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# ASSESSING JUYNBOLL'S THEORY: THE CASE OF ABŪ HURAYRA IN THE *MUWAṬṬA'* OF MĀLIK

**Usman Ghani** [1]
[1]*Department of Arabic & Translation Studies, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates*

**Abstract**
*Joseph Schacht (d.1969) argued that the further back the isnād of a ḥadīth goes, the more assure we should be of its fabrication and the later date that this fabrication occurred. Furthermore, Gautier Juynboll (d.2010) argued that the more people transmit a ḥadīth from a scholar the more historicity that moment has. For example, if a great amount of people narrated a ḥadīth from a transmitter the more attestation there is that the ḥadīth actually existed at the time. He concludes that this proves this ḥadīth must have been forged at some earlier date. He argues that the surge of Abū Hurayra's traditions occurs in the period of Mālik b. Anas (d.179AH/796CE) and that Zuhrī (d.124AH/741CE) or later figures linked with him may have played a rule in the promulgation of Abū Hurayra's reports. This paper will investigate whether there are other reports which corroborate the reports of Abū Hurayra through other isnāds. This discussion also leads to investigate these reports of Abū Hurayra in the Muwaṭṭa' which stem from Mālik and Zuhrī specifically.*

**Keywords**: *ḥadīth*, *isnād*, Common Link, Abū Hurayra

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*Corresponding Author:
*Usman Ghani, Department of Arabic & Translation Studies, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates*
Email: ughani@aus.edu

## INTRODUCTION

The scholarly debates on the authenticity of *ḥadīth* stem from the beginning of the 19th Century with the work of Sir William Muir (d.1905), in which he rejected the corpus of *ḥadīth* as a source of the Prophet Muhammad's life and ways. Sir William Muir's main argument emphasised that only the Qur'ān was a reliable source for Muslims and that the *ḥadīth* were merely to promote the Muslim 'chorus of glory to Muḥammad' as well as the political, sectarian and scholarly ambitions of the early Muslim community.[1]

Ignaz Goldziher's (d.1921) *ḥadīth* analyses contributed further to the idea having had a great impact on Western *ḥadīth* Scholarship. His sceptical views of *ḥadīth* literature was taken up by Joseph Schacht (d.1969), who in contrast to Goldziher, analysed the *isnād* of legal *ḥadīth* and argued that legal Ḥadīth did not represent the actual details of the Prophet's life. Schacht concluded that the further back the isnād of a Ḥadīth went, the higher chance of their fake identity and fabrication date, occurring usually at a much later date, should be suspected.

Schacht's Common Link theory influenced substantially Western Ḥadīth Scholarship. Gautier Juynboll (d.2010) one of the leading Ḥadīth scholars, expounded Schacht's Common Link theory. Juynboll in his book on early Ḥadīth underlines that:

> *"Surely it is unlikely that we will ever find even a moderately successful method of proving with incontrovertible certainty the historicity of the ascription of such to the Prophet but in a few isolated instances."*[2]

[1] Jonathan Brown, *Ḥadīth : Muhammad's legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, (Oneworld publications, Oxford, 2009), 205
[2] Gautier Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition, Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadith*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 71

He continues that many Companions were credited

> *"With colossal numbers of obviously forged traditions that it is no longer feasible to conceive of a fool proof method to sift authentic from falsely ascribed material."*[3]

Building upon Schacht's theory, Juynboll argues that the more people transmit a Ḥadīth from a scholar the more its historicity becomes disputable. For example, if a large number of people narrated a Ḥadīth from a transmitter it would indicate that the Ḥadīth actually existed at that point of time and that its forging must have taken place at an earlier date, Juynboll concludes.

The present paper focuses specifically on the Ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra in the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik b. Anas (d.179/796). According to Juynboll the surge of Abū Hurayra's traditions occurs in the period of Mālik and in fact, Zuhrī (d.124/741) or later figures' link with him may have played a role in the promulgation of Abū Hurayra's reports.

However, this increase in the number of isnāds and the surge of Abū Hurayra's traditions as Juynboll points out, have occurred during the period of Zuhrī and Mālik. Based upon the premise of his Common Link theory, he underlines that the increase in the number of isnāds is not because of Abū Hurayra excessive narration. It is rather, due to the Common Links in the isnāds.

The central theme of the present study is to investigate whether there are other reports which would reinforce Abū Hurayra's reports, and which would be concomitant with the reports of Abū Hurayra having parallel isnāds. Here, the reports of Abū Hurayra in the *Muwaṭṭa'* which are specifically derived from Mālik and Zuhrī are discussed and their chain of transmission also assessed.

As mentioned earlier on, the academic debates on the authenticity of Ḥadīth stem from the beginning of the 19th Century with Sir William Muir who rejected the corpus of Ḥadīth as a trustworthy source of the Prophet Muhammad's life and deeds. Muir's argument was based upon his belief that only the Qur'ān was a reliable source for Muslims and that the Ḥadīth were merely to promote the Muslim 'chorus of glory to Muhammad' as well as the political, sectarian and scholarly ambitions of the early Muslim community.[4] Applying a historical-critical method, Muir in his work argued that more emphasis was put on the isnād criticism than on the Text (*Matn*) itself.

