

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAM AL-BUKHARI'S WORK AMONG SAHIH COLLECTIONS

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Abstract: This article examines the development of hadith literature and the classification methods employed by hadith scholars in organizing collections according to subject matter, authenticity, and methodology. It analyzes the distinctive position of Sahih al-Bukhari among hadith compilations, highlighting Imam al-Bukhari's rigorous criteria for authentic narrations and his systematic chapter arrangement. The study also explores related hadith genres such as musnad, jami', mustadrak, mustakhraj, zawa'id, and atraf, as well as the scholarly contributions made around the Sahihayn. Furthermore, the article discusses the lasting influence of Imam al-Bukhari's methodology on later hadith scholarship and the formation of various branches within hadith sciences.

Keywords: Hadith literature, muhaddithun, Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, al-Jami' al-Sahih, musnad, jami', mustadrak, mustakhraj, zawa'id, atraf, isnad, hadith sciences, authentic narrations.

Hadith scholars (muhaddithun) compiled in their works the hadiths of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), the sayings of the Companions, and the legal opinions of the Tabi'un, leading to the emergence of hundreds of works related to hadith sciences and the development of various social sciences. As hadith literature expanded, scholars classified these works according to their topics, styles, and fields, beginning with musnad compilations and later developing other genres of hadith literature. By the second half of the second century Hijri, musannaf works arranged by subject matter appeared through scholars such as Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani (d. 211/826) and Ibn Abi Shaybah (d. 235/849), while Imam al-Bukhari later pioneered the compilation of only authentic hadiths, making Sahih al-Bukhari recognized by Muslims as the most authoritative book after the Noble Qur'an.

Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari named his work "Al-Jami' al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar min Umur Rasul Allah (p.b.u.h.) wa Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi", though it became widely known among scholars and Muslims as "Al-Jami' al-Sahih" or simply "Sahih al-Bukhari". Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj likewise compiled a collection of authentic hadiths, commonly referred to by scholars as "Al-Sahih"¹, while he himself sometimes called it "Al-Musnad". Hadith scholars classified collections according to subject matter and style, and works covering all major hadith themes were called jami', meaning a comprehensive collection². Since "Sahih al-Bukhari" includes topics such as creed, legal rulings, manners, tafsir, history, virtues, and fitan, it is regarded as a true jami'. Although Sahih Muslim also covers many branches of hadith sciences, Mubarakfuri notes in Tuhfat al-Ahwazi that it is not classified as a jami' because it does not contain hadiths related to tafsir and qira'at (Qur'anic recitation)³.

¹ Muhammad Nuristani. Al-Madkhal ila Sahih al-Imam Muslim ibn Hajjaj. – Kuwait: Maktabat Shu'un al-Fanniyyah, 2008. – P 44.

² Sayyid Abdulmajid Ghawri. Al-Wajiz fi Ta'rif Kutub al-Hadith. – Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 2009. – P 19.

³ Al-Mubarakfuri. Tuhfat al-Ahwazi. Introduction. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, publication year not specified. – Vol. 1, pp. 64-66.

The work of Imam Al-Tirmidhi, commonly known as Sunan, is actually titled “Al-Jami’ al-Mukhtasar min al-Sunan an Rasul Allah (p.b.u.h.)” and contains all eight major hadith topics. For this reason, many scholars considered it more appropriate to classify it as a jami’ collection rather than simply a Sunan, making it similar in nature to the compilation of Imam al-Bukhari⁴. Hadith collections were also categorized according to the titles chosen by their authors, such as works named “Sahih”, including those of Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Ibn Khuzaymah, Ibn Sakan, and Ibn Hibban⁵. However, not all of these works reached the level of the Sihah Sitta, whose collections gained special status because their hadiths were regarded as generally more authentic and reliable than others.

Since hadiths in most collections are recorded with chains of transmission (isnad), such works may generally be described as musnad. However, unlike musnad compilations that arrange hadiths according to chains of transmission, works such as Sahih al-Bukhari organize hadiths by subject matter while still preserving their isnads, as reflected in its full title “Al-Jami’ al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar min Umur Rasul Allah (p.b.u.h.) wa Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi”. Later scholars sometimes shortened these chains due to new methodological approaches.

