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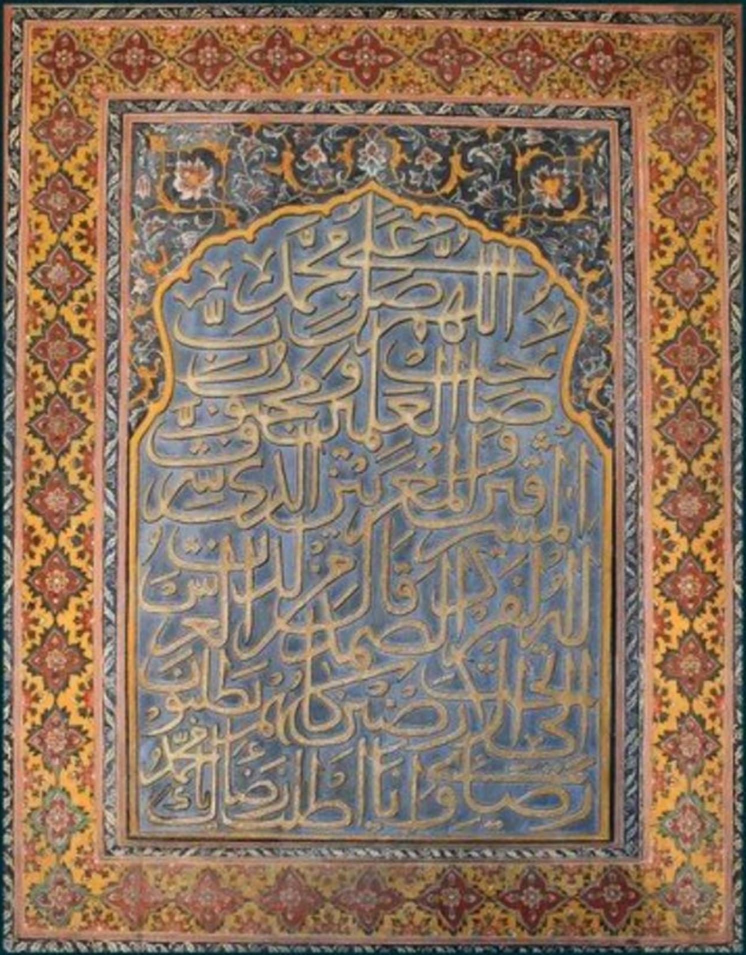

EDITED BY

Daniel W. Brown

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The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith

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Contents

List of Figures vii

Notes on Contributors ix

Introduction 1
Daniel W. Brown

I. Overview 13

1 The Classical Tradition 15
Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar

2 Western Hadith Studies 39
Daniel W. Brown

II. Beginnings 57

3 Revelation 59
William A. Graham

4 Muhammad 75
Andreas Görke

5 Recording 91
Gregor Schoeler

6 Dating 113
Pavel Pavlovitch

III. Growth 135

7 Collections 137
Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar

8 Commentaries 159
Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu

9 Genres 187
Roberto Tottoli

IV. Impact 203

10 Law 205
Christopher Melchert

11 Exegesis 223
Herbert Berg

12 Theology 241
Hüseyin Hansu

13 Sufism 265
Aiyub Palmer

14 Shiʿism 281
Ahmad Pakatchi

V. Modernity 295

15 Reform 297
Jawad Anwar Qureshi

16 Reappraisal 315
Daniel W. Brown

17 Gender 335
Adis Duderija

Bibliography 353
Index 383

List of Figures

1.1 Unusual text: versions of Hishām's hadith on combining prayers 23
1.2 Unusual narration: Qutayba's hadith on combining prayers 24
2.1 Simplified common link 45
6.1 The common-link phenomenon 115
6.2 A common link, partial common links (PCLs), and a diving *isnād* 116
6.3 *Isnād* diagram: the prophet pokes ʿUmar in the chest with his finger 125
7.1 Two *isnāds* of a hadith about fasting while traveling 137
7.2 Combined diagram of two *isnāds* 138
7.3 Twenty-three *isnāds* of a hadith about fasting while traveling 139

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Introduction

Daniel W. Brown

More than a decade ago Andrew Rippin wrote that the publication of the *Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan* marked the emergence of the Islamic scripture "within the canon of world literature" (Rippin 2006, x). While he was right that the Qurʾan is now widely known and studied, the same cannot be said about the other major body of Islamic scripture, the hadith. In the West, at least, the hadith remains largely the domain of a small band of specialists. Many well-educated lay readers have only the vaguest notion of the nature and content of this vast and important body of literature. While it will be easy for many readers to find an introductory course on the Qurʾan, or to join a Qurʾan reading group, most will be hard pressed to find an undergraduate "Introduction to the Hadith" at their local college or university. This is not the case, of course, for one's local madrasa. Thus to some readers of this book the hadith literature will seem like an alien and unexplored world, while to others it is a constant companion and essential guide for life. Part of the burden of this book is to bridge this gap.

Definition and Characteristics

Because the hadith literature is unfamiliar terrain for many readers, we need to begin by explaining why it deserves sustained attention and to describe this literature's characteristics and boundaries. If we open Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the most famous collection of hadith, we read,

> Ḥumaydī ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr related to us that Sufyān related that Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Anṣārī reported: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Taymī informed me that he heard ʿAlqama ibn Waqqāṣ al-Laythī saying: I heard ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allāh be pleased with him, saying from the minbar: I heard the Apostle of God, peace be upon him, say: "Deeds

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> are according to intentions [*niyya*], and each person gets what he intends. Whoever emigrated for worldly reward, or for a woman to marry, his emigration is for that for which he emigrated." (Bukhārī 1 *Badʾ al-Waḥy*, 1)

Like every other hadith report, this one has two parts, a list of names of people who passed it on, called the *isnād*, and a text ("Deeds are according to intentions ..."), called the *matn*. The *matn* of most hadith reports may also be further analyzed as the composite of narrative frame and text. Sometimes the narrative frame is long and elaborate; sometimes, as in this case, short and economical, indicating the small but important detail that ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb cited the tradition in a sermon. The narrative frame sometimes serves important functions like reinforcing the importance of the report, as it does here.

This particular tradition nicely fits the narrow, technical definition of the term "hadith": a report about something the Prophet Muhammad said or did, or a description of the Prophet, or an account of something that happened in his presence. The term also has wider, less precise uses. Hadith can, for example, refer collectively to the whole, monumental body of literature that is made up of such discrete narrations about the Prophet. The term is also sometimes used for traditions composed of an *isnād* and a *matn* in the form illustrated above, but which do not go all the way back to Muhammad. A report attributed to a Shiʿi imam, for instance, or to a companion of the Prophet, or to some other authority in early Islamic history might be called a hadith. In the later tradition of hadith studies, these non-Prophetic reports are often labeled "*athar*" or "*khabar*" in order to reserve the term "hadith" for reports attributed to Muhammad.

This book is concerned with hadith in the broadest sense, beginning with traditions like the one above that transmit information about the Prophet Muhammad and that therefore match the technical definition, but also extending to the whole genre of literary uses of the *isnad–matn* pattern. Applied in this broad sense, the hadith literature provides us, beside the Qurʾan, with our most important documentation of early Islamic history, a massive treasury of records documenting the life of Muhammad, the history of the earliest generations of Muslims, the context of the Qurʾan, and the origins of Islamic law, theology, and piety. Take away the hadith literature, and we are left with very little to say about any of these. Much of what we know, or think we know, about the first two centuries of Islamic history, we know from the hadith literature, understood in this broad sense.

For the Islamic tradition, hadith-derived data about the Prophet Muhammad and early Islam are a major source of religious authority, providing theoretical foundations for Islamic law, ethics, theology, and scriptural exegesis. The *matn* of the hadith cited above, "Deeds are according to intentions," articulates a principle of Islamic law so foundational that it is inscribed over one of the entrances to al-Azhar, the world's oldest institution of Islamic learning. Apart from the testimony of hadith, a Muslim lacks the most rudimentary knowledge about when and how to perform ritual prayers. Similarly, without hadith the meaning of much of the Qurʾan remains obscure. Consequently, Muslims developed a nuanced and complex system to transmit, study, and evaluate hadith. This approach to hadith within the Muslim scholarly tradition is surveyed in Chapter 1 and is also the focus of several other chapters of this book.

This book will also be concerned with another tradition of historical scholarship that also takes hadith as its essential data, and that emerged in the first instance in the Western academy. For this reason, I have labeled it "Western," although the label is misleading insofar as the scrutiny of hadith as a historical source has subsequently grown into a worldwide scholarly enterprise to which Muslims, non-Muslims, Western, and non-Western scholars contribute. The broad aim of this historical enterprise is to illuminate the origins and development of Islam and to pursue the same sorts of questions that historians might pose about the emergence of any great movement in history, such as, for instance, the life of the Buddha or the origins of Christianity.

Hadith scholarship in both traditions involves sometimes dizzying levels of complexity and sophistication; both traditions require us to navigate through seemingly impenetrable technical jargon. Yet the difficulty should not be allowed to obscure just how important these two overlapping worlds of scholarship are to the real world: take away hadith from Islam and the traditional foundations of Islamic law and practice crumble, as modern Qur'anist movements (described in Chapter 16) exemplify; reject the historical reliability of the whole body of hadith literature, as some revisionist historians have done, and we are left with a craterous gap in our knowledge of the origins of Islam. The whole superstructure of Islamic belief and practice, on the one hand, and, on the other, almost everything we might wish to know about the history of early Islam, rests on the hadith.

Hadith, History and Memory

We should also not let complexity obscure the fundamental universality of the epistemological issues raised by the study of hadith. We can begin to grasp this universality by stepping outside of the Islamic tradition altogether. Consider, for example, a saying often attributed to Winston Churchill. Churchill is widely reported to have said, "If you're not a liberal when you are 25, you have no heart. If you're not a conservative by the time you are 35, you have no brain." The report comes to us in several variants, suggesting that the saying has become a widespread tradition, and like any widely distributed tradition it has mutated in the course of transmission. In this case the mutations are largely inconsequential; the differing versions are recognizable variants of a single tradition, and the differences make little difference to the point. Nor is there any mystery about that point, or about why the tradition spread widely: the saying pithily captures the self-understanding of conservatives who fancy themselves the adults in the room, and it invokes the authority of an iconic statesman of the twentieth century for a not-so subtle takedown of liberalism as the province of immature, youthful passion.

But did Churchill actually utter these words? The Churchill Centre rules the quote inauthentic with a terse declaration: "There is no record of anyone hearing Churchill say this." (Churchill Centre, n.d.). The Centre's website goes on to invoke the authority of a University of Edinburgh professor to argue that Churchill could not possibly have originated this tradition since "he'd been a conservative at age 15 and a liberal at 35!" (Churchill Centre, n.d.). Others argue that the saying originated with a Frenchman, François Guizot, or with George Bernard Shaw, or Disraeli, or Bismarck. Cumulatively these arguments will likely reduce our confidence that the tradition is traceable to Churchill. But they are not decisive. Churchill talked a lot, and it remains at least remotely possible that he uttered words to this effect, that one of his companions heard him and transmitted the saying privately to others, and that these in turn passed it on in ever-widening circles. In the absence of a categorical denial from Churchill himself, it would seem impossible to wholly rule out the possibility that he said something like this. Even his unequivocal denial, were he available to offer it, might not settle the matter. Churchill was, after all, a politician. In the end, God knows best.

The issues raised by this modern Churchill tradition roughly parallel those which the system of hadith addresses. Narrowly defined, the tradition of hadith scholarship asks, "Did the Prophet Muhammad say it or not?" But the methods by which Muslim scholars preserved, transmitted, and evaluated Muhammad's words could be, and were, put to work on many kinds of historical reports. Thus, behind that question of Muhammad's words and deeds is a wider question: how can we know anything about the past, and how can we be sure that what we know is knowledge? As I sit typing at my laptop, with notes, books, and a cup of tea scattered around me, how can I have any certainty about what Churchill, Muhammad, or even my own grandfather said or did? The case of my grandfather feels more immediate to me than the others and therefore illuminating. Just as with Churchill and the Prophet Muhammad, I have no direct experience of my grandfather. He died before I was born. In the absence of direct knowledge, I am reliant on artifacts – traces – of my grandfather's life that I can experience in the present. These come in two forms: artifacts of memory, and physical artifacts (letters, photographs, objects). Artifacts of memory will encompass any traces that my grandfather's life left in the memories of people still alive. My father or my aunts, for example, might have passed on memories of my grandfather. My father's case is further complicated since his own memories were not first-hand; my grandfather died when my father was aged three. My father would have, however, retained memories passed on to him from his mother, sisters, or family friends; although he never knew him, my grandfather's life nevertheless left significant marks on my father's experience.

Physical artifacts might include documents or objects that bear the marks of my grandfather's life: a birth record; a gravestone; medical or police records of the automobile accident that would ultimately lead to his death; letters; the house where he lived; the factory where he worked. It will soon become clear that a sharp delineation between artifacts of memory and physical objects cannot be maintained. A letter might record memories of an incident in my grandfather's life; my judgment about the significance of a physical object may rest heavily upon the memory of my aunt Ruth. The categories overlap. (We should also note one other source of knowledge about the past which we cannot dismiss as unimportant because it will enter into discussions later in the book: a Sufi may claim that Muhammad spoke to him in a dream; or a medium may claim to have heard from my grandfather, or from Churchill; or a devotee of *Doctor Who* might claim to have direct knowledge of any of these through time travel.)

Western academic culture tends to favor physical artifacts. Academics like documents, manuscripts, inscriptions, objects. Our museums are full of such artifacts. The system of hadith instead prefers, at least in theory, artifacts of memory passed on by reliable human witnesses. This preference should hardly seem strange to the aficionado of television crime dramas who knows that, in the court room, documents cannot stand on their own; physical evidence requires the attestation of witnesses. In Muslim intellectual culture, we see this same preference in the legal sphere as well as in attitudes toward the Qurʾan, which is often idealized as primarily an oral text, preserved and transmitted by memory. But it is in the system of hadith that the preference for the testimony of human memory finds fullest and most systematic expression. Reliable knowledge of the past, according to this way of thinking, depends upon reliable witnesses passing on their knowledge through a chain of reliable transmitters. Among religions, Islam is not entirely unique in this regard. The early Christians, for example, also emphasized the testimony of eyewitnesses (Bauckham 2017), and the oral transmission of the Vedas is a paradigmatic case (Graham 1987, 68). But scholars of hadith were convinced of the superiority of their method, a sentiment duly reflected in the hadith, "The *isnād* is a part of religion, and if not for the *isnād* anyone could say anything he wanted" (Muslim *Muqaddima*, 5).

If when I seek knowledge of my grandfather my first impulse is to seek out the testimony of those who knew him, or, in their absence, of those who knew those who knew him, then I have begun to enter into the logic of hadith, and it will be natural to ask questions about how to evaluate such testimony. Can I trust my aunt Ruth's memory? Is her testimony reliable? What if a transmitted story about my grandfather is passed on by an apparently reliable witness but otherwise seems implausible or anachronistic? If my father, who was only three when his father died, passed on words from my grandfather without other attestation, should I credit his report? The system of hadith scholarship encompasses all such questions, relying on the evaluation of each link in the chain of transmission as the surest way of establishing authenticity.

Hadith thus reflects an epistemological system governing the transmission and evaluation of knowledge about the past. To enter into the world of hadith is like entering a courtroom, a sphere with its own distinctive assumptions, methods, and rules of evidence. Evidence which, in another sphere or in common sense judgment, might seem decisive, may be ruled inadmissible, and, just as the rules of the courtroom will sometimes seem strange and incomprehensible to the uninitiated, so too the world of hadith scholarship. But to those who accede to its particular assumptions and rules, the system appears marvelously coherent and absorbing.

Insofar as method is concerned, the system rests heavily on the evaluation of the list of human transmitters, the *isnād*, that is an integral part of each hadith report. The purpose of the *isnād*, however, is instrumental to the goal of evaluating the reliability of the *matn*, the content of the report. And since for the majority of Muslims through most of Islamic history the Prophet's words and actions have served as a fundamental source of religious authority, the ultimate goal is usually not mere accumulation of knowledge but rather the weightier task of discovering the divine will. In light of the weight assigned to the Prophetic word in the structure of religious authority (see Chapter 3), Muslim hadith scholars usually approach this task with a good measure of humility. Most know that the best they can do is assess the relative probability that a particular report originated with the Prophet; certainty is beyond their grasp.

Organization and Themes

The organization of this book is straightforward. Part I surveys the two major traditions of hadith study, Islamic and Western, in two overview chapters; Part II has four chapters concerned with the origins, both theoretical and historical, of hadith; Part III surveys major literary products of the hadith enterprise in three chapters; Part IV, the largest section of the book, drills down to examine the varied genres in which hadith reports were employed in five chapters; and Part V traces different trajectories of Muslim responses to hadith in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ending with a chapter on gender that describes the application of modern hermeneutical methods to the hadith by feminist and progressive Muslim scholars. The rare reader who sets out to read the book cover to cover will be following a very rough historical chronology, though with significant detours.

Some readers may prefer to approach the book thematically, following its two major story lines. The first of these, the story of Muslim hadith scholarship, begins in Chapter 1, where we are immediately confronted with the breadth and sophistication of the Muslim tradition of hadith scholarship. Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar, who is himself immersed in this tradition, opens the book with a masterful survey of the methods, assumptions, and technical vocabulary of hadith study viewed from the perspective of a contemporary practitioner. Abdul-Jabbar's recommendations for further reading at the end of the chapter hint at the magnitude of the challenge he takes on: many of his recommendations are in Arabic because there is little he can recommend in English that accomplishes what he sets out to do, which is to succinctly survey the results of eight centuries of hadith scholarship. Chapter 1 only begins to confront us with the scale of the scholarly enterprise that grew up around the hadith literature. For a more complete overview, some readers will find it useful to proceed from there to Chapter 7, which discusses the major canonical hadith collections, and to continue from Chapter 7 to Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu's overview of the tradition of hadith commentary in Chapter 8 and to Hüseyin Hansu's survey of how Muslim theologians approached hadith in Chapter 12. In Chapter 14 Aḥmad Pakatchi guides us through the parallel universe of Shiʿi hadith scholarship, and our tour of the Muslim tradition of hadith study finally ends in Part V with Jawad Qureshi's exploration of hadith study in the modern period in Chapter 15, my own account of increasingly bold nineteenth- and twentieth-century Muslim reappraisals of hadith in Chapter 16, and Adis Duderija's survey of feminist and progressive Muslim approaches to hadith in Chapter 17.

These chapters give a vivid sense of the scope and scale of the hadith enterprise and introduce major themes of the book that are developed in greater detail in other chapters. The sheer number of works referenced here tell their own story of a staggering investment of capital – intellectual, social, and economic – represented by the transmission, collection, and study of hadith. But, fun as it is, counting bibliography entries or commentary volumes will not quite capture the wider significance of this massive, continuing tradition: hadith study is a living, growing intellectual enterprise. Jawad Anwar Qureshi reinforces the point in Chapter 15, where he describes how the living tradition of hadith study has continued to evolve through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And if we look past the authors and titles, as Qureshi helps us to do, we will glimpse the fascinating web of institutions, patronage, and social relations that have grown up in support of the hadith enterprise.

Hadith study is a living tradition in another less secular sense. A major theme linking the chapters here will be the many ways the hadith literature has shaped and been shaped by Prophet-centered piety. Undoubtedly Muslim hadith scholars have been driven to labor over hadith by a complex mixture of motives, and Karagözoğlu and Qureshi in particular help us to see the social and historical context of hadith study. But a powerful driving force in these labors is the connection with the Prophet that the hadith mediates; as Karagözoğlu tells us, the commentator al-Sahāranpūrī expected no less than salvation as a reward for his effort (al-Sahāranpūrī 2006, 1:153). Such piety had deep roots. The boundaries between divine word and Prophetic word were not hard drawn, and from as early as we can discern the normative example of the Prophet, the sunna, was connected with revelation, as William Graham shows in Chapter 3. Thus, the hadith, as documentation for the Prophetic sunna, is part of a spectrum of revealed material that includes both recited revelation, the Qurʾan, and its "unrecited" complement in the sunna of the Prophet.

Of course, the normative function of hadith as the bearer of revealed guidance has been most clearly applied in the field of Islamic law (Chapter 10). But we see the imprints of Muhammad-centered piety far beyond concerns of law, at least as we ordinarily conceive these. Andreas Görke's chapter on Muhammad (Chapter 4) opens a window to the ways that the hadith literature both shapes and is shaped by devotion to the Prophet Muhammad as the ideal exemplar of human speech, behavior, and beauty. Such piety left a deep imprint on almost all of the major Islamic intellectual traditions, for the Prophet becomes not just a lawgiver but also the authoritative interpreter of the Qurʾan (Chapter 11), arbiter of correct belief (Chapter 12), and fount of Sufi spirituality (Chapter 13).

Genres

The diverse ways that hadith reports are employed reflect the varied disciplines that employ them. Complexity and variety should not surprise us in an ancient tradition of study that was already well developed in the third/ninth century, reached maturity eight centuries ago, and continues as a living scholarly tradition to the present day. Readers looking for a taste of this diversity can begin with Roberto Tottoli's account in Chapter 9 of the many and varied genres of Islamic literature in which hadith comes into play, genres which are then analyzed separately and in greater detail in Part IV.

This diversity of genres led to important variations in how the authority and authenticity of hadith reports was reckoned. Once the hadith literature had achieved its all-pervasive influence in Muslim intellectual culture, some Muslim scholars treated the *isnād* system of authentication much more casually than did others. The great al-Ghazālī famously came under criticism for citing hadith with weak *isnād*s, as did major biographers of the Prophet. Sufis were among the worst culprits, and it is easy to see why. As Aiyub Palmer shows in Chapter 13, Sufis bent to the logic of the hadith scholars, finding no shortage of hadith reports to ground their their teaching, but Sufis also privileged a parallel system of authority in which the *isnād*s that mattered most, the golden-chain linking them spiritually to the Prophet, was the *silsila*, the living chain of Sufi masters.

At the other end of the spectrum some theologians articulated standards for hadith apparently more stringent in certain ways than those of Islamic law. In the field of *kalām*, as Hüseyin Hansu shows (Chapter 12), theologians held that essentials of belief could only be known with certainty on the basis of *mutawātir* traditions, hadith reports so massively corroborated that there could be no doubt of their authenticity. Hadith reports that fall short of this standard – the vast majority – may be edifying but cannot be used to ground belief. Exegetical hadith reports (Chapter 11) form yet another distinctive genre.

All of these genres, despite their differences, grow out of a shared Sunni intellectual culture. When we come to Shiʿism we enter a fully constructed parallel universe in which many of the assumptions of Sunni hadith scholarship are upended. Pakatchi's comprehensive survey of Shiʿi hadith scholarship (Chapter 14) gives us a window into an alternate world of hadith piety in which the Imams, as successors to the Prophet, become the originators of hadith reports, in which the Sunni canonical "Six Books" are mirrored by the "Four Books," and in which the interplay of reason and tradition are debated in distinctively Shiʿite ways. At the same time much of the content and many of the chief concerns of the Shiʿite hadith corpus overlap with the Sunni tradition, making it clear that they arise from a shared history.

The Traditionalist Impulse

The case of Shiʿism shows just how pervasive the hadith paradigm and hadith-based ways of thinking became across even the most sharply drawn boundaries of Islamic intellectual culture. Consequently it is no surprise that hadith came to be cited and employed in diverse ways, fully reflecting the variety of that culture. At the same time, this variety comes into dialectic tension with a rigorous traditionalist impulse zealously kept alive by those who saw themselves as custodians of hadith. Is the hadith one way of knowing among many, which can therefore be integrated into a larger epistemological structure? Or is the tradition of the Prophet *the* primary way of knowing so that rigorously authenticated hadith reports become the standard against which all other knowledge, including even knowledge derived from the Qurʾan, is tested? One of the themes that will run through many of the chapters of this volume will be this dialectic between a strict traditionalism, identified with hadith scholars proper, and the cavalier (in their view) approach to hadith evident in some other genres.

This tension emerges as a major theme in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and looms large in this book. One twentieth-century name which will recur with surprising frequency here – in Abdul-Jabbar's survey in Chapter 1, in Christopher Melchert's treatment of Islamic law in Chapter 10, and in Qureshi's analysis of modern trends in hadith study in Chapter 15 – is Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, a twentieth-century hadith scholar whom Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar credits with, or rather blames for, single-handedly shifting Muslim hadith studies in a rigorous Salafi direction. Thus, one major trajectory of hadith study in the modern world, documented in Chapter 15 by Qureshi, is a story of revival and reform in which pure fidelity to hadith occupies a central place in shaping how Muslims respond to the challenges of the modern world. In this vision, the extreme of which is represented by the Ahl-i Ḥadīth and Salafis, the authority of hadith is determinative, and Muslims must navigate the challenges of the modern world by its light.

Movement toward rigorous hadith-based reform was not the only trajectory of modern Muslim thinking about hadith, however. For many other Muslims, in a trend that began in the nineteenth and accelerated in the twentieth century, hadith represented not light but darkness, an obstacle to successfully meeting the challenges of the modern world. Thus our account of the Muslim tradition of hadith study ends unresolved in Chapters 16 and 17, which tell the story of Muslim thinkers and movements who have reassessed the hadith, subjected it to new methods of scrutiny, reappraised its place in the structure of religious authority, rejected it completely, or relegated it to the sphere of private piety.

Clash of Epistemologies

The second major story line of this book traces what happens when a centuries old body of scholarship based on a tradition-centered system of historical epistemology becomes the object of another scholarly system with a quite different set of assumptions and methods. From the nineteenth century onward the hadith became the pre-occupation of a Western tradition of historical scholarship that applied sophisticated tools of source criticism pioneered and already destructively employed in the study of early Judaism and Christianity. The assumptions of Western scholarship have often been profoundly skeptical and the results often devastating to bodies of received knowledge. One of the subtexts of this book will be the interaction between these two very different ways of approaching the hadith literature. Distinguished scholars of both traditions are represented here. Contributors make no effort, however, to reconcile these perspectives, if indeed such a reconciliation is possible.

By contrast with the venerable maturity of Muslim hadith scholarship, this Western tradition of hadith study, while not exactly in its infancy, has hardly yet emerged from a stormy adolescence. It has also been one particular center of turbulence in the larger storm of controversy that has swept over the study of early Islam. Though he will be seldom cited here (he was not a specialist in hadith), John Wansbrough's long shadow still looms over the whole enterprise, as does that of Patricia Crone. The unwavering skepticism Wansbrough and Crone brought to the question of the sources for early Islam has inevitably seeped into the study of hadith.

The story really begins much earlier, however, at the end of the nineteenth century with the pioneer of Western hadith study, Ignaz Goldziher, whose seminal work laid the foundations for the field and set the agenda for the whole next century. Goldziher is the undisputed protagonist of Chapter 2, which traces the history of Western hadith studies. The note of skepticism that Goldziher sounded about the value of hadith as a source for the seventh-century origins of Islam was taken up and refined by Joseph

Schacht and amplified by twentieth-century revisionists. On the other side, and more constructively, the gap in knowledge Goldziher exposed has also motivated a century-long quest to show that he might not have been entirely right, and to argue that careful methods can retrieve from the hadith literature some usable historical data about the seventh or early eighth centuries.

The reader looking for a tour of the major themes of Western hadith scholarship should start with Chapter 2, proceeding from there to Chapter 5, where Gregor Schoeler considers a topic which is foundational to hadith-related historical scholarship: the question of how hadith reports were first transmitted and recorded. Christopher Melchert's chapter on Islamic law (Chapter 10) and Herbert Berg's chapter on Qurʾanic exegesis (Chapter 11) survey two major fields of study in which debates over the authenticity and dating of hadith reports have been especially intense. Melchert and Berg have both tended to take skeptical positions on the value of hadith as a source for the earliest history of Islam. By contrast Andreas Görke has been more optimistic that by rigorous methods hadith can give us usable data about Islam's first century. In Chapter 4 Görke illustrates this cautious optimism in his discussion of the major issues in considering the hadith as a source for the life of Muhammad. The most active front in current debates over hadith centers on the efficacy of methods for dating hadith that were pioneered by Harald Motzki and Gregor Schoeler and which have been taken up by Görke and others. These methods are roughly described in Chapter 2 and treated much more thoroughly by Pavel Pavlovitch in Chapter 6. Several contributors to this volume – Schoeler (Chapter 5), Görke (Chapter 4), Melchert (Chapter 10), Berg (Chapter 11), and Pavlovitch (Chapter 6) – have been energetic participants in methodological discussions, and their contributions here are a window into an ongoing and so far unresolved scholarly debate.

In some respects this book strains the boundaries of the companion genre. Far from synthesizing and rendering accessible the results of hard-won scholarly consensus, which I imagine to be the platonic ideal of a Companion-to-Something-or-Other, many of the contributors to this book are offering reports from the frontiers. On some of the topics covered here scholarly interest, at least in European languages, remains in its infancy. Consequently the book will function not just as an introductory guide but also as a substantial reference work, offering, for example, extensive bibliographies of Arabic sources.

Editorial Notes and Acknowledgments

References to the Qurʾan are cited in the format (Q sura number:āya) following the numbering of the standard Egyptian edition. No such standard numbering system exists for hadith reports, nor do we have widely accepted standard editions even for major collections. Contributors vary somewhat in their approach to citation, but the short method of citation most frequently adopted here is, for example (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 66) where Bukhārī is the author of the collection, 72 the number of the major section or *kitāb* (in the particular edition consulted by the contributor), *Libās* the abbreviated heading of the *kitāb*, and 66 the number of the subsection or *bāb* in which the tradition appears. While the system is imperfect, the inclusion of the abbreviated heading of the *kitāb* will in most cases allow readers to quickly trace down a particular hadith report across different editions or, more importantly, in electronic databases, and to account for variations in numbering systems. Where both Hijrī and Gregorian dates are given, the Hijrī is followed by a slash and the Gregorian date. In the references and bibliography, when the work gives a Hijrī date, the Gregorian follows in square brackets.

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The Winston Churchill illustration above was inspired by a conversation after church with my friend Joe Gilman, who has now returned to his Lord; he will, I hope, be amused by my use of it. My father, Ralph Brown, was called home while I was working on this volume. This world is poorer without his laugh, and I miss him deeply. This book is dedicated to his memory.

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I. Overview

CHAPTER 1

The Classical Tradition

Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj's (206–261/817–875) prologue to his hadith collection, the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, is the first treatise devoted to what later developed into the classical Islamic discipline of hadith evaluation or hadith criticism, known today as *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* ("the technical terminology of hadith study"). This discipline grew out of the work of the hadith collectors themselves. Thus the summary of the discipline, the *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* of Ibn Ṣalāḥ (577–643/1181–1245), is a set of lectures in which each lecture describes one sort of expertise that those who engage with hadith must have. Since Ibn Ṣalāḥ's work, each scholarly work in this field has had to engage with what he wrote. This chapter describes this discipline of hadith evaluation.

Hadith experts begin by collecting hadiths and studying them to evaluate the accuracy of the texts being transmitted and the continuity of the chains of narration with which they are transmitted. Their primary concern is with establishing the texts of the hadith reports. By contrast, the practitioners of practical jurisprudence in Islam (the *fuqahāʾ*, or "the *fiqh* scholars") begin with the practical implications of text – whether texts in the Qurʾan or hadith texts. They also evaluate hadiths, but they do this as an auxiliary to their interest in deriving "dos and don'ts" from these texts. Chapter 10 of this book deals with hadith in relation to Islamic law, and except for a brief note at the very end of this chapter, I have not discussed the perspective of the *fuqahāʾ* on hadith criticism.

This chapter deals with the Sunni approach to hadith evaluation, not the Shiʿi one, which will be discussed in Chapter 14. Nor am I concerned here with approaches to hadith adopted in many modern universities in Europe, Turkey, and the United States. These will be introduced in Chapter 2 and are also the focus of other chapters in this book.

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Overview

By the middle of the second century of Islam, a distinct group of scholars were engaged in some disciplines that a scholar has to take into account when evaluating the soundness of hadiths. About a century later, these disciplines had branched off into a number of distinct genres: the study of cohorts of hadith narrators (*ṭabaqāt,* or *tarīkh:* "history"), narrator evaluation or criticism (*al-jarḥ wa'l-taʿdīl:* "positive and negative evaluation of narrators," or *ʿilm al-rijāl:* "knowledge of narrators"), *ʿilal al-ḥadīth* ("the study of hidden defects of hadith"), and *musṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* ("the terms hadith scholars use in their evaluation of hadith"), or *uṣūl al-hadīth* ("the principles of evaluating hadith"). This chapter is mainly about this last discipline.

The principles of hadith criticism emerged as a genre in the third century, but discussions of the discipline remained haphazard until Ibn Ṣalāḥ's *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. This was a series of lectures in which he summarized the discussions of hadith criticism in a way that has defined the discipline to this day. Dhahabī (673–748/1274–1348) and Ibn Ḥajar (773–852/1372–1449) were able to put some finishing touches on the work of Ibn Ṣalāḥ so that, since their time, Muslim scholars see this discipline mainly in the perspective that these three scholars have provided.

In the first part of this chapter, presented in two sections, "Evaluating hadiths" and "Evaluating Hadiths from first principles," I will simply review this perspective on hadith, which I will call the "post-Ibn Ḥajar perspective on hadith evaluation." Most students of hadith begin with this perspective, and it remains the final word for all but a handful of contemporary hadith specialists.

In the second part of this chapter, again in two sections, "History" and "The Auxiliary Disciplines as Genres," I have tried to work up to the perspective of these contemporary specialists by tracing the history of the development of the discipline until it found final form in the work of Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar. These contemporary specialists have attempted to recover the methods scholars of the second and third century used to evaluate hadiths. Ibn Ṣalāh, Dhahabī, and Ibn Ḥajar formulated rules and definitions to capture these methods, but these contemporary specialists argue that they had to compromise some nuance in the process. In the final part, "Recent Developments," I point to these debates in a brief comment.

Evaluating Hadiths

A hadith is either totally rejected or found admissible for discussion. An admissible hadith is evaluated not as being true or false (a judgment confined to its text alone) but as being sound, tolerably sound, weak, or fabricated. This overall judgment on the "soundness" of a hadith is based first on assessing the "occurrence" (more accurately, the inability to rule out the non-occurrence) of the event of narration (that a narrator did hear that particular hadith from the source he names); and then on forming a judgment on the quality of the chain of narration, the narrators themselves, and the freedom of the text from strangeness and defect.

Degrees of Soundness

The hadith expert Muḥammad ibn Ismaʿīl al-Bukhārī (810–870/1194–1256), records the following two hadiths in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*:

> Musaddad narrated to me, [he said that] Yaḥyā narrated to me from Hishām that he [Hishām] said: "My father narrated to me from ʿAʾisha that Ḥamza ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī said 'O God's Messenger, I fast continuously ...' (Bukhārī 30 *ṣawm*, 33)
>
> ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yūsuf narrated to me, [he said that] Mālik reported to me from Hishām ibn ʿUrwa [who reported] from his father, [who reported] from ʿAʾisha the wife of God's Prophet [that she said,] "Ḥamza ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī said to the Prophet: 'Should I fast while travelling?' [ʿAʾisha states:] He [Ḥamza] used to fast a lot. The Prophet replied 'If you wish, you may fast, if you wish you may leave off fasting.'" (Bukhārī 30 *ṣawm*, 33)

A discipline of hadith evaluation ought to tell us whether the events reported in this hadith happened or not, and how accurately each hadith records the events, if they happened. Actually, though we have some hadith reports that are almost surely accurate and others that are almost surely inaccurate, the vast majority of reports are somewhere in between. Hadiths that tend toward being surely accurate are called "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*), while those at the other end are called "fabricated" (*mawḍūʿ*). The term "tolerably sound" (*ḥasan*) is used for the hadith that is a little less reliably reported, while the "weak" (*ḍaʿīf*) hadith is one that is not surely fabricated but is not reported reliably either.

Most often the hadith scholar's judgment regarding the soundness of a hadith has to do with the text as narrated through a specific chain of narration. So when Abū Zurʿa criticized Muslim, the author of the second most reliable collection of sound hadiths, for including hadiths by narrators such as Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr, Quṭn ibn Nusayr, and Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā – narrators not quite of the first rank of reliability – Muslim responded that he had done this where he knew the text itself through a perfectly sound chain of narration, but the weaker narrator is able to provide him a shorter chain of narration to the Prophet, so he narrated the hadith on his authority (Ḥāzimi 2007, 185, 188). The hadith texts in question are known to be well attested in their attribution to the Prophet, but Abū Zurʿa considers the hadiths weak because the well-attested texts are being narrated through chains of narration that include weak narrators.

Abū Zurʿa argues that a hadith is a series of claims. Each narrator claims he heard his source narrate the hadith. We evaluate the claim of each narrator with reference to his reliability. Since Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr, for example, is not of the very first rank of reliable narrators, his claim will not have the weight that the claim of a more reliable narrator would have. As a result, though the hadith texts that Muslim narrates through Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr are accurate reports of the words and deeds of the Prophet, the fact that Muslim narrates the texts through Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr will make the hadith evaluate as less than sound. Muslim's excuse is that through other sources, he knows the Prophetic texts that he narrates through Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr to be accurate. A weak narrator's report is not always inaccurate. Muslim assesses these to be cases where a narrator, although weak, was nevertheless conveying the Prophetic report accurately.

Past Judgments on Soundness of Hadiths

The companions and their followers noted down words and events they had participated in or had heard others tell them about (see Chapter 5). These notes were primarily an aid to memory. Succeeding generations would report these same hadiths through intermediaries. In transmission, some texts and chains of narration might have been shortened, lengthened, or corrupted. The idea of hadith collections where soundness of text and chain of narration was the principle of selection appeared and gained currency in these later generations.

By 225/840 Bukhārī had composed the first collection of hadith that made the reliability of hadiths an explicit criterion for selection. His student Muslim followed with a second such collection. Later, other hadith experts tried to compose such collections consisting exclusively of sound hadiths, but these two collections are the only ones that survived the test of time. In the next century Dāraquṭanī (306–385/918–995) devoted much of his life to trying to find weaknesses in the hadiths of Bukhārī and Muslim. Over the succeeding centuries, hadith experts studied these objections, and when Ibn Ḥajar came to summarize these discussions in *Fatḥ al-bārī* scholars had found almost all of Dāraquṭanī's objections to be technical ones that did not touch the substance of their selection.

Mālik ibn Anas's *Muwaṭṭa*ʾ, composed in the middle of the second century, is yet another work such that if a hadith is reported in it, it is judged to be sound. The book is from a different period, is written in a different style, and is available in a number of recensions containing a varying selection of 500–600 hadiths. All these things contribute to the fact that hadith scholars put the *Muwaṭṭa*ʾ in a class separate from the well-known hadith works of the third century. Mālik's care in his selection of the hadith material he chooses has led to the unanimous decision of hadith experts that every hadith he narrates is sound.

So, one way that contemporary students of hadith identify a sound hadith is to consult the collections of Bukhārī or Muslim or to discover whether Mālik reports it in the *Muwaṭṭa*ʾ. In such cases, we may consider the hadith sound, relying on the tested scholarship of these scholars. But the converse is not true. So, Abū Zurʿa, one of Muslim's teachers, objected that after Muslim's collection of sound hadiths, people will say that if a hadith is not in his work it is not sound. Muslim's response was to say that I have reported sound hadiths, but I do not claim to have recorded all hadiths that are sound (Ḥāzimī 2007, 185–189).

The works of Bukhārī and Muslim are known as "the two sound collections." Four more collections, those of Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Māja, and Nasāʾī, are mentioned along with these two, and the six are called "the six sound collections" (for more detailed discussion, see Chapter 7). Those not familiar with the field make the mistake of thinking that a hadith in any of these six collections should be judged sound, though actually these four compilers did not take it upon themselves to collect only sound hadiths. However, since hadith experts have written extensive commentaries on each of these four collections, we can easily find informed scholarly judgments regarding any hadith they have reported.

Haythamī's (735–807/1335–1405) *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, gathers together the hadith texts not reported in the Six Books but reported in some of the famous larger works:

namely, Ṭabarānī's three *Muʿjam* works, Abū Yaʿlā's *Musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, and Bazzār's *Musnad*. Most important for the student is that Haythamī has issued a judgment on the reliability of each hadith he records.

Another important source for judgments on hadiths not found in the Six Books is Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī*. Although this is a commentary on Bukhārī's work, in his discussion of each hadith in Bukhārī, he brings in hadiths relevant to the topic from other works. Ibn Ḥajar has taken it upon himself only to mention hadiths that are at least tolerably sound ("*ḥasan*") in his discussions of the hadiths in Bukhārī's text.

Hadith specialists also produced compilations of weak and fabricated hadiths. Suyūṭī's *Al-Laʾālī al-maṣnūʿa*, Kinānī's *Tanzīh al-sharīʿa al-marfūʿa*, and Ibn Qayyim's *Al-Manār al-munīf* are excellent sources for hadiths that experts have deemed fabricated. Finally, Sakhāwī's *Al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana* is worth mentioning since he has tried to collect those texts that common people often cite as hadiths – some are sound hadiths, some are simply popular sayings, while some are fabricated reports falsely attributed to the Prophet.

Evaluating Hadiths from First Principles

One needs to re-do the work of the hadith experts from "first principles" for a hadith that previous scholars have not assessed or regarding which they have issued varied judgments. For example, Muslim records that Abū Isḥāq al-Ṭāliqānī said,

> I [Abū Isḥāq] asked ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak about the hadith that says that it is a good thing to say prayers on behalf of your parents along with your own prayers, and to fast on their behalf along with your own fast. He [ʿAbdullāh] asked me who I had heard this from. I [Abū Isḥāq] told him that this is a hadith that Shihāb ibn Khirāsh narrates. He [ʿAbd Allāh] said: "He's reliable. Who does he narrate it from?" I [Abū Isḥāq] said, "Hajjāj ibn Dīnār." He [ʿAbd Allāh] said: "He's reliable. Who does he narrate from?" I [ʿAbū Isḥāq] said that he narrates it from the Prophet. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Mubārak said: "O Abū Isḥāq, there is a desert between Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār and the Prophet long enough that many camels would die in it! But yes, there is no difference of opinion about doing good deeds on behalf of deceased relatives." (Muslim *Muqaddima*, 4)

In this report, Ḥajjāj is from the generation of people who had heard hadiths from the generation of people who had heard from the companions of the Prophet. So there are at least two unknown people (and perhaps more) whom Ḥajjāj has not mentioned and about whose truthfulness and accuracy we cannot say anything.

A report is false because one or more of the narrators has made a mistake: either inadvertently on intentionally. The more careful a narrator, the more we can trust that he has not made inadvertent errors. Similarly, we can expect a person who avoids lying in everyday life not to deliberately state a falsehood in narrating hadiths. But when the person reporting to us does not explicitly name all his sources we do not even know the names of all the narrators, so we are not in a position to evaluate their reliability. Thus, the chain of narration being complete and going all the way to the Prophet is essential. Finally, even reliable narrators make mistakes. So we need to have external checks to ensure that otherwise reliable narrators have not made any mistakes in a specific report.

Ibn Ṣalāḥ (577–643/1181–1245) presents, in the form of a definition, the practical activity of evaluating hadiths:

> The sound hadith is the hadith that has a chain of narration that (1) goes all the way back to the Prophet *(musnad)*, and that (2) is continuous *(muttaṣil)*, and in which (3) a person of religious probity *(al-ʿadl)* who is (4) in control of the material he narrates *(al-ḍābiṭ)*, relates the hadith on the authority of another person of religious probity who is in control of the material he narrates, until you reach the very end of the chain of narration; and (5) the hadith is neither unusual *(shādhdh)* nor (6) does it contain any other hidden defect *(ʿilla)*. (Ibn Ṣalāh 1986, 11–12)

The first two conditions of this definition have to do with the chain of narration, the second two with the narrators, and the final two with the text of the hadith.

The Chain of Narration: Continuity and Completeness

To establish that a hadith goes all the way back to the Prophet through a continuous chain of narration one begins by trying to establish that each narrator had actually heard the hadith from the source he is naming. At least he should have been of an age to possibly narrate a hadith from his source before the time his source died. In some cases we can find testimony of his having been present in a city at a time at which the source he names was narrating hadiths in that city.

Ibn Ḥajar's *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb* is the most accessible brief reference work we can use to investigate the continuity of the chain of narration. Ibn Ḥajar's work consists of brief entries on narrators mentioned by the authors of the Six Books in their various works. Using evidence of the kind mentioned above, for the purposes of this book, Ibn Ḥajar has devised 12 generational cohorts to identify the temporal position of a narrator. He places both Shihāb ibn Khirāsh and Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār (from the quotation from Muslim above) in the seventh cohort: elder students of the students of the companions. So, the desert between Ḥajjāj and the Prophet is certainly a desert long enough that many camels would die in it!

Examining cohorts of narrators establishes the possibility that the chain of narration could be continuous. Mizzī's *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, the source for Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb,* takes us a step further by providing a list of usual sources and transmitters for each narrator. Mizzī starts each entry with a list of everyone who has narrated from that narrator and everyone from whom that narrator has narrated. The appearance of a source–narrator and narrator–transmitter link in Mizzī's list strengthens faith in the continuity of these links in the chain. The fourth name in the list of Shihāb ibn Khirāsh's sources for hadiths is Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār's. So, the chain of narration between Shihāb and Ḥajjāj is continuous while, clearly, it is broken between Ḥajjāj and the Prophet, making it a discontinuous and incomplete chain of narration.

Narrators: Reliability and Religiosity

The narrator should also be reliable in narrating hadiths and sound in his religious practice. Again, Ibn Ḥajar's *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb* is the most common reference work for identifying these qualities in a narrator. The book is arranged alphabetically. The entry on Shihāb Ibn Khirāsh reads,

> Shihāb son of Khirāsh son of Ḥawshab; of the Banū Shaybān tribe; father of Salṭ; of the city of Wāsiṭ; the son of ʿAwwām ibn Ḥawshab's brother (Khirāsh). He settled in Kufa. He is mentioned in Muslim's *Muqaddima*. Truthful, makes mistakes *(ṣadūq yukhṭiʾ)*…(Ibn Ḥajar 1991, *sub* Shihāb ibn Khirāsh)

First, Ibn Ḥajar identifies Shihāb uniquely. He lists his father's name, his grandfather's, his tribal affiliation, and his geographic origin. People often use a patronymic to refer to a person, so he notes that he is the father of Salṭ. A chain of narration might refer to him as "Abū al-Salṭ." He hails from Wāsiṭ in Iraq, so his name might be in chains of narration of people who are from Iraq or have traveled there and have narrated to Iraqis and from them.

Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb,* the more detailed work of which *Taqrīb* is a digest, tells us that Shihāb ibn Khirāsh has narrated only a few hadiths, but his uncle ʿAwwām, son of Ḥawshab, is better known and has narrated about 200 hadiths. Shihāb's grandfather Ḥawshab accepted Islam at the hands of the fourth caliph, ʿAlī. ʿAlī gave him a slave girl whom Ḥawshab married, and these are the descendants from that marriage (Ibn Ḥajar 2005, *sub* Shihāb ibn Khirāsh).

The *Taqrīb* tells us that he settled in Kufa. So, we can expect to see Kufans or those who had visited Kufa to collect hadiths to be narrating from him. He is further identified as the Shihāb who has been mentioned in Muslim's *Muqaddima.*

After this identification, Ibn Ḥajar judges his reliability: truthful, makes mistakes. This places Shihāb in the fifth of 12 grades of reliability that Ibn Ḥajar has proposed in the *Taqrīb* for assessing narrators (Table 1.1).

One could evaluate a chain of narration by looking up each narrator in Ibn Ḥajar's *Taqrīb*. If it looks as if all the narrators have heard the hadith from their source, and each narrator is of the first three grades of positive evaluation, one could issue a tentative judgment that the hadith is "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*), provided that the remaining conditions are fulfilled. Where there is a narrator of the second three grades in the chain of narration, the hadith would come down to being "tolerably sound" (*ḥasan*). Where there is a narrator of the third three grades, we would judge the hadith to be weak (*ḍaʿīf).* Hadiths with a narrator of the tenth grade can be judged weak or, if evidence suggests it, they can be judged fabricated (*mawḍūʿ).* Hadiths with a narrator from grade 11 or 12 would be judged to be fabricated. This judgment would be tentative, the final judgment resting on an examination of the remaining conditions.

The Text: Strangeness and Defects

Finally, for a hadith to be sound, the text must not be unusual, nor should it contain a hidden defect. A text is deemed unusual when either what it reports or the chain of narration through which the report comes to us, stands out as unusual with respect to the whole corpus of hadith as it has reached us.

Table 1.1 Ibn Ḥajar's 12 grades of reliability of narrators.

Grade	Description of narrators	Words used
1	The companions	
2	Narrators evaluated by repeating the highest words of positive assessment: "reliable, reliable" or "reliable, strong"	"*thiqa, thiqa,*" or "*thiqa, thabt*"
3	Narrators evaluated by *one* of these highest words of positive evaluation	*thiqa, thabt*
4	Narrators evaluated by a lukewarm word of positive evaluation: "truthful"	*ṣadūq*
5	Narrators evaluated by a lukewarm word of praise qualified by a slightly critical word, such as "truthful, but makes mistakes"	"*ṣadūq yukhṭiʾ*"
6	Narrators whose hadiths are few but about whom no one has found anything sufficiently damaging to reject their hadiths; indicated by the words "acceptable when others corroborate his report, otherwise, weak"	
7	Narrators from whom more than one hadith expert has related hadiths but no one has stated to be reliable	*mastūr*, or *majhūl al-hāl*
8	Narrators whom nobody has assessed as reliable while some experts have applied the description as "weak"	weak – *ḍaʿīf*
9	Narrators from whom only one person has reported hadiths and whom no one has assessed as reliable	*majhūl*
10	Narrators whom no one has evaluated as reliable while they have received significant critical commentary	*matrūk*, *matrūk al-hadith*, *wāhi al-hadith*, or *sāqiṭ*
11	Narrators accused of lying	
12	Narrators who are liars or fabricators of hadith	

A hadith of Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh ibn Jabal tells us that in his journey to Tabūk the Prophet would pray the afternoon salat and the late afternoon salat at one time, and he would pray the sunset salat and the evening salat at one time. Notice that this hadith does not specify whether he would delay the first salat so that he would pray both salats at the time of the second salat, or he would pray the second salat in advance, praying both salats in the time of the first one. Numerous hadiths explicitly describe the Prophet as delaying the first salat in travel, but hadith scholars have been hard put to find a sound hadith that describes the Prophet as having prayed the second salat in advance, in the time for the first salat.

In this commonly narrated version (that does not specify the time of the salat), Abū al-Zubayr narrates the hadith from Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh, and a number of reliable narrators relate this text from Abū al-Zubayr in this manner. One weak narrator, Hishām ibn Saʿd, also narrates the hadith from this same chain of narration of Abū al-Zubayr, from Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh, but he narrates the text differently. This weak version of this hadith specifies that when the Prophet would start travel before the time for the afternoon salat, he would continue traveling until the time for the late afternoon salat, then he would get down from his mount and everyone would pray both salats in the time for the second salat. If the time for the afternoon salat had begun before the Prophet started traveling, he would pray both salats in the time for the first salat and then begin his journey. In this same manner, if he traveled before the sun had set, he would travel until the time for the evening salat had started, and then he would get down from his mount and would pray both salats together in the time of the second salat. If the sun had set

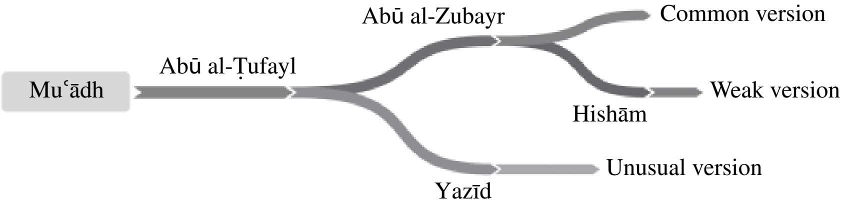

Figure 1.1 Unusual text: versions of Hishām's hadith on combining prayers.

before the Prophet started traveling, he would pray both salats in the time of the first, sunset, salat, and then he would begin his journey.

This is the well-known narration of the hadith and the weak version of the text of that well-known hadith as Hishām ibn Saʿd has narrated it (Figure 1.1). Another, unusual narration of the hadith is the one that Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb narrates from Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh. A very reliable narrator, Qutayba ibn Saʿīd, claims that Layth ibn Saʿd narrated this hadith to him from Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb with a text like the text of Hishām ibn Saʿd's hadith: a text that does not just state that the Prophet would pray salats ordained for two different times together while traveling but, rather, specifies that he would pray the two salats in the time of the second salat if he started out before the time of the first salat, and would pray them in the time of the first salat if he started out after.

In Ibn Ḥajar's classification in the *Taqrīb*, Hishām ibn Saʿd is a narrator of the fifth grade: "truthful but he has misconceptions" (*ṣadūq lahu awhām*), opposing Sufyān Thawrī, Zuhayr ibn Muʿāwiya, and Qurra ibn Khālid, each of whom is a narrator of the second grade. In addition, Hishām is trying to establish an important, unusual practice: offering an obligatory prayer before the time of it having become obligatory. So, hadith experts easily dismiss his hadith as an error.

Qutayba's hadith is a problem. All the factors that go against Hishām's hadith go against Qutayba's, but all the narrators of this unusual narration are of second grade, of the highest grade of reliability in the *Taqrīb* classification. Two particular pieces of information suggest that we should not take it at face value: (i) This hadith is the only instance of the chain of narration Yazīd ibn Ḥabīb from Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh; (ii) Layth narrates this hadith from Yazīd ibn Ḥabīb from Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh, and he is also among the people who narrate the common but weak version of this hadith from Hishām from Abū al-Zubayr from Abū al-Ṭufayl. If Layth were able to narrate this hadith from Abū al-Ṭufayl with only Yazīd as intermediary, why would he take the longer route of narrating it from Hishām from Abū ʿl-Zubar from Abū al-Ṭufayl (Figure 1.2)?

Hadith experts have struggled with this report in various ways. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has suggested that Qutayba has made two mistakes in this hadith. Qutayba is known as one of the narrators of Hishām's weak version of this hadith. He intended to narrate Hishām's hadith, with its unusual text, but instead of naming Hishām in the chain of narration, his mind wandered and he named Layth. Layth frequently narrates hadiths from Yazīd. So Qutayba was narrating the text he had heard from Hishām from Abū al-Zubayr but he mistakenly attributed it to Layth from Yazīd. Then Qutayba returned to the actual chain of narration of the hadith he had intended to narrate, so he finished up

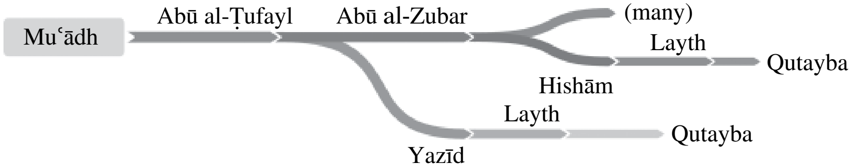

Figure 1.2 Unusual narration: Qutayba's hadith on combining prayers.

with Abū al-Ṭufayl from Muʿādh. Thus the unusual hadith text that should have been narrated through Qutayba from Layth from Hishām from Abū al-Zubayr from Abū Ṭufayl from Muʿādh ended up being narrated through Qutayba from Layth from Yazīd from Abū Ṭufayl from Muʿādh (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 2006, 2:104 no. 245; Mizzī 1980–1992, *sub* Qutayba ibn Saʿīd).

As another example, Ibn Abī Ḥātim says that he had heard Muḥammad ibn Muṭarrif narrate a hadith from Zayd ibn Aslam from ʿAṭā from the companion ʿUbāda ibn Ṣāmit. Muḥammad ibn Muṭarrif was a reliable narrator but Ibn Abī Ḥātim felt uneasy about this hadith. Then much later, when he heard the hadith narrated from Hishām from Zayd ibn Aslam *from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥibbān from Ibn Muḥayrīz* from ʿAṭā from ʿUbāda, he understood what had happened. Zayd ibn Aslam does narrate hadiths directly from ʿAṭā, but Zayd had this specific hadith through two intermediaries from ʿAṭā. When Muḥammad ibn Muṭarrif narrated it as if Zayd ibn Aslam had heard it directly from ʿAṭā, Ibn Abī Ḥātim was put in doubt. When he heard the hadith through Hisham, his knowledge of both narrators, of the various narrations of this hadith, of the types of mistakes narrators can and do make, and of probably half a dozen other such things, convinced him that in this case, Muḥammad ibn Muṭarrif had erred and dropped two names, that of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥibbān and that of Ibn Muḥayrīz, from the chain of narration (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 2006, 2:95 no. 239).

In another such incident, Abū ʿAwāna, a very reliable narrator, narrated a hadith in front of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī. Ibn Mahdī told him that he was mistaken, and that he, Abū ʿAwāna, had not himself heard the hadith from the source he claimed he had heard it from. Abū ʿAwāna was alarmed at this accusation, but when he checked his original notebooks, Abū ʿAwāna could not find this hadith in the corpus of texts he had narrated. Abū ʿAwāna asked Ibn Mahdī how this could have happened. Ibn Mahdī suggested that he had heard the hadith as a young man in an informal discussion of someone else's hadiths, and the hadith had stuck in his head and he had ended up repeating it as if it was his own hadith (Ibn Ḥibbān 2000, 1:51).

Ibn Mahdī's judgment is not based on a simple knowledge of dates and of who had met whom. Rather, a number of incidents told about him suggest that he had a reputation of having a comprehensive knowledge of the sources of hadiths and of the people who had acquired these hadiths from these sources.

This kind of judgment depends entirely on depth of study, and it is precisely this depth of study that hadith experts of this period do claim for him. ʿAli ibn al-Madīnī, relates that when he came to Kufa he began careful study of the hadiths of Aʿmash. Going through the hadiths of various students of Aʿmash he was able to gather together a considerable collection of Aʿmash's hadiths. When he came to Basra, he mentioned his interest in Aʿmash's hadiths to ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Mahdī. Ibn Mahdī said to him, "Let me dictate thirty of Aʿmash's hadiths to you that you would not have." He not only knew Aʿmash's hadiths, but his knowledge of the sources of Aʿmash's hadith was complete enough to allow him to guess which of them Ibn al-Madīnī would not have been able to locate (Rāmahurmuzī 1971, 251).

An expert will identify a hadith as unusual, and hence not meeting the fifth condition of the sound hadith, through his close familiarity with numerous narrations of many hadiths of many narrators. Such familiarity is also the only way to identify errors in hadiths that are sound with respect to the other five conditions. The first five conditions cover obvious defects, leaving this sixth one to cover "hidden defects," errors that are apparent only to experts.

Evaluating Hadiths from First Principles: Summary

In summary, although the text of a reported incident is either true or false, a report about the Prophet will be judged on a sliding scale. Some will be judged definitely sound. Others can be safely discarded as obvious mistakes or fabrications. But most will be more or less sound.

This is because most criteria are a matter of judgment. Usually, narrators are more or less reliable in their narration of hadiths and their religious practice is more or less sound. It is true that the chain of narration is either connected or broken, but the evidence that each person has actually heard each hadith from his source can have varying degrees of strength. Similarly, the claim that the hadith actually goes back to the Prophet can be well supported or less well supported. The final two conditions, that a hadith not be "unusual," and that there be no hidden defects in it are the two conditions most subject to the expert's judgment.

Finally, except in some extreme cases of a hadith being totally rejected as an obvious mistake or a fabrication, the judgment of a hadith being sound, reasonably sound, weak, or fabricated depends on weighing all six conditions: (i) continuity and (ii) completeness of the chain of narration; (iii) reliability in narration and (iv) soundness of religious practice; and absence of (v) strangeness and (vi) hidden defects in the text of the hadith. Thus, if the narrator of a hadith is very reliable, a fairly unusual hadith will be acceptable on his authority. An unusual hadith coming from a less reliable narrator will be rejected more readily.

History

It took about a century after the demise of the Prophet for hadith to develop into the genre as we know it today. At roughly the same time, an auxiliary "literature" (oral and written) related to examining these texts emerged. After the middle of the third/ninth century, this literature was to separate into four interrelated, distinct bodies of material: *taʾrīkh* or *ṭabaqāt* (history or the study of cohorts of hadith narrators), *ʿilal* (the study of hidden defects in hadith), *rijāl* or *jarḥ wa'l-taʿdīl* (knowledge of narrators or narrator criticism), and *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* or *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* (the terms hadith scholars use in evaluating hadiths or the principles of hadith criticism).

The Genesis of Hadith as a Genre

People were writing down words of the Prophet from his very lifetime (Aʿẓami 1978, 34ff.), but while the Prophet was alive authority was vested in the person of the Prophet and not in any oral or written record of his sayings or deeds. Such records would gain authority as the temporal distance from the person of the Prophet grew, and as the community united in the tutelage of the Prophet was confronted with disputes.

The Prophet did not describe in lectures the ideal life that a Muslim should live. He lived that life and people tried to emulate him. This ideal conduct was known as the sunna, the "way," of the Prophet in doing anything. In the first instance, those learning the Prophetic sunna learned it directly from being in his company. The Prophet might use words to describe what he wanted emulated, to correct errors in emulation, but the primary vehicle for his teaching was his example. Words did not serve as an independent vehicle for transferring his exemplary life to his audience.

Islamic scholarship continues to value learning from a teacher whose practice preserves what he teaches, but today texts are the primary vehicle of instruction. In a gathering of people who had spent years in the company of the Prophet, written or oral narratives of the Prophet's deeds and words would not have the significance they would later gain when those texts became the only source of access to that lived life.

As the first century progressed, the text began to weigh more and more compared to companionship as the primary vehicle of instruction. Thus, for example, most of a group of scholars in Medina, known as the "seven scholars," died within five years or so of 100 AH (718 CE). Each of these scholars had spent large portions of their lives as disciples of younger companions and each was known as a repository of the knowledge of the companion he had lived with.

This shift in medium of instruction from companionship to texts and verifiably sound texts is reflected in Ibn Sīrīn's (33–110/653–733) statement that people used not to ask for sources, but when "The Dispute" occurred, people started asking those who would quote the Prophet's words to name their informants (Muslim *Muqaddima,* 5). Where there had been a single, unimpeachable source of knowledge, Ibn Sīrīn's statement speaks of an awareness of variety in the sources of knowledge. Another oft-quoted report in this respect is that ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, caliph from 99 to 101 AH (717–719 CE), wrote to his governors to look in their areas for whatever sunnas they could find and write them down since he was afraid that knowledge might die out with the deaths of the scholars.

Those who had learned directly as disciples of the Prophet would not be impressed by narratives that went against things they had learned directly: they could simply deny them, or they could seek a suitable interpretation. Those who learned from the companions, not having the comfort of confidence in direct learning from the Prophet, would be much more disturbed by such conflicting narratives. This is not a matter of a development from oral reports to written ones. Rather, the significance of narration about the Prophet changed during the course of the first century.

Dispute and temporal distance from the Prophet forced those who were concerned to look for new ways of preserving the exemplary life of the Prophet. Throughout the second century, the concern to gather together such reports and to separate reliable reports about the Prophet from weak ones led to the genesis of the group of scholars that came to be known as "hadith folk."

Pericopae about the Prophet were neither the invention of the hadith folk nor their sole preserve: scholars of Islamic law, people concerned with preserving the inner aspect of the Prophet's teaching, even poets and authors of belles lettres would quote sentences of the Qurʾan and reports of the Prophet's words and deeds in their works. But not everyone was equal in preserving such *pericopae* with accuracy. Then, a narrator would convey a report to, say a dozen of his pupils, who might convey it to another dozen – thus a single report in one generation would become 144 in the students of their students, each of them varying in their ability to preserve these reports with accuracy. Identifying the most accurate of these 144 versions of a report became a complex art to which the hadith folk devoted themselves.

Some would argue that these *pericopae* should be used in conjunction with other things like a broad understanding of the sunna of the Prophet, while others would argue that they could actually become a substitute for the knowledge that previous generations had gained in discipleship. In this chapter I must bypass these important issues to return to focus on the discipline the hadith folk developed to identify the accuracy of these reports. I have raised these issues to suggest the gradual process by which hadith itself, the disciplines of evaluating the accuracy of hadith reports, and the principles involved in such evaluation grew into distinct genres and became the province of expertise of a dedicated class of scholars.

The Closing of the Corpus and the Beginnings of Auxiliary Disciplines

One can imagine an early period, say during the very life of the Prophet, when someone could report that the Prophet had said something and, depending on what the person was reporting and how reliable that person was, it would be acceptable even if no one else could corroborate his report. At the other end of the spectrum we can imagine a time in which if a person were to report something that the Prophet had said, the fact that no one else was reporting anything like it would be considered clear evidence that that report was wrong, no matter how reliable the person.

When the period ended in which hadith scholars remained willing to entertain the possibility of a single person reporting a hadith that no one else in his cohort reports, we can say that the corpus of hadiths was closed and no further additions to it were acceptable. Versions of these same texts narrated through numerous chains could multiply, but the number of texts being transmitted would remain the same.

In describing the classes of reliable narrators, Dhahabī tried to identify this period. Accepting a report coming through a single early source depends on the reliability of the narrator, the nature of the report, and the cohort of the narrator. So he says that the report of a single narrator narrating a hadith from a companion will be acceptable from a narrator who stands at the summit of reliability, such as Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib (21–94/642–712). When a narrator of this quality in the next generation, such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (50–124/671–741), is alone in reporting a hadith from just one of the followers of the companions, the hadith may be considered sound. It is rare to find instances of this in the next generation. So a narrator of the very first quality in this next generation, such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī (135–198/752–814) or Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (120–198/738–814), will relate 200,000 versions of hadiths, with only two or three hadiths that he narrates them although no one else in his cohort is able to (Dhahabī 1405b, 77).

Hadith experts have estimated the total number of distinguishable texts of hadith as being around 10,000. We must take Dhahabī to mean that narrators of the very first quality would command a corpus of many hundred thousand different chains of narrations to the set of hadith texts they knew. Of these many hundred thousand paths to these texts, they would not be able to come up with more than a handful of paths that others did not have.

A comprehensive count of hadith narrations and texts is difficult because the many narrations of a hadith text differ from each other in such a continuum that it is often difficult to decide how many unique texts one should make out of hundreds of variant versions of hadiths that seem alike. Also, one would like to limit the count to reliable reports, but there are often differences of opinion on the criteria for a hadith to be considered reliable and on the application of these criteria to a specific hadith. Nevertheless, hadith scholars have often tried to construct a broad vision of the field. One can contest the details of such a vision while benefiting from it in trying to construct a history of the development of the field.

ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī (161–234/778–849), an outstanding hadith expert of the late second/early third century, is known as “the philosopher among the hadith scholars.” He has tried to capture the development of the literature in his reflections on hadith narrations in his *Kitāb al-ʿilal* (al-Madīnī n.d.). He identifies six people who died toward the end of the first quarter of the first century as the pivot of chains of narration in each locality: Zuhrī (50–124/671–741) in Mecca, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār (d. 126/743) in Medina, Qatāda (60–117/679–735) and Yaḥyā ibn abī Kathīr (d. 129/746) in Basra, and Aʿmash (61–148/680–765) and Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī (33–127/653–744) in Kufa.

Ibn al-Madīnī’s study of chains of narrations showed him that if a hadith was being narrated in Mecca, for example, Zuhrī would probably be among those narrating it. Zuhrī is of the generation who would have had met many disciples of the younger companions, and who would have felt the impulse that led ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz (61–101/681–720) to ask that people write down the sunnas they were able to find in their areas. I suggest that Ibn al-Madīnī was able to identify pivots in chains of narration because in every locality in the Islamic world in this period in the early second century there were well-known scholars who had felt the need to collect the information about the sunna from disciples of the younger companions, and the outstanding ones among them had gathered together just about all the hadiths that were available in their area.

Ibn al-Madīnī calls the generation after this the generation of the authors of the topical collections of hadiths. This is the generation of Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179), the author of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. The variant versions of hadiths continued to grow geometrically in the succeeding two generations so that by the end of the century there were collections with many tens of thousands of hadiths. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's (164–241) *Musnad* contains about 28,000 hadiths. ʿAbd al-Razzāq's (126–211) *Muṣannaf* and Ibn Abī Shayba's (159–235) *Muṣannaf* contain about 20,000 and 38,000 reports respectively, though in the common style of second-century hadith works they contain both Prophetic hadiths and reports about later authorities.

Students of the history of narrator criticism usually begin with incidents from the life of the Prophet and from the period of the Caliphs, where someone confronted with a report about the Prophet demands to know the reporter, or where he rejects the report because the person conveying it was not reliable. Such events can certainly be presented as justification for the activity of narrator criticism. Such justification is required since, in general, speaking ill of people is blameworthy.

But the beginning of narrator criticism as a discipline must be tied to the beginning of the genre of hadith, with the formal appearance of a chain of narration followed by narrated text. As a corpus of such texts establishes itself as a genre, it demands an accompanying corpus identifying and evaluating the names appearing in the chains of narration of these texts.

Thus, Dhahabī begins his list of scholars whose critical assessment of narrators count with the usual early instances of critical assessments of narrators, but he ends this discussion of the precursors of the narrator critics and introduces his list of actual narrator critics with the words, "Then, when most of the followers of the companions had died, around the year 150/767, a group of brilliant scholars began to assess narrators positively and negatively." After listing four examples he states, "Let us now begin naming those scholars who, when they assess a narrator, their assessment is accepted ..." (Dhahabī 1405a, 175).

This first generation of critics is the same as the generation of the authors of the topical collections. They assessed the work of the preceding generation, the one that forms the pivot of hadith transmission. Narrator evaluation came into its own in these same three generations in which the corpus of hadith grew geometrically. These generations span the period from the second part of the second/eighth century to the first part of the third/ninth: starting from this generation of Mālik (93–179/711–795), Sufyān al-Thawrī (97–161/716–778), and Shuʿba (82–160/701–777), continuing with the generation of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī (135–198/752–814) and Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (120–198/738–814), and reaching a summit in ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī's (161–234/778–849) own generation that includes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855) and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (158–233).

A series of books record sessions in which a student reports question after question he asked of a scholar of this period along with the scholar's response. For example, we have the *Suʾālāt* ("questions") that Ibn al-Junayd asked Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, those that Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān ibn abī Shayba asked ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī, those that Abū Dāwūd asked Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Part of this genre are also the books of *ʿIlal* (for example, by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, by ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī, and by Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn) and of

Tarīkh (for example, that of Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn) by hadith experts of this period. The substance of Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* is the evaluations of hadiths and narrators from these and other scholars of this period.

One source for narrator evaluation was anecdotal information: a hadith expert says that he caught a narrator lying, or that he heard him narrate a certain hadith in one way and then, later, heard him narrating it differently. However, with the proliferation of the versions of a hadith as a teacher passed it on to his dozens of students and they passed it on to their dozens of students, hadith critics found a potent new tool with which to assess narrators. Narrator criticism based on a close study of all the chains of narrations and all the texts that a narrator relates allowed the critic to move beyond the anecdotal method.

So, when Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn came to ʿAffān to hear the hadiths of Ḥammād ibn Salama having already heard Ḥammād's hadith from 17 other students of Ḥammād, Ibn Maʿīn was in a position to judge ʿAffān's narration. ʿAffān refused to narrate these hadiths to Ibn Maʿīn! Ibn Maʿīn was coming less to learn from him and more to judge him (Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn,* 34).

The Auxiliary Disciplines as Genres

Much of the narrator assessment of scholars of these three generations was derived from this kind of comparative study of multiple narrations of a text. Such studies would expose the general character of strength and weakness in the narrations of a narrator, and they would also reveal errors in the narration of an otherwise strong narrator. This latter would be dubbed the study of hidden defects in hadith and would merit entire books devoted to it. In addition, while assessing narrators and hadiths, comments that the critic had made incidentally would later be identified as principles of hadith criticism. Later scholars would scour the comments of the scholars of these three generations for incidental records of hidden defects and of principles of hadith criticism, and these comments would become a point of reference for all later study.

The Narration of Texts

By organizing hadiths according to their bearing on various topics of religious practice, the topical collections presented an implicit demand that hadiths be taken into account in any discussion of a religious issue. But by the end of the second century the field had become so complex that this demand was no longer practical. A series of works appeared in the third century that, as a whole, presented a brief selection that could serve as a guide to the hadiths relevant to any topic of discussion and served to rehabilitate this demand.

In the second and third quarters of the third century, Bukhārī (194–256/810–870) and his student Muslim (206–261/817–875) had written their brief works recording only the soundest of sound hadiths, and only hadiths that went all the way back to the Prophet (i.e. not sayings or judgments of the companions and later scholars). Ibn

Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) also composed a collection that, in his judgment, contained only sound hadiths, but later scholars identified numerous questionable hadith in his collection. Ḥākim (321–405/933–1014) tried to identify sound hadiths that Bukhārī and Muslim had missed in their collections, but, again, later scholars identified numerous weak and even fabricated hadiths in his work.

The more generally beneficial direction of effort turned out to be in the works of Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasāʾī, and Ibn Māja, who relaxed the criteria of soundness to include hadiths that scholars of practical jurisprudence actually used as evidence in their arguments. Nasāʾī's work added a dimension of technical hadith criticism by identifying mistakes of narrators by comparing different narrations of a single text. Ibn Māja's work was distinguished by including many narrations that were not present in all the other five works. At the same time, he ended up including a number of hadiths that hadith experts deemed to be clear mistakes and even fabrications. So three centuries later, when the value of these books came to be acknowledged among hadith scholars, some spoke of the five books, subtracting Ibn Māja's work, while others substituted Dārimī's (181–255/869–797) *Sunan* for Ibn Māja's to complete the six.

In the first century and through most of the second century the unit of transmission was the single hadith. Sessions of hadith narration were not usually tied to books: students would come to get the authority to transmit hadiths from hadith narrators, and either the narrator would decide the hadiths to be read out, or the students would request particular hadiths or sets of hadith. The hadith narrator would usually be in possession of manuscripts from which he would read out these hadiths, but these manuscripts were primarily for his own use. The third century was the century for hadith compilations. A contemporary scholar has argued that this was the century in which just about all reliably transmitted hadiths were collected and compiled into works of hadith written for the benefit of the public (al-ʿAwnī 1996, 61). So, in the fourth century, the written book replaced the pericope as the unit of transmission.

Hadith scholars continued to compose collections of hadiths throughout the fourth and even the fifth century. However, it is rare to find a hadith in these compilations that was sound and had not already been recorded in the compilations of the third century. Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Maghribī's *Jamʿ al-fawāʾid* gathers together the texts of hadiths discounting repeated texts from most of the major well-known collections of hadiths. The total number of hadiths in this book is 10,133. Thus, it is quite reasonable to think that by the end of the third century the corpus of hadith texts might have been recorded in hadith compilations.

Narrator Evaluation

Bukhārī's *Al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr,* appearing around the end of the first quarter of the second century, was the first work organizing the narrators of hadith in roughly alphabetical order, and then according to generational cohort within each alphabet. This work gave shape to what was to become the field of narrator criticism.

Bukhārī focused on narrators, but though there was some material on narrator criticism in many entries, the work was more concerned with identifying narrators, studying hidden defects of hadiths, and incidentally discussing principles of hadith criticism. As narrator criticism was to develop, issuing judgment on narrators was to be seen as the final goal of the discipline. Bukhārī's work was lacking in this respect. In addition, Bukhārī loved subtlety, so that even when he issued judgment he did it in a way that only someone with considerable background in hadith studies can understand what he has said.

The next work in the field was Ibn Abī Ḥātim's (195–277/811–890) work, *Al-Jarḥ wa'l-taʿdīl*. There is a story that when Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa saw Bukhārī's work they felt that they could not get along without it so they sat Abū Ḥātim's son down with Bukhārī's *Ta'rīkh* and had him go through the entries one by one asking them what they had to say regarding each entry. They replied with what they had learned from Bukhārī and added a comment or two here and there and this compilation of Abū Ḥātim's son was what came to be known as *Al-Jarḥ wa 'l-taʿdīl!* (Khaṭīb Baghdādī 1987, 1:15–16).

However, comparing the entries in the two books, it is clear that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's is entirely a different kind of work. Ibn Abī Ḥātim is concerned to issue judgment on the reliability of each narrator. Discarding all of Bukhārī's allusions to hidden defects and the principles of criticism, he makes his book one of the first books in the genre of narrator criticism proper.

ʿIjlī's (182–261/798–874) *al-Thiqāt* is another book from this period. By the end of the fourth century, al-ʿUqaylī's (d. 322/934) *al-Ḍuʿufā,* Ibn ʿAdī's (277–365/890–975) *al-Kāmil fi ḍuʿufā al-rijāl,* and Ibn Ḥibbān's (d. 354/965) *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn* comprised an encyclopedic compendium describing most narrators of hadith who had been considered weak by critics. Ibn Ḥibbān also wrote *al-Thiqāt,* which focused only on sound narrators. These works summarize and study the efforts of the critics of the second and third centuries so they carry that same flavor. There is some anecdotal evaluation, but much of the evaluation is based on a study of the narrations of hadith: the study of hidden defects.

Criticism of this period, especially of the first few generations of critics, also reflects the gradual growth of terminology. A narrator can be strong relative to one narrator and weak relative to another. A critic can describe a narrator as strong, very strong, tolerably strong, or not quite weak. So the comments of a single critic about a single narrator must be understood in the light of what others have said about him. Dhahabī states that some critics are quick to issue harsh criticism and do not praise a narrator easily, others are quick to praise and slow to criticize, while a third group is known as even-handed (Dhahabī 1405a, 171–172).

Each critic may use words differently, and in some instances, a single critic may use a single term to indicate two different evaluations. So there are instances where Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn denigrates a narrator saying, "He's nothing." But in some instances he uses this same term to indicate that this narrator has so few hadiths that he is not worth wasting one's breath over (Ibn Ḥajar 2003 1:421).

In the late fourth and fifth centuries, scholars began composing works collecting the assessments relevant to the narrators of the hadiths present in a single work, such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī or that of Muslim. This work led to the composition of the source of the common compendia of biographies of hadith narrators, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī's (541–600/1146–1203) *Al-Kamāl fī ʿasmā al-rijāl*. Maqdisī wrote biographical entries on the narrators mentioned in the chains of narrations of the hadiths in the Six Books. In *Tahdhīb al-kamāl,* Mizzī (654–742/1256–1341) expanded on his effort, correcting mistakes, adding narrators that Maqdisī had missed, adding much biographical data on various narrators, adding entries on narrators mentioned in other hadith works composed by the authors of the Six Books, and adding entries on narrators who do not narrate in the Six Books but have names similar to narrators of hadiths in the Six Books and who could be confused with them. With these additions, his book became about three times the size of Maqdisī's *al-Kamāl.*

Mizzī's *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* turned out to be an invaluable resource for students of hadith but it was voluminous. Mizzī's student, Dhahabī, tried to bring his book down to a manageable size by deleting all the biographical material that was not relevant to identifying the narrator and to assessing his reliability in transmitting hadiths. At the same time he added some useful material from ʿAlā al-Dīn al-Mughalṭāʾī's *Ikmāl tahdhīb al-kamāl* and from his own study. The result of this work, *Tadhhīb al-tahdhīb,* was, once again, of a size comparable to Mizzī's work, so Dhahabī wrote a very brief digest of it in a single volume: *al-Kāshif.* This work mentions just the name of the narrator followed by a few lines to help the student identify the narrator, place him in history, and evaluate his reliability as a narrator. Dhahabī was a pedagogue, and his brief comments in these entries constitute a marvelous introduction to numerous narrators.

In the following century, Ibn Ḥajar brought the size of the *Tadhhīb* down by a third by focusing strictly on material related to narrator evaluation. Because of this focus and the reduced size, today his book, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb,* is the most popular single first source for biographies of narrators whose narrations are in the Six Books. Ibn Ḥajar improved on Dhahabī's *al-Kāshif* in his *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb,* by his very systematic scheme of evaluating narrators. So today there is no better source than his *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb* for a quick evaluation of the reliability of a narrator.

Principles of Criticism

By the end of the second century, Shāfiʿī (150–204/767–820) had written his *Risāla.* The subject of the treatise is the proper way to understand the Qurʾan, but as a part of this discussion he states principles one must observe in assessing hadiths to be used to decide religious issues. While establishing the importance of reference to Prophetic practice in all religious issues, he decisively rejects all non-textual attempts to recover that practice. He argues that the text, well documented and reported through a continuous and complete chain of narration through reliable people, should be the only source for establishing anything about practice. In technical terms, Shāfiʿī rejects hadiths with discontinuous chains of narration and hadiths that do not go all the way back to the Prophet. Basing all practice on sound hadiths, he presents a definition of the sound hadith. These discussions remain the foundations of discussions of hadith criticism to this day.

Nevertheless, Shāfiʿī treats these topics incidentally, as his main topic requires. The first independent, focused discussion of the principles one must observe in evaluating hadiths available to us today is in Muslim's prolegomena (*Muqaddima*) to his *Saḥīḥ.* Another such discussion, covering many more topics than Muslim's, is Tirmidhī's in his

Kitab al-ʿilal, usually included as an addendum to his *Sunan*. Abū Dāwūd also discusses a handful of important issues in hadith criticism in his letter describing his compilation of hadiths, the *Sunan*, to the people of Mecca.

These discussions are not incidental but they are fragmentary. The authors of the Six Books and other hadith experts of the third century demonstrate the principles of hadith criticism much more in practice than in trying to capture their practice by verbal formulations and definitions. It is with Rāmahurmuzī's (265–360/879–970) *al-Muḥaddith al-fāsil* that we can say we finally have a first work on hadith criticism. Many of the topics that will become familiar in later texts on hadith criticism appear in this work. But Rāmahurmuzī does not describe the way to judge a hadith to be sound, reasonably sound, or weak. Ḥākim (321–405/933–1014) fulfilled this crucial lack in *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth,* the second sustained work on hadith criticism.

In *al-Kifāya fī ʿulūm al-riwāya* and in a series of treatises he wrote on the various skills a hadith expert must have, Khaṭīb Baghdādī (392–463/1002–1071) brought together the discussions that were scattered through the works of the experts from the second century to the fifth. Khaṭīb's works form the basis for the first comprehensive manual for hadith criticism, Ibn Ṣalāḥ's *Maʿrifat anwaʿ ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*.

Ibn Ṣalāḥ's manual was a series of his lectures that soon gained the position of a single textbook that students would consider a sufficient introduction to the discipline of hadith criticism. For the next few centuries, works on principles of hadith criticism would be versifications of Ibn Ṣalāḥ's work, summaries of it, or glosses and commentaries upon it.

After his work, perhaps the only work that gained comparable importance was Ibn Ḥajar's *Nukhbat al-fikar*, along with his own commentary on it, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*. While Ibn Ṣalāh's work maintained the form of lectures with only a rough organization, Ibn Ḥajar submits the entire field to a strict logical structure. The book begins, "Either a report is transmitted through innumerable chains of transmission, or through numerable chains more than two, or through two chains of narration, or through one…" In this manner, Ibn Ḥajar finally gathers together the scattered descriptions of the practice of hadith experts through the centuries into a steel frame of divisions, sub-divisions, terms, and definitions. Ibn Ḥajar's well-argued judgments in discussions of disputed issues and his insistence on precision in terminology brought a logic and organization that were familiar to students of the various shariʿa-related disciplines of that day but that were not usual in hadith studies.

Scholars continued to write significant works in the field, and they continue to do so. At the same time Ibn Ḥajar's logical organization of the field and Ibn Ṣalāḥ's summary of the issues and the significant positions scholars had taken in the field, continue to provide the discipline with its broad shape.

Recent Developments

In general, for many centuries Sunni Muslims have been practicing Islam throughout the world within the framework of four schools: the Ḥanafī, the Mālikī, the Shāfiʿī, and the Ḥanbalī. Those who take their practice from the collective decisions of any one school are known as *muqallid:* people who practice *taqlīd.* A *muqallid* may be extremely knowledgeable; his decision to work within the framework of the scholarly decisions of a single school makes him a *muqallid.*

Aside from all of these schools, there have been individuals who examine the evidence for each practice and decide on the correct practice based solely on their reading of the texts of Qurʾan and hadith. Obviously, only a person of considerable knowledge can take this route. And, even among *muqallid*s, in theory a person who has the ability to examine the evidence directly is not allowed to ignore the primary evidence and cling to *taqlīd.* As an empirical matter, usually *muqallid* scholars question the ability of each of these individuals to understand the primary texts in this manner. Proving an individual incompetent will not endear the critic to the individual or his students and followers, so arguments get acrimonious.

Over the centuries, the work of those who refuse to adhere to one school has brought forward a cluster of issues in which their interpretation of the texts seems to go against the position of the schools. The thinking of the schools in these issues is often complex and based on global demands of the positions scholars of the school have taken on various issues, while the independent thinkers bring forward simple, easy-to-understand, and seemingly unambiguous texts. Thus, while it takes considerable knowledge to derive the ruling for a specific issue through studying texts based on global demands of positions taken on other issues, it is easy to argue that the schools are hide-bound followers of what their elders say while they ignore clear commands of the Qurʾan and hadith. As a result, these independent thinkers gain not-so-independent-thinking followers. Such groups of people who commit themselves to follow only texts regardless of the positions of the local schools have arisen in various areas throughout Islamic history. In modern Arab-Muslim history, this group of people who prefer the eclectic style to the systematic one call themselves "Salafis."

With some notable exceptions, the study of hadith after Ibn Ḥajar took the direction of interpreting hadiths. Ibn Ḥajar and other experts of his age (such as Dhahabī) seemed to have explored the issues surrounding the verification of hadiths so thoroughly that all that was left was to consistently apply the rules that they had derived. Scholars committed to schools would identify the level of reliability of a hadith, and then they would strive to interpret it in a way that made sense within the framework of the decisions of their schools. Those of Salafi inclination, in a generic sense, would identify the places where the decisions of the schools departed from the demands of reliable hadiths. In either case, the factors that participate in reliability were not up for discussion.

Historical sensibility balks at the idea of single individuals changing the course of history, but I am unable to escape the impression that the efforts of one Salafi activist, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, have weighed in heavily in a change of atmosphere in hadith studies that has taken place since about 1980. Albānī began with the standard Salafi demand that people leave their following of social custom and tradition and turn to following the pristine Islam preserved in the texts of the Qurʾan and hadith. But his insistence that today nobody has the right to quote a hadith without evaluating it from first principles brought about the greatest change.

That Albānī demanded such revaluation of hadiths from anyone quoting a hadith, and then his own practical steps to determine the reliability of hadiths afresh caused a furor among the *muqallid*s, and even some Salafis were taken aback. For the purposes of our story, the most important result was that a generation of university students tried to evaluate any hadith they would use in their dissertations.

Although *muqallid* hadith experts complained about this trend by describing the knowledge required to evaluate a hadith, it took over a decade or so for the first backlash from within the Salafi camp. Would-be hadith critics focused on the first four conditions of Ibn Ṣalāh's definition of the sound hadith: that the hadith be reported (i) by reliable people of (ii) sound religious practice, (iii) through a continuous chain of narration, and (iv) going back all the way to the Prophet. They would give the condition that (v) the hadith not be unusual and that (vi) it not contain a hidden defect only perfunctory notice in a comment at the end of the evaluation to the effect that "there is nothing apparently unusual about the hadith and we are not able to find any hidden defects in it."

But serious scholars of Salafi inclination gradually became aware that these last two conditions are precisely those that are the focus of hadith criticism in the second and third centuries. A hadith that is narrated by a weak narrator need not necessarily be weak, and a strong narrator can also make a mistake. Usually, a weak narrator will make mistakes and a reliable narrator will not. But the hadith expert will examine each hadith as reported through various chains of narration to see what the case actually was, and such examination is well beyond the reach of the ordinary university student.

The most important contemporary studies take up issues that were seen as having been settled and codified by Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar and other experts of the ninth/fifteenth century, and they go through the literature of the second/eighth to the fourth/tenth centuries to see if what had been settled could actually be established. In the process, these studies revise many particular decisions of the scholars like Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar, and they revive an appreciation of the subtlety of the methods of the scholars of the second/eighth to fourth/tenth centuries.

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Mizzī, Yūsuf ibn al-Zakī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. 1980–1992. *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, edited by Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayri. 1427 [2006]. *Al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-mukhtaṣar min al-sunan bi-naql al-ʿadl ʿan al-ʿadl ʿilā Rasūl Allāh ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, edited by Naẓar Muḥammad Fāryābī. 2 vols. Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba.

Rāmahuruzi, al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. 1391 [1971]. *Al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil bayn al-rāwī wa ʿl-wāʿī*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAjjāj al-Khaṭīb. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

Further Reading

There are numerous excellent works at introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels along with research articles and books in Arabic. However, the material in English either treats the field as a list of terms that need definition or it engages in polemics either trying to demonstrate or refute the authenticity of the hadith literature. So, unfortunately, I am unable to recommend a few simple, readable, and accurate presentations of the principles of Muslim hadith criticism as it was practiced and as it was encoded in the works of medieval scholars.

Abdul-Jabbar, Ghassan. 2007. *Bukhari*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Although not a description of the field of hadith criticism, through a study of one of its prime practitioners one can get a flavor of the things it involved. The description of

critical methods does not get beyond those of the post-Ibn Ḥajar era.

Brown, Jonathan. 2009. Hadith: *Muḥammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World.* Oxford: Oneworld. The first three chapters of this book form the only readable introduction to Muslim hadith criticism in English that I would recommend for a beginner.

Ibn Ṣalāh al-Shahrazūri. 2006. *Kitāb maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, translated by Eerik Dickinson, as *An Introduction to the Science of the Hadith: Kitab Maʿrifat Anwaʿ ʿIlm Al-Hadith*. Great Books of Islamic Civilization. Reading: Garnet. The translator took on the impossible task of translating a very technical manual of hadith criticism without the aid of footnotes and explanations. As a result, the book is only useful to get a first impression of the types of things Muslim hadith critics dealt with.

Lucas, Scott. 2004. *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn and Ibn Ḥanbal*. Leiden: Brill. This is a difficult book but it provides a well-researched academic grounding to the type of vision of the development of hadith and related disciplines that forms the narrative background to this chapter.

The following Arabic works are good introductions to the field.

al-ʿAwnī, al-Sharīf Abū Ḥātim. 1421 [2001] *Khulāṣat al-taṣīl fī ʿilm al-jarḥ wa ʿl-taʿdīl.* Mecca: Dār ʿālam al-fawāʾid. This is a brief introduction to narrator criticism from the point of view of a practitioner of the art. It is based on lectures delivered in a mosque in the Sacred Precinct of Mecca.

al-ʿAwnī, al-Sharīf Abū Ḥātim. 1427 [2007]. *Sharḥ mūqiẓat al-dhahabī*. Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzi. This is Dhahabī's brief classic introduction to hadith criticism. The explanatory notes by al-ʿAwnī make it accessible to the beginner.

Malibari, Hamza. 1423 [2003]. *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth fī ḍawʾ taṭbīqāt al-muḥaddithīn al-nuqqād.* Beirut: Dār ibn Ḥazm. This is a well-thought-out reorganization of Ibn Ṣalāh's treatise, along with the author's attempt to revive the style of criticism of the critics of the second and third centuries.

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, Raḍī al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī. 1326 1st ed. 1408 2nd ed. *Qafw al-ʿathar fī ṣafw ʿulūm al-athar*, edited by ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda. Halab: Maṭba al-maṭbūʿāt al-islāmiyya. This is a brief elementary treatise written from the point of view of the schools of law. The copious footnotes make it a good introductory work.

Ibn Kathir. (n.d.). *Al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, edited by Aḥmad Shakir. Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmīyya. This is a classic presentation of post-Ibn Ḥajar hadith criticism.

al-Judayʿ, Abd Allāh Yūsuf. 1424 [2003]. *Taḥrīr ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. Beirut: Muʾassassat al-Rayyān. A little beyond the elementary level, the book is useful as an introduction to the discussions in contemporary hadith studies.

CHAPTER 2

Western Hadith Studies

Daniel W. Brown

Early Encounters

The encounter of Western critical scholarship with the hadith literature began in nineteenth-century colonial India through the work of Aloys Sprenger (1856, 1865) and William Muir. Muir's *Life of Mahomet* (1858) is especially significant for its impact on the Indian reformer Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1870), who became one of the first modern Muslims to question the authority and reliability of the hadith literature. Sprenger, however, was the more original scholar and the first to "submit the sources of the biography of the Prophet of the Arabians to a critical enquiry" (1856, 303). Goldziher later credited Sprenger as "the first to treat of the hadith scientifically" (Goldziher 1971, 1:20 n.5).

Sprenger pioneered several themes of enduring importance. He called attention, first, to hadith forgery on a large scale. This was not difficult, since the Muslim tradition itself documents massive forgery. But while Muslim hadith scholars were confident that hadith criticism provided the tools to deal with the problem, Sprenger rejected the efficacy of traditional hadith criticism, arguing that forgery was endemic from the companions of the Prophet onwards. On a more constructive note, Sprenger noticed that a single tradition could often be found in multiple variations, opening the possibility that careful comparison of the numerous variants of a tradition could be used to establish a chronology for the growth of that tradition over time (Sprenger 1865, 65 n.1). Indeed, he thought that hadith literature offered the historian scope for constructive criticism precisely because so many versions of the same tradition were circulated, an insight which has proved fruitful in recent hadith scholarship. Finally, he recognized the importance of conflicting reports about when the hadith were first recorded and collected in writing (Sprenger 1856, 304–310), thus pioneering an important topic in modern

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studies of hadith. On all of these questions Sprenger laid the foundation for Goldziher's seminal work. Nevertheless, Sprenger's conclusions were conservative. He continued to accept strong *isnād*s as reliable evidence of the provenance of a tradition (1856, 310), and in the end he concluded that "the Sunnah contains more truth than falsehood" (Sprenger 1865, CIV).

In his *Life of Mahomet*, William Muir closely followed Sprenger. Anticipating what would become an enduring theme in modern biographical writing on Muhammad, Muir held that the Qur'an is the one unassailable source for Muhammad's biography:

> The Coran becomes the ground-work and the test of all inquiries into the origin of Islam and the character of its founder. Here we have a store-house of *Mahomet's own words recorded during his life*, extending over the whole course of his public career, and illustrating his religious views, his public acts, and his domestic character. (Muir 1858, xxvii, emphasis original)

By contrast with the Qur'an, Muir argued, the hadith literature is riddled with corruptions and is therefore of dubious value as a source for early Islamic history. Like Sprenger, he discounted the value of classical *isnād* criticism, although his doubts did not prevent him from taking *isnāds* at face value when it suited him. He argued, for example, that traditions narrated by individuals who were very young at the time of the events they report, or which relate events prior to the time when Muhammad became a well-known public figure, are, in his view, of doubtful authenticity. More significantly, Muir insisted that the text of the tradition itself, the *matn*, "must stand or fall upon its own merits" (Muir 1858, lxxxvii). Thus he discounted any tradition which furthers a general bias common to all Muslims, such as "the universal desire of Mahomet's glorification" (lxv); he rejected traditions in which the narrator appears to have a "special interest, prejudice or design"; and he expressed suspicion of traditions in proportion to their "particularity of detail" (liii, lv). Muir thus followed Sprenger in applying rudimentary tools of textual criticism to the hadith literature.

Muir's most significant legacy, however, may have been through his influence on Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, whose *Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed and Subjects Subsidiary Thereto* (1870) was written as a rebuttal of Muir. But although Sayyid Aḥmad initially defended the value of hadith against Muir's criticisms, he conceded that all traditions, even those in the canonical collections, should be subject to criticism; he agreed with Muir that criticism of the content of traditions is essential and that traditional hadith criticism was flawed by its primary reliance on external criticism, and, following Muir, he emphasized the subordination of hadith to the Qur'an, viewing the Qur'an as the standard against which other information about the Prophet must be tested. Throughout his subsequent writings on hadith, Sayyid Aḥmad remained preoccupied with issues raised by Muir.

The methods adopted by Sprenger and Muir anticipated enduring trends. Both largely ignored the *isnād* as a criterion of authenticity, focusing their attention on the *matn*. Both, similarly, imported methods of textual criticism from other fields of historical inquiry to establish criteria for judging authenticity. They also initiated an enduring search for an external criterion to anchor judgments about the authenticity of hadith.

Muir argued that only the Qur'an can provide such historical certainty, a refuge of perceived safety which scholars have continued to fall back on, although few biographers have been willing to consistently follow through on its logic.

At roughly the same time as Sprenger and Muir, scholars of Islamic law also turned their attention to hadith. Like the biographers, their aim was historical, to reconstruct the origins and development of Islamic jurisprudence. But unlike biographical writing, which utilizes hadith as evidence to illuminate Muhammad as subject, the study of Islamic law gives primary place to the role and function of the hadith literature in the evolution of the Islamic tradition. This has the important effect of shifting the focus away from early seventh-century Arabia and toward later developments. Eduard Sachau (1870) accepted the foundational premise of Muslim jurisprudential theory that the essential material of the hadith, the sunna of the Prophet, provides, alongside the Qur'an, the basic material for Islamic law. Islamic law grew out of the practical need for "applied knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunna" and the "confrontation between the facts with the regulations of the Qur'an and Sunna" (Motzki 2002, 3). But Prophetic sunna is not identical with hadith, and this raised questions about how the hadith eventually emerged as the sole vehicle for documenting and transmitting Prophetic sunna. Both Sachau and Alfred von Kremer (1877) became interested in issues of transmission, forgery, *isnād* criticism, and the writing down of traditions. Von Kremer in particular was skeptical of the efficacy of *isnād* criticism and doubted that biographical reports about transmitters, upon which *isnād* criticism is based, could be trusted. Like Sprenger, he argued that large-scale fabrication of reports originated with the companions and continued into the following generations (Motzki 2002, 8). Thus while Sachau and von Kremer accept the existence of an essential core of Prophetic *dicta*, they are naturally more interested in what following generations did with this material. This shift in focus away from the Prophet and toward the evolution of Islamic thought and institutions during the eighth and ninth centuries set the stage for Goldziher's seminal work.

Goldziher's Paradigm Shift

With his seminal *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889, 1971), Ignaz Goldziher launched a paradigm shift in Islamic studies such that Goldziher's work "became the corner-stone of all serious investigation" not merely of law and jurisprudence, as Schacht notes, but of all hadith-reliant scholarship (Schacht 1950, 4). Subsequent Western studies of hadith might be fairly characterized as a series of footnotes to Goldziher. In Volume II of *Muhammedanische Studien*, Goldziher built on Sprenger's tentative observations about the growth of forged traditions to argue that "the hadith will not serve as a document for the history of the infancy of Islam, but rather as a reflection of the tendencies which appeared in the community during the more mature stages of its development" (Goldziher 1971, 2:19). And because "by far the greater part" of the hadith is "the result of the religious, historical and social development of Islam during the first two centuries" (Goldziher 1971, 2:19), a hadith report is a primary source of documentation for the outlook of those who first attributed that report to the Prophet and circulated the tradition. Goldziher's thesis seemed to eviscerate knowledge of the early seventh-century origins of Islam, and at the same time opened dramatically new prospects for what study of hadith might reveal about the formation of Islamic law, theology, and piety under the Umayyads and early Abbasids.

Goldziher's argument rests on a sweeping theory of the growth and forgery of hadith literature and its motives. Following Sprenger, he finds evidence of forgery on a massive scale: "Every stream and counter-stream of thought in Islam," he argues, "has found its expression in the form of a hadith, and there is no difference in this respect between the various contrasting opinions in whatever field" (Goldziher 1971, 2:126). No political or doctrinal controversy was left without numerous supporting hadith reports, "all equipped with imposing *isnād*s" (Goldziher 1971, 2:44). Goldziher found the hadith literature to be replete with anachronisms: reports supporting the legitimacy of dynasties; traditions addressing how believers should respond to ungodly rulers; hadith supporting particular positions in theological controversies; reports giving voice to local patriotism; reports praising the merits of particular localities, tribes or families; apocalyptic prophecies of conquests and rebellions; and hadith praising the descendants of ʿAlī or, conversely, seeking to limit Alid legitimacy. He argued that these features of the hadith literature cast doubt on the entire corpus. Forgery became so engrained in the system that hadith reports were fabricated to combat forgery (Goldziher 1971, 2:127), as in the Prophet's famous condemnation near the start of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*: "Whoever lies wilfully about me enters his resting place in the fires of hell" (Muslim, *Muqaddima*, 2; Goldziher 1971, 2:127). In the same vein, manifest anachronisms in the hadith are justified by traditions affirming that the Prophet had predicted the entire history of the community to the hour of the resurrection (Goldziher 1971, 2:143).

For Goldziher *isnād*s are negligible and *isnād* criticism is derivative, a secondary development motivated by the urgent need to bolster the strength of one's own hadiths in the face of competing traditions. Thus he ignores *isnād*s as a basis for evaluating or dating traditions, implicitly treating all *isnād*s, along with the entire scholarly apparatus that grew up to support *isnād* criticism, as potentially fabricated, the result of needing to document and defend one's position in legal, political, and theological controversies. There is effectively no difference between "sound" traditions that appear in the canonical collections and traditions rejected as fabrications by Muslim hadith scholars. All traditions – legal, historical, biographical, theological, exegetical, canonical or not – are equally useful as sources documenting the development of Islamic thought, and at the same time equally unusable as sources for the time of the Prophet. In the end, the content of a hadith report is the only criterion for evaluating the context and provenance of any particular tradition.

Since it is much easier to tear down than to rebuild, it is hardly surprising that Goldziher's constructive attempts to correlate the growth of hadith literature with the development of Islam during the Umayyad and early Abbasid period have had a shorter shelf-life than the doubts he raised. But even if many details of his reconstruction have failed the test of time, the destructive results of Goldziher's analysis have had an enduring impact, and it was not long before other scholars began to amplify Goldziher's skepticism. Whereas Goldziher's analysis had been largely restricted to legal and theological hadith, for example, Lammens (1910) and Caetani (1905–1907) explicitly extended his conclusions to the genres of Qurʾan commentary, *sīra* literature, and historical reports generally (Lammens 1910; Schoeler 2011, 3). Lammens, in particular, long anticipates a theme of late twentieth-century revisionism by arguing that the biography of Muhammad was in large part the product of Qurʾanic exegesis.

The degree to which Goldziher altered the landscape of hadith scholarship is sometimes obscured amidst the mind-numbing intricacies of subsequent scholarly debates about hadith, some of which will occupy us below. After Goldziher, for many scholars concerned with hadith, the likelihood that any given tradition can be confidently attributed to the Prophet approaches zero. Extraordinary efforts have been exerted, for example, to make the case that a particular tradition might plausibly be traced to within 50 or 60 years of the events it recounts, but establishing a given hadith report as authentically Prophetic is seldom in view. When a careful scholar like Harald Motzki criticizes Goldziher (Motzki 2005), it is not to argue for the authenticity of hadith in the usual sense, but to argue that Goldziher's methods of dating are imprecise, his skepticism overgeneralized, and that rigorous methods can plausibly establish the origins of particular elements of the hadith to authorities of the early second or late first century AH. This is generally the most that we can hope to gain.

In practice, however, the sweeping results of Goldziher's skepticism have proved hard to swallow, and many writers have chosen to studiously ignore him. Many serious biographers of Muhammad, like Montgomery Watt (1953, 1956), Maxime Rodinson (1968), Rudolph Peters (1994), or Tilman Nagel (2008), rejected Goldziher's sweeping skepticism, and some continued to write as if they lived in a mostly pre-Goldziher world. It is easy to empathize. As Schacht pointed out, scholars have a "natural desire for positive results" (Schacht 1950, 4) and hewing close to Goldziher is an unlikely way to fill the pages of a biography. Indeed, one of the few books about Muhammad to take doubts about the hadith literature seriously is very short and amounts to little more than a rehashing of Qurʾanic themes cleverly marketed as biography (Cook 1983). Another solution has been to ignore questions of historicity altogether, focusing instead on the literary representation of Muhammad (Rubin 1995).

Naturally, direct attempts to refute Goldziher have also been plentiful. One line of argument is especially associated with the Turkish scholar Fuat Sezgin and relies on a defence of the *isnād*. Whereas Goldziher dismissed the *isnād* as irrelevant, Sezgin finds *isnād*s largely unproblematic as historical data. In fact, he argues, *isnād*s were used from the time of the companions onwards to document not oral but *written* transmission of hadith (Sezgin 1967, 53–233). *Isnād*s, in Sezgin's own words, are a record of "authors or authorized transmitters of books" (Sezgin 1967, 79). Thus, the literary collections of the third century are the culmination of continuous written activity beginning with the companions, written collections (*ṣaḥīfa*s) attributed to the companions and successors are real books, and we can reconstruct those books by collating *isnād*s from the literary period. Even if we lack manuscript evidence, we can nevertheless mine *isnād*s from later sources, bring together all hadith reports attributed to the putative author, and reconstruct the source. Although their methods differed from Sezgin's in significant respects, Azami, Siddiqui, and Abbott also argued that hadith reports were scrupulously transmitted in writing from the generation of the companions onwards (Siddiqui 1993; Azmi [Aʿẓamī] 1978, 1985, 1992; Abbott 1967).

Goldziher had already concluded that written activity began very early and opposition to writing was a later development arising from doctrinal concerns; thus, on the general question of whether the early Muslims wrote anything down, Sezgin is well within the scholarly consensus (Cook 1997; Schoeler 2006, 2009). But beyond this general conclusion, Sezgin's claims have gained little traction. While early followers of Muhammad may well have made use of writing, it is a massive leap to conclude that they wrote books and that the content of these books was transmitted in such a way that these can be reliably reconstructed from literary sources two centuries distant. The foundation of Sezgin's argument turns out to be circular: he can only argue the reliability of third-century sources, which is all we have and upon which any reconstruction must be based, by taking for granted the reliability of *isnād*s and of supporting biographical literature, thus a priori asserting the reliability of third-century sources.

Apart from these noteworthy holdouts, Goldziher's broad premise won the day: the vast bulk of the hadith literature will be of little help as a source for seventh-century Arabia or the career of the Prophet, rather it will provide evidence about the beliefs of the Muslim community and the development of Islamic law and piety. Debate then moves on to the question of whether we can find convincing ways to get behind the third-century literary sources and, if so, how far into the early second or late first century the hadith might take us. Post-Goldziher hadith studies might be seen as a series of attempts to slowly, painstakingly, and partially fill the yawning gap in our knowledge of early Islam that he exposed.

Schacht and the Common Link

The first major contribution to filling this gap came 50 years after Goldziher with Joseph Schacht's seminal study of Islamic law, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (1950). Schacht adopted Goldziher's skepticism, agreeing that few if any traditions originated with the Prophet. But departing from Goldziher, he believed that it was possible to arrive at a plausible estimate of when a particular tradition was put into circulation. Schacht's conclusions, while focused on legal traditions, are just as sweeping as Goldziher's, and his own condensed summary of how he proceeded is worth quoting at length:

> Every legal tradition from the Prophet, until the contrary is proved, must be taken not as an authentic or essentially authentic, even if slightly obscured, statement valid for his time or the time of the Companions, but as the fictitious expression of a legal doctrine formulated at a later date. Its date can be ascertained from its first appearance in legal discussions, from its relative position in the history of the problem with which it is concerned, and from certain indications in text and *isnād* which will be discussed in the following chapters. The sources available enable us to draw these conclusions in many cases. We shall find that the bulk of legal traditions from the Prophet known to Mālik originated in the generation preceding him, that is in the second quarter of the second century AH, and we shall not meet any legal tradition from the Prophet which can be considered authentic. (Schacht 1950, 149)

As this makes clear, Schacht's treatment of hadith is part of his larger reconstruction of the origins of Islamic law for which he employs a range of historical-critical methods. Many of these are standard-issue tools of historical source criticism: polemical traditions are later than the doctrine or practice they oppose (152); traditions with elaborate circumstantial details are later than those without (156); pithy legal maxims are earlier than traditions which incorporate them (180ff.); a tradition with clear relevance to a legal discussion in which it is not mentioned is likely to have originated later than that discussion (140); traditions often reveal evidence that they have been improved to head off possible objections (157) or adapted to reconcile them with the doctrine of a particular legal school (159). So far Schacht's methods are extrapolations of the methods of Sprenger and Goldziher, adapted and more narrowly applied to his analysis of legal traditions.

Schacht's great innovation was to reclaim the *isnād* as a source of usable data that might preserve clues to a tradition's provenance. He argued that *isnād*s tend to grow backwards in such a way that "traditions from Successors become traditions from Companions, and traditions from Companions become traditions from the Prophet" (Schacht 1950, 156). This turns classical *isnād* criticism on its head: for Schacht, the earlier a tradition, the less likely it will be to have a complete *isnād*, and "the most perfect and complete *isnād*s are the latest" (Schacht 1950, 165). Schacht argued that this process of backward projection left behind clues to the true originator of the hadith (Schacht 1950, 163). In particular he drew attention to the curious pattern whereby the *isnād*s of numerous variants of a tradition frequently trace back through a single transmitter whom Schacht labels the common transmitter or common link. The common link phenomenon, which is well-known to Muslim hadith scholars, is easier to diagram than to explain (Figure 2.1):

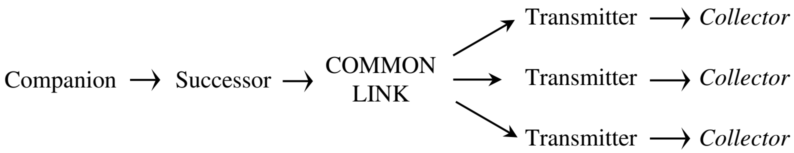

Figure 2.1 Simplified common link.

If we collate the many separate narrations of a given hadith report, the *isnād*s of many of these narrations often converge on the common link. The chain of transmission preceding this common link is shared by most versions of the tradition, but after the common link, lines of transmission fan out, just as we might expect of a widely distributed tradition that was received and passed on by numerous transmitters. This is an odd pattern, marking a sharp shift in patterns of transmission that requires explanation: after the common link a tradition is passed on via numerous paths, resulting in many variants, exactly as we would expect; why does transmission prior to the common link look so different? Schacht's solution was simple: the part of the *isnād* after the common link is real, the pre-common link *isnād* is fictitious. Therefore, the earliest point at which the hadith transmission process can be considered historical is the era of a tradition's common link. The common link (or someone using his name) is the presumptive originator of the hadith, and the hadith report can be plausibly dated to the era of the common link.

Schacht's aim was to repurpose *isnād* criticism so that it was no longer a means of authenticating Prophetic hadith but instead a tool for dating when a tradition began to circulate, meaning, for him, when it was forged. These methods of dating then gave Schacht the tools to reconstruct the emergence and evolution of the hadith literature in the context of the development of Islamic law. He concluded that the material sources of legal hadith – the legal positions and doctrines that found their way into hadith reports – emerged out of the relatively free-wheeling legal thinking of early regional schools of jurisprudence which applied independent judgment, *raʾy*, to legal problems as they arose. But those legal schools faced pressure from tradition-minded rivals to justify their doctrines on the basis of earlier authority. After al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) this pressure became irresistible. Thus, the evolution of the hadith literature can be traced through several stages of back projection: legal doctrines that originated as *raʾy* were at first attributed to the generation of the successors, then to companions, and finally to the Prophet.

Post-Schacht Revisionism

It is a mark of Schacht's enormous influence on subsequent hadith studies that 70 years later the common link phenomenon continues to be relied upon as an analytical tool, albeit in much revised form, even by some of his severe critics. His legacy has been taken in varying directions, however. One trajectory, represented by Michael Cook, underscored Schacht's negative conclusions, while at the same time dismantling his positive program for dating hadith. In *Early Muslim Dogma* (1981) Cook reinforced Schacht's conclusions about hadith forgery, constructed his own model of Muslim scholarly culture to explain the backward growth of *isnād*s, and extended Schacht's skepticism well beyond the limited sphere of legal traditions with which Schacht worked. What Cook calls a "traditionist culture" values authority over originality, favors elegance and brevity in *isnād*s, and prefers traditions with multiple lines of transmission. The result is a system within which the backward projection and the spread of *isnād*s is incentivized. The successful traditionist scholar is just as sure to seek out the strongest *isnād* attributions as the successful modern scholar is to claim originality (Cook 1981, 107–110). This same set of incentives make Schacht-like attempts to date according to the common link untenable. In order to identify common links, Schacht had to trust post-common link portions of the *isnād*. But if Cook is right, incentives in favor of short, elegant *isnād*s and multiple lines of transmission ensured that new, shorter, more elegant *isnād*s and additional lines of transmission would continue to be created, rendering *isnād* analysis of any kind unreliable. Common links are just as likely to be illusory as earlier authorities, and any method of dating hadith which relies on the *isnād* is a fool's errand. What looks like a common link may be created by someone inventing his own chains of transmitters.

Cook further tested the efficacy of Schacht's method on traditions that can be confidently dated according to external criteria (Cook 1992). He first arrives at plausible dates for three eschatological traditions by establishing the point at which the tradition's narrative shifts from fact to fiction – that is, the point at which the author is clearly making wild guesses, and guessing wrongly, about future events. Cook then applies Schacht's methods to these same traditions, concluding that those methods show limited utility. On the positive side, since no early authorities could possibly have possessed the specific knowledge attributed to them, Schacht's general skepticism about attribution of any tradition to the companions or the Prophet is confirmed – hardly a ringing vindication of Schacht given the tiny sample size. On the other hand, and more significantly, Cook shows that Schacht's general conclusion that no tradition can be traced earlier than 100 AH is incorrect. Further, Schacht's dating of traditions based on the completeness or perfection of the *isnād* is also not confirmed since traditions traced to the Prophet and traditions with more perfect *isnād*s are not always later than those with less perfect *isnād*s. Perhaps most damaging, Schacht's common link method fails in every case to identify a plausible originator of the tradition. The cumulative effect of Cook's work is to bring into doubt any scheme which relies on the *isnād* to date hadith. In effect this would return us to Goldziher's *isnād*-free world, where our only real hope of placing a tradition will be by correlating the tradition's content with known historical data. If we follow Cook, the vast bulk of the hadith literature will tell us almost nothing about the first two Islamic centuries, and we will abandon any hope that *isnād*s can help us to fill this void.

But is this level of doubt warranted? Ten years after Cook's article Görke (2003) revisited his methods of dating and found significant weaknesses. Applying an approach similar to Cook's to test methods for dating an eschatological tradition, Görke found that his dating based on *isnād* analysis fitted perfectly with the results of external dating (2003, 207). Indeed, Görke's critique is built on an approach to hadith studies which has resisted radical skepticism and instead has attempted to develop and refine Schacht's use of the *isnād* to date traditions.

