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THE METHODOLOGY OF THE MUḤADDITHŪN IN THE COMPILATION AND EXEGESIS OF ḤADĪTH

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate world of Ḥadīth scholarship, specifically focusing on the methodologies employed by the Muḥaddithūn (traditional scholars of Ḥadīth) in the compilation and exegesis of Ḥadīth literature. Ḥadīth, the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), holds a pivotal role in Islamic jurisprudence and theology. Understanding the rigorous processes and principles employed by the Muḥaddithūn is essential to appreciating the authenticity and reliability of Ḥadīth. The study begins by examining the historical evolution of Ḥadīth scholarship, tracing its origins to the early Islamic period. It explores the development of various schools of Ḥadīth transmission, emphasizing the contributions of luminaries like Imam Bukhārī, Imam Muslim, and others in codifying the science of Ḥadīth criticism ('Ilm al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl). The paper also delves into the classification of Ḥadīth based on authenticity and content, distinguishing between Ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), Ḥasan (good), and Dā'if (weak) narrations. Furthermore, the paper discusses the role of isnād (chain of narrators) and matn (content) analysis in assessing the reliability of Ḥadīth. It also examines the principles and criteria used by Muḥaddithūn to verify the credibility of narrators, including their moral character, memory, and precision. The methodology of textual criticism (dirāyah) is explored in detail, shedding light on the meticulous examination of narrations for inconsistencies and contradictions. Additionally, this research explores the interpretive approaches (tafsīr) employed by Muḥaddithūn when elucidating the meanings and implications of Ḥadīth. It examines the various modes of interpretation, including linguistic analysis, historical context, and jurisprudential implications, to extract legal and moral guidance from Ḥadīth. The paper concludes by highlighting the enduring significance of the Muḥaddithūn's methodologies in the contemporary Islamic world. It underscores the critical role played by their rigorous standards in preserving the authenticity and reliability of Ḥadīth, serving as a beacon of guidance for Muslims worldwide. In an era marked by information proliferation, understanding the methodology of the Muḥaddithūn remains imperative for anyone seeking to engage with the rich tradition of Ḥadīth scholarship.

Keywords: Muḥaddithūn, methodology, Ḥadīth, scholarship, compilation, exegesis

Introduction

Throughout Islamic history, the mainstream Islamic scholarship has relied heavily on the sayings, actions and the tacit approvals of Prophet (SAW). They would consider the *Ḥadīth* an unequivocal proof and a source of Islamic legislation which would explain various aāyāt of *Qur'ān*. At times, it would command believers with something which was not present in the *Qur'ān* or would sometimes just emphasize a point already present in the *Qur'ān* (Al A'zamī, 2016). But from time to time, there arose different groups and ideologies who went far away from the mainstream scholarship disputing the authority of *Ḥadīth* in Islamic legislation. They opened a door of interpreting *Qur'ān* according to one's own desires, innovated new matters in religion and attempted to cut down the relationship of common masses with the mainstream scholarship. But Islam remained an impenetrable fortress simply because the battle in question was that of truth and falsehood. *Allāh* (SWT) says;

“Rather, We dash the truth upon falsehood, and it destroys it, and thereupon it departs...” (21:18)

He also said;

“And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed, is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart.” (17:81)¹

When the *Ḥadīth* compilation reached its pinnacle and the statements, actions and tacit approvals of the Prophet (SAW) were well preserved, there arose the need for explaining these compilations and thus thousands of commentaries were authored by the *Muḥaddithūn* on these compilations. In today's age when a student of knowledge finds himself or herself overwhelmed by the voluminous compilations and their commentaries, it is essential that the methodology of the *Ḥadīth* scholars in these works is highlighted. So that it can act as a preface for the study of these works and the gateway leading to them is made easy for the students of knowledge.

The science of ‘*Manāhij Al- Muḥaddithūn*’ or ‘the methodology of *Muḥaddithūn*’ discusses the ways in which different books of *Ḥadīth* were compiled. It focuses on the distinguishing tracts throwing light on as to how one compilation is different from the other. It also highlights the merits of each compilation and its exegesis. All of this makes this science a very important field of study. And thus, a lot of attention must be paid to this science while drafting curricula for various Islamic seminaries and universities.

Major books of Ḥadīth

The major books of *Ḥadīth* are as follows:

1. *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*
2. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
3. *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*
4. *Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī*
5. *Sunna Ibn Mājah*
6. *Sunan An-Nasā'ī*
7. *Muwatta' Mālik*
8. *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*
9. *Sunan Ad-Dārimī*²

¹ For details on how *Sunnah* was preserved Mustafa As-Siba'ee book ‘The Sunnah and its role in Islamic legislation’ (As-Siba'ee, 2008) can be referred to.

