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Reasons for Including Hadiths in Ibn Abi Hatim al Razi's al *Jarh wa al Tadil* (Narrator criticism and accreditation) - A Study and Analysis –

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Abstract

This study examines Ibn Abi Hatim al Razi's inclusion of hadiths within certain narrators' biographical entries. It addresses the following questions: Why does Ibn Abi Hatim include hadiths and transmitted reports in these entries, and what purposes do they serve? The study's importance derives from the scholarly value of *al-Jarh wa al-tadil* (Criticism and Validation) and the attention it merits, as well as the need to identify why scholars include hadiths and reports in works other than collections organized around transmission with chains of authority. Its principal objectives are to explain the scholarly and substantive reasons for Ibn Abi Hatim's inclusion of this material and to demonstrate how understanding these purposes benefits the assessment of both narrators and their reports. The study concludes that such material serves several purposes, primarily in support of the biographical entry itself, including clarifying a narrator's standing and distinguishing that narrator from others. Further findings are presented in the conclusion.

Keywords: narrator criticism and accreditation; Ibn Abi Hatim al Razi; narrators' biographies; reasons for citing hadiths...

Introduction:

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds. May blessings and peace be upon the noblest of messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon all his family and Companions.

Al-Jarh wa al-tadil (Criticism and Validation), by Imam Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi (d.327 AH), is a foundational work for identifying hadith narrators and assessing their standing and relative strengths and weaknesses in memorization, proficiency, integrity (adalah), and accuracy (dabt). Its biographical entries also identify prominent teachers and students and transmit the judgments of hadith critics.

These features generally occasion little surprise, since this work and others of its kind are intended to evaluate narrators through criticism and accreditation (*Al-Jarh wa al-tadil*). What does invite attention, however, is the inclusion of hadiths and other transmitted reports in certain entries, even though *al-Jarh wa al-tadil* is not primarily a hadith collection.

Research Questions:

This practice raises two questions: Why does Ibn Abi Hatim include hadiths and transmitted reports in the biographies of some narrators? What purposes does their inclusion serve?

Significance of the Study:

The study's significance lies in the scholarly value of al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl and the need to give it sustained attention. It also lies in identifying why scholars transmit hadiths and reports in works other than collections of reports with full chains of transmission, and in explaining the value of this practice.

Objectives:

The study seeks to achieve two principal objectives:

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- To explain the scholarly and substantive reasons for Ibn Abi Hatim's inclusion of hadiths and reports in a work whose primary subject is narrator criticism and accreditation.

- To demonstrate the value, for the study of both narrators and transmitted material, of understanding why such reports appear in works of narrator criticism.

Previous Research:

I identified an earlier study that overlaps with the subject of this article: a research project at Emir Abdelkader University of Islamic Sciences in Constantine entitled "Tracing the Sources of the Hadiths and Reports in Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi's *al-Jarh wa al-tadil*," supervised by Professor Salih Umar. The project was divided among master's students in 2019 and has been completed.

The present article's contribution is to build on the results of that source-tracing work (takhrij), studying and analyzing the reports to identify Ibn Abi Hatim's purposes in including them.

Methodology:

I used a non-exhaustive inductive approach to collect examples and samples of the hadiths and reports in the book. I then applied an analytical approach to examine them and identify the reasons for their inclusion.

Structure of the Study:

Following the introduction, the study comprises a preliminary discussion, seven sections, and a conclusion. Each section addresses one purpose served by including a hadith or report in Ibn Abi Hatim's work.

We ask Allah Most High to grant us success and sound judgment in explaining the matter.

Preliminary Discussion:

Every author in every discipline writes with a particular objective and purpose. Authors' aims may be identified through explicit statements in their introductions or elsewhere in their works.

Generally, these statements provide the clearest and most direct evidence, although some formulations admit more than one interpretation and may therefore be understood differently. The author knows the work and its intended purpose better than anyone else.

Sometimes, however, we find no statement explaining an author's method or purpose. We must then proceed inductively: examining the work, collecting comparable examples, and grouping similar instances to identify the principal features of the author's method and aims.

For the issue examined here, Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi's *al-Jarh wa al-tadil* belongs to this second category and requires close examination and induction.

This article does not claim to survey the entire work exhaustively. Rather, its investigation sheds light on some of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's purposes in including hadiths and reports in certain biographical entries. Seven purposes emerged, which are discussed in the following sections.

Establishing a Narrator's Status as a Companion

One means of establishing Companion status (ṣuḥbah) for a little-known narrator is a report transmitted by that narrator from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, accompanied by an indication that the narrator saw or heard him. Scholars therefore include such hadiths and reports in biographical entries to establish this status.