Juynboll's Taxonomy of *Isnāds*

Post-Schacht study of *isnād*s has been especially associated with the work of Gautier Juynboll (1993, 2007, Reinhart 2010). A truly independent Dutch scholar, who could spend his time any way he liked, Juynboll chose to spend immense amounts of time mastering the intricacies of *isnād* criticism. In sharp contrast to Cook and Goldziher's *isnād*-free world, Juynboll's world was occupied with almost nothing but *isnād*s. Juynboll doubled down on the common link phenomenon, investing enormous effort in the development of dizzyingly complex methods to more reliably distinguish genuine common links from "seeming common links" by cataloging curiosities such as "partial common links," "dives," and "spreading *isnād*s." The bottom line is that once he is confident that he has established a common link, Juynboll's assessment remains largely Schachtian, in that the common link can be used to date the tradition, but with an important caveat: Juynboll is unwilling to call the common link a forger. From a rigorous methodological perspective Juynboll agrees with Schacht that the common link must be thought of as the originator of the report, but he does not think this implies forgery (1993, 9–10). Rather, early transmitters of hadith inherited a huge body of religious material. They did not make up what they passed on but instead systematized it and added value by attributing reports to earlier authorities, whom they may very well have believed did in fact transmit the data. But because the common link remains the earliest transmitter to whom any solid historical value can be reliably assigned, the era of the common link must be considered the tradition's *formal* point of origin even if the subject matter of the hadith might be older (Juynboll 1989, 353). Sometimes Juynboll thinks the subject matter of a hadith report might go back even as far as the companions, but he considers any such judgment speculative and beyond the scope of any systematically applied method. Juynboll's approach amounts to a refinement of Schacht's methods in identifying genuine common links, but it has limited impact on the dating of hadith (for criticisms of Juynboll's methods see Motzki 2010).

Forgers or Avid Collectors?

Efforts to push the dating of hadith farther back than Juynboll was willing to go were pioneered by Gregor Schoeler, Harald Motzki, and Andreas Görke. Motzki argues that the common link phenomenon has been misunderstood, and that when we rightly understand the actual role played by common links, we can plausibly push back our estimate of the origins of hadith by at least a generation. Whereas Schacht's common links are forgers, Motzki's common links are avid collectors, "the first major collectors and professional disseminators of knowledge in general, and of traditions about individuals of the first Islamic century in particular" (Motzki 2005, 227; for a discussion of the various roles that have been assigned to the common link and the possibility of distinguishing between them, see Görke 2003, 188). The multiplication of hadith reports from the period of the common links onward should not be attributed to forgery but to newly invigorated efforts at collecting and systematizing what was already circulating in more scattered and less systematic form. Motzki finds it incredible that early collectors of hadith would have simply invented their *isnād*s. Far more plausible, he argues, to accept at face value that the common link did actually hear the tradition from the authority he claimed to have heard it from. Motzki admits a "possibility that common links themselves invented the content and *isnād* of traditions" (Görke et al. 2012, 45) but he finds this uncertainty more tolerable than Schacht's or Juynboll's skepticism and holds it reasonable to hypothesize that many hadith reports were in circulation among the generation of the successors by the end of the first century AH, awaiting collection and more systematic transmission in the early part of the second century AH. Motzki thus argues that we can reasonably trace the origins of hadith back at least to the later first century AH, and that in many cases the generation of the common link does not represent, as Schacht argued, the earliest possible point of origin of a hadith report but, rather, the latest. We can be reasonably sure that a hadith report really was in circulation at the time of the common link, and we can often plausibly trace it to an earlier point.

Motzki developed his approach to hadith via two distinct methodologies, both involving the *isnād*. The first is a method of source reconstruction which looks to escape the circularity of Sezgin's uncritical confidence in *isnād*s. In a ground-breaking work Motzki (2002) applied a combination of internal and external criteria to test whether the *isnād*s of one of the earliest extant collections of hadith, the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, could plausibly be employed to reconstruct earlier sources. He finds that each of the four major authorities cited by ʿAbd al-Razzāq display both internal consistency on certain criteria and significant variance from one another, and on this basis he concludes that it is unlikely that ʿAbd al-Razzāq fabricated these attributions. After thus establishing that ʿAbd al-Razzāq's four major authorities represent real sources, Motzki drills down to further analyze one of those authorities, Ibn Jurayj, applying similar methods and coming to similar conclusions. He concludes that material, for example, that Ibn Jurayj transmits on the authority of ʿAtāʾ really did originate with ʿAtāʾ, thus allowing us to plausibly reconstruct a source of hadith from the late first or early second century.

Motzki's method, if accepted, would seem to significantly increase confidence that *isnād*s were in play by the end of the first Islamic century and that some hadith reports can plausibly be traced to transmitter-compilers of the late first and early second century AH. This clearly undercuts Schacht, who discounted all ascriptions to first-century authorities. Motzki says a forger would not invent different authorities, each with its own character, so that different sources vary measurably on certain criteria. Thus, when each of Ibn Jurayj's authorities displays internal consistency, and at the same time varies in significant ways from other authorities, Motzki concludes that the pattern is inconsistent with forgery and Ibn Jurayj's attributions are to real sources.

Motzki's methods have not gone unchallenged. Melchert (2004) argues that Motzki's verdict that Ibn Jurayj is innocent of forgery relies heavily on assumptions about how a forger would go about forging, and such assumptions are vulnerable to challenge. Melchert can easily imagine a forger attributing reports to authorities in the manner that Ibn Jurayj does. So can Gledhill (2012), who set out to test Motzki's methods on an expanded data set and found those methods wanting. Gledhill concluded that patterns of transmission from ʿAtāʾ to later authorities inspire far less confidence than Motzki's study of Ibn Jurayj seems to suggest and that there is good reason to be skeptical that third-century collections accurately preserve material from second-century scholars. If we put aside these doubts, Motzki's source reconstruction takes us back to the late first/early eighth century, at best. That still leaves us with a significant gap in knowledge.

Reconstructing ʿUrwa's Narrations

Another method, anticipated by Iftikhar Zaman (1991), independently developed by both Harald Motzki and by Gregor Schoeler (2003), and further developed by Andreas Görke (2000; Görke and Schoeler 2005), has aimed to penetrate that void. The method begins by gathering every version of a given tradition that is ascribed to a particular authority. In Schoeler's (2011) pioneering application of this method, which we will take as our example, the authority chosen was ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94/712). The son of a prominent companion of the Prophet, ʿUrwa was also a nephew of ʿAʾisha and his adult life spanned the second half of the first century AH. Several characteristics make ʿUrwa a good test case: he is credited as an important source for material in Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra*; he may have directly received reports from his aunt ʿAʾisha; reports from him are transmitted by multiple channels, including both his son Hishām and the important transmitter Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī; and, not least, Rudi Paret, famous translator of the Qurʾan into German, had already sought to establish that genuine student–teacher relationships existed between Ibn Isḥāq and al-Zuhrī and between al-Zuhrī and ʿUrwa (Paret 1954; Shoemaker 2011, 261; Schoeler 2011, 6–7). If we can satisfy ourselves that genuine historical material from ʿUrwa has reached us, we will push back the horizon of knowledge of the early Islamic tradition to within 60 years of Muhammad's life (Schoeler 2002, 362).

After we have gathered all reports traced to ʿUrwa about a particular event, the Hijra, for example, the next step is to collate and compare variants. Best results require as many versions and as many different paths of transmission as possible. Theoretically, if real transmission is happening, then different textual variations should correspond to specific *isnād*s. In other words, allowing for the normal modifying effects of transmission, it should be clear that reports attributed to al-Zuhrī by Ibn Ishāq display some stamp of a common source, that is, they share material in common showing that they are versions of the same original text. Similarly we will expect that versions transmitted via ʿUrwa's son Hishām (d. 146/763) will display their own common features, while also displaying textual characteristics that differ from the textual profile of al-Zuhrī's reports. The argument is that if *isnād*s and textual analysis line up, we have real transmission (for a more nuanced discussion, see Görke 2003, 191). We can then reconstruct al-Zuhrī's original version of the tradition by stripping away modifications revealed by variants. In this way, we can also identify later embellishments or forgeries, thus tracing "layers" in the growth of a tradition. In a similar manner we can compare the al-Zuhrī transmissions with other separate lines of transmission that go back to ʿUrwa to isolate the historical material that originated with ʿUrwa from later accretions. The result, according to Schoeler, is that we can "almost always" reconstruct Ibn Isḥāq's version (d. 150/767); we can "often enough" get back to versions transmitted by al-Zuhrī and Hishām ibn ʿUrwa (d. 146/763), and when these authorities independently transmit a report from ʿUrwa, we can reconstruct the gist of that report by comparing different versions (Schoeler 2011, 114).

By means of these methods, which have been stuck with the awkward label, *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis, Schoeler and Görke claim to establish that traditions about certain key events in the life of Muhammad go back at least to al-Zuhrī and in many cases to ʿUrwa. Events so far studied in this way include the beginning of revelation to Muhammad; the scandal involving ʿA'isha (Schoeler 1996, 2011); the murder of the Jewish satirical poet Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq (Motzki 2000); the treaty at al-Ḥudaybiya (Görke 2000); traditions concerning the Hijra (Görke and Schoeler 2005); and accounts of the battles of Badr, Uḥud, the Trench and the conquest of Mecca (Görke and Schoeler 2008). Although the particular results vary, in each case the authors come away convinced that a core of the tradition can be traced at least to al-Zuhrī and frequently to ʿUrwa, and that the chief elements of what these authorities transmitted can be separated out from later accretions.

What about the remaining gap between ʿUrwa's reports and the historical events themselves? If we have confidence that we have material genuinely from ʿUrwa, then we are at most six or seven decades distant from the events of Muhammad's later life. Schoeler thinks this is close enough that "we can as a rule assume that the report correctly reflects at least the main outlines of the event" (Schoeler 2011, 114) with the caveat that "what we have are 'memories' at best, if not actually 'memories of memories,'" and in the end he concedes that "we have to leave the question of the historicity of these events unanswered" (Schoeler 2011, 113). Similarly, Motzki admits that knowledge of the tradition before the common link is "hypothetical rather than certain" (Görke et al. 2012, 45). These qualifications aside, it seems clear that proponents of the method are convinced that the gap between ʿUrwa and Muhammad is sufficiently small that these earliest layers of tradition are "likely to reflect traces of the historical Muhammad" (Görke et al. 2012, 3).

How much historical data are we left with when later embellishments and accretions are stripped? Not much. Motzki, Schoeler, and Görke admit that positive results are modest and the best we can hope for is a "proto-Sīra" or "mini-history" that will fall far short of a full biography. For example, Görke and Schoeler's analysis of Hijra traditions concludes that ʿUrwa's reports included four elements: (i) persecution of Muslims in Mecca; (ii) emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia; (iii) continuing persecution and emigration of most Muslims to Medina; (iv) emigration of the Prophet to Medina accompanied by Abū Bakr and ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra (Görke and Schoeler 2005, 219). This hardly makes for an exciting read, but it does seem to prove Schacht, Wansbrough, and other skeptics wrong.

Indeed, critics concede that this combination of *isnād* and *matn* analysis, rigorously applied, has been fruitful, although not as fruitful as Motzki, Schoeler, and Görke claim. A lengthy critique by Shoemaker admits that Motzki "persuasively locates a number of traditions in the early second century," and that the attribution of some traditions to al-Zuhrī is "very likely" (Shoemaker 2011, 332). Melchert agrees that Motzki has shown beyond dispute that all *isnād*s "are not necessarily nonsense" and that particular *isnād*s can be associated with particular textual variants (Melchert 2003, 302). However, Shoemaker finds attempts to trace material back beyond al-Zuhrī "considerably less convincing" (Shoemaker 2011, 267). Measuring Motzki, Schoeler, and Görke against Juynboll's methods, Shoemaker complains that they have abandoned Juynboll's rigorous safeguards on *isnād* criticism. In particular he is critical of their use of single strand *isnād*s, which were excluded by Juynboll, to establish a much earlier common link for certain traditions than Juynboll's method would have allowed. He also comments on the meager results, noting that the historical data reconstructed by Schoeler and Görke "ultimately does not reveal much about the 'historical Muḥammad'" and that in many cases the method does not achieve much better results than *matn* criticism on its own. Melchert also finds Motzki's use of single strand *isnād*s problematic and argues that after the sheer mass of contradictions in hadith reports transmitted in this way has been stripped away, the historical kernel that remains to be recovered is "so small as to be virtually worthless" (Melchert 2003, 303). Pavel Pavlovitch (2016) has recently argued that even a voluminous set of data may yield meager results when it comes to the first/seventh century. In a study of 29 clusters of traditions dealing with the cryptic Qurʾanic word *kalāla*, Pavlovitch utilized a modified version of *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis that draws heavily on meticulous *matn* scrutiny and concluded that most of the traditions he examines developed in the course of legal and exegetical debates between second-century jurists. He argues that only a handful of these may be dated, though with a considerable degree of uncertainty, to the last decades of the first/seventh century (Pavlovitch 2016, 31–40, 143–150, 491–496; see also Pavlovitch's contribution in Chapter 6).

Given the sometimes forceful scholarly exchanges over the efficacy of *isnād*-cum-*matn* criticism, what Motzki, Schoeler, and Görke concede is worth noting. They do not dispute, for example, the meagerness of the positive results but rather argue the virtue of "acknowledging how little we know with certainty" (Görke et al. 2012). And it turns out that there is a long list of findings of skeptical scholarship that Schoeler, at least, accepts: forgery and embellishment did take place on a large scale and at every stage of transmission; the chronology of Muhammad's life is a late construction; many traditions can be shown to be exegetically derived, and in many cases unconnected with historical events; *isnād*s on their own are insufficient for dating traditions or identifying sources; pre-hijra events are legendary regardless of the reliability of their transmitter, as are miracle stories; and even credible reports should not be assumed to be early because credibility is no proof of historicity (Schoeler 2011, 17). To characterize this approach as credulous or uncritical would be grossly inaccurate.

Beyond Authenticity

There is, however, a real distance between scholarly groupings that have been described, using the language of temperament, as "sanguine" and "skeptical" (Berg 2003). Making any use of *isnād*s, for example, requires a foundational confidence in the scholarly apparatus that grew up around *isnād* criticism to supply the data necessary to evaluate transmitters – death dates, birth dates, biographical details, historical accounts. Even the modest goal of tracing a hadith report back to a common link requires a high level of trust in these ancillary sources, and critics have questioned whether such trust is warranted. If *isnād*s could be subject to creative growth, so also might the data that grew up in support of particular transmitters or particular *isnād*s. Motzki articulates the difference with a question: "Is it methodologically responsible to critically and cautiously use the information about the source(s) available in the traditions themselves and in other Islamic works, or must all of this information generally be disregarded because it is potentially counterfeit?" (Görke et al. 2012, 48). He answers yes, skeptics say no, and this continues to be the most significant debate in the field.

Amidst the sometimes heated debates, it is easy to miss that we have left behind the question of authenticity in its usual sense, that is, the question of whether hadith reports are authentic to Muhammad or his companions. When Schoeler claims that sound method can recover "authentic" traditions he must redefine authenticity: traditions are authentic "which were demonstrably collected and disseminated in a systematic process of teaching, by historical individuals from approximately the last third of the first century A.H." (Schoeler 2011, 2). This means that the painstaking efforts of Motzki and his followers will gain us, at best, a few decades over Juynboll and Schacht. Projections farther back than that are admittedly hypothetical and speculative. Of course the more wide-ranging skepticism of Cook, Berg, or Shoemaker leaves a wider gap by leaving a much larger swath of early Islamic history veiled. But for this whole range of approaches, from Cook's skepticism to Motzki's optimism, we are still basically operating under Goldziher's basic premise: hadith will document the development of Islam, not its origins – unless we also redefine what we mean by origins. What continues at issue is exactly what period in the development of Islam the hadith, or any particular hadith report, will illuminate, and what methods will get us there.

Nevertheless, advances in methodology may have the potential to move us beyond narrow debates over authenticity. For example, the rigorous and sophisticated methods of textual criticism pioneered by Schoeler, Motzki, and Görke open the possibility of reconstructing and recovering different layers of tradition. Schoeler's finding that interest in chronology does not begin until at least al-Zuhrī, and only takes full hold with Ibn Isḥāq, is a truly useful result that has little to do with authenticity and everything to do with better understanding Ibn Isḥāq and his generation. Similarly, his method allows Schoeler to definitively show that al-Wāqidī is a plagiarist who does not hesitate to tamper with *isnād*s. These are valuable results that might go some distance toward a more convincing and rigorous pursuit of Goldziher's aim. Moreover, we also see refreshing signs of liveliness in areas of hadith scholarship, some of them represented in this volume, that move beyond questions of authenticity in other ways. Areas of real progress have included questions of authority, canonization, the growth and function of commentaries, the function of hadith in the Twelver and Ismāʿīli Shiʿite traditions, the uses of hadith within the Sufi and Kalam traditions, and the evolution of attitudes toward hadith in the modern period.

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II. Beginnings

CHAPTER 3

Revelation

William A. Graham

Strong convictions about the reality of divine revelation or inspiration are widely documented in the history of religion, and nowhere more prominently than in the three major Western monotheistic traditions. In Islam, this conviction has focused on God's scriptural revelation and Prophetic inspiration, and their textual instantiation in Qurʾan and hadith, respectively, but it has extended also to include other, post-scriptural, post-Prophetic, divine revelatory activity such as God's guidance of Shiʿi imams or his communion with Sufi adepts. The strong sense that scripture and the sunna of the Prophet are the primary sources of revealed truth and guidance has been historically a widely accepted, fundamental premise of Muslim religious thinking for the majority of Muslim scholars and religious thinkers, Sunni, Shiʿi, and Sufi alike, as well as for the wider community of the Muslim faithful, whatever their orientation. This has ensured the place of both Qurʾan and hadith as dual sources of divine revelation or inspiration at the heart of the vast majority of Muslim traditions of thought, piety, and practice.

We focus here on conceptions of divine revelation/inspiration through Qurʾan and hadith that can be found in these texts themselves and in other classical Sunni sources (e.g. *tafsīr, sīra*) from primarily the first four centuries AH (seventh to tenth century CE). While the antiquity or authenticity (e.g. as words of Muhammad or a companion) of some, if not many, of the traditions and views cited from early and even later sources can be questioned (as they have been in both Islamic and non-Islamic scholarship), our interest is not in the origins of these traditions and views but in their preservation and ongoing usage in the developing Islamic tradition.[1]

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The Islamic Conception of Revelation / Inspiration

Muslim concepts of God's revelatory or inspirational activity differ from some of those in the Christian or Jewish tradition. All three traditions agree on founding acts of revelation from God and also on continuing divine guidance through revelation or inspiration. In Islam, God's guidance on the right path begins with prophecy and scriptural revelation but does not cease with them. Similarly, the Hebrew Bible has a strong tradition of God's revelatory guidance of his people, notably in his covenants in Genesis, the Exodus, the Sinai commandments, and the Deuteronomic call for positive response to these divine acts. There is also a long history to Christian notions of God's biblical revelation and ultimate incarnation of his Word in Christ followed by ongoing guidance of individuals and the church through active revelation/inspiration.

Similarities in ideas of divine revelatory guidance notwithstanding, the key biblical theme of God's self-revelation or unveiling "is foreign to the Qurʾan and to Islam" (Wild 1996, 137). Islam knows nothing like the self-revelation of the invisible God in the Hebrew Bible, where the verbs *ra'ah*, "to see," and *yada'*, "to know," express the receiving of revelation; where (less often) *galah*, "to uncover, reveal" can express divine revelation (Gen 35:7; 1 Sam 2:27, 3:31); and where (e.g. Gen 12:6–7), God "has showed Himself," *nirah*, at various sacred places (Wurzburger 1971, 118). Nor does Islam know anything analogous to the New Testament's divine incarnation. Arabic has no exact equivalent of our English "revelation" or its classical precursors (Latin *revelatio*, Greek *apocalypsis*) denoting something "revealed," "uncovered," or "unveiled" in the sense of an "epiphany" or "manifestation" (Church Latin *epiphania*, from Greek *epiphaneia*). Any emphasis on divine self-disclosure is notably absent in Islamic sources.

Instead, the focus is God's communication with human beings to call them as his servants to respond to his beneficence in creation and to guide them on the right path. "Revelation/revealing" in Islamic sources designates overwhelmingly God's active promptings or communications to human beings through inner inspiration, oral dictation, or didactic teaching; in mind or heart; in a dream, in auditory or visual physical experience, or in combinations of these; and directly or through a heavenly intermediary such as the "spirit" [*rūḥ*] or the angel Gabriel.

In general Islamic as well as in Qurʾanic usage, two Arabic terms, *waḥy* and *tanzīl/ inzāl* (verbal noun of *n-z-l*, form II/IV), can usually be translated as "revelation/ revealing" or "inspiration/inspiring." These carry the literal sense of, respectively, "suggesting, prompting, communicating," or "sending down" from God on high to earth.[2] Where the root *n-z-l* suggests conveyance of a discrete message or concrete text, the more internal *w-ḥ*-y in the form-IV verb *awḥā*, "to suggest, inspire, reveal [to]," connotes a mysterious, or inner, personal divine communication directed to a recipient's heart/mind. Both roots occur frequently in the Qurʾan (*n-z-l occurs* 293 times; *w-ḥ-y*, 78). In addition, the form-IV verb, *alhama* (verbal noun *ilhām*), occurring only once, in Q 91:8, means "to inspire." It has been used in Islamic sources over the centuries in ways often very close if not equivalent to *awḥā*. *Ilhām* has also been sometimes used to distinguish non-Qurʾanic divine inspiration of individuals (e.g. the prophets, and in later interpretation, some mystics) from God's verbatim, scriptural revelation, *waḥy*, addressed to the generality of humankind (Jurjānī 1938, 28; Macdonald 1961, 163; Jadaane 1967, 30ff.).

Early or late, revelation in Islam carries the basic sense of God sending his Word to offer his earthly creatures knowledge – in particular, of his will, admonitions, and promises. Revelation is what God has "engendered," "(en)kindled," or "communicated" (*awḥā*) in the heart, hearing, or vision (waking or dreaming) of a contingent being (human, or even *jinnī*, or angel), whether directly or through an intermediary such as the angel Gabriel. Such divine action involves especially "sending down," *tanzīl*, in the form of special "communication," *waḥy*, of a scripture, *kitāb*. *Waḥy* even becomes, in one hadith, "what is between the two boards," that is, the written Qurʾanic text (Ibn Ḥanbal 1:220). *Waḥy* was given to both Muhammad and the messengers before him, notably Abraham, Jesus, and especially Moses. Thus "revealing [something] to/inspiring [something] in" is a sound English rendering of God's *tanzīl* ("sending down") or *waḥy* ("communicating") of his messages, and it will be used accordingly in what follows.

Qurʾanic Revelation / Inspiration

In the Qurʾan's own view, God's revelation has been ongoing since the creation of humankind. Through prophets and messengers, and scriptures given them for their respective peoples, God has never left a community without revealed/inspired guidance. His Qurʾanic revelation is first of all *waḥy*, which Q 4:163 says God has also accorded earlier messengers and prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. It is also *tanzīl*, a "sending down," in the form of a revealed scripture (*kitāb*), preeminently the Torah given Moses (Q 17:2, 46:12, 6:91, 5:46, etc.). At the time of their revelation, all previous divine communications carried the same message as the Qurʾan, but because the communities of the messengers who transmitted these revelations allowed them to be corrupted over time, God has revealed the Qurʾan to confirm and to supersede other scriptures (cf. Q 3:3, 6:92, 10:37, 46:12 *i.a.*).[3]

The latest, and assumed to be final, scriptural revelation, the Qurʾan, was sent down to Muhammad to disseminate to his people. As revelation, it can be described as a discourse of signs (Graham 2014) that speaks of three ways in which God has communicated clear "signs" (*āyāt*, pl. of *āya*; 380 occurrences in the Qurʾan) to offer human beings in every age "lessons" or "examples" (*ʿibar*, pl. of *ʿibra;* seven occurrences) of his omnipotence, lordship, and beneficence: (i) in the natural world which abounds in vivid signs of God in the heavens, the waters of rain and sea, sunlight and moonlight, plants and animals – in short, all creation; (ii) in history, specifically in the record of God's previous prophets and scriptures and of peoples who rejected or neglected their messages; and (iii) in God's scriptural revelations, both past and now present in the Qurʾanic verses which are explicitly termed *āyāt*, "signs," verbal reminders of God's other *āyāt* in nature and history. As this third sense of *āya* indicates, since creating the world God has repeatedly sent prophets or messengers with revelations for their peoples in their own tongues (Q 14:4) to guide them on the right path of *ʿibāda*, "worship and service" of him as creator, sustainer, and ultimately judge of his creation. Through Muhammad, his culminating prophet (*nabī*) and messenger (*rasūl*), he has given guidance and revealed (*nazzala, anzala, awḥā*) a perfected "Arabic recitation" (*qurʾan ʿarabī*, Q 12:2, 20:113, 39:28, 41:3, 42:7, 43:3, cf. 13:37, 26:195, 46:12) to replace or correct what has gone before.

After the cessation of revelation with Muhammad's death and the subsequent codification of the Qurʾan as a closed text, a gradual shift in Muslim thinking occurred over the next three centuries or so. This shift was from early, more informal, unsystematized conceptions of revelatory activity in the time of Muhammad to an eventual crystallization of a theological doctrine of the Qurʾan as a perfect, verbatim recitation immaculately transmitted by the Prophet, who, as conveyor of God's Word, was "protected" (*maʿṣūm*) by God from any possible error in transmission. By the mid-third/ninth century, in the wake of the ultimately failed doctrinal inquisition (217–233/833–848) begun by the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn, a doctrine of the uncreated, eternal Qurʾan had won the day, at least among Sunnis, and brought in its wake the notion of a wholly externalized, verbatim transmission of the Qurʾanic revelations by the Prophet that excluded any active role for him in shaping their specific words.

This externalized theory of the revelatory process even posited that, at God's initiative, Muhammad was given individual *qurʾan*s orally, word for word, by Gabriel, who appeared to him in either a trance-like "waking vision" (sometimes with others present and observing: Bukhārī *Badʾ al-waḥy* 2–4, 25; *Ḥajj* 17, 26; *al-ʿUmra 10.1*; 52 *Shahādāt* 15; 59 *Badʾ al-Khalq* 6:1; Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 1:i: 131–132) or a dream-vision in sleep (Bukhārī 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy* 2–5; 91 *Taʿbīr* 1; Muslim 1 *Īmān* 73; *Ibn Saʿd* 1905ff., 1.i: 131). Both kinds of experience were interpreted with a bias toward a literal understanding of the transmission as Gabriel's rehearsing revealed *āyāt* with Muhammad until the latter could repeat them perfectly. One tradition even has Gabriel coming annually for a full recitation of the revelations, and twice in the year the Prophet died (Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 2.ii: 3f.). Other reports have Gabriel returning in the months or days before Muhammad's death to review all the previous recitations (Muslim 56 *Tafsīr* 2; Bukhārī 66 *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* 1; Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 2.ii: 2, 48–49); one hadith even says *waḥy* continued uninterrupted until the day Muhammad died, with most of it coming that day (Ibn Ḥanbal 1895, 3:236)!

This developed conception of revelation has been characterized by the Muslim modernist scholar Fazlur Rahman (1966, 31) as the result of later theological concern to preserve the perfection of transmission of the revealed text:

> When ... during the second and third centuries of Islam, acute differences of opinion ... arose among the Muslims about the nature of Revelation, the emerging Muslim "orthodoxy" ... emphasized the *externality* of the Prophet's Revelation in order to safeguard its 'otherness', objectivity and verbal character.

This eventual externalization of the revelatory process was arguably a retreat from the acceptance apparent in early sources that the Prophet, as one chosen by God to receive his recitations, was naturally in intimate communication with him. Such intimate communication is reflected in the Qurʾan in passages such as: Q 26:192–195, where God's revelation is what "the faithful Spirit revealed/brought down to your [Muhammad's] heart" (*nazala bihi al-rūḥ al-amīn ʿalā qalbika*); Q 2:97, where Gabriel "revealed it [the Qurʾan] (*nazzalahu*) to your [Muhammad's] heart (*qalb*) at God's command, confirming what [came] before it and as guidance and good news for the faithful"; and Q 53, "[The Qurʾanic recitation] is nothing but a revelation revealed (*waḥyun yūḥā*) [v. 4] ... [the Prophet's] heart (*fuʾād*) did not lie about what he saw [v. 11]." Q 42:51 asserts that God speaks to humans in three ways: (i) by *waḥy*, (ii) from behind a veil (*min warāʾ ḥijāb*), or (iii) by sending a messenger to reveal (*yūḥī*) by his permission (*bi-idhnihi*) what God sends down. In other words, revelation involves God's communicating in different ways, either (i) through inner prompting/inspiration or communication, (ii) by speaking without being seen (as in God to Moses in 4:174 and 7:143–44), or (iii) by sending an intermediary (presumably Gabriel or "the Spirit") to deliver his words.

These categories arguably belie the later, externalized doctrine of the revelation of the Qurʾan which, in an effort to preserve maximally God's sublimity and otherness vis-à-vis his creatures, limited revelation almost solely to the third manner, through Gabriel. A more internal, intimate engagement of the Prophet with God's revealed Word is suggested not only in the Qurʾan but also in traditional accounts of how Muhammad received revelations. One well-known tradition says, "the dreams of the prophets are *waḥy*" (Bukhāri 4 *Wuḍūʾ*, 5; 10 *Adhān*, 161; also Suyūṭī 1999, 1:104), and another asserts (without mentioning Gabriel), "The first sign of prophethood given the Messenger of God was authentic dreams ... in his sleep (*al-ruyʾā al-ṣādiqa ... fī nawmihi*)" (Muslim 1 *Īmān*, 73 *Badʾal-waḥy*; Ibn Isḥāq 1971, 1:249–250; also *al-ruʾyā al-ṣāliḥa*: Bukhārī 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy*, 3; 91 *Taʿbīr*, 1; Ibn Ḥanbal 6:153, 232). Most accounts of revelations to the Prophet speak apparently not of physical encounters but of dreaming or waking visions (e.g. Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 1.i: 131–132; Bukhārī 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy*, 2–5; 25 *Ḥajj*, 17; 26 *al-ʿUmra*, 10; 52 *Shahādāt*,15; 59 *Badʾal-Khalq*, 6) – even those with Gabriel, as noted above (see also Ṭabarī 1879ff., 1150; Ibn Isḥāq 1971, 1:252). It is often hard to distinguish in the traditional reports whether it was a waking or sleeping vision or a physical sighting (*ruʾyā ʿaynin*). However, in Muhammad's reply to al-Ḥārith's query "How did revelation (*al-waḥy*) come to you?" he refers to not only angelically transmitted but also apparently unmediated revelations:

> Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, and that is hardest for me. When it leaves me, I remember what was said. Sometimes the angel appears to me in the form of a man, and speaks to me, and I [also] remember what he says. (Bukhārī 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy*, 2; cf. Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 1.1: 131; Ibn Ḥanbal 2:222)

Similar reports reinforce the notion that revelations came through not only Gabriel but also some kind of direct, inner experience of God (Ṭabarī 1879ff., 1147; cf. Tirmidhī 49.30). Traditional accounts of the revelatory process collected by al-Suyūṭī (d. 910/1505), further suggest that it occurred often through inner inspiration of the Prophet, waking, or dreaming, rather than angelic visitation (Suyūṭī 1999, 96–105 and *passim*; cf. Ṭabarī 1879ff., 1147; Tahānawī 1862, 2:1164). The different reports preserved concerning Muhammad's revelatory experiences point to general acceptance of an intimate, inner psychic involvement of the Prophet in the revelatory process both with and without Gabriel's mediation.

Muslims also early accepted that some Qurʾanic passages were abrogated by later ones, which acceptance eventually issued in the Qurʾanic science of "the abrogating and the abrogated" (*al-nāsikh wal-mansūkh*). The Qurʾan itself indicates that God may supplant earlier revelations with later ones (Q 2:106, 13:39, 87:6–7); he also "abrogates what Satan interjects" into the reciting (22:52); and his exchanging of one verse for another does not mean that Muhammad has invented it (16:101). Furthermore, based on the later tradition's acceptance of the sunna ("way," "tradition") of the Prophet as also (albeit not *verbatim*) *waḥy* from God, the possibility that a sound hadith could abrogate a Qurʾanic word was even accepted. This is affirmed (as Madigan 2001, 93–96, 189–190 notes) by major Sunni authorities, such as al-Ṭabari (d. 310/923) and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), as well as Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), the main early proponent of the authority of Prophetic sunna alongside the Qurʾan. (Note, however, that in classical Imāmī Shiʿi view, only a *qurʾan*, never an *hadith*, can abrogate a *qurʾan*: Mufīd 1983, 123–124.) For the faithful to accept that, in the long *ad hoc* process whereby the revelation came piece by piece, some *qurʾan*s could be supplanted by later *qurʾan*s (let alone by Prophetic hadiths) is not easy to reconcile rationally with the doctrines of the "miraculous inimitability" (*iʿjāz*) or fixed verbatim (*bi-l-lafẓ*) text of the Qurʾan. However, Islamic tradition was able to do this even while mounting all possible doctrinal protection of the Qurʾan as an immaculately transmitted, perfectly preserved record of God's eternal, uncreated speech. Of course, tolerance for such apparent incongruity is historically not unusual in religious or other human affairs.

Similarly, there is substantial evidence, notably in traditions concerning the variant readings, or *qirāʾat*, of the collected Qurʾanic text, that the codified revelation was recognized early to be less invariable than later doctrine demanded it be. There are numerous reports that human error, forgetfulness, and chance played a certain role in some revelations being lost – as when the companions were "busy with the Prophet's death" and allowed a household goat to eat one small scroll (*Mabānī* 1954, 87–88; other examples in Chapter 4, *passim*). Certainly the Qurʾanic text was held to admit variation in how it was recited or "read" at different times, or what precisely it included or excluded. There are multiple traditions about the differing versions of the text, the codices or *maṣāḥif* (sing. *muṣḥaf*), which companions of the Prophet preserved. The most famous variant *muṣḥaf*, that of Ibn Masʿūd, is reported to have omitted both the first sura of the Qurʾan, the *Fātiḥa*, and the final two suras, 113 and 114, the *Muʿawwidhatān*, "two prayers for refuge" (Suyūṭī 1999, 227; cf. Nöldeke et al. 1909ff., 39–42). All three passages take the form of first-person-plural prayers, as the faithful might pray them, directed to God (like the last verses, of Q 2, 285–286, the so-called seals of the Cow, *khawātim al-baqara*). Yet they have no introduction like the imperative "Say!" (*qul!*), which precedes many passages the Prophet (and after him each Muslim) is called to recite. The inclusion of these passages in the final, accepted *muṣḥaf* indicates that that text may preserve small amounts of material that were not *āyāt* originally but were perhaps prayers used and repeated so regularly by the Prophet himself that they were later included in the text as having his inspired imprimatur. This would be in line with an early Muslim understanding of God's revelatory activity that was more flexible and encompassing than later dogma could accept.

Furthermore, even the genesis of individual revelations, or *qurʾan*s, seems to have been a more multifaceted process than later dogma could allow. Some traditions report that Muhammad (and even others) were on occasion actively involved in the final formulation of a given *qurʾan* (see the discussion and references in Nöldeke et al. 1909ff., 1:44–55; Suyūṭī 1999, 1:137–39). A famous example involves the final words in

Q 23.14, "So blessed be God, the best of creators!" A tradition cited by Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) says this was the awed exclamation of a scribe at the beauty of the preceding text of verse 14 as Muhammad dictated it. Hearing the scribe's words, the Prophet said these were exactly what came next as the closing words of v. 14 (1947, 178–179).

The aforementioned materials speak for an understanding of the revelatory process that allowed for both the Prophet's intimate involvement and some variation in recitation of revelations at different times. Significantly, Islamic tradition was able again to preserve such materials alongside an increasing emphasis on a doctrine of verbatim scriptural revelation aimed at preserving the Qur'an's *iʿjāz*. This argues for the community's early and ongoing understanding of the historic, even cosmic, "time of the Messenger of God" as a unitary Prophetic-revelatory event (on which, see below), in which scriptural revelation and inspired Prophetic mission were two conjoined aspects of God's revelatory activity in the early, defining moments of Islam.

Extra-Qurʾanic Revelation / Inspiration

Just as the Islamic tradition has preserved God's revealed Word in the Qur'an, both traditional sources and the Qur'an itself also testify to special guidance given Muhammad apart from the Qurʾanic recitations. There was apparently from the outset general acceptance of the revealed or inspired authority of *both* the explicit *qurʾans* and also the words and example of the Messenger of God while he lived. These reports (*akhbār*) were gradually regularized and collected in the hadith format and their contents identified as representing the sunna of the Prophet – the path of right guidance for the community when *qurʾanic* revelation and living prophecy had ended. This general view of both Qurʾanic and Prophetic authority as divinely inspired was eventually fixed more formally in the Sunni-majority consensus associated especially with the legal theory codified by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). This theory established reliance for authority upon, first, two *revealed* sources of religio-legal judgment, Qur'an, and sunna (as preserved in the hadith) and, second, two *human* sources, the independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) and consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of qualified scholars (*ʿulamāʾ* or *fuqahāʾ*) – both based on the first two, God-given sources. Thus, in the realm of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and more widely in other domains of Islamic life and learning, the notion that *both* the Qur'an *and* the Prophet's words and example convey God's revealed truth was preserved (Musa 2007).

This eventual recognition of the revelatory status of the Prophet's sunna associated with Shafiʿi was undergirded by many passages in the Qur'an itself supporting the idea that Muhammad received not only *qurʾan*s from his Lord but also guidance and other inspiration as well. Q 53:2–3 reassures the Muslims that "your comrade [the Prophet] is not astray, nor does he err. Neither does he speak capriciously." The Qur'an speaks of "God and His Messenger" repeatedly as though their authority were indivisible (e.g. Q 2:279, 4:13f., 4:136, 5:33, 8:20) and proclaims that Muhammad was sent as "a mercy to the worlds [or: created beings]" (*raḥmatan li-l-ʿālamīn*: Q 21:107). Q 62:2 speaks of God's sending a messenger to the people "to recite to them His signs (*āyātahu*), to purify them, and to teach them scripture (*al-kitāb*) and wisdom (*al-ḥikma*)." This last is only one of many Qurʾanic references to "the book and wisdom" (*al-kitāb wa'l-ḥikma:* Q 2:129, 151, 231; 3:48, 81, 164; 4:113), which was early interpreted as referring to the Qurʾan and the sunna as divinely given guides for human life (Ṭabarī 1954ff., 1:557). In line with this interpretation, the *Kitāb al-Mabānī* (1954, 81) says that when Muhammad said, "I was given the Book, and with it something similar" (Abū Dāwūd 39.9), he was referring to the Qurʾan and wisdom already mentioned in scripture.

Thus, Muslims early understood the Qurʾanic revelations and the divinely guided Prophet to be correlative sources of God's right guidance. Even though Goldziher argued long ago (1889, 19ff.) that the elevation of the sunna of the Prophet to equality with or even precedence over the Qurʾan was a late second- and third-century development, he could later also identify a much earlier cultivation of Muhammad's words and example deriving from "the feeling that God's revelations to Muhammad were not exhausted with the Qurʾan" and were "not the sum of all those revelations with which God favored his chosen Prophet" (1907, 863; cf. Robson 1951, 178; Nöldeke et al. 1909ff., 234–261). Traditions in the major hadith compendia support this, not least the following: "God ordained (*sharaʿa*) for your Prophet paths of right guidance (*sunan al-hudā*)" (Muslim, 5 *Masājid*, 44).

That the reverence for Muhammad's words was not far removed from that for Qurʾanic words is evident in a hadith of ʿAmr b. Maymūn, who says that although he was for a year frequently with ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd, he only heard him cite the Prophet once, and when he uttered "the Messenger of God said," fear overcame him so that he saw sweat stream from his brow, whereupon he said, "May it please God, either somewhat more than that, or about that, or somewhat less than that [was what Muhammad said]" (Ibn Saʿd 3.1:110; Goldziher 1907, 860, with further examples).

The acceptance of Muhammad's divine inspiration/revelation apart from the Qurʾan is emphasized in the tradition by Prophetic words indicating his special knowledge, as in those cited by Ṭabarī, "[God] revealed to me secrets that I am not allowed to communicate" (1954ff., 27:26), or by Hammām b. Munabbih, "If you knew what I know, you would weep much and laugh little" (Hammām 1953, hadith 14). The many traditions preserved in the hadith in which Muhammad speaks in a prophetic voice about what will happen after his death or on the Day of Judgment also suggest the community's acceptance at a basic level of his Prophetic, supramundane knowledge (e.g. Hammām 1953, hadiths 1, 29, 125, 128; Muslim 1 *Īmān* 71; Bukhārī 97 *Tawḥīd* 35.6). A further example is a Sunni hadith concerning *al-ʿashara al-mubashsharūn bil-janna,* "the ten [companions of the Prophet] promised paradise" by the Prophet (e.g. Abū Dāwūd 4 *Ṣalāt al-safar* 212), which assumes revealed knowledge given Muhammad concerning the ultimate salvation of the first four caliphs and six further companions. Such clairvoyance was evidently not seen to contradict the clear assertions in Qurʾan and hadith that he was not divine but "only a man" like other men (Q 18:110, 41:6; cf. 17:93; Bukhārī 8 *Ṣalāt*, 31.3; 90 *Ḥiyal*, 10; 93 *Aḥkām*, 20.1, 29.1, 31; Muslim 45 *al-Birr waʾl-Sila waʾl-Adab*, 25; Mālik ibn Anas 1951, 36.1; *i.a.*; cf. Pautz 1898, 234–235; Nöldeke et al. 1909, 82–83; Robson 1951, 179).

Certainly, along with the idea that later would become dogma – namely that the fully human Muhammad was nonetheless protected from serious error (*maʿṣūm*) by God (and thus could not have erred in transmitting the Word of God) – there was necessarily a reliance both in his lifetime and afterward on the veracity of his interpretation as well as his transmission of *qurʾan*s. Ṭabarī even says that when Q 20.114 says, "Do not hurry with the *qurʾān* before its *waḥy* has been completed for you," *waḥy* means God's inspiring the explanation of the meaning of the revealed text (1954ff., 17:219–220). Thus, it is not surprising to find a tradition reported centuries later saying that whenever a revelation was sent down to Muhammad, Gabriel was present with the sunna needed to explain it (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 2:191). Other hadiths echo this idea of Prophetic inspiration in what Muhammad said: "Gabriel used to descend (*kāna yanzilu*) with the sunna just as he descended with the Qurʾan" (Dārimī 1966, *Muqaddima* 49.3); and, from Anas b. Mālik, "Accept my reports, for I have received them from the Prophet, and he from the angel Gabriel, who got them from God" (from Tirmidhī, cited by Goldziher 1889, 2:20).

There is also considerable evidence, especially in the hadith, that Gabriel came to Muhammad not only with God's *qurʾān*s, but also with other messages for him (Bukhārī 97 *Tawḥīd* 9, 59; *Badʾ al-Khalq* 7; 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy* 37; Ibn Ḥanbal 2:231; Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 1.i: 113). Nöldeke argued long ago for the probable reliability of many of the reports of non-Qurʾanic *ad hoc* revelations to Muhammad (Nöldeke et al. 1909, 1:259). That there was regular exchange between the Prophet and Gabriel is evident in various traditions. One vivid instance of the angel coming not with revelation but with assistance is at the battle of Badr when the Prophet assures Abū Bakr that he sees Gabriel leading his horse, having come to aid the Muslims "with dust [from riding] on his teeth" (Ibn Isḥāq 1971, 2:279). According to ʿAʾisha, Muhammad once said, "Gabriel called me and said, 'God has heard the words of your people and what they reply to you'" (Bukhārī 97 *Tawḥīd*, 9.4), and in other traditions Muhammad relates what Gabriel has said to him on various matters (Bukhārī 59 *Badʾ al-Khalq* 7.4; 1 *Badʾ al-waḥy* 37.1; Muslim 1 *Īmān*, 57; Ibn Ḥanbal 1895, 2:231; Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., I.i:113). In addition, sometimes "divine sayings," words spoken by God but not found in the Qurʾan (see below), are cited by the Prophet on Gabriel's authority.

In the wider tradition (e.g. Ṭabarī 1954ff., 1:403–406, *ad* Q 2.87), there is widespread identification of Gabriel with "the spirit of holiness," or *rūḥ al-qudus*, in the Qurʾan (Q 2:87, 253; 5:110; 16:102). Nonetheless, the notion of God's *rūḥ* being sent to Muhammad can also be taken as referring not to God's sending down Gabriel but instead to his inspiring the Prophet (and earlier prophets) through direct infusion of his own "spirit" (see Q 15.29, 21.91, 32.9, 40.15, 58.22, and 66.12). This reading would correlate with the notion that Muhammad was held to have received on occasion extra-Qurʾanic revelations directly from God himself. For example, many traditions suggest that the Prophet experienced the divine presence directly on his *miʿrāj* ("ascension"), traditionally taken to be referenced in Q 81.19–25 and 53.1–18, and joined to the "night journey," or *isrāʾ*, of Q 17.1, 60. Ṭabarī (1954ff., *ad* Q 15.13) cites a report that the *miʿrāj* experience "was for him [Muhammad] like some of the dreams of sleepers (*ka-baʿḍ aḥlām al-nāʾimīn*)." Bukhārī also cites this report, and another in which it is termed "a vision (*ruʾyā*) that the Prophet saw" (1896, *Tafsīr Q 17*.60). Whatever the mode of the experience, the night journey from Mecca to "the farthest mosque" *(al-masjid al-aqṣā*, traditionally identified with Jerusalem, where the *miʿrāj* began) is also said to have included the vision, *ruʾyā*, of Q 17.60, which was interpreted as Muhammad's meeting God and receiving revelations from him (Ṭabarī 1954ff., 15:110). One *hadith* even has the Prophet say of this experience (perhaps paraphrasing Q 53.4, cited above?), "God revealed/communicated (*awḥā*) to me what He revealed/communicated (*awḥā*)" (Muslim 1955f., 1:259; cf. Ibn Ḥanbal 1895, 3:148f.).

Such reports seem to place the Prophet's *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* in the same dream or visionary category as the Qurʾanic revelatory experiences. Other hadiths say that on the *miʿrāj* Muhammad received even Qurʾanic revelations directly, such as the first-person prayer formulae of Q 1, the *Fātiḥa,* and Q 2:284–286, "the Seals of the Cow" (*khawātīm al-baqara:* Muslim 1955f., 1:279; 6:253; Tirmidhī 1964, 5.1; further refs. in Wensinck 1936ff., 2:10B. cf. Suyūṭī 1899, 39; Widengren 1955, 105f.).[4] There are also hadiths reporting that on the *miʿrāj* Muhammad received from God the prescription of salat five times a day (Bukhārī 1896, 8.1.1) and some extra-Qurʾanic words of God, or so-called divine sayings, *aḥādīth qudsiyya* (Tahānawī 1862, 2:280), treated below. While much of this imaginative elaboration of the *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* traditions is a late phenomenon (Andrae 1918, 68, n. 1; 82–88), it is hard to get around the fact of the persistence in Islam of the idea that, in addition to receiving revelation through Gabriel's visitations, Muhammad had in the *isrāʾ* and *miʿrāj* some kind of direct communication with the divine or heavenly realm if not directly with God himself. Widengren (1955, chs. 4, 5) may well be right in arguing that to authenticate and legitimize Muhammad's role as God's emissary, his *miʿrāj* was required by long-standing Near Eastern tradition, in which the motifs of ascension and reception of a heavenly book would have been familiar, expected marks of a prophet.

There are also many references, especially in the hadith, to extra-Qurʾanic revelation given the Messenger of God. These are testimony to the community's awareness from early on of the special relationship of the Prophet to his Lord and the guidance that he received alongside the revealed recitations that would comprise the Qurʾanic scripture. Like the *qurʾan*s, many non-Qurʾanic revelations came to him in dreams, and there are numerous accounts of his interpretation of his own or others' dreams (see chapters on "Interpretation of Dreams" in Bukhārī 1896, 91; Ibn Māja 1952f., 35; or "Dreams" in Muslim 1955f., 42; Tirmidhī 1964, 32; Dārimī 1966, 10; Mālik 1951, 52). These dream experiences guided him in decision-making (Wāqidī 1966, 1:208f.), enabled him to predict future events (Bukhārī 62.5.9, 62.6.4), gave him material for instructing his followers (ibid., 62.6.2, 91.18), and even confirmed his special status with God (ibid., 96.1, 91.11).

In the category of extra-Qurʾanic revelation, there are also two further kinds of revelation that bear brief mention, although they fall outside the scope of the present discussion. The first of these is that of divine inspiration or revelation granted to others among the first Muslims besides the Prophet. Muhammad himself is quoted as calling on God to aid the poet Ḥassān b. Thābit with *rūḥ al-qudus*, "the holy spirit" (Bukhārī 1896, 8.68, 59.6, 78.91; further refs. in Wensinck 1936ff., 1:139a, 5:320a; cf. Tirmidhī 1964, 41.70.1; Muslim 1955f., 44.157). Muhammad also is quoted as saying, "God has placed truth upon ʿUmar's tongue and in his heart" (Tirmidhī 1964, 46.17.2; Ibn Saʿd 1905ff., 2.ii: 99) and "In the past there were among the peoples those who were spoken to (*al-muḥaddathūn*); truly, if there were one of them among this people, it would be ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb" (Bukhārī 60.54; Muslim 1955f., 44.23; further refs. in Wensinck 1936ff., 1:434a).

The second of these is found in the traditions that recognize some kind of post-Prophetic, ongoing revelation or inspiration. These fly in the face of mainstream Islamic doctrinal consensus that, as a Prophetic hadith has it, "no revelation (*waḥy*) came down after the Messenger of God" (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1:456). Still, an extreme Shiʿi sect, the Manṣūriyya, was purported to hold that "messengers (*al-rusul*) never cease, and (apostolic) mission never ceases" (Shahrastānī 1842ff., 136; cf. al-Ashʿarī 1963, 9, 24–25). We could also mention the conviction among many Sufis that direct experience of unity with God is possible, which comes close to holding that revelation is available at least to some of the *awliyāʾ Allāh*, "friends of/'those close to' God." Among those individual mystics who report experiences of direct encounter with and/or receiving inspiration from God himself, some of the most famous are Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. The idea of mystical union with God, a recurring Sufi theme, has been a powerful part of Muslim spirituality and has also elicited strong resistance and condemnation from more conservative Muslims who see in this idea a fundamental threat to the unique, revealed authority of Qurʾan and Prophet (see Chapter 13).

However, it is most strikingly in the various Shiʿi traditions that the idea of post-Prophetic divine revelation and guidance is found. The notion of ongoing revelation or inspiration after the Prophetic-revelatory event is at the heart of the Shiʿi–Sunni divergence, since Shiʿis recognize the divine guidance and even infallibility of those they recognize as imams, beginning with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. For example, according to Imāmī hadiths cited by al-Kulīnī (1961, 531, 534), each imam is *mulham*, "inspired." However, while Ashʿarī (1963, 611) says the Rawāfiḍ [Twelver Shiʿis] claim an Imam can abrogate a *qurʾan*, this must be Sunni calumny; the great Shiʿi scholar al-Mufīd (d. 413/1032), does not make this claim when discussing abrogation (Mufīd 1983, 122–124).

The Special Case of the "Divine Hadith"

In addition to explicit *qurʾan*s and traditions of other, extra-Qurʾanic, revealed/inspired guidance, there is a third category of early material, the existence and preservation of which is important to the general Muslim understanding of revelation. This is the genre of reports (*akhbār*) transmitted as *hadith*s of the Prophet that came eventually to be labeled "holy/divine sayings," *aḥādīth qudsiyya* (also *aḥādīth ilāhiyya* or *aḥādīth rabbāniyya;* sing., *ḥadīth qudsī*/*ilāhī*/*rabbānī*). These traditions report first-person words of God not found in the Qurʾan, and the various names given them are perhaps best translated as "divine sayings," which most clearly indicates their distinguishing characteristic as words attributed to God (Graham 1977, 38, n. 108; cf. Graham 2017, 91a ff.). As hadiths, these sayings are found in the earliest small collections as well as the major, later classical compendia of hadith, and their preservation signals the wide range of early Muslim notions of revelation/inspiration. In later centuries, particularly in some Sufi circles, these sayings not only became popular but were supplemented with words of God reported from direct ecstatic experiences of individual mystics (also referred to frequently as *shaṭḥiyyāt*, "ecstatic sayings"; see Graham 1977, 53f., 62–65).

Divine sayings are also found in Shiʿi hadith, cited on the authority of Muhammad, one of the imams, or even a previous prophet (ibid., 67f.).

The earliest instances of divine sayings are in the oldest extant small hadith collections such as the *Ṣaḥīfa* of *Hammām b. Munabbih* (d. c. 107/720; Hammām 1953) or the *Mashyakha* of Ibrāhīm ibn Tahmān (d. 163/780; Ibn Tahmān 1983), and they are also found in all the major third-/ninth-century hadith works (e.g. those of Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Mālik, etc.). While much fewer in number, they are evidently as old as other Prophetic traditions. However, they were long given no special name but referred to by well-known examples; their earliest attested name, *aḥādīth ilāhiyya,* appears in the title of a work from the early sixth/twelfth century and is also used in 599/1201 by Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) in introducing his selection of 40 of these sayings (1927). The earliest attested use of *qudsī* to label this genre seems to be much later, in a discussion of these "*akhbār Allāh*" by al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭayyibī (d. 743/1342; Graham 1977, 57).

The earliest established discussion of these sayings is found not in a work on hadith but in our earliest extant work in the Qurʾanic sciences, the *Muqaddimat kitāb al-Mabānī* (*al-Mabānī* 1954, 88f.), written in 425/1033, most likely by Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad al-ʿĀṣimī (See Graham 2017, 92b). Here, in a discussion of revelations given the Prophet as "communication and [apostolic] message/mission (*tablīgh wa-risāla*), not as a *qurʾan* recited or written," they are identified as words of God that Muhammad "knew and related by revelation and (apostolic) mission/message (*bi-waḥy wa-risāla*) from God" (ibid., 88). It goes on to affirm their revealed character but notes that they are not valid for recitation in the *salat*, nor do they take the form of "the rest of the Qurʾan (*sāʾir al-qurʾan*)" (ibid.). Later treatments classify these reports (*akhbār,* as they are often termed) as part of the hadith, not the Qurʾan, but the *Mabānī*'s alignment of the divine sayings with the Qurʾan is striking, as it suggests that, up to a certain time, these reports may have been seen as somehow closer to Qurʾanic revelations than to hadiths, something of which later scholars would have been chary. Early and late, these sayings were clearly considered along with the Qurʾan and the Prophetic hadith as "from God, His inspiration (*waḥy*), and his revelation (*tanzīl*)" (*Mabānī,* 89), even while an effort was always made to distinguish clearly the Qurʾan as God's verbatim speech from both divine and regular Prophetic traditions. The later formulae that fix this distinction are: the Qurʾan was communicated *maṭlūʾan,* "as something to be recited," and *bil-lafẓ,* "verbatim," while both the *ḥadīth nabawī* and *ḥadīth qudsī* were transmitted *bil-maʿnā,* "according to sense"; or that the Qurʾan is *waḥy* and possesses *iʿjāz,* "*miraculous inimitability,*" while both types of hadith are also *waḥy, tanzīl, or ilhām* but do not have *iʿjāz* (Graham 1977, 57–61).

Thus, we find, as the Islamic tradition develops, a continuing, even growing acceptance of Qurʾan, sound hadiths of the Prophet, and sound *aḥādīth qudsiyya* as all belonging to God's revelatory activity in the world. Clear distinctions are always being made among the three categories of divinely inspired material, and the exalted place of the Qurʾan among the three is never questioned, but the special rank of all three vis-à-vis other Islamic sources is maintained. They are considered special not because all three are equal, let alone the same, but because they are viewed as forming the heritage from God's engagement in the revelatory and Prophetic mission of his final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh.

The Unity of the Prophetic-Revelatory Event

Our consideration of revelation and inspiration in early and classical Islamic perspective suggests that the Muslim understanding of Muhammad's Prophetic mission and of the Qurʾanic revelations that he communicated should be seen as originally and possibly for several centuries a largely unitive one.[5] In other words, the wellspring of Islamic religious tradition can best be described as a *Prophetic-revelatory event* in which God's sending of his chosen prophet with a revealed Arabic recitation (*qurʾan ʿarabī*) was the central reality for those who responded to the mission of Muhammad and the *qurʾan*s that he brought. Any formal, developed theological distinctions among the direction and guidance offered by the Messenger, the Qurʾanic revelations, and the sayings of God reported as *aḥādīth qudsiyya* came out of a long-standing acceptance of all of these as fruits of this "Prophetic-revelatory event." The sources indicate that in what might be termed the largely "pre-dogmatic era" of the first three centuries or so, there was a readiness to see *both* Qurʾanic and Prophetic word, including the *akhbār* reporting further words of God, as revealed or inspired by God and not to try to rationalize this over much. There was apparently little worry about the theoretical question that would later attract the systematizing efforts of theologians, legal theorists, and philosophers, namely that of the distinction between verbatim revelation (*tanzīl*/*waḥy bil-lafẓ*) in the Qurʾan and its miraculous inimitability, or *iʿjāz,* versus other kinds of revelation (*waḥy*) or "inspiration" (*ilhām*), which were transmitted not verbatim but according to sense (*bil-maʿnā*) in the hadith (and later, for some segments of the community, in the experience of Shiʿi imams or Sufi mystics). It is safe to say that until possibly the fifth century AH, there was altogether no consistent theory of revelation; as J. van Ess (1996, 189) remarks, "for this we have to wait until the time of the philosophers, especially Ibn Sīnā [d. 428/1037]."

Small minorities throughout Islamic history have, of course, argued that *only* the Qurʾan, not the hadith, is revealed and ultimately authoritative (Musa 2008; see also Chapter 16). Further, we have already noted that among Shiʿis, the guidance of divinely chosen and directed imams carries also (along with the Qurʾan and hadiths transmitted from the Prophet or the imams) the authority of revelation or divine guidance after Muhammad's death; or that, in some Sufi traditions, God may give select spiritual adepts intimate access to him that could easily be characterized as affording divine inspiration or revelation.

Notes

1 The present chapter draws at a number of points on the author's earlier monograph (1977), albeit with emendations, since a key question for that study was the nature of the early Muslim understanding of revelation and prophet. See also the author's recent article, "Ḥadīth qudsī" (2017) for updated information and bibliography on the genre.

2 On *waḥy*, see Izutzu (1964), 165–185. On *n-z-l,* see Wild (1996). Also from *n-z-l* is the form-I verbal noun, *nuzūl,* "descent, coming down," often used for revelation of the Qurʾan; it is not used in the Qurʾan, but six finite verb forms of *n-z-l* form I do occur.

3 For concise but substantial treatments of concepts and terminology of revelation in the Qurʾan, see Izutzu (1964), 151–197, Rahman (1980), esp. ch. 5, Wild (1996), Wensinck

(rev. Rippin) (2000), Madigan (2004), 438–448; all of which inform the present discussion. See also the 2018 Harvard dissertation of Mohsen Goudarzi Taghanaki, *The Second Coming of the Book*, which makes a very strong argument for "kitāb" as a scriptural category being limited in the Qurʾan to the Torah and the Qurʾan only, not to further revelations such as the New Testament or Psalms of David.

4 The issue of whether the *miʿrāj* was a corporeal or a visionary experience became a major issue in later theological discussions, in particular with regard to the (im)possibility of Muḥammad's "seeing God" (*ruʾyat Allāh*). For a brief and clear resumé of these discussions, see Andrae (1918), 71–85; also Stieglecker (1962), 361–371.

5 This interpretation is developed more fully in Graham (1977); see especially Part One, 1–48, and ch. 5, 107–110.

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CHAPTER 4

Muhammad

Andreas Görke

Introduction

The hadith (*ḥadīth*) can be defined as the corpus of accounts of what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or tacitly approved. As such, a close connection between the hadith and Muhammad is immediately apparent, and it seems reasonable to assume that the hadith can tell us something about the Prophet of Islam. There are, however, two major caveats. First, the vast majority of these accounts are only available in sources that date from some 200 years or more after Muhammad's death, and the question of whether these accounts actually reflect what the Prophet may have said or done, or to what extent they have been shaped and revised in the course of transmission is highly controversial. And second, the hadith is not primarily interested in Muhammad as a person, but rather uses his sayings and deeds as a means to understand and define the Muslim moral and legal code. It focuses on what Muhammad taught his community through what he said and did. A typical account, for example, tells us that the Prophet said, "No one of you will have faith until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (Bukhārī 2 *Īmān*, 7). Even if we were to assume that Muhammad actually said this, what does it tell us about him?

Nevertheless, the various reports included in the hadith contribute to an image of Muhammad by addressing various aspects relating to his character, his physical appearance or his habits. In this study, we will first analyze the image or images of Muhammad as conveyed in the hadith, either explicitly or implicitly. We shall then examine to what extent the image of Muhammad in the hadith differs from his image in other sources, in particular the Qurʾan and the biographical tradition. Finally, we will consider the

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question of the origin and transformation of these accounts and discuss to what extent Muhammad's image in the hadith is rooted in history.

When we speak of hadith in the following, we will focus on those traditions that can be found in hadith collections. For the purpose of this study, the examples will mostly be taken from collections that are readily available in English translations, such as the collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, Abū Dāwūd, and the later summary *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ* by Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī. The observations, however, apply to almost every other hadith collection as well. While the individual collections may have slightly different focuses and vary in their selection of the material, the overall scope and character of these works is very similar, and most of the hadiths discussed in this chapter can be found in several different collections. The study will focus on Sunni hadith collections. While Shiʿi collections also contain traditions from and about Muhammad, the Prophet plays a less prominent role in them, as reports of the sayings and deeds of the Imams are seen as equally important and take up a significant part in these works (see Chapter 14).

All hadith collections contain numerous individual reports (each report is also called a hadith; the plural is *aḥādīth*, or, Anglicized, hadiths). These reports are equipped with a line of transmitters (called *isnād*, pl. *asānīd*), intended to secure the reliability of the report. This precedes the actual account of what Muhammad said or did, which is called the *matn* (pl. *mutūn*). This form, combining a line of transmitters with an individual report, can be termed "the hadith format." Reports in this format are not only found in the hadith collections but also in other sources, such as biographies of the Prophet (*sīra* or *maghāzī* works), commentaries of the Qurʾan (*tafsīr*, pl. *tafāsīr*), legal works, historiographical works, or theological treatises. While hadith collections in general contain only reports of this type, in other genres they are just one among several sources of information pertaining to Muhammad. Thus, for example, commentaries of the Qurʾan usually also contain the statements of several generations of scholars on the grammar of specific verses, the meaning of uncommon words, or the historical context in which Muhammad received specific revelations, the so-called *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Biographies of the Prophet, in addition to reports in the hadith format, also contain poetry about specific events, lists of participants in certain events, chronological information, documents, speeches, and a narrative framework (see Raven 1997; Watt 1962, 1983 for a discussion of the materials included in the *sīra*). There is some overlap between these fields, and individual traditions may be found in different genres, but in order to get an idea of the image of Muhammad in the hadith, we have to limit ourselves to works of this genre. We will get back to the relationship of the hadith to other fields later.

To gain information about the image of Muhammad conveyed in the hadith, we can disregard the lines of transmission (*asānīd*). These may be helpful to determine when a hadith was given its final shape and wording and who may have been involved in the spread or the shaping of a tradition (see Chapter 6), but to learn about how Muhammad is portrayed in the hadith, we have to turn to the content of the traditions, contained in the *mutūn*.

Types of Information about Muhammad in the Hadith

The hadith as a whole displays a huge diversity of topics. A large part of the material contains ritual, legal, or moral guidance, either directly through sayings of the Prophet, or indirectly following from his actions or his tacit approval of the actions of others, where his behavior is regarded as exemplary. This is not surprising, since legal concerns were the main driving force in the collection of the material. Other reports, apparently of less direct legal importance, tell us about what the Prophet liked or disliked, or how he dressed. We also find accounts describing how the Qurʾan, or specific verses thereof, were revealed to the Prophet. Some reports describe his behavior during military expeditions, others contain general statements by Muhammad on the nature of paradise, God, the virtue of certain parts of the Qurʾan, the meaning of specific Qurʾanic verses, or the meaning of dreams. What links all these different reports in the hadith literature is their normative value. These reports were important not because of the general advice they may contain; they were seen as authoritative because the advice or explanation came from the Prophet.

It is apparent from the above that the kind of information about Muhammad that can be derived from particular hadiths will vary widely. But it is not only the content that varies; we can also distinguish three different modes in which information about Muhammad is conveyed in the hadith.

A number of hadiths speak directly and explicitly about Muhammad, and the information about Muhammad is at the core of the message they contain. In one hadith, for example, Anas b. Mālik reports that Muhammad "had a very fair complexion, and the drops of his perspiration shone like pearls, and when he walked, he walked inclining forward" (Muslim 28 *Faḍāʾil*, 21).

Other hadiths likewise present information about the Prophet, but this seems incidental, usually as part of a description of a situation that serves as an introduction to the actual message of the report. In one such report, for example, we learn that Muhammad was combing his hair with an iron comb (*midray*) while a man was peeping through a hole into his dwelling. Muhammad then says that he would have poked the man in his eye, had he noticed this, and that it has been made compulsory to ask for permission to enter a house to protect the inhabitants from being watched (Bukhārī 74 *Istiʾdhān*, 11). While the central message is the importance of asking for permission before entering a house, we also learn that the Prophet used this particular type of comb. In several cases, there seems to be no apparent link between the incidental information and the message of the report. Thus in one *ḥadith* the narrator reports that he once came to the Prophet while the latter was asleep wearing white clothes, and then came again later when he had awakened. The dialogue that ensues is completely independent from this introduction and revolves around the statement that whoever states that there is no god but God and then dies will enter paradise (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 24).

A third type of information can be derived indirectly from the way the speech or actions of Muhammad are reported. For example, we can find numerous reports in which the Prophet names three (or less frequently four or five) important points to observe, creating the impression that this was a common feature of his way of speaking.

While for the first type of report the information contained is obviously intentional, this is not necessarily the case for the second and third types, which therefore may appear to have a higher claim to authenticity. We will later get back to this observation when we discuss the historicity of these reports.

The Image of Muhammad in the Hadith

Hadiths in general only describe the Prophet's outward appearance and observable actions, as it was a convention that the original narrator of a story needed to be an eyewitness (see Günther 1998, 440f., 464f.; Beaumont 1996, 10, 18, 23). As a consequence, there is not much to be learned from the hadith about the feelings or thoughts of Muhammad. We will in the following focus on four main aspects on which the hadith provides information, namely the physical appearance of Muhammad, his character, his habits and behavioral patterns (including his likes and dislikes), and miracles connected with his person.

Physical Attributes

The hadith contains a number of specific descriptions with regard to Muhammad's physical appearance. He is described as being of medium height, with hair not extremely curly, nor straight, broad shoulders, a round face white in color, and with a line of hair from his chest to his navel (Tirmidhi 46 *Manāqib*, 8). His hair used to hang down to his shoulders (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 68) or covered his ears but did not reach his shoulders (Tirmidhi 21 *Libās*, 21). He is said to have had a few white hairs, in particular between the lower lip and the chin (Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 23), but not enough to dye them (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 66). However, it is also reported that one of his wives brought out some of his hairs and they were dyed (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 21 *Libās*, 4). He had a thick beard (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 26 *Fitan*, 19), which he used to dye yellow (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 21 *Libās*, 4). His eyes were oval (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 26 *Fitan*, 19), and he had big hands and feet (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 68).

He used to sweat a lot, and people used to collect his sweat for its beautiful fragrance (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 26 *Fitan*, 19). He is said to have smelled good (Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 23), and people would follow him because of his sweet odor (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 26 *Fitan*, 19). On the other hand, we learn that his wife ʿAʾisha used to perfume Muhammad with the sweetest perfume she could find (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 21 *Libās*, 4), or that Muhammad perfumed himself with a perfume called *sukk* (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 21 *Libās*, 4).

One tradition describes him as extremely sexually potent, saying that he used to visit all his (9 or 11) wives in a round, and that the people were saying that he had the strength of 30 men (Bukhārī 5 *Ghusl*, 13; cf. Bukhārī 62 *Nikāḥ*, 4). On the other hand, he is said to have been able to control his sexual desires as no other, and used to just fondle his wives during their menses (Bukhārī 6 *Ḥayḍ*, 7).

Character

Muhammad's meekness, humility, and kindness are often emphasized. He is also said to have been courageous (Muslim 28 *Faḍāʾil*, 11; Ibn Ḥanbal 1, 449 No. 654) and generous (Muslim 28 *Faḍāʾil*, 11–12; Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 23). He reportedly never struck a servant or a woman (Abū Dāwūd 36 *Adab*, 5). He is said to not have used foul language, neither to revile someone nor to joke (Bukhārī 73 *Adab*, 38), and to have been shyer than a virgin girl (Bukhārī 73 *Adab*, 77).

The Prophet is sometimes presented as very even-tempered and pragmatic. When, for example, a child he holds in his arm urinates on him, he just asks for water and pours it over the soiled place (Bukhārī 4 *Wuḍūʾ*, 63), and when a Bedouin urinates in the mosque, he advises his companions to let him finish and then pours water over the place (Bukhārī 4 *Wuḍūʾ*, 60–62). Other pragmatic decisions include allowing people to wear silk (otherwise discouraged) in case they are suffering from an itch (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 29), allowing them to make up for missed rituals during the pilgrimage at a later time (Bukhārī 26 *al-ʿUmra*, 131), or advising them in cases of severe heat to wait with the prayer until the temperatures have dropped (Bukhārī, 10 *Mawāqīt al-ṣalāt wa-faṣlihā*, 9). He is also said to have advised people to eat first and without haste and go to prayer afterwards if supper is served at the same time as they hear the call to prayer (Bukhārī 11 *Adhān*, 42).

In contrast, the Prophet is occasionally also portrayed as getting very angry and furious, with his face becoming red (Bukhārī 3 *ʿIlm*, 29). A few traditions point to minor human weaknesses. In one case he is said to have forgotten part of a prayer and justified himself by affirming that he is only human and as liable to forget as anyone else (Bukhārī 8 *Ṣalāt*, 31). On another occasion he is said to have followed the advice of others when he thought about how to call Muslims to prayer, which, according to some reports, was originally suggested by ʿUmar (Bukhārī 11 *Adhān*, 1). Likewise, it is reported that after his wife ʿA'isha asked him about punishment in the grave, of which she had learned from a Jewish woman, he affirmed that this punishment indeed exists and from that time did not pray a single prayer without seeking refuge with God from it (Bukhārī 23 *Janāʾiz*, 85).

Behavior and Habits

Several hadiths contain statements about Muhammad's behavior and habits. In many cases, these relate to ritual acts or other issues where the model of the Prophet was deemed particularly important. Thus, we learn how the Prophet performed his ablutions (Muslim 2 *Ṭahāra*, 4; 3 *Ḥayḍ*, 8) or several details pertaining to his praying (Muslim 4 *Ṣalāṭ*, 7, 8). We are also given descriptions of his more mundane habits. We are told, for example, that the Prophet used to walk bent forwards and walk quickly (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 26 *Fitan*, 19). He is reported to have spoken slowly and clearly (Bukhārī, 56 *Manāqib*, 23) and to have provided medical help for his companions (Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 22 *al-Ṭibb wa'l-ruqā*, 19).

As to the Prophet's preferences, we learn that he liked sweets and honey (Bukhārī 65 *Aṭʿima*, 33) as well as pumpkin (Bukhārī 65 *Aṭʿima*, 34, 36, 37), and that his favorite food was *tharīd*, a dish made of crumbled bread moistened with broth (Abū Dāwūd 21 *Aṭʿima*, 23). The garment he loved most is said to have been the *ḥibara*, a garment made of Yemenite cloth (Bukhārī 72 *Libās*, 18).

In addition to these direct statements, the hadith also contains a large amount of implicit information about Muhammad's behavior and habits which can be derived from a closer scrutiny of the traditions with regard to the manner in which he is described saying or doing something. So not only are we explicitly told that Muhammad repeated words three times so that people could understand him properly (Bukhārī 3 *ʿIlm*, 31), but we also find numerous examples where Muhammad is portrayed doing this (e.g. Bukhārī 73 *Adab*, 29). Likewise, we often find him using enumerations, often containing two, three, or five elements. For example, he is quoted saying that one should "feed the hungry, visit the sick, and set the captives free" (Bukhārī 70 *al-Marḍā*, 4), or that "healing is in three things: a gulp of honey, cupping, and cauterization" (Bukhārī 71 *Ṭibb*, 3). At a different occasion we find him saying that "the signs of a hypocrite are three: whenever he speaks, he tells a lie, whenever he promises something, he breaks his promise, and whenever one trusts him, he proves to be dishonest" (Bukhārī, 2 *Īmān*, 26). Another variant adds a fourth characteristic (ibid.).

He is frequently described using gestures, questions, parables, or comparisons to illustrate his point (cf. Scheiner 2014, 638–640). In one tradition, he is said to have asked his companions which tree does not lose its leaves and is like the Muslim, later indicating that it is the date palm (Bukhārī 3 *ʿIlm*, 5). In other traditions, he compares the Muslim community to a building whose different parts support each other, intertwining his fingers to illustrate the point (Bukhārī 73 *Adab*, 36), or he likens believers and hypocrites reciting or not reciting the Qurʾan to different kinds of fruit (Bukhārī 65 *Aṭʿima*, 31). Likewise, he uses the image of the rain falling on different types of earth – fertile soil, land keeping the water, and barren land neither holding the water nor bringing forth vegetation – to people having knowledge of the religion and making use of it or not caring about religion (Bukhārī 3 *ʿIlm*, 21).

Miracles

The hadith also contains numerous accounts of miraculous events in Muhammad's life. We are told that a stone used to pay him salutation even before he became a prophet (Muslim 28 *Faḍāʾil*, 1). When water was scarce, he only needed to place his hand in a very small quantity of water, and it started to spout from his fingers and dozens or hundreds of people could drink from it or perform their ablutions (Muslim 28 *Faḍāʾil*, 3; Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 24). During a severe drought, Muhammad prayed for rain and, although the sky was clear, it started raining almost immediately. As the rain became too much, Muhammad prayed again and the clouds now formed a crown around Medina, saving it from too much rain (Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 24). There are several accounts in which food was miraculously increased to suffice a large number of people (Muslim 1 *Īmān*, 11; 18 *Aqḍiyya*, 15; Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 24). We also learn that Muhammad was miraculously made aware of the death of people before the news about them reached him (Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 24), and that he was able to heal people with his spittle (Bukhārī 57 *Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥāba*, 10). When he was asked by the Meccans to perform a miracle, he showed them the splitting of the moon (Bukhārī 56 *Manāqib*, 26; 60 *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 287).

Summary

Taken together, these accounts provide a colorful and detailed depiction of Muhammad. The physical characteristics come close to what appears to be an ideal of beauty – no extreme traits in terms of size or hair length, no indication of anything unattractive in his appearance, but on the contrary superlative following superlative with regard to his beauty and body fragrance. His character likewise reads like a sequence of ideal character traits, including sincerity, commitment, humility, kindness, courage, and humor. He appears very confident and devoid of self-doubts. His only potentially negative character trait is an occasional outburst of anger, usually in cases where his companions show a certain ignorance relating to religion. In the manner in which he instructs and guides his community, he is represented as an ideal teacher: on the one hand, he listens to his audience, responds to concerns, and takes his audience seriously, while on the other hand he uses a large variety of didactical methods to clarify his message, including a clear speech, well-structured arguments, metaphors, repetitions, and gestures. With regard to the miraculous events that pervade his life, he matches previous prophets and appears beyond comparison to ordinary people. Through his behavioral patterns and his likes and dislikes, in contrast, he is presented as a very human figure, even displaying some individual traits.

Contrasting Portrayals of Muhammad in the Hadith, the Qurʾan, and the *Sīra*

This summary of the representation of Muhammad in the hadith stands in contrast to his representation in the Qurʾan and also differs to some extent from his image in the *sīra*, the biographical tradition about the Prophet.

Some care is warranted with regard to the question of which verses of the Qurʾan actually speak of Muhammad, as he is usually not referred to by name, and in several cases the Qurʾanic address "you" can refer either to Muhammad or to the believer in general (Rippin 2000, 299–300, 302–306). However, there are still a number of verses that clearly apply to him. In the Qurʾan, the focus lies almost entirely on Muhammad's role of being a bearer of good tidings, a warner, and a prophet, rather than on his personality (cf. Khalidi 2009, 24–26). The Qurʾan emphasizes the parallels between Muhammad's mission and that of previous prophets, which makes it more difficult to retrieve information that specifically relates to him. Very little can be learned about his character from the Qurʾan. There are a few rather general statements – Muhammad is said to have been of "great" (*ʿaẓīm*) character (Q 68:4) and lenient rather than rough or hard-hearted (Q 3:159, cf. Khalidi 2009, 31). Otherwise he is represented as very human – he cannot perform any miracles; he does not seem to have any knowledge of future events (Welch 1983, 34); he is aware of his limitations and his need to seek forgiveness for his sins (although none are specified in the Qurʾan) (Welch 1983, 52; Khalidi, 28, 34); he does not heal people. And there is no indication as to his outward appearance. Possibly one might infer from the Qurʾan that he was impatient, anxious about his role as a prophet and the future of his community, and in need of reassurance, in particular in the beginning of his career (Welch 1983, 18–21; Khalidi 2009, 32–33).

The image that the biography of the Prophet conveys of Muhammad is more in line with his depiction in the hadith, in contrast to his representation in the Qurʾan. Like the hadith, the *sīra* also abounds with accounts of miraculous events throughout Muhammad's life. Partly these are variants of accounts that can also be found in the hadith, but not every miraculous story is included in both genres. In contrast to the hadith, the *sīra* shows little interest in the physical characteristics of Muhammad, but there are occasional references to it, such as the sign of prophethood, which is described as looking like the mark of a cupping-glass (Ibn Hishām 1955, 709). The *sīra* also focuses less on the character of the Prophet, although his trustworthiness, generosity, and honesty are emphasized (e.g. Ibn Hishām 1955, 86, 98). In the wake of his campaigns, Muhammad is depicted not only as forgiving but at times also as stern and severe toward his enemies (Khalidi 2009, 88). Overall, there is only a very limited amount of information about his private life, and the focus is rather on his public, his political life. Thus, we learn about his decisions with regard to warfare or concluding treaties, and whom he selected as leaders of expeditions (e.g. Ibn Hishām 1955, 660) or his deputies in Medina (Cook 2015). We also learn about his marriages from the *sīra* (Ibn Hishām 1955, 792–794), but less about his behavior toward his wives.

We have seen that the hadith does not include much information on Muhammad's thoughts or feelings, owing to the literary convention that demanded that the original narrator of a report had to be an eyewitness. As these standards were less strictly handled in the field of the biography of the Prophet, these works contain more statements about what the Prophet knew, intended, thought, or felt. Thus we learn that when he called out to the people in one case, he actually only meant the Anṣār, as he thought they would help him (Wāqidī 2011, 26). In another case we are told that he thought that he would not leave Medina because of a dream he had and in fact desired to stay in the city (Wāqidī 2011, 104). When he did not receive revelations for some time, we learn that he was distressed and grieved (Ibn Hishām 1955, 155), and at one point we are told that he thought that his uncle would abandon and betray him (Ibn Hishām 1955, 119). Numerous other cases can easily be found in which it is said what the Prophet thought, felt, or meant by something he said (e.g. Wāqidī 2011, 7, 116, 224, 321, 534, 547; Ibn Hishām 1955, 97, 111, 133, 135, 166, 167, 217, 294, 307, 314, 462, 464, 466, 595, 628, 795).

Even this brief summary makes clear that the traditions that were transmitted and collected by hadith scholars differed to some degree from what scholars of the biography of the Prophet found relevant for their studies, and similar observations can be made with regard to commentators of the Qurʾan. For example, the story of Muhammad's controversial marriage with Zaynab bt. Jaḥsh, the divorced wife of his adopted son Zayd, referred to in Q 33:37, is told differently and with much more detail in the exegetical literature than in the hadith and the *sīra*, where it barely figures at all (see Görke 2018, 40–50).

The different genres were considered separate fields with different authorities and rules apparently from early on (see Görke 2011, 183–185; Tottoli 2014,161–163). The existence of a partial overlap is not surprising given that there were a few figures who were considered authorities in more than one field and that some topics were of direct relevance for different questions.

Origins and Transmission of the Hadith

The various interests involved in the production, collection, and transmission of reports relating to the Prophet Muhammad account for the diverse material found in the hadith corpus. As indicated, the main driving force behind production of hadith collections was the legal interest. This interest, however, was not the only constituent in the emergence and transmission of individual hadiths, and some considerations on the initial motivations to preserve (or invent) traditions and on the various influences to which they were exposed during their transmission may help to better understand the diversity of the hadith corpus.

People who related hadiths may have been driven by various motivations to do so. One obvious motivation would have been the preservation of the personal memories of the companions of Muhammad within their families. People will have told stories of their encounters with Muhammad that were memorable to them, and some of these stories will have been passed on within the families to subsequent generations.

It is likely that from the beginning some people will also have been interested in the model behavior of the Prophet as a means of guidance in legal and moral issues, in particular as the Qurʾan already states that the believers have “a beautiful example” (*uswa ḥasana*) in the Messenger of God (Q 33:21). However, as has been convincingly shown, Prophetic hadith only played a minor role in the early development of Islamic law. The earliest legal scholars were mostly reliant on their own opinions or on those of the first two generations of Muslims, and only to a much smaller degree on statements of Muhammad or verses from the Qurʾan (see e.g. Brown 2009, 25, 27f.; Motzki 2002, 107, 125, 295f.; Schacht 1950, 3; Lucas 2008).

A third motivation probably arose from the engagement with the Qurʾan and the attempt to understand some of its more cryptic and allusive verses. As the revelation of the Qurʾan was inextricably linked with the Prophet, it was only natural to try to understand its verses in the context of Muhammad’s life. Thus people would have related their knowledge about the occasions of revelation or explained how specific verses needed to be understood in light of Muhammad’s behavior. It is also not unlikely that the companions will occasionally have asked the Prophet directly for some explanation of verses from the Qurʾan, although this is difficult to ascertain.

Yet another interest lay in the use of sayings of the Prophet and stories from his life in public preaching, for exhortations and admonitions, possibly also for edification. This type of relating stories is often linked to the *quṣṣāṣ*, probably best described as public preachers (see Armstrong 2016), and similar forms of public religious instruction.

We would therefore expect different kinds of traditions relating statements and deeds of the Prophet circulating from an early time, possibly even going back to his lifetime. The interest in the physical appearance and character of the Prophet, in contrast, will have only emerged from the second generation onwards. While the companions knew what the Prophet looked like, how he walked and talked, and what he liked and disliked, the successors' interest in these questions may have given rise to traditions addressing these issues. As following the Prophet's model became to be seen as the ideal way to piety (Newby 1997, 266), these details became of major interest in the course of time. One offspring of this interest can be seen in the literary genre called the *shamāʾil*, or appearances of Muhammad, which evolved from the third/ninth century.

The different origins of the traditions are not the only explanation for the various aspects of the image of Muhammad in the hadith. During the following four or five generations, before they found entrance into the hadith collections, the traditions were exposed to different influences in the course of their transmission, and these influences shaped and transformed them to some degree. It is very difficult to establish to what degree traditions were transformed, unless a large number of variants of a single tradition can be studied in comparison. Nevertheless, it is possible to give an outline of some of the main influences to which hadiths were exposed. It is important to bear in mind that hadith originated as oral tradition and that the oral character remained an essential part of hadith even after the emergence of the major written collections. While there seem to have been attempts to write down sayings of the Prophet even during his lifetime, this was met with opposition, partly because people feared that this might lead to a confusion of the words of the Prophet with the Qurʾan (see Chapter 5; see also Goldziher 1890, 194ff.; Schoeler 1989; Cook 1997). People started to systematically collect and write down hadiths only beginning in the first half of the second/eighth century (Schoeler 2008, 47ff.; Lucas 2004, 341ff.), and it took more than a century until most of the hadiths were fixed in writing. During this period, several factors influenced the shape and contents of the hadiths.

Islamic Legal Theory

The most important factor was undoubtedly the development of a legal theory. While there had been some sort of "Islamic" law already at the time of Muhammad, it was only in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries that systematic legal theories were developed. The most influential of these was the one developed by Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). He argued that the second most important source of law, after the Qurʾan, had to be the model behavior of the Prophet, the sunna, largely preserved in the hadith, which he regarded as divinely inspired and thus deserving of preference over other sources of law. This argument ultimately also convinced other legal scholars (see Schacht 1950, 11ff.; Coulson 1964, 53ff.). The importance that Prophetic hadith gained in law as a consequence led to a massive forgery of traditions allegedly going back to Muhammad. People invented Prophetic traditions to bolster their claims, or wrongly ascribed positions to the Prophet that were originally held by Muslim scholars of later generations (see Schacht 1950, 140ff., Coulson 1964, 62ff.). While the hadith scholars tried to eliminate these forgeries, it is highly controversial to what extent they were successful in their endeavor. It is thus very likely that a considerable number of hadiths that can be found in the hadith collections did not actually originate with the Prophet but are later ascriptions.

Theology

It was not only the legal theory that had an impact on the shaping of the hadith. Over time, several theological dogmas evolved with regard to Muhammad that affected how some hadiths were transmitted. Thus the Prophet came to be seen as sinless and protected from error (*maʿṣūm*), a concept that originated in Shiʿi circles with regard to the Imams, but was soon applied to the Prophet as well (see Schimmel 1985, 56–66; Nagel 2008, 166–179). Similarly, based on the Qurʾanic phrase *al-nabī al-ummī* (Q 7:157), the dogma asserting that the Prophet was illiterate emerged (see Athamina 1992). After the emergence of these positions, it is likely that traditions that seemed to run counter to them, for instance by presenting the Prophet erring or reading or writing, would have been modified in a way to conform to these dogmas. We can see a possible instance of this in a comment by al-Bukhārī relating to the illiteracy of the Prophet (Athamina 1992, 77). Independently from theological dogma and its possible influence, we can safely assume that the Prophet over the course of time came to be presented in an increasingly idealized way in the hadith. Similar developments can be observed in the biographical tradition, where glorifications of Muhammad and embellishments of the traditions can be shown to have increased in the course of transmission (see e.g. Görke 2002, 260, 266), as well as in the historical tradition, where the period of the conquests and the early caliphate became idealized and was then regarded as a model for guidance and emulation (Noth/Conrad 1994, 137).

Oral Transmission

Apart from these more or less conscious changes, the oral nature of the early tradition and its methods of transmission likewise affected the form and content of the hadith. This is partly due to human memory, which constantly selects and interprets information according to expectations and previous knowledge (Vansina 1985, 5). It is also due to the use of topoi or clichés and schemata in the narrating of events or statements. Topoi or clichés emerge when expressions and motifs are used and applied to an increasing number of accounts. While they may originally have been rooted in history, they at some point become transferable and are used on numerous occasions. Schemata, on the other hand, are literary devices concerned with the form and the organization of content (see e.g. Noth/Conrad 1994, 109ff.). Schemata can serve as mnemonic devices, such as the use of repetitions and triplications or sequencing.

Eckhart Stetter has studied the topoi and schemata in the hadith and identified a number of recurring clichés and schemata (Stetter 1965). Amongst them are some of the incidental descriptions of situations that provide a setting for a hadith, but also the use of repetitions, triplications, sequencing, the symmetrical construction of statements or specific formulae, several of which we have already encountered in the analysis above. These literary features of the individual traditions seem in fact to be a result of the transmission process rather than being part of an original narration. This can be seen by the comparison of different variants of the same tradition. Harald Motzki studied in detail the variants of a Prophetic hadith on the *zakāt al-fiṭr*, a charity to be given to the poor at the end of Ramadan (Motzki 1996). While sharing the main contents, the variants differ in the categories of the people who are obligated to give the charity. These categories are always presented in opposite pairs (free and slave, man and woman, young and old), but the variants differ in the number of categories they use, the order, and the wording. Moreover, this pattern only occurs in traditions traced back through one specific *isnād*, namely Nāfiʿ from Ibn ʿUmar. While traditions going back to other companions do mention the obligation of the *zakāt al-fiṭr* and the amount due, they do not say anything about the categories of those who are obliged (cf. Bukhārī, 25). This seems to indicate that the use of the enumeration of the categories in pairs of opposites was introduced by either Ibn ʿUmar or Nāfiʿ and did not originate with the Prophet.

In another study of variant readings in the hadith, R. Marston Speight observed different types of variations of a single tradition (Speight 2000). He drew attention to the Greek apothegms (*chreiai*), which are very similar in form and structure, and concluded that it "seems likely that the transmitters of *hadith* were motivated by a concern to clothe the Prophetic dicta in effective rhetorical dress to enhance their religious significance" (Speight 2000, 85).

Is the Portrayal of Muhammad in the Hadith Rooted in History?

All these considerations and observations have an impact on the question to what extent the image or images of Muhammad in the hadith are rooted in history. It is not unlikely that the hadith contains some authentic statements of or about Muhammad. However, the various legal and theological interests that led to the invention of traditions as well as the nature of the transmission of the material make it extremely difficult to unearth such statements and separate them from ones that emerged only at a later time or, while having an original kernel, were transformed in the course of transmission. Therefore a careful approach seems warranted. This is in particular true for indirect information about Muhammad's behavior and habits. It has, for example, been argued that Muhammad was a model teacher, that he used aids to memory, repeated important statements, structured the material by focusing on three or five main points, used gestures to support his statements, or used specific formulae (Abdel Haleem 2002). While all these devices are indeed important to remember key points, we have seen that they likely only emerged in the course of the transmission and thus may not be based in Muhammad's teaching. On the other hand, some information appears to be rather unsuspicious and not affected by legal or theoretical consideration and it may therefore have a higher claim for authenticity. Amongst such reports one might count the (apparently unanimous) views that Muhammad liked *tharīd* and sweets, that he easily got angry, or that he once forgot part of a prayer.

Conclusion

The hadith not only provides legally relevant statements and reports of deeds of the Prophet, but also a colorful image of Muhammad with a lot of detail about his physical appearance, character, likes, and dislikes. There are a number of inconsistencies in these reports, but some aspects seem to be unanimous. Taken together, the reports depict an almost perfect human being with only minor weaknesses.

This image complements – and sometimes contradicts – the image of Muhammad that can be derived from the Qurʾan, the exegetical literature, and the biographical tradition about Muhammad. Several aspects covered in the hadith are absent from the other fields and vice versa. We find, for example, almost no information about Muhammad's thoughts and feelings in the hadith (in contrast to the *sīra* or the *tafsīr*), while the hadith tells us more about Muhammad's physical appearance, his character, his likes and dislikes, and his behavioral patterns and habits. The differences between the fields are partly due to the different aims and interests of the scholars in the respective fields but also to different literary conventions.

Several features of the hadith bear witness to the conscious recasting or invention of reports out of legal and theological interests, as well as to their gradual transformation owing to the nature of oral transmission. This makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to extract a historical kernel from the individual reports, but it tells us what topics the transmitters and collectors of hadith in the first two to three centuries after Muhammad were interested in.

Independently of the question of the extent to which the image of Muhammad in the hadith is historically correct, Muslim scholars have often used the kind of information gathered above to illustrate and exemplify Muhammad's character and still do so (e.g. Choudhury 1993; Salahi 2013). And Muslims over the course of history have always taken interest in the minute details of Muhammad's personal life, as imitating the Prophet in every conceivable aspect has been regarded as a way of piety. For this purpose, the information about Muhammad conveyed through the hadith (rather than in other sources) has always been of primary importance, not only because the amount of information and its direct relevance for everyday life, but also because it was considered more reliable and authoritative than the information contained in the *sīra* and the *tafsīr*. The image of Muhammad in the hadith thus continues to play an important part in Muslim life, and its development and relevance for Muslims throughout history will remain an important object of research.

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CHAPTER 5

Recording

Gregor Schoeler

Written and Oral Teaching in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

From an early stage, the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each had *two* collections of teachings running side by side: a written teaching, that is, a holy book, considered to be divine revelation, and, arising simultaneously with it or emerging sooner or later thereafter, an oral teaching (Strack 1931, 12–20; Kaplan 1932–1933, 261–288; Gerhardsson 1961, 19–29; Schoeler 2006, 111–116, 208, n. 759; Cook 1997, 498–512). In Judaism, the written doctrine is the Torah, the Pentateuch, while the oral doctrine is the "Oral Torah," that is, the contents of the Talmud (Mishnah and Gemarah), and the Midrash works which form a whole with the Talmud (Kaatz 1922, 1). In Christianity, as in Judaism, the written teaching was originally the Torah of the Jews, the "Writ"; the "oral teaching" was the Gospels, the good news of the risen Christ, witnessed to by the apostles and other believing contemporaries, and passed on in turn by them to their contemporaries, initially only by word of mouth (Galling 1957–1965, I, 1113). In Islam, the written teaching is the Qurʾan, the "Book" (*al-kitāb*) par excellence, considered to be the revealed Word of God; the oral teaching is the hadith, the reports on the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. In all of the three religions, the oral teaching is believed to be divinely inspired (Goldziher 1890, 20–22; Goldziher 2004, 63–66).

Initially, these oral traditions of Jews, Christians, and Muslims were transmitted by word of mouth alone; after a while, however, all three sets of oral teaching, Talmud, Gospels, and hadith, were ultimately committed to writing and redacted (codified). The intervening time up to codification was quite different for the three religions. It proceeded most quickly in Christianity; the first Gospel to undergo written redaction is the Gospel of Mark (c. 70 CE, i.e. about 40 years after Christ's death). It took the longest

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in Judaism: several hundred years passed until a written edition of the Talmud was available. The exact date of the redaction of the Talmud remains unknown, though it may have been in the ninth century (cf. Cook 1997, 519).

It took 150–250 years, or even longer, for the Islamic oral doctrine, the hadith, to arrive at its more or less definitive written structure in the works of al-Bukhārī (2001), Muslim (1972), both in the ninth century, and many others, and to circulate in manuscript form. The Shiʿi tradition needed even more time: al-Kulīnī's (d. 329/940–941) *al-Kāfī* was not compiled and redacted until the fourth/tenth century (Kohlberg 1983, 303–304; see Chapter 14).

This is not to say, however, that the oral teachings of the three religions were passed on purely orally until the time of their definitive codification, with no intervention of writing at all. Rather, the transmission of the oral doctrines of the Jews and Muslims ensued ever more frequently on the basis of written notes; the Christians, too, seem to have used written records prior to the redaction and codification of the Gospels (cf. Gerhardsson 1961, 202, 335). It is such notes, used as mnemonic aids, that provided the basis for the teachers' instruction and transmission; and in the course of time, students, as well, began more and more frequently to write down what they heard for mnemonic purposes. The "publication" of the material, however, was for a long time only by means of lectures. In this light, then, we must envisage the instruction and transmission of oral doctrine in Judaism and Islam to have been much like a modern academic lecture (Schoeler 2006, esp. 29–33, 40).

The writing down of the oral teaching, however, was not always without controversy (Goldziher 1890, 194–202; Schoeler 2006, 111–129; Cook 1997). For a time, many Jewish and many Muslim scholars raised sharp objections to the writing of oral traditions. Their main concern was that no second holy book should emerge alongside the scriptures, that is to say, the Torah or the Qurʾan, respectively. In Islam, however, there were, simultaneously, or soon thereafter, also early advocates for committing traditions to writing, and thus arose a long-lasting dispute among Muslim traditionists over the question of whether it is permissible to commit the traditions to writing or whether they should just be kept in mind, taught from memory, and learned by heart.

In all three religions the process ended with the original "oral" teaching nonetheless being recorded in book form (codified). Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the hadith collections have also been printed. It thus came about in all three religions that a second written teaching ultimately emerged which was regarded in practice as equal in importance to the original written teaching or, in the case of the New Testament in Christianity, of even greater significance. The outcome is that in Judaism today the Talmud (Mishnah and Gemarah) stands as an edited and printed work alongside the (written) Torah, in Christianity the New Testament alongside the Old Testament, and in Islam the collections of hadith alongside the Qurʾan.

From Orally Transmitted Report to Tradition in a Redacted Work

The term "hadith," which quickly came to mean a "report on a saying or an action of the Prophet Muhammad," originally meant "a (piece of) news, (a piece of) information, a narration, or a story" (Lane 1863–1893, II, 529). This sense already indicates that hadith reports were originally intended to be retold and passed on orally. Nonetheless, Islamic preservation and transmission of tradition subsequently developed toward writing, at the end of which a comprehensive hadith literature emerged. The path from orally transmitted report to written tradition in a redacted work has already been recognized and described by indigenous hadith scholars. The following scheme (Sezgin 1967, 55) is based on their perceptions:

1. Unsystematic records (*kitāba*) at the time of the Prophet's companions and earliest successors (as of c. 630) on tablets, leaves, and in notebooks.
2. Deliberate collections (*tadwīn*) in the last quarter of the first and second century AH (c. 690–740 CE).
3. Compilations arranged systematically according to chapter content (*taṣnīf*) as of around 125/740 on into the third/ninth century and beyond; more or less finalized redacted works since the third/ninth century.

That hadith was originally intended to be taught and passed on orally by no means excluded the Prophet's literate companions having already made notes at an earlier time to serve as mnemonic aids (Schoeler 2009, 40–41; 2011, 20). We have numerous testimonies in this regard. It is reported, for instance, that Ibn ʿAbbās, the cousin of the Prophet and putative founder of Qurʾan exegesis (Sezgin 1967, 25–28), was seen carrying "tablets" or "boards" (*alwāḥ*) "upon which he would write something of the acts of the Messenger of God" (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, II/2, 123). Other reports indicate that companions and successors were in possession of *ṣuḥuf*, sheets of parchment or papyrus (Goldziher 1890, 9–10). All of these reports refer to spontaneous actions, not systematic efforts to record traditions.

However, according to a report disseminated by al-Zuhrī (see below) and transmitted in numerous variations, the caliph ʿUmar (r. 634–644) is said to have once planned to have the sunna (or *sunan*; "norm," "custom," i.e. the generally approved standard or practice introduced by the Prophet as well as by the pious Muslims of the days of old) committed to writing; nonetheless, after thinking it over, the plan was discarded (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, IV/1, 13–14; al-Khaṭīb 1974, 49–53; Schoeler 2006, 120; Cook 1997, 465–466).

The Tadwīn Movement

Deliberate efforts to collect traditions were made by representatives of the first generation of "successors," who were active roughly in the last quarter of the seventh century CE and in the first quarter of the eighth century CE and had no direct experience of Muhammad. Younger representatives of this generation began specifically to draw upon reports from diverse people on the Prophet's life and words, namely, from the companions who were still alive. They compiled these reports, the hadiths, in various ways. Collectors or transmitters soon adopted the habit of naming their informants first when passing on their reports; those who transmitted the report from them did the same, so that chains of transmitters came into being (Juynboll 1983, 9–10; Index). These chains were placed at the head of the texts they were intended to "support"; this is why they were called *isnād*s ("supports"). Each hadith is thus bipartite, comprising a chain of transmitters (*isnād*) and a text (*matn*).

ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr

The most important scholar of the first generation of successors is ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr (c. 643–c. 712), the son of a cousin of the Prophet and nephew and confidant of the Prophet's favorite wife, ʿA'isha (Sezgin 1967, 278–279; Schoeler 2000, 910–913; Schoeler 2011, 20–23; Görke and Schoeler 2008). He compiled on the one hand juridical traditions, in particular those containing ritual prescriptions; and on the other hand, *historical* reports on the life of Muhammad. His most frequently named informant is his aunt, ʿA'isha. For his juristic hadiths he is supposed to have had written documents (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, V, 133; Schoeler 2009, 42; Schoeler 2011, 21). He habitually recited them to students, arranged content-wise in chapters (al-Fasawī 1981, I, p. 551). ʿUrwa disseminated his compiled traditions orally through public instruction, yet he also possessed written records.

This manner of imparting knowledge before a gathering of students became determinant in the Islamic system of instruction: the lecturer referred to an informant or series of informants and then presented the relevant tradition; the written word and spoken word complemented each other; instruction, transmission, and publication were one; and the students listened and mostly wrote down what they heard.

It is possible that ʿUrwa first received the stimulus for his collection activities from the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705, or his son al-Walīd r. 705–715), who queried him in written correspondence about events in Muhammad's life and on juridical matters, which ʿUrwa answered by letter (Schoeler 2011, 22; Görke and Schoeler 2008, 17; see Index, Cook 1997, 481). The content of these epistles was transmitted further by ʿUrwa to his students in lectures, and it is in this transmitted form that the letters have come to us.

Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī

It is through the initiative of the court, or to be more precise, the Umayyad caliphs ʿUmar II (r. 717–720 CE) and Hishām (r. 724–43 CE), that the first official large-scale collections of juridical hadiths are said to have been initiated. After earlier caliphs had already sometimes occasioned the writing or collection of traditions, ʿUmar II is reported to have ordered the first official collection of hadith (*tadwīn*), "for fear of the decline of Tradition and the dying-out of its custodians" (Goldziher 1890, 210–211; Sezgin 1967, 56–57; Cook 1997, 474–475; Schoeler 2006, 121–124). He is supposed to have commissioned the scholar Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm (d. 120/737?) for this purpose.

While tradition itself leaves us in the dark as to the outcome of this undertaking – according to one report, it was lost (Sezgin 1967, 57) – it does expressly say that the most important student of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) (Sezgin 1967, 280–283; Lecker 2002, 565–566) "was the first to collect and write the Tradition (on a large scale)" (*awwal man dawwana al-ʿilm wa-katabahū*) (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1975, 94; Abū Nuʿaym 1932–1938, III, 363; Sezgin 1967, 57, 281; Schoeler 2006, 122).

He is supposed to have carried out this collection by order of the caliph Hishām (r. 724–743 CE) who wanted hadith to be implemented in the education of his sons. However, this collection has apparently been lost as well. We shall return to these later in another context.

The Taṣnīf Movement

Around the middle of the eighth century CE a systematic method of presenting the transmitted material was widely accepted – the *taṣnīf*, that is, the ordering of hadiths according to chapter content (Goldziher 1890, 231–234; Sezgin 1967, 57–58; Abdul Rauf 1983, 272–273; Schoeler 2009, 68–81). The traditionists who compiled such works are called *muṣannifūn*, the works themselves *muṣannafāt* (sg. *muṣannaf*) (Juynboll 1993a,b, 662–663). Muslim Tradition gives as the earliest possible time for *taṣnīf* the decade before the middle of the century (120–130/737–747) (Sezgin 1967, 55, 57–58); we have seen, however, that ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr is already supposed to have applied this method.

Muslim tradition connects this mid-eighth century inception of the *taṣnīf* movement with the spread of scholars into the large provincial cities and the rise of heretical movements (Schoeler 2009, 68). Evidently, comprehensive systematic collections seemed necessary at the point in time when the scholars, who were not already in Medina, the home of the sunna, but in other centers as well, had to come to terms with ever more traditions, authentic and inauthentic, and subject them to scrutiny. It is at this time that hadith criticism emerged as an especially important branch of hadith studies (Juynboll 1983, 20, 134). In order to be usable, large collections required systematization. Arrangement according to chapter content (*taṣnīf*) proved particularly advantageous.

Soon after the emergence of the *taṣnīf* genre, another systematic form of arranging the tradition material, the *musnad*, emerged, in which traditions were organized according to the name of the first/oldest transmitter (Goldziher 1890, 228; Juynboll 1993a,b, 705–707; Juynboll 1983, 22; Abdul Rauf 1983, 273–274). Mostly companions of the Prophet, these transmitters were customarily arranged according to the date of their conversion. Such a collection can contain either the *musnad* of one, a few, or all of the Prophet's companions. The oldest extant works of this type are the *Musnad* of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (d. 203/818; al-Ṭayālisī 2018) and the one by al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219/834); the most famous *musnad* is that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855; Ibn Ḥanbal 1313 AH).

The early *muṣannaf* and *musnad* works are designated in the sources as *kutub* (sg. *kitāb*), "books." The term *kitāb* in this period – and still later as well – by no means refers only to the "redacted book" but rather to all manner of written material: private records, writs, notebooks, letters, decrees, also inscriptions (Goldziher 1890, 196; Schoeler 2006, 176, n. 100). This led for a long time to confusion in hadith studies because the *muṣannaf* and *musnad* works of the eighth century were all assumed to be "redacted books." It is therefore advisable to assume here a pair of terms from Greek which enable a clear terminological differentiation between the private record as a memory aid, especially for a lecture, and an "actual" book designed according to the canon of stylistic rules, that is, a literary work. The former is called *hypomnēma*, the latter *syngramma* (Schoeler 2006, 46). There were few *syngrammata* in this period, and the most important *syngramma* by far, though not the only one, was naturally the Qurʾan.

Some of the earliest *muṣannafāt* must surely have been no more than ordered leaves or notebooks, in other words pure *hypomnēmata*. This certainly holds true for the collection of Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba (d. 156/773) who is supposed to have been the first *muṣannif* in Iraq (Sezgin 1967, 91; Schoeler 2006, 114–115). It is said of Saʿīd (Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, 57; Schoeler 2009, 69–70) that he had no "book," but committed everything to memory. The Iraqi Saʿīd did, however, have a scribe who always accompanied him and wrote his "books" with whom he could peruse them (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, VII/2, 76). Insistence that he transmitted only from memory is explained by the hostility of Iraqi traditionists to the writing of tradition, which we will discuss in detail in the next section. Saʿīd's *muṣannaf* is no longer extant; material from it, however, is quoted in later hadith works and elsewhere.

This holds as well for the other early *muṣannaf*, the *Kitāb al-Sunan* of Ibn Jurayj, allegedly the first *muṣannif* in Mecca (Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, IV, 4; Sezgin 1967, 58, 91). A great part of this work has survived in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*. From Ibn Jurayj's *Kitāb al-Sunan*, the titles of four chapters are known: (i) Ritual Purity, (ii) Fasting, (iii) Prayer, (iv) Alms Tax (Ibn al-Nadīm 1871–1872, 236). Many later legal *muṣannaf* and *sunan* works will begin in a like manner; appearing there first, as well, is purity, followed by the five pillars of Islam. Unlike Saʿīd, Ibn Jurayj did not only lecture from memory; on the contrary, he transmitted primarily on the basis of his "books" (Motzki, 2002, 274–275). It is even said of him that only when he used his books were his traditions reliable (al-Khaṭīb 1931, X, 404–405; Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, VI, 359).

Throughout premodern times, the most respected methods of imparting knowledge were *samāʿ* ("lecture"; actually "listening/audition") and *qirāʾa* ("reading"). For the *samāʿ*, the shaykh (teacher) delivered the material, from memory or by reading from a "book," before the gathered students. The latter simultaneously wrote it down, or, if this was not tolerated by the teacher, they first of all retained the material in their memory and then wrote it down later at home (Sezgin 1967, 58). This method corresponds in many respects to the modern academic lecture. For the *qirāʾa* ("reading"), it was a student who recited from the shaykh's work while the latter listened and monitored the recitation (Sezgin 1967, 59). What can be considered a special form of the *samāʿ* is the dictation session (*imlāʾ*), which was evident from the middle of the eighth century at the latest (Weisweiler 1952; Schoeler 2006, 32) and is ranked in later theoretical works as a separate method of transmission.

Here we must note the significance of the "heard" or "audited" transmission (*al-riwāya al-masmūʿa*) in the Islamic teaching system (Schoeler 2006, 41–42; Schoeler 2009, 36–37). This system demanded that each text under review be "heard" from or "recited" in the presence of the author or authorized transmitter. The simple copying (*kitāba*) of it, which was certainly often what happened in reality, was considered a poor transmission method, unless the copied texts were subsequently read in the presence of the author or authorized transmitter and corrected by him. Muslim scholars based the necessity of "audited" transmission mainly on the idiosyncrasies of Arabic script

(Schoeler 2006, 60, 85, 2009, 119–120), in which a great many letters are distinguished only by diacritical dots placed above or below the same letter. Dots are often omitted or wrongly placed when writing quickly, and this can result in serious misunderstandings. The fear of erroneous readings and slips of the pen was therefore not unwarranted, and the demand for control of the copies was fulfilled by reading aloud in front of an expert. Moreover, we frequently see in the literary criticism of Muslim scholars, traditionists, and also jurists, a fundamental distrust of everything written, similar to what Plato described in *Phaidros* (Schoeler 2006, 82–85).

"Audited" transmission (*samāʿ*) should not be equated with "oral" transmission, since "audited" transmission was almost always based on written texts. The presentation could be from memory, but with the passing of time the lecture was increasingly recited from a (note)book. The postulate of the "audited" transmission was maintained throughout premodern Islam. As of the eleventh century, but reaching their prime in the next two centuries, public lectures (called also *samāʿāt*) came into being; texts which had been "heard" in the presence of authorized persons, received certificates of hearing (audience certificates; *ijāzāt al-samāʿ*) in which the shaykh in whose presence they were read, the reciter/lecturer (often the shaykh himself), and all of the participants in the session were named. This development clearly represents a promotion of the listener vis-à-vis the reader–lecturer (Sellheim 1995, 1019–1020; Leder et al. 1996; Schoeler 2009, 122–123). Manuscripts containing such certificates were, and are still, considered especially reliable.

Traditionists from the middle of the eighth century, for example, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 812; Sezgin 1967, 96–97), went on journeys to hear hadiths from well-known teachers (*riḥalāt fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*), wrote them down, ordered the collected material by content, learned it by heart, and subsequently imparted it to their students as lectures (Ibn Ḥibbān 1959, 173; Ibn Ḥibbān 1973–1983, VII, 562; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1931, XIII, 475; Schoeler 2006, 31). Whether writing down was done during the lectures or at home depended on the teacher; with the pious Kufic jurist Sufyān ath-Thawrī (d. 161/778; Sezgin 1967, 518), making notes was evidently out of the question. When lecturing, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, like his Basran predecessor Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba, spoke from memory without a book; we will see that after the middle of the eighth century this type of presentation was no longer the general rule, still being followed only in Iraq, and particularly in Basra.

Several *muṣannafāt* from the second half of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries are extant, albeit not in the original but in later recensions (i.e. in further transmissions from students and their students). The most important of them is doubtlessly the *Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik b. Anas (d. 795; Sezgin 1967, 457–464; Dutton 1999), the founder of the school of jurisprudence named after him. It is a comprehensive legal work in which not only hadiths of the Prophet but also the doctrines of the companions and successors of the Prophet are compiled. Mālik also considered *ʿamal*, the transmitted judicial practice of Medina, the city of Muhammad, to be legally binding.

Like other texts, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* was primarily a "text for teaching" (Dutton 1999, 24). We are well informed of Mālik's teaching and transmission methods. As a rule, the master "published" his works in the traditional manner by means of lectures in front of his students. He preferred, in this regard, to have one of his students recite from the book while he himself listened and monitored the presentation; this is the transmission method called *qirāʾa;* "reading," later also called *ʿarḍ*, "presentation, submission" (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1970, 362–363, 443; Goldziher 1890, 221). Occasionally, at the special request of an exceptional student, even Mālik himself is reported to have recited (*samāʿ*) the text (Weisweiler 1952, 8f.). The *qirāʾa* was held in no less esteem by the Medinans than the *samāʿ* (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1970, 363); it was rumored, however, that Mālik sometimes fell asleep when monitoring the readings (ibid., 362). He occasionally gave a student a copy of the work that he had himself corrected and said thereby, "Transmit in my name" (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1970, 443c; this method of transmission is known as *munāwala*, "handing-over"; Sezgin 1967, 59). At times he is reported to have gone even further with his liberality and allowed a student to pass on one of the copies penned and collated for personal use by the student himself, and to say thereby that he "heard" it from Mālik (a transmission method enjoying little acceptance, the *ijāza*, "allowance," "license"; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1970, 443b).

In light of such loose handling of the prescribed rules of the transmission system, it is not surprising that extant recensions of the *Muwāṭṭaʾ* differ in content (inclusion or non-inclusion of material; see the collation by Goldziher 1890, 224–226) as well as structure (chapter order and headings). Editorial changes traceable back to Mālik himself are discernable; this is surely because the work was revised several times by the master himself over a period of over 40 years (Sezgin 1967, 458; Abdul Rauf 1983, 272).

Nonetheless, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is more than a mere *hypomnēma* ; it also has characteristics of a literary work (*syngramma*). The most noticeable distinction in this regard is the fact that it has an actual title. Mālik had possibly originally intended to do the final editing and publication of the work himself. *Al-Muwāṭṭaʾ* means "the Well-Trodden [Path]" and is thus a metaphorical term which seems to point to an actual book. The *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is one of the earliest Arabic scholarly works that bears an "authentic" title originating from the author himself (Schacht 1991, 264; Schoeler 2009, 73). The titles of other *muṣannafāt* from the same period are mostly appellative and not necessarily from the pens of their authors; they generally run under the name "*Muṣannaf* of so-and-so" or "*Jāmīʿ* ('Collection') of so-and-so."[1] Other indications of the possibility that Mālik originally wanted to create with the *Muwwaṭṭaʾ* an actual book are that the work displays a differentiated division into "books" (*kutub* = chapters) and "subchapters" *abwāb*, sg. *bāb*) and has a relatively fixed text. A comparison of mutually corresponding traditions in the diverse recensions of the *Muwwaṭṭaʾ* is said to have generally revealed a close similarity between these texts (Dutton 1999, Q 24).

Nevertheless, it is certain that Mālik had not prepared a definitive edition of his book; it was his students and their students who first gave the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* its final form. The work is thus available to us today in a number of different recensions (further transmissions). Of these, some three or four are complete, and several only incomplete or extant in fragmentary state (Sezgin 1967, 459; Dutton 1999, Q 23–24). The most widely disseminated recension is that of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Maṣmūdī (d. 848), generally considered to be the Vulgate of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, which contains 61 chapters (*kutub*). The subjects treated are purity, prayers, alms tax, fasting, and so on.

The *taṣnīf* movement reached its height in the ninth century CE. The six canonical hadith works of this century (see Chapter 7) are also *muṣannafāt*, including the compilations of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870; Sezgin 1967, 115–134) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875; Sezgin 1967, 136–143) called (*al-Jāmiʿ*) *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* ("The authentic collection"). The "Ṣaḥīḥ movement" (Abdul Rauf 1983, 274–277), which developed in close connection with hadith criticism, aimed to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic material, which up to that time was not the case in the *taṣnīf* and *musnad* movements, or at least had not been done to such an extent. A *musnad* work is what the large hadith collection of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855; Sezgin 1967, 502–509) entitled *al-Musnad* represents. It, too, is considered by many to be canonical.

