

Analyses of The Methodological Differences Between Muhaddithun and Usuliyyun in Hadith Criticism

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the difference in methodology between *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun* on *Hadith* discourse. *Hadith* is commonly referred to as words, actions, and tacit approval of the prophet Muhammad ﷺ. A *muhaddith* means someone who is highly knowledgeable and possesses mastery in the field of *Hadith*. An *Usuliy* on the other hand refers to scholars who have expertise on matters related to *Usul al-Fiqh*, namely the principle of Islamic jurisprudence. Differences of opinions between *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun* are thought to have significant methodological variances in *hadith* criticism. Few modern scholars claimed the differences were absent since the *Usuliyyun* merely followed the *Muhaddithun* in matters of critics of *Hadith*. This opinion is nevertheless contrasted by other group scholars. Therefore, this study examined both paradigms on the methodological issues over the criticism of *Hadith* and analyzed their various views. For this purpose, analytical and critical methodologies were used in addition to the descriptive methodology. Classic books of sciences of *Hadith* such as *Fath al-Mughith* and the *Muqaddimah 'Ulum al-Hadith* were analyzed for this purpose. As for *Usul al-Fiqh*, works like *Raudat al-Nazir* and *Nihayat al-Sul* were scrutinized accordingly. This study demonstrated differences indeed existed between these two factions in matters related to criticism of *hadith*, both theoretically and practically.

Keywords: Methodological Differences, Muhaddithun, Usuliyyun, Criticism of Hadith.

Introduction

Hadith criticism is a branch of knowledge that deals with examining the authenticity of the contents of a *hadith* and to assess the continuity of the narration of a *hadith* from narrator to the Prophet ﷺ. The former and latter are a critic of *sanad* (chain of narrators)

and *matan* (text) perceptively (Rohman et al., 2019; Asni et al., 2021; Ismail & Asni, 2018). *Muhaddithun* are those scholars who possess expertise in the field of *hadith* criticism. They are specialists who are intensely involved in the chain of narration, names of narrators, various wording, and compiler of *hadith* (Adam & Altine, 2019). *Usuliyyun* on the other hand, refers to the scholars who specialized in the field of *Usul al-Fiqh*. In classical Islamic scholarship, certain scholars have been attributed to the mastery of both fields. For example, scholars like al-Shaf'ie for example considered to be experts in both fields, but many scholars believe he is predominantly a jurist rather than a *muhaddith* (Abu-Alabbas, 2017). He is known as the first to offer a theoretical discussion of *hadith* criticism (Melchert, 2020). Similarly, Ahmad bin Hanbal, a student of al-Shaf'ie is an expert in both fields yet predominantly in *hadith*. Nevertheless, this paper emphasizes the term *Usuliyyun* on the scholars following 5th-century hijrah in which the expertise is quite distinct.

Scholars have different views on the issue of methodological differences in *hadith* criticism in both fields. Al-Sharif Hatim al-'Auni for example opined that there is no difference between the views of the *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun* in the methodology of *hadith* criticism. He deemed that those who subscribe to the existence of the differences were not meticulous in their research. He insisted that *Usuliyyun* are followers of Abu Hanifah, Malik, al-Shaf'ie and Ahmad. As for the later generation of *Muhaddithun*, there were those considered as *ahl* (the people of) *Usul al-Fiqh* such as al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Ibn al-Salah and al-Nawawi. They were all *Usuliyyun* and *Muhaddithun* without any objections from both classical and contemporary scholars. This proves that both terminologies of *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun* are intertwined and inseparable. Hence, it is not possible to separate their methodologies in *hadith* criticism. The differences thought existed between the *Usuliyyun* and *Muhaddithun* do not represent the view of all *Usuliyyun* or most of them. The *Muhaddithun* also were not in consensus in all discussions on the sciences of *hadith*. Therefore, according to him, these individual scholars are better classified as a new faction apart from the majority of the scholars of *Muhaddithun*. In addition, the scholars of *Usuliyyun* did not have practical evaluations regarding *hadith*. They only produce a general theory for the methodology of *hadith* criticism substantiated by the *Muhaddithun*. Thus, some *Usuliyyun* accepted the evaluations of the *Muhaddithun* in *hadith* criticism. They just made *taqlid* (blind following) with the *Muhaddithun* when it comes to the verification of *hadith* status (Ibn Qudamah, 1979).