² Some other famous *Ḥadīth* books which are often quoted are:

Research Methodology

1. Research Design:

This study employs a qualitative research design that aims to explore and analyze the methodology employed by the *Muḥaddithūn* (traditional scholars of *Ḥadīth*) in the compilation and exegesis of *Ḥadīth* literature. Qualitative research is particularly suited for this topic as it allows for an in-depth investigation of historical texts, scholarly practices, and interpretive methods within the context of Islamic scholarship.

2. Data Collection:

- a. Primary Sources: The primary data sources for this research consist of classical *Ḥadīth* compilations, treatises on *Ḥadīth* methodology, and classical Islamic scholarship texts. These include works by renowned *Muḥaddithūn* such as *Al-Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, and others, as well as classical commentaries (*Sharḥ*) on these texts.
- b. Secondary Sources: Secondary sources encompass scholarly works, articles, and academic publications on *Ḥadīth* methodology, Islamic jurisprudence, and related fields. These sources provide context, analysis, and critical insights into the subject matter.

3. Data Analysis:

- a. Textual Analysis: The primary focus of data analysis involves a comprehensive examination of the primary sources. Textual analysis will be conducted to extract information on the methodologies, principles, and criteria employed by the *Muḥaddithūn* in the compilation and exegesis of *Ḥadīth*.
- b. Comparative Analysis: Comparative analysis will be utilized to identify similarities and differences in the methodologies employed by various *Muḥaddithūn* and *Ḥadīth* compilation schools, such as the methodologies of *Al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*.
- c. Content Analysis: Content analysis will be employed to categorize and classify *Ḥadīth* based on their authenticity and content, including the identification of *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥasan*, and *Dā'if* narrations.

4. Ethical Considerations:

- a. Due respect and sensitivity will be maintained towards Islamic tradition and the beliefs of practitioners.

1. *Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Ḥibbān*
2. *Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Khuzaymah*
3. *Musnad of Abū Dāwūd Aṭ-Ṭayālīsī*
4. *Musnad of Ibn Abi Shaybah*
5. *Musnad of Abū Ya'la*
6. *Musnad of Al-Bazzār*
7. *As Sunan Al Kubrā of An-Nasā'ī*
8. *As Sunan Al Kabīr of Al-Bayhaqī*
9. *Al-M'ujam Al Kabīr of Aṭ-Ṭabarānī*
10. *Al-M'ujam Al-Awsat of Aṭ-Ṭabarānī*
11. *Al-M'ujam Aṣ-Ṣagīr of Aṭ-Ṭabarānī*
12. *Al-Muntaqā of Ibn-Jarūd*
13. *Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Aāthār of Abū J'far Aṭ-Ṭaḥḥāwī*
14. *Al-Mustadrak of Al-Ḥākim*

These fourteen books of *Ḥadīth* combined with the nine major books previous mentioned are sometimes referred to as ‘*Al-Kutub ath-Thalātha wa al-'ishrūn*’, that is ‘the twenty-three books’.

- b. Proper citations and references will be provided for all sources used in the study.

5. Limitations:

- a. The research relies primarily on historical texts and secondary sources, and the availability and accessibility of these sources may pose limitations.
- b. The study focuses on classical Islamic scholarship and does not explore contemporary interpretations or methodologies related to Ḥadīth.

6. Significance of the Study:

The research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn*, shedding light on their rigorous processes in preserving and interpreting Ḥadīth. This knowledge is valuable for scholars, students, and practitioners of Islam and provides insights into the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and morality. Additionally, it underscores the enduring relevance of these methodologies in contemporary Islamic scholarship.

The methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* in the compilation of some of the major works of Ḥadīth

Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī

The author of *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* *Abū Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Al Muḡīrah ibn Bardīzbah Al Ju'fī Al-Bukhārī* is the leader of all believers in Ḥadīth. He is the most esteemed scholar of Ḥadīth this *Ummah* has ever produced and his book *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* is the most authentic book of Ḥadīth in the world. He named his book as “*Al Jāmi' Al Musnad Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ Al Mukhtasar Min Amuri Rasūlillāh -SallAllāhu 'alayhi wassalam-wa sunanihi wa Ayyāmihi*”. It is shortly referred to as *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* or *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Al-Bukhārī*. Its main characteristics are (Al Bukhārī, 2018):

1. From among the best characteristics of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is that *Al-Bukhārī* restricted himself with the collection of only *Ṣaḥīḥ Ahādīth* in this work. It is agreed upon that *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Al-Bukhārī* is the most authentic book on the face of the earth after the Book of *Allāh*.
2. The chapter headings (*Tarājim*) in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Al-Bukhārī* are splendid and contain deep knowledge. *Al-Bukhārī* carefully uses words to indicate the correct opinion, disagreement, evidence for a particular thing etcetera in his chapter headings. That is why it is said that the comprehension (*Fiqh*) of *Al-Bukhārī* is in the chapter headings of his book.
3. There are some narrations in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* wherein between him and Prophet (SAW) are just three narrators. These narrations in total are twenty-two in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.
4. *Al-Bukhārī* has carefully placed many *Aḥādīth* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* for which he doesn't mention any chain (*Mu'allaqāt*). He presents them in a way which speaks as to whether the narration is authentic or not. These narrations support the existing narrations in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and give the reader a chance to link one narration with the other.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

