

# The “Disclaimed” (*Munkar*) Ḥadīth

by GF Haddad – Shawwāl 1425

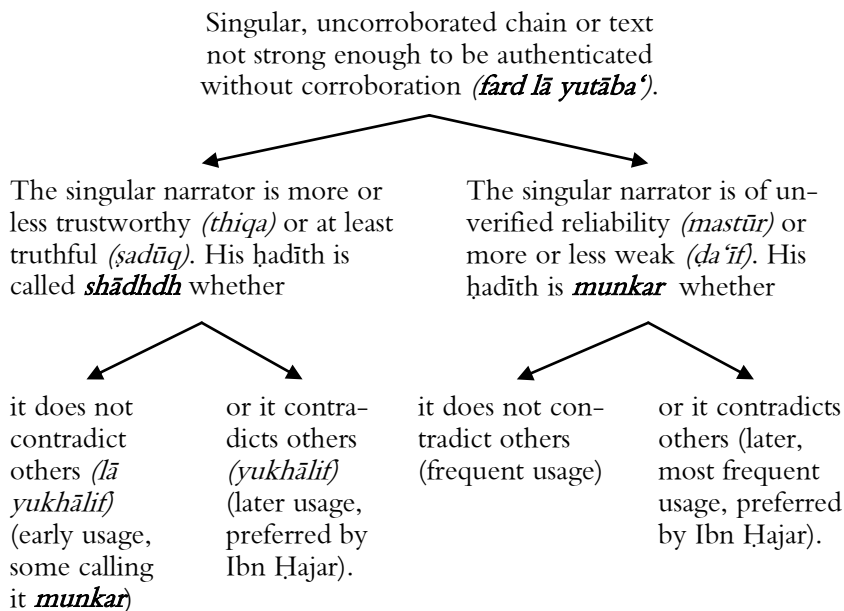
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## Definitions

The *munkar* is similar to the *shādhdh* in that each of them describes a truly singular narration – one that comes only through X – hence its abnormality or aberrant quality (*shudhūdh*). The more X tends to be weak, the more reason such narration will be described as disclaimed (*munkar*).

In later usage, each of the *shādhdh* and *munkar* category is itself subdivided into two categories, the first of which is defined as stated above, the second entailing *mukhālafā* or irreconcilable difference with what is more authentically reported.

*Munkar* and *shādhdh* may apply to text (*matn*) as well as chain (*sanad*).



Source: Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat 'alā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (2:674-675).

Imām Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī said in *Alfiyyat al-Ḥadīth*:

*And the munkar is the unheard-of stand-alone (al-fard) per al-Bardījī,  
In absolute terms; but the right [classification] for such narrations  
Is to detail it just like the aberrant (shādhdh) which we discussed before.<sup>1</sup>  
For it shares its meaning; thus did the Shaykh [Ibn al-Ṣalāh] speak.  
For example “Eat young dates with old dates,” etcetera,<sup>2</sup>  
Or Mālik naming Ibn ‘Uthmān “‘Umar” [instead of “‘Amr”]:<sup>3</sup>  
I say, so what?<sup>4</sup> Or, again, the ḥadīth of his [ﷺ] removing  
His ring upon entering the privy and putting it down.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>In *Faḥ al-Mughīth*: The *shādhdh* is the trustworthy narrator’s irreconcilable, solitary, uncorroborated contradiction of the whole trustworthy lot of the narrators or those stronger than him through addition or omission in the chain or text of a ḥadīth. Theirs is “retained” (*maḥfūz*) while his is “aberrant” (*shādhdh*).

<sup>2</sup>In *Faḥ al-Mughīth*: Narrated [from ‘Ā’isha by Ibn Mājah, al-Ḥākim, and Ibn al-Jawzī in the *Mawḍū‘āt*] exclusively through the honest but not quite reliable Abū Dhukayr Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Baṣrī as per al-Dāraquṭnī, Ibn ‘Adī, and others while al-‘Uqaylī said no-one corroborated him and it is unknown but for his narrating it; likewise al-Ḥākim: “It is among the stand-alone reports (*afīrād*) of the Baṣrians from the Madīnans” hence graded *munkar* by al-Nasā’ī followed by Ibn al-Ṣalāh and Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat* (2:680). The full wording of the ḥadīth is: “Eat *balāḥ* with *tamr*, eat the old with the new! For the devil is angered and says, ‘The son of Ādam has lived to eat the old with the new!’”

<sup>3</sup>In the ḥadīth narrated from Usāma ibn Zayd in the Nine except al-Nasā’ī: “A Muslim does not inherit from a non-Muslim nor a non-Muslim from a Muslim.” All the Masters and even Mālik’s students other than Yaḥyā and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan narrate it through ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and not through his brother ‘Umar except Mālik. The chain from Mālik, from al-Zuhri reads “‘Amr” in the Risāla edition of Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zuhri’s *Muwaṭṭa’* (2:539-540 §3061) and in our Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alawī al-Mālikī’s edition – Allāh have mercy on him! – of Ibn al-Qābisī’s epitome (*talkhīṣ*) of Ibn al-Qāsim’s *Muwaṭṭa’* (p. 126 §65). In *Faḥ al-Mughīth*: Al-Nasā’ī said no-one corroborated Mālik on “‘Umar” while Muslim and others even wrote it off as an error on his part but Mālik would motion with his hand when he said “‘Umar” as if acknowledging they differed with him. He said, “Thus did we preserve it and thus is it written in my book, and we make mistakes – who is exempt of making them?”

