

The ‘*Thulāthiyyāt*’ Traditions in the Hadith – Collections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Introduction

A special, and not very well-known topic, even amongst scholars according to our teacher Mohammed Daniel *ḥafīẓahullāh*, during one of his lessons with regards to the hadith – sciences, is the topic of the so called ‘*thulāthiyyāt*’ traditions (*aḥādīth*) or narrations about the Prophet s.a.w.s.

Thulāthiyyāt traditions are those specific traditions that only have three narrators (in the chain of narration c.q. *sanad/isnād*) -also called ‘links’ in Orientalist hadith-literature or discourse¹- between the one who relates the tradition (in other words: the fourth person in the chain of narration) and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). These three narrators would consequently be a Saḥābi, a Tābi’i and a Tābi’i at-Tābi’i. As for the one who relates the tradition: this mainly concerns a well-known name/scholar in the field of hadith i.e. a compiler or author of a major and well-known hadith – collection (in the past) like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and so on.

An example of this would be the following hadith that is related by imam al-Bukhārī:

It was narrated that al-Makki bin Ibrahīm said that it was narrated that Yazīd bin Abī ‘Ubayd said on the authority of Salamah ibn al-Akwa’ (may Allah be pleased with him) that he heard the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.s.) say: “*Whoever attributes something to me that I haven’t said, then let him take his place in Hellfire.*” This is the first hadith of the *thulāthiyyāt* of imam al-Bukhārī. So the chain of narration looks as follows:

Imam al-Bukhārī - (1) [al-Makki bin Ibrahīm](#) - (2) [Yazīd bin Abī ‘Ubayd](#) - (3) [Salamah ibn al-Akwa’](#) - the Prophet s.a.w.s.

¹ For example G.H.A. Juynboll who uses this term in his work.

More information on al-Makki ibn Ibrahīm² will be given below as it is important to understand who he was.

An interesting point to add here is that this hadith is *mutawātir bi'l-lafzi* and one of the most authentic hadith there is.

A hadith that belongs to the category of *thulāthiyyāt* is quite unique because most of the major and well known hadith – collections contain traditions with at least between four and six narrators or more in the chains. An *isnād* that consists of fewer links is considered as more reliable since the possibility of error and doubt increases with every additional link in the chain. Searching for a shorter or higher *isnād* (by students and scholars of hadith) in preference to one that is lower is an act of merit and highly recommended³. Closeness or proximity (*qurb*) of *isnād* indicates closeness to the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and closeness to the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) means closeness to Allah s.w.t.⁴.

The well-known hadith – collections and the number of *thulāthiyyāt* in them

We will start with mentioning the number of *thulāthiyyāt* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and will then mention some more collections which are highlighted in the sources I had available⁵. There will also be a short discussion/review of the English translation of the *Thulāthiyyāt* of the *Musnad* of imam Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal *raḥmatullahi 'alayhi*. The article ends with an index of the *thulāthiyyāt* in 5 well-known hadith – collections.

- *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* : 22⁶

They (the *thulāthiyyāt*) are called the 'pride of imam al-Bukhārī' by some because of the short linkage between imam al-Bukhārī and the Prophet s.a.w.s. which rendered

² For his biography I refer to al-Mizzi's book *ʿIlm ar-Rijāl*.

³ According to Ibn as-Salah in his *Muqaddimah* this is a *sunnah*. He quotes Ahmad b. Hanbal (may Allah be pleased with him) as having related this. See pag. 183 of the English translation of the *Muqaddimah*.

⁴ See M.H. Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies*, pp. 183, 184.

⁵ For example *ar-Risālah al-Mustatrafah* by shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Kittāni. He has a chapter on the *thulāthiyyāt*.

⁶ This document can be found in the online library of Cordoba Academy alongside with an English translation.

him more close to the latter⁷. These *thulāthiyyāt* were compiled by imam Ibn Ḥajr al-‘Asqalānī *rahmatullahi ‘alayhi* in a separate volume⁸. The contemporary shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd ad-Dā’im al-Birmāwī ash-Shāfi’ī wrote a *sharḥ* (commentary) of these *thulāthiyyāt*⁹ which was published in 1421 AH. Shaykh ‘Ali bin Sultān al-Qāri al-Harawī (better known as Mullah ‘Ali al-Qāri) also wrote a book with notes (*ta’liqāt*) on the *thulāthiyyāt* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*^{10 11}. ‘Allāmah Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq ‘Azīmabādi started writing commentary on the *thulāthiyyāt* but was not able to complete it.¹² The contemporary Moroccan shaykh Yusuf al-Kittāni also wrote a book on the *thulāthiyyāt* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* called “*Rubā’iyyāt al-Imām al-Bukhārī*”. An interesting fact to mention is that imam al-Bukhārī related half of the *thulāthiyyāt* through his shaykh al-Makki ibn Ibrahīm *rahimahullah*. Shaykh al-Makki ibn Ibrahīm was a student of imam Abu Ḥanīfah (may Allah be pleased with him) and one of the greatest hadith scholars of his time¹³, the *musnid* of Khurāsān. He belongs to the first and highest category of teachers of imam al-Bukhārī¹⁴. He said about imam Abu Ḥanīfah: “*He was the most knowledgeable person of his time.*” This relates to hadith as well of course so the argument of some people that he didn’t have knowledge of hadith or was weak in hadith is completely false¹⁵. Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal also narrates hadith from shaykh al-Makki ibn Ibrahīm by the way, as well Yahya b. Yahya al-Laythi.

