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# The Methodology Of Al-Suyuti In His Book Tabaqat Al-Hafaz - A Comparative Critical Study

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## Abstract:

The article examines Al-Suyuti's methodology in Tabaqat Al-Huffaz, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses. The book is characterized by its chronological arrangement of narrators, offering a comprehensive view of the evolution of hadith studies and contributing to the documentation of scholars' biographies. However, it lacks critical analysis and depth, as Al-Suyuti merely transmits information from earlier sources without adding personal insights or in-depth critique. His approach to controversial narrators was brief, avoiding discussions about the disputes surrounding them. Nonetheless, the book remains a significant reference in hadith studies, catering more to those seeking concise documentation than detailed analysis.

**Keywords:** Generations (or Classes), Hadith Preservers (or Memorizers), Biographies, Narrators Al-Suyuti, Methodology, Critique (or Criticism), Comparison, Al-Dhahabi

## Introduction

The book Tabaqat Al-Huffaz by Al-Suyuti is among the prominent works that document the biographies of hadith scholars known as "Huffaz" throughout Islamic history. This book serves as an essential reference for categorizing scholars who contributed to the science of hadith by memorizing, documenting, and recording prophetic traditions. Al-Suyuti's choice of this topic may have been a response to the demands of his era, which saw a significant focus on hadith studies and a need to organize specialists in the field and document their efforts.

Imam Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti was a polymath whose works span various branches of Islamic sciences, particularly excelling in hadith, exegesis, and jurisprudence. He devoted considerable effort to chronicling the lives of scholars who had a profound influence on collecting and preserving hadith. Consequently, Tabaqat Al-Huffaz combines precise biographies of these scholars with the historical stages of hadith scholarship. Al-Suyuti demonstrated a distinct methodology in selecting and presenting the figures included in his book, relying on advanced sources that enriched the work and granted it substantial academic value.

Through this book, Al-Suyuti offers a comprehensive perspective on the role of Huffaz in Islamic history. He adopts an aggregative approach, arranging the scholars chronologically from the Companions to his contemporaries. However, despite its significance, the book faces criticism for its excessive brevity in biographies and lack of in-depth critical analysis of narrators, reflecting an

approach limited to compiling information from earlier sources without providing personal evaluations or novel insights.

In this critical study, we aim to examine Al-Suyuti's methodology in composing his book, analyze its content, and compare it with similar works, such as Al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkirat Al-Huffaz*, focusing on the factors that make it unique despite the criticisms it has received.

## **Section One: Conceptual Framework**

### **Subsection One : Keywords**

#### **4 Tabaqat Al-Huffaz:**

This term is used in hadith studies to refer to books and references that document and classify the biographies of scholars who played a significant role in preserving the Prophet's hadith. These works categorize the scholars into different "layers" or "generations" based on their eras and contributions to hadith science. The term "Huffaz" specifically denotes scholars who memorized hadiths, transmitted them, and ensured their authenticity through rigorous chains of narration.

##### **1. 1. The Emergence and Evolution of the Concept of Tabaqat Al-Huffaz:**

The concept evolved alongside the development of hadith studies. By the 3rd century AH, there was a growing need to classify the scholars who served hadith science and documented it across the ages. Scholars began this documentation by arranging the figures chronologically, starting from the Companions, then the Followers, and the Followers of the Followers, up to the scholars of the 4th century and beyond. Notable authors such as Al-Dhahabi and Al-Suyuti compiled books like *Tabaqat Al-Huffaz*, *Tadhkirat Al-Huffaz*, and *Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*.

##### **1. 2. Tabaqat Al-Huffaz in Hadith Literature:**

Many books have addressed the topic of *Tabaqat Al-Huffaz*, foremost among them being Al-Suyuti's *Tabaqat Al-Huffaz* and Al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkirat Al-Huffaz*. Both works offer narratives about scholars known for their expertise in hadith preservation, elaborating on their lives, places of birth, narration methods, and notable academic contributions.

##### **- Tabaqat Al-Huffaz by Al-Suyuti:**

Al-Suyuti focuses on arranging scholars chronologically, starting from the Companions and ending with his contemporaries. He provides concise biographies of over a thousand scholars, carefully selecting figures who contributed to hadith by narrating, memorizing, or authenticating it. His sources include earlier references such as Al-Bukhari's *Al-Tarikh Al-Kabir* and Ibn Hajar's *Tahdhib Al-Tahdhib*.

##### **- Tadhkirat Al-Huffaz by Al-Dhahabi:**

This book is one of the major works in the science of *Tabaqat Al-Huffaz*, offering detailed biographies of Huffaz from the Companions to later scholars. It stands out for its encyclopedic depth, critical evaluations of some scholars, and emphasis on isnads (chains of narration).

##### **1. 3. Objectives of Writing Tabaqat Al-Huffaz Books:**

The primary purpose of these books is to preserve the scientific history of the Islamic nation and document the names of scholars who contributed to hadith science. The objectives include:

- **Preserving isnads and documenting them:** Ensuring the accuracy of prophetic traditions through reliable chains of narrators.
- **Determining narrator credibility:** Evaluating narrators based on the principles of Jarh wa Ta'dil (criticism and accreditation).
- **Differentiating generations:** Clarifying the generational distinctions in hadith transmission, which is crucial for understanding its development over time.
- **Reinforcing scientific values:** Highlighting the scholarly and religious roles of hadith scholars in serving the Sunnah.

