

An Analytical Study of the Tahqiq Methodology of ‘Abd Al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah in his Work Al-Raf‘u Wa Al-Takmil Fī Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta‘dil

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ABSTRACT

The intellectual heritage of Islam preserved in classical manuscripts demands meticulous preservation and authentication to remain both authentic and relevant. The process of tahqiq, as a scholarly approach to classical texts plays a vital role in ensuring the accuracy of religious and intellectual narratives within the Islamic tradition. This study focuses on analysing the tahqiq methodology applied by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah in his work al-Raf‘u wa al-Takmil fī al-Jarh wa al-Ta‘dil. Employing a qualitative approach, this research utilises content analysis based on library-based sources of the said text. The findings indicate that Abu Ghuddah’s methodology is holistic and meticulous. He conducted comprehensive takhrij of hadiths and quotations, corrected textual errors based on original sources and included brief biographies of narrators to assess their credibility. In addition, he provided critical commentary on technical terms and clarified difficult vocabulary to ensure textual clarity. Abu Ghuddah also structured the book modularly by dividing it into 25 iqad, included a detailed table of contents and added istidrak alongside a star-marking system as an academic navigation tool. The implications of this study are significant both theoretically and practically. It enriches the discourse on tahqiq methodology in classical hadith studies and offers a systematic framework that can serve as a reference for researchers, modern muhaqqiqs and postgraduate students in managing turath texts in an academic and ethical manner. This study also emphasises the importance of safeguarding scholarly disciplines in the digital age which is often exposed to unverified texts.

Keyword: Tahqiq, Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, al-Raf‘u Wa al-Takmil, Jarh wa al-Ta‘dil, Tahqiq Methodolog

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of Islamic intellectual heritage, classical manuscripts occupy a significant position in shaping the discourse and religious practices of the Muslim ummah. One of the essential efforts to preserve the authenticity and authority of these manuscripts is through the process of tahqiq, a meticulous editorial endeavour grounded in rigorous philological and scholarly methods. This process not only safeguards the originality of the text but also facilitates access to a reliable corpus of Islamic scholarship (Muslim, 2021). Tahqiq is defined as an academic undertaking aimed at tracing and critically editing manuscripts (al-makhtutat) with the objective of reproducing the text in a form that closely aligns with the author’s original intent (Muhammad ‘Abdullah Abu

Sa'ailaik, 1995). However, in practice, tahqiq goes beyond mere textual reproduction. Many muhaqqiqun include critical commentary and scholarly insights within the texts they edit. Within this context, Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah (d. 1417 AH) occupies a distinguished place as a scholar renowned for his unwavering commitment to the authentication of classical Islamic texts, particularly in the disciplines of hadith and rijal al-Hadith. Born in Aleppo, Syria, on 17 Rajab 1336 AH / 1917 CE, Abu Ghuddah passed away in 1997 (Shaikh Abdulfattah Abughudda, n.d.). He authored approximately 68 works, including 20 original titles and 48 critical editions of classical texts (Abu Ghuddah, 1997). One of his most monumental contributions is *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*, which not only offers essential insights into the science of narrator criticism but also exemplifies his methodological rigour in the practice of tahqiq (Fajrianti, 2018). His motivation to edit this work stemmed from the challenges he encountered in obtaining the original manuscripts, which were exceedingly rare and difficult to access. The book had previously been published twice: first during the lifetime of al-Laknawi in 1301 AH by Anwar Muhammadi Press in Lucknow, and again in 1309 AH by al-'Alawi Press, also in Lucknow comprising a total of 30 pages (al-Laknawi, 1987). Through perseverance, Abu Ghuddah eventually acquired both editions. The first came from Shaykh Abi al-Wafa' al-Afghani and the second while he was studying at al-Azhar University in Cairo (al-Laknawi, 1987). Another motivating factor was the bequest of his teacher, Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari who had urged him to revisit and critically study the works of al-Laknawi. Consequently, his edition was presented as a tribute to his esteemed teacher (al-Laknawi, 1987).

In the modern era, the mass reproduction of classical texts without sufficient scholarly verification has become a critical issue. This trend has led to misreadings of the text, flawed understanding of sanad (chains of narration) and even egregious errors in legal rulings. Hence, the need for a robust and meticulous tahqiq methodology has become increasingly urgent to ensure the academic validity and shari'ah reliability of classical Islamic texts (Yaakob & Shamsudin, 2019). *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil* stands out as a model of modern tahqiq grounded in classical tradition. It addresses the concept of jarh wa ta'dil (narrator criticism and accreditation), a critical subject within 'Ilm al-Hadith with a systematic and well-documented approach that includes sharp critique of unreliable sources. However, the tahqiq methodology employed by Abu Ghuddah in this work has yet to receive thorough academic scrutiny (Hamdani, 2024). Investigating his editorial approach is important for both practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, it helps researchers understand how to edit manuscripts with scholarly precision; theoretically, it lays a foundation for scientific engagement with hadith studies and 'ilm al-rijal. Moreover, Abu Ghuddah's methodology can serve as a reference point for contemporary scholars working with the Islamic intellectual legacy (turath) (Mustafa, 2011). The primary issue underpinning this study is the lack of attention to the methodological intricacies employed by contemporary muhaqqiqun. Many are preoccupied with the formal aspects of tahqiq while neglecting its substantive essence. Abu Ghuddah's editorial work needs to be analysed in order to reveal how he harmonised scholarly rigour, critical reasoning and reverence for the classical tradition (Mala, 2020). A major gap in the literature is the absence of a comprehensive systematic study of Abu Ghuddah's tahqiq methodology in *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil*. Most existing research tends to focus on the book's content rather than on the editorial techniques employed (Noor, 2017). In addition to methodological concerns, the challenges posed by the digital age also threaten the integrity of classical texts. Many tahqiq works circulated online often bypass academic verification processes. Examining Abu Ghuddah's methodology thus provides a deeper understanding of the editorial standards that should be upheld in the digital era (Yaakob, 2011). Accordingly, this article aims to critically and systematically examine the tahqiq methodology employed by 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah in *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil*. The scope of this study includes his approach to manuscript selection, annotation system, matn (text) verification and reference mapping. The expected benefits of this article are twofold: theoretically, it enriches the body of literature on tahqiq methodology in hadith studies; practically, it serves as a valuable guide for academics, postgraduate students and muhaqqiqun engaged in producing high-quality critical editions of classical texts.

