

***Maqbul* as Terminology, its Use and Meaning according to Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani in his book Taqrib At-Tahzib**

Helimy Bin Aris

Mohd Fauzi Bin Mohd Amin

Fakulty of Quranic and Sunnah Studies, Islamic Science University of Malaysia

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Abstract

This study presents a discussion on one of the terminologies for hadis practitioners which is *maqbul*, its uses and prerequisites according to Al-hafiz Ibn Hajar, as well as its uses among previous hadis experts before Ibn Hajar. The study includes the opinions of contemporary hadis researchers about the term *maqbul*. This study employs the descriptive methodology and it aims to determine the precise perception towards the status of *maqbul* hadis practitioners according to Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar.

Keywords: Maqbul, Ibn Hajar, Hadis, Evaluation, Definition

Introduction

Maqbul is a terminology used by hadis experts from the past to present. In fact, they have used it in various purposes and meaning. Nevertheless, in his book Taqrib At-Tahzib, Al-Hafiz Ibnu Hajar has limited the use of Maqbul to describe one of hadis practitioners status. He has also given a definition which is different from prior definitions advanced by other hadis experts. Hence, his definition has attracted the attention of many contemporary hadis researchers.

This study will present a collection of commentaries from hadis researchers in three phases: first, the meaning of maqbul from language perspective. Second, the meaning of maqbul as a terminology. Third, researchers' commentaries regarding the pre-requisites for Maqbul as stated by Al-hafiz Ibn Hajar and his consistency in imposing them on the evaluation of hadis practitioners.

Maqbul according to language perspective:

The word maqbul is formed with *wazan* (mould) maf'ul which is one of the many types of ism maf'ul wazan. It means accepted, blessed and loved. Its origin is the word qabul or qubul which means: good, love, blessings, and inclination (Azhari 2001; Jauhari, 1987; Manzur, 1414H; Athir, 1979).

Definition of Maqbul among hadis experts

There is not much difference between the definition of maqbul by hadis experts and the original definition (Fahl, 2006). It is commonly used to explain the types of hadis, sanad and status of hadis narrator (Jaitan, 2010). Hajar illustrated the use of hadis as, "among the various types of *hadis ahad*, some are *maqbul* that we are obliged to refer to as guide, while others are *mardud*".

In fact, there are two parts of hadis ahad namely maqbul and mardud. Maqbul includes hadis *sahih lizatihi*, *sahih lighairihi*, *hasan lizatihi* dan *hasan lighairihi*. Examples of how it describes the types of *sanad* includes the statement given by Munawi (1356H): "This is the justification given by Amirul Mukminin Ali – may Allah s.w.t. grant him blessings – as reported by Baihaqi with *sanad* that is *maqbul*..".

A *sanad* that is *maqbul* fulfills the requirements of hadis *maqbul*. To illustrate its use in defining the status of hadis practitioners, Imam Ahmad (Adiy, 1997) has made a statement about Abdur Rahman bin Ishaq: "a person that is religious or *maqbul*". Also, it is used with the same purpose by other hadis experts like Al-Hakim An-Naisaburi (Hajar, 1984), Abu Hatim Ar-Razi (Hatim, 1952), Hibban (1973). Nevertheless, they quite seldom use the term *maqbul*.

Also, they do not give specific prerequisites that could differentiate *maqbul* from other terminologies given by other hadis experts (Jaitan, 2010). Occasionally, they use it in the form of mudhaf for words: "hadis" or "qaul". Sometimes, it is combined with one or more words of ta'dil or tad'if that are not finalized yet. Also, it is represented by itself (Husban, 2005; Jaitan, 2010).

Maqbul according to Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar:

Ibnu Hajar often uses the term maqbul in his book At-Taqrīb. In fact, he refers to it as the sixth status for the hadis practitioners. He has also given a specific definition for maqbul in the introduction to At-Taqrīb (199) "Narrator who narrated only a few of hadis and there is no comment has caused his report to be rejected. He will be rated as a *maqbul* if he possesses *mutaba`ah*. Otherwise, he will be addressed as *layyinul hadis* if he does not have *mutaba`ah*". This definition is perceived as a new idea introduced by Ibn Hajar in his use of maqbul as terminology (Jaitan, 2010).