Ignaz Goldziher (d.1921) in his pioneering work *'Muhammedanische Studien',* applied the same method; however, on a wider scale and with much academic rigour. He argued that Ḥadīth does not- 'serve as a document for the history of the infancy of Islam, but rather a reflection of the tendencies which appeared in the community during the mature stages of its development.'[5]
Goldziher applied a rather sceptical approach in analysing Ḥadīth. The keys he used to identify the forgery in the Ḥadīth were the principles of analogy, anachronisms and the conflicts which emerged after the Prophet's death by the parties involved in such clashes. Factors as such challenged the words attributed to the Prophet Muhammad as being fake or genuine. Consequently, the contents of many Ḥadīth not only proved to be forged but also allowed the historian to determine who forged them and when exactly.[6] Goldziher's method of analysing Ḥadīth had a great impact on Western Ḥadīth Scholarship as his scepticism of Ḥadīth literature was taken up by Joseph Schacht (d.1969).

Schacht, in contrast to Goldziher who had mainly focused on the Ḥadīth which discussed politics and sectarian agendas, analysed the isnād of the legal Ḥadīth. Schacht argued that legal Ḥadīth did not represent the actual details of the Prophet's life. Rather, they were attributed by later schools of law to lend support to their doctrines. He further explained that the original study and elaboration of Islamic law developed in cities such as Kufa and Medina around the practice of the local community and the

[3] Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition, Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadith,* 71
[4] Brown, *Ḥadīth : Muhammad's legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 205
[5] Mustafa Shah, ed. *The Ḥadīth: Critical concepts in Islamic Studies*, (Routledge, 2010), 58
[6] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, (George Allan & Unwin Ltd. London,1971), 114

opinions of its senior religious figures, namely Abū Ḥanīfa (d.150/767), Mālik (d.179/796) and Layth b. Saᶜd (d.175/792). The Prophet's Sunna has not been an immediate revered source of law.

Debates amongst these scholars caused a great deal of contention because none of these schools of law possessed the evidence and arguments which the other schools of law found compelling enough to follow. Schacht thus, concludes that by the late eighth and early ninth centuries, Muslim scholars of these schools attempted to resolve this interpretive chaos by investing with more authority the legal precedent of the Prophet and his Companions. Schacht attributes this association with Shāfiᶜī (d.204/820) whose famous *Risāla* documented his campaign to identify the notion of authoritative precedent (*Sunna*) solely to Prophetic Ḥadīth.[7]

Interestingly, the movement away from the precedent of numerous authoritative figures such as the Companions and the Successors of the Prophet himself, manifested itself in the 'back growth of isnāds. Schacht argued that such books as Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'* included far more reports from later figures than from the Prophet himself.[8] The collections compiled after Shāfiᶜī such as The Six Books *(Kutub al-Sitta)* had their focus on Prophetic Ḥadīth .[9] These collections often included the reports attributed to the Prophet which the authors of the earlier Ḥadīth collections had attributed to the Companions or Successors.

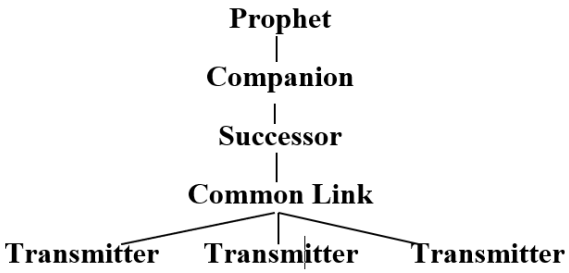
For example, a report in Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'* may be attributed to a Companion, while a generation later Shafiᶜi attributes the same report to the Prophet through a *mursal isnād*. There exists therefore, a gap between the Prophet and the Successor. Two generations later we find the same Ḥadīth in Bukhārī's collection of Ḥadīth with a complete isnād to the Prophet.[10] Schacht underlines that the Prophetic versions of these reports are clearly forged and fabricated after the compilation of Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'*, since if they had existed earlier, Mālik would have definitely included them in his work to overwhelm his adversaries in legal debates.[11]

Ultimately, according to Schacht, the development of law in the first centuries of Islam was a slow process of finding more and more compelling sources of authority for legal or doctrinal issues. Statements from Successors were the oldest and historically the most accurate ones. Since the major Sunni Ḥadīth collections consist almost entirely of reports from the Prophet, much of their material must have been circulated after Shāfiᶜī's time.[12] In short, Schacht concludes that the further back the isnād of a Ḥadīth goes, the more certain one can be of its forgery and the later date it has been done.[13]