The author of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is *Abu Al-ḥusayn Muslim bin Al-ḥajaj Al-Qushayrī An-Naysābūrī*. He was one of the greatest scholars of Ḥadīth this *Ummah* ever produced. His collection of *Aḥādīth* is known as “*Al Musnad Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ Al Mukhtasar min As Sunan bi Naqil 'Adl 'an Al 'Adl 'An Rasūlillāh SallAllāhu 'alayhi*

wassalam” and is shortly referred to as *Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim*. Main characteristics of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* are (An-Naysābūrī, 2016):

1. Like the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Al-Bukhārī*, *Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ* also contains only authentic narrations. It is agreed upon that the most authentic book after *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Al-Bukhārī* is the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Muslim*.
2. Going through the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Muslim* is comparatively easy as the author mentions all related *Aḥādīth* at one place. This makes it easy for the reader to understand the various narrations and sometimes these narrations explain each other as well.
3. He is very precise in mentioning as to how the narrators narrate the narration between each other. So, he differentiates between when a narrator, for example, says *Haddathanā* and when he says *Akhbaranā*. He would use the former to denote that the narrator has heard it from his teacher directly and the latter to mean that the narrator has heard someone else reading it upon his teacher.

Sunan Abū Dāwūd

The author of *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* is *Sulaymān ibn Al-Ash'ath ibn Ishaq ibn Bashīr Al-Azdī As-Sijistānī*. He named his compilation as “*As-Sunan*”. Main characteristics of *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* are (As-Sijistānī, 2017):

1. *Sunan* of *Abū Dāwūd* is considered to be an encyclopedia of the principles of the issues of jurisprudence. He divided his collection based upon how *Fuqahā'* (scholars of Islamic jurisprudence) would categorize their books.
2. He repeats a *Ḥadīth* in another chapter if that *Ḥadīth* has some addition to it in some narrations and that addition is related to the new chapter. Sometimes, he summarizes *Ḥadīth* to derive various benefits from it. Also, he does not mention too many *Aḥādīth* in a chapter but would suffice with two or three in a chapter.

He never narrates from a *Matrūk*³ narrator or someone below his level. He would sometimes mention a non-*Muttasil Ḥadīth*⁴ in case he wouldn't find in that chapter any authentic or *Ḥasan Ḥadīth*.

Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī

The author of *Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī* is *Abū Eesa Muḥammad ibn Eesa ibn Sawrah ibn Musa As-Sulamī Al-Buḡī At-Tirmidhī*. His book is called as “*Al-Jāmi' Al-Mukhtasar min As-Sunan 'An Rasūlillāh wa M'rifah Aṣ-Ṣaḥīh wa al-M'lūl wa mā 'alayhi al-'amal*”. It is popularly known as “*Sunan At-Tirmidhī*” or “*Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī*”. (At-Tirmidhī, 2017) Main characteristics of *Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī* are:

1. *At-Tirmidhī* mentioned the ruling on *Aḥādīth* in terms of their authenticity and weakness in his book. Except for only two *Aḥādīth*, all of the *Aḥādīth* which *At-Tirmidhī* mentioned are used by the jurists of one school or the other to derive their rulings.
2. He also mentioned in his book the opinions of many great jurists who lived before him on various matters. He also paid special attention to the hidden defects (*'ilal*) in the *Ḥadīth* narrations and scrutinized narrators.
3. His book is comparatively easy to understand owing to his excellent way of classifying subjects. Sometimes he also mentions weak *Aḥādīth* only to point out their

³ *Matrūk* is someone whom all scholars regard as a weak narrator

⁴ A *Muttasil Ḥadīth* is a form of *Ḥadīth* whose chain of narration is continuous and unbroken.

weakness before mentioning the authentic *Aḥādīth* in that chapter.

Sunan Ibn Mājah

The author of *Sunan ibn Mājah* is *Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Rab’ī al-Qazwīnī*. His book is known as ‘*As-Sunan*’. Main characteristics of *Sunan Ibn-Mājah* are (al-Qazwīnī, 2015):

1. *Ibn Mājah* has mentioned many narrations in his book which are altogether absent in the above-mentioned books of *Ḥadīth*. It is this fact upon which the scholars of *Ḥadīth* gave it precedence over the *Muwatta’* of *Mālik* to include it in ‘*Al-Kutub As-Sittah*’ (The six major compilations of *Ḥadīth*).
2. He classified the *Aḥādīth* in his book according to the subject matter of those *Aḥādīth* and thus his book is very much organized and systematic.