#### 1. 4. Chronological Layers of Hadith Preservation

Hadith scholars categorize preservers (huffaz) into chronological layers, beginning with the Companions and extending to later generations. These layers are not merely a chronological classification but also reflect each group's role in preserving and transmitting hadith.

##### **The First Layer (The Companions):**

This group consists of those who directly heard the hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). They were the most reliable in preserving and documenting the hadith. This generation includes the noble Companions who memorized and initially transmitted the prophetic traditions [9] .

##### **The Second Layer (The Successors):**

The Successors learned hadith from the Companions and served as intermediaries between them and the subsequent generations [10] .

##### **The Third Layer (Followers of the Successors):**

This group lived in the second century AH and received hadiths from the Successors. They were known for their expertise in hadith sciences and their detailed knowledge of chains of narration (asanid) [11] .

##### **Later Generations:**

This includes scholars who lived in the subsequent centuries, up to the Abbasid era, such as Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. These scholars played a pivotal role in collecting and authenticating hadiths by critically examining the chains of narration [12] .

#### **4 Definition of Huffaz**

The term huffaz in hadith science refers to scholars who meticulously memorized and transmitted the prophetic traditions across generations. They are regarded as the most trustworthy and

credible narrators of the Prophet's sayings and actions. The term includes those who memorized the hadiths by heart and mastered their transmission and authentication through proper chains of narration.

#### **4 1. Definition of "Huffaz" in Hadith Science**

In hadith science, huffaz refers to individuals who memorized the Prophet's hadiths and were recognized as authorities in transmitting them. They are distinguished from other narrators by their exceptional ability to preserve and document hadiths with precision. Their expertise in scrutinizing chains of narration and distinguishing between authentic and weak hadiths further sets them apart. A hafiz is identified based on their proficiency in preserving vast numbers of hadiths and their reliability in transmitting them [13] .

#### **2 2. Importance of Huffaz in Hadith Science**

The critical role of huffaz lies in preserving and documenting the prophetic traditions. Initially, hadiths were transmitted orally among the Companions and Successors. However, as the Islamic empire expanded, the need for precise documentation became urgent to ensure their accurate transmission across generations without distortion or addition. The efforts of huffaz were foundational in collecting and classifying hadiths, thereby preserving the Sunnah and maintaining its authenticity [14] .

#### **2 3. Characteristics of Huffaz**

Key traits of huffaz in hadith science include:

- **Precision in Memorization:**

A hafiz preserves hadiths faithfully and accurately, often possessing an extraordinary memory that enables them to recall chains of narration and texts with ease.

- **Mastery of Jarh wa Ta'dil (Criticism and Praise):**

Huffaz have extensive knowledge of jarh wa ta'dil, the science of assessing narrators' credibility or lack thereof.

- **Ability to Discern Authenticity:**

They possess a keen aptitude for distinguishing between authentic, weak, and fabricated hadiths by meticulously examining chains of narration and texts [15] .

#### **2 4. The Role of Huffaz in Preserving the Sunnah**

The efforts of huffaz safeguarded the prophetic Sunnah from distortion or loss. As a result of their work, major hadith collections were compiled, serving as primary sources for understanding the Sunnah. Among the most famous of these works are:

- Sahih al-Bukhari by Imam Al-Bukhari.
- Sahih Muslim by Imam Muslim.
- Al-Sunan al-Kubra by Al-Nasa'i.

The meticulous work of huffaz ensured the accuracy of hadith collections by scrutinizing chains of narration and confirming their authenticity [16] .

## 2 5. Prominent Huffaz in Hadith History

Some of the most notable huffaz who made significant contributions to hadith history include:

- **Imam Al-Bukhari:**

Known for compiling one of the most accurate collections of hadiths in his book, Sahih al-Bukhari.

- **Imam Muslim:**

The compiler of Sahih Muslim, a renowned hadith collection.

- **Imam Al-Tirmidhi:**

Author of Sunan al-Tirmidhi, one of the essential hadith compilations after the two Sahih [17] .

## 2 6. Jarh wa Ta'dil and Its Impact on Huffaz

Jarh wa Ta'dil is the science of evaluating narrators who transmit hadiths. Scholars assess narrators either by praising (affirming their reliability) or criticizing them (highlighting weaknesses in their narration). Huffaz specialize in this discipline, serving as critical references for authenticating and documenting hadiths accurately [18] .

## 2 7. The Difference Between a Hafiz and a Muhaddith

There is a distinction between a hafiz and a muhaddith. A hafiz is more specialized in memorizing hadiths and verifying chains of transmission (asanid), whereas a muhaddith focuses on narrating and explaining hadiths. The hafiz possesses exceptional ability in preserving and documenting hadiths, while the muhaddith may primarily concentrate on narrating reliable hadiths [19] .

## 4 Definition of Tarajim (Biographies)

In the science of hadith, tarajim refers to biographies or profiles of narrators and scholars who contributed to transmitting the Prophetic traditions or other Islamic sciences. Unlike general autobiographies, tarajim focus on scholarly and hadith-related aspects of an individual's life, such as their preservation of hadiths, conditions for narration, standing in the science of jarh wa ta'dil, and their impact on the development of hadith sciences.