Hadith scholars also classified collections according to reliability, placing the Sahihs of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, along with the Muwatta of Imam Malik, in the highest category⁶. While Imam Muslim arranged his work into chapters without titles, Imam al-Bukhari provided chapter headings; Ibn Salah explained this as a way to prevent the work from becoming too lengthy and for other scholarly reasons⁷. Later printed editions of Sahih Muslim included chapter titles attributed to Imam Nawawi, which further distinguishes it from Sahih al-Bukhari.

Among hadith collections, Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari’s al-Sahih is regarded as superior due to its exceptional level of authenticity. Al-Hakim al-Naysaburi stated that Imam al-Bukhari was among

⁴ Ma’mar ibn Rashid (d. 154/771), Ibn Wahb al-Fihri (d. 197/812), and Razin ibn Muawiyah al-Sarqusti (d. 535/1140) were among the scholars who authored works titled Jami’. There were also Jami’ compilations by scholars such as Ibn al-Athir, whose full name is Mubarak ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim (d. 606/1209), Ibn al-Dabi, whose full name is Abd al-Rahman ibn Ali al-Shaybani (d. 944/1537), Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi (d. 975/1567), and Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Rudani (d. 1094/1683). These Jami’ works are characterized by a principle of relying on a specific scholar’s collection (for example, those of Imam al-Bukhari or Imam Muslim). They gather hadiths from multiple books, but differ in that the hadiths are not usually presented with full chains of transmission (isnad); instead, only the text (matn) is provided along with attribution to the narrator who reported it.

⁵ Among the scholars who authored works entitled Sahih are Ibn Khuzaymah (Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Khuzaymah ibn Mughirah, Abu Bakr al-Naysaburi al-Shafi’i, d. 311/923), Ibn Hibban (Muhammad ibn Hibban ibn Ahmad ibn Mu’adh, Abu Hatim al-Tamimi al-Busti, d. 354/965), Ibn al-Sakan (Sa’id ibn Uthman ibn Sa’id ibn Sakan, Abu Ali al-Baghdadi al-Misri, d. 353/964), and Al-Isma’ili (Ahmad ibn Isma’il, Abu Bakr al-Isma’ili al-Jurjani, d. 371/981). However, the hadiths contained in their works are not all of the same strong level of authenticity (sahih) in terms of strict classification.

⁶ Hadith collections, whether they are divided into chapters, arranged in alphabetical order, or compiled in other ways, can all be regarded as musnad – that is, collections based on chains of transmission (isnad) – if they are fundamentally based on narrations with isnad. However, from a methodological perspective, a musnad work is specifically one in which hadiths are arranged according to narrators, rather than being organized by thematic chapters or other classifications. For example, the collection known as Musnad Siraj by Imam Siraj is organized on the basis of chapters, similar to the work of Imam al-Bukhari. In addition, the work Musnad al-Firdaws by Al-Daylami (d. 558 AH) is arranged alphabetically. The work Musnad al-Shihab by Al-Quda’i (d. 454 AH) is organized based on individual sayings and narrations. However, the Musnad of Musnad Ibn al-Makhlad by Baqi ibn Makhlad is considered a musannaf work. This is because it is compiled according to the ranks of the Companions in narration. It begins with the Ahl al-Uluw (Companions who narrated more than a thousand hadiths) and ends with the Wuhdan (those who narrated only one hadith), and it also follows a fiqh-based arrangement. Ibn Hazm stated that it contains narrations from more than 1,300 Companions. Although it is called a musnad, it is organized into fiqh chapters, and no book like it had been authored before in this style. the Wuhdan (those who narrated only one hadith), and it also follows a fiqh-based arrangement. Ibn Hazm stated that it contains narrations from more than 1,300 Companions. Although it is called a musnad, it is organized into fiqh chapters, and no book like it had been authored before in this style.