Introduction to the Book *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* by Muhammad 'Abd al-Hayy al-Laknawi

This work is authored by Abu al-Hasanat Muhammad 'Abd al-Hayy ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn Amin Allah ibn Muhammad Akbar ibn Abi al-Rahim ibn Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn al-Shaykh al-Shahid Qutb al-Din al-Ansari al-Sahalawi al-Laknawi. Upon reaching puberty, he was given the honorific kunyah "Abu al-Hasanat" by his father (al-Laknawi, 1987). Al-Laknawi was a distinguished muhaddith (hadith scholar), jurist (faqih) and historian (al-Laknawi, 1994). He was born in the city of Banda, India, on

Tuesday, 26th Dhu al-Qa'dah 1264 AH (al-Laknawi, 1987). He began his education by memorizing the Qur'an at the age of five and by twelve had completed its memorization. His first teacher was al-Hafiz Qasim 'Ali al-Laknawi. However, before completing Juz' Amma, his family moved to Junpur where he continued his memorization under al-Hafiz Ibrahim (al-Laknawi, 1987). Alongside Qur'anic memorization, he also studied various disciplines under his father's supervision. The first texts his father introduced were in French including rhetoric and calligraphy (al-Laknawi, 1994). By the age of 17, al-Laknawi had mastered several disciplines including morphology (sarf), tafsir, hadith, 'ulum al-hadith, jurisprudence (fiqh), usul al-fiqh, grammar (nahw), semantics (ma'ani), rhetoric (bayan), logic (mantiq), philosophy, medicine, theology ('ilm al-kalam) and others. During his father's lifetime, he had not pursued mathematics but developed an interest after his father's passing. He learned mathematics from his uncle Muhammad Ni'matullah (d. Muharram 1290 AH in Benares) and also studied arithmetic with his father's student Muhammad Khadim Husayn al-Muzaffar. Al-Laknawi performed the hajj pilgrimage twice the first in 1279 AH and the second in 1292 AH after the death of his parents. During the pilgrimage, he took the opportunity to collect rare books and manuscripts that were not available elsewhere. Al-Laknawi passed away in Rabi' al-Awwal 1304 AH at the young age of 39 (al-Laknawi, 1994). Despite his short life, he authored over 110 works ranging from extensive volumes to concise treatises that addressed significant issues and provided solutions to various scholarly debates (Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 1996). As the title *Al-Raf'u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* suggests, the work is specifically dedicated to the discipline of al-jarh wa al-ta'dil (narrator criticism and validation). From the title alone, the thematic focus of the book becomes evident. In his introduction, al-Laknawi explains that he was motivated to write this work out of concern for a growing trend in his era, wherein many scholars and public figures engaged with hadith criticism texts authored by individuals lacking proper mastery of the discipline. This phenomenon stemmed from their limited understanding of the principles and methodology of jarh wa ta'dil, leading to flawed assessments of isnads. Some would unjustly criticise sound chains of narration while others would validate weak ones (al-Laknawi, 1987).

This misjudgment arose from overreliance on popular rijal references such as *Tahdhib al-Kamal* by al-Mizzi, *Mizan al-I'tidal* by al-Dhahabi, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, *Taqrib al-Tahdhib*, *al-Mughni* and *al-Kamil* by Ibn 'Adi without grasping the technical terminology or understanding the nuances of general versus detailed criticism, nor distinguishing between accepted and rejected evaluations. Moreover, these individuals failed to assess the credibility and authority of the scholars they quoted. Before being critically edited, the book had been published twice in India. The first edition appeared in 1301 AH by Anwar Muhammadi Press in Lucknow during al-Laknawi's lifetime. It was printed as an appendix to *Mizan al-I'tidal* by al-Dhahabi in separate pages and in two volumes. The second edition was published after his death by al-'Alawi Press, also in Lucknow, in 1309 AH. Both editions consisted of merely 30 pages (al-Laknawi, 1987) and were used as references by Abu Ghuddah in his later tahqiq. These early editions were nearly extinct, making Abu Ghuddah's efforts particularly valuable. His editorial work revived a nearly lost classical text. Following his tahqiq, the book was republished three times: first in Aleppo (1383 AH / 1963 CE), then in Beirut (1388 AH / 1968 CE) and a third edition again in Beirut (1407 AH / 1987 CE), ten years prior to his passing. The third edition included significant additions and notes that enhanced the previous versions. Abu Ghuddah's scholarly diligence is highly commendable. Originally comprising only 30 pages, the book expanded substantially with his intervention: the first edition of his tahqiq reached 272 pages, the second edition 400 pages (al-Muhasibi, 1999) and the third edition 564 pages. This expansion reflects the depth of his annotations, critical commentary and clarifications. As a result, readers cannot rely solely on the original text without consulting Abu Ghuddah's ta'liq and critical apparatus which are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the work's content.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach through the method of library research. The research design adopted is content analysis of the book *Al-Raf'u wa al-Takmil*. Secondary sources used in this study include books, journal articles, magazines, conference papers, as well as other relevant materials such as master's dissertations and doctoral theses. The primary focus of the study is the book *Al-Raf'u wa al-Takmil* authored by al-Laknawi and critically edited (tahqiq) by Abu Ghuddah. This book encompasses various aspects of the science of jarh wa ta'dil and it is selected with the specific aim of examining the tahqiq methodology applied by Abu Ghuddah in producing a critical edition of this classical work.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this study derived from the book *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* are presented in Figure 1 below:

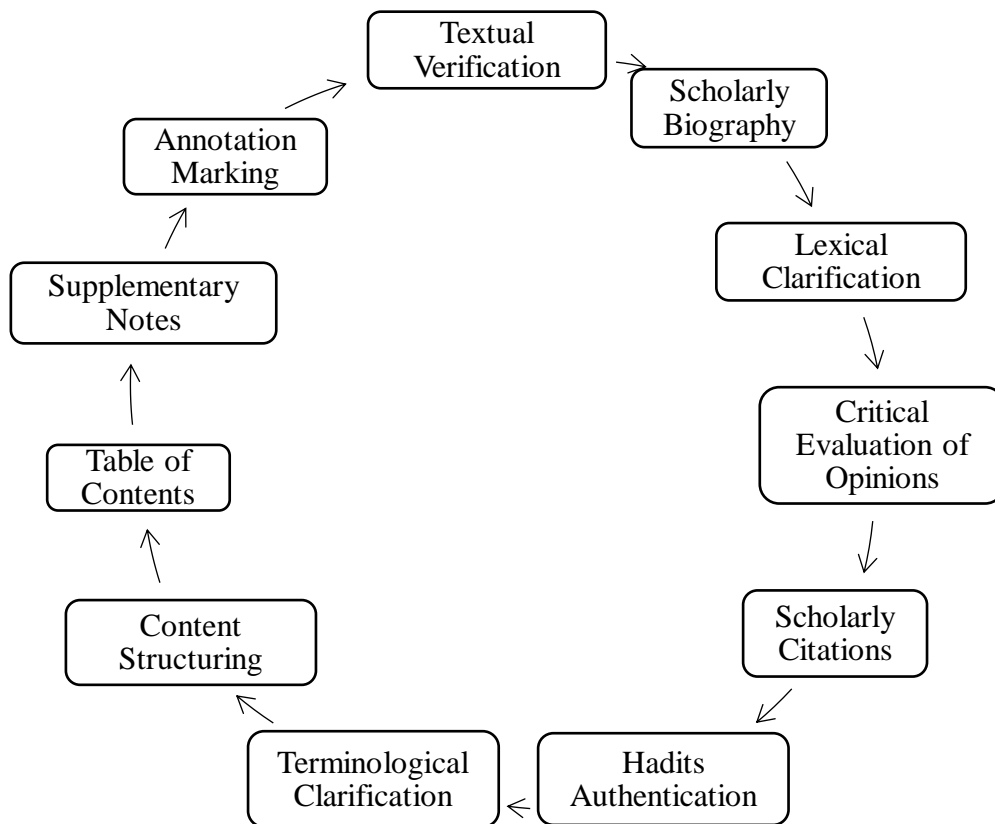


Figure 1: Abu Ghuddah's Method of Tahqiq in the Book *Al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*

DISCUSSION

Each scholar employs a distinct methodology in composing or editing their works and the same is true for Abu Ghuddah. In the prefaces to several of his authored and edited works, Abu Ghuddah frequently outlines his motivation for undertaking a particular tahqiq the foundational sources he relied upon, as well as the methodological framework he adopted in the editing process. This pattern is also evident in his edition of *al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil*. Although Abu Ghuddah does not explicitly articulate a detailed methodology in this work, his introductory remarks provide a general overview of the principles and editorial procedures he applied. Through a close reading of his muqaddimah (introduction), it is possible to extract and infer several key elements of his tahqiq methodology. These include his approach to manuscript selection, verification of textual integrity, critical annotation, takhrij al-hadith, biographical clarifications and commentary tagging among others. The following section outlines several major methodological components adopted by Abu Ghuddah in his critical edition of *al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* derived through textual analysis of his editorial introduction and footnotes.

Verification (Takhrij) of Texts Compiled by al-Laknawi

One of Abu Ghuddah's key editorial practices in *al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* is his rigorous takhrij the verification of textual sources compiled by al-Laknawi. Through the analysis of manuscript content, he established clear methodological references in the science of al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil. Each text cited by al-Laknawi was carefully traced back to its original source to verify its accuracy and correct any textual discrepancies. For instance, al-Laknawi had quoted the phrase: بِشَيْءٍ لَا يَسْقُطُ بِهِ عَنِ الْعَدَالَةِ (with something that does not invalidate one's reliability), whereas Abu Ghuddah found in the original source the phrase: بِشَيْءٍ يَسْقُطُ بِهِ عَنِ الْعَدَالَةِ (with something that invalidates one's reliability). To confirm the authenticity of the correct wording,

he consulted al-Kifayah by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (al-Khathib al-Baghdadi, 1374). This approach underscores Abu Ghuddah's firm commitment to methodological precision in takhrij and hadith verification. In 'ilm al-hadith, takhrij is not limited to identifying textual sources; it also entails evaluating the context, the narrators and the grading of the hadith through primary sources such as the Kutub al-Tis'ah and the major biographical dictionaries (kutub al-rijal) (Mohd Sobri Elias et al., 2025). The difference between the two expressions لَا يُسْقِطُ بِهِ عَنِ الْعَدَالَةِ (does not nullify reliability) and يُسْقِطُ بِهِ عَنِ الْعَدَالَةِ (nullifies reliability) has profound implications for assessing the status of a narrator. In the science of al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil such a variation may lead to a change in ruling from maqbul (acceptable) to mardud (rejected), in line with the principle al-jarh al-mufassal muqaddam 'ala al-ta'dil (detailed criticism takes precedence over general commendation) (al-Suyuti, 1993). Abu Ghuddah's verification effort, therefore was not merely about correcting textual phrasing but about preserving the integrity of transmission chains (isnad) and the validity of legal-hadith reasoning (fiqh al-hadith). Furthermore, his reference to al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (1986) illustrates his adherence to classical hadith principles that emphasise precision (dabt) and narrator integrity ('adalah) as foundational to valid narration. Abu Ghuddah also consistently applied the principle of al-ihyat fi al-naql (caution in transmission), as articulated by Ibn al-Salah (2002) and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (1997) particularly in managing authentic textual transmission (Khatib al-Baghdadi, 2023). His careful verification of key phrases aligns with best practices in tashih al-nusakh (collation and correction of variant manuscripts) and the comparative analysis of makhtutat (manuscripts) which is essential for maintaining scholarly reliability in hadith literature. In contrast to Abu Ghuddah's approach which emphasizes the precision of wording and direct cross-referencing to original sources, Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut in his critical edition of Musnad Ahmad introduced a more comprehensive codification system of takhrij (hadith referencing) (al-Arna'ut, 2001). This approach involves providing cross-references to various primary hadith sources within a single, structured commentary, accompanied by a detailed classification of the chains of transmission (isnad). Through this method, the takhrij process becomes more holistic, systematic and user-oriented thereby facilitating readers in assessing the strength and authenticity of a given hadith (Muzakky & Mundzir, 2022).

