

The Thought of Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani on Hadith Science

Muhammad Jamil¹, Raden Rezeki Alam², Moh. Najib³, Engkos Kosasih⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: Muhammadjamildakwah@gmail.com

Inputted : July 9, 2026

Revised : July 23, 2026

Accepted: August 21, 2026

Published: August 29, 2026

Abstract

This paper aims to comprehensively analyze the monumental thought and contributions of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (773–852 AH) in the field of hadith science, covering three main domains: musthalah al-hadith (hadith terminology), syarah hadith (hadith commentary), and jarh wa ta'dil (narrator criticism). The method used is qualitative library research, employing descriptive-analytical analysis of primary works such as Fath al-Bari, Nukhbat al-Fikar, and Taqrib al-Tahdzib. The findings show that in musthalah al-hadith, Ibn Hajar successfully systematized hadith classification through a deductive-hierarchical framework in Nukhbat al-Fikar. In the field of commentary, his masterwork Fath al-Bari stands as the culmination of the hadith commentary tradition, integrating multidisciplinary approaches such as history, linguistics, and jurisprudence. In jarh wa ta'dil, his contribution is evident in the standardization of twelve levels (maratib) of narrator evaluation, providing an objective standard for chain-of-transmission criticism. This paper concludes that Ibn Hajar's intellectual dedication cemented his position as Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadits (Commander of the Faithful in Hadith), whose scholarly legacy remains a standard reference in contemporary hadith studies worldwide.

Keywords: *Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani; Hadith; Fath al-Bari; Nukhbat al-Fikar; Jarh wa Ta'dil.*

Citation:

Jamil, M., Alam, R. R., Najib, M., & Kosasih, E. (2026). The thought of Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani on hadith science. *MSJ: Majority Science Journal*, 4(3), 133–141. <https://doi.org/10.61942/msj.v4i3.641>

Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Jamil

Muhammadjamildakwah@gmail.com

1. Introduction

In the long history of the development of hadith science, a small number of scholars have made contributions so monumental that it is almost impossible to study hadith without referring to their works. One of the most prominent among them is al-Hafizh Shihab al-Din Abu al-Fadl Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Mahmud ibn Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Kinani al-'Asqalani al-Mishri al-Shafi'i, better known as Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (773–852 AH / 1372–1449 CE). He was a muhaddith (hadith scholar), jurist (faqih), exegete (mufassir), historian, and man of letters who lived during the Mamluk era in Egypt and held the position of Qadhi al-Qudhat (Chief Judge) of the Shafi'i school (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. I, pp. 65–80).

Ibn Hajar was given the honorific title Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadits (Commander of the Faithful in Hadith)—the highest honorary title bestowed upon a muhaddith in the Islamic scholarly tradition. This title reflects the recognition, by the entire Islamic scholarly community, of the breadth of his mastery of hadith, both in memorization (riwayah) and comprehension (dirayah). His works, numbering more than 270 titles, cover nearly every aspect of hadith science, from musthalah al-hadith, syarah hadith, jarh wa ta'dil, takhrij, athraf, to narrator bibliography (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1998, Editor's Introduction).

Among all of Ibn Hajar's works, three are the most monumental and influential: (1) *Fath al-Bari* bi Syarh Sahih al-Bukhari—a commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari regarded as the greatest work of hadith science in history; (2) *Nukhbat al-Fikar fi Musthalah Ahl al-Atsar*—a concise treatise that has become the standard reference in the science of hadith terminology; and (3) *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib* together with its abridgment *Taqrib al-Tahdzib*—an encyclopedia of hadith narrators' biographies that serves as the primary reference in the science of narrator criticism (Abu Khalil, 2005, pp. 112–115).

Given the magnitude of Ibn Hajar's contribution to hadith science, a comprehensive study of his thought is of considerable importance, particularly for graduate students specializing in hadith studies. This paper seeks to meet that need by systematically tracing Ibn Hajar's thought across three main domains: the science of hadith terminology, hadith commentary, and narrator criticism.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative method based on library research. The primary sources used are Ibn Hajar's own works, particularly *Fath al-Bari*, *Nukhbat al-Fikar* together with its commentary *Nuzhat al-Nazhar*, *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib*, *Taqrib al-Tahdzib*, *Lisan al-Mizan*, and *al-Ishabah fi Tamyiz al-Shahabah*. Secondary sources include al-Sakhawi's biography of Ibn Hajar as well as contemporary academic studies. The analysis was conducted in a descriptive-analytical manner.

