

**IMAM BUKHARI: HIS LIFE, SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES, AND ROLE IN THE SCIENCE OF HADITH****Samandarova Rayhona Ilhom kizi**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article covers the life, scientific activities and place in Hadith science of Imam Bukhari, one of the most important muhaddis of the Islamic world. The article provides an in-depth analysis of his birth in Bukhara, educational travels, the process of creating the work “Sahih al-Bukhari”, and his methodology in the development of Hadith science. his article covers the life, scientific activities and place in Hadith science of Imam Bukhari, one of the most important muhaddis of the Islamic world. The article provides an in-depth analysis of his birth in Bukhara, educational travels, the process of creating the work “Sahih al-Bukhari”, and his methodology in the development of Hadith science. Particular attention is paid to Imam Bukhari's strict criteria for verifying the sanad and text, his development of the “al-Jarh and at-Ta'dil” method, and his approach to determining the reliability of the narrators. Further information is also provided about his students, teachers, other works and his legacy, which is preserved today through the Imam Bukhari International Research Center in Samarkand.

**Key words:** Imam Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith authentication, Islamic scholarship, Ahl ahadiat, narrator criticism (Jarh wa Ta'dil), Abbasid Caliphate, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kutub al-Sittah.

Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810–870 CE), revered as the “Imam of Hadith” and “Commander of the Faithful in Hadith”, stands as one of the most pivotal figures in Islamic scholarship. Born in Bukhara (modern-day Uzbekistan) to a family of Persian descent with roots tracing back to Zoroastrian converts to Islam, Bukhari overcame early hardships, including the loss of his father and temporary blindness, to become a prodigy in hadith studies. By age 16, he embarked on extensive travels across the Abbasid Caliphate, memorizing over 600,000 narrations from more than 1,000 teachers. His magnum opus, “Sahih al-Bukhari”, meticulously compiled over 16 years, selects only 7,563 authentic hadiths from hundreds of thousands, establishing rigorous criteria for authentication that revolutionized hadith sciences. Facing theological controversies later in life, including expulsion from Nishapur, Bukhari's unwavering dedication to scholarly integrity influenced generations, including Imam Muslim and others who formed the “Kutub al-Sittah”. His legacy endures through global academic study, modern research centers, and his tomb in Uzbekistan, symbolizing piety, precision, and perseverance in preserving the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah.

Imam Bukhari, whose full name is Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughira ibn Bardizbah al-Ju'fiy al-Bukhari, was born on July 21, 810 CE (13 Shawwal 194 AH) in Bukhara, Greater Khorasan, which is now part of modern-day Uzbekistan. He hailed from a family of Persian descent; his great-grandfather, al-Mughirah, was among the first to settle in Bukhara after converting to Islam under the governor Yaman al-Ju'fi, from whom the family derived their nisba “al-Ju'fi”. His earliest known ancestor, Bardizbah, was a Zoroastrian Magi, highlighting the family's transition to Islam.

Bukhari's father, Ismail ibn Ibrahim, was a distinguished hadith scholar who studied under luminaries like Imam Malik ibn Anas, Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, and Hammad ibn Salamah. Tragically, Ismail passed away when Bukhari was an infant, leaving his widow to raise him and his brother Ahmad alone.

As a young child, Bukhari suffered from a severe eye ailment that left him blind. According to tradition, his mother's fervent prayers led to a miraculous recovery, after which he not only regained his sight but developed an extraordinary memory and visual acuity—reportedly able to discern and write by moonlight. By age six, he had memorized the entire Qur'an, and soon after, he delved into hadith sciences, committing to memory the works of Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak.

His prodigious talent shone at age 11 when, during a lecture by the scholar Imam ad-Dakhili, young Bukhari corrected an error in the isnad (chain of narration) of a hadith, earning widespread acclaim among local scholars.

By adolescence, he was already narrating and authoring hadiths, marking the beginning of his lifelong commitment to the field. At 16, in 826 CE, Bukhari undertook his first Hajj pilgrimage accompanied by his mother and brother, spending two years in Mecca and four in Medina immersed in studies. This journey ignited a lifelong odyssey of scholarship; he traversed the Abbasid Caliphate, visiting key centers like Basra, Kufa, Baghdad, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Damascus—sometimes multiple times, including two trips to Mesopotamia and four to Basra. Over these travels, which spanned much of his adult life, Bukhari studied under over 1,080 teachers, including giants like Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ali ibn al-Madini, Yahya ibn Ma'in, and Ishaq ibn Rahwayh.