Brief Biographical Notes and Rijal Criticism of Scholars Mentioned in the Text

Abu Ghuddah also incorporated concise biographical notes and critical evaluations (naqd al-rijal) of the scholars referenced in al-Raf'u wa al-Takmil. These biographies were typically brief and presented in footnotes for example, on figures such as Imam al-Nawawi, al-'Abbas ibn al-Fadl and others. Though succinct, these entries go beyond mere historical background providing assessments of the narrators' credibility ('adalah) and reliability in hadith transmission. In the tradition of 'ilm al-rijal (biographical evaluation), information such as the date of death, teachers and students, geographical influence and commentary by earlier scholars is critical in assessing the strength of an isnad and the grading of a narration. Thus, despite their brevity the biographical notes provided by Abu Ghuddah in the footnotes are highly significant. They reflect the narrator's status in terms of jarh (criticism) and ta'dil (commendation) a fundamental component in determining the authenticity or inauthenticity of a hadith (Quran Talk Blog, 2024; Daud Rasyid Harun et al., 2021). For instance, in his note on Imam al-Nawawi (al-Laknawi, 1987), although al-Nawawi does not appear as a direct transmitter in major isnad chains, his authority in 'ulum al-hadith lends significant weight to his opinions when evaluating the strength of a narration. Likewise, figures such as al-'Abbas ibn al-Fadl (al-Laknawi, 1987), though less known to modern students were still assessed by Abu Ghuddah based on classical rijal sources such as Tahdhib al-Kamal by al-Mizzi (1992), al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil by Ibn Abi Hatim (1984) and Tahdhib al-Tahdhib by Ibn Hajar (1997). This method demonstrates Abu Ghuddah's awareness that the textual integrity of a hadith is inseparable from the moral and intellectual integrity of its narrators. This is consistent with the maxim of Ibn al-Salah: "The soundness of a sanad depends on the narrator's uprightness ('adalah), accuracy of memory (dabt), continuity of transmission (ittisal) and absence of irregularities (shudhudh) and hidden defects ('illah)" (Ibn al-Salah, 2002). Hence, these concise biographies are not merely supplementary information but constitute an integral part of the sanad and matn evaluation process which is critical in scholarly tahqiq. In contrast to other scholars, Ibn Hajar in his work Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, not only compiled the biographies of hadith transmitters, but also systematically arranged their names according to paternal lineage thereby facilitating easier information retrieval. Moreover, he included diverse and often conflicting evaluations from 'ilm al-rijal scholars regarding the status of the transmitters. This approach provides researchers and readers the opportunity to undertake the process of tarjih selecting the most authoritative opinion based on sound reasoning (Aris & Muslim, 2018).

Clarification of Ambiguous Terminology

Another key feature of Abu Ghuddah's editorial methodology is his clarification of words or expressions that may appear ambiguous or obscure in meaning. A clear example of this is his explanation of the phrase **لَيْنٌ لَا يَكُونُ سَاقِطًا مَتْرُوكَ الْإِعْتِبَارِ** (soft in criticism, but not considered completely discredited or dismissed). He elaborates that a narrator assessed in such terms may still be considered acceptable as a supporting narrator (*tabi'* or *shahid*), even if not reliable enough to serve as a principal source (al-Laknawi, 1987). Such clarification is highly important in the field of *jarh wa ta'dil*, as it enables readers to more accurately understand the precise evaluative level of a narrator. Terms such as *layyin* (soft or mildly weak in memorization), *saqit* (dropped from reliable transmission), and *matruk al-i'tibar* (abandoned and disregarded) have direct implications for the usability of the hadith in question. In this context, when a narrator is classified as *layyin al-hifz* (weak in retention) but not *saqit*, then the hadith he transmits cannot be used as an independent legal proof. However, it may still be utilised as corroborative evidence (*mutaba'ah* or *shahid*) for a stronger narration (Hartati et al., 2025; Muhammad Mushfique bin Ahmad Ayub, 2019). This aligns with the principle stated by al-Suyuti in *Tadrib al-Rawi*, where he notes: "A hadith narrated by a weak narrator who is not completely abandoned (*matruk*) may be accepted as a supporting narration (*mutabi'* or *shahid*), though not as an independent proof" (al-Suyuti, 1993). This demonstrates that Abu Ghuddah's efforts were not limited to transmitting the correct lexical meanings of technical terms, but also extended to conducting *tarjih* (preference between conflicting views) and *tahlil* (conceptual analysis) of the terminology, which often causes confusion especially among students or readers unfamiliar with the nuanced lexicon of 'ilm al-rijal. More significantly, his approach reflects a *taqrib 'ilm al-hadith ila al-afham* a pedagogical orientation that seeks to bring the science of hadith closer to public understanding without compromising scholarly rigour. This represents a vital contribution to modern *tahqiq* efforts, as it goes beyond the reproduction of classical texts. It involves active interpretation and structured explanation aligned with the principles of 'ilm al-hadith, ultimately making these works more accessible and academically usable in the contemporary era. Abu Ghuddah's approach of elucidating difficult terms found in hadith texts aligns with the classical methodology employed by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his work *al-Kifayah*, which involves providing literal meanings along with references to primary sources. However, this method differs from that applied by Mahmud al-Tahhan in *Usul al-Takhrij*, where terminological explanations are offered based on considerations of *maqasid* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and contemporary *ijtihad*. This indicates that al-Tahhan places greater emphasis on modern contextualisation in interpreting hadith terminology (Tahhan, 2004).

