Critical Methods on Hadith: 
Self Reflexivity in Hadith Scholarship

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Rivayet, insad, hadis, hadis tenkidi, sünnet, tenkít yöntemleri, Usul-i Hadis, Usulu Füh, Rıza, Tabakat.

Hadith narration, I argue, remained an excessively self-critical and self-reflective activity regarding ties, identities, and networks, but not only regarding narrative texts. The Sciences of hadith, which emerged gradually parallel to the formation of hadith transmission network, document the way hadith narrators examined their own network. A survey of this literature below will show that narrators developed a differentiated view to hadith, its narrators and types of their ties. Furthermore, they analyzed patterns in the transmission networks of hadith to determine the degree of reliability. This critical activity created a system of thought through which narratives, narrators and chains were brought together to create a larger structure.

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Meta-narratives\(^2\) of hadith can be best understood in contradistinction with each other: the Methodology of hadith (Usul al-Hadith, Methodology of Islamic Law (Usul al-Ri'ih), commentaries on hadith compilations, and the biographical dictionary literature (rijāl, tabaqāt and tārikh). Each metanarrative tradition developed a rather distinguished perspective on the same narrative material, which will be introduced below.

How hadith narrators reflected on the network of others manifests itself a valuation as its integral part - assigns identities to narrators, narratives, their ties, and their networks. This complicated order is difficult to penetrate without considerable study and contemplation. These parts developed relationally and remain interdependent to each other. Narratives mediate ties to other identities. The intermeshing of these identities creates a metastructure of these actors, narratives, and metanarratives. Employing these constructs, metanarrative ironically both warns and insures the public about the reliability of narrative. Metanarrative genres of hadith give identities are attacked and defended quite apart from the conflict over the interpretation of the content of narrative. The outcome, however, as Silverstein argues for metalinguistic structural coherence\(^3\) variably achieved, perceived, and used by actors and onlookers. The historical manifestation of structural coherence is the rise of the different schools of law which made sense of hadith and its transmission network in contradictory terms.

Metanarrative is an emergent structural property of narrative social structure. It emerges as reflection and medium of construction - gradually parallel to the development of narrative social structure and takes various forms based on the criteria used in the self-reflection and examination of the narrators. These criteria are derived from culture and based on broader epistemological questions.

I. Methodology of Hadith Criticism: Usul al-Hadith

Parallel to the emergence of hadith compilations in volumes, a new genre also emerged, the critique of hadith. Scholars of hadith referred to it as the Science(s) of hadith (Uṣūl al-Hadīth), the Science of the Terminology of hadith (Tirās al-Mustalah al-Hadith), or the Methodology of Hadith Criticism (Usul al-Hadith). This genre gradually developed over centuries.

Amongst the early scholars of hadith, the rules and criteria governing their study were meticulous, but some of their terminology varied from scholar to scholar, and their principles began to be systematically written down, scattered amongst various books. One of the outstanding and path breaking works is Al-Risālah of al-Shafi‘i (d. 204), the introduction to the Sahih of Muslim (d. 261) and the Jam‘ of al-Tirmidhi (d. 279); many of the criteria of early scholars, for instance al-Bukhari, were deduced by later scholars through a careful study of which reporters or isnads were accepted and rejected by them.

One of the earliest examples of a comprehensive work is by al-Ramahumuri (d. 360). The next major contribution was Marifah Uṣūl al-hadith by al-Hakim (d. 405), which covered fifty classifications of hadith, but still left some points untouched; Abu Nu‘aim al-Isbahani (d. 430) completed some of the missing parts in this work. After that came Al-Kifayah fi ‘Ur al-Risālah of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463) and another work on the manner of teaching and studying hadith; later scholars were considered to be greatly indebted to al-Khatib's work. After further contributions by Qadi ‘Iyad al-Yahsibi (d. 544) and Abu Hafs al-Mayani (d. 580), among others, came the work which, although modest in size, was so comprehensive in its excellent treatment of the subject that it came to be the standard reference for thousands of scholars and students of hadith to come, over many centuries until the present day: ‘Uṣūl al-hadith of Abu 'Amir al-‘Uthman Ibn al-Salah (d. 643), commonly known as Muqaddimah of Ibn al-Salah, compiled while he taught in the Dar al-Hadith of several cities in Syria.