<sup>4</sup>In *Faḥ al-Mughīth*: Both ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthman and his brother ‘Umar are trustworthy so it makes no difference in the grading of the ḥadīth; and its *matn* may not be called *shādhdh* nor *munkar*. Ibn al-Ṣalāh cites it as an example of *munkar* in the chain exclusively because that quality may apply to the *isnād* as to the *matn*.

<sup>5</sup>Narrated in the four *Sunan* through Hammām ibn Yaḥyā, from Ibn Jurayj, from al-Zuhri, from Anas. Abū Dāwūd said, “This is *munkar* as it is only recognized from Ibn Jurayj as narrated from Zayd ibn Sa’d, from al-Zuhri, from Anas. The error in this is from Hammām and no-one else narrates it his way.” In *Faḥ al-Mughīth*: “Hammām is trustworthy and relied upon by the *Ṣaḥīḥ* compilers but he contradicted everybody. Nevertheless, Abū Dāwūd was not blessed to declare it disclaimed since Mūsā ibn Hārūn said, ‘I do not rule it out that these are two different ḥadīths.’ To this did Ibn Ḥibbān incline and he graded both of them sound.... At any rate the use of this ḥadīth as an example for the *munkar* and the use of Mālik’s statement also, are only according to the method of Ibn al-Ṣalāh in not differentiating between the *munkar* and the *shādhdh*.”

The ḥadīth Master Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī states in his commentary on Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Lakhmī’s poem on ḥadīth science, *Gharāmī Ṣaḥīḥ fī Anwāʿ al-Ḥadīth* (verse 6): “*Munkar, ay mardūd*” [meaning “rejected”].

Similarly Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bāʿith al-Ḥathīth fī Anwāʿ ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*.

Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr – Allāh preserve him – wrote, “*Munkar* is used as a stand-alone term in two senses: (1) As settled upon by the later authorities, the *munkar* is what the weak narrator relates in contradiction of the trustworthy narrator and is very weak.... (2) The *munkar* is a report with which a narrator singles himself out whether it contradicts others or not and even if he is trustworthy.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus does al-Lacknawī also define it in the *Rafʿ wal-Takmīl*. However, if he is trustworthy then his report may be called *shādhdh* or *gharīb* rather than *munkar*. *Faṭḥ al-Mughhīth* states, in the chapter on the *munkar*:

They differ insofar as the narrator of the *shādhdh* is trustworthy (*thiqa*) or truthful (*ṣadūq*) without thorough accuracy (*dabt*), while the narrator of the *munkar* is weak because of poor memorization or ignorance [of correct narration] or the like.

Al-Dhahabī said: “The singularity of the trustworthy narrator (*thiqa*) is counted as the *gharīb* while the singularity of the merely truthful narrator (*ṣadūq*) and those below him is counted as the *munkar*.”<sup>7</sup>

## Causes for which a Ḥadīth May Be Called *Munkar*

The grade of *munkar* can be caused by [1] a narrator (*al-rāwī*) that some declared weak rightly or wrongly, such as Suwayd ibn Saʿīd who is *thiqa* before his old age but whom Ibn Maʿīn lambasted as a criminal although Muslim retained him in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*; or by [2] a transmission (*al-riwāya*) some deem highly improbable, such as “al-Wāqidi from Maʿmar from al-Zuhri” which resulted in Aḥmad no longer upholding al-Wāqidi as reliable although such transmission proved authentic; or by [3] the text transmitted (*al-marwī*) which struck some as implausible, such as al-Dhahabī rejecting the ḥadīth of Ukaydar the Roman king of Dūma’s gift

<sup>6</sup>In his notes on al-Nawawī’s *Irshād* (p. 96) cf. al-Aḥmad Ghumārī *infra*.

<sup>7</sup>In *Mizān al-ʿIṭidāl*, chapter on ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī.

of a jar of ginger to Madīna although this it is quite possible and probable since such preserves or dried fruit continue to be one of the specialties of the Syro-Palestine region; or Ibn Ḥibbān rejecting the Prophet's ﷺ order to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubay to have gold teeth made for himself although such a private dispensation does not contradict the general prohibition of the wearing of gold by men; or al-Dhahabī rejecting al-Tirmidhī's authentic narration of the two books the Prophet ﷺ showed the Companions, one containing the names, patronyms, and surnames of all the people of Paradise until the Day of Resurrection and the other those of the people of Hellfire because he surmised such books would be impossibly voluminous – a reasoning rejected by Ibn Ḥajar and others.<sup>8</sup>

## ***Munkar* in the sense of “Forged”?**

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda adds another meaning: “forged” (*al-mawḍūʿ al-kadhīb al-muftarā*) in his introduction to al-Qārī's *Maṣnūʿ*.<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ḥajar said unambiguously: “The *munkar* is other than the *mawḍūʿ*”<sup>10</sup> and he differentiates between them time and again: “Ibn al-Jawzī cited the *ʿalah* and *tamr*’ ḥadīth<sup>11</sup> among the forgeries but the correct ruling is what al-Nasāʿī said, followed by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, that it is *munkar* in view of its singularity from a weak narrator”;<sup>12</sup> “He [Ibn al-Jawzī] has [wrongly] included in his book of forgeries the *munkar* and weak ḥadīths....”<sup>13</sup> This can be reconciled [1] if Abū Ghudda means the terminology of certain specific post-5<sup>th</sup> century scholars as Aḥmad al-Ghumārī noted (see below) and [2] if he means the use of *munkar* in conjunction with a more explicit statement as in the expressions “*munkar* and a lie,” “a *munkar* falsehood or forgery,” “*munkar*, and the one who made it up is...” etc.