- **1. Tarajim in the Science of Hadith**

Tarajim are among the most crucial resources used by hadith scholars to classify and verify narrators. They help assess the credibility of narrators based on their scholarly achievements and dedication to preserving and transmitting hadiths. Information typically included in tarajim

comprises details about the narrator's life, such as their birth and death dates, teachers, students, narrations, and methodology in assessing hadiths [20] .

- **2. The Importance of Tarajim in Hadith Sciences**

Tarajim play a key role in understanding the condition of narrators and distinguishing between authentic and weak hadiths. By studying tarajim, scholars verify the trustworthiness of narrators and the reliability of the chains of transmission. They also provide detailed insights into the lives of scholar-narrators, enabling scholars to determine who is qualified to transmit hadiths and who is not due to weaknesses in memory or integrity [21] .

- **3. Elements of a Tarjamah in Hadith Science**

A tarjamah consists of several essential elements, including:

- **Name of the Narrator:**

The full name of the individual, along with their scholarly titles.

- **Birth and Death Dates (Gregorian and Hijri):**

Includes the narrator's date of birth and death (or an estimated death date if not precisely known).

- **Teachers and Students:**

Documents the names of the teachers the narrator learned from and the students who transmitted hadiths from them.

- **Scholarly Evaluation:**

Includes assessments of the narrator's reliability (jarh wa ta'dil), based on their integrity and accuracy in transmitting hadiths.

- **Publications:**

If the narrator authored works in hadith or other Islamic sciences, these are documented.

- **Narrations:**

Identifies the hadiths transmitted by the narrator, ensuring their authenticity [22] .

- **4. Types of Tarajim**

There are two primary types of tarajim in hadith sciences:

- **General Biographies:**

Comprehensive biographies of prominent hadith scholars who made significant contributions to hadith sciences, such as the biographies of Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. These provide a detailed overview of the scholar's life and work.

- **Specific Biographies:**

Focused profiles of lesser-known narrators or those mentioned in the context of specific

hadiths. These biographies are more concise and concentrate on critically evaluating the narrator's life and narrations [23] .

- **5. Sources of Tarajim**

Numerous books have been dedicated to documenting the biographies of narrators in hadith sciences. Among the most famous are:

- Tarikh Baghdad by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, a key resource for scholars' biographies.
- Siyar A'lam al-Nubala by Al-Dhahabi, an extensive encyclopedia of biographies for hadith scholars.
- Tahdhib al-Tahdhib by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, which refines and corrects previous biographical works [20] [23] .

- **6. The Importance of Tarajim in Determining the Authenticity of Hadiths**

Tarajim are vital for evaluating the authenticity of Prophetic hadiths. By examining the biographies of narrators, scholars can determine whether a narrator is trustworthy or weak, and consequently, assess the reliability of the hadiths they transmit. Tarajim are an essential part of chain of transmission (isnad) analysis, where the chain is scrutinized from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the final narrator [24] .

- **7. Tarajim and Other Hadith Sciences**

Tarajim form the foundation of many disciplines related to hadith sciences, including:

- **Science of Jarh wa Ta'dil:**  
This discipline heavily relies on tarajim to evaluate the trustworthiness of narrators.
- **Hadith Terminology Science:**  
Definitions of terms like "hasan," "sahih," and "da'if" are derived from the study of narrators' tarajim [25] .

#### **4 Definition of Narrators in the Science of Hadith**

Narrators in the science of hadith are individuals who transmitted Prophetic traditions (ahadith) from their original source—namely, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his Companions (Sahaba), or their successors (Tabi'un)—to subsequent generations. The narrator is one of the core elements in the chain of transmission, as hadiths are attributed to the narrators who conveyed them. Their trustworthiness and integrity are crucial factors that influence the authenticity and acceptance of a hadith or its classification as weak [26] .

- **Types of Narrators**

Narrators in hadith sciences can be categorized based on their credibility and quality in transmitting hadiths. The main types include:

1. **Upright Narrators ('Udul):**

These are individuals known for their exemplary reputation in religion and morals. They must possess piety, integrity, and scholarly reliability. The hadiths of such narrators are accepted without hesitation, provided they meet the conditions of accurate transmission, such as precision in memory and sound listening. Their narrations are foundational in deriving jurisprudence, and their hadiths are considered trustworthy [27] .

2. **Accurate Narrators (Dabit):**

For a narrator's hadith to be accepted, they must be precise and retain their narrations accurately. This involves maintaining strong memory and meticulous care in preserving and conveying hadiths. The acceptance of their narrations depends on their retention abilities and sound memory [28] .

3. **Weak Narrators (Du'afa):**

These narrators have deficiencies in memory or accuracy, or they exhibit questionable behavior in transmitting hadiths. Such weaknesses render their narrations weak or rejected. Weak narrators lack the conditions of integrity ('adalah) or accuracy (dhabt) [29] .

4. **Criticized Narrators (Majruhun):**

These are narrators who have been described with terms indicating their weaknesses, whether due to poor memory, deviant personal conduct, or flawed religious practice. Such defects, ranging from minor to severe, determine whether their narrations are unacceptable. Severe flaws make their hadiths inadmissible as evidence [30] .

5. **Unknown Narrators (Majhulun):**

These narrators lack sufficient biographical information, making it difficult to assess their personal and scholarly integrity. Their narrations are not accepted unless their reliability and precision are verified [31] .

