

## ON THE ROLE OF MUHAZRAM NARRATORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HADITH SCIENCES

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### Abstract

This study explores the under-researched category of mukhāḍramūn (transitional narrators) and their significance in the development of hadith sciences. These individuals lived during both the pre-Islamic period (Jāhiliyya) and the early Islamic era, accepting Islam either during the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ lifetime or shortly after his death, but did not meet him while in a state of belief. The research traces the terminological evolution and definitional nuances of mukhāḍramūn from both linguistic and hadith sciences perspectives, analyzing the differing views of prominent scholars such as al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-‘Irāqī, al-Suyūṭī, al-Sakhāwī, and ‘Alī al-Qārī.

The paper highlights how hadith scholars classified mukhāḍramūn as a distinct generation located between the ṣaḥābah (companions) and tābi‘ūn (successors), which holds critical implications for isnād (chain of transmission) analysis. The presence of these narrators in foundational works such as Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal underscores their relevance, while biographical compilations by al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī demonstrate scholarly efforts to catalog their narrations. The research further notes the disagreements over their exact status, whether they are a subcategory of the tābi‘ūn or a distinct class altogether.

By documenting their lives, contributions, and classifications, the article establishes the mukhāḍramūn as essential transmitters in hadith historiography and argues for deeper investigation into their role. Ultimately, this inquiry emphasizes the meticulous methods of early Muslim scholars in preserving the authenticity of hadith literature, and it proposes that further research on the mukhāḍramūn can enhance our understanding of transmission accuracy and the evolution of Islamic scholarly traditions.

**Keywords:** Mukhāḍramūn, hadith sciences, isnād criticism, tābi‘ūn and ṣaḥābah, islamic historiography, biographical evaluation (‘Ilm al-Rijāl)

### Introduction

After the Noble Qur’an, the second primary source of Islam is ḥadīth, and scholars have paid great attention to it since the earliest Hijrī centuries. As the study of ḥadīth intensified, new sciences related to it emerged, and scholars authored various books in this field. Among the many disciplines, a specific branch was developed that focused on studying the biographies of the narrators of ḥadīth, which then continued to evolve.

In order to accept a ḥadīth, examining its sanad (chain of narration) (Yusuf Sh., 2019:12) is

considered one of the most important factors. From the earliest period in which isnād analysis began, the narrators received the utmost attention. Initially, the focus was on the Companions, followed by great emphasis on the Tābi'ūn. However, although much has been written about the Companions and the Tābi'ūn, relatively little has been said about the mukhāḍramūn who lie between these two generations.

A person who met the Prophet (peace be upon him) while being a Muslim and died as a Muslim is called a ṣaḥābī (Muratov D., 2019:23). Similarly, a person who met the Companions while being a Muslim and died as a Muslim is called a tābi'ī (Ṭaḥḥān, 2010:45). The individuals who fall between these two generations are referred to as mukhāḍramūn. Many scholars include them among the Tābi'ūn.

Various definitions of the term mukhāḍram have been given by scholars. The word "mukhāḍram" is derived from the Arabic root khaḍrama, and is the passive participle (ism maf'ūl) of the verb takhaḍrama, which means "to live between two periods" (al-Nu'aym, 2003:23). It also has other meanings such as: water whose taste (bitter or sweet) is not yet known, a child born with a white father but who is dark-skinned, a person of mixed lineage, tasteless food, a child born to a slave, or a child of unknown parentage. Scholars have stated that all these meanings suggest ambiguity and indistinctness. According to some linguists, the verb root mentioned above is more accurately read as mukhāḍrim in the sense of "one who lived during the periods of pre-Islamic ignorance and Islam." However, the widely accepted pronunciation is mukhāḍram, in the sense of "one who left disbelief and entered Islam" (Bilgen, 2015:284), as noted by Dr. Usman Bilgen in his work.

