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MARAHIL, LA MANAHIJ: Categorization of Hadith Critics and the Development of Isnad Criticism

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Abstract

The development of ḥadīth criticism throughout history demonstrates a complex dynamic, both in terms of the quality and quantity of evaluations, the perspectives of critics, and the types of works produced. Within the tradition of ḥadīth studies, critics are commonly classified into three main categories, *mutasyaddid* (strict), *mu'tadil* (moderate), and *mutasahil* (lenient), based on their evaluative tendencies toward transmitters of ḥadīth. However, this categorization has often been accepted taken for granted by subsequent scholars without critical reassessment. As a result, it not only limits the inclusion of new figures within these categories but also perpetuates certain classificatory inaccuracies that have never been reexamined. In response to this problem, the study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing critical historical methods and library research to address two main objectives. First, it reexamines the tripartite classification of ḥadīth critics by revisiting the figures most frequently cited within these categories. This analysis reveals the existence of a pattern of periodization that significantly shaped tendencies in ḥadīth criticism. Second, the study explores this periodization and its relationship to the emergence and dominance of the *zahir al-isnad* orientation. The findings demonstrate that

the categories of *mutasyaddid*, *mu'tadil*, and *mutasahil* essentially represent stages in the historical periodization of ḥadīth criticism (*marāḥil zamāniyyah*), rather than methodological approaches (*manāḥij*). Consequently, these terms should not be understood as *manāḥij al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dil*. While useful as heuristic tools for classification, such categorization oversimplifies the complexity of ḥadīth criticism and risks polarizing the field within the narrow framework of the *zahir al-isnad* school.

Keywords: Critic Categories, Hadith Critics, *Isnad* Criticism, *Zahir Al-Isnad*.

Abstrak

Perkembangan kritik hadis sepanjang sejarah menunjukkan dinamika yang kompleks, baik dari segi kualitas dan kuantitas penilaian, perspektif kritikus, maupun jenis karya yang dihasilkan. Dalam tradisi studi hadis, para kritikus sering diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga kategori utama, yakni *mutasyaddid* (ketat), *mu'tadil* (moderat), dan *mutasahil* (longgar), berdasarkan kecenderungan penilaian mereka terhadap periwayat hadis. Namun, kategorisasi ini cenderung diterima secara taken for granted oleh para peneliti berikutnya tanpa kajian ulang yang kritis, sehingga tidak hanya menutup kemungkinan masuknya tokoh-tokoh baru dalam kategori tersebut, tetapi juga mempertahankan sejumlah kekeliruan klasifikasi yang tidak pernah direvaluasi. Berangkat dari problem tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode sejarah kritis dan kajian kepustakaan untuk membahas dua fokus utama. Pertama, mengkaji ulang pengelompokan kritikus hadis ke dalam tiga kategori tersebut dengan melibatkan tokoh-tokoh yang selama ini dijadikan rujukan. Kajian ini mengungkap adanya pola periodisasi yang memengaruhi kecenderungan kritik hadis. Kedua, penelitian ini menganalisis periodisasi tersebut serta kaitannya dengan kemunculan dan dominasi kelompok *zhāhir al-isnād*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kategori *mutasyaddid*, *mu'tadil*, dan *mutasahil* sejatinya merepresentasikan tahapan periodisasi kritik hadis (*marāḥil zamāniyyah*), bukan metode kritik (*manāḥij*). Oleh karena itu, ketiga istilah tersebut tidak tepat dipahami sebagai *manāḥij al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dil*. Meskipun berguna sebagai alat bantu klasifikasi, kategorisasi ini terbukti menyederhanakan

kompleksitas kritik hadis dan berpotensi mempolarisasi kajian hadis ke dalam kerangka sempit mazhab *zhāhir al-isnād*.

Kata kunci: Kritikus Hadis, Kritik Sanad, Kategori Kritikus, *Zahir Al-Isnad*.

Introduction

Hadith criticism is inseparable from *ijtihad* and yields varying outcomes. According to al-Tahanawi (d. 1394 AH/1974 AD), the issue of hadith criticism is based on what is *zhanni* (probabilistic), so it is not related to what is *qath'i* (definitive) (al-Tahanawi, 1972, p. 49). This is evidenced by the many inconsistent assessments among hadith critics (*nuqqad al-hadits*). Due to its *zhanni* nature, the accuracy of assessments ranges from 50% to 99.99% according to the principles of *ushul al-fiqh* or *manthiq*. For example, Hanafi scholars divide the level of truth into three classifications: 1) *‘ilmu al-yaqin*, which includes *mutawatir* reports; 2) *thuma'ninah al-qalb*, which includes *masyhur* reports; 3) truth that may or may not be correct, which includes *ahad* reports (Shofiyyuddin, 2017; Syamsuddin, 2001). In addition, the study of hadith in Shi'ism has distinctive standards and criteria that differ from those applied in Sunni scholarship (Khadim Al-Zhakreen & Bahramizad, 2025; Ostadi, 2025; Suryadilaga, 2009; Vilozy, 2019).

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani also stated in his *Fath al-Bari* after citing Yahya bin Ma‘in’s (d. 233 AH/848 AD) criticism of Sufyan bin ‘Uyainah (d. 198 AH/814 AD) (Gaafar, 2025), which Ibn Ma‘in’s criticism was rejected by Yahya bin Sa‘id al-Qaththan (d. 198 AH/813 AD), regarding the chain of narration of the hadith performed in front of the worshipper (al-‘Asqalāni, 1970, vol. I: 585):

“The (process of identifying) hidden defects in hadith (ta‘lil al-hadits) by hadith scholars is based on the predominant probability (ghalabah al-zhann). Thus, when they say that fulan (that a certain narrator) made an error in a particular, it does not necessarily mean that he actually erred in that instance; rather, it reflects what is most likely and therefore acceptable. Otherwise, they would not have stipulated the condition of the absence of contradiction (syadz), which refers to a report contradicting that of a more reliable transmitter.”

The defecting (*ta'li*) of the hadith scholars when identifying defects (*'ilal*) in narrations is based on predominant probability (*ghalabah al-zhan*), not on absolute certainty. This demonstrates that their evaluation consistently involves weighing probabilities among narrators rather than asserting infallible conclusions. According to Ibn Hajar's statement, the assessment of hadith is *ijtihadi* in nature. Therefore, hadith criticism has undergone various developments over time; in terms of quality, quantity, evaluative perspective, type of text, and other dimensions. In this regard, the quality of assessments made by hadith critics is often used to determine whether a critic belongs to the *mutasyaddid* (strict), *mu'tadil* (moderate), or *mutasahil* (lenient) category.