Based on the sources examined, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani's thought can be constructed into a broad theoretical framework referred to here as the “Theory of Integrative Systematization in Hadith Science.” This theory consists of four main pillars that explain how Ibn Hajar transformed the study of hadith from mere data collection into a logical, measurable, and multidimensional discipline.

1. The Pillar of Deductive-Hierarchical Logic

Ibn Hajar transformed the paradigm of hadith science compilation, which had previously been enumerative (merely listing types of hadith), into a deductive-hierarchical system.

Logical Classification System: Through *Nukhbat al-Fikar*, he divided hadith beginning from the most general category (*khabar*), then branched into increasingly specific sub-categories based on logical criteria, such as the number of narrators (*mutawatir* versus *ahad*) and their quality (*maqbul* versus *mardud*).

Methodological Efficiency: This approach allows a hadith researcher to map the status of a given hadith within a single coherent and interconnected coordinate scheme.

2. The Pillar of Standardized Evaluation Metrics (Objectification of Criticism)

Ibn Hajar introduced precise standards to reduce subjectivity in the evaluation of hadith and their narrators.

Measurable Definitions: He provided a clear definition of *hasan* hadith as one that meets the requirements of *sahih* hadith but with a slightly diminished degree of narrator accuracy (*khaffa dhabtuh*). This resolved the ambiguity present in earlier definitions.

The Twelve-Level Scale (*Maratib*): In *Taqrib al-Tahdzib*, he standardized narrator evaluation into twelve fixed levels, ranging from *shahabi* (Companion) to *kadzdzab* (habitual liar). This functioned as an objective “measurement scale” that allowed for a consistent comparison of narrator quality.

3. The Pillar of Multidisciplinary Synthesis (Holistic Approach)

Ibn Hajar's theory asserts that a complete understanding of hadith cannot be separated from other branches of knowledge.

An Encyclopedia of Knowledge: In *Fath al-Bari*, he integrated hadith science with history, linguistics, geography, theology, and jurisprudence.

Dual-Dimensional Analysis: His methodology encompassed the simultaneous analysis of textual structure (*matan*), the quality of the chain of transmission (*sanad*), and legal derivation (*istinbath al-ahkam*).

4. The Pillar of Critical Autonomy and Harmonization

While respecting his predecessors, Ibn Hajar's theory emphasizes intellectual independence and the reconciliation of conflicting data.

Intellectual Independence: He did not hesitate to disagree with major authorities such as Imam al-Bukhari regarding the requirement of proven contemporaneous contact (*mu'an'an*) between narrators, or with al-Dhahabi regarding narrator evaluation, provided his position was supported by strong argumentation.

Harmonization of Contradictions: He developed methods for reconciling seemingly contradictory hadith (*mukhtalif al-hadits*), thereby contributing to a more solid structure of Islamic law.

This Theory of Integrative Systematization positions Ibn Hajar not merely as a collector of hadith but as an “architect” who constructed the scientific structure of modern hadith studies. His contribution established a methodological standard for hadith studies that remains applicable and relevant to this day

3. Results and Discussion

1. The Life and Scholarly Journey of Ibn Hajar

a. Biography

Ibn Hajar was born on 12 Sha'ban 773 AH (22 February 1372 CE) in Egypt. The *nisbah* “al-'Asqalani” refers to the city of 'Asqalan (Ashkelon) in Palestine, the ancestral homeland of his family. He grew up as an orphan—his father, Nur al-Din Ali, a scholar and man of letters, died when Ibn Hajar was four years old (777 AH), and his mother had died earlier still. He was raised by Zaki al-Din al-Kharrubi, a wealthy merchant who served as the guardian (*washi*) appointed by his father (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. I, pp. 68–75).

Ibn Hajar memorized the Qur'an at the age of nine and began memorizing concise hadith texts from a very young age. At the age of twelve, he accompanied his guardian on the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he had the opportunity to hear hadith from the scholars of the Hijaz. From that point onward, he embarked on a long *rihlah 'ilmiyyah* (scholarly journey) that took him to various centers of Islamic learning: Cairo, Damascus, Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), Mecca, Medina, and numerous cities throughout Egypt and Syria (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. I, pp. 80–95).

