

ḤADĪTH SCHOLARS' EFFORTS IN FACING FABRICATION OF ḤADĪTH

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ABSTRACT

Since the demise of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Companions and the following generations paid great attention to preserving the Dīn. These efforts started with the compilation of the Qur'ān during the reign of Abu Bakr ؓ. Later, more efforts were exerted across generations in the compilation of the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to preserve it from mistakes and lies. False reports were made and related to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for several reasons; however, scholars exerted efforts to stop the dissemination of those fabrications by writing compilations about fabricators' names, fabricated ḥadīths, and common unauthentic ḥadīths. Furthermore, scholars developed rules and methodologies to identify fabricated ḥadīths and to scrutinize the text and chain of narrators of ḥadīths. In this paper, some of these efforts are highlighted, some examples of the books written for this purpose are mentioned, and some of the rules stated by these scholars are listed. This study was made using library research and content descriptive analysis methods for the information obtained from published books and papers. The study has shown that tremendous efforts were made to resist fabrications and to expose fabricators since the third century AH, and these efforts resulted in extensive and comprehensive compilations about fabricators and fabricated ḥadīths as well as the development of other fields of Islamic sciences such as 'ilmu al-Jarḥi wat-Ta'dīl and 'ilmu at-Tārīkh. These efforts should be brought to light in our contemporary time in which some voices claim once again that the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not authentic or cannot be considered as a reliable source of law.

KEYWORDS: ḥadīths, Sunnah, fabrications, Prophetic traditions, scholars' efforts, criticism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Wad' lexically means to put something down, to leave it, or to fabricate it. Technically, as a terminology in the ḥadīth sciences, *wad'* means to falsely and intentionally ascribe sayings, acts, approvals, or descriptions to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Al-'Anzī, 2021). Fabrication is prohibited and a major sin in Islam. It also guarantees a seat in the Fire for the fabricator. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: *"Whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him take his seat in the Fire"*¹. The scholars of ḥadīth agreed about the prohibition of narrating fabricated ḥadīths if the narrator is aware of the fabrication, except in the case of exposing the fabrication of the ḥadīth. This ruling is general, whether the fabricated ḥadīth belongs to the category of the Islamic rulings (*aḥkām*), stories (*qaṣāṣ*), or virtues of deeds (*at-targhīb*) (Al-'Anzī, 2021). Samurah ibn Jundub رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: *"Whoever narrates a ḥadīth from me, and he knows that it is a lie, he is one of the liars"*².

The fabrication of ḥadīth started in the first century AH after the murder of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, but spread widely in the second century, after the era of the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) and the first generation of Followers (*Tābi'īn*). Any fabrication during the first century could be easily detected due to the large number of the memorizers and the scholars of ḥadīth during that time. Reasons for fabrication included attempts to harm the Islamic faith, political disputes, disputes between the different schools of Islamic creed (*'aqīdah*), disputes between the different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), bias and fanaticism towards a race, tribe, language, or a city; attempts to please Caliphs and rulers of states, telling stories and exhortations especially for providing incentives (*targhīb*) and apprehension (*tarhīb*), and for personal motives (Al-Ḥayyāwī, 1413 AH; Al-Maṭ'anī, 1999; Ghaffār, 1404 AH).

Due to the aforementioned reasons, the field of ḥadīth criticism was developed by early scholars to distinguish authentic from unauthentic and forged ḥadīths. The term authentic means a ḥadīth that is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and hence, it can be used in all aspects of Sharī'ah. Duderija (2009) discussed the concept of an authentic ḥadīth and presented a chronological analysis of the development of ḥadīth literature. If the ḥadīth is unauthentic, scholars debated on the extent of using such ḥadīths. In that perspective, Brown (2011) studied the opinions of ḥadīth

¹Sahih Al-Bukhari, 1291; and Sahih Muslim, 3.

²Musnad Ahmad, 18184 (30/121, 122) from the way of Al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah, and the grade is authentic/Sahīh.

scholars on the use of unauthentic and fabricated ḥadīths from the third century (AH) to the contemporary era.