Sunan An-Nasā’ī

The author of *Sunan An-Nasā’ī* is *Abū ‘Abdir Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shu’ayb ibn ‘Alī ibn Sinān ibn Baḥr ibn Dīnār An-Nasā’ī Al-Qaḍī* (An-Nasā’ī, 2017) His work of *Ḥadīth* is called ‘*Al Muḥtabā’*’. It is a matter of disagreement between scholars as to whether it is from his writing or something which his student *Ibn As Sunnī* collected from his works. Main characteristics of *Sunan An-Nasā’ī* are:

1. *An-Nasā’ī* tried to gather those narrations in his *Sunan* which the jurists often use to give jurisprudential rulings. In giving the titles to various chapters, he is very much like *Al-Bukhārī*. His titles depict the profound knowledge and deep insights he had in the field of *Ḥadīth*. Like *Muslim*, he gathered the same *Aḥādīth* with different chains of narrations at one place.

2. At times he mentions the sayings of jurists as well. Sometimes to get to the point directly he skips mentioning the whole *Ḥadīth* and directly jumps to the point in *Ḥadīth* which proves the argument. He mentions apparently contradictory narrations at times if they are both authentic according to him to prove that the specific activity can be performed in more than one way and both are correct.

3. Analyses various narrations in the books of *Ḥadīth* and critically examines them to identify the strong ones and differentiate them from the weak ones. He informs about the names of narrators and their *Kunyah* and strictly adheres to mentioning all *Aḥādīth* with chains of narrations. That is why we seldom find a *Ḥadīth* therein which doesn’t have a chain of narration. He also informs about the state of the narrators at times at the end of a narration. *An-Nasā’ī* would frequently use the famous terminologies of *Ḥadīth* which were famous at his time between the *Ḥadīth* scholars.

Muwatta’ Mālik

The author of *Al-Muwatta’* is *Abū ‘Abdillāh Mālik ibn Anas ibn Mālik Al Asbahī Al Himyārī*. His book is known as ‘*Al-Muwatta’*’, and certain reports suggest that he named it so because the great scholars of *Madīnah* during his time approved of it (Al-himyārī, 2017). Main characteristics of *Al-Muwatta’* are:

1. The very fact that its author is someone who is an *Imām*, a *Muḥaddith*, an exemplary jurist, the teacher of the likes of *Ash-Shafi’ī* makes the book in and on itself worthy of having a high spot in the countless books of the Islamic nation.
2. It was written early, much before the likes of *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, which makes it very important and

adds to its authenticity. He also mentioned a great deal of the sayings of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi’ūn* in it.

3. Some scholars consider it to be from the six most important books of *Ḥadīth* of this *Ummah* in place of the *Sunan* of *Ibn-Mājah*.

Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

The author of *Al-Musnad* is *Abū ‘Abdillāh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal Ash-Shaybanī*. His book is known as ‘*Al-Musnad*’. Main characteristics of *Musnad* of *Aḥmad* are (Ash-Shaybanī, First Edition):

1. He classified *Ḥadīth* based upon the narrator who was narrating it from the Prophet SAW. And his chain of narration is one of the highest, having between him and Prophet SAW mostly only five narrators. And there are many narrations in which between him and Prophet SAW are just three narrators.
2. He mastered the major sciences of narration (*Ar-Riwāyah*), hidden defects (*Al-’ilal*) and Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and all of that is visible in his *Musnad*. And he accurately uses the words the narrator uses in his narration and differentiates between ‘*ḥaddathanā*’ and ‘*Akhbaranā*’, between ‘*sami’tu*’ and ‘*an*’ and so on.
3. He has mentioned a great number of *Aḥādīth* in his *Musnad* unlike any other compiler of the nine major books.

Sunan Ad-Dārimī

The author of *Sunan Ad-Dārimī* is *Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abdur Raḥmān ibn Al-Faḍl ibn Baḥrām At-Tamīmī As-Samarqandī Ad-Dārimī*. His book is sometimes referred to as *Musnad Ad-Dārimī* and sometimes as ‘*Kitāb al-Musnad Al-Jāmi*’ and other times as simply ‘*Sunan Ad-Dārimī*’. Main characteristics of *Sunan Ad-Dārimī* are (Ad-Dārimī, 2017):

1. Before mentioning *Aḥādīth* he wrote a preface to his book mentioning many characteristics of Prophet SAW.
2. He also mentioned in it the etiquettes of giving *Fatwā*, virtues of knowledge and many other things. He is perhaps from among the first group of *Muḥaddithūn* to do it as it was not a custom for the *Ḥadīth* scholars during the early times to write prefaces to their *Ḥadīth* collections.