Throughout his life, Ibn Hajar held several important positions: he served as professor of hadith at a number of prominent madrasahs in Cairo, including Madrasah al-Kamhiyyah, Madrasah al-Husayniyyah, and Madrasah al-Babarsiyah. He also served as *Qadhi al-Qudhat* (Chief Judge) of the Shafi'i school in Egypt from 827 AH onward, although he had little fondness for judicial office and requested to resign from the position on several occasions. Ibn Hajar passed away on 28 Dhu al-Hijjah 852 AH (22 February 1449 CE) in Cairo and was buried in the al-Qarafah cemetery.

b. Teachers and Chains of Transmission

Ibn Hajar studied under more than 500 scholars from various disciplines. His principal teachers in hadith included the following. First, Zayn al-Din al-'Iraqi (725–806 AH), author of *Alfiyyah al-'Iraqi* (a thousand-verse poem on the science of hadith terminology) and *Takhrij Ahadits al-Ihya'*. Al-'Iraqi was the foremost *muhaddith* of his era and the most influential teacher in Ibn Hajar's formation in hadith science. Ibn Hajar studied under him for ten years (796–806 AH) and inherited his entire scholarly tradition in hadith (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. I, pp. 110–125).

Second, Siraj al-Din al-Bulqini (724–805 AH), a prominent jurist and *muhaddith* who taught Ibn Hajar *fiqh* and its methodology (*usul al-fiqh*). Third, Nur al-Din al-Haythami (735–807 AH), author of *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, who taught Ibn Hajar hadith and *takhrij*. Fourth, Ibn al-Mulaqqin (723–804 AH), a prolific *muhaddith* who wrote more than 300 works, including an unfinished commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari* that was, in effect, later completed by Ibn Hajar's own project in *Fath al-Bari*.

Ibn Hajar's chain of transmission (*sanad*) is among the richest and most extensive in Islamic history. He possessed chains connected to the entire body of canonical hadith literature through remarkably short ('*ali*') chains of transmission—that is, with very few intermediaries between himself and the compilers of the hadith collections. This wealth of transmission made Ibn Hajar a kind of “common link” connecting the earlier hadith tradition to subsequent generations.

c. Students and Intellectual Influence

Ibn Hajar had many students who later became eminent scholars in their own right. His most celebrated student was Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi (831–902 AH), who wrote Ibn Hajar's biography in the monumental three-volume work *al-Jawahir wa al-Durar fi Tarjamah Syaikh al-Islam Ibn Hajar*. Al-Sakhawi also continued Ibn Hajar's scholarly tradition in hadith, history, and biographical literature. Another important student was Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (849–911 AH)—although he learned more from Ibn Hajar's students than directly from Ibn Hajar himself—who went on to become one of the most prolific scholars in Islamic history (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. III, pp. 1050–1080).

Ibn Hajar's intellectual influence transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. His works—particularly *Fath al-Bari*, *Nukhbat al-Fikar*, and *Taqrib al-Tahdzib*—remain standard curricula in Islamic madrasahs and universities worldwide, from Indonesia to Morocco, from India to Turkey. In the *pesantren* tradition of the Malay Archipelago, *Nukhbat al-Fikar* and its commentary *Nuzhat al-Nazhar* are required texts in the study of hadith terminology.

d. Monumental Works

Al-Sakhawi recorded that Ibn Hajar wrote more than 270 works across various fields (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. II, pp. 670–720). His most significant works in hadith and hadith science include the following.

In hadith commentary: (1) *Fath al-Bari bi Syarh Sahih al-Bukhari* (13 volumes plus one introductory volume, *Hady al-Sari*), his masterwork, on which he labored for more than twenty-five years; (2) *Taghliq al-Ta'liq*, a work investigating the *mu'allaq* hadith (those whose chains are partially omitted) in *Sahih al-Bukhari*; and (3) *al-Mathalib al-'Aliyah bi Zawa'id al-Masanid al-Tsamaniyyah*, which compiles hadith from eight *musnad* collections not found in *al-Kutub al-Sittah* (the Six Canonical Books).