● **The Importance of Narrators in the Science of Hadith**

Narrators serve as the vital link between the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and subsequent generations. Their role in transmitting hadiths is critical for preserving the authenticity and reliability of the isnad (chain of transmission). Scholars of hadith developed rigorous methodologies to evaluate narrators and scrutinize their credibility through the science of jarh wa ta'dil, which determines the reliability of each narrator based on precise standards [32] .

Narrators are pivotal in preserving the Prophetic legacy. A significant portion of hadith sciences is dedicated to studying their lives to ensure the reliability of authentic narrations and distinguish them from weak ones [33] .

**Subsection Two: Biography of Imam Al-Suyuti**

Imam Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti was one of the most prominent scholars of the 9th century AH. He authored numerous significant works in hadith, tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and grammar. Born in Cairo in 849 AH (1445 CE), he passed away in 911 AH (1505



CE). Hailing from a scholarly family, his father was a respected scholar of his time. Al-Suyuti grew up in a rich intellectual environment and studied under the leading scholars of Egypt and the Hijaz.

## 1. Early Life and Education

Born in Cairo, Al-Suyuti pursued studies in various religious and scientific disciplines. He began his education at an early age, memorizing the Qur'an at a young age before delving into the sciences of hadith, tafsir, and fiqh. Among his notable teachers was the renowned scholar Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, who significantly influenced his expertise in hadith sciences [34] .

## 2. His Methodology

Al-Suyuti employed a meticulous scholarly approach in his writings. He carefully compiled all relevant information on the topics he addressed, whether in tafsir, hadith, or fiqh. His works were characterized by conciseness and clarity, with references to primary sources. He valued the works of earlier scholars and incorporated their insights while maintaining his distinctive style [35] .

## 3. His Scholarly Standing

Imam Al-Suyuti held a prominent scholarly position in his time and was regarded as one of Egypt's leading scholars. His influence extended to subsequent generations, with many scholars benefiting from his works. He played a significant role in educating students, conducting study circles in Cairo's mosques, and delivering lectures on various Islamic sciences. His lessons attracted students from across the Islamic world [36] .

## 4. Death and Legacy

Imam Al-Suyuti passed away in 911 AH (1505 CE) in Cairo and was buried in the cemetery of Imam Al-Shafi'i. Despite his death, his legacy endures through his books, which remain major references in Islamic sciences. His clear and accessible writing style has ensured the enduring relevance of his works for scholars and students alike [37] .

## 5. Key Works

- **Al-Jami' Al-Saghir:** A renowned hadith collection, summarizing traditions from the six major collections.
- **Tafsir Al-Jalalayn:** A widely known exegesis of the Qur'an, co-authored with Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli.
- **Al-Iqtirah fi Usul al-Fiqh:** A work on principles of Islamic jurisprudence.
- **Tabaqat al-Huffaz:** A historical encyclopedia on hadith scholars and narrators [38] .

## 6. Critical Observations on His Methodology

While Al-Suyuti is celebrated for his contributions to hadith and tafsir, some scholars have critiqued aspects of his works. For example, his reliance on summarization in some books, such as Al-Jami' Al-Saghir, has raised questions about the contextual accuracy of certain narrations. This reliance on abridgements occasionally led to concerns about the precision and reliability of transmitted material [39] .

## **Section Two: Introducing the Book Tabaqat al-Huffaz and Al-Suyuti's Methodology in It**

### **First Subsection: Introduction to Al-Suyuti's Tabaqat al-Huffaz**

Tabaqat al-Huffaz is one of the distinguished works of Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and is considered a valuable book in the field of biographies of scholars and narrators in the science of hadith. The book organizes the lives and biographies of hadith preservers who excelled in preserving and explaining prophetic traditions. It highlights their names, life stories, efforts in disseminating hadith, and their ranks in the science of hadith.

#### **1. Overview of the Book**

Tabaqat al-Huffaz is a scientific encyclopedia that gathers the biographies of hadith scholars, starting from the Companions, followed by the Successors, leading to the prominent Imams of hadith, and concluding with the scholars of the seventh and eighth centuries AH. In this book, Al-Suyuti documents the names of scholars who excelled in preserving and studying hadith, clarifying their scientific status by presenting comprehensive scholarly biographies that include details of their lives, narrations, and the reliability of their hadiths. [40]

#### **2. Significance of the Book**

The significance of Tabaqat al-Huffaz lies in its role as a primary reference in the sciences of biographies and hadith. It documents the hadith preservers who memorized the narrations and preserved their chains of transmission (isnad). The book helps determine the scholars' roles in transmitting hadith, highlights those authenticated over time, and sheds light on the ranks of narrators in terms of their memorization quality and the acceptance of their narrations among scholars. [41]

#### **3. Prominent Narrators Mentioned in the Book**

Al-Suyuti includes many prominent figures who contributed to the transmission of hadith over the ages. Among the most notable are:

- **Imam al-Bukhari:** One of the greatest hadith scholars and the author of Sahih al-Bukhari.
- **Imam Muslim:** The author of Sahih Muslim, one of the six major hadith collections.
- **Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal:** The compiler of Musnad Ahmad, one of the most renowned hadith books in the Islamic world.
- **Imam al-Nasa'i:** A major hadith scholar and the author of Al-Sunan al-Kubra. [42]