According to some researchers (Husban, 2005), al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar was influenced by an esteemed hadis expert called al-Hafiz Az-Zahabi. Indeed, Az-Zahabi has also used the term maqbul in all of the abovementioned matters. Whenever az-Zahabi described any hadis practitioner as maqbul, ibn Hajar would also express either agreement, disagreement or he would add to Az-Zahabi's commentary (Zahabi, 1992; Hajar, 1991).

Researchers' commentary on Al-hafiz Ibn Hajar:

Following are the commentaries made by contemporary researchers regarding maqbul prerequisites that were introduced by Ibn Hajar, his implementation and the status of *maqbul*'s hadis.

First prerequisite: Small number of narration

Some researchers believe that hadis are relayed in a small number due to hadis practitioner's *dabt* (memorization and notes). It is easier for the hadis practitioner to memorize when the total number of hadis relayed is smaller. So, even a little misake in relaying the hadis will show his weakness in memorizing the hadis. When he makes a lot of mistakes in relaying the hadis, it proves that his memorization is very weak (Aniy, 1999; Fahl, 2006; Husban, 2005). This opinion is supported by statements from hadis experts like Imam Ahmad, Al-Hafiz Az-Zahabi and Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar.

When Imam Ahmad was asked about the status of Al-A`mash and Abu Hasin Usman bin Asim, he replied: "Abu Hasin relays a smaller number of hadis; thus, they are more reliable. Similarly, Mansur is more reliable because he relays a smaller number of hadis". (Zahabi, 1985). When Ibn Hibban referred to Umar bin Syabib al-Kufi as *saduq*, al-Hafiz Az-Zahabi responded that "there exists a counter argument in that *saduq* does not make many mistakes. Instead, the practioner who makes a lot of mistakes when relaying hadis is referred to as *matruk*" (Zahabi, 1985).

In his commentary about Muslim bin Quraz al-Hijazi, Ibn Hajar said, "He relays too few hadis. Any mistake in relaying the hadis makes him appear weak". (Hajar, 1984). According to some researchers, there is no relationship between "relaying a small number of hadis" and the process of *jarh wa ta`dil*, and it is not representative of the expression used in *jarh wa ta`dil*. This is because some members of *jarh wa ta`dil* occasionally express them with *jarh* or *ta`dil* without giving any description. Several of the Prophet's friends seem to relay a small number of hadis despite their *udul* status (highly reliable).

Relaying a significant number of hadis does not affect *dabt* (memorization and notes) and relaying a small number of hadis does not increase *dabt* (memorization and notes). In fact, a practitioner is deemed less famous if he relays fewer hadis. Thus, the process of determining the status of the practitioner becomes more complicated since it is difficult to compare his hadis with other practitioners whose hadis have been proven *siqah*. (Jaitan, 2010). Both of the abovementioned opinions conclude that when the practitioner is labelled as relaying a small number of hadis, it sometimes relates to his ability to memorize and take notes, but it cannot elevate the status of the hadis from *daif* to *hasan*.

While relaying more hadis does not not affect the practitioner's memorization, it does not mean that he is not careful and precise if he delivers a small number of hadis. Indeed, some experts relay a small number of hadis merely to describe a lifestory of an individual, not to show his status of memorization. Still, this is taken into consideration when evaluating the level of memorization.

Statements given by Az-Zahabi and Ibn Hajar sometimes show that it is significant when evaluating the practitioner's status. However, this term (relaying a small number of hadis) is not a pre-requisite for *maqbul* as practised by Ibn Hajar unless it is perceived as a specific terminology that he created which is not at all related to the unanimous practice among hadis practitioners. If this is true, it becomes unnecessary to debate about it (Awwamah, 1991).