Ḥadīth critics have developed rules and standards for ḥadīth criticism. Abul ‘Abbās (2017) studied the early ḥadīth criticism standards as established by Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204 AH) and Imām Muslim (d. 261 AH) in their writings and highlighted the common points and the minor differences in their principles. Another debate was made about ḥadīth criticism: is it mainly concerned with the chain of narration (*isnād*) or is the text (*matn*) also included? In response to that, Brown (2008, 2012) paid great attention to *matn* criticism in his research. He focused on the works of the third and fourth centuries (AH) to prove that early critics did both *matn* and *isnād* criticism. Also, Al-‘Alwānī (2017) discussed *matn* and *isnād* criticism and presented 19 criteria for *matn* criticism. This paper discusses further important signs of fabrication in *matn* and *isnād* and provides an analytical discourse and descriptive analysis of the efforts made by scholars in protecting the *Sunnah* from the forged ḥadīths through secondary research. This paper provides the reader with a summary of the scholars’ efforts that is brief in size but comprehensive in scope, which may help in understanding that the authenticity of *Sunnah* must not be doubted. The paper proves that fabrication is a fact that the scholars acknowledged, but also proves that they tackled it in several ways.

The remaining parts of this paper are organized as follows: the second section represents a literature review; the third section elucidates the research methodology; the fourth section discusses the efforts of scholars in facing the fabricated ḥadīths and provides examples of their methodologies, their books, and the rules and guidelines they formulated to identify the fabricated narrations; and the final section provides a summary of the paper’s main points and future recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Every so often one of the sources or sciences of the *Dīn* is attacked, whether it is Qur’ān, ḥadīth, or *fiqh* and *uṣūl* (Aouidad, 2021). However, the ḥadīth corpus has had the biggest share of these attacks. Ḥāfiẓ (2007) mentioned several quotes from contemporaries who question the authenticity of the *Sunnah* and claim that it cannot be a source of law or a reference because it includes fabricated narrations, it is narrated by meaning, it is not preserved nor did the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ want it to be preserved, and because the scholars did not exert enough effort to make the *Sunnah* a source of a certain knowledge (*‘ilm yaqīnī*) instead of a speculative knowledge (*‘ilm ḡannī*).

Many studies in literature discussed the scholars' efforts in responding to these claims and in facing fabrications, which this paper aims to review and summarize. For example, Al-Ghaurī (2016) discussed in his paper "Fabrication of the Prophet's tradition" the fabrication, its inception and causes, and the response of the scholars to fabrication as well as the books written for this purpose. He also summarized the guidelines to identify signs of fabrication in ḥadīth that were presented by Imām Ibn al-Qayyim (1970) in his book "*The Towering Lighthouse*".

Later in 2017, Al-Ghaurī added to the previous topics in his book "*The Fabricated Hadīth*" the types of fabricators and expanded the guidelines to include guidelines in *sanad* and others in *matn*. He classified the guidelines in identifying the signs of fabrication into three categories: 1) specific guidelines 2) general guidelines and 3) maxims. He also presented the terms used by scholars of ḥadīth to identify a fabricated narration or a fabricator. Furthermore, he listed popular books that are full of fabricated ḥadīths.

Mazīd (2011) discussed the scholars' efforts from two perspectives:

- 1) in exposing the weak and fabricated narrations.
- 2) in defending the Sunnah in the past and in contemporary times by listing the claims against the Sunnah and their refutations. Under the first topic, he listed the methodology of the scholars and listed the books written by them about:
 - 1- Narrators who are accused of narrating the ḥadīth with a gap in the chain after the *Tābi'ī* (i.e., *irsāl*).
 - 2- Those who are accused of concealing defects (i.e., *tadlīs*).
 - 3- Others who are weak or abandoned.
 - 4- *Ilal* (hidden defects).
 - 5- The fabricated ḥadīths.

He also mentioned some signs of fabrication in *sanad* and in *matn*.

Fabricated ḥadīths were used in *tafsīr* to give strength to some opinions and relate them directly to the Qur'ān. Eren (1998) discussed the effect of fabrication of ḥadīth on *tafsīr*. He stated that fabrication existed mainly in *tafsīr* by narration (*ma'athūr*) as compared to the *tafsīr* by opinion (*r'ay*). He noted that fabricated ḥadīths were used in the books of *tafsīr* in the following sections: 1- virtues of sūrahs, 2- causes of revelations, 3- Qur'ānic stories, 4- Qur'ānic recitations (*qirā'āt*), and 5- in *'aqidah*-related matters.

Al-Laknawī (1984) comprehensively discussed the types of fabricators and weak narrators based on their knowledge and their reasons. Then, he mentioned some of the commonly narrated stories that are based on forged ḥadīths. He organized his book by topics that are supported by fabricated narrations stating the position of scholars on them, what they agreed upon and what were disputed.