#### **4. Purpose of the Book**

The aim of Tabaqat al-Huffaz is to shed light on the scholars who excelled in preserving hadith and their role in transmitting prophetic traditions. It also provides a comprehensive

view of how biographies contribute to examining the chains of transmission and hadiths. The book aids in understanding the scholarly development of narrators across eras and offers valuable information to hadith scholars and researchers about the prominent figures in the history of hadith transmission. 【43】

#### 5. **Relevance of the Book in the Modern Era**

Despite being written over five centuries ago, *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* remains one of the most important references for students of hadith sciences and scholars of biographies. It offers a vast database on hadith scholars and narrators and serves as a fundamental resource for studying their lives and classification. The book significantly aids in understanding the development of hadith transmission and its treatment across the ages. 【44】

#### 6. **Critical Editions of the Book**

*Tabaqat al-Huffaz* has undergone several critical editions since its composition. Many scholars have worked on its verification, with one of the most notable efforts being that of Sheikh Muhammad Fu'ad Abd al-Baqi, a leading scholar in the field of hadith sciences. Sheikh Abd al-Baqi meticulously verified the book, clarifying many ambiguous issues and adding explanatory comments to facilitate understanding of Al-Suyuti's scientific intentions. The verifier aimed to make the book fully accessible to researchers and students by elucidating points that might be difficult to grasp or require interpretation. 【45】

#### 7. **Editions of the Book**

The book has seen several editions since it was first published in the ninth century AH. Notable editions include:

- **The First Edition:** Published by Al-Halabi Library in Cairo in the ninth century AH. This edition served as the foundational version used by scholars and later verifiers in their studies and analyses.
- **The Second Edition:** A modern edition published by Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi in Beirut. It was critically edited by Muhammad Fu'ad Abd al-Baqi and released in 1996. This edition is known for its clarity and meticulous verification, with added notes and explanations aiding in the understanding of classical texts. 【46】
- **The Third Edition:** Published later by Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya in Lebanon. This edition included additional scholarly tools such as detailed indexes of narrators and hadiths, making it more useful for researchers and hadith scholars.
- **The Fourth Edition:** Published by Dar al-Ma'arif in Cairo. This edition underwent a comprehensive review of the classical texts, incorporating interpretative benefits derived from modern references in the field of prophetic traditions, making it a more updated and enhanced version. 【47】

#### 8. **The Importance of Modern Editions and Investigations**

The modern editions of *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* represent a significant step toward presenting the book in a comprehensive scientific format. Editors have meticulously verified the texts, emphasized scientific critique, and added explanations to enhance understanding of the book. Furthermore, these modern editions include essential scholarly indexes, such as an index of names, books, and hadiths, making it easier for researchers to access the information they need efficiently. 【48】

Through these investigations and various editions, Al-Suyuti's *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* has become one of the most crucial academic references for researchers in the fields of hadith studies, evaluation (*jarh wa ta'dil*), and biographies. Modern editions have significantly improved access to the book's content by expanding on explanations and clarifications, making this scholarly work more accurate and beneficial.

## **Subsection Two: Al-Suyuti's Methodology in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz***

The methodology employed by Al-Suyuti in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* stands out as one of the most profound approaches in categorizing narrators and preserving hadith. This book serves as an encyclopedic collection that includes biographies of narrators from all trusted historical classes, with detailed explanations of their lives and knowledge. However, Al-Suyuti's methodology in categorizing these narrators deserves closer scrutiny and analysis, as the book goes beyond merely presenting biographies. It also includes critical evaluation of narrators and an interpretation of the historical layers that produced them.

### **1. Classification of Narrators by Layers (*Tabaqat*)**

One of the most notable aspects of Al-Suyuti's methodology is his systematic classification of narrators by chronological layers. This classification demonstrates how the transmission of hadith evolved across generations and is divided into four primary layers:

- **The First Layer:** The Companions, who witnessed the Prophet ﷺ and directly transmitted his teachings.
- **The Second Layer:** The Successors (*Tabi'un*), who met and learned from the Companions.
- **The Third Layer:** The Followers of the Successors (*Atba' al-Tabi'in*), who lived alongside and learned from the Successors.
- **The Fourth Layer:** Later hadith scholars who established the foundations of hadith science and authored significant works.

This classification helps trace the development of hadith preservation over time and provides a scientific map of how the community of hadith preservers evolved through various historical periods. Through this framework, Al-Suyuti highlights influential figures from each era and underscores the temporal role of each narrator in preserving the prophetic traditions. **【49】**

### **2. Documentation of Narrators and Prophetic Hadith**

Al-Suyuti employs a rigorous approach to documenting narrators. Every narrator included in the *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* undergoes meticulous analysis to determine the authenticity and credibility of their narrations. Al-Suyuti relies on scientific criteria for evaluating narrators, drawing upon established works in *jarh wa ta'dil* and the opinions of scholars like Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and Al-Dhahabi. This approach provides an accurate and realistic assessment of the narrators he addresses.

- **The Companions:** Al-Suyuti generally does not delve into detailed authentication of the Companions, as they are universally regarded as the most reliable narrators. However, in

specific cases, he includes scholarly opinions about the degree of authenticity associated with certain Companions.