Several studies have been conducted that discuss these three categories. The *first* group consists of studies that merely describe the categories of *mutasyaddid* (strict), *mu'tadil* (moderate), or *mutasahil* (lenient) (Ismail, 1992, pp. 76–81, 1995, p. 81; Nabel, 2018; Ridho Ilahi, Razi, Maulana, & Najib, 2023). In many of these articles, researchers present the three categories descriptively without offering an in-depth analytical explanation. The *second* group includes studies that classify several scholars into one of these categories (Faruq, Zain, & Hasyim, 2018; Jamilin, 2017; Muzakki, 2020; Noorhidayati & Zulfikar, 2023). These researchers categorized scholars according to existing classifications without providing a critical or analytical justification for their placement within these categories.

The *third* group involves analyses of category classifications conducted by scholars such as Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naisaburi (d. 405 AH/1014 AD) and Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn al-Husain al-Baihaqi (d. 458 AH/1066 AD) (Abdurrahman, 1999; Abu Syuhbah, n.d.; 'Isa, 2019). In these studies, researchers merely describe the assessment criteria employed by hadith scholars and indicate which of the three categories they belonged to. The *fourth* group examines the influence of these three categories on *jarh wa ta'dil* ('Abd Allah, 2024). In his research, 'Abd Allah explains the meaning of *tasyaddud* and *tasāhul* linguistically and terminologically. He also discusses their causes, focusing primarily on theological hadiths without addressing their historical dimensions.

However, the main issue is that these three categories have not been further developed or critically analyzed. Researchers tend merely to cite, affirm, and reinforce the

existing classifications. No new figures have been included in these categories, and certain errors within them are often overlooked. Consequently, the stagnant and static treatment of these three categories of hadith critics has made the study of *isnād* in hadith increasingly rigid. Moreover, these three categories perpetuate a form of hadith criticism that focuses solely on the *isnād* while neglecting the *matn*. In addition, the exclusive emphasis on *isnād* criticism without corresponding *matn* analysis has drawn significant critique from both revisionist and traditionalist scholars.

Building on these issues, this study addresses two main points. *First*, it reexamines the classification of hadith critics into three categories. The study includes figures frequently cited within these three categories. By examining the periodization patterns among these categories, the study elaborates on issues related to their chronological development. *Second*, after identifying the periodization of these three categories, the study explores their relationship with the *zhahir al-isnad* group. The classification of hadith critics into these three categories is closely linked to the *zāhir al-isnād* approach, particularly when their assessments are viewed solely through these categorical lenses, rather than through the structural conditions or contextual indicators of the hadith (*qara'in au 'ilal al-hadits*). This connection becomes especially evident when related to *matn* criticism.

By reexamining the classification of hadith critics into three categories, observing the periodization patterns among them, and relating these to the *zhahir al-isnad* group, this study contributes to the study of *isnad*, which often appears rigid and inflexible but is, in fact, dynamic and still contains many unexplored dimensions, and redefines the criteria for critiquing narrators, *isnad*, *matn*, and hadith methodology

Discussion

Categories of Narrator Critics

The classification of narrator critics can be traced back to Syams al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Dzahabi (d. 748 AH/1348 AD) in his work, *Dzikh Man Yu'tamad Qauluhu fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*. At the beginning of the book, al-Dzahabi discusses hadith based on the quantity of their evaluations. After categorizing hadith

critics according to quantity, al-Dzahabi further classified them based on the quality of their criticism. The *first* category is *muta'annit fi al-jarh mutatsabbit fi al-ta'dil* (strict in disparagement yet cautious in validation), represented by figures such as Yahya bin Ma'in, Abu Hatim al-Razi and Ibrahim bin Ya'qub al-Jauzajani (d. 259 AH/873 AD).

The second category includes *mutasahil* such as Muhammad bin 'Isa al-Tirmidzi (d. 279 AH/892 AD), Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naisaburi (d. 405 AH/1014 AD) and Abu Bakr Ahmad bin al-Husain al-Baihaqi (d. 458 AH/1066 AD). The *third* category comprise *mu'tadil munshif* (moderate and fair-minded) critics, including Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 265 AH/870 AD), Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal (d. 241 AH/855 AD), Abu Zur'ah 'Ubaydullah bin 'Abd al-Karim al-Razi (d. 264 AH/878 AD) and Abu Ahmad 'Abd Allah bin 'Adi Jurjani (d. 365 AH/976 AD) (al-Dzahabi, 1990, pp. 171–172).

This categorization was later continued by Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi (d. 902 AH/1497 AD) in his work, *al-Mutakallimun fi al-Rijal*. Al-Sakhawi. He adopts al-Dzahabi's classification of narrator critics according to the quantity and quality of their evaluations, while adding several additional figures. In the category of *muta'annit fi al-jarh mutatsabbit fi al-ta'dil*, al-Sakhawi includes Syu'bah bin al-Hajjaj (d. 160 AH/776 AD) and Yahya bin Sa'id al-Qaththan (d. 198 AH/813 AD) (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 138–144). In the category of *mutasahil* (which al-Sakhawi refers to as *mutasammih*), he includes 'Ali bin Ahmad bin Sa'id al-Andalusi Ibn Hazm (d. 456 AH/1064 AD) (for a critique of al-Sakhawi's misjudgment of Ibn Hazm, see Akmaluddin, 2014, p. 99; Ibn Hazm, 1989). Meanwhile, in the category of *mu'tadil munshif* (which al-Sakhawi calls *mu'tadil*), he adds Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin 'Umar al-Daruquthni (d. 385 AH/995 AD) (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 144–145). By quoting al-Dzahabi in full, al-Sakhawi affirms and supports this classification without offering any critique or re-evaluation of the categories.

The categories based on the quantity, and particularly the quality, of narrator criticism later evolved into the mainstream framework for understanding hadith criticism. As noted in the preceding literature review, the qualitative categories of narrator criticism came to be regarded as methodological groupings rather than as chronological periodization.

