Nukhbat al-Fikr

Imaam Ibn Hajar Asqalani
Nukhbat al-Fikr
by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, Merciful and Compassionate

Praise to Allah who never ceases being know, able. May Allah bless our liegelord Muhammad, whom He sent to humankind as a bearer of good tidings and a warner, and upon his folk, Companions, and many salutations.

To commence: The books of the nomenclature of ḥadith specialists are many and were expanded and condensed. One of my brothers asked that I summarize for them what is important. I responded to his request seeking to be counted among those who trod the [scholarly] paths. So I say:

الحمد لله الذي لم يزل عالما قديرا، وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد الذي أرسله كثيرا إلى الناس كافة بشيرا ونيرا، وعلى آل محمد وصحبه وسلم تسلیما

أما بعد: فإن التصانيف في اصطلاح أهل الحديث قد كثرت وسطت فسألني بعض الإخوان أن أخصص له المهم من ذلك فأجابته إلى واختصرت، الاندراج في تلك المسالك. فأقول سؤاله رجاء:

Reports & Their Paths

The paths of a report (khabar) are either:
1. without specific number
2. more than two paths
3. two paths
4. one path
   - The first is the mass–transmitted report (mutawātir), and conveys sure knowledge (‘ilm yaqīnī) when its conditions are met.
   - The second is the well–known report (mashhūr) and it is also called the well–circulated report (mustafīḥ) according to one opinion.
   - The third is the rare report (‘azīz). It is not the [minimal] condition for authenticity, contrary to whoever claimed it.
   - The fourth is the uncommon report (gharīb).

All of them except for the first are solitary reports (āḥād). They [=these reports] encompass the accepted and the rejected since using them as evidence hinges on investigating the status of the reporters, contrary to the first category. Yet they might
contain what conveys inductive knowledge (‘ilm našrī) with external indicators, according to the preferred opinion.

**Uncommonness**

Then the uncommonness (gharāba) is either:
1. at the root of the chain (sanad)
2. or not.
   • The first is the absolutely–unique report (fard muqālaq) [e.g. one–hadīth narrator, one–compiler narrator, one–narrator hadīth, one–locality narrations].
   • The second is the relatively–unique report (fard nisbī), and it is rare that the term ‘unique’ (fard) is used for it without qualification.

**الغرابة**

ثم الغرابة إما أن تكون

1. في أصل السند.
2. أولاً.
   • فالأول الفرد المطلق
   • والثاني الفرد النسبي-ويقل إطلاق الفردية عليه.
Dividing Accepted Reports into Sound & Fair

The solitary report (āhād) transmitted by:
1. an upright (‘adl)
2. thoroughly accurate person (tāmm al-ḥāfīd)
3. with a continuous chain (sanad)
4. that is not defective (mu’allal)
5. nor anomalous (shāhdh)
is the sound–in–itself report (ḥāshīḥ bi dhātihi). Its ranks are commensurate to variation in these conditions. Hence al-Bukhārī’s ḥāshīḥ was put first, then Muslim’s, and then what matches their criteria (shurūf).

Fair Reports

If the accuracy decreases then it is the fair–in–itself report (ḥāsan li dhātihi); with multiple paths it is considered sound (ḥāshīḥ).
If the grading is composite [e.g. fair–sound (ḥāsan ḥāshīḥ)] it is [either] because of indecision regarding the reporter when it [=his report] is unique [either fair or sound]; otherwise it is from examining two chains [one fair and one sound].
Additions from Trustworthy Narrators

An addition from a narrator of each of these two types of chains [the sound and the fair] is accepted as long as his addition does not negate [the report of] someone who is more trustworthy.

• If the addition is contrary to something superior (ارجاً), the stronger is the well-preserved report (ما فُهم), and its opposite is the anomalous report (شَأْدَه). When a report agrees with a relatively-unique report (فرد نسبي) it is called a corroborative chain (مَعْتَكِب).

• If in addition to being contrary it is weak (حافياً), the stronger is the well-recognized (مرعف), and its opposite is the disclaimed report (مُنكر).

Contradiction & Objection

That which is accepted (مُقبَل): if it is free from contradiction or objection (مُعاَرَة)، then it is decisive (مُحْكَم).