Although the hadith compilations of the ninth century were soon disseminated in writing, the authors conceived their works *fundamentally* as texts for teaching, and "published" them by lecturing to students. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had not yet given a fixed structure to his *Musnad*. The work was then transmitted further by Aḥmad's son ʿAbd Allāh (d. 903), then by the latter's student Abū Bakr al-Qaṭīʿī (d. 979); both supplemented Aḥmad's text with yet other traditions (Schoeler 2009, 79).

The works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and those of other canonical authors, like Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, show characteristics of literary works (*syngrammata*), for example, actual work titles, a differentiated division into "books" (*kutub* = chapters) and subchapters (*abwāb*, sg. *bāb*), and occasional explanatory notes. This is most clearly evident in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjaj, which is the only one of the canonical hadith works with a foreword by the author (Juynboll 1984; Schoeler 2009, 116). This clearly shows that Muslim had not only conceived his *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a text book for instruction but had also written it with an eye to a reading public.

The Prohibition on Writing Hadith

The ongoing scripturalization of hadith from the end of the seventh to the beginning of the ninth century CE was accompanied by a fierce discussion among the traditionists as to whether writing hadiths down is at all permissibled (Golziher 1890, 196–202; Schoeler 2006, 111–141; Cook 1997; Kister 1998). Opponents of the writing of traditions, or at any rate the public utilization of written traditions, are encountered near the end of the seventh century and in the first half of the eighth century in all major centers of Muslim scholarship: Medina, Mecca, Syria, Basra, Kufa, and Yemen. At this period in time, the rejectionist stance toward writing seems to have prevailed everywhere. Later, in the second half of the eighth century, the opposition to writing subsided in most of the centers. The circumstances under which this came about will be observable with particular clarity in Medina. Opposition to writing held its ground in Iraq into the third/ninth century, especially in Basra. Afterwards, little by little, it disappeared there as well.

This opposition to the writing down of traditions is expressed in sentences and epigrams (Goldziher 1890, 199), but the most important testimony is traditions themselves. In the first instance, these are not traced back to the Prophet but to companions and successors, or to later scholars. Subsequently, hadiths traced back to the Prophet seem to emerge.

Basra

The Basran Abū Naḍra al-Mundhir b. Mālik (d. c. 727 CE) transmitted from the companion Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693; Medina) that the latter replied as follows to a request for him to dictate:

> Do you want to adopt it as copies of the Qurʾan? Your Prophet used to speak to us (*kāna yuḥaddithunā*); you, too, should memorize that which is from us, just as we used to memorize (that which was from the Prophet). (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 36c–37; cf. 36–38; Schoeler 2006, 117; Cook 1997, 447, 492)

The traditionist Shuʿba (d. 160/776), one of the early *muṣannifūn* (Sezgin 1967, 92), said to his son: "My dear son, when I die, wash my books and bury them" (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 62b; Cook 1997, 480).

Kufa

ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/721) from Masrūq (d. 63/683):

> (ʿAbd Allāh) Ibn Masʿūd related a hadith, whereupon his son said to him: "But it is not the way you told it before." (Ibn Masʿūd) then asked him: "How do you know that?" – "I wrote it down." – "Bring the leaf (*al-ṣaḥīfa*)!" – (The son) brought it, and he (Ibn Masʿūd) erased it. (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 39b; Schoeler 2006, 120–121; Cook 1997, 482)

The successors Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/715; Kufa) and ʿUbayda b. ʿAmr al-Salmānī (d. 72/691; Medina) are each reported to have said to a student taking notes from them,

> Don't write down anything from me for eternity (*lā tukhlidanna ʿannī kitāban*)! (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 46d–47a; Schoeler 2006, 117; Cook 1997, 484)

Since it was crucial that notes not be permanent like the Qurʾan, some traditionists tolerated short-term notes as mnemonic aids:

> Masrūq (d. 63/683) said to ʿAlqama (b. Qays) (d. 62/681): "Write for me the *naẓāʾir* (?)!" ʿAlqama answered: "Do you not know it's wrong to write?" Masrūq replied: "I only glance at it, then I erase it." ʿAlqama: "That's all right then" (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 58c; Cook 1997, 487).

Syrians

Al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774), an eminent scholar and founder of a school of jurisprudence, is supposed to have said,

> This science (i.e. hadith) was once something noble, when people still received it (in lessons) and memorized it with each other; however, once it entered into the books, its luster disappeared and it fell into the wrong hands. (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 64a; Schoeler 2006, 121; Cook 1997, 491)

Medina and al-Zuhrī's Change of Mind

As to the attitude of the Medinan traditionists on the subject in question, we are particularly well informed because we have numerous biographical reports about the Medinan Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, the most outstanding hadith scholar of the eighth century CE.[2]

Al-Zuhrī's teacher, ʿUrwa, from whom we already know that he had written records of his juridical hadiths, is – just like his student al-Zuhrī later – reported to have left no books behind (Dhahabī 1985, V, 345, 3; Cook 1997, 462). According to one tradition, he is said to have burned them on the day of the battle of Ḥarra, perhaps to keep them from falling into other hands in case of his demise; later, however, he is said to have regretted having done so (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, V, 133; Schoeler 2011, 21; Cook 1997, 463). Another source has him saying, "I wrote down the Tradition, and then erased it [no circumstantial details are given here]. (Now, however,) I wish, … I had not erased them!" (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 60a; ʿAbd al-Razzāq 1970–1972 XI, 425, Nr. 20902; *Tahdhīb* 7/165).

Reports about al-Zuhrī's use of writing seem to be contradictory. This is even true of those concerning the collection of traditions. According to an account traced back to his student Mālik b. Anas, al-Zuhrī denied writing down traditions (al-Fasawī 1981, I, 622; al-Dhahabī 1985, V, 345; Schoeler 2011, 23; Cook 1997, 459). ʿIkrima b. ʿAmmār, a contemporary of al-Zuhrī, reports that he, along with al-Zuhrī and others, came to al-Aʿraj (d. 117/735 or some years later) to hear hadiths from him. Al-Aʿraj was making copies of the Qurʾan. Unlike the others, al-Zuhrī did not make written notes at first; later on, however, whenever a long hadith came up, he wrote it down on a piece of the same material used by al-Aʿraj for his Qurʾan copies (probably parchment), but erased it after reading it out loud (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 59a; al-Fasawī 1981, I, 633; Schoeler 2011, 22; Cook 1997, 459).

On the other hand, we find several reports about al-Zuhrī writing down numerous traditions in the process of collection without immediately destroying them. His student Maʿmar ibn Rāshid says that another traditionist and companion of al-Zuhrī, Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān (d. after 140/757–758), related the following story (al-Fasawī 1981, 637; al-Khaṭīb 1974, 106c; Schoeler 2011, 23; Cook 1997, 460):

> Ibn Shihāb (al-Zuhrī) and I met while collecting traditions. We agreed to write down the *sunan* (the sayings and doings of the Prophet and the pious Muslims of the days of old). We then wrote down what came from the Prophet …

The contradictory nature of these reports is less pronounced if we picture the following development: advocating at first the position, widespread in his time, that traditions should not be written down at all, or only retained in writing for a short time before memorizing them, al-Zuhrī was gradually constrained by the pressure of circumstances to make more and more use of written records. Additional reports confirm this hypothesis.

In accordance with contemporary practice, al-Zuhrī at first transmitted his knowledge only through lectures. Naturally, students had to attend them in person. However, listeners occasionally wanted to gain access to his records in a more convenient manner. A report (al-Dhahabī 1985, V, 338; Schoeler 2011, 24) going back to Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778; Sezgin 1967, 518–519) reveals that there were valid reasons for this desire: al-Thawrī once came to al-Zuhrī and wanted to hear traditions. The latter, however, was disinclined to recite. After a gentle rebuke by al-Thawrī, al-Zuhrī went into his house, handed him a "book," and told him to transmit it on his authority. The conscientious Sufyān remarked that he had not transmitted a single letter of it. Owing to the growing number of students, al-Zuhrī became perhaps the first scholar to use a method of transmission which in theory never gained full recognition but in practice always played an important role: *munāwala* (Sezgin 1967, 59). As we have seen, his illustrious student Mālik ibn Anas used this procedure as well.

Undoubtedly, al-Zuhrī's original position, according to which written records were to be avoided or only produced as short-term mnemonic aids to be destroyed after use, proved to be impracticable over time. However, a huge step towards a genuinely written literature was marked by al-Zuhrī's tolerance of the emergence, and even commissioned production, of writings penned for a smaller or larger circle of laypersons, that is, for a reading public. At that time, the audience for these writings and collections consisted almost entirely of members of the court: the caliph, the princes, and court officials. The most important work was a large-scale hadith collection (*tadwīn*) produced at the behest of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–343). Al-Zuhrī was also required to dictate large quantities of hadiths to the caliph's son, to whom he served as mentor (al-Fasawī 1981, I, 640, 632; Sezgin 1967, 281–282; Schoeler 2006, 123–124, 2011, 31; Cook 1997, 460–461, 486; Lecker 1996, 25).

By collecting and writing down hadith collections commissioned by the court, al-Zuhrī breached a decades-old taboo against the production of (permanent) written religious works beside the Qurʾan. His qualms are amply illustrated by his repeated urge to justify himself. The best known of his explanations was that he was compelled by the Umayyads (ʿAbd al-Razzāq 1970–1972, XI, 258 no. 20486; al-Khaṭīb 1974, 107b; Schoeler 2006, 122–124; Cook 1997, 460–461):

> We had an aversion to writing down the Knowledge (i.e., the Tradition) until these rulers compelled us to do it. Now, we are of the opinion that we should not prohibit any Muslim from doing likewise (sc. from writing down traditions).

In fact, the opposition to recording hadith in writing slowly disappeared in Medina after the middle of the second/eighth century.

Two of al-Zuhrī's students report that their teacher had only one book at his home, or only two books, respectively: the one, "a book containing his family's genealogy," the other "something about his family's genealogy and some poems" (al-Fasawī 1981, I, 641, 643). The second report adds a remark by al-Zuhrī himself denying that he kept anything written down in his house. On the other hand, the hadith collections he wrote (i.e. dictated to scribes) by order of the court, and which were removed from the library of the caliph after the assassination of al-Walīd II in 125/743, are said to have amounted to several mule loads (al-Fasawī 1981, I, 637–638; Schoeler 2009, 48; Schoeler 2011, 25; Cook 1997, 459–460).

These reports need not contradict each other. Apparently, according to the opponents of written records, to which al-Zuhrī ultimately belonged, it was worse to possess and leave behind books (especially religious ones) oneself than to dictate or otherwise produce them and give them to others. These persons could thus be admonished to destroy the written notes after having memorized them. It is noteworthy that there were apparently few qualms, if any at all, about penning and retaining books of non-religious content.

Prophetic Hadiths Pro and Contra Writing Notes

While these traditions traced to the companions and successors on the allowance and disallowance of writing down hadiths were disseminated from the first quarter of the eighth century at the latest (Schoeler 2006, 130–141, cf. 139–140; Cook 1997, 490–491), hadiths of the Prophet pertaining to the same dispute arose a bit later. Obviously, the aim with the more respected Prophetic hadiths was to outdo the traditions traced "merely" to companions and successors.

It seems that the Prophetic hadiths sympathetic to writing appear somewhat earlier than those hostile towards them, emerging in the first quarter of the eighth century, especially in Mecca. This is not surprising at a time when opposition to writing still prevailed in every center. But the emergence of Prophetic hadiths against writing was also not long in coming. These arose in reaction to the adversarial hadiths, and above all against the increasingly prevalent practice of utilizing written texts also in public (second and third quarter of the eighth century: Medina, Basra, Kufa). Indigenous critics were to a certain extent skeptical of the authenticity of these Prophetic traditions; it was recognized in at least one case that one such hadith was the "back-projection" of a companion tradition to the Prophet (see below). Later critics, for whom the writing and eventual codification of hadith was a matter of fact, have attempted to harmonize the Prophetic hadiths in favor of writing with those hostile to it (Schoeler 2006, 118).

One of the major Prophetic hadiths in favor of writing was disseminated by the Meccan ʿAmr b. Shuʿayb (d. 736, in Mecca). He reported it on the authority of his father Shuʿayb, who, for his part, transmitted it from his grandfather, the companion ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ. What we have here, then, is a tradition with a so-called family *isnād* (Schacht 1950, 170). The hadiths delivered by ʿAmr were put down in writing in a *ṣaḥīfa* (notebook) which was nicknamed *al-Ṣādiqa*, "the Authentic," by the family; it is said to have been passed on from generation to generation as a valuable family heirloom (Schoeler 2006, 127; Cook 1997, 478 with n. 346).

According to this hadith, which has been passed down in numerous versions (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 74a, cf. 74–82; Schoeler 2006, 127–128, 133, 138–139; Cook 468, 479), ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAmr is reported to have asked the Prophet Muhammad,

> "When we hear something from you which we can't retain in our memory, may we write them down?" (The Prophet) answered thereby: "Yes, write them down!"

How the Basrans, who still in the second half of the eighth century rejected the use of writing for hadith transmission, reacted to this hadith is seen in the following anecdote:

ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad reports from his father Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that a man came to Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿUlayya (d. 194, Basra) and recited to him on the authority of somebody the hadith cited above. Ismāʿil thereupon rent his cloak asunder and said several times, "I seek refuge in God from lying and liars." Ibn Ḥanbal remarked in this regard: "Ibn ʿUlayya was wont to follow the way of the Basrans (i.e. he used to commit traditions to memory)" (al-Khaṭīb 1975, 78c–79; Ibn Ḥanbal 1963, 55, no. 314; Schoeler 2006, 126; Cook 1997, 444–445). Clearly Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal saw the hostility to writing as a noteworthy characteristic of the Basrans.

As a reaction to such Prophet hadiths sympathetic to writing, and above all against the increasingly prevailing practice of also using written texts openly, Prophetic hadiths hostile to writing soon appeared as well. The most important one of all was spread by the Medinan Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753) (al-Khaṭīb 1975, 29–35; Schoeler 2006, 125–126, 131, 136–137; Cook 446–449, 464–465). Three of Zayd's transmitters passed it on in different ways; common to all three versions, however, is the fierce rejection of writing. Zayd reported from ʿAṭāʾ b. Yasār (d. 103/721), the latter from the companion Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693) who refers to the Prophet. According to the version transmitted by the Meccan Ibn ʿUyayna from Zayd b. Aslam, the Prophet is said to have denied the request of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī to be allowed to write down the hadith in question (al-Khaṭīb 1975, 32–33). A more detailed version is provided by the Basran Hammām b. Yaḥyā (d. 781). Accordingly, the Prophet is to have said to Abū Saʿīd, "Don't write down anything from me; whoever has written down something from me except of the Qurʾan, he should erase it …" (al-Khaṭīb 1975, 29–32). A third version is even more detailed, and Muhammad's reasoning for the prohibition of writing is different from the previous one. Zayd b. Aslam's son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān transmits the hadith from his father as follows:

> The Prophet came out to us while we were writing down hadiths. He then asked us: "What are you writing?" We answered: "Hadiths which we heard from you." He thereupon retorted: "A book other than the Book of God! Do you know what led the people before you astray? It was the books which they wrote besides the Book of God." We asked him: May we relate from you, O Messenger of God? To that he answered: "Relate from me; there is no objection to doing that …" (al-Khaṭīb 1975, 34a, cf. 33–35)

This hadith is noteworthy in several aspects: first, because of the different versions in which it is extant. This may have arisen from Zayd having transmitted it differently every time; in this case, he would have performed *riwāya bil-maʿnā* (transmission according to the sense or the gist, as opposed to transmission of the exact wording); the changes might also, however, be traceable to the transmitters, who possibly "actualized" it depending on their audience.

What is also conspicuous is that the hadith ultimately has the same or very similar content to the one transmitted by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī himself (see above); in fact, the last one most closely resembles the version of Zayd's son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. We are dealing here with a phenomenon already recognized by indigenous hadith criticism, and one which in critical Western research has played an important role since J. Schacht, the phenomenon of backward growth of the *isnād* to the Prophet (Schacht 1950, 156–157, 165). In the present case, such a projection was facilitated through

Abū Saʿīd as his text already referred to the Prophet and the quote could easily be developed from the reference.

As already noted, transmitting from memory was generally abandoned in the second half of the second/eighth century; it was still cultivated only in the Iraqi centers, primarily in Basra. But it had long been known at this time that the Iraqis, too, had *hypomnēmata* in their possession, but did not display them openly. There are thus reports at hand concerning *which* Iraqi traditionists were the first to present their "books" publicly as documentation of the traditions that they dealt with: they are said to have been the Basran Rawḥ b. ʿUbāda (d. 205/820) and the Kufan Abū Usāma (d. 201/816) (Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, III, 254; Schoeler 2006, 115). In the final stage of the development, it seems that the transmission of hadiths from memory continued especially in Basra only as a competition. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was not particularly fond of it. He had recognized the downside of oral transmission: the immanent and unavoidable slips of memory. He subsequently ascertained that he preferred the hadiths of the *Muṣannaf* author ʿAbd al-Razzāq on the authority of Maʿmar b. Rāshid, who diligently perused his written records in Yemen, over those of the Basrans, who indeed transmitted from memory (Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, VI, 279; Schoeler 2006, 115, 116). By contrast, the traditions disseminated by Maʿmar in his hometown of Basra are said to have contained errors because, when there, he had to transmit them by heart (Ibn Ḥajar 1983–1985, X, 219).

We can now take a closer look at the reasons for the opposition to the writing down of tradition (Schoeler 2006, 117–118). Some are already discernable in the traditions cited above. The reasons most frequently given by indigenous scholars are:

1. Fear of the emergence of a second book similar to the Qurʾan (Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī's hadith; third version of the last treated Prophetic hadith) or of the comingling of the written hadiths with the text of the Qurʾan (al-Zuhrī burns the writing material on which he wrote the hadith).
2. The cautionary example of the Jews and Christians. They transgressed grievously by accepting other books alongside the divine revelation (second version of the Prophet hadith discussed above).
3. Fear that the traditions could get into the wrong hands (hinted at explicitly in the statement of al-Awzāʿī; ʿUrwa's burning of the hadiths on the occasion of the battle of Ḥarra); this fear is also to have been the reason for some traditionists requesting that their notes should be burned upon their demise (the Yemenite Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān (d. 106; al-Khaṭīb 1974, 61c; Cook 1997, 469)).
4. Fear that people would depend too much on the written word, which, as it were, is ephemeral, and that they would not sufficiently commit to memory the words to be heeded (al-Khaṭīb 1974, 58; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1975, 86–88).

Goldziher was the first of the Western scholars to concern himself in detail with the subject. He took several approaches to explain the problem. His main argument is that the representatives of the old *raʾy* schools (the schools of jurisprudence that recognize the *opinio*, the personal juristic opinion of the scholars, as legally binding) had favored an oral transmission because of its flexibility (Goldziher 1890, 194–195). Cook (1997, 455–456, 492–493), however, asserted against this view that the testimonies of both of the large surviving schools of jurisprudence which recognize the *opinio*, the Ḥanafi and the Māliki, come up with no convincing proofs in this regard. In the Māliki school, the subject was apparently not disputed at all, and the Ḥanafi tradition endorsed writing as school doctrine from Abū Ḥanīfa onward. The fact is, however, that we find among the ranks of the early opponents of writing a number of jurisconsults and judges belonging to the *proto-Ḥanafī line* of the Kufan law-school (Cook 1997, 455–456; Schoeler 2006, 119); note, for example, the report of Ibn Masʿūd's indignation at the fact that his son, through taking notes, could prove a change in his father's doctrine (see above). Thus, Goldziher's observation, though, for chronological reasons, not holding true for the representatives of the old *raʾy* schools, seems nevertheless not to be totally unfounded. As to the request of flexibility, note the tradition on a measure taken by the caliph ʿUmar, who did not want a hadith made public (*ẓāhiran*; committed to writing?), which might be uncomfortable for his enterprise (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, IV/1, 13–14: Goldziher 2004, 56).

The second important hypothesis argued by Cook (1997, 498–519) assumes a Jewish provenance for Muslim hostility to the writing down of oral tradition. Both religions are in fact familiar with the coexistence of an oral and a written doctrine, and the same or similar arguments for the rejection of writing oral traditions were asserted in early rabbinical Judaism and in emergent Islam alike (in particular the fear of the development of a second book of revelations side by side with the Book of God, and the intermixture of one doctrine with the other). In the Talmud, there are also chains of transmission, at least in a rudimentary stage. An additional argument for this hypothesis is gained in that the Muslims themselves noticed the parallels. The book accepted by the Jews alongside their Holy Scripture is at times even denoted as "the Mishna" (Ibn Saʿd 1904–1921, V, 140; Cook 1997, 502–503).

An argument from the perspective of Jewish studies (Fishman 2016, 61–64) against this hypothesis is that the valorization of the oral transmission of doctrine that gave rise in both cultures to the above argument, that is, fear of the development of a second book of revelation, took place at widely divergent times (already in the third century among the Jews) and at great distances from one another, so that influence is improbable. In addition, these phenomena must be understood respectively as the response to completely different cultural challenges. On the other hand, there was in Judaism between the eighth and eleventh century in Iraq a second valorization of the oral transmission of doctrine. It was thus simultaneous with that in Islam and took place at the same location (in or near Baghdad). If the Jewish scholars here have the same ideas as the Muslim scholars (e.g. recognition of the necessity to take private notes, with the stipulation that they be destroyed after use; prohibition of utilizing *hypomnēmata* in public), then it should rather be assumed that their arguments were influenced by the arguments of the Muslims and not vice versa, or that the influence could have been reciprocal.

A third explanation proceeds from the observation that the dispute among the traditionists is evident around 700 CE, approximately the time when the Umayyads in Syria made repeated efforts to codify tradition (Schoeler 2006, 121–124). Outside of Syria, especially in Iraq, this could have elicited an intensified opposition to the writing of tradition. The Umayyads were also suspected of using codification to have hadiths sympathetic to themselves disseminated (Goldziher 1890, 38–39; Lecker 1996, 22–41); al-Zuhrī had frequently emphasized the pressure exerted by the Umayyads against him.

According to this hypothesis, the Iraqis reacted to it with an aggressive valorization of orality, in that they started circulating traditions against writing, but also in that they themselves transmitted from memory alone. It has been alleged against this hypothesis that reports about efforts of this sort by Umayyads (residing in Syria) are hardly to be found in the Syrian tradition; hence, such efforts are possibly not historical (Cook 1997, 493, 474–475). Against this objection, however, it can be said that the latter inference is not at all compelling; in fact, at least one tradition that makes this assertion is old and well attested and therefore probably authentic (Schoeler 2006, 123).

Looking back on the arguments against the writing of tradition, it is conspicuous that alongside strict bans on writing, conditional bans already existed from the earliest times. Almost all of these fit into a compromise position based on a public/private double standard (Schoeler 2006, 31–33, 112–113; Cook 1997, 476–481, 519): the teacher recites from memory yet keeps written records which he consults before the lecture; the students listen to the traditions being presented but only write them down later, at home; traditionists destroy their notes after using them; some give orders to have this done upon their death; notebooks are kept safe at home as valuable heirlooms; the presentation of their content, however, is oral; letters with scholarly content are tolerated because letters are evidently considered private communications (Cook 1997, 480–481). Perhaps most curious of all is that some opponents of note-taking (even Iraqis!) tolerated their students' use of so-called endings (extremities), that is, notes in which only the beginnings and endings were recorded (Ibn Abī Shayba 1966–1983, IX, 51 (no. 6484); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1975, 92; Ibn Saʿd 1904–1940, V, 353; Schoeler 2006, 113; Cook 1997).

In light of the facts to hand it can be concluded that

1. The prohibition on writing in the first half of the eighth century CE represented the prevailing opinion – it is entirely possible that the discussion in the last quarter of the seventh century was triggered by the intensive writing activities in the *tadwīn* phase.
2. The ban pertained primarily to the public use of written records rather than the private taking of notes.
3. Constant violation produced great quantities of records.
4. Liberal scholars completely ignored the ban, while more rigorous scholars tolerated compromises for practical reasons, as explained above.
5. Sooner or later, the prohibition on writing could no longer be upheld. What is certain is that for all traditionists throughout this whole period, even for the proponents of writing, it was still unthinkable that hadith would someday become a redacted book like the Qurʾan.

The Canonical Collections: From Teaching Text to Printed Book

The hadith works, the canonical collections and a great number of other older and more recent collections, exist today as redacted and printed books. In this last section, the path taken by al-Bukhārī's *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* from manuscript to its first printing will be traced. We have chosen al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* because it is considered by Muslims to be the most important of all the hadith works but also because the history of its redaction has been particularly well studied.

Like their predecessors, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and the other traditionists of the ninth century transmitted and "published" their works by personal contact, through teaching, employing familiar procedures such as listening (*samāʿ*), recitation before the teacher (*qirāʾa*), and, in particular, dictation (*imlāʾ*) (Sezgin 1967, 116–118; Fück, 1938, 60–87; Schoeler 2009, 79–81). Anyone wishing to study the canonical collections in order to subsequently transmit them himself was therefore, in theory at least, still obliged to attend the lectures of the traditionists themselves or of their authorized transmitters. In practice, however, few indeed were those who were able to "hear" these very large works from beginning to end.

In some late sources, al-Bukhārī is reported to have dictated his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to 90,000 students (al-Khaṭīb 1931, II, 9; Fück 1938, 62; Sezgin 1967, 116). This exorbitant number is both a pious exaggeration, and misleading, giving the erroneous impression that there were many transmitters of the work. In fact, teaching and transmission were no longer the same in this period. Johann Fück's study of the transmission history of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* has shown that only a limited number of al-Bukhārī's students (four, maybe five) were engaged in transmitting the whole work (Fück 1938, 62–64). And of these few students, only one, al-Firabrī (d. 320/932), ever heard the totality of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the presence of his teacher; indeed, he heard it twice. The texts of the other transmitters, on the other hand, are not based from beginning to end on being listened to. Another of al-Bukhārī's students, al-Nasawī (d. c. 290/902), for example, had not heard the entire work; nevertheless, al-Bukhārī granted him a license (*ijāza*) to transmit the remainder of the work; in other words, he authorized al-Nasawī to transmit the rest of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* without having heard it. As Goldziher showed in his study of the development of hadith studies as a discipline, this mode of transmission later became quite common (Goldziher 1890, 188–193).

Al-Firabrī's recension is the one which played the most important role in the subsequent transmission and dissemination of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, perhaps because al-Firabrī was the only student to have "heard" the whole text. Moreover, the written version he used as a basis for his recension is said to have been a manuscript based on a copy made by al-Bukhārī's secretary Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim (Sezgin 1967, 117); al-Firabrī must therefore have verified this manuscript against al-Bukhārī's recitation. Al-Firabrī himself had at least 10 students, all of whom had to make the long journey to Firabr, on the banks of the Oxus River, southeast of Bukhara, in order to receive the text from him directly.

Little by little, the hadith scholars ceased to oppose the (solely) written dissemination of their hadith collections. The eminent scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), author of the standard work in the field of hadith science (*ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth al-maʿrūf bi-Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*), had to admit that in his time, and for generations before him, the uninterrupted chain of transmitters through which good manuscripts indicated the ("audited") transmission path of the text (*riwāya*) – from the author of the work to the last owner of the manuscript – was no longer a guarantee that one was in the presence of reliable texts; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ expressed the view that scholars were holding on to the chain of transmitters for the sole reason that they regarded it as a characteristic and exclusively Islamic feature of scholarship (Fück 1938, 79–82). From this, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ concluded that the only way to have (and recover) an authentic and reliable text was to collate as many correct manuscripts of the different extant recensions of a work as possible.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's call was answered by the traditionist al-Yūnīnī (d. 701/1302), who prepared under the title *Rumūz ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* a "critical edition" of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. "Collating various manuscripts, al-Yunīnī left a copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* [the so-called *Yūnīniyya*] which was probably very close to the original. Containing variants with notes and signs in a critical apparatus, it was less suited for transmission by reading and listening" (Quiring-Zoche 1998, 191–222, esp. 192 and 212). All the published texts of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in use today are based on the *Yūnīniyya*. The most eminent traditionists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-ʿAynī and al-Qasṭallānī, followed in al-Yūnīnī's footsteps, each producing a recension of al-Bukhārī's work on the basis of different manuscripts (Fück 1938, 81–85; Quiring-Zoche 1998, 192). What is more, they wrote lengthy commentaries on the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

All of the printed editions of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Sezgin 1967, 117–118; Quiring-Zoche 1998, 192) are based on the *Yūnīniyya* (Sezgin 1967, 117–118; Quiring-Zoche 1998, 192). The honor of being the first to provide a printed version of the work (lithography; published in two volumes 1268/1851–1270/1853) belongs to the Indian scholar Aḥmad ʿAlī Sahāranpūrī (d. 1297/1880).[3] This edition, which is mainly based on two good manuscripts, also includes notes which are highly praised because they offer an exemplary synopsis of the most renowned earlier commentaries (see Chapter 8). It was not until 10 years later that the first printing of the work began in Egypt (Būlāq 1279/1862–1863). In 1311/1893–1894, the Ottoman sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II issued a caliphal decree to prepare a critical edition of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[4] The task was taken over by Shaykh ʿAlī al-Makāwī in Cairo; the publication was issued in the Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya in Būlāq between 1311/1893–1894 and 1313/1895–1896, in nine volumes. It was presented upon publication to a committee of 16–18 scholars of the Azhar. To this day it is still considered one of the best editions (Sezgin 1967, 118). The first European edition was taken on by Ludolf Krehl and Theodor W. Juynboll; it was published from 1862–1908 in four volumes by Brill in Leiden. It is not considered to be particularly good. A complete translation into French, in which the *isnād*s, however, were shortened, was undertaken by Octave Houdas and William Marçais (*Les Traditions islamiques*, 4 vols., Paris 1903–1914).

Notes

1 There are also works of other scholars which bear the title *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ*; the most famous is that of ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb (st. 812; Sezgin 1967, 466), a younger contemporary of Mālik.

2 However, al-Zuhrī spent much of his life in Syria, and had close contact with the caliphal court in Damascus.

3 https://zakariyya.wordpress.com/2007/11/13/an-introduction-to-hadhrat-mawlana-ahmad-'ali-the-hadith-scholar-of-saharanpur/

4 http://attahawi.com/2009/07/21/the-most-accurate-edition-of-sahih-al-bukhari/

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Further Reading

The following two articles are essential for the topic:

Cook, Michael. 1997. "The Opponents of Writing of Tradition in Early Islam." *Arabica* 44: 437–530.

Schoeler, Gregor "Oral Torah and Ḥadīṯ: Transmission, Prohibition of Writing, Redaction." In Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, edited by J. Montgomery, translated by U. Vagelpohl, 111–141. New York and London: Routledge, and in Motzki, Harald, ed. 2004 *Ḥadīth. Origins and Developments*, 67–108. The Formation of the Islamic World 28. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Goldziher, Ignaz. 1890. "Ueber die Entwickelung des Ḥadīth." In *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. 2, 1–274, Halle: Max Niemeyer. English translation by C.M. Barber and S.M. Stern, 1971. "On the Development of the Ḥadīth." In *Muslim Studies*, 2nd ed., vol. II, 17–251. London: Allen and Unwin. Goldziher was the first Islamicist to deal thoroughly with the traditionists' dispute on the permissiveness of writing down of tradition.

Kister, Meir J. 1998. "Lā taqraʾū ʾl-qurʾāna ʿalā ʾl-musḥafiyyīn ... Some Notes on the Transmission of Ḥadīth." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 22:1 27–162. A comprehensive collection of traditions on the issue of orality/literacy of the Islamic tradition.

Motzki, Harald. 2002. *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, translated by M. H. Katz. Leiden: Brill. This study shows that the view of J. Schacht on the origins of Islamic jurisprudence that dominated Islamic studies in the the second half of the twentieth century must be revised and that the beginnings can be dated a good half to three-quarters of a century earlier.

Motzki, Harald, ed. 2004. *Ḥadīth. Origins and Developments*. The Formation of the Islamic World 28. Aldershot: Ashgate. This is a collection of 17 pivotal essays on the hadith, including an article on the issue of orality/literacy and two articles on the origin of the *isnād*.

Schoeler, Gregor. 2006. *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, edited by J. Montgomery, translated by U. Vagelpohl. Abingdon: Routledge. Is a collection of six seminal articles on the issue of orality/literacy, concerning not only hadith but also poetry, belles-lettres, grammar, lexicography, and other fields.

Schoeler, Gregor. 2009. *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, in collaboration with and translated by by S. Toorawa. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Provides an overvieuw on the development of Arabic literature from the point of view of orality/literacy.

Sprenger, Aloys. 1856. "On the Origin and Progress of Writing Down Historical Facts Among the Musulmans." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 25: 303–329, 375–381. Sprenger was the first scholar to deal with the problem of orality or/and literacy in Hadith and to introduce the distiction between "actual book" and "notes to bolster the memory."

CHAPTER 6

Dating

Pavel Pavlovitch

Viewing the Past through the Eyes of the Present

Historians of Islam deal with countless traditions (hadiths) included in hadith collections, works of jurisprudence, exegesis, and lexicography, biographical dictionaries, and other literary sources. The earliest specimens of this capacious and diverse textual corpus of hadith began to circulate toward the middle of the second century Hijra/c. 767 CE, that is, about one century after the death of Muhammad in 11/632. Literary sources elucidate virtually every aspect of early Islamic history in the form of reports about what the Prophet and his companions did or said. The aim of these reports, however, is not so much to describe what really happened as it is to construct an idealized image of the past that sets legal precedents and moral examples to be followed by each and every Muslim. This tendency of Muslim traditions to model the past on the needs of the present has led many Western scholars to suspect that many of these traditions are later inventions aimed at asserting religious, political, or legal authority.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ignáz Goldziher concluded that toward the end of the first century AH (c. 718 CE) pious opponents of the Umayyad dynasty (41–132/661–750) were the first to fabricate traditions on the Prophet's authority. The main impetus for forgery, according to Goldziher, came from their conviction that government should abide by divine legislation enshrined in the Qurʾan and the Prophet's exemplary deeds and sayings (sunna). This doctrine was to provide an alternative to the Umayyad secular administration, which paid little attention to the norms of divine law (Goldziher 1889, 28–33). Apart from the pious impulse, hadith forgery was driven by rivalry between the Umayyads, on the one hand, and their manifold political opponents, on the other (Goldziher 1889, 88–130).

The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith, First Edition. Edited by Daniel W. Brown.
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Joseph Schacht (1950, 1964) adopted from Goldziher the postulate that Umayyad legal practice was essentially secular and only superficially related to Qurʾanic norms (Schacht 1950, 227; Schacht 1964, 15–22). At the same time, he propounded a more nuanced theory about the development of Muslim jurisprudence and its use of traditions. Unlike Goldziher (1889, 32), who thought that the pious opponents of the Umayyads "founded the sunna of the Prophet," Schacht (1964, 17–18) posited that throughout the Umayyad period the term "sunna" stood for the political and administrative practice of the caliph and provincial governors, without yet referring to deeds or pronouncements of the Prophet as a basis of authoritative legislation. According to Schacht (1964, 28), in the first few decades of the second century AH, "pious specialists" laid the foundation of the regional "ancient schools of law." Each school developed its own "living tradition," which, in pursuit of higher authority, was ascribed to the previous generations of Muslims. Within the individual schools, exponents of conflicting views also appealed to past authorities: thus, the main body of Kufan legal doctrine was associated with the famous companion Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652), while dissenting Kufan views were put under the aegis of the fourth caliph ʿAlī (d. 40/661) as a higher authority (Schacht 1964, 31–33). The practice of back-projection was brought to its logical end by the traditionists, who demanded that legal rules be derived from the idealized practice of the Prophet, which came to be known as his sunna. This process led to a massive forgery of traditions: whenever Muslim jurists engaged in a legal dispute, they would present their views as authoritative statements by the Prophet or his companions (Schacht 1950, 149).

In addition to substantive constraints highlighted by Schacht and Goldziher, there is a no less important formal limitation of hadith historicity. Muslim traditions are fictional narratives (Günther 1998) embodying the principle of literary representation (mimesis), which may be understood not only as reproduction but also as production of reality (Wansbrough 2006, 164). Behind the formal layer of literary devices employed to construct a historical or legal tradition there may be no real historical referent, or, alternatively, the events to which that tradition purports to refer may be distorted beyond recognition (Noth 1994).

A chief reason for doubt in the historicity of Muslim traditions is the time of their registration. The earliest biography of the Prophet was composed by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (d. c. 151/768), but it reached us in the later recensions of ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Hishām (d. 218/834) and Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-ʿUṭāridī (d. 272/886). The oldest surviving work of Muslim jurisprudence belongs to the eponymous founder of the Mālikī school of law, Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), although Calder (1993, 20–38) doubted that, in its present form, the work represents Mālik's original teaching. The earliest extant Qurʾan commentary is associated with Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767); its text must, nevertheless, be treated with caution because of the possibility of later interpolations (Versteegh 1993, 131). Even if we grant that the preserved texts of these works accurately reflect the state of knowledge about the past in the first half of the second century AH/718–768 CE, a gap of nearly one century would still separate the formation of this knowledge from the period of early Islam. It is plausible that, on their way to later collectors, early traditions underwent a variety of intentional and unintentional changes. Some hadith reports may also have been put into circulation at a later time, under the influence of manipulative factors highlighted by Goldziher, Schacht, Wansbrough, and other skeptics.

Consequently the study of early Islam is a major epistemological challenge. It stands or falls on our ability to develop an adequate methodology of dating and reconstructing the earliest versions of Muslim traditions. Such a methodology must take into account both the *isnād*, that is, the way by which a complier of an extant hadith collection received a tradition from its putative original speaker, and the *matn*, that is, the substantive content of the tradition. For example, the *isnād* of one well-known tradition can be diagrammed as **Al-Bukhārī** → al-Ḥumaydī → Sufyān b. ʿUyayna → Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī → Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Taymī → ʿAlqama b. Waqqāṣ → ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb → **the Prophet**, while the *matn* of the tradition is the famous maxim "deeds are to be appraised according to their intentions" (*inna-mā ʾl-aʿmāl biʾ l-niyyāt*).

Isnāds and Chronology

To Muslim hadith scholars the *isnād* is the single most important means of establishing the authenticity of traditions. Not surprisingly, therefore, Western hadith scholars also pay considerable attention to the lines of transmission, albeit in a manner that differs somewhat from the traditional Muslim approach. Schacht (1950, 171–175) has noted that the *isnād*s carrying variants of the same tradition to several later collectors usually pass through one key figure that is several generations older than these collectors (see Figure 6.1). Below this key figure, designated by Schacht as a "common link," the

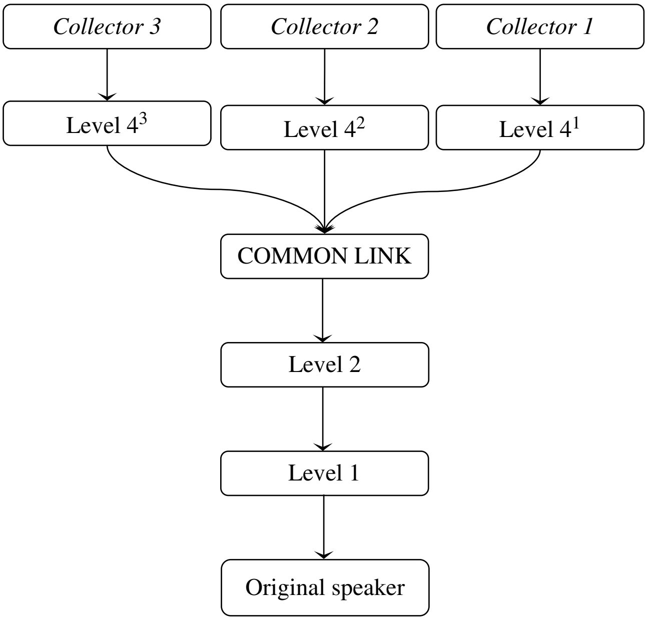

Figure 6.1 The common-link phenomenon.

transmission is based on a single line of informants, down to the level of the original speaker – the Prophet or a person from his entourage. Schacht considered the multiplication of *isnād*s as the main criterion of authenticity: since the lines of transmission start branching out only from the common-link level upwards, the common link is "the original promoter" of the tradition, which may be dated only to his lifetime. To put it in figurative terms: the crown of the *isnād* tree may represent a process of historical transmission, whereas the single-strand *isnād* that forms the trunk of the same tree is always fictitious.

Two decades after Schacht's death in 1969, G.H.A. Juynboll introduced significant improvements to the common-link theory (see Figure 6.2). In addition to the common link, Juynboll (1989, 352) paid attention to knots of *isnād* convergence at the higher levels of transmission, which he called "partial common links." Unlike Schacht, who viewed the transmission above the common-link level as reliable, Juynboll espoused a more skeptical viewpoint. Many such narrators are, in fact, "seeming common links or partial common links" (Juynboll 1993, 214), and it is the task of the hadith scholar to develop a cogent method by which to distinguish historical from unhistorical transmission. According to Juynboll (1993, 210–211), the authenticity of the single strands of transmission, irrespective of their place in the *isnād* tree, should be rejected. Similarly,

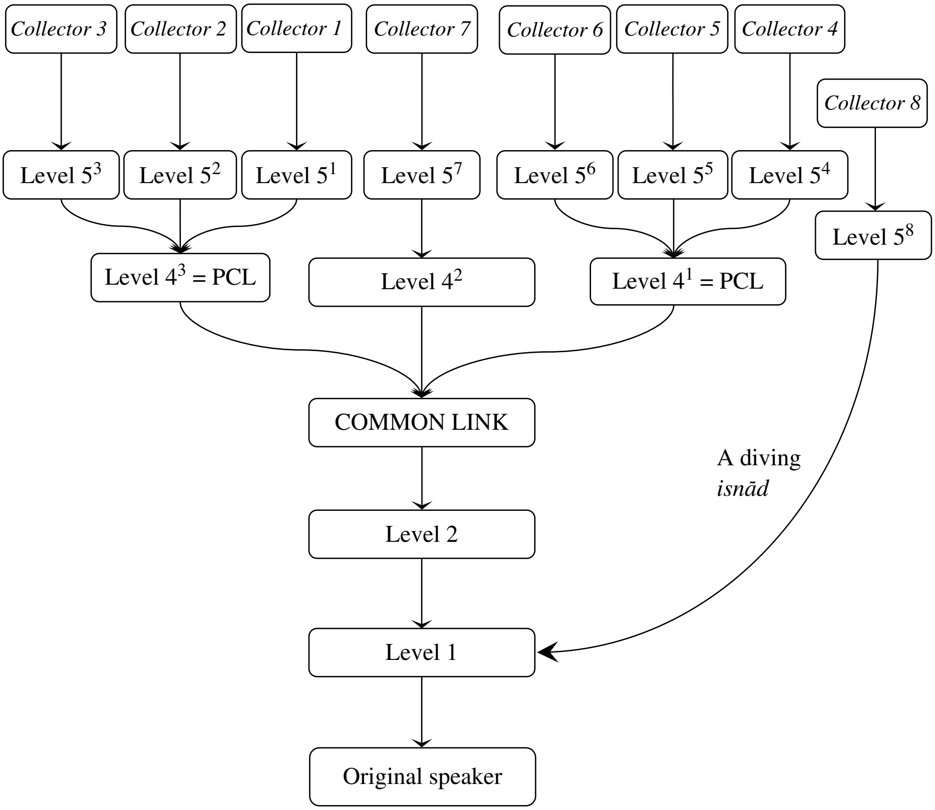
Collector 3
Collector 2
Collector 1
Collector 7
Collector 6
Collector 5
Collector 4
Collector 8
Level 5^3
Level 5^2
Level 5^1
Level 5^7
Level 5^6
Level 5^5
Level 5^4
Level 5^8
Level 4^3 = PCL
Level 4^2
Level 4^1 = PCL
COMMON LINK
A diving *isnād*
Level 2
Level 1
Original speaker

Figure 6.2 A common link, partial common links (PCLs), and a diving *isnād*.

strands that attempt to bypass the apparent common link in an *isnād* bundle are also inauthentic. Juynboll (1989, 366) designated such strands as "dives" under the level of the common link. Another memorable term coined by Juynboll is "spider," that is, an *isnād* bundle consisting only of single lines of transmission above the common-link level (Juynboll 1993, 214). Such spidery structures are another example of unhistorical transmission. Like Schacht's common-link theory, Juynboll's method is predominantly *isnād*-analytical. Juynboll considers the *matn* only in general terms, without attending to textual details.

The Significance of Matn *Evidence*

The common-link theory, as formulated by Schacht and elaborated by Juynboll, allows dating traditions to the lifetime of the common links. Since most common links are representatives of the second or the third generation of Muslims after the Prophet (Juynboll 1989, 353), dating by the common link brings us back only to the end of the first century AH/c. 718. By assuming that the common link invented the tradition, Schacht and Juynboll subvert the possibility that it depicts real historical events from the lifetime of the Prophet and the first/seventh century as a whole. This limitation of the common-link theory is partly due to its superficial interest in the *matn* substance. As he spoke about *isnād*s passing through a common link, Schacht (1950, 172) mentioned that they carry "different, but closely related traditions," whereas Juynboll (1993, 224–225) introduced the term "*matn* clusters." Neither scholar, however, explored how to distinguish kindred *matn*s from *matn*s that only seemingly belong to one family.

Kramers (1953) undertook the earliest attempt to analyze *isnād*s together with their *matn*s. Two decades later, Josef Van Ess (1975) scrutinized *isnād*s and *matn*s of predestinarian traditions found in early hadith corpora. It was, however, Harald Motzki and Gregor Schoeler who neatly formulated the method which Motzki labeled *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis. Schoeler (1996) applied *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis to historical traditions about the first revelation to the Prophet and to narratives about the alleged adultery by the Prophet's wife ʿA'isha (*ḥadīth al-ifk*). Motzki (1996) elaborated on the principles of *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis in a critical review of Juynboll's article about Nāfiʿ, the client (*mawlā*) of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, and the *isnād*s on his authority.

According to the criteria set out by Motzki and Schoeler, if the *isnād*s of several traditions found in extant hadith collections pass through a common transmitter, and if the *matn*s of these traditions exhibit a sufficient degree of similarity, including elements of distinctive content, then the common transmitter is the tradition's partial common link. If the *isnād*s of the partial common links come together in an earlier common transmitter, while carrying *matn*s that are similar in the above described manner, this transmitter is the tradition's common link (Schoeler 1996, 24–26; Motzki 1996, 221–226). Since the second half of the 1990s, Western scholars have been using *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis on a wide scale. Among the most advanced studies, Jens Scheiner's (2009) analysis of traditions dealing with the conquest of Damascus deserves special mention. Scheiner (2009, 7) proposed an analytical procedure that takes into account a narrative's (i) plot, (ii) specific motifs, and (iii) wording. Based on this procedure, he was able to reconstruct the common-link versions at the level of motifs and, sometimes, at the level of specific wording. Such a morphological approach to Muslim traditions is extremely useful when attempting to date the emergence of a tradition and to reconstruct its earliest *matn*. Just as the paradigm of cognate words takes us to their shared root, so too a paradigm of similar traditions reveals points of thematic and, more importantly, textual, similarity that may lead us to the content and composition of the common-link narrative.

Challenges and Limitations of Isnād-*Cum*–Matn *Analysis*

Dating and reconstructing early Islamic narratives is, in a sense, an archeological exercise that involves digging through large amounts of textual data in a quest to unearth a few possibly authentic bits of information. Notwithstanding its usefulness, *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis is subject to several limitations.

Can We Trust the *Isnāds*?

In his seminal work, *Early Muslim Dogma* (1981), Michael Cook argued that *isnād*s may grow backwards not only below the level of the common link, as posited by Schacht, but also above that level. This process may generate artificial common links. A major flaw in formal *isnād* analysis is that whenever one discovers an *isnād* that sprouts forth from a transmitter below the level of the previously established common link, one must consider that earlier transmitter as the new common link (Cook 1981, 107–116).

As a safeguard against cases in which artificial *isnād*s may be taken for authentic transmission, Juynboll put forth a requirement of concurrency (*tawātur*) similar to that formulated by Muslim legal theorists and speculative theologians: in order to be considered sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) a tradition must be transmitted by multiple authorities at each successive level of transmission. In Juynboll's view, the factor of multiplication precludes forgery (Juynboll 1989, 355–356). Put in Juynboll's terms, a key figure on which several *isnād*s converge is a historical common link only when cited by a sufficient number of partial common links up to the level of the collectors. Juynboll's requirement of concurrency leads to an extremely skeptical assessment of the partial common link/common link candidates. Most of them do not meet the stringent criteria of multiple citation required for considering them to be historical transmitters. Insofar as this skeptical stance stands and falls on the authenticity of the single-strand *isnād*s, Motzki has advanced several arguments that, in his view, undermine Schacht's and Juynboll's rejection of such *isnād*s.

1. According to Motzki (2005, 227–228), the common links were "the first major collectors and professional disseminators of knowledge in general," who may have chosen to name only one of the channels from which they received a tradition, while remaining silent about the other channels. Likewise, single-strand *isnād*s above the common link may have emerged because, instead of citing all *isnād*s that they knew, later hadith collectors may have preferred transmission paths that do not intersect with those of other well-known transmitters (Motzki 1996, 51).

2. The *isnād*s both below and above the common-link level may be single strands because not all transmissions from a given authority have been preserved (Motzki 2005, 229). An important reason for this is the fact that not every student of a teacher became a teacher himself (Motzki 1996, 51).
3. The circulation of some traditions may have remained confined to specific geographical areas and centers of learning, which made them less widespread than other traditions (Motzki 1996, 51).
4. Juynboll's outright rejection of single-strand *isnād*s is self-defeating. In most cases, it abolishes the link between late collectors and partial common links, which is often based on single-strand *isnād*s (Motzki 2005, 229).
5. For statistical reasons, the single strands above the partial common link are the more likely way of transmission, whereas cases of massive multiplication at the lower levels of transmission would occur less frequently.[1]

Motzki's critique of Juynboll is susceptible to several objections. Motzki selects for his studies only traditions that allow identification of a transmitter earlier than the common link (Motzki 2010, 213). Conclusions based on such selective evidence are not representative of those traditions that do not allow identification of a historical transmitter at the level below the common link. The latter group of traditions by far exceeds the former group, which seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

As the first systematic collector of traditions, the common link may have gathered traditions that, for various reasons (e.g. faulty memory, absence of strict requirements for retrospective attribution, anonymous circulation) were not supplied with *isnād*s. In order to lend them authority, especially legal and political, the common link would have supplied such deracinated traditions with *isnād*s that may have included names of both real and fictitious transmitters. That most of these names were haphazardly inserted in the *isnād*s below the level of the common links is suggested by the fact that, as a rule, there is only one common link of a given tradition. Even if the common links were the earliest collectors of traditions, one expects to find cases in which (i) one common link cites more than one informant; and (ii) several early common links cite the same informant, who would be an even earlier common link, and so forth, down to the level of the original speaker. The rare occurrence of the first scenario (in which case Juynboll uses the label "inverted common links") and the impossibility of attesting the second scenario raises considerable doubt about the authenticity of the single-strand *isnād*s covering the entire first century AH.

Presumably, certain traditions may have remained confined to specific regions in the caliphate. There is no reliable method, however, to identify such traditions and to establish the area of their diffusion, which could easily expand because of the scholarly practice of "traveling in pursuit of knowledge" (*riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*).

Concerning the single strands above the common-link level, Motzki's argument that not all students of a certain teacher would become hadith transmitters is reasonable. It is unreasonable, however, to expect so many cases of only one student becoming a hadith transmitter. The argument that not all *isnād*s and hadith collections have survived to the present is compelling only when combined with a methodology that is capable of establishing how lost traditions compare numerically and substantively to surviving ones. The same holds for the possibility of (re)collecting *isnād*s that were once forgotten or disregarded. We do not know how widespread this phenomenon was and whether traditionists who claimed to have discovered new traditions did not, in fact, invent them.

In sum, single-strand *isnād*s remain highly problematic. If hadith transmission in the first centuries AH was as ubiquitous as it is believed to have been, one would expect a far greater incidence of *isnād* intersection than is actually observed. Therefore, spidery structures consisting of single-strand *isnād*s spanning multiple generations of intermediate transmitters are likely to have resulted from later ascriptions to seeming partial common links or seeming common links. Even less credible are the single-strand *isnād*s below the common-link level. Overall, they represent third-century idealized conceptions of reliability and authoritativeness of hadith rather than providing instances of historical transmission. Single strands seem less suspicious when accompanied by partial common-link transmissions. Thus, the partial common links are the evidentiary pillar of *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis. Equally significant are compilers of early hadith collections, such as, for instance, Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (d. 203–4/818–819) and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827). If their collections include traditions similar or identical to the reconstructed variants of contemporary partial common links, and if all transmissions share an earlier source, then we are entitled to consider this source as the tradition's common link. If such a bundle includes also single-strand *isnād*s sprouting forth from the common link, their evidence may be taken into consideration when reconstructing the common-link version.

How to Reconstruct the Common-Link Narrative?

Only a handful of works that we use for *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis go back to the second century AH; most of them are of a later provenance. Hence, we deal with textual evidence that is usually removed by several generations from the early partial common links and common links as suggested by the criterion of *isnād* convergence. Anyone attempting to reconstruct the versions of these transmitters encounters the question of how to interpret textual variation that is frequently observed in later transmissions from a single earlier authority. Is it the normal outcome of transmission between multiple generations? Was the emergence of textual variants determined by peculiarities of oral and written transmission? Is it possible to reconstruct the versions of the partial common links and the common link when later transmissions on their authority disagree in wording and structure?

A considerable degree of textual variation may be treated as normal in extensive historical narratives, such as those studied by Schoeler (1996) or Scheiner (2009), but the same is difficult to concede with regard to legal traditions that, because of their brevity and rhetorical organization, are more amenable to memorization and literal transmission. One possible approach to textual variation is to posit that whenever several traditions are substantively similar, their purported shared source may be identified as the original transmitter of the common substance, or the gist of the tradition. This assumption underlies Motzki's statement that in most cases when Ibn Jurayj and Ibn ʿUyayna, transmitting on the authority of ʿAmr b. Dīnār, disagree on textual details, this constitutes “proof that the two strands of transmission are independent of each other” (Motzki 2002, 180). According to Sadeghi (2009, 225), variant traditions that share a common source belonging to the first and early second century AH usually differ significantly in wording. Similarly, Brown (2009, 274) has asserted that “The practice of transmitting the general meanings of a hadith (*al-riwāya biʾl-maʿnā*) was widely accepted among hadith transmitters in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries.”

Slight *matn* variations may indeed signal authentic transmission from a partial common link or a common link. Schoeler (1985, 207–208, 210–213) has argued that, at its earliest stages, hadith transmission was predominantly oral. In such circumstances, the wording of the source tradition may have varied to some degree from one session of oral delivery to another. Conceivably, however, the same level of textual fluidity may have resulted from deliberate manipulation of the *matn*. This possibility comes to the fore when we deal with traditions based on single-strand *isnād*s, which are impossible to correlate with parallel transmissions at the level of both wording and lines of transmission.

Even if we accept textual variation as an indication of authentic transmission, we must address an important challenge. Imagine that several collectors assert that they received a tradition from a common source but they use different expressions to convey the tradition’s substance. If there are no substantive indications (see below) that one of these transmissions represents the formulation of the original source, narrative diversity will prevent us from plausibly reconstructing the source tradition. The problem becomes more acute as we proceed to the lower levels of transmission. Even if, at the partial common-link level, we manage to reconstruct meaningful parts of the narrative, at the common-link level, these would dwindle to scattered words, prepositions, conjunctions, and root morphemes, that is, to elusive traces of the tentative original formulation. Such spectral traditions are of little value to the student of early Islamic history and jurisprudence.

Beyond *Isnād*-cum-*Matn* Analysis: Hadith and Textual Criticism

Accurate reconstruction of the narrative part (*matn*) of Muslim traditions is of critical import for determining their original transmitter and *Sitz im Leben*. Without such a reconstruction, we may gain the erroneous impression that late textual additions or altogether fictitious narratives are of an early origin or, conversely, that genuinely old traditions reflect more recent historical circumstances. Text-critical techniques may help us to attain better knowledge of the versions transmitted by the partial common links and the common links. These techniques, however, should not be applied mechanically to Muslim traditions, since working with them differs from working with manuscripts in several important respects.

First, unlike Qurʾanic or biblical manuscripts, Muslim traditions are usually supplied with a unique chain of transmission (*isnād*). The *isnād* normally includes all, or most, of the transmitters believed to have passed the tradition from its original source to a later collector. A comparison of the *isnād*s carrying variants of a given tradition may reveal important information about its historical development.

Second, hadith criticism and classical textual criticism approach narrative substance from different perspectives. Textual critics are concerned with scribal errors; hadith scholars encounter variants of early traditions that mostly reflect the creative ingenuity of oral transmission. Second-century traditionists relied mainly on their memory with occasional recourse to written notes (Schoeler 1985; Cook 1997). For this reason, they would have preferred to transmit short legal maxims and concise traditions rich in mnemonic devices. In the following centuries, written record of traditions took precedence over oral transmission and ultimately brought about the emergence of voluminous hadith corpora comprising both short and long *matn*s.

In the third place, we should bear in mind that Qurʾanic and biblical manuscripts aim, as a rule, at preserving the uniform text of scripture. The same is not always true with respect to hadith. Apart from unintentional oral/aural or scribal errors, Muslim traditions were subject to intentional manipulation driven by religious or political incentives. To this, we must add the factor of literary and rhetorical embellishment (fictionalization) that has always accompanied transmission of Muslim historical and legal traditions. The process of fictionalization may involve minor changes, such as using specific connectives to increase narrative cohesion, along with considerable revisions, such as introducing new motifs and actors, specifying the historical circumstances of a particular event, or even inventing characters and events.

With the above qualifications in mind, we may take advantage of the following text-critical principles.

The Short Reading Is Earlier than the Long Reading

The maxim *brevior lectio potior* (the short reading is more probable than the long reading) is a key principle of biblical textual criticism. Aware of the limitations of this principle, Schacht (1950, 188) considered it relevant only to legal maxims, which, he argued, “reflect a stage when legal doctrine was not yet automatically put in the form of traditions.” Schacht’s dichotomy between maxims and traditions implies that, unlike concise legal maxims, as, for instance, “deeds are to be appraised according to their intentions,” short variants of Muslim traditions should not automatically be presumed to be older than the more extensive variants of the same traditions.

Motzki took issue with Schacht for not taking into account the possibility that “legal maxims can also be formulated on the basis of reports on legal cases and their solutions and thus be secondary” (Motzki 2005, 211–212). This objection, however, has limited force, since neither example that Motzki adduced to justify his criticism is directly applicable to Schacht’s qualified use of the textual brevity principle (Pavlovitch 2016, 37–38, note 143). It is perhaps on this account that Motzki agreed to a qualified use of the principle as a “working hypothesis.”

More recently, Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann (2010, 387) proposed to treat textual omissions as preferable to textual additions because, “we more frequently forget a thing or remember a thing differently than we ‘remember’ something we have not heard at all.” While seemingly persuasive, this psychological argument cannot be used as an axiom in hadith studies. Unintentional changes do not affect every part of an orally transmitted narrative in the same way. We are more prone to forget or recall incorrectly details of lesser conceptual relevance, such as proper names and numbers, than we are with regard to words and phrases that can be included into a conceptual framework (Delnero 2012, 192–193, 195). If some *matn*s belonging to one cluster include such details while other *matn*s in the same cluster do not, we may interpret the latter variants as instances of forgetting over the course of oral hadith transmission. When traditions in a *matn* cluster exhibit a larger degree of textual disparity, neither deletion nor addition may be presumed secondary. The assessment of such cases depends on our ability to determine whether such external factors as, for instance, contextual requirements, polemical or compositional reasons may have led the collector or his informants to modify the narrative by removing parts of it that they considered irrelevant, or, alternatively, by merging it with other narratives with the aim of composing a larger account. With regard to both shorter and longer *matn*s, we ought not to disregard the factor of fictionalization, which may bring about the introduction of actors and historical details, or simply narrative flourish, that were not part of the original tradition.

In hadith studies, it is advisable to treat short maxims and aphorisms as earlier than traditions that include these maxims and aphorisms together with elements of literary embellishment. Complex narratives, on the other hand, allow for the possibility of both contextual deletions and accretions.

Conceptual Transparency

Relative chronology of Muslim traditions may be established by a criterion that we may call "conceptual transparency." That is to say, less advanced formulations are earlier than their clearer and more elaborate counterparts. To illustrate the working of this criterion, we may point to Christopher Melchert's study (2002) of the third-century doctrine of abrogation. Melchert has shown that the doctrine of abrogation in the works of Abū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838) is set out in vaguer terms than it is in al-Shāfiʿī's *Risāla*, believed to have been composed a quarter of a century earlier. At the same time, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) treats abrogation in a manner that brings to mind al-Shāfiʿī's treatment. Hence, the *Risāla* as we know it "is roughly contemporary with the *Mukhtalif [al-Hadith]* of Ibn Qutaybah" (Melchert 2002, 96).

The criterion of conceptual transparency correlates with the text-critical canon *lectio difficilior potior*, which accords precedence to the more unusual lexical, grammatical, or stylistic variant. Just like *brevior lectio potior*, this principle should be wielded carefully. Before applying it, we must assess the contextual fitness of the more difficult reading. As Bertil Albrektson (1981, 9) points out, the difficulty of a text is on its own an insufficient criterion, for "it must also fit the context and make better sense than the rival variant (or at least not make poorer sense)." In the field of hadith studies, the postulate that the more difficult reading is original should be combined with quantitative and chronological criteria that take into account both the number of textual witnesses and their proximity to the original source.

Semantic Consistency

When possible, the text of Muslim traditions may be reconstructed by applying a criterion that may be described as "semantic consistency," that is, absence of substantive discrepancies or redundancies in the narrative content. Contradictory or redundant sections in *matn*s are most likely traces of later redactions.

Frequency of Use and Priority of Occurrence

Hadith clusters are characterized by an uneven distribution of textual variants. Whereas certain variants – at the level of clauses, individual words or root morphemes – are found on a regular basis, other readings are less widespread. Where textual differences cannot be categorized by substantive criteria such as, for instance, conceptual transparency and semantic consistency, quantitative evidence becomes especially important. Frequency of use suggests that the numerically preponderant reading is original, but it should not be applied in an unqualified manner.

To avoid judging by sheer numbers, the frequency of use must be combined with a second criterion – priority of occurrence. This criterion accords priority to the formulations of collectors found at the level immediately above the partial common link or the common link (hereinafter, "direct collectors"). Unlike later collectors, who are separated from the shared source by a number of intermediate transmitters, direct collectors are less likely to diverge from the formulation of the original source. If several direct collectors together with partial common links agree on a specific reading against the reading of (i) fewer direct collectors/partial common links and/or (ii) one or several late sources, then the numerically preponderant direct collector/partial common-link reading has a greater probability of correctly representing the common-link version. Accordingly, the chances that the minority reading represents the common-link version are fewer. Note that when the direct collectors/partial common links do not agree on a single reading, and when this variation is mirrored at higher levels of transmission, the reconstruction is either impossible or less certain than if all or almost all direct collectors/partial common links agree on a single reading.

A Case Study: The Prophet's Finger, ʿUmar's Belly, and the Elusive "Summer Verse"

For our case study, we consider an excerpt from a long narrative devoted to the enigmatic Qurʾanic term *kalāla*. In this tradition, the third caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644) recalls that he asked the Prophet persistently about the meaning of *kalāla*, until the Prophet poked ʿUmar's chest with his finger and exclaimed that "the summer verse" at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (that is, Q. 4:176) is sufficient to understand the word.

The *isnād* diagram (Figure 6.3) suggests that the Basran traditionist Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī (d. c. 154/771) may be the common link of the summer-verse tradition. Above the level of Hishām, we find two key figures who may be partial common links

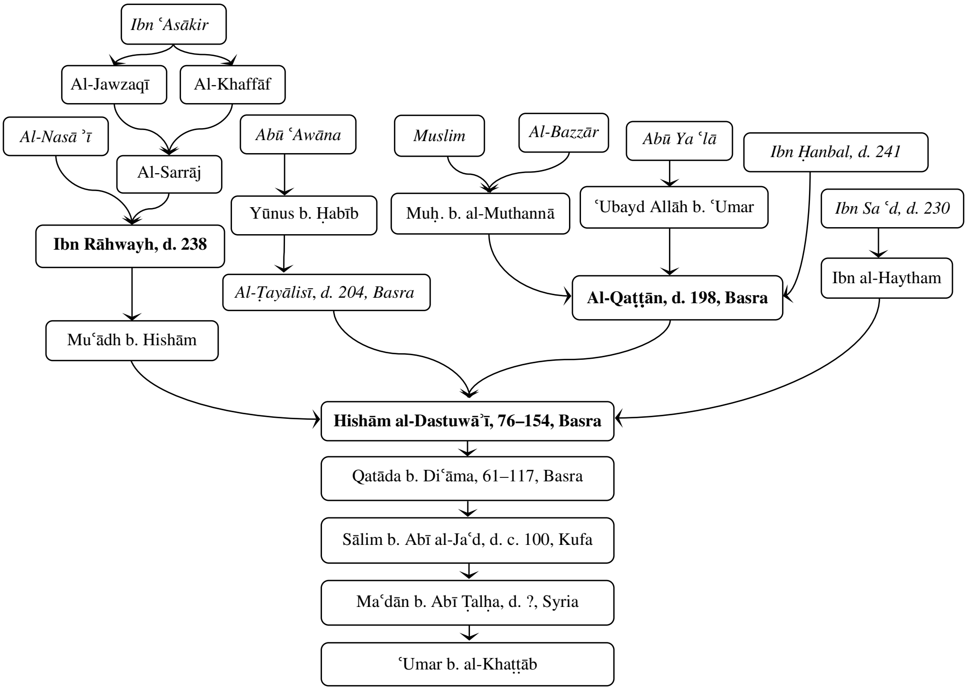
Ibn ʿAsākir
Al-Jawzaqī
Al-Khaffāf
Al-Nasāʾī
Al-Sarrāj
Abū ʿAwāna
Muslim
Al-Bazzār
Abū Yaʿlā
Ibn Ḥanbal, d. 241
Yūnus b. Ḥabīb
Muḥ. b. al-Muthannā
ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿUmar
Ibn Saʿd, d. 230
Ibn Rāhwayh, d. 238
Al-Ṭayālisī, d. 204, Basra
Al-Qaṭṭān, d. 198, Basra
Ibn al-Haytham
Muʿādh b. Hishām
Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī, 76–154, Basra
Qatāda b. Diʿāma, 61–117, Basra
Sālim b. Abī al-Jaʿd, d. c. 100, Kufa
Maʿdān b. Abī Ṭalḥa, d. ?, Syria
ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb

Figure 6.3 *Isnād* diagram: the Prophet pokes ʿUmar in the chest with his finger. (*Italic* = Collector; **Bold** = Key transmitter.)

(Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān [d. 198/813] and Ibn Rāhwayh [d. 238/853]), one direct collector (Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī [d. 203–4/818–819]), and one single-strand *isnād* cited by Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845). To determine al-Dastuwāʾī's status and, possibly, to reconstruct the wording of his version, we must examine each of these transmissions (Table 6.1).

Transmissions through Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān

Variants of this tradition transmitted through al-Qaṭṭān are remarkably similar, allowing us to conclude that these narrations reflect a process of historical transmission by al-Qaṭṭān to his pupils. Clause 1 ("until he poked me in the chest with his finger") is identical in all versions. The only point of difference in clause 2 ("is not the summer verse that is at the end of Sūrat al-Nisāʾ sufficient for you?") is the interrogative particle. This is given as *a-lā* according to Ibn Ḥanbal, Muslim, and Abū Yaʿlā, and *a-mā* according to al-Bazzār. The criterion of frequency of use suggests that *a-lā* was al-Qaṭṭān's original formulation. This conclusion finds support in the criterion of priority of occurrence: *a-lā* is attested in the tradition of Ibn Ḥanbal, who is a direct collector with respect to al-Qaṭṭān. But did al-Qaṭṭān receive the tradition from Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī? To answer this question, we turn to the other lines of transmission through Hishām.

Table 6.1 Recensions of the summer-verse tradition and reconstruction of the common-link version. The *isnād* of each rescension can be traced in Figure 6.3.

Key Transmitter (collectors)	Clause 1	Clause 2
al-Qaṭṭān 1. Ibn Ḥanbal (1996, 1:317–319) 2. Muslim (1991, 1:396) 3. Al-Bazzār (1988, 1:444) 4. Abū Yaʿlā (1984, 1:165–166)	until he poked me in the chest with his finger	and said, "O ʿUmar, is not *[a-la]*[1, 2, 4] *[a-mā]*[3] the summer verse that is at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* sufficient for you?"
Ibn Rāhwayh 1. Al-Nasāʾī (2001, 10:78) 2. Ibn ʿAsākir (1995, 44:406–407)	until he poked my chest with his finger	and said, "O ʿUmar, [verily][1] [is not][2] the summer verse that is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* [is][1] sufficient for you[.][1] [?][2]"
al-Ṭayālisī 1. direct (al-Ṭayālisī 1999, 1:57) 2. Abū ʿAwāna (1998, 3:439–440)	until he hit me [in the front of][1] [in][2] the chest with his hand	and said, "O ʿUmar, [verily][1] [is not][2] the summer verse that was sent down [in][1] [at the end of][2] *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* [is][1] sufficient for you [.][1] [?][2]"
Ibn Saʿd (2001, 3:311)	until he poked me in the belly with his finger	and said, "O ʿUmar, let the verse at the end of [*Sūrat*] *al-Nisāʾ* be sufficient for you!"
Reconstructed version of Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī	until [...] in the front of my chest	and said, "O ʿUmar, is not the summer verse that is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* sufficient for you?"

Transmissions through Ibn Rāhwayh

Like transmissions through al-Qaṭṭān variants of the tradition transmitted through Ibn Rāhwayh are composed of virtually identical *matn*s. A slight variation is observed only in clause 2 in which al-Nasāʾī transmits the assertive particle *inna-mā* while Ibn ʿAsākir has the interrogative *a-mā*. However, since we have only two transmissions, neither of which is associated with a direct collector, it is impossible to determine which of them, if any, represents Ibn Rāhwayh's original formulation.

From the *isnād* diagram in Figure 6.3, it is clear that Ibn Rāhwayh is separated from the possible common link, Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī, by one intermediate transmitter. To this we must add that the tradition at hand is not part of Ibn Rāhwayh's surviving collection. These facts cast a shade of doubt on Ibn Rāhwayh's status as a partial common link. We must remain alert to this ambiguity when we proceed to reconstructing al-Dastuwāʾī's version.

Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī's Version

Variants of the tradition found in al-Ṭayālisī's *Musnad* and in the *Musnad* of Abū ʿAwāna, transmitted on the authority of al-Ṭayālisī, display a degree of textual fluidity higher than that in the variants on the authority of al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Rāhwayh. In clause 1 ("until he hit me [in the front of/in] the chest with his hand") al-Ṭayālisī uses the adverb *qibal*^{a} (in front of), whereas Abū ʿAwāna uses the preposition *ʿalā* (on/upon), which, in the present case, is translated as "in." In clause 2 ("O ʿUmar, [verily/is not] the summer verse that was sent down [in/at the end of] Sūrat al-Nisāʾ [is] sufficient for you [./?]") al-Ṭayālisī uses the assertive particle *inna-mā* (verily); Abū ʿAwāna's transmission includes the interrogative particle *a-mā* (is not?). In the same clause, al-Ṭayālisī mentions that the summer verse was sent down "in" *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* whereas Abū ʿAwāna specifies that verse's location as "the end" (*ākhir*) of the same sura.

Despite the differences, the fact that the above tradition is present in al-Ṭayālisī's extant hadith collection suggests that the formulations found in its text are the original ones. If so, Abū ʿAwāna's tradition on the authority of al-Ṭayālisī reflects changes in the narrative that most likely occurred under the influence of other traditions from the same *matn* cluster. One must bear in mind, however, that al-Ṭayālisī's extant *Musnad* is only a selection of the original work by Khurasani transmitters, who may well have introduced changes in the *matn* substance.

Ibn Saʿd's Version

None of our substantive and quantitative criteria for *matn* assessment applies to Ibn Saʿd's tradition because of its single-strand *isnād* that intersects with the other lines of transmission only at the level of the possible common link, Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī. Although with a limited evidentiary value, Ibn Saʿd's tradition will be taken into account for the reconstruction of al-Dastuwāʾī's version. This is because it may be compared to the transmission of at least one common link (al-Qaṭṭān) and one direct collector (al-Ṭayālisī).

Reconstructing Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī's Tradition

To this point, we are able to confirm the status of al-Qaṭṭān and, with qualifications, of Ibn Rāhwayh as partial common links above the level of Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī. Al-Ṭayālisī is a direct collector, that is, according to our *isnād*-critical criteria he has a status identical to that of the partial common links. Let us examine these three variants together with Ibn Saʿd's single-strand transmission in order to determine if Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī is a common link and to reconstruct the wording of his tradition.

Clause 1 in the transmissions of al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Rāhwayh includes the locution *ḥattā ṭaʿana bi-iṣbaʿ*^{i}*-hi fī ṣadrī* ("until he poked my chest with his finger"), whereas al-Ṭayālisī has *ḥattā ḍaraba bi-yad*^{i}*-hi qibal*^{a} *ṣadrī* ("until he hit me in the chest with his hand"). Ibn Saʿd's variant is peculiar in that, like al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Rāhwayh, Ibn Saʿd uses the word "finger" (*iṣbaʿ*), but, unlike all other traditions, he states that the Prophet poked ʿUmar in his belly (*baṭn*), not in his chest (*ṣadr*). Altogether, the four variants of clause 1 share only the word "until" (*ḥattā*), but differ in the other components of the clause. Let us assess each instance of variation.

Frequency of use seems to favor the formulation "poked with his finger" (*ṭaʿana bi-iṣbaʿ*^{i}*-hi*), which is found in the traditions of al-Qaṭṭān, Ibn Rāhwayh, and Ibn Saʿd.

Recall, however, that neither Ibn Rāhwayh nor Ibn Saʿd are direct collectors with regard to al-Dastuwāʾī and that the tradition at issue is not part of Ibn Rāhwayh's extant hadith collection. These limitations do not allow us to treat the traditions of Ibn Rāhwayh and Ibn Saʿd on an equal footing with the traditions of al-Qaṭṭān and al-Ṭayālisī, who transmit directly from Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī. Because of their single-strand *isnād*s, we may not exclude the possibility that the variants of Ibn Rāhwayh and Ibn Saʿd were modeled after al-Qaṭṭān's tradition. If so, we are left with only two early variants (al-Qaṭṭān and al-Ṭayālisī), which have a different wording. Hence, neither frequency of use nor priority of occurrence may be used to identify the formulation that reflects more accurately the wording of al-Dastuwāʾī's tradition.

The adverb *qibal^{a}* (in front of), found in al-Ṭayālisī's tradition, might seem to be the more difficult, hence older, reading. Nonetheless, we must bear in mind that *qibal^{a}* is not an obscure or infrequently used unit of the Arabic lexicon. To prefer it to the other possible readings (*ʿalā, fī*) would reflect the scholar's subjective choice rather than objective criteria of selection.

The reference to "my belly" (*baṭnī*) is found only in Ibn Saʿd's tradition. Both priority of occurrence and frequency of use allow us to consider it an anomalous reading that does not represent the common-link version.

To sum up our analysis of clause 1, although the traditions of al-Qaṭṭān, al-Ṭayālisī, Ibn Rāhwayh, and Ibn Saʿd include variants of clause 1 that are substantively similar, the specific wording of their shared source, to wit, Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī, is impossible to reconstruct in its entirety.

In clause 2 al-Qaṭṭān transmits the interrogative particle *a-lā*, al-Ṭayālisī has the assertive *inna-mā*, Ibn Saʿd does not use any particle, whereas Ibn Rāhwayh's formulation is impossible to reconstruct. This level of textual fluidity precludes the reconstruction of al-Dastuwāʾī's formulation. In the same clause, al-Qaṭṭān has "the summer verse that is *at the end of Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*"; Ibn Rāhwayh has "the summer verse that is *in Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*"; al-Ṭayālisī transmits "the summer verse *that was sent down* in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*"; and Ibn Saʿd has "the verse that is *at the end of* [*Sūrat*] *al-Nisāʾ*." The verb "was sent down" in al-Ṭayālisī's *matn* is apparently a superfluous clarification; every Muslim knows that the Qurʾan was "sent down" to the Prophet. Therefore, the criteria of semantic consistency and textual brevity suggest that this verb was not part of al-Dastuwāʾī's transmission.

The most intriguing difference between the four *matn*s is the specification that the summer verse is "at the end" of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* – present in the traditions of al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Saʿd. Was this specification part of Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī's transmission to his pupils, and what is its significance for the history of the narrative?

The fact that the expression "at the end" is absent in al-Ṭayālisī's early tradition, but occurs in Abū ʿAwāna's later transmission on the authority of al-Ṭayālisī, suggests that, initially, the *matn* did not refer to "the end" of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* as the location of the summer verse. The criterion of semantic consistency points in the same direction. The locution "(1) the summer verse (2) that is at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*" includes two redundant specifications. First, it mentions the summer verse and, then, as if this identifier were insufficient, it points to the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* as the verse's actual location. Apparently, the second specification was added to the narrative subsequent to a semantic shift that obscured the originally clear referent of the summer-verse linguistic tag. To remove the ambiguity, someone found it necessary to specify that the summer verse is at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*.

Since the summer verse is related to the understanding of the word *kalāla*, which is mentioned in Q. 4:12, that is, at the beginning of the *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*, and in Q. 4:176, that is, at the very end of the same sura, the cause of perplexity is clear. The person who asserted that the summer verse is at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* was responding to a development whereby the original association of the summer-verse linguistic tag was transferred from the *kalāla*-verse at the beginning of the sura to the *kalāla*-verse at its end. Thus, the criterion of semantic consistency indicates that the association of the summer-verse linguistic tag with Q 4:176 was a secondary development that suppressed an earlier association of the tag with Q 4:12. We may now conclude that the expression "the summer verse in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*" (*āyat^{u} ʾl-ṣayf^{i} fī sūrat^{i} ʾl-nisāʾ*), found in Ibn Rāhwayh's transmission, was the formulation of the common link, Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī, that later transmitters modified in several ways. Whereas al-Ṭayālisī added to it the redundant clause *allatī unzilat* (that was sent down), al-Qaṭṭān specified that the summer verse is "at the end of" (*fī ākhir^{i}*) *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*. Ibn Saʿd's late version is remarkable: it suggests that he was aware of the semantic redundancy of the expression "the summer verse at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*." To avoid the surfeit of identifiers, Ibn Saʿd removed the word "summer," thereby stressing the later understanding that the meaning of *kalāla* is defined in Q 4:176.

Although not as anomalous as the expression "the summer verse that is at the end of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*," Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī's formulation "the summer verse that is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*" already betrays uncertainty about the referent of the summer-verse linguistic tag. Al-Dastuwāʾī presumably inserted the clause "that is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*" into the originally unqualified formulation, "the summer verse is sufficient for you," whose recipients were in no doubt that the summer verse is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*. If al-Dastuwāʾī received this formulation from an earlier source, which seems highly possible, the criterion of semantic consistency offers us a glimpse into the history of the tradition before the level of the common link.

To sum up, our analysis allows us to conclude that Hishām al-Dastuwāʾī is the common link with respect to the shared parts of the narrative as follows:

> until [...] in the front of my chest (*ḥattā [...] qibal^{a} ṣadrī*)
>
> and said, "O ʿUmar, is not the summer verse that is in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* sufficient for you?" (*wa-qāla: "Yā ʿUmar^{u}, a-lā/a-mā t/yakfī-ka āyat^{u} ʾl-ṣayf^{i} ʾl-latī fī Sūrat^{i} ʾl-Nisāʾ?"*)

For the sake of brevity, we did not examine all traditions that include the above two clauses. For this reason, a reconstruction based on all available traditions might differ to some extent from the reconstruction in the present simplified case study.

Conclusion

The most challenging task before the modern analyst of Muslim traditions is to reconstruct their wording and transmission history during the first two centuries of Islam (c. 622–c. 815 CE), when oral delivery took precedence over written record and knowledge was not set down in the form of fixed hadith collections to be passed on to posterity. Current methods of hadith analysis combine study of the *isnād*, many principles of which were formulated and applied by Muslim hadith critics in the classical period, with thorough examination of the *matn*, which had been, at best, of secondary concern to traditional Muslim hadith science. As has been shown at the end of this chapter, the inclusion of text-critical techniques in our *matn*-analytical inventory may help us to date traditions before the level of the common link, which has hitherto represented the outermost limit for our ability to date traditions with reasonable certainty. Such techniques may even afford glimpses into the last decades of the first century AH (Pavlovitch 2016, 143–150). Thus, in many instances, the study of the *isnād*s together with an in-depth textual and philological analysis of the *matn*s enables us to engage systematically and cogently the issue of the authenticity of Muslim traditions, understood here as determining the original promoter of a given hadith and locating the social settings that fostered its formulation and putting into circulation. It remains to be seen, however, how authenticity relates to the historical claim of Muslim traditions to accurately describe events that had taken place at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries CE.

Note

1 Motzki undertook what he describes as a "quantification of Juynboll's assumptions." If the *isnād* branches by a factor of 5 at each level of transmission upwards, the number of tradents at the first level above the common link would be 5; at the second level – 25, at the third level – 125, at the fourth level – 625, at the fifth level – 3,125, and so on (Motzki 1996, 48–49). If each of the six collectors mentioned in Diagram 1 in Juynboll's article "Nāfiʿ" transmitted – independently of the other collectors – from at least three informants from the previous generation, the chance is very limited that these collectors, who might choose 18 out of 125 possible informants, would cite the same person. The chance that these 18 *isnād*s come together in the same person will increase to 18:25 at the next lower level; and to 18:5 at the partial common link level (Motzki 1996, 49). This quantification of transmission, according to Motzki, explains the preponderance of single-strand *isnād*s at higher levels of transmission and the occurrence of partial common links/common links at lower levels.

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Further reading

Electronic databases

Modern study of Muslim traditions is hard to imagine without comprehensive computer databases including thousands of sources, such as *al-Maktaba al-Shāmila* (www.shamela.ws) and *al-Jāmiʿ li'l-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī* (www.sonnaonline.com). These databases enable hadith scholars to perform almost instantly a research that without the expedient of computer technologies would have consumed years of tedious examination of sources. Needless to say, reliance on computer technologies does not diminish the role of human intellect for the analysis of data accumulated by electronic means. One must also bear in mind that, due to technical errors, electronic versions might differ from the printed text on which they are based. That is why, any tradition found by electronic means must be checked against one or more printed editions of the respective work.

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III. Growth

CHAPTER 7

Collections

Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar

Chains of Narration

In Chapter 1, we came across the two versions of a hadith that Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (194–256/810–870), records in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*:

> Musaddad narrated to me, [he said that] Yaḥyā narrated to me from Hishām that he [Hishām] said: “My father narrated to me from ʿAʾisha that Ḥamza ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī said ‘O God’s Messenger, I fast continuously ...’.” (Bukhārī 20 *Ṣawm*, 33 al-ṣawm fī ’l-safar wa’l-ifṭār, no. 1942)
>
> ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yūsuf narrated to me, [he said that] Mālik reported to me from Hishām ibn ʿUrwa [who reported] from his father, [who reported] from ʿAʾisha the wife of God’s Prophet [that she said] “Ḥamza ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī said to the Prophet: ‘Should I fast while traveling?’ [ʿAʾisha states:] He [Ḥamza] used to fast a lot. The Prophet replied ‘If you wish, you may fast, if you wish you may leave off fasting’.” (Bukhārī 20 *Ṣawm*, 33 al-ṣawm fī’l-safar wa’l-ifṭār, no. 1943)

Figure 7.1 is a representation of the chains of narration of the two hadiths.

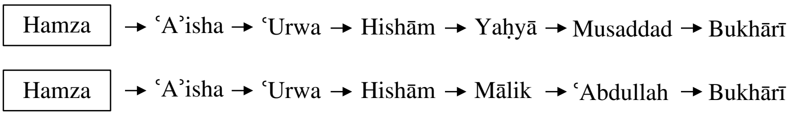
Hamza → ʿAʾisha → ʿUrwa → Hishām → Yaḥyā → Musaddad → Bukhārī
Hamza → ʿAʾisha → ʿUrwa → Hishām → Mālik → ʿAbdullah → Bukhārī

Figure 7.1 Two *isnāds* of a hadith about fasting while traveling.

Looking at the similarity between the texts of the two hadiths, and the fact that the final four narrators of both hadiths are the same, one could represent them like this (Figure 7.2):

The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith, First Edition. Edited by Daniel W. Brown.
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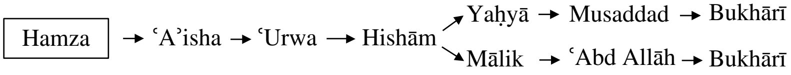

Figure 7.2 Combined diagram of two *isnād*s.

Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khalīl's *Al-Musnad al-jāmiʿ* (1994) lists 23 narrations of this hadith in some of the well-known hadith works. The diagram in Figure 7.3 represents the chains of narrations of these narrations.

The single event of Ḥamza's question, seemingly while ʿA'isha (d. 58/678) was listening, was narrated to her nephew ʿUrwa (22–94/644–713) who narrated it to his son Hishām (61–145/680–763) who further narrated it to the 13 people whose names are numbered and listed in bold in the diagram. Based on just the evidence of these chains of narration one could say that this seems to have been one hadith until the death of ʿUrwa in 94/713, while sometime in the life of Hishām, it became 14 hadiths, and eventually, by the time the authors of the books (shaded light) recorded this hadith, it had become 23 hadiths. A more thorough search through the literature for a hadith of this kind, a hadith that has been recorded in such a large number of these major collections, will usually yield a hundred or more narrations of it.

The classical literature on hadith uses the term "hadith" both to refer to the single source of a hadith and to refer to its numerous narrations. To avoid ambiguity, I use the word "hadith" to refer to the initial description of the event, and "narrations" to refer to its many versions. Hadith scholars have estimated the total number of hadith texts to be between 4,000 and 30,000. These same scholars describe expert hadith scholars as having had repertoires ranging from 300,000 to 1 million hadiths. The figures in hundreds of thousands refer to narrations of hadiths while the figures in thousands and tens of thousands refer to the initial hadith that was later transmitted by many narrators.

A Brief History of the Hadith Literature

This graphic presentation of the career of a hadith text corresponds to stages in the history of the hadith literature. In *Taqyīd al-ʿilm*, Khaṭīb Baghdādi (n.d.) discusses early attitudes to writing hadith in a theoretical manner. He quotes sayings of the Prophet, his companions, and later authorities regarding writing hadiths or not writing them. In his dissertation of 1967, Muṣṭafā Aʿẓamī took a practical approach to the issue. He identified 50 companions, then 49 students of companions, and then 87 scholars of the late first and early second century who noted down the hadiths they heard, or whose students had noted down hadiths they had heard. These early works were not for public consumption, rather, they were written as aids to memory or for instruction to specific students whom the author would see fit to receive and understand them properly (Azmi 1978, 34–106; see also Chapter 5).

These first hadith collections are simply records of hadiths that a person had heard: there is no additional consideration in their organization. So, the companion Abū Bakr

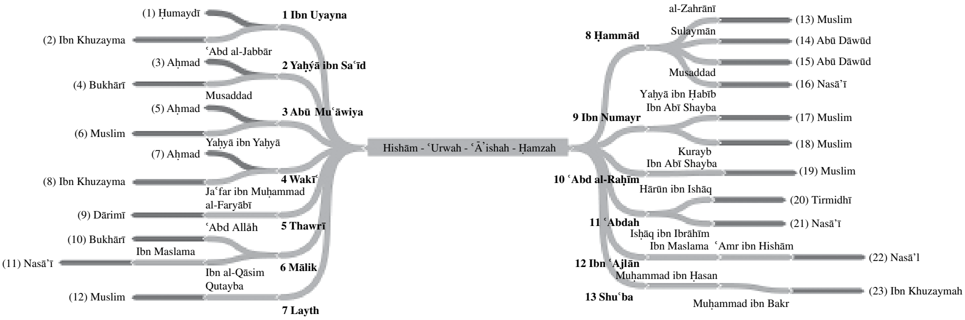
(1) Ḥumaydī
1 Ibn Uyayna
(2) Ibn Khuzayma
ʿAbd al-Jabbār
(3) Aḥmad
2 Yaḥýā ibn Saʿīd
(4) Bukhārī
Musaddad
(5) Aḥmad
3 Abū Muʿāwiya
(6) Muslim
Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā
(7) Aḥmad
(8) Ibn Khuzayma
4 Wakīʿ
Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad
al-Faryābī
(9) Dārimī
ʿAbd Allāh
5 Thawrī
(10) Bukhārī
Ibn Maslama
(11) Nasā'ī
6 Mālik
Ibn al-Qāsim
Qutayba
(12) Muslim
7 Layth
Hishām - ʿUrwah - ʿĀ'ishah - Ḥamzah
al-Zahrānī
(13) Muslim
8 Ḥammād
Sulaymān
(14) Abū Dāwūd
(15) Abū Dāwūd
Musaddad
(16) Nasā'ī
Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabīb
Ibn Abī Shayba
9 Ibn Numayr
(17) Muslim
(18) Muslim
Kurayb
Ibn Abī Shayba
(19) Muslim
10 ʿAbd al-Raḥīm
Hārūn ibn Ishāq
(20) Tirmidhī
11 ʿAbdah
(21) Nasā'ī
Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm
Ibn Maslama
ʿAmr ibn Hishām
(22) Nasā'l
12 Ibn ʿAjlān
Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan
(23) Ibn Khuzaymah
13 Shuʿba
Muḥammad ibn Bakr

Figure 7.3 Twenty-three *isnād*s of a hadith on fasting while traveling.

is described as having a collection of about 500 hadiths that he had heard from the Prophet over his lifetime. The companion ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀs is described as having a *ṣaḥīfa* (manuscript) in which he had written down things he had heard from the Prophet. In his *musnad*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal seems to have narrated in full a *ṣaḥīfa* that Hammām ibn Munabbih narrated from the companion Abū Hurayra (Hammām ibn Munabbih 1985, 10).

The first attempts at organizing collections of hadith appeared early in the second/eighth century, probably because of the growth in the number of hadiths that a scholar would know. A student would record sessions of hadith narration from a particular source that the student would have attended. As the number of such records in his possession grew, the student would organize his collection by the name of the companion narrating the hadith. Such collections organized by the name of the earliest source came to be known as "musnad" collections.

Another significant development, also in the second/eighth century, was the development of collections based on the content of the hadith. "*Taṣnīf*," often translated as "writing" or "authoring," literally means "putting together things of a kind (*ṣinf*)" or "organizing by type (*ṣinf*)." Zuhrī (51–125/671–741) is described as the first person to do "*taṣnīf*." In one of the earliest self-conscious descriptions of the history of the development of hadith as a genre, ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī describes Zuhrī's generation as "*aṣḥāb al-aṣnāf*": the people who composed collections organized by type of hadith (al-Madīnī 1980, 37).

A *muṣannaf*, then, is a hadith work where the hadiths are organized by subject: hadiths shedding light on the Prophet's ways of worship, his financial dealings, his manners, his dealing with opponents and enemies, his biography, are distributed according to subject and organized into sections. The two *muṣannaf* works best known to hadith scholars today are those of Ibn Abī Shayba (136–235/754–849) and ʿAbd al-Razzāq (126–211/744–827). These two works seem to have been popular works of hadith, both proper Prophetic hadith and sayings of companions and early authorities, that six works of the third century supplanted.

Ḥadīth and Practical Jurisprudence until the Third Century

Today, the first books a student of hadith will encounter are a group of hadith works known as the "Six Books." These are the works of Bukhārī (194–256/810–870), Abū Dāwūd (202–275/817–888), Muslim (206–261/817–875), Tirmidhī (209–279/825–892), Ibn Māja (209–273/824–887), and Nasāʾī (215–303/830–915). These books were written over a period of roughly 75 years, from about 225/840 to 300/912 or so. About two centuries later, Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (448–507/1057–1113) was the first person to treat these six books as a unit in his work *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-sitta* ("the criteria for accepting hadiths of the six leading hadith scholars"; Maqdisī 2005). So, to think of these six books as a group and to use their criteria of accepting hadiths as a way to group them together certainly reflects concerns of students of hadith of the fifth century, but it is not clear that when the authors of each of the six works was writing them in the third century, these same concerns were guiding them, or even that they had these things in mind. Even to think of all six together, to identify common features and points of difference, is to think of them in a way that fifth-century hadith scholars thought of them.

The exponential growth in the number of versions of hadiths from generation to generation in the first two centuries certainly created a need for brief works selecting hadiths that could introduce a novice to the field. Selection is guided by concerns, and we can identify a number of concerns that guided the construction of these works.

From the second/eighth century there seem to have been two fairly distinct groups of scholars who engaged with hadiths in two different ways: the hadith experts, who were primarily interested in technical issues of transmission, and the scholars of practical jurisprudence (the *fuqahāʾ*), who focused on the implications of hadith texts. The "*musnad*" collections of the second century reflect the engagement of the hadith experts. The authors of these collections have organized the hadiths only with a view to the narrators of the hadith paying no attention to the issues on which the hadith texts have a bearing. The "*muṣannaf*" collections correspond to the interest of the scholars of practical jurisprudence. Hadiths are sorted by the subjects they bear upon. Also, the authors do not shy away from the opinions and practice of companions and later authorities.

The *Muwaṭṭā*, a book that Mālik ibn Anas (93–179/711–795) was probably teaching by the middle of the second/eighth century, is one of the more explicit expressions of this attention to the subject of a hadith. Each section in Mālik's book deals with aspects of the practical life of a Muslim. He begins each section with hadiths that are relevant to the issue he is discussing, follows them up with sayings of the elders of the community and descriptions of their practice, and finally he issues explicit judgment on the appropriate conduct of a Muslim in the issue at hand.

While Mālik provides a window into Medinan scholarship, his older contemporary, Abū Ḥanīfa (80–150/702–772), represents the Iraqi school of practical jurisprudence. Four of his students (Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, Ḥasān ibn Ziyād, and Zufar) narrate a *Kitāb al-āthār* from him: Abū Yūsuf's narration is extant. It presents hadiths in the same context of discussions of issues of practical jurisprudence involving Prophetic hadiths, practice and sayings of companions, and decisions of later authorities.

Many third-/ninth-century hadith works, and specifically the Six Books, bring together the concerns of hadith experts and those of the scholars of practical jurisprudence. Another significant development of this century was that the authors of works in this period make a principle of according a place of privilege to the Prophetic hadiths as compared to texts recording the sayings and practices of companions or later authorities.

Third-Century Works: The Six Books

Tirmidhī's Sunan

Of the six works, Tirmidhī's *sunan* contains the most explicit expression of the concerns that are embodied in more subtle ways in the other five works. Tirmidhī's work is divided into some 40-odd "books." Each book includes chapters with more specific headings that form the rubric under which Tirmidhī records hadiths. So in one chapter in the book on purification for ritual prayers, Tirmidhī discusses the practice of wiping a wet hand over leather socks instead of washing one's feet under the heading "Chapter regarding wiping a wet hand over leather socks for the person who is traveling or not traveling" (Tirmidhī n.d., 1: 158ff, no. 95).

[1] Qutayba ibn Saʿīd narrated to us from Abū ʿAwāna from Saʿīd ibn Masrūq from Ibrāhīm al-Taymī from ʿAmr ibn Maymūn from ʿAbd Allāh al-Jadalī from Khuzayma ibn Thābit from the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he was asked about wiping a wet hand over leather socks and he said: "Three [days] for the person traveling and one [day] for the one not traveling."

[2] It is reported from Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn that he declared the hadith of Khuzayma to be sound.

[3] Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jadalī's name is ʿAbd ibn ʿAbd. It is also said that his name is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd.

[4] (Abū ʿĪsā [Tirmidhī] said:) This hadith is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.

[5] Regarding this issue there are also hadiths from [the companions] ʿAlī, Abū Bakra, Abū Hurayra, Ṣafwān ibn ʿAssāl, ʿAwf ibn Mālik, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar and Jarīr.

[6] Hannād narrated to me from Abū al-Aḥwas from ʿĀṣim ibn Abi al-Najūd from Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh from Ṣafwān ibn ʿAssāl that he said: God's Messenger, God bless him and send peace on him, would command us not to take off our leather socks for three days and nights – except when one of us would need a bath due to the greater impurity. But, for purifying ourselves after defecating, or urinating or sleeping [he would command us not to take off our leather socks].

[7] (Abū ʿĪsā said:) This hadith is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.

[8] Ḥakam ibn Qutayba and Ḥammād have narrated [the first hadith, of Khuzayma] from Ibrāhīm al-Nakhʿī from Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jadalī from Khuzayma ibn Thābit, but this is not correct.

[9] ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī said that Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd said that Shuʿba said that Ibrāhīm al-Nakhʿī did not hear the hadith of wiping a wet hand [over leather socks] from Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Jadalī.

[10] Zāʾida said, from Manṣūr: We were in Ibrāhīm al-Taymī's room while Ibrāhīm al-Nakhʿī was with us, when Ibrāhīm al-Taymī narrated to us from ʿAmr ibn Maymūm from Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jadalī from Khuzayma ibn Thābit from the Prophet, God bless him and send peace on him, regarding wiping a wet hand over leather socks.

[11] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl [al-Bukhārī] said: the best hadith in this issue is the one of Ṣafwān ibn ʿAssāl.

[12] (Abū ʿĪsā said:) This is the position of most of the scholars from among the Companions of the Prophet, God bless him and send mercy on him, and their followers and the scholars of practical jurisprudence after them – such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn al-Mubārak, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Isḥāq [ibn Rāhawayh]. They say: The person who is not traveling may wipe his hands on his

leather socks [instead of taking the socks off and washing his feet] for a day and a night and the traveler may do so for three days and nights. It has also been narrated from some scholars that they did not fix a time limit for wiping a wet hand over leather socks, and this is the position of Mālik ibn Anas.

[13] (Abū ʿĪsā said:) It is more correct to set a time limit.

[14] The hadith of Ṣafwān has also been narrated through narrators other than ʿĀṣim.

Tirmidhī has quoted two hadiths, [1 and 6], quoted his teacher Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn's assessment on the reliability of a hadith [2], issued his own assessment on the reliability of two hadiths [4 and 7], provided information to identify the narrator of a hadith [3], pointed the reader to seven other relevant hadiths [5], provided evidence [8–10] regarding an erroneous narration of the first hadith, pointed to evidence that a narrator who sometimes experiences lapses of memory (ʿĀṣim ibn Abi al-Najūd) should be trusted in the case of this hadith since his narration is supported by others [14], given al-Bukhārī's assessment of the most reliable hadiths regarding this issue [11], summarized the positions of scholars of practical jurisprudence on the issue [12] and, finally, issued his own judgment [13] on the jurisprudential issue being discussed. The initial eight issues are in the domain of the disciplines of hadith transmission and evaluation, while the final two are issues of practical jurisprudence. Of course, the way Tirmidhī has organized his work into chapters, and the rubric he has established above these two hadiths are both explicit in the focus on the implications in practical jurisprudence of the hadiths being quoted.

This discussion appears in the second in a set of four chapters (Tirmidhī n.d., 1:155–166, no. 93–98) narrating hadiths on issues that have a bearing on wiping a wet hand on one's feet instead of washing them during purification for ritual prayers. In the first chapter, Tirmidhī narrates hadiths on the permissibility of this practice and this second chapter contains hadiths that deal with the issue of time limits for this practice. In the third chapter Tirmidhī narrates a hadith that suggests that in wiping the socks one must wipe both the top part and the part that touches the floor. After narrating the hadith, he notes that a number of companions and their followers have held this position while, among the later jurisprudents, Mālik, Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh have held it. Then Tirmidhī comments that this hadith is defective and quotes Bukhārī and another hadith expert, Abū Zurʿa, describing the problem in it. The fourth chapter complements the third chapter and contains a hadith that tells us that the Prophet would wipe only the top part of his leather socks. Again Tirmidhī has notes on the transmission of the hadith and lists the scholars who held this position.

The books in Tirmidhī's work have chapters in which he narrates hadiths relevant to the broad topics list given here in Table 7.1.

Sunna (plural: *sunan*) refers to a practice of the Prophet that serves as an example for his followers to imitate. Although many of the chapters in Tirmidhī's book deal with *sunan*, with issues of what I have called "practical jurisprudence," a considerable portion of the book narrates hadiths that have no bearing on *sunna*. In this period, it appears

Table 7.1 Topics in Tirmidhī's *Sunan*.

	Chapters	Hadiths		Chapters	Hadiths
1. Ritual purity	1–112	1–146	26. Doing good to others and to relatives	1–87	1897–2035
2. Salat	113–434	147–616	27. Treating the sick	1–35	2036–2089
3. Zakāt	1–38	617–628	28. Inheritance	1–23	2090–2115
4. Fasting	1–83	682–808	29. Deeds	1–7	2116–2124
5. Ḥajj	1–116	809–964	30. Relations established through manumission, Gifts	1–7	2125–2132
6. Funerals	1–76	965–1069	31. Predestination	1–19	2133–2157
7. Weddings	1–44	1080–1145	32. Tribulations near the end of time	1–79	2158–2269
8. Foster relationships	1–19	1146–1174	33. Dreams	1–10	2270–2294
9. Divorce, repudiation	1–23	1175–1204	34. Bearing witness in court	1–4	2295–2303
10. Commercial dealing	1–76	1205–1321	35. Renouncing material goods and pleasures	1–64	2304–2414
11. Court rulings	1–42	1322–1385	36. Description of the Day of Judgment and other hadiths that soften the heart	1–60	2415–2522
12. Compensation for injury	1–23	1386–1422	37. Description of heaven	1–27	2523–2572
13. Prescribed punishments (for adultery, murder, highway robbery, and the like)	1–30	1423–1463	38. Description of hell	1–13	2573–2605
14. Rules to observe to make the meat of hunted animals permissible	1–7	1464–1471	39. Faith	1–18	2606–2644
15. Slaughtering animals	1	1472	40. Knowledge	1–19	2645–2687
16. Food	1–5	1473–1481	41. Taking permission before entering a dwelling	1–34	2688–2735
17. Animals, hunting, etc.	1–6	1482–1492	42. Etiquette of daily life	1–75	2735–2858
18. Sacrificial animals	1–24	1492–1523	43. Hadiths in which the Prophet used similitudes	1–7	2859–2874
19. Vows and oaths	1–19	1524–1547	44. Rewards of reciting the Qurʾan	1–25	2875–2926
20. Dealing with the enemy in battle	1–48	1548–1618	45. Variant recitations of the Qurʾan	1–13	2927–2949
21. Rewards of jihād	1–26	1619–1669	46. Exegesis of Qurʾanic passages	1–95	2950–3369
22. Jihād	1–39	1670–1719	47. Prayers the Prophet taught	1–133	3370–3604
23. Attire	1–45	1720–1787	48. Praise of individuals or groups of people	1–75	3605–3956
24. Food	1–48	1788–1860	49. Defects of hadiths		
25. Drink	1–21	1861–1896			

that the name of a book was simply to identify it: so some people speak of "Tirmidhī's book on *sunan*." Others refer to it as his *Jāmiʿ* ("comprehensive book") since it contains hadiths on *sunan* and on other topics. Some have also called it the *Saḥīḥ* of Tirmidhī: "Tirmidhī's collection of sound hadiths."

The final book, on "Defects of Hadiths," can be considered a separate composition. Tirmidhī discusses his *sunan*, along with discussing issues that come under consideration when evaluating hadiths. Thus, this book is counted among the first compositions on the principles of hadith criticism.

Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ

In contrast with Tirmidhī, who does not hesitate to discuss whatever issues are relevant to the hadith at hand, after a prologue in which Muslim discusses his book and some issues related to evaluating hadiths, the entire book, except for a chance comment or two, consists only of chains of narrations and the hadith texts that Muslim narrates through those chains of narrations. Muslim has not even set up headings or rubrics: hadith follows hadith from the beginning of the book to its end.

This does not mean that considerations of the type Tirmidhī speaks of are not present in Muslim's work. Muslim has organized hadiths by subject matter pretty much as Tirmidhī has arranged them. He does not evaluate hadiths one by one, but he has stated in his prologue that he will begin with hadiths of the highest levels of reliability, then he will follow them up with hadiths that, though they are at a lower level, are still reliable. So, the apparatus of hadith evaluation that is explicit in Tirmidhī's *Jāmīʿ* is working behind the scenes implicitly in Muslim's work.

In fact, because of the opacity of Muslim's work, many scholars over the centuries have thought that all the hadiths he has recorded are of the same level. Recently a number of scholars have demonstrated that Muslim has fulfilled his promise: when he starts narrating hadiths that have a bearing on a topic he begins with the narrations that are at the highest level of reliability, and then he finishes with narrations that, although not to be dismissed, are a bit less reliable. In addition, sometimes he will narrate a sound hadith and then narrate a problematic version simply to identify the problem in it. For example, he narrates the following six hadiths regarding sale of fruit on the tree before it ripens:

> Abū Ṭāhir → Ibn Wahb → Ibn Jurayj from Abū Zubayr → Jābir: "God's Messenger said: If you sell your brother fruit [on the tree] ..."
>
> Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbād → Abū Ḍamra → Ibn Jurayj → Abū Zubayr → Jābir: "God's Messenger said: If you sell your brother fruit [on the tree], then it was destroyed after the sale, it is not permissible for you to take anything from him. How would it be rightful taking your brother's money?"
>
> Ḥasan al-Ḥulwānī → Abū ʿĀṣim → Ibn Jurayj narrates a similar hadith from this same chain of narration.

> Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, Qutayba ibn Saʿīd, ʿAlī ibn Ḥujr → Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar → Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl → Anas: "The Prophet forbade the sale of fruit before it reaches zahw." *We asked* Anas: "What is zahw?" He said: "That it becomes red and yellow. What do you say, if Allah were to stop the fruit from becoming ripe, how would you be rightful in taking your brother's money?"
>
> Abū al-Ṭāhir → Ibn Wahb → Mālik → Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl → Anas: "The Prophet forbade the sale of fruit before it reaches zahw." *They asked*: "What is zahw?" He said: "It becomes red." And he said: "If Allah were to stop the fruit from becoming ripe, how would you be rightful in taking your brother's money?"
>
> Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbād → ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Muḥammad → Ḥumayd → Anas: The Prophet said: "If Allah were to stop the fruit from becoming ripe, how would you be rightful in taking your brother's money?" (Muslim 22 *Musāqā*, 3; Muslim 2006, 2: 730)

Muslim begins this set of hadiths with the three most accurate narrations of the hadith, all narrated from the chain of Ibn Jurayj → Abū Zubayr → Jābir. Muslim abbreviates the first narration mentioning just the first words in it and then goes on to the second narration to narrate the full text. Note that the full text begins with the Prophet prohibiting taking money from the sale of fruit where the fruit is destroyed before possession, and ends with the statement "how would you be rightful in taking your brother's money," also clearly attributed to the Prophet.

Muslim only presents the chain of narration of the third hadith and then continues with three narrations of a hadith conveying the same sense but narrated this time through the chain of Ḥumayd → Anas. In the first narration, the Prophetic hadith ends with his prohibition. The narration continues with an exchange between Anas and his audience, which would be Ḥumayd and other students who were present at the incident Ḥumayd narrates. The statement "how would you be rightful …" is Anas explaining the reasoning behind the Prophet's prohibition.

In the next narration "we asked Anas" is changed to a "they asked." Having heard the first narration, it is easy to understand "they asked" as another way of describing Ḥumayd and his companions asking Anas, and Anas responding. But the third narration quotes only what we have described as Anas' justification for the Prophet's prohibition and presents this justification as being the words of the Prophet.

The hadith of Jābir does present this same justification as part of the Prophetic hadith. But Muslim is arguing that to present these words as part of the Prophetic hadith in the narration of Anas is an error. He has also indicated the probable source of the error. In the second of the six hadiths, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbād is a very reliable narrator who narrates the hadith of Jābir that does contain these words as a Prophetic hadith. Then, in the sixth hadith, the hadith of Anas, he is the one who unambiguously attributes these same words to the Prophet while, in the hadith of Anas, these are the words of Anas.

This is one of the clearer examples of the manner in which Muslim organizes each set of hadiths dealing with a subject: the most technically superior ones in the very beginning, then those that are a little less perfect, and sometimes he even narrates a defective hadith to indicate its defect. Instances of such defective hadiths are few and incidental since the purpose of his book is to provide the student just a selection of the most technically sound hadiths with which to begin his study of hadiths.

The Ṣaḥīḥ *of Bukhārī*

Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* is usually considered the first of the Six Books. It is as verbose as Tirmidhī's, but in many places it is as opaque as Muslim's. Whenever he can, Bukhārī establishes rubrics over hadiths that make the reader struggle to understand how the hadiths he narrates under the rubric are related to it. Bukhārī seems as interested in developing the reader's ability to interpret texts as he is in collecting sound versions of a text.

A detailed discussion of Bukhārī's many uses of rubrics is not possible here. As a sample, consider the following long rubric followed by two hadiths:

> Chapter: Regarding the statement of God, Most High: "… and the game of the sea has been made permissible for you"; and ʿUmar said: "Its 'game' is what you catch and its 'food' is what the sea throws up"; and Abū Bakr said: "The fish that comes up dead to the surface of the water is permissible"; and Ibn ʿAbbās said: "Its 'food' is its dead animals except things in it that you consider foul, and the Jews don't eat water snakes while we eat them"; and Shurayḥ, the Companion of the Prophet, said: "Everything in the sea is as if it has been slaughtered properly"; and ʿAṭā said: "As for birds, I think they should be slaughtered"; and Ibn Jurayj said: "I said to ʿAṭā: 'Does the game in streams and in the pools that form after flooding count as game of the sea?' He replied: 'Yes', then he recited [from the Quʾran]: 'This [water] is palatable and sweet while that [water] is salty and bitter, and from each you eat fresh meat'"; and Ḥasan rode on a saddle of made of the skin of otters; and Shaʿbī said: "If my family wanted to eat frog I would let them eat it"; and Ḥasan did not feel there was any harm in [eating a] tortoise; and Abū al-Dardāʾ said, regarding, *murī*: "The fish and the sun serve to slaughter it properly."
>
> Musaddad narrated to me that Yaḥyā narrated from Ibn Jurayj that he said: "ʿAmr told me that he heard Jābir saying: 'We went out on the expedition known as the "army of leaves." Abū ʿUbayda was our leader. We came to be very hungry, then the sea threw up a dead fish the like of which has not been seen, it was called "ʿAnbar." So we ate it for half a month. Abū ʿUbayda took one of its bones and a mounted person was able to pass underneath it.'"
>
> ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad narrated to us that Sufyān told him from ʿAmr that he said: "I heard Jābir saying: 'The Prophet sent us, three hundred riders, with Abū ʿUbayda as our leader. We were lying in wait for the caravan of the Quraysh tribe. We came to be very hungry to the point that we ate leaves, and our army was called "the army of leaves." The sea threw up a fish called "ʿAnbar." We ate it for half a month and we rubbed its grease on our bodies until our bodies recovered.' He said: 'Abū ʿUbayda took one of its bones and stood it up and a mounted man passed underneath it. There was a man among us who, when our hunger became severe, he started slaughtering three camels at a time. Then Abū ʿUbayda forbade him.'" (Bukhārī 72 *al-Dhabāʾiḥ,* 12; Bukhārī 1400, 3: 455–456).

The general rule is that meat must be slaughtered properly to make it permissible for eating. Carrion is not permissible. But there is no way to slaughter fish and other sea animals. Then, should one distinguish between fish that we catch and fish that die in the water and float to the surface? Is it only fish that is permissible or is it permissible to eat all sorts of sea animals without proper slaughter?

Bukhārī presents two narrations of a single hadith of ʿAmr from the companion Jābir to shed light on these issues. The hadith describes companions eating a dead fish. Bukhārī has only narrated part of the hadith. The hadith goes on to speak of how when then companions returned and told the Prophet about the fish he, too, ate the leftover dried fish they had with them. This is typical of Bukhārī's pedagogic interest: he will hide the relevant part of the hadith to put the student to work.

At the same time, it is clear that the sound hadith texts Bukhārī has narrated in the body of his book do nothing to address many of the issues he has raised in the rubric. The rubric itself is much more than a brief statement of what is to come.

The distinction between Bukhārī's rubrics and the body of his book is important because of the Six Books, Bukhārī's and Muslim's are the two books in which the author has attempted to limit himself to reporting only the soundest of sound hadiths. But this claim is restricted to the hadiths Bukhārī has quoted in the body of his book and does not apply to his rubrics. His rubrics themselves contain numerous references to hadith, as in the example above. In the study of later experts, these hadiths, too, are not such that they can be dismissed, but they do not meet the stringent criteria that he has set for the body of his book.

Muslim too narrates hadiths of the highest quality in the main part of his book. Afterwards he may well follow up with somewhat weaker hadiths either in support of these hadiths or in order to show the problems in these weaker hadiths. So although it is true in general that if a hadith is in Muslim's work it is sound, one cannot blindly put one's finger on a hadith anywhere in it and claim that it is sound. We can be sure that a hadith in Muslim's book is sound if, looking at the context of a particular hadith, we can see that the hadith is not being used to support a previously narrated hadith, and it is not being narrated to show its defect with respect to a previously narrated sound hadith.

Tirmidhī's work explicitly embodies both the technical concerns of hadith narrators and the substantive concerns of practical jurisprudence. Bukhārī's detailed rubrics ensure the reader's interest in the substantive aspect. Technical concerns are implicit in his selection of hadiths. In Muslim's work, the only sign of attention to the substantive aspect is in the fact that he follows the subject-order of works of practical jurisprudence in presenting his hadiths. However, he does not even want to put in headings to indicate this.

There is evidence from the first/seventh century that many of the companions disapproved of scribes even inserting necessary vowels and punctuation in copies of the Qurʾan. God's word should be kept pure. Perhaps it was a similar sentiment that led Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241) to disapprove of hadith works that contained anything but hadiths: nothing should be mixed up with words of the Prophet. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was one of the most important teachers of Bukhārī, of Muslim, and of Abū Dāwūd. The reverence of the sort Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal would demand for hadith might have contributed to Muslim avoiding rubrics in his work. Muslim's focus on sound Prophetic hadith, and that of Bukhārī, might also in part stem from this attitude.