- **The Successors and Their Followers:** For these narrators, Al-Suyuti provides a detailed analysis of their reliability, as differing opinions often arose regarding certain figures within these layers. To address this, Al-Suyuti presents the divergent views of scholars on some narrators, offering readers a comprehensive perspective on both widely accepted and disputed narrations. 【50】

### **3. Al-Suyuti's Style in Presenting Biographies**

Al-Suyuti's style in presenting biographies is characterized by detail and organization. The book serves as a comprehensive encyclopedia of biographies, going beyond basic data to delve into the narrator's life and contributions to the science of hadith. At the beginning of each biography, Al-Suyuti provides the narrator's name and year of death, followed by details of their scholarly life, such as:

- The most prominent teachers from whom the narrator learned.
- Significant works authored by the narrator, if any.
- Scholars' opinions regarding their reliability and level of truthfulness.

Al-Suyuti sometimes includes criticisms of the narrator cited in books of jarh wa ta'dil (criticism and praise of narrators), reflecting a scientific methodology based on documentation and critical analysis. He occasionally discusses incidents that might affect the narrator's reliability, such as errors they made or differences in the narrations they transmitted. 【51】

### **4. Internal Criticism of Chains of Transmission**

Al-Suyuti's work demonstrates internal criticism of the chains of transmission (isnads) by reviewing them and ensuring their adherence to the established principles of hadith science. He meticulously examines the complete chain of narrators, from the Companion to the later transmitter, verifying the authenticity of the chain.

In this regard, Al-Suyuti references what is recorded in jarh wa ta'dil about the various narrators, clarifying how these narrators influenced the strength of the hadith, whether classified as authentic (sahih) or weak (da'if). This internal critique helps ensure the scholarly reliability of the material presented in Tabaqat al-Huffaz, thereby enhancing the accuracy of transmitted prophetic hadith. 【52】

### **5. The Author's Jurisprudential and Documentary Role**

Al-Suyuti's methodology in documenting narrators extends beyond listing names to include a deeper examination of their jurisprudential contributions. He highlights the thoughts of scholars about these figures who played significant roles in transmitting hadith.

Al-Suyuti also provides information on how these narrators influenced Islamic jurisprudence, enabling readers to connect the preservation of hadith with its practical applications in fields such as jurisprudence (fiqh), exegesis (tafsir), and hadith studies. 【53】

## **6. Al-Suyuti's Techniques in Avoiding Repetition**

One of Al-Suyuti's notable methods is his effort to avoid repetition in his book. He aimed to present concise and accurate information about each narrator. When discussing similar biographies, he provided succinct cross-references that connected the information without duplicating content. Additionally, he avoided reintroducing narrators whose biographies were already mentioned earlier in the book, making the work more organized and precise. 【54】

Al-Suyuti's methodology in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* stands as a foundational reference in the science of prophetic hadith. It is distinguished by its scholarly rigor, unique organization in classifying narrators, meticulous documentation of chains of transmission, and comprehensive presentation of biographies.

In this book, Al-Suyuti delivered an integrated study of narrators throughout Islamic history, successfully providing a chronological framework that aligns with the development of hadith science across generations.

The critical approach he adopted in categorizing the layers (tabaqat), analyzing chains of transmission, and exploring factors affecting the preservation of hadith added immense scholarly value to this work. It remains a primary resource for researchers studying hadith transmitters and authenticating chains of transmission.

### **The Third Section: A Critical Study of *Tabaqat al-Huffaz***

The book *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* by Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti is a cornerstone in the field of hadith studies, aiming to compile and document the biographies of narrators who preserved and transmitted prophetic traditions across generations. While al-Suyuti sought to honor these keepers of hadith, the book contains some critical gaps that warrant discussion and analysis.

This critical study focuses on al-Suyuti's methodology in compiling narrators' biographies from various generations, his classification methods, and some shortcomings in the book, such as insufficient details about certain narrators, limited engagement with contemporary hadith criticism, and an overemphasis on lesser-known narrators at the expense of more influential figures.

#### **1. Insufficient Information on Some Narrators**

Despite being a significant reference for shedding light on the lives of narrators, *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* suffers from a lack of detailed information about some narrators who are mentioned superficially. In some instances, al-Suyuti provides only the narrator's name and year of death, which limits the usefulness of the book for hadith scholars.

For example, al-Suyuti often neglects details about the lives of lesser-known narrators, who, despite their role in transmitting hadith, lack extensive works or comprehensive biographies. This omission makes the book incomplete, as it does not clarify these narrators' roles in preserving and transmitting hadith across generations. Furthermore, basic details, such as the narrators' places of birth or educational backgrounds, are sometimes omitted, despite their importance for analyzing the sanad (chain of transmission) and matn (content of the hadith). 【55】 【56】

## **2. Overemphasis on Lesser-Known Narrators**

Al-Suyuti's methodology includes an extensive focus on lesser-known narrators, some of whom played only minor roles in the preservation of hadith. While these narrators deserve scholarly attention, al-Suyuti's emphasis on them sometimes comes at the expense of highlighting more influential figures.

This issue is evident in biographies where al-Suyuti mentions narrators with limited impact on hadith scholarship. Although documenting these narrators aligns with scholarly integrity, the extensive focus on their biographies may overshadow more significant personalities in hadith science.

Conversely, al-Suyuti could have included more detailed accounts of narrators with substantial contributions to the transmission and development of hadith. This imbalance might pose challenges for researchers trying to assess the roles of lesser-known narrators while al-Suyuti diverts attention from the more prominent figures. 【55】 【57】

## **3. Scientific Evaluation of Narrators**

While al-Suyuti's evaluation of narrators is a key strength of *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, he occasionally lacks depth in critically analyzing the components of these evaluations. Often, al-Suyuti references early scholars such as al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar without providing a critical assessment of their opinions from a modern perspective.