Opposingly, some contemporary researchers acknowledged the existence of methodological differences between the two groups. Among the contemporary scholars that subscribed to this view are Hamzah al-Malibari and Abu Zar al-Muhammadi (Hamzah, 1996; Abu Zar, 2005). They argued for the emergence of new terminologies in the science of *hadith* that were absent in the early period of *Muhaddithun* such as *mutawatir* dan *ahad* (Abu Zar, 2005). In addition, many citations can be found from the scholars of *Usul al-Hadith* such as al-Khatib al-Baghdadi and Ibn al-Solah acknowledged the existence of methodological differences in *hadith* criticism (Abu Dhar, 2005). Mu'taz al-Khatib (Abo-Alabbas et al., 2020), for example, in his paper title '*Hadith* Criticism between Traditionalist and Jurisprudents' demonstrated differences in *matan* criticism of both groups of scholars while some researchers rejected any differences. The differences in *matan* criticism between both groups are also demonstrated by Mohamad Bakir in his paper title '*Kritik Matan Hadis Versi Muhaddisin Dan Fuqaha*': *Studi Pemikiran Hasjim Abbas*' (Bakir, 2018). This paper stated that *Muhaddithun* methodology is based on the integrity of text and sentences as well as the validity of Islamic teaching as

expressed by traditions of *hadith* while fuqaha' criticized the quality of the truth of the formula of the legal concept which became the substance of the traditions of the *hadith*. Therefore, this research intends to identify the possible methodological differences that may occur between the *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun*, especially in *hadith* criticism.

Methodology

The current study adopted analytical and critical methodologies and a descriptive methodology. Classical books in sciences of *hadith* (*Fath al-Mughith & Muqadimmah 'Ulum al-Hadith*) and *Usul al-Fiqh* works (*Raudat al-Nazir & Nihayat al-Sul*) were referred respectively.

Results and Discussion

Based on the analyses of these two views, it is evident that the view stating the differences in methodology in *Hadith* criticism between both groups is deemed as *rajih* (accurate). The words of al-Baihaqi to Abu Muhammad al-Juwaini indicate this;

"I hope that Allah will revive the sunnah of our imam al-Muttalibi in accepting al-Athar, for many of the fuqaha' have abandoned it, which was after the generation of the great imams who had accumulated knowledge in fiqh and hadith..." (Al-Baihaqi, 2007).

al-Baihaqi indicated that the later *Usuliyyun* and *Fuqaha'* had views that differed from the methodology of al-Shafi'ie in the methodology of *hadith* criticism. Scrutinization of *Usul al-Fiqh* books showed differences between the *Usuliyyun* and *Muhaddithun* in some of the discourses within the sciences of *hadith*. This statement is sufficient to prove that there are methodological differences in *hadith* criticism between these two groups. The differences are on several factors that lead to methodological variations. The factors involved in narration evaluation, the definition of companions, the narration of *ahl bid'ah*, the connectivity of narration and the influence of *mantiq*. As can be seen, the differences were not merely on *matan* criticism as demonstrated by other researchers.

