**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 الله الذي لم يزل عالماً قديراً، وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد الذي أرسله كثيراء إلى الناس كافة بشيرًا ونيرًا، وعلى آل محمد وصحابه وسلم تسليماً.

أما بعد: فإن التصنيف في اصطلاح أهل الحديث قد كثرت وبسطت فسألني بعض الإخوان أن ألخص له المهم من ذلك فأجبته إلى واختصرت، الاندراج في تلك المسالك. فأقول سؤالي 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
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 muḥlaq) [e.g. one–hadith narrator, one–compiler narrator, one–narrator hadith, 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.

غَرَبَة

ثم الغرابة إما أن تكون

في أصل السند، 1.
أولا. 2.
• 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-ṣabīl)
3. with a continuous chain (sanad)
4. that is not defective (mu'allal)
5. nor anomalous (shadhūd)

is the sound–in–itself report (ḥāthi bi ḏāthi). Its ranks are commensurate to variation in these conditions. Hence al-Bukhārī’s ḥāthi 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 (ḥasan li ḏāthi); with multiple paths it is considered sound (ḥaṣān) .

If the grading is composite [e.g. fair–sound (ḥasan ḥaṣān)] 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].

١. عدل
٢. تام الضبط
٣. متصل
٤. معلل
٥. ولا شاذ

هو الصحيح لذاته. وتفاوت رتبته بتفاوت هذه الأوصاف. ومن ثم قدم صحيح البخاري، ثم مسلم، ثم شرطهما.

فإن خف الضبط، فالحسن لذاته، وبكثره طرقوه يصح،

فإن جمعا فلتتردد في الناقل حيث التفرد، وإلا فباعتبار إسنادين.
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 (arjaḥ), the stronger is the well-preserved report (maḥfūṣ), and its opposite is the anomalous report (shādhīdh).
- If in addition to being contrary it is weak (ḥaʾīf), the stronger is the well-recognized (maʿrūf), and its opposite is the disclaimed report (munkar).

When a report agrees with a relatively-unique report (fard nisbī) it is called a corroborative chain (mutābiʿ).

If a report’s content (matn) is found that resembles it, then it is a witness-report (shāhid).

Investigating the paths of transmission for the above is called evaluation (iʿtibār).

Contradiction & Objection

That which is accepted (maqṣūl):

- if it is free from contradiction or objection (muʿāraḥa), then it is decisive (muḥkam).

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

- if reconciliation (jamʿ) is possible, they are reconcilable reports (mukhtalif al-ʿadīth);
- if not and the later one is positively established (thābit), then one is the abrogating report (nāṣikh) and the other is the abrogated report (mansūkh);
- if not, superiority is sought (тарجل); and
- lastly, neither one is confirmed or denied (tawaqquf).
The Rejected & its Divisions

Reports are rejected because of:
1. lacuna (saqḥ)
2. or aspersion (ḥa’n).

Lacunas

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,
3. 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 (munqa’i’).

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 khāfī) from a contemporary he did not meet [or did
not meet as a narrator, such as a baby Companion from the Prophet, e.g. Mūsā ibn ʿalī.

Aspersion 诊断

Aspersion (ḥa'n) 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 (mawḥū').
   • The second is the discarded report (matrūk).
   • The third is the disclaimed report (munkarak) 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'allal).
• 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 (marfūʾ) then it is the content–interpolated report (mudraj al-matn)
o or transposition, then the topsy–turvy report (maqālīb)
o or inserting a narrator, then it is the insertion into an already–connected–chain report (mażīd fi muttaqīl 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-mūḥiḥ).
o The narrator has few [narrations] and is not frequently taken from. Concerning this they wrote single–report narrators (alwaṣān).
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-Nasā'ī’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 (mukhtalā').
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