In the science of ḥadīth, mukhāḍramūn are the group of narrators who occupy a rank between the Companions and the Tābi'ūn. Many definitions have been given for the term mukhāḍram. For instance, the hadith scholar al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) defined mukhāḍram as a person who lived during the period of pre-Islamic ignorance and the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but did not meet him; or someone who lived during the age of ignorance but did not interact with the Prophet (peace be upon him), later embraced Islam after his death, and met with the Companions. The well-known hadith scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) expressed a similar view, stating that a mukhāḍram is someone who lived during the period of pre-Islamic ignorance and the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), accepted Islam, but did not have the opportunity to meet him (Ṣalāḥ, 1986:303–304).

Among the hadith scholars, Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1403) also defined a mukhāḍram as someone who witnessed the pre-Islamic era and the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), accepted Islam, but was not able to speak with the Prophet (Bilgen, 2015:288). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) shared the same view (Suyūṭī, 2016:252).

In his book *Fath al-Mughīth*, Imam al-Sakhāwī provided the following definition: "As for those who lived during the pre-Islamic period, they were young before prophethood and reached adulthood during the time the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was appointed as a prophet. They either did not see him at all or saw him without having accepted Islam, and they embraced Islam either during his lifetime or after his death. Such individuals are called mukhāḍram" (al-Sakhāwī, 2005:110).

The Ḥanafī scholar 'Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605), in his commentary on *Nukhbat al-Fikar*, elaborated on the definition by the hadith scholar Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1448), who stated: "One who



witnessed the pre-Islamic and prophetic eras but did not see the Prophet (peace be upon him) as a Muslim.” Al-Qārī added: “This includes those who reached the period after the conquest of Mecca, whether they accepted Islam during the Prophet’s time or afterward, as long as they did not see him in a state of belief” (al-Qārī, 1995:598).

Among contemporary scholars, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Mājid Ghāwri also mentioned those who lived during the pre-Islamic era and believed after their deaths in the definitions given for mukhāḍram (Ghāwri, 2007:210).

The above definitions were provided by hadith scholars and may be said to complement one another. However, there are also other definitions of mukhāḍram that differ from the aforementioned views. For instance, the jurist Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) considered mukhāḍram to be a person who recognized Islam at an old age and accepted it after the Prophet (peace be upon him) had passed away (al-Sakhāwī, Faḥ al-Mughīth, 2005:130–135). This opinion differs in that it emphasizes the person’s old age and their acceptance of Islam only after the Prophet’s death.

The great scholar Ḥāfiẓ Burhān al-Dīn Abū Ishāq ibn Muḥammad ibn Khalīl (d. 841/1438) provided further information in his work: “According to al-Jawharī, even a poet who lived during both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras is also considered a mukhāḍram. For example, Labīd would be one such individual” (Ishāq, 1986:7).

Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl, known as Ibn Sīda, one of the famous scholars of Andalusia and author of al-Muḥkam, stated: “A mukhāḍram is someone who spent half of his life in the pre-Islamic era and the other half in Islam. Accordingly, individuals such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī, Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām, Huwaytib ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā, Sa‘īd ibn Yarbu‘, Jum‘un ibn ‘Awf (the brother of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf), and Makhramah ibn Nawfal are among the mukhāḍramūn. However, in the terminology of the people of hadith, this is not the case. According to hadith scholars, a mukhāḍram is someone who remains in between two generations, whose affiliation to either is uncertain. This is the essence of the meaning of mukhāḍram” (Ishāq, 1986:7–8).

Likewise, some scholars have also included individuals such as Zayd ibn Wahb in this category. He had accepted Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and while he was on his way to meet the Prophet, the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away. Similarly, Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim, Abū Muslim al-Khawlanī (d. 62/681), and Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣunābihī also embraced Islam. However, a few days before they arrived in the presence of Muhammad (peace be upon him), he had already passed away. Another such individual was Suwayd ibn Ghafalah (d. 81/700), for whom hadiths exist stating that he arrived only after the Prophet (peace be upon him) had already been buried (al-Sakhāwī, Faḥ al-Mughīth, 2005:111).

Accordingly, Abū Zu‘ayb Khuwailid ibn Khālīd al-Hudhalī, who saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) after his death but before he was buried, is not considered a companion (ṣaḥābī) but rather a mukhāḍram. This person had accepted Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but was not able to see him (Muratov, 2019:15).

Most of the mukhāḍramūn were individuals who had faith in the Prophet (peace be upon him) during his lifetime but never went to see him. One such example is Uways al-Qaranī (Mukhamedov N., Turambetov N., 2020:798–803).

