Modern Historical Methodology vs. Hadeeth Methodology

(part 1 of 5): Western Historical Methodology

The study of hadeeth is one that goes back centuries and has been the subject of much discussion among both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some scholars deem the collections of hadeeth as unauthentic and something to be disregarded, while others claim the opposite. Where exactly does the truth lie? As a starting point, it is helpful to examine criticism according to hadeeth methodology compared to criticism according to modern, western historical methodology. Therefore the purpose of this paper shall be to first explain the general guidelines for authenticating and verifying historical sources, then to explain the general guidelines used in authenticating and verifying hadeeth, and finally to compare the two processes.

Modern, Western Historical Methodology

When events occur, they can be known by contemporaries who then pass on their knowledge and understanding (Lucey 20)[1]. In daily life, people accept that knowledge of events can be passed on from the witnesses of those events, and that they can be transmitted exactly. Indeed, in a court of law, through the testimonies of witnesses to a particular event, facts are established beyond a reasonable doubt (Lucey 22). According to one historian, "Testimony, sufficient, reliable testimony, is a source of unimpeachable, indisputable knowledge of historical events" (Lucey 20). It is from the reliable testimony of contemporaries of events that historical knowledge is derived (Lucey 18). Therefore, the aim of historical methodology is to determine if the various testimonies that reach us today can be accepted as sound evidence.

Once a historian has collected his sources anything that directly or indirectly provides information about a particular event (e.g. a book, a scroll, a broken piece of pottery, a picture, a radio clip, an oral tradition)he must then evaluate them using the techniques of criticism. These historical sources or "witnesses" provide information or testimony. It is the role of external criticism to establish the authenticity of a source (the fact of testimony) and its integrity (the freedom from corruption during transmission). In comparison, internal criticism is concerned with establishing the true meaning of a testimony and the credibility of a witness (Lucey 23). Ultimately, the basic principles of source criticism are what lead to the establishment of facts, or to the debunking of previously established ones (Marwick 196)[2].

External Criticism

External criticism involves investigating the origin of a particular source – as opposed to its content, which is the concern of internal criticism. The historian needs to seek out all possible information regarding the sources origin, as well as possibly restore the source to its original form (Lucey 23). This is in order to establish the authenticity of the source. Determining the authenticity of a source means establishing that the testimony is indeed that of the person to whom it is attributed, or that it belongs to the period to which it claims to belong, and that it is what it claims itself to be. Seeking out all possible information regarding the sources origin is also necessary for establishing the integrity of the source; i.e., that it has not been corrupted during its transmission to the present time, and if it has, that the changes are identified.

There are many different kinds of questions that need to be answered in order to establish the fact of testimony, the first step of external criticism. One needs to determine the origin of the source as well as where it was originally found (Marwick 222). For example, if one finds Egyptian pottery in excavations in Yemen, then where it was found would be of great significance in that it would hint at trade between the two countries. Additionally, one needs to know the date of the source and determine how close its date is to the dates pertaining to the topic under investigation (Marwick 222). Another important matter to determine is how it relates to other important dates. All this information pertaining to the origin of the source will also prove useful in determining its credibility by way of internal criticism later on.

It is worth noting here that historians distinguish between authorship and authenticity, even though "identifying the author is the first step in establishing authenticity" (Lucey 47). It is possible for an anonymous document to be authentic, such as the early writings that appeared under pseudonyms, as long as it is known to what year or period and place the document belongs. However, in certain cases the author of a document must be established in order to determine the authenticity of a source.

The second and last step in external criticism consists of an examination of the sources integrity. In other words, it must be ascertained that the source or testimony has reached the historian uncorrupted. Only then is the fact of testimony absolutely established (Lucey 62). If changes have been made in the testimony, he must be able to distinguish the original from the changes in order for the source to remain authentic. Although there may be unintentional or intentional additions and deletions made to the original source or its copies, it must be established that the source or testimony is at least substantially integral. It is worth noting here that corruption resulting from careless copying is quite a common occurrence and can potentially lead to great misunderstanding (Lucey 62). With this much being established, the historian can now move on to evaluate the testimony.

Footnotes:

[1] Lucey, William. *History: Methods and Interpretation*. Chicago: Loyola UP, 1958.

[2] Marwick, Arthur. *The Nature of History*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1989.