Some of the numerous later works based on that of Ibn al-Salah include the following: An abridgement of Muqaddimah, Al-Itibar by al- Nawawi (d. 676), which he later summarised in his Taqrib; Tadbir al-Rawi, a valuable commentary on the latter by al-Suyuti (d. 911); Ikhtisar ‘Uṣūl al-hadith by Ibn Kathir (d. 774), Al-Khulasah by al-Tibi (d. 743), Al-Mithal by Badi‘ al-Din b. Janah (d. 733), Al-Muqaddimah by Ibn al-Mulaqiq (d. 802) and Mahasin al-Isfahani by al-Baqani (d. 805), all of which are abridgements of Muqaddimah of Ibn al-Salah. Al-Nukat of al-Zarkashi (d. 794), Al-Taqrij wa ‘I‘lidh al-Ma‘ruf (d. 806) and Al-Nukat of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852), all of which are further notes on the points made by Ibn al-Salah. Al-Juyyah al-hadith of al-Iraqi, a rewriting of Muqaddimah in the form of a lengthy poem, which became the subject of several commentaries, including two (one long, one short) by the author himself, Fatih al-Mughith of al-Sakhawi (d. 903), Qasim al-Durar of al-Suyuti and Fatih al-Baqi of Shaykh Zakariyyah al-Ansari (d. 928)\(^4\).

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\(^2\) Metanarrative means narrative about narrative, whose subject is hadith can be seen as metanarratives of hadith.

\(^3\) Silverstein, Michael, "Metapragmatic Discourse: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics" (ed. Lucy, John A.), Cambridge 1993, p. 94. See also Gombricht, Jan Eike, Metalinguistic Development, Chicago 1992. Distinct from semantic and text-bound "sense-based coherence" needed by actors who are embedded in social structures to interact meaningfully within the context.

\(^4\) Other notable treatises by subsequent generations include Al-‘Iqrah of Ibn Da‘iq al-Tij (d. 702).
Hadith criticism, as Ibn Khaldun summarizes, was guided by some principles that have roots in the classical literature. Below I tried to codify these principles to make them easily accessible to the modern reader. These principles have their roots in our daily experience with reported speech and narrative. They developed gradually, gained considerable acceptance in the Hadith community and were further developed and refined in the Hadith literature and the identification of narrators. These metastructural features of the Hadith community and the identification of narrators will give us an idea about the reliability of hadith. The Hadith literature concerns the number of tenses in the chain. The number of tenses in the primary rule in the critique of that each additional in the narrative reduces the level of authenticity. The one with less than relatively more number of tenses in the spread of the canonical narratives was before each other by examining the traveled to remote lands to obtain teachers. However, after the general emphasis on the shortest chains of hadith, there are shorter chains that reduce reliability of hadith in the case of contradiction. The second criterion adopted by the hadith critic is the number of corroborative or parallel chains for a narrative. Briefly put, the more parallel chains a narrative has, the more reliable the narrative is. We may see this rule as the second major principle of hadith critique. Again, it is common sense that the narrative with higher number of parallel chains is more assuring to the audience, compared to the one with less number of parallel chains. Hadith critique is a common notion and employed in it in the works of many scholars.

Tangil al-Awar of Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Wezir Amir al-San'at (d. 1182), Nakhsh al-Kifr of Bay Haq al-Aspli (d. 1138). Among those who paraphrased the Nakhkhi in poetic form are al-Tawq (d. 893) and al-Amir Manum al-Suwaydi. The most comprehensive poetic work in the field, Al-Nawwab Sofyab of Kharaj, was expanded upon by two works, al-Zayzani (d. 1120) and Tawil al-Hurair of Tahiri al-Jawzi (d. 1138).

determining the relative reliability of contesting narratives. Jurists give priority to a hadith with more number of parallel chains because it is considered more reliable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF CHAINS</th>
<th>Most reliable</th>
<th>Very reliable</th>
<th>Less reliable</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The more chains a hadith has, the better it is.