One of the extensive studies that were made on the issue of fabrication is the three-volume book of Fallātah (1981) named: “*The Fabrication in Hadīth*”. He discussed the terms that indicate fabrication, causes of fabrication, evidences of fabrication, rulings related to fabricators and fabrications, fabrication in *sanad* and fabrication in *matn*, names of fabricators, and the efforts made by scholars in resisting fabrication. This paper summarizes and discusses the main outcomes of the aforementioned studies in section four.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was made using library research and content descriptive analysis methods for the information obtained from published books and papers about fabrication of ḥadīth. The paper aims to summarize and list the efforts in the form of clear points and tables that show the methodology of the scholars as well as the results of their efforts in facing the fabricated and unauthentic ḥadīths.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 SCHOLARS’ EFFORTS IN PROTECTING THE SUNNAH FROM WEAK AND FABRICATED ḤADĪTHS

Scholars of ḥadīth exerted great efforts in resisting the fabrication of ḥadīth. Fallātah and Ḥāfīz classified these efforts into two types: preventive and curative efforts. Protective efforts include questioning about *sanad* and criticizing narrators. The curative efforts include compilation of the fabricated ḥadīths and criticizing their *sanad* and *matn*; exposing the fabricators; compilation of the liars and fabricators in books; and compilation of ḥadīths in general (Fallātah, 1981; Ḥāfīz, 2007).

Al-Ghaurī summarized the efforts as follows: verifying the narration of ḥadīth and investigating about its narrators; travelling to seek knowledge of ḥadīth; gathering the fabricated ḥadīths and conducting a critical appraisal of their *sanad* and *matn*; exposing the fabricators and their behavior; compiling the ḥadīths; and developing the sciences of ḥadīth. Furthermore, scholars put precise conditions and guidelines to detect the fabricated ḥadīths, even by barely looking at the *sanad* without the *matn*. Lastly, they compiled books about the fabricated ḥadīths (Al-Ghaurī, 2016).

Mazīd discussed these efforts as well in several points (Mazīd, 2011). The following list include the main efforts:

- 1- Scholars of ḥadīth compiled the accepted ḥadīths in books such as the six books of the Prophetic tradition, *al-Muwatta'a*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah*, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, *Musnad Aḥmad*, *al-Mustadrak* by *al-Hākim*, and *al-Muntaqa* by Ibn Jārūd, etc.
- 2- They studied the narrators of ḥadīth, analyzed and conducted critical appraisals of them, and developed *'ilmu al-Jarḥi wat-Ta'dīl* (the science of criticism of ḥadīth narrators). Examples of books written in this field include: *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' ar-Rijāl* by Al-Ḥāfiẓ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742 AH) and *Tahdhīb at-Tahdhīb* by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852 AH).
- 3- The traditionalists paid particular attention to *isnād*. They would not accept a ḥadīth unless the entire chain of narration was clean and free of a single untrustworthy narrator.
- 4- Scholars of ḥadīth also paid a lot of attention regarding transmitting the ḥadīth and memorizing it. They would track any minor issues, count them, and discuss them in detail.
- 5- They developed rules and conditions for the acceptance of ḥadīth in *'ilmu ar-Riwāyah* and *'ilmu ad-Dirāyah*. An example of the former is the long travels made by the scholars of ḥadīth to check the authenticity of ḥadīth. Examples for *'ilmu ad-Dirāyah* include the development of *'ilmu at-Tārīkh* (e.g., books about the history of narrators like: *Tārīkh al-Bukhārī* by al-Bukhārī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī); the development of *'ilmu al-Jarḥi wat-Ta'dīl*; and the development of the conditions of transmission and narration of ḥadīth to check the continuity and authenticity of narrations.
- 6- Scholars also exerted huge efforts in *matn* criticism. They compared ḥadīths with Qur'ān, authentic *Sunnah*, deduction analogy (*qiyās*), and by checking their rationality.

4.2 SCHOLARS' EFFORTS IN IDENTIFYING THE FABRICATED ḤADĪTHS

The scholars further analyzed the fabricated ḥadīths and tracked them in different ways. These efforts resulted in the development of signs and indicators of fabrication in ḥadīth. These signs can be classified as signs in *matn* and signs in *sanad*. The signs of fabrication in *sanad* includes:

- 1- A fabricator acknowledges that he fabricated ḥadīth(s).
- 2- A narrator is commonly known as a liar to the scholars of *'ilmu al-Jarḥi wat-Ta'dīl*.
- 3- A narrator narrates from a *shaykh* that he did not meet, or was born after his death using explicit forms of hearing such as *ḥaddathanā*, *akhbaranā*, *sami'tu...* etc.
- 4- A narrator mentions a ḥadīth from a *shaykh*; however, this ḥadīth is not mentioned in any of the books of the *shaykh*, or narrated by any of his trustworthy students.