If it is contradicted by something equal to it [in soundness]:

• if reconciliation (جمَع) is possible, they are reconcilable reports ([مُكْتَالِفِينَ الْذِّيْنِ أَلْدَاعِيَاتِهُمْ]);

• if not and the later one is positively established (ثَابِئ), then one is the abrogating report (ناسيك) and the other is the abrogated report (مسوكن);

• if not, superiority is sought (تِرجُحة);

• and lastly, neither one is confirmed or denied (تَواَقْفَ).
Reports are rejected because of:
1. lacuna (saqḥ)
2. or aspersion (ḥa’n).

Lacunas are either:
1. at the beginning of the chain (sanad) on the part of the compiler,
2. at the end of the chain after the Successor, or elsewhere.
   • The first [case] is the suspended report (mu’allaq).
   • The second is the expedient report (mursal).
   • The third:
     o If the lacuna consists in two or more narrators consecutively then it is the problematic report (mu’ḥal),
     o If not, then it is the broken–chained report (munqaṭi’).

The lacunas can be:
1. obvious
2. or hidden.
   • The first is recognized by lack of meeting [between inter–connected reporters]. Hence the need for [biographical] history.
   • The second is the camouflaged report (mudallas), a report related with a phrase which implies possible meeting, such as “From so–and–so”, “He said…”, (‘an, qāla). Likewise, the hidden expedient report (mursal khafī) from a contemporary he did not meet [or did
Aspersion is because of one of the following:
1. the narrator lying
2. being accused of lying
3. making enormous mistakes
4. being heedless (ghafla)
5. being morally corrupt (fāsiq)
6. being delusionary (wahm)
7. contradicting others (mukhālafa)
8. being unknown (jahāla)
9. being an innovator
10. being chronically forgetful
   - The first is the forged report (mawḥūḍ).
   - The second is the discarded report (matrūk).
   - The third is the disclaimed report (munkar) according to one opinion, as are the fourth and fifth.
   - When delusion (wahm) is discovered through external indications (qarā’in) and gathering the paths of transmission, then it is the defective report (mu’āllal).
• As for contradicting others (mukhālafa), if it results from:
  o changing the wording of the chain, it is the chain–interpolated report (mudraj al-isnād)
  o conflating a halted Companion–report (mawqūf) with a raised Prophetic–report (marfū’)
    then it is the content–interpolated report (mudraj al-matn)
  o or transposition, then the topsy–turvy report (maqlūb)
  o or inserting a narrator, then it is the insertion into an already–connected–chain report
    (mażīd fi muttaḥīl al-masānīd)
  o or it is substituting one narrator for another [without preponderance of one chain over
    the other], then it is the inconsistent report (muḥḥarib). Substitution may occur
    intentionally for the sake of testing
  o or alternating dots or vowels while orthography remains the same, then the dot–
    distorted report (muḥḥaf) and the vowel–distorted report (muḥarraf).
• It is not permissible to intentionally alter a ḥadīth’s content (matn) by omission or
  paraphrase, except for someone knowledgeable of what changes meanings.
• If the meaning is obscure, explaining odd words and clarifying the problematic is
  needed.
• The causes for which a narrator is unknown (jahāla) are:
  o The narrator may have many names and he is mentioned with one that is not well–
    known, for a purpose. Concerning this they compiled the clarifier (al-mūḥīḥ).
  o The narrator has few [narrations] and is not frequently taken from. Concerning this they
    wrote single–report narrators (alwuḥān).
  o Or he may be left unnamed out of brevity. Concerning this [they compiled] the
    anonymous mentions (mubhamāt).
  o The anonymous narrator (mubham) is not accepted, even if he is mentioned
    anonymously with a grading of commendation (ta’dīl), according to the soundest opinion.
  o If the narrator is named:
    ♣ If only one person related from him, then he is an unidentifiable reporter (majhūl al–
      ‘ayn).
    If two or more related from him and he is not [explicitly] declared♣ reliable, then he is a
      reporter of unknown status (majhūl al-ḥāl); and that is the veiled reporter (mastūr).
• Innovation is of two types:
  1. tantamount to apostasy
  2. or tantamount to moral corruption.
As for the first: The vast majority do not accept any narrator thus described.
As for the second: Someone who is not inviting people to it is accepted according to the
soundest opinion, unless he related something supporting his innovation: in that case he is
rejected according to the preferred opinion. This is what al-NasāĪ’s shaykh, al-Jūzajānī,
explicitly said.
• Then poor memory:
  o If it is chronic, then it is the anomalous report (shādhdh) according to one opinion
    or occasional, then the jumbled report (mukhtalaḥ).
  o Whenever a chronically–forgetful reporter is corroborated by a reporter worthy of
    consideration, the veiled reporter (mastūr), the expedient reporter (mursil), and likewise
    the camouflager–reporter (mudallis), their ḥadīth becomes the fair (ḥasan) report, not in
    itself, but on the whole (lā li-dhāthihi bal bil–majmū’).
ثم الطعن: إما أن يكون
لكتب الرواوى.
1. أو تهمته بذلك، 2.
أو فحش غلطه، 3.
أو غفلته، 4.
أو فسه، 5.
أو وهبه، 6.
أو مخالفته، 7.
أو جحالته، 8.
أو بدعته، 9.
أو سوء حفظه. 10.
فالأول الموضوع،
والثاني المتبوع،
والثالث المنكر على رأي،
وكذا الرابع والخامس.
ثم الوهم: إن يتحقق عليه بالقرآن وجمع الطرق، فهو المعلل.
ثم المخالفة: إن كانت
بتغيير السياق، فدرج الإسناد، 0
أو بدمع موقف بمرفوع، فدرج المتن، 0
أو بتقديم أو تأخير في الأسماء، فالمقلوب، 0
أو زيادة راو، فالزفز في متصل الأسائيد، 0
أو بإباداله ولا مرجح، فالمضطرب 0
وقد يقع الإبادال عمداً امتحاناً، 0
أو بتغيير حروف مع بقاء صورة الخط في السياق، فالصحاب، والمحرف 0.
ولا يجوز تعمد تغيير المتن بالنقص والمرادف إلا لعالم بما يحيل المعاني،
فإن خفي المعنى احتاج إلى شرح الغريب وبيان المشكل.
ثم الجهالة: وسببها أن الرواى 0
قد تكثر: يعيرته فيذكر بغير ما أشتهر به لغرض، وصنفوا فيه الموضوع 0.
وقد يكون منفلاً فلا يكثر الأخذ عنه، وصنفوا فيه الوحدان، 0
أولاً يسمى اختصاراً، وصنفوا فيه المبهمات 0.
The chain’s ascription (isnād) explicitly or implicitly goes to
1. the Prophet: consisting in his statements, or his actions, or his tacit approval
2. a Companion. He is whoever encountered the Prophet believing in him and died as a Muslim, even if [his Islam] was interrupted by apostasy according to the strongest opinion
3. or a Successor, namely anyone who met one of the Companions.
• The first is the raised-chain (Prophetic) report (marfūʿ).
• The second is the halted-chain (Companion) report (mawqūf).
• The third is the severed-chain (sub-Companion) report (maqūūf). It is the same for anyone subsequent to the Successor.
• The last two are said to be non-Prophetic reports (āthār).

