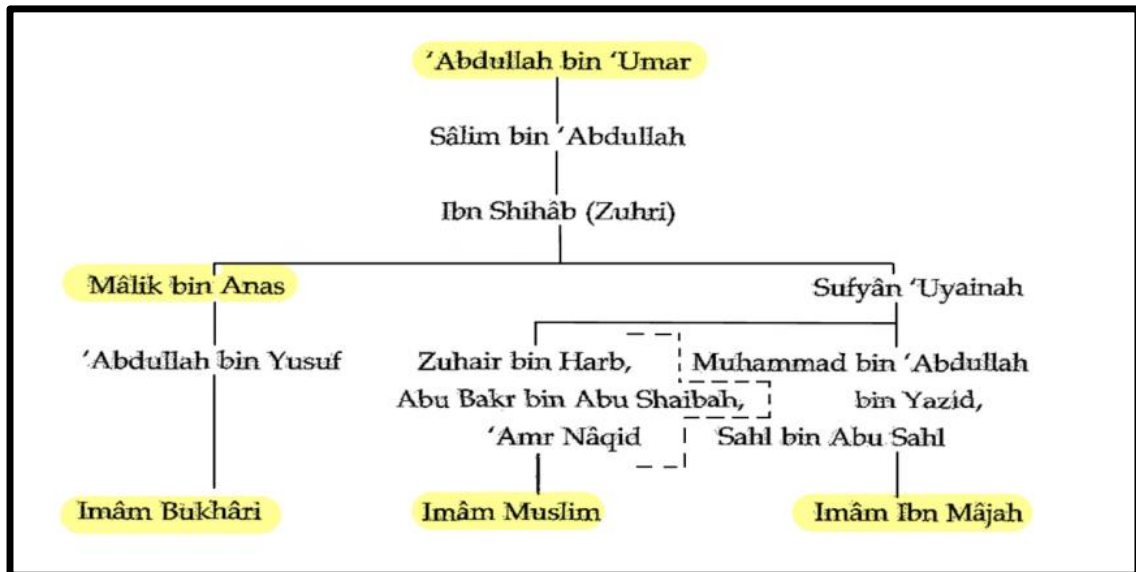


Figure 1

I found the chart above in the introduction of *Sunan Ibn Majah* by Darussalam. It shows an example of a Hadith found in *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Sahih Muslim*, and *Sahih Bukhari*, with chains of narration provided. The chain begins with a Sahabi (companion) of Mohammed ﷺ, Abdullah bin Umar, whom I did mention above in Chapter 1. Malik bin Anas on that chart is the famous Imam Malik. The chains above were traced by Sheikh Zubair Ali.

I used the Notability app to redraw the lines of the chains of narration, as they were unclear. I also used it to refine the image a bit more, and to highlight the Sahabi that the chain begins with, and also to highlight Malik bin Anas, and to highlight the 3 collections this Hadith is found in. I do not know exactly which Hadith this is, as Sheikh Zubair Ali did not exactly mention it. But it is still a good example of an *Isnad*, discussed in Chapter 4. The dotted line is also my addition, to distinguish between the two chains from Sufyan 'Uyainah clearly.

Do not confuse the great scholar of Fiqh, Imam Malik, or Malik bin Anas, with the legendary companion of Mohammed ﷺ called Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه. The Maliki school of Fiqh is attributed to Imam Malik, and so is *Muwatta Malik* listed in Chapter 2 above. Imam Malik is Tabi' At-Tabi'een, making him part of the last generation of the Salaf. Remember that the Sahaba are the first generation.

Musnad Ahmed bin Hanbal

Musnad Ahmed is the longest collection I have mentioned in this essay, and it is produced by the scholar of Legendary Status, Ahmed bin Hanbal. Ibn Uthaymeen and Ibn Kathir have both stated

that of all Musnads, the Musnad of Ahmed bin Hanbal is undoubtedly the Greatest. Ibn Kathir added that none of the Musnads are of the same length or perfect organization as the Musnad of Ahmed.

Musnad Ahmed contains 40,000 Hadith, and without repetition, it comes down to 30,000 Hadith. It should be noted that Abdullah bin Ahmed⁴⁰ did add, into Musnad Ahmed, some Hadith that he personally collected. These are referred to as “Zawa'id Abdullah” or “Additions of Abdullah.”

Biography of Ahmed bin Hanbal

His name is Abu Abdullah Ahmed bin Muhammed bin Hanbal ash-Shaybani Al-Marwuzi, born 164 Hijri in Marwu, Iraq. He was later taken to Baghdad. Imam Ahmed traveled to gather Hadith, and excelled at preserving the Sunnah. He is also famous for his Fiqh, and people began to (in his lifetime) call him a Faqih⁴¹ and their Imam.

He is famously the student of Imam Al-Shafi'i as well. Al-Shafi'i himself said about Ahmed bin Hanbal, “I left Baghdad and I did not leave behind me a man better, having more knowledge, or

⁴⁰ Saleh, Abdullah, and Hanbal bin Ahmed bin Hanbal are all sons of this Legendary Scholar.