So, how does one know who has been behind the back growth of an isnād and when a certain statement has been attributed to the Prophet? As for the study of legal Ḥadīth, Schacht has applied the theory of the Common Link (see figure 1). Schacht identifies that this report for several generations after the Prophet is transmitted up to a certain point by only one chain. After this transmitter who Schacht refers to as the 'Common Link', the Ḥadīth spreads out to more chains of transmission. With respect to the fact that the eighth century witnessed a process of isnāds growing backwards, it seems justified to assume that the said Common Link was responsible for the fake attribution of his isnād back to the Prophet. Everything before the Common Link is made up, which explains why the Ḥadīth only spreads out widely after him.[14]

[7] Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence,* (Oxford University Press, 1979), 13
[8] Ibid.157
[9] Ibid. 22
[10] Ibid.22
[11] Ibid.157
[12] Ibid.157
[13] Ibid.39
[14] Ibid.175

**Schacht's Common Link Theory (Figure 1)**




The Common Link here is responsible for circulating the Ḥadīth to his transmitters and according to Schacht, the chain from the Successor back to the Prophet is fake narration and just a fabrication.

Schacht's Common Link theory becomes very influential in Western Ḥadīth Scholarship. Gautier Juynboll (d.2010) a leading Ḥadīth scholar expounds Schacht's Common Link theory further, stating that:

> *'Surely it is unlikely that we will ever find even a moderately successful method of proving with incontrovertible certainty the historicity of the ascription of such to the Prophet but in a few isolated instances.'*[15]

He continues that many Companions were credited with -

> *'colossal numbers of obviously forged traditions that it is no longer feasible to conceive of a fool proof method to sift authentic from falsely ascribed material.'*[16]

Elaborating Schacht's theory, Juynboll underlines that:

> *"the more people transmit a Ḥadīth from a scholar the more historicity that moment has".*[17]

For instance, if a great number of people narrated a Ḥadīth from a transmitter, the attestation would be higher that the Ḥadīth actually existed at that point of time. Juynboll then comes to the conclusion that such cases prove the narrated Ḥadīth being forged at some earlier date.[18]

Furthermore, Juynboll asserts that if the Prophet did mention a certain Ḥadīth in the presence of his Companions who were considered to be his devout followers then why would the Prophet choose to convey his saying to one Companion and then why would this Companion choose only one Successor? Juynboll concludes that since it is inconceivable for a true Ḥadīth to be transmitted only through one isnād from the Prophet, the only possibility is the transmission of this Ḥadīth having occurred with a Common Link and anything before this Common Link being fabricated by the Link.[19]
The issue of the Common Link is an area broadly discussed and challenged by such scholars as Motzki, Azami, Sezgin and Abbot. The present paper, however, focuses more specifically on the narrations of

[15] Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship in Ḥadīth*, 71
[16] Ibid.

[17] Juynboll, *Some Isnād analytical methods illustrated on the basis of several women-demeaning sayings from Ḥadīth literature,* in *Studies on the usage on the Origins and Usage of Islamic Ḥadīth,* (Variorum Ashgate Publishing Limited Aldershot, Hampshire, 1996), 352
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.353

Abū Hurayra in the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik since this increase of the isnāds and the surge of Abū Hurayra's traditions discussed by Juynboll, occurred during the period of Zuhrī and Mālik. Working on the premise of his Common Link theory, Juynboll underlines that it was not Abū Hurayra who narrated excessively rather, the Common Links in the isnāds. He further states:

> *'The oldest isnāds featuring Abū Hurayra emerge in support of akhbār of which Zuhrī may ultimately be considered to be the chronicler. The oldest prolific Common Link who made use of strands ending in Abū Hurayra was probably Aᶜmash. His example was followed soon by most of the Common Links of his time and later. The veritable surge of Abū Hurayra supported traditions dates to the time of Mālik.'*[20]

Furthermore, Juynboll also emphasises that Abū Hurayra can in *'no way'* be held responsible for the traditions brought into circulation under his name.[21] According to Juynboll the surge of the narrations of Abū Hurayra stems mainly from Aᶜmash, Zuhrī and Mālik. Schacht also maintains that the fabrications of isnāds spread widely in the generation preceding Mālik.[22] The following isnād is an example:

***Mālik – Zuhrī - Ibn Musayyib - Abū Salama – Prophet***

This is *mursal* tradition, as the Companion between Abū Salama and the Prophet is omitted. There is another isnād which has the same chain but with Jābir as the Companion, which makes it complete. Also, in another chain Abū Hurayra is put in the place of Jābir.[23] According to Schacht this is the creation of an isnād which grows backwards and is considered as being fake and fabricated.[24]

