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Examples of Conflicted Narrators in the Book Tahdheeb Al-Tahdheeb by Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Linguistically, confliction refers to three things: difference, imbalance, and movement. A tradition is not considered conflicted unless the two narrations are equally valid, but it is impossible to reconcile or give preference to one over the other. Confliction in a narrator indicates weakness, signifying that the narrator did not perfectly memorize the tradition. It can occur in the chain of transmission and the content, though it is more common in the chain than in the content. Rarely do narrators judge the content as conflicted without referencing the chain of transmission. Confliction among narrators has many causes, including lack of precision, illusion, poor memorization, and others. This study seeks to clarify the reasons for the imams' judgments on certain narrators as conflicted, focusing on three specific narrators.

Keywords: Narrators, Disorder, Refinement, Hafiz, Ibn Hajar.

Introduction

Hadith science is one of the most esteemed and significant branches of Islamic knowledge after the Qur'an. This science deals with the study of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and encompasses various subfields, such as the science of Hadith terminology, abrogation, and others. Among these subfields is the science of 'Ilal al-Hadith (hidden defects in Hadith), which is considered one of the most intricate and complex branches of Hadith studies, addressed only by the most expert Hadith critics.

One of the types of hidden defects in Hadith is disorder (or confliction), where narrations contradict each other in a way that cannot be reconciled or given preference. This research, titled "Examples of Narrators Described as Conflicted in Ibn Hajar's Tahdhib al-Tahdhib: A Comparative Study," aims to present examples of narrators whom the scholars of Hadith described as having conflicts in their narrations, along with an explanation of the reasons for this judgment.

The research structure is organized as follows:

A brief biography of each narrator described as conflicted.

A listing of some of their teachers and students.

Identification of which Hadith critics described them as conflicted.

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Presentation of the opinions of scholars who either praised or criticized them, followed by discussion and conclusion.

This study relies on primary sources such as biographical dictionaries, the *sualat* (questions posed to Hadith scholars), and books on Hadith defects. If the research achieves its goals, it is by the grace of Allah; any shortcomings are from human limitations.

First Requirement: The Narrator Ibrahim ibn Tahman

Name, Kunya, and Title:

Ibrahim ibn Tahman ibn Shu'ba al-Khurasani, Abu Sa'id. He was born in Herat, lived in Nishapur, and later moved to Baghdad where he narrated Hadith. He eventually settled in Baghdad until his death, with differing opinions regarding the year of his death, which ranged between 156 AH, 163 AH, and 168 AH.

His Teachers:

Among his teachers were Abu Jamra Nasr ibn Imran al-Dub'i, Ishaq al-Sabi'i, Abu Ishaq al-Shaybani, and others.

His Students:

His notable students included Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, Abu 'Amr al-'Aqdi, Muhammad ibn Sinan al-'Awqi, and others. **Scholars Who Criticized Him for Disorder:**

Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn 'Ammar al-Mawsili said: "He is weak and his Hadith is conflicted."

Opinions of Hadith Critics:

Those Who Praised Him:

Ibn al-Mubarak said: "His Hadith is authentic," and once said: "His books are sound."

Yahya ibn Ma'in stated: "He is trustworthy," and also said: "There is no harm in him," adding at another time: "He is sound in Hadith."

Ishaq ibn Rahwayh said: "His Hadith is authentic, his narration is good, and he was well-versed in Hadith. No one in Khurasan had more Hadith than him, and he is trustworthy."

Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: "Ibrahim ibn Tahman is trustworthy in Hadith and his narrations are stronger than those of Abu Ja'far al-Razi by far." He further mentioned that "Ibn Mahdi narrated to us from him." He also remarked: "His Hadith is authentic and close to the mark, although he held the view of Murji'ah."

Abu Zur'ah reported that when Ahmad was sitting back comfortably and Ibrahim ibn Tahman was mentioned, he sat up and said: "One should not speak of the righteous while reclining."

Ahmad ibn Sayyar al-Marwazi said: "Ibrahim engaged in discussions, wrote books, and studied his works carefully. He was never suspected of fabricating his narrations."

Yahya ibn Aktham, the judge, stated: "He was the most noble and trustworthy of narrators in Khurasan, Iraq, and the Hijaz, and he had the most extensive knowledge."