The definition given to the word mukhāḍram by linguists differs from that provided by hadith



scholars. According to the linguistic definition: "A person who witnessed both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods equally, regardless of whether they saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) or not—for instance, Labīd ibn Rabī'ah (d. 41/661), Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām (d. 54/673), and others" (Sabri, 1997:765–766).

The difference between the definition given by linguists and that of hadith scholars lies in the fact that (Sabri, 1997:766) the hadith scholars stipulate that a mukhāḍram must have lived during both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, but not seen the Prophet (peace be upon him) after having accepted Islam. However, linguists do not set this condition. According to them, it is sufficient that half of the individual's life was spent during the pre-Islamic era and the other half in Islam. In the view of hadith scholars, even if someone was young, merely having witnessed the pre-Islamic era is enough.

Since mukhāḍramūn were individuals who lived during the pre-Islamic era and reached the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), accepted Islam, but did not see him, they are considered neither ṣaḥābah nor tābi'īn. That is, because they did not see the Prophet (peace be upon him) during his lifetime, they are not counted as companions. At the same time, since they lived during his era, they differ from the tābi'īn. For this reason, there are numerous disagreements between linguists and hadith scholars concerning the definition of those referred to as mukhāḍram (Bilgen, 2015:285).

Some scholars, when defining muhazram, have described them as a category similar to the tabi'un (successors), or as "tabi'un with specific characteristics." An example of such a viewpoint can be found in the work of Allama Hafiz Burhanuddin Abu Ishaq ibn Muhammad ibn Khalil (d. 841/1438). In the first part of his three-part work, he states: "Let it be known to those who are acquainted with this book that the meaning of the word muhazram, written with the Arabic letter 'khaa' and the vowel 'ra' with a fatha (i.e., 'khaa' + 'ra') is a tabi'un who reached the time of the Jahiliyya and the time of the Prophet (PBUH), but did not meet him nor have a conversation with him" (Ishaq, 1986:7).

However, some lexicographers do not make the condition that a muhazram must have had a conversation with the Prophet (PBUH) (Ishaq, 1986:7). Additionally, there is the opinion that the muhazram is considered lower than the companions (Sahabah) due to the fact that they did not meet the Prophet (PBUH), as stated in the book An-Nihaya: "The origin of the word khazrama means to do something between two things, like when part of an ear is cut off, it is neither complete nor defective," referring to how the people of the Jahiliyya used to cut the ears of sheep. When Islam came, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered them to cut the ears in a different way than the Jahiliyyah did. Thus, anyone who lived in the Jahiliyya and reached the time of Islam is called muhazram (Ishaq, 1986:8).

In general, a muhazram is someone who lived during the time of the Jahiliyya, became Muslim during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), but did not meet him during his lifetime, and also lived after his passing, dying as a Muslim. The length of time they lived before Islam or after accepting it is not taken into account.

When studying the opinions of scholars on muhazram, it becomes clear that their differences from the Sahabah are as follows:

Firstly, muhazram is someone who did not see the Prophet (PBUH) in a Muslim state nor have a conversation with him. This is a condition that must be met to be considered a companion





(Sahabi).

Secondly, it does not matter whether the Sahabah were born before or after the time of Jahiliyya. Some of them were of the same age or older than the Prophet (PBUH), such as Abu Bakr (d. 13/634), Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 23/644), Uthman ibn Affan (d. 35/655), and Salman al-Farsi (d. 35/656). Similarly, younger companions like Abdullah ibn Abbas (d. 68/687) and Usama ibn Zayd were born after the Prophet (PBUH) received revelation.

Thirdly, according to scholars like the jurist Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) and the hadith scholar al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505), the condition for being a muhazram is that the person became Muslim during the time of the Prophet (PBUH). This leads to the following question: If someone saw the Prophet (PBUH) in his state of disbelief and then later became Muslim but did not meet the Prophet (PBUH), would they be considered a companion or a muhazram?