Muslim and Tirmidhī both acknowledged Bukhārī as their teacher. Apparently they had an opportunity to study with him when he was in Nishapūr (250–255/865–870), in five of the final six years of his life. Muslim, though 12 years younger than Bukhārī, had reached the final part of his career, while Tirmidhī was 15 years younger and still about mid way in his. Tirmidhī states in his "Book of Defects" that he has not met anyone who had as much knowledge of the hidden defects of hadith as Bukhārī did. Tirmidhī's *al-ʿIlal al-kabīr*, in which he discusses technical problems with hadith, is so full of quotations from Bukhārī that it has been used a source for studying Bukhārī's approach to hadith criticism.

The Sunan *of Abū Dāwūd*

Abū Dāwūd (202–275/817–889) was eight years younger than Bukhārī, but he traveled early and widely to collect hadiths, so he was able to narrate hadith from the cohort of hadith narrators from whom Bukhārī narrated. In a "Letter to the people of Mecca describing his *sunan* book," Abū Dāwūd begins by stating that in each issue all the hadiths in his collection are the soundest hadiths regarding that issue (Abū Dāwūd 2005, 30). But then he goes on to describe what might be the real distinction of his book: that he has gathered together all the hadiths that are sound enough for one to base practice on them.

In this period, a book was still something one read in front of the author. Only after such a reading could one claim the right to narrate the hadiths in it (see Chapter 5). At the same time, in every reading an author felt free to modify the book, adding hadiths to it and deleting from it. So, although Abū Dāwūd states in his letter that his books consist of 4,800 Prophetic hadiths, depending on the manuscripts used, published versions usually contain a few hundred more hadiths.

Abū Dāwūd's book is organized much as Tirmidhī's is, except that the focus is on hadiths that have implications for practical jurisprudence. The rubrics are straightforward introductions to the hadiths being quoted. The sophistication is in his selection of hadiths to narrate, in the concise manner in which he is able to gather together a vast store of hadiths relevant to practice, and in a series of comments preceded by "Abū Dāwūd said: …" Consider, for example, the following selection:

> Chapter on the reprehensibility of giving the leader of salat a hint when he forgets as he recites the Quʾran:
>
> ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Najda narrated to us, he said: Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Firyābī narrated to us from Yūnus ibn Isḥāq from Abū Isḥāq from Ḥārith from ʿAlī that he said: "God's Messenger said to me: 'O ʿAlī! Don't give the leader of salat hints when he forgets'."
>
> Abū Dāwūd said: Abū Isḥāq only heard four hadiths from Ḥārith, and this is not among them. (Abū Dāwūd 2015, 3:12)

This hadith of ʿAlī might well be one of the weakest in Abū Dāwūd's book. So, Abū Dāwūd tells us that Abū Isḥāq does not seem to have heard this hadith from Ḥārith. But he does not tell us that Ḥārith has been accused of fabricating hadiths: one of the severest accusations that can be leveled at a narrator.

In his letter to the people of Mecca, Abū Dāwūd has promised that "I have clearly indicated those hadiths in my book that are exceedingly weak." Abū Dāwūd fulfills his promise by this statement that serves to mark this hadith, but his expression is in inverse proportion to the severity of the the problem! Perhaps we can understand Abū Dāwūd's attitude from a somewhat obscure passage toward the end of his letter to the people of Mecca:

> Sometimes there would be something in a hadith that establishes that the hadith is sound. [In such situations, I would record the hadith.] Then, there were situations where I have not been able to find such definite indication in the hadith that it is sound. In such a situation, sometimes I would leave the hadith since I had not been able to discover any clear indication of it being sound, while at other times I would include this kind of hadith in my book and would make it clear that I had not been able to find clear indication that the hadith is sound.
>
> Often I have simply avoided this kind of hadith [in which I have not found a clear indication of its being sound] since it is harmful for the general public to expose them to all the instances of this kind: [instances] of technical faults of the kind I have described in hadiths since the common person's knowledge of this kind of thing is not adequate to a proper understanding of it. (Abū Dāwūd 2005, 50)

We can set aside the hadith that is clearly sound and the one that has a clear problem with it: he will record the clearly sound hadith, and if he chooses to include the weak hadith he will indicate its weakness. The problem is the narration of a hadith that lies in between. There is scholarly benefit in including such a hadith with an indication of its problems. But there is a danger that the confidence of a beginner in the field will be shaken if he tries to follow the discussion of hadiths with which even experts are having difficulty.

Bukhārī's book is opaque because he wants to teach the student to struggle to discover results he has achieved and then presented in an oblique manner. Abū Dāwūd's comments on hadith are opaque because of his esoteric stand on hidden defects. He marks the place of the problem in a delicate manner so that the student will sail on while the expert will stop and get to the depth of the problem. In addition, perhaps Abū Dāwūd keeps his commentary light in an attempt to attend to Ibn Ḥanbal's concern that hadith should be kept separate from all other discussion.

The relevance of hadiths to issues of practical jurisprudence is straightforward, except in Bukhārī's work, where he makes things difficult intentionally. The hadith-craft of all these books is difficult to follow. Delicate expression in the case of Abū Dāwūd, abstruse reference in the case of Bukhārī, and indicating weaknesses of hadith simply in the ordering of hadiths on a subject in the case of Muslim, all these make sense only when there is a shared background of knowledge of considerable depth. Even in Tirmidhī's work, where he discusses issues openly, one has to gather together all the different narrations of the hadith to appreciate his discussion.

The Sunan *of al-Nasāʾī*

Nasāʾī is interested in exploring subtle indications of hadith texts. A well-known hadith records an incident in which a child climbed on to the Prophet's back as he was leading prayers. Because of this, the Prophet remained in prostration until the child climbed down. This hadith is usually quoted in discussions of his kindness to children. But Nasāʾī narrates this hadith under the rubric "Is it permissible that one prostration be longer than another?" (Nasāʾī 2012, 2: 402, no. 1152). In salat, there are two prostrations in each cycle. One tends to think that one should spend roughly the same amount of time in each prostration. Nasāʾī finds evidence that this is not the case in this hadith of the child climbing the Prophet's back.

Nasāʾī regularly uses his rubrics to indicate his understanding of hadiths. For example, he begins with a rubric, "Chapter regarding the person who markets his goods by means of false oaths," and quotes four hadiths that speak of its being reprehensible. Next is the "Chapter regarding the oath that must be considered deception in a sale." He quotes a hadith similar to the ones in the previous chapter, but with the difference that it specifies the type of deception: "a person who bargains with a person regarding his goods after the late afternoon salat and takes an oath on God that he has been offered such and such amount of money for this, and the other person thinks him to be truthful" (al-Nasāʾī 2012, 7: p. 187, no. 4503). Next is the "Chapter on the command to the person who makes an oath unintentionally while selling something to give charity." Here he quotes a hadith in which the Prophet says, "O businessmen, oaths and useless talk attend your dealings, so mix some charity into them" (al-Nasāʾī 2012, 7:188, no. 4504).

Nasāʾī has taken a number of hadiths all of which tell us that false oaths in the market place are not a good thing. Nasāʾī 's understanding is that one type of oath is reprehensible while the other invalidates the sale since the oath constitutes deception, while a third makes charity obligatory. Nasāʾī encodes his understanding in these rubrics.

Aside from such incidental displays of interpretive skill, and aside from the fact that he has organized hadiths with respect to the familiar issues of practical jurisprudence, Nasāʾī 's work is focused much more on hadith-craft. His style is similar to Muslim's: by quoting various narrations of a hadith, he draws the attention of the reader to the errors in problematic versions. His work is more transparent since he does not hesitate to use rubrics and brief comments at the ends of hadiths to guide the student to the problem in the hadith.

The Sunan *of Ibn Māja*

Ibn Māja's work (2014) contains about 4,350 hadiths. Of these 1,552 hadiths do not occur in the other five books. Ibn Māja has managed to collect many hadith texts that have clear relevance to issues of practical jurisprudence, but in the process he has had to accept weak hadiths and has even included about 30 hadiths that are, in the judgment of many hadith experts, fabrications. Although he covers many more topics of practical jurisprudence than other authors of the Six Books, his rubrics are straightforward. There seems little in the way of discussion or practice of hadith-craft in the work, so that it gives the impression of a hadith-based work of practical jurisprudence.

Hadith experts have vacillated with respect to including Ibn Māja's work in the Six Books. Because Ibn Māja's collection contains weak and, especially, fabricated hadiths, some experts speak of just five books. Others substitute another work, the *Muwaṭṭā* of Mālik or the *Sunan* of Dārimi, as the sixth work.

Contexts of Reception

Over three centuries after Bukhārī and Muslim had completed their works, Al-Mayyānishī (d. 583/1187) wrote that the soundest hadiths were those that both Bukhārī and Muslim had included in their books. A little lower in the hierarchy were the hadiths that only one of them had included. Lower than these were hadiths that met the criterion for inclusion of Bukhārī and Muslim, though they had not included them in their books (Mayyānishī 2002). Finally, there are the hadiths that are reported through sound chains of narration but do not meet the criteria of Bukhārī and Muslim.

A generation later Ibn Ṣalāḥ (577–643/1181–1245) enshrined an expanded version of this categorization in his *Maʿrifa anwāʿ ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* (Ibn Ṣalāḥ 1986) which, practically speaking, became the main introductory textbook to the field of hadith criticism (see Chapter 1). From the second/eighth century, experts would judge individual hadiths sound, reasonably sound, weak, fabricated, or somewhere in between. This was the first time that entire books were categorized at a stroke. Hadith experts had been known to judge a particular chain of narration to be "the soundest chain of narration," and this could be seen as a precursor to this kind of wholesale endorsement. Ibn Ṣalāḥ quotes the opinions of a number of second-/eighth- and third-/ninth-century hadith experts on which is the soundest chain of narration, but he disapproves of this activity.

Writing in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth century, Ibn Ṣalāḥ is concerned with identifying the bases on which the hadith experts of the third to fifth century AH evaluated hadiths. This evaluation was done hadith by hadith, according to clear criteria. But with respect to the age he was living in, Ibn Ṣalāḥ would have liked to establish that the experts were gone, and amateurs should not try their hand at applying the criteria of the early experts to hadith texts on their own.

This categorization of books is related to two types of discussion that continue to shape the vision of modern students of hadith: discussion of the criteria of the *Shaykhayn* (the "two masters," Bukhārī and Muslim) and the discussion of the soundest books. A hadith collection consisting of completely sound hadiths is useful for a novice who does not have the expertise to separate sound from weak. This is a technical concern and seems to be foremost in Ibn Ṣalāḥ's discussion. Ibn Ṣalāḥ is discussing the works where one will find sound hadiths, tolerably sound hadiths, weak hadiths, and fabricated hadiths.

In addition to this technical utility, there is an aspect of reverence and love for the Prophet that draws one to a work regarding which one can say that the book records the very words that the Prophet spoke. In troubles at the personal level or the communal level, it is common to sit down to recite the Qurʾan or parts of the Qurʾan, "God's very words," as a means of calling on God for help. A time came when the common people would perform recitations of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī and that of Muslim when faced with such difficulties.

But when a reader approaches a book in this manner, he bypasses the book, the author of the book, and his purposes in writing the book, and even the meanings of the texts in the book, to get directly to the blessings of the Prophetic person. Indeed, even the issue of soundness gets left behind. A series of hadiths, known as *musalsal* hadiths, report the Prophet's words as he performed some act, such as giving a companion a date to eat. Then the companion performs the same act as he narrates the Prophet's words to a follower, and the follower performs the same act as he narrated the Prophet's words to his student, and so on. To this day, hadith masters narrate such hadiths to their students in emotionally charged settings. However, as many among them publicly acknowledge, these hadiths have very weak chains of narration.

By the fifth century, the discussion of the criteria that Bukhārī and Muslim used for including hadiths in their works had expanded to accommodate the remaining four books. The discussion of experts is usually nuanced, but ranking books as sound, sounder, and soundest serves to level the books to the point that the reader uses these books simply as a hunting grounds for hadiths, ignoring, once again, the book, the author of the book, and his purposes in writing the book, and even the meanings of the texts in the book.

As we have seen, the Six Books are not just collections of hadiths. Even Muslim, who has stated his intent to narrate only sound hadiths, and who dislikes interrupting his narration with even the light interruption of the rubric, pauses his narration of sound hadiths to educate the reader by interjecting flawed versions of the sound narration. Hadith experts acknowledge Nasāʾī to have pursued an ideal of the sound hadith higher than that of Bukhārī and Muslim. But because he discusses flawed versions of the sound hadiths he narrates, these flawed versions are seen as being "included" in his work and, hence, his work is ranked lower than Bukhārī's and Muslim's.

One recent trend in thinking about Islam would base all thinking about issues of religion on texts. Further, the strength of an opinion on an issue would be tied to the soundness of the text to which the position corresponds. The history of this manner of thinking remains to be explored. It is certainly clear that nobody would claim that the Prophet dictated hadiths to people when he wanted them to do things. Nobody would claim that people always wrote down the Prophet's command before or after they had obeyed him. The strongest claim that can be made is that authority was vested in the person of the Prophet. After his demise, and as long as there was a strong presence of companions who had known the Prophet well, any notes anyone might have made regarding the words and deeds of the Prophet might gain a little in importance: but they would serve as a check on memory; they would not be authoritative in themselves. Certainly by the end of the third century, these texts would have become the primary way to ascertain the words or the practice of the Prophet.

The attempt to provide a textual basis to each judgment on religious issues produces a strong impetus to search for the sound hadith. It is also clear that placing the Six Books in the framework of this search obscures the unique nature of each book. Perhaps, then, students of the history of Islam have viewed the first centuries of Islam through the lens of this later understanding. This might be the source of the attempt some scholars have made to place the six works in the context of a *ṣaḥīḥ* movement: an attempt to base all Islamic practice on the well-verified text.

The muṣannaf works of the second-century, the *Muwaṭṭā*, and the *Kitāb al-āthār* all contain proper Prophetic hadiths combined with texts that document the practice of the scholars of Medina, general understandings regarding groups of issues in practical jurisprudence, sayings and practices of companions and of elders of the community that are not necessarily properly documented Prophetic hadiths, and rulings of later authorities on issues of practical jurisprudence.

Thus, in his *Muwaṭṭā*, Mālik places great emphasis on the practice of the scholars of Medina. To him the practice of Medina, the city of the Prophet, preserved the life of the Prophet in the lived lives of the scholars, publicly available and well-verified. One of his teachers expresses this by saying, "A thousand from a thousand is better than one from one." A chain of narration is one person narrating a text that encodes an aspect of the Prophet's life from another person. The practice of a thousand people of the generation of those who lived with the Prophet preserves the Prophet's life and presents it to the thousand people in the succeeding generation.

Mālik insists on the pre-eminence of the practice of the scholars of Medina because it could be traced back continuously to the Prophet. Other contemporaries argued that the knowledge of many scholars of the first generations could also be traced back continuously to the Prophet. Thus, in this period, sayings of the companions and judgments of their students and of later authorities were all seen as sources to be used in coming to a decision about religious issues.

Similarly, both Mālik in Medina and Abū Ḥanīfa in Kūfa, the other major center of Islamic learning in Iraq, rely heavily on *tafaqquh:* a general understanding of the things that a scholar identifies as coming into play regarding an issue. For example, reading the section on sales in the *Muwaṭṭā*, the prohibition of usury in all its forms seems to be perennially in the background as Mālik talks about issue after issue. The prohibition is documented, but the concern looms much larger than the documentation.

Although Ṭaḥāwī writes in the third century, his *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* attempts to articulate and justify the second-century Ḥanafī approach to the use of texts in practical jurisprudence (Ṭaḥāwī 2006). An example is his discussion of the prohibition of salat once the Friday sermon has started. After establishing the prohibition, he discusses hadiths that suggest that on occasion the Prophet allowed and even recommended to people to perform salat even after he had started his sermon. Other scholars would treat these hadiths as establishing exceptions to the rule. Ṭaḥāwī takes this prohibition as Mālik has taken the prohibition of usury: he makes it a basic principle in all related issues. So, a hadith that seems to establish anything to the contrary must be interpreted away; it cannot be used to modify the principle.

These scholars who base their decisions on *tafaqquh*, "general understandings," assign priority to principles in each domain of practical jurisprudence, so that these principles form the framework within which hadiths, sound or weak, must be placed. The principle is not important because of the strength of a sound hadith or two that support it, a principle is important because one can see it coming into play in the rulings on numerous related specific issues of practical jurisprudence.

So this approach to practical jurisprudence is not simply a matter of interpretive skill. A jurist will study numerous details of practical jurisprudence, and his awareness of rulings on many issues will guide him to general understandings that will guide his interpretation of specific texts regarding particular issues. The interpretation of the text is the tip of the iceberg; the interpretation is compelling to the degree that it is tied to the general understandings that are forcing one to turn away from the apparent meaning of a text.

In his *Risāla*, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (150–204/767–820) argued vehemently against basing judgments about issues of practical jurisprudence on anything but the hadith that goes back through an unbroken chain of reliable people all the way to the Prophet. He directed his ire against all the sorts of evidence we have just been reviewing: the practice of the people of Medina, or of elders of the community, or of companions who do not explicitly attribute what they are doing or saying to the Prophet, or general understandings of religion. In his letter to the people of Mecca, Abū Dāwūd also states that until Shāfiʿī came and objected, people used to accept the *mursal* hadith: statements of the students of the companions quoting the Prophet directly.

It is tempting to see the second century as a unit, Shāfiʿī as the turning point, and the Six Books as the new wave: the *Ṣaḥīḥ* movement that was a claim that religious issues ought to be decided solely on the basis of sound hadiths and on the basis of the strength of hadiths. Sayings of students of the companions, or sayings of the companions that are not explicitly attributed to the Prophet, become just kinds of "weak hadiths," while rulings of all other authorities should be considered only when there are no hadiths on the matter.

But the Six Books themselves constitute strong argument against this reading. Certainly the body of Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* consists only of sound Prophetic hadiths. But the rubric is where Bukhārī argues his stand on issues of practical jurisprudence, and rubrics are full of all sorts of things that a *Ṣaḥīḥ* movement ought to eschew. Tirmidhī is explicit in his attention to jurists and their positions not limiting himself to sound hadiths. Nasāʾī is not averse to guiding the reader to his interpretation of a hadith using rubrics.

Muslim does limit himself to only reporting sound hadiths, and Abū Dāwūd claims to have restricted himself to the soundest available hadiths in each discussion. So these two books could be adduced as evidence of an attempt to base judgments on issues of practical jurisprudence solely on sound hadiths. Perhaps one could draw in Ibn Māja in this same sense: that he has tried to find the strongest available hadith in each issue. But Muslim claims only to be composing a brief work consisting of sound hadiths for the novice hadith student. He does not claim that practical jurisprudence should be based exclusively on these hadiths. Abū Dāwūd is not entirely willing to dispose of the *mursal* hadith, and indeed, includes many weak hadiths in his work. Ibn Māja is notorious for the weak hadiths in his work.

The Six Books remain to be studied in a manner that would place their composition in a framework of concerns contemporary to the authors. Too often these books are viewed in the context of concerns that developed out of the way these books came to be received in the centuries after they were composed.

The Context of Composition

In his Prolegomena to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim tells us that he has written this book as a brief collection of sound hadiths for the common person who does not have the time or ability to memorize numerous variant versions of hadiths and come to his own decision about the sound among them and the weak (Muslim 2006, 1). Abū Dāwūd feels that the special feature of his work is that he has gathered together all the hadiths worth mentioning that are relevant to any issue of practical jurisprudence. Tirmidhī, in his *Book of Hidden Defects* at the end of the *Sunan*, begins with his claim that except for two hadiths in his book, all the hadiths of his book have formed the basis for judgments of scholars of practical jurisprudence. He goes on to excuse himself for having presented the legal positions of scholars of practical jurisprudence in this book of hadith. His excuse is that he saw benefit in doing so.

Although we have no explicit statements from Bukhārī, Nasāʾī, and Ibn Māja regarding their purpose in writing their books, the utility of hadiths in issues of practical jurisprudence and the soundness of the hadiths they report seem to be two general concerns that guide all these authors. Bukhārī is additionally concerned to develop the student's ability to derive judgments of practical jurisprudence and to identify problems in hadith narrations. Ibn Māja seems exclusively concerned with the utility of hadiths in practical jurisprudence.

By organizing their books by topics of practical jurisprudence the authors of the Six Books make a statement that hadiths should participate in deciding issues of practical jurisprudence. Nevertheless, each author has a different position on the issue. Tirmidhī's constant reference to the positions of the scholars of practical jurisprudence shows that he feels that the hadith expert must defer to the jurist. So, he describes the position of a jurist with respect to a hadith and then states, "This is what the scholars of practical jurisprudence say, and they are more knowledgeable about the meanings of hadith" (Tirmidhī n.d., 3:307).

Abū Dāwūd claims that after the Qurʾan this is the most important book for a person to learn, and that having learned this book he need not turn to any other book. Then he specifically mentions books of practical jurisprudence of specific authors and states that the hadiths in his own book are the basis for the things these people have said. After challenging the need for anything other than the hadiths in his book, he backtracks a bit by suggesting that after his book one ought to learn the judgments of companions on issues of practical jurisprudence and that one ought to learn books like the *Jāmiʿ* of Sufyān al-Thawrī (97–161/778–716), a well-known second-century work on practical jurisprudence that is no longer extant.

We have seen that Nasāʾī uses rubrics to guide the reader to his understanding of texts. Bukhārī's use of rubrics also shows that he is quite willing to let non-Prophetic hadiths participate, guide, and shape the reader's understanding of hadiths.

Conclusion

The vast growth in the hadith literature in the last part of the second century called for brief digests of hadith that would introduce the novice to the field. This need certainly contributed to the eventual popularity of these six works. In addition, the authors of all six works display a deep interest in the utility of the hadiths in decisions on issues of practical jurisprudence. As a whole, in these six books the authors display an attitude to all material other than Prophetic hadith that forms a clear departure from the norms of second-century hadith works. This material does not necessarily disappear, but it does take a subsidiary position in the formal structure of the books.

We can imagine a *Ṣaḥīḥ* movement in the third century demanding that all stands on religious issues be tied to texts of hadith and the strength of the stand be considered proportionate to the soundness of the text supporting it. In this case, the authors of the Six Books would be seen as responding to this demand and the subsequent acceptance of these books by the community could be seen as a result of it. While such a vision is appealing and is able to account for much available data, the authors of the Six Books themselves do not seem to be unanimously committed to this view. In fact, when we go beyond the Six Books to other works of these same authors, we see them using all sorts of non-Prophetic material to argue their positions.

It is possible that modern proponents of a text-based approach to religious issues might have projected this manner of looking at the six works on to scholars of the second and third centuries. Although I have presented some evidence for this, it is not conclusive. The issue needs further investigation and I feel it will not be settled until an alternative vision is proposed and documented.

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Further Reading

Because the Six Books continue to be taught in Islamic schools around the world there are numerous introductions to the works in various languages.

Abdul-Jabbar, Ghassan. *Bukhari*. 2007. Oxford: Oxford University Press. A concise biography of the famous hadith scholar.
Brown, Jonathan A.C. 2007. *Canonization of Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Canon*. Leiden: Brill.
Brown, Jonathan A.C. 2009. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. Oneworld: Oxford. An excellent first introduction to hadith, with a discussion of collections in Chapter 2.

In Arabic the following four works are good introductions.

Muḥammad Muḥammadī ibn Muḥammad Jamīl al-Nūristānī.1428 [2007]. *Al-Madkhal ilā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*. Kuwait: Maktab al-Shuʿūn al-Fanniyya.
Muḥammad Muḥammadī ibn Muḥammad Jamīl al-Nūristānī.1429 [2008]. *Al-Madkhal ilā Sunan al-Imām Abī Dāwūd*. Kuwait: Maktab al-Shuʿūn al-Fanniyya.
Muḥammad Muḥammadī ibn Muḥammad Jamīl al-Nūristānī. 1429 [2008]. *Al-Madkhal ilā Sunan al-Imām al-Nasāʾī*. Kuwait: Maktab al-Shuʿūn al-Fanniyya.
al-Ṭāhir al-Azhar Khudhayrī. 1428 [2007]. *Al-Madkhal ilā Jāmiʿ al-Imām al-Tirmidhī*. Kuwait: Maktab al-Shuʿūn al-Fanniyya.

CHAPTER 8

Commentaries

Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu

Introduction

The centuries following the establishment of the authoritative hadith collections were, in a sense, "the age of commentary," an epithet used to describe the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Western classical tradition (Grafton 2010, 229–230). Indeed, numerous commentaries have continued to be written from the end of the first millennium down to the present day, and many aspects of hadith scholarship were reflected in them (Ḥabashī 2004). For many medieval and even modern authors, to pen a commentary or a gloss was the only means to engage in a scholarly dialogue with the previous literature and offer their own perspective. Commentary, as a literary genre, was embraced not only in the explication of individual hadiths and hadith collections, but also in other sub-disciplines like hadith methodology.

Despite their significance, commentaries were long regarded as the products of uncritical minds, often associated with intellectual stagnation and indolence (Rahman 1984, 37, 45, 70, 150–151). Reformist thinkers like Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, the rector of al-Azhar in Egypt (1830–1834), believed that dealing with the books received from previous generations prevented Muslim scholars from exploring new ideas and inventions (Gesink 2010, 24–25). The famous Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897) found commentaries useless and socially irrelevant because they entailed and consolidated the practice of *taqlīd* which was embedded in the *ḥalqa* system, the primary method of education in madrasas (Gesink 2010, 76). Legal and theological commentaries and glosses in particular came under fire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they failed to lead the students to "modern ideas." Neither were Muslim opponents of the reformers more successful in properly contextualizing and weighing

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the pros and cons of the commentarial literature. Western scholars, on the other hand, were so occupied with the issue of "origins" that they paid little or no attention to later developments in the hadith scholarship, as can be observed in the rather insufficient entries on "*sharḥ*" in the first two editions of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Because a large amount of scholarly output in medieval Islamic scholarship was in the form of commentary and gloss, one important consequence has been that this period, with its underlying assumptions, ideologies, argumentation strategies, and literary styles, has not been fully penetrated.

Such treatment of medieval Muslim commentaries with disdain or indifference has been challenged by a number of recent studies in various fields.[1] Focusing on different regions, periods, and sets of problems, these studies commonly emphasize the need for a refreshed and balanced look at the classical genres of Muslim intellectual history. This chapter aims to contribute to this ongoing scholarly discourse by providing a conceptual and structural framework for the analysis of hadith commentaries with special reference to the historical development of the literature. Additionally, it will highlight fundamental but seldom addressed questions, including the function, authorship, and patronage of hadith commentaries.

Conceptual Framework

The term commonly used in Arabic for commentary is *sharḥ* (pl. *shurūḥ*) which lexicographically means to cut up or spread something such as a slice of meat (al-Azharī n.d.; Ibn Manẓūr 1997; al-Zabīdī 1969). The word is also used, particularly in religious texts, in the sense of opening, expansion, or a spiritual relief and confidence bestowed by Allah. In the Qurʾan (20:25), for example, Moses is said to have prayed: "O my Lord! Expand me my breast" (*Rabbiʾshraḥ lī ṣadrī*). The third and the most relevant meaning of the word for the present study is explanation, elucidation, and commentary. *Sharaḥtu al-masʾala*, for example, denotes clarifying the ambiguous element of a problem (al-Khaṭṭābī 1991, 3:195). *Sharḥ* can thus be taken to mean dividing a body of text into smaller parts for deeper analysis and exposing its meanings.

In Islamic terminology, there are numerous words that denote explaining or commenting on something, such as *bayān/tabyīn*, *kashf*, *tawḍīḥ/īḍāḥ*, *fahm*, *ḥifẓ*, *taʿlīq*, *ithāra*, *taʾwīl*, *dalāla*, *istinbāṭ*, and *baḥth*. However, in spite of their proximity to *sharḥ* in varying degrees, none has gained a widespread usage comparable to *sharḥ*, which has achieved the status of a genre in the Islamic literature, perhaps the only exception being *tafsīr*. While *tafsīr* has been a title generally given to Qurʾan commentaries, *sharḥ* is preferred in a wide range of disciplines, including Islamic philosophy, law, and theology to name a few. However, a few early hadith commentaries were entitled *tafsīr* (al-Dhahabī 2008, 8:88, 12:103).

Two other genres of Islamic literature, *ḥāshiyya* (gloss) and *taʿlīq* (appending with brief remarks and resulting notes), are closely related to *sharḥ*. Glosses, which usually consist of informative or interpretative notes on the margins of a page, come into existence after the emergence of commentaries, and therefore are associated with the *mutaʾakhkhirīn* (latecomer) members of the Muslim scholarly community.

While commentators strive to cover all or many aspects of the book, *muḥashshī*s tend to operate more selectively, keeping their notes relatively short. Similar to *ḥāshiyya* in several respects, *taʿlīq* arguably marks a later trend in the development of the Islamic literature. Also, as Rosenthal suggests, *taʿlīq* is "much less firmly anchored in manuscripts than ḥāshiyya was originally" (Rosenthal 2015). These are all generalizations, and we find instances where these terms are used interchangeably. For example, *al-Muʿlim bi fawāʾid Muslim*, one of the earliest commentaries on Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, is referred to as *taʿlīq* (al-Māzarī 2012, 1:181), and likewise al-ʿAẓīmābādī prefers the word *ḥāshiyya* to introduce his voluminous *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd* (al-ʿAẓīmābādī 2009, 1:24).

In the discipline of hadith, *sharḥ* refers to the practice of explaining traditions in terms of both *isnād* (chain of transmitters) and *matn* (text), as well as to the output of this practice, namely books of hadith commentary. Hadith commentaries are of different types. Some commentaries were penned to explain a single hadith, while others aimed at analyzing only one chapter of a hadith collection. Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī's (d. 795/1393) *Sharḥ ʿilal al-Tirmidhī*, for example, elaborates the final *ʿIlal* chapter of Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī's (d. 279/892) *Sunan*. More significant, however, are the commentaries written to explain a hadith collection from the beginning until the end. My focus in this chapter will be on commentaries devoted to the six most authoritative hadith collections (*al-Kutub al-sitta*; see Chapter 7) with the addition of a seventh work, *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* by Mālik (d. 179/795), for these have been the subject of the majority of hadith commentaries.[2] Among these seven works, Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, and the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim appear to have attracted the highest number of commentators, in line with their privileged status and prestige.

Finally, one should note that the title of *sharḥ* in hadith works does not necessarily refer to commentary on a base text, as is the case in Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī's (d. 321/933) *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār*.

The Emergence and Development of Hadith Commentaries

To determine when hadith commentaries came into existence inevitably begs the question of how one defines the activity of *sharḥ*. In Western scholarship, initial efforts to comment on Prophetic traditions are associated with works written in the field of *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, the study of rare words in hadith (Gilliot 2015). Modern Arabic and Turkish scholarship, on the other hand, emphasizes that the Prophet Muhammad was the first to explain the meanings of his words and *sharḥ* has thus been continuous through the following generations, gradually accumulating and finally taking written form as a distinct literary genre (Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamīd 2009, 261–314; Efendioğlu 2010). Each generation, they maintain, has contributed to this historical process in different ways. For example, the *mudawwins*/*muṣannif*s (early hadith collectors) determined which material is related to which topic, a process that necessarily entails the practice of reasoning and interpretation, and brought traditions together within the framework of *bāb*. Later *muṣannif*s would similarly find ways to reveal their reflections on traditions, as clearly seen in the case of al-Bukhārī who reveals his opinions in chapter headings.

Simply explaining a word of a hadith or clarifying the identification of a transmitter must be distinguished, however, from the emergence of hadith commentary as a literary genre. Reports in the Muslim biographical dictionaries suggest that earliest works in this distinct genre date back to as early as the late second century AH, and Mālik b. Anas's *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is undoubtedly the earliest hadith collection to become an object of commentary. Within a few decades after Mālik's Egyptian disciple ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 197/813), who penned a commentary on *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, a number of works that deal with different aspects of the book came into existence, including commentaries by ʿAbd Allāh b. Nāfiʿ al-Ṣāʾigh (d. 206/822?), ʿĪsā b. Dīnār (d. 212/828), and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb al-Andalusī (d. 238/853) (al-Dhahabī 2008, 8:86; Ḥabashī 2004, 1978–1980). These works were taken further with Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn (d. 256/870) and Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā b. Muzayn (d. 259/872), both of whom reportedly wrote commentaries on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* (al-Dhahabī 2008, 8:86; Ḥabashī 2004, 1978–1980). To my knowledge, only one of these commentaries has survived, that is ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb's *Tafsīr gharīb al-Muwaṭṭa*, which, contrary to what its title implies, goes well beyond offering linguistic explanations for unfamiliar words in hadiths (Ibn Ḥabīb 2001). Though we are unable to tell whether other works were commentaries in the technical sense, the fact that they were entitled "sharḥ al-*Muwaṭṭaʾ*" and mentioned separately from *gharīb* and *rijāl* works give us a legitimate ground to conclude that these were preliminary examples of the commentary literature which was still in the making during the third century AH.

While the realm of hadith commentaries in the second and third centuries was clearly dominated by works on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, the fourth century brought new scholarly attention to the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and to Abū Dāwūd's (d. 275/889) *Sunan*. This finding is coherent with the observation that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* went through an intense process of canonization during the fourth century (Brown 2007). Unlike early commentaries on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, which were primarily focused on legal and linguistic/philological implications of its traditions, the great majority of early works on al-Bukhārī and Muslim were in the form of *mustakhraj*, indicating that their writers were primarily concerned with providing additional *isnād*s for hadiths in these collections.

Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), author of the earliest surviving commentaries on both al-Bukhārī and Abū Dāwūd, was the leading figure of this genre during the fourth/tenth century. His works offer insight not only into his thought and perception of major hadith collections but also into the nature of previous commentators' contributions. Among others who reportedly produced commentaries in this century, Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Dāwūdī (d. 402/1011) stands out with his now lost commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

The fifth/eleventh century is distinguished by Andalusian commentaries on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The great Mālikī muḥaddith Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) wrote the comprehensive *al-Istidhkār*, where he expounded all traditions of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, in addition to *al-Tamhīd limā fī al-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-maʿānī wa al-asānīd*, a more *isnād*-oriented work focusing on merely Prophetic (*marfūʿ*) hadiths. Moreover, Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) had a commentary, *al-Muntaqā*, on *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. In the meantime, Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra (d. 435) and Ibn Baṭṭāl al-Qurṭubī (d. 449/1057) penned commentaries on the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that would be cited frequently in the subsequent literature.

By the end of the fifth/eleventh century, other hadith collections became the focus of commentary literature, a momentum that was accelerated in the next century. While Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) studied al-Tirmidhī's *Sunan* with his *ʿĀriḍat al-aḥwadhī*, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khalaf (d. 567/1172) commented on *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*. Meanwhile, the Andalusian commitment to *Muwaṭṭaʾ* endured with Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Kitāb al-Qabas*. There was also a growing interest in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* thanks to al-Māzarī's (d. 536/1141) commentary *al-Muʿlim*, and Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's (d. 544/1149) supplement to it.

The seventh/thirteenth century is marked by the great Damascene muḥaddith and jurist al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), who took over the Andalusian tradition of commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and raised it to a highly sophisticated level. His significance lies in his success in utilizing the rich toolbox of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) over Prophetic traditions, coupled with his deep reverence for the base text's authority.

The common recognition of the six collections of hadith (*al-Kutub al-sitta*) as the most reliable ones prompted students of hadith to concentrate their efforts on these books, resulting in a good number of commentaries, particularly in the seventh/thirteenth to tenth/sixteenth centuries. Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Raslān al-Ramlī (d. 844/1441), for example, wrote a commentary on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, whereas Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384) penned the influential *al-Kawākib al-darārī* on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Mughulṭāy b. Qilīj (d. 762/1361), another notable commentator of the century, authored *al-Talwīḥ fi sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, in addition to his unfinished works on the *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Māja. Furthermore, his student Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401), who pursued a great enterprise of commentary throughout his life in both fields of hadith and *fiqh*, produced works on the *Sunan*s of Nasāʾī and Ibn Māja besides his 35-volume *al-Tawḍīḥ li sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

The ninth/fifteenth century in Mamluk Cairo is noteworthy for its comprehensive commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Despite the existence of works such as Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Dāʾim al-Birmāwī's (d. 831/1428) *al-Lāmiʿ al-ṣabīḥ*, towering figures of the era and of the whole history of the genre are Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) and his contemporary Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451). Ibn Ḥajar's masterpiece, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, a product of his lifelong interest in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, deals with both technical aspects and legal implications of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, with reference to early commentators of the work. *Hady al-sārī*, his introduction to *Fatḥ al-bārī*, is also an indispensable source for those who want to get familiar with the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. On the other hand, Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, the chief judge of the Ḥanafīs in Cairo, came up with *ʿUmdat al-qārī*, which is replete with extensive quotations from *Fatḥ al-bārī*, not to dismiss the originality of the former with its highly successful and delicate inner organization and discernibly Ḥanafī interpretation of legal *aḥādīth*. Under the influence of these two great works, particularly that of *Fatḥ al-bārī*, Molla Gūrānī (d. 893/1488), al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517), and Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) produced commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Additionally, the prolific Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) contributed to the development of the *sharḥ* literature with his commentaries on *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and every collection in *al-Kutub al-sitta*.

From the tenth/sixteenth century onwards, a gradual deceleration is visible in the literature. Some of the commentaries produced from the eleventh to the thirteenth century include *Sharḥ al-Zurqānī ʿalā Muwaṭṭaʾ al-Imām Mālik b. Anas* by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710), *Najāḥ al-qārī li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by the Ottoman scholar Yūsuf Efendi-zāde (d. 1167/1754), *al-Muhayyaʾ* by ʿUthmān b. Yaʿqūb al-Kamākhī (d. 1171/1758), and *al-Taʿlīq al-mumajjad* by Abū al-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1886).

The Indian Subcontinent was the central stage for the resurgence of hadith commentaries in the twentieth century with its competing networks of madrasas. In an effort to reconcile their Ḥanafī identities with classical hadith collections, leading members of the Deobandi school penned voluminous commentaries, including al-Sahāranfūrī (or al-Sahāranpūrī; d. 1927) on Abū Dāwūd, Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī (d. 1933) on al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmidhī, Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī (d. 1949) on Muslim, and Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī (d. 1982) on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. Among the scholarly products of their rivals, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth (see Chapters 15 and 16), are the renowned *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd: Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by al-ʿAẓīmābādī and *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī bi sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* by Abū al-ʿUlā al-Mubārakfūrī (or al-Mubārakpūrı; d. 1935).

Finally, Muḥammad b. ʿAli al-Wallawī (b. 1947), who is of Ethiopian origin and settled in the holy city of Mecca, is a present-day author who has perpetuated the long-lived tradition of commentary on major hadith collections with his lengthy works on Muslim, Ibn Māja, and Nasāʾī so far.

In terms of geography, three regions stand out in this narrow survey: al-Andalus in the first six centuries, Mamluk Cairo from the eighth to tenth centuries, and the Indian Subcontinent in the twentieth century.

Factors Motivating the Production of Commentaries

Despite the variety and scope of this literature that spans many centuries and geographies we also observe striking common motives that seem to have led scholars to pen commentaries on major hadith collections.[3] Hadith commentaries are intended to bridge the gap of space and time between the Prophet's teachings, in all their diversity, and the actual world of the reader. Much has changed since the first centuries of Islam, and context-dependent traditions in particular required further clarification for latecomers to the Muslim community. This urgent need could also stem from the gradually changing character of the Arabic language, the inevitable medium of religious texts, a situation that suits the evident role of *gharīb al-ḥadīth* books in the early formation of the commentary literature. However, regardless of how this need exactly came about, we can safely assume that hadith commentators approached their work not as a mere professional occupation but also out of religious devotion. While discussing the reasons that inspired him to compose a work on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, al-Sahāranfūrī states that when he was appointed to teach hadith at the madrasa of Maẓāhir al-ʿUlūm, he saw no other way of salvation from his sins and misconducts than writing a commentary on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*. "Though I am not competent to do this," he says, "I rely on Allah's help and blessing, hoping that he would resurrect me [in the hereafter] among those who serve the hadith and its students" (al-Sahāranfūrī 2006, 1:153).

Scholarly rivalries among different schools of thought are another prominent factor in the production of commentaries. The schools, and especially their adherents who were well-versed in Prophetic tradition, have recourse to hadith collections in order to defend their legal or theological positions against their opponents. Using a variety of interpretative tools, they sought to demonstrate the conformity of their reasoning with the Prophet's teachings. The influence of scholarly divisions, whether in the field of law or theology, is clearly seen in Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī's introduction to his *Maʿālim al-sunan*:

> I have seen the knowledgeable people of my time divided into two groups: The people of hadith and *athar*, and the people of *fiqh* and *naẓar*. These groups cannot be distinguished from one another because they are in need of each other and cannot operate self-sufficiently in the way of attaining their objectives ... The majority of the people of *athar* and hadith seek to collect traditions with their variants, including *gharīb* and *shādhdh* hadiths, most of which are forged (*mawḍūʿ*) or reversed (*maqlūb*). They do not regard (*yarāʿawna*) the texts, nor understand their meanings; they do not draw lessons and rulings. Sometimes they harshly criticize the jurists, claiming that they oppose sunna, but in fact they lack and are unaware of the multitude of their knowledge. They have committed sin by badmouthing them.
>
> As for the other group, the people of *fiqh* and *naẓar*, a majority of them do not make recourse to hadith except in few issues. With almost no competence to distinguish sound and fair hadiths from weak and arrant ones, they do not care about using the latter as evidence against their opponents as long as these traditions accord with the opinions of their legal schools ... (al-Khaṭṭābī 1991, 1:3–4)

Writing in an age of scholarly turbulence, al-Khaṭṭābī sought to handle the legal matters on the basis of sound hadiths, paying little attention to other sources of law and thus leaning manifestly to the people of hadith and *athar*. What concerns us here is the fact that al-Khaṭṭābī preferred to elaborate his views on a commentarial ground provided by an important hadith collection. In another commentary, this time on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Khaṭṭābī openly talks about interpreting the controversial traditions in favor of the people of hadith who were subjected to ruthless accusations by deviant groups (al-Khaṭṭābī 1988, 1:102–104). *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth* engages in polemics against the *ahl al-bidʿa* (people of innovation), with a special interest in offering plausible interpretations for the seemingly anthropomorphic traditions (Tokatly 2001). Therefore, we may argue that hadith commentaries proved to be a useful means of endorsing legal and theological positions in addition to providing a convenient ground to interpret and neutralize problematic traditions.

Teaching practices in the Muslim world were also a major factor in the rise of commentaries. A large number of commentaries owe their existence either to vigorous students of a teacher (read "commentator") or to the fact that some hadith collections require explanatory remarks because they are too difficult to handle for students.

A remarkable example of the former case is the formation of *al-Muʿlim* by Muḥammad b. ʿAli al-Māzarī, the famous Sicilian jurist who later settled down in the city of Mahdiyya. This commentary emerged because of the loyal efforts of al-Māzarī's students who wrote down their master's remarks when *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* was read to him in special gatherings and then presented their notes for his approval (al-Māzarī, 1:181). Once this approval was granted by al-Māzarī, his students obtained the license to transmit the work on his authority. The relationship between teaching methods and hadith commentaries is visible outside of educational institutions as well. Appointed to teach *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the Ottoman court of his time in Istanbul, Yūsuf Efendi-zāde composed *Najāḥ al-qārī*, an extensive but still unpublished commentary, and presented it to the Sultan Mahmud I (Özkan 2013).

Another factor influencing the emergence of commentaries was the fact that certain hadith collections achieved a high epistemological status in the Sunni world. When Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) announced that the hadiths in the collections of Bukhārī and Muslim (called the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, or the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s) yielded certain knowledge because the Muslim community unanimously agreed on their reliability (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2002, 28–29), this gave a new impetus to the works devoted to exploring the traditions of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's position echoed only very slightly among Sunni scholars of *kalām* and even some hadith experts, it consolidated the scholarly commitment to the two influential collections. Thus, it is no surprise that al-Nawawī, who thinks differently on the particular issue of epistemological certainty, still frequently referred to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's opinions in the introductory chapters of his commentary in order to demonstrate the value of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (al-Nawawī 2004, 1, 20ff.). Although the collections of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, and Ibn Māja (called the *Sunan al-Arbaʿa*) could never enjoy the epistemological status attributed to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, they were still perceived to contain fewer weak reports than other types of hadith collections (e.g. *musnad*s and *muṣannaf*s) and therefore appealed to many commentators. The *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, on the other hand, had established its authority long ago, thanks to the reputation of its author Mālik b. Anas and the scholarly labors of his early disciples.

Finally, some commentaries are in essence supplementary works produced to modify and enrich a preceding commentary. In such cases, having noticed the shortcomings, inconsistencies, or inattentive organization of a respected commentary, a late authority dedicates himself to modify, reorganize, and consolidate his predecessor's book instead of composing a work from scratch. For example, Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, while the renowned Andalusian *muḥaddith*, acknowledged his master al-Māzarī's competence in explaining the meanings of traditions in his *al-Muʿlim* and thus found it pointless to write another commentary, he also saw the work as not comprehensive enough because it left several problematic passages unresolved and used an arrangement that differed from Muslim's original collection (Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ 1998, 1:72–73). So, he came up with a supplement to *Muʿlim* titled *Ikmāl al-Muʿlim bi fawāʾid Muslim*, which is about four times larger than the former. Al-Birmāwī, a ninth-/fifteenth-century Egyptian *muḥaddith*, provides us with another example of this phenomenon. While al-Birmāwī admits that Egyptians are fond of Kirmānī's *sharḥ* and Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī's (d. 794/1392) *al-Tanqīḥ* among commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, he thinks that these two, especially the latter, include mistakes and overextended explanations. For this reason, he integrates these into one text, removes the repeated passages, corrects the errors, and adds further remarks, some of which are taken from his teacher, ʿUmar b. Raslān al-Bulqīnī, and an unnamed contemporary, probably Ibn Ḥajar (al-Birmāwī 2012, 1:4–5). This story of al-Birmāwī's recently published commentary, *al-Lāmiʿ al-ṣabīḥ*, is not uncommon in the history of Islamic scholarship in general, let alone the literature of hadith commentary.

The Content and Structure of Hadith Commentaries

Commentaries usually start with an introduction. Such introductions vary in length, ranging from a few paragraphs to a separate volume that describes and praises the characteristics of the base text and highlights the salient features of the commentary. More detailed introductions, like those of Ibn Ḥajar (see Fadel 1995 for a partial translation) or al-Mubārakfūrī, discuss issues related to the methodology and history of hadith and also evaluate the transmitters in the book.

The foundational hadith texts typically determine the inner organization of the commentaries on those texts, hence the sequence of chapters and hadiths is usually the same in both text and commentary. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's *al-Tamhīd* was a notable exception; the commentary was originally arranged on the basis of Mālik's teachers in the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, who were given in alphabetical order with the hadiths transmitted through them. However, under the pressure from readers, the author rearranged his work to follow the exact systematic order of *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and to cover every type of hadith it contained.

A commentary's entry on a specific hadith may contain some or all of the following elements:

1. The identification of sources that include the same or a similar hadith (*takhrīj*): Because different narrations of a hadith may vary in their wordings or even meanings in some cases, commentators have to collect all of the different versions of a hadith and to take the differences into consideration in their reflections on it. This is perhaps best seen in *Fatḥ al-bārī*, where the author carefully points out differences among various channels of a hadith and discusses their influences in determining the hadith's correct meaning and implications. Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī also pays a great deal of attention to *takhrīj al-ḥadīth* in his *ʿĀriḍat al-aḥwadhī*, especially if the hadiths differ in their wordings. *Takhrīj* plays a more crucial role for sources like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, where the composer repeats the same hadith with shorter versions in different parts of his book. Hence, it becomes incumbent upon commentators to put the hadith in its original context by referring to its full version.
2. The hadith's relationship with the chapter (*bāb*) and its heading (*tarjama*): this has been a hotly debated issue, particularly in the commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, whose author communicates his own conclusions by means of his chapter titles. By contrast, many other collections bear neutral headings. This feature of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* posed a challenge to commentators because the relationship between the hadith and *tarjama* is sometimes difficult to discern. In many cases, for example, al-Kirmānī, who appears to have embraced a more critical approach, declares that a chapter's heading is irrelevant to its hadiths, while Ibn Ḥajar takes issue with him and attempts

to explain the relationship. Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī then attacks Ibn Ḥajar on the grounds that he pushes too hard to establish a connection between the *tarjama* and the content of traditions. When al-ʿAynī does identify a relevant connection he simply says, "its compliance with the chapter heading is obvious."

Although Muslim divided his work into chapters according to subject matter, unlike al-Bukhārī he did not compose chapter headings. His reasons for not doing so are unclear, but authorities after him inserted their own chapter titles until al-Nawawī gave them a final form that we still read today (al-Nawawī 1:30).

3. Identification and criticism of transmitters: *Isnād* analysis, the unique scholarly pursuit of hadith experts, is an essential concern for the majority of commentaries. When a transmitter in the *isnād* has been referred to as "*rajul*: a man," and thus left unknown, or when he bears a very common name like "Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh," it falls to the commentators to figure out who that person actually is. Once this identification process is complete, the problem of a transmitter's reliability arises. Though transmitter criticism is usually undertaken in biographical dictionaries, commentaries also include a large number of critical reports ascribed to celebrated *rijāl* critics. Commentaries also allow the reader to see the practical application of critical opinions to major hadith collections. For instance, through the literature of commentaries one can investigate the question of how or to what extent the rigorous standards of early hadith critics were eased when it came to the popular *al-Kutub al-sitta*.
4. Evaluation of the hadith's authenticity: this is a more general and complicated decision than simply finding a transmitter reliable or unreliable because a hadith report's text (*matn*) as well as its utilization in the related chapter of the collection is taken into consideration.
5. Grammatical structure: in some cases, commentators need to analyze the hadith and the chapter title in terms of Arabic grammar and syntax. Such investigations may include the correct identification of protasis (*sharṭ*) and apodosis (*jawāb*) in conditional sentences, as well as the designation of introductory noun (*mubtadaʾ*) and the predicate (*khabar*). The question of whether the definite article, *al-*, refers to a specific thing/person or all members of a particular type/group is also commonly discussed.
6. Deduction of legal rulings and the discussion of legal schools' doctrines: many commentators have a strong interest in examining the legal implications of hadiths. Eager to discover legal verdicts, al-Khaṭṭābī was able to derive up to 13 rulings from only one hadith, generally beginning his words "*wa fī al-ḥadīth min al-fiqh*" or "*fīhi dalīl ʿalā*," and so on (al-Khaṭṭābī *Maʿālim al-sunan*, 3:279–280). Al-Nawawī, another prominent jurist, discussed the issue of hoarding (*iḥtikār*) in his commentary on the hadith "No one hoards but a sinner" (al-Nawawī 4:46). His brief investigation then examines questions about the nature of hoarding, whether it encompasses things other than food, and whether it is prohibited only in times of famine (see also al-ʿAẓīmābādī 9:230–233). The real accomplishment of al-Nawawī, however, lies in his application of the principles of Islamic legal theory to Prophetic traditions. For example, as regards the Prophet's words "Do not buy

[your gift], and do not take back your charity," al-Nawawī remarks that the expression does not render the said action prohibited (*ḥarām*) but only subject to disapprobation (*"Hādhā nahy tanzīh lā taḥrīm"*; al-Nawawī, 6:67). Some pages later, he touches upon the legal implication of the word "*jawr*," stating that it can be employed for prohibited (*ḥarām*) and reprehensible (*makrūh*) actions (al-Nawawī, 6:72). In another example, he takes Zahirites to task saying that they inaccurately inferred from a hadith that the writing of bequest is compulsory. In al-Nawawī's opinion, the hadith in question communicates a recommended (*mandūb*) action not an obligatory (*wājib*) one (al-Nawawī, 6:79–80).

Hadith commentaries thus give authors the opportunity to defend the doctrines of their legal schools on the basis of Prophetic traditions. For example, Andalusian authors were eager to bring the legal opinions of the Mālikī school into the line with Prophetic reports, while al-Sahāranfūrī of the Indian Subcontinent did the same thing for the Ḥanafī doctrine in the twentieth century. A quick reading of the long-disputed issues in *Badhl al-majhūd* – raising both hands before and after bowing in the prayer (*rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*), or saying "āmīn" out loud when the imam finishes reciting *Fātiḥa* – suffices to prove the influence of the *madhhabs* on hadith commentaries (al-Sahāranfūrī 4:5–60, 432–458). Some commentaries discuss the opinions of legal schools in such detail that they appear to operate like *ikhtilāf* (*khilāf*) works, an Islamic literary genre whose focus is on the juristic disagreements. "The Book of Breastfeeding (*Kitāb al-raḍāʿ*)," the first segment of Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī's (b. 1943) *Takmilat Fatḥ al-mulhim*, displays such characteristics of a comparative legal work (al-ʿUthmānī 2006, 7:35–141). The first chapters of al-Mubārakfūrī's *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī* also include extensive legal discussions (al-Mubārakfūrī 1963, 1:23–148).

7. Study of rare words in hadith (*gharīb al-ḥadīth*): some of the earliest efforts at commentary took the form of brief definitions of unfamiliar words that occurred in hadiths, and such explanations have remained a fundamental element of hadith commentary. Commentators who had a keen interest and expertise in Arabic, like al-Khaṭṭābī and al-ʿAynī, resorted to such clarifications more frequently than others; al-Khaṭṭābī even wrote a separate work on *gharīb al-ḥadīth*.
8. Reconciliation of contradictory hadiths: when a hadith is contradicted by another one, the commentator tries to reconcile them by using different tools of interpretation. For example, in the face of contradictory hadiths as to whether one is allowed to recite poetry in *masjid*s, Ibn Ḥajar remarks that if the poem is related to the old days of ignorance (*al-jāhiliyya*) it cannot be read aloud in the *masjid*. However, if the poem is not like this, then the hadiths that allow the recitation of poem become effective (Ibn Ḥajar 2003, 2:722).
9. Critique of earlier commentators: one of the inevitable tasks of commentators is to assess the contribution of previous authorities in order to make a persuasive argument. Hence, hadith commentaries abound in examples where authors support, negate, or neutrally present the views of earlier commentators at varying lengths. For example, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī often starts the paragraphs of *Tanwīr al-ḥawāliq*, a concise commentary on *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, with a reference to a preceding

commentator. The great majority of commentators make explicit references to their colleagues, whereas some scholars like, al-ʿAynī, prefer to say "*qāla baʿḍ al-shurrāḥ*: One of the commentators said …" Al-ʿAynī often makes such statements before he quotes and criticizes Ibn Ḥajar's opinions.

10. Answers to anticipated questions: in an effort to convince the reader of his interpretation, the author discusses the possible objections to his commentary and tries to come up with a plausible reply. This is carried out by using the traditional expressions of "*fa in qulta qultu:* if you say such-and-such I say the following," or "*fa in qīla qultu:* if such-and-such is said I say the following." Such objections are not always imaginary constructs of authors; indeed, it is very likely that some of them did really occur, particularly in cases where the commentary emerged as a result of the master's teaching process. The question–answer pattern is also sometimes utilized in the context of a polemical discourse against the earlier commentators. Al-Mubārakfūrī, for instance, sets up such a framework in which he responds to hypothetical questions while at the same time rebutting the claims of al-Ṭaḥāwī and al-ʿAynī (al-Mubārakfūrī 1963, 1:238–239).

While these enumerated 10 types of information are the most commonly found elements in hadith commentaries, this does not necessarily mean that each work contains all of them. For example, al-Māzarī and al-Bājī show less interest in transmitter criticism than they do in legal deductions, and Ibn Baṭṭāl passes over some chapters without analysis because they are not related to the field of law. On such occasions, he says, "There is no law in this chapter (*lā fiqh fī hādhā al-bāb* or *laysa fīh fiqh*)."

Commentators employ a variety of headings to differentiate one field of investigation from another, such as "hadith's vocabulary (*lughatuh*)," "rulings (*aḥkāmuh*)," and "transmitters (*rijāluh*)." Ibn al-Mulaqqin announces in the introduction to his *Tawḍīḥ* that he will divide the commentary on each hadith into 10 parts and retained this categorization for the most part of his work (Ibn al-Mulaqqin 2008, 2:10–11). Likewise, al-Bājī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-ʿAynī, and other systematic commentators used titles like *masʾala*, *farʿ*, *faṣl*, *tatmīm*, *takmila*, and so forth at the points of transition from one aspect of a topic to the other. *Fatḥ al-bārī*, on the other hand, has no serious system of categorization despite the great diversity of material it contains.

In accordance with their scholarly orientations, commentators make use of a wide range of sources, including major hadith collections and their commentaries, biographical dictionaries, legal works, Qurʾan commentaries, books on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and monographs on various disciplines of the hadith. While Mālikī commentators paid particular attention to Saḥnūn's (d. 240/854) *al-Mudawwana al-kubrā* in their legal analysis, Ḥanafī commentators often consulted their hadith-oriented jurists such as Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī and Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457). Shawkānī's (d. 1250/1834) *Nayl al-awṭār* has been quoted extensively by modern commentators owing to its critical discussion of the established legal schools' doctrines. Among the critics of hadith transmitters, al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) and Abū ʿAli al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105) particularly prompted the commentators on the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* to deal with the transmitters in these two collections. Almost all commentators after them, including Ibn Ḥajar, took great pains to defend the authority of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* against their highly critical remarks. As far as the Arabic language is concerned, Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 175/791), Abū ʿUbayd Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838), and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Harawī (d. 401/1011) are often quoted thanks to their definitions of uncommon words in hadiths. In addition to all of these, in the same way that modern Qurʾan commentators make reference to the Bible in their discussions of early prophets, twentieth-century hadith commentators also occasionally used the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Barnabas for the same purpose (see, e.g. al-ʿUthmānī 2006, 11:31).

Hadith commentaries are generally lengthy products with multiple volumes. Their actual size is determined by a number of factors, among which is the question whether the author comments on all chapters of the work. Worried about the spread of their books, commentators paid special attention to the intellectual interests of their time and sought ways to increase the influence of their works by their choices of word and style. Thus al-Nawawī reluctantly embarked on writing a mid-size commentary: "Were it not for poor efforts, too few knowledge seekers, and the fear that my book could not spread because very few people would ask for extended books, I would have written a lengthier work that would reach up to more than one hundred volumes without repetition and unnecessary additions" (al-Nawawī, 1:14). The material culture of books differed from one region to another even after printing technology improved. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1952), the influential traditionalist scholar of the late Ottoman period, noted such a difference in his remarks on the then newly published commentary of Shabbīr Aḥmad in Delhi: "Two big volumes of this work came out so far, each one being 500 pages with 35 lines on every page. If it were published in Egypt, each volume would be two oversized volumes" (al-Kawtharī 1953, 83).

Inconsistency and redundant repetition are two serious threats to commentaries as they are to other multi-volume works. But beyond the challenge of physical magnitude, the real problem stems from the fact that large commentaries were written over an extended period of time, often exceeding 10 years. Commentators were usually aware of the possible downsides of their work and tried to take precautions in order to keep their collections in good shape and disorders at a minimum level. If a tradition, a topic, or a transmitter appears more than once in a hadith collection, many authors commented on the item on the first occasion and cross-referenced it in later instances by saying "discussed above, in the segment of …" or "we commented on this before, in the chapter …" Some of them, however, chose to cover the issue in the place which they believed was the most relevant. These points may seem insignificant for the modern reader; nevertheless they demonstrate that a commentator of the past, despite the exhausting nature of his task, could regard his work as a whole body and seek to harmonize its integral parts as much as possible.

Function

One of the basic functions of hadith commentaries is to serve as a reminder of the universal character of the Prophet's teachings by offering a moderate critique of scholarly opinions and social practices in the light of Prophetic principles. Commentaries not only connect the reader to the world of the Prophet Muhammad by developing a sense of empathy but also provide readers with a fresh interpretation of religious texts.

For the author, commentary constitutes a great opportunity to display his scholarly abilities and to reaffirm his position in intellectual circles. By commenting on a hadith collection, the author can prove that he is competent to teach and speak on the towering literary pieces of the past. Since hadith collections commonly share an important number of traditions, one who has commented on a collection could be easily tempted to produce another work on another collection. A list of those who commented on more than one book would encompass numerous names from different centuries, such as Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Nawawī, Mughulṭāy b. Qilīj, al-ʿAynī, al-Suyūṭī, and al-Wallawī.

Hadith commentaries are also one of several battlefields where scholarly debate is engaged. Almost all commentators aim at defending the legal or theological doctrines of their schools against the opponents. For example, a comparison of Ibn Baṭṭāl, Ibn Ḥajar, and al-ʿAynī illustrates how a Mālikī, a Shāfiʿī, and a Ḥanafī each deals with the legal hadiths in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In Andalus, the main factor that led Mālikī jurist Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī to comment on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* was the disparagement of the book by the followers of the eminent *Ẓāhirī imām* Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) (Ibn al-ʿArabī 2007, 1:330). In the field of theology, Sunni commentators do not hesitate to engage in polemic with Shiʿi scholars, particularly in chapters regarding the leadership (*imāra, imāma*) and the virtues of the companions (*faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba*). Moreover, the traditional tension between the Ashʿarites and the people of hadith can be observed throughout the commentary literature, even in the present day. A striking example is found in the introductory remarks of the editors to Ibn Baṭṭāl's commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Apparently not in favor of theological speculation, they criticize the author because he engaged in the interpretation of divine attributes, following the footsteps of his teacher, Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015). They maintain that they showed the author's mistakes by adding short notes indicating where such interpretations are found, except the chapter of *tawḥīd*, which accommodates several remarks on God's attributes, the refutation of which would make the footnotes too long (Ibn Baṭṭāl 2004, 1:13–15).

Hadith commentaries not only address the "other" but sometimes reflect the subtle divisions within a particular *madhhab*. For instance, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, whose commentaries were characterized by a heavy emphasis on the role of hadiths in the articulation of legal verdicts and little interest in the *ijtihād*s of esteemed Mālikī jurists like Ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191/806), Ashhab al-Qaysī (d. 204/820), and Saḥnūn, can be regarded as the voice of the traditionalist scholars in the Mālikī school of law. Indeed, we have no good reason to think that Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr was addressing only non-Mālikīs, as he was a part of the process in which the Mālikī school of Andalus went through a gradual transition and eventually came closer to traditionalism (Fierro 2005, 57–76; Fierro 2011, 76–77).

Hadith commentaries also serve functions on an institutional level, particularly when they are written and perceived as the products of a certain madrasa, since the success of a commentary potentially brings popularity and financial support to the affiliated institution. Muhammad Qasim Zaman shows that *Badhl al-majhūd* by al-Sahāranfūrī served such a function for the madrasa of Maẓāhir al-ʿUlūm in northern India:

> Commentaries also served to undergird the authority of a particular madrasa or, more broadly, of a particular sectarian orientation against its opponents. Dissemination of the *Badhl al-majhūd* would not only help keep the Mazāhir al-ʿUlūm solvent, surely this impressive commentary would also raise the public standing and prestige of a madrasa intimately associated with this commentary in several ways. (Zaman 1999, 75)

Commentaries also played a significant but less noticed role in the transmission of hadith collections. The late fourth and fifth centuries marked the beginning of a new era in the history of hadith that was focused on the transmission of books as opposed to transmission of single hadiths and compilation of collections. Exceptional figures like al-Dāraquṭnī, Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014), and al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) continued to collect hadiths traced to the Prophet with full chains of narrators, yet the general trend had changed from the compilation of original hadith collections to the transmission of already written works. Commentators contributed to this process of book transmission in two ways. First, they actually participated in it, as did Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī in the transmission of al-Tirmidhī's *Sunan* and al-Nawawī in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Second, through their references to and comparisons with unpopular versions of hadith collections they demonstrated alternative renderings, and thus paved the way for a comprehensive textual analysis of these collections. *Fatḥ al-bārī*, for example, illustrates many nuances among different versions of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. More interestingly, al-Khaṭṭābī's *Maʿālim al-sunan* emerges as an important source concerning the transmission of Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* because it relied on the rare version of Ibn Dāsa (d. 346/957) who transmitted the work with a different classification of topics and some textual differences from the popular version of Abū ʿAli Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Luʾluʾī (d. 333/944) (al-Khaṭṭābī, *Maʿālim*, 1:9).

Authorship

At the start of his *Fatḥ al-bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar cites a fundamental motto of hadith scholarship: "The *isnād*s are genealogies of books (*al-asānīdu ansāb al-kutub*)" (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:3). The *isnād*, in this context, is a chain of people who participated in the transmission process of a collection, connecting the commentator back to the author of the base text. The *isnād* not only demonstrates how and through whom a hadith collection was handed down but also provides the commentator with a strengthened authority to elaborate on its content. For this reason, virtually all commentators, either in the classical or modern period, needed to mention their *isnād*s going back to the author of the commented text – some even mentioned multiple *isnad*s – at the outset of their works (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1993, 1:168–170; Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ *Ikmāl*, 1:75–77; al-Nawawī 1:15–16; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās 1409, 1:171–183; al-Mubārakfūrī 1:3–8).

To compose a successful work, a commentator needed more than an authentic chain of authority; he also needed a group of devoted students. The role of authors' students in the formation of commentaries should not be underestimated, as seen above in the formation of al-Māzarī’s *al-Muʿlim*. Recent research reveals that Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fatḥ al-bārī* – and perhaps other unstudied commentaries – went through a similar process of composition (Blecher 2013, 265–268; Özkan 2014, 155). Ibn Ḥajar’s students, including first and foremost Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Khiḍir (d. 852/1448), took an active part in the writing down of the commentary. Özkan claims that these students’ contribution was not limited to outward form but also included the discussion of the commentary’s content before it takes its final form (Özkan 2014, 155). Furthermore, in a significantly different context, al-Sahāranfūrī admits that he took great help from his pupils, notably Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī, who scrutinized the challenging topics from related sources and physically wrote the commentary because al-Sahāranfūrī’s hands were trembling so that he could not write (al-Sahāranfūrī, 1:153). Another account, concerning the formation of *Badhl al-majhūd*, shows that students undertook preliminary research, gathering material from previous commentaries and other sources, and presented the findings to their master, who decided which material would be included in the commentary (al-Sahāranfūrī, 1:39). This also explains how such a wide range of sources could be utilized in commentaries (al-Sahāranfūrī, 1:153–157, 158). The role of Muḥammad Yūnus al-Marjālawī, who helped his teacher Muḥammad ʿAli Janbāz (d. 2008) in *Injāz al-ḥāja*, again had to do with resorting to major sources (Janbāz 2011, 1:99). Unlike *Fatḥ al-bārī*, where the voice of students cannot be distinguished from that of the master (Blecher 2013, 267), Kāndahlawī’s notes were separated from al-Sahāranfūrī’s remarks and indicated by the letter (ش) at the bottom of pages. *Fatḥ al-mulhim*, another example of a co-authored commentary, was started by Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī, who passed away when he reached the chapter on breastfeeding, almost halfway through the collection. Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī, fulfilling his father Muḥammad Shafīʿ’s request, resumed the commentary, producing a *Takmila* on the work (al-ʿUthmānī 2006, 7:29–30).

In some cases, the complicated nature of authorship in the Islamic tradition caused confusion and controversy in identifying the real authors of commentaries. For example, the renowned *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd: Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, an abridgment of the unfinished *Ghāyat al-maqṣūd fī sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by Abū al-Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq Muḥammad b. Amīr ʿAli al-ʿAẓīmābādī (d. 1329/1911), has been the object of controversy. Concerned about whether he would be able to finish his comprehensive *Ghāyat al-maqṣūd*, Abū al-Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq asked his youngest brother, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sharaf al-Haqq Muḥammad Ashraf al-Ṣiddīqī al-ʿAẓīmābādī (d. 1326/1908), to prepare a smaller version of the work and promised to help him. While the majority of scholars attribute the outcome of this cooperation to Abū al-Ṭayyib (al-Sahāranfūrī, 1:134ff.), some consider the younger Abū Abd al-Raḥmān to be producer of the work.[4] And the fact that al-Mubārakfūrī, the author of *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī*, spent some three years (1902–1905) with al-ʿAẓīmābādī to help him complete *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd* makes the story only more interesting (Özşenel 2006, 31:428). A quick comparison between *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd* and the published parts of *Ghāyat al-maqṣūd* reveals that their analysis of hadith texts are almost identical, and a large amount of material in *Ghāyat al-maqṣūd* about transmitters has been excluded from *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd*. For the purpose of this study, identifying the real author of the work is not of major significance, but this case demonstrates that the issue of authorship in the Islamic tradition is complex, encompassing not only the author and the reader but also the author's students, his circle or institution of teaching, and even his political entourage.

Writing a voluminous commentary is a long process. Al-ʿAynī started writing *ʿUmdat al-qārī* in 820 AH and completed it in 847 (al-ʿAynī 2009, 25:304). Ibn Ḥajar, on the other hand, started *Fatḥ al-bārī* in 813 AH and completed the first one-fourth of the book in approximately five years. However, it was only in the month of Rajab in 842 that he finally managed to finish the commentary (Ibn Ḥajar 1997, 1:23). Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī, a recent figure, states that it took 18 years and nine months for him to prepare the *Takmila*, with interruptions that sometimes lasted more than a year, caused by his journeys and other occupations (al-ʿUthmānī 2006, 7:27). The writing of *Badhl al-majhūd* also took 10 years, 5 months, and 10 days, being completed on 21 Shaban 1345/24 February 1927 (al-Sahāranfūrī, 1:41). These accounts simply suggest that commentators needed to set time aside for other pursuits during their writing process, which postponed, and sometimes made impossible, the completion of their works. It is misleading to regard these texts as if they were penned during an uninterrupted, thoroughly consistent and almost supernatural process fully controlled by the author.

Accusations of plagiarism, particularly during the Mamluk period, are another important issue related to authorship. Many respected scholars, including Sirāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Mulaqqin, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, al-Birmāwī, al-Suyūṭī, and al-Sakhāwī, were associated with duplication from someone else's works (Özkan, 187–192), but the most famous controversy took place between Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī, who had once been good friends. Ibn Ḥajar accused the latter of getting a copy of his commentary via one of the students with whom he shared his drafts, and of incorporating them into *ʿUmdat al-qārī* without proper attribution (Ibn Ḥajar *Intiqād al-iʿtirāḍ*, 1:26). In an effort to prove this, upon the completion of *Fatḥ al-bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar wrote *Intiqād al-iʿtirāḍ*, a rare account of the composition of a major commentary, in which he compared the dates when al-ʿAynī started, paused, and finished *ʿUmdat al-qārī* with the formative history of *Fatḥ al-bārī*, detailed the passages copied by al-ʿAynī, and responded to his criticisms. However, while he quoted several passages from *ʿUmda*, he remained silent about al-ʿAynī's critique on many occasions in the book. Though the majority of his contemporaries appear to have sided with Ibn Ḥajar, it remains a mystery why a significant scholar like al-ʿAynī would heedlessly resort to excessive plagiarism, knowing that this can potentially besmirch his intellectual persona. In any case, the incident lies in the intersection of a number of issues, including the nature and the etiquette of textual tradition and authorship, the transmission of knowledge, and patronage (Blecher, 271–274; Özkan, 189).

Were the commentaries written primarily for ordinary people or for ʿulamaʾ? Perhaps neither. Despite the fact that encouraging the layman to lead a more intensified and sound religious life was among the factors that fostered the rise of commentaries, these works contained delicate legal and theological investigations as well as technical remarks pertaining to hadith methodology and criticism, which were irrelevant to the majority's interests. However, it is also untenable to see these works as intended to fulfill the hadith specialists' concerns alone. While it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to generalize about the question without a comprehensive study, we can tentatively suggest that the primary audience of commentaries were "seekers of knowledge" – a less technical term compared to "students" or "scholars" – who neither reached the level of high proficiency in hadith nor could be described as layman with little or no interest in its technical aspects. Such classifications are slippery, particularly when applied to the past, yet both the formation processes of commentaries discussed above and the textual evidence suggest that commentators had a certain image of the intended reader in mind, a person who had familiarity with the study of hadith but not at a super-advanced level. Al-Nawawī, for example, justified giving information about the identification of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and the like in his commentary with the following words: "We provide this kind of knowledge, in spite of the fact that these are commonly known and therefore not worth mentioning for the adepts at this science. For this book is not meant to [address] only superiors (*fuḍalāʾ*); on the contrary, it has been written to benefit those who have not acquired adequate skill in this science yet (*man lam yatamakkan fī hādhā al-fann*)" (al-Nawawī *Sharḥ*, 1:268). This statement subtly implies that commentaries possessed features that appealed to nonprofessionals, patrons, and the learned elite as well. Qasim Zaman strikingly demonstrated how Indian commentators of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wrote in Arabic so as to address the scholars of the Middle East and other Muslim regions, despite the fact that majority of the population in South Asia could not understand the Arabic language (Zaman 1999, 62ff.).

Patronage

What advantages or disadvantages did hadith commentaries provide for their authors? How was scholarly rivalry reflected in them? What were the sources of funding for bulky commentaries? To what extant did the social milieu and the institutional affiliation of an author exercise influence on his writings? Was commentary really an effective tool for an author establishing contacts with the ruling elite and patrons? What were the expectations of patrons? Questions like these potentially connect researchers to a multifaceted web of actors that include the author, merchants, political authorities (sultans, amīrs), prominent scholarly families, and educational institutions, each contributing to the formation of commentaries in one way or another. Only by investigating the patterns of interaction among these classes can one contextualize the literature in the broad framework of the social and intellectual history of Islam.

In fact, medieval Muslim biographies testify that commentators were often found in settings where they developed close ties with different sectors of the society. Most of the Andalusian commentators lived in a socially and politically turbulent atmosphere. Al-Māzarī witnessed numerous civil revolts under the Zīrid dynasty in North Africa (al-Māzarī, *al-Muʿlim*, 1:8–22). Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ held judgeships in Ceuta and Granada from which he was later dismissed amid the political conflict of his times between the Almohads and the Almoravids (Talbi 2015). Ibn al-ʿArabī, a contemporary of Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, who also took active part in political negotiations, apparently raised scholars' eyebrows because of his companionship with the sultan (Ibn al-ʿArabī 1992, 1:25). Several surviving anecdotes like these that may offer promising glimpses into the lively world of commentaries have unfortunately been poorly covered in modern literature.[5]

We have a fuller picture of patronage in Mamluk Cairo thanks to the works of Jonathan Berkey and others. Among the commentators who competed for, and held, teaching posts in the educational institutions, including not only madrasas but also Sufi lodges (*khānkāh*s), *zāwiya*s, and mosques, were al-Birmāwī, the famous Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī. The latter was a close companion to Sulṭān al-Muʾayyad al-Maḥmūdī (d. 824/1421), under whose reign he reinforced his administrative and educational positions; al-ʿAynī would develop further ties with Sulṭān al-Ashraf Barsbay (d. 841/1438) (Berkey 1992, 100; Broadbridge 1999, 94–97). Ibn Ḥajar, however, had greater power compared to the others as he held multiple prestigious positions at several institutions and managed to maintain more persistent contacts with a variety of patrons. Exercising some sort of scholarly patronage, he himself appointed his successors to teaching posts at a number of madrasas from among his students (Berkey 1992, 110–112).

Ibn Ḥajar reports that composing *Fatḥ al-bārī* put him in touch with a number of sultans who were alerted about the quality of the work by the scholars around them, even before it was completed (Ibn Ḥajar *Intiqād al-iʿtirāḍ*, 1:23–24). Moreover, he mentioned some Mamluk sultans by name in the interpretation of particular hadiths (Blecher, 269–271). Joel Blecher strikingly explores how Ibn Ḥajar succeeded in disclosing the scholarly inadequacy of Shams al-Dīn al-Harawī (d. 829/1426), a Shāfiʿī jurist and potential rival of Ibn Ḥajar for the chief judgeship, on the basis of a hadith's commentary in a special gathering in the garden of the Sulṭān al-Muʾayyad (Blecher, 274–280).

Hadith sessions that took place regularly in the Mamluk royal court created an intriguing setting where the sultan, *ʿulamāʾ*, *umarāʾ*, and other influential bureaucrats came together in order to listen to the reading of a certain hadith collection – usually al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* or that of Muslim. It appears that participants from the learned elite engaged in such hot debates that some sultans issued rulings forbidding discussion during lessons (Özkan, 148). Such discussions provided the scholars with opportunities to win the favor of sultans and other patrons as well as to eliminate potential academic rivals.

We see similar patterns of patronage among the Ottomans, as attested above by the case of Yūsuf Efendi-zāde. In the absence of a thorough academic survey of hadith scholarship in the Ottoman period, not to mention specific place of hadith commentary in it, we can only emphasize that not only the production but also the instruction of commentaries must be a subject of attention. Recent research suggests that the hadith education at Ottoman *dār al-ḥadīth*s and madrasas depended primarily on the recitation of major hadith collections, most commonly *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim (Yardım 1993, 8:529–532; Karacabey 1992, 227–235; Karacabey 1999, 149–169), and the curriculum evidently needed a type of literature that would be helpful in the explication of hadith texts. Therefore, a comprehensive knowledge of hadith commentary must have been received as an outstanding advantage in the academic promotion and advancement of the *ʿilmiyya*.

Patronage relations can be more easily traced from the nineteenth century onwards as rich material related to educational institutions, intellectual circles and tendencies, and socioreligious movements is largely accessible. Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī, who claimed descent from the third caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, was a friend of Pakistan's founder and first governor-general, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and presided over the Jamʿiyyat ʿUlamāʾ-i Islām established by Deobandi scholars with a demand for an independent Pakistan. Muḥammad Taqī al-ʿUthmānī, who completed Shabbīr Aḥmad's unfinished commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, also had a large web of connections, evident in the several forewords to his *Takmila* (Zaman 1999, 76–77; al-ʿUthmānī 2006, 7:5–22). Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī, a twentieth-century commentator on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, was a prominent member of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, a socioreligious movement that aimed at spreading Islamic teachings through personal dialogues and connections instead of pursuing a political agenda to that end. But regarding the question of what all of this information about commentators means for their scholarly products, there remains a lot of work to be done. Although Muhammad Qasim Zaman found a general correlation between Muḥammad Taqī's lengthy discussion of legal penalties and rising interest in the implementation of Islamic laws, he had little to offer about how this interest practically influenced Taqī's commentary on related hadiths (Zaman 2002, 50).

Another significant aspect of patronage had to do with how commentaries were published and how their expenses were met. As stressed before, inasmuch as a hadith commentary was a product of a certain madrasa or a jamʿiyyat, adherents were encouraged to buy one or more copies as a means of supporting the madrasa's livelihood, even though highly sophisticated intellectual discussions included in the work hardly concerned them at times (Zaman 1999, 74–75). Potential audiences or patrons included distant Muslims as well. The printed edition of *Badhl al-majhūd*, for instance, was made possible by generous supports from high-ranking officials in the United Arab Emirates (al-Sahāranfūrī 1:6–7, 22). Zaman (1999, 66–68) identifies ties with the Saudi house as well. Likewise, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, whose leadership depended primarily on members from the well-educated upper-middle-class families (Metcalf 1982, 268), found needed support through Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān's (d. 1890) influential connections in the intellectual centers of Muslim world such as Cairo and Beirut (Zaman 1999, 63). The advent of printing technology and the fact they wrote in Arabic enabled both Deobandis and Ahl-i Ḥadīth to establish patronage relations with the more affluent and intellectually more powerful regions of the Islamic world (Zaman 1999, 62ff.).

Some aspects of patronage certainly overlap with the issue of authorship discussed above, and this sits very well with commentaries' rootedness in social practice bound by both institutional and individual actors as well as manifesting a commitment to a splendid, longue *durée* literary tradition. However, hadith commentators, in general, appear to be reluctant to reveal their social surroundings, so that useful information about their patrons is not readily available in commentaries themselves. Only efficient use of a variety of local histories, biographical dictionaries, and monographs on educational institutions and the religious elite allow researchers to set the author in his rich and diverse social milieu. Such combination of commentarial analysis with external sources has been partially achieved in various writings by Muhammad Qasim

Zaman, who enjoyed the rare privilege of using diverse sources in original Urdu, and also by Joel Blecher, who ingeniously compared the narrative structures of a significant report in Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī* and his chronicle, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*.

The Future of Commentaries

Commentaries will most likely continue to exist as long as Muslims continue to claim religious authority on the basis of the interpretation of their foundational texts. The concern to demonstrate compatibility with the very foundations of Islam, thereby gaining legitimacy, has been a major one for a broad spectrum of Muslims, from modernist Salafis to *madhhab* affiliated scholars, and commentary has proved to be an extremely useful tool in that regard. This is why even ardent critics of the long-standing traditions of commentary and gloss like Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) sat down to produce commentaries. Glenn Most's prediction regarding the future of Western commentaries can be taken for Islamic commentaries as well: "The disciplines of scholarship may be in crisis; but commentaries are likely to continue to flourish. They are much too useful, both in more and in less obvious ways, to ever be abandoned" (Most 1999, xi).

Some changes in the traditional characteristics of hadith commentaries, however, would seem to be underway. For one thing, while a contemporary author like al-Wallawī can still produce a voluminous work on a major hadith collection, an increasing number of commentators tend to select their material from a variety of hadith sources according to their taste, instead of relying on a specific collection. This provides the commentator with greater freedom to determine the central themes of the book, in addition to liberating him from the structural boundaries of a primary text. Second, those who decide to stick to one collection would prefer later and arguably less challenging compilations like al-Nawawī's *Forty Hadiths* or *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn* to the early authoritative works. And third, there has been a growing interest in the production of non-Arabic hadith commentaries, including works in South Asian languages, Turkish, and Persian. These works contribute to the development of the religious literature in regional languages and also reflect efforts to reconcile Islam's universal teachings with its local manifestations.

Notes

1 See, e.g., the special issue of the *Oriens* (41/2013) dedicated to Islamic commentaries and glosses in addition to the articles cited in this chapter. For other works, see the "Further Reading" section. Unfortunately, I was unable to consult Joel Blecher's recent book, *Said the Prophet of God*, and his entry on hadith commentary in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* during the writing of this chapter. Blecher makes a substantial contribution to the development of the field by addressing various aspects of the issue of commentary. Though I was not able to consult the book and the entry here, I made use of, and referred to, the article in *Oriens* by the same author.

2 This chapter does not cover commentaries produced in such other fields of hadith scholarship as hadith methodology or transmitter criticism because these works are related to the theoretical foundations of hadith, not offering comments on individual traditions.

3 For an oft-quoted account of why commentaries (not exclusively hadith commentaries) are needed and the etiquette of commentators, see Kātib Chalabī, Ḥajī Khalīfa Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbdullah, *Kashf al-żunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ihyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), I, 36–38.

4 The recent edition chosen for this study, for instance, attributes the work to Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān; see *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd*, I, 14ff., 25.

5 An inspection of the literature surveyed in the following articles can be a good starting point for those who wish to dig out the patronage relations in Andalusian hadith: Fierro, “Proto-Malikis, Malikis, and Reformed Malikis in al-Andalus”; “Local and Global in Hadīth Literature: The Case of al-Andalus.”

6 For an exhaustive list of commentaries and glosses on these books, see al-Ḥabashī, *Jāmiʿal-shurūḥ wa al-ḥawāshī*, I, 396–438, 579–583; II, 1052–1056, 1057–1059, 1059–1061; III, 1672–1695, 1978–1996.

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CHAPTER 9

Genres

Roberto Tottoli

The word of Muhammad (hadith), and indeed the word of God from the Qurʾan, stand as the two sources inspiring every aspect of Muslim life. Hadith is one of the foundations of Muslim faith, and as such it exerts influence on the lives of Muslims, inspiring beliefs, practices, attitudes, feelings, and even the languages spoken by Muslims in the world. The words attributed to Muhammad also permeate all the literary productions of the Muslim community, from its beginnings to contemporary times. This is evident in the large collections of works devoted specifically to collecting, discussing, and choosing not only the words of the Prophet but also the names of the people involved. Hadith works are so significant that they constitute a group of literary genres, forming a substantial part of Islamic literary production.

Critical questions connected to the soundness of the words of the Prophet and to the reputation of the Muslims involved in their preservation gave rise to entire libraries of books, written first in Arabic but also in other languages, intended to preserve and offer Muslim believers their second source of reference after the Qurʾan. However, the prominence and importance of hadith also prompted the circulation of these traditional reports beyond the specific literary genres devoted to hadith literature. Almost every Arabic literary expression contains citations or allusions to hadith. Although it is not easy to follow the path of hadith in all the literature produced by Muslims, in this chapter we aim to discuss the use and quotation of words from hadith in Islamic literature. Our aim is to delineate how the word of hadith is used in non-hadith literature, how it is quoted or alluded to, and what attitudes by the authors and works emerge in relation to quotation of or reference to hadith.

Before coming to the discussion in detail, a few further words are necessary to define the extent and approach in this undertaking. We shall take into consideration traditions ascribing words to the Prophet without particular concern as to whether they are

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included in the major or so-called canonical collections. When discussing an explicit or implicit reference to hadith or the way of doing so, we constantly refer to the quotation of or allusions to words ascribed to Muhammad in works primarily but not only belonging to religious literature. Further, we shall also discuss how Islamic literature refers to hadith and the words of the Prophet, and the manner of quoting them or simply using the words of the Prophet to substantiate something on whatever occasion may arise. Range and extent are partially limited since we investigate only the literature in Arabic, while we take into consideration the period from early Islam to contemporary times. This scope implies that for some topics only some preliminary and generic considerations will be possible.

Definition and Meaning

The space and interplay between quotation and allusion are complex and ambiguous when dealing with words and concepts. The simplest way to approach this topic would be to check when a complete hadith, possibly drawn from the canonical collections, is quoted in literary works such as Qurʾanic commentaries or theological treatises, and then to proceed to some considerations. But this will not suffice. The words of the Prophet appear in expressions which evoke them; they can be defined not as hadith but with other terms or expressions; and above all they can be alluded to in various different ways and even taken for granted. Although study of direct and distinct quotations in non-hadith literature is a relatively easy path, we shall also try to go beyond this simple approach to verify, where possible, what use has been made of hadith in literature which does not simply quote traditions explicitly. The question here is to see what significance, use, and relevance were given to the word of Muhammad in early Muslim literary attestations and how it came about.

In this regard, one important point to discuss is the way the words of the Prophet appear in Islamic literature, and to try, first of all, to see how quotations or allusions worked and work. Differing attitudes emerge. The words of the Prophet can be given in formulas such as *Qāla al-Nabī/Rasūl Allāh* (The Prophet/Messenger of God said …) or in similar formulas which highlight statements on some topic, with or without the chain of transmitters which hadith literature quotes to corroborate an attested saying of Muhammad. But along with this, Islamic literature shows various other ways of quoting and introducing hadith or words of the Prophet apart from the simple attestation of his having made a certain affirmation. As regards early times, some inconsistencies or rather variety given by a process of codification and canonization still under way can be recognized. This shows how during the first generations the concept itself of hadith and its connection to the sunna of the Prophet was still in a phase of development and thus even the Arabic term “hadith” (originally meaning “news” or “story”) emerged in the early centuries as one of the terms to designate the accepted sayings of Muhammad.

The early literature attests, in fact, that hadith was not the only term to designate sayings of the Prophet, and in almost all of this literature, sayings of the Prophet and other narratives or accounts were introduced by terms such as *khabar* (“tradition”) (cf. Tottoli 2015). *Khabar* is sometimes considered a synonym of hadith or a more comprehensive term tending to include, along with proper hadith, reports from companions and successors or traditions with faulty chains of transmitters (*isnād*). But *khabar* is much more: it came to be the term used by Shiʿis to designate their hadiths and traditions (see Chapter 14); it was also a substantial term in grammatical analysis, and it was the term applied to quote and mention reports of every kind, and in particular historical narratives (pl. *akhbār*). In this regard, turning to the early literature we find in the work of authors such as al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820 CE), whose activity was fundamental in the definition of the role of hadith and of the Prophetic sunna, extensive use of *khabar* to refer to traditions from the Prophet (cf. Lowry 2007). There are in fact good reasons to endorse what Pierre Larcher (2005) remarked a few years ago, namely that the relations in meaning between hadith and *khabar* are not clear in early usages. In the Qurʾanic commentaries of authors such as Māturīdī (d. 944 CE) or Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 983 CE), for instance, the term *khabar* systematically introduces and recalls hadith from the major collections but also other reports of various kinds; and what is even more significant is that this use is attested in many early works in various literary genres ranging from *adab* works and *tafsīr* to hadith works (Tottoli 2015). It is thus very common in Islamic literature to come across not only the term "hadith" to introduce the sayings of the Prophet or some of his words, but also the more generic *khabar*. Although there is no certainty about the respective meanings of these terms, this double use should be read in line with the early tendencies in Islamic traditions not to isolate the words of the Prophet from the words of others but to include them along with those of his companions and followers, attributing to all of them a role in the definition of practices. This attitude is well reflected in all early Islamic literature.

Things began to change in the ninth century CE, reflecting the centrality of hadith in the debates which led to the final definition of Sunni Islam. This took place above all in the literature produced by hadith-oriented scholars, who prompted the use of hadith in the theological debates and whose line of thought would gain prominence. Despite the use of different terminologies in their works, the words of the Prophet Muhammad are extensively quoted and cited in various ways. In authors from the early ninth century onward we have the most common typologies: words introduced by complete chains of transmitters reaching back to the Prophet/Messenger (*qāla* .../said ...), either the quotation of the term "hadith" plus the name of the first transmitter and then the name of the Prophet, or the introductory statement *ḥadīth al-nabī*, and so on What is more significant is that all the literary genres show this approach when dealing with the words of the Prophet, from early juridical handbooks (cf. al-Shāfiʿī 1990, I:48, *passim*) to theological treatises (cf. al-Qāsim b. Sallām 2000, I:20–22, *passim*, I:30).

Other features are attested in these works as well. The generic introduction *fī al-ḥadīth* or *al-ḥadīth*, and so on, usually introduces quotations of the direct words uttered by Muhammad. In this regard, the major factors influencing this situation were the final triumph of traditionalism against more rationalistic approaches to the question of the tradition, the role of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s by al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875), and the longer process of canonization of these hadith collections which went through the tenth century and after, as demonstrated by Jonathan Brown (2007). This process finally made quite clear the role of the words of the Prophet and consequently hadith took on its definitive technical sense, which it still has today.

The most obvious result of the final emergence of the term "hadith" as designating only the sayings of the Prophet, and thus indicating a fundamental source of knowledge of beliefs and practices, is given by the late use of abbreviated forms to construct a single saying. This tendency was already attested in ninth-century works and would gain significance in later literary works where hadith also appears as introduced and evoked with a reference simply stating that it is, for example, the hadith of the revelation (*ḥadīth al-nuzūl*) or the hadith of the slander against ʿA'isha (*ḥadīth al-ifk*), the hadith of the night journey by Muhammad (*ḥadīth al-isrāʾ*), the hadith on the intercession on the Day of Resurrection (*ḥadīth al-shafāʿa*), and so forth Sometimes a saying of Muhammad is further quoted as hadith plus a short sentence which characterizes it: see, for example, *ḥadīth dakhaltu ʿalā rabbī* (the hadith "I entered at the presence of my Lord"; cf. Dārimī 1998, II:725). Examples are many and in some cases are not so clear-cut. The use of these abbreviated and evocative references, which would become most common in medieval literature of every genre, attributes relevance to the fundamental role of the contents of hadith while at the same time indicating the emblematic status of what is evoked with a simple hint that is evidently known to everybody.

It is thus clear that in the Middle Ages and up to the present day a variety of trends emerged in the ways of introducing and quoting what the Prophet said. Once discussions on soundness were settled, the canonical and non-canonical major works served as main references, but many other reports ascribed to the Prophet continued to circulate in the Muslim world. Late works dedicated to forged hadith attest to the practice, not only in early times but also later on, of asserting and circulating some point by ascribing words to the Prophet. All this material was labeled hadith but was quoted or alluded to in many differing ways, sometimes with a full chain of transmitters, sometimes with only the words uttered by the Prophet Muhammad, or sometimes evoked through an abbreviated form recalling contents. Medieval works quoted and used hadith in all these ways, and together these citations and allusions attest to how hadith was and continues to be a fundamental aspect of the literatures produced in Islamic countries.

Quoting Hadith: Where and How?

Although to different degrees, genres such as Qurʾan commentaries, theological and related works, historiographical works dealing with early Islam, Sufi literature, and juridical literature have always been in dialogue with hadith literature and the sayings of Muhammad. All the different kinds of works belonging to the genres, whether scholarly or popular, use and quote the Prophet, relying on complete or incomplete versions or only alluding to what hadith literature has preserved of the sayings of Muhammad. Evidently the manner and content of quotations are connected to the genre or the work in which a hadith or a reference to it appears, and the manner of quotation is therefore influenced by the concerns of these various genres and works. Consequently, we see differences between genres and differences between authors of the same genre, though some general patterns can be discerned.

Another question is how the authors writing non-hadith works had access to and could quote the hadith they decided to use. The answer is both simple and complex. Authors of hadith works, or works involving elaboration and organization of hadith literature, were sometimes also engaged in producing religious literature on some other theme; they had the material at hand and they used it according to the work they were writing down. But knowledge was transmitted in different ways, oral or written, both in early Islam and also in later times. The most common readings have always had a great significance in the transmission and discussion of hadith. An author could be both the one reading and collecting comments (as a way to show authority in religious discourse and gain the associated benefit from rulers) and, at the same time, the one listening to the recital and writing down one or more hadiths through the channel of oral transmission which has always had a privileged role and has always been considered more trustworthy and prestigious than books (see Chapter 5). A work like Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and following it, the other major collections, assured prestige to the single hadiths it quoted. The sayings of the Prophet from the work of al-Bukhārī were recited and then commented upon, and as such found their way directly or indirectly into all the literary genres as objects of devotion which took various forms (cf. Brown 2007, 335–358).

Books and collections of books were copied and circulated throughout all the Muslim regions, but, as Maribel Fierro has demonstrated in relation to al-Andalus, specific regional concerns, and the prominence gained or lost over time by some works, also influenced what was circulating and known throughout the Muslim world. Although the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s, in particular that of Bukhārī, have always been the favorites, the other canonical works and certain other works had varying fortunes. It is interesting to see how in al-Andalus, and elsewhere, works like that by the Egyptian al-Quḍāʿī (d. 1062) circulated alongside authoritative works thanks to its user-friendly exposition which excluded *isnād*s (Fierro 2011, 72f.). This was because of the passing of time and the impossibility of copying ever longer chains of names, and it was also a matter of changing literary taste prompted by canonization. The corpus of the hadith was becoming more or less fixed, and after canonization the authority of the books was such that it was possible to recall widely known contents from major compilations with no need to repeat attested chains of transmissions.

Authority and Criticism

The extensive use of hadith in Islamic literature was not the natural result of undisputed acceptance of the meaning and role of the word of the Prophet. To the contrary, the significance of the words of the Prophet was the result of keen rivalries about the authority of tradition and contrasting views on which traditions would predominate in the Muslim community along with the Qurʾanic word. This emerges clearly in the designation of partisans of the two contrasting trends as *ahl al-ḥadīth* (supporters of hadith) and *ahl al-raʾy* (supporters of personal opinion). In the works of one of the most significant fighters on the front line of traditionalism, Ibn Qutayba (d. 885), "hadith" appears in the titles of books which discuss the significance of hadith for beliefs and in polemical debates against those who questioned the role of the sayings of the Prophet (Ibn Qutayba 1982). Consequently, the spread and diffusion of hadith reflects a manifest traditionalism which left clear evidence in the diffusion of hadith-based works aiming to counteract other works containing the different attitudes maintained by the opposing front, the *ahl al-raʾy*, Muʿtazilites, or devotees of Greek and scientific knowledge. All this prompted the diffusion of works based on hadith not only in the major religious literary genres mentioned above but in fields such as dream interpretation, cosmology (Burge 2014, 260), or popular medicine (of the Prophet), thus affirming the centrality of hadith in topics which are not closely connected to ritual and other religious questions. The influence and role of hadith is a sign of the triumph of traditionalism, the protagonists being the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who maintained the primacy of the sayings of the Prophet and won their fight in Sunni Islam in the ninth century CE.

The role of hadith is further exemplified by the diffusion and final imposition of the model prompted by it. The preference for brief, sometimes disjointed, narratives and units typical of hadith reports also became a specific feature in *adab* literature and in most of the religious genres. This opened the way to the interchange of concepts and even contents. Moreover, this applies to hadith as a whole, without drawing lines between canonical hadith, non-canonical collections, and works displaying different attitudes toward what would become a standardized corpus of established sayings going back to the Prophet. Differing approaches and evaluations in what to use and quote are attested, and together they all bear out the significance accorded to the words of Muhammad as such and in the form that came to prevail. In any case, the early literature evidences the diffusion of the model advanced by the traditional literature, namely short narratives and the names of transmitters and possible *isnād*, to collect a display of traditions also including hadith going back to the Prophet. An author like Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 894), who wrote so many booklets on religious matters, is a case in point. But in any case, the situation remained fluid over the time. Hadith are fundamental, but the questions of which hadith and how to recall them and quote them continued to meet with different answers in classical Islam, and indeed has done up to our own times.

The issue of how to cite hadith also prompted different attitudes. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), one of the major figures of medieval Islam and a protagonist in the building of Islamic piety in a number of works, is an interesting case. Ghazālī had the reputation for incomplete knowledge of hadith and inconsistency in how he quoted words of the Prophet (Leites 2012). Apart from questions of consistency in this accusation, it is important to ask how a figure like Ghazālī could gain such great prominence as an author of religious literature without perfectly mastering the sciences of hadith. His systematic appeal to the authority of the Prophet without following the exact form preserved in hadith literature hints that he was deliberately counteracting strict adherence to hadith, preferring an approach to content, usually recalled by memory. This evidently attests to the survival of old attitudes and thus reflects no intention of belittling hadith as such, which he extensively quoted, for instance, in his major work, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Rather it is a rejection of the strict formal devices which were already in use during his lifetime.

Hadith and *Tafsīr* Literature

Amongst the genres of Islamic literature, *tafsīr*, commentary on the Qurʾan, is one of the most important, if not indeed the supreme genre. The relation between the Qurʾan and the hadith is also a topic of significance in itself given the role that the sacred text and the Prophet have in Islamic conceptions (see Chapter 3). Commenting on the Qurʾan was an early activity, notwithstanding some opposition, but, as time passed, Muslims started producing large encyclopedic commentaries, collecting reports and traditions or other kinds of interpretations, and also including references to what the Prophet said. However, the use of hadith in explaining the Qurʾan and consequently quotation of it in commentaries cannot be taken for granted. Islamic history has sometimes seen tensions between the authority of the Qurʾanic word on one side and the authority of the word of the Prophet on the other – *pace* the work of al-Shāfiʿī. The tension has prompted differing solutions since, after all, the genres of hadith and Qurʾan exegesis have different concerns.

Although the word of the Prophet was fundamental for all religious knowledge, what interested exegetes more was the Qurʾanic word. Reports, traditions, and opinions of the early generations were considered significant or noteworthy in relation to the choices of each exegete in explaining a passage, a verse, or a word of the Qurʾan. Developments regarding the place of hadith in religious discourse also had an impact on Qurʾan exegesis. The first commentary by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 767 CE) mentions words of the Prophet but never uses the term “hadith” to introduce or recall them. In some cases, the word is mentioned in the simple sense of “story.” But just one generation after Muqātil, things had changed. In early *tafsīr* literature, there is mention of hadiths going back to the Prophet and the mention of hadith of a companion or an authority appears very early; further, we also find in *tafsīr* literature mention of hadith plus a term identifying a significant saying by Muhammad, such as the saying on the intercession on the Day of Resurrection (*ḥadīth al-shafāʿa*) or the hadith on the ascension to heaven (*ḥadīth al-miʿrāj*) (Yaḥyā b. Sallām 2004, I:323, II:693).

The relation between the two genres in classical exegetical works can be ascertained by verifying which hadiths exegetes used, included, excluded, or discussed when addressing the commentaries of specific verses. Only a few studies have dealt with this topic (cf. Tottoli 2013a,b; Geissinger 2015), analyzing some case studies to verify the attitudes of the various exegetes. It appears that in relation to topics where there are controversial interpretations or hadith attestations which are not uncontroversial, exegetes were very careful in dealing with hadith material on that point. And in this respect, more interestingly, the question at issue is not the reliability and soundness of the hadith or which particular version, but the inclusion or not of specific hadith in the exegetical discourse. Consequently, most exegetes remain silent on controversial points, simply rejecting the use of hadith in the exegesis of some verses where, in fact, hadiths could be included and are indeed included by some.

But there are not only passages alluding to the possible use of hadith in exegetical discourse. The story of the exegesis of Qurʾan 17:1, for instance, is in fact completely different. Here we have an elusive and brief Qurʾanic verse which came to be taken as reference for a major event in the life of Muhammad, namely his night journey and ascension to heaven, which is fully described and discussed only in hadith literature. Exegetes had in this regard a serious problem in choosing from a huge amount of material. In this case all the exegetes quote or allude to hadith, quoting transmitters rather than works and various versions of the reports recounting the story in full detail.

Canonization of hadith also had a strong impact on Qurʾanic commentators. For example, early commentaries, such as those by Muqātil b. Sulaymān, ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 826), Yaḥyā b. Sallām, and Hūd b. Muḥakkam (d. 893), included reports that were later to be discarded from canonical collections. But these reports were not completely forgotten, since they were sometimes still included in some major commentaries and mainly in those including many reports on the topic, thereby aiming at comprehensive coverage in the discussion of the main issues connected to the story. It thus appears clear that *tafsīr*s subsequent to the canonization of hadith cannot avoid considering the relevance of what is now generally considered sound (cf. Geissinger 2015; Bauer 2015) but that at the same time they can in any case also include and discuss questionable reports with no particular discussion of their soundness. This highlights the fact that exegetes had an independent approach toward this material. Many classical exegetes were also authors of hadith works and experts in hadith, but the concerns displayed by the authors of the two literary genres were different and *tafsīr* authors accepted the inclusion of material rejected by hadith authors, or at least seen by them as problematic, although this did not go unnoticed by other exegetes who took different attitudes.

Thus, the appearance and canonization of major hadith collections influenced the relation between hadith and *tafsīr*, leading to rejection by some exegetes of the hadiths dismissed by hadith criticism. But it did not eliminate more liberal approaches with a less strict attitude toward traditions as a whole. In works such as those by al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273) and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), which display an encyclopedic nature, the authors chose to include and discuss also the controversial reports while noting doubts on the reliability of the material quoted and the polemical issues connected to them. Their liberality in quoting the hadith and the source and usually only the first transmitter was also criticized by later figures such as al-Shawkānī (d. 1835). Here, as in other cases, we can see the different attitudes taken by exegetes and the usual different concerns about what is relevant in hadith. Some are concerned about the content only, given the soundness ascertained by previous authors, while others concern themselves with the entire hadith, including the transmitters that guarantee this soundness. Given all this, Qurʾanic commentaries in any case offer good evidence of the use of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus constitute a genre where the words of the Prophet are quoted and used to corroborate exegetical discussions.

We can also make some quantitative observations. Stephen Burge maintains in his study on the sources used by the late polymath and exegete Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) that exegesis based mainly on hadith is rare; only a few commentaries are exclusively based on quotations of traditions and hadith (Burge 2014, 253). Only a quarter of the traditions quoted by Suyūṭī are sayings of Muhammad, and this is a high figure compared to other commentaries (Burge 2014, 254–255). As regards the way hadith are quoted, Suyūṭī does not quote the entire *isnād* but gives the name of the author of the book which served as the source and then the name of the transmitters or only a part of the chains of transmitters. Suyūṭī was probably inspired, as was the exegete Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), by the hermeneutical lines for Qurʾan exegesis defined by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). However even some early commentaries reflect the same approach, restricting interpretation to quotation of supposed relevant hadiths and traditions. One interesting case is that of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 938), who explains the Qurʾan through quotations of reports and traditions rather than articulating his discourse around them. His commentary is thus a list of contents and chains of transmitters, collecting all that he knew on the topics prompted by the Qurʾan. If this is a traditionalist approach, it nevertheless does not attribute primary importance to hadith among all the other traditions, though the words of the Prophet do precede in importance those of the companions and then of the followers. All exegetes could be measured according to their relative frequency of use of the words of the Prophet, and their approach is never free from theological or polemical attitudes. As one would expect, the role of hadith is relatively reduced in the commentary by the Muʿtazilite al-Zamakhsharī, while it is central in the work of Qurṭubī, who makes frequent reference to hadith, citing them in all the possible ways. Ibn Kathīr, a pupil of Ibn Taymiyya, was particularly concerned with the soundness of reports and what to quote and thus made frequent use of the canonical hadith.

Historiographical Literature

Other literary genres share some of the features discussed above in relation to Qurʾan exegesis, albeit with some specific features. In Islamic historiography the use and quotation of hadith is relevant to two subgenres, the life of Muhammad and the literary construction of biographies and outlines of the history of Islamic times. Both subgenres display relatively infrequent use of words attributed to the Prophet, or in any case do so mostly when connected to narratives which appear in history books but which could equally well belong to *adab* treatises. On the one hand, historiographic and annalistic traditions in the Islamic world are are strictly connected to the literary production of other genres and on the other hand historiography was not usually the main concern of authors who could have also been producers of specific works on hadith. With regard to biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, the *sīra* literature and its versions in universalistic histories shares little with traditional discussions on the hadith, and attestations of common words in hadith collections and in *sīra* works are rare. As argued by Görke (2011), *maghāzī* ("battles of Muhammad") and *sīra* on one hand, and hadith on the other, emerged early as different literary genres with differing concerns and thus not relying upon the same references and sources. This appears clearly in the works on the life of Muhammad and his battles, which contain relatively few sayings of the Prophet, and in some cases astonishingly few.

Many reasons may account for this. The inspiring role of the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām (d. c. 828) determined for all the later literary developments of the biography of Muhammad a primary place for reports and traditions attested before the finalization of formal criteria for assessing the reliability of hadith. In the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām or in the *Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī (d. 823) the term "hadith," meaning simply "story," is not necessarily connected to the Prophet. And when words of the Prophet are quoted in relation to the narration of his life, there is no clear relation to the hadith literature. On the other hand, not a single attestation in the *Sīra* traced back to Muhammad b. Isḥāq (d. 767), who was considered untrustworthy by later standards, finds its way into canonical hadith. The literary style and peculiar topics dealt with in biographies of Muhammad are closely related to his political and even military leadership, and in these topics occasions to cite the words ascribed to him in later hadith literature were not frequent. Here Muhammad is described on his path to his success rather than in the administration of religious affairs. Given these early steps, later historiographical literature has not been closely connected to the hadith disciplines, and if words of the Prophet are needed, there is no systematic recourse to hadith and no way of managing them. While this early attitude is to some extent to be attributed to the fact that canonization and the emerging of the role of hadith as such had yet to be established, in later works it is first of all due to a reflection of different attitudes and subject matters. The result is that as a whole, in any case, historiography displays a less formal and more indulgent attitude toward the words of the Prophet preserved by hadith. Most typical of later attitudes is the approach taken by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), who mentions or alludes to words of the Prophet or to hadith, and quotes the term in the generic meaning of "report/narrative," but not often, and mostly in relation to the traditions going back to Ibn Isḥāq or other early authors (cf. Ṭabarī 1967, I, 203, 209, 218 *passim*). For example, when he mentions the *ḥadīth al-ifk* (Ṭabarī 1967, II, 610f) he means the story of the slander against ʿAʾisha rather than the "canonical" sayings of Muhammad about this incident, although he also quotes from them along with other material. In later historiographic literature, the emergence of interest in topics more closely related to the hadith, such as the *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (Signs of the prophecy), *shamāʾil/khaṣāʾiṣ* (Peculiarities [of the Prophet]) genres, these developments appear to be a hadith-oriented response to early traditional biographies of Muhammad. Such different and even competing attitudes can be seen in specific times and places as a reflection of the prominence of hadith studies competing with other prevailing trends. The Mamluk period, for instance, was particularly notable for the composition of works which fully belong to hadith scholarship, with authors such as Ibn Ḥajar (d. 1449), al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505). This attitude left its mark and can be recognized in reliance on hadith as the major source to convey historical knowledge in, for example, the works of al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) (cf. Brown 2007, 356–358).

Juridical and Theological Literature

Juridical discussion and its literary products are strictly connected to hadith. Their concerns are also of religious significance since juridical literature also discusses ritual duties and other topics of religious interest. Consequently, works on law from early Islam on were concerned with the contents of the Qurʾan, the attestations of the behavior of the Prophet and his companions, and the legal practice attested in the community (Brown 2009, 150–172). The behavior of the Prophet can be ascertained through the hadith and early reports that then came to be discussed and chosen in the major works. In this regard the major role played by Muhammad al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820) is not to be underestimated, since he was the one theorizing the centrality of the sunna of the Prophet as displayed by sound hadith in legal discourse. In particular, he argued the complementarity of the Qurʾan and the sunna, underlining the role of hadith as the sole source together with the Qurʾan (Lowry 2007, 165–205).

Consequently, from the start, the use of hadith was constant and significant in juridical literature. However, concerns differed according to the various attitudes of the scholars and schools of law, and notwithstanding its crucial role at the origin of Islamic law, the role of hadith did not remain static. For instance, Ḥanbalīs and Ẓāhirīs attributed the greatest importance to hadith given their attitude of close adherence to texts and words. Consequently, their literary output attached more significance to what hadiths state and attest of the behavior or opinion of the Prophet. The same logic was at work in later works. Later *fiqh* works use and quote hadith, usually displaying the same attitude as other literary genres. An example in this regard is to be seen in the Ḥanafī al-Sarakhsī's (d. 483) *Mabsūṭ* (1993), a handbook displaying fairly frequent reference to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which are quoted and introduced according to the most common standards. As usual, the different attitudes of the authors play a major role. For instance, Ibn Qudāma (d. 1223) in his *Mughnī* aimed to collect the most reliable hadith supporting the Ḥanbalī school (Brown 2009, 159). Many other examples could be offered. Hadith appear ubiquitous and are recalled by the usual reference to short names of transmitters, authorities, or authors, or an evocative word for the content, citing or not citing the words uttered by the Prophet. In other words, use and reference style in juridical literature is consonant with use in other literary genres.

In the realm of theological literature, early religious epistles show that hadiths were rarely cited and thus probably did not constitute an important point of reference in the earliest theological debates (van Ess 1975, 122). At the same time, all the main arguments that came to be debated and came under focus in the ensuing theological debates were drawn from the contents of hadith rather than the Qurʾan. In fact, though the words attributed to the Prophet may not have been considered fundamental reference in early theological writings, by the ninth century the sayings of the Prophet appear well attested. Most of the theological beliefs, probably underlying the much debated, controversial issues, mention beliefs connected to eschatology and apocalypticism, which appear only in hadith (Brown 2009, 174–175). Although the dynamics behind all this and the contraposition between rationalistic approaches and the theology of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* are beyond our scope here and are addressed in greater depth in Chapter 12, this in any case attests to the relevance of hadith in theological works, and to the fact that the hadith became a major point of reference in theological debates. The final solution arrived at by Ashʿarism, and the compromise which it represented, was achieved taking full consideration of the hadith, though later Salafi approaches downplayed this.

Other Literary Genres

The use of hadith and words going back to the Prophet was also significant in intrareligious polemics and in the confrontation between Sunnis and Shiʿis (cf. Afsaruddin 2002, 197–228). Despite differing evaluations of the process of transmission and of the reliability of the persons involved, Imāmī Shiʿism displays a consistent attitude toward hadith throughout its history (see Chapter 14). As regards Sufi literature or literature of mystical concern, however, the situation is rather different. On one hand, the example of the Prophet was considered the source of mystical sensibility and approach (Addas 2015). Consequently, Sufi interest in hadith is well attested (see Chapter 13) and sufis also composed specific works, conceived for the instruction and education of those following this path, such as the collection of the 40 hadiths by Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021) (Brown 2009, 185). On the other hand, with regard to the circulation of esoteric knowledge connected to the figure of Muhammad we find almost no direct relation between what is ascribed to the Prophet in the canonical collections and what is considered significant in Sufi knowledge, and questions regarding transmitters and authenticity are of scant significance. In general, however, hadiths are present and quoted in Sufi literature, where specific sayings are given prominence and particular significance, with the aim of corroborating particular beliefs or interpretations (cf. Brown 2009, 193–194).

Our survey could be extended to non-religious literature. Works of *adab* or lexicographical dictionaries make use of hadith and quote from the words of the Prophet according to their needs. This appeared quite early in *adab* works such as the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* of Ibn Qutayba in which quotations of hadith from the Prophet follow hierarchically after the Qurʾan as text references in the topics dealt with. This reflects the personal attitude of Ibn Qutayba as an advocate of the authority of the words of the Prophet, but it became a fixed structure in later anthologies and literary works such as al-Thaʿālabī's (d. 1038). Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), notwithstanding his muʿtazilite beliefs and his criticism of the early Sunni conception of the authority of hadith, nevertheless used and quoted words of the Prophet, though with no interest in critical terminology. Where belletrist literature quotes narratives or reports, adding these to other stories, lexicographical collections quote the linguistic use, with particular interest in strange or curious words attested in the sayings of Muhammad. Other literary genres used hadith for different purposes from very early on. For example, al-Khalīl (d. c. 786) was already including explicit references to hadith in discussing terms and their meanings (al-Khalīl 1986, I:67 *passim*). This is no doubt the attitude that gave rise to the works of *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, which are devoted to discussion of the linguistic characteristics of the language used by the Prophet as attested in hadith literature and which appear prominently from the ninth century onwards.

Hadith in Contemporary Literature

The question of hadith has become a major issue in modern and contemporary Islam. Various trends and contrasting attitudes toward hadith are at the core of some major developments which left their mark on Islam between the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Although the primary concern is theological – the meaning of hadith in religious discourse and in the lives of Muslims facing the challenges of modernity – questions concerning hadith clearly reverberate in the literature produced by Muslims. From the end of the nineteenth century, the production of written works in Muslim countries changed completely thanks to the triumph of the printing press and the emergence of various actors in the production of religious discourse. In the various regions of the Muslim world, written knowledge was no longer diffused through manuscripts and produced by ʿulamaʾ and supposed experts. Printing allowed for the emergence of many and various authors and the easy diffusion of manifold works, rapidly leading to a veritable explosion of written production in all Muslim countries. In this new state of affairs, hadith became the subject of specific works but was also quoted and referred to in works on religious themes as in the past, and even to a greater degree.