لكذب الرواى،
أو تهتمته بذلك،
أو فحش غلطه،
أو غفلته،
أو فسقه،
أو وهمه،
أو مخالفته،
أو جهالته،
أو بدعته،
أو سوء حفظه.
فالأول الموضوع،
والثاني المتروك،
ثالث المنكر على رأي،
وكذا الرابع والخامس.
ثم الوهم: إن يتحقق عليه بالقرائة وجمع الطرق، فهو المعلل.
ثم المخالفة: إن كانت بتغيير السياق، فمدرج الإسناد،
أو بدمج موقوف بمرفع، فمدرج المتن،
أو بتقدم أو تأخر في الأسماء، فالمقلوب،
أو زيادة مأزق، فالمفاضل في متصل الأسانيد،
أو بإبداله ولا مرتجع، فالمضطرب.
وقد يقع الإبدال عمدا امتحانًا،
أو بتغيير حروف مع بقاء صورة الخط في السياق، فالمصحت والمحرف.
ولا يجوز تعدي تغيير المتن بالنقص والمرادف إلا لعالم بما يحيل المعاني،
فإن خفي المعنى احتاج إلى شرح الغريب وبيان المشكل.
ثم الجهالة: وسببها أن الرواى.
قد كثير يعرفه فيذكر بيده ما اشتهر به لغرض، وصنفوا فيه الموضوع.
وقد يكون مفلا فلا يكثر الأخذ عنه، وصنفوا فيه الوحدان.
أولا يسمى اختصارا، وصنفوا فيه المبهمات.
ولا يقبل حديث المبهم- ولو أبهم بنظف التعديل على الأصح، 
فإن سمى
وانفرد واحد عنه، فمجهول العين، 
أو أثناً فصاعداً ولم يوثق، فمجهول الحال، وهو المستور

• ثم البذعة
  1. إما بمكفر
  2. أو بمفسق

فالأول لا يقبل صاحبها الجمهور،
والثاني يقبل من لم يكن داعية إلى بدعته في الأصح، إذا ان روى ما يقوَى
بدعته، فيرد على المختار، وبه صرح الجوزجاني شيخ النسائي
• ثم سوء الحفظ
  إن كان لازمًا للراوي في جميع حالاته، فالشاذ على رأي
  أو طارتا فالمختار
  أو متى تتبع السيء الحفظ بمعتبر، وكذا المستور والمرسل والمدلس صار،
  حديثهم حسنًا لا لذا، بل بالمجموع

To Whom the Report is Attributed

المتن بحسب ما يضاف إليه

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 (marfū’).
   • The second is the halted-chain (Companion) report (mawqūf).
   • The third is the severed-chain (sub-Companion) report (maqūū'). It is the same for anyone subsequent to the Successor.
   • The last two are said to be non–Prophetic reports (āthār).
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:
  - concurrent chain (muwāfaqa) which arrives at the shaykh of one of the compilers without using the compiler’s path;
  - convergent chain (badal) which arrives at the shaykh’s shaykh in the same way;
  - 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;
  - and handshaking (muḥāfaṣa) 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 aṣāghīr). It includes: fathers–from–sons narration (al-ābā’ ‘an al-abnā’); its opposite is frequent. It includes son–from–father or grandfather narration (‘an ābīhi ‘an jaddīhi).

If two share the same shaykh and one’s death precedes, then it is predecessor–successor narration (sābiq wa-lāmiq).

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 ḥaddatha wa nasiya).

If the narrators conform in the phrasing used to convey or in some other manner, then it is pattern–chained narration (musalsal).
والمسند مرفوع صحابي بسند ظاهرة الاتصال.
فإن قال عده: إما أن ينتهي إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم. 1«أو إلى إمام ذي صفة عليّة ك»شعبة. 2
- الألف العلو المطلق،
- والثاني النسبي:
وفي المواقفة، وهي الوصول إلى شيخ أحد المصنفين من غير طريقه;
وفي البند، وهو الوصول إلى شيخ شيخه كذلك;
وفي المساواة وهي استواء عدم الإسناد من الرواى إلى آخره آخر الإسناد
مع إسناد أحد المصنفين;
وفي المصادفة، وهي الاستواء مع تلميذ ذلك المصنف.
ويفاق العلو باقتسامه النزول.
فإن تشارك الرواى ومن روى عنه في السن واللقي، فهو رواية الأقران.
وإن روى كل منهما عن الآخر، فهو المذبح.
وإن روى عمن دونه في السن أو في المقدار، فالأكبر عن الأصغر - ومنه الأباء عن الأبناء، وفي عكسه كثرة، ومنه من روى عن أبيه عن جده رواية.
وإن اشترك اثنان عن شيخ وتقدم موت أحدهما فهو السابق واللاحق.
وإن روى عن اثنين متفقى الاسم ولم يتميزا، فباختصاصه بأحدهما يتبين المهم.
وإن جدد الشيخ مروى
- جزماً، رُدّ،
- أو احتمالاً، قبل في الأصح.
وفيه «من حدث ونسى».
وإن اتفق الرواية في صيغ الأداء أو غيرها من الحالات، فهو المسلسل.