Al-'Ajli remarked: "There is no harm in him."

Abu Dawood al-Sijistani said: "He was trustworthy and originally from Sarakhs. He left intending to perform Hajj, but when he reached Nishapur, he found them adhering to the views of Jahm. He said, 'Staying among these people is better than performing Hajj,' so he changed their views from Jahmism to Murji'ah."

Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Darimi remarked: "He was trustworthy in Hadith. The imams consistently sought and valued his narrations."

Ibn Khirash stated: "He was truthful in Hadith, but held the Murji'ah view."

Al-Bazzar commented: "There is no harm in him."

Salih ibn Muhammad al-Jazra said: "He was trustworthy and had good Hadith, though he leaned towards Murji'ah in his views on faith. His Hadith was beloved to people, and he narrated well."

Abu Hatim mentioned: "He was truthful and his Hadith was good." He also said: "Two Murji'ah figures from Khurasan are trustworthy: Abu Jamra al-Sukkari and Ibn Tahman."

Ibn Hibban included him in *al-Thiqat* (the trustworthy narrators) and commented: "He narrated sound Hadith that resembled the narrations of established narrators, though he sometimes narrated isolated, problematic reports."

Al-Daraqutni said: "He is trustworthy, but scholars criticized him for his Murji'ah views."

Ibn Shahin said: "He is trustworthy."

Ibn al-Jawzi described him as "a righteous man."

Al-Dhahabi stated: "He was one of the leaders of Islam, though he held Murji'ah views." On another occasion, he mentioned: "He has unique narrations but does not fall below the level of hasan (good)." He also described him as "a famous, trustworthy narrator."

Ibn Hajar said: "He is trustworthy but sometimes narrates isolated reports. He was criticized for his Murji'ah views, although it is said that he recanted from them."

Criticism of Ibrahim ibn Tahman

Criticism by Scholars:

Al-'Aqeeli mentioned: "He exaggerated in his Murji'ah views."

Ibn Hazm stated: "He is weak."

Discussion of the Opinions:

From the previously mentioned opinions of the scholars about Ibrahim ibn Tahman, it is evident that the majority classified him as trustworthy. As for the criticism by Abdullah ibn Ammar, who stated, "He is weak and his Hadith is conflicted," this is considered an isolated opinion and is disregarded. Salih Jazra responded to this critique. Hussain ibn Idris mentioned that he heard Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Ammar al-Mawsili say about Ibrahim: "He is weak and his Hadith is conflicted." Jazra then commented, "How could Ibn Ammar understand Ibrahim's Hadith regarding Muhammad ibn Ziyad narrating from Abu Hurayrah (about the first Friday prayer being held in Joatha)?" The Hadith was narrated by Ibn Abbas, and it was preserved by trusted companions of Ibrahim, as found in Sahih al-Bukhari. Mu'afa ibn Imran narrated it differently from Ibn Tahman, narrating from Muhammad ibn Ziyad via Abu Hurayrah. Jazra's statement

suggests that the disorder attributed to Ibrahim's narrations was likely due to one of his students, not from him directly.

Regarding the comment by al-Dhahabi that "he has unique narrations but does not fall below the level of *hasan*," and Ibn Hajar's statement that "he narrates isolated reports," these terms indicate that some of his narrations were unique and may not have reached the highest level of authenticity, but this does not necessarily diminish his overall trustworthiness. This might indicate that the uniqueness or oddness came from the narrators who transmitted from him, not from Ibrahim himself. Ibn Hajar's further clarification supports this view: "The correct view is that he is trustworthy, and his Hadith is sound if a reliable narrator transmits from him."

As for his Murji'ah views, Abu Salat 'Abd al-Salam ibn Salih al-Harawi narrated that he heard Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah say: "No Khurasani has come to us better than Abu Raja' Abdullah Waqid al-Harawi." He then asked: "What about Ibrahim ibn Tahman?" To which he responded: "He was a Murji'." However, Abu Salat clarified that the Murji'ah of Ibrahim's time did not hold the corrupt belief that faith was mere speech without actions, nor did they claim that abandoning actions did not harm one's faith. Rather, they were Murji'ah in the sense that they hoped for forgiveness and did not declare people disbelievers due to sins. This was in opposition to the Khawarij and others who would accuse people of disbelief over sins.