To Whom the Report is Attributed

المتن بحسب ما يضاف إليه

وناق득 واحد عنه، فمجهول العين، أو أثنا عقدا ولم يوثق، فمجهول الحال، وهو المستور.

وثم البذعة: 1. إما بمكر، 2. أو بمفسق.

فالأول لا يقبل صاحبها الجمهور، والثاني يقبل من لم يكن داعية إلى بدعته في الأصح، إنما روى ما يقول.

إن كان لازما للراوي في جميع حالاته، فالشاهد على رأى، أو طارئا فالمختلط.

ومتى توسع السيء الحفظ بمعتبر، وكذا المستور والمرسل والمدلس صار، حديثهم حسن لا لذته بل بالمجموع.

لا يقبل حديث المبهم-لو أبهم بلفظ التعديل على الأصح، فإن سمى.

وخلاصة

وقد ينتهي إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم;

1. تصريحا، أو حكما من قوله، أو فعله، أو تقرر، أو إلى الصحابي كذلك. وهو من لقي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مؤمنا به.

2. ثم الإسناد: إما أن ينتهي إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم.
How the Report is Attributed

A grounded report (musnad) is a report that a Companion raised to the Prophet with a chain that has the outward appearance of being connected. If its numbers [of narrators in the chain] are few, either it ends with:

1. the Prophet
2. or an Imām with a distinguished description, like Shu‘ba.

• The first is absolute elevation (‘ulūw muḥlaq)
• The second is relative elevation (‘ulūw nisbī). It includes:
  o concurrent chain (muwāfaqa) which arrives at the shaykh of one of the compilers without using the compiler’s path;
  o convergent chain (badal) which arrives at the shaykh’s shaykh in the same way;
  o parity (musāwāt) which is the number of narrator–links in the chain from the narrator to the end equaling [the length of] the chains of one of the compilers;
  o and handshaking (muḥāfaqa) which equals the chain of that compiler’s student.

