

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF IBN SALOḤ'S "ULUM AL-HADIS"

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Abstract

This article analyzes the structure, content, and scholarly significance of the work *Ulum al-hadis* ("The Sciences of Hadith") by the renowned muhaddith and prominent representative of Hadith studies, Ibn Saloḥ ash-Shahrazuriy (d. 643/1245). The author's work is recognized as a turning point in the development of *mustalah al-hadis* (the science of Hadith terminology) and is acknowledged as the first source to systematically and comprehensively present 65 types of Hadith sciences. The article examines Ibn Saloḥ's scholarly approach, criteria for selecting sources, methods of definition and analysis, and the influence of his work on the intellectual legacy of subsequent muhaddith scholars. According to the research findings, *Ulum al-hadis* not only systematized the theoretical foundations of Hadith sciences but also played a significant role in the formation of Hadith methodology in the following centuries.

Keywords

Ibn Saloḥ, *Ulum al-hadis*, *mustalah al-hadis*, Hadith studies, scholarly methodology, sanad, narration, muhaddith, structure of the work, intellectual legacy.

The study of *mustalah al-hadis* owes substantial importance to Ibn Saloḥ's *Ulum al-hadis*. This book represents a pivotal stage in the history of works written on Hadith sciences and is considered the first major source encompassing 65 types of Hadith sciences. Ibn Saloḥ compiled dispersed materials from earlier works, collected their useful elements, and organized them according to a previously unseen order. He divided the book into well-structured sections and carefully analyzed the definitions presented within it. For nearly three centuries, this work served as a primary reference for subsequent students and authors¹.

In the preface to this book, Ibn Saloḥ discusses the importance of Hadith studies, its position relative to other religious sciences, and the attention that early scholars (*salaf*) devoted to this field. He later emphasizes that, in his time, Hadith

¹ Imam Badr al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Jamal al-Din. *Azwa' as-Salaf*. Riyadh: Dar al-Minhaj, 2008. p. 17.

studies were not receiving the necessary level of attention compared to earlier periods. During his era, scholars engaged with Hadith primarily through activities such as *kitabāt* (writing), *ijazah* (authorization), and *riwayah* (transmission), while they largely neglected the investigation of the principles, types, and *'illat* (causes or defects) derived from Hadith. This situation motivated Ibn Saloḥ to write a book that would address these unmet needs.

Ibn Saloḥ's work is known by various titles in different sources. The findings of the researcher Nuriddin Itr, who examined some opinions regarding the book's title, are as follows:²

1. **Ma'rifatu Anwa'i 'Ilmi al-Ḥadīth.** Ibn Saloḥ clearly emphasized this title in the preface of his book. On the cover of the Indian manuscript, the book's name is written exactly in this form. Furthermore, in the original copy read by the author, preserved at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul, the same title is noted at the end of the manuscript.

2. **Ma'rifatu 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth.** When Ibn Saloḥ referred to this book in his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, he used this title.

3. **'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth.** This title appears in the manuscript authorized by Zayniddin al-Iraqi (d. 806/1404) and his son Abu Zur'a Waliyyuddin Ahmad (d. 826/1423). In the copy of Waliyyuddin al-Iraqi preserved in Turkey, the book is also mentioned under this title. Subsequently, the book became widely known by this name, and most modern researchers have adopted it.

4. **Muqaddimatu Ibn al-Salōḥ.** Nuriddin Itr noted: "This title appears in some manuscripts and published copies. However, this naming does not belong to the author himself. Nevertheless, since the book served as an introduction to Hadith studies for students and was one of the best presentations of the early stages of this science, it was called *Muqaddimatu Ibn al-Salōḥ*."

5. **Anwa'u 'Ulūmi al-Ḥadīth.** In the cover of the Iraqi manuscript, there is a small note, and unlike other annotations in the copy, the book's name is recorded in this form.

Before discussing the date of composition, it is important to note a key point. Ibn Saloḥ did not write the book in its entirety to present it formally to his students or the scholarly community. Instead, over approximately three and a half years, he compiled in this book the lessons he had taught orally to his students during various sessions using the dictation method. Ibn Saloḥ served as a teacher at the Ashrafiyya Madrasa from its opening until his death, a period of thirteen years. He began writing this book using the dictation method on 7th Ramadan, 630 AH. The

² Abu Amr Usman ibn Abdurahman Shahrazuriy. *Muqaddimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 6.

lessons recorded in the book continued until the second Sunday of Safar in 634 AH (1237 CE), when the compilation was completed³.