(part 2 of 5): Internal Criticism

Internal Criticism

Internal criticism is concerned with the content of the source and naturally follows its external criticism (Lucey 24). The goal in this step is to establish the credibility of the testimony. To start with, the historian must be sure to understand what the witness meant by his testimony. Only then can the historian be able to properly determine the credibility of the witness under question. Establishing the credibility of the witness means establishing both his competence (that he speaks out of knowledge) and veracity (that he is truthful). In practice, some testimonies are rejected on the basis of the aforementioned tests, though a considerable amount of testimonies are established as reliable (Lucey 24).

Given that language is constantly in a state of change, determining the true meaning of a testimony is not an easy task. Oftentimes words are not used

literally and new meanings become attached to them. The historian needs to figure out the meaning which the author or witness attaches to particular words in order to properly understand the testimony. He also needs to be familiar with the idioms used at the time of the sources origin. Obviously the historian must be fluent in the language used in the source and trained in philology to undertake this task.

In order to properly understand a source or testimony, it is also necessary to know what kind of person or people created the source; in other words, what their attitudes and interests were (Marwick 223). One should inquire into their education, position in life, political views, and character (Lucey 73). Also important is their age and temperament (Lucey 78). This knowledge will also prove useful in determining the credibility of the witness. Furthermore, it is important to know how and why the particular source came about as well as for whom it was intended. After the historian has correctly understood the content of the testimony and what the witness intended to say, he can move on to examine the credibility of the witness.

The next step is to establish if the person or people behind the source were indeed in a position to know first-hand about the matter under investigation and whether they were honest. It is said that the proper attitude at this juncture is to be neither gullible nor skeptical in order to do justice to the source in question (Lucey 73). A witness's testimony should not be discounted unless he has been completely discredited. It is acceptable for a witness to make some mistakes so long as his testimony remains substantially true. In the words of one historian,

> "The credibility of testimony, then, derives from the competence and veracity of the witness, and these two qualifications must not be taken for granted. His ability to observe must be established, the opportunity to observe verified, his honesty ascertained, his testimony compared with that of other witnesses to discount the errors any one witness may make" (Lucey 73-4).

Also among the items that help establish the credibility of a source is knowledge of the type of source, including its nature and purpose (Lucey 77). Each type of source will have its own criteria of evaluation. For example, a political platform would not be looked at in the same way as an editorial (Lucey 77). In addition, certain witness' veracity, moral character, and competence are already well established, particularly those in public life (Lucey 78). Therefore, the testimonies of such witnesses need not be challenged unless proven otherwise.

There are a few matters that the historian must be careful of at this step. He should be careful not to assume that a witness's opportunity to observe means that he is competent. Not only does it need to be established that the opportunity was real, but it also must be established that a competent witness took advantage of it. Another matter to note is the common sources of error. At the top of the list are faulty memory and prejudices, though weaknesses such as a defective sense of observation also pose a serious challenge (Lucey

75). Such weaknesses on the part of the witness or author of a source can easily lead to misunderstandings on the part of the historian.

Although historians are reluctant to accept the testimony of one witness, they are justified in doing so as long as the witness is qualified. Naturally more than one witness is preferred, and the more the better. Of course the witnesses should be competent and honest, and should have been near the reported event or at least took their knowledge from those who were (Lucey 79). The more qualified witnesses there are, the easier the task of the historian. He can then compare testimonies and eliminate errors in them, as well as use his reliable sources in determining the reliability of any new witnesses.

In comparing one source with others to determine credibility, there are three possibilities. They can agree with the source in question, they can disagree, or they can be silent. Agreement between the sources is not enough to establish the credibility of a source in question. It needs to be determined if the sources are independent, as otherwise one can suspect a conspiracy or dependence on one original source (Lucey 80). Especially if an event was public, then there should be many independent accounts of it. However, if the sources disagree or contradict, then one needs to examine the degree of the difference and the nature of the sources. Differences on minor points and details are not enough to discredit the source in question, and in fact they are common and expected (Lucey 81). One should be careful not to confuse between flat or apparent contradictions and real ones, and realize that carefully and patiently sticking to the rules of criticism will probably resolve an apparent contradiction (Lucey 83). However if there is a real contradiction, then none of the sources can be used until one of them gains credibility on some other grounds. If the subject happens to be a controversial problem, then the testimonies of interested parties and extremists must be handled with great care.

