The “Disclaimed” (Munkar) Ḥadith
by GF Haddad – Shawwāl 1425

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 mukhālaṭa or irreconcilable difference with what is more authentically reported.

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

Singular, uncorroborated chain or text not strong enough to be authenticated without corroboration (fard lā yutāba‘).

The singular narrator is more or less trustworthy (thiqa) or at least truthful (sadūq). His ḥadith is called shādhdh whether it does not contradict others (lā yukhāliṣ) (early usage, some calling it munkar) or it contradicts others (yukhāliṣ) (later usage, preferred by Ibn Ḥajar). The singular narrator is of unverified reliability (mastūr) or more or less weak (da‘īf). His ḥadith is munkar whether it does not contradict others (frequent usage) or it contradicts others (later, most frequent usage, preferred by Ibn Ḥajar).

Imām Zayn al-Dīn al-ʻIrāqi said in Alfīyyat al-Ḥadīth:

And the munkar is the unheard-of stand-alone (al-fard) per al-Bardijī, in absolute terms; but the right [classification] for such narrations is to detail it just like the aberrant (shāhdh) which we discussed before.¹ For it shares its meaning; thus did the Shaykh [Ibn al-Ṣālīḥ] speak. For example “Eat young dates with old dates,” etcetera;² Or Mālik naming Ibn ʿUthmān “ʿUmar” [instead of “ʿAmr”]:³ I say, so what?⁴ Or, again, the ḥadīth of his [ṣ收录] removing His ring upon entering the privy and putting it down.⁵

¹In Fath al-Mughith: The shāhdh 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” (mahfūz) while his is “aberrant” (shāhdh).

²In Fath al-Mughith: Narrated from ʻA’isha by Ibn Mājah, al-Ḥākim, and Ibn al-Jawzī in the Mawdūʿāt exclusively through the honest but not quite reliable Abū Dhukayr Yahyā ibn Muhammad ibn Qays al-บาشري as per al-Dāraquṭnī, Ibn ʻAdi, and others while al-ʻUqaylī said no-one corroborated him and it is unknown but for his narrating it; likewise al-Ḥākim: “It is among the stand-alone reports (ṣ收录) of the Baṣrians from the Madīnans” hence graded munkar by al-Nasā’ī followed by Ibn al-Ṣālīḥ and Ibn Hajar, Nukat (2:680). The full wording of the ḥadīth is: “Eat balāh with tamr, eat the old with the new! For the devil is angered and says, ‘The son of Šām has lived to eat the old with the new!’”

³In 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 Yahyā and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan narrate it through ʻAmr ibn ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān and not through his brother ʿUmar except Mālik. The chain from Mālik, from al-Zuhrī reads “ʻAmr” in the Risāla edition of Abū Muṣʿab al-Zuhrī’s Muwatta’ (2:539-540 §3061) and in our Shaykh Muhammad ‘Alawi al-Mālikī’s edition – Allāh have mercy on him! – of Ibn al-Qābisī’s epitome (talkhīṣ) of Ibn al-Qāsim’s Muwatta’ (p. 126 §65). In Fath al-Mughith: Al-Nasā’ī said no-one corroborated Mālik on “ʻUmar” while Muslim and others even wrote it off as an error on his part but Mālik would motion with his hand when he said “ʻUmar” 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?”

⁴In Fath al-Mughith: Both ʻAmr ibn ʿUthman and his brother ʻUmar are trustworthy so it makes no difference in the grading of the ḥadīth; and its māṭun may not be called shāhdh nor munkar. Ibn al-Ṣālīḥ cites it as an example of munkar in the chain exclusively because that quality may apply to the isnād as to the māṭun.

⁵Narrated in the four Sunan through Hammām ibn Yahyā, from Ibn Jurayj, from al-Zuhrī, from Anas. Abū Dāwūd said, “This is munkar as it is only recognized from Ibn Jurayj as narrated from Ziyād ibn Saʿd, from al-Zuhrī, from Anas. The error in this is from Hammām and no-one else narrates it this way.” In Fath al-Mughith: Hammām is trustworthy and relied upon by the Šāhīḥ 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-Ṣālīḥ in not differentiating between the munkar and the shāhdh.”