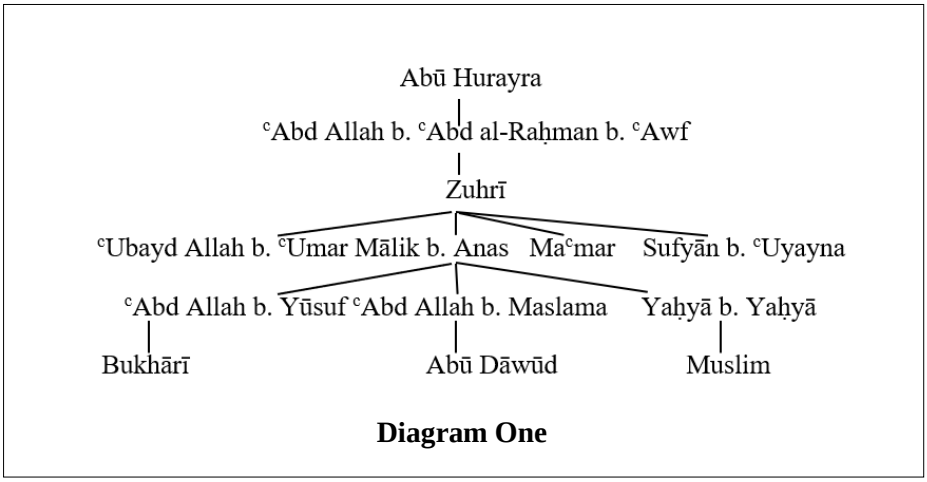



**Diagram One**

This isnād is an example of Mālik's transmission from Zuhrī which also leads to the main collections of Bukhārī's, Muslim's and Abū Dāwūd's Ḥadīth. According to Schacht and Juynboll the narration branches out from Zuhrī and then Mālik. This in fact, supports their Common Link theory and the idea that they are the circulators of this Ḥadīth.

According to Schacht; however, towards the end of the second century after hijra, Zuhrī had already been credited with many spurious and often contradictory opinions, and his name inserted in isnāds of traditions which did not yet exist in his time and from which fictitious statements on his supposed doctrine were abstracted. He appears as the Common Link in the isnāds of a number of traditions from the Prophet as well as the Successors for the greater part of which, Zuhrī himself was hardly

[20] Gautier Juynboll, *Encyclopaedia of canonical Ḥadīth*, (Brill, 2007), 45
[21] Ibid. 46
[22] Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*,163
[23] Ibid.166
[24] Ibid.166-170

responsible.[25] Conversely, Motzki points out that according to Schacht, these fictitious transmissions from Zuhrī are to be found in Shaybānī's recension of the *Muwatta*', in Shafiᶜi's treatises and in the *Mudawwana*.[26]

Motzki in his *'Analysing Muslim Traditions'* has delved in this discussion very deeply and has endeavoured to refute Schacht's thesis on Mālik and Zuhrī. Referring to the *Muwatta*', the reports Mālik has taken from Zuhrī are in total 21%. Zuhrī can therefore, be considered his main informant. Texts from the others such as Nāfiᶜ, Yaḥyā b. Saᶜid reach to 14%. Rabiᶜa b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim, Hishām b. ᶜUrwa and ᶜAbd Allah b. Abī Bakr's sources are around 4%. There is also a stock of anonymous traditions reaching to round about 18%. Hence, Motzki concludes that it is inconceivable and against any possible suspicion that Mālik would have forged his transmissions. If Mālik wanted to ascribe his transmissions to higher authorities then why would there be an irregular distribution?[27]

Motzki mentions that the Mālik – Zuhrī transmissions reach the total of 21%. What is then the specific percentage of the reports which emanate from Abū Hurayra in Mālik's *Muwatta'* from Zuhrī? The investigations imply that there are 267 transmissions from Mālik – Zuhrī in the *Muwatta*' and 28 transmissions specifically from this chain to Abū Hurayra, not a significant number according to Juynboll.

In diagram two, the blue area specifies the transmissions from Mālik via Zuhrī. Taking the number of transmissions from Mālik-Zuhrī till Abū Hurayra into consideration, one perceives that there is a significant reduction in this area which justifies Motzki's opinion. The third diagram illustrates more specifically the number of transmissions from other transmitters. This will give us a total of 267 transmissions from which the 28 in red are specifically transmissions from Abū Hurayra, presenting only nine percent of the transmissions which is a considerably small fraction.

**Transmissions from Mālik - Zuhrī in the *Muwatta'***

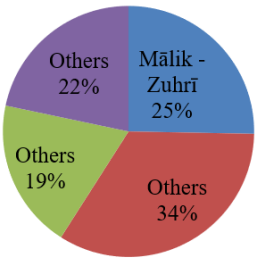



**Diagram Two**

**Transmissions of Mālik - Zuhrī from Abū Hurayra**

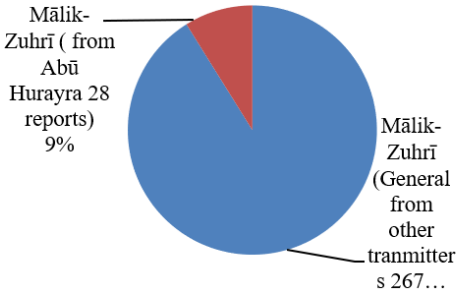



**Diagram Three**

[25] Ibid.246
[26] Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth,* (Brill, 2013)1
[27] Ibid.1

This discussion also leads us to investigate Abū Hurayra's reports in the *Muwatta'* which, specifically speaking, stem from Mālik and Zuhrī. As stated earlier, there are 28 reports of Abū Hurayra via the chain of Mālik and Zuhrī. As an example a report is examined here with respect to its chain of transmission and assessed to establish whether it has also concomitant transmissions.