The third major criterion used by Hadith critique can be identified as the continuity of chain: The fewer the indirect ties, the better the chain. In other words, the less broken, the better the chain, or the more completely recorded
the ties in a chain, the more reliable the chain. In a reported speech, one of the first features we examine is the possibility of tracing the chain to the source without any interruption. Each node and each relationship must be verifiable. This is required to prove that the chain of narrative is reliable and the content is true. Yet, sometimes, it is not easy to determine the exact information about each node and relation. In such a case, we have to rely on what is available for us at the moment. From this perspective, each chain has a relative reliability, the unbroken being the most reliable. The resulting typology includes the following categories: muttaṣabi, 'unbroken,' a continuous chain; mu'allaq, 'suspended,' a chain which lacks the names of one or more narrators in the chain; munqati, 'broken,' a chain in which several narrators are unknown; and mursal, 'loose,' a chain in which the name of the Companion is not mentioned.

**Figure 3: The Third Principle of Hadith Criticism**

The more continuous the ties in a chain, the better the chain is.

**Figure 4: The Fourth Principle of Hadith Criticism**

The fifth criterion concerns the type of narration, relation or the tie between teacher and student. Hadith critics examine the strength of narrators' ties to each other to judge about their relative reliability, which is determined by the method of narration: the more adequate the methods of narration, the more reliable the chain. Eight types of narrative are identified by hadith narrators which also demonstrate how the teacher-student relationship is established among hadith scholars: (1) Sana' and injla: Verbal narration with or without dictation by the mentor; (2) Qura and Qura: Student reading back...
to the mentor what is initially narrated by the mentor; (3) Ijaza: Permission of the teacher to the student to narrate his narratives; (4) Munawala: Student obtaining a copy of a compilation by the teacher; (5) Mukataba: Student receiving the traditions of the mentor in writing through correspondence; (6) I'tam: Narration by a mentor to a student without granting permission of narrating to other; (7) Wasiyya: Student obtaining the collection of a teacher by his will; (8) Wijada: Student finding the collection of a mentor.

**THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE of CRITIQUE**

**TYPES OF NARRATION**

- **Suni**: Authored by the teacher or the collection of a teacher.
- **Qura’i**: Conferring a narration back to the teacher.
- **Fidha**: Getting permission from the teacher to narrate his collection.
- **Mundhilla**: Obtaining a copy of the teacher’s collection.
- **Mukataba**: Obtaining a teacher’s collection through written correspondence.
- **I’tam**: Narrating, if the teacher’s narrations without permission to narrate them.
- **Wasiyya**: Obtaining a collection by the will of a teacher after his death.
- **Wijada**: Finding the collection of a teacher.

The more adequate the methods of narration, the better the chain is.

**Figure 5: The Fifth Principle of Hadith Criticism**

The sixth general principle of hadith critique concentrates on the academic competence of narrators (zabt) which is demonstrated by the relative strength of their memories. Thus, the rule goes, the stronger the memory of the narrators, the more reliable the chain. According to this principle, the strength of the memory of each narrator in the chain is required for the reliability of narrative. Therefore, one must make sure that the following five defects do not exist in the narrators: Si` al-hife, unreliable memory; katharat al-qhalat, excessive mistakes; wain, persistent uncertainty; far al-qhalaf, absent-mindedness; nukhala`fat al-thiqat, contradicting with the most reliable authorities. If one of these attributes is found in a narrator he/she is no longer considered reliable.

**THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE of CRITIQUE**

**TYPES OF ACADEMIC DEFECTS**

- **Si` al-hife**: Unreliable memory
- **Katharat al-qhalat**: Excessive number of mistakes
- **Wain**: Persistent uncertainty
- **Far al-qhalaf**: Absent-mindedness
- **Makhala`fat al-thiqat**: Contradicting with the highest authorities

The more competent the narrators, the more reliable the chain is.

**Figure 6: The Sixth Principle of Hadith Criticism**

The seventh criterion on which hadith critics focus is the character and morality (adil) of narrators. The higher the character of the narrators, the more reliable the chain. This may be seen as the seventh major rule of the hadith critique. A narrator’s character is required to be free from five defects: kidhib, forging a hadith; ittham bi al-kidhib, lying in daily affairs; fisq, violating ethical
and religious principles; bid'a, heresy; jahl, obscurity. The existence of these defects in a narrator of hadith is unacceptable and disqualifies him for the profession.

**The Seventh Principle of Critique**

**Types of Ethical Defects**

- **Khidib**: Forger in hadith
- **Salim bin al-Hasib**: Lying in half-differences
- **Fals**: Immorality, unclean
- **Bid'a**: Lack of correspondence to tradition
- **Jahl**: Character, lie figure; being a shadow

The higher the character of the narrator, the more reliable the chain is.