Differences in Evaluating A Narration

The main factor that contributed to methodological differences between the *Usuliyyun* and *Muhaddithun* within the discourse of *hadith* sciences is the differing perspectives of *hadith* narration (*al-Riwayah*). The expertise of the *Usuliyyun* is to derive ruling through methods of *Usul al-Fiqh* based on shar'i evidences and view it as a fiqh practice. Scholars from the past have unanimously agreed on this until the present. On the other hand, *Muhaddithun* is dedicated to verifying narrations and assessing their validity. This entails them to view narrations from the aspect of their authenticity being attributed to the Prophet ﷺ. These different perspectives contributed to the methodological differences that existed in evaluating a particular narration. Some *Usuliyyun* view the need to elevate every slightly *da'if* (weak) *hadith* that is following *Qiyas* (analogical reasoning) or the practice of most the scholars. (Al-'Attar, 1999). Whenever a *da'if hadith* is in agreement with *Qiyas* and the practice of the majority of the scholars, then it serves as a proof of that its *sahih* (authentic) meaning. In contrast, the *Muhaddithun* emphasize mainly the attribution of *da'if hadith* attributed to the Prophet ﷺ rather than merely considering it as *sahih* solely because it coincides with *Qiyas* (Bazmul, n.d). A sound meaning of narration cannot necessarily be attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.

The Definition and The Duration of *Sahabah* of The Prophet ﷺ

The *sahabah* (companions) of Rasulullah ﷺ were the pillars of prophetic narration. No doubt knowing the identity of and the period of companionship consider the crux of a particular narration. They were the conveyor of the narration. Knowing them is the very first step in examining the continuity of the *isnad* (chain of narrators). Some of the *Usuliyyun* define the *sahabah* as those that have established their companionship for a certain duration that would qualify them to be a companion under normal circumstances. Ibn Amir al-Hajj attributed this opinion to the majority of *Usuliyyun* (Ibn Amir, 1999). This opinion is the perspective from the aspect of the *madhhab* (school of thought) of the *sahabah* and his fiqh tendency, which cannot be discerned except after having companionship for a long duration (Al-Qudah, 2003). Continuous companionship is thought important in assuring the companion understands the tradition. The majority of the *Usuliyyun* are opined that placing the condition of the duration of companionship is necessary for defining a *sahabah*. The determination of companionship is based on 'Urf (custom).

Opposingly, *Muhaddithun* defined a companion of the Prophet ﷺ as the one who had met the Prophet ﷺ, believed in him and died in the state of Islam (al-'Asqalani, 2000, Al-Sakhawi, 2003). The companionship is accepted even for a short period as long as the meeting is established. The meeting between a *sahabah* and the Prophet ﷺ would allow him/her to narrate from the Prophet ﷺ. Such a person qualifies to be considered as a companion. Comparing both definitions, it seems the definition offered by *Muhaddithun* is much more feasible and practical. The *Usuliyyun* definition seems away from actual practicality as difficult to establish companionship based on custom alone. Thus, these differences in determining the companionship drive the tendency that contributes to the different approach in the criticism of *hadith* between *Usuliyyun* dan *Muhaddithun*.

Ruling of *Ahl al-Bid'ah* Who are *Fasiq*

The *Muhaddithun* define the class of heresy (*bid'ah*) into two parts, (1) "*yukaffaru bi bid'atih*" means a man is disbelieved because of his heretical heresy, denying the established religious matters and making religious matters new to Islam, (2) "*laa yukaffaru bi bid'atih*" means a person who does heresy but not a disbeliever (Siregar, 2018). Due to this, they differed in their rulings regarding narrating *hadith* from the people of *al-bid'ah*. Imam Malik bin Anas are among those who completely reject the narration from them. The rejection is intended to stop that *ahl al-bid'ah* from becoming well known with narrations from narrators that are *al-thiqah* (trustworthy). Other *Muhaddithun* allowed it with specific conditions considering the type of *al-bid'ah*, and further scrutinization of the *al-riwayah* (narration). A narration is only accepted if the narrator is truthful and there is accuracy within his narration. For example, al-Bukhari included the narrations of Abd al-Rahman bin Muljam even though he was among those that persistently invited others to his *al-bid'ah* the most (Shakir, 2013). As for *Usuliyyun*, they would only consider the *al-bid'ah* alone for they are disconnected from the reality of *hadith* narration. They would make *qiyas* between the ruling of the narration of *ahl al-bid'ah* with the ruling of accepting the testimony of *al-fasiq* with *al-ta'wil* (interpretation) as the discourse in accepting and rejecting the testimony of *al-fasiq* is fiqh-related. They also have a differing opinions if the *al-fisq* (transgression) causing the *al-bid'ah* to occur before the *hadith* narration, even though the narrator has ceased committing the *al-bid'ah* (Syuraym, 2002).