Al-Hakim also clarified that Ibrahim's recorded views were contrary to extreme Murji'ah beliefs. He expressed uncertainty whether Ibrahim once held such views and later recanted or whether there was confusion among narrators about his true position. Al-Hakim then cited sound narrations from Ibrahim that demonstrate his adherence to the beliefs of Ahl al-Hadith in both theology and jurisprudence. Ibn Hajar also affirmed that Ibrahim's supposed extremism in Murji'ah was not proven, and he was neither an advocate for it nor did he actively propagate those views. Furthermore, al-Hakim mentioned that Ibrahim may have repented from this belief.

As for Ibn Hazm's criticism, it was based on a Hadith narrated by Umm Salamah from the Prophet (peace be upon him): "A woman whose husband dies should not wear dyed clothing or apply perfumes..." This Hadith was not solely narrated by Ibrahim; Ma'mar also corroborated it through Sufyan, who narrated from Ma'mar. Thus, Ibn Hazm's criticism of Ibrahim ibn Tahman is unfounded, especially since Ibrahim was a reliable preserver of Hadith, whose narrations are found in both Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, and who was widely praised for his truthfulness and trustworthiness by numerous prominent scholars.

Conclusion:

After thorough study and analysis of the narrations of Ibrahim ibn Tahman and the opinions of the scholars, it is evident that the majority of scholars regard him as trustworthy. Those who criticized him did so primarily due to his alleged Murji'ah views. As for the accusation of disorder in his narrations, it was likely due to those who transmitted from him rather than from him directly. Allah knows best.

Al-Rawi (Narrator): Asim bin Ubaidullah

His Name, Title, and Lineage:

Asim bin Ubaidullah bin Asim bin Umar bin al-Khattab, from the 'Adawi clan of Madinah. His mother was Salma bint Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Juhsh. He belonged to the fourth generation of narrators and passed away in the year 132 AH.

His Teachers:

Asim studied under notable figures such as Abdullah bin al-Harith bin Nawfal, his paternal uncle Abdullah bin Umar, and al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, among others.

His Students:

Among his prominent students were Shuba bin al-Hajjaj, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Yahya bin Saeed al-Qattan.

Scholars Who Criticized Him for Inconsistency:

Abu Zur'a al-Razi stated that Asim's narrations were inherently weak and described him as inconsistent.

Al-Saji similarly noted that Asim's narrations were unstable.

Abu Hatim referred to him as a narrator whose narrations were not dependable, comparing him to Ibn 'Aqil due to his inconsistencies.

Ibn al-Qattan described Asim's narrations as weak and confused.

Statements from Scholars of Hadith Criticism:

Those Who Considered Him Trustworthy:

Imam al-Bukhari mentioned that he was truthful, and both Malik bin Anas and Shuba narrated two of his Hadiths, although they were mursal (lacking a link between the narrators).

Al-Ajli said there was nothing wrong with him, indicating he found Asim acceptable.

Ibn 'Adi stated that while Asim was weak, people still recorded his Hadiths, suggesting his narrations were still considered for some contexts.

Those Who Criticized Him:

Shuba said, "If Asim had been asked who built the mosque of Basra, he would have claimed to know, narrating from the Prophet."

Imam Malik expressed surprise that Shuba, known for his rigorous standards, accepted narrations from Asim.

Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah reported that the early scholars were cautious with Asim's narrations.

Ibn Sa'd noted that although Asim narrated many Hadiths, he was not reliable.

Yahya bin Ma'in stated that Asim was weak and could not be relied upon for Hadiths.

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal remarked that the senior scholars were wary of Asim's Hadiths, noting that his narrations, along with Ibn 'Aqil's, leaned toward weakness.

Discussion of Opinions:

Upon reviewing the collected statements about Asim bin Ubaidullah, it becomes evident that the majority of the Hadith critics agreed on his weakness, though the severity of their language varied from describing him as extremely weak to rejecting his narrations outright. Those who spoke favorably of him, such as Ibn 'Adi and al-Ajli, did not place him in the highest ranks of trustworthiness. Al-Ajli's phrase "no problem with him" and Ibn 'Adi's acknowledgment of his weakness suggest a moderate acceptance rather than full endorsement.