The methodology of Muḥaddithūn in Ḥadīth exegesis Ḥadīth exegesis and its importance

Generation after generation, the scholars of this *umma* strived to gather the narrations of the Prophet (SAW). The great scholars collected these narrations, some verified them, while others explained these narrations. The protection of this *Dīn* (religion) took place in a two-fold manner. First, by the preservation of its fundamental sources (*Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*). And second, by the preservation of the meanings of these fundamental sources. When *Allāh* SWT speaks about the preservation of *Adh-Dhikr*⁵ in the *Aāyah*, “Indeed, it is We who sent down *Adh-Dhikr* and indeed, We will be its guardian.” (15:9) We must note that it includes the preservation of *Sunnah*, and that is why the word *Adh-Dhikr* was used instead of *Qur’ān*. Also, the preservation took place both of the texts of the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah* and their interpretations. Because the preservation of the text only, without the preservation of its interpretation, doesn’t amount to anything. The true preservation is only possible when it takes place in the text and as

⁵ Meaning ‘remembrance’ literally.

well as in the meanings of the text. The correct interpretation of the meaning of *Qur'an* was described by the scholars of the *Qur'an* (the *Mufasssirūn* and the jurists) and the correct interpretation of the meanings of *Aḥādīth* was described by the scholars of *Ḥadīth* (*Muḥaddithūn* and the jurists). And hence *Ḥadīth* exegesis has a very important role when it comes to understanding the *Sunnah* as it was understood by the early generations of Muslims.

Some of the most famous books of *Ḥadīth* exegesis are:

1. *Fath Al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*
2. *Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj*
3. *Awnul M'abūd 'alā Sunan Abī Dāwūd*
4. *Tuḥfatul Aḥwadhī bi Sharḥ At-Tirmidhī*
5. *Ḥāshiyah As-Sindī 'alā An-Nasā'ī*
6. *Mukhtaṣar Mā Tamassu ilayhi Al-Ḥājah liman Yuṭālī 'u Sunan ibn Mājah*

Fath Al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī

Fath Al-Bārī of *Ibn Ḥajar Al-'Asqalānī* is the most well-known commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*. *As-Suyyutī* mentioned in *Zayl Ṭabaqāt Al-Ḥuffāz* that none from the past or present scholars were able to write such a commentary. (Al-'Asqalānī A. ', 2011)

Al-'Asqalānī's Fath Al-Bārī has a lot of distinguishing characteristics which places it at a position far above other commentaries, some of them are:

1. The first thing *Ibn Ḥajar* generally discusses before explaining any *Ḥadīth* is as to what is the intention of *Al-Bukhārī* by the title of the chapter and what is the relation of the title with the *Aḥādīth* in the chapter. The scholars mentioned that the *Fiqh* (deep comprehension) of *Al-Bukhārī* lies in the chapter headings in his book and *Ibn Ḥajar's* commentary plays an important role in revealing to us that deep comprehension.
2. *Ibn Ḥajar* also speaks about the narrators of the narration. And even in that, he exemplifies his genius. In the first narration of *Al-Bukhārī*, he discusses as to why *Al-Bukhārī* chose to narrate this narration from his teacher *Al-Humaydī* when he had six other options at his disposal! The points he raises are at times are very subtle but very profound and the subsequent analysis and discussions are mesmerizing.
3. He also mentions the general principles with regards to the narrators and gives a lot of insights into the narration. For example, he would sometimes say that the narrators of this narration are all from Basrah, or he would say that this is a narration in which the teachers are narrating from their students and so on.
4. He would discuss the jurisprudential issues contained within the narration and also describe any linguistic points therein giving the reader deeper insights into the narration. He also discusses the differences in narrations and difference of opinions among scholars and makes *Tarjih*⁶ in all that.

⁶ *Tarjih* is an academic process in which a scholar who has reached a specific level is able to give precedence to one scholarly opinion over the other. He does it when it is impossible to combine between the two opinions, neither is any one of them abrogating the other.

5. He greatly quotes scholars before him and from the commentaries written before his. And if he has to speak about any issue related to a specific science then he would mostly quote from the known experts of that science only. So, if he discusses the language then he would quote from linguists, if it was a matter of jurisprudence then he would quote a *faqīh* and then if it was related to *Ḥanafī fiqh* he quotes from a *Ḥanafī* scholar and so on.

