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## ANALYSIS OF IMAM BUKHARI'S SILENCE ON NARRATORS IN «AL-TARIKH AL-KABIR»

**Abstract:** The article also examines the methodology of Imam Bukhari in compiling his renowned work, "al-Tarikh al-Kabir." It delves into how Imam Bukhari meticulously selected and analyzed hadith narrations, including his approach to evaluating the credibility and reliability of narrators through the lens of "jarh" (criticism) and "ta'dil" (accreditation). Additionally, it sheds light on the significance of "sukut" (silence) in Imam Bukhari's methodology, highlighting instances where his silence on certain narrators or narrations holds particular significance. By incorporating Imam Bukhari's "al-Tarikh al-Kabir" into the analysis, the article provides a comprehensive understanding of the scholarly practices and methodologies employed in hadith authentication.

**Key words:** Imam Bukhari, al-Tarikh al-Kabir, sukut, silence, jarh, criticism, ta'dil.

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

In Islam, the status of hadiths is unparalleled, and they are considered to be the next level of guidance after the Holy Quran, being interpreted by holy sources. The authenticity or weakness of hadiths, their acceptance or rejection, is essential to the chain of narrations, meaning it is related to the level of trustworthiness of the source. When Imam Shafi'i (d. 203/819) says, "The one who embarks on learning hadith without a sanad (chain of narrators) is like the one who gathers wood in the dark; he is likely to collect much, but more than likely to be off the mark," he emphasizes the importance of the chain of narrators in determining the credibility of hadiths [1, p. 21-22]

Scholars who have emerged from Movarounnahr (Central Asia) have engaged not only in the science of hadith but also in other fields of knowledge, gaining recognition from other Muslim scholars. Their research results have been documented in books

dedicated to narrations. For instance, the renowned hadith scholar Imam Bukhari (d. 256/870 CE), who is praised with the title "the Amir of the believers in hadith," has gained fame with several works dedicated to the science of narrations.

Imam Bukhari's works dedicated to the science of hadith include three notable texts titled "at-Tarikh al-Kabir" (The Great History), "at-Tarikh al-Awsat" (The Middle History), and "at-Tarikh as-Saghir" (The Small History), collectively known as "Tarikh".<sup>1</sup> These works are categorized as "major," "medium," and "minor" histories respectively. These texts are sources for studying the personal characteristics and positive and negative attributes of narrators, and they differ from each other in terms of volume and organization.

In "at-Tarikh al-Kabir," the names of narrators are arranged alphabetically, emphasizing the first letter of their names, while the remaining two works

<sup>1</sup> In the view of scholars, the identification and reporting of events and hadiths crucial for the criticism and authentication of narrations are utilized. See Muhammad Siddiq Minshawi. (Year of Publication

not provided). Qomus Mustalahat al-Hadith an-Nabaviy [Lexicon of Prophetic Hadith Terminology]. Cairo: Dar al-Fazila. – P. 36.

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arrange narrators and their death dates chronologically, based on the sequence of events.

The work "at-Tarikh al-Kabir" is distinguished among the aforementioned works by its comprehensive coverage of topics and information. Therefore, it is also referred to as the "major history." This work is not only significant in terms of Imam Bukhari's contributions but also holds great importance in the field of hadith science, as it is considered a primary source for narrators' biographical details.

Imam Bukhari's "at-Tarix al-Kabir" provides extensive information about narrators, including their biographical details, teachers, students, and travels. This comprehensive coverage adds depth to the understanding of hadith narrators.

Despite the detailed information provided, Imam Bukhari remains silent on certain narrators, neither criticizing nor endorsing them explicitly. This silence is particularly notable considering Imam Bukhari's meticulous scrutiny of hadith narrators.

Imam Bukhari used 13 terms of criticism ("jarh") and 8 terms of accreditations ("ta'dil ") a total of 600 times considering 107 narrators as reliable and 493 as weak. For nearly 13 thousand individuals mentioned in the text, judgments regarding "jarh" or "ta'dil" were not explicitly made.

In "at-Tarix al-Kabir," Imam Bukhari's silence regarding certain narrators has been a subject of analysis and discussion among scholars. This silence, often referred to as "sukut" in Arabic, carries significant implications within the science of hadith. Here, we delve into the implications and possible reasons behind Imam Bukhari's silence on narrators.

Imam Bukhari's "Sukut" on narrators is highly significant due to the meticulous nature of his work and the standards he set for hadith authentication. His "Sahih al-Bukhari" is considered one of the most authentic collections of hadith, and his silence on certain narrators raises questions and prompts scholarly inquiry.

Scholars have offered various interpretations for Imam Bukhari's silence on narrators. Some argue that it signifies his tacit approval or trust in the reliability of those narrators. Others suggest that it reflects his cautious approach, refraining from passing judgment without sufficient evidence.

Notably, Imam Bukhari's silence on a narrator should not be equated with approval or endorsement. It is essential to recognize that silence does not necessarily imply reliability. Instead, it indicates Imam Bukhari's refraining from explicit criticism or endorsement based on the available information.

In the sources, it is recorded that the hadith scholar Abdullah ibn Ahmad Yarbu'i Ishbili stated regarding Imam Bukhari's "at-Tarikh al-Kabir": "If he does not clarify whom the criticism is directed towards, it is presumed. If he says 'in his view,' it is probable, but if he doesn't, it is not" [13, v.18, p.265].

However, this statement does not appear in contemporary discussions.

Abdulfattah Abu Ghudda and Abdulhay Laknawi addressed this matter in their commentary on "ar-Rof'u wa at-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa at-Ta'dil," indicating that the silence of scholars like Imam Bukhari and Ibn Abi Hatim regarding the narrators should be understood as tacit accreditation. Additionally, scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Munziri, Zahabi, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Abdul Hadi, Zailai, Ibn Kathir, Zarkashi, Haysami, and Ibn Hajar accept Imam Bukhari's silence on narrators as accreditation [2, p. 230-232].