Critique of al-Laknawi's Terminological Judgments

Abu Ghuddah also engages critically with certain terminological choices made by al-Laknawi in his text. One notable example is al-Laknawi's statement that a hadith is "not authentic" (*la yasih*) without clarifying whether the hadith is weak (*da'if*) or fabricated (*mawdu'*). According to Abu Ghuddah, terms like *la yasih* or *la yathbut* must be used with caution. When used in the context of *ahkam* (legal rulings), *la yasih* implies that the hadith cannot be employed as legal evidence (*hujjah*). However, in the context of *al-mawdu'at* (fabricated traditions), it indicates that the hadith is entirely spurious (al-Laknawi, 1987). Abu Ghuddah's emphasis here is of particular significance, as hadith classification terminology such as *sahih*, *da'if*, *mawdu'*, *la yasih*, and *la yathbut* carries distinct legal and scholarly implications depending on the context in which they are used (Abdul Kamil, 2024; Mohd Nor Adzhar Ibrahim et al., 2024). As Ibn al-Salah explains, the phrase *la yasih* can encompass two meanings: (1) the hadith does not meet the rigorous conditions of authenticity as established by al-Bukhari and Muslim, or (2) more generally, it refers to a hadith that is not legally acceptable as evidence, although it is not necessarily fabricated (Ibn al-Salah, 2002). Therefore, the unqualified use of such terms may lead to serious misinterpretation. In this regard, Abu Ghuddah's critique reflects a deep sensitivity to terminological precision within the 'ulum al-hadith framework, which is essential for accurate legal and theological classification of narrations (Abdul Kamil, 2024; Mohd Nor Adzhar Ibrahim et al., 2024). For instance, in legal hadith compilations such as *Bulugh al-Maram* or *al-Muntaqa* by al-Shawkani (n.d.), the term *la yasih* is often used to indicate that the narration does not fulfil the conditions necessary for use in jurisprudential reasoning. Conversely, in hadith works focusing on fabrications such as those by Ibn al-Jawzi (1995) or al-Suyuti (1993), the same phrase implies the hadith is entirely forged and should not be attributed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Nik Suhaili et al., 2022). Abu Ghuddah strongly asserts that the failure to distinguish between these contextual uses may mislead readers and undermine the integrity of hadith evaluation. His critical remarks thus constitute

a form of *tanqih istilahi* (terminological refinement), which is essential in scholarly *tahqiq* work. This example illustrates his high level of terminological awareness and his commitment to upholding analytical precision in evaluating al-Laknawi's text. Abu Ghuddah conducted textual and content criticism with decorum and scholarly etiquette, however his approach tended to lean towards *ta'dil*, offering favourable assessments of the figures under critique. In contrast, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (1986), in his seminal work *al-Kifayah*, placed greater emphasis on the *takhrij* of scholarly transmission chains (*sanad*) as a fundamental basis for evaluating the integrity and authority of hadith scholars. In this regard, Abu Ghuddah focused more on the textual content presented by al-Laknawi without engaging deeply with the strength of the arguments from the perspective of the *sanad* or the continuity of scholarly authority. This indicates that his priority was on conveying the textual substance rather than critically analysing the legitimacy of the epistemic chain underpinning the argumentative narrative (Wasman et al., 2023).

Abu Ghuddah's Reliance on Scholarly Opinions in His Commentary

Abu Ghuddah frequently cited the views of renowned scholars when composing his critical annotations, particularly those who were experts in the science of *rijal*. He also engaged in *tarjih* (weighing of opinions) favouring the views he deemed most accurate and methodologically sound. A clear example of this can be seen in his treatment of the issue of *majhul al-'ayn* (al-Laknawi, 1987). Abu Ghuddah's approach reflects a fundamental principle in the disciplines of *tahqiq* and *tarjih*: the necessity of consulting authoritative *rijal* scholars and critically evaluating their differing positions. The category of *majhul al-'ayn* refers to a narrator whose identity is known only through a single teacher and a single student with no further corroborating information. The acceptance or rejection of such narrators has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Scholars such as Ibn al-Salah (2002) and al-Nawawi (2003) generally consider narrators of this type to be unreliable unless supported by corroborative evidence (*qara'in*) that elevate their narration to the level of *Hasan li-ghayrih*. However, other scholars such as Ibn Hibban, sometimes accept their narrations in the absence of any apparent *'illah* (hidden defect) (Marjan Asi, 2023). In this matter, Abu Ghuddah carefully supports the more cautious stance, preferring to reject hadiths narrated by *majhul al-'ayn* unless clearly supported by strong corroborative evidence. His rationale prioritizes the preservation of the authenticity of *isnad* chains and the overall integrity of the hadith tradition. In his commentary, Abu Ghuddah does not merely cite the opinions of classical scholars such as al-Dhahabi, Ibn Hajar and al-Mizzi he also compares their arguments and assesses their strengths. This approach is aligned with the critical methodology of *naqd al-rijal* (evaluation of narrators), which requires a nuanced understanding of terms such as *majhul al-hal*, *mastur* and *la yu'raf*. As al-Khatib al-Baghdadi emphasised: "It is not permissible to transmit hadith from a narrator whose condition is unknown unless their characteristics and honesty have been reliably established" (al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, 1986). Abu Ghuddah also demonstrated a high level of discernment in filtering out lenient or overly permissive opinions, consistently giving precedence to more rigorous and academically sound positions. This is significant because the role of a *muhaqqiq* is not merely to reproduce or compile texts but to critically evaluate, verify and reinforce scholarly accuracy in hadith transmission. His methodological caution in engaging with contentious biographical cases illustrates his broader commitment to upholding the epistemological integrity of Islamic scholarship. Not only Abu Ghuddah, but also Ibn Hajar in his renowned work *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, frequently included multiple and sometimes conflicting opinions of *'ilm al-rijal* scholars followed by a process of *tarjih* (weighing and selecting the stronger opinion) based on critical and analytical reasoning (Yabi, 2020). In contrast, Abu Ghuddah tended to cite the views of earlier scholars without providing extensive commentary or explicitly favouring one opinion over another (Fadzir & Abdullah, 2020). Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut on the other hand, adopted a more systematic approach in his criticism offering detailed commentary on the views of hadith scholars, including evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of each narration based on both *sanad* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (content) analysis. This made Arna'ut's commentary highly critical and valuable in comprehensively assessing the authenticity of hadith narrations (Arna'ut, 1996). Such a critical approach is essential in hadith studies, particularly in evaluating the authenticity of narrations transmitted by scholars such as Ibn Hajar and Arna'ut (Aris & Muslim, 2020).