Abū Ghudda himself notes<sup>14</sup> that al-Suyūṭī cautioned in *Bulūgh al-Maʿmūl fī Khidmat al-Rasūl* ﷺ that the scholars may use *munkar* in the sense of a single-chained (*gharīb*) ḥadīth as when al-Dhahabī in the *Mizān* calls many sound reports “*munkar*,” even some in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*,<sup>15</sup> or Ibn ʿAdī<sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Cf. *Darʿ al-Ḍaʿif ʿan Ḥadīth Man ʿAshiqā fā-ʿAff* (p. 36-48).

<sup>9</sup>In *al-Maṣnūʿ* (p. 20 n. and p. 42 n. 6) cf. his notes on the *Rafʿ* (p. 211 n. 1).

<sup>10</sup>In *al-Qawl al-Musaddad* (p. 79).

<sup>11</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>12</sup>In *al-Nukat ʿalā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (2:680).

<sup>13</sup>*Nukat* (2:848).

<sup>14</sup>In the *Rafʿ* (p. 200 n. 2).

<sup>15</sup>*Al-Ḥāwī lil-Fatāwī* (2:210).

saying of Sallām ibn Sulaymān al-Madāʿinī, “His narrations are *munkar* but they are all *ḥasan* ḥadīths.”<sup>17</sup>

In *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, chapter on the *maqlūb*, al-Suyūṭī differentiates between the *munkar* and the forged:

The worst type of weak ḥadīth is the forgery (*al-mawḍūʿ*), followed by the discarded (*al-matrūk*), then the disclaimed (*munkar*), then the defective (*muʿallal*), then the inserted (*mudraj*), then the topsy-turvy (*al-maqlūb*) then the inconsistent (*muḍṭarib*). Thus did Shaykh al-Islām [=Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī] arrange them.”<sup>18</sup>

Al-Suyūṭī elsewhere said:

Ibn ʿAsākir’s ruling of *munkar* on the ḥadīth [of the declaration of belief on the part of the Prophet’s parents when they were temporarily brought back to life in front of him ﷺ] is a categorical proof for what I say, namely, that it is *ḍaʿīf* and not forged, since the *munkar* is a sub-class of the *ḍaʿīf* and there is a difference between the *munkar* and the *mawḍūʿ* as is well-known in ḥadīth science.... and the *ḍaʿīf* is a rank above the *munkar* and better in state. It is also better than another rank which stands below the *munkar*, namely, the *matrūk*. The latter is also a sub-class of the non-forged *ḍaʿīf*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Ibn ʿAdī is Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAdī ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Mubārak ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Jurjānī (277-365), the Imām, keen ḥadīth Master who travelled the world, and author of *al-Kāmil fīl-Jarḥ wal-Taʿdīl* in five large volumes, an unprecedented encyclopedia of weak narrators. He heard Bahlūl ibn Ishāq al-Tanūkhī, Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān ibn Abi Suwayd, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Marwazī, Anas ibn al-Salām, al-Nasāʿī, al-Firyābī, Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, al-Baghawī, Ibn Khuzayma, etc. He lived a long time and his chain of transmission became quite short. He specialized in narrator-criticism, ḥadīth authentication and criticism, until he became a foremost expert in this science despite weakness in his grammar. Al-Dāraquṭnī praised his book as sufficient for knowledge of the weak narrators. Ibn ʿAsākir and others declared him trustworthy and praised his mastership and memorization. Apparently he was Shāfiʿī and compiled a book based on the chapter-headings of al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar*. His method in the *Kāmil* is to mention every narrator that was ever criticized rightly or wrongly. Al-Dhahabī integrated it into *Mizān al-ʿIṭidāl* and expanded upon it, criticizing him at times for citing undeserving entries. Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ* (16:154).

<sup>17</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *Faṭḥ al-Mughīth*, chapter on the *munkar*.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī, *Tawjīh al-Nazar ilā Uṣūl al-Aṭhar* (2:597).

<sup>19</sup>In *al-Fawāʾid al-Kāmina fī Ḥimān al-Sayyida ʿĀmina = al-Taʿzīm wal-Minna bi-anna Wāliday al-Muṣṭafā fīl-Janna* (Muṣṭafā ʿĀshūr 1988 Riyadh ed. p. 44-45).

Al-Zarqānī in *Sharḥ al-Mawāhib* cites it and applies the same reasoning toward Ibn Kathīr’s words, “*munkar jiddan*.”<sup>20</sup>

Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ghumārī said:

**When the early authorities declare a ḥadīth *munkar* it does not indicate that it is false nor a forgery** unlike what Ibn al-Qayyim concluded [with reference to the ḥadīth “*Whoever falls passionately in love but remains chaste...*”], who relied upon their having declared it *munkar*. For “*munkar*” in their usage and conventions differs from “*munkar*” in the terminology of the later scholars, by whom we mean those of the fifth century and later.

The later scholars use “*munkar*” in two senses: the first – and the one by which they usually define it – is “that by which a weak narrator contradicts the trustworthy one.” The second meaning – and the one they use in their discourse – is “what is thoroughly flimsy or forged” (*wāhin aw mawḍūʿ*). Hence you find them saying, “This is a *ḥadīthun munkarun mawḍūʿ*,” or “This is a *ḥadīth munkar* and the culprit for it is So-and-so,” as you can frequently read in the likes of al-Khaṭīb, Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-Najjār, Ibn al-Jawzī, and al-Dhahabī who is the seal of those that very frequently use the term *munkar* to refer to a forgery.