In the science of hadith terminology: (1) *Nukhbat al-Fikar fi Musthalah Ahl al-Atsar* and its commentary *Nuzhat al-Nazhar fi Taudhih Nukhbat al-Fikar*; (2) *al-Nukat 'ala Kitab Ibn al-Shalah*, a critical commentary on Ibn al-Shalah's *Muqaddimah*.

In narrator criticism and biography: (1) *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib* (12 volumes), an abridgment and revision of al-Mizzi's *Tahdzib al-Kamal*; (2) *Taqrib al-Tahdzib*, an abridgment of *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib*; (3) *Lisan al-Mizan* (7 volumes), a revision of al-Dhahabi's *Mizan al-I'tidal*; (4) *al-Ishabah fi Tamyiz al-Shahabah* (8 volumes), an encyclopedia of the biographies of the Prophet's Companions; and (5) *Ta'jil al-Manfa'ah bi Zawa'id Rijal al-A'immah al-Arba'ah*, biographies of narrators found in the four *musnad* collections but not included in *al-Kutub al-Sittah*.

2. Ibn Hajar's Thought in the Science of Hadith Terminology (Musthalah al-Hadith)

a. *Nukhbat al-Fikar: The Systematization of Hadith Science*

Nukhbat al-Fikar fi Musthalah Ahl al-Atsar (The Essence of Thought on the Terminology of Hadith Scholars) is a concise treatise composed by Ibn Hajar to classify the types of hadith systematically. Although small in volume—only a few pages—*Nukhbat al-Fikar* is regarded as one of the most brilliant and densely constructed works of hadith terminology ever written, owing to its success in arranging all types of hadith into a single logical, coherent, and interconnected classificatory scheme (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000a, Editor's Introduction, pp. 5–15).

The methodological strength of *Nukhbat al-Fikar* lies in its deductive-hierarchical approach. Unlike earlier works of hadith terminology—such as Ibn al-Shalah's *Muqaddimah*, which classified types of hadith enumeratively (item by item, without a clear relational framework)—Ibn Hajar began with the most general category (*khbar*) and progressively divided it into increasingly specific sub-categories based on logical criteria.

Ibn Hajar's classificatory scheme begins with *khbar* (report), which is divided into *mutawatir* (transmitted by so many narrators that collusion in fabrication is inconceivable) and *ahad* (that which does not reach the degree of *mutawatir*). *Ahad* hadith are then subdivided into *masyhur* (transmitted by three or more narrators at every level of the chain), *'aziz* (transmitted by two narrators), and *gharib* (transmitted by a single narrator). Each sub-category is further divided according to quality: *maqbul* (accepted) and *mardud* (rejected). *Maqbul* hadith include *sahih* and *hasan*, each of which may be *li dzatih* (in itself) or *li ghairih* (strengthened by corroborating hadith). *Mardud* hadith comprise various categories of *da'if* (weak) hadith, classified according to the type of defect involved (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000a, pp. 20–35).

b. *Ibn Hajar's Concept of Sahih and Hasan Hadith*

Ibn Hajar formulated a highly precise definition of *sahih* hadith that remains the standard in hadith science to this day. He defined *sahih* hadith as a hadith with an uninterrupted chain of transmission, narrated by narrators possessing full *'adalah* (integrity) and *dhabt* (accuracy), from similarly qualified narrators, all the way to its ultimate source (the Prophet or a Companion), free from *syadz* (irregularity) and *'illah* (hidden defect). This definition entails five conditions: (1) *ittishal al-sanad* (continuity of the chain), (2) *'adalah al-rawi* (integrity of the narrator), (3) *tamam al-dhabt* (perfect accuracy), (4) *'adam al-shudhudh* (absence of irregularity), and (5) *'adam al-'illah al-qadihah* (absence of a discrediting hidden defect) (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000a, pp. 25–28).

For *hasan* hadith, Ibn Hajar provided a definition that clearly and measurably distinguished it from *sahih* hadith: a *hasan* hadith is one that satisfies all the requirements of a *sahih* hadith except the third condition, in that its narrator's accuracy is slightly diminished (*khaffa dhabtuh*)—meaning the narrator is somewhat less precise than a narrator of *sahih* hadith, yet not so deficient as to warrant rejection of the hadith. This definition was of considerable importance, as it resolved the confusion caused by earlier, less precise definitions of *hasan* hadith, including that of al-Tirmidhi, which had been regarded as ambiguous.