Descent (nuzūl) corresponds to elevation (‘ulūw) in all of its categories.

If the narrator is the same age as someone who narrates from him and they met, then it is peer narration (aqrān).

If each of them related from each other then it is reciprocal narration (mudabbaj).

If he relates from someone inferior [in age, teachers or knowledge] him, then it is seniors–from–juniors narration (akābir ‘an aḥāghīr). It includes: fathers–from–sons narration (al-ābār ‘an al-abnā’); its opposite is frequent. It includes son–from–father or grandfather narration (‘an abīhi ‘an jaddihī).

If he relates from two shaykhs whose names match and cannot be differentiated, then the fact that he specializes in narrations from one of them is a sign that the other one is irrelevant.

If he denies what is related from him
• categorically, the report is rejected
• or possibly, then it is accepted according to the soundest opinion.

Concerning this is the genre of those–who–narrated–and–forgot (man ṭaddatha wa nasiya).

If the narrators conform in the phrasing used to convey or in some other manner, then it is pattern–chained narration (musalsal).
The forms of conveyance are:
1. “Sami’tu” (I heard)
2. and “‘addathani” (he narrated to me)
3. then “akhbaranî” (he reported to me)
4. and “qara’tu ‘alayhi” (I read to him)
5. then “quri’a ‘alayhi wa–ana asma’u” (it was read to him while I heard)
6. then “anba’anī” (he informed me)
7. then “nāwalanī” (he put into my hands)
8. then “shāfahānī” (he told me verbally)
9. then “kataba ilayya” (he wrote to me)
10. then “from” (“‘an”) and the like

• The first two are for someone who heard the shaykh verbatim one–on–one. If pluralized then [he heard] with someone else. The first is the most explicit and is the highest–ranked in ḥadīth dictation.
• The third and forth are for someone who read [to the shaykh] while alone. If the plural is used it is like the fifth.
• Informing [the sixth] is synonymous with reporting [the third]. However, in the custom of the later generations it is for authorization (ijāza), like “an [from].
• The indecisive–transmission terminology [‘an’ana, i.e. “from so–and–so, from so–and–so”] of contemporaries is understood to be direct audition unless from a camouflaging reporter (mudallis). It is said that a condition is that the meeting of the said contemporaries be positively proven, even if only once; it is the preferred opinion (mukhtār).
• They used mushafaha for an oral authorization and mukātaba for a written authorization [with the late scholars].
• For the authenticity of munāwala, they stipulated that it be accompanied by permission to relate; it is the highest type of authorization (ijāza).
• They also stipulated permission for a report found (wijāda i.e. “something found in a book”), likewise a book bequeathed (waḥiyya bi-l-kitāb), and in a shaykh’s public announcement that he narrates something (i’lām), otherwise it is of no consequence; as is an authorization that is universal or to someone unknown [to us], or to someone nonexistent—according to the soundest opinion concerning all of the above.

وصيغ الأداء:
سمعت 1. 
و، و«حدثني» 2.
و، و«أخبرني» 3.
و، و«قرأ عليه» 4.
ثم «قرئ على» وأنا أسمع 5.
ثم «أنبأتي» 6.
ثم «نأولني» 7.
ثم «شافئني» 8.
ثم «عن» ونحوها 10.
Names of Narrators

If the names of the narrators and the names of their fathers and on up match although they are different individuals, then it is same–name different–identity narrator (muttafiq wa muftariq).

If the names match in writing but differ in pronunciation, then it is homographic–heterophonic (mu’talif wa mukhtalif).

If the names match but differ in their fathers, or the opposite, it is same–name different–father–or–son narrators (mutashabih), and likewise if the similarity occurred in the name and the name of the father while there is a difference in the affiliation (nisba).

This and the previous can form various combinations, including:

- similarity or difference occurring except in one or two letters
- or transposition
- or the like.
أن يحصل الاتفاق والاشتباه إلا في حرف أو حرفين;
• أو التقدم والتأخير،
• أو نحو ذلك.

Conclusion

It is also important to know:
1. the synchronous layers (ḥabaqāt) of narrators
2. the dates of their birth and death
3. their lands and regions
4. and their conditions: commendation (ta’dīl), discreditation (jarḥ), and being unknown (jahāla).