Strict Category Critic (Mutasyaddid)

There was a greater amount of narrator criticism in Kufah and Bashrah than in Madinah. This is evidenced by the large number of hadith critics in these two regions, particularly in Basrah (Snober, 2021, p. 166). *Mutasyaddid* hadith critics such as Syu'bah bin al-Hajjaj emerged in Basrah, where hadith fabrication was widespread. Furthermore, according to Snober, Syu'bah drew heavily on his earlier experience in poetic and literary criticism, since Basrah lacked a strong legacy of fiqh studies from previous generations. Syu'bah employed historical verification (*al-tatsabbut al-tarikhi*) to investigate hadith narratives (Snober, 2021, pp. 234–238).

The widespread fabrication of hadith and the prevalence of weak narrations in Basrah compelled many critics to adopt a stricter stance regarding the acceptance of hadith. They were therefore faced with two primary tasks. *First*, they needed to establish strict standards for the hadith narrations circulating in the region. Only two options existed for determining the status of a hadith: accepted (*maqbul*) or rejected (*mardud*). *Second*, the evaluation of narrators had to be equally strict, either accepted (*maqbul*) or rejected (*mardud*). No intermediary judgments were permitted between these two extremes. Consequently, criticism of narrators had to be clear and straightforward, focusing solely on the narrator's reliability rather than on secondary factors such as the teacher, student, or region of origin. Beyond individual narrations, Syu'bah also discovered books containing fabricated reports, similar to those compiled by Abu Harun 'Imarah bin Juwain al-'Abdi (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, vol. I: 149; VI: 363).

This is evident in the writings of al-Dzahabi and confirmed by al-Sakhawi, as previously discussed, who stated (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 138–144; al-Dzahabi, 1990, pp. 171–172):

“Some of them are muta‘annit (strict) in jarh (negative evaluations) and mutatsabbit (cautious) dalam ta‘dil (positive evaluations). They may criticize a narrator for only two or three mistakes yet still soften their wording in doing so. If they judge someone to be trustworthy (tsiqah), they firmly uphold that person’s reliability and maintain their tautsiq (declaration of trustworthiness). If they judge someone to be weak (dha‘if), it is necessary to see whether others agree with their tadh‘if (assessment of weakness). If others concur with them and no tautsiq from other experts exists, then the narrator is considered dha‘if. However, if another

scholar provides tautsiq, the experts state: “jarh is not accepted except with an explanation,” meaning that it is insufficient, for instance, if Ibn Ma’in merely says someone is dha’if wit without offering a reason while others have tautsiq for him. In such cases, the authenticity of the hadith is considered tawaqquf (suspended), and its status leans closer to hasan. Ibn Ma’in, Abu Hatim, and al-Jauzajani are among the muta’annit critics.”

From the above explanation, it is evident that in the field of hadith criticism, some scholars *jarh wa ta’dil* for being extremely strict in their judgments, particularly when performing *jarh* on a narrator. These scholars are referred to as *muta’annit*, meaning strict and uncompromising, particularly in identifying a narrator’s weaknesses. At the same time, they are also categorized as *mutatsabbit*, meaning highly cautious and seeking strong certainty when offering *ta’dil*. Due to this strict disposition, they sometimes reproach a narrator merely for a minor error or for engaging in an act considered permissible. For instance, Syu’bah refused to transmit hadith from Abu Ishaq because he saw him playing chess when they met (A. bin ‘Ali al-Khathib al-Baghdadi, 1938, p. 111).

The principle is that if such strict scholars judge a narrator to be *tsiqah*, their evaluation carries considerable weight and can be reliably depended upon. This is because they do not readily offer *ta’dil*, thus, when they do, it indicates that the narrator truly meets the qualifications and criteria of *tsiqah*. However, if they judge a narrator to be *dha’if*, such a judgment requires further scrutiny. It should not be accepted outright unless other scholars corroborate that assessment. If the assessment of weakness is supported by other experts and no opposing *tautsiq* (validation) exists, the narrator is then considered *dha’if*.

However, if there are other scholars who can verify it, then the important rule in the science of *jarh wa ta’dil*: “*al-jarh la yuqbalu illa mufassaran*”—*jarh* cannot be accepted unless accompanied by an explanation of the reasons. Criticism that should be considered ineffective against the narrator but is considered influential by the *mutasyaddid*, then it needs to be reconsidered (al-Jadi’, 2003, vol. I: 358-378). If, for example, Ibn Ma’in said that a narrator was weak without stating the reason, while there were other scholars who stated that he was *tsiqah*, then bin Ma’in’s criticism does not automatically outperform the assessment of *ta’dil*. In such a situation, the status of the hadith narrated by the

narrator becomes *tawaqquf*, that is, its assessment is suspended, and its position is closer to the hadith *hasan* than the hadith *dha'if*.

According to al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawī, the scholars known for their firmness and strictness in exercising *jarh* include Yahya bin Ma'in, Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 277 AH/890 AD), and al-Jauzajani (d. 259 AH/872 AD). They were prominent hadith critics whose statements carried significant influence. However, later scholars emphasized that their evaluations should be understood proportionally: their *ta'dil* (positive assessment) is to be accepted decisively, whereas their *jarh* (negative assessment) requires closer scrutiny, especially when not accompanied by explicit reasoning (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 138–144; al-Dzahabi, 1990, p. 174).

From a chronological perspective, these three figures belong to the third century AH/ninth century AD. The periodization begins with Yahya bin Ma'in, al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi. If al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawi classify these three scholars as *mutasyaddid* yet do not elaborate on their specific criteria and standards of evaluation, then this classification can be verified by examining the assessments of these very scholars themselves. The following are several examples of assessments made by Yahya bin Ma'in, al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi:

1. Assessment of Yahya bin Ma'in (Y. bin M. al-Baghdadi, n.d., p. 65):

“Usman reported to me, saying: ‘I asked Yahya bin Ma'in: ‘What do you say about Ibrahim bin Maisarah?’ He replied: ‘tsiqah’. I asked again: ‘Whose narration do you prefer, from Thawus or from Ibn Thawus?’ He replied: ‘Both are equally sound.’ I then asked him about Asy'ats bin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jarmi, and he replied: ‘tsiqah’. And I asked him about Isma'il bin Ibrahim bin Muhajir, ‘What is he like?’ He replied, ‘dha'if.’”