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**Figure 7: The Seventh Principle of Hadith Criticism**

Operationalization of these concepts gave rise to a sophisticated, multidimensional, or multi-factor, evaluation system. Some narratives are denied the authority others enjoyed. Aḥadith are classified in accordance with authority attributed to it by the scholars as follows: (1) Sahih: reliable, sound; (2) Hasan: good, acceptable; (3) Da'iفاء: weak; (4) Mawduţ: fabricated. This classification is not universal; one can find more refined classifications too.

The narrators' self-reflection focuses more on transmission structure rather than on the content. This orientation drew criticism from those who wanted more focus on texts. The principles of hadith critique, which are used in coordination, appear to exhaust all aspects of the system of narration: types of chains, narrators and narration. It is generally accepted that the value of a chain is equal to its weakest link. Regarding the content, it is generally stipulated that the inconsistency with the empirically proven facts provides sufficient ground to dismiss a narrative as forged. Otherwise, hadith critique must strictly focus on the narrative process, narrators and relations.

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**Table 1.6: Classification of Narratives according to Five Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Brief Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of the Chain</td>
<td>'Ajl</td>
<td>Continuous hadith with relatively less number of transmitters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naql</td>
<td>Continuous hadith with relatively more number of transmitters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Transmitters</td>
<td>Mutawatir</td>
<td>Hadith with abundant number of chains that reason the possibility of forgery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maudhar</td>
<td>Hadith with many chains but not enough to give a perfect certainty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aḥad</td>
<td>At least one chain in each layer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity of Chain</td>
<td>Mutarrid</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muwa'ilāq</td>
<td>Suspended: one or more names are missing in the chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Munkatū'</td>
<td>Broken: More than one node (other than the Companion) is missing in the chain, but not in row.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murtal</td>
<td>The Companion’s name is missing in the chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerogative of Transmitter</td>
<td>Ma'ruf</td>
<td>Hadith with all prominent figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shadidh</td>
<td>Hadith with an obscure name in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mauquā'id</td>
<td>Hadith with an hidden or unmentioned name in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity of Hadith</td>
<td>Sahih</td>
<td>Perfectly reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Da'iفاء</td>
<td>Relatively less reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hassan</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mawduţ</td>
<td>Unreliable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The stratification of narrative is consequential because Islamic theology uses only the perfectly sahih hadith (mutawatir); Islamic law uses the first two categories; some schools of law, history (seerah), and mysticism (tasawwuf) on moral lessons, use weak (Da'iفاء) hadith as well. A legal or theological principle can only be derived from a sound (sahih) hadith - a concept variously defined. I can, therefore, confidently claim that each religious science (hadith, law, theology, mysticism, and history) developed a distinctive metanarrative about hadith for the different purposes they put it into use. Yet a detailed comparative analysis of these approaches is beyond the purpose of this study.

Below are two examples of hadith criticism. These examples show how the above rather abstract rules and concepts are put into play within the context.

"Knowledge is only by learning!" (ما علمAlice al-Film)

Al-Tabari related it in 'al-Mu'jam al-Kabir. Abu Nu'am and al-Akbari also related it from Abu 'Ali al-Darda' who reported it from the Prophet with the following phrases: "Knowledge comes only through learning. Insight comes only through persistent study. Only those who seek for the good will be given it. Only those who want to protect themselves will be protected. Those who cast lots (or seek an oracle from the deity), see
an evil omen in (or believe that) they are not about to reach the high levels—and I do not say to you only in Paradise, those who make prophesy, or cast lots, or go up in a journey because of evil omens. Al-Azkar also related it from Anas, with the phrase of "O People! Knowledge comes only through learning; understanding comes only through preserving evidence. If God wishes good comprehensive understanding in religion. Among the servants, only those who have knowledge really honor him."

Likewise, al-Tabarani related it in al-Rub'ir and Ibn Abi Asim in al-Ims also from Musawiyah. Al-Bukhari related it with an expression that indicates certainty as he said in one of the chapter headings: "The Prophet, May God bless him and give him peace, said: If God wishes good about someone gives him a comprehensive understanding in religion. He also said, "Knowledge comes only through learning.""

