



THE CLASSIFICATION OF WORKS IN HADITH STUDIES AND ITS SCIENTIFIC AND METHODOLOGICAL FEATURES

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Abstract. *This article examines the development of the classification of works in Hadith studies, its principal types and their distinctive scientific and methodological features. It discusses such types of Hadith collection as musnad, muṣannaf, jāmi‘, sunan, ṣaḥīḥ, mu‘jam and mustadrak, explaining the criteria used to classify them and their role in preserving and systematising the Hadith heritage. The relationship between the classification of Hadith works and the two branches of Hadith studies - riwāya (transmission) and dirāya (critical analysis) - is also explored. The article traces the compilation of Hadith from the written record initiated under ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz through the emergence of the collections devoted exclusively to sound Hadith, and follows the formation of the literature of Hadith terminology from al-Rāmahurmuzī to Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. It is argued that distinguishing the classification type of a work from the reliability level of the Hadith it contains is a necessary condition of a sound scholarly approach.*

Keywords: *Hadith, classification, musnad, muṣannaf, jāmi‘, sunan, ṣaḥīḥ, mu‘jam, mustadrak, riwāya, dirāya, muḥaddith, Hadith terminology.*

INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Islamic sciences, Hadith studies occupy an important place in examining, preserving and transmitting to later generations the sayings, actions, tacit approvals and characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), which constitute one of the principal sources of Islam after the Noble Qur’ān. The collection of the Messenger of God’s Hadiths, the examination of their chains of transmission, the analysis of their contents and their compilation in books according to specific criteria gave rise to a rich tradition of classification within Hadith studies (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:7).

Initially, Hadiths were preserved through memorisation and, in some cases, by being written down by Companions in their personal collections. Later, the process of recording them in compilations, dividing them into chapters and arranging them



according to a defined system developed further. This made Hadiths easier to study, facilitated the derivation of legal rulings from them and provided important means of assessing the reliability of narrations (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:11).

Studying the classification of Hadith works helps one to understand not only the external structure of the Hadith books, but also the scholarly aims of the Hadith scholars, their methodological approaches and the criteria they applied when selecting narrations (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011:14-15). The purpose of the present article is accordingly to set out the development of this classification, to distinguish its principal types and to establish the scientific and methodological features that characterise each of them.

MAIN PART

Hadith studies are divided into two branches: the science of Hadith from the perspective of transmission (riwāya), and the science of Hadith from the perspective of critical understanding (dirāya) (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:7).

The branch of transmission encompasses the sayings, actions, characteristics and tacit approvals of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), as well as the transmission of Hadith, the precision with which it is retained (ḍabt) and the verification of its wording. A narrator's ḍabt is the ability to preserve accurately the Hadith he has received from the time of its reception until he transmits it to others; it is of two kinds, namely retention by memory, which is the ability to memorise a Hadith when it is received and to recall it accurately when needed, and the preservation of a written record, which is the safeguarding of the Hadith in excellent condition from the time it is written down until it is transmitted to others (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:7).

The subject matter of this branch is the sayings, actions, tacit approvals and characteristics of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); its benefit is protection from error in transmitting them; its aim is the attainment of felicity in this world and the next; and its virtue is such that it is considered one of the noblest branches of knowledge, because through it one learns the ways and circumstances of following the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:7).

Among the earliest scholars to compile a book concerning Hadith transmission was the great scholar of Syria and the Ḥijāz, Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH). He undertook this task at the command of the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (60-101 AH), may God have mercy on him. Abū Nu'aym

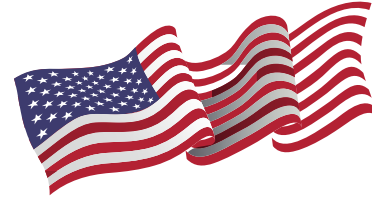


transmitted from Imām Mālik, through Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, that Imām Mālik said: «The first person to write down Hadith knowledge was Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī.» The reason for this was that the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, observed that those who had memorised Hadith and the scholars of Hadith were passing away, that no comparable scholars were being left behind and that innovations and superstitions were gradually spreading. He therefore sent letters to his governors in the cities and to scholars throughout the Muslim world, instructing them to write down the Hadiths of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:10).