**Forms of Conveyance**

The forms of conveyance are:
1. “Sami’tu” (I heard)
2. and “addathani” (he narrated to me)
3. then “akhbarani” (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’ani” (he informed me)
7. then “nâwalanî” (he put into my hands)
8. then “shâfahanî” (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 hadât 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 (ijâza), 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 (mukhtâr).
• They used mushâfaha for an oral authorization and mukâtaba for a written authorization [with the late scholars].
• For the authenticity of munâwala, they stipulated that it be accompanied by permission to relate; it is the highest type of authorization (ijâza).
• They also stipulated permission for a report found (wijâda i.e. “something found in a book”), likewise a book bequeathed (waâiyya bi-l-kitâb), and in a shaykh’s public announcement that he narrates something (i’lâm), 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:

1. سمعت
2. و» حدثني
3. ثم «أخبرني
4. و» قرأت عليه
5. ثم «قرأت عليه وأنا أسمع
6. ثم «أنبأتي
7. ثم «ناولني
8. ثم «شافهني
9. ثم «كتب إلي
10. ثم «عن» و نحوها.
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 (mutashābiḥ), 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.

والمثاليان لمن سمع وحده من لفظ الشيخ، فإن جمع فمع غيره.

وأولها أصرحها، وأرفعها مقدارا ما يقع في الإملاء.

والثالث والرابع لمن قرأ بنفسه، فإن جمع فهو كالخامس.

وأبياً بإمعان الإخبار، إلا في عرف المتآخرين، فهو للإجازة كـ» عن 

 وعنئه المعاصر محمولة على السماع، إلا من مدليس؛ وقيل يشترط ثبوت

لقائهما، ولو مرة، وهو المختار.

وأطلقوا المشافهة في الإجازة المنلفظ بها، وكذا المكاثرة في الإجازة.

الكتوب بها.

واشتراطا في صحة المناولة اقتراحها بالذين بالرواية، وهي أرفع أنواع

الإجازة.

وكذا اشتراطوا الإذن في الوجادة والوصية بالكتاب وفي الإعلام أن يعلم

بذلك الشيخ أحد الطلبة بـ«أنى أروى الكتاب الفلان عن فلان»، وإذا فلا عبرة

والإجازة العامة، وللمجهول، وللمعذوم على الأصح في جميع ذلك.

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This and the previous can form various combinations, including:

• similarity or difference occurring except in one or two letters
• or transposition
• or the like.

ثم الرواة: إن اتفقت أسماؤهم وأسماء أبائهم فصاعدا واختلفت أشخاصهم، فهو

المتفق والمفترق.

وإن اتفقت الأسماء خطا واختلفت الأباء نطاقة مع اختلافهما خطأ

وإن اتفقت الأسماء واختلفت الأباء أو بالعكس، فهو المشابه،

وكذا إن وقع ذلك الاتفاق في اسم الأب والاختلاف في النسبة,

ويتركب منه وما قبله أنواع، منها:
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-ḥifḥ”, 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 “thiqāl al-ḥifḥ”)
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 (aḥādīth).

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).
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.
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.
ومعرفة سبب الحديث، وقد صنف فيه بعض شيوخ القاضى أبي على بن الفراء.
وصنفوا في غالب هذه الأنواع، وهي نقل محض، ظاهرة التعريف، مستغنية عن التمثيل، فلتراجع مبسوطاتها.

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