2. Assessment of al-Jauzajani (al-Jauzajani, n.d., p. 74):

“Thalhah bin Jubair is unreliable in his hadith and not trustworthy (ghair tsiqah).”

3. Assessment of Abu Hatim al-Razi (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, vol. II: 52):

“Ahmad bin Sulaiman bin Abi al-Thayyib Abu Sulaiman al-Marwazi 'Abd al-Rahman reported to us, saying: ‘I asked my father (i.e., Ibn Abi Hatim asking Abu Hatim al-Razi) about him, and he replied: ‘dha'if al-hadits (weak in hadith)’.”

In the above narration, Yahya bin Ma'in did not hesitate to express *tautsiq* (trust) toward narrators he deemed worthy, while at the same time firmly declaring *tadh'if* (weakness) for those he considered below standard. The answer "both are the same" regarding Thawus and Ibn Thawus also reflects Ibn Ma'in's fairness. He avoids excessive comparison and instead places both figures in an equally credible position.

The assessments made by al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi are likewise similar in nature. Their evaluations are concise, firm, and straightforward, with little elaboration. This is because Yahya bin Ma'in, al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi lived during a period of extensive hadith transmission, when there was still no systematic filtering to verify and categorize the circulating reports. As a result, their written assessments are typically brief and seldom address details such as teachers and students, dates of death, the specifics of transmission, and other related aspects.

Thus, the judgment of *muta'annit* and *mutatsabbit* mentioned by al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawi is inseparable from the circumstances and conditions in which Yahya bin Ma'in, al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi lived. Furthermore, the stories of all three were transmitted through their students, not by their own writings (autographs), but by their students (apographs). To this end, the focus on periodization is important in demonstrating the development of narrator criticism.

Moderate Category Critic (Mu'tadil)

Al-Dzahabi said (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 145–146; al-Dzahabi, 1990, p. 172):

"And there is a group of the scholars of jarh wa ta'dil such as al-Bukhari, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Zur'ah, and Ibn 'Adi; they are moderate and just (balanced)."

This category of assessment is regarded as more reliable, as it is neither so strict as to dismiss a narrator for a mere error, nor so lenient as to accept a narrator who should be rejected. This moderate stance is what makes these scholars often serve as benchmarks in assessing hadith. In their arguments, al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawi include al-Bukhari, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Zur'ah, and Ibn 'Adi.

The following are the assessment made by al-Bukhari, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Zur'ah, and Ibn 'Adi:

1. Assessment of al-Bukhari (al-Bukhari, n.d., vol. I: 273):

“Ibrahim bin Adham. Abu ‘Abd Allah (i.e., al-Bukhari) said: Qutaibah told me that he was a Tamimi from Balkh and had lived in Kufah. He narrated from Manshur. His hadiths are mursal. Some also say that he was al-‘Ijlī, and that he had lived in Syria.”

Al-Bukhari’s statement in *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* shows how he provided a brief biography of a figure, including his genealogy, place of residence, hadith teachers, assessment of the quality of his transmission, and differences of opinion regarding his lineage (nasab).

2. Assessment of Ahmad bin Hanbal (al-Syaibani, 1993, p. 228):

“Al-Husain narrated to us from Sulaimān, he said: I heard Ahmad bin Hanbal say: Ibn ‘Uyainah said, “I saw Abu al-Zubair hearing a saḥifah (record of hadith).” So I asked Ahmad, “Are these hadiths, meaning Saḥifah Sulaiman al-Yasykuri, that are circulating among the people from him (i.e., from Abu al-Zubair)?” He replied, “Yes.” I asked again, “Did Abu al-Zubair take them from that saḥifah?” He replied, “Abu al-Zubair memorized it. Then there were some doubts about the word “memorized” what Ahmad actually said; they said, “Sometimes he (Abu al-Zubair) was uncertain about something, so he looked back to the saḥifah for confirmation.”

The assessment of Ahmad bin Hanbal involves several aspects: the report from his teacher, information about Abu al-Zubair, the *saḥifah* he possessed, how he memorized it and what Abu al-Zubair did in practice.

3. Assessment of Abu Zur‘ah

Not much of Abu Zur‘ah’s works has survived to the present day. However, one of his work, *Asami al-Dhu‘afa’*, transmitted through al-Bardza‘i, remains, and its method of evaluation is not significantly different from that found in the works of al-Bukhari and Ahmad bin Hanbal. Al-Bardza‘i said (al-Razi, 2009, p. 307):

“And Abu Zur‘ah had written down the names of narrators who were considered weak, as well as those who were discussed by hadith scholars, along with his own comments about them. I then asked him to show me his book. So he brought out the book, which he had written in his own hand, and handed it to me himself. I

copied the names from the book that he gave me, which had been written in his own handwriting. However, I did not hear it directly from him.”

This quote illustrates how al-Bardza‘i obtained data from Abu Zur‘ah al-Razi, a prominent imam in the field of *jarh wa ta’dil*. Abu Zur‘ah had a special list or book containing the names of narrators who were considered *dha’if* and the comments of hadith scholars regarding them. Al-Bardza‘i asked to see the book, whereupon Abu Zur‘ah brought it out, written in his own hand, and handed it to him. Al-Bardza‘i then copied the names of the narrators from the book but emphasized that he did not hear the list and comments directly from Abu Zur‘ah, rather, he copied them from his writing. In *Asami al-Dhu‘afa* a narration transmitted by al-Bardza‘i, Abu Zur‘ah included only the names of weak narrators.

4. Assessment of Ibn ‘Adi (Ibn ‘Adi, 1997, vol. I: 269):

“Ahmad bin Basyir, the maula of ‘Amr bin Hūraiṣ, was a Kufi. Some say his kunyah was Abu Isma‘il, while others say Abu Bakr, and the more authentic opinion is that it Abu Bakr. Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Isma‘il al-Sukkari narrated to us, he said: has narrated to us. He said: ‘Utsmān bin Sa‘id al-Darimi narrated to us, he said: I asked Yahya bin Ma’in, “Do you know ‘Atha’ bin al-Mubarak?” He answered, “Who narrated from him?” I said, “That sheikh, Ahmad bin Basyir.’ It was as if Yahya was surprised when I mentioned Ahmad bin Basyir, then he said: “I don’t know him.’ ‘Utsman said: ‘Ahmad bin Basyir was a man from Kūfah, who later came to Baghdād. He was a transmitter of matrūk (abandoned hadith) and had munkar hadith mentioned.”