Second pre-requisite: No criticism that has led to rejection of his narration

According to some researchers, this prerequisite implies that no criticism has led to rejection of hadis by *maqbul* practitioners. In fact, there exists *ta'dil* (praises) that have led to their acceptance. Some of them extended the discussion by admitting possibilities of criticism; however, they were either rejected or specified to certain hadis (Husban, 2005). This opinion is quite similar to the meaning of *maqbul* given by Ibn Hajar, but it cannot be accepted as the original meaning which is intended by Ibn Hajar. This is because hadis practitioners with *ta'dil*, also without *jarh* and relates limited number of hadis is not categorized as *maqbul* by *jarh wa ta'dil*.

Perhaps, this can be considered as a specific terminology given by Ibn Hajar which actually contradicts the way Ibn Hajar evaluated practitioners as *Thiqah* (credible) and not *maqbul* (Al-Jaitan, 2010). Some believe that this pre-requisite implies that there is completely no *jarh* (criticism) despite being general or *ta'dil* (praises) that can be accepted (Jaitan, 2010). The author believes that this opinion should be accepted because it is consistent with the methodology that says, "If the practitioner who is criticized is free from *ta'dil* (praise), the *jarh* (criticism) against him is accepted immediately despite being general (*jarh mujmal*) and that no reason is given by expert evaluation. This is because the practitioner who is criticized can be addressed as *majhul* (status is not known) if he is free from *ta'dil* (praise). In such a situation, considering *jarh* is more important than neglecting it (Hajar. 1422H; Jaitan, 2010). Based on the methodology above, practitioners that are perceived as *majhul* are included in the definition of *maqbul* by Ibn Hajar.

The second pre-requisite has received criticisms from researchers who claim that it is not *mani`* (limiting the meaning to the sixth status only). According to them, it is also used on practitioners at status seventh, eighth, and ninth. The practitioners with these status are not inflicted with *jarh* that may result in rejection of their hadis (Ata` Abd Latif, 1411H).

These criticisms are rejected. This is because according to Ibn Hajar, "the practitioner at the eighth has not a *ta'dil* but he has a *jarh mutlaq* (general criticism) or *jarh ghair mufassar* (criticism without being informed of the reason). Similarly, the practitioner at the seventh and ninth both of them – according to Ibn Hajar – "do not have *mutaba`at* (support) in their narration. (Jaitan, 2010).

The third pre-requisite: Mutaba`at (support)

Researchers seem to disagree with each other in explaining this prerequisite which has led to difference of opinion in accepting it as a suitable prerequisite for *maqbul*. Some of them believe that *mutaba`at* as proposed by Ibn Hajar refers to *ilmu mustalah hadis*. Hence, some criticize the way Ibn Hajar divided the sixth level of practitioners to *maqbul* and *layyinul hadith*.

Others claim that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar is not consistent with this pre-requisite in his analysis and evaluation. Some claim that this pre-requisite is not necessary because according to them, the status of the hadis narrated by practitioner who called *maqbul* is *hasan lizatih*. Several others perceive this prerequisite as too difficult to be ascertained unless after performing *takhrij hadith* (Aniy, 1999; Ata` Abd Latif, 1411H; Awwamah, 1991; Jaitan, 2010). On the other hand, some researchers believe that *mutaba`at* that is mentioned by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has a more extended meaning compared to the original meaning given in *ilmu mustalah hadis*

which includes *syawahid* or supportive hadis. Hence, they claim that the evaluation made by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar on the hadis practitioners are consistent and parallel to his prerequisites.

To limit the meaning of the pre-requisite to *mutaba`at* as stated in ilmu mustalah hadith will imply that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar lacks knowledge in *ilmu rijal* which is unreasonable (Husban, 2005; Jaitan, 2010). The author believes that the opinion that refers to it as parallel to the meaning of *mutaba`at* in ilmu hadith is more precise because it is consistent with the definition of *mutaba`at* mentioned by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar in *nukhbatul fikar*. It is also accepted unanimously as terminology by hadis experts before al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar.

If he seeks for another meaning, it will be defined following the way he addresses the term *maqbul* and others in the introduction to *At-Taqrīb*. The fact that he does not provide any explanation about it shows that he is limiting the meaning to the meaning given in ilmu Mustalah hadith (Jaitan, 2010).