The third possible scenario is that of the sources being silent on the testimony in question. The attitude towards such a testimony is negative, though it is not immediately rejected. In order to reject the testimony, it must be established that the silent witnesses were capable of knowing about the event and were in a position where they needed to report it (Lucey 84). However, these are hard to establish matters.

After the historian has sifted through his sources and rigorously applied the rules of external and internal criticism, he is ready to write. The ordering and synthesizing of all the materials into the correct reconstruction of an event is a challenging task that involves interpretation on the part of the historian. The manner in which he interprets his reliable sources shapes his reconstruction of a particular event.

(part 3 of 5): Hadeeth Methodology

A Prophetic hadeeth is a narration from or about the Prophet Muhammad (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him), and it is through the ahadeeth (plural of hadeeth) that Muslims know about the Prophet's way of life, the Sunnah. Such knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for fulfilling the Muslim's most basic religious requirements, and the Prophet naturally made it a point to spread this knowledge about himself during his lifetime.

The Prophet sought to teach his Companions through different ways such as repetition, questioning, dictation, and practical demonstration. After teaching them he would listen to what they had learnt. Along with his Companions, deputations from outside were educated in both the Quran and the Sunnah. The Prophet would question them as well to see what they had learnt (Azami 9)[1]. Furthermore, the letters sent by the Prophet, some of which were quite lengthy and dealt with a wide range of legal matters, also constituted a means of teaching his Sunnah. Apparently there must have been a great deal of writing in general as it is said that he had at least forty-five scribes at one time or another (Azami 10). He also would dictate to different companions such as Ali b. Abu Talib, and he is known to have sent copies of his sermons to certain people. Last but not least was the practical example he lay for his followers with his clear instructions to do as he does (i.e., "Pray as you see me praying" [Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 11, No. 604] and "Learn from me the rituals of pilgrimage" [Sahih Muslim, Book on Hajj, No. 310]). He was known to advise a questioner to stay with him and learn by observing him (Azami 10).

Other measures were taken by the Prophet to spread knowledge of his Sunnah, such as the establishment of what may be regarded as schools. It is known that these were established in Madinah soon after his arrival, and that he would send teachers to various places outside of the city. He emphasized to his Companions to pass on knowledge about him, and among his sayings are "Pass on knowledge from me even if it is only one verse" (Azami 10). In his famous farewell sermon he is reported to have said, "Those who are present (here) should convey the message to those who are absent." [Bukhari, Vol. 2, Book 26, No. 795] Consequently it was a common practice among his Companions to inform those who were absent about the Prophet's sayings and actions. Additionally, the Prophet would specifically instruct delegations to teach their people what they had learnt upon their return. He encouraged all this activity by informing on the great rewards for teaching and learning, as well as the possible punishment for refusing to do so (Azami 12).

On the part of the Prophet's Companions, it should be remembered how people take care to watch and imitate the actions and sayings of one they love and admire. It is well known the extent of love the Prophet's Companions had for him and that many would unhesitatingly die to protect him. Given this and their excellent memories, as well as the various methods the Prophet himself employed to teach his Sunnah, it would seem safe to assume that they did indeed know his Sunnah. In fact, reports show that they not only tried to learn it, but they tried to preserve it through various means such as memorization and recording. There are various examples of the Companions of the Prophet

memorizing together and cultivating what they had just learned from the Prophet (Azami 13). Many of them are known to have recorded the hadeeth, and following the Prophets instruction, they would emulate him based on what they had learned. After the Prophets death, there are several reports showing that they continued in their efforts to memorize, practice, and preserve what they had learned from him. Furthermore, there are reports showing Companions such as Ali b. Abu Talib, Ibn Masud, and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri advising the people who came after them (the Successors) to memorize the hadeeth, which they would do either individually or collectively in groups (Azami 15).

After the Prophets death, Islam spread beyond Arabia to distant lands. As the Companions of the Prophet were the ones who pioneered the expansion, it follows that the knowledge of hadeeth that they had went with them, and that not all of it remained in Madinah. Therefore, it is possible that a certain Sunnah was known to particular Companions who had left to settle in some distant land. As was previously mentioned, the Companions saw to it that those who came after them, the Successors, continued in the learning and preservation of hadeeth so that the knowledge would not be lost. However, now that the knowledge of the Sunnah was not concentrated in one place but had spread to different parts of the Muslim world, the likelihood of making errors arose, and consequently techniques for criticism had to be developed, especially after the first fitnah (Azami 49). Additionally, with the spread of the Sunnah, new techniques had to be developed for learning hadeeth.