Ibn Hajar also introduced the concepts of *sahih li ghairih* (*sahih* owing to corroboration) and *hasan li ghairih* (*hasan* owing to corroboration). A *hasan li dzatih* hadith supported by a corroborating chain (*mutabi'* or *syahid*) may be elevated to *sahih li ghairih*. Likewise, a lightly weak (*da'if*) hadith supported by numerous corroborating chains may be elevated to *hasan li ghairih*. This concept demonstrates Ibn Hajar's highly nuanced understanding of the gradation of hadith quality—that hadith quality is not a binary category, but rather a spectrum (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000b, pp. 55–65).

c. The Concept of Da'if Hadith and Its Classification

In classifying *da'if* (weak) hadith, Ibn Hajar demonstrated a highly systematic approach. He grouped the causes of a hadith's weakness into two broad categories based on the location of the defect.

First, defects in the continuity of the chain (*suquth fi al-sanad*). This category includes: (a) *mu'allaq* (a chain omitted at its beginning by the compiler); (b) *mursal* (a Successor narrating directly from the Prophet without mentioning a Companion); (c) *mu'dhal* (two consecutive narrators omitted); and (d) *munqathi'* (a single narrator omitted in the middle of the chain, or non-consecutive omissions).

Second, defects in the narrator (*tha'n fi al-rawi*). Ibn Hajar identified ten types of narrator defects: (1) *kadzib* (fabrication), which produces a *maudhu'* (forged) hadith; (2) *tuhmah bi al-kadzib* (suspected of fabrication), which produces a *matruk* (abandoned) hadith; (3) *fisq* (moral corruption); (4) *bid'ah* (religious innovation); (5) *wahm* (error), which produces a *mu'allal* (defective) hadith; (6) *mukhalafah* (contradiction of a stronger narration), which produces a *mudraj* (interpolated), *maqlub* (inverted), or *mudhtarib* (confused) hadith; (7) *jahalah* (unknown identity); (8) absence of *dhabt* (accuracy); (9) *su' al-hifzh* (poor memory); and (10) *tadlis* (concealment of a defect in transmission) (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000a, pp. 30–40).

d. Ibn Hajar's Theory of Tadlis and Mu'an'an

Ibn Hajar made a highly significant contribution to the theory of *tadlis* (concealment in transmission). In his work *Thabaqat al-Mudallisin*, he classified narrators who practiced *tadlis* (*mudallisin*) into five levels (*thabaqat*). The first level comprises *mudallisin* who rarely practiced *tadlis* and transmitted only from trustworthy narrators—their hadith are accepted even when using the ambiguous formula *'an'anah* ("from"). The fifth level comprises *mudallisin* who frequently practiced *tadlis* while transmitting from weak narrators—their hadith are not accepted unless they explicitly state *sami'tu* ("I heard") or *haddatsani* ("he related to me") (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1983, pp. 13–20).

Regarding *mu'an'an* hadith (those using the formula *'an*, "from"), Ibn Hajar adopted a position that differed from that of his predecessor al-Bukhari. Al-Bukhari required proven contact (*al-liqa' al-muhaqqaq*) between two narrators for a *mu'an'an* hadith to be accepted. Ibn Hajar, by contrast—following the position of the majority of *muhaddithin* and Imam Muslim—required only *al-mu'asharah* (contemporaneity) and *imkan al-liqa'* (the possibility of contact). This difference is significant, as it affects the number of hadith accepted or rejected, and demonstrates that Ibn Hajar—despite his great respect for al-Bukhari—was not blindly bound to every opinion of his teacher.

3. Fath al-Bari: The Culmination of the Hadith Commentary Tradition

a. Background to the Composition of Fath al-Bari

Fath al-Bari bi Syarh Sahih al-Bukhari (The Creator's Victory in Explaining *Sahih al-Bukhari*) is Ibn Hajar's greatest work and is widely regarded as the greatest work of hadith science in Islamic history. Ibn Hajar began composing it in early 817 AH and completed it in Rajab 842 AH—a process spanning more than twenty-five years. The completion of *Fath al-Bari* was celebrated with a grand ceremony (*walimah*) attended by scholars, officials, and the people of Cairo, reflecting the extraordinarily high regard in which the work was held at the time (al-Sakhawi, 1999, Vol. II, pp. 590–610).