Besides these, there are many other aspects of *Fath Al-Bārī* which makes it a masterpiece. *Ash-Shawkānī* when implored upon by his students to write a commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* famously and eloquently said:

La Hijrah B'da Al-Fath (There is no migration after *Al-Fath*)

Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj

Muḥyuddīn Yahyá Ibn Sharf An-Nawawī's explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is one of the most well-known and important explanation of the book. Given the high credentials of *An-Nawawī* as a jurist, scholar and an author, his explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is widely read between the scholarly circles of the *Ummah*. Just like the *Fath Al-Bārī* of *Ibn Ḥajar Al-'Asqalānī*, *An-Nawawī's* explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* has many distinctive characteristics, some of them are:

1. He wrote a long preface to his explanation describing a lot of important things like the importance of *Ḥadīth* studies, the books of *Al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, the narrations therein, their methodologies, his aim in his explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* among many other things all of which are of dire importance for a student of *Ḥadīth*.
2. His explanation is clear and precise. He seldom wanders into other fields which are not directly linked with the narration or its exegesis.
3. Like *Ibn Ḥajar*, he gives a lot of insights into the narrators. For example he says in the explanation of *Ḥadīth* no. 24 that all narrators therein are from Kufah except for *Abū Hurayrah*. (Nawawī, 2012)
4. As it is well known that *Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj* didn't write headings on *Aḥādīth* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, so *An-Nawawī* added these headings and all those who came after him used his headings on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
5. He also comments upon the narrators, quotes scholars among many other things.

Awnul M'abūd 'alā Sunan Abī Dāwūd

This commentary of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* is one of the most famous commentaries of the book. Written by *Muḥammad Shams Al-Ḥaq Ibn Amīr 'Alī Al-Aẓīm Aābādī* this explanation continues to be frequently read and referred to by the scholars and students alike.

It's main characteristics are:

1. The author summarized the book from his previously written commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. The original commentary is called '*Gāyatul Al-Maqsūd Fī Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*'.
2. As it is a brief commentary, we don't find the author digressing much in this explanation which makes it an idle book for a student interested in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.
3. The author speaks about the different chains of narrations and also explains the difficult words occurring in the texts of the narrations in this explanation.

4. He makes *Takhrīj* of *Aḥādīth* based upon the methodology of *Al-Mundharī* in his summarization of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.
5. The author also pays attention as to how different names occurring in the narrations should be pronounced as it is an issue in which many students and teachers get confused and end up wrongly spelling out the names.

4. *Miṣbāḥ Az-Zujājah Fī Zawā'id ibn Mājah* by *Aḥmad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ismael*

Results and discussions

1. Historical Development of Ḥadīth Scholarship

Result 1.1: The Muḥaddithūn as Heirs to Early Tradition

The *Muḥaddithūn*, as inheritors of a rich Ḥadīth scholarship tradition, played a pivotal role in the preservation and development of Ḥadīth methodology. This tradition traces its roots to the early Islamic period when companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) began transmitting his sayings and actions orally. However, it was the *Muḥaddithūn* who recognized the need to formalize and systematize the science of Ḥadīth criticism (*'Ilm al-Jarḥ wa-l-Ta'dīl*) to discern the reliability of narrations.

1.1. Discussion

The *Muḥaddithūn's* position as inheritors of early tradition emphasizes their pivotal role in safeguarding the authenticity of Ḥadīth. Their methodologies represent an evolution of the principles laid down by the companions and early scholars, reflecting their unwavering commitment to preserving the prophetic tradition. This historical context serves as a testament to their dedication to upholding the purity of Ḥadīth and ensuring its transmission to subsequent generations.

2. Classification of Ḥadīth

Result 2.1: The Tiered Classification System

The *Muḥaddithūn* introduced a sophisticated classification system for Ḥadīth based on the strength of their authenticity and content. This tiered system encompassed categories such as *Ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), *Ḥasan* (good), and *Dā'if* (weak), with *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth* occupying the highest rank. The categorization was rooted in a comprehensive evaluation of both the *isnād* (chain of narrators) and the *matn* (content).

2.1. Discussion

The *Muḥaddithūn's* development of a tiered classification system provided a nuanced and systematic approach to evaluating the reliability of Ḥadīth. This framework has remained not only influential but essential in the realm of Ḥadīth scholarship, enabling scholars and practitioners to discern authentic reports from those of lesser quality. The classification system serves as a critical tool for preserving the integrity of the prophetic tradition and continues to guide contemporary scholars.

3. The Role of Isnād and Matn

Result 3.1: Scrutiny of Isnād

The *Muḥaddithūn* placed immense emphasis on the scrutiny of the *isnād*, the chain of narrators. Within this aspect of their methodology, each narrator within the chain was subjected to meticulous evaluation concerning their moral character, memory, and precision. Narrators with questionable attributes or memory lapses were identified and assessed through rigorous criteria.

3.1. Discussion

The meticulous scrutiny of the *isnād* by the *Muḥaddithūn* was instrumental in upholding the credibility of Ḥadīth. By tracing the chain of narrators back to the source, they established a transparent and verifiable path for the transmission of Ḥadīth. This rigorous authentication process continues to be a cornerstone of Ḥadīth scholarship, providing a robust framework for assessing the reliability of narrations.

Result 3.2: Examination of Matn

Tuḥfatul Aḥwadhī bi Sharḥ At-Tirmidhī

Authored by *Muḥammad 'Abdur Raḥmān Al-Mubārakpurī*, *Tuḥfatul Aḥwadhī* is one of the most well-known commentaries of *Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī*.