An example appears in Ibn Abi Hatim's entry on Thabit ibn al-Harith al-Ansari. He states that Thabit transmitted from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, that he forbade the killing of a man who had participated in the Battle of Badr, saying, "***How do you know? Perhaps Allah, Mighty and Majestic, has looked upon the people of Badr***" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.450).

The reason for including this hadith is to adduce evidence of Thabit's Companion status, a matter on which scholars differed. Ibn Mandah, Abu Nuaym, and Ibn al-Athir were among those who included him among the Companions (Abu Nuaym, 1998, p.478; Ibn al-Athir, n.d., p.438; Ibn Mandah, 2005, p.353).

Other scholars questioned this status. In Tajrid asma al-sahaah (Extracting the Names of the Companions), al-Dhahabi used a formula indicating uncertainty: "A participant at Badr, according to what has been said" (al-Dhahabi, n.d., p.61). Al-IjlI, by contrast, described him as "a trustworthy Successor" (al-IjlI, n.d., p.259).

Ibn Hajar agreed with this assessment in TajIl al-manfaah (Accelerating the Benefit): "*Their statement that he 'participated at Badr'* is mistaken. The correct statement is that he transmitted a hadith concerning someone who participated at Badr." He added that he had found no transmission route in which Thābit expressly stated that he had heard the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him (Ibn Hajar, 1996, p.368).

Ibn Abi Hatim's apparent purpose, therefore, was either to establish this narrator's Companion status or to indicate that those who counted him among the Companions relied on the hadith cited in his entry.

Showing That a Narrator Was Not a Companion

This purpose is the reverse of the first: the report is included to indicate that the narrator's claimed Companion status is not established.

For example, Ibn Abi Hatim writes in the entry on Busr ibn Mihjan al-Dili: "He is also called Bishr, but Busr is more correct." He then quotes him as saying, "*I came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. The call to commence prayer was made, but I did not stand*." He continues: "Sufyan said: Bishr narrated from his father, who said, '*I saw the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. The call to commence prayer was made, but I did not stand'*" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.423).

The entry thus presents two versions. The first expressly indicates that Busr ibn Miḥjan saw the Prophet, while the second identifies his father, Miḥjan, as the person who saw him. On the latter account, Companion status belongs to the father, not the son.

Among the scholars who discussed this narrator, Abu Ahmad al-Askari alone included him among the Companions (al-Askari, 1982, p.576). Most scholars, including Ibn Hibban, Ibn al-Qattan al-Fasi, al-Dhahabi, and Ibn Hajar, did not (al-Dhahabi, 1995, p.18; Ibn al-Qattan, 2011, p.22; Ibn Hajar, 2013, p.112; Ibn Hibban, 1973, p.79).

Of the two versions cited by Ibn Abi Hatim, the first is weak. Abu al-Qasim al-Baghawi and Ibn Mandah transmit it through Ibn Humayd, from Salamah ibn al-Fadl, from Muhammad ibn Ishaq, from Imran ibn Abi Anis, from Handhalah ibn Ali, from Busr ibn Mihjan (al-Baghawi, n.d., p.331; Ibn Mandah, 2005, p.265).

The second is transmitted by Malik in al-Muwatta, Ahmad in al-Musnad, al-Nasai in al-Sunan, al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak, and others, through Zayd ibn Aslam, from Busr ibn Mihjan, from his father, from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1995, p.319; al-Hakim, 1997, p.360; al-Nasai, 2001, p.447; Malik ibn Anas, 1997, p.193).

This is the correct transmission: Busr ibn Mihjan narrates from his father, rather than directly from the Prophet. Trustworthy authorities such as Malik ibn Anas and Sufyan al-Thawri transmitted it in this form. Moreover, its chain is Medinan. After recording the second version, al-Hakim stated: "*This is an authentic hadith, and Malik ibn Anas is the arbiter in the hadith of the Medinans*" (al-Hakim, 1997, p.360).

It follows that Ibn Abi Hatim presented the two routes, one weak and the other authentic, to show that the narrator was not a Companion. Rather, his father was the Companion, as established by the sound version.

Indicating That a Narrator Is Insufficiently Known

A recognized principle of hadith scholarship is that a narrator from whom only one person transmits is classified as majhul al-ayn (An individual of unknown identity): insufficiently identified and not independently acceptable as an authority. Ibn Hajar explains: "*If the narrator is named, but only one narrator transmits from him, he is majhul al-ayn*" (Ibn Hajar, 1992, p.135).