- *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* : 0

The fact imam Muslim has no *thulāthiyyāt* in his collection is quite striking compared to the other well-known hadith – scholars.

- *Sunan ad-Dārimi* : 15¹⁶

- *Sunan/Jāmi’ at-Tirmidhi* : 1¹⁷

⁷ Some online lessons on the book can be listened here: <http://ar.miraath.net/audio/4514/01>

⁸ See M.H. Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies*, pag. 183.

⁹ See: <http://www.arabicbookshop.net/main/details.asp?id=115-485>

¹⁰ See: <http://www.arabicbookshop.net/main/details.asp?id=200-291>

¹¹ For online lessons on this book: <http://archive.org/details/Osaimi-tholathiat-aini>

¹² See: <http://biosalaf.wordpress.com/2011/04/03/allamah-azimabadi/>

¹³ See: http://www.central-mosque.com/biographies/abuhaneef_hadeeth.pdf

¹⁴ This is mentioned in *Fath al-Bāri*, the commentary of imam al-Bukhārī’s collection.

¹⁵ More on this issue can be read in the English translations of *Kitāb al-Āthār* and *Muwatta Imam Muḥammad* by Turath Publishing.

¹⁶ This document can be found in the online library of Cordoba Academy.

- *Sunan Ibn Mājah* : 5¹⁸

There is a book with the *takhrīj* of the *thulāthiyyāt* in these previous 5 works by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Shanuhah¹⁹.

- *Sunan an-Nasā’i* : 0

Just like imam Muslim.

- *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* : 1

- *Sunan* of Sa’īd ibn Mansūr (d. 841) : Number unknown²⁰

- *Sunan* of Abu Muslim al-Kashshī : 51²¹

His biography is in the work mentioned below by ‘Alī Riḍā ‘Abdallāh and Aḥmad al-Bazrah.

- The *Mu’jam* (as-*Saghīr*) of al-Tabarānī : 3²²

- *Musnad* ‘Abd bin Ḥumayd : 51²³

A work on the *thulāthiyyāt* in al-Bukhārī, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, ad-Dārimi, al-Kashshī²⁴ and at-Tabarānī has been compiled by ‘Alī Riḍā ‘Abdallāh and Aḥmad al-Bazrah²⁵, including the biographies of these 6 imams.

¹⁷ See: http://sunnah.org/history/Scholars/imam_tirmidhi.htm

¹⁸ See: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1908531; all of the narrators are accused of lying though according to the English translation of *Sunan Ibn Mājah* by Dar-us-Salam, pag. 53.

¹⁹ See: http://www.almaktabah.eu/detail.php?product_code=4983

²⁰ According to Bilal Philips, in his book “*Usool al-Hadeeth*” (pag. 193), this work contains a lot of *thulāthiyyāt*.

²¹ According to Bilal Philips, in his book “*Usool al-Hadeeth*” (pag. 194), it is said that this work contained a lot of *thulāthiyyāt*. Al-Kashshi died in 895 C.E.

²² This document can be found in the online library of Cordoba Academy.

²³ See:

<http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/homayed/Courses/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AC%20%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AB/%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AB%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA.pdf>

²⁴ Sometimes written as al-Kishshī with a kasrah.

²⁵ See: <https://ia600809.us.archive.org/4/items/SOLASYAT/pdf>

- *Musnad* imam ash-Shāfiʿī : **Some, but number unknown**²⁶ (see pag. 53 English translation of *Sunan Ibn Mājah* by Dar-us-Salam)

- *Musnad Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal* : **332**²⁷

These *thulāthiyyāt* were not only compiled by imam as-Saffarini *rahimahullah* in a separate volume but also by imam Muḥhib ud-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar al-Maqdisi (613 AH) *rahimahullah* with the title “*Tajrīd Thulāthiyyātih*”²⁸. The compilation of imam as-Saffarini is a *sharḥ* of the book by al-Maqdisi.