Example: The first report:

***"Whoever finds a rakᶜa of the prayer has caught the prayer."***

Prophet

|

Abū Hurayra

|

Abū Salama b. ᶜAbd al-Rahman b. ᶜAwf

|

Zuhrī

|

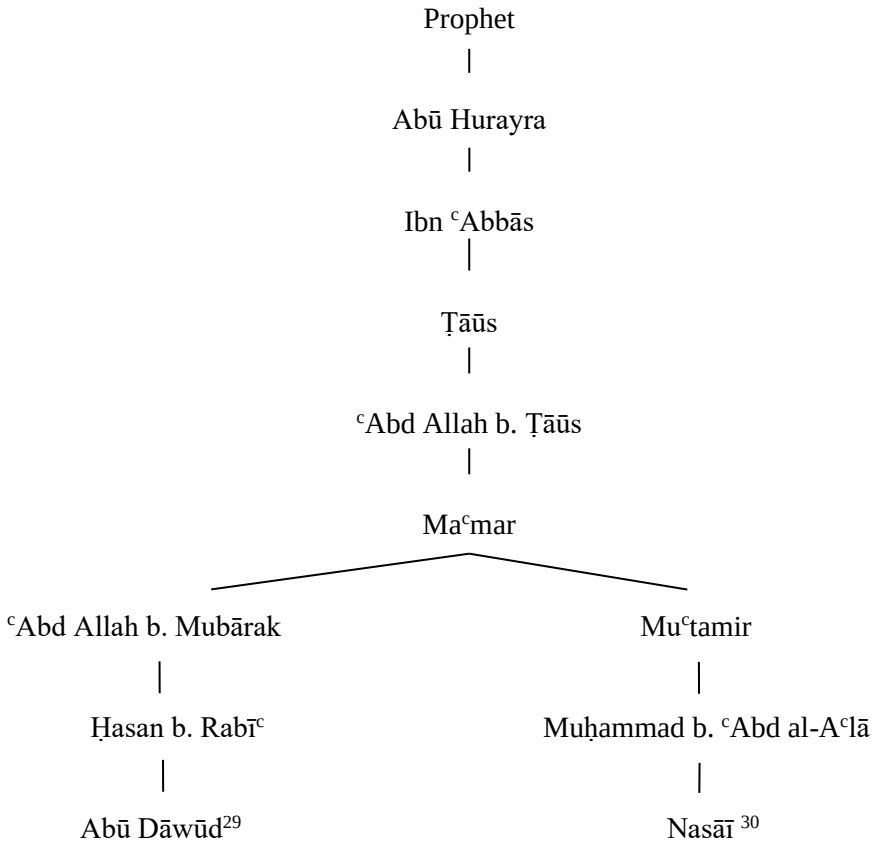
Mālik[28]

This is the report as it is found in Mālik's *Muwatta'*. It is also found in other chains from Abū Hurayra in other collections of Ḥadīth . For example, a further ten students have transmitted this report from Abū Hurayra:

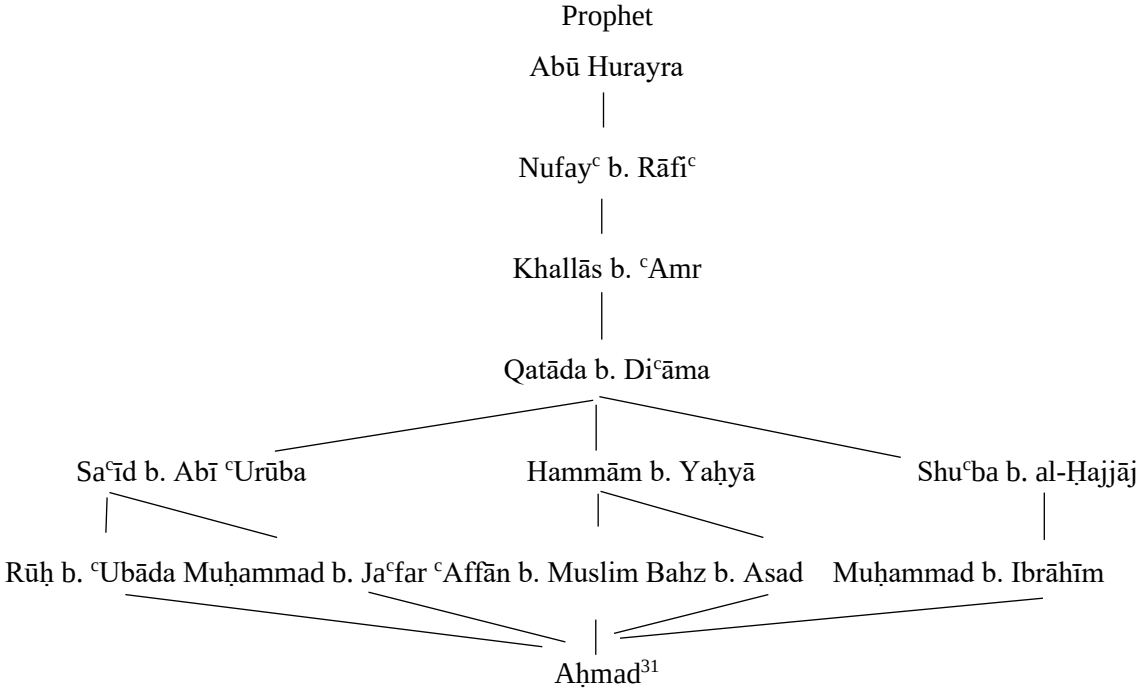
1. ᶜAbd Allah b. ᶜAbbās (Companion)
2. Nufayᶜ b. Rāfiᶜ
3. Bashīr b. Nahīk
4. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz
5. Zayd b. Abī ᶜAttāb
6. Kaysān
7. ᶜAṭā' b. Yasār
8. Busr b. Saᶜīd
9. Dhakwān
10. ᶜArrāk b. Mālik