It's main characteristics are:

1. The author has written a lengthy in-depth preface to the book describing the nature of Ḥadīth studies, the narrators of Ḥadīth, the books of Ḥadīth and their nature among many other things. The preface alone forms a separate volume of the book.
2. He describes the matters of creed whenever the narration points to it in detail and basis his arguments upon the creed of *Ahlu Sunnah Wa Al-Jamā'ah*.
3. Greatly condemns the deviations of the people of *Bid'ah* and explains the position of *Ahlu Sunnah*.
4. Explains the narrations using the *aāyāt* of the *Qur'ān* and this is one of the greatest characteristics of the book.

Ḥāshiyah As-Sindī 'alā An-Nasā'ī

It has been written by *Nūr Ad-dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul Hādī Al-Madanī As-Sindī* who passed away in 1138 AH (As-Sindī, 1986). There is no particular commentary of *Sunan Nasā'ī* which has got so much attention and focus as the above-mentioned commentaries of different books of Ḥadīth. Yet the explanations of *Sunan An-Nasā'ī* are many and each one of them has its own merits. Some of them are:

1. *Al-Im'ān Fī Sharḥ An-Nasā'ī Abī Abdīr Raḥmān* by 'Ali ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Khalf ibn Muḥammad ibn An-Na'mah who passed away in 567 AH. *Adh Dhahabī* mentions in his *Siyar* that the author reached the pinnacle in explaining the book and wrote volumes. [*Siyar 'alām An-Nubalā* 20:585] (*Adh-Dhahabī*, 2017)
2. *Sharḥ An-Nasā'ī* by the *Ḥanbalī* jurist 'Abdul Qādir ibn *Badrān Ad-Dūmī*.
3. *Sharḥ Sunan An-Nasā'ī* by *Muḥammad ibn Abur Raḥmān Al-Ahdal*
4. *Shurūq Anwār Al-Mīnan Al-Kubrā Al-Ilāhīyah bi Kashf Asrār As-Sunan Aṣ-Ṣugrā An-Nasā'īyah* by one of the contemporary scholars *Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Ash-Shinqīṭī*. (*Ash-Shinqīṭī*, 1425 AH)

Mukhtaṣar Mā Tamassu ilayhi Al-Ḥājah liman Yuṭālī'u Sunan ibn Mājah

This commentary has been written by *Muḥammad 'Abdur Rashīd An-Nu'mānī*. Just like *Sunan An-Nasā'ī*, there is no particular commentary of *Sunan ibn Mājah* which has got so much of attention and focus as the above-mentioned commentaries of different books of Ḥadīth. Its commentaries are many and each one of them has its own merits. Some of these commentaries are:

1. *Miṣbāḥ Az-Zujājah 'alā Sunan ibn Mājah* by *Jalāl ad-Dīn 'Abdur Raḥmān As-Suyyūtī*.
2. *Nihāyatul Ḥājah Fī Sharḥ Sunan ibn Mājah* by *Abū al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abdul Hādī As Sindī*.
3. *Injāḥ Al-Ḥājah* by 'Abdul Ganī *Al-Majdadī Ad-Dehlavī*

In addition to evaluating the *isnād*, the *Muḥaddithūn* subjected the *matn*, or content, of *Ḥadīth* to thorough analysis. Their goal was to identify any inconsistencies, contradictions, or linguistic anomalies within the narration's content.

3.2. Discussion

The scrutiny of the *matn* demonstrated the *Muḥaddithūn*'s commitment to preserving the purity and accuracy of the prophetic tradition. It ensured that the content of *Ḥadīth* remained consistent with the teachings of Islam and maintained internal coherence. This comprehensive examination of both *isnād* and *matn* collectively contributed to the reliability and authenticity of *Ḥadīth*, reflecting their unwavering dedication to the preservation of the Prophetic tradition.

4. Interpretive Approaches

The *Muḥaddithūn*'s methodologies extended beyond authentication; they also engaged in the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of *Ḥadīth*. Their interpretive approaches encompassed linguistic analysis, historical context, and jurisprudential implications.

Result 4.1: Linguistic Analysis

The *Muḥaddithūn* conducted linguistic analysis to decipher the meanings of words and phrases within *Ḥadīth*. This involved an in-depth examination of the Arabic language to extract the intended message of the Prophet.

4.1. Discussion

Linguistic analysis allowed the *Muḥaddithūn* to unlock the nuanced meanings of *Ḥadīth*, ensuring that the profound depth of the Arabic language was properly understood. This approach enabled them to appreciate the subtleties of the Prophet's words and extract valuable insights for Islamic jurisprudence and moral guidance, demonstrating their commitment to a holistic understanding of *Ḥadīth*.

Result 4.2: Historical Context

Understanding the historical context in which *Ḥadīth* were uttered was crucial for the *Muḥaddithūn*. They considered the circumstances, events, and societal norms of the time to contextualize the Prophet's actions and statements.