The scholars have answered this question by stating that the person would not be considered a companion. According to the definition, "Companions are those who saw the time of the Prophet (PBUH), were in his company as a believer, and died as such." Thus, according to scholars like Ibn Salah (d. 643/1245), al-Iraqi (d. 806/1403), Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1448), al-Sakhawi (d. 902/1496), and the Hanafi scholar Ali Qari (d. 1014/1605), such a person would be accepted as a muhazram.

From this, we can derive the following definition: "A person who saw the time of Jahiliyya and the time of the Prophet (PBUH), became Muslim during his lifetime or after his death, but did not see the Prophet (PBUH) as a believer, is a muhazram" (Bilgen, 2015:290).

It is also appropriate to familiarize ourselves with who the tabi'un are. A tabi'un is someone who met a companion, was in their company, and died as a Muslim (Zahw, 1984:172). Figures like Said ibn al-Musayyib, Ata ibn Abi Rabah, and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri are considered tabi'un. One benefit of studying this group is that it allows scholars to differentiate between a mursal hadith (where the companion is missing in the chain) and a mutassil (continuous) hadith, which reaches back to the Prophet (PBUH) (Tahan, 2010:247). Scholars have divided the tabi'un into three groups: major, intermediate, and minor, and studying them is significant in hadith sciences.

Although the tabi'un lived after the time of the Prophet (PBUH), they differ from the muhazram. There are various opinions about the number of muhazram people. Allama Hafiz Burhanuddin Abu Ishaq ibn Muhammad ibn Khalil (d. 841/1438), in the first part of his three-volume work Tazkirat al-Talib al-Mu'allim, mentions that Hafiz Abu Husayn Muslim ibn Hajjaj (d. 261/875) listed twenty muhazram individuals in his book (Suyuti, 2016:252). Then, Hafiz Abu Amr ibn Salah (d. 643/1245) added two more in his work Ulum al-Hadith. Later, the great scholar Hafiz Zaynuddin Abu Fazl Abdulrahim ibn Husayn ibn Iraqi (d. 806/1403) added three more names in his commentary on the work Alfiya (Ishaq, 1986:7).

According to Imam al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505), the number of muhazram individuals reached 45 (Bilgen D., 2015:308). Imam al-Shams al-Din al-Zahabi (d. 748/1374) in his work Siyar A'lam al-Nubala listed 65 muhazram individuals after the companions (Zahabi, 1985:90-109).

In addition, it can be mentioned that Abu Ishaq ibn Muhammad ibn Khalil, in his work Tazkirat al-Talib al-Mu'allim, listed 131 muhazram individuals in alphabetical order. Furthermore, he categorized them under separate headings, including 17 who were known by their kunyas (nicknames), 2 women, and 2 young muhazram individuals (Ishaq, 1986:12-33).

Hadith scholars established the field of "categories" to help identify who a narrator was—



whether they were a companion (Sahabi), a follower (Tabi'i), or someone from the subsequent generations. For instance, a companion is one group, a follower is another, and a successor to the followers (Taba' al-Tabi'in) forms a separate group, and so on. In studying the opinions presented by early and later scholars, it becomes clear that their approaches to the category of muhazram varied. Some considered this group to be part of the tabi'un, while others included muhazram individuals in their works dedicated to the biographies of the companions. Hadith scholar Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852/1448) emphasized that there were disagreements among scholars regarding which category the muhazram belonged to (Asqalani, 2008:139).

From the evidence presented above, it can be concluded that studying the specific category of muhazram narrators plays a significant role in clarifying historical events, providing deeper insights into the biographies of hadith narrators, and contributing to various scholarly inquiries. Furthermore, it highlights the attention that Muslim scholars paid to the sources of Islamic religion, aiming to protect them from distortions and imperfections, while choosing the most reliable and complex path to ensure their preservation to the present day.

The efforts made by the hadith scholars in ensuring the preservation of hadiths up to the present time are noteworthy. They paid great attention to how each hadith was transmitted, the individuals who narrated it, and from which paths it reached them. They meticulously studied the different categories of narrators, including companions, followers, successors, and others. Among these, muhazram individuals, who form a distinct group, undoubtedly require further research and investigation to gain a clearer understanding.

The lives of the muhazram individuals indicate that, like the companions, they hailed from various parts of the Arabian Peninsula, showing their distinct position between the companions and the followers.

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