⁷ Subhi al-Salih. *Ulam al-hadith wa mustalahuhu*. – Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Thaqafa, 1984. – P 116.

the first to establish the foundational principles of hadith rulings, and later scholars such as Imam Muslim relied upon his work⁸. Imam al-Daraqutni also emphasized Imam al-Bukhari's influence, stating that without him, Imam Muslim would not have produced such a work, and that much of Muslim's methodology benefited from al-Bukhari's compilation⁹. Although some Western scholars preferred Sahih Muslim, many classical scholars objected to this view, while still acknowledging Imam Muslim's strengths in jurisprudential insight, style, and narration methods. Ibn Khaldun likewise praised its commentary tradition, stating: "Its commentary has always remained the most superior for the Islamic Ummah"¹⁰.

Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti stated in *Tadrib al-Rawi* that Imam al-Bukhari's work is more authentic and beneficial than Sahih Muslim, affirming this as the stronger opinion¹¹. Many scholars preferred Sahih al-Bukhari because Imam Muslim relied heavily on Imam al-Bukhari's methodology, and Imam Muslim himself acknowledged his teacher by calling him "Sayyid al-Muhaddithin." Although Sahih Muslim contains additional narrations, scholars generally considered Imam al-Bukhari's work more reliable and treated the two collections separately¹². Later hadith scholars also used these Sahih works as foundations for new forms of research, particularly in the field of mustadrak works¹³. Among them, Imam al-Hakim al-Naysaburi (d. 405/1014 CE) authored al-Mustadrak on the Sahihayn, while Abu Dharr al-Harawi and Imam al-Daraqutni also produced similar works based on the methodological conditions of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim.

Ziya al-Maqdisi (d. 643/1245 CE) authored al-Mukhtara, also known as al-Ahadith al-Mukhtara mimma lam yukhrijhu al-Bukhari wa Muslim fi Sahihayhima, in which he collected accepted hadiths needed for legal rulings that were not included in the two Sahih collections. The work was arranged in musnad style according to the companions, beginning with the Ashara Mubashshara, while also indicating other scholars who narrated those hadiths¹⁴.

The mustakhraj method was likewise applied to Sahih al-Bukhari¹⁵, and a number of scholars – including al-Isma'ili, al-Ghitriqi, Ibn Abi Zuhail, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abu Nuaym al-Isfahani – composed works titled al-Mustakhraj ala Sahih al-Bukhari. Similarly, other scholars such as Ibn Akhram, al-Masarjisi, al-Barqani, Ibn Manjuya, Abu Dharr al-Harawi, Abu Muhammad al-Khallal, and Abu Mas'ud al-Mulihi authored works related to both Sahihayn¹⁶.

⁸ Asqalani. Muqaddimat al-Fath. – Beirut: Dar al-Risala, 2013. – Vol. 1. – P 24.

⁹ Asqalani. Muqaddimat al-Fath. – Beirut: Dar al-Risala, 2013. – Vol. 1. – P 24.

¹⁰ Mubarakfuri. Sirat al-Imam al-Bukhari. – Makkah: Dar al-Ilm al-Fawa'id, 2001. – Vol. 1. – P 354.

¹¹ Suyuti. Tadrib al-Rawi. – Riyadh: Maktabat Kawthar, 1994. – Vol. 1. – P 91.

¹² Nawawi. Sharh Sahih Muslim. – Cairo: Maktabat al-Azhar, 1929. – P 4.

¹³ In this method, a hadith scholar compiles a new work by collecting the hadiths that a previous scholar did not include in his book according to his own conditions. In other words, a collection of hadiths that is compiled not according to the compiler's own criteria, but in accordance with the conditions of an earlier scholar, is called a mustadrak. This is similar to a hadith scholar completing the work of a previous scholar, but in reality, it results in the creation of a separate and independent work.

¹⁴ Ziya al-Din al-Maqdisi. Al-Ahadith al-Mukhtara. – Beirut: Dar Khidr, 2001. Vols. 1-13.

¹⁵ The term mustakhraj in Arabic carries the meanings of "to extract" and "to find." In this type of books, the compiler transmits the hadiths found in an earlier scholar's work – such as Imam al-Bukhari's Sahih – through his own chains of narration that he has independently obtained. In doing so, the chain of the earlier compiler and the chain of the author of the mustakhraj meet at the level of their teachers or at a higher level in the chain of transmission. Thus, if Imam al-Bukhari narrated a hadith through a particular Companion, the author of the mustakhraj is required to transmit the same hadith through another independent route of that same Companion.