Hadith found its place in modern and contemporary religious discourse according to differing attitudes and uses, which to a certain extent reflect old traditional attitudes toward the meaning and relevance of hadith in religious discourse. A new emphasis on the hadith appeared in the nineteenth-century Indian movement of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth which promoted the centrality of hadith in the needed reform of Islam and in the behavior of the Muslims and consequently prompted the diffusion of a specific literature on various topics connected to religious, ethical, and various questions (Brown 1996, 27–32; see also Chapters 15 and 16). In India, Pakistan, and elsewhere, the study and dissemination of hadith in oral diffusion but above all in the new literature to be circulated among adepts and produced in the twentieth century in the form of simple treatises (*risāla*) on specific topics became a strong trend (Metcalf 1993, 585). The approach is not new: the Arabic texts of the hadith were usually but not always included with the Urdu translation and reference to the source. This tendency is confirmed by comparison with Muslim literature and in other countries, such as Indonesia, where study of hadith and translation of them played a major role in defining twentieth-century religious consciousness (Federspiel 1993). Here, as elsewhere, hadith literature, collected in new books and sometimes translated, is fundamental in educational institutions and consequently given prominence in all religious discourse quoting and using the words of the Prophet as attested in the canonical collections. The aim behind this trend, possibly connected to the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, but in any case reflecting the same attitude, was on the one hand to maintain the primacy and even the divine origin of the inspiration preserved in the hadith (Brown 1996, 43–59), and on the other, to attack popular beliefs or Sufi tendencies within Muslim societies, relying upon the Qurʾan and the hadith as sole reference for authority.

It is hardly surprising, then, that we see a continuity between these trends and Salafi tendencies emerging over the last few decades in Muslim countries. Salafi movements, as products of the Wahhabi religious vision and more recent perspectives emerging from the 1960s, are in fact characterized by a strong emphasis on hadith as authoritative sources in Islam along with the Qurʾan. But Salafis go even further when refusing every imitation of the traditional medieval past and affirming their approach to the original sources. They re-discuss the hadith as transmitted and subject the sayings to new criticism, in some respects changing the classical and traditional understanding of hadith and thereby imposing a new perspective on what they consider as sound and acceptable, which thus constitutes the sole authority to follow along with the Qurʾan. The result of this is the production of a literature proliferating discussion and quotation of hadith with the utmost attention paid to the chains of transmission and the people involved. The key figure in this activity was Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999), who produced a large library of works on hadith including traditional discussions on soundness of reports and thus, on the one hand, evidencing a contemporary focus on hadith while, on the other, producing reference works for the theological Salafi concern with hadith (cf. Lacroix 2009; see also Chapter 15).

However, it must also be recognized that this attitude was counteracted by another attitude tending to belittle and contest the authority of hadith. Though not directly connected to the old *ahl al-raʾy* or muʿtazilite skepticism, this attitude is closely connected to Western Orientalist criticism and new trends in Islamic modernism typical of the twentieth century with some early examples at the end of the nineteenth (Brown 1996, 81–107). This attitude recalls earlier movements such as the Ahl-i Qurʾan, maintaining the sole authority of the Qurʾan in religious discourse and thus dismissing hadith, though sometimes still discussing it (Brown 1996, 38–42). In the literature produced within this current of thought, hadith is quoted and discussed in order to reject it. However this rejection of hadith is often related to its content rather than to the way hadith was preserved and transmitted. The work *Aḍwāʾ ʿalā al-sunna al-muḥammadiyya* (Eng. transl. "Lights on the Muhammadan Sunna," Cairo 1958) by Maḥmūd Abū Rayya (d. 1970) is the most famous example (Brown 2009, 246–248) of a trend which involved other major figures of contemporary Islam who tried to downsize the role of hadith and sought to separate the concept of sunna from the single hadiths as a way to counteract criticism on some contents and the problems connected to the preservation and transmission of these sayings. In all the works reflecting this attitude, where hadith is the central topic, the question is the authenticity and the relevant means to ascertain this provided by traditional or contemporary criticism (cf. Juynboll 1969). Such trends and attitudes trying to diminish or circumscribe the role of hadith in religious discourse constantly emerge also in more recent times and are at the origin of harsh discussions (Brunner 2014; see also Chapter 16).

One last tendency attests to a more popular use of the contents of hadith as a way to convey other knowledge and to deal with some topics. Popular Arabic booklets devoted to eschatological themes and other topics found wide circulation in the years around the turn of the third millennium. These display a common attitude toward hadith. They refer to them, use and quote and discuss them, but the source is rarely given, leaving the impression that the authority is given by the word of the Prophet as attested in some unspecified traditional work without any need to specify which work it is, or to list transmitters (Tottoli 2002). Some works aiming to give a more grounded discussion cite some references, but it appears clear that, as in some cases in the Middle Ages, this kind of work takes for granted the reference to sources and transmitters; only the words uttered by the Prophet count, around which to build an argument.

This literature as a whole attests to the significance of the word of the Prophet in literary production that does not originate from cultural elites but reflects popular taste and circulates widely. Alongside the word of the Qurʾan, the word uttered by Muhammad is thus central, conveying significance to all the Muslim communities discussing and producing literature at every level.

Conclusion

Islamic literature as a whole preserves frequent use and quotation of hadith. Along with Islamic exegesis, all literary genres use the sayings of the Prophet to various ends, but mainly to give evidence and corroborate arguments. Though the extent and conditions of this use can vary according to period, genre, and author, as a whole they confirm the prominence which hadith gained in the imagery of Sunni Islam. The differing tendencies attest to more or less emphasis in quoting the hadith and also different ways of quoting them: complete, including chains of transmitters, or only the essential content, or paraphrased or even only hinted at. Although it is not easy to draw some specific lines in these differing attitudes, Sunni literature attests to the ubiquitous use of the sayings of the Prophet, while displaying an approach differing from hadith literature proper in the use and reference to it. As a whole, this use attests to the prominence accorded to the words of the Prophet in Sunni Islam and the various ways of achieving this prominence.

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IV. Impact

CHAPTER 10

Law

Christopher Melchert

Islamic law is at the center of the Islamic religious tradition. God's nature is unknowable, in Islamic theology, but he has graciously shown us the way we should behave, rather than let us stumble in the dark. Unlike Christian priests, but like Jewish rabbis, Muslim men of religion are pre-eminently experts in the law. *Sharīʿa* is usually taken to be the Arabic word corresponding to "Islamic law." It means precisely the revealed law that we should follow. It is referred to incessantly today but was fairly rare in the premodern tradition, where the related words *sharʿ* ("revelation") and *fiqh* ("discernment") were much more common, and *sharīʿa* often appeared in its plural form, *sharāʾiʿ*, meaning "revealed laws"; that is, individual rules. *Fiqh* is the scholastic discipline practiced by the men of religion whose job it was to advise the laity how to behave (especially as *muftī*s, givers of opinions). The object of their discernment was to classify actions, the most famous scheme comprising five categories (*al-aḥkām al-khamsa*): required, encouraged, indifferent, discouraged, and forbidden. The five-times-a-day ritual prayer is an example of something required; extra prayers beyond five are encouraged; wearing gray socks or blue might be indifferent; divorce is discouraged; eating pork is forbidden.

As an example of discerning the law, here is a passage from a classic handbook according to the Mālikī school, by Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081), on salutations to and from non-Muslims:

> People have disagreed over the interpretation of the saying of God (mighty and glorious is he) "When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a fairer greeting or return it" (Q. 4:86, Jones transl.). ʿAṭāʾ said this verse concerned the people of Islam in particular. This is what Mālik's position entails, for he forbade replying to Jews with better than their greeting. This is the meaning of the hadith report of the Prophet … ʿAbd Allāh ibn

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> ʿAbbās said, "It is general, so that if he greets you saying 'Peace be upon you (*salām ʿalayk*),' you say 'And upon you be peace and the mercy of God.' This is better than what he has said. If you just want to return it, you say 'And upon you.'" It was related of al-Shaʿbī that he said to a Jew, "On you be peace and the mercy of God." It was said to him, "You say to a Jew 'and the mercy of God?'" He said, "Is it not in God's mercy that he lives?" A certain person has said that the (proper) reply is *ʿalayka al-silām* with *i*, which is a stone. The qadi Abū Muḥammad said that the sunna has brought forth what has been said already, which is more appropriate. The basis of this is what Anas related of the Prophet … : "When the people of the Book salute you, say 'and upon you'." (Al-Bājī 1331–1332, 7:281)

Al-Bājī considers multiple ways of knowing what God wants. He starts with the Qurʾan. Of course, Muslims have always wished to do as the Qurʾan commands. Often, however, the Qurʾan lacks detail; for example, it continually refers to the basic duties of the ritual prayer and the alms tax but never spells out the required words or gestures of the prayer, beyond frequent references to prostration, nor who is liable to pay the alms tax or how much they should pay. In the case of greeting people, it does offer a command, but early Muslims evidently found it difficult to carry out in all cases. One difficulty is that the salutation *al-salām ʿalaykum* involves salvation, which they wish to avoid assuring to unbelievers. So al-Bājī goes on to the opinions of various jurisprudents through the centuries: a companion, Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687–688), a follower (or successor, someone of the generation that met companions but never the Prophet himself), ʿAṭāʾ (d. 114/732?) of Mecca, Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), eponym of al-Bājī's school, and "the qadi Abū Muḥammad," meaning ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Naṣr al-Thaʿlabī (d. 422/1031), who was trained and taught mainly in Baghdad. As usual among legal writers of the classical period, al-Bājī is loyal to a long interpretive tradition and presents a range of possibilities, not a single rule for everyone to follow. ("A certain person" is often a contemporary, conventionally not named, but the anonymous advocate of insult referred to in this passage also appears in much earlier Mālikī handbooks. The anonymity seems to allow some comic relief while indicating that this is not a serious possibility. It also balances a hadith report two paragraphs before, in which Ibn ʿUmar reports of the Prophet, "When one of the Jews salutes you, he says just *al-sāmm ʿalaykum* [poison be upon you], so say *ʿalaykum* [on you].") Still, al-Bājī gives the final word to a recent adherent of his school, backed up by a hadith report from the Prophet, which thus appears to dictate what is the best rule.

The Early Struggle for Recognition

At the time of the earliest extant literature on Islamic law, the later eighth century CE, it was evidently controversial where to look to figure out how God wanted us to behave – to figure out the category into which every conceivable action fitted. The two sides were defined as sunna (the pattern laid down by past authority) or hadith (oral reports documenting the sunna) against *raʾy* (opinion – shrewd and well-informed according to its partisans, arbitrary and unstable according to its opponents). Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ

(d. 139/756 or later) observes that one party of his time claims to follow the sunna, although he chides them for actually, on examination, tending to follow earlier *raʾy* (Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ 1960, 167). Implicitly, other jurisprudents did openly follow *raʾy*. In the earlier ninth century, the biographer Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) concludes notices for various men with the label *ṣāḥib raʾy*, indicating an adherent of reason in jurisprudence and theology. Implicitly, he dates the emergence of *raʾy* to the late first/early eighth century, quoting certain Kufans against it. Abū Wāʾil Shaqīq ibn Salama (d. c. 100/718–719) enjoined someone, "Do not sit with the partisans of *a-raʾayta, a-raʾayt* ('What do you think?' 'What do you think?')," alluding to their posing of hypothetical questions (Ibn Saʿd 1904, 6:68, 1957, 6:101). Al-Shaʿbī (d. 105/723–724?) refused a request for his opinion (*raʾy*): "What will you do with my opinion? Piss on my opinion" (Ibn Saʿd 1904, 6:174, 1957, 6:250). Occasionally, he regretfully comments that someone once adhered to hadith but later went over to *raʾy*; for example, the leading Ḥanafi jurisprudent Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798?), of whom he says, "He was won over by *raʾy* and turned from hadith" (Ibn Saʿd 1904, 7/2:74, 1957, 7:330). A generation later, in the third quarter of the century, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889?) expressly names the leading parties "the partisans of *raʾy*" and "the partisans of hadith" (Ibn Qutayba 1992, 494–500).

Over the ninth century, the adherents of hadith tended to prevail, and no juridical works survive that openly advocate *raʾy*. However, it seems likely that lost works of the Ḥanafi/Muʿtazili tendency did identify the basis of the law as Qurʾan, hadith, consensus, and *raʾy*, as the classic Sunni basis was to be Qurʾan, hadith, consensus, and analogy (Stewart 2004). No one is known to have rejected hadith entirely, but ninth-century rationalists argued for discarding hadith that contradicted reason or the Qurʾan, as is plain from the continual protests of Ibn Qutayba (1962). Some rationalists proposed impractical conditions before any particular hadith report could be allowed to bear on a legal question; for example, that it be transmitted by 20 or more at every level, making it *mutawātir* – knowledge so widespread that it could not have come of any conspiracy to deceive. (Such criteria are often reviewed in the literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh*; e.g. Abū Isḥāq 1999, 192–193.) At the traditionalist end, preferring to maximize reliance on revelation, were advocates of inferring the law mainly from hadith, to the point of making the Qurʾan give way whenever there seemed to be a contradiction. A slogan attributed to various experts of the earlier eighth century puts it that "The sunna judges the Qurʾan"; that is, it determines its application (al-Dārimī 1434/2013, Introduction, *bāb al-sunna qāḍiya ʿalā kitāb Allāh*; cf. among others ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad 1401/1981, 438, Marwazī 1408/1988, 33). Some traditionalists had misgivings. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk (ibn Muzāḥim, Khurasani, d. after 100/718–719) is quoted as saying, "There will come upon the people a time when hadith reports have increased to the point where the dust remains on the Qurʾan, no one looking at it" (Aḥmad 1357, 213 1403/1983, 262). The Kufan jurisprudent Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778?) said, "Would that I had restricted myself to the Qurʾan" (Aḥmad 1988, 1:469, 1410/1990, 1:174). But this probably has less to do with hadith as a source of rules and more with fears of becoming self-important, as an expert in hadith might become.

Sometimes, it appears to have been a matter of opinion whether someone should be called an adherent of *raʾy* or hadith. Here is an excerpt from the earliest extant law book, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik (d. 179/795), in the recension of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā (d. 234/849?):

> **38** Yahya related to me from Malik from ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUmar from Sulayman ibn Yasar from ʿIrak ibn Malik from Abu Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah … said, "A Muslim does not have to pay any zakat on his slave or his horse."
>
> **39** Yahya related to me from Malik from Ibn Shihab from Sulayman ibn Yasar that the people of Syria said to Abu ʿUbayda ibn al-Jarrah, "Take the *zakat* from our horses and slaves," and he refused. Then he wrote to ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab and he (also) refused. Again, they talked to him and again he wrote to ʿUmar, and ʿUmar wrote back to him saying, "If they want, take it from them and (then) give it back to them and give their slaves provision."
>
> Malik said, "What he means … by the words 'and give it back to them' is 'to their poor'."
>
> **40** Yahya related to me from Malik that ʿAbdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn ʿAmr ibn Hazim said, "A message came from ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz to my father when he was in Mina telling him not to take *zakat* from either honey or horses." (Malik 1989, 107)

This section is identical to another in the recension of Abū Muṣʿab al-Zuhrī (d. 242/857?). It presents directions from the Prophet, from a prominent companion, and from a prominent follower, implicitly in that order of authority as well as chronology. Mālik's gloss tends to keep the law uniform. This section is from the Book of Zakat in both recensions, but the translator has corrected an archaism, for the Arabic in the passage just quoted says each time not zakat but *ṣadaqa*. Only in the ninth century, it appears, were zakat and *ṣadaqa* formally distinguished as respectively compulsory and voluntary payments. It is not evident from this passage that Malik speaks on the basis of hadith rather than his own sense of things; that is, *raʾy*.

The next section in the recension of Yaḥyā (the second following in that of Abū Muṣʿab) also seems archaic.

> **42** Yahya related to me from Malik that Ibn Shihab said, "I have heard that the Messenger of Allah … took *jizya* from the Magians of Bahrain, that ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab took it from the Magians of Persia and that ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan took it from the Berbers …."
>
> **44** Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafiʿ from Aslam, the *mawla* of ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, that ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab imposed a *jizya* tax of four dinars on those living where gold was the currency, and forty dirhams on those living where silver was the currency. In addition, they had to provide for the Muslims and receive them as guests for three days ….
>
> **46** Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz wrote to his governors telling them to relieve any people who paid the *jizya* from paying the *jizya* if they became Muslims.
>
> Malik said, "The *sunna* is that there is no *jizya* due from women or children of people of the Book, and that *jizya* is only taken from men who have reached puberty. The people of *dhimma* and the Magians do not have to pay any *zakat* on their palms or their vines or their crops or their livestock. This is because *zakat* is imposed on the Muslims to purify them and

> to be given back to their poor, whereas *jizya* is imposed on the People of the Book to humble them .... If in any one year they frequently come and go in Muslim countries then they have to pay a tenth every time they do so, since that is outside what they have agreed upon and not one of the conditions stipulated for them. This is what I have seen the people of knowledge of our city doing." (Mālik 1989, 107–108)

Jizya is indeed the word used here in the Arabic, so why is this discussion in the Book of Zakat? Later law books normally discuss the special poll tax on *dhimmī*s (non-Muslim subjects) in the second half of a book on *jihād*, the holy war. Evidently, the common subject of this chapter is taxes. More importantly, does the *Muwaṭṭa'* seem to be here a book of hadith or *ra'y*? On the side of hadith, we have again quotations of the Prophet, then a companion, then a follower, usually with an *isnād* (chain of transmitters) between Mālik and his authority. On the side of *ra'y*, however, Mālik's own disquisition on the law is independent of the preceding hadith and cites only one authority, "the people of knowledge of our city." Later adherents of the Mālikī school of law, outstandingly Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), quoted copious Prophet hadith reports in support of Mālik's positions. The translator of the above passages implicitly makes this a book of hadith by assigning numbers to quotations of early authorities but not to quotations of Mālik. Sometimes, the practice of the learned people of Medina has been presented as simply an alternative means by which the personal example of the Prophet was preserved in memory, making practice equivalent to hadith (see Dutton 1999). But the foregoing passages are the sort of evidence from which Joseph Schacht inferred that the normal bases of Islamic law in the eighth century were local custom and Umayyad administrative practice (see Schacht 1950). Tellingly, Ibn Qutayba classifies Mālik in one book among the adherents of *ra'y*, in a later one among the adherents of hadith, probably according to the degree of political favor that the Mālikī school enjoyed in Baghdad when he was writing (Melchert 2001, 404–405).

Systematic inference of the law from Qur'an, hadith, consensus, and analogy was the program advocated most notably by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and his disciples (see Lowry 2007; Yahia 2009; Shamsy 2013). Al-Shāfiʿī held that the Qur'an was impossible to interpret without the aid of hadith (see Vishanoff 2011, Chapter 2). Among other things, he quoted the Prophet, "Let me not find one of you reclining on his couch when there reaches him a command of mine or a prohibition, then saying 'We do not know. We have not found anything in the Book of God for us to follow'" (Burton 1994, 88, to which add Shāfiʿī 1422/2001, 8:35–36, 9:49). More than known contemporaries, he insisted that hadith was equally inspired with the Qur'an. The exact words were less secure, but current methods of hadith criticism, he thought, were sufficient to guarantee that hadith accurately furnishes us with at least the gist of what the Prophet said. Al-Shāfiʿī also (at least in theory) restricted authoritative hadith to the words of the Prophet, demoting hadith from companions and followers. He himself preferred to interpret Qur'an and hadith as complementary, disallowing abrogation of the Qur'an by hadith. However, most of his school after him did allow hadith to abrogate the Qur'an, in case of contradiction, since both represented revelation from God. (The most famous example is the stoning penalty for adultery, supported by hadith in apparent contradiction to the Qur'an's prescription of flogging; see Burton 1990.)

Consensus and analogy were not sources in their own right but means to know the application of the revealed sources, Qurʾan and hadith. Consensus was interpreted as implying hadith from the Prophet otherwise lost to us. The companions would hardly have agreed unanimously over a rule, the argument goes, unless the Prophet had clearly endorsed it before them; for example, that all Muslims must perform the ritual prayer five times a day.

Across the ninth century, expertise in law and hadith were increasingly distinguished. For the most extreme traditionalist party, most prominently represented by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal of Baghdad (d. 241/855), they were virtually indistinguishable, inasmuch as the law was to be known from hadith and the essential skill was to sort hadith reports for reliability. By the generation after him, however, even the traditionalists conceded that expertise in law and hadith might coincide in a single person, such as their cynosure Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, but also might not. Mālik is an example of jurisprudents of the past whom Aḥmad disparaged for relying on *raʾy* who were reclassified after him as jurisprudents who relied on hadith, albeit sometimes without expressly saying so. Even traditionists (hadith collectors) as close to the nascent Ḥanbali school as Abū Dāwūd now offered their collections as providing the hadith on which the opinions of past jurisprudents had been based. Hadith became ancillary to law.

Classically, hadith documents the sunna. With the triumph of al-Shāfiʿī's program, sunna became increasingly narrowed to the model laid down by the Prophet, excluding the model of other early Muslims: companions, followers, and sometimes others. We have seen Mālik elaborating the sunna, meaning the model we should follow, without thinking any documentation necessary. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal illustrated an intermediate stage when he was repeatedly asked to define the authoritative sunna: did it include the practice of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī, the Rightly Guided Caliphs? He said, "Yes." Once he added, "On account of the hadith report of the Messenger of God: 'Incumbent on you is my sunna and the sunna of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.'" But then someone asked whether the dicta of such persons as Abū Muʿādh and Ibn Masʿūd, other companions, equally constituted sunna. "I will not deny it," said Ahmad, "and I dislike to disagree with any of them" (Abū Dāwūd 1 Ṭahāra, 105). Today, hadith is reserved for reports going back to the Prophet, and *athar* (pl. *āthār*) is used for reports going back to companions, followers, and others. In the classical age of collecting hadith, no such terminological distinction was observed. For example, the book *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* by the Egyptian Ḥanafi Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) is about contradictory Prophetic hadith, yet it refers to them as *āthār*.

Hadith and the Schools of Law

Hadith reports far more often contradict each other than the Qurʾan. Each school of law tends to cite its own hadith to support its rules. (Many examples are to be found in Burton 1994, Chapter 4, many more still in Ibn Rushd 2000.) The schools of law crystallized across the ninth century as jurisprudents recognized the superiority of one or another authority of the past and, across the tenth, came to expect that jurisprudents would follow a regular course of study under a recognized adherent of one or another school and receive authorization from such a teacher before presuming to issue legal opinions. The Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī are the four Sunni schools that lasted beyond the mid-eleventh century. Here is a section from Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), *al-Mughnī*, a major compendium of Ḥanbalī law. He is discussing the start of the ritual prayer, when the worshipper lifts up his hands and says *Allāhu akbar*, “God is greater”:

> It is preferable that he extend his fingers at the time of raising and press his fingers against each other on account of what was related by Abū Hurayra: that the Prophet, when he began the prayer, raised his hands so as to extend them. Al-Shāfiʿī said that the sunna is to separate the fingers on account of what was related by Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet used to spread his fingers for saying *Allāhu akbar*. In our favor is what we have mentioned. As for their hadith report, al-Tirmidhī said, “This is a mistake.” The sound one is what we have related. Moreover, even if that were sound, its meaning is that he extended his fingers. Aḥmad said, “Experts in Arabic say that this is pressing together” and pressed together his fingers. “This is spreading” (he said) and extended his fingers. “This is separation” (he said) and separated his fingers. Spreading does not entail separation, like the spreading of a garment. For this reason, they are applied in practice to the same thing and there is no disagreement. (Ibn Qudāma 1986, 2:138)

This is a typically vigorous argument from Ibn Qudāma, the sort of one–two punch that makes it a pleasure to read Islamic law: here is our rule (i.e. that of his own school, the Ḥanbalī); here is the evidence for it (a hadith report); another school has proposed another rule, with such-and-such evidence (a contrary hadith report); but we reject their rule because, first, their evidence falls to expert testimony and, second, their evidence, correctly interpreted, actually supports not their position but ours. This is typical of the way jurisprudents of different schools would argue against one another. No Ḥanbalī would say that praying after Shāfiʿī doctrine was impious. Where God has not given unmistakable indications of his will, as where there are only contradictory hadith reports to go by, there is a certain probability that each school’s doctrine is correct. Some jurisprudents held that all the proposed rules, having been arrived at by a school’s recognized procedures, were actually correct in God’s eyes. But even those who said there was only one correct rule in the mind of God held that no one would be punished for doing his best within the range of possibilities laid down by the schools. Still, a Ḥanbali jurisprudent would hold that the Ḥanbali position was most probably the God-pleasing way.

There were other ways of disposing of contrary hadith. Here is a discussion of how far to raise the hands at the start of the ritual prayer from al-Qudūrī (d. 428/1037), *al-Tajrīd*, a major compendium of Ḥanafī law. The main hadith reports in question are from the companion Ibn ʿUmar, who saw the Prophet raise his hands to the shoulders, and the companion Wāʾil ibn Ḥujr, who saw the Prophet raise his hands to the ears.

> Our report is related by more. What has more is more appropriate (to go by). They say, “We harmonize (*nastaʿmilu*) the two reports, saying that he raised his hands to opposite his shoulders such that the tips of his fingers were opposite his earlobes.” We say that his saying “until they were opposite his ears” entails their being opposite, or (at least) most of them. We harmonize their report in this wise: we say that *yad* is a word for the whole

> member (arms as well as hand), so that his saying "his hands were opposite his shoulders" means the bowing (the next stage of the ritual prayer) ... What we have mentioned is more difficult (*ashaqq*) and therefore appropriate. (al-Qudūrī 1425/2004, 1:478)

It seems typical that a Ḥanafī writer should not criticize the *isnād* of the opposing school's hadith report, as Ibn Qudāma does by adducing al-Tirmidhī's opinion, while spending more time defining words. His final appeal to difficulty is not indicative of a controlling principle of the Ḥanafi school, that God is better pleased by more strenuous devotions, rather of the opportunistic style of all the schools (see Sadeghi 2013 with many Ḥanafi examples). Like lawyers everywhere, medieval Muslim legal writers are not much concerned whether all their arguments are equally weighty, just so long as one convinces the reader. (It also seems typical that all of the Six Books except that of al-Bukhārī include hadith reports from both Ibn ʿUmar and Wāʾil ibn Ḥujr; that is, for raising the hands both to the shoulders and to the ears.) Of the four main Sunni schools of law, Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī, the Ḥanafī was notably slower to take up hadith than the rest. However, with al-Ṭaḥāwī and especially Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), Ḥanafī jurists did go out of their way to base their preferred rules on hadith, the same as everyone else.

Shiʿi jurisprudence also took up formal dependence on hadith (see Chapter 14 and Gleave 2001). To someone accustomed to reading Sunni hadith, their hadith collections combine what sound like ordinary precepts with bizarre *isnād*s. Their law books tend to leave out *isnād*s and *isnād* criticism altogether. Here, for example, is a passage from Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991–992) over the etiquette of depilation in the public bath:

> Al-Ṣādiq ... would spread (depilating paste) in the bath. When he got to the pudendum (*ʿawra*), he said to the one who was spreading, "Turn aside." Then he himself would spread on that place.
>
> Whoever spreads, there is no harm in going up to what is to be screened from him, for the depilating paste (*nūra*) is a screen.
>
> Al-Ṣādiq ... entered the bath. The owner of the bath asked, "Shall we leave it empty for you?" He said, "No – the believer causes little inconvenience."
>
> It is related of ʿUbayd Allāh al-Marāfiqī, "I entered the bath in Medina and there was an old man, manager of the bath. I asked him, 'O shaykh, to whom does this bath belong?' He said, 'It belongs to Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī.' I said, 'Did he use to enter it?' He said, 'He would enter and begin by depilating his pubis and what was adjacent to it. Then he would wrap his loincloth over his pudenda (*aṭrāf iḥlīlih*) and bid me, so I would spread the rest of his body. One day I said to him, 'What you would dislike me to see, I have seen.' He said, 'Certainly not – the depilating paste is a screen.'" (Bābūya 1957–1959, 1:65)

Both Sunni and Shiʿi law call for shaving the pubis, although they disagree as to whether the armpits should be shaven or plucked. Shiʿi law seems notably less anxious about immodest exposure in the bath. In Shiʿi doctrine, the imams are just as reliable sources of revelation as the Prophet, so Ibn Bābūya is certainly appealing to inspired hadith here as much as any Sunni contemporary, although his assertion that the depilating paste is a sufficient screen is substantiated by the second report following, not the first. Al-Ṣādiq is Jaʿfar (d. 148/765), sixth of the Twelver Imams; Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī is his father al-Bāqir (114/732–733?), the Fifth Imam. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Marāfiqī is there not to guarantee by his probity that this is a reliable quotation, as a companion might be in a Sunni handbook – indeed, the immediate source for al-Bāqir's saying is anonymous – but for someone to mention that the Imam not only approved of bathhouses (suspicion of them seems to have been concentrated in Basra, although there is some ambivalence in the Shiʿi tradition – see Melchert 2014) but owned one himself.

Hadith in Legal Theory

Hadith is much discussed in the literature of jurisprudence; that is, not books of rules but the theory of the law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Here, for example, is al-Shāfiʿī on the problem of accepting a hadith report from a single transmitter (*khabar al-wāḥid*):

> We do not accept hadith-reports from those hadith-transmitters who err frequently and have no accurate notes on which to rely, just as we do not accept the testimony of those who make frequent errors when giving evidence.
>
> Specialists in hadith-reports are of different kinds. Some among them are well known for their knowledge of hadith-reports, for seeking it out as a matter of piety, learning it from fathers, uncles, relatives, and friends, and for spending much time in sessions with those who debate about it. Such persons are to be given preference in respect of their ability to memorize. If such a person is contradicted by someone who falls short of him, it is better to accept the hadith-reports of the former than those of the one who, being among those who fall short of him, contradicts him.
>
> One must also evaluate specialists in hadith-reports according to certain considerations. If they share in transmitting hadith-reports from one man, then one can draw an inference about the strength of their memory according to whether their report agrees with what others have memorized from that person, or one draws an inference against the strength of their memory if they go against what others have memorized from him. In the case of inconsistent narrations, one draws an inference regarding what has been correctly memorized and what is an error by this. means. Other things, too, indicate veracity, sound memory, and error .... (Shāfiʿī 2013, 276–279)

The people against whom al-Shāfiʿī is arguing evidently distrust hadith vouched for by only one transmitter. Hadith transmission should be like testimony in a court of law, they hold, where a fact is established by two jurors, not one only. Al-Shāfiʿī needs a less strict standard for his scheme of depending on hadith to interpret the Qurʾan to be feasible. He offers historical examples of companions' acting on information from a single informant, then, as here, he suggests means of identifying those single informants who should be trusted. Preferably, X's report from A is corroborated by Y's relating the same thing. But X's uncorroborated report from A may still be acceptable if it can be shown that X's reports from B, C, and D are corroborated by Y and Z's reports from them.

Here is a discussion from a Ḥanafī writer, Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1100), of whose uncorroborated word to consider preponderant when there is a contradiction:

> For this reason, Abū Ḥanīfa would say that it is necessary to accept the word of someone of whom it is not apparent that his lying is more likely than his telling the truth, since reason and religion both incline one to telling the truth over lying. However, Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad [al-Shaybānī] said, "It is not necessary to accept the report of everyone who has religion, who is rational and has the same religion and reason, since lying and false testimony have appeared among people since the time of Abū Ḥanīfa, along with the depravity that inclines toward lying over telling the truth. This is depravity by way of clowning, such that one acts in a depraved manner without receiving any benefit. It is not to be accepted so long as it is not clear that there is not in him depravity inclining him to lying over telling the truth. If he avoids the disgraceful sorts of depravity, which is the clownish depravity he does not fall into, then one knows his superior inclination toward telling the truth over lying on account of his reason and religion. His telling the truth is preponderant over his lying, so his report is accepted."
>
> For this reason, our comrades said that depravity itself does not make lying more likely than telling the truth, since in most sorts of depravity there is some pleasure, whereas in lying there is no pleasure. Reason forbids lying because it is to disgrace and humiliate oneself, whereas one may not forego sorts of depravity that do not disgrace one and in which is some pleasure. (Bazdawī 2003, 34)

Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad (usually called al-Shaybānī in modern scholarship; d. 189/804–805) were the most prominent followers of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). It may seem unlikely to us that Muslims became notably more depraved in the space between their generation and his, but evidently Abū Ḥanīfa's simplistic presumption of truthfulness needed to be qualified, and this was a way to avoid making out that he had been in error. Like al-Shāfiʿī, al-Bazdawī will accept the uncorroborated report from someone trustworthy. However, whereas al-Shāfiʿī stresses comparing hadith, al-Bazdawī stresses the personal character of the transmitter, a vestige of the early Ḥanafī /Muʿtazili line that al-Shāfiʿī opposed.

Modern Approaches to Hadith

The future of hadith is unsettled among Muslims themselves. Salafi is a broad term for those who wish to recover the earliest forms, the pious ones of the earliest generations (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). This always means jettisoning the traditional schools of law and their complicated, often indeterminate literature in favor of getting back to sources. A prominent modern hadith critic and self-identified Salafī is the Syrian Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999), who has expressed himself mainly in notes to editions of famous hadith collections across the centuries (see Chapter 15). He has aroused fierce controversy by rejecting some hadith even in the collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875), usually considered to represent the height of reliability (see Brown 2009, 321–334). Here is his note to a hadith report ultimately from the collection of Muslim, < ʿAbd al-Jābir ibn al-ʿAlāʾ < Marwān, i.e. al-Fazārī < ʿUmar ibn Ḥamza < Abū Ghaṭafān al-Murrī < Abū Hurayra < the Messenger of God: "Let none of you drink standing up. Whoever forgets, let him induce vomiting (*yastaqiʾ*)":

> In its *isnād* is ʿUmar ibn Ḥamza, he being al-ʿUmarī al-Madanī. The *ḥāfiż* said in *al-Taqrīb*, "Weak." I say, however, that its meaning has come by another way from Abū Hurayra with a sound *isnād* without mention of forgetting, as I have made clear in *al-Aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*, 174–175, and *al-Ḍaʿīfa*, 931. On the same topic from Muslim < Anas traced back to the Prophet is forbidding … to drink standing up. It is brought out in sound hadith reports. We consider it most likely that the meaning of forbidding it is prohibition [not mere discouragement]. Look it up, for it is important (Bukhārı 74 *Ashriba*, 14).

"The *ḥāfiẓ*" refers to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449; see Chapter 1), whose short work *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* lists all the men in the Six Books. It is an abridgement of *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, where he summarizes earlier accounts of men in the Six Books at considerably greater length. There, Ibn Ḥajar quotes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as saying of ʿUmar ibn Ḥamza (fl. Medina, earlier second/eighth century), "His hadith reports are disreputable"; Ibn Maʿīn that he was "weaker than ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Zayd"; al-Nasāʾī that he was "weak"; Ibn Ḥibbān that he was trustworthy but "among those who made mistakes"; Ibn ʿAdī that "He was among those whose hadith is written" (i.e. not to be dismissed out of hand; Ibn Ḥajar 1325–1327, 7:437).

The fifteenth-century hadith critic whom al-Albānī cites seems to have summarized the opinions of ninth- and tenth-century critics accurately enough, but al-Albānī conspicuously relies on past hadith scholarship, not his own comparison of *isnād*s. (In his defense, one might argue that he has fewer hadith reports available for comparison than experts of the ninth and tenth centuries.) His idea seems to be not that ninth- and tenth-century jurists were incompetent and contemporary traditionists impeccable, but rather that through the centuries there were those who inferred the law from various sources, including reason and custom, others who inferred the law as directly and exclusively as possible from Qurʾan and hadith. Al-Albānī saw himself as continuing the tradition of the latter. But al-Albānī's system is a significant simplification. Al-Bājī presents possibilities A–D, in conclusion pronounces D the most suitable without quite repudiating A–C; Ibn Qudāma deals with a contrary hadith report both by citing expert *isnād* analysis and by reinterpreting it to support his preferred rule; but for al-Albānī the discussion seems to end as soon as *isnād* inspection and comparison have done their work. The hadith report from Anas that al-Albānī endorses is presented in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* just before the one quoted. Parallel hadith reports from Abū Hurayra appear outside the Six Books. Al-Albānī does not mention contrary hadith according to which the Prophet himself was seen to drink standing up (Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* 74, *k. al-ashriba* 16, *bāb al-shurb qāʾiman*, nos. 5615–5618; *isnād* inspection suggests to me that prohibition was the predominant eighth-century Basran position, permission the Kufan). This said, al-Albānī's avoidance of acknowledging contrary hadith reports seems to be of a piece with the opportunism remarked in medieval legal handbooks. His endearing earnestness also has many precedents in the medieval literature.

Muslim liberals have tended to revive the primacy of the Qurʾan. For example, the prominent Muslim feminist Ziba Mir-Hosseini, having surveyed feminist endeavors to wrest away control of *fiqh*, says,

> The majority of these feminist scholars have focussed their energy on the field of Qurʾanic interpretation (*tafsir*) and have successfully uncovered the Qurʾan's egalitarian message. The gender inequality in Islamic legal tradition, these scholars tell us, lies in the cultural norms of early Muslim societies. (Mir-Hosseini 2005–2006, 642)

The Qurʾan promoted one thing, but Muslim patriarchs pushed in another direction. In dealing with inconvenient hadith, liberals often seem disingenuous this way, refusing to acknowledge that hadith mostly goes against them. Here, for another example, is the Tunisian historian and theologian Mohamed Talbi on the penalty for apostasy:

> The *hadith* authorizing the penalty of death is not technically *mutawatir*, and consequently is not, according to the traditional system of *hadith*, binding. And above all, from the modern point of view, this *hadith* can and must be questioned. In my opinion, we have many good reasons to consider it a forgery. It may have been forged under the influence of Leviticus, Chapter 24, Verse 16, and Deuteronomy, Chapter 13, Verses 2–19, where the Israelites were ordered to stone the apostate to death.
>
> In any case, the *hadith* in question is at variance with the teachings of the Qurʾan, where there is no mention of the death penalty required against the apostate. During the lifetime of the Prophet apostasy presented itself at various times, and several verses deal with it. In all, without exception, punishment of the apostate who persists in rejection of Islam is left to God's judgment and to the afterlife. (Talbi 1998, 165–166)

This is correct or at least probable except for the characterization of non-*mutawātir* hadith as traditionally not binding. On the contrary, as documented above from al-Shāfiʿī and al-Bazdawī, all schools accepted not only hadith reports with two transmitters at every level (well below the usual definition of *mutawātir*) but even uncorroborated reports (*akhbār al-āḥād*). Only, perhaps, in the early Khāriji and Muʿtazili traditions (excluding late versions of the same) were uncorroborated reports rejected. It is understandable that Talbi should present himself as continuing the tradition, not proposing to overturn it, but it would be more honest to claim no more than continuing the tradition of juristic disagreement.

Leila Ahmed contrasts the ethical and spiritual values advanced by the Qurʾan with the androcentric, misogynist outlook of political, religious, and legal authorities in the ʿAbbasid period:

> Such differences make plain that the injunctions on marriage in the Quran are open to radically different interpretations even by individuals who share the assumptions, worldview, and perspective on the nature and meaning of gender typical of Muslim society in the Abbasid period. That groups of male jurists were able, in spite of the unquestioning androcentrism and misogyny of the age, to interpret the Qurʾan as intending to enable women to bind men to monogamy, and to obtain divorce in a range of oppressive situations, is itself

> an important fact. It suggests that a reading by a less androcentric and less misogynist society, one that gives greater ear to the ethical voice of the Qurʾan, could have resulted in – could someday result in – the elaboration of laws that dealt equitably with women. If, for example, the two dissenting doctrines just mentioned had been the view of the majority – and this formed the basis of general legal practice in Islamic countries rather than that of a minority – they, particularly in combination, could have radically altered women's status in society. (Ahmed 1992, 91)

The dissenting doctrines referred to are (i) the Mālikī rule naming a wider range of justifications than the other schools do for a woman to petition a qadi to dissolve a marriage and (ii) the Ḥanafī rule allowing a marriage contract to stipulate that there will be no additional wives. The first of these rules presumably did prevail in North Africa, which was exclusively Mālikī after the eleventh century, the second in the Ottoman and Mughal empires, which strongly favored Ḥanafī law. It seems doubtful that there was in fact noticeably greater sexual equality there than where Shāfiʿī law prevailed. Moreover, whereas one would not wish to take away Ahmed's discovery of high ethics and spirituality in the Qurʾan, one regrets the way she refers to "interpretations" without mentioning that these are embodied in hadith. She will not talk about invented hadith reports because she wants hadith to reliably document the more prominent roles allowed to women of the first generation (or the first four generations, if the wrong turn did not happen till the ʿAbbasid revolution); also, one suspects, because she does not wish to discredit her case with Muslims distrustful of historical criticism from without the community. As an historian, I naturally prefer the frank way Kecia Ali admits that discernment of an Islamic law compatible with modern liberal values, as in rejecting female genital mutilation, will require "a willingness to treat not only jurisprudence but also sunna and hadith as products of their time, with limited currency as formal rules for contemporary application" (Ali 2015, 99, with further examples throughout; admittedly sidestepping the issue of invented hadith). Even some passages of the Qurʾan, she argues, will have to be downplayed in favor of the egalitarian ethic dictated by other passages.

Current Research Questions

The most prominent controversial question concerning hadith is of course that of authenticity: what proportion of purported quotations of the Prophet actually go back to the early seventh century, as opposed to back projection from the eighth? We have excellent summaries of twentieth-century scholarship from Harald Motzki and Herbert Berg (Motzki 2002, Chapter 1; Berg 2000, Chapter 2; see also Chapter 2 of this book). I tend to agree with Berg that the argument is deadlocked over contrary initial assumptions. As for the development of Islamic law, those historians more skeptical of attributions more often find that the rules were developed first, then hadith found to support them, whereas historians more trusting of attributions tend to make out that hadith reports were always available as a basis for rules, although admitting that the theoretical priority of hadith from the Prophet was embraced only gradually. There is some convergence of the two sides in recognition that at least the contours of debates over the law can be reconstructed with some confidence back to the earlier eighth century, well before our earliest extant texts (e.g. the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik).

Still common are contradictory accounts of the nature of Sunni hadith criticism. I believe the view is gaining ground that it was especially about *isnād* comparison. Stress on personal character to determine whether a given hadith report is to be heeded seems to go with likening hadith transmission to testimony in court and, as suggested above, was evidently central to the theory of hadith in ninth-century Ḥanafī/Muʿtazili jurisprudence. Stress on personal character is hard to find in books of Sunni hadith criticism such as collections of evaluations from Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (d. 233/848), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Bukhārī, at least when it comes to accepting or rejecting particular reports. Jonathan A.C. Brown has observed that the term *tawātur*, meaning that something has been independently transmitted by so many separate channels that it cannot reasonably be doubted (as it would be unreasonable to doubt the existence of a city called Moscow, even if one had no sensual experience of it and could not say exactly how one had come to believe in it – the principle Mohamed Talbi refers to), was evidently common in *uṣūl al-fiqh* from at least the early ninth century. Al-Shāfiʿī refers to it. However, it seems not to have been taken up by Sunni hadith experts until al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071; Brown 2009, 104–105). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245) produced an influential synthesis of earlier theory (see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2005; modern scholars have too often read early hadith criticism through the lens of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ rather than directly; see Chapter 1 of this book), but Wael Hallaq has observed that his student al-Nawawī (d. 676/1271) still applies different terminology depending on whether he is discussing hadith as an expert in law or hadith (Hallaq 2001, 133). The gap between formal jurisprudence and legal handbooks, such that the theory is not predictive of actual rules, began to receive scholarly attention only in the 1990s (see notably Calder 1960–2004 and Jackson 2002). The gap between the theory of jurisprudents and the practice of hadith critics has just begun to receive attention today.

Law books cite hadith most plentifully a-propos of certain parts of the law, notably ritual law more than property law. Ritual law is apparently more resistant to elaboration by reason, but the difference needs to be further explored and explained. Does it indeed mean, as Schacht supposed, that ritual law was elaborated before property law? There has been some attention to change over time in the use of hadith by the schools, especially their adoption across the ninth century of the new method of citing hadith to justify every rule (e.g. Fierro 1989). There remains much more to be done, especially for legal writing after the eleventh century. The use of hadith outside the law (e.g. by Sufis; see Chapter 13) has been even less explored.

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CHAPTER 11

Exegesis

Herbert Berg

The goal of the genre of *tafsīr*, or Qurʾanic interpretation, presumably is to explain the Qurʾan. Much Qurʾanic interpretation came to be embodied in the form of hadiths, with the statements or reports (*matn*s) of earliest Muslim authorities, Muhammad, his companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*), and their followers (*al-tābiʿūn*) being recorded along with the chain of transmitters (*isnād*s). Yet, less has been written about hadiths in the early *tafsīr* tradition than those found in other early Arabic literature,[1] such as the hadiths of the sunna and biography of Muhammad (*sīra*). This may be due to how little there seems to be at stake compared to hadiths of the sunna and the *sīra*. The paradigmatic force of the sunna (with its foundational role within the Sharīʿa) hangs on the very authenticity of its hadiths' *matn*s and *isnād*s. The historicity of the *sīra*, and so the traditional accounts of Islamic origins, likewise hangs on the reliability of its hadiths. Moreover, both of these other forms of hadiths are tied closely to Muhammad: their *matn*s quote him or recount his actions, and the *isnād*s at least symbolically connect later generations of Muslims back to him. Scholars willing to cut loose the sunna and the *sīra* from Muhammad by doubting these hadiths are often termed "revisionists," for doing so cuts Islamic origins from its moorings. But what is to be lost if one questions the authenticity of exegetical hadiths? Even a casual perusal of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, with its fairly large collection of early exegetical hadiths, shows that most of the opinions it records do not rest on Muhammad's authority. Most purport to give the opinions of his companions and subsequent generations of exegetes. Moreover, these later authorities seemed to have constantly differed in their interpretation of the Qurʾan. Al-Ṭabarī's exegetical reputation rests as much on his activities as a compiler as on his genius in reconciling conflicting views. Nevertheless, the exegetical hadiths are as important as those in the sunna and *sīra*.

The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith, First Edition. Edited by Daniel W. Brown.
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The Place of Hadith in *Tafsīr* Literature

Karen Bauer's analysis of the major tropes in the introductions to important exegetical works from the fourth/tenth to the sixth/twelfth centuries highlights the dominance of hadith in the genre after al-Ṭabarī. "Introductory tropes include praise of the Qurʾan and *tafsīr*, assertions about the nature of *tafsīr*, arguments against interpreting through personal opinion (*raʾy*), and in favour of interpreting through hadiths …" (Bauer 2013, 40). Al-Ṭabarī states that there are three ways through which knowledge of the interpretation of the Qurʾan may be attained: first, Qurʾanic prophecies about the end times are known only to God; second, some interpretations of the Qurʾan can be attained only from Muhammad, that is, by means of hadith (al-Ṭabarī 1992, 1:56–57); finally, those whose expertise includes Arabic, the language of the Qurʾan, may interpret the text. The Qurʾan exhorts Muslims to reflect on its words, and al-Ṭabarī cites companions who made a point of commenting on its verses. But this latter category is not an invitation for every qualified Arabic speaker to use personal opinion. After citing strong opposition from Ibn ʿAbbas and Abū Bakr to the use of *raʾy*, al-Ṭabarī cites Muhammad himself: "Whoever speaks according to his own personal opinion concerning the Qurʾan, and is right, is [nevertheless] at fault" (al-Ṭabarī 1987, 34–35). Rather, an exegete of the Qurʾan must employ reliable or well-attested hadiths that go back to Muhammad if they exist, and can only then use his linguistic skills – using one's linguistic knowledge is not the same as *raʾy* for al-Ṭabarī (see Bauer 2013, 44) – though "his interpretation and commentary should not depart from what the pious predecessors among the companions and the leaders, and the successors among the followers, and the men of knowledge in the community, have said" (Al-Ṭabarī 1987, 40). But as Bauer points out, "For Ṭabarī, a hadith-based exegesis does not exclude learned judgments about the accuracy or truth of that knowledge" (Bauer 2013, 57). In other words, exegesis must employ hadiths.

But one cannot conflate the genres of hadith (as found in the sunna) with those of *tafsīr*, even if the latter came to largely adopt the format of the former. There are at least four prominent differences. First, as Roberto Tottoli points out, given the exegetical model of verse-by-verse, at times even word-by-word, commentary on the Qurʾan, using the hadith format "was a matter of selection from among sources which served the purpose of explaining the words and meaning of the holy text … Reports, traditions and opinions of the early generations were considered significant or noteworthy according to the choices of each exegete explaining a passage, a verse or a word of the Qurʾan" (Tottoli 2013, 200). This differed from compilers of hadiths, who might focus on an exhaustive collection or selection based on a general theme or from a particular companion. Second, in *tafsīr*, content often trumped the soundness of the report; even if the exegete was an expert compiler of hadiths, the differences in the genres allowed the exegete to include hadiths in an exegetical work that might have been rejected or considered problematic in work that simply compiled *ḥadith*s (Tottoli 2013, 211). Third, only a few of the elements that make up *tafsīr* were normally or necessarily encapsulated within the hadith format – whether Wansbrough's 12 devices: gloss or paraphrase, anecdote, Prophetic tradition, identification, circumstance of revelation, abrogation, analogy, periphrasis, grammatical explanation, lexical explanation, poetry, and variant readings (Wansbrough 1977, 121), or those exegetical concerns delineated by Versteegh: occasions of revelation, anaphoric references, historical detail, etymologies, comparisons of Qurʾanic verses, abrogation, variant readings, lexical glosses, paraphrases, legal application, metaphorical interpretations, and theological problems (Versteegh 1993, 91–92; al-Suyūṭī lists 80 categories in his *al-Itqān*). That is to say, there is much more to exegesis than hadiths. Fourth, Marston Speight has argued that the primary concern of the exegete (*mufassir*) is elucidation, but the concerns of the *muḥaddith* (traditionist) when citing hadiths about the Qurʾan ranged more toward the edificatory, exemplary, didactic, and juridical (Speight 1988, 80). Despite all these differences between hadith and *tafsīr*, the development of the exegetical tradition within early Islam and its encapsulation of much of it within the hadith format ensured that *tafsīr* would be subject to the same scrutiny and skepticism as hadith literature was when it came to be studied by Orientalist scholars.

Traditional Exegesis

One of the classic statements on how traditional Qurʾanic exegesis is to be performed comes from ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās, the younger cousin of Muhammad:

> Ibn ʿAbbās, when he was asked about some matter, if it was in the Qurʾan, he reported that, if it was not in the Qurʾan but was from the Messenger of God, he reported that; if it was not in the Qurʾan nor from the Messenger of God but was from Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, he reported that; And if there was nothing from that, he formulated his [own] opinion (*ijtahada raʾya-hu*). (Ibn Saʿd 1960–1968, 2:366)

Seven centuries later, the great exegete Ibn Kathīr outlined the same principles: first use the Qurʾan to interpret the Qurʾan, then turn to the interpretations of the Prophet, and only then, if these sources are silent, does one turn to the companions such as ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās or ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (Ibn Kathīr 1998, 1:8–9). Other notable companions traditionally associated with exegesis include the first four caliphs, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī, and also Ubayy b. Kaʿb, Zayd b. Thābit, Abū Mūsa al-Ashʿarī, and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.[2] Thus the above report from Ibn ʿAbbās, which comes in the form of a hadith with an impeccable *isnād*, anticipates and advocates this classical exegetical methodology in which one defers one's own opinion first and foremost to the Qurʾan and then to hadiths. The presence of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, and the absence of ʿAlī, suggest that the original intent of the hadith in its current form served a political agenda rather than a paradigmatic exegetical function. The absence of Ibn Masʿūd and other older experts on the Qurʾan further suggests a propagandist provenance. (For a discussion of Ibn ʿAbbās' use in Abbasid propaganda, see Berg 2004.) And since Ibn ʿAbbās was also among the generation that personally knew Muhammad – a companion like Abū Bakr and ʿUmar – he can also be seen as validating the preservation of the exegesis of others in the hadith format. Presumably, he and other companions refrained from exegesis while Muhammad was alive. Al-Suyūṭī concurs with the implication of the aforementioned hadith that Muhammad engaged in exegesis of the Qurʾan when needed (al-Suyūṭī n.d., 2:384), and this origin for exegetical hadiths seems supported by the examples that appear in the *kitāb al-tafsīr* in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. As with other hadiths, this material is thought to have been then transmitted faithfully until it was recorded several generations later. The paucity of this material was quickly supplemented in increasing amounts by the opinions of companions because, as Muslims were born further removed from Mecca and Medina, geographically and in time, more of the Qurʾan became obscure and required clarification (Leemhuis 1988, 14). Once this generation of early Muslims had died, the followers and later generations continued interpreting the Qurʾan, each learning at the feet of the previous generation and preserving their exegesis. The students of Ibn ʿAbbās are said to include Saʿīd b. Jubayr, ʿIkrima, Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām, Mujāhid b. Jabr, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda b. Diʿāma, and others, though not all of these could have studied with Ibn ʿAbbās. When this material was finally recorded in extant collections, these interpretations too had *isnād*s guaranteeing their authenticity. This *al-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* (exegesis based on hadiths or views of one's predecessors) became the standard for Qurʾanic exegesis. There are of course important exegetes who did not conform to this standard, such as al-Zamakhsharī, who did not rely on hadiths, Ibn al-Jawzī, who did not bother to cite complete hadiths or *isnād*s, or Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who was more concerned with theological and philosophical arguments (see McAuliffe 1991, 37–89).

In addition to the limited exegetical activity of some of these companions named above and the geographical or temporal distance between Ibn ʿAbbās and his putative students, there are three other significant problems with this traditional account of the rise of exegesis (and exegetical hadiths): a possible early resistance to exegesis; evidence from the extant texts that is not compatible with the Ibn ʿAbbās' methodology; and the reliability of the information contained in those hadiths.

Early Opposition to Exegesis

Ignaz Goldziher argued that there was aversion to interpretation of the Qurʾan by early Muslims that did not abate until the well into the second century AH (Goldziher 1920, 55). This was not a revolutionary claim; even al-Ṭabarī included a section in his introduction to his *Tafsīr* that dealt with hadiths ascribed both to Muhammad and to his companions indicating their refusal to interpret passages from the Qurʾan (al-Ṭabarī 1992, 1: 62–64).[3] Goldziher's point of departure is an encounter between ʿUmar, the second caliph, and Ṣabīgh b. ʿIsl during which the latter is rebuked after asking questions about the Qurʾan. ʿUmar opposed musing over difficult verses in the Qurʾan and had Ṣabīgh flogged several times. Goldziher adduces several examples of this aversion among other pious Muslims up to and including Ibn Ḥanbal. The latter, Goldziher argues, put *tafsīr* in the same category as *malāḥim* (apocalyptic traditions) and *maghāzī* (particularly the legendary material of the first *fitna* or civil war among Muslims). Goldziher's argument might explain the paucity of exegetical hadiths from some companions from the earliest period.

This opposition to *tafsīr* in general, however, was challenged by several other scholars. Harris Birkeland argued that the prodigious output by Ibn ʿAbbās attests to the fact that there was no such opposition in early Islam. Rather, it was a particular form of *tafsīr* that became problematic. Some early opposition to Qurʾanic exegesis was not opposition to *tafsīr* per se, but to *tafsīr* that relied on *raʾy* (opinion) popular among "heretical" groups. This opposition began around 100 AH and lasted about a century, by which time *mufassirūn* submitted to the same hadith-methodology employed by others. Thus Ibn Ḥanbal's opposition to *tafsīr* was part of his general opposition to the use of *raʾy*. Moreover, exegetical hadiths rarely extended much past 100 AH. But once molded into the form of hadiths, Birkleland suggested, *tafsīr* became a category of hadith literature and found its way into canonical collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others. As a result, exegetical hadiths also experienced the backwards growth of their *isnād*s, just as Joseph Schacht (1950) had claimed for other hadiths. In other words, hadiths that end with the so-called students of Ibn ʿAbbās, who had no problem with expressing their own exegetical opinions, are older than those ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās, other companions, or even Muhammad – which came into their final form in a time when a companion or the Prophet was needed to authenticate such an opinion (Birkeland 1955, 9–36).

Nabia Abbott (1967, 106–111), on the other hand, agrees that there was opposition to *tafsīr* but holds that it was much earlier in the first century and led by ʿUmar, who objected specifically (and only) to interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* (the ambiguous) passages in the Qurʾan. She concurs that the hadith format, with proper *isnād*s, began in the first half the second century, just as it did in other the other Islamic disciplines. Fred Leehmuis suggests that the real issue for ʿUmar was not *tafsīr* but the rebellious and destabilizing questions asked by Ṣabīgh, which questioned and undermined the Qurʾan. He argues that *tafsīr* did, in fact, begin with early Muslims such as Ibn ʿAbbās and Mujāhid, who would explain words as they recited the Qurʾan. Only later, when this transmitted material took written form, were *isnād*s added. Thus, he is unwilling to accept with certainty the material that is ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās (Leemhuis 1988, 16–30). Claude Gilliot (1990a, 85) largely agrees, but he suggests that Ṣabīgh's question reflected political opposition to the caliph.

The Absence of Muhammad from Most Exegetical Hadith

Be that as it may, the Ibn ʿAbbās hadith about the traditional account of the origins of *tafsīr* – which emphasizes the epistemological priority of the interpretations of Muhammad over those of his companions and theirs over later generations – is also problematic. This proto-hadith-methodology is not borne out by the evidence of Ibn ʿAbbās' own traditions. Of the 5,835 hadiths that list Ibn ʿAbbās as an authority in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, Ibn ʿAbbās only uses other passages of the Qurʾan in exegesis about 5% of the time and cites Muhammad only about 16% of the time (Berg 2000, 174). Abū Bakr and ʿUmar appear far less often as his authorities. On the other hand, he features his own exegesis quite prominently. The absence of Muhammad from most exegesis is quite universal. Even Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, a work dedicated to collecting Prophetic hadiths, can produce only 500 hadiths in his *kitāb tafsīr al-qurʾān*. Of these, under 60% cite Muhammad and they cover less than 5% of the Qurʾan (al-Bukhārī 1987, 5–6:328–569).[4] Muslim records only 40 exegetical hadiths in the *kitāb tafsīr* of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Nor are the verses which Muhammad is said to have explicated always the most problematic or most obscure, judging by later *tafsīr*s. Speight points out that there are exegetical hadiths in several *kitāb*s other than the *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* of the two canonical collections of hadiths by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. But their focus is more on the person of Muhammad, piety, and social behavior, rather than the interpretation of a Qurʾanic verse or word (Speight 1988, 73–76). Moreover, the tradition citing the traditional methodology sees Ibn ʿAbbās as the paradigmatic founding figure of Qurʾānic exegesis whose students followed his example. But it seems that no such "school of Ibn ʿAbbās" existed (Berg 2015, 67–88).

The Reliability of Isnād*s*

A far more problematic issue concerns the reliability of *isnād*s, the foundation on which the edifice of the traditional account of the origins of the exegetical tradition (and its traditions) sits. The aforementioned arguments of Goldziher, Birkeland, Abbott, and Leemhius all share a common assumption: that events and statements described in hadiths (both historical and exegetical) can be trusted at least in part. Thus, the third problem is that the authenticity debate about hadiths in general impacts those hadiths that contain exegesis of the Qurʾan. That is to say, the doubts expressed by Ignaz Goldziher and later Joseph Schacht about hadiths seem also to apply to exegetical hadiths. Goldziher suggested that hadiths must be used with "skeptical caution rather than optimistic trust" (Goldziher 1971, 2:19). He was motivated by the use of terminology in the *isnād*s that implied oral transmission rather than written transmission, the ubiquitous contradictions, the increasing number of (seemingly new) hadiths in later collections compared to earlier ones, and indications that younger companions knew more about Muhammad than older ones. Exegetical hadiths share these characteristics, although the last one should be reworded: the younger companions and followers knew more about the Qurʾan than the older ones – at least based on collections such as that of al-Ṭabarī. As noted earlier, Joseph Schacht argued that legal hadiths evinced a backward growth of *isnād*s. Various legal schools used their own "living tradition" that might or might not claim to be based on statements or actions of Muhammad, but could be rooted only in the traditions based on the opinions of companions, followers, or even later authorities. Later, in response to new rigorous demands that these legal authorities be connected to the earliest Muslims and eventually Muhammad himself, *isnād*s were found or extended backwards (Schacht 1950, 163–170). Or as Schacht eloquently stated, "the more perfect the *isnād*, the later the tradition" (Schacht 1949, 147). Again, what is good for the sunna is good for the *tafsīr*, except that its *isnād*s were extended back more often to the likes of Ibn ʿAbbās than to Muhammad. This fact is noteworthy. It seems to suggest that hadith-methodology proper came later to *tafsīr*, at a time when it would have been impossible to connect exegesis to Muhammad without raising suspicions. This process led to the proliferation of hadiths and explains why later collections have more hadiths ascribed to earlier exegetes than do earlier collections.

Several scholars of exegesis disagreed with these skeptical conclusions. Heribert Horst (1951), for example, argued that in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* the majority of the *isnād*s go back to exegetes from the first half of the second century, the date when Schacht argued that the use of *isnād*s began, thus avoiding the backwards growth of *isnād*s (Schacht 1950, 36–37). Horst, however, misunderstood the implication of Schacht's dating of the origin of *isnād*s. For at the same time that *isnād*s began to be used they also began also to be fabricated or altered.

On the reliability of the *isnād*s in exegetical hadiths there has been great disagreement among scholars. On one end of the spectrum lies Fuat Sezgin, who maintained that "almost all the earliest quranic commentary together with the transmission chains [i.e. *isnad*s] are preserved unaltered in later works" (Sezgin 1967, I:19; cf. Abbott 1967). Thus, he was confident enough to suggest that *Tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās could in all probability be reconstructed, and the works of Ibn ʿAbbās's students could definitely be reconstructed, from later sources using *isnād*s. At the other end of the spectrum lies John Wansbrough, for whom the presence of *isnād*s in *tafsīr* is a "halakhic embellishment [and] is, from the point of view of literary criticism, a superfluity" (Wansbrough 1977, 183). Wansbrough argued that the earliest form of exegesis was narrative and did not employ the hadith format. Only much later, after this requirement became necessary within legal circles, was the demand for the hadith format and methodology imposed on other genres such as exegesis. Rippin similarly saw *isnād*s as a mechanism, the presence of which "automatically dates a report to the second century or later, at least in its final recension" (Rippin 1995, 61).

Several attempts have been made to determine which of these diametrically opposed positions is correct. Although not focusing on exegetical hadiths per se, Motzki examined the hadiths, both *matn*s and *isnād*s, in the *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827). He concluded that the diversity and unique characteristics of each of the three major sources in the *Muṣannaf* demonstrate that ʿAbd al-Razzāq did not forge these materials, since one would expect uniformity if he had. He then examined ʿAbd al-Razzāq's informants according to the same criteria. The diversity in the relative use of *raʾy*, use of statements by Muhammad and by his companions; the use and quality of *isnād*s, terminology of transmission, disagreement with earlier sources, variant traditions, uncertainty, and so forth, all lead Motzki to conclude that the material is largely authentic. He concludes that Schacht was incorrect in his generalization that most *isnād*s were fabricated (Motzki 2002).

Focusing on exegetical hadiths, however, comparing the exegetical techniques ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās through various prominent transmissions found in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, leads to a different result. The inconsistency of the "stylistic fingerprint" (that is, the type and frequency of exegetical techniques employed) as they passed through several overlapping lines of transmission based on the *isnād*s suggested that hadiths are not a reliable source of historical information, at least in the case of hadiths from Ibn ʿAbbās contained in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Certainly any Sezginian reconstruction of the *Tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās, in whole or in part, seems very unlikely (Berg 2000, 173–230; for a thorough critique of my procedure and conclusion, see Motzki 2003, 211–257). Other scholars have opted to focus on newly discovered or newly reconstructed exegetical manuscripts in hopes of peering into the development of early exegesis. Yet they are unable to escape the issue of *isnād*s' reliability or lack thereof.

Extant Manuscripts

Ibn ʿAbbās

Relying on early manuscripts to determine the nature of early exegesis is problematic, for it often relies on the very *isnād*s that are in question. Isaiah Goldfeld, for example, goes even further than Sezgin when he refers to an independent *tafsīr* written by Ibn ʿAbbās. Goldfeld suggested that Goldziher et al. misinterpreted the transmission methods of early Muslims, in which written and oral materials served to mutually corroborate each other's accuracy. Redaction and interpolation occurred, and distinguishing author and transmitter might prove difficult at times, but the "wording of a certain piece of information could fluctuate, in form and contents, according to the requirements of the transmitter without completely forfeiting its cognate characteristics." Thus, Goldfeld maintained that all of the many versions of the *Tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās had always been transmitted in written form, either as monographs or compilations (Goldfeld 1981, 125–135). One should even be able to reconstruct the ur-*tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās.

Versteegh was not so confident of the existence of a *Tafsīr* penned by Ibn ʿAbbās but believed that "the *tafsīr* literature provides us with a clear picture of his teachings" (Versteegh 1993, 59). Versteegh also notes that "Motzki's remarks concerning the Ibn ʿAbbās traditions in ʿAbd al-Razzāq indicate that this process of accretion does not necessarily obscure the kernel of authentic teachings by Ibn ʿAbbās" (Versteegh 1993, 60; see Motzki 2002, 287–288). Both of these positions assume that the information in *isnād*s is largely authentic. At first glance, a contender for just such a *Tafsīr* (and identified as such by Sezgin) is the *Tanwīr al-miqbās min tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās*. It is also ascribed to al-Kalbī, al-Fīrūzābādī, and al-Dīnawarī. Rippin argued that this text reached its current form in the late third or fourth century and may have had a connection to al-Kalbī's *Tafsīr* but cannot be used to reconstruct al-Kalbī's exegesis, much less that of Ibn ʿAbbās (Rippin 1995, 38–83). Motzki disagreed with Rippin about al-Dīnawarī being the author, though he agreed with the late date of the text and suggested that the text suffered from relatively late *isnād* forgery, pointing out that "such cases of late *isnād* forgery must not be taken as proof, however, that *isnād*s are generally unreliable" (Motzki 2006, 161).

The problem with reconstructing any of Ibn ʿAbbās' exegesis, much less a *Tafsīr*, is that the number of hadiths ascribed to him increases dramatically over time. Gilliot argued that Ibn ʿAbbās attained a mythic status within exegesis. He became a "mirror" onto whom were projected various later controversial and juridical problems; he thus reflected the living tradition of the later Muslim community (Gilliot 1985, 127–184). Building on Gilliot, I argue that Ibn ʿAbbās stands as the cipher for an exegetical methodology (as evidenced in the report above) that bases itself on the Qurʾan, the Prophet, and his companions, and connects the later Muslim community with that cultural memory via *isnād*s that ascribe exegesis to him (Berg 2011, 259–283). Elsewhere, I suggest that his growing reputation as an exegete (and consequently the number of exegetical hadiths ascribed to him) coincided with the rise of Abbasid propaganda. Ibn ʿAbbās serves a role analogous to ʿAlī in proto-Shiʿism (Berg 2004, 129–146); his father, al-ʿAbbās was already too tainted by his late conversion, according to the sources, to serve in that role (Berg 2010, 13–38). Best not, therefore, to employ Ibn ʿAbbās to determine the early use of hadiths or to try to reconstruct his exegesis, for once he attained this status, traditions of later exegetes could be attached to him or new traditions that used pre-existing *isnād*s or newly created *isnād*s could be circulated.[5]

Students of Ibn ʿAbbās

One might argue that one could at least turn to other early *tafsīr* manuscripts such as those ascribed to Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Mujāhid, ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and so forth, some of whom are described as students of Ibn ʿAbbās. The *Tafsīr* Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) raises interesting issues because of its focus on narrative exegesis and Muqātil's failure to conform to the hadith format. Muqātil did not always identify his sources with *isnād*s. He does cite earlier authorities including al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Ibn ʿAbbās through ʿAṭāʾ, but in an irregular manner. He was an exegete who was accused of being a Zaydī of the non-Rāfiḍi variety, but the text is considered problematic, even heterodox, because of a perceived dependence on *isrāʾīliyyat* (Jewish and Christian sources). This *Tafsīr*, however, is extant only in the recension of Abū Ṣāliḥ Hudhayl (d. after 190/805) as transmitted by ʿAbd Allāh b. Thābit (d. 315/927). Nevertheless, Versteegh stated, "the text, as it has been transmitted, is indeed the commentary of Muqātil himself, which means that with this lengthy text (about 3,000 pages in the printed edition) we have an authentic document of what Qurʾanic exegesis looked like in the first decades of the second century of the Hiğra" (Versteegh 1993, 56; see also Versteegh 1990, 206–242). Goldfeld goes further, suggesting that it is "one of the earliest exegetic works extant, emanating from the school of Ibn ʿAbbās" (Goldfeld 1978, xiv). Rippin agreed that it is quite an early text, although he pointed out that the work has been subject to intrusions and reformulations (Rippin 1996, 319).

Does the lack of hadith format suggest that Muqātil was lax (as most of his critics suggest) or that he reflected, as Versteegh says, the practice of early exegesis? If the latter, then *isnād*s may have entered the genre of *tafsīr* fairly late. This is the view of Gilliot, who states that Muqātil wrote at a time when "the rules concerning the transmission of knowledge had not yet been fixed" (that is, in the form of *isnād*s). Muqātil's heterodoxy and laxity with *isnād*s may have led to his work being ignored, but material within his *Tafsīr* continued to be employed, but provided with *isnād*s, some of which culminate with Ibn ʿAbbās (Gilliot 1990a, 90–91).

The *Tafsir* of Mujāhid is a collection of exegetical hadiths whose *isnād*s culminate with Mujāhid. Leemhuis argued that the Cairo Dār al-kutub manuscript *tafsīr* 1075 "contains in all probability just what it says it does: *Kitāb al-tafsīr ʿan Warqāʾ ibn ʿUmar*

(d. 160/776) *ʿan Ibn Abī Najīḥ* (d. 131/749 or 132/750) *ʿan Mujāhid* (d. 104/722), which was transmitted by Ādam ibn Abī Iyās (d. 200/835)" (Leemhuis 1988, 19). Although it is related, it is not identical with al-Ṭabari's source for traditions with the same *isnād*. Leemhuis' analysis confirms that of Georg Stauth; the Ibn Abī Najīḥ–Mujāhid *Tafsīr* was established in written form by the middle of the second century (Stauth 1969, 225–229; Leemhuis 1981, 175; Gilliot 1990a, 88–89). Leemhuis noted that both Warqāʾ and then Ādam added traditions in which Ibn ʿAbbās was prominent: "The raising of *isnād*s to *ṣaḥāba* and especially to Ibn ʿAbbās apparently started with Warqāʾ ... about the time of the change of dynasty" (Leemhuis 1988, 25). Although Leemhuis agreed with Rippin and Wansbrough against Sezgin about reconstructing a *Tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās, he did suggest that it is likely that in the time of Ibn ʿAbbās, people like him and Mujāhid began explaining Qurʾanic words and expressions as part of the recitation of the Qurʾan. Rippin, one the other hand, argued that the books ascribed to Mujāhid are collations made well after from later sources. According to Rippin the same is true for that ascribed to Sufyān al-Thawrī (Rippin 1996, 318–319; for Sufyān al-Thawrī, see Gilliot 1990a, 89).

Nevertheless, Leemhuis, on the basis of this *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid, attempted to reconstruct the origins of *tafsīr* and the introduction of the hadith format as follows. In the first half of the second century, the "living *tafsīr* tradition" was being recorded and established in writing by scholars such as Warqāʾ and the more eclectic Sufyān al-Thawrī, Maʿmar b. Rashīd, and Ibn Jurayj. They identified their sources by labeling material as from Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, ʿIkrima, or others, and thus many of these "proto-*isnād*s" were defective according to later standards. Only in the next generation were those standards properly introduced and employed by the likes of Ādam b. Abī Iyās and culminating with al-Ṭabarī (Leemhuis 1988, 28–30).

A new entry into this debate came with the discovery of *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* of the *Jāmiʿ* of ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 197/812). According to Miklos Muranyi, this text was circulated in written form in the first half of the third/ninth century, within the lifetime of Ibn Wahb. Yet he argued that it contains exegesis from a century earlier, and in part even exegesis from the end of the first/seventh century (ʿAbd Allāh 1993, 9 and xii). Again, it is only possible to make this argument if one trusts the *isnād*s given in the text. Interestingly, of its 352 hadiths, only 7% cite Ibn ʿAbbās – far more than Ibn Masʿūd, but hardly reflecting the dominance seen in other *Tafsīr*s. Perhaps al-Shāfiʿī's skepticism about Ibn ʿAbbās was warranted; he could "assert only about a hundred *ḥadith*s from Ibn ʿAbbās concerning *tafsīr* as authentic" (Al-Suyūṭī n.d., 2:417). Gilliot points out that the context suggests al-Shāfiʿī is referring to hadiths that cite Muhammad through Ibn ʿAbbās, but even that seems at odds with his status as the exegete who received this vocation from Muhammad (Gilliot 1990a, 87) and suggests a cautious approach to the use of seemingly early exegetical hadiths. Otherwise, Ibn Wahb's *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* seems to support the development of exegesis and the use of the hadith format outlined by Leemhuis.

This brief survey highlights the problematic nature of determining both the formation of exegesis and the role hadiths played in the genre during the first century and a half of Islam.[6] Certainly by the time of al-Ṭabarī the hadith format was standard. Yet even with this methodological expectation, his *Tafsīr,* which features some 38,397 traditions, is replete with incomplete *isnād*s and *isnād*s with questionable transmitters.

Moreover, he provided his own commentary, albeit after listing the relevant *ḥadith*s. Such commentary may have been necessary, since it is clear that exegetes often disagree. Sometimes Ibn ʿAbbās even disagrees with himself, owing, no doubt, to the proliferation of Ibn ʿAbbās hadiths (Berg 2004, 129–146). Why include conflicting hadiths at all? Gilliot has argued that al-Ṭabarī is elaborating an "orthodoxy" by creating a direct connection to the Prophet and his companions, forming a consensus out of the diversity, and delimiting the acceptable range of that diversity. But his method also highlights the role hadiths had come to play in exegesis, at least for al-Ṭabarī. This method was "more efficacious than a theological treatise, because it causes one to think that Islam has always and everywhere been conceived as it was in the third century" (Gilliot 1990b, 281; my translation).

The question of the provenance of exegetical hadiths is further complicated by the nature of transmission of materials in early Islam. As Gregor Schoeler has argued with regard to hadiths and other materials from early Islam, oral and written transmission should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Although some followers credit companions with approving of recording hadiths in writing and others claim the companions disapproved of the practice even as a mnemonic aid, Schoeler described a lecture system characterized by a mixed oral–written transmission (see Chapter 5). Thus, if an exegete such as Ibn ʿAbbās or Mujāhid presented material to his students, even if he did not use notes, his students likely took their own notes during the presentation or made notes afterwards from memory. Or they may have used an exemplary copy within the teacher's circle. Many scholars, did not publish their own works but left that task to students. Thus, writing and orality were complementary rather than mutually exclusive (Schoeler 1989, 224). This model of transmission accounts for the great diversity between recensions of an exegete, especially since that same teacher might, over the years, have presented the material differently to different students. Despite this inherent diversity, Schoeler was able to assert the authenticity of each recension. Schoeler's model is often deployed to defend the authenticity of *Tafsīr* works ascribed to early exegetes such as Mujāhid, for it nicely accounts for variations while still allowing exegetical traditions to be employed by scholars to discuss the early development of exegesis since these are taken as "authentic" and so reflect what really happened. However, it could be argued just as persuasively that this form of transmission permitted later intrusions, fabrication of hadiths, or the forgery or repair of *isnād*s.[7] Thus, even in the case of early manuscripts, one's faith in their authenticity seems to depend almost entirely on one's faith in the hadith format and its *isnād*s.

Prospects for the Future

How then to resolve this impasse? It seems very unlikely that new, hitherto unknown, manuscripts dating from the earliest period of Islam will be found. Compilations of the exegetical hadiths gleaned from later texts will convince some but remain unpersuasive for those scholars who doubt the value of *isnād*s. Nevertheless, Motzki and Schoeler have been able to restore some faith that *isnād*s reliably describe at least some of the actual history of transmission of the materials to which they are attached.

Motzki calls his approach the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion), with which the providence of a report may be determined by comparing the *isnād*s and the *matn*s of a substantial number of related hadiths. As he points out, one starts with the assumption that there must be a correlation between *isnād* variants and *matn* variants of the tradition (Motzki 2005, 250) – an assumption that might make some skeptics balk. Put another way, however, the assumption appears more palatable. For this methodology to work, one need only trust the very first name in the *isnād*. For example, did al-Ṭabarī hear reports from (or have access to the written works of) informants such as al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm, Abū Kurayb, and Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd? Even the most skeptical scholars do not accuse al-Ṭabarī or other compilers of massive, wholesale fabrication of hadiths. Therefore, if one can find several transmissions of the same or similar hadiths in different compilations from the same informant, one can then compare their *matn*s. If they are identical, and there is no reason to believe that one compiler copied from another (and obscured the copying that the *isnād* provided), then one can be certain that report was transmitted by the person named. If they are different and there are sufficient versions, analysis of the *matn*s may determine which compiler altered the report, and perhaps even why. With this knowledge one continues to examine the informant's informants, that is, each transmitter who precedes him in the *isnād* the same way. Motzki outlined his procedure as follows: collect all the variants of a tradition; create a diagram of the transmission history based on the *isnād*s so as to highlight common links and partial common links (that is, transmitters who are recorded as having passed on the report to two or more others, who can be considered collectors and disseminators); group the *matn*s connected to those links for a synoptic comparison; analyze both the *matn*s (including motifs and themes, and even word choice and order) and *isnād*s to see if there is a correlation between the two; and draw conclusions about the original *matn* transmitted by the link and who is responsible for any changes that occurred during transmission after the link (Motzki 2005, 251). Careful analysis, therefore, of both the *isnād*s and *matn*s of all the extant versions of particular hadith often permits one not only to determine the origin of the tradition, but even sometimes to reconstruct the original form of the report and who adapted it as it was transmitted.

Motzki has successfully employed this methodology in a number of cases, especially with legal hadiths. It has also been applied by Schoeler and Görke to the *sīra* to determine whether certain events in Muhammad's life originated with ʿUrwa b. Zubayr (Schoeler 1996; Görke and Schoeler 2008). And lest one think that the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology only produces positive results, it can discover alterations and fabrications, even identifying when they occurred and who was responsible, as Jens Scheiner demonstrated by applying this method to historical reports (*akhbār*) about the conquest of Damascus (Scheiner 2010).

Motzki has also used this methodology with exegetical hadiths. But herein lies a problem: the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology is not likely to work for the vast majority of the hadiths in a compilation such as that of al-Ṭabarī. For most of his exegetical hadiths we have insufficient variations with different *isnād*s in other compilations. And although historical hadiths may be long enough to display a series of motifs, often exegetical *matn*s are too short. Many of Ibn Abbās' and Mujāhid's comments, for example, are simple one-word glosses. Moreover, given the nature of a hybrid oral–written transmission as suggested by Schoeler, these variations may be simply too many and too random to make definitive judgments.

That being said, the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology can at times be employed on the *isnād*s of exegetical hadiths which do exhibit the common link phenomenon, where multiple transmissions of related reports converge with an earlier transmitter (see for example, Motzki 2010, 238, 242, in which al-Aʿmash or Abū Ẓaybān is the common link and Abū Bishr another).

Harald Motzki and I have engaged in a lively debate, most recently on my approach to the analysis of Qurʾan 15:90–91, which highlights the value of the methodology (Berg 2000, 36–38; Motzki 2003, 211–257; Berg 2003, 259–290; and Motzki 2002, 231–303). Motzki's analysis is more thorough than mine, but on certain points our findings concur, for, just as I suggested, he concludes that the earliest authorities for the exegesis of the passage are Abū Ẓabyān, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Mujāhid, Qatāda, and Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad, and *not* Ibn ʿAbbās:

> They all died in the last decade of the first/seventh or the first two decades of the second/eighth centuries. Most of them (Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, al-Daḥḥāk, Mujāhid, Qatāda) did *not* ascribe their opinions to Ibn ʿAbbās. Only some transmitters *from* them did so. That happened in the second quarter of the second/eighth century and later. Yet, a few early scholars seem to have (probably falsely) ascribed their exegesis to Ibn ʿAbbās as early as the turn of the first/seventh century (Muhammad ibn Abī Muhammad, perhaps also Abū Ẓabyān). (Motzki 2010, 297–298)

In other words, the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology suggests that at some point, somebody invented portions of the *isnād*, thus confirming that *isnād*s must be used with caution particularly where they invoke followers and companions.

Thus for the earliest period of Islam, hadiths and their *isnād*s do not give us the definitive answers we wish. At least the *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology cuts both ways; it can show that some hadiths may be early and possibly reflect the actual opinions of some early exegetes, but it can also be used to establish relatively late dates and expose fictional *matn*s or *isnād*s. Even in the former case, however, those hadiths that are central to the standard methodology of exegesis, rarely, if ever, convincingly demonstrate that we can discern what Ibn ʿAbbās or Mujāhid actually said.

Notes

1 *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Beeston et al. 1983) in The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature series does not even mention *tafsīr*. The volume on *Ḥadith* (Motzki 2004) in the Formation of the Classical Islamic World series published by Ashgate Variorum also neglects the topic of *tafsīr*.

2 As Gilliot points out, this list of 10 companions does not match what we find in the sources. With the exception of Ibn Masʿūd, other companions not listed here, including Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAlī, and Ubayy, ʿA'isha, Abū Hurayra, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, Anas b. Mālik, and Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, all appear more frequently in exegetical *isnād*s (Gilliot 1990a, 1990b, 86).

3 These reports from Muhammad referred only to passages that fell into the category that God knew (that is, eschatological prophecies) or that had been interpreted by Muhammad. The reports from early Muslims simply meant that they did not feel qualified to interpret particular verses correctly, not that they condemned interpretation in general.

4 Based on 292 Prophetic hadiths (of 500) for 6,236 verses in the Qurʾān, though occasionally one hadith deals with more than one verse and one passage is covered by more than one hadith.

5 These would not be fabrication in the strict sense. Rather, the mythic status implies that valid exegetical opinions must ultimately derived from the pious predecessors, most commonly, Ibn ʿAbbās.

6 Another far more recent claimant includes al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (1999). It too is a compilation from later sources, but Versteegh (2011, 279–299) believes it can be used to corroborate his position on the authenticity of early sources. Other recent compilations include those of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, al-Suddī, and Sufyān b. ʿUyayna. In the latter case, the editor specifically sought to refute Orientalist claims about the late date during which such texts were established in writing; but having found no manuscripts, he simply compiled the traditions that cite Sufyān b. ʿUyayna found within the compilations of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ḥajar, and others (Gilliot 1990a, 1990b, 89–90).

7 Norman Calder agrees with Schoeler about the mixed nature of transmission but is far more skeptical about any inherent authenticity: "The owner of the notebook controlled its contents … There is no reason to suppose that one man's *samāʿ* would be the same as another's from the same master … In the end they would be preserving and transmitting their own material, not a 'book' by the masters" (Calder 1993, 137).

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Further Reading

Görke, Andreas and Johanna Pink, eds. 2014. *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*. New York: Oxford University Press, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. An excellent collection of essays focused on the genre of Qurʾanic interpretation. The first five essays are particularly relevant to hadiths. Catherine Bronson examines how traditions about Eve in the Qurʾan sprang from an acculturating milieu and the exegetical traditions of other religions and in the process transforming a Eve as a figure justifying gender heirarchy. Claude Gilliot shows how the exegesis of Mujāhid blurs boundaries of genre and how he drew upon popular storytelling (*qaṣāṣ*). Nicolai Sinai also sees the use of *qaṣāṣ* in Muqātil whose work reflects the formation of the genre of *tafsīr*. Roberto Tottoli explicitly examines the connections between *tafsīr* and hadith literature using Mālik b. Anas' *Muwaṭṭāʾ* and classical works of *tafsīr* to argue that the disregard of the former by the latter shows that a definable boundary between the genres had emerged. On the other hand, Ignacio Sánchez shows the permeability of boundaries at a later time by examining al-Jāḥiẓ' *Kitāb al-ʿUthmāniyya*.

Motzki, Harald. 2017. *Reconstruction of a Source of Ibn Isḥāq's Life of the Prophet and Early Qurʾan Exegesis: A Study of Early Ibn ʿAbbās Traditions*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press. Provides an excellent example of Motzki's *isnād*-cum-*matn* methodology in the process of examining the purportedly historical and exegetical traditions.

CHAPTER 12

Theology

Hüseyin Hansu

The Science of *Kalām*

ʿIlm al-kalām is concerned with God and his attributes, and with the Prophet and the fundamentals of the creed that he brought. Consequently, theologians considered it an exalted science and held that knowledge of *ʿilm al-kalām* is a requirement for all who are learned in religion (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 192–193; al-Taftāzānī 2013, 85). Although he rigorously criticized the methods of *kalām* in his *Iljām al-ʿawām*, al-Ghazālī (2014) assigned *kalām* the highest place in his classification of the sciences and considered it a universal science (*al-ʿilm al-kullī*) in relation to other religious sciences because *kalām* establishes the validity of the fundamental principles of those sciences. In his view, each of the religious sciences, such as *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, is a subcategory of *kalām* because each is concerned only with one branch of *kalām*. For example, the veracity (*ṣidq*) of the Prophet and the veracity of his words is established by the theologians; scholars of hadith, by contrast, are only interested in the authenticity and manner of transmission of the Prophet's words and not their intent or veracity (al-Ghazālī 1993, 6).

Despite this close relationship between *kalām* and hadith, noted by Ghazālī, the theologians and scholars of hadith differed sharply on religious matters and repeatedly questioned one another's legitimacy. Hadith scholars dismissed *kalām* as innovation (*bidʿa*) and labeled theologians *ahl al-bidʿa*, those who have strayed from the path of the Prophet and his companions. In the judgment of hadith scholars, by applying reason and dialectical methods to explain religion, theologians were at variance with the sunna of the Prophet, and they diminish the importance and the evidential value of hadith; because they use rational methods to evaluate hadith, they interpret it arbitrarily and find pretexts to reject it. For their part, theologians accused the hadith scholars of

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failing to understand the aims and real sense of the religion. Also, because hadith scholars rejected arguments based on reason, false ideas such as anthropomorphism and determinism penetrated the religion.

Kalām, also known as *ʿaqāʾid*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, and *ʿilm al-tawhīd*, can be briefly defined as a science that clarifies and teaches creedal principles (*uṣūl al-dīn*) based on the Qurʾan and sunna. (Although there are some nuanced differences among these various terms, they have been ignored in this chapter and the word *kalām*, which is more general and widespread, has been preferred.) The fundamental principles of the creed in Islam comprise belief in God, matters related to prophecy, and eschatology. These are considered the unchangeable foundations of religion. It is unthinkable for any legitimate religion or religious group to reject one of these three principles. The entire aim of all religion is to teach the content of these three principles and to correct beliefs that deviate from them. According to Islamic theology, this content, which is the subject of faith (*īmān*), encompasses everything that comes from the Qurʾan and from the authentic sunna of the Prophet (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1997, 2:459). *Kalām* establishes the foundation of these principles, determines their details, and explains and defends them based on both reason (*ʿaql*) and the Qurʾan and sunna. During the earliest period of Islamic history, in the absence of disputation over matters of faith, there was no call for *kalām*. Toward the end of the period of the companions of the Prophet, however, as a result of political conflict and civil wars, disputes about issues such as the religious state of a person who commits a grave sin (*murtakib al-kabīra*) and the meaning of predestination arose, and it became necessary to find answers to such problems. Early scholars tried to demonstrate the correct answers to these problems based only on the Qurʾan and sunna, but when anthropomorphist tendencies arose, with some claiming, for example, that God possessed hands, face, and a body based on the literal reading of certain expressions of the Qurʾan, scholars began to apply reason in the interpretation of the Qurʾan and sunna. In order to demonstrate that anthropomorphism conflicts with a Qurʾanic understanding of God, Muʿtazilī theologians developed the theory of *tanzīh*, by which they meant that anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qurʾan must be explained as purely metaphorical or allegorical. In reality, they held, such descriptions are only symbols of God's actions. In this way, the Muʿtazilī theologians rejected the attribution of undesirable attributes to God and denied the possibility of any comparison of God with human beings. Sometimes taking this position to an extreme, they argued that descriptions of God in the Qurʾan that suggest such comparison cannot be taken literally, for to do so leads to a plurality of eternal beings and anthropomorphism. As a result of these ideas, the Muʿtazila had to assert that the Qurʾan was created (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2:533–534).

Concurrently with these disputes on the Qurʾan and sunna, the Muʿtazila also attempted to answer criticism of Islam by non-Muslims. Following the conquests, when the Islamic community was confronted with older religions and ancient cultures, Muʿtazilī scholars increasingly applied arguments from reason. The founder of the Muʿtazila, Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748), reportedly wrote a book entitled 1,000 objections to Manichaeism (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 165). Wāṣil also sent his students to different areas of the Islamic world in order to answer criticisms of Islam. Therefore, in the second century Hijra, in addition to their disputation on religious texts, we see that the Muʿtazila also discussed important problems related to ontology such as non-essential attributes, substance, atoms, motion, and rest. This period, during which Dirār b. ʿAmr (d. 200/815), Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 246/860), Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād al-Sulamī (d. 215/829), and al-Naẓẓām (d. 221/836) emerged as major theologians, can be considered the formative period of *kalām*. Specific approaches to belief emerged as a result of these theologians' various responses to these discussions and their particular explanation of disputed verses and hadith. From the fourth century AH, *kalām* movements attempted to formulate their approach to various questions of belief in simple creedal statements. In the beginning, these treatises, called *maqālāt*, encompassed the creeds of all groups, but later books, called *ʿaqāʾid* or *uṣūl al-dīn*, focused only on each group's own creed. Examples include al-Ashʿarī's (d. 324/936) *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna* (exposition of fundamentals of faith), ʿAbd al Qāhir al-Baghdādī's (d. 429/1037) *Uṣūl al-dīn*, and al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār's (d. 415/1025) *Uṣūl al-khamsa*. The first comprehensive book which claimed to compile the creed of the *Salaf* was written at that time by Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933).

Many learned Muslim scholars, however, recoiled in distaste from such theological discussions. These scholars, known as *muḥaddithūn*, occupied themselves primarily with transmission of the hadith. To explain theological issues, they considered it unnecessary to go beyond the plain meaning of verses from the Qurʾan, Prophetic hadiths, and the views of the companions. They dismissed the use of rational methods to explain the Qurʾan or the sunna as *bidʿa*, innovation. They claimed the early generations of scholars, the *salaf*, were their forbears, and they believed that they were following in the path of these scholars by interpreting anthropomorphic and ambiguous verses purely on the basis of transmitted knowledge (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2:530). They expressed their views on such disputable theological issues by gathering Prophetic accounts and expressions into works of hadith and organizing them in chapters with titles such as *kitāb al-īmān* and *kitāb al-qadar*. The response of the hadith scholars to the claims and methods of the theologians is thus reflected in the major collections of hadith. Hadith scholars were uninterested in external criticism of Islam, nor were they sufficiently equipped to answer such challenges.

The controversy between theologians and hadith scholars took a new turn at the beginning of the third century AH when the theologians gained state support for their beliefs. The so-called *Miḥna* established an inquisition to impose Muʿtazilī views (218–234/833–849), eliciting widespread reaction and polarization. Those who accepted the createdness of the Qurʾan (*khalq al-Qurʾān*), a hotly disputed subject of that time, gathered around the *kalām* scholars; those who rejected the createdness of the Qurʾan gathered around hadith scholars.

Hadith scholars had originally expressed their views on various theological issues in the relevant sections of the hadith collections; but after the end of the classification period of hadith, toward the end of the third century, hadith scholars began recording their theological views in separate treatises called *kitāb al-sunna* (for a concise list of these treatises see Kutlu 2000, 22–29). The term "sunna" here means to follow the path of the Prophet and his companions regarding theological issues, and the use of *ahl al-sunna* as a designation for this movement has a closely related meaning.

A new period in the relationship of theology and hadith began in the fourth century with the official prohibition of Muʿtazilite *kalām* by the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Qādir Biʾllāh (d. 422/1031) (Ibn al-Jawzī 1992, 15:125) and the abandonment of Muʿtazilite views in favor of the views of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936). After declaring that he accepted the views of hadith scholars in their entirety (Ashʿarī 1397, 21), al-Ashʿarī attempted to explain and prove these views by supplementing transmitted evidence with rational proofs (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2:534). Al-Ashʿarī thus established the foundation of an alternative theological movement distinct from the Muʿtazila.

Although the conversion of al-Ashʿarī pleased the hadith scholars, they did not approve of his methods. From the very beginning, hadith scholars had opposed the use of dialectical methods to elucidate the articles of faith. The point of difference between the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the Ashʿarites was that the Ashʿarites were willing to subject some of the divine attributes to interpretation whereas the *ahl al-ḥadīth* opposed all such interpretation. Despite the strong reaction on the part of hadith scholars, al-Ashʿarī and his followers held their ground. Sharp debates emerged between followers of al-Ashʿarī and hadith scholars, and in the fifth century tension came to a head in sporadic clashes such as those in Nīshāpūr (Ibn ʿAsākir 1983, 310ff.). The *ahl al-ḥadīth* subsequently continued in two forms: followers of al-Ashʿarī on the one hand and supporters of Ibn Ḥanbal on the other. Ashʿarites adopted the label *ahl al-sunna*, while Hanbalites preferred to call themselves *salafiyya*. Expressions like *ahl al-ḥadīth* and *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, which had been used before this time, were gradually replaced by these new designations and in time went out of use.

The primary aim of the *salafiyya* was to revive the creed (*iʿtiqād*) of the *salaf* and to struggle against any view in conflict with it (Abū Zahra 2009, 196, 200–201). Although the term *salaf* had been in use before that time, it was used as a general term to refer to the first three generations of Islam. But from the fourth century, the term *salafiyya* came to refer to a particular school that maintained that the principles of the creed are only those manifested in the Qurʾan and sunna and that these must be taken in their literal sense without interpretation and without asking questions. Most of these were strict pro-Ḥanbalī hadith scholars. The *salafiyya* held that none of the names, attributions, and information concerning Allah in the Qurʾan and hadith may be be subject to any form of interpretation. Moreover, in imitation of the companions of the Prophet and their followers, not only must principles of belief be derived exclusively from scriptural texts, proofs of their validity must also be similarly derived.

The *salafiyya* dismissed any method other than their own as innovation, and they produced substantial literature in support of their ideas and in opposition to *kalām* (Abū Zahra 2009, 197). Although they claim to be the true *ahl al-sunna*, because this name became associated with the Ashʿarites, they prefer to call themselves Salafis. They sometimes disdainfully designate the Ashʿarī theologians as *khalaf* (those who gave up the approach of the *salaf* in understanding of the religion), in deliberate contrast with the *salaf* (Ibn Taymiyya 1995, 4:73; 5:9–10).

This theological salafism was systematized by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1351) in the seventh century, but it did not prevail over Ashʿarism, nor did the *salafiyya* remain the sole representatives of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Ashʿarism, understood as the defense of the theological views of the *muḥaddithūn* by rational methods, was preferred by many jurists, legal theorists, linguists, and exegetes. The majority of hadith scholars during that period also adopted the approach of the Ashʿarites. Almost all Qurʾan commentators (*mufassirūn*) and the great majority of famous *muḥaddithūn* who emerged after that period were Ashʿarites (Ibn ʿAsākir 1983, 177–330). Ashʿarī hadith scholarship continued with scholars such as Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and Ibn Fūrak (d. 478/1085), and an Ashʿarite school of hadith emerged with the establishment in Damascus of the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyyah. The terms of that institution's endowment stipulated that its head must adhere to the Ashʿarī creed, and notable scholars of hadith who led the institution included Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), al-Nawāwī (d. 676/1277), Mizzī (d. 742/1341), Abū Shama al-Maqdisī (d. 665/1267), and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449). Although he was a prominent *muḥaddith*, al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) was not assigned as head of the institution because of suspicion that his adherence to Ashʿarism was not sufficiently strict (al-Subkī 1964, 10: 398, 200, 201).

Ashʿarism, defined as the defense of the theological views of the *muḥaddithūn* by rational methods (Ibn ʿAsākir 1983, 163; al-Nasafī 1993, 2:220), gradually grew stronger through the work of scholars of *kalām* such as al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Ibn Fūrak (d. 478/1085), and al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2: 536–537). Ashʿarism was adopted as the official creed in the Nizāmiyya madrasas established by Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092). With al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ashʿarism also gained influence in Sufi circles.

Although philosophical tendencies, influenced by Muʿtazilī teaching, resume in Ashʿarī *kalām* in the sixth century, and became strong with al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) (al-Shāfiʿī 1991, 115), the traditionalist approach continued to dominate. Al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), a prominent Ashʿarī scholar, became author of the main Sunni synthesis with a commentary on al-Nasafī's *The Creed of Islam*. Abū Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) was a significant scholar of Māturīdī *kalām*, and al-Taftāzānī's commentary on al-Nasafī's three-page *Matn al-ʿAqāʾid*, the basic rules of the creed, became a manual for Sunni creed, drawing from both Ashʿarī and Māturīdī theology.

The Subjects of *Kalām*

Although the fundamental principles of religion – divinity (*tawḥīd*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and eschatology *(maʿād)* – are shared by all the theological schools, in practice the schools differed from one another and engaged in polemics on an ever-increasing multiplicity of subjects. These differences shape the distinctives of each school and are generally reflected in phrases such as "in our opinion," "according to the view of our school," which appear in manuals of the religious schools. In a sense, the opinions of schools, other than fundamental principles shared by all schools, took precedence in establishing the fundamental principles of belief.

Such differences in *kalām*, which had in earlier periods been limited in scope, gradually increased. Although this increase might be attributed to the influence of bigotry (*taʿaṣṣub*) or controversies between rival schools and political struggles, the primary cause of the increase in subjects of *kalām* and widening of its scope, was the nature of *ʿilm al-kalām* itself. Because theologians must analyze and answer every newly emerging problem and take on each challenge to theological principles, it was subject to an ongoing expansion in the number of topics it covered. Theological problems change with time, consequently the subjects of *kalām* increase (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2:535). For example, the question of miracles of the saints, *karāmāt al-awlīyāʾ*, came to be included in theological discussions as a result of the influence of mystical movements after the fourth century. As we see on the question of the createdness of the Qurʾan (*khalq al-Qurʾān*), sometimes a subordinate religious rule could become the most distinctive feature of a school of *kalām* as a result of polemical concerns. The scope of *kalām* has also widened as theologians tended to highlight the distinctive features of a school and to exaggerate details, treating subsidiary matters (*furūʿ*) as fundamentals of religion (*uṣūl*) in response to the criticisms of the opponents (al-Taftāzānī 2013, 272). Over time, based on single hadith narrations, many matters that in the past had been excluded from the scope of *kalām* came to be included. For these reasons, the scope of theological writings gradually grew, and theological texts, which in the early period consisted of several pages, gave way to voluminous works in later times.

This increase in the scope and subjects of *kalām* influenced its reasoning methods as well. While rational evidence was primarily used in external polemics, transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence came to be more frequently used in internal disputes. These changes in *kalām* were also reflected in its definition. Ibn Khaldūn, describing the period in which *kalām* dealt with philosophical issues, defined *kalām* as a science (*ʿilm*) which uses rational arguments to defend Islamic theology against criticism (Ibn Khaldūn 1954, 2:515). But from al-Ashʿarī onwards, *kalām* came to be understood largely as the defense and elucidation of the creed in the face of internal enemies (*ahl al-bidʿa*). Fārābī (339/950) regards *ʿilm al-kalām* as "a science which enables a man to procure the victory of the rules of faith and action laid down by the legislator of the religion, and to refute all opinions contradicting them" (Fārābī 1986, 125). After the discipline of *kalām* became an apologetic tool of the *ahl al-sunna* in the time al-Ashʿarī, Ghazālī defined the purpose of *kalām* as protecting the creed of *ahl al-sunna* against the doubts of innovators (al-Ghazālı 1988, 32). Thus, almost the whole of al-Taftāzānī's manual on the creed of the *ahl al-sunna*, his *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, is written in order to refute Muʿtazilī views.

The essential objective of *kalām* is to establish creedal prescriptions based on decisive proofs from reason and from the Qurʾan and the Sunna. Judgments (*al-aḥkām*) based on certain evidence and therefore not subject to doubt, are called fundamental judgments (*al-aḥkām al-aṣlī*). However, in case of any uncertainty regarding either meaning or certitude such prescriptions are designated probable (*ẓannī*). Despite this uncertainty, such prescriptions remain the subject of *kalām* because of their creedal character. They are, however, considered supplementary rules rather than fundamental. *Kalām* also uses probable evidence to clarify or support prescriptions based on decisive proofs. Even when it aims to establish creedal injunctions based on decisive proofs, probable evidence remains widely used in *kalām*. As I will demonstrate below, most subjects of controversy between theologians and traditionists fall into the probable category and are consequently classified as supplementary matters.

Indisputable Arguments

Transmitted (*naqlī*) proofs which do not have any problem regarding their authenticity are of two types: those that have decisive indication (*qāṭiʿ al-dalāla*), and those that are speculative (*ẓannī al-dalāla*). In order to provide the basis for a theological principle, evidence must be certain both in respect of authenticity (*qāṭiʿ al-thubūt*) and of meaning (*qāṭiʿ al-dalāla*). In theological literature, the expression of *yufīd al-ʿilm* ("it provides certainty") is used to express confidence in such reports. For reports that are probable, the expression *yufīd ẓann* ("provides probable knowledge") or *ʿamal* ("can be acted upon, but cannot provide the basis for belief") is applied.

Rational Proofs

In the history of Islamic thought, all groups, including hadith scholars, accept reason as evidence. Because both reason and transmitted evidence (revelation) are bestowed on his servants by God, these sources of evidence cannot be contradictory but must support each other. Thus, while they differ regarding its priority and the subjects it encompassed, all theological schools accept rational proofs as a fundamental source of evidence (al-Dabūsī 2001, 458; al-Shāfiʿī 1991, 137, 145).

The major controversy over the use of reason in theology concerns its priority among the categories of evidence. Which has priority in providing knowledge about God, reason or revelation? Does knowledge of or belief in Allah arise as a result of reason or of revelation? The question is not especially meaningful if both reason and revelation lead to the same conclusion, or if there is no contradiction between the two. But in case of apparent conflict, the main point of disagreement between theologians and hadith scholars is over which should be taken as essential and therefore be given priority as evidence. If reason is given precedence, then transmitted proofs take a secondary position, and vice versa, and in case of conflict the preferred source of evidence will always be considered essential and other sources will be considered secondary and interpreted accordingly. Understanding of religion will be shaped by these choices.

According to theologians, reason comes first in order of priority and is, therefore, the essential source of proof. The existence of Allah, his essence and attributes, and the reliability of prophecy can be understood only by means of reason. When the existence of Allah is established by rational proofs, the reliability of prophethood is thereby established, and by proving the authenticity of prophecy, the accuracy of Sharīʿa is also demonstrated. These can only be established by reason, and not by transmitted evidence, because transmitted evidence itself depends on reason to establish its reliability. If transmitted evidence is given priority, we arrive at a tautology and no proof is possible. For this reason, rational proofs are essential, and transmitted proofs which affirm it are secondary and must be interpreted accordingly. Theologians therefore insist that the proper order of fundamental proofs must be reason, the Qurʾan, the sunna, and *ijmāʿ* (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 139; ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī 2002, 14–15; al-Shāfiʿī 1991, 155, 159).

While some theologians treat reason as only a means and a process (al-Jāḥiẓ 1987, 128), others consider it an essential and independent source of evidence which can, on its own, establish creedal principles. They therefore accept the results of reason as a basis for religion. For example, we have knowledge concerning the existence of a Creator, his attributes, the createdness and non-eternity of the universe, and knowledge that he sends messengers and that he establishes their veracity by miracles. All such knowledge may be acquired by reason, and revelation comes only to affirm and reinforce what is known by reason (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 88–89; 1986, 139).

The theologians' hierarchy of evidence – reason, Qurʾan, sunna, *ijmāʿ* – is reversed by hadith scholars, according to whom reason is secondary to transmitted knowledge. Hadith scholars do not seek to justify this view on rational grounds but, rather, maintain that reason cannot provide an independent basis for proof because there is no evidence that the Prophet taught such a thing (Shāfiʿī 1991, 143, 146). To the contrary, reports from the Prophet warn his followers to avoid dialectical methods and quarrels in religious matters, and these are the very methods of dialectical theology. The Prophet only invited people to Islam and to believe in the unity of Allah. No reports indicate that he encouraged reason or reasoning (al-Taymī 2012, 2:100). Therefore, religion means to follow the Prophet rather than reason. Only adherence to the Book, to the sunna, and to what is handed down on the authority of the companions and the generation that succeeded them is binding. Nothing should be discussed which is not mentioned in these sources, and these sources commend obedience to religion and devotion to it without asking further questions, and they warn against innovation. This is the way of the righteous predecessors, the *salaf* (al-Taymī 2012, 2:287, 522, 565).

To follow Allah's commands and the words of his Messenger cannot, as the theologians claim (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1971, 25), be considered blind following (*taqlīd*). Rational reflection, to the extent permitted by the Qurʾan and the sunna, cannot be rejected. But the theologians' claim that such reflection is incumbent on human beings and that it leads to belief in God is untrue and baseless because there is no foundation for such claim in the hadith, or in the words of the companions, or their successors. Consequently this is nothing more than a fabricated claim (al-Taymī 2012, 2:99). Hadith scholars also reject the claim of theologians that rational evidence provides certain knowledge. In reality, the only foundation for unity in religious matters is transmitted knowledge; reliance on reason leads, invariably (al-Taymī 2012, 2:226), to controversy and instability in religion because reason gives rise to suspicion, doubt, and error (al-Taymī 2012, 2:587). To seek religious knowledge by means of reason is innovation (al-Taymī 2012, 2:288), and to apply rational methods to commentary is to give up the Qurʾan and the sunna (al-Taymī 2012, 2:230). Consequently reason cannot be a means of Qurʾanic exegesis (Abū Zahra 2009, 198).

This does not mean that hadith scholars reject reason absolutely. What they oppose is not reason in itself but the independent application of reason to the interpretation of religious texts (al-Taymī 2012, 2: 288–289). They accept reason as a criterion by which the plain meaning of a transmitted text (*naṣṣ*) can be confirmed, but they reject the use of reason to adjudicate such texts (Abū Zahra 2009, 176–177). In their view, the duty of reason is to persuade a person to surrender unconditionally to the commands and prohibitions of Allah without questioning those commands. To interrogate the meaning of a scriptural text, when that meaning has been kept a mystery by God from his servants, is a trap. One should therefore avoid those who sacrifice the apparent meaning of the Qurʾan and sunna in order to explore hidden meanings (al-Taymī 2012, 2:316). The claim has no basis in the Qurʾan and sunna that without reason truth cannot be distinguished from falsehood and that the truth of the Qurʾan and the Prophet cannot be (al-Taymī 2012, 2:287). To the contrary, the use of reason and analogy to explain religious matters is the source of all innovations and aberrations (al-Taymī 2012, 2:565).

In sum, according to hadith scholars, proofs of the creed must be derived from the Qurʾan and the sunna in the same way that the creed itself is taken from them. Rational evidence functions only as a support to and affirmation of transmitted evidence as well as an aid to its understanding, but it cannot serve as an independent basis for argument in religious matters (Abū Zahra 2009, 198). The Ashʿarī theologians also shared similar views with the *ahl al-ḥadīth* on the relationship of reason and revelation, but later Ashʿarites adopted Muʿtazilī views (Shāfiʿī, 1991, 135, 140).

We also see the reflection of these debates in discussions of the sources of Islamic law, the *uṣūl al-fiqh*. According to some Ḥanafī scholars like Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī (d. 430/1039), who had a tendency to Muʿtazilī views, the function of rational evidence is like that of transmitted evidence. Transmitted evidence, however, cannot provide an independent basis for argument apart from a process of reasoning. Therefore the necessity of following rational evidence is like the necessity of following transmitted evidence (al-Dabūsī 2001, 442). By holding that rational evidence is absolute and that transmitted evidence follows and restricts it, al-Dabūsī grants a large role to reason over against transmitted texts. He argues that wherever absolute evidence based on reason is not restricted by transmitted evidence, such rational evidence is valid (al-Dabūsī 2001, 460). He thus acknowledges an extensive sphere of validity for rational evidence. Al-Dabūsī offers examples of religious assertions based on rational evidence independent of transmitted evidence. For instance, a human being is required to confess that he is a slave, that the Lord is his God, and that he was created to be tested. Such requirements are equivalent to direct injunctions from Allah. Similarly, ignorance, cruelty, denial of the Creator, denial of the hereafter or denial of the Day of Judgment are known by means of reason to be prohibited (*ḥarām*) (al-Dabūsī 2001, 455–456).

On the other hand, the Mālikī legal scholar al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) holds that rational evidence cannot be used as an independent basis for argument in the essential Islamic sciences. Because reason is not itself a legislator, rational proofs can only be used in conjunction with transmitted evidence (Shāṭibī 1997, 1:27). The practical effects of these debates can be seen in discussions of the conflict of *ʿaql* and *naql*.

Transmitted Proofs

Transmitted evidence represents the divine judgment on matters of faith. This evidence, also called auditory (*samʿi*) evidence because it is learned by reports and through hearing, consists of the Qurʾan, sunna, and *ijmāʿ*. Scholars of Islamic law also add analogy (*qiyās*) because it deals with the epistemic value of legal rules

(Shāfiʿī 1991, 153), but *qiyās* is properly a subject of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (al-Ghazālī 1993, 9), and in *kalām* works only the Qurʾan, sunna, and *ijmāʿ* are considered binding authorities (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 88; Shāfiʿī 1991, 138).

Scholars of *kalām* hold that there is no difference between the Qurʾan and the sunna with regard to the value of the evidence they provide because both fall within the scope of *khabar al-rasūl*, reports of the Prophet. While the Qurʾan is learned from his lips, the sunna gains its evidential value from his actions, and the consensus of the community derives its value as evidence from his explicit approval (al-Ghazālī 1993, 6). However, in order to provide independent proof, the authenticity and meaning of these sources must be established. Controversies over sunna do not arise because it is secondary in authority but because of questions over its authenticity (*thubūt*) and the reliability of its transmission. If the authenticity and meaning of a sunna are established, it can be considered evidence at the same level as the Qurʾan because its evidential value is based on its status as words of the Prophet (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 17:90). The truth of prophecy is proved through accompanying miracles, which demonstrate the truthfulness of the one making the claim to be the Messenger of Allah and serve as a proof of his prophecy. Because miracles can be performed only by a truthful messenger and are impossible for a liar, the truthful messenger is infallible, protected from error, and all information he conveys is certain (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 4:173; 1986, 139). The general view is that such infallibility is restricted to his message set forth in the Qurʾan and the sunna (al-Taftāzānī 2013, 242).

Although the Prophet's companions witnessed his miracles directly, those who were not present or who lived in a later era receive knowledge of those miracles via massively transmitted (*tawātur*) reports. A *mutawātir* report is a certain indication of the miracle and, in a sense, lends the miracle continuity. Thus, the *mutawātir* report of the miracle, together with the miracle itself, establishes the evidential value of information from the Prophet. Both provide knowledge of the unseen (*al-ghayb*). The miracle proves the reality of the Prophet's words to people who cannot access the unseen world, and the *mutawātir* report is the means whereby certain information about the "unseen" past is transmitted to people who did not witness it. Like knowledge established by the senses, *tawātur* transmission is certain. Just as knowledge of the birth of Jesus, or knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad's emigration in 622 CE can be known with certainty, so also the authenticity of the Qurʾan is established by *tawātur*. Thus, no one can deny that the Qurʾan, which is considered the Prophet's greatest miracle, recorded in the *muṣḥaf* (written codex), and read in mosques, was revealed to him, that he called his contemporaries in Mecca and Medina to follow its message, and that the Arabs were unable to answer his challenge to match it.

According to the theologians, the responsibility of human beings derives from these two types of knowledge. Prophets, supported by miracles, are the source of knowledge about God and hereafter. It is incumbent on those who witness them to believe in them, but humans are free from responsibility as long as a prophet does not appear. *Tawātur* is the means by which certain knowledge of the existence of the prophets reaches people who do not witness them directly. Consequently, even those who do not live in the period of a prophet are required to believe in those prophets whose message reaches them by means of *tawātur*. People have the right to say "I did not know" as long as certain knowledge did not reach them either through miracles or *tawātur*, but this excuse disappears when certain knowledge is achieved. Thus, *kalām* scholars are not primarily interested in the legislative value of hadith but in its epistemic value. They assign the discussion of the legislative value of hadith to the books of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 770; al-Ghazālī 1993, 6).

If the authenticity of a hadith has been proved, it becomes certain and beyond dispute and it is incumbent on a person who hears this information to believe. But if any doubt arises about the authenticity of the Prophetic hadith, it loses evidential value. The degree of doubt is immaterial; the report no longer provides independent evidence since knowledge of the creed must be based on certain proofs. This does not mean, however, that probable knowledge has no value in theological matters. The epistemic value of such probable knowledge based on *āḥād* reports will be discussed below.

Probable (Ẓannī) Knowledge

When the truth of a proposition is probable, but its opposite remains possible, it is designated *ẓann*. The opposite of *ẓann* is *yaqīn*, certain. Evidence may be probable with regard to either authenticity or meaning, and any evidence which is in any way subject to doubt cannot serve as an independent proof.

Knowledge that is Probable with Regard to Authenticity

The issue of knowledge which remains only probable by virtue of uncertainty about its authenticity is focused on reports from the Prophet with a single chain of transmission. Hadith scholars label such reports sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), but in relation to their epistemic value theologians and legal scholars call them single (*khabar al-wāḥid* or *āḥād*) reports. In the books of *kalām* or *uṣūl* the term *āḥād* is used to designate hadith unless otherwise specified. *Āḥād* reports are those that fall short of the conditions for *tawātur* transmission (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2013, 26) and are thus contrasted with *mutawātir* reports. All reports that do not reach the level of *tawātur* fall into this category, whether transmitted by one or by more than one transmitter. While the authenticity of such reports may be considered probable, even in the most optimistic circumstances the possibility of error is not excluded.