Though all the techniques were important in preserving the hadeeth, the practice of a teacher reading to their students was a particularly significant technique that was developed very early. This included reading by the teacher from the students book, which was either a complete or partial copy of the teachers book (Azami 17). Students and scholars would test their teachers knowledge by inserting hadeeth throughout the book before giving it to their teacher for reading. Teachers who didnt recognize the additions were "denounced and declared untrustworthy" (Azami 17). Additionally, it is said that from the beginning of the second century, the technique of reading by the students to their teachers became the most common practice (Azami 19). This was done in the presence of other students who would then compare with what they had in their books or listen carefully. In copying, it is said that they would usually make a circular mark after every hadeeth, and that once the hadeeth had been read to the teacher a mark would be made in the circle or elsewhere to indicate so. Also, every additional time a hadeeth was read to the teacher another mark would be made indicating so, and at times scholars would read the same book many times. The reason probably was to counter-act the challenges presented by the Arabic scriptthe reporter had to hear a particular hadeeth from the person from whom he is transmitting, and transmit exactly what he heard (thus the grading of reporters became necessary to know who did this best) (Burton 110-111)[2]. Furthermore, from a very early time, the necessity of reviewing copies became evident, and it is reported that teachers

would help their students in this task to eliminate copying mistakes. It is important to know that one who did not follow the proper methods in teaching or compiling his own book could be accused of stealing hadeeth, even if the material was authentic. Hence it was critical that the hadeeth were obtained properly. There are several other techniques, but for the purpose of this paper it is important to know that the scholars of hadeeth used special terms in the transmission of a hadeeth, depending upon the technique employed in teaching it. Also worth pointing out is that these special terms such as "haddathana," "akhbarana," and "an," are often mistaken to mean that the transmission was strictly oral, although it has been shown that this was not the case.

Footnotes:

[1] Azami, Muhammad. *Studies in hadeeth Methodology and Literature*. Indiana: American Trust, 1977.

[2] Burton, John. *An Introduction to the hadeeth. Edinburgh*: Edinburgh UP, 1994.

(part 4 of 5): The Classification of Hadeeth I

The people involved in the transmission of a hadeeth constitute its *isnad*. The *isnad* informs us about the hadeeth's source, and this information later became an essential part of the hadeeth (Azami 31). Abdullah b. Al-Mubarak, one of the teachers of al-Bukhari, is reported to have said, "The *isnad* is part of the religion: had it not been for the *isnad*, whoever wished to would have said whatever he liked" (Hasan 11)[1]. There is some indication that the *isnad* was used before the first tribulation, though it was not until the end of the first century of the Hijrah that it was fully developed (Azami 33). (However, John Burton in his *An Introduction to the Hadith* says that the *isnad* did not yet exist in the first century) The other part of the hadeeth that actually contains the specific saying or action of the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, is its *matn* or text.

For the classification of hadeeth, there are several broad categories, of which only seven will be very briefly discussed here. The seven categories are classifications according to 1) the reference to a particular authority, 2) the links in the *isnad*, 3) the number of reporters involved in each stage of the *isnad*, 4) the technique used in reporting the hadeeth, 5) the nature of the *isnad* and *matn*, 6) a hidden defect found in the hadeeth's *isnad* or *matn*, and 7) the reliability and memory of the reporters (Hasan 14-16).

The first category, classification according to the reference to a particular authority, pertains to whether it goes back to the Prophet, a Companion, or a Successor. A *marfu'* or "elevated" narration is one that back to the Prophet, and this is regarded as the best grade (Burton 112). A *mawqoof* or "stopped" narration is one that goes back to a Companion, while a *maqtu'* or "severed" narration is one that goes back to a Successor. This classification is significant

in that it differentiates between the Prophet's sayings and actions and that of a Companion or Successor.