Similarly Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bāʿith al-Ḥathīth ʿī Anwāʿ Ulūm 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.”

Thus does al-Lacknawī also define it in the *Rafʿ wal-Takmil*. However, if he is trustworthy then his report may be called *shādhdh* or *gharīb* rather than *munkar*. *Fatḥ al-Mughith* 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 (*dabṭ*), 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*.”

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

The grade of *munkar* can be caused by [1] a narrator (*al-rāwi*) that some declared weak rightly or wrongly, such as Suwayd ibn Saʿīd who is *thiqa* before his old age but whom Ibn Maʿin 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-Wāqidī from Maʿmar from al-Zuhrī” which resulted in Aḥmad no longer upholding al-Wāqidī 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.

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6In his notes on al-Nawawī’s *Irshād* (p. 96) cf. al-Aḥmad Ghumārī *infra*.
7In *Mīzān al-ʿītīdāl*, 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 order to ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd 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 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.8

**Munkar in the sense of “Forged”?**

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda adds another meaning: “forged” (al-mawdū’ al-kadhib al-mustarā’) in his introduction to al-Qārī’s Masnū‘.9 Ibn Ḥajar said unambiguously: “The munkar is other than the mawdū’”10 and he differentiates between them time and again: “Ibn al-Jawzī cited the ‘balah and tamr’ hadith11 among the forgeries but the correct ruling is what al-Nasā‘ī said, followed by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, that it is munkar in view of its singularity from a weak narrator”;12 “He [Ibn al-Jawzī] has [wrongly] included in his book of forgeries the munkar and weak ḥadīths...”13 This can be reconciled 1 if Abū Ghudda means the terminology of certain specific post-5th 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 notes14 that al-Suyūṭī cautioned in Bulūgh al-Maʾmūl fī Ḥidmat al-Rasūl  that the scholars may use munkar in the sense of a single-chained (gharīb) ḥadith as when al-Dhahabī in the Mīzān calls many sound reports “munkar,” even some in the two Šahīḥs,15 or Ibn ʿAdī16

8Cf. Darʾ al-Dāʾif ʿan Ḥadīth Man ʿAshiqā ḥa-ʿAff (p. 36-48).
9In al-Masnū‘ (p. 20 n. and p. 42 n. 6) cf. his notes on the Raf (p. 211 n. 1).
10In al-Qawl ʿal-Musaddad (p. 79).
11See note 2 above.
13Nukat (2:848).
14In the Raf (p. 200 n. 2).
saying of Sallām ibn Sulaymān al-Madā‘īnī, “His narrations are munkar but they are all ḥasan ḥadiths.”

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

The worst type of weak ḥadīth is the forgery (*al-mawdū‘*), followed by the discarded (*al-matrūk*), then the disclaimed (*munkar*), then the defective (*mu‘allal*), then the inserted (*mudrāj*), then the topsy-turvy (*al-naql*), then the inconsistent (*muḍṭarīb*). Thus did Shaykh al-Īlām [=Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī] arrange them.”

Al-Suyūṭī elsewhere said:

Ibn ‘Asākir’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 ð] is a categorical proof for what I say, namely, that it is *da‘īf* and not forged, since the *munkar* is a sub-class of the *da‘īf* and there is a difference between the *munkar* and the *mawdū‘* as is well-known in ḥadīth science…. and the *da‘īf* 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 *da‘īf*.

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17 Al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-Mughīth*, chapter on the *munkar*.


Al-Zarqānī in *Sharḥ al-Mawāḥib* cites it and applies the same reasoning toward Ibn Kathīr’s words, “munkar jiddan.”