Every scholarly work has a method that the author follows in writing the book. To understand this method, scholars have paid attention to two main aspects:

1. The statements that the author explicitly mentions in the preface and between the lines of the book.
2. A detailed study of the author's book itself.

Through this, scholars attempt to understand the main features of the author's method in the book, including his style of presentation, approach to analysis, method of drawing conclusions, organization, use of citations, and related matters. These aspects are reinforced with examples selected from the book. In addition, these factors help reveal the author's style.

Ibn Saloh, apart from noting the reason for writing the book in the preface, did not provide an explicit statement regarding his method. In the preface, he presented a kind of plan for research, listing the topics to be discussed. The reason Ibn Saloh did not give a detailed explanation of his method is that he taught the book to his students over a period of more than three years using the dictation method. Therefore, there is not much explicit discussion about his method within the book itself.

The sources used in Ibn Saloh's book are numerous. This is because he studied under various teachers, enhanced his scholarly abilities across different fields, and after a long period of teaching and academic practice, he composed the book as a product of the maturation of his scholarly experience.

Researcher Abdulhamid Dog'istoni classified the sources mentioned and used in Ibn Saloh's *Ulum al-Hadis* as follows⁴:

1. The number of books that Ibn Saloh trusted and cited directly is 55.
2. The number of books that Ibn Saloh did not directly refer to or quote but mentioned is 51.

The sources that Ibn Saloh trusted and cited can be classified by subject as follows:

1. Books on Ulum al-Hadis:

- a) Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463/1071), *Al-jami li-akhlaq al-rawi wa adab al-sami wa al-kifaya fi 'ilm al-riwaya*.
- b) Al-Hakim al-Naysaburi (d. 405/1014), *Ma'rifat Ulum al-Hadis wa al-Madkhal ila Kitab al-Ihlil*.

³ Abu Amr Usman ibn Abdurahman Shahrazuriy. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 21.

⁴ Abdulhamid Dog'istoni. *Imom Abu Amr Shahrazuriy as-Saloh va Kitabih*. – Istanbul: Istanbul University Faculty of Literature Publications, 1980. – p. 152.

Muhammad al-Romahurmuziy (d. 360/971), *Al-Muhaddis al-Faṣil bayna al-Rawi wa al-Wayi*.

2. **Books covering various topics related to hadith:** 12 books.
3. **Books on rijal (biographies of narrators) and historical accounts:** 20 books.
4. **Books on hadith texts:** 10 books.
5. **Works on language:** 5 books.
6. **Books on fiqh and usūl:** 3 books.

Most scholars before Ibn Saloḥ transmitted their views along with the chains of transmission (sanads). Ibn Saloḥ also followed this method in his book, using terms like *rawayna/ رَوَيْنَا* or *ruwiyna/ رُوَيْنَا* for “hearing,” “reading,” or other forms of transmission.

One of his distinguishing features is that he emphasized linking the opinions he transmitted to their original owners. At that time, it was rare to trace transmitted opinions back to the original books. Most of the reports in this book can be traced to five of his teachers from various regions—Marv, Baghdad, Nishapur—where he traveled to seek knowledge. Ibn Saloḥ clearly stated the names of these teachers, their lineage, and where and how he learned from them.

For example, in Marv, Ibn Saloḥ received knowledge from a teacher through reading aloud, narrating hadith, and listening. He said:

“Abul Muzaffar ibn Hafiz Abu Sa’id Sam’oni (may Allah have mercy on him!) read and narrated a poem to me in Marv, and he said: ‘My father narrated a poem to me through his own recitation or in my presence, saying: Muhammad ibn Nasir Salomi narrated a poem to me through his recitation, and he said: the scholar and virtuous Foris ibn Husayn recited his poem to me...’⁵

Ibn Saloḥ numbered each category (tur) and provided its title. For example:

“**21st Category: Knowing the Subject / معرفة الموضوع: العشارون والحادي**”

Each category is considered a chapter or main heading within the book. The length of the topics covered in each category varies. Among these, the shortest category is *al-Muttasil*, which is about half a page, while the longest is *Ma’rifatu Kayfiyyati Sama’ al-Hadith wa Tahammulihi*, spanning 52 pages.

Ibn Saloḥ studied the categories that were important and required detailed explanation thoroughly. To facilitate understanding and comprehension, he added small subsections at the end of these categories, such as “beneficial points” (fawa’id al-muhimma), “differences” (tafriqat), and “warnings” (tanbihat)⁶.

⁵ Abu Amr Usmon ibn Abdurahmon Shahrzurii. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 88.