In his Ṣaḥīḥ, Imām al-Bukhārī (may God have mercy on him) included a chapter entitled «How Knowledge Is Taken Away». There he cited the following: «‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote to Abū Bakr b. Ḥazm: ‘Look for whatever Hadiths of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) there are and write them down, for I fear that knowledge will disappear and that the scholars will pass away. Accept only the Hadiths of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him). Spread knowledge widely and establish study gatherings so that those who do not know may be taught, for knowledge does not perish as long as it is not kept secret’» (Kashmīrī, 2005:I/285).

Abū Nu‘aym reported the following in his book Tārīkh Iṣbahān: «‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote to the people throughout the Muslim world, saying: ‘Look into the Hadiths of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) and collect them’» (Kashmīrī, 2005:I/285). According to the linguistic usage of the people of the East the name is «Iṣbahān», while in the usage of the people of the West the forms «Iṣbihān» and «Iṣbahān» are also found, as is mentioned in the book Laqṭ al-durar. In this way the written compilation of Hadith spread widely. Scholars committed themselves to this work in all parts of the Islamic world, and each of them authored books on Hadith.

Subsequently a generation of scholars emerged who compiled chapters of Hadith in their books alongside the sayings of the Companions and the legal opinions of the Successors. Among them were Imām Mālik b. Anas in Medīna; Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Jurayj in Mecca; Abū ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Amr al-Awzā‘ī in Syria; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Sufyān b. Sa‘īd al-Thawrī in Kufa; and Abū Salama Ḥammād b. Salama b. Dīnār in Basra. They compiled Hadiths and produced books (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:11). Thus the collection and classification of Hadith continued.



Some time later Imām al-Bukhārī, known as the «Commander of the Faithful» in Hadith, emerged. He examined and transmitted these classified books, but observed that they contained ṣaḥīḥ (sound) and ḥasan (good) Hadiths as well as weak Hadiths. For this reason he devoted his efforts exclusively to compiling sound Hadiths. Imām al-Bukhārī was the first to compile a separate work devoted specifically to sound Hadiths, and Imām Muslim (may God have mercy on him) followed him (Kashmīrī, 2005:I/285).

The branch of *dirāya* studies the nature of transmission, its conditions, types and rulings; the circumstances of the narrators and the requirements they must meet; the types of transmitted Hadith; and related matters (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:13). The nature of transmission consists in transmitting the Sunna and similar reports and in attributing a report to the person to whom it is considered to belong, by using such expressions as «ḥaddathanā» («he narrated to us»), «akhbaranā» («he informed us») and similar formulas.

The conditions of transmission require that the transmitter should have received the Hadith from his teacher through one of the recognised methods of Hadith reception. These include *samāʿ*, in which the teacher reads the Hadith and the student listens to it and receives it; *ʿarḍ*, in which the student receives the Hadith by reading it before his teacher; *ijāza*, in which the teacher grants the student permission to transmit the teacher's Hadiths orally or in writing; or another method of *taḥammul*, that is, of learning Hadith from one's teachers and receiving it from them (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:13).

The types of transmission include an uninterrupted chain of transmission as well as chains that are not continuous because one or more narrators are omitted, together with other related forms. The rulings on transmission are acceptance or rejection. The status of the narrators is expressed as *ʿadāla* (uprightness) or *jarḥ* (critical discrediting): *ʿadāla* is a quality of narrators that supports the acceptance of their Hadith, while *jarḥ* is a critical judgement indicating that a narrator has a disqualifying defect and is not fit to transmit Hadith. The requirements for narrators are those of *taḥammul* and *adāʿ*, that is, the conditions governing a narrator's receipt of Hadith from a teacher and its subsequent transmission to a student (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:13).

Depending on the purpose for which Hadiths are collected and classified, the works of transmitted Hadith fall into several types, including *jāmiʿ*, *sunan*, *musnad*, *mustadrakāt*, *mustakhrajāt*, *ajzāʿ* and others, and many books have been compiled in

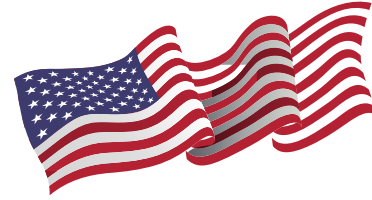


each of these categories (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:13). These categories describe the principle on which a compiler arranged his material and the scope of the material he admitted; they do not in themselves indicate the degree of soundness of the narrations contained in the work, and this distinction is addressed in the works of Hadith terminology (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 2015:52).