The criticism on the decision made by Al-Hafiz to divide it into *maqbul* and *layyinul hadith* can be contested because the division is in fact better than limiting it to only one meaning. Hence, if the practitioner is referred to as *maqbul*, it means that he can be said to also have *mutaba`at*. If he is referred to as *layyinul hadith*, this implies that the hadis practitioner does not have *mutaba`at*.

When a researcher finds that the reverse occurs in the evaluation by Ibn Hajar, it is not due to error in division but the application and evaluation. The opinion that claims that *maqbul* hadis practitioners are *hasan lizatih* can be contested due to lack of agreement among the researchers. This is because according to some researchers, the status of *maqbul`*s hadis is *daif*. Thus, the *mutaba`at* prerequisite becomes necessary.

Even when the status of hadis is *hasan lizatih*, the *mutaba`at* is still relevant for other purposes which includes identifying the problem with *tafarrud*, eliminating *tadlis*, contradicting or unanimous opinions among hadis practitioners, etc (Jaitan, 2010).

The consistency of al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar with his pre-requisites in evaluating the hadis practitioners

According to some researchers, al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar is not consistent in his prerequisites when analysing certain *maqbul* practitioners. It seems that he has evaluated some practitioners using *maqbul* terminology when they have been praised by one of the *jarh wata`dil* member.

Also, al-hafiz Ibn Hajar has evaluated some practitioners as *thiqah* (credible) and equivalent based on the praise of same man in *jarh wata`dil* members. His stance on the practitioners mentioned by Ibn Hibban in *at-Thiqat* is also not consistent (Ata` Abd Latif, 1411H). In the book entitled "*Tahrir Taqrīb At-Tahzīb*", Dr. Basyar Awwad and Syeikh Syuib Arna`ut made a lot of criticisms on the evaluation of al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar on *maqbul* practitioners. However, some researchers say that all of the analysis and evaluation that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar made about *maqbul* practitioners are consistent with his pre-requisites. This shows that he is very consistent with the prerequisites (Husban, 2005; Fahl, 2006)

The author believes that this contradicting opinions are due to two factors:

First, they contradict each other regarding the meaning of maqbul and its prerequisites which were introduced by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar.

Second, there is no comprehensive research on all maqbul practitioners and their hadis. The argument that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar is not consistent on his pre-requisites cannot be accepted unless he has completely disregarded them in his evaluation of the maqbul practitioners with significant difference in percentage. It is not a general conclusion if he only violated the prerequisites in certain evaluations.

Even when little contradictions exist in his evaluation, it gives researchers a good reason to countercheck with other available references within the *rijal* realm of knowledge and not limited to *Taqrib At-Tahzib* essay by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar.

The status of maqbul hadis practioners according to Ibn Hajar

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has not clearly explained about the status of maqbul's hadis in *At-Taqrīb*. Nevertheless, he has referred to the maqbul's hadis as *hasan lizatih* in his works namely *Fathul Bari*, *Taghliq At-Taa'liq* and *Al-Isabah fi tamyiz As-Sahabah*. (Aniy, 1999; Husban, 2005; Jaitan, 2010)

There are four opinions on this matter:

First opinion:

The status is *daif* (weak) and it can be elevated to *hasan lighairih* with the presence of *mutaba'at*. This opinion is shared by Syeikh Ahmad Syakir (1995), Syeikh Syuib Arna`ut dan Dr. Basyar Awwad (1997) This is because al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has conferred the sixth status of hadis practitioner in *At-Taqrīb* as *layyinul hadith* unless supported by *mutaba'at*. *Layyinul hadith* is one of the terminology used for *daif* practitioners. Several researchers assume that Syeikh Nasiruddin al-Albani holds similar opinion (Husban, 2005; Jaitan, 2010); however, the author has deduced based on research on maqbul practitioners at tenth, eleventh, and twelfth *tabaqat* that Al-Albani has in fact given his opinion on twenty-nine maqbul practitioners amongst the these *tabaqat*. Based on his evaluation on the hadis practitioners, ten were identified as *majhul* (status cannot be identified) while another six hadis practitioners were conferred *thiqah* (most reliable) or equivalent.