From this narration, several important points can be drawn regarding the scholars’ assessment of Ahmad bin Basyir. He is known as *maula* of ‘Amr bin Hurait al-Makhzumi, a figure of Kufah. There are different opinions regarding his *kunyah*, but the stronger view according to Ibn ‘Adi is that it was Abu Bakr. The narration of ‘Utsman bin Sa‘id al-Darimi from Yahya bin Ma’in indicates that Yahya did not know this narrator and was even surprised when his name was mentioned, which shows his lack of recognition among prominent hadith scholars.

Furthermore, al-Darimi explained that Ahmad bin Basyir had lived in Kūfah and then moved to Baghdad. However, his status in the science of *jarh wa ta’dil* was very weak, as he was classified as *matruk al-hadits*, meaning that his hadiths were abandoned by

scholars and could not be used as evidence. Ibn ‘Adi also emphasized that the hadiths he narrated were classified as *munkar*, that is, reports that contradict the reports of the *tsiqah* narrators and are unacceptable. Thus, Ibn ‘Adi assessment includes mention of his *kunyah* and its variants, the evaluations of earlier scholars, his place of residence, and the status of his hadiths.

Lenient Category Critics (Mutasahil)

Al-Dzahabi said (al-Sakhawi, 1990, pp. 144–145; al-Dzahabi, 1990, p. 172):

“And there is also a group that is opposed to them (i.e. the opposite of muta‘annit), such as Abu ‘Isa al-Tirmidzi, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim, and Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi; they are among the mutasahilun (those who are lenient in assessing hadith).”

These scholars are considered more adept at providing *ta’dil* assessment that elevate the status of hadith. They can even classify hadith strictly considered weak by other critics as *hasan* or *shahih*. Their designation as *mutasahilun* does not mean their narrations are rejected, but rather indicates their more lenient style of criticism than the previous group. They are more open to accepting hadith containing minor weaknesses (*dha’f yasir*), especially when supported by other narrations.

The following are the assessment made by Abu ‘Isa al-Tirmidzi, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim, and Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi:

1. Abu ‘Isa al-Tirmidzi (al-Tirmidzi, 1975, vol. II: 330):

“Qutaibah narrated to us; he said: ‘Abd Allah bin Zaid bin Aslam narrated to us from his father, that the Prophet said: ‘Whoever sleeps until he misses his witr, let him perform it when he wakes up in the morning.’ This hadith is more authentic than the first one. I (al-Tirmidzi) heard Abu Dawud al-Sijzi — namely Sulaiman bin al-Asy‘ats (the compiler of Sunan Abi Dawud) — say: ‘I once asked Ahmad bin Hanbal about ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin Zaid bin Aslam.’ Ahmad replied, ‘His brother, ‘Abd Allah — there is no harm in him (laisa bihi ba’s).’ He also said: ‘I heard Muhammad mention from ‘Ali bin ‘Abd Allah (al-Madini) that he considered ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam weak. He also said that ‘Abd Allah bin Zaid bin Aslam is tsiqah (trustworthy).’ Some scholars of Kūfah adhered to this hadith. They said that a person may perform witr when he remembers it, even after sunrise. This is also the opinion held by Sufyan al-Tsauri.”

This hadith discusses the ruling on someone who oversleeps and misses the *witr* prayer. The Prophet taught that such a person may still perform it in the morning after waking up, as a make-up for the missed *witr*. In the chain of this hadith appear two sons of Zaid bin Aslam: ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd al-Rahman. Scholars differ in their assessment of the two. ‘Abd Allah bin Zayd bin Aslam is considered *tsiqah*, so his narration is acceptable, while ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam is considered *dha’if*, although some scholars, such as Ahmad bin Hanbal, did not strongly reject his narrations but merely noted their weakness. Therefore, the hadith transmitted through ‘Abd Allah is considered more authentic than that transmitted through ‘Abd al-Rahman. From a legal perspective, there is disagreement among scholars regarding whether *witr* can be made up after the dawn prayer. Some scholars, such as those of Kufah and Sufyan al-Tsauri, permitted it even after sunrise, based on this hadith (al-Mubarakfuri, n.d., vol. II: 465-466).

In his commentary, al-Bukhari also stated that Ali bin al-Madīnī had regarded ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam as weak. However, in this case, al-Tirmizī also narrated from ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam. The narration of ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam, however, is considered unproblematic because the scholars of Kūfah and Sufyan al-Tsauri practiced this hadith. This widespread practice indicates that, despite its weakness, the narration of ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam was still used. In fact, many Companions and the four Imams also relied on this hadith (al-Mubarakfuri, n.d., vol. II: 466).

2. Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim (al-Nisaburi, 1990, vol. III: 374):

“Abu Ja‘far Muhammad bin Muhammad bin ‘Abd Allah al-Baghdadi informed us. Abu al-Qasim ‘Ubaid Allah bin Muhammad bin Sulaiman bin Ibrahim al-Iskandarani informed us in Egypt. Abu Yahya al-Dharir Zaid bin al-Hasan al-Mishri informed us. ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam informed us from his father, from his grandfather, from ‘Umar bin al-Khaththab, who said to al-‘Abbas bin ‘Abd al-Muththalib: “Indeed, I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say: ‘We will expand the mosque, and your house is adjacent to it; so give us your house so that we may add it to the mosque.’””

This narration describes an event during the caliphate of ‘Umar bin al-Khaththab concerning the expansion of the Prophet’s Mosque. As the Muslim population in Medina grew, the mosque became overcrowded and required enlargement. ‘Umar, as caliph, recalled the Prophet’s statement implying “*nazidu fi al-masjid*” (“we will expand the mosque”). This statement served as the basis for ‘Umar’s continued expansion of the mosque during his rule. The house of al-‘Abbas bin ‘Abd al-Muththalib, the Prophet’s uncle, was located very close to the mosque, and ‘Umar requested that the house be donated for the purpose of expansion. (al-Samhūdī, 1997, vol. II: 68-71).