The categories of discreditation (jarḥ) are [from worst to slight]:
1. To be described with the superlative (af’al), e.g. “greatest of all liars” “akdhab al-nās”)
3. The slightest is “malleable”, “chronically forgetful”, and “he leaves something to be desired” (“layyin”, “sayyi’ al-ḥifḥāl”, and “fīhi maqāl”).

And the ranks of commendation (ta’dīl) are [from highest to lowest]:
1. To be described with the superlative (af’al), e.g. “most trustworthy of people” (“awthaq al-nās”)
2. What is emphasized with one attribute or two, e.g. “trustworthy–trustworthy”,
   “trustworthy and memorizer” (“thiqa thiqa” or “thiqā al-ḥifḥāl”)
3. Something that suggests proximity to the slightest levels of discreditation, e.g. “honest layman” (“shaykh”).

Attesting someone’s good record (tazkiya) is accepted from someone knowledgeable in its criteria, even if from a single person according to the soundest opinion (aḥādīṣ).

Discreditation (jarḥ) takes precedence over commendation (ta’dīl) if it comes in detail from someone knowledgeable in its criteria. When lacking commendation, discreditation is accepted without specifics, according to the preferred opinion (mukhtār).

ومن المهم معرفة

طلبات الرواة، 1.
موالدهم ووفياتهم، 2.
و بلداته، 3.
واحوالهم تعديلها وتجريها وجهالة 4.

ومراتب الجرح:

«وأسلوبها الوصف بـ "أفعال"، كرأذب الناس 1.
«ثم "دجال"، أو "وضاع"، أو "كذاب" 2.

خاتمة
3. «وأسهلها «لين»، أو «سء الحفظ»، أو «فيه مقال».
ومراتب التعديل:
وإرفعها الوصف بـ«فعل»، كـ«أوثق الناس».
ثم ما تأكد بصفة أو صفتين، كـ«ثقة ثقة» أو «ثقة حافظ».
وإدناها ما أشعر بالقرب من أسهل التجريج، كـ«شيخ».
تقبل التركيبة من عارف بسبابها، ولو من واحد على الأصح.
والجر مقدم على التعديل إن صدر مبينا من عارف بسبابه؛ فإن خلا من تعديل، قبل مجمل على المختار.

MiscellaneousTopics
فصل

It is also important to know:
• agnomens (kunā, sing. kunya) of the people referred to by [first] name,
• the names of people referred to by agnomen,
• those whose agnomen and name are one and the same,
• those with multiple agnomens or multiple titles;
• the one whose agnomen matches his father’s name,
• or vice-versa;
• or his agnomen [matches] his wife’s agnomen;
• and whoever is affiliated to someone other than his father or is affiliated to his mother,
• or to something that does not immediately come to mind;
• and whose name matches the name of his father and his grandfather,
• or his shaykh’s name and the shaykh’s shaykh, and on up;
• and whose name matches the shaykh’s name and the person narrating from him;
• and the basic names of narrators;
• and the names exclusive to one person (mufrada),
• and agnomens and nicknames.
And from among his or her ancestors:

- or to what might lead to the understanding of:
- and from a mutual agreement of his or her ancestors;
- and from a mutual agreement of the shaykh and the student,
- and the reasons for these [because it may be contrary to the obvious].

The mawâlî: topwise [patrons and masters], and bottomwise [clients and freedmen],
- male and female siblings,
- the etiquette of the shaykh and the student,
- and the age of procurement and conveyance; the manner of writing ḥadîth, reading [the shaykh’s own narrations] back to the shaykh, audition, recital, and traveling for ḥadîth;
- One should also how ḥadîth is compiled: according to chains of narrators (masâni‘îd), subject matter (abwâb), defects (‘ilâl), or keywords (a‘râfî); and knowing the historical context for the ḥadîth. One of the shaykhs of al-Qaṭî‘i Abû Ya‘lā bin al-Farrâ‘ wrote about it.

They have written books in most of these genres. This is a basic list mentioning definitions without examples. It is difficult to be thorough, so consult the longer books.

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ومعرفة سبب الحديث، وقد صنف فيه بعض شيوخ القاضي أبي علی بن الفراء.
وصنفوا في غالب هذه الأنواع، وهي نقل محض، ظاهرة التعرف، مستغنیة عن التمثيل، فلتراجع مبسوطاتها.

Allah is the One Who grants success. He is the Guider. There is no god except He.