The second group of hadith scholars and modern researchers, such as Ali ibn Muhammad Fosiy (562/1167-628/1230 CE), Abdullah ibn Yusuf Jadiyah (born 1959), and Amr Abdulmun'im Salim (born 1967), have emphasized that the silence of Imam Bukhari regarding certain narrators indicates their obscurity or unknown status [3, v. 1, p. 507; 2, p. 233; 4, p. 164-165].

Contemporary researchers like Yahya Hussain Ahmad have examined the narrations in Imam Bukhari's "at-Tarikh al-Kabir" and emphasized that Imam Bukhari did not pass judgment on narrators in four specific cases [14].

For instance, individuals known for their reliability, such as Imam Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, narrators acknowledged for their trustworthiness, as well as those recognized as weak or abandoned, such as Muhammad ibn Ash'ath ibn Qays Kindi and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Yazkuri, were not subject to criticism or accreditation. Similarly, individuals categorized as obscure or unknown, like Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Bahili, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abdullah Hashimi, or those unknown to the author, such as Muhammad ibn Qays Asadi Kufi, Muhammad ibn Kulayb, and Ibrahim ibn Hanzala, were not subjected to criticism or accreditation.

Yahya Hussain Ahmad's observations primarily rely on addressing the two issues mentioned above. The mention of Muhammad ibn Ash'ath ibn Qays Kindi and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Yazkuri as trustworthy individuals in sources related to criticism and accreditation forms the basis for this assertion, requiring additional attention. Additionally, the fact that a narration from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim appears in Imam Bukhari's "al-Adab al-Mufrad" is noted [9, v. 5, p. 352; 5, p. 288]. The consensus among scholars that Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Bahili and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Hashimi are considered "mawdu" (fabricated) is based on the judgments of scholars relying on Ibn Abi Hatim [7, v. 7, p. 184, v. 9, p. 38]. This consideration does not definitively establish the position of these narrations in Imam Bukhari's estimation. It is crucial to note Ibn Hibban's mention of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Hashimi in "al-Siqat." Furthermore, Ibn Muja attributed a narration from

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Muhammad ibn Ibrahim in "al-Tarikh al-Kabir" to his "Sunan," [10, v. 2, p. 240] indicating its substantial significance.

Muhammad ibn Qays Asadi Kufi and Muhammad ibn Kulayb are individuals who are considered trustworthy by other hadith scholars but are unknown to Imam Bukhari according to the evaluation in the text [7, v. 8, p. 61, 67, v. 7, p. 427, v. 5, p. 362]. Therefore, it is necessary to consider Imam Bukhari's classification of them as "mawdu" (fabricated). Additionally, regarding the biography of Ibrahim ibn Hanzala, the statement "we do not know his identity" should be attributed not to him but rather to Ibn Abi Sufyan in the chain of narration.

Comparisons with other hadith collections and biographical works can shed light on Imam Bukhari's approach. Understanding how other scholars evaluated the same narrators may offer insights into the reasons behind Imam Bukhari's silence.

To clarify which of these views is correct, Ibn Adi's work "al-Kamil fi al-Du'afa al-Rijal" is mentioned, in which out of 296 narrators mentioned by Imam Bukhari as his teachers in the Sahih collection, 80 (27%) were selected, of which the following were identified when their mention in "al-Tarikh al-Kabir" with criticism or accreditation was examined:

- Out of the 80 selected narrators from Imam Bukhari's teachers, 24 were not mentioned in the work, with 5 of them having their translations provided in the footnote, yet no judgment was given regarding them.

- Of the aforementioned 24 narrators, 3 were mentioned without any judgment in the "al-Tarikh al-Awsat" by the author.

- 51 narrators were mentioned in "al-Tarikh al-Kabir," with one being described as "thiqah" (trustworthy), and one being subjected to a "ta'dil" (accreditation) by Muqri', such as Isma'il ibn 'Uzun Warraq being described as "thiqah." This is due to the

presence of another narrator, indicating his trustworthiness, and the accreditation of the second narrator as "thiqah." From the above, it can be concluded that Imam Bukhari did not express any judgment regarding the "trustworthy" narrators concerning criticism and accreditation. This is exemplified by the narrations cited in "al-Jami' al-Sahih." Nearly 13,000 narrators who were not subjected to criticism or accreditation are considered reliable in the field of hadith studies.

The "al-Tarikh al-Kabir" contains detailed information about the narrators' lineage, teachers, students, their status in the field of hadith, and their historical background, which indicates its significance in the science of hadith. The author provides some narrators' detailed biographical information, including their names, nicknames, teachers, students, their degree of reliability in "jarh wa ta'dil" (criticism and accreditation), their birthplace, demise, travels, and even excerpts from their narrations. Some narrators' fathers and grandfathers' names are also mentioned, providing additional context. The author's aim seems to be to provide the most concise information necessary for identifying the narrator and determining their level of reliability in the eyes of scholars of hadith criticism and accreditation.

The method of evaluating narrators' reliability, especially concerning accreditation, aligns with the approaches of earlier scholars, where judgments were not given for all narrators. Imam Bukhari's reliance on eight main criteria for praising narrators also underscores his approach to accreditation.

All narrators who underwent accreditation in the work do not necessarily have their narrations included in the "Sihah Sitta" (the six canonical hadith collections). This indicates that while Imam Bukhari considered some narrators trustworthy, their narrations might not meet the stringent criteria for inclusion in the "Sihah Sitta," possibly due to specific weaknesses or defects in their narrations.

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