Since the truth or falsehood of *āḥād* reports remains possible, we cannot know from the report itself whether it is true or false. In contrast to *mutawātir* reports which give rise to objective knowledge, the conviction provided by *āḥād* reports depends on other supporting evidence. When such a report is passed on by transmitters known to be trustworthy and is not contradicted by other substantial evidence then conviction with regard to its truth increases. But even when the probability of its authenticity increases through the addition of new channels of transmission, the report does not rise to the level of certainty as long as it does not qualify as *tawātur*. When a report is handed down on the authority of transmitters known to be unreliable, or when it conflicts with more substantial evidence, probability that it is a false report increases. However, just as the small possibility remains that a *ṣaḥīḥ āḥād* report contains mistakes, so too a similar possibility remains that an *āḥād* report thought to be false might be accurate (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 1986, 13–14). For this reason, it is neither easy to completely accept nor to completely reject an *āḥād* report.

An *āḥād* report may be dismissed as fabricated and invalid only when it is not subject to reasonable interpretation and when it contradicts other indisputable evidence. For example, an *āḥād* report may be rejected when it is contrary to reason, experience, *mutawātir* reports, or the consensus of the community, or when the number of transmitters rejecting its authenticity rises to the standard of *mutawātir* (al-Āmidī 2003, 2:19). Because the majority of hadith reports are *āḥād*, works of Islamic legal theory are filled with lively discussions of the epistemic value of such reports. The general result of such discussions is that all the law schools hold that *āḥād* reports that meet the necessary requirements must be accepted in legal matters and acted upon (al-Baṣrī 1983, 2:96, 98). Legal scholars argue that the Qur'an, the sunna, and the practice of the companions support acting upon such reports (al-Baṣrī 1983, 2:98–126). They also make the rational argument that ordinary people base their daily activities on *āḥād* reports, and that it is impossible to base all human actions on evidence that rises to the level of certainty (al-Baṣrī 1983, 2:98–99).

In contrast with hadith scholars, who hold that a chain of transmission (*sanad*) that fulfills necessary conditions is sufficient to require that an *āḥād* report be acted upon, the theologians add the condition that such a report should not contradict the Qurʾan, sunna, reason, or the consensus of the community (al-Balkhī 2018, 66; al-Qādī 1986, 194). They hold that *āḥād* reports that are, at first glance, contrary to both the Qurʾan and to reason should be interpreted in accordance with reason, and if no reasonable interpretation is found, such reports should be rejected (al-Qāḍī 1998, 98).

Although they differ over the conditions for acceptance of *āḥād* reports, ultimately both theologians and scholars of hadith agree that *āḥād* reports can be accepted as evidence in legal and practical matters. They disagree, however, over the acceptance of *āḥād* traditions in matters of belief (*iʿtiqād*), and this is the major point of conflict between the two groups. According to the theologians, faith cannot be based on probable evidence. Although probability (*ẓann*) is not the opposite of error or doubt but rather of certitude, even under the best circumstances it cannot preclude the possibility of error. Consequently, an *āḥād* report cannot provide independent evidence for an article of belief. The theologians sum up their position in the maxim "the *āḥād* report cannot provide certainty," and they therefore exclude the use of *āḥād* reports in fundamental matters of religion such as divinity and prophecy (al-Balkhī 2018, 66).

Hadith scholars agree that if a report yields only probable knowledge it cannot provide evidence for a foundational principle of belief. However, they maintain that the probability of an isolated report can be raised to certitude under certain conditions, and that in such cases it can serve as a basis for belief. For instance, the miracle of the *miʿrāj*, the advent of the Mahdi, the appearance of *Dajjāl* (the anti-Christ), and the descent of ʿIsā (Jesus) are established by reports that are labeled widespread reports (*mashhūr*). The Shiʿi theory of the imamate is also based on such reports. None of these beliefs is unanimously approved as a rule of faith by the majority of the Muslim community since they are based on probable reports. At the same time, hadith scholars or Shiʿites cannot accuse those who reject such beliefs of blasphemy; at most they accuse their opponents of innovation (*bidʿa*) (al-Taftāzānī 2013, 249).

The theologians did not consider *āḥād* reports on religious matters completely useless. Rather they hold that such reports can be used to supplement or support religious principles that are established from other reliable evidence (al-Balkhī 2018, 66). For example, theological treatises cite numerous *āḥād* hadith reports detailing the nature of the hereafter. Although such reports are *āḥād*, Muʿtazilite theologians did not hesitate to use such hadith so long as they did not conflict with their established theological positions (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1971, 148). For instance, while they are willing to cite many hadith reports to elaborate details of the life of the hereafter, they reject reports indicating that sinful believers stay temporarily in hell in proportion to their sin because such reports conflict with their belief that any believer who dies in *īmān* will not enter hell. They likewise rejected or treated with caution many hadith reports which seem to suggest anthropomorphic or corporealist themes. While they sometimes sought to interpret such traditions (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 770) they were more prone to reject them if they judged the probability of their authenticity to be low, or if their interpretation was unclear (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 4:233). They defended this method as a matter of prudence on the argument that matters of creed must be based on (distinctive) evidence like the Qurʾan, the authentic sunna, and consensus rather than on reports that might be subject to errors in transmission (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 194–195).

Traditions that Muʿtazila theologians referenced in support of their doctrine included the following (see Hansu 2017, 219–222):

> On the principle of justice:
>
> Ubayy b. Kaʿb from the Prophet: The wretched (who never does any act of obedience) is doomed because of his bad actions and one who is blessed because of his good actions. (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 145)
>
> On the createdness of the Qurʾan:
>
> Allah created nothing bigger than the verse of throne (āyat al-kursī). There was only Allah and nothing else. Afterwards the first entity that God created was invocation (*dhikr*). (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 157)
>
> On the beatific vision:
>
> Nobody will ever see Allah in this World or the hereafter. (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 4:228)
>
> Someone asked the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) “Did you see your Lord?” He answered “He is a light. How can I see Him?” (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 4:228)

While at first glance the Muʿtazila use of such traditions seems to be in contradiction with their refusal to accept *āḥād* reports as evidence in matters of belief, in reality they apply their views consistently. Such reports are employed in support of doctrine, to elaborate details of a doctrine, or to define the boundaries of a doctrinal position rather than to establish a new rule of belief. Since such aspects of doctrine are by their nature uncertain, clarifying them by means of *āḥād* reports cannot be considered contradictory since in probabilistic matters probable evidence is allowable. In these cases, probable evidence is less important than more certain evidence. Hence theologians frequently appealed to *āḥād* reports on ambivalent questions or in subsidiary fields of theology.

This was the weak link, however, in the theologian's use of hadith. They had no trouble accepting the probity of a report when it cohered with their views. But when a report conflicted with their doctrinal views they retreated to the maxim, "*āḥād* reports cannot serve as evidence in creedal matters." This disconnect can be seen especially in the case of the beatific vision (*ruʾyat Allāh*). The Muʿtazila reject narrations related to the beatific vision because such reports conflict with the Qurʾan and with reason, and on the grounds that reports of only probable authenticity cannot be opposed to reason (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1971, 62). On the other hand, they see no risk in arguing for the impossibility of beatific vision on the basis of an *āḥād* report (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 4:173). By employing *āḥād* reports to support their views in polemics with hadith scholars, the theologians opened themselves to the accusation of inconsistency (al-Taymī 2012, 2:233).

We have seen that although hadith scholars do not differ from theologians on the epistemic value of probable knowledge (*ẓann*), their criteria for determining what constitutes such probable knowledge differs markedly. Scholars of hadith do not accept the classifications *mutawātir* and *āḥād* as primary indicators of epistemological value. Instead they measure such value based on the scale of sound and weak, *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf*, which is itself based on the reliability of narrators of a report. A *ṣaḥīḥ* report yields both certainty (*ʿilm*) and a requirement to act (*ʿamal*) (al-Ghazālī 1993, 6). Hadith scholars accused those who differed from them on this point of inciting *fitna*, of being followers of the Muʿtazila, and of being *ahl al-bidʿa*, those who deviate from the sunna. According to scholars of hadith, if a report is transmitted by reliable transmitters and its authenticity is approved by the Muslim community, the report yields certain knowledge (al-Taymī 2012, 2: 215–216). From the start, Muslims narrated and approved hadith reports on the attributes of God, destiny, the punishment of the tomb, the interrogation of the dead in the tomb by Munkar and Nakīr, the beatific vision, the intercession of the Prophet, the basin (*ḥawz*) of the Prophet, the weighing of human actions in the balance on the day of resurrection, the bridge of *ṣirāṭ*, the removal of sinful believers from hell following their purification, the characteristics of paradise and hell, the virtues of the Prophet, reports of miracles, reports about previous prophets, and asceticism. The content of such reports is a matter of creed not of practice, and they engender certainty in the one who hears them. If we hold that *āḥād* reports cannot provide certain knowledge, it follows that the Muslim community, the *umma*, erred in transmitting such reports and was taken in by absurdities (al-Taymī 2012, 2:217–218).

The Ashʿarites attempt to establish a middle ground between the Muʿtazila and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* on the epistemic value of hadith reports. The Ashʿarīte position is theoretically closer to that of the Muʿtazila, but in practical results they more closely resemble the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Ashʿarī himself reportedly expressed his agreement with hadith scholars claiming, "We do not reject anything from the Messenger of Allah transmitted from a reliable transmitter. We confirm all the narrations which are proved as authentic by the hadith scholar." Al-Ashʿarī claimed to admit all sound hadith reports including the hadith of the *nuzūl* (according to which Allah descends every night to the lowest heaven and says: Is there anyone who asks? I will give. Is there anyone wanting forgiveness? ...) (Bukhārī 1990, 1:384), the hadith of the *miʿrāj* (the ascension of the Prophet), and the hadith of the appearance of the *Dajjāl*, the anti-Christ (Ashʿarī 1397, 20, 21, 29, 31).

After al-Ashʿarī, however, differing views on the epistemic value and interpretation of hadith emerged among his follows. In philosophical Ashʿarism, beginning with al-Rāzī, probable reports regarding creedal matters were not accepted. By contrast, the traditionists within Ashʿarism, although they agreed that reports other than *mutawātir* reports cannot provide certainty (ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī 2002, 12; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2013, 26), nevertheless argued that some *āḥād* reports yield acquired knowledge. In their view sound hadith reports with reliable chains of transmission yield acquired knowledge and can therefore be used as proofs in matters of faith. They placed in this category hadith reports concerning the beatific vision, the intercession of the Prophet, the basin (*ḥawz*) of the Prophet, the weighing of acts in the balance, and punishment in the tomb (ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī 2002, 13). The principles of belief they derived based on such reports are similar to those of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

The view of the scholars of *kalām* that only *tawātur* evidence can provide the basis for matters of belief had important theoretical and practical ramifications, especially for the handling of religious differences. It meant, for example, that religious groups such as the Shiʿa and the Khawārij, despite harsh disagreements, were in theory disallowed from charging others (or being charged) with blasphemy. Even those schools that accepted *khabar wāḥid* as proofs in matters of belief were discouraged from accusing their opponents of blasphemy or unbelief. We can see examples of this in attitudes toward the Shiʿi theory of the imamate and the acceptance by hadith scholars of beliefs about the advent of the Mahdi, the appearance of *Dajjāl*, and the descent of Jesus. In such cases, declarations of blasphemy (*takfīr*) are not allowable, since the question of blasphemy is only relevant to the rejection of a fundamental rule of religion; matters of ambivalence or probable authenticity are excluded (Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz 1997, 2:458). Hence the famous maxim, "Whoever enters Islam upon a certain proof, never leaves without a certain proof" (Ibn Taymiyya 1995, 12:466). Accordingly, no one can be declared an unbeliever based on probable evidence. For this reason, despite serious doctrinal differences, there is unanimity among the schools that the *ahl al-qibla* ("Muslims who perform the prayers") cannot be declared unbelievers (al-Taftazānī 2012, 280).

Because of this high bar for accusations of unbelief, doctrinal differences more often led rivals to label one another *ahl al-bidʿa*, "innovators." Because the general meaning of *bidʿa* is to stray from the path of the Messenger of God and his companions, and because this path is known primarily by means of hadith reports, controversies over hadith took center stage in such polemics. The result was to increase the importance of hadith in theological matters. Out of the vast corpus of hadith, rival schools had little difficulty finding traditions that supported their views and condemned those of their opponents.

Scholars made use of hadith to emphasize the distinctives of their school and to demonstrate that they adhered more closely to the sunna than their rivals. Taftāzānī, for example, justifies including non-theological issues in his *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* in this way (al-Taftāzānī 2012, 272). In addition to such use of hadith for polemical purposes, scholars of *kalām* also suffered from a reputation for carelessness in their evaluation of hadith reports. From the early period, scholars of *kalām* were accused of being weak in their understanding of hadith and of accepting large numbers of weak or fabricated reports (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 194–195; Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 8:277; Ibn Taymiyya 1995; 4:71–72; Kırbaşoğlu 1999, 348–349).

Consequently, it is incorrect to assume that because theologians accept *mutawātir* reports, the most reliable traditions are to be found in works of *kalām*. In theological discussions, *mutawātir* status arises from a priori certainty rather than from the form of transmission. In other words, the certainty of a *mutawātir* report is understood from the report itself since it yields certain and compulsory knowledge. Such an understanding of *mutawātir* differs significantly from the use of the term in hadith scholarship. The transmission of the Qurʾan, for example, is known to be *tawātur*, but this knowledge is not based on a formal tradition to the effect that "the Qurʾan is *mutawātir*." Indeed, such knowledge is not based on any particular report but on widespread shared knowledge that gives rise to certainty. In the same way, topics in *kalām* regarded as *mutawātir* are based on such certainty. On the other side, the position of hadith scholars who assert that *āḥād* reports can provide a basis for matters of belief also suffers from serious epistemological weakness. An assertion that *āḥād* reports can be used as evidence grants the same right to theological opponents. This entails acceptance of a multiplicity of truth claims on theological matters because even the hadith scholars themselves, let alone their opponents, often differ with one another in their determination of the soundness of some traditions. The Shiʿa in particular arrive at dramatically different results on the soundness of hadith. Each school thus judges their own hadith sound, and this leads to relativity in the use of hadith and consequently in creedal matters. This seems to justify the claims of theologians that reliance on hadith reports sows discord in the community.

Despite their specialization, in practice hadith scholars were accused of making serious errors. Ibn Taymiyya, for example, pointed out that quite apart from the challenge of understanding hadith, most of those who use hadith as evidence have insufficient knowledge of the authenticity of the reports they use. He alleged that even famous scholars of hadith confused sound reports with fabricated ones on the topic of the attributes of God. Likewise narrations used by some hadith scholars, and even by some theologians in creedal matters (such as the attributes of God), are fabricated or weak, to the degree that they cannot serve as proof even to establish the merit of acts, let alone in matters of creed (Ibn Taymiyya 1995, 287).

Knowledge that is Probable with Regard to Meaning

To serve as independent evidence, it is insufficient for a report to be authentic. Its meaning must also be clear and understood with certainty. Reports that are unambiguous in meaning are thus preferable to ambiguous ones, and such reports should be interpreted accordingly. In addition to ambiguous and allegorical texts, the time or setting of a command or prohibition, and its context, also raise hermeneutical concerns.

The controversy between hadith scholars and theologians over the relative priority of rational and transmitted evidence also has significant hermeneutical consequences. Theologians who claim certainty for rational evidence take such evidence as essential and interpret reports accordingly. Hadith scholars, by contrast, give priority to transmitted evidence. The following three categories clarify the main focus of controversy between the two approaches:

1. *Categories of knowledge for which rational evidence is primary.* According to the theologians, since the proper recognition of God (*maʿrifat Allāh*) may be known only by reason, rational evidence is essential for basic religious knowledge including the existence of Allah, his oneness, the perfection of his attributes, the creation of the world by a Creator, and the trustworthiness of prophethood. Revelation, whether from Qurʾan or sunna, merely comes to confirm such knowledge which is obtained by reason. Rational proofs are therefore primary, and transmitted evidence is subsidiary (*farʿī*) in such subjects (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 88–89; 1986, 139).
2. *Categories of knowledge acquired only by means of revelation.* Certain kinds of knowledge, such as the determination of religious duties (*ʿibādāt*) and practices (*aḥkām*), particular rewards and punishments for acts, ordinances such as performing prayer, and prohibitions such as the prohibition on drinking alcohol, can only be known by revelation; reason has no role. Reason can indicate the necessity of worship, but it cannot determine its time or place, or give detailed requirements. In such subjects the revelation/transmitted evidence is primary and the rational proofs are irrelevant (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1965, 15:27).
3. *Subjects known by means of both reason and revelation.* In this category both sources of evidence, reason, and revelation, are valid. Such subjects include knowledge that Allah is one, the possibility of the beatific vision, knowledge that injustice is good and cruelty bad, and the createdness of human acts (al-Baṣrī 1983, 2:327).

On the second and third categories there is little conflict between theologians and hadith scholars. On the first point, however, the two groups differ sharply, and this is the focus of the tension between the two over reason and revelation. In other words, the main points of conflict focus on conceptions of God and the universe. The ripples of this conflict were felt in most aspects of religion, however.

Theologians thus employed reason to interpret texts they considered ambiguous, especially those suggesting anthropomorphic or corporeal conceptions of God. Muʿtazila theologians engaged in complex hermeneutics to interpret Qurʾanic verses in these categories and they mostly rejected hadith reports on these topics. The religious boundaries of the Muʿtazila were thus determined largely according to their conceptions of reason, and their understanding of religion was shaped accordingly. Because of the importance they attributed to reason, Muʿtazila theologians were accused of putting forward a religion based mostly on reason and confining revelation to the number and timing of religious duties (al-Shahrastānī 1999, 64).

In reality, the position of the Muʿtazila with regard to reason and revelation had both favorable and unfavorable results. On the one hand, the Muʿtazila limited the influence of anthropomorphist and literalist trends in Islam, and they encouraged flexibility in the interpretation of revelation. The use of rational methods also proved effective in responding to both internal and external challenges to the religion. However inappropriate application of rationalist methods also had adverse outcomes. The Muʿtazila sometimes stretched the interpretation of texts to justify their doctrinal views by any means. Their adoption of their own theological method as the sole source of guidance in religion resulted in the neglect of spiritual and moral concerns. For example, in the case of their doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾan, the imposition of their doctrinal views on others by force resulted in a strong counter-reaction, a strengthening of literalist *ẓāhirī* approaches which emphasized close adherence to the apparent meaning of the Qurʾan, and a rise in mystical movements.

In contrast to the rationalist hermeneutic of the theologians with regard to metaphorical or allegorical expressions, or those texts that seem at first glance to conflict with reason, hadith scholars explicitly reject the arbitration of reason in the interpretation of religious texts, preferring instead to avoid interpretation and to pass on such texts as they are. In this way, they claimed to represent the approach of the *salaf* who applied to God those attributes which he attributed to himself in the Qurʾan without asking questions, *bi lā kayf* (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1967, 7:138).

In later times, however, this reasonable approach of the *salaf*, which was restricted to allegorical texts, evolved into literalism and gave rise to anthropomorphist and corporealist tendencies. Moreover, the application of such literalism gradually spread to legal texts in reaction to rationalist interpretation. Outright rejection of reason in favor of literalistic readings of religious texts were reflected in doctrinal treatises and the resulting approach can be summarized as follows:

Comprehensive recognition of God is only attained by means of revelation and not by reason (al-Taymī 2012, 2:224, 587). Because reason is the source of opinion and doubt, the revealed sources are the only basis for certain knowledge. The Qurʾan is the primary source, and the sunna is its exegesis. The meaning of the Qurʾan, its boundaries and the knowledge of how to put it into practice are known by sunna which therefore has precedence in the interpretation of the Qurʾan (al-Taymī 2012, 2:321). The claim that the validity of hadith reports should be tested according to the Qurʾan is therefore invalid. Similarly, judgment on the validity of a hadith report is not subject to reason or analogy (al-Taymī 2012, 2:501). Groups other than hadith scholars themselves have strayed by measuring the validity of texts of the Qurʾan and sunna by reason. While such groups reject or interpret texts which conflict with their conception of reason, in reality the validity of reason should be judged by the Qurʾan and the sunna (al-Taymī 2012, 2:224).

In its proper role, reason leads to acceptance of the Qurʾan and the sunna. Reasoning that leads to the denial of these is not reason but ignorance, and if the results of reason seem to conflict with the Qurʾan and the sunna this is because of defects in our reason, for in reality the Prophetic sunna cannot conflict with reason (al-Taymī 2012, 2:224, 598). Therefore, if a person knows that a report comes from Allah and his Messenger, he must believe and submit to it. Religion requires submission and devotion and is not subject to reason (al-Taymī 2012, 2:202, 598). Therefore, reports concerning the attributes of God must be transmitted without interpretation, without anthropomorphic speculation, and without exegesis. Such texts must be accepted *bi lā kayf*, without asking how, because no human word can ever be superior to the word of the Messenger of God (al-Taymī 2012, 2:361–362, 501).

Hadith scholars who oppose the use of reason show little interest in the problem of responding to external criticisms of the religion, and they were, in fact, ill-equipped for such challenges (al-Jazāʾirī 1925, 149).

Although hadith scholars attempt to avoid debate on theological questions, they occasionally make use of rational arguments to defend their position or to respond to criticism. They reject, for example, the claims of those who argue that the proper recognition of God can be possible only through reason and that for this reason there are few hadith reports on this question (al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1986, 141). They argue rather that knowledge of God is possible only by faith and assent in the heart, and that knowledge of God of this kind is only possible by means of transmitted reports (al-Taymī 2012, 2:364, 448).

Hadith scholars strongly reject the claim that many hadith reports concerning the attributes of God are fabricated or weak (al-Dārimī 1998, 2:730; al-Rāzī 1986, 128–129). On the contrary, they respond that it would have been impossible for the work of heretics or those disposed to evil to escape the scrutiny of the great masters of hadith sciences, to corrupt the chains of transmission, or to add inauthentic reports. Moreover, they question how, if it was difficult for even reliable transmitters to reach the great masters of hadith and to participate in their classes, it is possible that the malicious or heretics were able to corrupt chains of transmission or distort their books (al-Dārimī 1998, 2:730–731). Transmitters of sound hadith concerned with the attributes of God also narrated reports regarding *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* actions, and it is inconsistent to accept one category of reports and to reject others (Ibn Qudāmah 1990, 56–57).

On the other hand, even some proponents of hadith consider reports in this category seriously problematic. Ibn Taymiyya, for example, argues that neither the *muḥaddithūn*, nor the jurists, nor theologians, nor most of the scholars who are writing about the sunna have even basic information about the authenticity and meaning of these traditions. Sometimes even very famous hadith scholars confused authentic hadith with fabricated traditions. Likewise, some reports which are used by some hadith scholars, and even by some theologians for matters of *uṣūl al-dīn* or *ʿaqāʾid*, are fabricated or weak to the degree they cannot provide proof even for meritorious acts (Ibn Taymiyya 1406, 1:287).

The famous Ashʿarīte theologian Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī directs similar criticism at the inconsistencies of the hadith scholars:

> It is well known that a group of deviants (*mulḥid*) raised among the community fabricated hadith reports and mixed them with the authentic ones. Hadith scholars were unable to detect these because of their good and sincere intentions about the transmitters and they therefore narrated such hadith reports. But what could be worse than the narrations inappropriate to the sublimity of God? It is necessary to know that the narrations the content of which is inappropriate for attribution to God are certainly untrue or fabricated. (al-Rāzī 1986, 218)

Al-Rāzī harshly criticized Ibn Khuzayma's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* and his *Ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb*, dismissing it as the *Kitāb al-shirk*, "the book of polytheism" (al-Rāzī 1997, 9:582–583).

Among the Ashʿarites, there were prominent hadith scholars who rejected *āḥād* reports as a basis for matters of creed. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, for example, maintained that if a report conflicts with reason, the Qurʾan, authentic sunna, or consensus, it must be weak even if it comes through a reliable chain of transmitters (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2000, 1:354; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2013, 464). Similarly Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī holds that as long as there is a possibility of error in an *āḥād* tradition it cannot be maintained with any certainty, and he includes traditions recorded in the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim (al-Qāsimī 2004, 245). According to Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī, when a tradition contains anything in conflict with reason it must be interpreted according to reason since nothing in an authentic transmission can conflict with reason (al-Jazāʾirī 1995, 1:196).

However, even those Ashʿarīte theologians who in theory accept the arbitration of reason to interpret traditions scarcely applied the rule in practice. Al-Ashʿarī himself offered no interpretations of reports concerning God's attributes (Ashʿarī 1988, 234, 237–238). His followers applied limited metaphorical interpretation to allegorical expressions concerning God such as His throne and His hand. Apart from these limited examples they remain silent on most of the many allegorical expressions in the corpus of hadith. Ibn Fūrak (1985), in his *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, attempted to reconcile with reason some hadith reports that were problematic not only in content but also with regard to authenticity. Shortly after him, al-Bayhaqī in his *al-Asmāʾ waʾl Ṣifāt* adopted an interpretation of traditions on the attributes of God consistent with the position of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

Most later hadith scholars adopted an Ashʿarīte approach to the attributes. However, al-Rāzī, representing the philosophical trend in Ashʿarism, comes close to the Muʿtazila on this topic. He argued that there are four possible ways of reconciling apparent conflict between reason and transmitted evidence:

1. Affirm both, which is impossible.
2. Reject both, which is also impossible.
3. Accept the literal meaning and reject reason, which is nonsensical because transmitted texts cannot be understood apart from reason.
4. The only remaining course is to reject the tradition as inauthentic, or to interpret it in such a way that it accords with reason (al-Rāzī 1986, 250–251).

Consistent with this view, al-Rāzī argued that the reports attributing unfavorable attributes to God must be rejected (al-Rāzī 1986, 218). However, this theological trend in Ashʿarism, represented by al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) and al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), did not have wide influence, and Ashʿarism came to be dominated by the tenets of the hadith scholars. Consequently, hadith reports have shaped Ashʿarīte theology. Almost all subsidiary matters are based directly on hadith reports, and even the content of some fundamental religious rules came to be shaped primarily by hadith so that belief in predestination, for example, was transformed into a pure determinism. Even in regions where Ḥanafīs who adopted Māturīdī views were concentrated, the basic manual of Sunni *kalām*, Taftazānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, which reflects the views of the hadith scholars, became the manual of Sunni theology.

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CHAPTER 13

Sufism

Aiyub Palmer

Introduction

Sufism has been a dominant force in shaping Islamic societies since the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE. The manifestations of Sufism we consider normative today grew out of a broad synthesis of early mystical trends and movements that coalesced in Nishapur in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. This great mystical synthesis was articulated most succinctly by Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), both of whom were scholars of hadith as well as legal experts in the Shāfiʿī school of law. These two important figures demonstrate the intimate relationship that has existed between Sufism and the science and study of hadith. Both al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī employed the conventions of hadith science to establish a genealogy for Sufism as well as a basis for its authority as an Islamic discipline in its own right. They used hadith conventions to compile and present statements from the early progenitors of Sufism, who hailed primarily from Iraq and the Hijaz in the ninth century CE.

Louis Massignon's extensive study of Sufi terminology established a consensus that Sufism finds its inspiration and general contours from the two main sources of Islamic thought, the Qurʾan and the sunna (Green 2012, 26–27). The sunna of the Prophet according to Sunni Muslims is epitomized in the hadith (Brown 2009, 6). The differences between Sufis and non-Sufis derive mostly from varying conceptions of authority rather than a greater or lesser fidelity to hadith. Both Sufis and non-Sufis quote hadith extensively to support their claims. Some examples of hadiths that were contemplated by early Islamic mystics point to God's immanent presence in the world. In one tradition, God says, "I am present when my servant thinks of me … And whosoever seeks to approach me by a span, I approach him by a cubit; and he who seeks to approach me by

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one cubit, I will seek to approach him by two fathoms; and whoever walks towards me, I will run towards him" (Knysh 2010, 8). Hadiths such as this indicate lofty and exalted states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) that Sufis have tried to achieve through ascetic and mystical pursuits. Sufis believe that those Muslims who have realized these states and stations should be the true religious authorities in Islam because they exemplify in both their inward states and outward actions the way (sunna) of the Prophet.

Early Muslim renunciants (*zuhhād*) and pietists (*ʿubbād*) of the eighth century CE were often characterized by later hadith scholars as unreliable transmitters of hadith even if they were lionized by later Sufis for their ascetic and moralistic values. Rather than being concerned with the soundness of a hadith based on the reputations of its various narrators, these religious virtuosi often pulled from the accessible and abundant hadith lore of their times to motivate their fellow Muslim believers toward renunciation of worldly matters, fighting in the cause of God and earning gainful employment, among other such virtues (Knysh 2010, 18–26). A notable exception among these early renunciants is ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) who is generally considered reliable by scholars of hadith and whose *Kitāb al-zuhd* is an important compilation of hadith focusing on ascetic values and renunciation. His collection is one of the earliest and most comprehensive of this genre which was subsequently taken up by other great hadith scholars such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).

The ambivalence of early hadith scholars toward the ascetics and sermonizers of their time should not mislead us concerning the relationship between Sufism and hadith during the fourth and fifth Islamic centuries (tenth and eleventh centuries CE). Sufis such as al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī used hadith science to establish the authoritative basis of Sufism so that it could stand as its own Islamic discipline. Furthermore, Sufism spread to the far reaches of the Islamic world by the seventh/thirteenth century and became normative in most areas of the Muslim world by that time. Thus, we can see that Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) attack on what he saw as the excesses of Sufi practice and thought in his time was met with hostility by learned elites in both Egypt and the Levant. By the thirteenth century CE, we are no longer speaking of a conflict between Sufis and hadith specialists as was the case in the ninth century CE, since many of the foremost specialists in hadith science from this later period were themselves Sufis. Rather, it is the modern discourse around Sufism that has revived similar criticisms of ascetics and renunciants that were made by hadith scholars of the early Abbasid period, equipping modern Salafi apologists with an arsenal for attacks against Sufis.

Early Sufis and Their Reliance upon Hadith

Some of the most important progenitors of Sufism lived in the ninth century CE in Baghdad at the time when the canon of Prophetic hadith was being formalized. The ninth century was a time of great struggle between the partisans of hadith and the Abbasid Caliph who was supported by a cadre of pietistic theologians, later known as the Muʿtazila (see Chapter 12). In this struggle over religious authority and over who would come to wield interpretive authority in Islam, the Abbasid Caliph eventually succumbed and threw his support behind the scholarly class who were characterized by their adherence to the dictates of hadith over independent reason. The early mystics and ascetics of Iraq, who were also the forerunners of Sufism, generally belonged to this hadith movement. (An exception to this is the early *Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿazila* who were Muʿtazilī ascetics and Sufis; Gimaret 2015.) These were mystics such as Ḥārīth al-Muḥāsibī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), and Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896). Al-Muḥāsibī, for example, is said to have refused to accept his inheritance from his father on account of having considered him a Muʿtazilī (Knysh 2010, 43). Sufism developed as a coherent movement in this period of hadith dominance and Sufis referred to hadith as a primary source to justify their claims.

Muhammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (b. c. 205–215/820–830, d. c. 295–300/907–912), an early Islamic mystic who lived in Khurāsān and Transoxania (the land beyond the Oxus river, or Amu Darya, which historically marked the boundary between the Iranian plateau and the Central Asian steppe), is known primarily for his doctrine of *wilāya* (sainthood), which later became an important component of Sufi thought and practice. While al-Tirmidhī never used the term Sufi or *taṣawwuf* (the practice of being a Sufi), his approach to Islamic mysticism demonstrates the existence of mystical approaches that were similar to Sufism but existed outside of Iraq. Al-Tirmidhī's mystical terminology is distinctive, but the structural similarities that he demonstrates in his works show that Islamic mysticism was a widespread discourse by the end the ninth century CE. One of al-Tirmidhī's most acclaimed works is *Nawādir al-uṣūl* (*Rare Principles*), a mystical commentary on 291 hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Tirmidhī not only demonstrates that Prophetic hadith are central to Islamic mysticism but also that only an interpretation that is inward, *ab intra*, can fully appreciate the depth of the Prophet's words. In his 182nd principle, al-Tirmidhī begins his discussion with a Prophetic hadith: "From ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr, may God be pleased with him, from the Messenger of Allah may God bless him and grant him peace who said, 'The spirits of the believers meet within the proximity of one day's journey even if one of them has not [physically] seen his companion [in belief] at all.'" Al-Tirmidhī comments on the hadith by explaining that the spirits of the believers meet beyond the confines of the human body when the spirit overcomes the attachments and desires of the lower soul. When this happens the spirit rises and can roam more freely in the spiritual realm. Since, according to him, true believers have this quality, it is the spirits of believers that will meet before their bodies physically meet. Al-Tirmidhī then gives the example of how some of the early Muslims used to meet physically but know that they had met previously in the spiritual realm (al-Tirmidhī 1972, 164). Al-Tirmidhī's goal was to use hadith as a basis for each of his 291 principles which demonstrate how the spiritual universe interacts with the physical world and governs the mystical path.

Another important mystic from Basra, al-Tustarī, wrote a partial commentary on the Qur'an that followed a similar approach. Neither al-Tirmidhī nor al-Tustarī were Sufis per se, but their works laid the foundations for Sufism as it developed into its mature form. Both of these figures showed how the mystical interpretation of Qur'an and hadith could uncover meanings that were not readily understood by a mere surface reading of these texts. Through their attempt to interpret the Qurʾan and hadith in this way, they were demonstrating how Islamic mysticism continually returns to these two sources for its inspiration and fundamental doctrines.

Hadith and Normative Islamic Mysticism

It is well known that early Muslim ascetics were influenced by Christian asceticism, which had already been well established in both Syria and Iraq before the Arab/Islamic conquests of the seventh century CE (Green 2012, 19–21). A clear example of this kind of Christian asceticism can be found in the work of Isaac of Nineveh (d. 700 CE) from Iraq, who wrote a series of homilies about the virtues of the monastic life. Some of the early Muslim ascetics and mystics of Syria, in particular, advocated celibacy as an important component of the mystical path (Knysh 2010, 37). These Islamic ventures into asceticism and mysticism occurred before the canonization of hadith in the ninth century CE, which took the form of a corpus of widely recognized collections of Prophetic traditions representing the sunna of the Prophet. Once this corpus of hadith became the standard by which the sunna of the Prophet would be judged, it brought about a re-envisioning of Islamic mysticism that would align closer to the hadith. Al-Junayd, al-Tustarī, and al-Tirmidhī were all important figures in this re-visioning of Islamic mysticism. Their approaches were synthesized and institutionalized later by the likes of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī in the eleventh century CE. Thus, hadith played a crucial role in the development of Sufism as a uniquely Islamic approach to mysticism.

Celibacy is a case in point. At the end of the eighth century and beginning of the ninth century CE, ascetics such as Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830) were advocating celibacy as a component of their ascetic/mystical practice. Al-Dārānī had studied the mystic path with ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. c. 133/750) and Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ (d. 161/777) at Basra and ʿAbbādān, an island on the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, in Iraq. Upon returning to Syria he developed his own mystical teaching centered on *tawakkul*, total reliance upon God, and *riḍā*, complete acceptance of the divine will (Knysh 2010, 36). His use of celibacy fitted well with a strict ascetic regime that he had developed at ʿAbbādān, which was a training ground for Iraqi ascetics during the latter part of the eighth century and first part of the ninth century CE (Knysh 2010, 17). In this way, the asceticism of Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī was not significantly different from the ascetic regime of Isaac of Nineveh (d. 700 CE), an early Iraqi Christian ascetic and monk at the monastery of Bethabe in Kurdistan.

The supremacy of the hadith movement was realized by the middle of the ninth century CE when the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil rescinded the *Miḥna* and decided to back the supporters of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Muslim mystics from the end of the ninth century CE no longer made celibacy a central component of their mystical teachings. Al-Junayd, for example, had to defend his support for celibacy against the existence of Prophetic hadith that directly opposed it. Al-Tirmidhī probably went the furthest by stating that celibacy had no place in Islamic mysticism because it directly contravenes the Prophetic hadith. By the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, the Sufis were stating that the shariʿa, based on principles primarily derived from the Qurʾan and hadith, was the law that was required of all Sufis. By al-Qushayrī's time, the hadith and its expression in *fiqh* (Islamic law) had become supreme as a standard by which normative Sufi practice was regulated.

The Development of Sufism in Khurāsān

Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) wrote one of the first major works defending Sufism from its detractors. His book *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ* sought to place Sufism within the broader milieu of Islamic scholarship. According to al-Sarrāj, there are three types of scholars in Islam who are worthy of the title "inheritors of the prophets" (*warathat al-anbiyāʾ*). These are the scholars of hadith, the scholars of law (*fiqh*), and the scholars of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). For al-Sarrāj, these scholar-types are nested so that the scholar of law must accept and adhere to the dictates of hadith (al-Sarrāj 2014, 8), and the scholar of *taṣawwuf* must accept and adhere to the dictates of both law and hadith (al-Sarrāj 1914, 9–11). However, for al-Sarrāj, the scholar of law is of a higher rank than the scholar of hadith and the scholar of *taṣawwuf* is of a higher rank than both the scholars of law and hadith. This nested hierarchy is similar to al-Tirmidhī's hierarchy of knowledge, which places the scholar of outward knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) below the scholar of wisdom (*ḥikma*). For al-Tirmidhī, both of these scholar-types are of lower status than the scholar of gnosis (*maʿrifa*) as exemplified by the saints, the *awliyāʾ* (al-Tirmidhī 1571, fol. 16b). Both al-Sarrāj and al-Tirmidhī place hadith in a position of foundational importance for Sufism.

One of the fundamental aspects of Sufism is the idea that, even after the prophets, God continues to communicate with humanity through knowledge that he bequeaths to his saints (*awliyāʾ*). This knowledge does not have legislative force; however, it is still a means of guidance for humanity according to many Sufis. Thus, we see in both al-Sarrāj and al-Tirmidhī the idea that God communicates to humanity directly through the Qurʾan and then indirectly through the recorded words and deeds of the Prophet (hadith), and furthermore, more indirectly through his saints. Thus, the Qurʾan and the hadith, while being the first and foremost expressions of God's will, also provide a standard by which the words of the saints can be judged. In this way, the Qurʾan and the hadith provide an essential frame of reference for Sufi epistemology.

Al-Sarrāj was from Ṭūs, a city in northeastern Khurāsān and al-Tirmidhī was from the city of Tirmidh in Transoxania. Both Khurāsān and Transoxania became important centers of Islamic learning and thought during the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. While many of the early Sufis of the ninth century CE came from the central lands of Islam such as Iraq and Syria, Sufism developed its mature form in the eastern province of Khurāsān during the eleventh century CE. The city of Nishapur in Khurāsān was home to the two most important figures in the development of early Sufism whom we have already mentioned, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. Being hadith scholars, their scholarship in hadith heavily impacted their articulation of Sufism. Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī used the science of hadith to establish Sufism as an Islamic discipline alongside other knowledge disciplines in Islam such as *tafsīr* (Qurʾanic exegesis), hadith, and *fiqh* (law).

Al-Sulamī's contribution to Sufism has been likened to the contribution of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) to Islamic legal methodology. Al-Shāfiʿī sought to make hadith the main arbiter for recourse to legal rulings by bringing about more uniformity in the Islamic legal system and reducing the role of local traditions as a source of law. In a sense, al-Sulamī performs this task for Sufism by emphasizing the centrality of hadith to Islamic mystical thought and practice (Thibon 2009, 132). For example, in his book on *futuwwa* (chivalry), al-Sulamī takes pains to demonstrate the importance of *futuwwa* by citing numerous hadith about this aspect of Islamic spirituality. It would be facile to say that al-Sulamī was simply trying to bolster the orthodoxy of *futuwwa*. Rather, al-Sulamī is attempting to show that *futuwwa* is an important notion to the hadith corpus and thus should be incorporated into Sufi aesthetics (Thibon 2009, 133). While some have criticized the reliability of al-Sulamī in narrating hadith, it cannot be denied that al-Sulamī was steeped in hadith culture. He transmitted hadith orally in Nishapur for 40 years and transmitted local hadith traditions from Khurāsān to hadith masters in Baghdad. The only purely hadith work of al-Sulamī that survives is his *Arbaʿīn*, a collection of 40 hadith related to topics of Sufism (Thibon 2009, 134). In this book, he provides proofs from hadith for various controversial practices of the Sufis such as *samāʿ* (audition), *raqṣ* (dancing), and wearing the *muraqqaʿa* (patched frock).

In addition to his profuse use of hadith in support of Sufism, al-Sulamī used the conventions of hadith science to record and catalog the words of early Islamic mystics up to his time. One of the most important hadith conventions he used is the *isnād* (chain of narrators) that connects the person recording the tradition to the original speaker through an oral chain of transmitters. By recording the words of the early Sufi masters in this way, al-Sulamī establishes them as authorities in Sufism. This attention to *isnād*s by al-Sulamī mirrors the importance of the *isnād* in hadith studies. Through this use of *isnād*s, al-Sulamī associates the early Sufi masters with the Prophet since he considered them to be the true inheritors of the Prophetic legacy. In this light, the Sufis consider the words of the saints to be a lesser form of inspiration from God, but nevertheless an extension of the charisma of the Prophet.

Al-Qushayrī was no less influential on the development of Sufism than al-Sulamı, who was his teacher. Like al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī was a scholar of hadith as well as a legal expert in the Shāfiʿī school of law. Above and beyond this, he was a well-known Sufi master whose Sufi manual, *al-Risāla*, became a classic and is still taught to this day in Sufi circles around the world. Al-Qushayrī used the methods of hadith transmission along with the Arabic literary stylistics of *adab* culture to mold a unique and far reaching synthesis of Islamic mystical thought (Chiabotti 2014, 579–580; *adab*, comparable to the Latin *urbanitas*, refers to cultured etiquette in the early Abbasid period and was associated with skill in the literary arts as well as knowledge of culture and refined taste. See Gabrieli 2015). This synthesis is what we generally refer to as Sufism in its mature form that has lasted down to this day.

Al-Qushayrī made use of poetic verse to capture Sufi expressions of mystical insight and divine rapture, and after al-Qushayrī, poetry would become the primary mode of communicating Sufi aesthetics. Al-Qushayrī was known to recite Sufi poetry as mystical commentary on the hadith that he would narrate in his teaching sessions (Chiabotti 2014, 575). Here we can see that the practice of hadith narration could sometimes provide a background for Sufi mystical expression. The use of hadith for this purpose was highly motivating for Sufi aspirants, who no doubt felt that they were hearing the words of the Prophet himself as they listened to the hadith narrator. In this sense, the narrator provided a living and personal connection to the Prophet, while the hadith audition sessions could elicit strong mystical experiences in the participants. It is therefore unsurprising that Sufis would actively engage in hadith narration and transmission.

Al-Ghazālī and Hadith

Modern controversy surrounding Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), acclaimed Sufi and author of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (*Revivification of the Religious Sciences*), illustrates the evolving place of hadith in Sufism. Al-Ghazālī quotes weak hadith profusely in his *Iḥyāʾ*, and in modern times, he and other Sufis have been accused of carelessness when it comes to narrating hadith and even of being innovators (*ahl al-bidʿa*) for using weak, or allegedly forged, hadith to support their ideas and practices. This criticism requires several important caveats. Sufism had become so widespread in the Muslim world by the end of the early modern period that it is impossible to essentialize Sufis as "careful" or "careless" about the hadith they narrate. Moreover, Sufis were hardly alone in utilizing weak hadith. Rather, hadith experts and Muslim scholars in general have accepted the use of weak (though never forged) hadith in disciplines other than Islamic theology. For example, weak hadith have traditionally been widely accepted when discussing the *sīra* (biography) of the Prophet. In fact, most of the material that relates to the Prophet's biography can be categorized as weak by the standards of hadith experts. Nevertheless, these traditions are seen as relevant and useful since the Prophet's biography does not impinge upon the duties and prohibitions that are central to a Muslim's daily worship, or the principles of faith. Similarly, weak hadith have been allowed when they relate to the promotion of virtues. Again, since virtues do not relate to specific commands and prohibitions in Islamic law they are given consideration as part of the Prophetic heritage and thus are useful in promoting good character among Muslims (Brown 2011, 6–7).

Some Sufis considered the knowledge vouchsafed to them from God to be an arbiter of the soundness of particular hadiths. The celebrated Andalusian Sufi Muḥammad b. ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī (d. 638/1240) used several hadiths in his works that he knew to have no basis according to the requirements of hadith science. One such hadith found throughout Ibn ʿArabī's *Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations) reads, "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known. So I created the cosmos that I might be known." All major hadith critics consider this hadith to have no basis in the Prophet's words. Ibn ʿArabī knew that this hadith was weak or even forged. However, he considered it to be "sound" according to spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) (Brown 2009, 193–195). While there certainly were Sufis like Ibn ʿArabī who considered their personal unveiling from God to carry formal weight about the soundness of a given Prophetic tradition, this was not the case for the vast majority of Sufis. Generally, Sufis respected the classificatory system developed by hadith scholars. Rather, the difference between Sufis and their detractors with respect to the use of hadith was in the relative value and weight given to weak hadith as well as the appropriate context within which those weak hadith should be used (Brown 2011, 15).

Ibn Taymiyya and Radical Conservatism with Respect to Hadith

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) was a Ḥanbalī scholar known for his unrelenting attacks on what he considered religious innovation (*bidʿa*) among the Muslims of his time. He criticized a series of practices that were widespread among Muslims, some of which related to Sufism, such as *tawassul* (seeking the intervention of a saint), visiting the tombs of saints and prophets, and the institution of the Sufi shaykh (spiritual guide). Ibn Taymiyya lived in a time of social and political turmoil in the wake of the Mongol invasions of the Middle East, and his criticisms do not indicate that he is necessarily more fideistic toward hadith than the Sufis but, rather, that he inclined toward a "strict constructionist"[1] interpretation of hadith. This is embodied in the approach espoused by his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 750/1351), who held that religious beliefs and rituals should be assumed false unless proven otherwise. By contrast, contracts and personal interactions are permissible unless proven otherwise (Brown 2009, 187). This view runs counter to the majoritarian view that applies the same five-point scale of permissibility (*al-aḥkām al-khamsa*) to religious rituals as it does to economic dealings. Both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim demonstrate a radical conservatism with respect to the interpretation of hadith that was not adopted by the vast majority of Muslim scholars. Rather, the majoritarian view was that all human actions, whether religious or non-religious could be graded according to five different levels of permissibility depending on their *ḥukm* (ruling) in relation to the *Sharīʿa*. According to these Sunni scholars, the hadith is just one of four main sources for Islamic law that also includes the Qurʾan, *ijmāʿ* (consensus of the scholarly community), and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). This legal schema provided much greater flexibility than the binary approach of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. However, we should understand that these two scholars were intent on trying to instill a more conservative approach to Islam in reaction to the major threat posed by the Mongol invasions to Islamic civilization. While Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim were considered outliers for much of Islamic history, in the modern period their ideas have witnessed a resurgence in the various Salafi movements that have become important articulations of Islamic religiosity in many modern Muslim societies (for more on the beginnings of Salafism and its relationship to Sufism, see Weismann 2007; for modern Salafi approaches to hadith, see Chapters 15 and 16).

Salafism has its roots in a reaction to the threat of European colonialism and Western hegemony over Muslim societies. Thus, while modern-day Salafis will criticize Sufis for not adhering well to the dictates of hadith and for innovating affairs in religious matters, this criticism is better understood as a veiled attack on Sufi authority. Most Salafis consider Sufis to have failed to protect Muslim societies from the threat of colonialism. Similarly, neither Ibn Taymiyya nor Ibn Qayyim were antithetical to Sufism as an expression of Islamic religious thought and practice. Rather, they criticized particular aspects of Sufism, which they considered to be innovations. Some scholars of Islam have even argued that both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim were themselves Sufis who upheld the ethical teachings of Sufism (Weismann 2007, 188).

The Role of the *Isnād* in Sufism

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE, Sufi brotherhoods (*ṭuruq*, sg. *ṭarīqa*) became a normative part of Muslim social organization throughout the Muslim world. This has remained the case up to the modern period, since when a decline began in the influence of Sufi brotherhoods following colonization and the establishment of modern nation states. Nevertheless, Sufi brotherhoods still function as important social institutions all over the Muslim world today. Sufi *ṭuruq* developed modes of transmitting religious authority through the institution of the *shaykh–murīd* (master–disciple) relationship. The relationship between teacher and disciple in Sufism has been traditionally one of spiritual education (*tarbiya*) on behalf of the teacher with complete obedience expected on the part of the student. The basis of this master–disciple institution lay in the authority of the Sufi *shaykh*, who was understood to be a living representative of the Prophet and who derived his authority through a chain (*silsila*) of teachers reaching back to the Prophet himself. In a sense, one can visualize the Sufi *silsila* as a "living hadith," just as the hadith *isnād* (chain of narrators) connects the writer or reader of the hadith to the Prophet through a series of narrators. In this way, the structure of Sufism extends logically from the other Islamic disciplines that preceded it such as hadith and *tafsīr*.

There are two types of *isnād* that are important to Sufis. The first is known as *isnād al-ṣuḥba* (the chain/connection of companionship), which requires that a disciple spend time learning from and emulating a master who has perfected many of the Prophetic character traits. The second type is the *isnād al-ʿilm* (the chain/connection of knowledge), which is a mystical chain of transmission from teacher to student that extends back to the Prophet. This second *isnād* indicates a type of esoteric light-knowledge that passes from teacher to student through the masters of a particular *ṭarīqa* issuing originally from the Prophet (Weismann 2007, 188–189). This idea is somewhat similar to the Shiʿi notion of a light-knowledge that is inherited by the Imams from the Prophet. For many Sufis, however, this *isnād* is less esoteric than it is a conduit of blessing (*baraka*) that flows from the Prophet. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī articulated this idea succinctly when he described knowledge through the analogy of water. While the Prophet is like an ocean in his knowledge, the saint is like a river and the Muslim scholar is like a creek. Knowledge flows from its source and reaches humanity through particular individuals who carry this knowledge to the people (al-Tirmidhī 1972, 60). While this analogy sees knowledge as flowing from the source of the Prophet, who took his knowledge ultimately from God, al-Tirmidhī is primarily commenting on the capacity of different types of human beings to receive knowledge from God. For some Sufis, the Prophet only confided this special knowledge to a select few of his companions who then taught it to others. This is the inward (*bāṭin*) knowledge that can only be known through initiation into a *ṭarīqa* and by taking the hand of a Sufi master. In support of this idea, Sufis will point to the hadith of Abū Hurayra, a prominent companion of the Prophet, who is reported to have said, "I memorized two vessels [of knowledge] from the Prophet. As for the first, I made it known among the people. As for the second, if I made it known my throat would be cut" (al-Tirmidhī 1972, 189). For other Sufis, however, this inward knowledge is not an esoteric knowledge that was passed down from the Prophet, but rather it is a knowledge bequeathed to them directly from God. This is what Sufis call *maʿrifa* (gnosis) or *ilhām* (inspiration). In support of this type of knowledge, Sufis will point to the idea expressed in Qurʾan 2:269 that God gives wisdom (*ḥikma*) to his servants who are neither messengers nor prophets: "He gives wisdom to whomsoever he wills, and whoever is given wisdom is given great good. And none truly remembers save those who possess hearts."

In many ways, the second type of *isnād* performed the role of authentication for Sufi masters and supported their claims to religious authority. Just as the *isnād* of a particular hadith lends that hadith authoritative value as representative of the words of the Prophet, so too the Sufi *isnād* indicates the authority of a Sufi shaykh's claim to be a living representative of the Prophet. Al-Tirmidhī, al-Sulamī, and al-Qushayrī all considered the Sufi saints to be the true *khulafāʾ* (successors) of the Prophet. However, since almost anyone could claim to be a Sufi master and to have been bequeathed inward knowledge, there needed to be certain outward qualifications that would keep imposters from claiming sainthood and Sufi authority. Some of these qualifications were outward religious knowledge of the shariʿa, following the sunna of the Prophet, companionship with a Sufi master, and finally an *isnād*.

Not all Sufis followed these conventions. The Uwaysis, for example, claimed that they did not need companionship with a Sufi shaykh. They followed the example of Uways al-Qarnī, a second generation follower (*tābiʿī*) who never met the Prophet but was named by the Prophet as one of the greatest of God's saints (Baldick 1993, 7). The Qalandars also did not follow the normal conventions of Sufism. This group of wandering ascetics sought to break social conventions even if it related to the sunna of the Prophet as understood through the hadith. They would shave all their hair, put steel rings in their noses, ears, and genitalia, walk about without clothes or barely dressed, and eschew marriage and even friendship (Karamustafa 2006, 41). All of these actions run directly counter to the sunna of the Prophet as it was formulated and summarized in the hadith literature. The Qalandars represent another ascetic/mystical movement in Khurāsān that predated Sufism. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī records ascetics of his time in the ninth century CE who resemble closely the Qalandars of the thirteenth century CE. Rather than seeing the Qalandars as a socially deviant group that was reacting to the social conformity brought about by the strictures of the Prophetic sunna, we can see them historically as an ascetic/mystical group that predated Sufism but was eventually superseded by it. This same phenomenon happened to other ascetic/mystical groups that predated Sufism such as the Malāmatiyya and Karrāmiyya. The Malāmatiyya, literally "the people of blame," represent an ascetic/mystical movement from Khurāsān and Transoxania that was known for its strict regime of censuring the soul (*nafs*) and its ethic of hiding acts of worship. Its base of support was among the urban guilds that constituted the marketplace in medieval Islamic cities of the East. The Karrāmiyya represent the opposite end of the social spectrum, focused their efforts on reforming the rural and urban poor, and were known for sometimes ostentatious acts of asceticism. Neither of these movements survived the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century CE.

Remolding Sufism in Light of Salafism

The rise of Salafism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has posed one of the greatest challenges to Sufism. Salafis have attacked some of the fundamental ideas and practices of Sufism, labeling them innovations that were unknown at the time of the Prophet. Many present-day Salafis follow the example of Ibn Taymiyya, who, as we mentioned previously, was intent on undermining the authority structures that were at the heart of the Sufi enterprise. Sufis have responded with their own justifications for Sufi thought and practice based on their interpretation of the Qurʾan and sunna. In this way, Sufis have had to come to terms with aspects of their ritual practice that may not align directly with norms established through hadith. Sufis will argue that the hadith are just one source for Islamic law and that other sources such as *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) also come into play when deciding about the legality of a particular ritual practice. In response to criticism from Salafis, some Sufis have altered the terminology they use in order to recast their religio-mystical approach in ways that they feel will not be misunderstood. For example, a Yemeni Sufi movement based in Tarīm, the Ḥabāʾib, eschews the use of Sufi terminology associated with Ibn ʿArabī. The Ḥabāʾib have reinvented their approach to Sufism by focusing on *daʿwa* (proselytization) rather than *tarbiya* (spiritual training) based on the master–disciple relationship (Knysh 2001, 413).

This approach to Sufism in the modern era echoes the position of the famous Sufi of the eleventh century CE, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Hujwīrī (d. 1077), who said, “Sufism was a reality without a name, and now it is a name without a reality” (al-Hujwīrī 1970, 45). Al-Hujwīrī contends that Sufism was the de facto approach of the Prophet and his companions, but, as the Muslim community grew large and differentiated, there remained only a spiritual and mystical elite among Muslims who carried on the way of the Prophet. In other words, al-Hujwīrī considers the terms “Sufi” and *taṣawwuf* to be cultural and linguistic appellations arising from historical circumstance. According to him, the reality that these terms came to signify was a reality that had existed since the time of the Prophet. Again, we can see that the debate between Salafis and Sufis revolves primarily around modes of defining and interpreting Islam, whether they be more textually driven and egalitarian or whether they be more interpretive and based on saintly authority.

In the Indian Subcontinent, a Sufi/Salafi division plays itself out in the debate between Barelvīs and Deobandis. This division is largely based on a theological debate in Sunni Islam over the cosmic relevance of the Prophet (Mapril and Blanes 2013, 168). However, it also underlines the complex role Sufism plays in Islam. Not all Deobandis have a Salafi orientation. To the contrary, some are Sufis, but they usually restrict the cosmic relevance of the Prophet, while Barelvīs give prominence to the cosmic role of the Prophet even after his death. Barelvīs, on the other hand, are all

Sufis (Riaz 2008, 75–76). The interpretation of hadith plays a key role in the Deobandi/Barelvī division. Barelvīs tend to adopt a more theological approach which allows for more latitude in interpreting Qurʾanic verses and hadith when making claims about the nature of the Prophet. Deobandis, on the other hand, follow a less interpretive and less theological approach. This division echoes the discussion earlier in this chapter about the antagonism between *ahl al-hadīth* (hadith folk) and the Muʿtazila theologians in the ninth and tenth centuries CE.

Some of the main points of controversy between Barelvīs and Deobandis hinge on the light-based nature of the Prophet, the ability of the Prophet to know past, present, and future events, and the ability of the Prophet to be present in places even after his death. Deobandis criticize Barelvī views about the Prophet by saying that they give him supernatural qualities that border on the divine. Deobandis then point to various hadiths quoted by Barelvīs and allege that these hadiths are weak or forged. Barelvīs counter that their use of weak hadith is only in support of statements already established from the Qurʾan as well as hadith that are considered by all Muslims to be sound and acceptable. One such verse from the Qurʾan says, "There has come to you from Allāh a light and a clear book" (Q 5:15). Almost all the early exegetes of the Qurʾan consider the meaning of "light" in this verse to refer to the Prophet. While Barelvīs do not negate the human aspect of the Prophet, they interpret this to mean that the true essence of the Prophet is derived from light, and they emphasize his light-based nature. Deobandis, on the other hand, will interpret this same verse to mean that the Prophet serves as a metaphorical "light" by providing guidance for all of mankind. Deobandis, wary of where the logic of this light-based nature of the Prophet could lead, tend to be more conservative in their interpretation and emphasize the Prophet's human qualities (*bashariyya*) (Geaves and Gabriel 2013, 217).

The modern discussion between Deobandis and Barelvīs, Salafis and Sufis, can be understood by looking at how these groups approach the famous hadith of Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh about the light-based nature of the Prophet:

> It is related that Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of Allāh, may my father and mother be ransomed for you, tell me of the first thing Allāh created before all things." He said: "O Jābir, the first thing Allāh created was the light of your Prophet from his light, and that light remained in the midst of his power for as long as he wished, and there was not, at that time, a Tablet or a Pen or a Paradise or a Fire or an angel or a heaven or an earth or a sun or a moon or a sprite or a human being. And when Allāh wished to create creation, he divided that Light into four parts, and from the first made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, and then he divided the fourth part into four parts. He created from the first of those parts the bearers of the throne, and from the second the Footstool, and from the third the rest of the angels. Then he divided the fourth of these parts into four parts. From the first he created the heavens, and from the second the earths, and from the third Paradise and Hell. Then he divided the fourth of these parts into four parts. From the first he created the light of the eyes of the believers; and from the second the light of their hearts, and that is the knowledge of God; from the third the light of their intimacy [with God], and that is the affirmation of his oneness: There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God; [and from the fourth everything else.]" (al-Qasṭallānī 1864, 12)

This hadith is narrated by ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Humām al-Sanʿānī (d. 827), a narrator from Yemen who is considered trustworthy by all major scholars of hadith. There are several characteristics of this hadith that make it a point of contention between Deobandis and Barelvīs, as well as between Salafis and Sufis. While this hadith is narrated by a trustworthy narrator, the hadith does not come with a *sanad* (chain of transmission) that connects the narrator, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, to the Prophet. (This type of hadīth is called *marfūʿ*, "raised." It is ascribed to the Prophet without an intermediary *sanad* because of the reliability of the narrator.) Second, the *musnad* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq (his personal compilation of Prophetic hadith) has not reached us in full, and the part of his *musnad* that is extant does not contain this particular hadith. Rather, this hadith has been transmitted from him through other secondary sources. Various hadith scholars have classified this hadith over a wide continuum from sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) to weak (*ḍaʿīf*) and even to fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*). The wording of the hadith clearly contains vocabulary and concepts that can be traced to a later time period than that of the Prophet, dating to around the eighth century CE. However, the presence of anachronisms does not disqualify a hadith completely because generally hadith are interpreted based on their meaning and not their specific wording. This hadith, as we mentioned, is consistent with meanings articulated in verses of the Qurʾan and sound hadith. Most Sufis would probably claim that this hadith is weak (*ḍaʿīf*) but that its meaning is sound based on supporting evidence from other textual witnesses. Salafis, on the other hand, might classify this hadith as forged based on the many problems inherent in the hadith text. Furthermore, they might go on to claim that by using this hadith Sufis are lying about the Prophet, which is a grave accusation, given that the Prophet himself, in a well-authenticated hadith, promised hell for anyone who intentionally lies about him.

The controversy over this hadith demonstrates how the hadith was, and still remains, a focal point in mediating the various doctrinal debates in Islam. One can see from this discussion that the Sufi/Salafi and Barelvī/Deobandi debate is not simply an issue of one group being more or less fideistic toward hadith. Rather, these differences stem from often competing regimes of sense that seek to use hadith to bolster their various claims to authority and legitimacy. For almost a thousand years Sufis have represented entrenched religious authority in Muslim societies (Green 2012, 73). In the modern era, and in response to the challenges of colonization and globalization, Salafism has gained ground among Sunnis, who feel that traditional Sufi institutions have not been successful in defending the cause of Islam. Sufis, on the other hand, see themselves as the inheritors and preservers of the spiritual legacy of the Prophet and the culture and civilization of Islam.

Conclusion

Since earliest times, there has been an ascetic/mystical trend among Muslims. This trend eventually developed into what we call Sufism today, which was the product of a broad mystical synthesis that took place in Khurāsān during the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. The study and dissemination of hadith science developed in parallel to this mystical trend and played a critical role in its formative development. Many early Sufis were hadith scholars who emphasized the practical aspect of acting upon the hadith they were narrating. The culture of hadith dominance that began in the ninth century CE pushed out the theological and intellectual approach of the Muʿtazilīs. For the *ahl al-ḥadīth* at this time even a weak report from the Prophet was seen as superior to personal judgments based on rational speculation. Sufis were not the only ones who held this view. In fact, the majority of Sunni scholars for the greater part of Islamic history and scholarship have held this to be true. In the modern era, especially in response to the threat of colonialism, some Muslim scholars have called for a reappraisal of Islamic thought based on what they consider to be more rigorous standards for hadith. These Salafis tend to criticize Sufis for the use of weak, or even what they consider forged, hadith; however, this criticism is often disingenuous. Sufis are not uniform in their use of hadiths since they are represented across all segments of Islamic society. Rather, the Salafi challenge is a challenge to the authority structures and traditional religious establishments that were inherited by Muslims from the premodern era. Sufi institutions were of primary importance among these premodern institutions. The Prophetic hadith will continue to be a point of contention among Muslims as they seek to mediate these various differences. As long as the Prophet continues to inspire Muslims to emulate his ways and follow his words, there will always be a continuum of interpretation as Muslims struggle to understand his Prophetic legacy.

Note

1 I am using this term from United States constitutional law to indicate a similar interpretive regime with respect to foundational legal documents. United States judges who felt that the US Constitution should be interpreted closely to its original wording were termed "strict constructionists." Ibn Taymiyya might be styled as a "strict constructionist" in that he eschewed legal interpretations that did not follow the original wording and intent of the Qurʾan and hadith.

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CHAPTER 14

Shiʿism

Ahmad Pakatchi

For the Shiʿa, like the majority of Muslims, hadith has a special place as a second source of religious teaching next to the Holy Qurʾan, and as a development of Qurʾanic content. That the Qurʾan should be interpreted under the light of hadith was a belief held in common between the Shiʿa and the majority, and it was the basis for the great authority of hadith in the formation of religious beliefs and practices. The hadith known as *Ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* is cited by Shiʿi scholars not only to give a parallel authority to hadith alongside the Qurʾan but also to grant authority to hadith from the Prophet's household as a way of properly understanding the Qurʾan. Further, this hadith serves as a basis for a generalization regarding the domain of hadith: based on this hadith's reference to the "Scripture of God and my household (*ʿitra*)," the Shiʿa argue that the teaching of the Twelve Imams is an extension of Prophetic sunna.

Consequently, in all theoretical resources of the Shiʿa, especially in works on principles of jurisprudence (*uṣul al-fiqh*), sunna refers to teachings of the Twelve Imams as well as the Holy Prophet himself. This is the basis, in Shiʿi belief, for a generalized conception of hadith. Unlike Sunni scholars, hadith for Shiʿi scholars is the oral or behavioral teachings of the Holy Prophet and all Twelve Imams, and an accepted definition for hadith is "all that is received from the Prophet or Imams" (al-Shahīd al-Thānī 1988, 50). However, an alternative definition reserves the term "hadith" for what is received only from the Prophet and uses the term *khabar* for hadith received from the Imams (al-Shahīd al-Thānī 1988, 50, 52). Thus, Shiʿi jurists and theologians have often preferred to use the term *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*) rather than "hadith" for narrations received from the Twelve Imams. Shaykh Ṭūsī (d. 460/1068), for example, when he compiled a collection of contradictory juristic hadiths, preferred to call them *akhbār*. He names his book, which became the fourth of the Four Books of Shiʿite hadith, *al-Istibṣār fīmā ukhtulifa fīhi min al-akhbār*. Consequently when a struggle arose between supporters of

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jurisprudential methods and supporters of hadith in the field of Shiʿi canonical law from the sixth/twelfth century, the latter movement was called *akhbārī*, that is, supporters of *khabars* (Qazvīnī Rāzī 1980, 568–569).

On the relationship between hadith and Qurʾan, a key maxim among Shiʿa scholars, especially in recent centuries, introduces the Qurʾan as "decisive in source and indecisive in signification," while describing the hadith as "indecisive in source and decisive in signification" (Qummī 1886, 309). Consequently, most *Imāmī* scholars refer cases of ambiguity in Qurʾanic verses to related interpretive hadiths and restrict non-literal exegesis of the Qurʾan to the infallible Imams (Kulaynī 1971, 1:186, 213; Ṭūsī 1964, 2:400). It is a generally accepted position among *Imāmīs* that *taʾwīl* (non-literal exegesis) of the Qurʾan is proper to the Imams from the household of the Prophet, and further that the teaching of the Imams can only be known through hadith.

The Authenticity of Hadith

The description of hadith as "indecisive in source" raises the critical issue of authenticity. By contrast with the Holy Qurʾan, any hadith is approached critically and can never be used as an authoritative source unless scrutinized with regard to authenticity. One of the earliest Shiʿi traditions regarding the criticism of hadith is a saying narrated from Imam ʿAli which classifies transmitters of Prophetic hadiths into four groups: first, the hypocrites who consciously attribute forged hadiths to the Prophet; second, people who are deficient in memory or confused; third, people who transmit abrogated decrees unaware of the abrogation; and fourth, people free from all these deficiencies who transmitted hadiths properly (Kulaynī 1971, 1:62; al-Sharīf al-Raḍī 2:400).

Shiʿi scholars further distinguished between criticism of hadith from outside the Shiʿi community and criticism from within it. In principle, the Shiʿa usually evaluated the hadiths of the majority Sunni community pessimistically, giving little credence even to the most widely accepted hadith collections, the Six Books (*ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*). Other reports, however, show that the position of the early Shiʿa in relation to majority transmitters was not entirely negative. According to one narrative from the middle of second/eighth century, Muḥammad ibn Muslim, a great Shiʿa scholar, asked Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq about some people not suspected of lying who narrated sayings of the Prophet incompatible with teachings of Shiʿa Imams. In response, Imam Ṣādiq explained the contradiction by means of abrogation without accusing the narrators of lying (Kulaynī 1971, 1:64–65). Nevertheless, in addition to the probable occurrence of lying and forgery, by finding deficiencies in transmission such as abrogation, Shiʿa scholars dismissed Sunni hadiths as untrustworthy and have left these hadith in a situation of suspended judgment.

One of the concerns of the Shiʿa about the majority community's hadiths was change or loss of context. For example, a hadith narrated from Imam Riḍā declares that although the main expression of the hadith "God created man in his own image" (Bukhārī 1987, 5:2299; Muslim 1955, 4:2017; cf. Genesis, 1:27) is authentic, what leads to misunderstanding is the fact that it is separated from its context (Ibn Bābawayh 1984, 1:110). Shiʿa scholars also worried about proper understanding even of the text of a hadith. From a historical distance the meaning could not be properly understood by the majority, and the only authorities capable of confirming the meaning are leaders from the Prophet's household, hence the maxim: "The People of Household are more knowledgeable about what exists in the House" (Fayḍ Kāshānī 1986, 6:244). The viewpoint of the Shiʿa about the confusion of the majority community concerning the meaning of Prophetic hadith is based on an analogy between the hadith and the Qurʾan in nature of their language. When speaking about multivalent expressions (*mutashābihāt*) in Qurʾan, Shiʿi religious literature describes the hadith of the Prophet and the Prophetic household as "hard to understand" (*ṣaʿb-un mustaṣʿab*). Just as Qurʾanic multivalent words must be referred to the Imams, so also obscurities in the hadith. A specific work from hadith scholars who tried to interpret the complicated hadiths using auxiliary hadiths is Ibn Bābawayh's *Maʿānī al-akhbār* (1361/1972). The problem is further complicated by the issue of "meaning-based alterations in expression" (*naql bi'l-maʿnā*); some records that show the Shiʿa community engaged in such a problem from the middle of second century.

Despite these concerns, Shiʿi scholars did reference non-Shiʿi hadith and included them in their writings, particularly for the purposes of polemics and apologetics. Shiʿa scholars felt free to use the majority community's hadiths to make arguments against them. In particular, they made widespread use of Sunni hadiths to support *Imāmī* positions on subjects such as the Twelve Imams, the Mahdi and the apocalypse, and the Imamate in general. In jurisprudence they also applied hadith from the majority to support significant *Imāmī* practices such as the prohibition of beer and the permissibility of concubinage (*Mutʿa*) (Murtaḍā 1994, 268; Ṭūsī 1983, 256ff.).

In fields more ethical than jurisprudential, the Shiʿa drew extensively from Sunni hadiths. A well-known case is Fayḍ Kāshānī 's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ*, which was a Shiʿi version of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (ed. Tehran, 1383/1963). Also, Shiʿi scholars did not hesitate to use hadiths with wisdom content because of teaching from Imams allowing their usage. For example, according to a famous hadith of Imam ʿAli, "Wisdom is a lost object for the believer, and he/she seeks it anywhere it exists, even in the hearth of a hypocrite" (al-Sharīf al-Raḍī 1967, aphorism no. 79–80; Tirmidhī 1938, 5:51). Based on such beliefs, the wisdom books of the Shiʿa contain a large volume of hadiths from Sunni sources, as well as materials from Jews and Christians. We see such an approach in hadith works such as *Nahj al-balāgha* compiled by Sharīf al-Raḍī and *Ghurar al-ḥikam* by Āmidī (sixth century AH; ed. Qom, 1366/1987). Such an orientation led to the circulation among the Imāmiyya of Sunni hadith works in morals or medicine. These included the *Shihāb al-akhbār* of Qāḍī al-Quḍāʿī (d. 454/1062), edited with a commentary in Tehran (1361/1982), and *Ṭibb al-Nabiyy* of Abū al-ʿAbbās Mustaghfirī (d. 432/1041), published in Najaf (1385/1965).

Regarding criticism of hadith inside the community, there are reports from Imams which accuse some companions of being liars: Bayān (Banān) al-Tabbān was accused of lying by Imam Sajjād; Mughīra ibn Saʿīd was accused of lying by Imam Bāqir, and some other figures were accused of lying by other Imams (Kashshī, 1969, 108, 192, 301–302). In the third/ninth century, even in the traditionalist milieu of Qom, accusations of lying against figures like Abū Samīna al-Ṣayrafī, or accusations against others like Aḥmad Barqī of an over-optimistic approach to narrators became grounds for their exile from Qom by the leader of hadith scholars, Saʿd ibn ʿAbdullāh Ashʿarī (Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī 2001, 39, 94; Najāshī 1987, 32).

Such critical viewpoints regarding Shiʿa transmitters of hadith led scholars to the development of fields of study related to *isnād* criticism, *ʿilm al-rijāl* and *ʿilm al-dirāya*. The former field emerged from the late third/ninth century onwards (i.e. Ṭūsī 1937, 92; Najāshī 1987, 36) and the latter from the ninth/fifteenth century with the *Kitāb al-riʿāya* of al-Shahīd al-Thānī (1408/1988). While the scholar Amīn Istarābādī (d. 1036/1627) challenged the methods of hadith criticism of the Ḥilla school proposed by Jamal al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs and ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī during the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, Istarābādī also agreed that there was another method of criticism of *isnad* among Shiʿa in early centuries (Istarābādī 2003, 109).

Despite strict boundaries separating Shiʿa sects, sectarian concerns do not seem to play an important role in the sphere of hadith. The only sects excluded from hadith circles by *Imāmī* Shiʿa scholars were the extremists (*ghulāt*). A wide range of narrators recognized by Shiʿa scholars were associated with different sects of the *Imāmī* Shiʿa, including the Wāqifa, the Faṭḥiyya, and the Jārūdiyya, which was the closest Zaydi sect to the *Imāmī* Shiʿa. Among the greatest figures in the folios of Shiʿi hadith works are ʿAbdullāh ibn Bukayr of the Faṭḥiyya, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ḥamza of the Wāqifa, and Abū al-Jārūd, the founder of Jārūdiyya (Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī 1972, 286ff.). In the first half of fourth/tenth century, when narratives of some *Imāmī* scholars with special tendencies, such as Muhammad ibn Baḥr Ruhnī (Kashshī 1969, 147) and Ibn Junaid al-Iskāfī (see Najāshī 1987, 387), were filtered, narrations from Wāqifa scholars like Ḥumaid ibn Ziyād al-Nainawāʾī, and from Jārūdiyya like Abū al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿUqda, were nevertheless included in mainstream of *Imāmī* hadith collections (Ṭūsī 1937, 3, 4; Najāshī 1987, 14, 98). This common ground among Twelver Shiʿa sects in the sphere of hadith was extended in the fourth/tenth century to include the works of non-Twelver scholars. Thus some Twelver scholars used the works of the Ismāʿīlī scholar Qāḍī Nuʿmān, including his *Daʿāʾim al-islām* (1383/1963) and his *Sharḥ al-akhbār* (1409/1989–1412/1992), like their own heritage (see for example Nūrī 1987, 1:84, 11:17).

Early Hadith Works Ascribed to Imams

For the Shiʿa, the writing of hadith begins with Imam ʿAli, who is reported to have prepared several manuscripts of the teaching of the Prophet (Ṣaffār 1984, 168, 182; Ibn Bābawayh 1966, 1:106). The most important work ascribed to him is entitled *Kitāb ʿAlī*, *The Book of ʿAli*. Many references to the content of this book and many quotations from it indicate that it was well known in hadith circles. The book contains mostly juristic topics (Kulaynī 1971, 3:9, 175, 505; Ṭūsī 1985, 6:343, 10:146). A narrative from Imam Ṣādiq reports that Imam Sajjād used to refer to *The Book of ʿAli* (Kulaynī 1971, 8:163), and other reports indicate that other Imams had access to it (Ṣaffār 1984, 165, 182; Kulaynī 1971, 6:219). Although no manuscripts of this work have been preserved, Muṣṭafā Qaṣīr al-ʿĀmilī recently attempted to reconstruct the *Kitāb ʿAlī* from passages quoted in hadith sources (1415/1995). Other books ascribed to Imam ʿAli include *al-Jāmiʿa* (the comprehensive), *al-Farāʾiḍ* (Book of Inheritance), and *Kitāb al-diyāt* (the book of Legal Compensations) (Kulaynī 1971, 1:57, 7:214, 330–343).

One of the most widely circulated texts in the history of the *Imāmī* School is a collection of hymns, allegedly from the first/seventh century, transmitted by Imam Sajjād. In spite of the fact there are some differences in the number of hymns included in various versions of the book, the main body of the text has vast transmission chains and displays a high level of accuracy in preservation of content. This text, which is famous as *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-sajjādiyya* and has been called "Psalms of Muhammad's Household," has been the subject of several commentaries (Ṭihrānī 1983, 13:345–359).

A second text ascribed to Imam Sajjād is the *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* (Treatise of the Rights), which contains detailed instructions about all the obligations arising from rights of God and rights of relatives and neighbors that a believer should fulfill in his life. A complete version of the text is given by Ibn Bābawayh (1986, 2:392–399) and partially quoted in Sunni works (see Abū Nuʿaim 1932, 3:138). Finally, the content of a brief text containing instructions on ascetics is ascribed to Imam Sajjād, and its compilation and narration are attributed to Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī; the complete text is inserted in *al-Kāfī* of Kulaynī (1971, 8:14–17), and in some bibliographies this text, entitled *al-Zuhd,* is attributed to Abū Ḥamza (Sezgin 1967, 1:531).

In the first half of the second/tenth century, Imam Ṣādiq, the leader of Jaʿfari School, laid the foundations for *Imāmī* teaching on theology and jurisprudence, and thereafter we find several texts ascribed to him circulating in *Imāmī* circles. Imam Ṣādiq's life coincides with the start of the hadith compilation movement, and the attribution of writings to him is therefore not unexpected. The texts allegedly written by Imam Ṣādiq differ widely from the standpoint of authenticity. A famous text attributed to Imam Ṣādiq is a book on theology and cosmology known as *Tawḥīd al-mufaḍḍal* of which Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī was the main transmitter (Najāshī 1987, 416) and which has been published several times in different editions (i.e. Beirut, 1404/1984). Another considerable work ascribed to Imam Ṣādiq is a work of exegesis narrated by the well-known mystic Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sulamī. The text, which is quoted in Sulamī's *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr* (1970), is a work of mystical exegesis and is known in Sufi circles (see Ansari 2011, 523 ff.). Another text with ethical content entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-sharīʿa* (Light of Religion) is attributed to Imam Ṣādiq (ed. Beirut, 1400/1980), but there is evidence that the book is a later work by a Sufi author (Pakatchi 2009, 101ff.; for other works attributed to Imam Ṣādiq, see Khodayari 2012, 555ff.).

In the second half of second/eighth century, a book known as *Masāʾil ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar* contains the answers of Imam Kāẓim to the questions of his brother ʿAli. Shiʿi critics rate the credibility of this text highly and it is quoted in the Four Books of the Shiʿa (e.g. Kulayni, 1971, 3: 44). We are also told of a manuscript in Qurʾanic exegesis ascribed to Imam Kāẓim which was in the hands of Ibn Shahr Āshūb in sixth/twelfth century and had some quotations from it (1957, 3:107).

In the last years of sixth/twelfth century, during the lifetime of Imam Riḍā, Sunni hadith scholarship was well developed, and it is unsurprising that Shiʿa Imams were also active in this regard. The most famous book ascribed to Imam Riḍā is *al-Risāla al-dhahabiyya* (ed. Najaf 1361/1982) (the Golden Treatise) or *Ṭibb al-Riḍā* (Medicine of Riḍā). According to traditions cited in the introduction to the text, Imam Riḍā wrote this treatise at the request of Caliph Maʾmūn. Although the book circulated widely among Shiʿi scholars and there are some commentaries written on it (Ṭihrānī 1983, 13:363–364), its ascription to Imam Riḍā has been questioned by some critics (Shakuri 2010, 313ff.; for other works ascribed to him, see Haj-Manuchehri 2013, 431ff.).

In the first half of the third/ninth century, we are informed of brief writings from later Imams (Kashshī 1969, 575–580; Ibn Bābawayh 1984, 1:53–55; Ibn Shuʿba 1997, 458–481). The only work worthy of mention is a *Tafsir* on the early part of the Qurʾan attributed to Imam ʿAskarī which was circulated among *Imāmī*s in the middle and late centuries (al-ʿAskarī 1989). The commentary was reportedly recited by the Imam and recorded in writing by two disciples from the city of Astarābādh (Gurgan), as reflected in the introduction (al-ʿAskarī, 9–10). However, the text was not known before the fourth century in *Imāmī* bibliographical sources and its authenticity is doubtful (Shushtarī 1981, 1:152ff.).

Early Twelver Hadith Collections

Companions of Imam ʿAli such as Sulaym ibn Qays, ʿUbaydullāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, and his brother ʿAlī are reported to be the compilers of the earliest hadith works (Najāshī 1987, 4–8; Sezgin 1967, 1:86), of which only Sulaym's work is supposed to have survived. This book has no obvious order and its content is focused entirely on the doctrine of Imamate and relations between the Shiʿa and majority community in the early decades after the Prophet.

The movement to compile collections of hadith, including both hadiths from the Prophet and from the Imams, coincided with the formation of the Jaʿfari school in the first half of second/eighth century. A significant part of early hadith heritage of the *Imāmī* school is contained in the *Uṣūl al-arbaʿ miʾa*, the Four Hundred Codices. While some scholars believe these were written by a range of writers beginning with the companions of Imam ʿAli and continuing through the companions of the Eleventh Imam (Ibn Shahr Āshūb 1961, 39), others claimed that 400 codices were written only by 400 figures who were all companions of Imam Ṣādiq (Ṭabrisī 1996, 2:200; Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī 1985, 1:26). With emergence of Jaʿfari school, and in response to the vast quantity of hadith passed on from previous generations, this wave of compilation focused on the teachings of Imam Ṣādiq and gave rise to a kind of reformation among the Imāmiyya in the sphere of hadith. Consequently, the hadith works of the companions of Imam Ṣādiq left a significant influence on *Imāmī* culture.

Regarding the writing style of the early sources (*uṣūl*), we have limited evidence. Shaikh Ṭūsī in the fifth/eleventh century considered them to be comparable to arranged books (*muṣannaf*s) (Ṭūsī 1937, 25), but we know that most of the writings of third/ninth century and before were brief and unarranged. When scholars such as Ṭūsī speak about some kind of arrangement in those periods, they mean that a book was focused on a particular topic. We know, for example, that the *Kitāb al-ṣalāt* of Ḥarīz Sijistānī (Najāshī 1987, 145) was devoted to the topic of prayer. Two bibliographic resources prepared in fifth/eleventh century by Ṭūsī and Najāshī cover a huge quantity of such early writings compiled by the companions of Imam Ṣādiq as well as other Imams. In spite of the fact that the major part of these writings has been lost, a large part of their content is included is Shiʿite Four Books and other hadith collections.

Of the huge number of these early writings recorded in bibliographies, a few works attributed to companions of the Imams is available in a collection named *al-Uṣūl al-sitta ʿashar* or the Sixteen Books, and some are included totally or partially in *Qurb al-isnād* of ʿAbdullāh ibn Jaʿfar al-Ḥimyarī (1992) and *Mustaṭrafāt al-sarāʾir* of Ibn Idrīs (1990, 549ff.).

In the third/ninth century we see the first attempt of *Imāmī* scholars to integrate the hadith books and to prepare comprehensive works which sometimes received the title *al-Jāmiʿ* and were sometimes called simply *kutub* (the books). The collection made by Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, one of the companions of Imams Kāẓim and Riḍā, was a pioneering work in this regard (Ibn Nadīm 1971, 278; Ṭūsī 1937, 110; Najāshī 1987, 197). Ṣafwān's younger colleague Aḥmad ibn Abī Naṣr al-Bazanṭī (d. 222/837) was also a pioneer in writing a *Jāmiʿ* (Ṭūsī 1937, 19; Najāshī 1987, 75), which was quoted by Ibn Idrīs (1990, 97ff.), and of which copies were available at least until the sixth/tenth century. Another famous figure in that period is Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb (d. 224/839), who applied an innovative method of compilation to his *al-Mashikha* by arranging it according to the personality of the transmitters (Ṭūsī 1937, 47). Some scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿUmaiyr (d. 217/832), Ḥasan ibn Faḍḍāl (d. 224/839), and also al-Bazanṭī contributed to another genre of hadith compilations known as *al-Nawādir* (rarities) which gathered unusual hadiths from the standpoint of content or *isnād* (see Ṭūsī 1937, 19, 48; Najāshī 1987, 36, 75).

In the first half of the third/ninth century, an important development was a compilation of topical monographs by Ḥusain ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī. The collection was the first reference book for Shiʿi hadith until that time and was formed of 30 chapters, each on a topic, mostly in jurisprudence but also in theology, ethics, and exegesis (Ṭūsī 1937, 58; Najāshī 1987, 58–60). The only chapter of the book that remains extant is the text edited as an independent work under the title of *Kitāb al-zuhd* (The Books of Ascetics) published in Qom, 1399/1979 CE.

Another parallel effort was a project of Muḥammad ibn Khālid Barqī, a scholar of Qom, who compiled a large and comprehensive collection of hadith in which the share of theological and ethical hadith was greater than legal hadith, and which included chapters on cosmology, dream interpretation, health care, geography, and history. Ibn Nadīm reports that this collection, known as *al-Maḥāsin*, was completed by his son Aḥmad (Ibn Nadīm 1971, 276–277). Although it is listed as a work of Aḥmad Barqī in current bibliographies (Ṭūsī 1937, 20; Najāshī 1987, 76), the *isnād*s of the work itself confirm Ibn Nadīm's claim. Some sections of the book are preserved in an edition by Muḥaddith Urmawī (al-Barqī 1952).

The Four Books

Compilations of hadith by Imāmī scholars in the early centuries, and the wave of comprehensive collections in the middle of the third/ninth century, laid the groundwork for the Shiʿi canonical collections known as *al-Kutub al-arbaʿa*, or the Four Books: multi-volume collections of hadith in which hadith reports were critically sifted and arranged by subject to allow convenient access to existing hadiths in any field. While these might seem roughly comparable in authority to the Six Books of Sunni hadith, in fact such a comparison may be misleading. Unlike the books of the Sunni canon – especially the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Bukhārī and Muslim – it is not common among the Shiʿa to consider the Four Books to be above criticism and, in fact, *Imāmī* scholars did not hesitate to criticize many hadiths included in the Four Books. Mainstream *Imāmī* scholars considered the Four Books only "relatively more" trustworthy than other hadith collections. It is therefore not considered a radical position for a critic to subject hadiths within these canons to scrutiny.

The pioneering collection was *al-Kāfī*, authored by Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb Kulaynī (d. 329/941), a scholar from the city of Rayy (near today's Tehran) who spent a part of his life in Baghdad. Kulaynī was the leader of Shiʿi community in Rayy (Najāshī 1987, 377), although the nearby city of Qom was the educational centre of *Imāmiyya* in central Iran. Thus, the most influential Shiʿi hadith collection did not emerge from Qom.

The importance of *al-Kāfī* for *Imāmī*s might be roughly compared to the place of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī for Sunnis. Over the centuries, its circulation was vast and it was transmitted in numerous manuscripts and eventually published in several editions. The two first volumes, known as *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, contain hadiths in the fields of theology and ethics, the following five volumes known as *Furūʿ al-kāfī*, cover a series of topics in all fields of jurisprudence, and the final volume, known as *Rawḍa al-kāfī* (the garden of *Kāfī*), contains a miscellany. There are several commentaries on *al-Kāfī*, especially on the *Uṣūl* (see Ṭihrānī 1983, 13:94–100, 14:26–28). After *al-Kāfī* was compiled in the first of the fourth/tenth century, Ṭūsī and Najāshī's bibliographies take note of a great number of other compilations in Qom and the cities of Iraq, indicating that the pace of hadith compilation in *Imāmī* circles was feverish despite the fact that no new work could compete with *al-Kāfī*. However, only a small number of these works have survived.

The period of the Four Books, the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, begins with the absence of Imams and ends with the relative fixation of the *Imāmī* school through emergence of the school of Shaykh Ṭūsī. Because they lived close to the time of the last Imam, Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874), the greatest preoccupation of hadith scholars in this period was the issue of the Imam's absence, and many surviving works of that period reflect this preoccupation, including *al-Imāma wa al-tabṣira* of ʿAlī ibn Bābawayh (d. 329/941). One of the other themes of compilations in this period was strengthening the relationships inside the *Imāmī* community at the time of the Imam's absence; in this regard we have works such as *al-Tamḥiṣ* of Ibn Hammām al-Iskāfī (d. 336/947) concerning the ways of refreshment of Shiʿa against troubles and passions (ed. Qom, Madarasa al-Imam al-Mahdi, n.d.). Works such as *al-Jāmiʿ* of Muḥammad ibn Walīd (d. 343/954), an influential scholar of Qom and the greatest master of Muḥammad ibn Bābawayh (Najāshī 1987, 383), show that other scholars also sought to prepare comprehensive collections, although neither Ibn Walīd's word, nor the lost works mentioned in bibliographies was able to rival *al-Kāfī*.

During the second half of fourth/tenth century, hadith circles of Iran and Iraq were at the peak of their activity and produced a vast range of works in a considerable variety of genres and subjects. We see this variety not only in bibliographies of lost works but also in works to which we still have access, like those of Muḥammad ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991). This master, who played such a significant role in hadith of *Imāmiyya*, came to be known as the archetypical *Imāmī* traditionist and the chief representative of the early *Imāmī* traditionist school. Ibn Bābawayh's most important work was *Man lā* *yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, which became the second of the four canonical hadith works. The title literally means "who has no access to a jurist," indicating the function of the book as a teach-yourself reference for *Imāmī* traditionist believers aimed at *Imāmī*s living in Central Asia without access to knowledgeable clerics. The work is a complete series of chapters on *Imāmī* jurisprudence set within the framework of hadith. Thus the author offers non-scholarly readers all the decrees of religion by means of a body of hadiths and without explicit jurisprudential judgments (see Ibn Bābawayh 1986, 1:12; for commentaries see Ṭihrānī 1983, 14:94–95).

We are told that Ibn Bābawayh wrote another comprehensive hadith work two or three times larger entitled *Madīnat al-ʿilm* (the city of knowledge) of which there are no known surviving manuscripts (see Ṭūsī 1937, 185; Najāshī 1987, 389). Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-ʿĀmilī, one of the famous *Imāmī* figures of Lebanon in the tenth/sixteenth century, mentions *Madīnat al-ʿilm* and includes it with the other canonical hadith works, speaking of five books of the *Imāmiyya* (Ḥusain ibn ʿAbd aṣ-Ṣamad 1981, 85).

In his canonical collection, Ibn Bābawayh restricted himself to hadith with *Imāmī isnād*s, but in topical monographs he operated under no such restraints and used a great many hadith with Sunni *isnād*s as well. This is the case in works such as *al-Tawḥīd* in theology (ed. Tehran, 1387/1967); *al-Khiṣāl*, literally the habits, mainly including ethical instructions (ed. Qom, 1362 Sh/1983); *Maʿānī al-akhbār*, including the commentary on complicated hadiths using other explanatory hadiths (ed. Qom, 1361 Sh/1982); *ʿUyūn akhbār al-riḍā*, containing some records about Imam Riḍā, or narrated from him (ed. Najaf, 1390/1970); *Kamāl al-dīn*, about the issues concerning the Twelfth Imam (ed. Tehran, 1390/1970); *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*, on the causes of cosmic events or juristic decrees (ed. Najaf, 1385/1966); and *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*, about the rewards of good deeds (ed. Najaf, 1392/1972).

Apart from Ibn Bābawayh, other works preserved from this period include *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* of Ibn Qūlawayh Qumī (d. 367/978), about the pilgrimage to holy shrines of Imams (ed. Qom, 1417/1996); *al-Ghayba* of Ibn Abī Zainab al-Nuʿmānī, about the Twelfth Imam and events of the apocalypse (ed. Tehran, 1397/1977); *Muqtaḍab al-athar* of Ibn ʿAyyāsh al-Jawharī, including narrated arguments proving the rightfulness of Twelve Imams (ed. Qom, 1379/1959); *Kifāya al-athar* of Khazzāz Qumī, on the same subject and of the same generation (ed. Qom, 1410/1989); *Ṭibb al-aʾimma* of ʿAbd Allāh and Ḥusayn sons of Basṭām, including hadiths on medicine and health care (ed. Najaf, 1385/1965); and a series of brief works of Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad ibn Rāzī, especially a work entitled *Jāmiʿ al-aḥādīth*, all published in one volume (ed. Tehran, 1369/1950).

In the late fourth/tenth century, Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015) compiled his brilliant work, the *Nahj al-balāgha*, containing sermons, letters, and aphorisms of Imam ʿAli. Although for many readers outside the *Imāmī* sphere the *Nahj al-balāgha* is seen as belletristic or ethical in content, among the Shiʿa the book has been counted among hadith works. Although the hadiths in this collection are totally free from *isnād*s and are aimed at a popular Shiʿa audience, and not at scholars, it has often been reckoned the most important *Imāmī* source of hadith, and in recent centuries it has been called "the brother of the Qurʾan" (Ṭihrānī 1983, 14:111). Popular readers have sometimes taken Imam ʿAli himself to be the author of the book. Despite the absence of *isnād*s and criticism of its authenticity, *Nahj al-balāgha* has been the most widespread hadith text among the Shiʿa, with a huge number of manuscripts and many editions. No work of hadith has been the subject of so many commentaries, with more than 100 commentaries by Shiʿa authors, as well as several commentaries by non-Shiʿa scholars including the well-known commentary of the Muʿtaziī scholar Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (ed. Cairo, 1379/1959 CE; for a bibliography of commentaries, see Ḥusaynī Khaṭīb 1985, 1:202ff.).

In the fifth/eleventh century, theologians such as Shaykh al-Mufīd and Sharīf al-Murtaḍā questioned the authority of hadiths transmitted by a single line of narrators (*akhbār āḥād*) and seriously weakened the position of traditionists in *Imāmī* circles. These scholars did not oppose hadith in principle but were skeptical of its authority as a basis for jurisprudential decrees. Thus Shaykh al-Mufīd himself recited hadiths on theological and ethical subjects compiled under titles of *al-Amālī*, a miscellany including hadiths with theological, historical, and ethical themes (ed. Qom, 1403/1983), and *al-Mazār*, concerning pilgrimage to Imams' holy shrines (ed. Beirut, 1414/1993). In the same generation, traditionist writers such as Ibn Shādhān Qumī continued the process of hadith compilation with works such as *Miʾa manqaba*, concerning the 100 virtues of Imam ʿAli (ed. Qom, 1407/1987).

Although hadith compilation was a common concern of traditionists and theologians, it was not until the middle decades of the fifth/eleventh century that the two approaches were integrated by the great reformer of the *Imāmī* school, al-Ṭūsī, who received the title of *Shaikh al-ṭāʾifa* (the master of the community). Al-Ṭūsī, an Iranian scholar residing in Iraq, defended the authenticity of single-strand hadiths and made considerable reforms in the application of hadith to *Imāmī* jurisprudence. Such reform required special attention to hadiths relevant to jurisprudence, and this is what al-Ṭūsī aimed at in two hadith collections which rank third and fourth among the Four Books. His *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, which extends to 10 volumes, is the largest *Imāmī* hadith collection focused on jurisprudential traditions. The goal of the author was to propose a full account of what early *Imāmī* resources had contained on every one of the chapters of jurisprudence (ed. Najaf, 1379/1959). Another book, *al-Istibṣār*, in four volumes, is focused only on contradictory hadiths and is intended to be used as a tool for judgment on these controversies (ed. Najaf, 1375–6/1956–7). Both the books have been the subject of glosses and commentaries from the eleventh/seventeenth century until present (Ṭihrānī 1983, 13:83–87, 156–159). Apart from these two collections, al-Ṭūsī composed other hadith works including *al-Ghayba*, on subjects related to the absence of the Twelfth Imam (ed. Najaf, 1323/1905), and *al-Amāli*, a hadith miscellany (ed. Baghdad, 1384/1964).

Imāmī Hadith After the Four Books

The compilation of hadith declined after the time of al-Ṭūsī, although in the course of fifth/eleventh–sixth/twelfth centuries we come across narrowly focused compilations of hadiths earning *isnād*s. Surviving examples of such efforts include *al-Arbaʿīn*, by Abū Saʿīd Nīshāpūrī (d. c. 485/1092), a selection of 40 hadiths (Pakatchi 2006, 181); *Bishāra al-Muṣṭafā*, by ʿImād al-Dīn Ṭabarī (living 553/1158), about the issues of Imamate (ed. Najaf, 1383/1963); *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, by Qutb al-Dīn Rāwandī (d. 573/1177), including the stories of the prophets (ed. Mashad, 1409/1989); *al-Nawādir*, by Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Rāwandī (sixth century) as a hadith miscellany (ed. Najaf, 1370); *Faḍl al-Kūfa*, by Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar Mashhadī (d. Beirut, Dār al-Murtaḍā, n.d.), about the virtues of the ancient city of Kufa (ed. Bairut, Dār al-Murtaḍā, n.d.); *al-Mazār al-kabīr*, by the same author, about the pilgrimage to the Imams' holy shrines (ed. Qom, 1419/1998); and a selection of 40 hadiths, *al-Arbaʿīn*, by Muntajab al-Dīn Rāzī (living 600/1204) (ed. Qom, 1408/1988). All these works and some lost works listed in bibliography of Muntajab al-dīn of the traditionist school reflect the *isnād* tradition of the early centuries (Pakatchi 2006, 167–227).

During the same period, we find some monographs without *isnād*, or with occasional minimalist *isnād*s. To this category belong works such as *ʿUyūn al-muʿjizāt*, attributed to Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (fifth century), regarding the miracles of the Imams (ed. Najaf, 1369/1950); *Rawḍa al-waʿiẓīn*, by Fattāl Nīshāpūrī (d. 508/1114), including narratives useful for preaching (ed. Najaf, 1386/1966); *al-iḥtijāj*, of Abū Manṣūr Ṭabrisī (d. c. 560/1165), containing a great range of debates of the Prophet and the Imams (ed. Najaf, 1386/1966); *al-Daʿawāt*, by Qutb al-Dīn Rāwandī (d. 573/1177), including the supplications narrated from Imams (ed. Qom, 1407/1987); *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ*, by the same author, including the miracles of the Prophet and Imams (ed. Qom, 1407/1987); *Manāqib ʿalī ibn abī tālib*, by Ibn Shahr Āshūb Sarawī (d. 588/1192), about the virtues of the household of Abū Ṭālib the father of Imam ʿAli and Ancestor of all Imams (ed. Najaf, 1376/1957); *al-Faḍāʾil*, by Shādhān ibn Jabraʾīl (living 593/1197), containing narrative of the virtues of the Imams (ed. Najaf, 1381/1961); *al-Thāqib fi-l-manāqib*, by Naṣīr al-Dīn ibn Ḥamza Ṭūsī (d. c. 600/1204), with the same subject (ed. Qom, 1412/1992); and *Makārim al-akhlāq*, by Ḥasan ibn Faḍl Ṭabrisī (sixth century), including some narratives on morals and lifestyle for believers (ed. Beirut, 1392/1972).

After the Mongol invasions, *Imāmī* hadith circles entered a period of decadence, especially in Iran. The *isnād* tradition was largely forgotten, and books that cited hadiths in the middle Islamic centuries paid little attention to issues of documentation. From the viewpoint of documentation, the hadith works along these centuries can be divided into four classes:

1. We have rare examples from Syria and Lebanon which try to conserve the old *isnād* tradition, among which we can point out to works like the selection of 40 hadiths, *al-Arbaʿīn*, by Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 639/1241–1242) (ed. Qom, 1405/1985), and another collection with the same title and subject by Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-Shahīd al-Awwal (d. 786/1384) (ed. Qom, 1407/1987).
2. The second class is made up of works reliable in documentation and showing their references but with limited mention of *isnād*s. Among these we can count all the works of Raḍi al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266) (Kohlberg 1992), ʿAlī ibn Yūnus al-Bayāḍī (d. 877/1472) in *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* (ed. Najaf, 1384/1964), and Ḥasan ibn Sulaimān al-Ḥillī (ninth century) in *al-Muḥtaḍar* (ed. Najaf, 1424/2003), and *Mukhtaṣar baṣāʾir ad-darajāt* (Najaf, 1369/1950).
3. The third class is works which sometimes show their references but which are not thorough in documentation, of which we can name the works of Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī (d. 645/1247), such as *Muthīr al-Aḥzān*, about the sacrifice of Imam Ḥusayn (ed. Najaf, 1369/1950); *Kashf al-ghumma* by ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Irbilī (d. 693/1294), about life and virtues of Imams (ed. Tabriz, 1381/1961); and *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, by ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan Ṭabrisī (seventh century), an ethical handbook (ed. Najaf, 1385/1965).

4. The fourth class is made up of works without any references and without documentation, generally focused on morals and supplications. Among these we can mention works of Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī (d. 841/1437) such as *al-Taḥṣīn* (ed. Qom, 1406/1986) and *ʿUdda ad-dāʿī* (ed. Qom, 1407/1987) as well as works of Ibrāhīm al-Kafʿamī (d. 905/1500) such as *al-Miṣbāḥ* (ed. Beirut, 1403/1983).

From the time of high activity in the Ḥilla school, a movement to compile a new generation of hadith collections began in *Imāmī* circles which aimed to gather the hadiths narrated in early resources and make them easier to access. The starting point for such a movement may be a lost work of ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1326) the most influential leader of the Ḥilla school. This was a comprehensive work containing all hadiths with degree of *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*, entitled *ad-Durr wa-l-marjān fī aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa-l-ḥisān* (ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī 1996, 110). Another work of this kind later made by Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1011/1602) entitled *Muntaqa al-Jumān*, in three volumes (ed. Qom, 1362 Sh/1983 AH), laid the foundation for larger works in the time of Safavid Dynasty in Iran. Late *Imāmī* hadith collections include some very large encyclopedic works such as *al-Wāfī*, by Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), edited in 26 volumes (Isfahan, 1365 Sh/1946); *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693), edited in 30 volumes (ed. Qom, 1409/1989), both limited to hadiths with juristic content; *Biḥār al-anwār*, by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1699), including hadiths in all subjects and edited in 110 volumes (Beirut, 1403/1983); *ʿAwālim al-ʿulūm*, by ʿAbd Allāh al-Baḥrānī (d. 1130/1718), also covering all subjects, in 23 volumes (Qom, 1405/1985); and *Mustadrak al-wasāʾil*, by Ḥusayn Nūrī (d. 1320/1902), a supplement to *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, edited in 18 volumes (Qom, 1408/1987). The most recent work is *Jāmiʿ aḥādīth al-shīʿa*, by Seyyed Ḥosein Borūjerdī (d. 1383/1963), a contemporary effort at compiling a comprehensive arrangement of juristic hadiths, edited in 25 volumes (Qom, 1399/1979).

Finally, a huge project for publishing minor unpublished manuscripts in the field of *Imāmī* hadith, a series with the general title *Mīrāth-e ḥadīthī-ye shīʿeh*, edited by Mahdi Mehrīzī and ʿAlī Ṣadrāyī Khoyī, began to be published from 1377/1998. Since the inception of the project, more than 20 volumes have appeared.

The efforts of *Imāmī* scholars to compile hadiths from early sources and to make them accessible for practical use continue to the present. In the age of digital libraries, we find comprehensive software collections such as *Maktaba ahl al-bait* (last release 2.0, Qom, 1391 Sh/2012) and *Jāmiʿ al-aḥādīth* of the Noor Institution (last release 3.5, Qom, 1392 Sh/2013). The latter is a reliable resource for bibliography of all primary *Imāmī* hadith resources and also contains full text of the contents.

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V. Modernity

CHAPTER 15

Reform

Jawad Anwar Qureshi

Introduction

This chapter explores developments in the practice of hadith studies among Muslims in the past two centuries. It does not focus on Muslim debates on questions of authenticity, probity in law and theology, or even as sources of history, as scholarship has taken up some of these questions (D. Brown 1999; J. Brown 2007, 300–333; J. Brown 2009, 240–268; Chapter 16 of this volume). Rather, this chapter explores developments related to what Muslim students of hadith actually *do* when they teach, study, or specialize in hadith. What institutions, if any, are available to them? What does the course of study look like, and what are some of the key teaching texts used? Who are some of the authorities who have shaped the study of hadith today? What discursive developments among Muslims have contributed to the foregrounding of hadith? And how have technological advances, in print and computers, shaped the study of hadith?

This chapter will focus on three modes of hadith study that Muslims engage in that, given the constraints of space, serve somewhat as ideal-types. The first of the three modes is in the *dawrat al-ḥadīth* in madrasas, which trace their intellectual pedigree to the Dār al-ʿUlūm madrasa in Deoband, India. The *dawrat al-ḥadīth* ("year of hadith") is the capstone year for madrasa students during which the Six Books of the Sunni canon are covered. The institution of the *dawrat al-ḥadīth* has resulted in the production of numerous commentaries, both in Arabic and in Urdu, continuing premodern traditions of commentary while also vernacularizing hadith studies. This is arguably one of the most popular ways of systematically studying the Sunni canon, given the spread of Deobandi madrasas throughout South Asia and South Asian diaspora communities, particularly in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The second mode is concomitant with the emergence of print in the Arab world and the concern for

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the production of critical editions of Islamic textual sources from manuscripts (*taḥqīq al-makhṭūṭāt*). Some of the foremost editors and publishers of Islamic texts in the first half of the twentieth century were affiliated with Salafism and were concerned with the authentication of hadith references, a process known as *takhrīj*. *Takhrīj* entailed the studying of the *isnād* and *matn* of hadiths and providing a ruling on their probity. Along with the critical edition of manuscripts, *takhrīj* became an important skill taught in modern universities in the Arab world. Finally, in the last decades of the twentieth century (and seemingly in reaction to Salafi approaches to hadith), scholars of hadith began to re-center the interpersonal transmission of hadith and the authority that possessing a license (*ijāza*) from a hadith master conferred. As a result, a greater emphasis was placed on direct narration from hadith masters through audition (*samāʿ*) of hadith and attaining licenses.

Each of these three modes of hadith study have their precedents in premodern hadith culture, but given developments in Muslim societies since the nineteenth century, the emergence of new discourses, and new technologies that democratized access to hadith, some of these practices have received greater focus today than they might have had previously. The modes of hadith study described here are not mutually exclusive and students of hadith often embark upon another mode of hadith study after completing one.

South Asia: Madrasas, the *Dawr al-Ḥadīth*, and Hadith Commentaries

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) described the state of hadith studies as follows: "Were it not for the concern of our brethren the ʿulamaʾ of India for the sciences of hadith in this day and age, one could judge it as having died in the eastern lands. It has become weak in Egypt, the Levant, Iraq, and the Hijaz, from the tenth[/seventeenth] century, until it has reached its utmost weakness in the beginning of the fourteenth [/nineteenth] century" (Riḍā 1978, *qāf*). Riḍā's remarks do not take into account South Asia's long-standing tradition of hadith studies, dating to the earliest centuries of Islam, where Islamic learning was established in Sind, Baluchistan, Gujarat, and later in Lahore and Delhi (Ishaq 1955). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a flourishing of hadith studies in India as ʿulamaʾ traveled to the Hijāz and established connections with scholars in the central Islamic lands.

Under the Mughals, Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) and ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlavī (d. 1642), who were both associated with the Naqshbandī Khwāja Bāqī Billah (d. 1603), were instrumental in shifting Islamic teachings to focus on the Prophet. Sirhindī's reformist project re-centered the person of the Prophet in Sufism, distinguishing between the Prophetic path (*ṭarīq al-nubuwwa*) and the saintly path (*ṭarīq al-walāya*), valorizing the former and giving greater emphasis to the study of the sunna and hadith. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq traveled to the Hijāz and studied hadith extensively with ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī (d. 1592) between 1588 and 1592. The latter was the main disciple of the famous Indian *muḥaddith* ʿAlī ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 1567), known as al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, the author of *Kanz al-ʿummāl*. Upon his return to Delhi, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq dedicated his life to hadith studies and wrote a number of hadith-related works. More significantly, however, he taught and transmitted hadith for 50 years (Ishaq 1955, 146–163; Kugle 2008, 196–246).

Like ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) too went to the Hijaz and upon his return established a curriculum for the study of hadith in his madrasa and employed hadith extensively in his ambitious writings on Islamic thought. India's centuries old traditions of hadith studies picked up in the last half of the nineteenth century, as Riḍā noted. The loss of political sovereignty and the consolidation of British power challenged conceptions of Islamic identity, authority, and knowledge and a number of competing religious reform movements emerged that struggled with these issues. A central concern for Sunni Muslims was Prophetology, the authority of the sunna, and the role of hadith as sources for Islamic norms. Two of these nineteenth-century movements drew on aspects of Shāh Walī Allāh's legacy and offered competing responses to these challenges, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth and the ʿulamaʾ associated with the Dār al-ʿulūm madrasa in Deoband (Metcalf 2002, 268–296; Zaman 2003). Shāh Walī Allāh had a fairly eclectic approach to hadith. Though an adherent of the Ḥanafī school, Walī Allāh often broke from Ḥanafī rulings in favor of positions of Shāfiʿī scholars that were apparently closer to prima facie readings of hadith.[1] This ethos, breaking from the strict adherence to a particular legal school in favor of hadith, was taken up by the Ahl-i Ḥadīth. (A similar approach was also maintained by the Farangī Maḥallī scholar ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī (1848–1886), who authored a number of important works on hadith. Despite this, he was opposed to the reformist efforts of Ahl-i Ḥadīth scholars, particularly their jettisoning *ijmāʿ* and *qiyās* as sources of Islamic law.) The Ahl-i Ḥadīth stand out among South Asian Sunnis for their rejection of *taqlīd* (conforming to a legal school) in favor of formulating Islamic teachings and practice in conformity with hadith. As a result, they not only undermined the authority of the Sunni schools of law but also that of the Sunni *kalām* schools and many of the practices associated with Sufi orders. The Deobandis also trace their intellectual lineage to Shāh Walī Allāh; however, their approach to hadith and *fiqh* are more in line with the teachings of Walī Allāh's son, Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1824). The latter was a strict adherent of the Ḥanafī school and a hadith scholar in his own right. The Deobandis therefore maintain the authority of the Sunni legal schools, and the Ḥanafī school in particular, while also retaining the authority of the *kalām* schools and Sufi orders. However, they do so with a spirit of reform (*iṣlāḥ*), aiming at what they see as the most authentic practices and teachings conforming with the sunna.

The Ahl-i Ḥadīth

The two most influential figures that shaped the early Ahl-i Ḥadīth were Nawāb Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d. 1890) and Naẕīr Ḥusayn (d. 1902). Independent of each other, Khān and Ḥusayn studied with descendants of Shāh Walī Allāh, particularly those affiliated with the reformist Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya of Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī (d. 1830) and Shāh Ismāʿīl Shahīd (d. 1830). In addition to Walī Allāh, Khān and Naẕīr were influenced by the teachings of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Shawkānī (d. 1834), the prolific Zaydī turned Sunni hadith scholar from Yemen (Haykel 2003). Shawkānī taught one of Khān's teachers, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Banārsī (d. 1870), and Khān studied under Shawkānī's students in Yemen. Khān later brought two of them to India to teach hadith, the brothers Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Anṣārī (d. 1880) and Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin (d. 1910), who brought with them numerous copies of Shawkānī's writings and many important hadith texts. As the *nawāb* of Bhopal, Khān was able to oversee the printing of a number of important hadith reference works. The other major publisher of hadith texts in this time was the Usmania press in Hyderabad. Khān had a substantial literary output, including commentaries on canonical collections (such as Bukhārī and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s, and Tabrīzī's *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ*). All of these works are characterized by a reformist agenda, one that vehemently censored innovations (*bidʿa*), *taqlīd* of the legal schools and that emphasized knowing the textual basis for Islamic teachings and practice.

Deoband

While the Ahl-i Ḥadīth were instrumental in printing hadith texts and re-centering hadith in Muslim teachings and practice, other Muslim reformists of the late nineteenth century were concerned with educational reform and the establishment of new institutions of learning. Founded in 1867, a decade after the Sepoy Revolt, Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband paved a distinctive path in Islamic education. It adopted a professional administration and staff, and one of its distinguishing features among Muslim centers of religious learning at the time was the institutionalization of standardized exams at the end of each year (Metcalf 2002, 87–137). Its course of study combined aspects of the Dars-i Niẓāmī established in Lucknow by Mulla Niẓām al-Dīn al-Sihālawī (d. 1748) with the hadith curriculum established by Shāh Walī Allāh and his descendants in Delhi.

One can divide a student's progress in Deobandi madrasas into two stages, generally corresponding to the two curricula it sought to synthesize. The first stage emphasizes the Dars-i Niẓāmī texts, the "tools" for learning (*al-ʿulūm al-āliyya*), including Arabic syntax, morphology, rhetoric, and literature. The Deobandis had excised a number of texts of logic, philosophy, and *kalām* that were emphasized in the original Dars-i Niẓāmī, focusing more on mastery of Arabic and Ḥanafī legal texts. This part of a student's studies culminated in what is termed the *mawqūf ʿalayhi* year, when students complete the *Hidāya* of Marghīnānī in law, the *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-taʾwīl* of Bayḍāwī in Qurʾanic exegesis, and the *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ* of Tabrīzī. The final year, the second stage of study, is referred to as the *dawrat al-ḥadīth* (often called simply the *dawra*). This year is dedicated exclusively to the study of the main works of the Sunni hadith canon: the Six Books (the two *ṣaḥīḥ*s of Bukhārī and Muslim, and the four *sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Māja, and Nasāʾī; see Chapter 7), in addition to other authoritative collections, such as Tirmidhī's *Shamāʾil*, the *Muwaṭṭa* of Mālik, the *Muwaṭṭā* of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, and *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī. In some programs, students also study texts related to hadith nomenclature (*muṣṭalaḥ*), in particular the *Tadrīb al-rāwī* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.

Despite having studied hadith texts, such as the Mishkāt, before the *dawrat al-ḥadīth*, the *dawra* is considered the beginning of a student's formal study of hadith. This is marked in some schools by receiving the *musalsal bi al-awwaliyya*, a hadith whose narrators heard it as the first hadith from their master. The beginning of the *dawra* is often marked by the opening lesson of Bukhārī (*iftitāḥ Bukhārī*), which is accompanied by a ceremony that is open to the public and where notable scholars are invited to deliver exhortatory talks (*bayān*). The year closes with the completion of Bukhārī (*khatm Bukhārī*), where the final lesson of Bukhārī is delivered. This too is open to the public, and distinguished scholars are often invited to deliver commencement speeches. At the *khatm* ceremony, students have their turbans tied (*dastār bandī*), marking their initiation into a body of scholars. At the same time, they receive their formal *isnād* to the Sunni canon through the founding elders of Deoband.

The copies of the Six Books used by students in the *dawrat al-ḥadīth* represent a distinctly South Asian recension of hadith texts and a tradition of cumulative gloss. These editions are lithographed copies of handwritten texts and can be thought of as "madrasa editions." The lithographs retain a number of features of manuscripts such as how the text can be glossed, the way marginalia are written, and glosses between lines. These works are not commentaries per se but serve as reading aids, providing a quick reference for teachers and students to clarify particulars of the text, such as identifying referents for pronouns, clarifying the syntax of a passage, and in the margins offering a rudimentary commentary. These editions are quite large in page size but significantly shorter in terms of the number of volumes they comprise, making them more affordable for the average madrasa student in South Asia (many of whom come from impoverished families) and also easier to transport.