This narration is transmitted through ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam, who is known as a narrator widely criticized by hadith scholars and regarded as *dha’if*. Imām Ahmad, Ibn Ma’in, and other scholars considered him to have poor memorization and to have narrated numerous *munkar* (unacceptable) hadiths. Therefore, the *isnad* of this hadith is considered weak (al-Mizzi, 1980, vol. 17: 114-119). Although the chain of transmission is weak, the narration aligns with established historical facts, namely that ‘Umar’s expansion of the Prophet’s Mosque is also reported in other sources. Furthermore, al-Hakim explains that this hadith is corroborated by the traditions transmitted by the scholars of al-Syām (al-Nisaburi, 1990, vol. III: 374).

3. Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi

Al-Baihaqī assessment can be seen in the introduction to his work, *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, namely *al-Madkhal ila al-Sunan*. He divided the contents of his book into three large groups: first, those related to the terms and principles of hadith science; second, those related to the science of *usul fiqh*; and third, those related to etiquette for scholars (*‘alim*) and students of knowledge

Al-Baihaqī’s assessment can be seen in the introduction to his work *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, titled *al-Madkhal ila al-Sunan*. According to Muhammad ‘Awwamah, in the first part, al-Baihaqī begins with a discussion of *hujjiyyat al-sunnah* (the authority of the Prophet’s Sunnah) and affirms the validity of *khobar al-wahid* (a hadith transmitted through a single chain). He emphasizes the reliability of the narrations transmitted by four Companions; ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar, Abu Hurairah, Samurah bin Jundub, and Mu‘awiyah bin Abi Sufyan; because, in his city of Baihaq at that time, a heretical movement had emerged that cast doubt on their narrations. Following this, al-Baihaqī

discusses specific topics in the science of hadith, such as the criteria for accepting or rejecting a narrator, the permissibility of narrating by meaning and its related branches, *tadlīs* (concealment in transmission), falsehoods, methods for distinguishing between authentic and weak narrations, *mursal* reports, and narrators who transmitted and later forgot (Muhammad ‘Awwamah, 2017, p. 10).

As for the sources al-Bayhaqī used, particularly in the first two sections (hadith and *ushul*), the most important were the works of Imam al-Syafi‘ī: *al-Risalah*, *al-Umm*, *al-Musnad*, *Ikhtilaf al-Hadits*, and *Ahkam al-Qur’an*. He also referred to the *manaqib* works of Imam al-Syafi‘ī written by al-Hakim, al-Abiri, and Ibn Abi Hatim. From the collections of hadith, he drew extensively upon *al-Mustadrak*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, the latter being a principal source for him, as he transmitted hadith through his own chain—and he frequently connected these narrations to the *al-Shahihain* (al-Bukhari and Muslim) or to one of them. He also often cited hadith transmitted through the lines of al-Thayalisi, al-Ḥumaidī, and others (Muhammad ‘Awwamah, 2017, p. 11).

From this explanation, al-Baihaqi followed the approach of al-Hakim, Abu Dawud and others. Accordingly, he placed greater emphasis on the study of hadith and fiqh (*hadits mutafaqqih*). As noted by ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, issues of jurisprudence and legal rulings derived from hadith appear throughout his works. Therefore, a hadith may be employed for legal reasoning even if its status is *dha’if*, provided certain conditions are met (al-Turkī, 2011, p. 63), especially within Syāfi‘ī school. Abu al-Ma’ali ‘Abd al-Malik bin ‘Abdillah al-Juwaini (d. 478 AH/1085 AD) remarked that al-Baihaqi’s immense efforts in authoring, defending, and compiling monumental works made it appear as though al-Syafi‘ī himself was indebted to him (al-Dzahabi, 1985, vol. XVIII: 168).

According to ‘Isa Thahir Jaudah, al-Baihaqi himself is considered to have shown *tasahul* in narrating a weak hadith when there were other supporting indications (‘Isā, 2019, p. 386). For example, a hadith supported by *mutaba’at* or *syawahid* such as hadith number 10.907, which is narrated in a *mursal* form (al-Baihaqī, 2011, vol. XI: 225-226). Thus, al-Baihaqi’s *tasahul* is based on certain supporting indications rather than being without justification, particularly when the matter relates to the fiqh of the Syāfi‘ī school.

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From the above explanation, three categories of literary critics can be summarized as follows:

Table 1: categories of literary critics

No.	Category	Figure	Assessment criteria
1.	<i>Mutasyaddid</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yahya bin Ma'in (d. 233 AH/848 AD) - al-Jauzajani (d. 259 AH/873 AD) - Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 277 AH/890 AD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary - Firm - Direct - Without much elaboration - Narrations through their students
2.	<i>Mu'tadil</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241 AH/855 AD) - al-Bukhari (d. 256 AH/870 AD) - Abu Zur'ah (d. 264 AH/878 AD) - Ibn 'Adi (d. 365 AH/976 AD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mention the full name of the narrators - Narrations of assessment from previous scholars - Their residence - The status of the hadiths - Some have books of hadith criticism
3.	<i>Mutasahil</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abu 'Isa al-Tirmidzi (d. 279 AH/892 AD) - Abu 'Abd Allah al-Hakim (d. 405 AH/1014 AD) - Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi (d. 458 AH/1066 AD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the study of fiqh hadith - More aligned with a certain school of jurisprudence - Choose a variety of assessments - Some of the criticisms are in the book of <i>ḥadiṣ riwayah</i>

From the data above, the *mutasyaddid* category spans from the second half of the 2nd century AH/8th century AD to the second half of the 3rd century AH/9th century

AD. The criteria applied by critics in this category are characterized by brevity, firmness, and directness toward the narrators being evaluated, with minimal elaboration beyond essential information such as the year of death, teachers and students, place of residence, and similar details. Furthermore, this category is represented through direct assessments made by the critics themselves, rather than through their authored works. These evaluations are preserved in compilations written by their students (See the explanation on *su'alat* in al-Majid, 2015). For instance, *Tarikh Ibn Ma'in* written by students of Yahya bin Ma'in such as Ibn Mahraz, al-Darimi, al-Dauri, Abu Manshur al-Syaibani, and *Su'alat Ibn al-Junaid* on Yahya bin Ma'in. These two works are not autographs of Yahya bin Ma'in himself but rather records of his assessments written by his students (al-Halil, n.d., p. 72; al-Syahwad, n.d., p. 284).

