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 علیه وآله وباحره صلى الله عليه وسلم

أما بعد: فإن التصانيف في اصطلاح أهم الحديث قد كثرت وبريطانيا فسأني بعض الإخوان أن أختصهم من ذلك فأجابته إلى واختصرت، الاندراج في تلك المسالك. فأقول سأقاله 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 naqaṣrī) with external indicators, according to the preferred opinion.

الخبر إما أن يكون له
طرق بلا عدد معين. 1.
أو مع حصر بما فوق الإثنين، 2.
أو بهما، 3.
أو واحد. 4.
• فالالأول المتواتر المفيد للعلم القيني بشروطه.
• والثاني المشهور وهو المستفيض على رأى ويطلق المشهور على ما اشتهر
على الألسنة
• والثالث العزيز وليس شرطا للصحيح خلافا لمن زعمه.
• والرابع الغريب.
وكلها سواء الأول-أحاد، وفيها المقبول والمردود، لتوقف الاستدلال بها على
البحث عن أحوال روايتها دون الأول. وقد يقع فيها ما يفيد العلم النظري
بالقرائن على المختار.

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 muqalq) [e.g. one–ādīth narrator, one–compiler narrator, one–narrator ādīth, 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.

ثم الغرابة إما ان تكون

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

is the sound–in–itself report (ḥaḥīḥ bi dhāthi). Its ranks are commensurate to variation in these conditions. Hence al-Bukhārī’s ḥaḥīḥ was put first, then Muslim’s, and then what matches their criteria (shurūq).

Fair Reports

If the accuracy decreases then it is the fair–in–itself report (ḥasan li dhāthi); with multiple paths it is considered sound (ḥaḥīḥ).
If the grading is composite [e.g. fair–sound (ḥasan ḥaḥīḥ)] 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].

وخبر الأحاديث بنقل
عدل. 1.
تام الضبط. 2.
متصل. 3.
معدل. 4.
ولا شاذ. 5.

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

فإن خف الضبط، فالحسن لذاته، وبكثرة طرقه يصح،

فإن جمعا فلتتردد في الناقل حيث التفرد، وإلا فباعتبار إسنادين.
Additions from Trustworthy Narrators
زيادات الثقة

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 (arja), the stronger is the well-preserved report (ma'fūḥ), and its opposite is the anomalous report (shādhdh).
• If in addition to being contrary it is weak (a'tīf), the stronger is the well-recognized (ma'rūf), 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 (mutābi').

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 (i'tibār).

Contradiction & Objection
محكم الحديث ومختلف الحديث وطرق الجمع

That which is accepted (maqbūl):

• if it is free from contradiction or objection (mu'āra a), then it is decisive (muḥkam).

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

• if reconciliation (jam') is possible, they are reconcilable reports ([mukhtalif al-ḥadīth]);
• if not and the later one is positively established (thābit), then one is the abrogating report (nāsikh) and the other is the abrogated report (mansūkh);
• if not, superiority is sought (tarjīh);
• and lastly, neither one is confirmed or denied (tawaqqūf).
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‘allaq).
     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, ǧala). Likewise, the hidden expedient report (mursal khafī’) 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 Ḥaḍra.

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 (mawḥūʿ).
   • 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 (qarāʾin) and gathering the paths of transmission, then it is the defective report (muʾallal).
• 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 (maṣūd fī 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 (alwūdān).
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 reliably, 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 (shāḥdhadh) according to one opinion or occasional, then the jumbled report (mukhtalāf).
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–dhāthi bal bil–majmū‘).
ثم الطعن: إما أن يكون
لكذب الراوي،
أو تهمته بذلك،
أو فحش غلطه,
أو غفلته,
أو فسقه,
أو وهمه,
أو مخالفته،
أو جهلته،
أو بدعته،
أو سوء حقظه.
1. فالأول الموضوع،
والثاني المتروك،
والثالث المنكر على رأي،
وكان在这方面 والخامس.
ثم الوهم: إن يتحقق عليه بالقرائن وجمع الطرق، فهو المعلل.
ثم المخالفة: إن كانت
بتغير السياق، فمدرج الإسناد،
أو بمجرد موقف بمرفوع، فمدرج المتن،
أو بتقديم أو تأخر في الأسماء، فالمقلوب،
أو زيادة رأو، فالزيادة في متصل الأسائدة،
أو بإبادته ولا مرجح فالمضطرب.
وقد يقع الإيذال عمدا امتحانا،
أو بتعويش حروف مع بقاء صورة الخط في السياق، فالمصروف والمحرف.
ولا يجوز تعمد تغيير المتن بالنقص والمرادف إلا لعاقل بما يحل المعاني،
فإن خفي المعنى احتاج إلى شرح الغريب وبيان المشكلة.
ثم الجهالة: وسببها أن الراوي
قد يكثر لعوته فيذكر وغير ما اشتهر به، وصنفوا فيه الموضح.
وقد يكون مقاتلا فلا يكثر الأخذ عنه، وصنفوا فيه الوجدان.
ولا يسمى اختصارا، وصنفوا فيه المهمات.
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 (maqūdū’). 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

فإن سمى
والنكرة واحد عنه، فمجهول العين، 0
أو أثنان فصاعدا ولم يوثق، فمجهول الحال، وهو المستور 0
ثم البذعة
1. إما بمكرر،
أو بمفسق. 2.
فالأول لا يقبل صاحبها الجمهور،
والثاني يقبل من لم يكن داعية إلى بدعته في الأصح، إلّا أن روى ما يقوّى
بدعته، فيردّ على المختار، وبه صرح الجوزجاني شيخ النسائي.
ثم سواء الحفظ
إن كان لازما للراوي في جميع حالاته، فالشاذ على رأى، 0
أو طارنا فالخالط 0
ومتى تبيع السهيل الحفظ بمعتبر، وكذا المستور والمرسل والمفسر صار،
حديثهم حسان لا لذائه، بل بالمجموع.