Shaykh ʿĀhmād 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-Qayyīm 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 mawdūʿ). Hence you find them saying, “This is a ḥadīthun munkarun mawdūʿ,” 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 [ʿĀhmād ibn Hārūn ibn Rawḥ] al-Bardījī (d. 301) in the leaves he gathered on the subject of ḥadīth terminology, and the other is “that with which an unknown-status (inastūr) or weak (daʿīt) 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-sāqiṭ al-wāḥī ʿalā qilla).

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

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21He defined the munkar as “the unheard-of stand-alone were it not for its narrator” (al-fard al-ladīh lā yuʿrāf matnahu min ghayri rāwiḥ) in al-Suyūṭī’s *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* (1:238).
blameworthy content \((munkaral-matn)\)."\(^{23}\) 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."\(^{24}\)

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, “\textit{Do not eat the pumpkin before you slaughter it};”
- disproportional rewards or punishments;
- anachronism as in the pseudo-Prophetic ḥadīths mentioning the \textit{muṣḥaf} or Abū Ḥanīfah;
- 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"),\(^{25}\) locality, time (such as the reports emphasizing the month of Rajab compiled by Ibn Ḥajar in his monograph \textit{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 waiveless 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 \textit{Miʿrāj} Ibn ʿAbbās or the saying, “\textit{Sharīʿa is my words, Ṭariqa is my actions, Ḥaqīqa is my state, Maʿrifah is my capital, ʿAql is the basis of my Dīn...}”\(^{26}\)

\(^{24}\) ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghumārī, notes on al-Sakhawī’s \textit{Maqāṣid al-Hasana} (p. 193).
\(^{26}\) Cited chainless from the 5\textsuperscript{th} century onward as a Prophetic saying narrated from ʿAlī ｠ in the \textit{Iḥyāʾ} (4:361) and \textit{Shiṣā} (p. 191 §347) as well as \textit{Nahj al-Balāgha}. Neither al-Īrāqī nor Ibn Ḥajar found any chain for it while al-Suyūṭī declared it a forgery in \textit{Manāḥil al-Ṣalāḥ} (§322) as did al-Fattānī in \textit{Tadhkiraṭ al-Mawdūʿ āt}. See also note \textbf{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. 
(b) long speeches bursting at the seams with figures of rhetoric, internal rhymes, or learned expressions such as *Nahj al-Balâgha*, a 5th-century forgery.

(c) “priamelks” or numbered lists cataloguing types of levels such as creation in the “ḥadith of Jābir” on the light of the Prophet  ﷺ; or merits with rewards and/or defects with punishments as in the long pseudo-ḥadith of Ibn ʿAbbâs on the merits of each Sūra (said to be forged by Nūh ibn Abî Maryam) and the *Munabbihât ʿalâ al-Istîdâd li-Yawm al-Maʿād lil-Nuṣîhî wal-Widâd* (“Admonitions for Preparation for the Day of the Return for Advice and Love”) compiled by Zayn al-Quḍât Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥijjî or al-Hajrî or Ḥujuri’s (d. ?) and falsely attributed to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalânî 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.27

### Abū Ghudda’s Examples of *Munkar* to Mean *Mawḍūʿ*

Shaykh Ṭāḥ al-Fattâh Abû Ghudda cites thirty examples of what he says are uses of the term *munkar* to mean “forged” from four books: Ibn al-Jawzî’s *Mawḍūʿat* (1 example), al-Dhahabî’s *Mīzân al-Īṭidâl* (4 examples), Ibn ʿArrâq’s *Tanzîh al-Shariʿa* (19 examples), and al-Qârî’s *Maṣnûʿ* (6 examples). He introduces his list of citations with the words, “The scholars frequently use the term *munkar* to mean the *mawḍūʿ*, indicating thereby the blameworthiness (*nakâra*) of its meaning together with the weakness of its chain and the lack of its veracity (*buṭlân thubûṭih*).” He then cites the page numbers for the thirty passages he believes prove his claim, some of which we examine below:

In Ibn ʿArrâq’s *Tanzîh al-Shariʿa*:

- Al-Khaṭîb’s statement “*munkar jiddan*” about the forged ḥadîth “*The Qurʾān is the Speech of Allāh neither creator nor created.*” (1:134 §5)
- Ibn al-Najjâr’s statement “*munkar*” about the forged ḥadîth, “*O ʿAlî, the Qurʾān is the Speech of Allāh uncreated.*” (1:135 §7).