Imam al-Bukhari's description of Asim as "truthful" might be attributed to the fact that reliable figures like Malik, Shuba, and al-Thawri narrated from him. However, this does not indicate a strong endorsement of his reliability, as Imam Ahmad's statement clarifies that narrations from Asim were still approached with caution. Even Imam Malik, who narrated from him, had reservations about his reliability, highlighting that Shuba, known for his stringency, had accepted Asim as a teacher, despite his evident flaws.

As for the inconsistencies attributed to Asim, it seems that the disorder and confusion in his narrations stemmed primarily from his interactions with his teacher Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Rabi'a. Imam al-Daraqutni highlighted a specific case where Asim narrated a Hadith with considerable variation. Sometimes, Asim omitted certain transmitters or added others, leading to contradictions in his narrations. This instability in his chains of transmission is a clear example of why scholars found him unreliable.

Conclusion:

After reviewing the scholars' opinions on Asim bin Ubaidullah, it is clear that the majority of Hadith critics agreed that he was a weak narrator, primarily due to his poor memory and frequent errors. This led to the widespread classification of his narrations as inconsistent and unreliable. Thus, despite narrating from notable figures, his Hadiths are not considered strong, and he is generally classified as a weak narrator.

Section Three: The Narrator Ikrimah al-Barbari

His Name, Kunya, and Title:

Ikrimah al-Barbari, **Abu Abdullah al-Madani**, the freed slave of Abdullah ibn Abbas. He was originally from the Berber people and was once a slave of Husayn ibn Abi al-Hurr al-Anbari. When Ibn Abbas became the governor of Basra under Ali ibn Abi Talib – may Allah be pleased with him – he gifted Ikrimah to him. He passed away in the year 104 AH, or after that according to some sources.

His Teachers:

Abdullah ibn Abbas.

Abdullah ibn Umar.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with them), and others.

His Students:

Ibrahim al-Nakha'i (died before him).

Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i.

Jabir ibn Yazid (one of his contemporaries), and others.

Statements Regarding His Reliability:

Those Who Claimed His Narrations Were Inconsistent:

Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: "Ikrimah's narrations are inconsistent, his narrations vary, and I do not know."

Statements of Scholars About Him:

Statements of Those Who Affirmed His Reliability:

Sa'id ibn Jubayr said: "Do you know anyone more knowledgeable than you?" He replied, "Yes, Ikrimah."

Abu al-Sha'tha Jabir ibn Zayd said: "This is Ikrimah, the freed slave of Ibn Abbas, this is the sea of knowledge, so ask him."

Al-Sha'bi said: "No one remains who is more knowledgeable about the Book of Allah than Ikrimah."

Qatadah said: "The most knowledgeable of the Tabi'un are four: Ata, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Ikrimah, and Hasan."

Sufyan al-Thawri said: "Take the interpretation of the Qur'an from four people," and he mentioned Ikrimah among them.

Yahya ibn Ayyub al-Misri said: "Ibn Jurayj asked me: Have you written from Ikrimah? I replied, 'No.' He said: 'You have missed two-thirds of knowledge.'"

Yahya ibn Ma'in said: "He is trustworthy."

Ali ibn al-Madini said: "I heard Yahya ibn Sa'id say: Ibn Abbas's companions were six: Mujahid, Tawus, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Ikrimah, and Jabir ibn Yazid."

Al-Bukhari said: "None of our companions except that they relied on Ikrimah."

Al-'Ijli said: "He is a trustworthy Makki Tabi'i and innocent of what people attribute to him regarding Harurism (Kharijism)."

Abu Hatim said: "He is trustworthy, his narrations are accepted if narrated by trustworthy narrators, and what was objected to him was because of his views."

Al-Nasa'i said: "He is trustworthy."

Ibn Hibban said: "The scholars from all regions transmitted his narrations and fiqh."

Ibn 'Adi said: "I did not include any of Ikrimah's hadith here because when the trustworthy narrators transmit from him, his hadith are sound."

Abu Nu'aym said: "He was among those who interpreted clear verses and shed light on ambiguous narrations. He traveled across lands and was generous in sharing his knowledge with the people."

Al-Nawawi said: "He is among the major Tabi'un."

Al-Dhahabi said: "He was truthful, a memorizer of hadith, and knowledgeable. Many scholars considered him trustworthy and used his narrations as evidence."