The Ruling Regarding Contradicting Narration Between *al-Wasl* (extended/connected) With *al-Irsal* (disconnected) and Between *al-Raf'* (elevated) With *al-Waqf* (suspended)

The discourse regarding the contradiction between *al-Wasl* with *al-Irsal* and between *al-Raf'* with *al-Waqf* are among the famous debates within the science of *hadith* due to the diversity of opinions by scholars regarding its ruling. The majority of the *Usuliyyun* hold the authentic narration as the narration having the most narrators. The larger quantity of narrations signifies a small probability of errors occurring within the narration (Al-'Iraqi, 1970, Al-Abnasi, 1998; al-Suyuti, n.d). al-'Iraqi explained this criterion when he cited from the *Usuliyyun* related to the contradiction between *al-Wasl*, *al-Irsal*, *al-Raf'* dan *al-Waqf*. He firmly stated that the determination is made based on the larger number. If the higher quantity is found with *al-Raf'* or *al-Wasl* then one of them becomes *rajih* (preferred/correct), if found with *al-Irsal* or *al-Waqf* then one of them becomes *rajih*. Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar gave a general commentary and mentioned:

"This is the view of some of the Usuliyyun such as al-Razi. Al-Baidawi is inclined to accept it completely/entirely." (Ibn Hajar, 1984)

The *Muhaddithun* on the other hand, do not have a general methodology to prioritize a narration over another. Despite grading can be based on many narrators, they would study all the indications (*al-qarain*) underlying every narration. Grading of *al-sahih* (authentic) narration can be given by a narrator who has stronger memory and precision as compared to the narration that merely has many narrators. Al- Sakhawi explained that *Muhaddithun* always investigate upon *al-dabt* (precision) in conflicting narrations:

"Indeed, not to (simply) judge in the conflicting al-Wasl and al-Raf' with al-Irsal and al-Waqf with certain things. Verily if any of the narrators among the al-thiqat narrated via mursal or mauquf possessed stronger (memorization) then (his narration) will be prioritised (accepted) and vice versa."

Al-'Alai explained the methodology of the *Muhaddithun* in this regard

"What is evident from their words particularly the early generations such as Yahya bin Said al-Qattan and Abd al-Rahman bin Mahdi and those after them namely Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ali bin al-Madini, Yahya bin Ma'in. Those at this level and afterwards are at par with the likes of al-Bukhari, Abi Zur'ah al-Razi, Abi Hatim al-Razi, Muslim, al-Tirmizi, al-Nasaie and the likes of them, including al-Daraqutni and al-Khalili. All of them interacted with the acceptance and rejection of al-Ziyadah (addition within riwayat) and that tarjih (preference) is based on the strongest aspect found within the individual in every hadith, and they would not make a decision regarding a matter with a general decision that encompasses all hadith" (Al-Zarkashi, 1998).

Ruling on *al-Mastur* (hidden/concealed) Narrations

Some of the *Usuliyyun* differentiated between *al-Mastur* with *Majhul al-Hal*. They stated that *al-Majhul al-Hal* is an individual that has two narrators who are both *al-adil* (sound credibility) but he is not considered *al-thiqah* (al-Syaukani, 1999). *Al-Mastur* is one whose credibility is known physically and not spiritually (Hamadah, 1989). This differentiation is purely theoretical. How can the credibility of a narrator be known physically without the spiritual aspect? The difficulties in distinguishing the terminologies caused the later *Muhaddithun* to equate *al-Majhul al-Hal* and *al-Mastur* (Ibn Hajar, 1984).