Prior to *Fath al-Bari*, Ibn Hajar composed *Hady al-Sari* as its *muqaddimah* (introduction). *Hady al-Sari* is itself a monumental single-volume work containing a biography

of al-Bukhari, the history of the compilation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, an explanation of al-Bukhari's methodology, a glossary of terms specific to al-Bukhari's usage, brief biographies of every narrator appearing in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and responses to al-Daraqutni's criticisms of hadith contained in *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000c, pp. 1–15).

b. Ibn Hajar's Methodology of Commentary

Ibn Hajar's methodology in commenting on *Sahih al-Bukhari* is highly systematic and multidimensional. Each chapter of *Fath al-Bari* generally follows the pattern described below.

First, an explanation of the *tarjamah al-bab* (the chapter title set by al-Bukhari). Ibn Hajar analyzed the relationship between the chapter title and the hadith it contains, uncovering the *fiqh al-Bukhari* (al-Bukhari's implicit legal reasoning) embedded in the choice of chapter title. Scholars have observed that "*fiqh al-Bukhari fi tarajimihi*" (the depth of al-Bukhari's understanding lies in his chapter titles), and it was Ibn Hajar who succeeded most fully in uncovering this dimension (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1959, Vol. I, Author's Introduction).

Second, chain-of-transmission analysis. Ibn Hajar traced the biography of every narrator in a given chain, evaluated their reliability, identified alternative transmission routes (*turuq*), and explained any *'illah* (hidden defect) where present. He also connected *mu'allaq* hadith (those whose chains al-Bukhari had abbreviated) to their complete chains as found in other sources.

Third, textual (*matan*) analysis. Ibn Hajar explained difficult vocabulary (*gharib al-hadiths*), analyzed grammatical structure (*i'rab*), explained the *asbab al-wurud* (circumstances of a hadith's utterance), and discussed variations in wording across different transmission routes.

Fourth, *istinbath al-ahkam* (legal derivation). Ibn Hajar presented the views of jurists from various legal schools regarding the legal implications of each hadith, discussed their respective evidentiary bases, and frequently indicated the strongest opinion (*al-rajih*). Although he adhered to the Shafi'i school, Ibn Hajar was notably objective in presenting the views of other schools and often endorsed positions outside his own school when their evidentiary basis was stronger.

c. The Contribution of Fath al-Bari to Chain and Text Criticism

Fath al-Bari serves as an applied laboratory for the entirety of hadith theory developed by Ibn Hajar and his predecessors. Within it, Ibn Hajar applied the sciences of narrator criticism (*jarh wa ta'dil*), hidden defects (*'ilal*), difficult vocabulary (*gharib al-hadiths*), abrogation (*nasikh-mansukh*), and the reconciliation of contradictory hadith (*mukhtalif al-hadiths*), simultaneously and in an integrated manner, to every hadith he explained.

The specific contributions of *Fath al-Bari* to hadith criticism include: (1) systematically answering all of al-Daraqutni's criticisms of hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* (in *Hady al-Sari*); (2) connecting al-Bukhari's *mu'allaq* hadith to their complete chains; (3) identifying and explaining the *'illah* (hidden defect) present in certain hadith; (4) reconciling seemingly contradictory hadith (*mukhtalif al-hadiths*) through various methods of harmonization; and (5) conducting *takhrij* (source verification) of thousands of hadith from sources outside *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1959, Vol. I, pp. 7–12).

d. The Multidisciplinary Approach in Fath al-Bari

One of the distinguishing features of *Fath al-Bari* that sets it apart from other hadith commentaries is its multidisciplinary approach. Ibn Hajar explained hadith not only from the perspectives of hadith science and jurisprudence, but also integrated insights from a range of other disciplines.