- Ibn ‘Asākir’s statement, “al-Khaṭīb wrote these two [hadiths forged] by al-Ahwāzī in astonishment at their blameworthiness (nakāra) and they are false” about the narrations “I saw my Lord on the Day of Nafar [10 Dhūl-Hijja] 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 ḥadith, “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 ḥadith, “Allāh has three angels, one in charge of the Ka‘ba…” (1:170 §2).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “munkar jiddan” about the forged ḥadith, “Do not beat your children for their weeping…” (1:171 §6).
- The editor ʿAbd 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 Maṣ‘ūd, “Always look into the mushaf for I had ophthalmia and Gibril gave me the same advice” (1:308 §81).
- Al-Dhahabi’s statement “munkar” of the ḥadith that Gibril brought the Prophet ﷺ a bunch of grapes (qiṣf) and said, “Allāh greets you and sent me to you with this bunch of grapes for you to eat” (1:334 §20 although Ibn ʿArrāq argues that Al-Dhahabi’s statement means or should mean other than “forged” cf. §19).
- Al-Dhahabi’s statement “munkar” in the Mīzān of the forgery in which Gibril brings Abū Bakr water for wuḍū‘ and Mīkā’il brings him a towel (1:341 §1, Ibn ʿArrāq prefers Al-Dhahabi’s more explicit ruling of “kadhib” in his Mughnī in keeping with the view that munkar is an inappropriate term for “forged”).
- Al-Khaṭīb’s statement “munkar” about the forgery, “ʿAlī 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 ḥadith is false and forged (bāṭil

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28Abū ʿAli al-Ahwāzī is the Hanbali anthropomorphist that concocted the accusations against al-Ashʿarī that prompted Ibn ‘Asākir to write his masterpiece Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muṭṭari ‘ilmā Nasabahu ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.
29The unfortunate narrator of this ḥadith became known as Ḥaṣṣ the bunch-man.
mawḍū’)... 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 mawḍū’ about 20 in Tārikh Baġdād. 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)\(^{30}\) except once, in reference to a highly implausible chain for an otherwise authentic ḥadīth (12:467).\(^ {31}\) 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 (istiṣkartoṭuhu) 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-urāḥu bāṭiln)” (3:96).\(^ {32}\)

- 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),\(^ {33}\) debatably forged (3:222, 4:158, 5:13),\(^ {34}\) weak (2:51, 3:267, 5:296, 11:338),\(^ {35}\) and even fair (7:263),\(^ {36}\) sound (5:367, 8:370, 11:36),\(^ {37}\) or

\(^ {30}\)“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 jihad...”; “We seven of Banū al-Muṭṭalib...”; “Do not beat your children for their weeping...”; “When the orphan weeps his tears fall...”

\(^ {31}\)Hadith of the Prophet ḥ joining prayers during the campaign of Tabūk.

\(^ {32}\)“Whoever takes the hand of someone afflicted, Allāh takes his hand.”

\(^ {33}\)“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...”; “Ali 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...”

\(^ {34}\)“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...”

\(^ {35}\)“If you are pleased to make your prayer pure, put forward the best among you”; “The
mutawātir (8:370)! 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 (butāl thubūtiḥ)” but only “the weakness of its chain.”


- Al-Khaṭīb also means “forged” when he says laysa bi-thābit – “it is unestablished” – about three times (4:376, 7:421, 12:331). Al-Dhahabi 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 sahiḥ. Al-Dhahabi would be right if he were discussing a fiqh-oriented ruling, such as Imām Ahmad’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 adulteress 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…”

“Do you have qualms about denouncing the openly corrupt man?! (atariʿūn ‘an dhikr al-fajir)…”

“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…”

“Whoever harms a covenanted citizen (dhimmī), I will personally accuse him on the Day of Resurrection!”