¹⁶ Sayyid Abdul Majid al-Ghawri. Al-Wajiz fi Ta'rif Kutub al-Hadith. – Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 2009. – pp. 82-86.

Another type of hadith compilation is zawa'id¹⁷, in which works such as Imam al-Bukhari's al-Sahih serve as primary reference sources, though these compilations usually combine material from several collections rather than relying on a single book. One example is Zawa'id Ibn Hibban ala al-Sahihayn by Imam Mughlatay ibn Qulayj Bakjari al-Hanafi (d. 762/1361). Other major examples include Ghayat al-Maqsud fi Zawa'id al-Musnad, which treats the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal as supplementary to the six canonical collections, and Kashf al-Astar an Zawa'id al-Bazzar, based on al-Bazzar's al-Bahr al-Zakhkhar, containing 3,698 hadiths arranged by chapters with their chains of transmission. Imam al-Haythami also authored al-Maqsad al-Ali fi Zawa'id Abi Ya'la al-Mawsili, which compiled additional narrations from the Musnad of Abu Ya'la alongside narrations of the Ashara Mubashshara, containing around 2,400 hadiths organized by subject.

Another work by Imam al-Haythami is al-Maqsad al-Ali fi Zawa'id Abi Ya'la al-Mawsili, in which the Musnad of Abu Ya'la was treated as supplementary (zawa'id) to the six major collections, including narrations of the Ashara Mubashshara. It contains around 2,400 hadiths arranged by chapters. Scholars also compiled atraf works for al-Sahih¹⁸, including al-Atraf of Imam al-Bukhari by Nur al-Din Muhammad ibn Abd al-Hadi al-Sindi (d. 1138/1726), while others such as Khalaf al-Wasiti, Ibrahim al-Dimashqi, al-Haddad, and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani authored Atraf al-Sahihayn.

In addition, some atraf works included not only the collections of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, but also those of Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah¹⁹. Scholars also produced separate works on the narrators of al-Sahihayn, among which Abu Ali al-Ghassani al-Andalusi (d. 498/1105) became well known for Taqyid al-Muhmal wa Tamyiz al-Mushkil.

In conclusion Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari's al-Sahih holds a unique place among hadith sources due to its strict focus on collecting only authentic narrations and arranging them systematically by chapters. His criteria for accepting narrators were more rigorous than those of many earlier scholars, and he selected only the strongest authentic reports for inclusion. As a result, Sahih al-Bukhari became one of the most widely studied hadith collections, with numerous valuable commentaries written upon it. Later scholars also relied heavily on it in developing new methods and branches of hadith scholarship.

¹⁷ The term zawa'id in Arabic means "increase," "addition," or "extra material." It refers to a situation in which a reliable narrator transmits a hadith reported by another reliable narrator, but includes additional wording in his narration. Such additions may occur either in the chain of transmission (isnad) or in the متن (text of the hadith).

Hadith scholars have collected such narrations into separate compilations. Books that gather these types of additional narrations in one place are called zawa'id works.

¹⁸ The term atraf means "sides" or "parts." In this method, books compiled in this style include only a specific portion of a hadith, rather than its full text. The mentioned part is used as an indication of the remaining portion. After that, all the chains of transmission (isnad) of the hadith are presented in detail.

For example, from the hadith: "Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended. So whoever's migration was for Allah and His Messenger, then his migration is for Allah and His Messenger. But whoever's migration was for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration is for what he migrated for," only a portion is cited, such as "Actions are judged by intentions." Similarly, from the hadith: "Islam is built upon five things: testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; establishing prayer; paying zakat; performing Hajj to the House; and fasting Ramadan," only the part "Islam is built upon five pillars" may be mentioned. After this, the chains of transmission of the hadith are then listed.

¹⁹ Sayyid Abdul Majid al-Ghawri. Al-Wajiz fi Ta'rif Kutub al-Hadith. – Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 2009. – pp. 221-231.



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