The *thulāthiyyāt* by imams al-Bukhārī and Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal are the most well-known collections²⁹. What are some of the benefits of these short hadith – collections in our times?

Some benefits of the *thulāthiyyāt* – collections in our times

1. These short collections make it easy and possible for the student, interested in hadith and who doesn't have (much) time to study large collections, to study hadith.
2. A connection with the great scholars of hadith and their works and familiarity with the lesser known texts of the hadith scholars.
3. Every student starts with the shorter collections before he reaches the large collections. This is the way and tradition of students and scholars of hadith.
4. Familiarity with the *isnād* – system and the importance of the *isnād*.
5. Familiarity with some ‘hidden’ treasures and special features of hadith – collections.

For further research

There are several other books available on the *thulāthiyyāt*:

- A book on the *thulāthiyyāt* of the so called *Kutub as-Sittah* and the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal from an unknown author³⁰;

²⁶ In his *ar-Risālah al-Mustatrafah* shaykh Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kittāni says in the chapter about the *thulāthiyyāt*: وللشافعي في مسنده وغيره من حديثه وهي جملة أحاديث.

²⁷ Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kittāni mentions there are **337** though.

²⁸ See: <http://www.arabicbookshop.net/main/details.asp?id=161-287>

²⁹ See pag. 66 of: http://islamicstudies.islammessage.com/panel/media/file/mustalah-hadeeth_final-1.pdf

- A book with the title “*Ath-Thulāthiyyāt fi’l-Hadith an-Nabawi*” by Ashraf b. ‘Abd ar-Rahīm³¹;
- A work with the title “*Minḥat ul-Bāri fi Dhikr Asānidi ila Thulāthiyyāt al-Imam al-Bukhārī*” by Abu ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Hātim bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Ali Shalabi al-Filāzūnī³²;
- “*Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Thulāthiyyāt Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*” by Saqr b. Ḥasan al-Ghāmīdī³³.

The *thulāthiyyāt* in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal

As stated above the number of *thulāthiyyāt* in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal is **332** and they were compiled in separate volumes, among which the volume by al-‘allāmah shaykh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Salim as-Saffarini al-Ḥanbali (1114 – 1188 AH)³⁴ and he also wrote a *sharḥ* on these *aḥādīth*³⁵. A study and evaluation, by Hilmi ‘Abd ul-Hādi from **An-Najah National University** in Palestine, of this *sharḥ* can be read online here (mostly in Arabic):

<http://scholar.najah.edu/sites/scholar.najah.edu/files/journal-article/study-and-evaluation-sharh-thulathiyat-musnad-al-imam-ahmed-scholar-mohammed-ben-%E2%80%8Eahmed-asafarini.pdf>

Internationally known Islamic publisher **Dar-us-Salam Publications**³⁶ has published an English translation of these *thulāthiyyāt* in 2010³⁷. This publication is hardcover and printed in a nice style, pleasing for the eye, on large pages. The *sanad* and *matn* for each hadith is given in Arabic, with the *ḥarakāt*, the number of the hadith in the *Musnad*, followed by the English translation and with some explanatory footnotes. Underneath the grading/classification of the hadith is given as well. For this they (the

³⁰ See: <http://www.arabicbookshop.net/main/details.asp?id=1-782>

³¹ See: <http://www.neelwafurat.com/itempage.aspx?id=lbb78295-38768&search=books>

³² See: http://www.4shared.com/rar/UHtON7RD/__.html

³³ See: <http://www.ahlalhdeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=254897>

³⁴ See: <http://khadimululema.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/allama-as-saffarini-athari-hanbali-allah-taala-have-mercy-on-him/> and <http://www.arabnews.com/node/215658>

³⁵ With the title: “*Nafathat Sadr al-Mukmad wa Qurrat al-‘Ayn al-Mas’ad bi sharḥ Thulāthiyyāt Musnad Imam Aḥmad*”.

³⁶ See: <http://www.dar-us-salam.com/>

³⁷ See here: <http://www.dar-us-salam.com/inside/H20-3fromMusnadImamAhamd.pdf>

translation and editing team of Dar-us-Salam) relied (as stated in the foreword) on the work of shaykh ‘Abd ul-Qādir al-Arna’ūt³⁸ *rahimahullah* and others (like shaykh Aḥmad Shākir *rahimahullah*) but that is not further clarified in footnotes or anywhere else in the book. The translation was endorsed by the Saudi shaykh and minister Sālih ‘Abd ul-‘Azīz ibn Muḥammad Āl ash-Shaykh³⁹, the former mufti of Saudi Arabia.