The Influence Of *'Ilm al-Mantiq* Upon The *Usuliyyun*

The vast majority of the *Usuliyyun* were influenced by *'Ilm al-Mantiq* (the science of logic) which can be deciphered in their writings. The influence of *al-Mantiq* can be seen in the categorization of *hadith*. The *usulliyun* offers *al-jami' al-mani'* (brief and concise) for the classification of the types of *hadith*. *Muhaddithun* did not offer a detailed definition of each terminology of sciences of *hadith* as they were well-versed with *al-mutaqaddimun* application of *hadith*. It was later explained in great detail especially during the time Ibn al-Salah, as he was an *Usuliy* (Itr, 2010). Nevertheless, some of the definitions specified by Ibn Salah are not free from criticism. Sharaf al-Qudah criticized the definition of authentic (*sahih*) *hadith* stated by Ibn al-Salah which encompasses no *shudhudh* and *'illah* which is not fully practical. *Shudhudh* itself is a part of *'illah* in a *hadith*. The condition for not having *shudhudh* within the *hadith* deem unnecessary in that definition (al-Qudah, 2003).

Usulliyun Established General Method in *Usul al-Hadith*

The *Usulliyun* established the method of *usul hadith* by examining the applications of the *Muhaddithun* during the early era of narrations. This led to the emergence of the general method in *Usul al-Hadith*. As for *Muhaddithun*, they ascertained every *hadith* is unique in the method of criticism (Al-San'ani, 1997). An example of this can be demonstrated in the discussion of *Ziyadah al-Thiqah* (additions by reliable narrators), Hamzah al-Malibari mentioned:

"It has become a necessity to overcome the issue of Ziyadah al-Thiqah from all sides, and among the important aspect is to determine how far does it fall into the type of 'ilal (hidden defect), until we can identify the methodology of the Muhaddithun in accepting or rejecting it, without mixing it with the madhhab (school of thought) that exert theories in this discourse based on the intellect and 'Ilm al-Mantiq such as al-mutakhirin from among the Muhaddithun, Fuqaha' and Usuliyyun, perhaps that is the results from the effect upon them with the latest matter that they are faced with in the process of teaching and educating (al-Malibari, 1996).

Due to the influence of *ilm al-Mantiq*, drives the foundation of establishing a general method in *usul hadith*, especially in the total acceptance *Ziyadah al-Thiqah*. Imam al-Haramain al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali, al-Tufi, al-Qarafi and al-Amidi were among *Usuliyyun* held the opinion that additions in the narrations from the *thiqah* narrators are accepted in totality (al-Juwayni, 1997; al-Ghazali, 1992; al-Qarafi, 1998; al-Amidi, 1983). They attributed this opinion to the majority of the *Usuliyyun* (al-Muhammadi, 2005). The *Muhaddithun* exert a contrasting view on the totality of *Ziyadah al-Thiqah* acceptance. For example, Ibn Rajab objected to al-Khatib who stated that the acceptance of additions by *thiqah* narrators in totality is an authentic opinion. This shows that al-Khatib was affected by the methodology of the *Usuliyyun* in the discourse regarding the acceptance of *Ziyadah al-Thiqah*. It is undeniable that al-Bukhari and others from among the *hadith* evaluators had mentioned the phrase "*Ziyadah al-Thiqah* is accepted" but they did not mean to have this phrase as a general method that applies to all circumstances. But what they had meant was the acceptance of *al-Ziyadah* in the particular *hadith* being discussed specifically. Ibn Rajab stated:

"This matter, if it is true, then refers to additions within this particular hadith. If not, whoever examines al-Tarikh of al-Bukhari will find that he did not subscribe to the view that Ziyadah al-Thiqah is something that is accepted (absolutely). Similarly, with al-Daraqutni stated in a specific discussion that Ziyadah al-Thiqah is accepted. Then he mentioned that Ziyadah al-Thiqah occurs in many instances and placed al-Irsal over al-Isnad. This shows that the meaning

of *Ziyadah al-Thiqah* is for specific instances, which is when a *thiqah* narrator truly stood out in his memorization” (Ibn Rajab, 1987).

