

Criticism Against Şaĥĭĥ Al-BukĥĀrĪ

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Assignment question:

Please write on Criticism Against Al-BukĥĀrĪ and Şaĥĭĥ

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Abstract

This research paper elaborates on some criticism that was brought forward against Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī which is known to be the most authentic and most reliable hadith collection and, therefore, the most authentic and reliable source of Islamic knowledge after the Qur'ān itself. However, there are some aḥādīth which are disputed with regard to their authenticity and, even if they are authentic, if they meet the strict criteria which Imām al-Bukhārī utilized to classify a hadith as authentic (Ṣaḥīḥ).

Some people have tried to attack Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī for mentioning these aḥādīth. Therefore, it is very important to clarify the doubt surrounding these aḥādīth.

In this research paper, the criteria by which Imām al-Bukhārī classified aḥādīth as authentic (Ṣaḥīḥ) will be mentioned.

Then, some aḥādīth will be mentioned which are disputed a conclusion will be drawn as to whether these aḥādīth are, in fact, authentic (Ṣaḥīḥ) or at least reliable (hasan) and acted upon (ma'mūl bihi).

Keywords: Ṣaḥīḥ, Bukhārī, Hadith Criticism, Orientalism

Introduction

Imām al-Bukhārī was the author of the well-known hadith collection Şaĥīĥ al-Bukhārī. His full name was Abū ‘Abdullāh Muĥammad ibn Ismā’īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Burdazbah al-Ja’fī. He was born in the year 194 H in Bukhārā which is known today as Uzbekistan and died in the year 256 H.

Before the age of 10, he started memorizing aĥadīth. He travelled a lot to collect aĥadīth and is known for his strict principles regarding from whom he would accept aĥadīth and which aĥadīth he would classify as Şaĥīĥ. He was also known to have prayed şalāh al-istikhārah before writing any hadith.

The scholars of the Muslim ummah have agreed upon the authenticity of the Imām Bukhārī’s hadith collection Şaĥīĥ al-Bukhārī, also known as Al-Jāmi’ al-Musnad as-Şaĥīĥ al-Mukhtaşar min Umūr Rasūlillāh wa Sunanihi wa Ayyāmihi (“An inclusive authentic abridged book of aĥadīth of Allah’s Messenger and his commandments and military expeditions supported with a chain of narrators”). Some scholars, such as Hafiz ibn Ĥajr al-Asqalānī who wrote an immense commentary on Şaĥīĥ al-Bukhārī, criticized about 110 aĥadīth mentioned in Şaĥīĥ al-Bukhārī. However, the criticism does not decrease the authenticity below the level of Şaĥīĥ (authentic). (as-Sibā’ee, 2008)

Some aĥadīth have been criticised by several scholars which this research paper will elaborate on.

This research paper is divided into two sections:

Section 1: A brief summary of the principles that Imām al-Bukhārī utilized to classify aĥadīth as authentic, i.e. Mustalaĥ al-Hadith according to Imām al-Bukhārī.

Section 2: A short commentary on some disputed aĥadīth.

Mustalaḥ al-Hadith according to Imām al-Bukhārī

Imām al-Bukhārī, just like most other hadith collectors, used specific principles to determine if a hadith was authentic (Ṣaḥīḥ) or not. In summary, these are 5 principles:

1. A connected chain of narration, meaning that each narrator from the chain of narrators took the hadith from the person above him in the chain. Imām al-Bukhārī was known to be the strictest at this point as he did not only make it a condition that the narrators lived at the same time but that they also must have met one another.
2. Trustworthiness of the narrators, meaning that each narrator is an adult and sane Muslim, who is neither known to commit minor sins in public nor major sins in private.
3. Good memory of the narrators, meaning that each narrator should have a good memory, either memory by heart or memory by writing.
4. Absence of contradictions with a hadith which has stronger narrators.
5. Absence of hidden defects, meaning that there are neither hidden defects in the chain of narration nor the actual text. (Al-Ṭaḥān, 2010)

Imām al-Bukhārī attempted to make sure that there are only Ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth mentioned in his Ṣaḥīḥ and to stick to these principles very closely.