⁴¹ Essentially, Faqih means someone with deep knowledge.

Chapter 4: Briefly on the Science of Hadith

The Science of Hadith is a very rich and beautiful Science, exploring the authentication of Hadith, the history of Hadith, the narrators of Hadith, the events of Hadith, the Fiqh of Hadith, the Quranic Tafsir through Hadith, and much more. Here, I will briefly discuss authentication, as well as the authenticity of As-Sahihayn and Musnad Ahmed in particular.

Hadith authentication primarily involves investigating the chain of narration, or the *Isnad*. An example of an *Isnad* is **Figure 1** above. That is, who said what to who. How the Hadith was actually transmitted. Many factors are taken into consideration, such as gaps in the chain, the piety of people in the chain, the truthfulness of the people in the chain, the authority of the people, the memory of the transmitters, and many other factors.

Defects in a chain, such as a gap, or it being transmitted by liars like Al-Waqidi or Al-Kalbi, weaken a Hadith. Openly sinning, even a small sin, was enough for some scholars to totally reject that person as a potential narrator of Hadith, and he would be classified as weak by them.

Factors that strengthen a chain include the authority, piety, and memory of the one transmitting the Hadith.

There is also the concept of a Hadith being *Mutawator*, which literally means “successive.” It is used to mean something transmitted by many people, from one generation to the next. It may begin with 10, or even 50 of the Sahaba transmitting a Hadith, that is then received by hundreds of Tabi’in⁴⁵, and even more of the following generation, and so on. The Quran is actually also transmitted via Tawatorr, and there are entire books containing chains of transmission of the Quran, as well as *Mutawator* Hadith. The advantage of Tawator is that having such a huge number of narrators means that if one makes a mistake, others correct him. Another advantage is that Tawator can provide strong resistance to intentional corruption of the Hadith or Ayah of the Quran.

Some Hadith are not transmitted through huge chains (*Isnads*), and those are referred to as *Ahad*, with many subcategories. The 3 main subcategories are *Mashur*, *Aziz*, and *Gharib*.

There is *Mashur*, that is transmitted by 3 people or more, but doesn’t meet the criteria for Tawator. An example of Al-Mashur is the Hadith of Mohammed ﷺ, “The Muslim is the one whose tongue and

⁴⁵ Tabi’in means followers, and is used to refer to the generation immediately after that of the companions of Mohammed ﷺ.

hands the Muslims are safe from.” (Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and An-Nasa’i).

There is *Aziz*, that is transmitted by 2 people. An example is the saying of the Messenger ﷺ, “None of you have truly believed until I am more beloved to him⁴⁶ than his father, his son, and all the people.” (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Finally, there is *Gharib*, transmitted by only 1. An example is the Hadith collected in Bukhari and Muslim, “Actions are only by intentions, and a person will only have that which he intended...

An example of a Hadith that is Mutawator is the Hadith of Mohammed ﷺ found in the first chapter of Sahih Muslim, “Whoever tells a lie against me, then let him take his seat in the hellfire.” This is transmitted by over 60 of the Sahaba according to Ibn Uthaymeen.

Briefly on terminology of Hadith gradings

One last topic I wanted to mention in the Science of Hadith, is the terms *Sahih*, *Hasan*, and *Da’if*.

⁴⁶ Love of Allah takes the top position, then Mohammed ﷺ.

Sahih means authentic, and it falls under two main categories. One is *Sahih Li Dhatihi*, or “Sahih by itself”, where a given Hadith is sufficiently Sahih on its own. The second category is *Sahih Li Ghayrihi*, or “Sahih due to others”. This is where a Hadith by itself may not be Sahih, but there exists another *Isnad* (chain) of another Hadith that is strong in its authenticity, so it would also strengthen the other Hadith that may have a weaker chain by itself.

Hasan means that a Hadith is acceptable, but it was transmitted by someone of a lesser memory and trustworthiness, and it also falls under two main categories.

Hasan Li Dhatihi: The Hadith must have a connected and sound chain of narrators⁴⁷, and it must be free from irregularities or defects. This makes it almost identical to *Sahih*, except that it is reported with less precision, via less dependable narrators.

Hasan Li Ghayrihi: The Hadith may have a *Da'if* chain by itself, but there are many other chains that exist for this Hadith and they support each other. However, the chain must not contain any liars or fabricators of Hadith.

⁴⁷ So not liars like Al-Waqidi, or Muhammad ibn Al-Sa'ib Al-Kalbi (born 119 Hijri). Not to be confused with Ibn Juzayy Al-Kalbi..

Da'if means weak, and this would have a weak chain, and may not fall under *Hasan Li Ghayrihi* or other stronger categories either. These are normally not accepted, but there are instances of them being allowed in certain cases. Ibn Kathir accepted *Da'if* if it involved development of good character for example. There are also many Duas and Adhkar (Remembrances) that are found in *Da'if* Hadiths, but it is permissible to make these Dua or Adhkar so long as you do not attribute falsely to whom it may be claimed that it is attributed to⁴⁸. The Dua or Dhikr (Remembrance) obviously must not contain that which is forbidden, like Shirk or other evils.