As for the early authorities, they also use the term *munkar* in two meanings. **One of them** is “that with which a narrator singles himself out even if he is trustworthy” as defined by [Aḥmad ibn Hārūn ibn Rawḥ] al-Bardījī (d. 301)<sup>21</sup> in the leaves he gathered on the subject of ḥadīth terminology, and **the other** is “that with which an unknown-status (*mastūr*) or weak (*daʿīf*) narrator singles himself out.” Some of them might **also** use the term *munkar* and mean by it the terminally unreliable narrator that has very few narrations (*al-sāqit al-wāhī ʿalā qilla*).<sup>22</sup>

The above remarks do not address “blameworthiness of meaning” (*nakārat al-maʿnā*) by which *munkar* is also sometimes used to mean forged as in Ibn ʿAdī’s familiar expression, “So-and-so does not narrate any ḥadīth of

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khan, *Munīr al-ʿAyn* (p. 16).

<sup>21</sup>He defined the *munkar* as “the unheard-of stand-alone were it not for its narrator” (*al-fārd al-ladhī lā yuʿraf matnuhu min ḡhayri rāwīh*) in al-Suyūṭī’s *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* (1:238).

<sup>22</sup>Aḥmad al-Ghumārī, *Darʾ al-Ḍaʿʿan Ḥadīth Man ʿAshīqa fā-ʿAff* (p. 49-50).

blameworthy content (*munkar al-matn*).”<sup>23</sup> Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghumārī said: “When a ḥadīth is reprehensible in meaning (*munkaran fīl-maʿnā*) it is forged even if its chain meets the criterion of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In fact, there would be a hidden defect in its chain in such a scenario.”<sup>24</sup>

It goes without saying that reprehensibility is a far more subjective criterion than the criteria applied to the chain although Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn al-Qayyim, and others did attempt to itemize the signs of forgery in relation to *matn* implausibility, among them:

- nonsense as in the report, “Do not eat the pumpkin before you slaughter it”;
- disproportional rewards or punishments;
- anachronism as in the pseudo-Prophetic ḥadīths mentioning the *muṣḥaf* or Abū Ḥanīfa;
- extravagant praise or blame for a tribe, person (“My daughter Fāṭima is pure and purified, no trace of blood can be seen from her whether of menses or in giving birth”),<sup>25</sup> locality, time (such as the reports emphasizing the month of Rajab compiled by Ibn Ḥajar in his monograph *Tabyīn al-ʿAjab fīmā Warada fī Rajab*), food (“Cheese is a disease and walnuts a cure,” “Eggplant fulfills whatever [need] it is eaten for”), celibacy (“The best of you after the year 200 are the wifeless and childless”), schoolteachers (“The worst of you are those who teach young pupils”) etc.
- literary artificiality illustrated by
  - (a) poor or strained language as in the account of the Prophetic ascension known as *Miʿrāj Ibn ʿAbbās* or the saying, “*Sharīʿa* is my words, *Ṭarīqa* is my actions, *Ḥaqīqa* is my state, *Maʿrifā* is my capital, *ʿAql* is the basis of my *Dīn*...”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil* (1:208, 1:310, 1:387, 2:384, 4:88).

<sup>24</sup>ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghumārī, notes on al-Sakhāwī’s *Maqāṣid al-Ḥasana* (p. 193).

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mawdūʿāt* (1:421), Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* (3:238), al-Suyūṭī, *Laʾālī* (1:400), Ibn ʿArrāq, *Tanzīh* (1:413–414).

<sup>26</sup>Cited chainless from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onward as a Prophetic saying narrated from ʿAlī رضي الله عنه in the *Ihyāʾ* (4:361) and *Shifā* (p. 191 §347) as well as *Nahj al-Balāgha*. Neither al-ʿIrāqī nor Ibn Ḥajar found any chain for it while al-Suyūṭī declared it a forgery in *Manāhil al-Ṣafā* (§322) as did al-Fattānī in *Tadhkirat al-Mawdūʿāt*. See also note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

(b) long speeches bursting at the seams with figures of rhetoric, internal rhymes, or learned expressions such as *Nahj al-Balāgha*, a 5th-century forgery.

(c) “priamels” or numbered lists cataloguing types of levels such as creation in the “ḥadīth of Jābir” on the light of the Prophet ﷺ; or merits with rewards and/or defects with punishments as in the long pseudo-ḥadīth of Ibn ʿAbbās on the merits of each Sūra (said to be forged by Nūḥ ibn Abī Maryam) and the *Munabbihāt ʿalā al-Istiʿdād li-Yawm al-Maʿād lil-Nuṣṣi wal-Widād* (“Admonitions for Preparation for the Day of the Return for Advice and Love”) compiled by Zayn al-Quḍāt Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥijjī or al-Ḥajrī or Ḥujurī’s (d. ?) and falsely attributed to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī although it is replete with sourceless, chainless, ungraded reports in the most patent contrast with the masterly style that shines like the sun in all his works.<sup>27</sup>

## Abū Ghudda’s Examples of *Munkar* to Mean *Mawḍūʿ*<sup>ᶜ</sup>

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda cites thirty examples of what he says are uses of the term *munkar* to mean “forged” from four books: Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Mawḍūʿat* (1 example), al-Dhahabī’s *Mīzān al-ʿItidāl* (4 examples), Ibn ʿArrāq’s *Tanzīh al-Sharīʿa* (19 examples), and al-Qārī’s *Maṣnūʿ* (6 examples). He introduces his list of citations with the words, “The scholars frequently use the term *munkar* to mean the *mawḍūʿ*<sup>ᶜ</sup>, indicating thereby the blameworthiness (*nakāra*) of its meaning together with the weakness of its chain and the lack of its veracity (*buṭlān thubūtiḥ*).” He then cites the page numbers for the thirty passages he believes prove his claim, some of which we examine below:

In Ibn ʿArrāq’s *Tanzīh al-Sharīʿa*:

- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “*munkar jiddan*” about the forged ḥadīth “*The Qurʾān is the Speech of Allāh neither creator nor created.*” (1:134 §5)

- Ibn al-Najjār’s statement “*munkar*” about the forged ḥadīth, “*O ʿAlī, the Qurʾān is the Speech of Allāh uncreated.*” (1:135 §7).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the catalogue of Arabic manuscripts of the library of Sarajevo (number 334) and as referenced by Ḥajjī Khalīfā in *Kashf al-Zunūn* (2:1848) while other manuscripts misattribute it to Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī or leave the author unmentioned. See Shākir Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Munʿim’s two-volume 1997 doctoral thesis published at Muʿassasat al-Risāla in Beirut under the title *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī: Muṣannafātuḥu wa-Dirāsatuḥu fī Manḥajihī wa-Mawāridihī fī Kitābihī al-Iṣāba* (1:394–395).



- Ibn ‘Asākir’s statement, “al-Khaṭīb wrote these two [ḥadīths forged] by al-Aḥwāzī<sup>28</sup> in astonishment at their blameworthiness (*nakāra*) and they are false” about the narrations “*I saw my Lord on the Day of Naḥār [10 Dhūl-Ḥijja] on a red camel*” and “*Every Jumu‘a Allāh descends wrapped in a cloak*” (1:146 §35).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “*munkar*” about the forged ḥadīth, “*Allāh says, Lā ilāha illa Allāh is My Word... and the Qur‘ān is My Speech and issued from Me*” (1:148 §40).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “*munkar*” about the forged ḥadīth, “*Allāh has three angels, one in charge of the Ka‘ba...*” (1:170 §2).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “*munkar jiddan*” about the forged ḥadīth, “*Do not beat your children for their weeping...*” (1:171 §6).
- The editor ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī’s statements equating the *munkar* in meaning with the forged (1:193 n.).
- Al-Bayhaqī’s statement “*munkar*, and the culprit for this may be So-and-so” about the forgery in which the Prophet ﷺ says to Ibn Mas‘ūd, “*Always look into the muṣḥaf for I had ophthalmia and Gibrīl gave me the same advice*” (1:308 §81).
- Al-Dhahabī’s statement “*munkar*” of the ḥadīth that Gibrīl brought the Prophet ﷺ a bunch of grapes (*qitf*) and said, “*Allāh greets you and sent me to you with this bunch of grapes for you to eat*”<sup>29</sup> (1:334 §20 although Ibn ‘Arrāq argues that al-Dhahabī’s statement means or should mean other than “forged” cf. §19).
- Al-Dhahabī’s statement “*munkar*” in the *Mizān* of the forgery in which Gibrīl brings Abū Bakr water for *wuḍū’* and Mikā‘il brings him a towel (1:341 §1, Ibn ‘Arrāq prefers al-Dhahabī’s more explicit ruling of “*kadhīb*” in his *Mughnī* in keeping with the view that *munkar* is an inappropriate term for “forged”).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “*munkar*” about the forgery, “*Alī is the best of human beings, whoever doubts it commits disbelief*” (1:353–354 §39).

## More Precisions on the Sources of the Above Examples

### Al-Khaṭīb

Al-Khaṭīb may use *munkar* in a way that suggests he means “forged” when he says (3:307), for example, “This ḥadīth is false and forged (*bāṭil*)”

<sup>28</sup> Abū ‘Alī al-Aḥwāzī is the Ḥanbalī anthropomorphist that concocted the accusations against al-Ash‘arī that prompted Ibn ‘Asākir to write his masterpiece *Tabyīn Kadhīb al-Muftarī fīmā Nasabahu ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī*.

<sup>29</sup> The unfortunate narrator of this ḥadīth became known as Ḥaḥṣ the bunch-man.

*mawḏū*)... and the one before it is **also** *munkar*"; on closer look, however, the second ḥadīth – “Generosity is a tree in paradise” – is not as definitely forged as the former, and Allāh knows best.

Al-Khaṭīb applies the grading *munkar* to a ḥadīth about 30 times and the grading *mawḏū*<sup>c</sup> about 20 in *Tārikh Baghdād*. A review of his usage indicates the following:

– He uses *munkar jiddan* for ḥadīths which prove forged beyond doubt per later critical reference-works (3:168, 4:59, 4:85, 4:376, 7:128, 9:434, 11:337, 13:42)<sup>30</sup> except once, in reference to a highly implausible chain for an otherwise authentic ḥadīth (12:467).<sup>31</sup> He does seem to mean forged in those cases.