Al-Daraqutni narrated it in al-Ahad, from [the editor could not read what is in the manuscript] and al-Khathir from Abu Huraira on the authority of Abu Da'da as a marfu' hadith, and also from Musawiyah as a marfu' hadith but with the phrase of "O People! Knowledge comes only through learning."

In another narration, God created the Throne and prevailed on it, then, He created the Pen and ordered it to draw with his permission. The Pen said: "O my Lord! What should I draw?" He said: "What I am going to create and what is going to be in my Creation from rain, or plants, or the living, or the different ways of life, or the food, or the time of death." And the Pen drew what is going to be until the end of the world. Its men [i.e., narrators] are reliable except for al-Dhahabi bin Muzahim. Ibn Hibban honored him and said he did not hear from Ibn Abbas, yet, a large group of scholars considered him weak.

It reached us on the authority of Ibn Abbas, may God bless both of them, as a marfu' hadith up to him, that "The first thing God created is the Pen. He ordered it to write everything." Its men are reliable.

In another narration for Ibn al-Ansir as a marfu' hadith that "The first thing God created is the Pen, then, He created 'nun' that is the iniquity. Afterwards, He told it "write what will happen or what will exist... until the end of the hadith."

Ibn Jarir also narrated that the Prophet, May God bless him and give him peace, said: "By the Inkpot by the Pen and what they inscribed [Qur'an LXVIII:2-2] "He said a tablet of light and a pen from light which inscribes what will happen until the doomsday."

The hadith ended here.

In al-Najm, and by al-Tirmidhi, on the authority of Abu Hurayra, it is narrated that "the first thing God created is the Pen. Afterwards, He created the nun which is the inkpot and said to it: 'write.' It said: 'what should I write?' He said: 'write what happened and what will happen until the doomsday. This is the word of God by the inkpot! By the Pen and what they inscribed!' [Qur'an LXVIII:1-2]. After that, he sealed the mouth of the Pen, as a result of which it did not speak and it will not speak until the doomsday. Then, God created the intellect, and said, "by my power and glory, I will perfect you in those I love, and I will leave you imperfect in those I anger.""

Al-Laqani said in his Jawhar, "the Pen is a being from light of God. He created it and ordered it to inscribe what happened and what will happen until the Last Day. He stayed away from defining its real nature. In some reports the first thing God created is the Pen and he ordered it to inscribe everything. In one narration, the first thing the Pen wrote is "I am a repentant. I repent on behalf of those who repent." The hadith ended (al-Jarrahi II: 263-264).

The metanarrative stipulations outlined above and their historical implications are important for two reasons. First, they shed light on the logic of stratified investment on ties and thus social power in the hadith transmission network. Second, they explain how their publics perceived hadith and narrators, especially by students of hadith and jurists. Below, I will present more examples from two other metanarrative genres, the biographical dictionary and the methodology of jurisprudence, to further illustrate the aforementioned
principles of hadith critique with the purpose of demonstrating how various metanarratives actually work.

II. Methodology of Law: Usul al-Fiqh

Another genre, which illustrates the play of metanarrative, is the Methodology of Islamic Law, variably defined by different schools of law. Operating in the context of the assumptions already described and following the guidelines provided by the Methodology of Law, jurists critically examine the structure of the transmission network and the text of the hadith before they grant a hadith the status of legal evidence.

Not only did jurists develop a distinctive metanarrative on hadith, but also each school of law created its own metanarrative expressed in their Methodology of Law. In this connection, different metanarratives developed and a line was drawn between the ‘People of hadith’ and the ‘People of Opinion’—conflicts that are observable both among Sunnis and Shiites. The People of hadith claimed to be more faithful to the legacy of the Prophet and accused the People of Opinion of limiting the role of hadith in Islamic law. Both sides developed distinct methodologies of hadith and law, on which, because of the further differentiation, numerous schools of thought emerged. Only four of these schools survived the test of time: Hanafi, Shafi’i, Malik, and Hanbali.