While Deobandi madrasas seemingly agree that the Six Books form the core of the *dawra*, there is remarkable variety in terms of *how* the texts are read, as every institution and teacher seemingly has their own method. In some instances, a single teacher is assigned one of the Six Books for the entire year, while in others the text is divided among a group of teachers. Bukhārī, for instance, is often divided among teachers. Given the amount of material to cover, classes usually run the length of the day, with extra classes added toward the end of the year in order to ensure that all of the texts are covered. Citing Shāh Walī Allāh, Manāẓir Ahsan Gīlānī (d. 1965) notes three ways in which hadith are studied, which accurately reflect the ways hadith are covered during the *dawra* (Gīlānī 2007, 346–356). In the first method, the shaykh or a student merely reads the text aloud without any commentary or explanation being offered. This form of narration is known as "recitation of hadith" (*sard al-āḥadīth*) and its primary purpose is to license students to transmit hadith texts. This can often amount to speed reading, where the recitation is all but indecipherable. This is done for the sake of retaining the oral and aural dimension of hadith transmission and is often resorted to toward the end of the year. A large portion of the Six Books are read in this manner. Walī Allāh terms the second method "research and analysis" (*baḥth wa ḥall*), where the teacher explains rare words, difficult or uncommon syntax, and occasionally comments on narrators. This mode of hadith study is meant to give students their first impression of hadith texts, apprising them of the contents of the hadith canon, as well as being an introduction to the problems covered in studying hadith. The madrasa editions lend themselves to this mode of hadith instruction as the marginalia and gloss often address frequently asked questions. Lastly, Walī Allāh terms the third method "scrutiny and deep analysis" (*imʿān wa taʿammuq*). Here, the teacher provides detailed investigation of the *isnād* and *matn*, studying each of the narrators of a hadith, providing an in-depth study of the *isnād* as well as looking at corroborating hadiths; for the latter, the *matn* is glossed lexically and syntactically, and the primary issues that the *matn* relates to vis-à-vis theology and law are explained, in addition to secondary problems that the hadith might address.

Teachers in the *dawra* employ one of these three ways of teaching depending on the importance given to the texts being read. Issues of law and theological controversies are studied with a higher degree of "scrutiny and deep analysis," while other topics are often recited verbatim with minimal explanation, if any. The reason for this is that many of the non-legal-theological topics are ostensibly addressed in the *mawqūf ʿalayhi* year preceding the *dawra* through the study of Tabrīzī's *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ*, which gathers together *mutūn* of hadith for the main chapters covered by a *Jāmiʿ* text (with the exception of *tafsīr* and *maghāzī*) from the Sunni hadith canon, without mentioning the *isnād*. The *Mishkāt* thus presents most of the problems one might encounter in explaining texts of hadith or reconciling conflicting hadith texts. The lion's share of in-depth study is devoted to the theological and legal sections of Bukhārī and Muslim because of their status in the Sunni canon as the most authentic works. There is also a particular concern for studying legal hadith (*āḥādīth al-aḥkām*); thus, of the four *sunan,* Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī are generally given greater emphasis than Ibn Māja and Nasāʾī. To the same end, the *Muwaṭṭa*s of Mālik and Shaybānī, as well as Ṭaḥāwī's works are incorporated into the curriculum because of their role in shaping law, particularly the early Ḥanafī school.

The method of "scrutiny and deep analysis" is exemplified among early Deobandi hadith scholars in the person of Anwarshāh Kashmīrī (d. 1933). Kashmīrī graduated from Deoband in 1894 and studied under two of its most illustrious hadith teachers, Maḥmūd Ḥasan (d. 1920) and Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī (d. 1927). Kashmīrī replaced his teacher Ḥasan at Deoband and taught Bukhārī and Tirmidhī. He remained there for 14 years before joining al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya in Dabhel, Surat, where he taught until his death. Kashmīrī was a prodigious reader of hadith literature and his lectures often summarized the most advanced commentaries. However, he was not a mere compiler of other people's opinions but often argued his own original position on matters. One of the distinguishing features of Kashmīrī's teaching is the attention given to legal hadith, as he had presented the various ways that the Sunni schools derived rules from hadith texts and then, in line with Deoband's *raison d'être*, he argued for the superiority of the Ḥanafī school against its rivals (such as the Ahl-i Ḥadīth).

Production of Commentaries

As a result of the establishment of Deobandi madrasas, the institutionalization of hadith studies in the form of the *dawrat al-ḥadīth*, and the contestation on the interpretation of hadith by Deobandis and the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, there has been a flourishing of textual production in the form of commentary. Two types of commentary are worth noting. The first is a continuation of the premodern tradition of hadith commentary in the form of large multivolume works written in Arabic. Muhammad Qasim Zaman remarks that these commentaries "construct, preserve, and enhance religious authority" of the ʿulamaʾ (Zaman 1999, 61) in that they are meant to be read by other scholars or students training to be scholars, whether in India or the greater Muslim world.

The most notable commentaries by Deobandi ʿulamaʾ include Kashmīrī's commentary on Bukhārī, *Fayḍ al-bārī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*; Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī's (d. 1949) commentary on Muslim titled *Fatḥ al-mulhim bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim*, which was completed by Taqī al-ʿUthmānī (b. 1943); Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī's *Badhl al-majhūd fī ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*; Kashmīrī's *al-ʿArf al-shadhī ʿalā Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, a transcription of Kashmīrī's lecture notes on Tirmidhī; *Maʿārif al-sunan sharḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, which also contains Kashmīrī's lectures transcribed by his student Yūsuf Binorī (d. 1977); and Muḥammad Zakarīya Kāndhalawī's (d. 1982) monumental 18-volume *Awjaz al-masālik ilā Muwaṭṭaʾ Mālik*. These texts represent only some of the Deobandi hadith commentaries, as there are in fact dozens more of various lengths and quality on virtually all of the main hadith texts of the Sunni canon (al-Barnī 1998, 241–337).

Like the Deobandis, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth have produced numerous commentaries as well. Two texts coming from the second generation of Ahl-i Ḥadīth ʿulamaʾ have been well received since their publication and are worthy of note. These are Abū Ṭayyib Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAẓīmabādī's (d. 1911) encyclopedic *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd ʿalā Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Mubārakpūrī's (d. 1935) *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*.

What distinguishes the commentaries of the Deobandis from the Ahl-i Ḥadīth are the discursive positions that each subscribes to. As reformists who oppose *taqlīd* and the rigidity of *madhhab* law, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth emphasize deriving law directly from hadith. Their commentaries thus draw on numerous non-Ḥanafī sources and often have a polemical dimension targeting the Ḥanafīs. The Deobandis, as proponents of *taqlīd* and the Ḥanafī school, often write their commentaries in an apologetic tone, countering opponents such as the Ahl-i Ḥadīth. What results from this heated contestation is that the Deobandi study of hadith has become Ḥanafī-ized, while at the same time their study of Ḥanafī fiqh has been influenced by an emphasis on hadith.

The second type of commentary emerges from the demands of a modern madrasa and preparing students to take standardized exams. The system of examinations that was a hallmark of Deoband's institutional innovation to Islamic learning applied to the *dawra* as well. A series of commentaries emerged that can be thought of as student aids to prepare for exams. These texts are not meant to be exhaustive or as voluminous as the above-mentioned commentaries but are, more often than not, transcriptions of the teacher's lectures collected by students. Many of these commentaries are in Urdu, given that Urdu is the language of instruction in Deobandi institutions. Some of the better-known commentaries of this type include Taqī al-ʿUthmānī's *Dars-i Tirmidhī*, his *Taqrīr-i Tirmidhī* (which covers Tirmidhī's section on financial transactions), and his *Inʿām al-bārī* on al-Bukhārī. Also, Maḥbūb Aḥmad's *Inʿām al-maʿbūd sharḥ Abū Dawūd*, his *Inʿām al-muʾmin li ṭālibāt Muslim*, and *Durr al-manḍūd ʿala Sunan Abī Dawūd* are worth noting.

In addition to the discursive aspect of studying hadith, the *dawra* year is seen as a time to cultivate a particular relationship to the Prophet as a moral exemplar whose personal habits and virtues are not only studied but embodied. Texts such as Tirmidhī's *Shamāʾil* detail the particulars of the Prophet and his personal habits – his physical description, his manner of sitting, eating, dressing, and so on – that students seek to emulate, while other texts from the hadith canon elucidate Prophetic teaching and ethics in a variety of aspects of life. All of these come together in the personal piety of the hadith teacher, who provides an embodied ideal of a moral and virtuous life which students will seek to live up to in the course of their own lives. The *dawra* year is thus a period of disciplining the body and one's affects to conform with the Prophet's sunna as much as it is an initiation into the discursive study of hadith.

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat and "Living Hadith"

If the Deobandi madrasas were meant to reproduce a scholarly class to preserve and pass on a particular conception of Sunnism, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat offered a program for "living hadith" (as Barbara Metcalf phrased it) that was open to lay Muslims (Metcalf 1993, 584–608). Founded by Muḥammad Ilyās Kāndhalawī (d. 1944), the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is one of the largest transnational Muslim piety movements in the world. It is in some ways an extension of Deoband's religious orientation as Ilyās had studied under a number of prominent founding figures of Deoband, including Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, Maḥmūd Ḥasan, and Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrı (Masud 2000). Ilyās developed a highly successful missionary program in the Mewat region of northern India. The key practice of this program is itinerant preaching, where lay missionaries leave their families and worldly responsibilities to travel to new locales and call other Muslims to commit to religious practice. Undertaking itinerant preaching provides an opportunity to embody the sunna on the model of the companions and the earliest Muslims. The conception of this model was articulated in two texts that are the main teaching texts of the movement. At Ilyās' request, Zakariyya Kāndhalawī composed a series of Urdu tracts on the merits of particular devotional practices that was compiled under the title *Fażāʾil-i aʿmāl* (also known as *Tablīghī niṣāb*). These texts consist primarily of exhortatory narratives concerning the earliest Muslims. One part of the *Fażāʾil-i aʿmāl* is sometimes treated as a separate text, titled *Ḥikāyāt al-ṣahāba*, which focuses specifically on stories of the companions as models of piety. Ilyās' son, Yūsuf Kāndhalawī authored a well-received and more extensive Arabic text to the same end, titled *Ḥayāt al-ṣaḥāba*. What is key to note is that the Tablīghī does not emphasize the acquisition of formal knowledge, but rather through the practice of itinerant preaching for varying stretches of time it provides a method for the lay Muslim to embody the sunna as articulated in Kāndhalawī's texts. Those adherents of Tablīghī who want to pursue formal religious instruction are able to access madrasa networks that follow the Deobandi course of study.

As Riḍā noted, India has contributed to hadith studies for centuries, and in the last century and a half its contributions have increased exponentially. The contestation over competing constructs of religious authority among Sunni groups, in addition to the development of new educational institutions in this milieu, have centered on the authority of hadith. This has led to an eruption of textual production of hadith from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, including the vernacularization of hadith studies in the use of Urdu. The teaching methods employed by Deobandi ʿulamāʾ are not particularly innovative as they continue long-standing traditions of hadith study stemming from the formative centuries of Islam. What is new, however, is the institution of the *dawrat al-ḥadīth*, the systematic study of the Sunni hadith canon, as an essential part of a scholar's formation. Through the *dawra*, the Deobandis preserve the interpersonal mode of transmission of the Sunni hadith canon, and the interpretive authority of the ʿulamaʾ of that canon, while extending that tradition through initiating and authorizing newer generations and writing commentaries.

The Arab World: Reference Works, Critical Editions, and Hadith Verification

Riḍā's lament about the state of hadith studies in the Arab world came at a time that saw the rise of Salafism and an increased foregrounding of hadith among Arab ʿulamaʾ. Like the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, the earliest Salafis sought to return to hadith in order to ostensibly recover pure Islamic teachings and thereby free themselves of what they saw as a stagnated and backward tradition of the Sunni *madhhab*s, *kalām* schools, and Sufi orders. The Salafi movement criticized the blind following of the *madhhab*s, arguing that knowledge of the Qurʾan and sunna was easily accessible by educated lay Muslims and that they should form the sole basis of their religious practice. This discursive shift occurred at the same time that print took off in the Arab world, and many of the earliest Salafis such as Riḍā were prolific authors and publishers.

By contrast with the Indian ʿulamaʾ mentioned above, who produced hadith commentaries meant for other specialists, many of the Arab scholars of the twentieth century focused on the production of critical editions of the Islamic canon that could ostensibly be accessed by new classes of literate Muslims. The production of critical editions from manuscripts (*taḥqīq al-makhṭūṭāt*) became an important area of work for scholars. As part of the process of critically editing texts, scholars took great concern to account for the status of haditҺs mentioned in these works, favoring the authentic and warning against weak and forged attributions to the Prophet. As a result, greater attention was given to the science of hadith nomenclature (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*), hadith verification (*takhrīj*), and scholarly reference works to assist in *takhrij*.

One of the key contributors to hadith studies in the Arab world in the first half of the twentieth century was a student and associate of Riḍā, Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (1882–1967). ʿAbd al-Bāqī is known to Western scholars of Islamic studies for his concordance of the Qurʾan, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qurʾān*, but among hadith scholars ʿAbd al-Bāqī is known for the production of a number of reference works for hadith. One of his contributions to this end was *Miftāḥ kunūz al-sunna*, a translation and correction of the Dutch Orientalist A.J. Wensinck's *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition* (Wensinck 1927). This one-volume concordance provided a quick reference for hadith citation by topic and themes. It surveyed the Six Books, the *Sunan* of al-Dārimī, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik, the *Musnad* of Abū Dāwud al-Ṭayālisī, the *Musnad* of Zayd ibn ʿAlī (d. 740), as well as early *sīra* texts. ʿAbd al-Bāqī had corresponded with Wensinck and expressed interest in translating Wensinck's larger work, what would become *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (*al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li alfāẓ al-ḥadīth al-nabawī*). However, Wensinck informed him, in a letter that ʿAbd al-Bāqī reproduced in Wensinck's handwriting (Wensinck 1927), that this project would be written in Arabic and thus would not be in need of a translator. Despite this, ʿAbd al-Bāqī collaborated on this monumental work with a team of Orientalists for a number of years (Wensinck 1933–1938). The final product was an eight-volume concordance that surveyed the same books as Wensinck's *Handbook* but organized by the lexical root of the most prominent words in a hadith.

In addition to these concordances, ʿAbd al-Bāqī produced critical editions of key hadith works, including Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, and Ibn Māja's *Sunan*. ʿAbd al-Bāqī's editions aim at standardization of these texts and facilitate research; they thus contain fully vocalized texts and detailed tables of contents and indices. For *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, for example, ʿAbd al-Bāqī includes eight indices: (i) subject matter, (ii) the number of hadith, (iii) Muslim's repetition of hadith and their occurrence in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, (iv) alphabetical ordering of companions and the number of hadith they narrate in Muslim, (v) verbal hadith organized alphabetically, (vi) unusual (*gharīb*) words, (vii) "points of benefit" (i.e. linguistic, historical, and *sharīʿa* notes), and (viii) alphabetical order of the books in Muslim. In addition to detailed indices, one feature that stands out in ʿAbd al-Bāqī's editions is his attention to numbering the hadith to facilitate cross-referencing. This feature has proved quite useful, and later printed editions of these texts have been diligent in retaining ʿAbd al-Bāqī's numbering.

ʿAbd al-Bāqī's work was closely associated with a pioneer in producing critical editions of Arabic texts, the Egyptian judge Aḥmad Shākir (1892–1958). In addition to his demanding duties in the judiciary, Shākir was a bibliophile who had a tremendous influence on those involved in publishing critical editions of Islamic texts. In an essay prefacing his edition of the *Sunan* of Tirmidhī, he readily acknowledged the role of Orientalists in the production of critical editions, particularly when compared to the quality of the earliest printed works produced in the Muslim world. At the same time, however, and seemingly responding to a certain ethos among his peers that he deemed overly celebratory of the accomplishments of Orientalists, Shākir argued that the practice of critical editions of texts was not something that had to be learned from Orientalists but that it was in fact native to the Islamic tradition and had been cultivated by hadith scholars in particular (Shākir 1414/1993, 10–16).

Shākir set new standards for the critical edition of Arabic texts through his publications, particularly of Shāfiʿī's *Risāla*. The significance of this work is noted by Maḥmūd al-Ṭanāḥī in his history of printing Arabo-Islamic works when he remarks, "The appearance of the *Risāla* of Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī in the critical edition of Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir in 1358 AH (1939 CE) was the herald of a completely new stage of Arabic scholarly publishing, complete with every means of verification and critical editing" (al-Ṭanāḥī 1984, 92). While the *Risāla* had in fact been printed before, what made Shākir's edition stand out were the manuscripts that the work was based on (a manuscript of Shāfiʿī's direct student al-Rabīʿ ibn Sulaymān al-Murādī), his in-depth study arguing for the early writing of the manuscript, and Shākir's philological analysis, reproducing Shāfiʿī's linguistic usages.

Shākir also produced critical editions of a number of important hadith texts, many of which could not be completed before his death. He edited the first volume of Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Mundhirī's abridgement of Abū Dāwud with Khaṭṭābī's commentary *Maʿālim al-sunan*, and he also edited the hadith for the first 13 volumes of Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qurʾan. Additionally, he edited a number of works in hadith nomenclature (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*), including Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth* and Suyuṭī's *Alfiyya*. Finally, he edited Ibn Ḥazm's 10-volume *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* as well as his 11-volume *al-Muḥalla bi al-āthār*.

Shākir's tour de force, after his edition of the *Risāla*, is his work on the first 15 volumes of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*. In his review of Shākir's edition, G.H.A. Juynboll notes that, like ʿAbd al-Bāqī, Shākir numbered the hadith to facilitate cross-referencing and also set out a number of indices (Juynboll 1972, 225–226). More importantly, however, Shākir also provided a study of each hadith mentioned in the *Musnad*. Juynboll summarized Shākir's apparatus as follows: "Shākir's commentary contains an appraisal of every single *isnād*. When the *isnād* was sound he said so, and when it was weak, he indicated why … Every transmitter, whom Ibn Ḥanbal named by an abbreviation of his name, which was not perfectly clear, was mentioned by his full name in the commentary. Shākir pointed out at least once what was said in all of the *Kutub ar-rijāl* of every transmitter who occurred in the *Musnad*" (Juynboll 1972, 229–230). As Juynboll notes, the bulk of Shākir's study of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* focuses on *isnād*-criticism and in only a handful of instances delves into *matn*-criticism (Juynboll 1972, 230, 233–235). Shākir not only cross-referenced each hadith to other collections, he also offered a verdict as to whether its *isnād* was authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), fair (*ḥasan*), weak (*ḍaʿīf*), or forged (*mawḍūʿ*).

This process of tracking down the sources of a hadith and adjudicating its status is known as *takhrīj* and is in fact a premodern hadith practice.[2] In this practice, hadith scholars provide citations and rankings for all of the hadith and traditions mentioned in a given text. One of the most famous examples of *takhrīj* is Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī's (d. 1403) hadith verification of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, titled *al-Mughnī ʿan ḥaml al-asfār fi al-asfār*. (For a sample listing of *takhrīj* texts by century, see al-Ghumārī n.d., 20–35.) In the twentieth century, through the confluence of Salafism and the emergence of print, this practice gained new prominence among Arab scholars such as Shākir.

The name that stands out in the twentieth century for hadith verification is Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914–1999). In his youth, al-Albānī read an article by Rashīd Riḍā in *al-Manār* on Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* which provided a critical assessment of the *Iḥyāʾ* for its excessive use of weak hadith. Riḍā noted that this particular shortcoming could be overcome if one consulted the aforementioned *takhrīj* work by ʿIrāqī. Inspired by Riḍā's essay and ʿIrāqī's *takhrīj*, al-Albānī dedicated all of his spare time to studying hadith at the Ẓāhiriyya Library and cultivating the practice of hadith verification on his own. During his tenure at the Islamic University of Medina in the early 1960s, al-Albānī did not teach hadith in the traditional manner described by Shāh Walī Allāh above (through recitation, investigation and explanation, or scrutiny and deep analysis); rather, al-Albānī would guide students through the process of hadith verification as a practicum. Emphasis was placed on mastering hadith terminology (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) and learning how to use the vast literature of hadith reference works to carry out *takhrīj*. This method proved enormously successful and became the preferred method for teaching hadith throughout universities in the Arab world from the 1970s onward. Though al-Albānī never wrote a manual on this subject, hadith professors produced a number of manuals and textbooks that outlined and served as references works for hadith verification.

Perhaps the most popular of these textbooks, and one that has been in print since it was published in 1978, is Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān's *Uṣūl al-takhrīj wa dirāsat al-asānīd* (al-Ṭaḥḥān 1996). This text provides a concise and useful guide to the practice of hadith verification. al-Ṭaḥḥān defines *takhrīj* as "documenting the source of a hadith in those primary sources which have recorded the [texts of] hadiths along with their chains of transmission; then, when needed, providing an assessment of the hadith's rank" (al-Ṭaḥḥān 1996, 8). Based on this definition, hadith verification can be thought of as consisting of two steps: hadith citation and hadith criticism. The first, hadith citation, focuses on identifying which primary sources record the hadith under investigation. Al-Ṭaḥḥān presents five ways of researching the citation of a hadith: (i) through *Musnad* works listing the hadith narrated by companion, (ii) the *aṭrāf* books that collect the first words of a hadith, (iii) works like Wensinck's *Concordance* that are organized by the use of rare words in a hadith, (iv) by subject matter, and finally (v) by studying the *isnād* and the *matn* (al-Ṭaḥḥān 1996, 39–134). For each of these, al-Ṭaḥḥān lists the most important reference works and gives a brief description of that text's particular features. The second step of *takhrīj*, hadith criticism, entails studying the *isnād*s that one has collected from the primary sources in order to come to a ruling regarding whether the hadith is of probative status or not. This is accomplished by investigating each individual chain to determine whether or not it meets the conditions for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*). The focus of research into authenticity, as al-Ṭaḥḥān presents it, rests on the study of narrators, and the key hadith discipline required for "the science of narrators" (*ʿilm al-rijāl*) is "narrator criticism" (*al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*). The final result of this part of the research is a ruling on the ranking of a hadith and whether it is probative or not.

The two pillars of al-Albānī's reform effort were "purification" (*taṣfiya*) and "education" (*tarbiya*). By the former, al-Albānī meant the purification of Islamic teachings and practices to ostensibly restore an authentic form of Islam as taught by the Prophet and practiced by the earliest generation of Muslims (Al-Albānī 1999). This entailed the constant vigilance in purifying the hadith corpus of weak and inauthentic hadith. Al-Albānī embodied this through becoming a hadith editor for Salafi publishing houses, verifying the status of hadith in texts, following the work of Shākir in his critical editions. The end process of *takhrīj* entailed *taṣḥīḥ* ("deeming authentic") or *taḍʿīf* ("deeming inauthentic"), and al-Albānī was distinguished for finding the weaknesses of hadiths. He produced 14 large volumes that presented full *takhrīj* and *taḍʿīf* of over 7,000 hadith titled *Silsilat al-āḥadīth al-ḍaʿīfa*. He also produced an accompanying set representing *taṣḥīḥ* of just over 4,000 hadith, titled *Silsilat al-āḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa* in nine volumes. Both of these collections span the entirety of al-Albānī's long life dedicated to researching hadith.

The two practices of critically editing Islamic texts and hadith verification became the focus of hadith learning in the Arab world. One can say with little exaggeration that a book on an Islamic subject cannot be published in the Arab world today without some degree of *takhrīj*. Some of the most prominent hadith scholars in the Arab world are known primarily for their critical editions and *takhrīj* of Islamic texts and the production of reference works to facilitate *takhrīj*. Worthy of mention here are Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ (d. 2016) and Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (b. 1940), who oversaw the critical edition of numerous reference works in hadith, such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī's (d. 1341) *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl* (35 volumes) and the latter's *Tuḥfat al-ashrāf fī maʿrifat al-aṭrāf* (10 volumes), Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī's (d. 1348) *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (28 volumes) and *Tārīkh al-Islām wa wafiyāt al-mashāhīr wa al-aʿlām* (10 volumes). Arnāʾūṭ's most ambitious project was overseeing the critical edition of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* in 50 volumes. Like Shākir's edition, Arnāʾūṭ's provides extensive *takhrīj* of every hadith. Virtually all of the reference works that al-Ṭaḥḥān mentioned in his textbook on *takhrīj* have been critically edited and published.

For students of hadith, access to these texts is crucial, but owning them could cost a small fortune. Toward the end of the twentieth century, large collections of these texts were digitized and software programs were developed to facilitate searching them. This made the essential reference works available to any hadith student with access to a computer and provided shortcuts for research. More recent textbooks on *takhrīj* include discussions of using computer programs to assist in *takhrīj* and approvingly recommend a number of programs (al-Biqāʿī 2002, 46–52; al-Qāsimī 2004, 191–205). With the spread of the internet in the Arab world after the turn of the century, those programs have largely been eclipsed by al-Maktaba al-Shāmila (www.shamela.ws), which has over 5,000 Islamic texts digitized and its own search engine. (There is also a web version of the program at www.islamport.com). Given the low quality and unreliability of many of the earliest scans, one could not rely solely on search engines. Double-checking the electronic edition with the printed editions has become significantly easier through websites such as al-Maktaba al-Waqfiyya (www.waqfeya.com), which contains high quality scans of countless books in PDF format and is noted for uploading and relying on the most authoritative editions of books. The resources work in tandem; al-Maktaba al-Waqfiyya not only uploads scans but also includes a format of most books compatible with the Shāmila search engine, .bok. For students of hadith, these programs and websites are essential tools to facilitate carrying out *takhrīj* as they make the main reference works of a research library readily accessible to anyone with a computer and internet connection, democratizing access to Islamic knowledge to a far greater extent even than print.

Audition and Licensing

From its origins in the earliest centuries of Islam, hadith learning emphasized the interpersonal transmission of knowledge through upright and exacting narrators. This feature of hadith learning continued until the middle decades of the twentieth century. With the proliferation of print and the concerns for *taḥqīq* and *takhrīj*, there was little market for scholars who specialized in the transmission of hadith. With print, the study of hadith became increasingly impersonal, shifting the focus from exacting scholars to the most exact text. In this way, print had vitiated the need for an *ijāza* (license to transmit hadith). All that was required to access authentic knowledge was purchasing modern scholarly editions of Bukhārī or Muslim that, in many reformists' minds, spoke plainly. Print democratized access to the Sunni hadith canon, wrestling it from the monopoly of hadith masters. Without control on interpretation and with open access to the hadith canon, long-standing normative Islamic teachings came into greater contestation. In the last decades of the twentieth century, hadith scholars sought to reassert control over access to the hadith canon and its interpretation. A network of anti-reformist ʿulamaʾ – such as Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (1878–1952), ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (1917–1997), Muḥammad ʿAwwāma (b. 1940), and Sayyid ʿAlawī al-Mālikī (1944–2004) – sought to counter modernist and particularly Salafi interpretations by emphasizing the qualifications required to narrate and study hadith. This entailed studying directly under hadith masters (*musnid*s) in sessions of audition (*samāʿ*) often resulting in the attainment of a license (*ijāza*) of transmission.

ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda authored a small tract which spoke to the importance of possessing an *isnād*, titled *al-Isnād min al-dīn*, derived from the statement of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, "The chain of narrators is part of the religion; were it not for the chain of narrators, anyone could say what they wanted." While Abū Ghudda did not explicitly mention reformers or modern hadith students, his book valorized the premodern modes of hadith transmission that emphasized interpersonal transmission.

One of the most important *musnid*s for the first half of the last century was Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (1884–1962). The scion of a Moroccan family of *sharīf*s and ʿulamaʾ, his father had great concern for his son attaining high chains of transmission and took him to meet many of the older hadith scholars of Morocco to attain *ijāza*s. As a young man, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy continued to seek *ijāza*s from not only the older scholars but also younger ones, and even sought them through correspondence. While still a teenager, he began traveling through Morocco to meet personally with hadith scholars. By 1903, at just 19 years of age, he compiled his first *thabat* (catalog of transmissions). The next year he went on a *riḥla* to the central Islamic lands and continued seeking *ijāza*s. Because of his mastery of the literature on transmission chains for the late medieval hadith networks he compiled catalogs on behalf of many notable scholars and made important corrections to this literature. In 1927, he compiled his magnum opus, *Fahras al-fahāris* (Kattānī 1982), a catalog of his chains of transmission, which remains one of the most important reference works for this genre and was quickly recognized by other hadith specialists.

The most prominent *musnid* in the last century was the Meccan scholar of Indonesian extraction Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī (1916–1990). Fādānī was said to possess the highest *isnād* in the last century. He is referred to as "the *musnid* of the age" (*musnid al-ʿaṣr*), and scholars from all over the Muslim world sought out Fādānī to attend sessions of audition in his home. Like Kattānī, Fādānī's scholarly writings focused on documenting the *isnād*s and *ijāza*s of the most important *musnid*s that transmitted the Sunni hadith canon among later generations.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed a number of developments in hadith studies from the late nineteenth century to the present. It has drawn attention to the ways in which Muslims study hadith today – the *dawrat al-ḥadīth* in South Asian madrasas, specializing in critical editions and hadith verification as is emphasized in universities in the Arab world, and the re-emergence of interpersonal transmission. The commentaries that emerge from the *dawra* focus on studying the *matn* of hadith, where *taḥqīq* and *takhrīj* emphasize the manuscript and *isnād* sources for hadith texts. Finally, the emphasis on audition and licensing is concerned with the reception and transmission of hadith texts. These modes of study, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, are not mutually exclusive; rather, students who seek to specialize in hadith undertake aspects of each of these. By way of example, certain Deobandi madrasas, seemingly aware of this problem institutionally, have developed further years of study for students who want to specialize in hadith (*al-takhaṣṣuṣ fī al-ḥadīth*), where *takhrīj* and *taḥqīq* of books are emphasized.

These developments in the practice of hadith illustrate the ways in which this dimension of the Islamic intellectual tradition has responded to various contingencies, including discursive contestation within the tradition, institutional developments in response to changing sociopolitical realities, and technological advancements. These developments are illustrative of the dynamic and creative nature of how a practice responds to these contingencies while trying to retain the goods that are constitutive of that practice. In the case of hadith studies today, those goods include not only authenticity (as in the earlier centuries of Islam) but also social capital and the construction of scholarly authority (in the middle and later centuries), and, most importantly, a sense of connectedness to the Prophet and God.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 In his commentary on Shāh Walī Allāh's *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, Saʿīd Aḥmad Pālanpūrī draws attention to a manuscript of Bukhārī in the Khoda Baksh Library that bears an audition register of Walī Allāh where the latter provides his chain of narrators to Bukhārī and signs his name "Ḥanafī in practice, and Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī in teaching (*al-ḥanafī wa al-shāfiʿī tadrīs*^{an})" (Pālanpūrī 2005, 1:51–52).

2 This practice has its origins in the *mustakhraj* works related to Bukhārī and Muslim's collections. The term *mustakhraj* connotes "seeking to include," and these works seek to include those hadith not collected by Bukhārī or Muslim but meeting their criterion. Authors of these works thus needed to have detailed knowledge of Bukhārī and Muslim's narrators (Brown 2007, 104–113).

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Azharī, Usāma. 2011. *Asanīd al-maṣriyyīn: jamhara fī al-muta'akhkhirīn min ʿulamāʾ maṣr*. Abu Dhabi: Dār al-Faqīh. The latest in the "catalog of scholars" (*thabat*) genre, illustrative of the authority attached to *ijāza*s and audition to counter reformists.

Davidson, Garrett. 2018. *Beyond the Canon: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission Across a Thousand Years*. Leiden: Brill. An exceptional monograph on hadith transmission and its place in Muslim social and intellectual culture, covering the premodern tradition extensively, as well as the modern period.

Kamaruddin, Amin. 2004. "Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī on Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*: A Critical Study of His Method." *Islamic Law and Society* 11: 149–176. Amin provides detailed analysis of al-Albānī's hadith methodology.

Karic, Enes. 2011. *Contributions to Twentieth Century Islamic Thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, vol. 1. Sarajevo: El Kalem. An important study of a non-Arab Ottoman context of reform not covered in this chapter, noting the vernacularization and print of hadith in Bosnia.

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CHAPTER 16

Reappraisal

Daniel W. Brown

Turkish Hadith Reform

In 2013, Turkey's Diyanet, the massive religious affairs arm of the Turkish state, published *Hadislerle Islam* (Diyanet Işleri Başkanlığı 2013), a seven-volume collection of hadith curated by a team of Diyanet sponsored academic hadith specialists. In 2008, when the project was in preparation, the BBC reported that the Diyanet was overseeing "a radical revision of Islamic texts" and promoting a "controversial and radical modernisation of the religion." Mehmet Görmez, an architect of the project who would later head the Diyanet, was quoted as saying that even hadith reports found to be genuine would need to be contextualized and reinterpreted. An expert on Turkey from Chatham House called what Turkey was doing "akin to the Christian Reformation" (Pigott 2008).

The resulting published volumes make rather less exciting reading than the BBC report.[1] In form, the collection follows a familiar pattern that might be compared to a multivolume study Bible aimed at a popular audience. It is organized topically; each topic is given a brief title (e.g. "Freedom of Religion") and a slightly longer subtitle (e.g. "There is no Compulsion in Religion") followed by the *matn*s (*isnād*s are not given) of three to five short hadith reports. These are given in Arabic accompanied by a Turkish translation, and many are abbreviated versions of longer narrations. The selected hadith reports are followed by an eight- or nine-page unsigned overview of each topic which interprets and synthesizes Qurʾanic verses and hadith reports connected with the topic. In many respects the collection is unremarkable. Collations of hadith reports like this one, selected from the larger body of hadith literature for devotional, educational, or other purposes, are a common feature of Islamic piety. The involvement of an arm of the state in such an enterprise is also unworthy of special note; governments of almost all Muslim majority states have been active in seeking to shape and channel Islamic

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scholarship and popular piety, and Turkey is no exception. From an historical viewpoint, the collection falls into well-worn patterns.

But although the project may fall short of a reformation, it does usefully illustrate a characteristic feature of modern Muslim reformist thinking in relation to hadith: the impulse to approach the hadith literature as a problem to be overcome. Whatever else it may be, the Diyanet hadith project is an effort to make hadith palatable and innocuous in a contemporary Turkish context. It observes pieties, submerges difficulties, and addresses complexities in a manner calculated to affirm the value of hadith and the spiritual heritage it represents without arousing discomfort. This is probably clearest on questions of gender, such as the education of girls or child marriage, where the collection systematically omits, marginalizes, or reinterprets hadith reports that might be viewed as misogynistic by many Turks (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 2013, 209–250).

Since the late nineteenth-century, this tendency to approach the hadith as problematic has taken a variety of forms, including subjecting hadith reports previously judged reliable to new scrutiny, reassessing the place of the hadith literature in the structure of religious authority, rejecting the hadith completely, relegating it to the sphere of private piety, or, often, studiously ignoring it. Consequently, many reformist discussions of hadith are strangely light on actual hadith analysis or even citation of hadith reports themselves, and, correspondingly, the methods often relied on to justify legal reforms have often been divorced from substantive discussion of hadith.[2]

There are, of course, significant contemporary movements, Salafi and Islamist in particular, that take the hadith seriously as a basis for reestablishment of Islamic norms, and we might usefully distinguish between hadith-focused reform movements and hadith-critical movements. But as we will see, the lines between hadith-based and hadith-critical movements are not hard drawn, and these tendencies have been closely related historically. Moreover, these varying reformist approaches to hadith are all part of a spectrum of responses to the same general problem, that is the destruction during the modern period of traditional structures of religious authority and the question of how to rebuild on the ruins. The problem was felt earliest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in places like India and Egypt, where Muslim political, legal, and social institutions were radically impacted by colonial regimes, but ultimately the difficulty became a universal one for modern Muslims: in the face of radical and disorienting change and the destruction of traditional Islamic institutions, what does it mean to live as a Muslim, how does Islam adapt to change, and what is the role of hadith in answering these questions?

Sunna and Hadith in Early Islam

Questions about the place of hadith as a source of religious authority are not new to modern Muslims. Rather, modern reevaluations of hadith distantly echo discussions during the formative period of Islam, when the place of hadith as a source of religious authority was hotly contested. Two broad questions drove these early debates: what is the relationship of Prophetic authority to other sources of authority, and how is the

Prophet's authority mediated to later generations of Muslims? The first question centers on the concept of sunna, the second on the function of hadith in relation to the sunna. Neither of these questions was firmly settled prior to the third century, and the spectrum of views held by early Muslims on hadith and sunna has provided opportunities for Muslims to reopen the debate in the modern period.

We know from al-Shāfiʿī's polemics that prior to and during his lifetime the idea of sunna was fluid. Muslims appealed to the practice of the Prophet as an authority, but not exclusively so (Schacht 1950, 12, 75; Schacht 1963; Bravmann 1972; Juynboll 1987). The superiority of the Prophetic sunna had to be argued, and there was plenty to argue about. The very earliest Muslim notions of religious authority were centered on the charismatic authority of the successors to Muhammad, a pattern preserved in Shiʿite Islam (Crone and Hinds 1986, 43–57), and by the time of al-Shāfiʿī it is clear that many sources of religious authority were jostling for position, chief among them the Qurʾan, the sunnas of the companions, the sunna of the early caliphs and the sunna of the Prophet. This plurality of sunnas persisted among jurists after al-Shāfiʿī (Spectorsky 2002). When the sunna of the Prophet was explicitly invoked, it was often to make a general appeal to justice and righteous conduct. In early historical reports, the term is often used to indicate acceptable norms, the opposite of *bidʿa* (Crone and Hinds 1986, 66). Early Ibādī sources confirm the fluidity of the concept of sunna in the first Islamic century and its conceptual independence from hadith (Schacht 1963).

Against this plurality of sunnas, al-Shāfiʿī limited authoritative sunna to Prophetic words or actions known by means of authenticated hadith reports, an approach to Prophetic authority that would be accepted by most subsequent Sunni Muslims (Shāfiʿī 1940). It was a relatively small step from al-Shāfiʿī's insistence that sunna must be rooted in Prophetic hadith to Ibn al-Qutayba's full-blown doctrine of dual revelation: the sunna is unrecited (*ghayr maṭlū*) revelation, the Qurʾan is recited (*maṭlū*) revelation, but both were divinely revealed to the Prophet and are in principle equally authoritative as sources of Islamic law (Ibn Qutayba 1962, 217, 232). Unlike the Qurʾan, only the meaning of the sunna can be reliably transmitted, not the precise words which Muhammad received, with the implication that unlike the Qurʾan the sunna cannot be ritually recited. As divine guidance, however, the two sources of authority are equal and complementary (see Chapter 3).

In theory, the traditionists, the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, triumphed thoroughly, their victory aided and represented by Shāfiʿī's formidable polemics in favor of hadith-based sunna (Shāfiʿī 1940). In reality their victory was less than complete. While the *ahl al-raʾy* capitulated in theory, in practical terms they successfully preserved the substance of their legal doctrine. While hadith-based sunna took its exalted and unquestioned place in the theoretical structure of Islamic law, actual legal arguments continued to perpetuate and protect received doctrine. In fact, as the system matured, independent challenges to received opinion by direct appeal to earlier precedents, including hadith, became increasingly uncommon (Brown 2016). At the same time, the exalted status of hadith, the sheer volume of material it contained, and the continuing importance of hadith scholarship left open the potential for a more radical hadith-based challenge to received legal doctrine, and this potential was kept alive particularly within the Ḥanbalī school.

Premodern Hadith-Based Movements

Hodgson's contention that Hanbalism was never really a school of law at all and that "each major teacher felt free to start afresh" (Hodgson 1974, 1:160) is only partly true. In reality, the Ḥanbalī school functioned as a *madhhab* much like the others. Inspired by the mythology surrounding Ibn Ḥanbal, however, Ḥanbalīs preserved, in theory, a strict fidelity to the plain meaning of the Qur'an and sunna to occasionally dramatic effect. Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and his pupil Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) in particular would use this commitment to texts to justify a radical purificationist program, subjecting almost every feature of fourteenth-century Muslim piety to critique and denouncing idolatry in all of its forms, from Sufi pilgrimages and veneration of relics to backgammon and idleness (Little 1975). Ibn Taymiyya is also especially famous for his claim to be *mujtahid muṭlaq*, asserting his unhindered right to study and apply the Qurʾan and sunna by means of *ijtihād* (Jokisch 2001, 120). His provocative example and voluminous writings would become a key point of reference for reform-minded Muslims of every stripe, from Muḥammad ʿAbduh to Fazlur Rahman.

Ibn Taymiyya and other Ḥanbalīs also influenced a key precursor to modern hadith-based reform movements, the Yemeni scholar Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (d. 1839). Al-Shawkānī, who was without clear connections to any of the four schools of law, became the most consistent and vociferous premodern proponent of hadith-based purification of Islamic law. Like Ibn Taymiyya, he considered himself a *mujtahid*, but in several respects he advanced beyond Ibn Taymiyya, arguing that *mujtahid*s could and should be systematically educated, that every age must have one, that *ijtihad* has become easier rather than more difficult for later generations, that the *ijmāʿ* of a particular generation of scholars is impossible to confirm, that claims to the authority of such *ijmāʿ* precedents are therefore not binding, and that the sole test of the validity of any opinion is fidelity to the text of the Qurʾan and sunna (Peters 1980; Haykel 2002, 2003). As Haykel (2002) shows, Shawkānī's ideas arose from parochial nineteenth-century Yemeni concerns. His battle was with the Shiʿite Zaydī tradition, and his assertion of the right to *ijtihād* makes sense primarily as reaction and rejoinder to Zaydī assertions about the authority of precedent. But while it makes no sense to back project reformist or progressive motives on al-Shawkānī, his fidelity to hadith and his reputation as a reviver of hadith study would make him a model for the following generation, especially the Indian Ahl-i Ḥadīth.

Hadith-based movements in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India also found inspiration closer to home. Like almost every modern Islamic movement in the Subcontinent, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth traced their intellectual genealogy to the towering eighteenth-century scholar, Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762). The decline of Muslim power in the Subcontinent that Shāh Walī Allāh confronted, and his response to it, seemed directly relevant to his intellectual heirs in the nineteenth-century, and his efforts to reverse that decline in both the political and intellectual arena set the agenda for Muslims seeking the revival of Islam in the Subcontinent (on Shāh Walī Allāh see Rahbar 1955; Aḥmad 1964, 201–209; Ikrām 1968; Jalbani 1978; Rizvi 1980; Hermansen 1982; Baljon 1986; Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī 1996).

Rejection of *taqlīd* and revival of hadith studies was central to Shāh Walī Allāh's vision, although neither his emphasis on hadith nor in his rejection of *taqlīd* was quite so pioneering as his later admirers imagined. His immediate predecessor, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī, maintained a more consistent opposition to *taqlīd* than Shāh Walī Allāh did, and he was also a notable scholar of hadith. In reality, Shāh Walī Allāh's positions hew close to the mainstream. His views on hadith are the views of a *faqīh*, a fact made especially evident by the special place he assigned to Malik's *Muwaṭṭa*. Similarly, his approach to the application of hadith was bounded by the practical concerns of a legal scholar: not all traditions are legally applicable and those that are may be liable to misinterpretation. Indeed, the companions' own misunderstandings find their way into hadith, resulting in apparent contradictions that only qualified *fuqahāʾ* can resolve. Shāh Walī Allāh's analysis of the cultural context of particular legal rulings has been particularly consequential for later reformers. His concern to uncover the reason or principle (*ʿilla*) of particular legal rulings led him to distinguish God's universal law from its particular manifestation, and Muhammad Iqbal in particular took this as an opening for a radical legal relativism whereby specific rules may be "in a sense limited to [a particular] people" (Iqbal 1934, 163). This style of argument would be applied to hadith by some twentieth-century reformers, and we see evidence of this approach in some of the contributions to the Turkish hadith project described above.

The Ahl-i Ḥadīth

Among the nineteenth-century claimants to Shāh Walī Allāh's mantle, the Indian Ahl-i Ḥadīth would prove especially important in the evolution of modern Muslim approaches to hadith. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth emerged after 1857, steering the purificationist legacy of Shāh Walī Allāh's followers in a scholarly and quietist direction and away from jihad (Abou Zahab 2013, 129). The movement grew up among social and intellectual elites who were disenfranchised in the aftermath of the failed revolt, and it remained unapologetically elitist. The two key nineteenth-century founders of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, Naẓīr Ḥusayn Dihlawī and Nawwāb Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, claimed both family and intellectual descent from Shāh Walī Allāh. Both were from prominent families that had fallen into poverty, and both cultivated scholarly ties in the Middle East and aspired to high standards of Arabic scholarship, writing numerous works in Arabic and Persian (Metcalf 1982, 278).

In ideology, the group was pessimistic and purificationist. The rise of British power and the accompanying disintegration of Muslim rule was a signal of the disorder preceding the end of the world (Metcalf 1982, 269). The group's sense of embattlement, its elitism, and the markers that signaled membership in the one true sect of Islam are all of a piece. The highest calling of true believers when the world is disintegrating is to bear witness to the truth, to remain faithful to the pure teaching of the Prophet, and to shed all accretions. The sole channel for discovering the pure teaching of the Prophet is hadith, hence the group's label and its singular preoccupation with studying, applying, and living in accord with hadith. In method, they were closer to al-Shawkānī than to Shāh Walī Allāh, and they continued to foster close ties with Yemeni ʿulamaʾ. They saw themselves as thoroughly *ghayr muqallid*, entirely repudiating the *madhhab*s for fostering idolatry of their founding figures (Reetz 2006, 92). Although they projected this anti-*madhhab* position on Shāh Walī Allāh, their complete repudiation of classical *fiqh* is a departure from his legacy.

Appeal to hadith became, in the program of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, the tool for a thoroughgoing critique of received authority and customary practice. The motive was not so much revivalist as purificationist. The tone was pessimistic and apocalyptic, envisioning no widescale recovery. Rather, it invited a purified remnant of Muslims to save themselves from the wrath to come. The purificationist impulse was shared with other reformist movements, notably the Deobandis, but the Ahl-i Ḥadīth extended themselves further. Like other reformers they opposed popular Sufi practices like visitation to tombs, shrine pilgrimages, *ʿurs* celebrations, and *qawwālī* music, but they exceeded the Deobandis in also repudiating all manifestations of *ṭarīqa* sufism, especially the master–disciple bond (Metcalf 1982, 274). This purificationist impulse was not just directed outwards. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth fostered a style of individual piety that emphasized conformity to Prophetic precedent in every detail. In their view, hadith is the only authoritative guide to the sunna and is therefore the means of achieving closeness to the Prophet. They taught simplicity of life and eschewed, for example, expensive or elaborate marriages and excessive dowries (Metcalf 1982, 274).

The impact of al-Shawkānī on the Ahl-i Ḥadīth is also evident in their emphasis on a univocal reading of texts. Eschewing legal pluralism, they insisted that each text had only a single meaning, each problem a single solution. This hermeneutical approach is reminiscent of the Ẓahirīs (Brown 1996, 28). Consistent with their tendency to see history as a story of decline, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth reject *ijmāʿ* and deny the efficacy of *qiyās*. But their pessimism also leads away from al-Shawkānī: they are unwilling to question hadith judged authentic by classical traditionists, and for them hadith is therefore a repetitive and not a critical science (Ahmad 1967, 114–115).

To many of their contemporary rivals and to the British colonial authorities, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth seemed a marginal and reactionary throwback. Indeed, many Ahl-i Ḥadīth preoccupations were parochial, especially the sectarian boundary markers to which they vociferously clung and which set them apart from the Ḥanafī majority. They performed, for example, a modified prayer ritual, saying *Amīn* aloud, raising hands above the navel, and joining the prayer leader in reciting the *Fātiḥa* aloud. Such distinctives were both a powerful sign of belonging and an irritant to their opponents (Metcalf 1982; Abou Zahab 2013). Small as these may seem, these modifications made it impossible for the Ahl-i Ḥadīth to join with other Muslims in salat without making a scene and inviting controversy.

Despite its parochial concerns, small numbers, and elitist ethos, the movement exerted influence out of proportion to its size, and the set of ideas it championed has had extraordinary success in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.[3] Beyond the Subcontinent, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth built a robust network of ties with Arab scholars. Yemeni scholars were active in Ahl-i Ḥadīth circles during the nineteenth century, and connections with Arab Salafis began in the 1920s and especially accelerated in the 1970s (Reetz 2006, 74). In the 1960s an Ahl-i Ḥadīth scholar, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Ḥasan (d. 2007), was recruited to replace Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī at the

Islamic University in Medina, where he taught hadith for 16 years, developing close ties with the head of the Saudi ʿulamaʾ, al-Bāz (Abou Zahab 2013, 129). Thus the Ahl-i Ḥadīth is one of the important catalysts for the emergence of Salafism as a global phenomenon in the contemporary world (Meijer 2013). But while this trajectory of hadith-based, anti-*taqlīd*, purificationist ideas from the nineteenth century Ahl-i Ḥadīth to twenty-first-century Salafism is fairly direct, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth also played a surprising role in the emergence of more critical approaches to hadith.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, the pioneering Islamic modernist, articulated the first modern challenges to the reliability and authority of hadith beginning in the 1870s. While Sayyid Aḥmad is best known for his bold attempts to reconcile Islam and Western rationalism and for his establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh,[4] his modernist vision emerged only gradually. His earliest works reflect a pious veneration of the Prophet entirely consistent with his family's Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī ties. He also developed sympathy with the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, and under their influence he began to show increasing rigor in his evaluation of popular piety based on its consistency with hadith (Troll 1978, 52). At the same time, he had significant connections with Europeans from early in his career, and the influence of Orientalist scholarship and missionary polemics would ultimately have a profound effect on his thinking.

As with the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, the events of 1857 launched Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in a new direction, beginning with an almost obsequious declaration of the complete loyalty of Indian Muslims to British rule. For Sayyid Aḥmad, accommodation to the British did not imply complete intellectual or religious capitulation, however. While he urged his Indian Muslim compatriots to adopt Western science and to embrace British culture, he also became an active apologist for Islam, and it was in the context of his apologetic activities and his connections with William Muir and Alois Sprenger that his views on hadith began to shift (on Muir and Sprenger, see Chapter 2).

We first see signs of an evolution in Sayyid Aḥmad's outlook toward hadith in his *Mohamedan Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1862/1865), in which he sought a way to assimilate the Bible to Islamic categories of revelation. Sayyid Aḥmad argued that Muslims could accept the biblical text as a kind of revelation so long as it was understood to be in the same class as sunna, *waḥy ghayr maṭlū*, unrecited revelation. This move accomplished an apologetic goal by subtly devaluing the Bible in relation to the Qurʾan, but at the same time it emphasized the gap between Qurʾan and sunna. Within the biblical text, Sayyid Aḥmad further distinguished historical materials, which he likened to *isnād*s, from unequivocally religious content, arguing that only the latter could be considered *waḥy* (Aḥmad Khān 1862, I:14). He would later extend this distinction between sacred and secular content to the sunna, severely restricting the scope of its authority.

Sayyid Aḥmad's views on hadith were more directly impacted by William Muir's *Life of Mohamet* (Muir 1858). In his answer to Muir in *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohamed* (1870), Sayyid Aḥmad sought to counter Muir's skepticism with regard to the historical value of the hadith. He defended the general efficacy of hadith criticism, he argued that Muir was unreasonable in his attributing bias to hadith narrators, and he insisted that Muir severely underestimated the power of memory. At the same time, he made critical concessions to Muir. He conceded that the hadith must be subordinated to the Qurʾan as the supreme source of authority; he accepted Muir's argument that criticism of the content of hadith is essential; and he agreed that traditional hadith criticism is flawed because it utilized *isnād* criticism almost exclusively.

Although Sayyid Aḥmad Khān neither rejected the historicity of hadith nor the theoretical authority of sunna, he did severely restrict the application of hadith in practice, subordinated hadith to the Qurʾan, and distinguished between religious and secular content, thus severely reducing the scope of normative sunna. In the end, he allowed only *mutawātir* traditions, those so massively corroborated that collusion to deceive was impossible, as a reliable basis for guidance independent of the Qurʾan, a position that resembles that taken by some theologians (see Chapter 12). Sayyid Aḥmad found only five hadith that met this standard. Perhaps most significantly, he was among the first modern Muslims to grapple directly with the destructive effects of Western hadith criticism.

Qurʾanic Scripturalism in India and Egypt

At the turn of the twentieth century an even more surprising shift of doctrine emerged out of Ahl-i Ḥadīth circles in the Punjab. In 1900, a prayer leader at an Ahl-i Ḥadīth mosque in Lahore, Maulvī ʿAbd Allāh Chakṛālawī, made an extraordinary move, repudiating hadith altogether and declaring that the Qurʾan alone is fully sufficient requiring no supplement, for the Qurʾan is "a Book explaining all things" (Q 16:89) and supplies Muslims with everything required for guidance. Chakṛālawī accompanied this doctrinal shift with a dramatic flourish consistent with his Ahl-i Ḥadīth context, introducing modifications to the prayer ritual as a visible marker of his repudiation of hadith. Indeed, Chakṛālawī became obsessed with details of salat, setting out to prove that the Qurʾan alone provides sufficient guidance to Muslims on this most important of duties (Chakṛālawī n.d.). His polemical and publishing activities were directed largely toward this goal of demonstrating that all that is essential for Muslim practice can be known from the Qurʾan. To this end, he published a journal, *Ishāʿat al-Qurʾān*, and engaged in sustained polemical exchanges with Ahl-i Ḥadīth newspaper editor and controversialist Muḥammad Ḥusayn Batālawī (Qasmi 2011, 128).

Around the same time that Chakṛālawī was championing Qurʾan-only ideas in Lahore, a parallel movement emerged in Amritsar when Khwāja Aḥmad al-Dīn, whose father reportedly studied with Ahl-i Ḥadīth founding figure Naẓīr Ḥusayn, began to articulate doubts about the reliability of hadith. In later accounts, Aḥmad al-Dīn claimed that his doubts about the hadith began after he heard a preacher quote a tradition according to which Moses slapped the Angel of Death (Qasmi 2011, 168). Although Khwāja Aḥmad al-Dīn was self-taught, he had close connections with Ahl-i Ḥadīth figures in Amritsar, and according to some reports he also had connections with Chakṛālawī beginning as early as 1906. He did not actively promote Qurʾan-only views, however, until at least 1923, when he became engaged in polemical exchanges. The following year, 1924, he established the Ummat-i Muslima, and launched the journal, *al-Balagh*, to disseminate Qurʾan-only views (Qasmi 2011, 170).

As Qasmi shows, the trajectory of Aḥmad al-Dīn's ideas departed substantially from Chakṛālawī's. While Chakṛālawī argued the sufficiency of the Qurʾan, expending enormous effort to prove that the Qurʾan provides all a Muslim needs, Aḥmad al-Dīn, by contrast, emphasized its universality (Qasmi 2011, 171–174). The difference reflects variations in context. Aḥmad al-Dīn, educated in a missionary school and living in the diverse and polemical multifaith environment of Amritsar, was sensitive to the demands of interreligious debate and apologetics in which the Qurʾan seemed to hold up well, and the hadith was sometimes an embarrassment. Chakṛālawī's approach, by contrast, still fit comfortably within an Ahl-i Ḥadīth-shaped universe of ideas.

While the genesis of Qurʾan-only ideas in Lahore and Amritsar is closely correlated to the intellectual context of Indian Islam, at almost the same time similar ideas emerged within Rashīd Riḍā's circle in Egypt. In 1906, Muḥammad Tawfīq Ṣidqī initiated two years of controversy in the journal *al-Manār* when he published an article that argued that the Prophet was never meant to serve as a precise model for Muslims and that Muslims should rely exclusively on the Qurʾan (Juynboll 1969, 21–32). Much of his argument rests on a negative comparison of the reliability and preservation of the sunna relative to the Qurʾan. "If anything other than the Qurʾan had been necessary for religion the Prophet would have commanded its registration in writing and God would have guaranteed its preservation" (Ṣidqī 1906a, 515). Consequently, the sunna was a "temporary and provisional law," valid only for the first generation of Muslims, with no binding force in the present (Ṣidqī 1906b, 925). Muhammad's authority was limited to implementing the Qurʾan. Like Chakṛālawī, Ṣidqī sought to demonstrate the sufficiency of the Qurʾan by attempting to show that the detailed requirements of *ṣalāt* could be deduced from the Qurʾan alone. The controversy ended when, at Rashīd Riḍā's urging, Ṣidqī recanted his views (Juynboll 1969, 21–32; Ṣidqī 1907).

The almost simultaneous airing of Qurʾan-only views in the Subcontinent and Egypt represents both a natural extrapolation of anti-*taqlīd* ideas, and a radical turn of doctrine. We can see the continuity in conversion accounts of those who repudiated hadith, which frequently begin by describing how the author was a devoted student of hadith until extensive study confronted him with traditions that he found impossible to accept (Brown 1996, 40). The basic purificationist impulse, to rid Islam of accretions and return to pure revelation, persisted. The first generation of Qurʾanists in Lahore and Amritsar might be seen as enlarging and extending the Ahl-i Ḥadīth critique of the Islamic intellectual heritage to a critique of hadith itself, and at the same time narrowing the boundaries of revelation to the Qurʾan alone. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth were scripturalists in that they limited religious authority to a fixed body of texts. It was a small step to further limit authority to a far more defensible text. Similarly, in Egypt, Ṣidqī's exchanges with Rashīd Riḍā and Riḍā's willingness to allow publication of Ṣidqī's views in *al-Manār* show that Riḍā found the airing of these views useful to his anti-*taqlīd* project, despite the fact that he disagreed with Ṣidqī and eventually engineered his recantation.

But once uncorked, scripturalism is not easily contained. While Chakṛālawī made only small modifications to the salat, one of his disciples, Mistrī Muḥammad Ramaḍān, found only three prayers in the Qurʾan, reduced each prayer to two *rakaʿāt*, eliminated all recitations, and broke off to launch his own organization and journal in Gujranwala (Ramaḍān1938; Brown 1999, 46; Qasmi 2011), 147–149). In Ramaḍān's view, Chakṛālawī had not sufficiently freed himself from bondage to hadith-based Islam. In Amritsar Aḥmad al-Dīn also repudiated Chakṛālawī's efforts to establish the details of ritual practice from the Qurʾan, arguing that by leaving details undefined, the Qurʾan demonstrated its universal applicability to all times and places and allowed freedom for the specific application of its universal principles to change. He thought that the direction of prayer had no bearing on its purpose. It was fine for Muslims to pray toward Mecca, but not essential, and monotheists of different communities should be able to pray together. Similarly, the use of Arabic is unnecessary, and the point of ablutions is simple cleanliness, requiring no detailed instructions (Qasmi 2011, 180). Freedom from hadith was freedom indeed.

The parochial tenor of these discussions is striking and reflects the constricted sphere within which any discussion of Muslim legal norms had any practical relevance. The Ahl-i Qurʾān could argue with the Ahl-i Ḥadīth over details of ritual practice, but beyond these they had little scope for action. Colonial authorities had secularized much of the legal code and fixed and codified Muslim personal law for use in British administered courts, rendering most discussion of reform moot. Prayer and personal piety were among the few areas where Muslims could govern their own practice. At the same time, the colonial environment freed up significant space for intra-Muslim controversy and debate and for the emergence of heterodox views. Colonial administrators were concerned with order but had little interest in intervening in what looked like minutiae.

In reality, the issues at stake were far from minor. The trajectory of the Ahl-i-Qurʾān showed, and opponents of the Ahl-i-Qurʾān could clearly see, that without the authority of hadith Muslims would lack guidance on the most basic religious requirements and risked the disintegration of the most basic community norms.[5] Filling this gap in religious authority would become an urgent preoccupation of a second generation of Qurʾanic scripturalists, and the most important solutions were pioneered by Aslam Jayrājpūrī, Professor of History and Islamic Studies at the Jamia Milli University in Delhi.

Jayrājpūrī began by distinguishing between hadith as a source of history and sunna as a source of religious guidance. He was willing to accept the value of hadith reports for the transmission of historical data, but he rejected the normative religious authority of the hadith. To solve the problem of how to establish Muslim practice on a solid basis, however, Jayrājpūrī appealed to the notion of *mutawātir* sunna, arguing that the universal agreement of the community on the basic outlines of Islamic religious practice was sufficient guarantee. He was thus able to establish the existing ritual practice of the community on a basis independent of hadith reports, a position that distantly echoes the early Muʿtazilites and anticipates Fazlur Rahman. But what about questions of law which cannot be solved by appeal to the overwhelming agreement of the community? On this question Jayrāpūrī articulated a novel solution that would be picked up and developed by Ghulām Aḥmad Parwēz.

Postcolonial Discussions of Hadith

The postcolonial period introduced a dramatically changed context for discussion of hadith. While we see continuity with earlier ideas and movements, their trajectories were significantly altered. In response to new opportunities, Qurʾanist ideas were invigorated by energetic lay Muslims like Ghulām Aḥmad Parwēz in Pakistan and Maḥmud Abū Rayya in Egypt. The establishment of Pakistan as an Islamic state in which "Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah" (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1956, 1) further raised the political stakes, made discussions of the authority of hadith directly relevant to state policy, and set the context for some of the most important modern debates about hadith and sunna.

In Egypt, controversy over Qurʾan-only views peaked after Maḥmud Abū Rayya set off a vigorous debate with the publication of *Aḍwāʾ ʿalā al-sunna al-Muḥammadiyya* (1958), a direct attack on the reliability of hadith and on the character of one of the most prolific transmitters of hadith among the companions of the Prophet. Unlike Ṣidqī or the Ahl-i Qurʾān, Abū Rayya accepted the value of an authenticated hadith report in theory, but like Diogenes in search of an honest man, he had difficulty finding one. The themes of Abū Rayya's conversion account will by now seem familiar. He was an admirer of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā and absorbed their anti-*taqlīd* views. But he was shocked when he encountered numerous traditions transmitted by a companion of the Prophet, Abū Hurayra, that seemed to him crude and profane. For example, Abū Hurayra reported that the Prophet said, "When the devil hears the call to prayer he flees, farting," a hadith report that is found in the canonical collections (e.g. Muslim 5 *Masājid*, 19). This launched Abū Rayya on intensive study of hadith, and especially of Abū Hurayra, leading him finally to conclude that the majority of traditions in the canonical collections of hadith are forgeries (Juynboll 1969, 39–43).

Responses to Abū Rayya were swift and prolific. Juynboll (1969) surveys nine major published refutations, most notably from Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī (1958) and al-Khaṭīb (1962, 1963). Much of the energy of these writers was spent defending the integrity and honor of companions of the Prophet against Abū Rayya's allegedly scurrilous attacks. Sibāʿī, for instance, cannot imagine a companion lying since so many other companions, who were known to have counted even the gray hairs in the Prophet's beard, would immediately have called out the falsehood. Abū Rayya's critics also defended the reliability of oral transmission as well as arguing that traditions were, in reality, recorded in writing from an early date. Few felt the need to argue more foundational questions of Prophetic authority or the relationship of sunna to hadith; one of the few who does (Juynboll 1969, 44) simply recycles al-Shāfiʿī's arguments. In this close focus on technical details of hadith transmission and preservation, the Abū Rayya controversy stands in marked contrast to contemporaneous discussions of hadith and sunna in Pakistan and also differs sharply from the earlier Egyptian discussions in *al-Manār* described above.

Pakistani discussions of hadith also first erupted in the late 1950s and early 1960s, triggered by Ayyūb Khān's 1958 coup d'état. During the decade of military rule that followed, three key protagonists, Ghulām Aḥmad Parwēz, Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī

(d. 1979), and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), articulated a range of novel ideas about hadith that, unlike earlier discussions, took shape in the context of intense policy debates.

Parwēz

Ghulām Aḥmad Parwēz, who became one of the most successful promoters of Qurʾan-only views, was a civil servant and self-educated in religious matters. Parwēz was directly influenced by Aslam Jayrājpūrī, with whom he had significant connections prior to Pakistan's independence and from whom he inherited his central argument, the replacement of the authority of hadith by the authority of the state. According to Parwēz, normative sunna was not to be obeyed by imitating specific precedents but by reproducing the ideal pattern of leadership that the Prophet modeled. He portrayed the Prophet as an ideal and paradigmatic executor of a divinely ordained social order prescribed by the Qurʾan. Thus Muhammad's legacy was not transmitted by imitating his every act but by taking on his role and accepting his mantle of leadership and responsibility for the implementation of the Qur'an (Parwēz 1949).

The Prophetic responsibility to implement the Qurʾanic vision in concrete circumstances was inherited by his successors, the caliphs, and in the modern period must be taken up by the central authority of the Islamic state, the *markaz-i millat* (Parwez 1949, 357). The authority of the *markaz-i millat* is vast, extending well beyond normal expectations of a head of state to encompass even the responsibility to define and harmonize the detailed requirements of ritual practice in order to ensure the unity of the Muslim community. It would be perfectly legitimate, for example, for the central authority of an Islamic state to eliminate sectarian differences and require conformity in the prayer ritual. And while Parwēz envisioned little need for dramatic change in salat he did articulate novel and startling ideas about how the Ḥajj might be reorganized to function as a huge congress of the entire Muslim world where delegates would discuss common concerns of the *umma* and animal sacrifices, for example, would function purely as a way of shielding the host country from bearing the burden of feeding all the delegates (Qasmi 2011, 232). In less sensitive areas of policy, where the Qurʾan lays down principles but is silent on details, the *markaz-i millat* would be fully empowered to implement laws consistent with contemporary needs. Thus the state entirely displaces hadith as the means by which the Prophet's authority is manifested and as the authoritative interpreter of the Qurʾan.

Parwēz's thoroughly authoritarian political vision, with its utopian socialist tinge, was an excellent fit with Ayyūb Khān's vision for a benevolent, modernizing dictatorship, and Parwēz shamelessly courted Ayyūb's patronage, though with mixed success. While Parwēz received at least some tangible support from the Ayyūb regime, it was less than he wanted, and it was clear that in the end his ideas were a political liability. Indeed from early on Ayyūb's conservative opponents suspected that he was influenced by Parwēz, and when Ayyūb's 1962 rewrite of the Constitution of Pakistan systematically replaced the 1956 Constitution's references to "the Holy Qurʾan and Sunnah" with "Islam" the change elicited a massive reaction from ʿulamaʾ in Pakistan and beyond who suspected that Parwēz was behind the change. Opposition to Qurʾanist ideas grew fierce and became a lightning rod for conservative opposition to Ayyūb's regime, culminating with a massive anti-Parwēz fatwa signed by over 1000 ʿulamaʾ.

Mawdūdī

One of Parwēz's fiercest critics, the journalist, founder of the Islamist Jamāʿat-i Islāmī party, and prolific publicist, Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), stands out not just for his sustained defense of hadith against Qurʾanist arguments but also for his own novel approaches to the hadith. Against the Qurʾanists, Mawdūdī vigorously defended both the extra-Qurʾanic authority of the Prophet and the reliability of the hadith as the means by which normative sunna is known. The Qurʾan did not stand on its own during the lifetime of the Muhammad, he argued, but required the Prophet's attestation and elucidation, and the situation is no different for modern Muslims (Mawdūdī 1989, 327–328). In answer to Jayrājpūrī, Mawdūdī specifically defended the unity and universality of the Prophetic mission (Mawdūdī 1989, 256–272).

He also argued, however, that the interpretation and application of hadith requires special skill because Muhammad's words and actions fall into different categories. Sometimes the Prophet acted as a human, and in these cases Muslims are not bound to obey or imitate him; in other cases, he acted as Prophet and his sunna has binding effect. While this distinction had been utilized by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān to severely narrow the sphere of sunna, Mawdūdī turns it in a different direction. The distinction between human and Prophetic roles is not neatly delineated, he says. Even many of Muhammad's human actions had a Prophetic function, establishing, for example, the boundaries of freedom. Thus, although Muslims are not bound, for example, by the Prophet's specific example in clothing and food, these actions nevertheless serve a teaching function, establishing broad principles. Consequently, no part of sunna can be disregarded, and every detail matters, but it is not always clear exactly how it matters.

How can modern Muslims sort out the difference? That requires a skilled interpreter, a *faqīh*, who "breathes the spirit of the Prophet" (Mawdūdī 1989). Such an interpreter must be especially gifted by God, possessing what Mawdūdī calls *mizāj shinās-i rasūl*, an internalization of the temperament of the Prophet. Such a scholar will have no great need of the *isnād*. Although he will take the chain of transmitters into account, he will freely use traditions with defective *isnād*s and freely reject traditions with sound *isnād*s according to his instinct (Mawdūdī 1989, 362). Whereas Parwēz made the state the arbiter of the authority of the Prophet, Mawdūdī substitutes the especially gifted legal scholar. They both explicitly acknowledge that the sunna will not interpret and apply itself but requires human interpreters. Thus, in the postcolonial period it becomes clearer than ever that the question of who is qualified to sift, interpret, or apply hadith is not merely a religious question but also a political one.

Fazlur Rahman

This same Pakistani political context, and particularly Ayyūb's removal of the reference to "Sunnah" from the 1962 Constitution, was also the catalyst for Fazlur Rahman's bold attempt to rethink hadith and its relation to sunna.[6] Ayyūb's Constitution had been introduced in March, 1962. In August, Ayyūb appointed Fazlur Rahman to head his recently established Central Institute for Islamic Research, which was tasked with providing scholarly support to the regime's modernist program. Upon his appointment, Rahman immediately thrust himself into the center of the controversy with the publication of two seminal articles in the CIIR's new journal, *Islamic Studies* (Rahman 1962a,b,c). These articles remained Rahman's most thorough treatment of sunna and hadith and later formed the core of his *Islamic Methodology in History* (1965).

While Rahman's immediate challenge was to distance himself from Parwēz on the one hand, and to answer conservative critics, including Mawdūdī, on the other, his approach was also shaped by a thorough engagement with Western hadith studies. Rahman begins with a dramatic concession to Western scholarly skepticism, substantially conceding to Goldziher's argument that the bulk of the hadith literature is post-Prophetic. He also accepts Schacht's argument that the growth and back projection of *isnād*s to the Prophet was an inevitable by-product of the hadith enterprise; once Prophetic hadith became a decisive source of authority that could trump all lesser authorities the impulse to back project one's positions to the Prophet became irresistible. Thus Rahman also agrees substantially with Parwēz that the hadith proper – what Rahman calls "technical hadith" as opposed to biographical or historical reports – does not, in strict historical terms, originate with the Prophet. Rather, it represents the ideas and efforts of the early generations of Muslims and is, therefore, "not history writing, but history making" (Rahman 1965, 47).

This sets up Rahman's main project, which was to salvage the normative value of hadith from the destructive effects of historical analysis. Rahman's key move amounts to another riff on a Goldziher theme. Just as Goldziher found the true utility of hadith in what it could tell us about the growth of Islam after the Prophet and in its documentation of early theological and political ideas and controversies, Rahman locates the normative force of hadith in the struggle to implement the Prophetic vision that he sees reflected in early theological and political controversies. What hadith records, he says repeatedly in many ways, is what early generations thought the Prophet *would have done* had he faced their circumstances. So, for example, while Rahman does not hesitate to roundly reject the historicity of predictive hadith, he still finds that these same reports, though patently unhistorical in relation to the Prophet, nevertheless accurately convey the Prophet's vision, especially the supreme value of preserving the unity of the *umma* in the face of schism.

Rahman rejects the charge that denying the strict historicity of hadith amounts to accusing Muslim scholars of engaging in a vast conspiracy. To the contrary, those who preserved and transmitted hadith knew exactly what they were doing. Hence the tradition, "Whatever there be of good saying, you can take me to have said it," a hadith that expresses the early community's self-understanding that they were engaged in a good-faith effort to understand and apply the spirit of the Prophet's example. Hadith, then, amounts to "a gigantic and monumental commentary on the Prophet by the early community" (Rahman 1965, 76). Consequently, hadith retains normative force for Muslims, but not in a strict and literal sense. Rather, the spirit of the Prophetic vision must be ascertained by critical analysis of hadith and then reapplied to new circumstances.

In Rahman's view, the sunna of the Prophet is not to be understood atomistically but wholistically and organically. The Prophet acted in a particular social and historical context and made decisions in that context. The specific decisions were situational, and to understand their intent and reapply them in changed circumstances requires a sophisticated hermeneutic. Sunna thus becomes the living example of the Prophet, what Rahman calls the living sunna, and the instrument by which early Muslims developed this sunna "was responsible personal free-thought activity, that is *raʾy*." (Rahman 1965, 14).

But if the hadith is largely unhistorical in relation to the Prophet, how can Muslims anchor this living sunna? How, in other words, can we have any idea of what the Prophet's vision was in order to evaluate whether later generations faithfully applied it? First, in contrast to his skepticism about the historicity of "technical hadith," Rahman is largely uncritical with regard to the historicity of the biography of the Prophet. In its essential outlines the *sīra* is, he says, "absolutely clear." (Rahman 1965, 81). Similarly, the essentials of Muslim practice – prayer, fasting, *zakāt*, and pilgrimage –"are so Prophetic that only a dishonest or insane person would deny this" (Rahman 1965, 81). This less than critical acceptance of parts of the tradition in order to anchor his critical stance in relation to other parts of the tradition is hardly out of the ordinary; it is exactly the sort of selective use of data that the majority of modern biographers of the Prophet, Muslim or not, regularly engage in. Clearly, a skeptical stance in relation to the biography of the Prophet would be disastrous for Rahman's whole project.

But by far the most important anchor point for Rahman's analysis is his elevation of the Qurʾan as the one unassailable source for the spirit of the Prophet. In the end the Prophetic vision, to which Rahman says the early generations of Muslims responded to by producing the "living sunna" recorded in hadith, is primarily known via the Qurʾan. Effectively, the Prophet's sunna is the Qurʾanic message, the "living sunna" is the application of the Qurʾanic message by the first generations of Muslims, and the imperative for modern Muslims is to imitate these early generations by reflecting creatively and freely on the Qurʾan.

When it comes to actual cases, Rahman almost never reasons from hadith reports, and in fact seldom cites the hadith at all. Pakistan in the 1960s became a crucial testing ground for his ideas, and after political controversy forced his resignation and departure from Pakistan he wrote three articles reflecting on his tenure at the CIIR and describing and defending his positions (Rahman 1970, 1974, 1980). The controversies he describes encompass a full range of concerns for Muslims struggling with the relevance of Islamic law in a modern state: the legality of bank interest, the legality of mechanical slaughter houses, the place of *zakāt* in a modern nation-state, birth-control, divorce, and inheritance. In each case Rahman adopts thoroughly modernist positions, some novel, many reflecting well-established modernist arguments. Yet seldom does he cite or engage with hadith reports. Remarkably, despite the centrality of sunna and hadith in his theory of Islamic methodology, in his actual method hadith effectively disappears. Naturally, Rahman engages with and critically evaluates *fiqh* precedents since these are the basis for positions under challenge. But he seldom reaches behind these to analyze or discuss hadith reports. In almost every case, his own analysis of Qurʾanic data and his own reflections on the intent of the Qurʾan are determinative.

We find a clue to this striking absence of hadith in his 1970 critique of various modernist strategies for reform. In the article, Rahman is especially critical of modernists attempting to promote "reform through tradition" because "by appeal to tradition ... one is strengthening traditionalism itself" (Rahman 1970, 325). In practical application, then, and in spite of his sophisticated efforts to defend the value of hadith as a normative source, Rahman's approach privileges the Qurʾan in ways that by now should seem familiar. The effect in relation to the hadith literature is to reduce it, at best, to a supporting role in helping to illuminate how the Qurʾan might be applied. But in concrete cases he subordinates the authority of technical hadith to the Qurʾan, to human reason, to the *sīra*, and arguably even to *fiqh*.

Conclusion

The more radical attempts to rethink the authority of hadith described here have had little apparent lasting impact or institutional expression. Qurʾan-only ideas have tended to have a short shelf-life, diminishing quickly after their main protagonists are gone. This is most obvious in Egypt, where neither Ṣidqī nor Abū Rayya left much of a trace except by way of refutations and where later expressions of Qurʾan-only ideas have met with fierce resistance. Most traces of the early Ahl-i-Qurʾān disappeared completely, and while Parwēz's Idāra-i Ṭulūʿ-i Islām continues to exist in Pakistan, it has limited reach and impact. Fazlur Rahman's approach has had more lasting significance, especially in Indonesia and in Turkey, where his ideas have exerted significant influence on hadith studies via Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity. The chief architects of the Diyanet hadith project, including Mehmet Görmez, were products of an approach to hadith studies, the so-called Ankara Okulu, which has been characterized by sympathy for Rahman's method. Muslim feminists, especially in the West, have also often embraced skeptical approaches to hadith. Apart from such notable exceptions, reformist ideas continue to have little impact on how hadith is studied or taught in many places in the Islamic world where the approaches described in Chapter 15 continue to dominate.

However, these movements and thinkers should also not be dismissed as insignificant, since they raise problems that are of much wider import than the apparent limited success of Qurʾan-only ideas would seem to indicate. While full-blown anti-hadith ideas have been articulated by isolated thinkers and have seldom developed enduring institutional structures or a wide popular following, especially when compared with the resources and institutions of global Salafism, they point to a broader tendency in modern Islamic thought to elevate the Qurʾan over the hadith, to approach the hadith as a difficulty to be overcome, and to tame its use and interpretation in the face of the powerful logic of strict traditionalism.

Notes

1 The Diyanet itself quickly distanced itself from the hype and Görmez insisted that there was nothing revolutionary about the project (World Bulletin 2008).

2 In the critical sphere of family law reform, for example, reformists' reassessments of laws of marriage, divorce, and inheritance have largely worked within the boundaries of *fiqh* rather than pushing behind it to reassess data from hadith. As we will see in the case of Fazlur Rahman, when critiquing *fiqh* precedents reformers have most often taken the Qurʾan as the sole anchor point for reassessment (Anderson 2013; Brown 2016).

3 On the evolution of post-partition Ahl-i Ḥadīth groups in Pakistan toward jihadism, see Abou Zahab (2013).

4 ʿAligarh aimed to educate an entirely new generation of Muslims prepared to take their place in the modern world. In practical terms what this would mean was a generation equipped for employment by the British, an irony that ʿAligarh's critics saw clearly enough. But although Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's reforming vision was thoroughly anglophilic and thoroughly Westernizing, there is no question of his sincerity and seriousness about reconciling this Westernizing reform project with a reformed Islam. Although ʿAligarh never lived up to his vision, Sayyid Aḥmad was convinced that Islam, properly understood, was entirely rational and presented no barrier to Muslims adapting to the norms of the modern world.

5 The bizarre case of Rashad Khalifa nicely illustrates the point. Khalifa, an Egyptian émigré to the United States, began arguing the perfection of the Qurʾan based on numerological proofs in the mid-1970s. By 1982, he had entirely rejected hadith and was articulating full-blown Qurʾanist ideas. In 1988, he declared himself a messenger of God to the New World, placing himself alongside Muhammad and Abraham. Khalifa was murdered in his Tuscon mosque in 1990 (Brown 2018, 333–335).

6 The son of a Deobandi religious scholar, Fazlur Rahman earned his DPhil under Simon Van den Berger and Hamilton Gibb at Oxford, completing his doctoral thesis on Ibn Sīnā's *Psychology* and soon thereafter publishing *Prophecy in Islam* (1958), a critical study the conception of prophecy in Ibn Sīnā and al-Farābī. In 1958, Wilfred Cantwell Smith recruited him to the faculty of the newly established Institute for Islamic Studies at McGill University, where he taught until his return to Pakistan in 1961. He left Pakistan in 1968, taught for one year at UCLA, and in 1969 took a position as Professor of Islamic Thought at the University of Chicago, a position he held until his death in 1988. Abbas (2017) offers a useful survey of Rahman's career.

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CHAPTER 17

Gender

Adis Duderija

Preliminary Remarks on Gender-Related Hadith

Many contemporary Muslim scholars have highlighted the androcentric and, at times, misogynistic nature of many hadith reports and their role in the construction of gender non-egalitarian cosmologies in the Islamic interpretative tradition (Ali 2010; Lamrabet 2018; Duderija 2011). Examples of such traditions, cited by Aslan (2013, 42), include:

> If I were to command you to bow down before any power other than God, I would order you to bow down to your husbands.
>
> A woman ought to smile when her husband enters the house; when he leaves she should be silent. If she finds sustenance she may eat; if she finds none, she should be silent.
>
> All eyes commit *zināʾ* (extramarital sexual relations). If a woman puts on perfume and goes to the places visited by men, she commits *zināʾ*.
>
> A straw carpet is more useful than a woman who cannot bear children.

Some contemporary Muslim scholars (Kodir 2007; Shaikh 2004; Duderija 2011, 2015a,b) have argued that the hadith can also be read and interpreted in gender-just ways if approached from certain methodological and hermeneutical vantage points. This chapter describes the hermeneutical approaches employed in this kind of scholarship.

The hadith literature, as a whole, presents a picture of the Prophet as issuing orders or advising the contemporary Muslim community on a vast number of issues concerning Islamic dogma, law, theology, ethics, and morality, even to the extent of laying down rules concerning the most private spheres of an individual's life. These include rules

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about the status and roles of men and women in both the private and the public spheres that were incorporated into Islamic law, ethics, general sociocultural norms, and etiquette (Mahallati 2010). With the "traditionalization" of Islamic thought and "hadithification of Sunna" (Duderija 2015a), the textual indicants (*adilla*) on gender issues in the form of hadith became very important in shaping the views of Muslim scholars on issues pertaining to Islamic law, legal theory, ethics and, to a lesser extent, theology. In describing efforts of progressive Muslim scholars to produce non-patriarchal interpretations of the Islamic tradition I define gender justice as "the urgent need progressive Muslims scholars see in developing a legal [and ethical] system grounded in Islamic cosmology which is ever responsive to the contextually sensitive social realities in which Muslim women (and men) find themselves so that gender-based inequalities are not structurally disadvantageous to any of the sexes. Gender justice is therefore predicated on the idea that ethical values such as equality and fairness are non-gender hierarchical and ethically objectivist in nature, but can have at times significantly contextually dependent meanings based on prevalent social, economic, and political webs of relations affecting power distributions. Thus, they should be open to interpretation accordingly" (Duderija 2017, 148)

This definition emphasizes the importance of open-ended, context-driven, and rationalist approaches to Islamic theology and ethics when developing gender-just interpretations of Islam. As we shall see below, a number of contemporary approaches to the interpretation of the hadith use these and other principles as a lens through which gender-related hadith are interpreted to accord with the above definition of gender justice.

Rationalist Islamic Theology and Ontology

Neoclassical approaches to the interpretation of gender-related hadith, that is those approaches to the Islamic tradition which are hermeneutically restricted by and operate within the interpretational matrixes that constitute what is commonly referred to as classical Islam, are based on a non-rationalist and heavily textualist hermeneutic, and such approaches have yielded patriarchal interpretations of Islam (Duderija 2011). One of the assumptions that guides neoclassical approaches to gender issues in Islam is the idea that *only* males are capable of reason-based discourse and the forming of sound judgment (*ra'y/hazm*) and that women have either defective, incomplete, or non-existent rational capacities (Duderija 2016). Geissinger (2015, 150), writing on the gendered nature of exegetical authority in premodern Islam, notes that "the mythological, social, legal and medical discourses prevalent in the formative period typically present free Muslim males as the human beings who as a group are closest to actualizing human intellectual, spiritual and physical potential, while femaleness is equated with being innately flawed." Similarly, Anwar argues that women and femininity are considered to embody "every kind of 'less' in quality: less autonomy, less rationality, less agency, and less independence" (2006, 133). Many of these ideas about such a supposed nature of women/femininity are derived from hadith-based literature (Mernissi 1991; Abou el Fadl 2001; Duderija 2011; Tuksal 2013).

Another theme that features prominently in discussions pertaining to the nature of gender in neoclassical Islam is the assertion of male ontological superiority over women. Such a view is defended on the basis of an interpretation of the Islamic creation story that is almost entirely based on hadith. This interpretation of the Islamic creation story views only Adam, in his capacity as a *man*, as symbol of primordial humanity and representative of the collective and unchanging attributes and qualities of all men for all times. Adam's existence is also interpreted as original and non-derivative since he was created first and *ex nihilo* while his female partner, Eve, who represents the collective and unchanging attributes and qualities of all women, was merely imitative and derivative. Hence, Adam's creation is ontologically prior to that of Eve. Furthermore, neoclassical approaches to interpretation of gender-related hadith paint the picture of Adam as a prophet who was seduced by Eve in committing the original sin and who, unlike Eve, is strongly associated with spirituality and obedience to God (Hassan 2001; Anwar 2006).

Hassan, a pioneer in Islamic feminist theology, has identified three foundational theological assumptions behind men's supposed ontological superiority over women in neoclassical Islam that again relies heavily on hadith literature:

> (1) that God's primary creation is man, not woman, since woman is believed to have been created from man's rib, hence, women are derivative and secondary ontologically; (2) that woman, not man, was the primary agent of what is generally referred to as "Man's Fall" or man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, hence, "all daughters of Eve" are to be regarded with hatred, suspicion, and contempt; and (3) that woman was created not only from man but also for man, which makes her existence merely instrumental and not fundamental. (2001, 60)

Jalajel, in turn, demonstrated how this ontological inequality argument has translated itself into misogynistic discussions about women that go well beyond matters pertaining to religion per se but have strong ontological tones and are couched in form of opinions that view *only* men as honorable, complete, inherently worthy, and non-deficient (2013, 148–161).

Eshkevari (2013, 192), echoing Hassan, has identified three salient ontological-cum-epistemological assumptions on which the idea of male authority (*qiwāma*) and guardianship (*wilāya*) over women in Islam is premised:

i. The idea that men were ontologically superior to women and that women either have an evil nature or engender evil and hence must be controlled. This ontological superiority is justified on the basis of men's supposed higher intelligence and rationality, women's potent sexuality and its ability to corrupt men, as well as women's "polluting" body as a function of their reproductive biology.
ii. The argument that the patriarchal family serves as the most essential element of society without which the society cannot continue to exist.
iii. The Aristotelian concept of justice.

Eshkevari argues that these assumptions have been incorporated and subsequently canonized into traditional Islamic law in the form of practices or laws enshrining men's *qiwāma* and *wilāya* over women as well as others (Eshkevari 2013, 192–193). In this context, he states:

> These epistemological assumptions, shaped and consolidated over several millennia, became the basis of an authoritarian ethical and legal system that is premised on the notion that, if women fail to obey men in the family and society, justice will be compromised, as both family and social order will disintegrate. (Eshkevari 2013, 193)

Eshkevari (2013) argues that the above assumptions regarding the sexes, primarily expressed in the form of hadith (Mernissi 1991; Abou el Fadl 2001; Tuksal 2013; Duderija 2011), do not have a strong foundation in the Qurʾan and sunna. He also forms the view that these beliefs about the sexes had a significant role in determining gender relations in neoclassical Islam and that they were an outcome of patriarchal historical legacies which ought to be changed or interpreted differently in the interest of women as well as the well-being of society. An alternative set of ontological assumptions is necessary to achieve this. The two most relevant alternative assumptions to our discussion, here formulated by Eshkevari, are as follows:

1. *Men and women enjoy ontological equality*. In this context, he asserts that there is no "sound argument or textual proof" (Eskhevari 2013, 196) that would question this assumption. He continues to argue that, in fact, in Islam there is ample evidence to support this assumption, and he identifies a number of Qurʾanic verses as constituting such evidence (4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 31:28; 39:6). He forms the view that the Qurʾanic ontology, does not recognize any secondary human characteristics as a basis for discrimination and that the only things that matter from the perspective of "religion" are righteousness (*taqwā*) and righteous action (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*).
2. *Women are not inherently weak in reason or ruled by their emotion* (Eshkevari 2013, 193–194).

In this regard, Eshkevari forms the view that belief to the contrary is a historical construct and the product of a particular patriarchal mindset that "influenced the religious sources" and was "attributed to the Prophet or other religious personalities" in form of the hadith (Eshkevari 2013, 194). He also adds that differences in biology and genes cannot act as the basis for differences in rights between the two sexes.

Moreover, rationalist approaches to Islamic theology (and ethics) that are being revived and further developed by progressive Muslim scholars (Al-Attar 2010, 2017; Duderija 2011, 2017) for whom rationality is the very purpose of revelation also reject the views I have outlined pertaining to the nature of women on the grounds that they are repulsive to sound human reason and objective experience (Lamrabet 2018; Barazangi 2004).

Therefore, the alternative assumptions and arguments presented by scholars like Eshkevari, which are representative of rationalist approaches to Islamic theology, can be used as ontological, theological, and methodological mechanisms to question and ultimately reject the normative nature of misogynist and patriarchal hadith that have been the lynchpins of neoclassical approaches to gender issues in Islam and to develop gender-just interpretations of these hadith instead.

The Conceptual, Hermeneutical, and Methodological Distinction Between Sunna and Hadith

A number of modernist scholars have made conceptual, hermeneutical, and methodological distinctions between the concept of sunna and hadith that go beyond those that existed, especially during the formative period of Islam (Duderija 2015b, 211–232). I have elsewhere termed these approaches "hadith-independent" approaches to sunna (Duderija 2015a). These modernist scholars include Javed Ghamidi (b. 1951), a strong critic of traditional Pakistani religious thought; Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), one of the most prominent modernist scholars of the twentieth century; and Muhammad Shahrur (b. 1938), a Syrian intellectual. In what follows, I briefly examine their concepts of sunna and how these can be employed in developing gender-just interpretations or approaches to hadith.

Ghamidi has developed a very specific and systematic theory pertaining to the definition of *sunna* that is both epistemologically and methodologically independent of hadith. Ghamidi equates the concept of *sunna* with that of *millet Ibrahīm*, by which he refers to the religious traditions of the faith of Prophet Abraham, who in the Qurʾan is described as a *ḥanīf,* a person who follows true monotheism. The Prophet Muhammad revived, reformed, and added to these Abrahamic traditions. Furthermore, he argues that these religious practices have reached us through *in actu* (bodily perpetuations of numerous individuals) transmission of knowledge and not written or oral sources, such as the *hadith*. Therefore, the *sunna's* epistemological value is same as that of the Qurʾan, and much higher than that of hadith narrations, few of which, if any, Ghamidi considers as having such epistemological value. This concept of *sunna* is understood as being based on perpetuation of religious practices only through *ijmāʿ* of the Prophet's companions and successors, by means of what Ghamidi refers to as *ʾamali tawātur* (Duderija 2015b, 213–214).

For Ghamidi (n.d., 18–19, 61–64) only sunna, not the hadith, can serve as an independent source of legal authority and, moreover, its scope of authority is to be restricted to religious practices only. The hadith is not an *independent* source of legal authority in Islam, and its content can be accepted only if it is in accordance with several criteria that include those that operate in classical hadith sciences but with important modifications. For example, Ghamidi's approach rejects the widely established theory of dual revelation, whereby sunna derived from authentic hadith reports is a form of unrecited revelation (*waḥy ghayr al-maṭlū*) (Ibn Ḥazm n.d, 87), or the legal maxim from classical Islam that "the *sunna* rules over the Qurʾan (*qāḍiya ʿalā al-kitāb*) and the Qurʾan does not rule over the *sunna*" (Al-Baghdādī 1938, 14), and that the Book [Qurʾan] [often] takes form in general sentences whose preciseness the hadith specifies (*yakshifuhā*) and with succinctness (*wa-ʾkhtiār*) whose details are indicated (*tadullu*) by the sunna (i.e. *al-kitāb* (Qurʾan) *yaʾtī biʾl-jumal yakshifuhā al-ḥadīth wa-ʾkhtiār tadullu ʿalayhī al-Sunna*) (Ibn Qutayba 1972, 87). Instead, he argues that the Qurʾan's self-description as the *mizān* ("Scale of Truth") and *furqān* is not dependent on the (hadith-based) sunna *for* its explanation, including for the purposes of its specification. On the contrary, the *hadith* need to be interpreted in the light of the Qurʾan and cannot change or modify the Qurʾan in any way.

For Rahman, sunna is a dynamic concept that historically underwent changes from being first associated with general ethico-behavioral norms of the Prophet and, over time, becoming coextensive and in a dialectic relationship with a conception of the *ijmāʿ* of the Muslim community that was inclusive of *ijtihād*. He argues that this concept of sunna is not to be conflated with what is contained in the classical "ḥadīth-fiqhi" literature. For Rahman, the neoclassical approaches to hadith and sunna represent the "interpreted spirit of the Prophetic teaching" and a total fixation of formerly dynamic living sunna that crystallized as a result of the *ijtihād-ijmāʿ* process (Rahman 2000, 74–75; see also Chapter 16).

Shahrur contextualizes the concept of sunna even further and argues that the sunna of the Prophet is specific and circumstantial in nature based on the following five principles:

i. The Prophet's decisions were conditioned by his historical context.
ii. The Prophet's *ijtihād* did not need divine revelation to restrict what was permitted.
iii. The Prophet's restrictions of unrestricted permissions were subject to constant correction as a result of changes in circumstances in his own life.
iv. The results of the Prophet's *ijtihād*, unlike revelation, were not infallible.
v. The Prophet's *ijtihād*, regardless of whether it was Prophetic or non-Prophetic, does not constitute Islamic legislation. (Shahrur 2009, 71–115)

For Shahrur, hadith-based sunna in classical Islamic scholarship inappropriately became practically the first source of legislation, in effect, displacing the Qurʾan. Hence it must be rethought along the lines described above. The concepts of hadith and sunna, as he defines them, are clearly not independent or supplementary sources of legal authority in Islam per se. Their role in Qurʾanic interpretation, including that of the Prophet's *ijtihād*, especially in the realm of law, is non-binding because they are contextually contingent.

As I noted above, the majority of gender-related hadith are misogynistic and/or patriarchal in nature and neoclassical approaches have conceptually equated sunna and hadith (Duderija 2015a), introducing hadith-independent concepts of sunna (as in case of Ghamidi and Rahman) or developing a historically contingent or dynamic conceptualization of sunna itself (as in the case of Shahrur and Rahman) allows us to evaluate misogynist hadith with conceptual, hermeneutical, and methodological tools which go beyond the neoclassical *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* and which free us from the association of such hadith with the concept of sunna itself or which consider these hadith as remnants of a patriarchal cultural context that now should be deemed contrary to the principles underpinning gender justice.

Women-Inclusive Authorization of Hadith and a Non-patriarchal Theology of Sunna

A number of scholars have argued that the process of interpreting hadith, and the portrayal of women in hadith in very early Islam, has evolved from being at least partially inclusive and emancipatory to that of being exclusive and patriarchal at the time of the consolidation of classical approaches (Aslan 2013; Alwani 2013; Lamrabet 2018; Barazangi 2004). This evolution resulted in an almost complete exclusion of women's perspectives and experiences from knowledge formation of various bodies of knowledge, including that of the *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. For example, Aslan asserts that

> male interpreters' misapplication of laws relegated women to a marginal role in society and shut them out of public life. But women were not merely shut out; further theological arguments made women's return to authoritative knowledge impossible. This theological discrimination was impossible to support on the basis of the Qurʾān. Numerous ḥadīths, however, not only emphasized the danger posed by women, but also disqualified them by attributing to them degrading and inferior characteristic. (2013, 41)

Similarly, Alwani states that

> since the beginning of the Islamic community in the earliest decades of the seventh century, women have taken a prominent role in the preservation and cultivation of the main sources of Islamic knowledge, i.e. the Qurʾān and Sunna. The legacy of women's scholarly activism was later suppressed and weakened, but never entirely extinguished. (2013, 45)

Alwani further laments that the involvement of women in hadith scholarship has over time waned while simultaneously the invocation of hadith literature became increasingly used "to suppress the role, rights, and status of women" (Alwani 2013, 53). This lack of women's representation and women's voices in classical Islamic scholarship in general and hadith sciences in particular detrimentally and "deeply affected women's legal rights" (Alwani 2013, 55).

More generally, Ragab (2010) has demonstrated how the epistemic authority discursively attributed to women in neoclassical approaches to Islam is merely circumstantial rather than essential as in the case of men. Furthermore, Ragab shows how classical Muslim male scholars adopted a skeptical stance toward the epistemic authority of women. This further contributed to the exclusion of women's perspectives and insights for the purposes of knowledge production in classical Islam, and this exclusion continues in neoclassical approaches.

More specifically, Barazangi laments the fact that the process of canonization of hadith was not informed by women's perspectives in the context of developing Islamic jurisprudence and what she terms the theology of sunna. In her words,

> As canonizing ḥadīth authority without corroborating it by the Qurʾān dominated the process of developing Islamic jurisprudence, the absence of Muslim women left the field open for male elites to further marginalise women's perspectives. (2016, 161)

Barazangi makes a methodological distinction between authenticating and validating hadith. She emphasizes the need to distinguish hadith *authentication*, reflected in classical *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, from hadith *authorization*, and she argues that any process of rereading and rethinking the theology of sunna ought to make such a methodological distinction regardless of whether or not the authentication process was accepted

(Barazangi 2016, 27). She adds further that traditional approaches to hadith authenticity have in actual fact conflated the processes of authentication with that of authorization with very detrimental consequences for women's rights (ibid.). In that respect Barazangi suggests that the process of authorization of hadith ought to be subjected to women's insights, experiences, and perspectives in order to arrive at the authentic non-patriarchal theology of sunna.

As such, Barazangi argues that Muslim women have a special role in the process of rethinking the hadith and developing a new non-patriarchal theology of sunna because they have been excluded from the production of Islamic knowledge in general and the construction of theology of sunna and Islamic legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) in particular (Barazangi 2016, 18, 27, 161). In this respect Barazangi is adamant that from a "proper" Islamic perspective, every Muslim, regardless of gender, has the autonomy and the right to exercise leadership in investigating the *authority* of reported hadith (Barazangi 2016, 191).

Therefore, the interpretational principles mentioned in this section, namely women-inclusive authorization of hadith, the bringing of women's epistemic authority ontologically to be on par with that of men, and the need to develop non-patriarchal theology of sunna can be used as important tools in developing gender-just interpretations of the relevant hadith literature.

Application of Insights from Contemporary Epistemology in Evaluating *ᶜUlūm al-Ḥadīth*

The question of hadith authenticity and evaluation of its veracity in neoclassical approaches to Islam did have an epistemological element when applied by scholars of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūliyyūn*) whose methodology was distinct to that of the hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) (Zysow 2013). However, the field of hadith interpretation and its relationship with sunna became associated primarily with, and dominated by, the methodologies of *muḥaddithūn*, which did not encompass this epistemological approach (Duderija 2015a). Hence, the insights of classical *uṣūliyyūn* approaches to hadith authenticity and evaluation remain on the margins. Neoclassical approaches to interpretation of Qurʾan, sunna, and hadith thus remain decidedly premodern in nature and are premised on a retrogressive view of the nature and history of time according to which authenticity and highest forms of epistemic authority are to be found in the past (Duderija 2017; Souaiaia 2008).

While neoclassical approaches are able to accommodate change and do allow for new interpretations, they do so within the confines of a premodern epistemological and hermeneutical framework. Hence, neoclassical Islamic epistemology holds firmly on to the epistemological paradigm of the classical Islamic tradition by identifying legal epistemology (which is also incorporated into its methodology) with Aristotelian syllogism (Dahlen 2003; Duderija 2017).

Scholars such as Shahrur and Abou el Fadl have vigorously critiqued this aspect of classical Islamic tradition and applied their critique to the interpretation of sunna/hadith. For example, Shahrur (2009), whose views on the concept of sunna were discussed in the second section of this chapter, asserts that

> we have demonstrated that is it necessary to place sunna into the epistemological, cultural and political context of seventh century Arabia. We showed that we, living in the twenty-first century, must be critical of the sunna's contingent and context-bound nature as well as of formulations and definitions of sunna that Islamic fiqh invented during the seventh to the ninth centuries. (Shahrur 2009, 108)

Coupled with his belief in the need to interpret the Qurʾan in the light of the modern episteme, Shahrur's concept of sunna clearly presents a critique of its epistemological status in neoclassical approaches to sunna/hadith and a departure from an entirely past-oriented and justified epistemology of the classical Islamic epistemology (Dahlen 2003). Shahrur's approach, instead, endorses epistemic progressivism (Duderija 2017).

As I have already noted above, another progressive Muslim scholar who has recognized the need for an "updating" of neoclassical Islamic epistemology with specific reference to hadith is Abou el Fadl. Abou el Fadl critiques especially the puritan-Salafi approach to Islamic epistemology on the basis of its lack of dynamism, its lack of epistemological openness, and its immodest epistemological claim to objective, unmediated access to God's will (2001, 2014). One element of Abou el Fadl's epistemological critique concerns the hadith epistemology, not just of puritan Salafis, but of neoclassical approaches to Islam in general. In the light of contemporary epistemology, he argues, such epistemological claims become largely untenable:

> The mechanical and nearly mathematical methodology that Ahl al-ḥadīth apply to the ḥadīth and Sunna in light of our modern epistemological knowledge about reality, meaning, fiction, archetypes, symbolism, phenomenology, and especially history is untenable… In fact the oral reports that are commonly titled the books of ḥadīth often construct and narrate a performance – a performance that preserves a memory of the prophet in some form but that also documents the epistemological attitude of early Muslim generations. (Abou el Fadl 2014, 317)

While he still sees value in preserving and studying this body of knowledge for its historical, theological, ethical, and moral insights, this process of study ought to be achieved by means of an "epistemological arsenal that is available to us today – not through the epistemological tools that existed more than ten centuries ago" (Abou el Fadl 2014, 318). Abou el Fadl also forms the view that the traditional Islamic sciences approached this body of knowledge too literally:

> the books of ḥadīth are replete with dramatized performances that are deeply embedded in the epistemological and phenomenological dialectics of the first centuries of Islam and therefore are not to be understood as strictly factual. (Abou el Fadl 2014, 318)

Abou el Fadl, therefore, strongly critiques the idea of the epistemological promise inherent in the neoclassical approaches to Islam. Importantly, like Shahrur, Abou el Fadl argues that a regressive view of epistemology is also at odds with the Qurʾanic approach to epistemology that is embedded in neoclassical approaches. Instead, Abou el Fadl advocates a dynamic and progressive view of human epistemology and the need for Muslims and the Islamic tradition to seriously negotiate the moral progress and epistemological growth which was brought about by modern historical experiences resulting in what he calls an "epistemological overlapping consensus." This epistemological overlapping consensus is to be considered a product of both Muslims and non-Muslims and their respective civilizations (Abou el Fadl 2014, 377). In this context, Abou el Fadl writes,

> Muslims have to be intimately connected with all moral progress and epistemological growth, learning from and, in turn, influencing it. As the Qurʾān emphasizes, the imperative confronting Muslims is to understand the moral and ethical and epistemological overlapping consensus that exists in this globalized world, critique it, and improve on it – grow with it, and seek to establish a new epistemological, moral and ethical realization. Along this path and process, the Qurʾān provides moral and ethical directives as well as epistemological illustrations. (Abou el Fadl 2014, 388)

One specific example of an epistemological critique of hadith literature found in Abou el Fadl's work is his recourse to conceptions of "multiple authorship" and "authorial enterprise." According to Abou el Fadl, the term "authorial enterprise" refers to the process of determining to what extent the Prophet's role in the historical transmission of *any* hadith report can safely be established. In this context, he argues that when evaluating reports attributed to the Prophet, we need to keep in mind that these reports are a result of what a number of companions have "seen/heard, recollected, selected, transmitted and authenticated in a non-objective medium." Hence they have multiple author, and a hadith narration can viewed as the product of several authors and various collateral influences, each impacting upon both the structure and the meaning of the report. Therefore, in each report, the personality of the transmitter is indelibly imprinted, a process he terms "authorial enterprise" (Abou el Fadl 2001, 88). He further argues that because of this characteristic of the hadith, "it is virtually impossible to attribute any specific report to a particular person in history, whether the Prophet or any of the early generations of Muslims" (Abou el Fadl 2014, 316–317). Rather, these reports, which might retain kernels of truth from the Prophet, are more indicative of the memory of the early generations of Muslims and the contesting ideological currents that were prevalent at the time (ibid.).

The critique of premodern epistemology embedded in neoclassical approaches to hadith and the case for embracing epistemological progressivism as argued by scholars such as Shahrur and Abou el Fadl that were outlined above provides important avenues for rethinking the place of hadith in Islamic epistemology in general and can be used for developing gender-just interpretation of hadith literature in particular since these critiques radically question the epistemological promise of neoclassical approaches to the hadith as representative of the normative teachings of sunna that have yielded patriarchal interpretations of Islam.

Rationalist Islamic Ethics and the Ethical Filtering of Hadith

Neoclassical approaches to Islamic ethics are premised on ethical voluntarism that ties ethics to a heavily textualist Qurʾan–hadith hermeneutic (Duderija 2011, 2017; Al-Attar 2010, 2017). On the one hand, these approaches have resulted in patriarchal interpretations of Islam in general and gender-related hadith in particular (Duderija 2011). Rationalist approaches to Islamic ethics, on the other hand, can yield gender-just interpretations of hadith and Islamic tradition in general. Furthermore, for a number of reasons, in neoclassical Islam there is a de facto separation of Islamic ethics and morality from Islamic law. He forms the view that this separation of law from ethics in classical Islam in the context of contemporary epistemological cosmopolitanism provides an enormous challenge for contemporary Islamic thought, including those issues pertaining to gender which needs to be addressed urgently (Abou el Fadl 2014).

In fact, Abou el Fadl has applied such ethical filtering to misogynist hadith by appealing to an ethical regulatory mechanism relating to the normative effect of hadith reports. According to this rule, reports having "widespread moral, legal, or social implications" must be of the highest rank of authority and "require [the] heaviest burden of proof" (Abou el Fadl 2001, 89). When approached with certain morally repugnant but "sound" hadith (from the perspective of classical hadith sciences) that have wide-ranging implications for society, such as those pertaining to gender relations, the proof must be the highest otherwise the hadith will not be considered as normative. Lastly, when dealing with morally offensive (i.e. misogynist) hadith, Abou el Fadl introduces the concept of a "conscientious pause," which is an ethical faith-based objection to textual evidence that rejects their normative value on the basis of their moral repugnance (Abou el Fadl 2001, 93).

He utilizes these hermeneutical principles to reject the normative nature of these misogynistic hadith (Abou el Fadl 2001). Based upon these principles Abou el Fadl also discards all hadith narrations advocating segregation or seclusion of women, all narrations linking women to the concept of *fitna* (i.e. sociomoral chaos), and hadith reports advocating the "removal" of women from public spaces or prohibiting gender mixing (Abou el Fadl 2001, 426–535). He asserts of them and of his own position, that

> quite aside from the issues of technical, chain of transmission-focused authenticity of these traditions, they are indicative of a dynamic and highly negotiative process. In fact I believe that as to the overwhelming majority of traditions dealing with the role of women in society, the role of the Prophet in the authorial enterprise is minimal ... [And] that there were too many patriarchal vested interests circulating, advocating and embellishing these types of reports. (Abou el Fadl 2001, 246–247)

Such application of rationalist ethics can advance gender-just approaches to hadith literature.

Contextualist Approaches to Hadith Interpretation Based on Traditional *ᶜIlm Asbāb al-Wurūd*

Neoclassical approaches to the interpretation of gender-related hadith are heavily textualist and yield gender-unjust interpretations. Contextualist approaches to the same have the potential to engender gender-just interpretations (Duderija 2011). In this section I describe the scholarship of an Indonesian progressive Muslim scholar

Faqihuddin Abul Kodir, one of the pioneers of gender-just approaches to the interpretation of hadith, who uses a contextualist method with roots in classical *ʿilm Asbāb al-Wurūd* to document the historical circumstances behind the hadith (Al-Suyūṭī 1988).

Kodir's (2007) foundational premise is that classical hadith sciences contain useful mechanisms for a contextualist reading of hadith on the basis of which gender-just interpretations can be developed. For Kodir, the contextualist interpretation of hadith entails a critical reading of the hadith by means of *ijtihād* of the text (*matn*) of the hadith conceived of as a linguistic text that functions within a certain cultural environment (Kodir 2007).

For Kodir, hadith texts are historical records. As such, they are intimately connected to the social dynamics of Arab society at the time of the Prophet. Consequently, in light of the fundamentally contextual character of the hadith, meaning inscribed in the literal language of the text is not to be regarded as definitive and need not be applied in an unconditional manner. In essence, then, as social contexts change, the essential purpose of a hadith should be emphasized rather than its literal meaning (Kodir 2007, 19–20). If hadith narrations are approached in this way, the meanings of hadith can yield a number of different interpretations, some of which are commensurable with gender-just interpretations/meanings (Kodir 2013, 176).

Adopting this contextualist approach, Kodir (2007, 1–25; cf. 2013) argues that the proper interpretation of hadith is obtained by evaluating narrations with respect to the original sociopolitical contexts in which they were embedded and by inquiring into the circumstance behind the emergence of hadith, as per *ʿilm asbāb al-wurūd*. This is especially so in relation to hadith pertaining to gender issues. In this context, Kodir (2007, 25) states that

> the ḥadīth regarding relations between men and women are windows into a particular socio-cultural reality. These texts must therefore be understood to be based on the logic of the historical role they played in furthering justice and the general welfare of specific communities.

The contextualist approach to hadith developed by Kodir assists in developing gender-just interpretations of the relevant hadith by examining the content of the relevant hadith through the prism of the social dynamics of the revelatory and early Muslim community society, its values and gender-related norms and mores, which they largely reflect (Duderija 2016), rather than considering them decontextually and as binding upon all generations of Muslims.

Maqāṣid-Based Approaches to Hadith

Maqāṣid al-sharīʿa "is a system of values that could contribute to a desired and sound application of the *shariʿah*" (Auda 2011, 194). This concept has been employed as a legal hermeneutical tool in premodern Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) at least since the third century AH (Nyazee 2000, 162–175). It is based on the idea that Islamic law is purposive in nature, that is, the law serves particular purposes, such as promoting people's benefit and welfare and protecting them from harm, that are either explicitly present in or can be derived from the sources of Islamic law, namely, the Qurʾan and the sunna (Nyazee 2000, 162–175). Neoclassical approaches to *maqāṣid*, however, are embedded in a heavily textualist hermeneutic which, when coupled with non-rationalist approaches to Islamic theology and ethics, significantly curbed the potential of the *maqāṣid*-based approaches to engender gender-just interpretation of the Islamic tradition in general and hadith in particular (Duderija 2011, 2014). Kamali (2011, 37–52), for example, laments the fact that the neoclassical approaches to Qurʾan, sunna, and Islamic jurisprudence and ethics pertaining to women and family law were not sufficiently informed by and grounded in the *maqāṣid*-based approach to Islamic law, which, in itself, has been methodologically undertheorized and marginalized in the overall Islamic legal theory.

Kodir is one of the few scholars who applies a *maqāṣid*-based approach to gender-based hadith texts that extends beyond the hermeneutical confines of neoclassical approaches to *maqāṣid*. In addition to his contextual approach (outlined in the previous section), Kodir argues that hadith pertaining to gender issues should be read in accordance with their underlying objectives. These objectives take the form of ethico-religious values such as justice, equality, and mercy, understood and conceptualized in ethically objectivist terms. In this context, Kodir asserts that in respect to gender issues, references to the hadith must be approached from the perspective of the interpreter being aware of the fundamental values the Prophet Muhammad's message entailed, including the oneness of Allah, the equality of all human beings (rich or poor, men or women), justice, and mercy (Kodir 2007, xxi). The rational principles of justice and equality in particular play a prominent role in this type of reasoning and interpretation of hadith (Kodir 2013, 171). Kodir (2007, 23) laments that this approach to interpretation of hadith is lacking today, as evident from the following quote:

> Contemporary interpretations of many [of these] ḥadīth continue to engender inequality and unfairness in the relationship between men and women. This inequality, moreover, violates the most fundamental principles of the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth.

Kodir, therefore, acknowledges the long history of androcentric interpretation of hadith that in many contexts continues in the present day but urges for a much more "gender sensitive" approach that takes into account women's needs and experiences. In this context, he asserts,

> I believe that we need to re-examine the ḥadīth in this gender sensitive fashion so as to restore the teachings of Islam to their original truth in which women are accorded respect and compassion. Though we often hear ulama and other scholars asserting that Islam has never discriminated against women, that Islam treats women and men equally, we also constantly hear and witness the opposite. In fact, Islamic preachers commonly use the very ḥadīth I have quoted in the preceding chapters as a justification for restricting women's rights and treating them as subordinate second class citizens. They argue that this inequality and necessary subservience has been ordained by God. (Kodir 2007, 162)

Thus, Kodir applies a novel "interpretive paradigm" to the hadith that seeks to establish gender relations that are in accordance with the contemporary conceptualizations of gender justice which are also the most truthful reflections of the fundamental values and teachings of Islam itself (Kodir 2007, xix).

Duderija (2014) has also argued that the development of an interpretational approach to hadith which hermeneutically privileges ethico-religious values and purposive (*maqāṣid*) approaches, in addition to that of contextualism and recourse to rationalist Islamic theology and ethics, has a potential to support a gender-just interpretation of hadith /Islam. This approach is premised on hermeneutical recognition of moral trajectories in some gender-related hadith, such as:

> The best of you are those who behave best to their wives
>
> The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is
>
> Women are but sisters (or twin halves) of Men. (Duderija 2014, 201)

When approached in concert with all of the above methodological and hermeneutical mechanisms discussed, such hadith narrations can be viewed as embodying gender-related *maqāṣid* that are truer to the objectives and the philosophy behind Islamic ethics and legal philosophy than those prevalent in neoclassical approaches, and they can therefore contribute to gender-just interpretation of hadith as a whole.

Conclusion

The main concern of this chapter was to provide a brief outline of the interpretational arsenal employed by feminist and progressively minded Muslim scholars in interpreting gender-relevant hadith in gender-just terms. The lynchpin of the patriarchal nature of the still dominant neoclassical approaches to the Islamic tradition are particular approaches to the hadith literature which have important social, cultural, legal, ethical, and political implications. Therefore, the emergence of feminist and progressive approaches to the canonical hadith literature described above has the potential to contribute significantly to religious delegitimization of patriarchal and misogynistic approaches to the Islamic tradition and the engendering of alternative, gender-just interpretations.

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Further Reading

Systematic approaches to gender-just interpretation of hadith are a relatively recent genre that has emerged over only the last decade and a half. Most of the literature is written in English with a few sources in French (the works of Mernissi Fatima and Lamrabet Asma), Indonesian (Abdul Kodir Faqihuddin), and Arabic (Abu Shuqqa, Jasser Auda). The following works are in my view the most relevant and important written on the subject matter from the perspective of interpretational methodology.