The *mu'tadil* category extends from the second half of the 2nd century AH/8th century AD to the second half of the 4th century AH/10th century AD. The criteria applied by critics in this category include providing the narrator's full name, basing their evaluations on the assessments of earlier scholars or on established critical traditions, and offering further elaboration with additional details such as the narrator's place of residence, the status of his hadiths, and his teachers. The evaluation of *mu'tadil* critics were partly recorded in their own works and partly preserved through the writings of their students. Examples include *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* by al-Bukhari, *Asami al-Dhu'afa'* by Abu Zur'ah as transmitted by al-Bardza'i, and *al-Kamil* by Ibn 'Adi which were authored by the critics themselves. Meanwhile, other works were preserved through the transmissions of their students, such as *Su'alat Abi Dawud li Ahmad*, which contains questions posed by the narrator Abu Dāwūd to Ahmad bin Hanbal (al-Halil, n.d., p. 72; al-Syahwad, n.d., p. 284).

The *mutasāhil* category spans from the first half of the 3rd century AH/9th century AD to the first half of the 5th century AH/11th century AD. This period is generally regarded as the formative era of the early schools of (Masud, 1991). The criteria applied by critics in this category include a focus on the study of hadith and fiqh, a tendency to favor hadith narrations associated with certain fiqh schools, particularly the Syafi'i school, an openness to diverse and alternative evaluations, and authorship of hadith compilations. Their method of identification is almost identical to that of the *mu'tadil* category, namely by mentioning the narrator's full name, basing evaluations on

earlier scholars or critical traditions, and providing elaboration through supplementary information such as the narrator's residence, the status of his hadiths, and his teachers. Their evaluations were recorded in their own works rather than through the writings of their students. Examples include *al-'Ilal* by al-Tirmidzi, *al-Madkhal ila Kitab al-Iklil* by al-Hakim and *al-Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Baihaqi.

Marahil: Narration (Riwayah), Correction (Tashih), and Following Madhhab (Tamadhub)

The categorization of hadith critics proposed by al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawi more accurately reflects a periodization (*marahil*) of hadith criticism rather than a methodological distinction (*manahij*). This periodization can be divided into three major stages: the period of narration (*riwayah*), correction (*tashih*), and the period of adherence to legal schools (*tamadhub*).

The first stage, the period of narration (*riwayah*), coincided with the phenomenon of hadith fabrication (*wadh'u*). The widespread production of forged hadiths demanded rapid and precise evaluation, particularly in centers of learning such as Kūfah and Baṣrah. Scholars at this time sought to prevent fabricated reports from infiltrating the corpus of authentic hadiths. Consequently, their assessments of narrators were limited to two options: *tsiqah* or not, with no intermediate categories (compare with 'Abd Allah, 2024, p. 47). Hadith critics were therefore compelled to make swift judgments about the reliability of narrators. Moreover, these assessments were transmitted orally, as writing and other recording media were not yet widely used, being reserved primarily for the Qur'an. (al-Qalqasyandi, 1987, vol. II: 515-516; Snober, 2021, p. 198). They also did not compile independent works devoted solely to the evaluation of narrators. As the number of narrations increased, however, students from this first period began collecting and recording the assessments of earlier critics such as Yahya bin Ma'in, al-Jauzajani and Abu Hatim al-Razi.

Mutasyaddid hadith critics, such as Syu'bah bin al-Hajjaj emerged in Baṣrah, a city known for the prevalence of fabricated hadiths. According to Snober, Syu'bah's critical approach was deeply influenced by his background in poetic and literary criticism. This was partly due to the absence of a strong legacy of fiqh scholarship in Baṣrah and his

adoption of historical verification (*tatsabbut tarikhi*) as a means of examining hadith transmissions (Snober, 2021, pp. 234–238). The widespread falsification and general weakness of hadiths circulating in Basra compelled many critics to adopt a rigorous and uncompromising stance toward hadith authentication.

These critics operated under two main principles. First, they applied strict standards to the circulating hadiths, classifying them solely as either accepted (*maqbul*) or rejected (*mardud*), with no intermediate category. Second, their evaluations of narrators followed the same binary system: a narrator was either accepted (*maqbul*) or rejected (*mardud*). As a result, narrator criticism during this period was concise and categorical, focusing only on the reliability of the narrator, without elaborating on related biographical details such as teachers, students, or place of origin. In fact, Syu'bah's criticism extended beyond oral narrations; he also identified written compilations that contained fabricated reports, as in the case of Abu Harun 'Imarah bin Juwain al-'Abdi (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952, vol. I: 149; VI: 363).

The *second* stage is the period of correction (*tashih*), which corresponds to the phase of verification (*tatsabbut*). During this period, hadith critics had already accumulated a substantial amount of information about narrators from the earlier *riwayah* stage. Drawing upon this earlier material, critics in the *tashih* period were able to process, filter, and further elaborate the available data by comparing it with additional sources and contextual information. The scholarly output of this period included systematically organized works on narrator criticism. Some of these were authored directly by the critics themselves, such as *al-Tarikh al-Kabir* by al-Bukhari, *Asami al-Dhu'afa'* by Abu Zur'ah as transmitted by al-Bardza'i, and *al-Kamil* by Ibn 'Adi. These were preserved through the writings of their students, such as *Su'alat Abi Dawud li Ahmad*, which contains questions posed by Abu Dawud to Ahmad bin Hanbal concerning various narrators. The main focus of this stage was the authentication and codification of hadith. As a result, scholars began to verify and reconcile multiple evaluations concerning individual narrators, reflecting a more analytical and comparative approach to narrator criticism.

The *final* stage is the period of adherence to a particular school of law (*tamadhub*) which is synonymous with the *ijtihad* of particular madhhabs (*ijtihad al-*

madzhab), primarily Syafi'i school. The *tamadhub* period is characterized by what the *tashih* period had done: verifying several judgments concerning a single narrator but now according to a particular school of thought. Scholars from this period each produced distinguished works in *hadis dirayah*, such as Abu 'Isa al-Tirmidzi in his *al-'Ilal*, as well as in *riwayah al-ḥadīṣ*, such as Abu 'Abd Allah al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak* and Abu Bakr al-Baihaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*. This period was no longer limited to verifying multiple assessments of a single narrator, but also emphasized the principle of the benefit or practical usefulness of a hadith, even if the hadith was considered *dha'if*.