A fabrication is evident due to his circumstance or due to a certain incident that happened to him (Mazīd, 2011; Al-Ghaūrī, 2017).

Fabrication can also be detected by the *matn*. The signs of fabrication in *matn* are either related to the style or the meaning. With respect to the style, the most important sign is the weak wording of a ḥadīth. The signs concerning the meaning of the *matn* include:

- 1- An explicit disagreement with Qur'ān, authentic *Sunnah*, or consensus of scholars (*ijmā'*).
- 2- A disagreement with realities and rationalities.
- 3- A disagreement with historical facts.
- 4- A great reward for a simple deed or huge threat for a simple mistake or heedlessness.
- 5- A narration of an important story that took place in front of a great number of *Ṣaḥābah*; however, their action was against it, as if all of them had decided to conceal it.
- 6- A narration that is full of fantasies or silly information.
- 7- A narration that does not sound like the speech of prophets, or sounds like a physician's prescription rather than a ḥadīth (Mazīd, 2011; Al-'Anzī, 2021; Al-Maṭ'anī, 1999).

4.3 COMPILATIONS OF THE FABRICATED ḤADĪTHS AND FABRICATORS

One of the most important efforts of the ḥadīth scholars in facing the fabrication of ḥadīth was by listing the names of the fabricators in different generations. Hence, the next generations of scholars can identify these liars if they encounter them in any *sanad*. The following are some of the books written to expose the fabricators and weak narrators of ḥadīth. Al-Ghaūrī mentioned 19 books in his study (Al-Ghaūrī, 2017). Few examples are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of compilations about the fabricators of ḥadīth

Book Name	Author
Al-Ḍu‘afā’	‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī (d. 234 AH)
Tamyīz thiqāt al-muḥaddithīn wa ḍu‘afā’ihim wa asmā’ihim wa kunāhum	Ibn al-Barqī (d. 249 AH)
Kitāb al-ḍu‘afā’ al-ṣaghīr, (and al-kabīr)	Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH)
Al-Ḍu‘afā’	Al-Jūzajānī (d. 259 AH)
Al-Ḍu‘afā’ wal-matrūkūn	Abū Zur‘ah ar-Rāzī (d. 264 AH)
Al-Ḍu‘afā’ wal-matrūkūn	Imām an-Nasā’ī (d. 303 AH)
Ma‘rifatu al-majrūhīn mina al-muḥaddithīna wal-ḍu‘afā’ wal-matrūkīn	Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 AH)
Kitāb al-ḍu‘afā’ wal-matrūkīn	Al-Dāraqūṭnī (d. 385 AH)
Al-Ḍu‘afā’ wal-matrūkūn	Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH)
Lisān al-mīzān	Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852 AH)

Source: The Author

It is noteworthy to mention that Fallātah (1981) in his comprehensive work of “*Fabrication in Hadīth*” had listed all names of fabricators in an alphabetical order, and he divided them into three groups:

- 1- narrators that are agreed upon as fabricators.
- 2- narrators that are disagreed upon as fabricators.
- 3- narrators that are accused of lying and have narrations in one or more of the six canonical books of ḥadīth.

The scholars did not write only about the fabricators of ḥadīths; they also gathered the fabricated ḥadīths in separate compilations. Al-Ghaurī and Mazīd mentioned more than 20 books in each of their studies (Al-Ghaurī, 2017; Mazīd, 2011). Table 2 below includes only some examples.

Table 2. Examples of compilations about the fabricated ḥadīths

Book Name	Author	Remarks
Tadhkirat al-mawḍū'āt	Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507 AH)	Includes 1139 ḥadīths
Al-Mawḍū'āt mina al-'aḥādīth al-marfū'āt	Al-Jaūraqānī (d. 543 AH)	771 ḥadīths, 270 are fabricated or <i>munkar</i>
Al-Mawḍū'āt	Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH)	1847 fabricated ḥadīths
Al-Mughnī 'an al-ḥifẓi wālkitāb	'Umar al-Maūṣilī (d. 623 AH)	He compiled the topics that have no single authentic ḥadīth
Al-Durr al-multaqāṭ wa al-mawḍū'āt	Al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650 AH)	145 fabricated ḥadīths in Al-Durr, then added another 93 fabricated ḥadīths in al-mawḍū'āt
Mukhtaṣar al-'abāṭil wālmawḍū'āt	Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH)	A combined and an abridged version of Al-Jaūraqānī's and Ibn al-Jawzī's books.
Al-Manār al-munīf fī al-ṣaḥīḥ wālda'if	Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah (d. 751 AH)	Includes 347 fabricated ḥadīths.
Al-L'ālī' al-maṣnū'ah fī al-'aḥādīth al-mawḍū'ah	Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH)	The best book in this field, it gathered most of the fabricated ḥadīths and added more that were overlooked, and organized the book in chapters and sections.
Al-Maṣnū' fī ma'rifat al-ḥadīth al-mawḍū'	Al-Mullā 'Alī Qārī (d. 1014 AH)	Includes 417 fabricated ḥadīths.