In the same line, Ibnu Hajar also insisted that *Ziyadah al-Thiqah* not be accepted in absolute, although later *Muhaddithun* accepted due to the influence of *Usuliyyun* (Ibn Hajar, 2001). The view of accepting its totality is against the condition of denying *al-Shudhudh* (peculiarity) in narration. This is because *al-Shudhudh* only happens when a trustworthy narrator has a conflicting narration of the majority or those who are more trustworthy than him. Inversely, acceptance of addition to a particular narration is based on *al-Qarain* (indicators). This is stated by early *Muhaddithun* like Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ibn Ma’in, al-Bukhari, al-Nasa’i and others (Ibn Hajar, 2001).

Utilization of *al-Tajwiz al-‘Aqli* (the possibility of occurrence according to the intellect)

In terms of harmonizing between contradictory narrations, *Usuliyyun* applies the principle of *al-Tajwiz al-‘Aqli*. Unlike the *Muhaddithun* which is based on indication (*al-Qarain*), the *Usuliyyun* would simply accept contradictory narrations as multiple occurrences even before scrutinization of narrators. Al-Malibari expounded on this reality:

“If the hadith scholar sees a hadith with the reality of their knowledge concerning hadith and knowledge that they possess, other groups would then approach it from the aspect of *mantiq* that is founded on *al-Tajwiz al-‘Aqli*...” (Al-Malibari, 1996)

Consequencely, they made every conflicting *hadith* occurs due to different events if it is impossible logically to harmonize it. Hamzah al-Malibari stated when providing commentary regarding the opinion of some *Usuliyyun* in eliminating the discrepancies between narrations pertaining to the wiping above the two *khuf* by stating that they were due to different events: “The basis for the harmonization process is the trustworthiness of the reporters with the possibility that it is a different event without stating the support for it. This is as you can see that it is an easy way out that first came to the mind. It does not need for memorization or even knowledge and understanding...” (Al-Malibari, 1996)

Conclusion

The summary of the research paper in terms of analyses of the differences in the methodology of *Muhaddithun* and *Usuliyyun* is as follows:

1. The differences in methodology existed and it encompasses the issue of *isnad* and *matan*.
2. The *Usuliyyun* view the role of a companion as those having competency in fiqh. A long period of companionship is required to attain a degree of credibility for the purpose of narration. *Muhaddithun* views companions are those eligible in narrations even when they met the prophet ﷺ only once.
3. *Usuliyyun* equates the issue of narration of *ahl bid’ah* similar to the testimony of *fasiq* in the court. *Muhaddithun* examine the types of *bid’ah*, the content of narrations and the behaviour of narrators.
4. *Usuliyyun* accepted the narration of *al-Mausul* dan *al-Marfu’* when conflict existed in a particular hadith. *Muhaddithun* scrutinizes the *al-Qarain* (indicators) for a particular narration.
5. *Usuliyyun* introduced the theory of *al-Mastur* narrators which is difficult to apply in *hadith* criticism.

6. They were differences of opinion between *Muhaddithun* dan *Usuliyyun* in the acceptance of *Ziyadah al-Thiqah*. *Usuliyyun* attempted to generalized the general method of *hadith* criticism based on the practice of early *Muhaddithun*. Early *Muhaddithun* did not accept it in totality. It depends on the surrounding indicators.
7. *Usuliyyun* utilized the *al-Tajwiz al-'Aqli* in harmonizing the narrations. This is one of the prominent examples of the influence of *ilmu al-Mantiq* on the methodology.

Though the methods of *Usuliyyun* lack practically *riwayah*, itself has contributed to the development of sciences of *hadith* and better understanding by later generation.

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