It would have been beneficial for al-Suyuti to incorporate a broader scientific discussion of these scholars' views on narrators, particularly in cases where disagreements existed. The challenge lies in al-Suyuti's reliance on traditional opinions as definitive references without addressing potential shifts in evaluation criteria over time. In some cases, he adopts conventional classifications of narrators without rigorously reassessing their credibility using modern standards such as isnad analysis and advanced scientific scrutiny. 【55】 【58】

## **4. Limited Interaction with Contemporary Criticism**

One notable shortcoming in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* is its lack of engagement with contemporary criticism in hadith studies. While al-Suyuti provides extensive coverage of narrators, he does not incorporate modern critiques or methodologies, such as contemporary classification techniques or objective critical approaches.

Al-Suyuti's reliance on traditional methodologies reflects a conventional approach, showing limited engagement with innovations in the study of asnad. He could have enriched the book by interacting with methodologies such as statistical analysis and rigorous chain examination, which would add significant value to the scholarly evaluation and analysis. [55] [59]

## **5. Political and Jurisprudential Influences in Narrator Accounts**

One of the critical observations about al-Suyuti's methodology in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* is the influence of political and jurisprudential contexts in presenting narrator biographies. At times, al-Suyuti's classification of narrators seems to be shaped by the political and religious realities of his era, leading to biases in portraying certain figures.

For instance, al-Suyuti mentions narrators with significant political roles; however, his classification occasionally reflects non-scholarly factors, such as sectarian allegiance or political affiliation. This suggests that his documentation might have been influenced by considerations beyond objective hadith scholarship. [55] [60]

## **6. Insufficient Coverage of Weak Hadith**

Another critique of *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* is al-Suyuti's limited engagement with weak hadith. He does not delve deeply into discussing narrations that are weak or criticized by hadith scholars. Since the book aims to document the classes of narrators and evaluate their reliability, it would have been appropriate for al-Suyuti to address weak narrations linked to certain narrators and provide scholarly judgments on factors that weaken the sanad (chain of transmission) and affect credibility. [55] [61]

While *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* by Imam al-Suyuti remains an essential source in hadith studies, the book has notable shortcomings requiring further review and analysis. Among these are the lack of detailed biographies for some narrators, the focus on lesser-known figures at the expense of influential ones, and the absence of engagement with modern methods of criticism.

It is important to note that al-Suyuti's methodology reflects the norms of his time and does not always align with contemporary approaches in isnad and narrator criticism. This suggests the need for a critical scientific revision of the book to enhance its value for modern scholars.

## **Fourth Section: Comparative Study of Al-Suyuti's *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* and Al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz***

Both *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* by al-Suyuti and *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz* by al-Dhahabi are landmark works in the biographical study of hadith scholars. While the two books share a common focus, their methodologies differ significantly, reflecting contrasting perspectives, analytical styles, and documentation techniques. This study highlights these differences systematically, supported by diverse and specific sources.

### **1. Analytical Methodology**



## **1.1 Al-Dhahabi's Analytical Approach**

In *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, al-Dhahabi adopts a comprehensive and in-depth approach to presenting biographies. He does not merely recount the lives of scholars but delves into their opinions, stances, and impact on religious and intellectual spheres. His treatment of each narrator includes scientific critique and thorough analysis of their positions on intricate scholarly issues.

For example, in his biography of Imam al-Shafi'i, al-Dhahabi not only discusses his stature in hadith sciences but also analyzes his influence on the evolution of jurisprudence. He references debates like the "createdness of the Qur'an" and their effects on al-Shafi'i's scholarly and personal life [62]. Al-Dhahabi further incorporates scholarly opinions and addresses criticisms, providing a nuanced understanding of al-Shafi'i's influence on other jurisprudential schools. This detailed approach links the narrator's life to their historical and scholarly context, offering the reader a deeper understanding.

## **1.2 Al-Suyuti's Analytical Approach**

In contrast, al-Suyuti's approach in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* is more concise. He typically limits himself to presenting brief biographies of narrators, including basic information such as dates of birth and death, and notable works, without engaging in detailed analysis.

For instance, in his entry on Imam al-Shafi'i, al-Suyuti mentions his prominence in hadith and his founding of the Shafi'i school but does not explore his intellectual impact or scholarly debates surrounding him [63]. This more aggregative style makes *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* focused on biographical summaries rather than in-depth analysis.

## **2. Treatment of Weak or Controversial Narrators**

### **2.1 Al-Dhahabi: Rigorous Critical Analysis**

Al-Dhahabi's *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz* not only lists the biographies of narrators but also provides critical evaluations, especially of controversial or weak narrators. He offers detailed discussions about narrators whose reliability was debated among scholars.

For example, when discussing figures like Ibn Lahi'ah, a narrator surrounded by allegations of weakness, al-Dhahabi analyzes the reasons behind the criticism. He points out issues with some of Ibn Lahi'ah's narrations while acknowledging his virtues and contributions to hadith sciences [64]. This balanced critique demonstrates al-Dhahabi's ability to present a nuanced perspective on disputed narrators.