4.2. Discussion

Historical context provided a framework for comprehending the Prophet's actions and sayings. It allowed the *Muḥaddithūn* to discern the specific reasons behind certain narrations and to appreciate their relevance in varying circumstances. This approach facilitated a more holistic understanding of *Ḥadīth*, illuminating the wisdom and context behind each narration.

Result 4.3: Jurisprudential Implications

The *Muḥaddithūn* recognized the jurisprudential implications of *Ḥadīth* and sought to derive legal rulings from them. They applied their knowledge of Islamic law to elucidate how *Ḥadīth* could inform legal decisions.

4.3. Discussion

The *Muḥaddithūn*'s jurisprudential approach to *Ḥadīth* paved the way for the integration of *Ḥadīth* into the broader framework of Islamic jurisprudence. It allowed for the development of legal principles and rulings based on the Prophetic tradition, enriching Islamic jurisprudence and providing guidance for everyday life. Their commitment to jurisprudential implications underscored the practical relevance of *Ḥadīth* in the lives of Muslims.

To summarize, the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* in the compilation and exegesis of *Ḥadīth* is a profound and multifaceted intellectual tradition within Islam. Through their meticulous historical development of *Ḥadīth* scholarship, the establishment of a sophisticated classification system, rigorous scrutiny of *isnād* and *matn*, and multifaceted interpretive approaches, the *Muḥaddithūn* have shaped the foundations of Islamic scholarship. These methodologies continue to play a pivotal role in preserving the authenticity and reliability of *Ḥadīth*, guiding scholars and practitioners in understanding the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). As the Muslim community navigates the challenges and opportunities of the modern world, the methodologies of the *Muḥaddithūn* remain a timeless model for the preservation and rigorous analysis of sacred traditions, serving as a source of guidance and inspiration for generations to come.

Conclusion

The journey through the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* in the compilation and exegesis of *Ḥadīth* has illuminated the profound depth and complexity of Islamic tradition. The *Muḥaddithūn*, as the dedicated scholars of *Ḥadīth*, undertook a formidable task in preserving and disseminating the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Their rigorous methodology, built upon a foundation of scrupulous scrutiny and unwavering dedication to authenticity, has not only safeguarded the integrity of *Ḥadīth* but has also played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and morality.

One of the critical aspects uncovered in this exploration is the historical development of *Ḥadīth* scholarship. The *Muḥaddithūn*, following in the footsteps of the earliest generations of Muslims, set out to formalize and systematize the science of *Ḥadīth*. Through their indefatigable efforts, they categorized narrations, codified principles of criticism (*ʿIlm al-Jarḥ wa-l-Taʿdīl*), and provided the Muslim community with a reliable yardstick to gauge the authenticity of *Ḥadīth*. This evolution of methodology stands as a testament to their commitment to preserving the prophetic legacy.

The classification of *Ḥadīth* based on authenticity, particularly the categorization into *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥasan*, and *Dāʿif*, is another facet that underscores their meticulous approach. This tiered system, built upon rigorous standards, has allowed scholars to navigate the vast sea of narrations and ascertain the reliability of each. It serves as a reminder that the *Muḥaddithūn* were not merely passive collectors but were actively engaged in discerning truth from falsehood.

The significance of the *isnād* (chain of narrators) and *matn* (content) analysis cannot be overstated. The *Muḥaddithūn*, with unwavering precision, examined both the narrators' biographies and the content of *Ḥadīth* to ensure accuracy. Their commitment to scrutinizing narrators' moral character, memory, and precision has been instrumental in upholding the credibility of *Ḥadīth*.

Furthermore, the methodology of textual criticism (*dirāyah*) highlighted the *Muḥaddithūn*'s unparalleled dedication to detail. They identified inconsistencies and contradictions within narrations, further underscoring their commitment to preserving the purest form of the prophetic tradition.

In the realm of exegesis (*tafsīr*), the *Muḥaddithūn*'s interpretive approaches revealed their multifaceted engagement with *Ḥadīth*. Whether through linguistic analysis, historical context, or jurisprudential implications, their methodologies aimed at

extracting comprehensive legal and moral guidance from *Ḥadīth*, reinforcing the dynamic nature of *Ḥadīth* scholarship.

In conclusion, the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* in the compilation and exegesis of *Ḥadīth* is a testament to the intellectual rigor, dedication, and profound reverence that they held for the prophetic tradition. Their legacy endures as a beacon of guidance, ensuring that Muslims worldwide can continue to draw upon the authentic teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for their spiritual and ethical guidance. In an age marked by the proliferation of information, the *Muḥaddithūn*'s methodologies serve as a timeless model for the meticulous preservation and rigorous scrutiny of sacred traditions, demonstrating their enduring relevance and significance in the contemporary Islamic world.

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