⁶ Abu Amr Usmon ibn Abdurahmon Shahrzurii. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 94.

Since Ibn Saloḥ was a great methodological scholar, he attached significant importance to definitions in his book. He strictly adhered to the conditions of definitions because a definition must clarify the essence of the subject, be free from any misunderstanding or confusion, be comprehensive in meaning (jami'), and limited in scope (muḥdūd). Ibn Saloḥ introduced new definitions in the science of mustalah al-hadith that no one before him had included. Sometimes he provided extended explanations in his definitions, or in certain cases, he cited various definitions offered by other scholars in the same field. This shows the flexibility of his definitional methodology.

Ibn Saloḥ analyzed definitions in hadith science deeply according to his method, introducing innovations where necessary. For example, although he provided a comprehensive definition for ṣaḥiḥ hadith, he retained certain limitations when refining definitions for ḥasan and shaḍḍ hadiths. This approach demonstrates the breadth and depth of his scholarly method.

Definition of Ṣaḥiḥ Hadith: *"It is a musnad hadith transmitted continuously by trustworthy ('adl) and precise (ḍabit) narrators, without any interruption, and free from defects ('ilal) or irregularities (shudhūdh) in the chain."*

1. Although many aspects of this definition appear in the words of Imam Shafi'i (d. 204/820), Imam Shafi'i did not provide a definition of ṣaḥiḥ itself; rather, he offered commentary. Before Ibn Saloḥ, no one had defined ṣaḥiḥ hadith so clearly and comprehensively.

Regarding the levels of ṣaḥiḥ hadith, Ibn Saloḥ states: *"The levels of a ṣaḥiḥ hadith differ according to the strength of the characteristics that underpin its authenticity. Therefore, enumerating and delineating them is extremely complex and requires division into detailed sections"*⁷.

2. Definition of Nash (Abrogation): *"It is the annulment of a previous ruling by a subsequent ruling issued by the Shari' (the Lawgiver). This definition is free from objections that have been raised against other definitions and is accepted as conveyed to us."*⁸

3. **Definition of Shaz Hadith:** Ibn Saloḥ presented the views of various scholars regarding shaz hadith, evaluated them, and analyzed the definitions given by Imam Shafi'i, Abū Ya'lū al-Ḥalili, and al-Ḥakim. He preferred Imam Shafi'i's definition:

"A shaz hadith is not when a trustworthy narrator reports something that others have not narrated. Rather, a shaz hadith is when a trustworthy narrator reports a hadith that contradicts the narrations of other reliable narrators."

He further elaborated:

⁷ Abu Amr Usmon ibn Abdurahmon Shahrzurriy. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 113.

⁸ Abu Amr Usmon ibn Abdurahmon Shahrzurriy. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 116.

"Regarding a hadith that Imam Shafi'i has judged as shaz, it is clear that this is a shaz hadith that is not acceptable."⁹.

Ibn Saloh connected the methodology of hadith with the principles of fiqh and highlighted the common topics between them. In many issues, he presented the opinions of usul scholars and fuqaha', supporting them with benefits related to language, poetry, and literature. He also organized the correct pronunciation of words, names, lineages, and epithets that could lead to confusion.

Regarding the definition of authentic (shahih) hadith, Ibn Saloh stated the following:

"The hadiths narrated with an uninterrupted isnad in the two books of al-Bukhari and Muslim are undoubtedly considered authentic. Among these hadiths, those slightly below the main criterion of the book are rare. They appear in some chapter headings of al-Bukhari's 'al-Jami' al-Shahih' or in suspended narrations. This statement limits his general declaration: 'I have included only authentic hadiths in my book.'¹⁰

Through this commentary, Ibn Saloh resolves ambiguities found in some chapters and narrations of al-Bukhari. According to him, al-Bukhari considered only the continuous (muttasil) and authentic (sahih) hadiths, not the chapter headings or the suspended (muallaq) narrations.

Ibn Saloh not only pointed out the errors of the scholars but also explained their causes in detail. In doing so, he promoted scholarly dialogue and encouraged qualities such as competence, piety, and honesty among scholars.

In conclusion, Ibn Saloh's work demonstrates his scientific approach and methodology in the study of hadith. This approach was later reviewed and developed by subsequent muhaddiths. Ulum al-hadith became an important source for future generations and served as a primary reference for students of hadith.

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⁹ Abu Amr Usmon ibn Abdurahmon Shahrazuriy. *Muqadimatu Ibn Saloh*. – Cairo: Saodah, 1903. – p. 122.

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