### **2.2 Al-Suyuti: Minimal Criticism**

Al-Suyuti's approach to weak or controversial narrators is less comprehensive. While he includes their biographies, he does not engage extensively with the critical discourse surrounding them. This

lack of detailed evaluation limits the book's ability to serve as a comprehensive resource for assessing the reliability of narrators.

### **3. Literary Style**

#### **3.1 Al-Dhahabi's Literary Style**

Al-Dhahabi is known for his exquisite literary style in *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, where he balances scientific analysis with literary presentation. He frequently cites proverbs and literary excerpts that add a distinctive character to his work. His narrative style is engaging for the reader, as he includes literary and poetic moments that offer deeper insight into the life of the narrator.

For instance, when discussing a figure like al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, he does not merely narrate his scholarly life but also includes excerpts from his writings and poetry that reflect his personal thoughts, thus adding both a literary and intellectual dimension to his work [65] .

#### **3.2 Al-Suyuti's Literary Style**

In contrast, al-Suyuti's style in *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* is more concise. His approach is highly practical, aiming to provide information quickly and accurately without delving into literary or philosophical details. Al-Suyuti's biographies present the bare facts about the narrator without excessive narrative or literary style, making the book suitable for quick reading, but lacking the literary appeal that al-Dhahabi is known for.

### **4. Independence in Authorship**

#### **4.1 Al-Dhahabi: An Encyclopedic Approach**

Al-Dhahabi is distinguished by his independence in writing *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, as he relies on gathering various sources and providing his critical commentary on them. He studies each figure in detail and offers comprehensive information, making his work an encyclopedic resource for scholars and hadith experts.

#### **4.2 Al-Suyuti: A Compilatory Method**

In contrast, al-Suyuti is more dependent on previous sources. In *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, he lists many narrators based on what is found in other books, without adding his own analysis or critique. His goal is to compile information into one volume, without delving into deep interpretations or critical insights.

### **5. Illustrative Examples**

#### **5.1 Imam al-Bukhari**

- **Al-Dhahabi:** In *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, al-Dhahabi provides a detailed analysis of al-Bukhari's methodology in authenticating and narrating hadiths. He also addresses some of the

controversies surrounding him, particularly regarding the “creation of the Qur’an” debate 【66】 .

- **Al-Suyuti:** In *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, al-Suyuti simply mentions that al-Bukhari is the author of *Al-Jami’ al-Sahih*, without discussing the significant controversies surrounding his scholarly life 【67】 .

## 5.2 Imam Ibn Ma'in

- **Al-Dhahabi:** In *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, al-Dhahabi explains Ibn Ma'in's role in the development of the science of Jarh wa Ta'dil (criticism and validation of narrators). He provides an analysis of Ibn Ma'in's opinions on weakening certain hadiths and his arguments for accepting them 【68】 .
- **Al-Suyuti:** In *Tabaqat al-Huffaz*, al-Suyuti simply mentions Ibn Ma'in as one of the major hadith scholars, without referring to the details of his critical positions or his contributions to the science of Jarh wa Ta'dil 【69】 .

## 6. Conclusions

- **Critical Analysis:** Al-Dhahabi emerges as an encyclopedic scholar who presents each figure in depth and objectivity, while al-Suyuti focuses more on compiling and documenting information without engaging in critical analysis.
- **Literary Style:** Al-Dhahabi blends literature with science, while al-Suyuti is more direct in presenting the information.
- **Independence in Authorship:** Al-Dhahabi is more independent in his authorship, whereas al-Suyuti relies more heavily on previous sources.

### Conclusion:

After this study of the hadith book "Tabaqat al-Huffaz" by al-Suyuti, explaining his methodology and pointing out some criticisms of the book, we can conclude the following results:

1. The book *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* by Imam al-Suyuti is considered one of the essential works in the science of hadith. It plays a significant role in documenting the ranks of narrators and providing precise information about their lives and works.
2. Despite the great scientific value of this book, it suffers from some shortcomings that require critical examination.
3. One issue is the lack of detail in some of the biographies, as al-Suyuti sometimes only provides general information about the narrators without delving deeply into their biographies or explaining the reasons for their classification.
4. The book also tends to focus on lesser-known or less influential narrators at the expense of more important figures in the field of hadith.
5. Additionally, there is the matter of the absence of engagement with modern criticism, which is a crucial point in the study of the book. While al-Suyuti extensively discussed the topic of narrators, he did not take advantage of contemporary techniques in the critique of chains of

transmission, such as statistical analysis or a thorough examination of the chains. This makes the book seem, in some respects, disconnected from the methodologies of contemporary scholarly research.

6. There are also some critical perspectives related to political and jurisprudential influences in the classification of certain narrators. Al-Suyuti's classifications were sometimes affected by the political and religious realities of his time, which could lead to bias in the presentation of some figures.
7. The book did not adequately address weak hadiths, nor did it provide a precise scientific judgment on the weak hadiths that might be linked to some narrators.

Despite these observations, *Tabaqat al-Huffaz* remains an important reference in the study of chains of transmission and narrators in the science of hadith. However, it must be acknowledged that the book requires a critical scientific review in line with modern developments in the field, both in terms of documentation and critical methodology. While the book reflects al-Suyuti's thinking and his era, the evolution of modern research methods could offer a deeper and more accurate understanding of the chains of transmission and the evaluation of narrators. Therefore, the book serves as a foundation for further critical analysis and development in the study of hadith and its narrators.

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