[28] Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa*', (Dar al-Kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, Beirut, 2014) Ḥadīth no.233, 55

**1. Chain of ᶜAbd Allah b. ᶜAbbās**

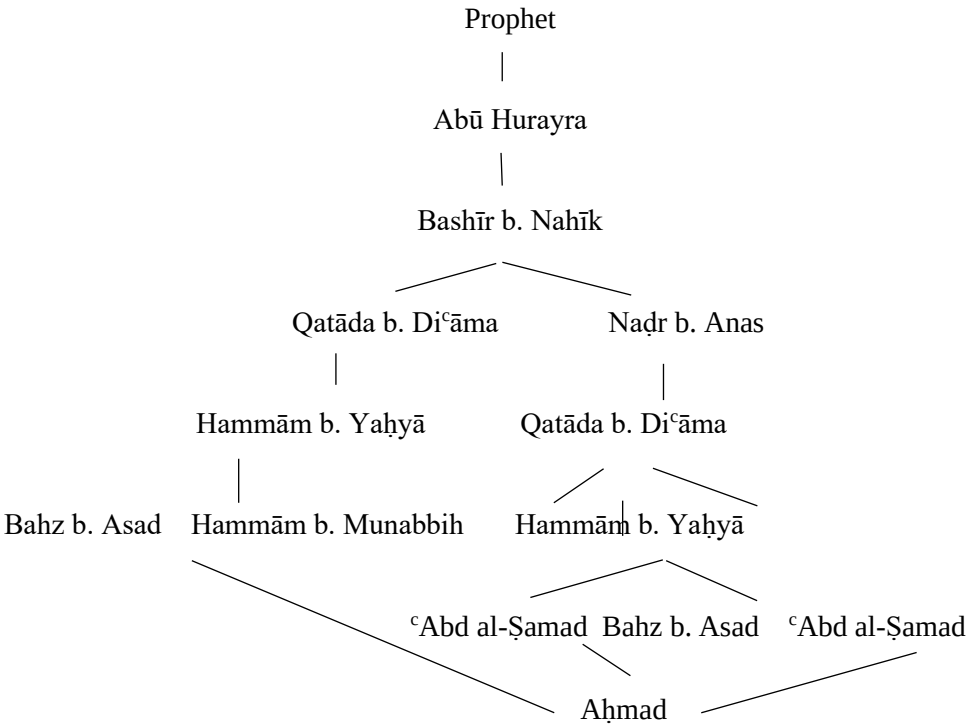



**2. Chain of Nufayᶜ b. Rāfiᶜ**

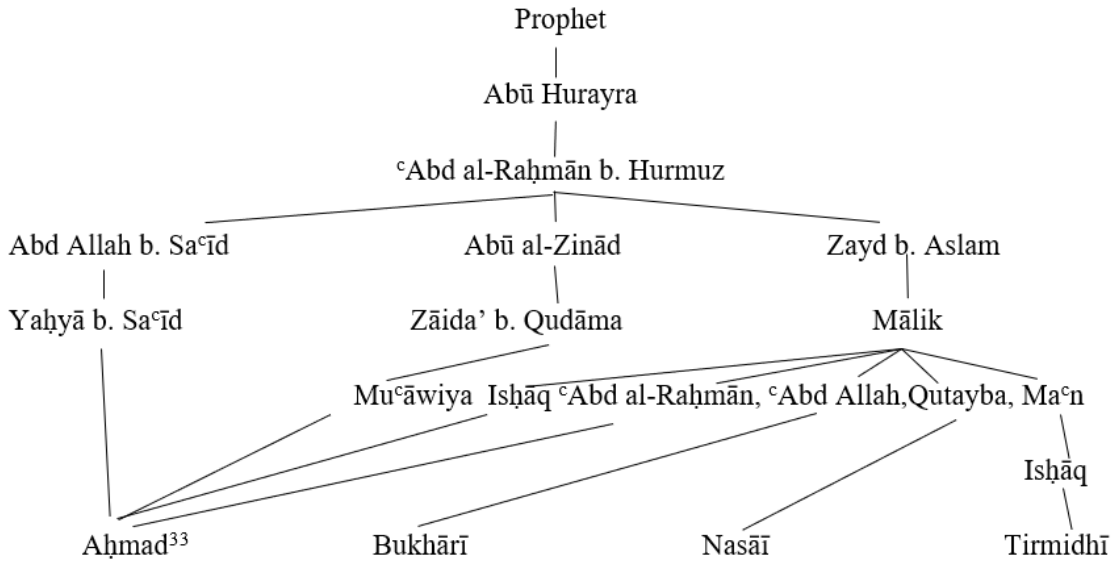



[29] Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ashᶜath al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, (Riyadh; Darus Salām Publishers,1999) Ḥadīth no. 1121, 168
[30] Aḥmad b. Shuᶜayb al-Nasāī, *Sunan*, (Riyadh, Dārus Salām Publishers, 1999), Ḥadīth no. 516, 71
[31] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, (Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 1995) Ḥadīth no.7282, 525