“I asked Allāh not to answer the supplication of the lover against the beloved”; “Allāh says, ‘Son of Ādām, I am your indispensable need…’”; “A man will come after me named al-Nuʿmān ibn Thābit, Abū Ḥanīfah…””; “Whoever takes the hand of someone afflicted, Allāh takes his hand”; “Allāh curse your killer [O al-Husayn]…””; “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 Ahmad’s Fadā’il Abī Ḥanīfah; “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” [sahih with a forged chain]; “I am the Seal of Prophets and you, ‘Ali, are the Seal of Saints”; “Pursuing ʿilm is an obligation upon every Muslim” [Ḥasan with a forged chain]; “Whoever loves me, let him love ‘Ali; and whoever angers ‘Ali has angered me…””; “Every Jumuʿa night Allāh delivers 100,000 people from the Fire except the hater of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar…””; “There will be in my Community a man named al-Nuʿmān, his nickname is Abū Ḥanīfah…”.

“The bearers of knowledge in the world are the caliphs of Prophets…”; “‘Ali is the best of human beings, whoever doubts it commits disbelief”; “My daughter Fāṭima is a human houri, she never got menses….”

Mīzīn (s.v. al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Yahyā 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.42

Al-Dhahabī

Al-Dhahabī says khabar munkar for the following among others in the Mīzān – 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 ʿAbbās that the Prophet ﷺ supposedly said at the funeral of Abū Tālib, “May direct relatives embrace you and may you be rewarded with goodness, my uncle!” (s.v. Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Khwārizmī).
- the report that ʿAlī supposedly said, “People gave bayʿa to Abū Bakr although I am worthier…” (s.v. al-Ḥarīth ibn Muḥammad).
- the report, “There is no Mahdī but ʿIsā 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 ʿUthmān, “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 ʿUthmān ibn Abī Saʿīd).
- 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-ʿUmarī, “an unknown”).
- the report that ʿAʿisha gave a dinār to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and split her tunic in half for each of them (s.v. Jābir ibn Yazīd ibn al-Ḥarīth).

42Abū Ghudda, introduction to al-Qārī’s Maṣnūʿ (p. 29–30): “Al-Dhahabī lost sight of the rule and was overhasty to correct al-Khaṭib.” In this oversight al-Dhahabī joins a list of lesser Masters such as al-Zarkashi, al-Qārī, and Ibn Ṭarrāq – Allāh have mercy on all of them and continue to benefit the Umma with them.
- the report that al-Khaḍîr and Ilyâs – upon our Prophet and them blessings and peace – meet every year in the Ḥajj season at ‘Arafâ (s.v. al-Ḥasan ibn Razîn).

Al-Dhahâbî much less frequently uses munkar to question a certain chain for an otherwise authentic ḥadîth cf. “My Community is not taken to task for fleeting thoughts” (s.v. Ayyûb ibn Manṣûr ibn ʿAlî) and in the notice of ‘Abd al-Muʿmin ibn Sâlim ibn Maymûn.

The Term Munkar al-Ḥadîth

As for the term munkar al-ḥadîth the early scholars use it for a narrator that singles himself out in narrating certain ḥadîths or is condemned for fisq but not lying among the categories of the “rejected ḥadîth” (al-mardûd) while al-Bukhârî means it in the worst negative sense and Muslim in his Muqaddima identifies it with matrûk when one’s narrations are mostly munkar. This is also the usage of al-Ḵaṭîb in Târikh Baghdâd and he equates it with daʿîf jiddan and matrûk although Abû Ḥâtim equates it with the “nearly matrûk.” Shaykh Nûr al-Dîn ʿItr defines munkar al-ḥadîth as “The narrator who narrates munkar ḥadîths and singles himself out or contravenes others thereby; his narrations are taken into consideration in the methodology of other than al-Bukhârî.”