Source: The Author

The scholars exerted significant efforts in filtering the *Sunnah* from any possible fabrications. Consequently, An-Nawawī (d. 676 AH) and Ibn as-Ṣalāḥ (d. 642 AH) said all the narrations of a fabricator of a single ḥadīth are rejected, even if he repented and became a righteous Muslim later in his life. This shows to what extent the scholars of ḥadīth took precautions and paid great attention to the issue of fabrication (Al-Ghaūrī, 2016).

Moreover, the scholars made compilations about the ḥadīths that are widespread among people. Some of these ḥadīths were fabricated; therefore, the scholars put efforts to filter these ḥadīths and

make Muslims aware of all of the fabricated narrations. Al-Ghaūrī listed 12 books in his book that were compiled solely for this purpose (Al-Ghaūrī, 2017). Table 3 shows some examples of these books.

Table 3. Examples of compilations about the common ḥadīths that have fabrications

Book Name	Author
Aḥādīth al-quṣṣās	Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH)
Al-L'ālī' al-manthūrah fī al-'aḥādīth al-mashūrah	Az-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH)
Al-Maqāsid al-ḥasanah fī bayān kathīr mina al-'aḥādīth al-mushtahirah 'ala al-'alsinah	As-Sakhāwī (d. 902 AH)
Al-Ghammāz 'ala al-lammāz fī al-'aḥādīth al-mushtahah	Abū al-Ḥasan al-Samhūdī (d. 911 AH)
Al-Durur al-muntathirah fī al-'aḥādīth al-mushtahirah	Al-Suyūfī (d. 911 AH)
Al-Shadharah fī al-'aḥādīth al-mushtaharh	Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Dimashqī (d. 953 AH)
Al-Mawḍū'āt al-kubra	Al-Mullā 'Alī Qārī (d. 1014 AH)

Source: The Author

Lastly, the scholars developed specific rules and regulations (*dawābiṭ*) to help students of ḥadīth and the general Muslims to easily identify fabricated ḥadīths. Ibn al-Qayyim listed many of his *dawābiṭ* in his book "Al-Manār al-Munīf" (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1970). The following are just some examples (Al-Qārī, 1986):

- All ḥadīths about virtues of praying on certain days (Sunday, wednesday etc.) are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths regarding the prevention of raising hands in prayer are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths include "al-ḥumairā'" are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths that slander Mu'āwiyah  or the Umayyads are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths mention that a certain city is a city of Paradise, or a city of fire are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths about the rock in Al-Aqṣa are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths about Al-Khiḍr and that he is still alive are fabricated.
- All ḥadīths about 'aql (intellect) are fabricated.

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- All ḥadīths about *adhkār* on every limb of *wuḍū'* are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths that say “*īmān* does not increase nor decrease” are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths that praise al-Manṣūr as-Saffāḥ and ar-Rashīd (Abbasid caliphs) are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths that praise celibacy are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths about the virtues of certain flowers are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths about certain dates in the future are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths that slander Abyssinia, Sudan, and Turks are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths about pigeons are fabricated.
 - All ḥadīths that slander children are fabricated.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the efforts of ḥadīth scholars in facing the fabrication of ḥadīth. Fabrication is defined, its ruling is mentioned, and the reasons for fabrication are briefly presented. Scholars exerted huge efforts in protecting the *Sunnah* and classifying the ḥadīths. Many of these efforts are summarized. Among these efforts were the compilation of the books of ḥadīth and scrutinizing the authenticity of ḥadīths by questioning about the *isnād* and criticizing the *matn*. Furthermore, the scholars tracked the fabricators of ḥadīth and their fabrications. Several books were compiled since the third century after Hijrah and until recent times to list and expose the fabricators as well as the fabricated ḥadīths. Moreover, scholars developed rules and guidelines to help in identifying the fabricated and invented narrations. A few of these guidelines are listed. This paper focused on some of the early works of ḥadīth scholars; in the future, the works of the contemporary scholars in defending the *Sunnah* and facing the claims of the modernists and Orientalists need to be discussed.

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