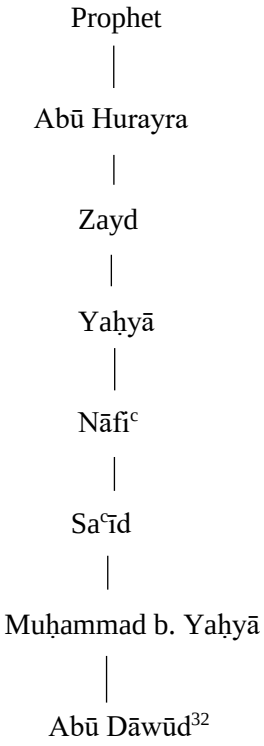
**3. Chain of Bashīr b. Nahīk**



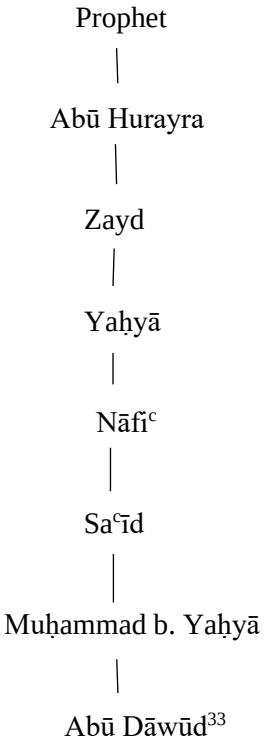

**4. Chain of ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz**



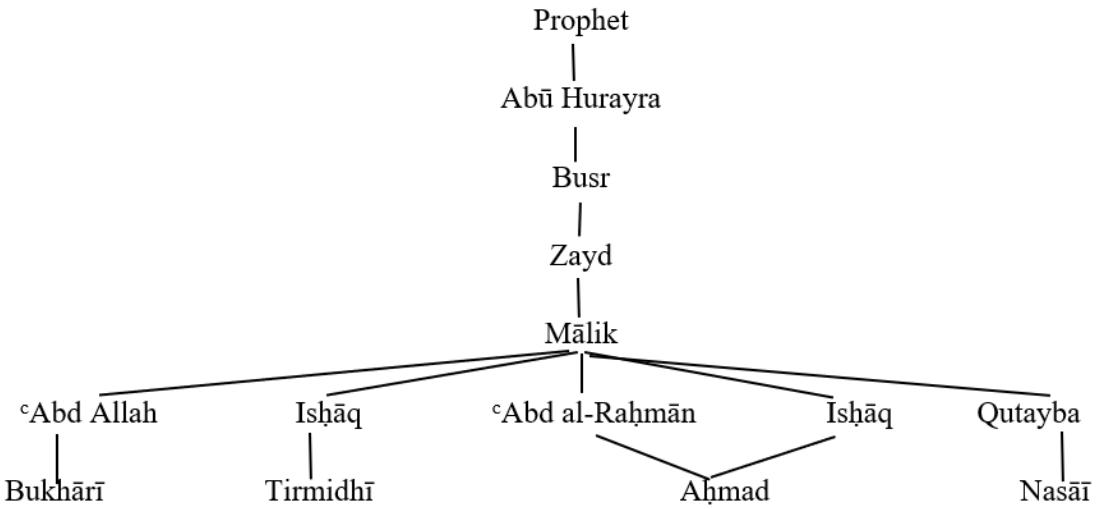
**5. Chain of Zayd b. Abī ᶜAttāb**




**6. Chain of Kaysān**




**8. Chain of Busr b. Saᶜīd**[34]




[32] Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, Ḥadīth no.1121, 168
[33] Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, Ḥadīth no. 1121, 168
[34] Aḥmad, *Musnad*, Ḥadīth no.7860, 570, Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiᶜ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ḥadīth no.580, 97, Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiᶜ*, Ḥadīth no.524, 138, Al-Nasāī, *Sunan*, Ḥadīth no. 516, 71