Hadith Authentication (Takhrij al-Hadith) within the Edited Text

One of the most critical aspects of Abu Ghuddah's *tahqiq* methodology is his systematic practice of *takhrij al-hadith* the authentication and tracing of prophetic traditions mentioned in the original text. *Takhrij* is a

fundamental process in scholarly editing as it involves locating the original sources of the hadiths, determining the status of the isnad (chain of transmission) and evaluating the authenticity of the narration in accordance with the established principles of hadith scholarship. In his tahqiq works, Abu Ghuddah consistently carried out takhrij of hadiths cited in the base text referencing primary sources such as the Kutub al-Tis'ah (the nine canonical hadith collections) as well as other authoritative compilations like Musnad Ahmad, al-Sunan al-Kubra, and al-Mustadrak (Mohd Sobri Ellias et al., 2025). His takhrij process went beyond simple source identification. It included comprehensive analysis of both the isnad and the matn (text) of each hadith. Abu Ghuddah would verify the narrators found within the chain of transmission using major 'ilm al-rijal references such as Tahdhib al-Kamal by al-Mizzi (1992) and Taqrib al-Tahdhib by Ibn Hajar (2004). If there were differing evaluations of a particular hadith among earlier scholars, he would document these differences in the footnotes and provide a reasoned tarjih (preference) for the view he deemed most reliable. This demonstrates his critical and non-partisan approach to hadith analysis (Mohd Sobri Ellias et al., 2025). For example, when al-Laknawi mentions a hadith without identifying its narrator, Abu Ghuddah would trace the narration through various sources to confirm its precise wording, identify the transmitter and evaluate the hadith's rank whether sahih (authentic), hasan (good), da'if (weak), or mawdu' (fabricated). Where necessary, he would also highlight any textual or isnad based flaws ('ilal), such as a broken chain, a weak narrator or a meaning that contradicted established Shariah principles. This approach is in line with the guideline articulated by al-Suyuti in Tadrib al-Rawi, who stated: "Takhrij is not merely the citation of sources, but also includes the explanation of the isnad's condition, the grading of the hadith and the scholars' evaluation thereof" (al-Suyuti, 1993). Thus, Abu Ghuddah's work goes beyond verification he reinforces the scholarly reliability of the text through critical engagement, systematic analysis and deep reference to the authoritative legacy of hadith scholarship. Abu Ghuddah conducted the process of takhrij by focusing on the precision of wording and direct referencing to original hadith sources, consistent with the traditional approach that emphasizes textual authenticity and philological accuracy. However, Mahmud al-Tahhan, in his work Usul al-Takhrij introduced a more modern and user-friendly approach particularly suited to contemporary students and researchers. He underscored the importance of utilizing digital indexes and hadith database support systems to identify complete and comprehensive transmission chains. This method not only accelerates the research process but also enhances the efficiency and accuracy in the analysis of isnad and source transmissions (Tahhan, 2004).

Clarification of Difficult Vocabulary to Enhance Reader Comprehension

In the field of tahqiq, the clarification of difficult or obscure vocabulary commonly referred to as gharib al-hadith is a crucial component that reflects the editor's sensitivity to the needs of readers, particularly when dealing with texts dense in technical terminology or classical expressions rarely used today. Abu Ghuddah frequently offered explanations for such terms, either through footnotes or parenthetical insertions within the text in order to help readers grasp the author's intended meaning with greater accuracy and avoid misinterpretation (Rabie Ibrahim Mohamed Hassan et al., 2024). For example, terms such as al-mastur (unknown in status), al-majruh (criticised narrator), al-maqbul (acceptable) or al-matruk (abandoned) are all part of the specialised lexicon of jarh wa ta'dil. Abu Ghuddah provided brief definitions of such terms based on the authoritative writings of classical rijal scholars. Moreover, for classical Arabic words with multiple meanings depending on context he offered interpretive explanations (ta'wil) consistent with the methodology of hadith specialists and Arabic linguists. This practice aligns with the scholarly tradition established by figures such as al-Khattabi (1975) and Ibn Qutaybah (2006), who compiled difficult terms in works like Gharib al-Hadith to assist Muslims in understanding prophetic narrations correctly. Clarifying complex vocabulary also helps prevent semantic distortion (tahrif al-ma'na), especially among readers unfamiliar with the compact and layered structure of classical Arabic which often requires detailed explanation (mujmal expressions). Thus, Abu Ghuddah's effort not only facilitates understanding for modern readers, but also preserves the authenticity of the original text within the intellectual framework of the Islamic tradition. His methodology exemplifies tafsir lughawi (linguistic interpretation) or al-sharh al-lafzi (lexical commentary), consistent with Ibn al-Salah's assertion that "understanding the difficult wording in a hadith is one of the necessary prerequisites before one can evaluate its authenticity" (Ibn al-Salah, 2002). Indeed, renowned muhaqqiqun such as Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut (2000) have employed similar approaches in explaining terminology in their critical editions. Abu Ghuddah's explanation of vocabulary in his critical editions typically relied on classical Arabic lexicons such as Lisan al-'Arab and al-Qamus al-Muhit, aiming to preserve the original meanings of words based on traditional linguistic usage. However, Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut adopted a

more contextualised method, he not only provided lexical definitions but also included analogies and explanations grounded in the context of the hadith matn itself. This approach aids readers in grasping the appropriateness of a given term within the overall semantic structure of the hadith and in assessing whether the meaning aligns with the intended message of the text (Arna'ut, 2000).