From The Critical Method in the Sciences of Ḥadîth by Shaykh Nûr al-Dîn ʿItr

The disclaimed and the recognized narration (al-munkar wal-maʿrûf).

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:

43Cf. Ibn al-Ḥanbâlî’s Qafîv al-Athâr (p. 74).
44Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, Nukat (2:675), al-ʿLâqânî, Raṭʿîqâz 7, al-Tâhânî’s Qawāʾid fî Ulûm al-Ḥadîth (p. 274) etc.
45ʿItr, Muʿjam al-Muṣṭalahât al-Ḥadîthiyya (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-*ma₀ʳœ't*), which is the ḥadîth of the trustworthy narrator in contravention of that of the weak narrator.

The above convention is followed by many of the ḥadîth scholars and is standard terminology among the later scholars. The ḥâfiz 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 (*taḥarrada biḥ*), 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 ḥadîth 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 Aflāḥ ibn Ḥumayd al-Anṣārī — one of the trustworthy narrators of the two Ṣaḥiḥs: “Aflāḥ narrates two *munkar* ḥadîths: that the Prophet ṣ bled his sacrificial animal as a pre-slaughter marking, and the ḥadîth ‘The consecration-place of the people of Iraq is Dhātu ‘Irqin.’”46 So Imām Aḥmad named these two ḥadîths *munkar* due to Aflāḥ singling himself out with their narration although he is trustworthy.

2. The ḥadîth 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 ṣ strongly forbade us this.’” Thus did Muslim narrate it while al-Nasā’ī said, “Ibrāhîm ibn al-Ḥasan narrated to me saying, Ḥājîj ibn Muḥammad told us, from Ḥammâd ibn Salama, from Abū al-Zubayr, from Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh, that the Messenger of Allâh ṣ forbade the sale of dogs and wildcats except hunting dogs.’” Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmân [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 *shâdhîd* because this addition actually contravenes [what is established].

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

46In Ibn Ḥajar, *Ḥadî al-Sârî* (2:117).
us: Sa‘īd ibn Zakariyyā narrated to us, from ‘Anbasa ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān, from Muḥammad ibn Zādḥān, from Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadīr, from Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh who said: ‘Abd Allāh said, ‘Salaam comes before [all other] talk...’ Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmīdī] said, “This is a munkar ḥadīth, we do not know it except through this particular chain (min ḥādhā al-wājīh); and I heard Muḥammad [ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī] say, “‘Anbasa ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān is weak in ḥadīth and forgetful (dhāhib) while Muḥammad ibn Zādḥān is a disclaimed-ḥadīth narrator (munkar al-ḥadīth).””

Thus, Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmīdī 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-Awsat (Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id 2:170-171) and its chain contains Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmā al-Jumāhī – “he is not known.” Hence al-Dhahabī said, “This is a munkar report” (In the Mizān, entry for Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmā [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-fārd) as well as the aberrant (al-shādīḥd), 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-fārd 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 Muhaddithin 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.47

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

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47He 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 hadith is far from weak. Ibn ʿAdī said, ‘The most munkar that Burayd ibn ʿAbd Allāh narrated is, When Allāh desires good for a nation, He seizes their Prophet before seizing them.’ That hadith is in Ṣāḥīh Muslim. And al-Dhahabī said [in the Mīzān], ‘The most munkar hadith that al-Walīd ibn Muslim narrates is that of the memorization of the Qurʾān’ 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 hadith in al-Ṣalawāt al-Khāṣṣa p. 246–253).

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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 yurjaʿu ilayhi ẓāḥiḥa), nor a reliable rule by which to declare it (qāʿidatun yuʿtamadu ʿalayhā fil-ḥukmi bihā).” And Allāh knows best.

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49 In Darʾ al-Ḍaʿfʾan Ḥadīth Manʾ Ashiqā fāʿ-ʿAffʾ (p. 35).