Revisiting the Sahihayn

I wanted to return to these collections, and share some sayings of Scholars regarding them. I will be referring to Ibn Uthaymeen in his *Mustalah Al-Hadith*.

The Sahihayn, that are Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, are agreed upon to be the most authentic two collections (amongst the primary collections of Hadith⁴⁹), and Sheikhul Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah said, "Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim would not agree

⁴⁸ So if it is falsely attributed to Mohammed ﷺ, you would not attribute it to him, for example.

⁴⁹ The part in brackets is my interpolation.

upon a Hadith except that it is authentic without doubt.”

In spite of the grand authenticity and immense praise of the *Sahihayn*, there are scholars that criticize certain Hadith within Bukhari and Muslim’s collections, claiming they are of a lower authenticity than they are claimed to be. Ibn Uthaymeen states that the scholars say there are 78 Hadith in *Sahih Bukhari*, and 100 Hadith in *Sahih Muslim* that are considered less than the *Sahih* level they are claimed to be. There are also another 32 Hadith found in both *Muslim* and *Bukhari* together that are also considered less *Sahih* than claimed to be.

However, Ibn Hajr Al-Asqalani in his introduction to *Fath Al-Bari*⁵⁰, said that if Bukhari and Muslim both agree upon a Hadith to be *Sahih*, then it is undoubtedly *Sahih*, agreeing with Ibn Taymiyyah.

The point isn’t to question the authority or authenticity of these works, but rather to show that not everything in the *Sahihayn* is considered *Sahih*, and that scholars do not unanimously agree upon the authenticity of the Hadiths. Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim in the end were humans, subject to the possibility of making mistakes. May Allah have mercy upon them, and grant them the highest *Jannah* for their magnificent works.

⁵⁰ This is a book by Ibn Hajr, where he provides explanations and commentaries for the Hadiths of *Sahih Bukhari*.

Musnad Ahmed

Ibn Uthaymeen writes that there are 3 main opinions amongst scholars of Hadith regarding the authority and authenticity of Musnad Ahmed. The **first** group holds the view that all of the Hadiths of Musnad Ahmed can be used as proof. The **second** group holds the view that Musnad Ahmed contains Sahih, Weak, and *Mawdu'* (Fabricated), and Ibn Al-Jawzi writes that there are 29 fabricated Hadith⁵¹ in Musnad Ahmed. The **third** group holds the opinion that Musnad Ahmed contains Sahih and Da'if without fabricated Hadith, but that the Da'if of Musnad Ahmed is equivalent to (or nearly equivalent to) the status of *Hasan*. The Titans amongst Titans, Ibn Taymiyyah, Adh-Dhahabi, Ibn Hajr, and As-Suyuti are of the third group.

In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah claims that the conditions of Ahmed bin Hanbal were stronger than those of Abu Dawud. He also said that the Hadith that are fabricated in Musnad Ahmed are not those narrated by Ahmed bin Hanbal himself, but rather his son, Abdullah.

Ibn Uthaymeen praises a book produced as an explanation of Musnad Ahmed. The book is *Bulughul Amani min Askari ul-Fath ar-Rabbani*, produced by Ahmed bin Abdurrahman Al-Banna,

⁵¹ 29 Hadith in a collection of 40,000 Hadith is quite fair.

Conclusion

It can be seen that the history of Hadith is long and rich, with many astonishingly intelligent Scholars. The collections of Hadith are many, and there are many other collections I did not list above, some of which were even produced during the time of the authors of the *Ummahat As-Sitt*, like the *Kitab At-Tabaqat* by Ibn Sa'ad, which I did reference in another document. The important collections for us to focus on at our level are *Ummahat As-Sitt*, and *The 40 Nawawi*. Of the *Ummahat As-Sitt*, *Sunan At-Tirmidhi* is said to actually be the easiest and most accessible to beginners, such as ourselves.

The biographies and details on the Hadith collections are also part of the Science of Hadith, or *'Ilm Al-Hadith*. In fact, the study of biographies is actually called *'Ilm Ar-Rijal*, literally meaning "Science of the Men." Biographies of most scholars can be found in some introductions of their books, either placed there by the author himself⁵², or added by the publisher⁵³ or another. The Chapter on Science of Hadith, written above, is truly not even the first centimeter of the very tip of the iceberg of *'Ilm Al-Hadith*. The iceberg of Hadith extends to the Hadal Zones⁵⁴, and the books I've

⁵² Like Sheikh Mubarakpuri in *Sealed Nectar*

⁵³ Such as Darussalam in the translations I referenced above.

⁵⁴ The Ocean is divided into many layers according to depth. The Hadal Zone is the deepest of them, named in reference to the mythological Greek entity, Hades of the Underworld.

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