**9. Chain of Dhakwān**

Prophet
Abū Hurayra
Dhakwān
Suhayl
Shuᶜba
Hāshim b. al-Qāsim, Muḥammad b. Jaᶜfar
Aḥmad[35]

**10. Chain of ᶜArrāk b. Mālik**

Prophet
Abū Hurayra
ᶜArrāk
Yazīd
Muḥammad Isḥāq
Muḥammad b. Salama
Aḥmad[36]

## ANALYSIS OF THE CITED CHAINS

In the chain of Ibn ᶜAbbās, according to Juynboll, the main source or the Common Link is to be Maᶜmar b. Rāshid (153AH/770CE) as he is the main transmitter from whom the report sprouts. In the chain of Nufayᶜ and the chain of Bashīr b. Nahīk, Qatāda (118AH/737CE) is the Common Link. Chain number four is where Mālik is the Common Link but Aḥmad has also two different reports which he transmits from Yaḥyā b. Saᶜīd and Muᶜāwiya.

Chain five and six are single stranded reports which Abū Dāwūd transmits. Mālik is the Common Link for chain number seven and eight. Shuᶜba is the Common Link for chain nine and chain ten is a single stranded transmission from Aḥmad. Mālik as a transmitter is mentioned in chains four, seven and eight. However, Zuhrī's holds a non-existing role in these chains. According to Juynboll, this report in the *Muwaṭṭa'* with the concomitant chains are to be the work of the Common Links and hence, the handiworks of the Ḥadīth collectors attempting to attribute an isnād with different transmitters to the main source in order to strengthen the report.

It can however, be argued that although this report has concomitant chains and which can also be found in other Ḥadīth collections, it has been transmitted from other Companions with different chains of transmission as well. This report is transmitted from three Companions, Jubayr b. Muṭᶜim (d.59AH/681CE), Sahl b. Ḥanīf (d.38AH/659CE) and ᶜAbd Allah b. Zayd (d.63AH/685CE), as follows:

[35] Aḥmad, *Musnad*, Ḥadīth no.7860, 570
[36] Ibid.Ḥadīth no.7860, 570

| **1.Jubayr's chain:** | **2. Sahl's chain:** | **3. ᶜAbd Allah b. Zayd's chain:** |
|---|---|---|
| Prophet | Prophet | Prophet |
| Jubayr | Sahl | ᶜAbd Allah |
| Sulaymān | Asaᶜdᶜ | ᶜAbbād b. Tamīm |
| ᶜAmr | Muḥammad b. Sulaymān | ᶜAbd Allah |
| Zuhayr | Majmaᶜ b. Yaᶜqūb | Sufyān |
| Faḍl b. Dukayn | Qutayba | ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allah |
| Bukhārī[37] | Nasāī[38] | Bukhārī[39] |

The three reports referred to corroborate the report of Abū Hurayra. Thus, it can be established that Abū Hurayra's report is not exclusively his and has also been transmitted from other Companions. We can also notice that these three reports do not have Mālik or Zuhrī included in their chain of narration. Hence it is equally safe to establish that this surge of Abū Hurayra's reports is unsubstantiated and inconclusive.

## CONCLUSION

According to Juynboll, Abū Hurayra had no distinctive role in the transmission of these traditions and this was rather, as Juynboll notes, the job of the Common Links in the chain and sometimes even the handiwork of the Ḥadīth collectors. However, further surveys and investigation of the transmissions from Mālik and Zuhrī establishes their total transmissions as 21%. More specifically, the transmissions of Abū Hurayra especially within the *Muwatta'* of Mālik are considerably less than suggested by Juynboll. This prompted a detailed investigation of the total reports from Mālik via Zuhrī from Abū Hurayra.

In this article, to respect its length, just one example is provided and examined. However, further examinations established that there are 28 reports from this chain out of which 18 reports have concomitant isnāds and corroborative reports. The remaining 10 reports are Abū Hurayra's verdicts and solitary reports. Based upon this investigation, it is not surprising that the narrations of Abū Hurayra through this chain are low in number. This further undermines the opinion of Juynboll that Mālik and Zuhrī were the promulgators of the narrations of Abū Hurayra.

[37] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiᶜ al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* Ḥadīth no. 613, 640
[38] Al-Nasāī, *Sunan,* Ḥadīth no. 516, 71
[39] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiᶜ al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* Ḥadīth no.570, 532

The study of these reports in the *Muwatta'*, establishes the Common Link theory discussed by Juynboll in relation to Mālik via Zuhrī from Abū Hurayra as unsubstantiated since the said reports have other corroborations and concomitant chains of narration which Juynboll does not seem to have addressed. Thus, his Common Link theory in this regard remains inconclusive.

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