In history, Ibn Hajar provided richly detailed historical information about the events surrounding each hadith, the biographies of the figures mentioned, and the social and political context of the Prophet's era. In linguistics, he analyzed difficult Arabic terms by drawing on classical dictionaries and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. In geography, he identified the locations mentioned in hadith. In theology (*kalam*), he discussed the doctrinal implications of certain hadith. This multidisciplinary approach makes *Fath al-Bari* not merely a hadith commentary,

but an encyclopedia of Islamic sciences organized around the systematic structure of *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Abu Ghuddah, 1992, pp. 5–15).

4. Ibn Hajar's Contribution to Jarh wa Ta'dil (Narrator Criticism)

a. *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib and Taqrib al-Tahdzib*

Tahdzib al-Tahdzib (The Refinement of the Refinement) is Ibn Hajar's work abridging and revising al-Mizzi's (d. 742 AH) *Tahdzib al-Kamal fi Asma' al-Rijal*, an encyclopedia of the biographies of all narrators found in *al-Kutub al-Sittah* and their supporting collections. Ibn Hajar retained the essential information from al-Mizzi's work while adding evaluations from other hadith critics not mentioned by al-Mizzi, correcting errors, and providing a final judgment (*hukm*) on the status of each narrator (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1907, Vol. I, Introduction).

Taqrib al-Tahdzib (An Approach to the Refinement) is a more practical and user-friendly abridgment of *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib*. In it, Ibn Hajar provided a concise evaluation of each narrator using standardized terms of his own devising. He classified narrators into twelve levels (*maratib*), from the highest (*shahabiyy*, Companion) to the lowest (*kadzdzab*, habitual liar). Among the intermediate levels are: *tsiqah tsiqah* (highly trustworthy), *tsiqah* (trustworthy), *shaduq* (truthful), *shaduq yahimu* (truthful but occasionally mistaken), *maqbul* (accepted if corroborated), *layyin al-hadith* (weak in narration), *da'if* (weak), *matruk* (abandoned), and *muttaham bi al-kadhib* (suspected of fabrication) (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1986, Introduction, pp. 15–25).

The systematization of narrator levels in *Taqrib* represents an extremely valuable methodological contribution, as it provides a measurable and replicable standard of evaluation. Before Ibn Hajar, the terminology used by hadith critics to evaluate narrators varied considerably and was difficult to compare across sources. By establishing twelve standardized levels, Ibn Hajar created, in effect, a “measurement scale” that allowed for a more objective comparison of narrator quality.

b. *Lisan al-Mizan: Criticism of Narrators Outside al-Kutub al-Sittah*

Lisan al-Mizan (The Tongue of the Scale) is Ibn Hajar's work revising and refining al-Dhahabi's (d. 748 AH) *Mizan al-I'tidal fi Naqd al-Rijal*. Whereas *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib* focuses on narrators found within *al-Kutub al-Sittah*, *Lisan al-Mizan* focuses on narrators not included in *al-Kutub al-Sittah*—that is, narrators found in other hadith collections, works of jurisprudence, exegesis, history, and other sources (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2002, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. 15–30).

In *Lisan al-Mizan*, Ibn Hajar demonstrated a sharp critical acumen. He did not merely record the opinions of earlier critics but also evaluated, corrected, and frequently offered his own independent judgment. He at times disagreed with al-Dhahabi and explained his reasoning through detailed argumentation. This work demonstrates that Ibn Hajar was not merely a “compiler” gathering the opinions of others, but an independent and original critic.

c. *Al-Ishabah fi Tamyiz al-Shahabah*

Al-Ishabah fi Tamyiz al-Shahabah (Precision in Distinguishing the Companions) is the most comprehensive biographical encyclopedia of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ever compiled. It contains more than 12,000 biographical entries of Companions, including information on their names, lineage, date of conversion to Islam, role in Islamic history, hadith they transmitted, and date of death (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 1995, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. 5–20).

The distinguishing feature of *al-Ishabah* lies in Ibn Hajar's methodology of classifying biographical entries into four categories: (1) Companions whose status is confirmed through *sahih* narration; (2) Companions mentioned in weaker sources; (3) individuals who lived during the Prophet's lifetime but whose status as Companions remains doubtful; and (4) individuals mistakenly included in earlier lists of Companions. This classification reflects Ibn Hajar's meticulousness and critical disposition, refusing to accept claims without verification.