Division of the Book into 25 Iqad (Scholarly Reflections)

One of the distinctive structural features of al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil is its division into 25 sections known as iqad (sing. iqad), which may be translated as "scholarly reflections" or "academic admonitions." Each iqad contains focused sub-discussions that will be elaborated further in the subsequent section titled "Content and Structure of al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil." The use of iqad reflects a highly structured and thematic approach to scholarly writing guiding the reader through the complexities of 'ilm al-rijal in a gradual and pedagogically sound manner. The term iqad, which denotes an "intellectual alert" or "didactic reminder" is not equivalent to an ordinary chapter heading. Rather, it was intentionally employed by al-Laknawi to direct the reader's attention to key issues within the science of jarh wa ta'dil. Abu Ghuddah, in his tahqiq, preserved this original structure, recognizing its importance in maintaining the coherence of the author's thought and facilitating thematic navigation of the text. Each iqad addresses a critical topic in 'ilm al-rijal, such as the criteria for narrator reliability ('adalah), types of jarh classifications of majhul narrators, the distinction between terms like la yu'raf and mastur and discussions on the methodologies used by hadith scholars to evaluate narrations. Through this division, the work transcends being a mere compilation of scholarly opinions and is transformed into a pedagogical text suitable for systematic teaching and learning in the field of 'ulum al-hadith. In the preface to his tahqiq, Abu Ghuddah remarked that the use of the iqad format is relatively unique and not widely employed by other scholars, rendering this book a significant contribution that combines classical scholarly discipline with thematic and logical arrangement. This method reflects continuity with the traditional Islamic scholarly writing style which is structured and thematically oriented similar to the works of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (1986) in al-Kifayah and al-Sakhawi (1996) in Fath al-Mughith. The iqad format also grants the book a modular quality, each section may be read as a stand-alone unit while remaining thematically linked to the overall structure. This modularity enhances the pedagogical value of the text making it suitable for both formal instruction and individual advanced study. Abu Ghuddah's method of content division known as iqad, bears resemblance to the systematic approach employed by earlier scholars such as Ibn al-Salah and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, who also structured their chapters into distinct thematic units. However, Abu Ghuddah's iqad divisions are more practical in nature aiming to facilitate readers in navigating the content in an organized and focused manner. In contrast, the chapter arrangement by Ibn Hajar particularly in works like Tahdhib al-Tahdhib leans more towards academic utility, where scholarly opinions are structured according to transmitter hierarchies and isnad classes enabling rijal analysis to be conducted systematically based on levels of transmission authority (Aris & Muslim, 2018).

Providing a Table of Contents to Facilitate Topic Navigation

The inclusion of a table of contents (fihris al-mawdu'at) is a crucial component of modern scholarly works, particularly in the critical editing (tahqiq) of classical manuscripts which often lack a systematic navigational structure. Abu Ghuddah's initiative in compiling or refining the table of contents for al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil exemplifies his dedication to improving user accessibility for readers, researchers and students engaging with the intricate and multilayered discussions within the work. In contrast to many classical texts that either omit a contents section or offer only a rudimentary listing of topics, Abu Ghuddah's enhancement can be described as a form of tahsin tanzimi a structural enhancement achieved without compromising the integrity of the original text. This editorial refinement aligns with contemporary academic publishing standards and reflects the principle of taqrib al-ma'lumat (bringing knowledge closer to its audience), transforming the work from a traditional manuscript into a functional and pedagogically sound scholarly resource. The table of contents produced by Abu Ghuddah does not merely list the primary thematic divisions (iqad) but also identifies the critical subtopics embedded within each section. This allows readers to pinpoint specific issues such as the criteria for narrator reliability ('adalah), typologies of jarh, or the classification of hadith without the necessity of linear reading. Furthermore, this structured format greatly facilitates cross-referencing and supports the generation of thematic indices for academic libraries and digital repositories. As Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib aptly observes, "Restructuring classical works without altering their original texts is an expression of scholarly etiquette towards

past scholars and a significant contribution to future generations” (al-Khatib, 1997). Accordingly, this editorial enhancement is not merely technical in nature it reflects Abu Ghuddah’s scholarly attentiveness and pedagogical foresight preserving the spirit of the Islamic intellectual tradition while rendering it accessible to contemporary academic audiences. This approach represents a contemporary feature that is less prominent in the works of classical scholars such as Ibn Hajar or al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, who primarily focused on content organisation based on the sequence of transmission chains (sanad) and traditional scholarly opinions. In contrast, Mahmud al-Tahhan demonstrates a more modern and user-friendly approach by incorporating additional elements such as thematic indexes, hadith indexes, and concise glossaries to assist readers in navigating the content more efficiently. This approach is a distinctive feature in his works and is highly suitable for meeting the needs of students and researchers who require quick and structured access to essential information (Tahhan, 2004).