The second category, classification according to the links in the *isnad*, makes several different distinctions. The *musnad* or "supported" hadeeth is the best out of the group as it contains no break in the chain of authorities reporting the hadeeth back to the Prophet (Burton 111). The *mursal* or "unattached" hadeeth is one that contains a gap of one generation (according to both Azami and Hasan it is a hadeeth reported by a Successor who drops the Companion from whom he learned it in the *isnad*). The *munqati'* or "broken" hadeeth is one which is missing a link closer to the traditionalist reporting it (i.e., before the Successor). This applies even if there appears to be no break in the chain, if it is known that one of the reporters could not have heard hadeeth from the immediate authority given in the *isnad*, even if they are contemporaries. The term *munqati'* also is used by some scholars to refer to a hadeeth in which a reporter does not name his authority and instead says, "a man narrated to me" (Hasan 22). A hadeeth is *mu'dal* or "perplexing" if more than one consecutive reporter is missing in the *isnad*. If the *isnad* is dropped altogether and the reporter directly quotes the Prophet, then the hadeeth is considered *mu'allaq* or "hanging" (Hassan 22).

Within the third category, hadeeth are classified according to how many reporters are in each stage of the *isnad*, i.e. in each generation of reporters. The two main classifications are *mutawatir* ("consecutive") and *ahad* ("single"), though *ahad* is further divided into many subdivisions, among them *ghareeb* ("scarce" or "strange"), *'azeez* ("rare" or "strong"), and *mash'hoor* ("famous"). A *mutawatir* hadeeth is one that is reported by a large number of people whose agreement upon a lie is not reasonably possible and in which the possibility of coincidence is negligible. The minimum number of required reporters differs among the scholars of hadeeth, and ranges from four to several hundred (Azami 43). The hadeeth may be *mutawatir* in either meaning or words, the former being the more common one. Al-Ghazali stipulated that the hadeeth must be *mutawatir* in the beginning, middle, and last stages of its *isnad* (Hasan 30). A hadeeth that is *ahad* is one whose number of reporters does not come near to that required for a *mutawatir* hadeeth. A hadeeth is classified as *ghareeb* if at any stage (or every stage) in the *isnad* there is only one person reporting it. A hadeeth is classified as *'azeez* if at every stage in the *isnad* there are at least two people reporting it. If at least three people report a hadeeth in every stage of its *isnad*, then it is classified as *mash'hoor*, although the term is also applied to those hadeeth which start out as *ghareeb* or *'azeez* but then end up with a larger number of reporters (Hasan 32).

In the fourth category, hadeeth are classified according to manner in which they are reported. As was mentioned earlier, there is a corresponding special term to denote a particular mode of learning or transmission when a student or scholar learned a hadeeth. *"Haddathana,"* *"akhbarana,"* and *"sami'tu"* all indicate that the reporter personally heard the hadeeth from his own sheikh.

"*An*" and "*qaala*" are more vague and can signify either hearing from the sheikh in person or through someone else. Actually, "*'an*" is very inferior and can signify learning the hadeeth through any one of various modes of transmission (Azami 22). A hadeeth can be labeled as weak due to the uncertainty caused by using the latter two terms, which respectively translate into "on the authority of" and "he said" (Hasan 33). One who practices *tadlees*, "concealing", reports from his sheikh that which he did not hear from him, or reports from a contemporary whom he never met. This violates the principle that a hadeeth must be heard first-hand in order to be transmitted (Burton 112). Another type of *tadlees*, which is considered the worst among them, is when a reliable scholar reports from a weak authority who is in turn reporting from a reliable scholar. The person who is reporting this *isnad* may show that he heard it from his sheikh, but then omits the weak authority and simply uses the term "*'an*" to link his sheikh with the next trustworthy one in the *isnad* (Hasan 34).

If throughout the *isnad* all the reporters (including the Prophet) use the same mode of transmission, repeat an additional statement or remark, or act in a particular way while narrating the hadeeth, then it is called *musalsal* ("uniformly-linked"). This type of knowledge is useful for discounting the possibility of *tadlees* in a particular hadeeth (Hassan 35).

Footnotes:

[1] Hasan, Suhaib. *An Introduction to the Science of hadeeth*. Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996.