Four other hadis practitioners were referred to as *thiqah* while another two were *daif*. Five others were rated *sahih*, *hasan* and *jayyid*. One hadis was identified as *daif* and one hadis practitioner was said to merely agreeing with the evaluations provided by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar. The findings above depict that Al-Albani confers the terminology maqbul to *majhul* practitioners if they fulfil the prerequisites. He does not confine himself to the evaluation of al-hafiz Ibn Hajar on hadis practitioners; instead, he also considers other opinions from religious experts. Thus, there's possibility that his opinion may differ from the evaluation of al-Hafiz especially when it is different from Ibn Hajar.

The second opinion:

The status is *hasan lizatih* which can be elevated to *sahih lighairi* with support from *mutaba'at*. This opinion is advanced by Walid al-Aniy (1999), Khalud al-Husban (2005) and Syahid Karim Fulaih (2013).

The following reasons entail:

- Their hadis are produced (takhrij) by Ashabus Sihah like Ibn Khuzaimah, Ibn Hibban and Ad-Dya` al-Maqdisi.
- Maqbul by Ibn Hajar is equivalent to thiqah to other religious experts.
- Some religious experts like al-Bukhari confer *maqbul* hadis as *hasan*.
- Ibn Hajar has conferred *maqbul* hadis as *hasan*.

The author thinks that the abovementioned arguments are more appropriate to prove that Ibn Hajar is consistent with his pre-requisites in evaluation, but not to prove his given meaning for maqbul, nor whether the status of hadis is *hasan* or weak.

The third opinion:

The status is *hasan lighairih*. This opinion is shared by Muhammad Isa Khalif Husein (Jaitan, 2010). According to this opinion, many religious experts including Ibn Hajar acknowledge *maqbul* hadis as *hasan* with evidence of *mutaba`at*.

There exists similarity between this opinion with the first because both address *maqbul* hadis as *hasan* with the presence of *mutaba`at*. Nevertheless, the first opinion does not consider it as *hasan* before *mutaba`at* is fulfilled. The third opinion accepts it as *hasan lighairi* even when *mutaba`at* is not confirmed.

The fourth opinion:

The status is daif and will not be elevated to *hasan* without *mutaba`at*. This opinion is supported by Muhammad Raghil Rasyid al-Jaitan (2010). This opinion argues that lafaz maqbul is another name for *majhul `ain* (identity is not known) or *majhul hal* (status is not known).

Most of religious rejected hadis by majhul practitioners due to lack of clarity in `adalah (religion) and *dabt* (memorization and notes). The pre-requisites required by Ibn Hajar cannot replace *jahalah* (characteristics that makes a hadis practitioner *majhul*) that exists in majhul hadis practitioners.

According to the author, the maqbul practitioner is theoretically majhul `ain or majhul hal. *Majhul `ain* is a hadis practitioner who has a only one *thiqah* student who relates his hadis without declaring any identity or status.

Majhul hal is a hadis practitioner who has more than one student who is *thiqah* in relating his hadis without declaring the status. Indeed, both these characteristics are present in *maqbul* hadis practitioners. On this note, the hadis by maqbul practitioners are included in the category of *mutaba`at* and syawahid that can support other hadis or elevated as *hasan* when they are supported by other *mutaba`at* and syawahid.

Although majhul hadis is rejected by jumhur hadis experts, it can still be elevated as *hasan* with the presence of *mutaba`at* and syawahid. Al-Hafiz Suyuti in *Tadrib ar-Rawi* has assigned majhul practitioners at the third level amongst the jarh status which is equivalent with daif practitioners. This means that their hadis can be elevated to *hasan lighairih* with the presence of *mutaba`at*.

Closing

This research shows that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has learned from past experts and reviews while adding to the findings particularly on research regarding the prerequisites of *maqbul*. Contemporary researchers do not seem to concur with the interpretation on these prerequisites which result in arguments in responding to the evaluation and analysis given by al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar on hadis practitioners. A thorough and wholesome research on all maqbul practitioners and their hadis should be able to answer this question: Is al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar consistent with his pre-requisites or otherwise?

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