– Where the text happens to be utterly singular, the high implausibility of its chain leads to the certitude of its forgery as in al-Khaṭīb’s statement, “When he read the ḥadīth I had strong doubts about it (*istankartuhu*) and expressed my wonder about it. I said that such a ḥadīth was extremely odd (*gharībun jiddan*) through that path and that I conclude it is a falsehood (*wa-urāhu bāṭilan*)” (3:96).<sup>32</sup>

– He uses *munkar* for chains and/or texts of ḥadīths that vary from being indisputably forged (1:259, 3:304, 4:81, 4:157, 7:403, 7:421, 12:423, 13:122),<sup>33</sup> debatably forged (3:222, 4:158, 5:13),<sup>34</sup> weak (2:51, 3:267, 5:296, 11:338),<sup>35</sup> and even fair (7:263),<sup>36</sup> sound (5:367, 8:370, 11:36),<sup>37</sup> or

<sup>30</sup> “If you are a Prophet, tell me what I have in my possession. – If I tell you, will you affirm the testimony of faith?...”; “Whoever hopes that prices will rise in my Community...”; “Whoever feeds his brother a mouthful of sweet...”; “The bearers of knowledge in the world are the caliphs of Prophets...”; “Whoever wears a helmet for jihād...”; “We seven of Banū al-Muṭṭalib...”; “Do not beat your children for their weeping...”; “When the orphan weeps his tears fall....”

<sup>31</sup> Ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ joining prayers during the campaign of Tabūk.

<sup>32</sup> “Whoever takes the hand of someone afflicted, Allāh takes his hand.”

<sup>33</sup> “The night I was taken up to the heaven I saw on the gate of Paradise...”; “Whoever associates in partnership with a covenantee (*dhimmī*) and humbles himself before him...”; “Whoever learns the Qur’ān and memorizes it, Allāh shall enter him into Paradise and give him intercession for ten of his relatives...”; “Allāh has three angels, one in charge of the Ka’ba...”; “Cheese is a disease and walnuts a cure...”; “‘Alī is the best of human beings, whoever doubts it commits disbelief”; “Paying due rights and keeping trusts is our Religion...”; “There will be no rider besides us on the Day of Resurrection....”

<sup>34</sup> “What is this camel? O ‘Alī, fear Allāh regarding worldly possessions...”; “When an innovator dies, Islām gains a new victory”; “When I was taken up to the heaven Gibril brought me to Sidrat al-Muntahā and bathed me in light....”

<sup>35</sup> “If you are pleased to make your prayer pure, put forward the best among you”; “The

*mutawātir* (8:370)!<sup>38</sup> In the latter three or four categories it is abundantly clear that he uses *munkar* in only one of the three senses claimed by Abū Ghudda: neither “the blameworthiness (*nakāra*) of its meaning” nor “the lack of its veracity (*buṭlān thubūtih*)” but only “the weakness of its chain.”

– When he wants to say a ḥadīth is *mawḍūʿ* – in its chain, its text, or both – he calls it just that (2:203, 2:247, 2:289, 3:98, 3:290–291, 3:307, 3:410, 4:209, 7:135, 8:44, 8:165, 9:49, 10:356, 10:373, 13:32, 13:271, 13:335).<sup>39</sup>

– Al-Khaṭīb also means “forged” when he says *laysa bi-thābit* – “it is unestablished” – about three times (4:376, 7:421, 12:331).<sup>40</sup> Al-Dhahabī takes strong exception to what he deems an understatement that does not, in his understanding, denote outright forgeries but merely ḥadīths that fall short of the rank of *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>41</sup> Al-Dhahabī would be right if he were discussing a *fiqh*-oriented ruling, such as Imām Aḥmad’s statement that there is no *thābit* ḥadīth stipulating *Basmala* at the time of ablutions – *i.e.*, only *ḥasan*. However, al-Khaṭīb’s ruling of “unestablished” here uses

Prophet ﷺ prayed over an adultress and her daughter”; “When I was taken up to the heaven and I reached the fourth heaven, an apple fell into my lap...”; “On the Day of Resurrection the people will be made to stand....”

<sup>36</sup> “Do you have qualms about denouncing the openly corrupt man?! (*atariʿūn ʿan dhikr al-fājir*)....”

<sup>37</sup> “Two types of my Community have no part in Islām: the Murjiʿa and the Qadariyya”; “There is no marriage without guardian”; “Your Lord [in *al-Bukhārī* and *al-Dārimī*: *A man*] built a house and prepared a banquet...”

<sup>38</sup> “Whoever harms a covenanted citizen (*dhimmi*), I will personally accuse him on the Day of Resurrection!”

<sup>39</sup> “I asked Allāh not to answer the supplication of the lover against the beloved”; “Allāh says, ‘Son of Ādam, I am your indispensable need...’”; “A man will come after me named *al-Nuʿmān ibn Thābit*, *Abū Ḥanīfā*...”; “Whoever takes the hand of someone afflicted, Allāh takes his hand”; “Allāh curse your killer [O *al-Ḥusayn*]...”; “Allah gave preference to the Messengers over the angels brought near...”; “On the Day of Resurrection the scholars of ḥadīth will come, inkwells in hand...”; Mukarram ibn Aḥmad’s *Faḍāʾil Abī Ḥanīfā*; “The night of my wedding to the Messenger of Allāh, he embraced me...”; “Allāh revealed to the world, ‘Serve whoever serves Me...’”; “I saw marjoram growing under the Throne”; “The Throne shook at the death of Saʿd [ṣaḥīḥ with a forged chain]; “I am the Seal of Prophets and you, ʿAlī, are the Seal of Saints”; “Pursuing ʿilm is an obligation upon every Muslim [ḥasan with a forged chain]; “Whoever loves me, let him love ʿAlī; and whoever angers ʿAlī has angered me...”; “Every Jumʿa night Allāh delivers 100,000 people from the Fire except the hater of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar...”; “There will be in my Community a man named *al-Nuʿmān*, his nickname is *Abū Ḥanīfā*....”