The debates about the hadith on marriage without permission of one’s guardian illustrate the process of extracting rulings from hadith. Narratives have it that the Prophet said, “the marriage contract [for a minor girl] without the permission of a guardian is invalid.” Among the four major Sunni schools of Islamic law (the Shiites also have a different understanding of hadith), the Hanafi jurists did not grant this hadith status of legal evidence. They argued that this hadith was an ‘ahad hadith with sufficient parallel chains. Also, they argued, one of the narrators, Aisha, narrative by allowing the marriage

of her niece while her father was away for a business trip. This also showed that she did not think this was a binding legal rule.

Jurists almost unanimously view the isnad as a source of conjectural knowledge (dhann) with varying degrees of certainty regarding the authenticity and denotation of the hadith. Theirs is a task of dealing with a dual uncertainty: first, varying reliability of the sources of knowledge, and second, varying explicitness of meaning of narrative. The outcome, which is legal decision (ijtihad), is also conjectural and binding only on those who accept it. Thus, as Berman documented for Western legal tradition, Islamic legal tradition also developed out of narrative, primarily the Qur’an, and supplementary to it, the hadith. In primary and secondary oral cultures, narrative remained the best way to store legal knowledge for easy dissemination, memorization and recall. About the tenth century, in Iran, among oral traditions, law occupied a distinct place: “The second oral tradition was the law, one third of which was recited from memory at the Parliament on each of three years by an elected . . . lawspeaker.”

III. Commentaries on Hadith Compilations

Every well-known hadith compilation has at least several commentaries (sharḥ pl. sharḥū) on it. This literature constitutes an important part of hadith studies and helps the public in the interpretation of hadith texts as well as the
chains of hadith. Commentaries analyze the chain and the text of the hadith. For instance, al-Ayni’s twenty huge volumes on the hadith, systematically discussing the relationship between the hadith and the chapter heading under which it is narrated, analysis of the chain of sources where the same narration is related in the broader hadith literature, explanation of the vocabulary in the text of the hadith, literary arts in the text, and debates regarding the hadith.

IV. Biographical Dictionaries: Science and Genre

Biographical dictionaries (tabaqat and tarikh) constitute a metanarrative genre on hadith with a particular focus on the network connections between narrators, teachers, and students of narrators. The Science of the Layers of Hadith (al-Bukhari’s hadith) became subject for a few collections, including the Science of the Layers of Hadith, which was also known as the People’s hadith. The Science of the Lay

Biographical dictionary literature, as a genre, presents a rich variety in scope. For instance, some biographical dictionaries provide information only about the transmitters of a particular book or a city. Also, the narrators of al-Bukhari’s hadith were the subject for a few collection, The Reliable hadith Collection Biographical studies. In Bukhari’s work, titled the People of Bukhari’s Authentic Book (Rijal Sahih al-Bukhari). Biographical dictionaries about hadith transmitters, the primary source with which to reconstruct the network of narrators, provide biographical information about each figure which may include the name of the person, father and grandfather’s birth date and place, death date and place, teachers, students, travels, scholarly works, and the comments of other authorities about the narrator.

1 For a detailed discussion of the meaning of layer (tabaqat) and the discipline entirely dedicated to it, see Asad Salim Hayn, ‘Ibn Tabbagh al-Mukhaddith: Ahammyiyatuh wa Rawadihuh [Science of the Layers of Hadith: Scholars, Its Importance and Uses], Riad 1415/1994.


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him or her. Following is a brief example of a transmitter from the fifth layer whose name was Bakr who lived between 102-174 AH.

215. Bakr son of Mudhir son of Muhammad son of Hakim son of Sulaiman, the father of Muhammad, the Egyptian. He narrated from Muhammad son of Ailam, and Yezid son of the father of Haidar. Narrating from him were the son of Walid, Qutayba, and al-Walid son of Muslim. He was reliable, honest, and pious. He was born in 102 and died in 174 on the day of ‘arif, a day before the festival of ‘id (Suyuti 108).

Dhahabi’s History of Islam (Tarikh al-Islam), with only 38 volumes that could yet be published, contains around forty thousand biographies of important figures in Islamic history from the time of Prophet Muhammad until his time. This magnificent study is the mother of several other small and more specialized biographical dictionaries, two of which are very well-known among specialists in their field: Biographical Dictionary of Elite Hadith Narrators (Taddikhir al-Huffaz), and Biographical Dictionary of Elite Reciters of the Qur’an. The following record is taken from Dhahabi’s biographical dictionary of prominent narrators, huffaz. The way the narrator strategically built his network as a student and the criteria by which the narrator is judged are striking. I will add relevant points to the text references to the above mentioned metanarrative criteria. I will also add ‘H’ to indicate those who are huffaz in the network.