Ibn Hajar said: "He is trustworthy, reliable, knowledgeable in tafsir, and neither his rejection by Ibn Umar nor any accusations of innovation were confirmed."

Statements of Those Who Criticized Him:

Ibn Umar said to Nafi': "Do not lie about me as Ikrimah lied about Ibn Abbas."

Ata' said: "He was an Ibadi."

Muhammad ibn Sirin said: "I wouldn't be unhappy if he is among the people of Paradise, but he is a liar."

Al-Hadhdha' said: "He was one of the most knowledgeable people, but he held the views of the Kharijites, specifically the Sufriyya sect."

Imam Malik did not consider Ikrimah trustworthy and instructed not to take from him.

Ibn Bukayr said: "The Kharijites of the Maghreb took from him."

Analysis of the Statements:

First Reason: The Accusation of Lying:

One of the main accusations against Ikrimah is that he lied, based on a report from Ibn Umar. However, this report is weak as it is transmitted by Abu Khalaf al-Jazzar from Yahya al-Bakka', who is a weak narrator. Moreover, scholars like Ibn Hibban explained that the people of Hijaz used the word "lied" to mean "erred." This is supported by similar uses of the term in other instances, where "kathaba" (lied) was meant to indicate "mistaken judgment" rather than intentional falsehood.

Additionally, Ibn Abi Hatim narrated from Yazid al-Nahwi that Ibn Abbas told Ikrimah, "Go and give fatwa to the people, and I will support you." This shows Ibn Abbas's trust in him. Moreover, those who accused Ikrimah of lying did so behind his back and never confronted him directly, which weakens their case.

Second Reason: The Accusation of Holding Kharijite Views:

Regarding the accusation that Ikrimah held Kharijite views, scholars like al-'Ijli defended him, stating that he was innocent of such accusations. Even if the accusation of innovation was true, as Ibn Jareer mentioned, attributing every alleged deviation to someone does not invalidate their entire character or their narrations. Furthermore, the scholars continued to transmit and rely on his narrations despite these accusations.

In fact, Ibn Hajar highlighted that over three hundred individuals transmitted hadith from Ikrimah, including more than seventy leading Tabi'un. This level of transmission and reliance upon his narrations demonstrates that the criticisms against him were not strong enough to discredit his narrations entirely.

Conclusion:

After examining the statements of scholars regarding Ikrimah, it is clear that he is a trustworthy narrator, and the criticisms against him are either weak or based on accusations that did not hold strong ground. Major scholars like al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Hajar, and al-Dhahabi relied on his narrations, which confirms his reliability. Therefore, Ikrimah can be considered a reliable and trustworthy transmitter of hadith.

Conclusion

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the most honorable of prophets and messengers, our master Muhammad, his family, and his companions. After this study, we can summarize the key findings as follows:

The Definition of "Inconsistency": In language, "inconsistency" refers to three matters: difference, disturbance, and movement.

Inconsistency in Hadith: Inconsistency in hadith necessitates weakness, indicating that the narrator did not maintain accurate narration.

Occurrence of Inconsistency: Inconsistency can occur in both the chain of transmission (isnad) and the text (matn), with more occurrences in the isnad than in the matn.

Number of Narrators Studied: The number of narrators examined in this study amounts to three: Ibrahim ibn Tahman, Asim ibn Abd Allah, and Ikrimah, the freed slave of Ibn Abbas.

Regarding Ibrahim ibn Tahman: After gathering and discussing the statements of scholars, it became clear that he is trustworthy according to the majority of reliable scholars. Those who criticized him did so due to a misunderstanding or because of the inconsistencies found in those who narrated from him.

Regarding Asim ibn Abd Allah: Through the analysis of critics' opinions, it is evident that he is weak, with a consensus on his weakness, as stated by several scholars. His weakness stems from poor memorization and frequent errors, leading most scholars to describe him as inconsistent.

Regarding Ikrimah: It is clear that he is among the trustworthy Tabi'un, as affirmed by Ibn Hajar, who stated that his alleged innovation was not proven. Additionally, Imam al-Bukhari included him in his historical works and narrated from him in the foundations, indicating that al-Bukhari was aware of the accusations against him and found them unsubstantiated or non-detrimental to his status as a narrator, provided he met the conditions for acceptance of narration. And Allah knows best.

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