Credit has to be given to Dar-us-Salam and the people who worked to realize this translation, masha’Allah. May Allah reward them for publishing this work which is the first of its kind. No other published English translation of any of the *thulāthiyyāt* of the other collections mentioned above exists up until now. This publication was the forerunner of the complete English translation of the complete *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, of which three volumes already have been published so far⁴⁰.

Some remarks can be made though on this translation which pertain to possibly crucial issues. This publication brings several questions to mind.

One notices immediately the absence of a *sanad* in the book to transmit this text, going back to *al-‘allāmah* as-Saffarini and/or Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal *rahimahumullah*; no *sanad* is mentioned or given so it remains a question on whose authority this book has been transmitted⁴¹. The student of hadith with a keen interest in research would like to know this for sure. Can one assume the former mufti of Saudi Arabia was licensed with an *ijāzah* to transmit this book? What about the translator? Did he read and/or study the book with the mufti? No information about *al-‘allāmah* as-Saffarini (except for his date of birth and death) and his work is given either. That is a missed chance for Dar-us-Salam and disappointing for interested students of knowledge. May be they didn’t deem this necessary, *w’Allahu ‘alam*, but it weakens the credibility of this publication somehow, or at least this is a lack from the side of Dar-us-Salam. Information that shaykh ‘Abd ul-Qādir al-Arna’ūt worked on the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal is difficult to trace but it seems he wrote some (unpublished?) notes on the *sharḥ* of imam as-Saffarini. All in all, one can ask questions about the academic

³⁸ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdul_Qader_Arnaoot

³⁹ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saleh_bin_Abdul-Aziz_Al_ash-Sheikh

⁴⁰ See: http://store.dar-us-salam.com/Eng_Hadith/H21.html

⁴¹ This is not a very crucial issue though according to az-Zarkashi as related by Ibn Ḥajr al-Haythami in his *al-Fatawa al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kubra*. See: <http://daralhadith.lefora.com/2012/07/19/relying-on-books-without-a-sanad/>; and shaykh Shu’ayb al-Arna’ūt said: ‘Nowadays the works of people are their *ijāzāt*.’

reliability of this work. Lastly, shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt⁴² *hafīzahullah*, though (not related to the other al-Arna'ūt mentioned here) is known to have done some work (*taḥqīq* with regards to the *aḥkām* / rulings on each hadith) on the *Musnad* (in 52 vols.!), which can be downloaded from the internet here:

<http://www.waqfeya.com/book.php?bid=2673>

Cordoba Academy and the *thulāthiyyāt*

Until now Cordoba Academy has granted its students the blessed possibility to get acquainted with and get *ijāzah* in the *Thulāthiyyāt* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (twice) and the *Sunan ad-Darimi*. Our respected teacher Mohammed Daniel has taught both of these texts online with commentary on his own *asānīd* and the *mutūn* and has provided the students with an English translation of these texts as well. I have had the opportunity to read both texts with him, *alhamdulillah*. In the future a course will be done *insha'Allah* on the *thulāthiyyāt* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal by shaykh Mohammed Daniel.

May Allah accept this from me and forgive me for my mistakes.

Harun Verstaen, *Dhu'l-Hijjah* 1433
student of Cordoba Academy

⁴² Read his bio here: <http://forum.cordobaacademy.com/2011/09/16/bio-shaikh-al-muhaqiq-shuayb-arnaut/>

Index of the numbers of the *thulāthiyyāt* in the well-known hadith – collections

1.) Sahīh al-Bukhārī

Hadith nrs. 109, 497, 502, 561, 2007, 2289, 2960, 3041, 4206, 6891, 4206, 2477, 1924, 2295, 4272, 5569, 7208, 2703, 4499, 6894, 3546 and 7421.

2.) Sunan ad-Dārimī

Hadith nrs. 740, 1396, 1761, 1901, 1922, 1924, 2602, 2204, 2589, 2622, 1342, 2681, 2701, 2841 and 3380.

3.) Sunan/Jāmi' at-Tirmidhi

Hadith nr. 2260.

4.) Sunan Ibn Mājah

Hadith nrs. 642, 3310⁴³, 3355⁴⁴, al-Albāni, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, nr. 2819, and al-Albāni, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, nr. 3483 (I was not able to trace the original numbers in the book of Ibn Mājah of these last two hadith). All 5 of these hadith are narrated through the same chain.

5.) Sunan Abū Dāwūd

Hadith nr. 4749.

⁴³ Also see al-Albāni, *Da'if Sunan Ibn Mājah*, nr. 656.

⁴⁴ Also see al-Albāni, *Da'if Sunan Ibn Mājah*, nr. 670/671.