Scholars therefore sometimes include in a narrator's biography a hadith or report through which alone that narrator is known, thereby indicating that knowledge of the narrator is confined to that particular report.

For example, Ibn Abi Hatim writes of Bishr ibn Imran al-Qubai: "He was from Quba. He narrated from his mawlā, Abd Allah ibn Hilal, who said, '*My father took me to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him*. Zayd ibn al-Hubab narrated from him" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.361).

After searching for this narrator's biography, I found no entry other than Ibn Abi Hatim's, quoted above. In it, he names only Zayd ibn al-Hubab as a transmitter from Bishr. It is as though Ibn Abi Hatim intended to say that this narrator is known only through this hadith.

It may therefore be suggested that the report was included to indicate the narrator's insufficiently known status and the fact that he is known only through this hadith. Allah knows best.

Distinguishing Between Narrators

An important branch of hadith studies is al-muttafiq wa al-muftariq, which concerns distinct narrators whose names, fathers' names, epithets, or other identifying designations coincide. Failure to distinguish them may cause several different narrators to be treated as one person.

Scholars therefore differentiate them by identifying their respective teachers and students: one narrator transmits from particular authorities and is cited by particular students, while another has a

different set of teachers and students.

A further means of distinction is a report associated specifically with one narrator. Identifying someone as the transmitter of a particular hadith can distinguish that person from others.

For example, Ibn Abi Hatim writes of Bishr ibn al-Muhtafiz: "He is counted among the Basrans. He narrated from Ibn Umar, from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: '*Silk is the clothing of those who have no share* [in the Hereafter].' Qatadah narrated from him. I heard my father say this. Abu Zurah was asked about him and replied, '*I know him only through this hadith*'" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.365).

Scholars disagreed over whether this narrator was distinct from another similarly named narrator, Bishr ibn Aidh. Al-Bukhari treated them as one person, identifying Bishr ibn al-Muhtafiz with Bishr ibn Aidh. He devoted a single entry to them, introducing Bishr ibn Aidh and then mentioning the name Bishr ibn al-Muhtafiz, thereby indicating that the two names referred to the same person (al-Bukhari, 1962, p.78).

Others, including Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hibban, al-Mizzi, al-Dhahabi, and Mughlatay, treated them as two narrators, assigning a separate entry to each name (al-Dhahabi, 1992, p.268; al-Mizzi, 1983a, pp.132, 144, 1983b, p.322; Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.365; Ibn Hibban, 1973, p.66; Mughlatay, 2001, p.405).

Thus, Ibn Abi Hatim included this hadith in the entry on Bishr ibn al-Muhtafiz to distinguish him from Bishr ibn Aidh. The distinguishing feature was the report specifically associated with Bishr ibn al-Muhtafiz. Allah knows best.

Identifying a Narrator as One of a Hadith's Transmission Routes

An example occurs in Ibn Abi Hatim's entry on Bishr ibn Muḥammad ibn Abi Zaidah: "He lived in Baghdad … He narrated from Hariz ibn Uthman and Umar ibn Abi Zaidah. He narrated the report of Umm Mabad from Abd al-Malik ibn Wahb al-Madhhiji. My father and Abu al-Asbagh narrated from him" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.364).

The report of Umm Mabad mentioned here is a well-known account describing the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Examination of its transmission routes shows that they converge on three principal channels:

- Bishr ibn Muhammad al-Sukkari, from Abd al-Malik ibn Wahb al-Madhhiji, from al-Hurr ibn Sayyaḥ, from Abu Mabad al-Khuzai, from the Prophet. An alternative version has Abu Mabad narrating from Umm Mabad (Abu Nuaym, 1998, p.3019; al-Bukhari, 1962, p.84; al-Hakim, 1997, p.12).
- Hizam ibn Hisham, from his father Hisham ibn Hubaysh, from his grandfather Hubaysh ibn Khalid, from the Prophet (Abu Nuaym, 1998, p.3400; al-Hakim, 1997, p.10; al-Tabarani, n.d., p.48).
- Yahya ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Madani, from Muhammad ibn Sulayman ibn Sulayt, from his father, from his grandfather (al-Tabarani, n.d., p.123).

All these routes have been subject to criticism. Al-Dhahabi states: "*None of these routes meets the conditions of authenticity*" (al-Dhahabi, n.d.-b, p.11). Ibn Kathir, however, observes: "*Her story [that is, Umm Maʿbad's] is well known and is transmitted through routes that strengthen one another*" (Ibn Kathir, 1997, p.472).