He memorized an astonishing 600,000 hadiths—later expanding to 300,000 fully connected with isnads and 100,000 disconnected ones—dedicating himself to their verification.

A legendary demonstration of his prowess occurred in Baghdad, where scholars challenged him with 100 altered hadiths; Bukhari instantly recited their authentic originals, solidifying his reputation.

These journeys were not without peril—plagues, political instability, and physical exhaustion tested his resolve—but they equipped him with unparalleled expertise in narrator biographies and transmission chains.

Bukhari's contributions systematized hadith sciences, emphasizing collection, classification, and authentication. At 18, he authored early works like “at-Tarikh al-Kabir” (a vast biographical compendium on narrators) and “Qadaya as-Sahaba wa at-Tabi'in” (judgments of the Companions and Successors).

His crowning achievement, “Sahih al-Bukhari”—fully titled “al-Jami' as-Sahih al-Musnad al-Muxtasar min Hadisi Rasulillah wa Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi”—took 16 years to compile starting in 846 CE. From 600,000 narrations, he selected only 7,563 (across 97 books/chapters), performing ghusl and two rak'ahs of prayer before each inclusion to invoke divine guidance.

This work forms the bedrock of Sunni jurisprudence, eschewing speculative reasoning (qiyas and ra'y) in favor of textual authenticity, aligning with the Ahl al-Hadith tradition. His authentication criteria were stringent:

- Isnad (Chain of Narration): Unbroken, with narrators possessing justice ('adl) and precision (zabt).
- Matn (Text): Alignment with the Qur'an, other sahih hadiths, and logical/scientific coherence.
- al-Jarh wa at-Ta'dil: Rigorous critique of narrators' reliability to weed out fabrications.

Other notable works include:

- “at-Tarikh al-Kabir”, “at-Tarikh al-Awsat”, and “at-Tarikh as-Saghir” (biographical histories of narrators, the latter lost).
- “al-Adab al-Mufrad” (hadiths on manners and ethics).
- “Khalq af'al al-ibad” (theological treatise on divine attributes and human actions).
- “az-Zu'afa ash-Shaghir” and “al-Du'afa al-Saghir” (guides to weak narrators).
- “Al-Kunā” (on patronymics), “Birr al-walidayn” (on parental piety), and lost texts like “Kitab al-wuhdan” and “Kitab al-'ilal”.

Bukhari mentored over 90,000 students, profoundly shaping scholars like Imam Muslim (author of “Sahih Muslim”), Imam at-Tirmidhi (“Sunan at-Tirmidhi”), and Imam an-Nasa'i (“Sunan an-Nasa'I”), whose works form the “Kutub al-Sittah” alongside his own.

Bukhari's path was fraught with trials. In his later years, theological disputes arose, particularly over his statement that “My recitation of the Quran is created”, misinterpreted by some as endorsing the Mu'tazilite view of the Quran's createdness—a stance antithetical to Ahl al-Hadith orthodoxy.

This controversy, possibly fueled by scholarly envy, led to his expulsion from Nishapur around 864 CE.

He retreated to his village in Khartang near Samarkand, where he continued teaching until his death. Amid the broader mihna (inquisition) under Abbasid caliphs, Bukhari's steadfastness exemplified scholarly resilience.

Imam Bukhari passed away on September 1, 870 CE (1 Shawwal 256 AH) at age 62 in Khartang, after a brief illness—some accounts suggest natural causes, others mild poisoning.

His tomb in the Imam Bukhari Mausoleum in Hartang, Uzbekistan—restored in 1998 with a mosque, madrasa, library, and rare Qur'an collection—draws pilgrims worldwide.

Bukhari's legacy transcends hadith; his scientific approach—blending memorization with critical analysis of narrators' lives, morals, and memories—safeguarded Islamic tradition from forgeries. “Sahih al-Bukhari” and “Sahih Muslim” (the “Sahihayn”) are deemed the most authentic post-Qur'anic texts in Sunni Islam.

Modern institutions like the Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center in Samarkand have published 89 works, hosted conferences, and integrated his methods into fields like text analysis and source criticism.

Globally, his techniques inform academic historiography, underscoring his enduring symbol of faith, patience, and intellectual rigor.

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