178. 25/5 [meaning 25th narrator from layer 5] A (‘A) after the number of the narrator is used by Dhahabi to indicate that the narrators through his chain were accepted by the authors of the six most reliable collections] Abdurrrahman son of Ya’rur son of Jibril. The outstanding scholar, jurist, and prominent narrator of hadith (Cr. 4), father of Uyyuhab of Azi, from Damascus and Damascus. He took narrative from the father of Salam Mamluk, H[13] Makhul, the father of al-Askh of Sana, Abdullah son of Amir of Yuhin, and [H] Zubair as well as from a great number of other narrators [Cr. 2]. He traveled to Mansur when he wanted to take narrative from him. He was well-respected and was from the outstanding scholars of Damascus [Cr. 4]. The son of Ma’in, and the father of Hasm confirmed his reliability [Cr. 7]. The best word of his is what Walid son of Muslim heard from him, “do not write down knowledge [narrative] except from those who truly know the quest for knowledge” [Cr. 5, 6]. He met some of the elderly Companions, and I have not come across any narrative he reported from the young Companions [Cr. 1]. During the rule of Walid, son of Abdul Malik, he underwent oppression along with his father [Cr. 7]. His narrative is accepted by the six (most reliable) Books. Son of Mudhir said, “I saw him.” He passed away in 153 [after hijri]. [H] Son of Mubarak, [H] Walid son of Muslim, [H] Muhammad son of Shu’ayb son of Shubab, Umar son of Abdulwahid, and [H] Husayn of Isf as well as many other narrators related from him [Cr. 2]. May God bless him.
We learn from this biographical narrative that Abdurrahman was a figure of high repute with several renowned scribes among the Companions, disciples of the Prophet, since he did not report narrative from his position. Thus, he is placed in the position in the network is determined not by the position in the network but by the position in the network.

Here are the strata of hadith scholars:
1. Tālib: student, apprentice.
2. Musnad: the one who can report a hadith with its chain of authorities.

Abdurrahman was a hafiz. The way to figure out this point is by looking at the biographical dictionaries as hafiz or not. It is a common practice in the biographical entries. In other words, these entries are not in the entry of the student in the biographical dictionary. Additionally, this study has shown that Abdurrahman had another layer—indicating the stratigraphic investment in the material. Sakawih writing: “As for the hadith scholar, all his studies come from layer 6, two of them from layer 7. We have avoided ties to narrators from his own layer—an indication of stratified investment (muhaddith), he is the one who [1] knows the hadith; [2] has a precise knowledge of their date of transmission; and the various types of narratives they have in their possession; [3] differentiates the various types of(transmission) from those who have the same form; [4] has a precise knowledge of the date of transmission; [5] has knowledge of all the books; [6] has knowledge of all the books; [7] has knowledge of all the books; [8] has knowledge of all the books; [9] is an expert in the names of the narrators, and considers the narrators as his authorities as well as his book; [10] knows the context and the details of the narratives; [11] writes the names of the narrators, and extracts what he knows, keeping a precise record of such qualities of chains as sound or weak; [12] has knowledge of all the books; and [13] has knowledge of all the books.

Sakawih defined it as follows: “Shaykh al-Islām,” as inferred from his case as a term among the authorities, is a title attributed to that follower of the book of Allah Most High and the example of His Messenger, who possesses the knowledge of the principles of the science (of religion), has gained deep insights into the different views of the scholars, has become able to extract the legal evidences (from the texts), and has understood the rational and the transmitted proofs at a satisfactory level (Sakawih, al-Jasbār wa al-Qurrā). Sakawih traces the evolution of the concept and lists the few years (Sakawih, al-Jasbār wa al-Qurrā).

tionary literature (rijāl, tabāqāt and ṭirāz). Each one of these metanarrative genres is distin-
guished by a distinct critical focus on a particular aspect of hadith. Methodology of hadith is
reflexive on chains and types of narration. Methodology of Law is reflexive on the legal inter-
pretation of hadith while the biographical dictionary literature is reflexive on the narrators
and their networks. The article comparatively analyzes the most nascent aspects of these
metanarrative genres.

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