<sup>40</sup> “The bearers of knowledge in the world are the caliphs of Prophets...”; “ʿAlī is the best of human beings, whoever doubts it commits disbelief”; “My daughter *Fāṭima* is a human *hourī*, she never got menses....”

<sup>41</sup> *Mizān* (s.v. *al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-ʿAlawī*).

a different convention, namely a twofold, “either authentic or forged” convention used by Ibn al-Jawzī and others. Abū Ghudda has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt – after Imām al-Kawtharī’s citation of the ḥadīth Master Ibn Himmāt al-Dimashqī – that such a term does indeed mean “forged” in ḥadīth-oriented literature as opposed to *fiqh*.<sup>42</sup>

## Al-Dhahabī

Al-Dhahabī says *khbar munkar* for the following among others in the *Mizān* – most apparently in the sense of forgery:

- the report, “*The Hour will not rise before Allāh will not have been worshipped for an hundred years on the earth*” (s.v. Abān ibn Khālid).
- the report from Ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet ﷺ supposedly said at the funeral of Abū Ṭālib, “*May direct relatives embrace you and may you be rewarded with goodness, my uncle!*” (s.v. Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khwārizmī).
- the report that ‘Alī supposedly said, “*People gave bay‘a to Abū Bakr although I am worthier...*” (s.v. al-Ḥārith ibn Muḥammad).
- the report, “*There is no Mahdī but ‘Īsā ibn Maryam*” (s.v. Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Janadī).
- the report, “*The believers and their children are in the heaven while the disbelievers and their children are in the fire*” (s.v. Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān, “an unknown”).
- the report, “*I was given superiority to people in four things: generosity, courage, frequent coitus, and fierceness in combat*” (s.v. Marwān ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Abī Sa‘īd).
- the report that as the Prophet ﷺ was praying he replied to someone’s greeting lest the greeter take offense (s.v. Abū Bakr al-‘Umarī, “an unknown”).
- the report that ‘Ā’isha gave a dīnār to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and split her tunic in half for each of them (s.v. Jābir ibn Yazīd ibn al-Ḥārith).

<sup>42</sup>Abū Ghudda, introduction to al-Qārī’s *Maṣnū‘* (p. 29-30): “Al-Dhahabī lost sight of the rule and was overhasty to correct al-Khaṭīb.” In this oversight al-Dhahabī joins a list of lesser Masters such as al-Zarkashī, al-Qārī, and Ibn ‘Arrāq – Allāh have mercy on all of them and continue to benefit the *Umma* with them.

- the report that al-Khaḍir and Ilyās – upon our Prophet and them blessings and peace – meet every year in the Ḥajj season at ʿArafa (s.v. al-Ḥasan ibn Razīn).

Al-Dhahabī much less frequently uses *munkar* to question a certain chain for an otherwise authentic ḥadīth cf. “*My Community is not taken to task for fleeting thoughts*” (s.v. Ayyūb ibn Maṣṣūr ibn ʿAlī) and in the notice of ʿAbd al-Muʿmin ibn Sālim ibn Maymūn.

## The Term *Munkar al-Ḥadīth*

As for the term *munkar al-ḥadīth* the early scholars use it for a narrator that singles himself out in narrating certain ḥadīths or is condemned for *fiṣq* but not lying<sup>43</sup> among the categories of the “rejected ḥadīth” (*al-mardūd*) while al-Bukhārī means it in the worst negative sense and Muslim in his *Muqaddima* identifies it with *matrūk* when one’s narrations are mostly *munkar*.<sup>44</sup> This is also the usage of al-Khaṭīb in *Tārīkh Baghdād* and he equates it with *ḍaʿif jiddan* and *matrūk* although Abū Ḥātim equates it with the “nearly *matrūk*.” Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr defines *munkar al-ḥadīth* as “The narrator who narrates *munkar* ḥadīths and singles himself out or contravenes others thereby; his narrations are taken into consideration in the methodology of other than al-Bukhārī.”<sup>45</sup>

## From *The Critical Method in the Sciences of Ḥadīth* by Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr

### The disclaimed and the recognized narration (*al-munkar wal-maʿrūf*).

The expressions of the scholars vary in defining the *munkar* to the point that the observer is unsure what it means exactly. Careful scrutiny yields a clear determination that this diversity is caused by the difference in purposes for each side when they use that terminology. After such scrutiny we found that there were two ways (*maslakayn*) among the Ulema as follows:

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Ibn al-Ḥanbalī’s *Qafw al-Athar* (p. 74).

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat* (2:675), al-Lacknawī, *RafʿIqāz* 7, al-Tahānawī’s *Qawāʿid fī ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (p. 274) etc.

<sup>45</sup>ʿItr, *Muʿjam al-Mustalahāt al-Ḥadīthiyya* (p. 108).

The first way applies the term *munkar* to a particular type of divergence, namely, the weak narrator's report in contravention of the trustworthy narrator. This division is the opposite of the "recognized narration" (*al-ma'rūf*), which is the ḥadīth of the trustworthy narrator in contravention of that of the weak narrator.

The above convention is followed by many of the ḥadīth scholars and is standard terminology among the later scholars. The *ḥāfiẓ* Ibn Ḥajar uses it in *al-Nukhba* and its commentary.