Books on Hadith terminology also began to be compiled, and these works likewise belong to the field of *dirāya*. The first author to compile a book on Hadith terminology and to establish foundational rules for this discipline was Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360 AH). His book was entitled *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil bayn al-rāwī wa-l-wāʿī*. Because it was the earliest work of its kind, it did not cover all the terminology (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:16). Thereafter scholars began to produce books on Hadith terminology one after another. Over time this discipline developed, and the works devoted to its terminology became increasingly comprehensive.

Some time later al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Naysābūrī (d. 405 AH) authored a book entitled *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430 AH) authored *al-Mustakhraj ʿalā Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. During the same period Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Thābit al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463 AH) compiled *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya* and *al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa-ādāb al-sāmiʿ*. Some time later Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544 AH) authored a book entitled *al-Ilmāʿ ilā maʿrifat uṣūl al-riwāya wa-taqyīd al-samāʿ*. Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Mayyānījī (d. 570 AH) also compiled a short treatise entitled *Mā lā yasaʿ al-muḥaddith jahluhu* (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011:14-15).

Thereafter the scholar and Hadith expert Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643 AH) emerged. He authored a book entitled *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth*, widely known as *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*. This is considered one of the finest works in the discipline of Hadith terminology. In it the author gathered the scattered material found in earlier works, particularly those of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and of the scholars before him. The book was highly beneficial; its arrangement, however, was not entirely systematic, since Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ dictated it to his students in separate portions. Nevertheless, after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ the *Muqaddima* became a foundational reference for scholars: some rendered it into verse, others abridged it, and many commentaries and marginal notes were written upon it (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011:14-15).



Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's book *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth* is regarded as one of the most important and widely accepted sources in the study of Hadith terminology. It should be noted that *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth*, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* and *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth* are all titles referring to one and the same book: it became widely known under the first two titles, although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ did not give them to it, the author having named his book *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth*. This question has been examined by Muwaffaq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir in his work *Tawthīq al-nuṣuṣ wa-ḍabṭuhā ʿind al-muḥaddithīn* (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011:15).

Some time later the eminent Hadith scholar Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿAsqalānī al-Miṣrī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 852 AH), known as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, emerged. He authored a concise treatise and named it *Nukhbat al-fikar fī muṣṭalaḥ ahl al-athar*. He then wrote a commentary upon it known as *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-fikar* (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 2007:14).

After this important work was written, scholars turned their attention to it and relied upon it in the study of Hadith terminology. It was distinguished by its concision, its orderly structure, its careful analysis and verification, and its inclusion of several important categories of Hadith terminology not found in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth* (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 2015:36). As a result, *Nukhbat al-fikar* and its commentary *Nuzhat al-naẓar* became subjects of study and research among scholars. The number of commentators, abridgers and versifiers grew substantially - among them ʿAlī b. Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Harawī al-Qārī, whose commentary upon the work is one of the best known (al-Qārī, 1994:21) - until these works came close to the standing of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth* (al-Ḥalabī, 1987:24).

CONCLUSION

The classification of works in Hadith studies is an important scientific and methodological phenomenon in Islamic history. The collection and systematisation of Hadith according to differing criteria led to the development of books representing various approaches, and each type of classification serves a particular scholarly need (al-Ḥusaynī, 2020:13). Understanding the differences between these types is essential for making proper use of the Hadith sources, for understanding the characteristics of narrations and for conducting Hadith research effectively. In particular, distinguishing



the classification type of a work from the reliability level of the Hadiths it contains is a necessary condition of a sound scholarly approach (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, 2015:52).

In conclusion, the study of the classification of Hadith works helps to deepen our understanding of the historical development of the Hadith heritage, of the methodological approaches of the Hadith scholars, and of the transmission and critical-analysis dimensions of Hadith studies (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011:14-15; al-Ḥalabī, 1987:24).

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