(part 5 of 5): The Classification of Hadeeth II

According to the fifth category, a hadeeth can also be classified with respect to the nature of its text and *isnad*. According to Al-Shafi'i, if a hadeeth reported by a trustworthy person goes against the narration of someone more reliable than him, then the hadeeth is *shadh* or "irregular". According to Ibn Hajar, if a narration by a weak reporter contradicts an authentic hadeeth, then that hadeeth is classified as *munkar* ("denounced"), although some scholars would classify any hadeeth of a weak reporter as *munkar*. A hadeeth could also be classified as *munkar* if its text contradicts general sayings of the Prophet. If a hadeeth reported by a reliable person contains some additional information not narrated by other authentic sources, the addition is accepted so long as it doesn't contradict them, and the addition is known as *ziyadatu thiqah* ("an addition by one trustworthy"). However, if a reporter adds something to the hadeeth being narrated, then the hadeeth is classified as *mudraj* or "interpolated". If this occurs in a hadeeth, then it is usually in its text and often for the purpose of explaining a difficult word. In a few examples this occurs in the isnad - a reporter takes a part of one *isnad* and adds it to another *isnad*. A reporter found in the habit of intentional *idraj* or interpolation

is generally considered a liar, although scholars are more lenient with those reporters who may do it to explain a difficult word (Hasan 37-39).

In the sixth category, hadeeth that contain hidden defects in their *isnad* or text are classified as *ma'lool* or *mu'allal* ("defective"). This could be due to such things as classifying a hadeeth as *musnad* when it is actually *mursal* or attributing a hadeeth to a particular Companion when it really comes from another one. In order to detect such defects, all the *isnads* of a hadeeth have to be collected and examined. For example,

> "Some scholars wrote works on which Successors heard hadeeth from which Companions. From this information is it known that Al-Hasan Al-Basri did not meet Ali, although there is a slight chance that he may have seen him during his childhood in Madinah. This is significant as many Sufi traditions are said to go back to Al-Hasan Al-Basri who is said to have reported directly from Ali." (Hasan 42-43)

There can also be uncertainty about the *isnad* or text, in which case the hadeeth is classified as *mudtarib* ("shaky"). This occurs if reporters disagree about some points in the *isnad* or text in such a way that no opinion prevails. A hadeeth may be classified as *maqloob* ("changed" or "reversed") if in the *isnad* a name was reversed (i.e., Ka'b b. Murra versus Murra b. Ka'b) or if the order of a sentence in the text is reversed (Azami 66). This also applies to those hadeeth whose text has been given a different *isnad* or vice versa, or those in which a reporter's name was replaced with another (Hasan 41-42).

The seventh and last category to be discussed here is classification according to the quality of the reporters, upon which the final verdict on a hadeeth critically depends. Hadeeth reported by those known to be *adil*, *hafiz*, *thabit*, and *thiqa* are the highest ranked hadeeth and are classified as *saheeh* or "sound." For someone to be considered *adil*, he had to be a very pious Muslim, honest and truthful in all of his dealings. Through careful comparison, verbal agreement found in the text of a hadeeth among various transmitters indicated who was the most accurate (*thabit*), the most reliable (*thiqa*), and who had the best memory (*hafiz*). If any scholar falls less than this ideal in one or more categories, but he is not criticized, then the hadeeth reported by him are judged to be less sound, or *hasan* ("fair"). If a reporter was known to have a weak memory or make mistakes due to carelessness, then his hadeeth are judged as *da'eef* ("weak") (Burton 110-111).

Of course, there are other factors which play into the final verdict on a hadeeth, and in the words of Ibn Al-Salah, "A saheeh hadeeth is the one which has a continuous *isnad*, made up of reporters of trustworthy memory from similar authorities, and which is found to be free from any irregularities (i.e. in the text) or defects (i.e., in the *isnad*)." According to Al-Tirmidhi a hasan hadeeth is "A hadeeth which is not *shadhdh*, nor contains a disparaged reporter in its *isnad*, and which is reported through more than one route of narration" (Hasan 44-46). A hadeeth that doesn't reach the requirements for a hasan hadeeth is classified as *da'eef*, and often this is due to discontinuity in

the *isnad*. It can also be classified as *da'eef* if one of the reporters does not have a good reputation for whatever reason, be it because of his making many mistakes or being dishonest. If the defects are many and severe, then the hadeeth is closer to being classified as *mawdu'* or fabricated. According to Al-Dhahabi the *mawdu'* hadeeth is the one whose text goes against established norms of the Prophet's sayings or whose *isnad* contains a liar. A hadeeth can also be established as *mawdu'* due to "external evidence related to a discrepancy found in the dates or times of a particular incident" (Hasan 49).

In conclusion, the aforementioned classifications constitute only a fraction of the total number of classifications that exist. The studies in hadeeth are very complex, and it seems that the scholars thought of every imaginable angle from which to analyze hadeeth. All this was for the purpose of distinguishing between different types of narrations, especially for distinguishing the authentic from the inauthentic.