Al-Ishabah holds great significance in hadith science, since the status of “Companion” (*shahabiyy*) has direct implications for the evaluation of hadith: the consensus of *muhaddithin*

holds that all Companions possess *'udul* (integrity) and require no *jarh* (criticism). Accurate identification of who qualifies as a Companion is therefore a foundational element in the overall validation of hadith. Ibn Hajar's work remains the definitive reference on this question.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (773–852 AH) was one of the greatest muhaddithin in Islamic history, honored with the title Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadiths. He studied under more than 500 scholars, authored more than 270 works, and bequeathed a scholarly tradition in hadith science that remains a standard reference to this day. His intellectual journey reflects a total dedication to hadith science spanning more than half a century.

In the science of hadith terminology, Ibn Hajar made a foundational contribution through *Nukhbat al-Fikar*, which presents a deductive-hierarchical systematization of hadith science. His definitions of *sahih* and *hasan* hadith became the standard in hadith science. The concept of *sahih/hasan li ghairih* demonstrates his highly nuanced understanding of gradations in hadith quality. His classification of ten types of narrator defects and his theory of the five levels of *mudallisin* represent original and highly valuable contributions.

Fath al-Bari stands as the unrivaled culmination of the hadith commentary tradition. This work—composed over more than twenty-five years—applies the full range of hadith science instruments in an integrated, multidisciplinary manner. Ibn Hajar's methodology of commentary, encompassing analysis of the chapter title (*tarjamah al-bab*), chain-of-transmission analysis, textual analysis, and legal derivation (*istinbath al-ahkam*), renders *Fath al-Bari* not merely a commentary but an encyclopedia of the Islamic sciences.

In the science of narrator criticism (*jarh wa ta'dil*), Ibn Hajar made significant contributions through *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib* and *Taqrib al-Tahdzib* (with its systematization of twelve narrator levels), *Lisan al-Mizan* (criticism of narrators outside *al-Kutub al-Sittah*), and *al-Ishabah* (the most comprehensive encyclopedia of the Companions). These works established Ibn Hajar as the foremost authority in the evaluation of hadith narrators, an authority that remains indispensable for every researcher of hadith.

References

- Abu Dawud, S. ibn al-Ash'ath. (n.d.). *Sunan Abi Dawud* (M. M. al-Din Abd al-Hamid, Ed.). al-Maktabah al-'Ashriyyah.
- Abu Ghuddah, A. F. (1992). *Muqaddimah tahqiq syarh Nukhbat al-Fikar*. Maktab al-Mathbu'at al-Islamiyyah.
- Abu Khalil, S. (2005). *Atlas al-Hadiths al-Nabawi*. Dar al-Fikr.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Anchor Books.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1907). *Tahdzib al-Tahdzib* (Vol. I). Da'irat al-Ma'arif al-Nizhamiyyah.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1959). *Fath al-Bari bi syarh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Vol. I). Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1983). *Thabaqat al-Mudallisin* ('A. ibn Abdillah al-Qaryuti, Ed.). Maktabat al-Manar.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1986). *Taqrib al-Tahdzib* (M. 'Awwamah, Ed.). Dar al-Rashid.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1995). *Al-Ishabah fi tamyiz al-shahabah* (Vol. I) ('A. A. Abd al-Mawjud & A. M. Mu'awwad, Eds.). Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (1998). *Raf' al-ishr 'an qudhat Mishr*. al-Khanji.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (2000a). *Nukhbat al-Fikar fi musthalah ahl al-atsar* (N. al-Din 'Itr, Ed.). Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (2000b). *Nuzhat al-nazhar fi taudhih Nukhbat al-Fikar* (N. al-Din 'Itr, Ed.). Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (2000c). *Hady al-Sari: Muqaddimah Fath al-Bari*. Dar al-Salam.
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. (2002). *Lisan al-Mizan* (Vol. I) ('A. F. Abu Ghuddah, Ed.). Dar al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyyah.
- Ismail, M. S. (1991). *Pengantar ilmu hadits*. Angkasa.
- Maulana, L. (2016). *Periodisasi perkembangan studi hadits*. ESENSIA, 17(1), 111–123.
- Sakhawi, S. al-. (1999). *Al-Jawahir wa al-durar fi tarjamah Syaikh al-Islam Ibn Hajar* (Vols. I–III). Dar Ibn Hazm.