It should be mentioned however that Imām al-Bukhārī never attempted to collect all authentic aḥādīth that he heard. In fact, those aḥādīth which he collected in his Ṣaḥīḥ are only a small number of those aḥādīth which he heard. Those aḥādīth which he did not write down were not rejected by him, but they simply did not meet the criteria of authenticity, were repetitions, or were not of great relevance. The scholars mentioned that he heard over 600,000 aḥādīth of which Imām al-Bukhārī wrote 9,082 in his Ṣaḥīḥ. If repetitions are not

counted, it is only 2,062 aḥādīth which he included in his Ṣaḥīḥ. (Philips, 2007) These numbers show the level of knowledge of Imām al-Bukhārī as well as his caution about which aḥādīth he should include in his hadith collection.

Four Disputed Aḥādīth

The first hadith

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “After one hundred years, there will not remain a breathing soul on the face of the earth.”

Some orientalist understood this to mean that it indicated the end of this world. But as the world did not end, he classified this hadith as a fabrication. (as-Sibâ'ee, 2008)

However, this statement is part of a longer hadith which was mentioned by Imām al-Bukhārī as well in the “Book of Prayer”. In that hadith, it clearly states that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ led the night prayer at the end of his life and, upon completion, stood up and said: “Do you see this night of yours, for after one hundred years pass, there will not remain a single person from those who are today on the face of the earth.” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 116)

Some Saḥābah understood this and narrated the disputed hadith. In order to understand the disputed hadith, one should see it in the context of the longer hadith.

Upon research, some scholars came to know that the last Saḥābī to pass away was Abū Ṭufayl ‘Āmir Wāthilah who passed away exactly one hundred years after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ mentioned it.

Therefore, this hadith is a miracle and a sign of the Prophethood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. (as-Sibâ'ee, 2008) (ibn Ḥajr, 1989)

The second hadith

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever eats seven Ajwa dates every day will not be harmed by poison or magic on that day until the night.” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 5769) This hadith was mentioned with different wordings in other hadith collections as well.

Most of the scholars understood this hadith to be limited to the Ajwa dates of Madīnah as it was narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: “Whoever eats seven dates within the limits of Madinah...” In another narration in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, there is another narration with the wording: “Indeed, this Ajwa al-‘Āliyah is a cure.”

Some orientalist criticised this hadith to be a fabrication. However, it has been narrated through many chains and upright narrators, the meaning is established through other reliable aḥādīth, so it can by no means be classified as a fabrication. (as-Sibâ'ee, 2008) (ibn Ḥajr, 1989)

The third hadith

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Truffles are a form of manna, and its liquid is a cure for the eye.”

This hadith has been narrated through many authentic chains of narration and was actually tested by Abū Hurayrah. Thus, there is no reason why this hadith should not be accepted, classified as Ṣaḥīḥ and acted upon. (as-Sibâ'ee, 2008) (ibn Ḥajr, 1989)

The fourth hadith

Ibn ‘Umar narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever takes possession of a dog other than for the dog that is used for hunting or (herding) livestock loses two qīrāt of reward every day.”

When it was mentioned to ibn ‘Umar that Abū Hurayrah added to the narration, “or the dog that is used in the field”, ibn ‘Umar said: “Indeed, Abū Hurayrah has a field.”

Some orientalists claimed that Abū Hurayrah fabricated the addition to the hadith to justify his own practice of having a dog for his field. However, what ibn ‘Umar meant most likely was that Abū Hurayrah knew so well about this hadith because he himself has a field and it applied to him.

Again, this hadith was narrated through different chains of narration and also through other than Abū Hurayrah which makes this hadith reliable. (as-Sibā’ee, 2008) (ibn Ḥajr, 1989)

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the narrations which some orientalists and hadith critics have criticised in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī have been proven to be authentic and reliable. In my humble opinion, it seems that those who criticise those aḥādīth merely do not accept the miracles but rather prefer logic over the authentic transmission of these aḥādīth.

The authenticity and level of authority that Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī has in the diverse fields of Islamic knowledge is agreed upon and cannot be diminished by any attempts of orientalists and other critics. The scholars of the fields of ḥadīth criticism, mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth and others have left behind a great legacy which protects and ensures the authenticity of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

And Allāh knows best.

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