Criticism of Narrators and Periodization

From the various periods, it can be concluded that narrator criticism has evolved over time. The *riwayah* period tended to be exclusive from the critic's perspective and lacked alternative options. The *tashih* period was somewhat inclusive, offering several alternative options, although sometimes there was controversy, as with the methods used by al-Bukhari and Muslim. Next came the *tamaḏhub* period, which focused not only on *tashih* but also on the principle of the benefit or usefulness of hadith. This final period is considered *mutasāhil* because it did not strictly apply the rules of narrator criticism and did not require the hadith to be authentic.

The reason is that critics of the *mutasāhil* category often accepted *dha'if* hadith based on their perceived usefulness or utility, not solely on the basis of their criticism of the narrators themselves. Furthermore, they might judge the narrators in their own books as authentic based on their independent evaluation. In this regard, 'Abd Allah bin Muslim Ibn Qutaibah (d. 276 AH/889 AD) said (al-Dīnawarī, 1999, p. 63):

“Indeed, you will hardly see two people who are truly in agreement, unless each of them chooses what the other chooses and criticizes what the other criticizes, unless that occurs purely by taqlīd.”

In this statement, Ibn Qutaibah explains the nature of human differences in judgment and choice, including in matters of knowledge, religion, and hadith criticism. According to him, it is almost impossible to find two people who completely agree on all choices—what is considered good, true, or acceptable, and what is considered weak, wrong, or rejected. Some strengthen certain narrations, while others weaken them; some

accept, and others reject. All of this is natural due to the nature of human thinking. What is unnatural is if two people agree on everything without any differences, unless one of them is blindly following the other (al-Dinawari, 1999, pp. 63–64).

Thus, Ibn Qutaibah viewed differences in the assessment of hadith as a form of intellectual wealth. This is supported by al-Tahanāwī who stated that the criticism of narrators and the determination of the quality of hadith are *amr ijthadi, wa li kull wijhah* (matters of *ijtihādī*, each with its own perspective). Even Ahmad bin Ali bin Hajar Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 852 AH/1449 AD) in *Fath al-Bari* and Yahya bin Syaraf al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH/1277 AD) in *Syarḥ Shahih Muslim* said that there were several critics who considered the hadith in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Shahih Muslim*, who were considered *mu'tadil* in their criticism, to be not all valid (al-Tahanāwī, 1972, pp. 49–55).

Therefore, the criticism of narrators is not solely based on the categories of *mutasyaddid*, *mu'tadil*, or *mutasāhil*. These categories represent periodization rather than methodological approaches. Therefore, valid criticism of narrators should be elaborated and strengthened by the internal indications of each hadith, as stated by al-Mallibari (al-Mallibari, 2001, 2003). If only following the three-category division made by al-Dzahabi and al-Sakhawi, then that category will fall into the *zhahir al-isnad* madhhab. The weakness of this madhhab is that it will contain many weak narrators if applied consistently. In addition, the quality of the *isnad* depends on the scholars' assessment of the narrators. One narrator may have different standards and criteria applied to him than another. Thus, inconsistencies in assessment will occur (Amin, 2009, p. 102).

For example Qatadah bin Di'amah al-Sadusi. If we look at the narration of al-Baihaqi, which is considered *mutasahil*, then the assessment of his hadith is considered *tasahul*. However, this narrator is also included in the narration of al-Bukhari which is considered *mu'tadil* (Ṭal'at, 2005, pp. 368–382). If we only focus on one of the three categories, then the status of the hadith will be unclear. Likewise, if *tadlis* is due to the use of 'an, is that really the case? 'An narration in certain periods, such as the time of 'Abd al-Razzaq bin Hammam al-Shan'ani (d. 211 AH/827 AD), was considered the same as *haddatsana* (Motzki, 1991; cf. Omar, 2025). This is the importance of *qara'in* madhhab. Each hadith has its own indications and characteristics, not only based on *isnad* assessment alone (Snober, 2020).

Furthermore, the standardization made by post-canonical scholars such as Ibn al-Şalāḥ is inappropriate. The proof is that this standard cannot be applied to *Muṣannaf ‘Abd al-Razzaq* who narrated from Ma’mar bin Rasyid with ‘an (Amin, 2004; Kara, 2024; Motzki, 2005). Likewise, the term *hasan shahih* yang used by al-Tirmidzi would not fit Ibn al-Shalah’s definition (al-Mallibari, 2003, pp. 21–31). Therefore, the terms *mutasyaddid*, *mu’tadil* and *mutasāhil* are not appropriately considered as *manāhij al-jarh wa al-ta’dil* (methods of negative and positive assessment of narrators). These three categories constitute a periodization (*marahil zamaniyyah*) of narrators’ assessment, not a method (*manahij*).

These three categories are indeed helpful in classifying hadith critics. However, this classification oversimplifies a very broad critique. This simplification polarizes hadith criticism and leads to the trap of *zhahir al-isnad* madzhab. Falling into this trap, the principles used appear inconsistent. Each critic has its own school of thought and criteria (Akmaluddin, 2023). Yet, each hadith has its own indications and characteristics (*qara’in wa mulabasat khashshah*). A narration by a narrator with his teacher has *qara’in wa mulabasat khashshah*. To the extent that Ibn Hajar wrote a special book for *qara’in wa mulabasat khashshah* in *Hady al-Sari Muqaddimah Fath al-Bari* and *Taghliq al-Ta’liq* to save al-Bukhari’s criteria and standards (al-‘Asqalani, 1405, 1961). Thus, *mutasyaddid*, *mu’tadil* and *mutasāhil* are a form of simplification of rawi criticism and its periodization, not a method of criticism of narrators.

Conclusion

The categories of *mutasyaddid*, *mu’tadil* and *mutasahil* are not methodological but chronological. These three categories represent the historical development of the study and criticism of narrators. When viewed as chronological, the practice of narrator criticism can be understood as a dynamic and evolving discipline. Conversely, if regarded as methodological, narrator criticism becomes oversimplified and reductive, leading to the standardization of various concepts and principles of hadith science that have long been in use. Such simplification and standardization would confine the scope of narrator criticism to the isnād alone (the madhhab of *zhahir al-isnad*) disregarding the broader indications and distinctive features present in each hadith, both in its chain of transmission and in its text. Consequently, narrator criticism would become rigid and

static, focusing solely on the *isnād* and neglecting its interpretive and historical dimensions.

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