In any event, Bishr ibn Muḥammad is a known narrator. The reason for including the report in his biography may therefore have been to identify him as one of the channels through which the report of Umm Maʿbad was transmitted. Allah knows best.

Identifying a Narrator as the Sole Route of Transmission

This purpose is more specific than the preceding one. Here, the hadith is known only through the narrator in whose biography it appears.

For example, Ibn Abi Hatim writes of Bakr ibn Zurah al-Khawlani: "He was Syrian. He narrated from Abu Inabah al-Khawlani, and al-Jarrah ibn Maliḥ narrated from him … Bakr ibn Zurah also narrated from Muslim ibn Abd Allah al-Azdi that Abd Allah ibn Qurṭ came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Ismail ibn Ayyash narrated from him" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.386).

Ibn Abi Hatim also mentions this hadith in the biography of Muslim ibn Abd Allah al-Azdi (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.187). On tracing its sources, I found, within the material available to me, that it is transmitted only through Bakr ibn Zurah from Muslim ibn Abd Allah, with the remainder of the chain (Abu Nuaym, 1998, p.1757; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1995, p.428).

The hadith is at least hasan (sound). Al-Haythami states: "*Aḥmad transmitted it, and its narrators are trustworthy*" (al-Haythami, 2001, p.56).

Ibn Abi Hatim thus included the same hadith in two separate biographies because it is transmitted only through these two narrators. Its inclusion in both entries indicates that it has a

single transmission route passing through them.

Identifying a hadith's transmission route also has an important critical function. Once a single established route is identified, it provides a criterion against which purported alternative routes can be assessed and defects in them detected, since the available transmission evidence indicates that the hadith is known only through that particular route.

Identifying an Unusual Report Attributed to a Narrator

An example occurs in Ibn Abi Hatim's biography of Budayl ibn Warqa al-Khuzai: "He was a Companion. Habibah bint Shurayq, the grandmother of Isa ibn Masud ibn al-Ḥakam al-Zuraqi, narrated from him. His son Salamah ibn Budayl narrated from him that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, wrote him a letter" (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, p.428).

This report attributed to Budayl ibn Warqa is transmitted through Bishr ibn Abd Allah, from his father Abd Allah ibn Salamah, from his father Salamah ibn Budayl, from his father Budayl ibn Warqa (al-Fakihi, 1994, p.98; al-Tabarani, n.d., p.29; Ibn Abi Asim, 1991, p.313; Ibn Mandah, 2005, p.279).

The report is not authentic. Among the scholars whose remarks bear on its status are Ibn Mandah, who states, "*This is a gharīb report, known from him only through this route*" (Ibn Mandah, 2005, p.279); al-Haythami, who states, "*Al-Tabarani transmitted it, and its chain contains individuals whom I do not know*" (al-Haythami, 2001, p.223); and Ibn al-Athir, who states, "This is a gharīb report" (Ibn al-Athir, n.d., p.359).

Accordingly, Ibn Abi Hatim's purpose in including the report in the biography of Budayl ibn Warqa, whose Companion status is undisputed, was to identify this unusual, singly transmitted report (gharib) attributed to him, although its attribution is not sound. Allah knows best.

Conclusion:

All praise is due to Allah alone. May blessings and peace be upon the one after whom there is no prophet.

This brief examination of selected passages in which Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi includes hadiths within biographical entries yields the following findings:

Ibn Abi Hatim had substantive scholarly purposes in including hadiths within these entries. His practice was deliberate, rather than arbitrary, even when he did not state his purposes explicitly.

The examples examined reveal seven purposes: establishing a narrator's Companion status; showing that a narrator was not a Companion; distinguishing between narrators; indicating that a narrator is insufficiently known and is known only through a particular report; identifying a narrator as one of a hadith's transmission channels; identifying a narrator as its sole transmission channel; and drawing attention to an unusual report attributed to an otherwise well-known narrator.

Further purposes may emerge as the scope of the investigation and the range of examples are expanded.

These purposes support the biographical entry by clarifying the narrator's identity and standing and informing judgments about that narrator.

The hadiths are included primarily to serve the biographies, rather than to collect and transmit hadiths as an end in itself.

This explains why Ibn Abi Hatim generally confines himself to the wording of a report without providing its chain of transmission.

I therefore recommend closer attention to the various works of narrator criticism and accreditation: systematically identifying the reports embedded in their biographies, explaining why their authors included them, and using this material to study the standing of the narrators concerned.

May Allah bless and grant peace to His servant and Messenger, our Prophet Muḥammad, and to all his family and Companions. All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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