**Over-generalization on the part of the early scholars in the [terminology of the] *munkar* and the resolution of the problem inherent in its multiple usages.**

The second way overgeneralizes in the use of the term *munkar* and apply it to whatever a narrator is alone in narrating (*tafarrada bih*), whether or not he contravenes others and even if he is trustworthy. There are many different illustrations for this. In each of these cases the ḥadīth scholars applied the term *munkar*. This is the way of many of the early authorities. Following are examples of what we find them saying:

1. Imām Aḥmad said of Aflaḥ ibn Ḥumayd al-Anṣārī – one of the trustworthy narrators of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*: "Aflaḥ narrates two *munkar* ḥadīths: that the Prophet ﷺ bled his sacrificial animal as a pre-slaughter marking, and the ḥadīth 'The consecration-place of the people of Iraq is Dhātu 'Irqin.'"<sup>46</sup> So Imām Aḥmad named these two ḥadīths *munkar* due to Aflaḥ singling himself out with their narration although he is trustworthy.

2. The ḥadīth of Ibn al-Zubayr al-Makkī who said: "I asked Jābir of the sale of the wildcat and the dog and he replied, 'The Prophet ﷺ strongly forbade us this.'" Thus did Muslim narrate it while al-Nasā'ī said, "Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥasan narrated to me saying, Ḥajjāj ibn Muḥammad told us, from Ḥammād ibn Salama, from Abū al-Zubayr, from Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh, that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ forbade the sale of dogs and wildcats except hunting dogs." Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Nasā'ī] said, "This is *munkar*." This is a chain of trustworthy narrators but it alone narrates the phrase "except hunting dogs." Hence al-Nasā'ī said of it that it is *munkar*. It is possible to put this in the category of the *shādhdh* because this addition actually contravenes [what is established].

3. Al-Tirmidhī said (in the "Chapter of what is related concerning giving salaam before [all other] talk"), "Al-Faḍl ibn al-Ṣabāḥ Baghdādī narrated to

<sup>46</sup>In Ibn Ḥajar, *Hadī al-Sārī* (2:117).

us: Sa'īd ibn Zakariyyā narrated to us, from 'Anbasa ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, from Muḥammad ibn Zādhān, from Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir, from Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh who said: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, 'Salaam comes before [all other] talk'...' Abū 'Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said, "This is a *munkar* ḥadīth, we do not know it except through this particular chain (*min ḥādthā al-wajh*); and I heard Muḥammad [ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī] say, "Anbasa ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān is weak in ḥadīth and forgetful (*dhāhib*) while Muḥammad ibn Zādhān is a disclaimed-ḥadīth narrator (*munkar al-ḥadīth*)."

Thus, Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī graded the ḥadīth *munkar* and it is narrated with a chain containing two weak narrators, together with its not being known through any other chain.

4. The ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra that "the Prophet ﷺ used to clip his nails and cut his moustache on the day of Jumu'a before coming out to the Prayer." Al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī narrated it in *al-Awsaṭ* (*Majma' al-Zawā'id* 2:170-171) and its chain contains Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāma al-Jumahī – "he is not known." Hence al-Dhahabī said, "This is a *munkar* report" (In the *Mizān*, entry for Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāma [1:53]. See also our book *al-Ṣalawāt al-Khāṣṣa* p. 17). This is a rare example of the use of this term by later scholars.

### The status of the *munkar* according to its various usages.

As for the status or grading (*ḥukm*) of the *munkar*, in the context of the first nomenclature it is very weak because its narrator is weak and it is made weaker by its contravention [of other reports and/or narrators]. In the context of the second nomenclature which applies the term to unique reports (*al-fard*) as well as the aberrant (*al-shādhidh*), if the same is meant by it. So its status is the same as for the singular report (*al-gharīb*) with regard to both text and chain and the absolutely unique report (*al-fard al-muṭlaq*): it could be sound, it could be fair, and it could be weak.

Hence it is required from everyone that peers into the books of the *Muḥaddithūn* to understand well and realize how the word *munkar* is used and not act in haste then proceed to weaken something that does not deserve weakening or speak without knowledge as happened with one of our contemporaries.<sup>47</sup>

**Their statement, "The most *munkar* that So-and-so narrates" does not mean its weakness!**

<sup>47</sup>He means Nāṣir al-Albānī.

Al-Suyūṭī said (in *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* p. 153=1:241): “Among their expressions is ‘The most *munkar* that So-and-so narrates is this,’ even when that ḥadīth is far from weak. Ibn ‘Adī said, ‘The most *munkar* that Burayd ibn ‘Abd Allāh narrated is, *When Allāh desires good for a nation, He seizes their Prophet before seizing them.*’ That ḥadīth is in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. And al-Dhahabī said [in the *Mizān*], ‘The most *munkar* ḥadīth that al-Walīd ibn Muslim narrates is that of the memorization of the Qur’ān’ but it is in al-Tirmidhī who declared it fair while al-Ḥākim declared it sound by the criterion of the Two Shaykhs” (See the detailed study of this ḥadīth in *al-Ṣalawāt al-Khāṣṣa* p. 246–253).<sup>48</sup>

★ ★ ★

In recapitulation, as Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ghumārī said: “In the usage of the early authorities ***nakāra* has no precise definition (*ḥaddun maḥdūd*) nor a firm reference-text concerning it (*aṣlun yurja‘u ilayhi fīhā*), nor a reliable rule by which to declare it (*qā’idatun yu‘tamadu ‘alayhā fīl-ḥukmi bihā*).**”<sup>49</sup> And Allāh knows best.

<sup>48</sup>Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fī ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (p. 430–433).

<sup>49</sup>In *Dar’ al-Da‘f ‘an Ḥadīth Man ‘Ashīqa fā-‘Af* (p. 35).