ولا يقبل حديث المبهم-ولو أبهم بنفظ التعديل على الأصح،
فإن سمى
وانفرد واحد عنه، فمجهول العين، 0
أو أثنان فصاعدا ولم يوثق، فمجهول الحال، وهو المستور 0
ثم البذعة
1. إما بمكرر،
أو بمفسق. 2.
فالأول لا يقبل صاحبها الجمهور،
والثاني يقبل من لم يكن داعية إلى بدعته في الأصح، إلّا أن روى ما يقوّى
بدعته، فيردّ على المختار، وبه صرح الجوزجاني شيخ النسائي.
ثم سواء الحفظ
إن كان لازما للراوي في جميع حالاته، فالشاذ على رأى، 0
أو طارنا فالخالط 0
ومتى تبيع السهيل الحفظ بمعتبر، وكذا المستور والمرسل والمفسر صار،
حديثهم حسان لا لذائه، بل بالمجموع.

ثم الإسناد: إما أن ينتهي
إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 1
 تصريفا،
أو حكما، من قوله، أو فعله، أو تقريره،
أو إلى الصحابي كذلك. وهو من لقى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مؤمنا به، 2.
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 (muwāfaqta) 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 (musawaiq) 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 (muḥafaḥa) 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 (aqrīn).
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 aḥāqir). It includes: fathers–from–sons narration (al-ābār ‘an al-ābān); its opposite is frequent. It includes son–from–father or grandfather narration (‘an abīhi ‘an jaddīhi).
If two share the same shaykh and one’s death precedes, then it is predecessor–successor narration (sābiq wa-lāhiq).
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).
Forms of Conveyance

The forms of conveyance are:
1. “Sami’u” (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 “qūrīa ‘alayhi wa–ana asma’u” (it was read to him while I heard)
6. then “anba’anī” (he informed me)
7. then “nāwalānī” (he put into my hands)
8. then “shāfahanī” (he told me verbally)
9. then “kataba ilayya” (he wrote to me)
10. then “‘an” (“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 (mudallīs). 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 (mukhār).
• They used mushāfaha 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 (wa Hibī yā 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 الأذاء:
 سمعت 1. 
و» «حدثني 2. 
ثم «أخبرني 3. 
و» قرأته عليه 4. 
ثم «قرأء عليه وأننا أسمع 5. 
ثم «أبناي 6. 
ثم «ناولني 7. 
ثم «شافنئي 8. 
ثم «كتب إلى 9. 
ثم «عن و نحوها 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.

ثم الرواة: إن اتفقت أسماؤهم وأسماء آبائهم فصاعدا وانتفعت أشخاصهم، فهو المتفق والمفرق.
 وإن اتفقت الأسماء خطأ وانتفعت الآباء نطقا مع اختلافهما خطأ.
 وإن اتفقت الأسماء واختلفت الآباء أو بالعكس، فهو المشابه.
 وكذا إن وقع ذلك الاتفاق في اسم الأب والأختلاف في النسبة:
 ويتركب منه وما قبله أنواع، منها:
Conclusion

It is also important to know:
1. the synchronous layers (ḥabqāt) 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 “thiqa ḥiṣfī’”) 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).
وأمثالها «لين»، أو «سق الحفظ»، أو «فيه مقال.

ومراتب التعديل:
«وارفعها الوصف بـ «أفعل»، ك «أبهق الناس» 1،
ثم تؤكد بصفة أو صفتين، ك»ثقة ثقة» أو «ثقة حافظ». 2،
وادناها ما أشعر بالقرب من أسهل التجريح، ك»شيخ».

3. تقليل التركيبة من عارف بأسبابها، ولو من واحد على الأصح.
والجر مقدم على التعديل إن صدر مبينا من عارف بأسبابه؛ 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.

ومن المهم معرفة:
• معرفة كنیة المسمین،
• وأسماء المکنین،
• ومن اسمه كنتیة،
• ومن كثيرت کتاه،
• أو نعوته،
• ومن واقدت كنیته اسم أبيه،
• أو بالعكس،
• أو كنتیته کنیة زوجته،
It is also important to know:

- Affiliations, i.e. to tribes, homelands, countries, localities, roads and alleys, proximity; to crafts and professions. It gives rise to similarities (ittifāq) and confusions (ishtibāh), as with names; and affiliations sometimes take place as nicknames.
- and the reasons for these [because it may be contrary to the obvious].
- The mawāli: 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 葭adīth, reading [the shaykh’s own narrations] back to the shaykh, audition, recital, and traveling for 葭adīth;
- One should also how 葭adīth is compiled: according to chains of narrators (masānīd), subject matter (abwāb), defects (‘īlal), or keywords (aṭrāf); and knowing the historical context for the 葭adīth. One of the shaykhs of al-Qa'īb Abū Ya'la bin al-Farrā‘ 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.
وعرفة 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 مبسطاتها.

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