Adding al-Istidrak (Supplementary Notes) at the End of the Book

Abu Ghuddah’s inclusion of an al-Istidrak section at the end of al-Raf’u wa al-Takmil reflects his scholarly precision and awareness of the ethical responsibility inherent in the role of a muhaqqiq. In the Islamic scholarly tradition istidrak denotes “a completion or supplementation of what was previously overlooked or left incomplete in the main text. It is not merely a correction of errors but a means of enrichment adding explanations, clarifying ambiguities or addressing issues that could not be fully elaborated in the main commentary. This practice is particularly significant in the context of tahqiq, as original manuscripts often contain various deficiencies such as incomplete quotations, scribal errors (tahrif) or semantic confusion that cannot always be adequately addressed within the constraints of marginal notes or footnotes. Al-Istidrak thus serves as an additional reflective space that enhances the comprehensiveness and intellectual integrity of the editorial process (Ahmad Dallal, 2010). Abu Ghuddah used this section to reorganize critical comments, introduce additional observations and elaborate on earlier points that had been only briefly mentioned. He marked each instance of istidrak with a distinct symbol (e.g., an asterisk) and arranged these notes systematically at the end of the volume. This approach is consistent with the methodology of tartib al-hawamish wa al-ta’liqat (the structuring of notes and scholarly commentary) employed by many contemporary editors such as Ahmad Shakir and Shu’ayb al-Arna’ut. This editorial practice demonstrates that tahqiq is not limited to textual reproduction or factual verification, it also encompasses the ethical and scholarly obligation to present the most complete, organized and transparent account of the material for the benefit of readers. As al-Kattani affirms, “al-Istidrak is a manifestation of scholarly trustworthiness and the muhaqqiq’s intellectual honesty toward the text and its original author” (al-Kattani, 1999). The element of istidrak employed by Abu Ghuddah serves as a supplement to the existing critiques found in the original text. This approach is reminiscent of the methodology adopted by Ibn Hajar in his work al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah, where he consistently added new or supplementary information about transmitters particularly the Companions that had not been mentioned by earlier scholars. Such efforts rendered Ibn Hajar’s work a critical complement to al-Mizzi’s Tahdhib al-Kamal. Similarly, Abu Ghuddah’s use of istidrak enriches and completes the existing discussions by incorporating facts, references or corrections that may have been overlooked or omitted by the original author. This elevates his critical edition beyond a mere reproduction of the text, transforming it into a scholarly work that offers a form of academic refinement and completion.

Using Asterisk Symbols (*) to Indicate Comments Linked to the Istidrak Section

Abu Ghuddah’s use of the asterisk symbol (*) to mark specific annotations (ta’liqat) demonstrates a high level of systematisation and scholarly professionalism in his tahqiq work. This symbol was not used arbitrarily rather, it functioned as a scholarly indicator (ramz ta’liqi) that connects a discussion in the main text to further elaboration found in the Istidrak section at the end of the book. As a result, the reading process becomes more guided and comprehensive, offering readers explicit cues to follow up on related arguments or extended explanations. Within the tradition of tahqiq, the use of visual symbols such as asterisks (*), arrows (→) and superscript numerals (¹, ²) has been employed by renowned editors like Ahmad Shakir (1995) in his Tahqiq Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Bashshar Ma’ruf (2004) in Tahdhib al-Kamal fi Asma’ al-Rijal, to manage lengthy annotations and facilitate cross-referencing between the main body of the text and supplementary notes. Such symbols serve as essential tools in tawjih al-qari’ (guiding the reader) to navigate the continuity of information across footnotes, the core text and the appendices. More than a mere technical device this symbolic system reflects Abu Ghuddah’s intellectual etiquette toward both the original text and its readers. Rather than

interrupting the structure of al-Laknawi's text with lengthy digressions, he opted for a more elegant solution deferring certain discussions to the Istidrak section with the asterisk serving as a navigational signal. This practice is consistent with the principle articulated by Muḥammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib, who asserted that "a muhaqqiq should organise his scholarly notes with discipline so as not to disturb the sanctity of the original text, while still delivering the necessary information to the reader" (al-Khatib, 1997). This system not only enhances the academic value of the work but also facilitates future research by allowing readers to trace the development of arguments and commentary through a consistent and transparent visual code. In the digital research era, this method further supports the transition of critical editions into indexed or hypertext formats, increasing accessibility and usability in academic databases and digital libraries. The use of symbolisation in critical editions represents a distinctive innovation introduced by Abu Ghuddah, a method rarely found in the works of classical scholars. This approach has proven highly effective in facilitating cross-referencing particularly for readers who require quick access to essential information within the text. Through specific symbols, readers can clearly and systematically distinguish between the original text, commentary, and supplementary information. This visual strategy aligns with the organisational style of Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, particularly in his notational and hadith commentary system which also features a structured and user-friendly system of markers. Abu Ghuddah's initiative not only enhances the textual presentation but also contributes to the evolution of tahqiq methodology toward a more interactive and contemporary model.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah was not merely a traditional muhaqqiq, but a scholar who employed a highly critical and structured methodology in dealing with classical Islamic texts. Through the analysis of al-Raf' u wa al-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil, it is evident that he combined philological precision, mastery of primary sources and profound scholarly ethics at every stage of the tahqiq process. His methodology encompasses rigorous manuscript selection, lexical verification, comprehensive takhrij of hadiths, systematic scholarly annotations, the construction of a modular content structure (iqad) and the addition of an organized istidrak section. His major contribution lies not only in reviving a nearly lost classical text, but also in offering a comprehensive framework for tahqiq that serves as a model for contemporary muhaqqiqun. Abu Ghuddah demonstrated that tahqiq is not a mere technical restoration of a text, it is a multidisciplinary scholarly endeavour encompassing riwayat (transmission), dirayah (analysis), lughah (linguistic refinement) and tarjih (evaluative comparison). His approach reflects a delicate balance between respect for the integrity of the original matn and the modern academic need for clarity, accessibility and readability. The implications of this study are particularly relevant in the digital age, where the widespread circulation of unverified classical texts poses serious risks of misinformation and scholarly distortion. Therefore, Abu Ghuddah's methodology should serve as a foundational reference for developing contemporary tahqiq standards particularly in the fields of hadith studies, rijal al-hadith and the broader management of Islamic turath. Moreover, this research opens avenues for further investigation into his other edited works, as well as for comparative studies between the tahqiq methodologies of classical and modern scholars within the Islamic tradition.

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