Duderija, Adis. 2011. *Constructing a Religiously Ideal “Believer” and “Woman” in Islam: Neo-traditional Salafi and Progressive Muslim Methods of Interpretation*. New York: Palgrave. Compares and deconstructs the interpretational assumptions of neoclassical and progressive Muslim approaches to interpretation of the Qurʾan and hadith and explains how they lead to diametrically opposing ideas on gender issues, especially on segregation, women’s dress and husband–wife dynamics.

Duderija, Adis. 2014. “Maqāṣid al-sharīʿa, Gender Non-Patriarchal Qurʾān-Sunna Hermeneutics and the Reformation of Muslim Family Law.” In *Maqasid Al Shariʿah and Contemporary Muslim Reformist Thought*, edited by A. Duderija, 193–219. New York: Palgrave. Develops a systematic four step interpretational method which can be employed to engender gender-just interpretations of hadith.

Kodir, Abdul, Faqihuddin. 2007. *Hadith and Gender Justice: Understanding the Prophetic Traditions*. Cirabon: Fahmina Institute. The most comprehensive treatment of gender-just interpretations of hadith from an interpretational methodology perspective. The first two chapters are theoretical in nature and lay out the principles according to which all gender-related hadith are to be interpreted. Subsequent chapters apply these in relation to various aspects of marital relationship, the rights of women in education and the public sphere to name but the most important few.

Mernissi, Fatima.1991. *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books. Uses largely classical hadith sciences to question the legitimacy of misogynistic hadith pertaining to the nature of women and their place in the public sphere. One of the earliest works on gender-just interpretation of the hadith literature.

Shaikh, Saʾdiyya. 2004. “Knowledge, Women and Gender in the Hadıth: A Feminist Interpretation.” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 15: 99–108. Provides both a critique of the patriarchal neoclassical understanding of highly gendered constructions of human nature, knowledge, rationality and authority as presented in al-Bukhārī’s Saḥīḥ (the chapter on “Knowledge”) as well as an alternative interpretation of the same on the basis of a feminist hermeneutic.

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Index

(Note: ʿayn, hamza and the definite article al- are ignored in alphabetization)

Aaron, 61
ab intra (inward interpretation), 267
ʿAbbādān, 268
al-ʿAbbās, 231
ʿAbbasids, 42, 62, 216, 266–268; propaganda, 225, 231; revolution, 217
Abbott, Nabia, 43, 227, 228
abbreviated traditions, 190
ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, *see* Ibn ʿAbbās
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abi Bakr ibn ʿAmr ibn Hazim, 208
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad (d. 903), 99, 103, 104
ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlī, 278
ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, 103, 267
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, 66, 225
ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), see Ibn al-Mubārak
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 146
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Thābit (d. 315/927), 231
ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, 117, 208, 235, 236
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Wahb (d. 197/813), 109, 231, 232, 353
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yūsuf, 17, 137
ʿAbd Allāh al-Jadalī, 142
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Muḥammad, 145
ʿAbd al-Bāqī, Fuʾād (d. 1967), 305–307
ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Ḥasan (d. 2007), 320
ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī (d. 1642), 298, 299, 319
ʿAbd ibn ʿAbd, *see* al-Jadalī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh
ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī (d. 415/1025), 243
ʿAbd al-Jābir ibn al-ʿAlāʾ, 215
ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705), 94
ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn Ḥabīb al-Andalusī (d. 238/853), 162
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd, 142
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, 104
ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), 29, 49, 102, 105, 120, 194, 229–231, 277; *Muṣannaf* of, 29, 96, 105, 229
ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Muttaqī (d. 1592), 298
ʿAbduh, Muhammad (d. 1905), 179, 318, 325
Abdul-Jabbar, Ghassan, ix, 6, 8, 11, 15, 38, 137
ablutions, 324
Abou el Fadl, Khaled, 336, 342–345
Abraham, *see* Ibrahīm (prophet)
abrogation, *see naskh*

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absurdities in hadith, 254
Abū al-Aḥwas, 142
Abū ʿĀṣim, 144
Abū ʿAwāna, 24, 126
Abū Bakr (caliph), 51, 67, 138, 147, 210, 224, 225, 227
Abū Bakra, 142
Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), 172, 173
Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ibn Ḥazm (d. 120/737?), 94
Abū Bishr, 235
Abū Ḍamra, 145
Abū al-Dardāʾ, 147
Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī, *see* al-Ṭayālisī
Abū Dāwūd, al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), 29, 31, 66, 76, 79, 140, 149–150, 155, 156, 162, 164, 210, 303, 307; *Sunan*, 18, 149–150, 162–164, 173, 300
Abū Ghaṭafān al-Murrī, 215
Abū Ghudda, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (d. 1997), 310
Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/772), 106, 141, 154, 214
Abū Ḥātim, 32
Abū Hurayra (companion), 140, 142, 208, 211, 215, 235, 274, 325
Abū ʿĪsā, 142, 143
Abū Isḥāq al-Ṭāliqānī, 19, 149, 150, 207
Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī, 28
Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, 212
Abū Kurayb, 234
Abū Muʿādh, 210
Abū Muṣʿab, 208
Abū Rayya, Maḥmūd (d. 1970), 200, 330, 325
Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693), 100, 104, 105
Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām, 226
Abū al-Salṭ, 21
Abū Shama al-Maqdisī (d. 665/1267), 245
Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), 162, 165
Abū Ṭāhir, 145, 146
Abū Ṭālib, 291
Abū al-Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq, 174
Abū Ṭufayl, 22–24
Abū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838), 123, 171
Abū ʿUbayda, 147, 208
Abū Yaʿlā, 19, 125, 126
Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798?), 141, 207, 214
Abū Ẓabyān, 235
Abū al-Zubayr, 22–24, 145, 146
Abū Zurʿa, 17, 18, 32, 143
Abū al-ʿAbbās Mustaghfirī, 283
Abū al-Jārūd, 284
Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 246/860), 243
Abyssinia, emigration to, 51
accretions, 51, 123, 230
accuracy in preserving hadith, 17, 27, 285
accusation of lying, 24, 277, 283
actions: divine, 242; human, 255; legal categorization of, 169, 259; Prophetic, 5, 78, 206, 223, 250, 327; weighing of, 254
activity, revelatory, 70
adab, 189, 192, 195, 198, 270
Adam (Prophet), 337
Ādam ibn Abī Iyās, 232
adaptation of hadith reports, 234
adepts, spiritual, 176
adhān, 79
adilla, 336
ʿadl, 20
admissible hadith reports, 16, 255
admonitions, divine, 61
adoption across the, 218
adultery, 144; accusation against ʿAʾisha, 117
ʿAffān, 30
affluence and hadith patronage, 178
al-Afghānī, Jamāl al-Dīn (d. 1897), 159
aḥad (sing. *āḥād;* single narrations), 27, 31, 51, 116, 119–121, 161, 173, 191, 200, 213, 216, 246, 251–254, 260, 290; epistemic value, 252
āḥādīth al-aḥkām, *see* legal hadith
aḥādīth ilāhiyya, 69
aḥādīth qudsiyya, see ḥadīth qudsī
aḥādīth rabbāniyya, 69
aḥkām al-khamsa, 205, 272
Ahl al-Bayt (household of the Prophet), 64, 283, 292
ahl al-bidʿa (innovators), 165, 241, 246, 254, 255, 271
ahl al-dhimma, 208
ahl al-ḥadīth, 27, 191, 192, 197, 244, 249, 254, 260, 266, 276, 278, 343

ahl al-qibla, 255
ahl al-raʾy, 191, 192, 200, 317
ahl al-sunna, 243, 244, 246
Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 9, 164, 178, 199, 299–300, 302, 303, 305, 318–324; influence on Qurʾanist ideas, 323; post-partition, 330
Ahl-i Qurʾān, 200, 330, 324, 325, 332
Aḥmad Barqī, 283
Aḥmad al-Dīn Amritsarī, Khwāja, 322, 323
Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *see* Ibn Ḥanbal
Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā, 17
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Harawī, 171
Aḥmad Khān, Sir Sayyid, 40, 321, 322, 327
Ahmed, Leila, 216
aḥwāl (mystical states), 266
Ahwāzī, Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd, 287
aʾimma al-sitta (six leading hadith scholars), 140
ʿAʾisha (d. 58/678), 17, 49, 67, 79, 94, 138, 196, 235; accusation of adultery against, 117
ʿAʾisha bint al-Ḥusayn al-Sulaymānī, 181, 182
akhbār, *see khabar*
akhbār al-āḥād, *see aḥad* traditions
akhbār Allāh, 70
Akhbārī movement, 282
Albānī, Nāṣir al-Dīn al- (d. 1999), 8, 35, 36, 200, 202, 214, 215, 307, 308, 320, 331
Albrektson, Bertil, 123
alcohol, prohibition of, 257
Alfiyya (of Suyuṭī), 307
ʿAlī ibn Abī Ḥamza, 284
ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, 226
ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), 42, 69, 114, 235, 282, 284, 291; companions of, 142, 225, 286; in proto- Shiʿism, 231; letters and sermons, 289; manuscripts attributed to, 284; virtues of, 290
ʿAlī ibn Ḥujr, 145
ʿAlī ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 1567), 298
ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, 285
Ali, Kecia, 217
ʿAligarh, 321, 330
Allāh, 68, 160, 244, 247, 249, 250, 253, 255, 257, 276; attributes, 172, 243, 244, 247, 257, 259, 260; book from, 276; oneness, 257
Allāhu akbar, *see takbīr*
allegorical expressions in hadith, 242, 257, 258, 260
allusions to hadith, 190
Almohads, 176
Almoravids, 176
alms tax, *see* zakat
ʿAlqama ibn Qays (d. 62/681), 100
ʿAlqama ibn Waqqāṣ, 1, 115
alterations to hadith reports, 234, 283
alwāḥ (boards or tablets), 61, 93
Alwani, Zaynab, 341
ʿamal (practice of Medina), 97, 254
al-aʿmāl bi'l-niyyāt, 2, 115
ʿamal ṣāliḥ (righteous action), 338
Aʿmash (d. 148/765), 24, 25, 28, 235
ambiguous texts, 257, 282
Āmidī, 283
al-ʿĀmilī, Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn (d. 1011/1602), 290, 292
al-ʿĀmilī, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, 289
al-ʿĀmilī, Muṣṭafā Qaṣīr, 284
Amīn (in salat), 320
ʿĀmir ibn Fuhayra, 51
ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī, 100
ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀs, 140
ʿAmr ibn Dīnār, 28, 120
ʿAmr ibn Maymūm, 66, 142
ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb (d. 736), 103
Amritsar, 322–324
Amu Darya (Oxus), 267
anachronisms in hadith, 5, 42, 277
analogy, *see qiyās*
analysis of hadith (*ḥall*, *taʿammuq*), 301, 302
Anas ibn Mālik, 67, 77, 235, 236
Anas, 145
ʿAnbar, 146
Andalus, 180, 201; hadith commentaries, 162–164, 176
Andrae, Tor, 72, 353
androcentricism and hadith, 216, 217, 335, 347
angels, 276; Angel of Death, 322; assistance of, 67; Gabriel, 60–63, 67
anger, attributed to Muhammad, 79
anglophilia, 330
animals, dead, as food, 146
Ankara Okulu, 330

Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity, 330
Anṣār, 82
Anṣārī, Mawlāna Bilāl ʿAlī, 311
Anṣārī, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 1880), 300
ant, 237
anthologies, 198
anthropomorphism, 242, 243, 253, 258, 259
anti-Christ, *see* Dajjāl
anti-hadith ideas, 330
Anwār al-tanzīl (of Bayḍāwī), 300
Anwar, Etin, 336
anxiety, attributed to Muhammad, 82
apocalypse, 283, 289
apocalypsis (Greek word), 60
apocalyptic prophecies, 42
apocalypticism, 197, 320
apologetics, 321, 323; Shiʿi, 283
apostasy: penalty for, 216
apothegms (*chreiai*), 86
apparent common link, 117
appraisal of deeds, 115, 122
ʿaqāʾid, 242, 243, 246, 259
ʿaql, 242, 249
Arab world, universities, 298
Arabia, seventh century, 44, 343
Arabic, 6, 37, 160, 178, 187, 315, 324; booklets, 200; commentaries, 350; grammar, 168; modern, 161
Aʿraj (d. c. 117/735), 101
Arbaʿīn (collection of 40 hadith): of Abū Saʿīd Nīshāpūrī, 290; of Muntajab al-Dīn Rāzī, 291; of al-Sulamī, 270
archaisms, 208
armpits, shaving, 212
Armstrong, Lyall, 83
army of leaves, 146
al-Arnāʾūṭ, Shuʿayb (d. 2016), 309
arrangement: of hadith collections, 95, 286, 287; of transmitters names, 21, 95
asānīd, *see isnād*
asbāb al-nuzūl, 76, 225
Asbāṭ ibn Naṣr, 17
ascension motifs, 68
asceticism, 254, 266, 268, 274, 285; Christian, 268; Shiʿi, 285
aṣḥāb al-aṣnāf, 140
aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth (traditionists), 244, 317
ʿashara al-mubashsharūn bi'l-janna, 66
al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 324/936), 69, 243–246, 255, 261
al-Ashʿarī, Abū Mūsā, 176, 225
al-Ashʿarī, Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 283
Ashʿarites, 172, 197, 244, 245, 249, 254, 255; creed, 245; hadith scholarship, 245; theologians, 260
Ashhab al-Qaysī (d. 204/820), 172
al-Ashrafiyyah Dār al-Ḥadīth, 245
ʿĀṣim ibn Abi al-Najūd, 142–143
al-ʿĀṣimī, Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad, 70
ʿAskarī, Imam, 286
assent in the heart, 259
assessment: of hadiths, 33; of narrators, 22, 29, 33
Astarābādh (Gurgan), 286
ʿAṭā (d. 114/732?), 24, 49, 147, 205, 206, 231
ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār (d. 103/721), 104
athar (pl. *āthār*), 154, 210; people of, 165
atoms, 243
aṭrāf books, 308
attributes: divine, 172, 243, 244, 247, 257, 259, 260; of men, 337; of women, 337
attribution: of bias to hadith narrators, 322; of hadith, 46, 49, 175, 344; false, 49, 119, 282; mistaken, 23
audition, *see samāʿ*
aural dimensions of hadith, 301
authentication of Sufi masters, 274
authenticity of hadith (*ṣiḥḥa*), 8, 10, 40, 44, 52, 53, 55, 59, 86, 95, 99, 109, 118, 200, 228, 229, 233, 241, 247, 250, 251, 254–256, 259, 282, 285, 286, 305, 308, 311, 320, 339, 342; controversies, 192; controversy over, 217; criteria for, 308
authenticity of isnāds, 173, 230
authorial enterprise, 344
authoritarian ethical systems, 338
authority: of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, 49; binding, 250; claims to, 277; early, 47, 120, 193, 209, 235; of hadith, 7, 26, 39, 290, 316, 339; of Ibn Jurayj, 49; interpretive, 267; Islamic, 299; legal, 228, 339, 340; of the Qurʾan, 322; of unusual hadith, 25; Prophetic, 65, 200, 326; religious, 266; in

religious discourse, 191; saintly, 275; secondary, 250; structures, 278; Sufism, 8, 265, 270
authorization to transmit hadith, *see ijāza*
authorship, 174, 178; complicated nature of, 174; multiple, 344
aversion to writing hadith, 226
awḥā, see waḥy
awliyāʾ Allāh (saints), 69, 267, 269, 272, 273
ʿAwn al-maʿbūd (of ʿAẓīmābādī), 161, 164, 174, 180
Al-ʿAwnī, al-Sharīf Abū Ḥātim, 31, 38
ʿawrah, 212
ʿAwwām ibn Ḥawshab, 21
al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774), 100, 105
āyāt (signs; sing. *āya*): in nature, 61
āyat al-kursī (throne verse), 253
al-ʿAynī, Badr al-Dīn (d. 855/1451), 109, 163, 168–170, 172, 175, 177, 212
Ayyūb Khān, 326, 327; coup d'état, 325
Aʿẓamī, Muṣṭafā, 26, 55, 43, 138
al-Azhar, 2, 109, 159
al-ʿAzīmābādī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sharaf al-Haqq, 174
al-ʿAẓīmabādī, Abū ṭayyib Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq (d. 1911), 161, 164, 174, 303

bāb (pl. *abwāb;* chapter), 96, 98, 99, 143, 161, 167, 287, 302; sorting of hadith by, 93 (*see also taṣnīf*); chapter headings, 168
backgammon, 318
back, Muhammad's, 150
backward growth of *isnād*s, 46, 103, 104, 217
bad actions, 253
Badhl al-majhūd (of al-Sahāranpūrī), 169, 173–175, 178
badmouthing, sin of, 165
Badr, battle of, 50, 67
Baghdad, 106, 206, 266, 270, 288
al-Baghdādī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir, 243
al-Baghdādī, al-Khaṭīb (d. 463/1071), *see* Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī
al-Baḥrānī, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 1130/1718), 292
baḥth wa ḥall (research and analysis), 160, 301
al-Bājī, Abū al-Walīd (d. 474/1081), 170, 205, 206, 215
balance, deeds to be weighed in, 255
Baluchistan, 298
Banārsī, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq (d. 1870), 300
bank interest, 329
Banū Shaybān, 21
Bāqī Billah, 298
al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), 245
al-Bāqir, Imam (d. 114/732–733?), 213, 283
baraka: of the Prophet, 273
Barazangi, 341, 342
Barelvīs: debates with Deobandis, 275– 277; on the Prophet, 275, 276
Barelwī, Sayyid Aḥmad (d.1830), 299
Barnabas, Gospel of, 171
Barqī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid, 287
Barqī, Muḥammad ibn Khālid, 287
barren woman, 335
Barsbay, Sultan (d. 841/1438), 177
Bashir, Aamir, 311
Basra, 25, 28, 97, 99, 100, 103– 105, 124, 213, 215, 267, 268
Basṭām, 289
Batālawī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, 322
baths: public bathhouses, 212–213; required for impurity, 142
bāṭin, 274
battle, dealing with enemies in, 144
Bauckham, Richard, 11
Bauer, Karen, 224
Bayāḍī, ʿAlī ibn Yūnus al- (d. 877/1472), 291
Bayān (Banān) al-Tabbān, 283
bayān/tabyīn, 160
Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, 69
al-Bayḍāwī, 300
al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), 173, 245, 260
al-Bāz, 321
al-Bazanṭī, Aḥmad ibn Abī Naṣr (d. 222/837), 287
al-Bazdawī, Abū al-Yusr al- (d. 493/1100), 214, 216
al-Bazzār, 19, 125, 126
BBC, 315
beard of Muhammad, 325
Bearing witness, 144

beatific vision (*ruʾyat Allāh*), 253, 254
beautiful example (*uswa ḥasana*), 83
beauty of Prophet, 81
beer, prohibition of, 283
behavior: of Prophet, 77, 79, 80, 83, 90; advice on, 205
Beirut, 178
beliefs, 251, 258; approaches to, 243; basis for, 255; divine unity, 248; eschatology, 272; essentials of, 8; formulated in creedal statements, 243; foundational principles of, 252; in God, 247, 248; ground for, 8; hadith a basis for, 247, 252; hadith as evidence for, 253; incumbent on those who witness, 250; Mahdi, 255; in prophets, 250; and practices, 190, 281; principles of, 242, 244; Shiʿi, 281; about the sexes, 338
believers, 83, 91; and hypocrites, 80; light of, 276; seek wisdom, 283; true, 267
belletrist literature, 198
bell, revelation to Muhammad like ringing of, 63
belly (baṭn), 126, 127
bequests, compulsory, 169
Berg, Herbert, ix, 10, 11, 52, 55, 217, 227, 231
Bergmann, Uwe, 122
Berkey, Jonathan, 177
Bethabe, monastery of, 268
Bhopal, Nawāb of, 300
bias, traditions which further, 40
Bible, 315, 321; commentary, 321; modern Qurʾan commentators and, 171; New and Old Testaments, 92
bibliographies, 6; Shiʿi, 287
bidʿa (innovation), 241, 243, 244, 246, 249, 253, 255, 272, 300; in commentaries, 180; Deoband and, 305; opposite of sunna, 317
binding and non-binding sunna, 318, 323
biographical dictionaries, 33, 52, 162, 168, 170, 178
biography of Muhammad, 41, 43, 51, 195, 207, 271
biology and gender, 338
birds, slaughter of, 146
Birkeland, Harris, 227, 228
al-Birmāwī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Dāim (d. 831/1428), 163, 166, 167, 175, 177
birth-control, 329
Bismarck, 3
Bisṭāmī, Bāyazīd, 69
Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan, 1
blameworthy acts, 29
blasphemy, 253, 255
Blecher, Joel, 174, 177, 179, 180, 353
blessing, 253, 273
blind following, *see taqlīd*
boards or tablets, *see alwāḥ*
body, discipline of, 304
booklets, eschatological, 200
books of hadith: allowability of, 105; circulation of, 191; dictation of, 103; distinction from notes, 95; genealogies of, 173; early hadith collectors and, 96; possession of, 103; printed, 107; ranking of, 153; reconstruction of, 43; transmission of, 173; al-Zuhrī and, 101; Zuhrī and, 102
Book, The: appellation for the Qurʾan, 91, 322; people of, 208; and sunna, 66; and wisdom, 65
Borūjerdī, Sayyid Ḥusayn (d. 1383/1963), 292
boundaries: between divine and Prophetic word, 7; of hadith literature, 1; between Tafsīr and hadith, 89, 202
bowing: to authority, 335; in prayer, 169
breastfeeding, 169, 174
brevior lectio, 122
brevity of legal traditions, 120
British India, 319, 321; colonial authorities, 320; courts, 324
Bronson, Catherine, 238
broth, *see tharīd*
Brown, Daniel W., ix, 315
Brown, Jonathan A.C., 37, 121, 189, 191, 218, 311
Brown, Ralph E., 4, 11
Brown, Ruth, *see* Johnson, Ruth
Buddha, 3
Bukhara, 108
al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl (d. 256/870), 17, 30, 31, 62, 63, 66–68, 70, 75–80, 85, 86, 92, 99, 107–109, 115, 137, 140, 143, 147–149, 161, 189, 191,

212, 214, 215, 218, 228, 260, 300–303, 306, 311; and al-Tirmidhī, 164; commentaries, 163, 165–167, 303; exegetical hadith, 228; modern print editions, 310; and Muslim, 18, 152, 153, 166, 228, 288, 300, 302, 311, 312; *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1, 10, 18, 19, 32, 36, 74, 99, 107, 108, 109, 147–149, 153, 155, 156, 163, 164, 166, 167, 172, 177, 189, 191, 215, 227, 228, 288, 303, 311; teaching of, 301
Būlāq Press, 109
al-Bulqīnī, Sirāj al-Dīn, 175
al-Bulqīnī, ʿUmar ibn Raslān, 167
Burge, Stephen, 194
Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Khiḍir (d. 852/1448), 174
Burton, John, 209, 210

Caetani, Leone, 42
Cairo, 163, 164, 177, 178, 231
Calder, Norman, 114, 236
Caliphs: administrative practice, 114; court of, 109, 353; court officials, 102; decree of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, 109; early, 94; library of, 102; al-Maʾmūn, 62; patronage of hadith collections, 102; rightly guided, 66, 210; successors to Muhammad's authority, 326; sunna of, 317
call to prayer, 79
camels, slaughter of, 146
canon, Sunni hadith, 297, 302, 304, 305, 310, 312
canonical hadith collections, 6, 42, 98, 99, 107, 108, 188, 190, 192, 194–196, 199, 227, 228, 289, 325, 348; commentaries on, 300; criticism of, 40; Shiʿi, 289
canonization of hadith, 162, 188, 189, 191, 194, 196, 337
Cantwell Smith, Wilfred, 330
captives, freeing of, 80
care and carelessness in transmission, 19, 193, 256
carrion, 148
cauterization, 80
celibacy, 268
Central Asia, 267, 289
central authority of Islamic State, 326
Central Institute for Islamic Research, 327–329
certainty, 4, 5, 41, 52, 189, 247, 251, 252, 254, 256, 257, 260, 350
chain of companionship, *see isnād al-ṣuḥba*
chain of knowledge, *see isnād al-ʿilm*
chain of transmission, *see isnād*
Chakṛālawī, Maulvī ʿAbd Allāh, 322–324
chaos, *see fitna*
chapter, *see bāb*
character, promotion of good, 218, 271; of the Prophet, 75, 81
charisma, 270
charity, 86, 150, 169
Chatham House, 315
Chicago, University of, 330
child marriage, 316
childlessness, 335
children, Muhammad's kindness to, 79, 150
Christ, incarnation of divine Word, 60
Christianity, 9; asceticism, 268; eyewitness testimony, 5; origins, 3; priests, 205; revelation in, 60; scriptures, 91; written and oral teaching, 91
church, 60
Churchill Centre, 3
Churchill, Winston, 3, 4, 11
circulation of traditions, 39, 48, 129; Imāmī, 285; Sunni, 283
citation of hadith, 19, 189, 192, 225, 226, 291; legal schools, 210; religious epistles, 197; variations in, 8
civility to wives, 348
civilizations, 344
civil war, *see fitna*
claims, hadith as a series of, 17; of hadith narrators, 17; of theologians, 243
clarity of speech, attributed to Prophet, 79
clash of reason and revelation, 257
classical exegesis, 194, 225
classical Islam, 192, 336; scholarship, 340
classical *isnād* critism, 40
classification: of actions, 205; of hadith, 23, 176
cleanliness, 324
clichés and schemata, 85

clothing: 144, 274; women's, 350; worn by Muhammad, 304, 327
clusters, *matn*, 123
codex, *see muṣḥaf*
codification of hadith, 36, 188
cohorts of hadith transmitters, 20, 28
collation: of manuscripts, 109; of traditions by students, 98; of variants of a tradition, 50
collecting hadith (activity), 21, 31, 48, 52, 65, 83, 84, 94, 149, 173, 187, 199, 210; caliphal order, 95; *isnād*s, 308
collections of hadith, 18, 76, 85, 92, 93, 95, 102, 137–157, 161, 162, 166, 168, 171–173, 191, 214, 234, 265, 287–289, 307; canonical, 18, 107, 137–157, 194; chapter titles, 167; classification of, 166; commentaries, 170, 172, 173; commentary on, 163; development of, 140; early, 69; Ibn Māja, 151–152; *al-Kutub al-sitta*, 18, 161, 237; musnad, 140; non-canonical, 192; printing, 107; Shiʿi, 76, 281, 283, 285, 286, 288, 289, 292; skepticism towards, 49; standard editions, 10; Sufi, 266; transmission, 173; Turkey, 315; al-Ṭūsī, 290; written, 39, 102
collectors, 121, 124, 234, 353; common links, 48, 118; direct, 124; late, 114, 119, 121
colonialism, 272, 273, 277, 278, 316
comb (*midray*), 77
commands: divine, 248; Prophetic, 153, 323
commentaries, 159, 160, 162, 163, 165–167, 169, 170, 174–177, 179, 194, 195, 233, 248, 283, 302, 303; age of commentary, 159; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 303; Arabic, 297; authorship, 174; composition, 305; Deobandi, 164; emergence, 160, 165; formation, 176; function, 172, 173; future of, 167, 179; and glosses, 179, 290, 353; Ḥanafī, 303; headings, 170; legal schools and, 169; literary genre of, 159; *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, 162; production, 175; Qurʾanic, 89, 193, 195; repetition, 171; Sahāranpūrī, 174; Shākir, 307; Shiʿi, 290; six books, 161; South Asia, 298; and teaching methods, 166; twentieth century, 164, 179; Urdu, 297, 303
commentators, 161, 162, 167, 169, 170, 172, 173; motivation, 164, 168, 176; polemics, 170; Qurʾanic, 194; Sahāranfūrī, 7
common link, 44–48, 51, 116–120, 124, 126–130, 234–235; artificial, 118
communication, divine, 60–62
community: consensus of (*see ijmāʿ*); deviants from, 259; men of knowledge, 224; Muslim, 41, 44, 71, 82, 157, 191, 217; Shiʿa, 283, 288, 290
companions of Muhammad (*ṣaḥāba*), 4, 11, 22, 26, 28, 29, 44–48, 64, 66, 86, 88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 100, 103, 113, 114, 138, 140–142, 148, 153, 154, 172, 189, 195, 196, 206, 209–211, 213, 223–229, 231–233, 235, 241–244, 248, 252, 255, 275, 287, 306, 308, 325. 344; collections attributed to, 43; as models of piety, 304; and successors, 18, 99, 103, 143, 210, 228, 248, 339; sunna of, 317; younger, 26
compensation for injury, 144
compilers, 18, 223, 234
complete *isnād*s, 25, 45, 189
completion of revelation, 67
compulsion in religion, 315
compulsory payment, 208
computers and hadith study, 131, 297, 309
conceptual transparency, 123
concordances, 306
concubinage, *see mutʿa*
conflict: political, 242; Sufis and hadith scholars, 266; theologians and hadith scholars, 257
conflicting hadiths, 233
conquests: Arab, 85; Mongol, 272, 275, 291; prophecies of, 42
consensus, *see ijmāʿ*
conservatives, 3, 272, 276, 328
Constitution of Pakistan, 326, 327
Constitution of the United States, 278
constructs, historical, 113, 338
contemporary hadith scholarship, 16, 38, 347
contemporary Islam, ix, x, 198, 200, 345
contempt toward women, 337
content of hadith, *see matn*
Contents: of hadith collections, 306; of hadith commentaries, 174, 195

context-driven approaches, 336
context of traditions, 123, 257; historical, 76; loss of, 282; original, 167; and provenance, 42; separation from, 282; socio-political, 346.
contextualized interpretation, 315, 336, 340, 345–348
contingent beings, 61
continuity of transmission, 20, 33, 36
contracts, 272
contradictions in hadith, 51, 102, 169, 207, 211, 213–215, 247, 251, 290, 319
controversy, 174, 197, 214, 248, 290, 324, 329; Barelvīs and Deobandis, 276; Fazlur Rahman, 329; theologians and hadith scholars, 243, 246, 257
Cook, Michael, 43, 46, 47, 52, 53, 55, 118
correct belief, 7
corruptions in hadith, 40
cosmic events, 289
cosmology, 287
covenants, biblical, 60
creation, 60, 61, 276; Adam, 337; ex nihilo, 337; humankind, 337; of the Qurʾan, 242; narratives, 337; of the universe, 248, 257; of woman, 337
Creator, 65, 248, 249, 257
creed, 241, 243, 244, 246; Ashʿarite, 245; Sunni, 245
criteria: for acceptance of *aḥad* reports, 252; for authenticity, 25, 40, 308; for certitude, 252; for reliability, 28, 140, 195; for *tawātur*, 251
critical approaches to hadith, 168, 321
critical editions, 109, 298, 305–309, 311
criticism, 7, 16, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 41, 99, 129, 273, 282, 288; of canonical collections, 40; hadith, 32, 34, 209; *isnād*, 39–42, 51; narrator, 308
Crone, Patricia, 9, 55
cross-referencing, 307
cruelty, 257
cubit, 265, 266
cultural context, 319, 340, 343, 346
cultural elites, 200
culture: hadith, 298; intellectual, 8; Islamic, 277; and refinement, 270
cultured etiquette, 270
cupping, 80, 82
currency: gold, 208; silver, 208
curricula, 177, 180, 299, 300, 302

ḍābiṭ, 20
Dabūsī, Abū Zayd al- (d. 430/1039), 249
al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim, 226, 231, 235–237
ḍaʿīf (weak traditions), 7, 17–19, 21, 22, 30, 32, 36, 148, 150–152, 154, 215, 254, 256, 259, 260, 271, 272, 276–278, 307
Dajjāl (anti-Christ), 252, 255
dalāla, 160
Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa, 196
Damascus, 163, 245; conquest of, 117, 234
dār al-ḥadīth, 177
Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband, *see* Deoband
al-Dārānī, Abū Sulaymān, 268
al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), 18, 170, 173
al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, 31, 306
Dars-i Niẓāmī, 300
Dars-i Tirmidhī (of Taqī al-ʿUthmānī), 303
dastār bandī (Deobandi initiation ceremony), 301
al-Dastuwāʾī, Hishām (d. c. 154/771), 124–128
databases, electronic, 131
dating hadith reports, 10, 43, 44, 46, 47, 75, 115, 117, 229, 235, 236, 279
dawrat al-ḥadīth (year of hadith study), 297–298, 300–305, 311; *dastār bandī*, 301; *iftitāḥ* Bukhārī, 301; *khatm* Bukhārī, 301
al-Dāwūdī, Aḥmad ibn Naṣr (d. 402/1011), 162
Day of Judgment, 144
dead animals, eating, 146; fish, 147, 148
dead, interrogation in the tomb, 254
death: of believers, 253; interrogation in the tomb, 254; of Muhammad, 62, 64, 75, 153, 275; of successors, 29, 235
death penalty, 216
debates: authenticity of hadith, 228, 325; Barelvīs and Deobandis, 275, 277; interreligious, 323; reason and tradition, 8; Salafis and Sufis, 275; scholarly, 43, 55; theological, 244

deception in a sale, 150
decline: Islam, 318; post-Mongol, 291; Sufism, 273
deeds: according to intentions, 1, 2, 115, 122; Prophetic, 4, 26, 27, 113; reward for good, 289
deep analysis, *see taʿammuq*
defects in hadith, 16, 21, 25, 26, 30, 32, 36, 143, 145, 147, 150, 327; hidden and obvious, 25
defects in human reason, 258
deficiencies in memory, 282
Delhi, 298
Deliberate collections, *see tadwīn*
democratized access to hadith, 298, 309, 310
Deoband: Dār al-ʿUlūm, 164, 178, 275, 297, 300, 302, 304, 305; madrasas, 311; and the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, 304
Deobandis, 178, 299, 300, 302, 303; and Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 303, 320; and Barelvīs, 276, 277; commentaries, 303; course of study, 304; and Salafism, 275; and Sufism, 320
depilating paste (*nūrah*), 212–213
depravity, 214
derivative creation of women, 337
descent of God, 255
desert, 19
detail, Qurʾan lacking in, 206
determinism, 242, 260
Deuteronomy, 60, 216
deviants (*mulḥid*), 259
deviation from sunna, 242, 254
devil, 325
devotional hadith, 315
al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn (d. 1348), 16, 27–29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 196, 245, 309
dhikr, 253
dhimma, *see ahl al-dhimma*
diacriticals, 97
dialectical theology, *see kalām*
dialogue, personal, 178
diaspora communities, 297
Dickinson, Eerik, 38
dicta, Prophetic, 86
dictation of hadith, 65, 108, 153
dictionaries, *see* biographical dictionaries
digitized texts, 309
Dihlawī, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al- (d. 1642), 312
al-Dīnawarī, tafsīr, 230
Diogenes, 325
Dirār ibn ʿAmr (d. 200/815), 243
direct collectors, 124–126
direct quotations, 188
direction of prayer, *see qibla*
dirhams, 208
disagreement: over *aḥad* traditions, 252; exegetical hadiths, 229; juristic, 212; among narrations, 120; theologians and hadith scholars, 247
disciple-master relationship, 273
disciples of the Imam, 286
disciplines: hadith study, 15, 32, 34, 196; Islamic, 160, 227, 265, 266, 270
discontinuous transmission, 33
discouraged actions, 79
discourse: modern, 266; polemical, 170; religious, 193, 198–200
discrimination against women, 338, 341, 347
disenfranchised elites, 319
disintegration, social, 338
dislikes of Muhammad, 87
Dispute, The, 26
disputed issues, 34, 242
disputes: among traditionists, 92; over writing hadith, 106
Disraeli, 3
dissenting doctrines, 217
distress attributed to Muhammad, 82
dives, *see isnād*s
divine action, 60–61
divine attributes, 172, 244
divine communication, 60
divine guidance, 60, 66, 69, 71, 317
divine inspiration, 60, 65, 66, 68, 70, 84
divine realm, 68
divine sayings, *see ḥadīth qudsī*
divinity of prophets denied, 66
Divorce, 144, 205, 217, 329
Diyanet Işleri Başkanlığı, 315, 316, 330
Doctor Who, 4
doctrine, 64, 254, 268, 322; concerns, 44; controversy, 42; debates, 277; differences, 255; inquisition, 62, 255; legal, 44, 170,

317; of schools, 211; oral, 91, 106; Prophet's illiteracy, 85; theological, 85; written, 106
documents, as evidence, 5
doubt, 218, 246, 248, 251, 252
dowries, 320
dreams, 63, 67, 144; interpretation of, 68, 192, 287; of Muhammad, 68, 82; and revelation, 60, 63, 68
drought, prayer during, 80
dual revelation, 59
Duderija, Adis, ix, 6, 335, 339, 342, 345, 348, 351
dust, 67
duties, religious, 196, 271, 322

ears, 211
earth, 276
eating, lawful and unlawful foods, 79, 147, 148, 304, 335
economic dealings, 272
education: hadith, 100, 297; India, 330; institutions, 159, 166, 177, 178, 199, 305; Ottoman empire, 177; reform, 300; Shiʿi, 288; women's, 350
egalitarianism, Qurʾanic, 216
Egypt, 109, 171, 191, 266, 298, 325, 330; al-Azhar, 159; commentaries, 166; Qurʾanic Scripturalism, 322–323; early twentieth century, 316
Egyptian edition of the Qurʾan, 10
Eleventh Imam, 286
elites, 176, 178, 200, 266
elitism, 319, 320
emigration, *see hijra*
emotion, attributed to women, 338
employment, 266, 330
emulation: of a master by a disciple, 273; of the Prophet, 26, 278
Encyclopaedia of Islam, 160
enemies: in battle, 144; of Islam, 246; Muhammad's dealings with, 140
entering into a house, hadith concerning, 77, 212
epigrams, 99
epiphaneia, *epiphania*, epiphany, 60
epistemic authority, 341, 342
epistemology, 3, 339, 343; Abou el Fadl, 343–344; assumptions, 338; certainty, 166; challenge of early Islam, 115; claims, 343; contemporary, 343; dynamic, 343; historical, 9; early Islam, 343; Islamic, 343; modern, 343; premodern, 342, 344; Sufi, 269
equality and fairness, 336
erasing written notes, 101
errors: human, 64; in electronic editions, 131; in hadith transmission, 24, 30, 62, 66, 105, 146, 150, 213, 251–253, 256, 260; Muhammad protected from, 250; in sound hadiths, 25
eschatology, 54, 197, 200, 242; eschatological traditions, 47
Eshkevari, Hassan, 337, 338
essence, divine, 247
eternal beings, plurality of, 242
ethics, 217, 285, 335, 340, 345, 348; authoritarian, 338; egalitarian, 217; hadith, 287; Islamic, 345; and Islamic law, 336; Prophetic, 304; Qurʾanic, 216, 344; rationalist, 345; sexual, 348; Shiʿa, 289, 291; voluntarism, 344
Ethiopia, 164
Etiquette, 144
etymologies, 225
evaluation:of hadith, 2, 15, 16, 20, 21, 26, 33, 35, 36, 145, 152, 192, 218, 241; of narrators (*see ʿilm al-rijāl*)
Eve, 238, 337; creation of, 337; seduction of Adam, 337
exams, standardized, 300
exegesis, Qurʾanic, *see tafsīr*
exegetes, *see mufassirūn*
exegetical hadiths, 8, 223, 226–229, 231–235
exhortations of Muhammad, 83
exhortatory talks (bayān), 301
Exodus, 60
expeditions initiated by Muhammad, 82
experiences: mystical, 271; women's, 341, 342, 347
exponential growth of narrations, 141
expulsion from Paradise, 337
extending fingers in salat, 211

extremists (*ghulāt*), 284
eye, poking in, 77
eyewitness reports, 82

fabricated hadiths, *see mawḍūʿ*
face: of God, 242; of Muhammad, 79
Fādānī, Muḥammad Yāsīn al- (d. 1990), 310
faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba, 172
fahm, 160
Fahras al-fahāris (of Kattānī), 310, 312
fair complexion, attributed to Muhammad, 77
faith: basis for, 252; foundations of, 187; knowledge of God possible by, 259; rules of, 242, 246, 252 (*see also īmān*)
faithful, the, 62
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), 226, 245, 255, 259, 260
Fall, 337
false attributions, *see mawḍūʿ*
falsehood or truth: distinguishing, 249; of hadith, 16, 19, 25, 251
family *isnād*s, 103
faqīh, *see fuqahāʾ*
al-Farābī, 330
Farangī Maḥall, 299
farʿī, 257
farting, attributed to the devil, 325
fasting, 17, 19, 137, 144, 329; Prophet's teaching on, 17
Fatḥ al-bārī (of Ibn Ḥajar), 18, 19, 163, 167, 170, 173–175, 177
Faṭḥiyya, 284
Fātiḥa, 64, 68, 169, 320
fatwa, anti-Parwēz, 326
al-Fazārī, Marwān, 215
feelings of Muhammad, 87
feet, wiping, 143
female genital mutilation, 217
femininity, 336
feminism, Islamic, 6, 216, 330, 335, 348
fictitious expressions, 44
Fierro, Maribel, 191
fighting, 266
financial dealings of Muhammad, 140
fingers: extending in salat, 211; Prophet pokes ʿUmar with, 124–126; spreading, 211; water spouts from, 80
fiqh (jurisprudence), 15, 31, 41, 65, 94, 100, 101, 113, 114, 141–143, 148, 151, 152, 155–156, 163, 196, 205, 207, 213, 216–218, 241, 269, 287, 288, 290, 330, 341, 347; juridical hadiths, 94, 281, 292; repudiation by Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 320; Shiʿi, 212, 289
fiqh and *naẓar*, people of, 165
Firabr (city), 108
al-Firabrī (d. 320/932), 108
Fire (Hell), 276
al-Fīrūzābādī, 230
al-Firyābī, Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, 148
fish: dried, 148; eating, 147; slaughter of, 147, 148
fitna, 226, 254, 345; women linked to, 345
five books, 31, 152, 289
five categories of actions, *see al-aḥkām al-khamsa*
flexibility of oral transmission, 105
flogging for adultery, 209
floods, 146
floor, 143
fluidity, textual, 126
followers, *see al-tābiʿūn*
food, 168; lawful and unlawful, 146–147
footstool, divine, 276
forbidden actions, 205
forgery of hadith, 39, 41, 42, 46–49, 84, 113, 115, 118, 120, 122, 190, 216, 217, 271, 272, 276–278, 282, 305; invented *isnads*, 46, 49
forgetfulness, 122, 149, 215
forgiveness, 82, 255
foster relationships, 144
Four Books (Shiʿi hadith collections), *see al-Kutub al-arbaʿ a*
fragrance of Muhammad, 78, 81
frame, narrative, 2
framework, conceptual, 160, 170
freeing captives, 80
French, 109
frog, eaten as food, 146
fruit, sale of, 145
Fück, Johann, 108
fuḍalāʾ, 176

function: of hadith commentaries, 160; of Muhammad's actions, 327
Funerals, 144
*fuqahā*ʾ (jurists), 15, 65, 97, 106, 114, 141, 154, 163, 165, 168, 172, 207, 211, 212, 218, 245, 269, 281, 289, 317, 319; disagreement, 169; Shiʿi, 281
furqān, 339
Furūʿ al-kāfī, 288
furūʿ, 246
future events, prediction of, 47, 81, 276
futuwwa (chivalry), 270

Gabriel, 61–63, 67; horse of, 67
game, as food, 146
Gangohī, Rashīd Aḥmad, 304
Gemarah, 91, 92
gender, 201, 216, 238, 316, 335–337, 342, 347, 349–351; inequality, 216; mixing, prohibition of, 345; relations, 338, 346; roles, 217, 349
genealogy, 102, 265
Genesis, 60, 282
genres, literary, 6, 8, 25, 29, 76, 82–84, 89, 160, 162, 163, 190, 193, 195, 201, 224, 232, 238, 288, 310
German, 50, 54
Ghamidi, Javed, 339, 340
gharīb al-ḥadīth, 16, 21, 23–25, 36, 161, 162, 164, 169, 198, 287, 306
al-Ghassānī, Abū ʿAli (d. 498/1105), 170
Ghāyat al-maqṣūd, 174
ghayba, 250, 288–290
ghayr muqallid, 320
al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid (d. 505/1111), 7, 64, 192, 241, 245, 246, 271, 307
ghulāt (extremists), 284
Gibb, Hamilton, 330
gifts, 169
Gīlānī, Manāẓir Ahsan, 301
Gilliot, Claude, 227, 230, 233, 235
Gilman, Joe, 11
girls education, 316
Gledhill, P.J., 49
gloss: *ḥāshiyya*, 159, 160, 290, 301, 302
God, 66, 67, 69, 70, 212, 249, 257; anthropomorphic descriptions, 242; attributes, 241, 242, 254, 256, 259, 260; basis for belief in, 248; Book of, 104, 106, 209; calling on, 153; comes near, 265, 266; communication, 269; corporeal conceptions of, 257; creation of man in his image, 282; creedal affirmation of, 77; fighting in cause of, 266; friends of, 69; gives wisdom, 274; hadith inspired by, 70; intimacy with, 276; knowledge from, 273; knowledge of, 250, 258, 259, 276; mercy of, 206; Messenger of, 65, 93, 210, 225, 255, 259, 267, 276; mind of, 211; oneness, 276, 347; otherness of, 63; prophets sent by, 61; reliance on (*tawakkul*), 268; revelation from, 61, 68, 69, 71; rights of, 285; seeking refuge in, 79, 104; self-revelation, 60; sublimity of, 259; union with, 69; unknowability, 205; vision of, 254; Word of, 71, 187
Goldfeld, Isaiah, 230, 231
Goldziher, Ignaz, 9, 39, 41–45, 53, 55, 66, 84, 106, 113–115, 226, 228, 230, 328
goods: bargaining for, 150; marketing of, 150
Görke, Andreas, ix, 7, 10, 11, 47–49, 51–54, 195, 234
Görmez, Mehmet, 315, 330
Gospels, 91–92
governor-general of Pakistan, 178
governors, 26
grading of narrators, 21, 23
Graham, William A., x, 5, 7, 11, 59
grammar, Arabic, 168, 189
greetings, responding to, 205
Gregorian calendar, 11
growth of *isnād*s, 45, 118, 328
guests, receiving Muslims as, 208
guidance, 258; divine, 60; Prophetic sunna, 66, 81, 83, 322; revealed, 7, 59, 61, 62, 65, 71, 269, 276, 322
guide, spiritual, 272
Guizot, François, 3
Gujarat, 298
Gujranwala, 324
Günther, Sebastian, 78
Gurgan, 286

Ḥabāʾib (Yemeni Sufi movement), 275
habits of the Prophet, 75, 79, 304
Hadislerle Islam, 315
hadith, *passim*; attestations, 193; authorization, 341; circles, 284; citation, 305, 308; collections, 15, 18, 69, 76, 83–85, 99, 102, 108, 113, 126, 127, 129, 137–157, 161–166, 168, 170–173, 177, 179, 189, 194, 195, 212, 214, 243, 282, 284, 288, 290, 292, 315; culture, 270, 298; enterprise, 6, 7, 328; evaluation, 15, 17, 144; experts, 15, 17–19, 23, 24, 28, 30, 31, 34, 137–157, 168, 271; format, 76, 224, 225, 227, 229, 231–233; instruction, 302; methodology, 159; networks, 310; scholars, accusations of error against, 256
hadith commentary, 160, 161, 162, 164, 165, 169–172, 176–180, 193, 303, 305, 353; composition, 171; cross-references, 171; functions, 171, 172, 176; length, 171; non-Arabic, 179; patronage, 175–176, 178; social milieu, 176, 179; topic headings, 170; Turkish, 179
hadith folk, *see ahl al-ḥadīth*
ḥadīth al-ifk, 117, 190, 196
ḥadīth al-miʿrāj, 193
ḥadīth al-nuzūl, 190
ḥadīth qudsī, 68–71, 353
ḥadīth al-shafāʿa, 190, 193
hadith studies: India, 299; Shāh Walī Allāh's revival of, 319; vernacularization, 305
hadith al-thaqalayn, 281
hadith verification, *see takhrīj al-ḥadīth*
Hady al-sārī (of Ibn Ḥajar), 163, 181, 182
Ḥāfiẓ, The, *see* Ibn Ḥajar
Ḥajj, 144, 326
Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār, 19, 20
Ḥakam ibn Qutayba, 142
Hākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014), 31, 34, 173
al-Ḥalabī, Muḥyi al-Dīn, 291
halakhic embellishment, 229
ḥalāl, 259
al-Ḥallāj, Manṣūr, 69
Hallaq, Wael, 218
ḥalqa system, 159
Ḥammād ibn Salama, 30
Ḥammād, 142
Hammām ibn Munabbih, 66; *Ṣaḥīfa* of, 70
Hammām ibn Yaḥyā (d. 781), 104
Ḥamza ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī, 17, 137
Ḥanafī school, 34, 106, 163, 164, 172, 197, 207, 210–212, 299, 303, 311; hadith commentators, 170; India, 320; interpretation of hadith, 163; legal texts, 300; marriage, 217; twentieth century, 169
Ḥanbalī school, 34, 197, 211, 212, 317, 318
hand, divine, 242, 260
handbooks, legal, 205
hands of Muhammad, 80, 126
hands, raising during salat, 211, 212
ḥanīf, Abraham described as, 339
Hannād, 142
Hansu, Hüseyin, x, 8, 11
ḥarām (prohibited), 249, 259
Ḥārith, 63, 149, 150
Ḥarīz Sijistānī, 286
Ḥarra, Battle of, 101, 105
Ḥasan (teacher of Kashmīrī), 302
ḥasan (tolerably sound traditions), 17, 19, 21, 147, 292, 307
Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874), 288
Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, 159
al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, 226, 236
Ḥasan al-Ḥulwānī, 144
Ḥasan ibn Faḍḍāl (d. 224/839), 287
Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb (d. 224/839), 287
Ḥasān ibn Ziyād, 141
ḥāshiyya (gloss), 159–161, 290, 301, 302
Hassan, Riffat, 337
Ḥassān ibn Thābit, 68
al-Ḥātimī, Muḥammad ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), 271
Ḥawshab, 21
ḥawz (basin of the Prophet), 254
Haythamī, 18, 19
Ḥāzimi, 17
healing, 80
hearing of hadith, *see samāʿ* (audition)
heart: assent in, 259; knowledge of God in, 276; of the Prophet, 63; revelation and, 60; those who possess, 274

heaven, 144, 276; heavenly book, reception of, 68; heavenly intermediary, 60; heavens, 276
Hebrew Bible, covenants, 60
Hell, 144, 254, 276, 277
help, calling on God for, 165
hereafter, 165, 250, 253
heresy, 259
heritage, Prophetic, 271
hermeneutics, 221, 257, 335, 336, 339, 340, 342, 347, 349, 351
heterodoxy, 231
ḥibara (garment of Yemenite cloth), 80
Hidāya (of Marghīnānī), 300
hidden defects in hadith, 16, 21, 25, 30, 32, 36, 149, 150
ḥifẓ, 160
highway robbery, 144
Hijāz, 265, 298
Hijra, 2, 50, 250; pre-Hijra events, 52
Hijrī calendar, 11
ḥikma (wisdom), 66, 269, 274; of Imams, 283
Ḥilla school, 284, 292
al-Ḥillī, ʿAllāma (d. 726/1326), 284, 292
al-Ḥillī, Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān, 291
al-Ḥillī, Ibn Fahd al- (d. 841/1437), 292
al-Ḥillī, Ibn Namā al-(d. 645/1247), 291
Ḥimyarī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar, 287
Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–743), 102; order to collect hadith, 95
Hishām ibn Saʿd, 22, 23, 24
Hishām ibn ʿUrwa (d. 146/763), 17, 50, 138
historical criticism, 217; historical-critical method, 45
historiography, 195, 196
*ḥiya*l, 66
hoarding, 168
Hodgson, Marshall, 318
holy books, 91, 92
holy spirit, *see rūḥ al-qudus*
holy war, *see jihād*
homilies, 268
honey: healing properties, 80; Muhammad's liking for, 79
horses, zakat on, 208
Horst, Heribert, 229
Houdas, Octave, 109
household of the Prophet, *see Ahl al-Bayt*
Hūd ibn Muḥakkam (d. 893), 194
Ḥudaybiyya, 50
Hudhayl, Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. after 190/805), 231
Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha (of Shāh Walī Allāh), 332
al-Hujwīrī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī (d. 1077), 275
human acts, createdness of, 257; weighing of, 254
human beings, 60, 61, 242, 249, 336; equality of, 347
human body, limitations of, 267
human potential, actualization of, 336
human responsibility, 248, 250
humanity of the Prophet, 79, 81, 276
humanity: guidance for, 63, 269; primordial, 337; responsibility, 250
Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl, 145
Ḥumaydī (d. 219/834), 95, 115
humility: attributed to Muhammad, 79; scholarly, 5
hunger, 146
hunting, 144
al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693), 292
Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin (d. 1910), 300
al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭayyibī (d. 743/1342), 70
husband, wife's behavior toward, 335
Hyderabad, 300
hymns, Imāmī, 285
hypocrites, 80, 283
hypomnēmata, 96, 98, 105, 106

ʿibādāt, 257
Ibāḍī sources, 317
Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 68/687–688), 93, 147, 205, 206, 224–234, 236; school of, 228; students of, 226, 231
Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), 162, 167, 172, 173, 209
Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Ḥusayn, 291
Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d., 192
Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 290
Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad, 23, 24, 32, 108
Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, 50, 54, 130
Ibn Abī Najīḥ (d. 131/749 or 132/750), 232
Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), 29, 88, 136, 140

Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, 236
Ibn ʿAdī (d. 365/975), 32
Ibn al-ʿArabī, Abū Bakr (d. 543/1148), 163, 167, 170, 172, 173, 176
Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn (d. 638/1240), 70, 271, 275
Ibn ʿAsākir, 126
Ibn Bābawayh (d. 329/941), 283, 285, 288, 289
Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991–992), 212
Ibn Baṭṭāl al-Qurṭubī (d. 449/1057), 162, 170, 181; commentary on Bukhārī, 172
Ibn Bukayr, ʿAbd Allāh, 284
Ibn Dāsa (d. 346/957), 173
Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī (d. 841/1437), 292
Ibn Fūrak, Abū Muḥammad (d. 406/1015), 172, 260
Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (d. 478/1085), 245
Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), 16, 19–22, 33–35, 96, 105, 109, 163, 167, 170, 172, 173, 175, 177, 179, 196, 215, 245; hadith classification, 23
Ibn Hammām al-Iskāfī (d. 336/947), 288
Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855): 19, 29, 104, 105, 108, 125, 126, 140, 143, 148, 210, 215, 218, 226, 266, 268, 318; *Musnad*, 29, 95, 99, 307, 309
Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), 172, 307
Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965), 24, 30, 31, 32, 215; *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 307
Ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Mālik (d. 218/828 or 213/834), 114, 195
Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457), 170
Ibn Idrīs, 287
Ibn Isḥāq, 49, 50, 53, 67, 114, 196, 238
Ibn al-Jawzī, 226, 261
Ibn Junayd al-Iskāfī, 284
Ibn al-Junayd, 29
Ibn Jurayj, 49, 96, 120, 144–146; *Sunan*, 96
Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), 38, 195, 225, 236, 307
Ibn Khalaf, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 567/1172), 163
Ibn Khaldūn, 246
Ibn Khuzayma, 260
Ibn al-Madīnī, ʿAlī (d. 234/849), 24, 25, 28, 29, 140, 142
Ibn Mahdī, ʿAbd ʾl-Raḥmān (d. 198/814), 24, 25, 28, 29
Ibn Maʿīn, 215
Ibn Māja (d. 273/887), 18, 31, 68, 140, 150, 154, 163, 166; commentaries, 164; *Sunan*, 300, 302, 306
Ibn Masʿūd, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 32/652), 64, 66, 100, 106, 114, 210, 225, 232, 235
Ibn al-Mubārak, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 181/797), 19, 142, 266, 310
Ibn Muḥayrīz, 24
Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401), 163, 170, 175
Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 139/756 or later), 206
Ibn Muṭarrif, Muḥammad, 24
Ibn Nadīm, 287
Ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191/806), 172
Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/1), 244, 272, 273, 318
Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), 197, 211, 212, 215
Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889?), 123, 191, 198, 207, 209, 317
Ibn Rāhwayh (d. 235/853), 125–128, 143
Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, 161
Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), 62, 93, 125–128, 207
Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), 15, 16, 20, 34, 38, 108, 109, 152, 166, 181, 218, 245, 261
Ibn Salama, Abū Wāʾil Shaqīq (d. c. 100/718–719), 207
Ibn Shahr Āshūb, 285
Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741–2), *see* al-Zuhrī
Ibn Sīnā, 330
Ibn Sīrīn, 26
Ibn Tahmān, Ibrāhīm (d. 163/780), 70
Ibn Ṭāwūs, Jamāl al-Dīn, 284
Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 728/1328), 195, 244, 256, 259, 266, 272, 273, 275, 318
Ibn ʿUlayya, 104
Ibn ʿUmar (d. 160/776), 86, 142, 206, 211, 212, 231
Ibn ʿUqda, Abū'l-ʿAbbās, 284
Ibn ʿUyayna, 104, 120
Ibn Wahb, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 197/812), 145, 146, 162, 232

Ibn Walīd, Muḥammad (d. 343/954), 288
Ibn Zayd, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid (d. c. 133/750), 268
Ibn al-Zubayr, ʿAbd Allāh, 225
Ibrāhīm al-Nakhʿī, 142
Ibrahīm (prophet), 61, 339
Ibrāhīm al-Kafʿamī (d. 905/1500), 292
Ibrāhīm al-Taymī, 115, 142
īḍāḥ, 160
Idāra-i Ṭulūʿ-i Islām, 330
idolatry, denunciation of, 318
iftitāḥ Bukhārī, 301
ignorance, 249, 258
ignorance, days of, *see al-Jāhiliyya*
iḥtikār (hoarding), 168
Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn (of al-Ghazālī), 192, 271, 307
iʿjāz (inimitability), 64, 65, 70
ijāza (license to transmit hadith), 97, 98, 108, 166, 298, 310, 311; *ijāzāt al-samāʿ*, 97
ʿIjlī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 261/874), 32
ijmāʿ (consensus), 65, 207, 209, 210, 247, 250, 252, 260, 272, 299, 320, 340
ijtihād, 318, 340
ikhtilāf (*khilāf*) works, 169
ʿIkrima, 226, 232
ʿilal al-ḥadīth, 16, 25, 29, 149, 161
ilhām (inspiration), 60, 71, 274
ʿilla, 20, 319
illiteracy, attributed to Muhammad, 85
ʿilm asbāb al-wurūd, 345, 346
ʿilm al-dirāya, 284
ʿilm al-kalām, 241, 246
ʿilm al-rijāl (narrator criticism), 16, 22, 26, 33, 54, 170, 284, 308; in Shiʿism, 283; works, 162
ʿilm al-tawhīd, 242
Ilyās, Muḥammad (d. 1944), 304
ʿImād al-Dīn Ṭabarī, 290
imam (prayer leader), 169
Imamate, 172, 252, 255, 283, 286, 290
Imāmiyya, 286, 288–290, 292; hadith works, 286
Imams (Shiʿite), 2, 69, 85, 212, 213, 273, 281–283, 286–291; miracles of, 291; Twelfth, 289
īmān (faith), 242
imʿān wa taʿammuq, 302
imāra, 172, 326
imitation of Muhammad, 143, 326, 327
imlāʾ (dictation session), 96, 108
immodest exposure, 212
impatience, attributed to Muhammad, 82
imposters, Sufi, 274
impurity, 142
inadvertent errors, 19
incarnation, divine, 60
inciting *fitna*, accusations of, 254
inclusivity, 340
inconsistencies in hadith, 87, 192
independence of Pakistan, 326
independent thinkers, 35
India, 164, 169, 199, 323; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 319; hadith commentary, 176; hadith movements, 318; hadith studies, 298, 304; Islam, 323; Qurʾanist movements, 322; Sufism and Salafism, 275; early twentieth century, 316
indices to hadith collections, 306–307
indifferent actions in Islamic law, 205
indivisibility of Qurʾanic and Prophetic authority, 65
Indonesia, 199, 310, 330, 345
inequality, gender, 336, 347
inertia, 243
infallibility: of Imams, 282; Prophetic, 250
inheritance, 144, 267, 284, 329
inner inspiration, 60, 63
innovation, *see bidʿa*
innovators, *see ahl al-bidʿa*
inscriptions, 95
insight, mystical, 270
inspiration, divine, 59, 60, 65, 67, 69, 71, 84, 212, 270, 274 (*see also ilhām*; *waḥy*)
Institute for the Study of Religion in the Middle East, 11
institutions: Deoband, 303, 311; educational, 166, 176; Islamic, 41; Sufi, 273
intellect, human, 131
intellectual centers, 178
intellectual circles, 172
intellectual genealogies, 318, 319
intellectual history, 160

intelligence, superiority attributed to men over women, 337
intention, *see niyya*
intercession of the Prophet, *see shafāʿa*
interests, patriarchal, 345
internal consistency, 49
internet, 309
interpolation, 230
interpretation, 154, 161, 169, 244, 252, 258, 330; according to reason, 260; ambiguous texts, 257; arbitrary, 241; feminist, 338, 345, 346, 348; legal, 35; of hadith, 35, 66, 193, 224, 244, 252, 260, 277, 278, 310, 327, 339, 340, 348; of dreams, 287; Qurʾanic, 216, 243, 282, 315; sunna, 327
interpretive authority, 267
intimacy with God, 62, 63
Intiqād al-iʿtirāḍ (of Ibn Ḥajar), 181
invented traditions, *see* forgery of hadith
inverted common link, 119
invisiblility, divine, 60
invocation of God's name, *see dhikr*
inward interpretation, *see ab intra*
inward knowledge (*bāṭin*), 274
Iqbal, Muhammad, 319
ʿIrak ibn Malik, 208
Iran, 288, 291
Iraq, 21, 97, 105, 106, 265, 267, 268, 288, 290, 298; asceticism, 268; opposition to writing hadith, 99; Sufism, 269
ʿIrāqī, Zayn al-Dīn al- (d. 1403), 307
al-Irbilī, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā (d. 693/1294), 291
iron comb (*midray*), 77
ʿĪsā ibn Dīnār (d. 212/828), 162
Isaac of Nineveh (d. 700 CE), 268
Isaac (patriarch), 61
iṣbaʿ (finger), 126
Ishāʿat al-Qurʾān (journal), 322
Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh, 143
Ishmael, 61
iṣlāḥ (reform), 299
Islamic civilization, x, 272
Islamic community, *see umma*
Islamic conquests, 268
Islamic cosmology, 336
Islamic education, 180, 219, 300
Islamic epistemology, 342, 343
Islamic ethics, 348
Islamic feminism Is, 349
Islamic history, 5, 71, 193, 272, 278; early, 2, 40, 53, 113, 242
Islamic identity, 299
Islamic institutions, 316
Islamic law, 45, 51, 75, 77, 83, 86, 87, 105, 113, 122, 162, 163, 165, 168–170, 175, 190, 205, 225, 229, 269, 270, 278, 284, 317, 319, 324, 336, 343, 346, 348; aḥad reports, 252; authority, 228, 339, 340, 349; commentaries, 159; criminal penalties, 178; discourse, 197; discussions, 44; doctrine, 44, 46, 114, 317; epistemology, 342; hadiths, 42, 46, 172, 228, 234, 287, 302; handbooks, 215; origins, 97; sources, 114, 340
Islamic origins, 223
Islamic Studies (journal), 328
Islamic theology, 69, 205, 335
islamport.com, 309
Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUlayya (d. 194), 104
Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar, 145
Ismāʿīlīs, 284; hadith, 53
isnād bundles, 117
isnād criticism, 322; Shiʿi, 212
isnād forgery, 119
isnād al-ʿilm, 273
isnād al-ṣuḥba, 273
isnād-cum-*matn* analysis (ICMA), 50–52, 55, 117, 118, 120, 234, 235, 238
*isnād*s, 2, 5, 8, 27, 40, 42, 43, 45–47, 50–52, 93, 109, 115, 117–121, 162, 168, 173, 194, 209, 215, 218, 223, 226, 229–232, 234, 235, 252, 274, 289, 291, 302, 310, 312, 321, 327, 353; absence of, 290; analysis, 46, 47, 118, 215; appraisal, 307; backward growth of, 46, 228–229, 328; broken, 25; collation, 43, 45; convergences, 116, 120; criticism, 41, 42, 45–47, 51, 52, 126, 284, 307; dating via, 46, 229; defective, 189; dives, 47, 117; elegant, 46; in exegetical traditions, 229, 231; forgery of, 45, 48, 116, 118, 227, 230, 235; incomplete, 232; Juynboll's approach to, 47; in legal texts, 212; and matn, 51, 234,

298, 302; perfect, 45, 47, 225; raising of, 232; reliability of, 44, 230; Sezgin, 43, 48; Shiʿi, 284, 289; single-strand, 118–120, 125; sound, 40; Sufi, 270, 273; Sunni, 289
isolated traditions, *see aḥad* traditions
isrāʾ and *miʿrāj,* 67, 68, 190, 194
isrāʾīliyyat, 231
Istanbul, 11
Istarābādī, Amīn (d. 1036/1627), 284
itch, 79
iʿtiqād, 244, 252
ʿitra, 281

Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 145–148, 235, 236, 276; hadith of, 146, 276
Jacob, 61
al-Jadalī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh, 142
Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad ibn Rāzī, 289
Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), 213, 282, 284, 285; companions of, 286
Jaʿfari school, 286
al-Jāhiliyya, 169
Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), 198
Jalajel, David, 337
Jamāʿat-i Islāmī, 327
Jāmīʿ (Collection), 98; of Tirmidhī, 144
al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya in Dabhel, 302
Jamʿiyyat ʿUlamāʾ-i Islām, 178
Janbāz, Muḥammad ʿAli (d. 2008), 174
jarḥ wa taʿdīl (narrator criticism), 16, 26, 32, 308
Jarīr, 142
Jārūdiyya, 284
jawāb (apodosis), 168
al-Jawharī, Ibn ʿAyyāsh, 289
Jayrājpūrī, Aslam, 324, 326, 327
al-Jazāʾirī, Ṭāhir, 260
Jerusalem, 67
Jesus, 61, 255; birth of, 250; descent of, 252
Jewish scholars, 92
Jewish Studies, 106
Jewish traditions (*isrāʾīliyyat*), 231
Jews, 106, 147, 206; and Christians., 105, 283; oral traditions, 91; permissibility of greeting, 206
jihād, 144, 209, 237, 319
Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, 178
jizya, 208, 209
Job (prophet), 61
Johnson, Ruth, 4
joking, 79
Jonah (prophet), 61
journey, salat during, 22
Judaism, 9, 91, 106; oral teaching, 92; oral tradition, 92; rabbis, 205; revelation in, 60
Al-Judayʿ, Abd Allāh Yūsuf, 38
judges, 106, 306
Judgment, Day of, 216, 249
al-Juʿfī, Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar, 285
al-Junayd, Abū al-Qāsim, 267, 268
jurisprudence, *see fiqh*
jurists, *see fuqahāʾ*
justice, 317, 346, 347; and equality, 347; conceptions of, 337; gender, 336
al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), 245
Juynboll, G.H.A., 47, 48, 52, 54, 55, 116–119, 202, 307, 325
Juynboll, Theodor W., 109

al-Kāfī (of Kulaynī), 285, 288
kalāla, 51, 124, 128
kalām, 8, 53, 166, 241, 242, 244, 246, 248, 250, 256, 300; Ashʿarī, 245; formative period, 243; Māturīdī, 245; schools, 305
al-Kalbī, *tafsīr,* 230
Kamākhī, ʿUthmān ibn Yaʿqūb al- (d. 1171/175), 164
Kamali, Hashim, 347
Kāndhalawī, Muḥammad Ilyās (d. 1944), 304
Kāndahlawī, Muḥammad Zakariyyā (d. 1982), 164, 174, 178
Kāndhalawī, Yūsuf, 304
Karagözoğlu, Mustafa Macit, x, 6, 7, 11
karāmāt al-awlīyāʾ, 246
Karrāmiyya, 274, 275
Kāshānī, Fayḍ (d. 1091/1680), 283, 292
kashf, 160, 271
Kāshif (of Dhahabī), 33
al-Kashmīrī, Muḥammad Anwar Shāh (d. 1933), 164, 302, 303
al-Kattānī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al- Ḥayy al- (1884–1962), 310
Kawtharī, Muḥammad Zāhid al- (d. 1952), 171, 310

Kāẓim, Imam, 285, 287
kernel, historical, 87
khabar al-wāḥid, 213, 251, 255 *see also aḥad*
khabar (pl. *akhbār*), 69, 70, 188, 189, 202, 281
khalaf, 244
Khalifa, Rashad, 330
al-Khalīl (d. c. 786), 198
Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 175/791), 171
Khalīl, Maḥmūd Muḥammad, 138
khalq al-Qurʾān, 243, 246
Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, 321
Khān, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan (d. 1890), 299, 300, 319
khānkāh, 177
al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 32, 34, 138, 218, 260
Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī (d. 741/1340), 76, 78
al-Khaṭīb, Muḥammad ʿAjjāj, 325
khatm Bukhārī, 301
Khaṭṭābī, Abū Sulaymān al- (d. 388/1002), 165, 168, 169, 172, 173, 307
Khawārij, 255; traditions, 216
Khazzāz Qumī, 289
Khirāsh, 21
Khoda Baksh Library, 311
Khoyī, ʿAlī Ṣadrāyī, 292
khulafāʾ (successors): in Sufism, 274
Khurāsān, 267, 269, 274, 277
Khuzayma ibn Thābit, 142
Kinānī, 19
kindness, attributed to Muhammad, 81
Kirmānī, Shams al-Dīn al- (d. 786/1384), 163, 167, 177
kitāb (pl. *kutub*; section in hadith collections), 10, 98, 99
Kitāb ʿAlī, 284
Kitāb al-ʿilal (of al-Madīnī), 28, 33, 34
Kitāb al-Lumaʿ (of al-Sarrāj), 269, 278
Kitāb al-zuhd (of ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak), 266
kitāba, 93
knowledge, 61, 114, 176; accumulation of, 5; accuracy of, 224; acquired by reason, 248; *aḥad* reports, 255; of the ahl al-bayt, 283; authoritative, 341; categories of, 257; certain, 26, 166, 251; chapter in Bukhārī, 351; conceptions of, 299; dissemination of, 48, 118; esoteric, 198; formal, 304; inner, 274; Islamic law, 47; of God, 247, 250; of God's commands, 2; linguistic, 224; modern epistemology, 343; outward, 269; of the past, 4, 8, 10, 114, 196; people of, 224; people possessing, 35; probable, 251, 252, 254; production of, 342; Prophetic, 66, 273, 274; from the Qur'an, 8; religious, 248, 257, 341; revealed, 66; scientific, 192; seekers of, 176; from senses, 250; sources of, 26; Sufism, 198, 269, 270, 274; and taqlīd, 35; transmission of, 8, 180, 219, 231, 256, 273, 339; transmitted, 156, 255, 258
Knysh, Alexander, 268
Kodir, Faqihuddin Abdul, 346–348, 350
Kramers, Jan Hendrik, 117
Krehl, Ludolf, 109
Kufa, 21, 24, 99, 100, 106, 114, 207, 215, 291
al-Kulaynī (or Kulīnī), Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb (d. 329/940–941), 69, 92, 284, 285, 288
Kurdistan, 268
kutub (scriptures), 61, 95
al-Kutub al-arbaʿ a (Four Books), 281, 285–288, 290
al-Kutub al-sitta (Six Books), 18, 34, 141, 163, 168, 215, 282, 287, 297, 300, 301, 305

Lahore, 298, 322, 323
laity, 205
al-Laknawī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy (d. 1304/1886), 164, 299
Lammens, Henri, 42, 43
Lamrabet, Asma, 350
Larcher, Pierre, 189
law, Islamic, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 15, 41, 44, 46, 160, 170, 178, 205, 207, 209–211, 215, 218, 249, 269, 271, 297, 302, 317, 319, 326, 336, 337, 340, 345, 346; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 303; books, 55, 196, 208, 209, 218; and ethics, 345; India, 217, 324; and modernity, 217, 329; origins, 45, 84; ritual, 218; scholars, 41, 269; schools, 172, 197, 210, 211, 214, 270, 299, 318; sources, 84, 165, 270, 275; and Sufism, 218
laypersons, 102
Layth ibn Saʿd, 23

al-Laythī, ʿAlqama ibn Waqqāṣ, 1
leadership (*imāra*), 172, 196, 326, 342
learned elites, 177, 266
learning: centers of, 154; by heart, 97; institutions of, 2, 300; tools for, 300; transmission of, 26, 32, 213, 250, 273, 309
Lebanon, 289, 291
Lecomte, Gerard, 331
lectures, 15, 16, 38, 92, 94, 96, 97, 303
Leehmuis, Fred, 227, 228, 231, 232
legal experts, 205, 265
legal theory, 65; hadith in, 213
letters, 94, 95, 107; of ʿAli, 289
Levant, 266, 298
Leviticus, 216
lexical glosses, 225
lexicography, 113, 123, 198, 225, 302
liberalism, 3; Islamic, 216
license to transmit hadith, *see ijāza*
life of the Prophet, 26, 40, 82, 83, 87, 93, 94, 154; chronology, 52
light, God described as, 253; metaphor for modernity, 9; Muhammad created from, 276; primordial, 276
likes and dislikes of Muhammad, 84, 87
linguistic analysis, 162, 198, 245, 306
link, common, see common link
listening sessions, *see samāʿ*
literacy, 111, 112
literalism, 258
literary arts, 270
literary criticism, 97
literary devices, 85, 86, 114, 123, 187, 224
literary embellishment, 122
literary genres, 84, 161, 169, 187, 189, 191, 192, 194, 195, 197, 198, 201
lithographed texts, 301
living hadith, 304, 329
living tradition, 228
local custom, 209
local hadiths, 270
local histories, 178
local schools of law, 35
logic, 300
longue durée tradition, 178
Lord, *see* Allah
lordship, 61
lost revelations, 64
lost writings, 286
love for the Prophet, 152
lowest heaven, 255
Lucas, Scott, 38
Lucknow, 300
Luke, Gospel of, 171
al-Luʾluʾī, Abū ʿAli Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad (d. 333/944), 173
lying, 19, 22, 104, 214, 282; accusations of, 283; forbidden by reason, 214; about the Prophet, 277

maʿād (resurrection), 245
Maʿālim al-sunan (of al-Khaṭṭābī), 168, 173
Mabānī, Kitāb al-, 70
Mabsūṭ (of Sarakhsī), 197
madhhabs (legal schools), 34, 35, 46, 106, 114, 168–170, 172, 179, 197, 205, 206, 209–211, 216–218, 245, 246, 252, 255, 285, 299–302, 318; Jaʿfari, 286; repudiation by Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 320
Madīnat al-ʿilm, 289
madrasa editions, 301
madrasas, 164, 172, 173, 177, 178, 303; Deoband, 297, 299, 300; eighteenth-century India, 299; Ottoman empire, 177; South Asia, 298
maghāzī (battles of Muhammad), 76, 226, 302
al-Maghribī, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, 31
Magians, 208
Maḥbūb Aḥmad, 303
Mahdi, 255
Mahdiyya (city), 166
Maḥmūd Ḥasan, 304
majhūl al-ḥāl, 22
Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir (d. 1111/1699), 292
al-Makāwī, ʿAlī, 109
al-Maktaba al-Shāmila (www.shamela.ws), 131, 309
al-Maktaba al-Waqfiyya (www.waqfeya.com), 309
malāḥim (apocalyptic traditions), 226
Malāmatiyya, 274

male authority, *see qiwāma*
male superiority, 337, 338
males, capacities, 336
Malibari, Ḥamza, 38
Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), 17, 18, 29, 44, 70, 89, 98, 101, 102, 114, 137, 141, 143, 146, 154, 166, 167, 205, 206, 208–210, 218, 235; *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, 97, 161, 162, 202, 208, 238, 302, 306, 319
Mālikī school, 34, 106, 162, 169, 170, 172, 205, 206, 209, 211, 212, 217, 249; divorce, 217; hadith commentators, 170
Mālikī school of law, 106, 170, 212
Maʿmar ibn Rashīd, 101, 105, 232
Mamluks, 164, 177, 196; patronage of hadith study, 177
al-Manār (journal), 323, 325
mandūb (recommended), 169
Manichaeism, 242
Manṣūr, 142
Manṣūriyya, 69
manumission, 144
manuscripts, 4, 31, 97, 108, 109, 121, 122, 140, 199, 236, 290, 292; exegetical hadith, 233; reconstruction of early exegetical works, 230
maqālāt, 243
maqāmāt (mystical stations), 266
maqāṣid al-sharīʿa, 346–348
al-Maqdisī, ʿAbd al-Ghanī (d. 600/1203), 32
al-Maqdisī, Abū Shama (d. 665/1267), 33
al-Maqdisī, Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir (d. 507/1113), 140
maqlūb (reversed) hadiths, 165
Marçais, William, 109
marfūʿ hadiths, 162
Marghīnānī, 300
marginalia, 301, 302
maʿrifa (gnosis), 269, 274
maʿrifat Allāh (knowledge of God), 257
Maʿrifat anwaʿ ʿulūm al-ḥadīth (of Ibn Ṣalāḥ), 15, 16, 220
al-Marjālawī, Muḥammad Yūnus, 174
Mark, Gospel of, 91
markaz-i millat, 326
marketplace, 275
marriage contract, 217
marriage, 2, 330; in the Qurʾan, 216
Maʿrūf, Bashshār ʿAwwād (b. 1940), 309
Mashhadī, Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar, 291
mashhūr traditions, 252
Masjid al-Aqṣā, 67
masjid, poetry recitation in, 169
Maṣmūdī, Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al- (d. 848), 98
Masrūq (d. 63/683), 100, 142
master-disciple bond, 273, 320
masters, Sufi, *see Shaykh*
mastūr, 22
maʿṣūm, 62, 85
Maṭbaʿa al-ʿAmīriyya, 109
Matn al-ʿAqāʾid (of al-Nasafī), 245
matn (pl. *mutūn*), 2, 5, 76, 93, 115, 117, 123, 126, 127, 168, 223, 229, 234, 260, 302, 315; analysis, 40, 51, 126, 129, 234; clusters, 117, 126
matrūk al-hadith, 22
al-Māturīdī (d. 944), 189
Māturīdī *kalām*, 245, 261
mawḍūʿ (fabricated traditions), 11, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 42, 150, 151, 165, 229, 231, 233, 235, 236, 252, 256, 259, 277, 307; fabricators, 22
Mawdūdī, Abū l-Aʿlā (d. 1979), 325, 327, 328
mawlā, 117, 208
mawqūf ʿalayhi year, 300, 302
maxims, 115, 122, 123, 254, 282, 339; legal, 45, 122
Mayyānishī (d. 583/1187), 152
Maẓāhir al-ʿulūm, 164, 173
al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), 163, 170, 173, 176
al-Māzarī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAli, 166
al-Maʾmūn (Caliph), 285
McAuliffe, Jane, 226
McGill University, 330
meat, 146; of hunted animals, 144
Mecca, 28, 50, 51, 99, 149, 150, 154, 164, 226, 250, 324; opposition to writing traditions, 103
medicine, 289; works of, 283
Medina, 82, 99, 100, 102, 103, 154, 212, 215, 226, 307; Islamic Univeristy, 321; learned people of, 209; sunna of, 95
meekness, attributed to Muhammad, 79

Mehrīzī, Mahdi, 292
Melchert, Christopher, x, 8, 10, 11, 49, 51, 123, 205
memorization, 101, 120, 130, 213
memory, 4, 85, 92, 95, 97, 122, 213, 322; preference for, 5; reliability of, 5, 105, 119, 213; transmission from, 96, 107
men and women: gender, 336–338, 341, 347, 348, 350
meritorious acts, 259
Mernissi, Fatima, 350, 351
messengers: Muhammad, 17, 142, prophets, 61, 69, 248, 250
metaphor, 225
metaphorical interpretation, 225, 260
Metcalf, Barbara, 304
methodology: dating traditions, 115; exegetical, 226, 230; hadith analysis, 4–6, 9, 10, 16, 38, 40, 43, 45, 47–49, 51–55, 96, 116, 117, 119, 166, 167, 176, 225, 229, 232–234, 238, 244, 246, 248, 253, 258, 282, 301, 305, 312, 328, 329, 335, 339, 341, 348; *isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis, 235; legal, 270
Mewat (region of northern India), 304
Middle Ages, 190, 200
middle class, 178
Middle East, 176, 272, 319
midray (iron comb) 77
miḥna, 62, 243, 268
millet Ibrahīm, 339
minbar, 1
mind, 60
Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, 216
miracles, 64, 71, 81, 248, 250, 254; attributed to Muhammad, 80–82; of saints, 246; of the Imams, 291
miʿrāj (ascension), 67, 68, 72, 193, 255
miscellanies, 291
Mishkāt al-anwār (of ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan Ṭabrisī), 291
Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ (of al-Tabrīzī), 88, 300–302
Mishnah, 91, 92, 106
misogynistic hadith, 316, 335, 337, 338, 340, 345, 351
mission, Prophetic, 71, 81
missionaries: colonial India, 321; Tablīghī Jamāʿat, 304
mistakes in narration of hadith, 3, 19, 23, 24, 31, 33, 36, 166, 172, 215
mizāj shinās-i rasūl, 327
al-Mizzī, Jamāl al-Dīn (d. 742/1341), 20, 24, 33, 245, 309
mnemonic aids, 92, 93, 122, 233
model behavior, *see* sunna
modernism, Islamic, 310, 321, 329
modernity, challenges of, 198
Molla Gūrānī (d. 893/1488), 163
monasticism, 268
money, 145, 150
Mongol invasions, 272, 275, 291
monogamy, 216
moon, 276; splitting of, 81
morality, Islamic, 75, 77, 113, 291, 292, 304, 344, 350
Morocco, 310
morphology, 118, 124
Moscow, 218
Moses, 61, 63, 160
Most, Glenn, 179
motifs, 85, 117, 118, 122
motion, 243
Motzki, Harald, 10, 41, 43, 48, 49, 51–53, 55, 117–119, 122, 217, 229, 230, 233, 234, 235
Muʿādh ibn Jabal, 22–24, 210
Muʿawwidhatān (Suras 113 and 114), 64
Mubārakpūrī [Mubārakfūrī], Abū al-ʿUlā Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 1935), 164, 167, 174, 181, 303
mubtadaʾ, 168
mufassirūn, 193–195, 224, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 245
Mufīd, Shaykh al- (d. 413/1032), 64, 69
*muftī*s, 205
Mughal empire, 298; Ḥanafī law in, 217
Mughalṭāʾī, ʿAlā al-Dīn, 33
Mughīra ibn Saʿīd, 283
Mughnī (of Ibn Qudāma), 211
Mughulṭāy ibn Qilīj (d. 762/1361), 163, 172
muḥaddithūn, 162, 166, 225, 245, 269, 342
Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufra (d. 435), 162
Muḥammad ʿAwwāma (b. 1940), 310

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbbād, 144
Muḥammad ibn Abī Muḥammad, 235
Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿUmayr (d. 217/832), 287
Muhammad ibn Baḥr Ruhnī, 284
Muḥammad ibn Ḥumayd, 234
Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhim, Raḍī al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbali, 38
Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-Shahīd al-Awwal (d. 786/1384), 291
Muḥammad ibn Muslim, 282
Muḥammad ibn Muṭarrif, 24
Muhammad (prophet), 2, 7, 20, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 33, 40–42, 50, 51, 54, 55, 61, 62, 64–68, 70–72, 75–87 *passim*, 88–91, 93, 94, 104, 105, 113, 142, 146, 148, 154, 164, 170, 172, 187–190, 192, 194–197, 200, 206, 210, 216, 223, 225, 228, 232, 241, 242, 249, 250, 255, 274–276, 278, 281–283, 291, 325, 327, 330, 335; absence in exegetical hadith, 227; appearance, 78, 81, 87; beard of, 78; depictions of, 76, 78, 87; dislikes of, 78; emigration (*see* Hijra); emulation of, 85; exemplar, 7, 26, 81, 326; feelings of, 82; glorification of, 85; humanity of, 66; images of, 75, 84; lawgiver, 7; pious veneration, 90; wives of, 78; words of, 188, 189
Muḥammad ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/870), 162
Muḥammad Shafīʿ, 174
al-Muḥāsibī, Ḥārīth, 267
Muir, William, 39–41, 321, 322
Mujaddidī-Naqshbandiyya, 321
Mujāhid (d. 104/722), 232, 233, 235, 238; students of, 233; *Tafsīr*, 231
Muʿjam al-mufahras li alfāẓ al-ḥadīth al-nabawī, 306
Muʿjam al-mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qurʾān, 305
Mujir al-Khaṭīb, Shaykh, 311
mujtahid mutlaq, 318
Mukhtalif al-ḥadīth (of Ibn Qutayba), 123
mulḥid (deviants), 259
multiple authorship, 344
multiplicity, divine, 242
multivalent expressions, 283
munāwala, 98
al-Mundhir ibn Mālik, Abū Naḍra (d. c. 727), 100
Mundhirī, 307
Munkar and Nakīr, 254
Muntajab al-Dīn Rāzī, 291
Muntaqa al-Jumān (of al-ʿĀmilī), 292
muqallid, 35, 36
Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), 114, 193, 194, 231
al-Murādī, al-Rabīʿ ibn Sulaymān, 306
Muranyi, Miklos, 232
muraqqaʿa (patched frock), 270
murder, 144
mursal hadith, 154
Musa, Aisha Y., 71
Musaddad, 17, 137, 138, 139, 147
musalsal bi al-awwaliyya, 301
musalsal hadiths, 153
muṣannaf collections, 95–98, 140, 141, 161, 166, 286; of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, 29, 105, 229; of Saʿīd, 96
muṣannifūn, 95, 96, 100, 161
muṣḥaf, 64, 250
Mushkil al-ḥadīth, 260
music, Sufi, 320
Muslim community, *see umma*
Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 15, 17, 18, 30, 70, 77, 79, 80, 108, 125, 126, 140, 145–146, 148, 149, 151, 181, 183, 214, 311; modern print editions, 310; *Muqaddima*, 21; *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 18, 31, 33, 42, 76, 92, 99, 108, 109, 145–147, 152–155, 161–163, 166, 168, 173, 177, 178, 189, 215, 226, 227, 302, 306
musnad, 20, 95, 99, 126, 140, 141, 166, 277, 306, 308; of Abū Yaʿlā, 19; of Ibn Ḥanbal, 29, 140, 307, 309; of al-Ṭayālisī, 126
musnid (hadith master), 166, 310; *musnid al-ʿaṣr*, 310
mustakhraj, 162, 311
muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth, 15, 16, 37, 300, 305, 307, 308
mutʿa marriage, permissibility, 283
mutashābihāt (ambiguous texts), 227, 283
al-Mutawakkil (Caliph), 268
mutawātir transmission, 207, 216, 250, 254; in theological discussions, 256 (*see also tawātur*)

Muʿtazila, 192, 195, 198, 200, 207, 216, 242, 244, 253, 254, 257, 258, 260, 267, 278, 324; theology, 242; traditions, 216
Muthannā ibn Ibrāhīm, 234
Muttaqī al-Hindī, *see* ʿAlī ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn
Muttaqī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1592), 298
muttaṣil, 20
Muwaṭṭā of Mālik, 18, 97, 98, 141, 161–164, 167, 169, 172, 178, 208, 209, 218, 300, 302, 303, 306, 319
Muwaṭṭā of al-Shaybānī, 300, 302
al-Muʾayyad, Sulṭān, 177
mysticism, 198, 267, 268, 270, 271, 273, 274, 285
mystics, 60, 71, 267, 285

nabī, 61 *see also* prophets
Nāfiʿ, 86, 117
nafs (soul), 274
Nagel, Tilman, 43
Nahj al-balāgha, 283, 289, 290
al-Nainawāʾī, Ḥumayd ibn Ziyād, 284
Najaf, 283
Najāshī, Aḥmad, 286, 288
naked fakirs, 274
al-Nakhaʿī, Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd (d. 96/715), 100
al-Nakhʿī, Ibrāhīm, 142
naql, 242, 246, 247, 249
Naqshbandī order, 298
narration of hadith, 2, 17, 19–21, 23–25, 27–30, 33, 36, 40, 88, 90, 130, 137, 138, 140, 141, 146, 148, 149, 152–154, 156, 254, 259, 270, 271, 277, 282, 284, 285, 289, 291, 292, 298, 301, 306, 308, 310, 339, 343–346, 348
narrations: multiple, 30
narratives: cohesion, 122; common link, 118; diversity, 121; exegesis of, 229; exegetical, 231; frame, 2; historical, 120; in hadith, 117, 123, 124, 192, 304; oral transmission, 123; reconstruction of, 121; Shiʿi, 284
narrator cohort, 27
narrator criticism, 32; *ʿilm al-rijāl*, 16, 17, 19–22, 24–27, 29–33, 36, 38, 116, 148, 149, 271, 273, 277, 283, 290, 301, 308, 310
Nasafī, Abū Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn al- (d. 537/1142), 245
Nasawī, al- (d. c. 290/902), 108
al-Nasāʾī, 18, 31, 126, 140, 151, 156, 163, 166, 215; commentaries, 164; *Sunan*, 300
naskh, 63, 64, 69, 123, 209, 224, 225, 282
naṣṣ, 248
nature, Prophetic, 276
navel, raising hands above, 320
Nawādir (rarities in hadith), 287
Nawādir al-uṣūl (of al-Tirmidhī), 267
al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf (d. 676/1277), 163, 166, 168, 171–173, 176, 179, 245, 267
Nayl al-awṭār (of al-Shawkānī), 170
Naẓīr Ḥusayn Dihlawī (d. 1902), 299, 319, 322
nazzala, 61
al-Naẓẓām (d. 221/836), 243
neo-classical Islam, 336–338, 340, 342–348, 351
night journey (*isrāʾ*), 190, 194
nineteenth century CE, 275
Nīshāpūr, 149, 244, 265, 269, 270
Nīshāpūrī, Abū Saʿīd (d. c. 485/1092), 290
Nīshāpūrī, Fattāl (d. 508/1114), 291
niyya (intention; pl. *niyyāt*), 2, 115, 259
Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), 245
Niẓāmiyya madrasas, 245
Noah (prophet), 61
Nöldeke, Theodor, 67
Noor Institution, 292
norms, 93, 274, 275, 316, 324
North Africa, 176, 217
nose rings, 274
notebooks, 24, 93, 95, 96, 107, 236
notes, written, 93, 100, 101, 103, 153, 233
nubuwwa, 245
Nukhbat al-fikar (of Ibn Ḥajar), 34
al-Nuʿmānī, Ibn Abī Zaynab, 289
Nūrī, Ḥusayn (d. 1320/1902), 292

oaths, 150
obedience, 253, 273
obligations, 86, 285
obscure verses, 2
obscurities in hadith, 283

occasions of revelation, *see asbāb al-nuzūl*
ocean, Prophet's knowledge compared to, 273
omissions, textual, 122
omnipotence, divine, 61
ontological assumptions, 337, 338
ontological equality, 337
ontology, Qurʾanic, 338
opinion, personal, 191, 207, 224, 225, 227, 245, 318 *see also* raʾy
orality, 106
oral narratives, 26
Oral Torah, 91
oral transmission, 11, 25, 43, 84, 85, 87, 91–93, 106, 107, 112, 120–123, 128, 199, 228, 233, 270, 301; oral narratives, 26
order, Sufi, *see ṭarīqa*
orientalists, 200, 236, 305, 306; hadith scholarship, 39–53; India, 321
orthodoxy, 233
otters, skin of, 146
Ottoman empire, 166, 171, 312; court, 166; Ḥanafī law in, 217
outward actions, 266
Oxus river (Amu Darya), 108, 267
Özkan, Halit, 174
Özşenel, Mehmet, 174

pairs, opposite, 86
Pakatchi, Ahmad, x, 6, 281
Pakistan, 199, 325, 326, 329, 330; Ayyūb Khān regime, 325; Constitution, 325, 326
Pālanpūrī [Pālanfūrī], Saʿīd Aḥmad, 311
palm trees, date, 80
Palmer, Aiyub, x, 7, 265
papyrus, 93
parables, used by Muhammad, 80
paradise, 66, 77, 254, 276
parchment, 93, 101
parents, prayers for, 19
Paret, Rudi, 50
partial common link, 47, 116–121, 124, 126, 234, 353
Parwēz, Ghulām Aḥmad, 324–328
passions, 288
past authorities, 114, 206, 210, 215
past, knowlege of, 4, 5, 250
path, well-trodden, 98
patriarchy, 337, 338, 340, 344, 348
patronage, 7, 176–179
Pavlovitch, Pavel, x, 11, 51, 113
PDF editions of hadith works, 309
Peace be upon you (*salām ʿalayk*), 206
pearls, Muhammad's perspiration compared to, 77
Pen, primordial, 276
penalties: adultery, 209
Pentateuch, 91
People of the Book, 209
perfection: faith, 348; isnāds, 47; of the Qurʾan, 61
perfume, 335; used by Muhammad, 78
pericopae, 27
periphrasis, 224
permissibility: entering a house, 77; food, 147, 148; levels of, 272, 340; rational reflection, 248
persecution of early Muslims, 51
Persia, 208 *see also* Iran
pessimism, historical, 319, 320
Peters, Francis E., 318
Peters, Rudolph, 43
petition, legal, 217
philology, 129, 307
philosophy of existence, 242
philosophy, 246, 255, 300, 348; philosophers, 28
physical appearance of Muhammad, 81, 82, 84, 87, 304
pietists (*ʿubbād*), 266
piety, 7, 44, 87, 192; hadith-based, 8, 113; models of, 304; Muhammad-centered, 7, 228; personal, 90; pious exaggeration, 108; popular, 316, 321
pilgrimage, 79, 329; to shrines, 320; Sufi, 318
plagiarism, accusations of, 175
plants and animals, 61
plateau, Iranian, 267
plot, narrative, 117
poetry, 76; poets, 27; recitation of, 169; Sufi, 270, 271
poets, 27
poison be upon you (*al-sāmm ʿalaykum*), 206
polemics, 37, 165, 170, 192, 194, 195, 246, 283, 303, 322, 323; Sunni-Shiʿi, 197

politicians, 4
poll tax, 209 *see also jizya*
pollution, ritual, 337
pork, prohibition of, 205
postcolonial discussions of hadith, 325–327
post-Ibn Ḥajar era, 16
poverty, 275, 319
power, 177, 276, 336; British, 299, 319; decline of Muslim, 318
practice, 34–36, 101, 141, 143, 149, 190, 205, 260, 266, 298; approved, 93; as basis for sunna, 209; authentic, 299; correct, 35; and creed, 254; hadith-based, 299; Islamic, 33, 34, 322, 324; legal, 217; of early Muslims, 308; Prophetic, 33; religious, 20, 25, 339; ritual, 324, 326; social, 178; Sufi, 268, 275, 299
prayer, 19, 22, 23, 38, 64, 68, 79, 143, 150, 205, 206, 211, 220, 255, 257, 320, 322, 324, 325, 329; of the Prophet, 144; for rain, 80
preaching, 304, 347
precedent, 113, 298, 317, 318, 320, 326
precision in terminology, 34
predestination, 144, 260
predicate (*khabar*), 168
prediction of future events, 328
pre-dogmatic era, 71
prepositions, 121
presence, divine, 265
preservation of hadith, 5, 59, 63, 93, 187, 192, 196, 200, 209, 328
primordial humanity, 337
printing, 199, 297, 300, 306, 309, 310, 312; impact on hadith study, 310; printed editions of hadith works, 92, 131, 178, 231, 306, 309
private and public spheres, 107, 336
private communications, 107
probable evidence, 246, 251, 254
probable knowledge, 251
probity: legal, 297, 298; religious (*al-ʿadl*), 20
problems: in hadith, 148, 150, 200, 277, 301; legal, 46, 230; theological, 246
production, literary, 187, 196, 198; commentaries, 162–164, 177, 302, 305; critical editions, 306; hadith works, 83, 189, 200, 288, 308; of knowledge, 341; printed works, 199, 306; written records, 102
proficiency in hadith science, 176
progressive Islam, 338, 344
progress, moral, 343, 344
prohibited actions (*harām*), 154, 169, 215, 257, 271
prohibition: on discussion during lessons, 177; on writing traditions, 107, 154
proliferation of hadith, 85, 199, 230
promises: broken, 80; divine, 277
prompting, inner, 60, 63
proof, 247, 251, 256, 259; decisive, 246; *khabar wāḥid*, 255; rational, 244, 247, 249; textual, 270
prophecy, 60, 65, 242, 247, 250, 330; Qurʾanic, 224
Prophet: *see also* Muhammad, *sīra*; actions of, 328; attribution to, 17, 154, 198, 328; authority of, 26, 153, 316, 317, 325; after-death appearances, 276; *baraka* of, 273; Barelvī views of, 276; behavior of, 196; character of, 77, 79, 82, 273; charisma of, 270; commands of, 208; companions of (*see* companions); death of, 25, 62; exegesis, 225; experience of God, 67; extra-Qurʾanic authority of, 327; fallibility of, 340; and Gabriel, 67; hadith from, 104, 192, 193, 209, 319; household of, 282, 283; humanity of, 85, 327; and Imams, 286; inspiration, 59; knowledge, 273, 274; legacy of, 270; living sunna, 329; love for, 152; miracles of, 291; as moral exemplar, 304; perfection of, 85; prayers of, 64; preaching of, 83; quotations from, 198, 217; representatives of, 273; revelation to, 63, 117, 317; reverence for, 66; sayings of, 83, 84, 188, 190–192; sinlessness, 66; 82, 85, 238, 250, 329; spirit of, 329; successors to, 8, 273; Sufi saints as successors to, 274; Sufi views of, 273, 275, 276, 298; sunna of, 26, 59, 64, 83, 197, 210, 241, 265, 274, 308, 327, 328, 340; teaching of, 319, 344; time of, 42, 346; traditions from, 19, 27, 33, 43, 44, 47, 67, 86, 97, 104, 142, 153, 154, 210, 250, 281; veracity of, 241; way of, 275; words of, 41, 77, 86, 87, 114, 140, 148, 187–190, 193–201, 209, 271

Prophet-centered piety, 7
prophethood, 247; signs of, 63
Prophetic inspiration, 67
Prophetic-revelatory event, 65, 71
prophets, 60, 61, 63, 81, 254, 269, 272, 274
prostrations, 150 *see also* salat; *rakaʿāt*
proto-*isnād*s, 232
proto-*sīra*, 51
Psalms of Muhammad's Household (*Ṣaḥīfa al-sajjādiyya*), 285
Psychology (of Ibn Sīnā), 330
public instruction, 94
public life, women's exclusion from, 341
publishing: Arabic, 306; Salafi, 308
pudenda, 212
pumpkin, 79
punctuation, 147
punishment: divine, 211; prescribed, 144; in the tomb, 79, 254
Punjab, Ahl-i Ḥadīth in, 322
purificationist ideas, 320, 323
purification rites, 142, 143
purity, ritual, 96

Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad, *see* Thaʿlabī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Naṣr
Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, 163, 166, 176
Qāḍī al-Quḍāʿī (d. 454/1062), 283
Qāḍī Nuʿmān, 284
al-Qādir Biʾllāh (Caliph), 244
Qalandars, 274
qalb (heart), 62
al-Qarnī, Uways, 274
al-Qāsimī, Jamāl al-Dīn, 260
al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517), 109, 163
Qatāda ibn Diʿāma (d. 117/735), 28, 226, 235
qāṭiʿ al-dalāla, 247
qāṭiʿ al-thubūt, 247
al-Qaṭṭān, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd (d. 198/814), 126–128
qawl al-rasūl (words of the Prophet), 250
qawwālī music, 320
Qaysī, Ashhab al- (d. 204/820), 172
qibla, 324
qirāʿa (recitation), 64, 96, 98, 108
qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 290
qiwāma (male authority over women), 337, 338
qiyās (analogical reasoning), 207, 209, 210, 249, 250, 258, 272, 275, 320
Qom, 283, 287; as educational center, 288
quantitative analysis, 123, 126
al-Quḍāʿī (d. 1062), 191
al-Qudūrī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (d. 428/1037), 211
question-answer pattern, 170
Qumī, Ibn Qūlawayh (d. 367/978), 289
Qumī, Ibn Shādhān, 290
quotation of hadith, 20, 35, 36, 105, 150, 188– 190, 195–197, 199, 200, 213, 215, 223
Qurʾan, 40, 65, 70, 83, 105, 187, 195, 198, 225, 242; Abraham in, 339; abrogation of, 130, 209; ambiguous passages, 227; application determined by hadith, 207; and Bible, 122, 321; and divine revelation, 60; and hadith, 59, 65, 70, 71, 193, 197, 199, 207, 210, 215, 225, 258, 269, 276, 278, 281, 282, 322, 341; and *ḥadīth qudsī*, 70; and Islamic law, 84, 207, 210, 272; authority of, 65, 200, 282, 339; canonization of, 62; commands, 35, 206; commentaries, 6, 43, 114, 170, 171, 188–190, 193, 194, 223, 227, 229, 245, 307; concordance of, 305; conflict with, 252, 254; context of, 2; copies, 101, 147; createdness, 243, 258; epistemology of, 343; established by *tawātur*, 250, 256; eternity, 62; ethics, 217; exalted place of, 70; exegesis, 10, 43, 193, 195, 224–228, 231, 238, 248, 258, 285, 300 *see also tafsīr*; Fazlur Rahman and, 329; German translation, 50; God in, 69; inimitability (*iʿjāz*), 70; intent of, 329; interpretation of, 7, 33, 83, 209, 216, 223, 224, 226, 238, 268, 340, 343; knowledge from, 8; Moses, 160; Muhammad in, 75, 81, 82; obscure verses, 226; perfection of, 62, 64, 330; plain meaning of, 318; quotations from, 27; recitation of, 153; as recited (*maṭlū*) revelation, 7, 317; revelation, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 71, 353; and Salafism, 199; *ṣalāt*, 323; and other scriptures, 61; Shiʿi exegesis,

286; as source for Muhammad's biography, 41; as source for Muhammad's life, 40; source for the Prophet's message, 329; sufficiency of, 322, 323, 327; and sunna, 41, 65, 66, 71, 197, 242, 244, 248– 250, 258, 265, 275, 281, 305, 321, 326, 329, 330, 338, 339, 341, 347; superiority to hadith, 322; *taʾwīl*, 282; text of, 35, 64, 105; traditions in conflict with, 207, 260; transmission of, 256; universality of, 324; variant readings, 64; verses of, 277; writing of, 92, 102, 104, 107, 323; in world literature, 1
Qurʾanists, 3, 322, 323, 325, 326, 330; opposition to, 326, 327
*qurʾan*s (individual revelations to Muhammad), 62, 64, 65, 67, 69
Quraysh, 146
Qureshi, Jawad Anwar, x, 6, 8, 9, 297
Qurra ibn Khālid, 23
al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273), 194, 195
al-Qushayrī, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 465/1074), 265, 266, 268–271, 274
quṣṣāṣ, 83
Qutayba ibn Saʿīd, 23, 24, 142, 145
Quṭn ibn Nusayr, 17

Rabīʿ ibn Ṣabīḥ (d. 161/777), 268
Raḍi al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266), 291
rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt, 211
Rāfiḍis, 231
Ragab, Ahmed, 341
Rahman, Fazlur, 62, 318, 324–330, 339, 340
rain, 61, 80
raising hands, *see rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*
Rajab (month), 175
rajul, 168
rakaʿāt, 324
Ramaḍān, Mistrī Muḥammad, 324
Rāmahurmuzī, al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, 25, 34
Ramlī, Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Raslān al- (d. 844/1441), 163
raqṣ (dancing), 270
Rāshidūn caliphs, 66, 210
Rasūl Allāh, *see* Prophet
rationalism: ethics, 344, 345, 348; hermeneutics, 258; rationalists, 207; rationalist theology, 197, 338; and traditionalism, 189; Western, 321
rationality, 214, 330, 338, 351
Rawāfiḍ, 69
Rāwandī, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, 291
Rāwandī, Qutb al-Dīn (d. 573/1177), 290, 291
Rawḍa al-kāfī, 288
Rawḥ ibn ʿUbāda (d. 205/820), 105
Rayy, 288
al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *see* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī
al-Rāzī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 938), 195
raʾy, 46, 206–209, 224, 225, 227, 317, 329, 336
reading aids, 301
readings, 98, 124, 191; aloud, 97, 169; difficult, 123; erroneous, 97; long, 122; short (*brevior lectio*), 122; variant, 86
reason, 214; and analogy, 249; arguments from, 242, 246, 248, 252, 259; conceptions of, 258; conflict with revelation, 260; and custom, 215; and dialectical methods, 241; and exegesis, 242, 258; evidence from, 246–249, 257; gives rise to doubt, 258; hadith in conflict with, 252, 258, 260; interpretation according to, 252; in jurisprudence, 207; knowledge acquired from, 248; knowledge of God, 259; limits of, 258; proofs from, 248; rejection of, 248, 258; and religion, 214, 248; and revelation, 247, 249, 257, 258; role of, 248, 257; and theology, 247; and transmitted evidence, 8, 247–249, 254, 257
reasoning, 65, 104, 161, 347
rebellions, 42
recensions, 18, 97, 98, 108
recital of hadith, 96, 97, 108, 191 *see also qirāʿa*
recitation, 107, 301, 307; in salat, 70, 324; of commentaries, 286; of hadith, 97, 102, 108, 191, 290, 317; from memory, 107; Quʾranic, 64, 70, 146
reconciliation of texts, 223, 302

reconstruction of traditions, 124, 128, 190
recording of hadith, 18, 31, 40, 92, 102, 138, 223, 226, 232–234, 250, 260, 286, 287, 325, 329
redaction, 124, 230; books, 95; Gospels, 92
reform, 9, 297; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 303; educational, 300; hadith-based, 316, 318; hadith-critical, 316; legal, 290, 316, 330; modernist, 329, 330; Prophetic, 339; Salafi, 308; Westernizing, 330
reformation, 315, 316
reformism, 159; reformists, 299, 300, 316, 330
regional schools of law, 114
Reinhart, Kevin, 55
reinterpretion of hadith, 215, 315, 316
reliability: of hadith, 120, 193; of *isnād*s, 255, 260; of narrators, 20, 22, 25, 27, 145, 168; of sunna, 323; of traditions, 23, 28, 35, 87, 145, 210; of transmitted evidence, 247
religion, 91; aims of, 242; ancient, 242; and reason, 214, 248; challenges to, 258; criticisms of, 259; experts in, 205; freedom of, 315; fundamentals of, 242, 245; history of, 59; *isnād* is a part of, 5
religiosity, 272
religious authority, 5, 266, 267, 316, 324; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 323; after Muhammad, 317; place of hadith in, 316; sources of, 2, 317; structure of, 5, 9, 316; Sufism, 273, 274; Sunni Islam, 304
religious discourse, 191, 199, 200
religious duties, *see ʿibādāt*
religious elites, 178
religious establishments, 278
religious groups, 242, 255
religious guidance, 324
religious innovation, *see bidʿa*
religious instruction, 304
religious virtuosi, 266
renunciants (*zuhhād*), 266
renunciation (*zuhd*), 144, 266
repetitions, 81, 85, 171, 320
reports, *see hadith, akhbār*
representation: of women, 341; of Muhammad, 81
repudiation and divorce, 144
repudiation of hadith, 322 *see also* Qurʾanists
repugnant traditions, 345
required actions, 205
Resurrection of Jesus, 91
resurrection, hour of, 42
revealed guidance, 7, 61, 69
revelation, 61, 62, 69, 71; ad hoc 64, 67; biblical, 60; conceptions of, 61–63, 69; definitions, 60; divine, 60, 61, 91, 209; Divine self-revelation, 60; doctrine of, 65; externality of, 62; extra-Qurʾanic, 67, 68; Gabriel, 63; Hebrew Bible, 60; imams, 212; Incarnation, 60; and inspiration, 65, 71; knowledge acquired by, 257; limited, 63; lost, 64; Muslim understandings of, 71, 353; occasions of, 224, 225; ongoing, 61; pre-Islamic, 61; post-Prophetic, 59, 69; process of, 82; Qurʾan, 59, 62, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71; and reason, 247, 248, 257, 258, 338; recitation of, 62; recited, 317; revelatio, 60; scriptural, 61; scriptures, 61; *sharʿ*, 205; of sunna, 7; *waḥy*, 61–63, 68, 70
revelatory activity, 59, 62, 64, 65, 70
revelatory experiences, 63, 68
revisionist historiography, 3, 47
revival and reform, 9
revivalism, 320
rewards and punishments, 257
rhetoric, 300
rib, woman created from, 337
Riḍā, Imam, 282, 285, 287, 289
Riḍā, Rashīd (d. 1935), 179, 298, 299, 305, 307, 323, 325
right guidance (*sunan al-hudā*), 65, 66
Rightly Guided Caliphs, *see* Rāshidūn
rights: of God, 285; of humans, 285; of women, 341, 347
riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm, 97, 119
riḥla of Kattānī, 310
rijāl criticism, *see ʿilm al-rijāl*
ripe fruit, sale of, 145, 146
Rippin, Andrew, 1, 11, 81, 229, 230, 231
Risāla (of al-Qushayrī), 270
Risāla (of al-Shāfiʿī), 33, 123, 306, 307
Risāla al-dhahabiyya, 285

Risālat al-ḥuqūq (of Imam Sajjād), 285
ritual, 79, 192, 196, 272; pilgrimage, 79; prayer, 322, 326; practice, 275; purity, 144
river, saints' knowledge compared to, 273
riwāya (transmission path), 108
riwāya al-masmūʿa, 96
riwāya bil-maʿnā (non-literal transmission), 104, 121
Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn (of al-Nawawī), 179
Rodinson, Maxime, 43
Rubin, Uri, 43
rubrics, use in hadith collections, 143, 147–150, 151, 154
rūḥ al-qudus (holy spirit), 67, 68
rūḥ, 60, 67
rulers, 42, 102, 191
rulings, legal, 35, 114, 148, 168, 170, 205–207, 211, 213, 217, 218, 260, 270, 272, 299, 302, 319
Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn), 69
ruyʾā al-ṣādiqa (authentic dreams), 63
ruʾyat Allāh (beatific vision), 72, 254, 257, 353

Ṣabīgh ibn ʿIsl, 226, 227
Sachau, Eduard, 41
sacred and secular, 321
sacrifices, 326, 144
Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 283
Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās, 54
ṣadaqa, 208
Sadeghi, Behnam, 11, 36, 121, 122
Ṣādiqa (nickname for hadith collection of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ), 103
ṣadr (chest), 126
ṣadūq, 22, 23
Safavids, 292
Ṣafwān ibn ʿAssāl, 142, 143
Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, 287
ṣaḥāba, *see* companions of Muhammad
Sahāranpūrī, Aḥmad ʿAlī (d. 1297/1880), 109
Sahāranpūrī, Khalīl Aḥmad (d. 1927), 7, 164, 169, 173, 174, 302–304
ṣāḥib raʾy, 207
Ṣaḥīfa al-sajjādiyya, 285
ṣaḥīfa, 43, 100, 103, 140
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *see* al-Bukhārī
Ṣaḥīḥ movement, 99
Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *see* Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj
ṣaḥīḥ traditions, 21, 118, 251, 252, 254, 255, 260, 292, 303, 307
Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s), 166, 170, 189, 191, 288, 300
Saḥnūn (d. 256/870), 170, 172
Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūba, 96, 97
Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, 226, 235
Saʿīd ibn Masrūq, 142
Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib (94/712), 28
Sāigh, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Nāfiʿ al- (d. 206/822?), 162
sainthood, *see wilāya*
saints, *see awliyāʾ*
Sajjād, Imam, 283, 284, 285
al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), 19, 175, 196
al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ, 214, 244, 248, 258
Salafism, 9, 35, 36, 197, 199, 200, 214, 266, 272, 273, 275–278, 298, 305, 307, 308, 316, 320, 321, 330, 343
salafiyya (theological salafism), 244
salat, 22, 23, 144, 149, 154, 322, 323; late afternoon, 22; prescription of, 68; recitation in, 70; sunset, 22, 23; while traveling, 22
sales, 154
Ṣāliḥ ibn Kaysān (d. c. 140/757–758), 101
Salṭ, 21
salty water, 146
salutations, 80, 206
salvation, 7, 164
samāʿ (audition), 96, 97, 108, 270, 298, 310; certificates, 97; and hadith transmission, 4, 19, 23–25, 30, 48, 96–98, 104, 108, 140; and memory, 122; and writing, 92
samāʿāt (public lectures), 97
al-Samarqandī, Abū al-Layth (d. 983), 189
samʿi (auditory evidence), 249
sanad (chain of transmission), *see isnad*
al-Ṣanʿānī, ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827), *see* ʿAbd al-Razzāq
sanguine scholars, 52
sāqiṭ, 22
al-Sarakhsī's (d. 483), 197
Sarawī, Ibn Shahr Āshūb (d. 588/1192), 291
sard al-āḥadīth, 301

al-Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh (d. 378/988), 269
Satan, 64
Saudi ruling family, 178
ṣawm, 137
al-Ṣayrafī, Abū Samīna, 283
Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, 39, 40, 322, 330
Sayyid ʿAlawī al-Mālikī (1944–2004), 310
sāʾir al-qurʾan, 70
Schacht, Joseph, 9, 10, 41, 44–48, 55, 114–118, 122, 209, 227–229, 328
Scheiner, Jens, 117, 118, 120, 234
schemata, 85
Schoeler, Gregor, 10, 11, 48, 50–53, 55, 117, 120, 122, 233, 234, 236
scholars: authority, 311; consensus, 44; culture, 46; deaths of, 26; debates, 10, 43, 172; families, 176; rivalries, 165, 176; scholarly apparatus, 42, 52; scholarly class, 267, 304; scholarly discourse, 160
schools: Ḥilla, 292; Imāmī, 289, 290; legal *see madhhabs*; missionary, 323; theological, 245, 247, 305
science of narrators, *see ʿilm al-rijāl*
sciences: classification, 241; hadith, 100, 129, 339, 341, 346; Islamic, 249; *kalām*, 241; traditional, 343; universal (*al-ʿilm al-al-kullī*), 241; Western, 321
scribes, 65, 102, 147; scribal errors, 122
scriptural interpretation, *see tafsīr*
scripturalism, 294, 322, 323, 324
scriptures, 59, 61, 65, 92, 106
sea creatures, eating, 147, 148
search engines, 309
sectarianism, 284, 320, 326
seduction, of Adam by Eve, 337
seeing God, *see ruʾyat Allāh* (beatific vision)
self-disclosure, divine, 60
self-doubts, attributed to Muhammad, 81
semantic consistency, 124, 127, 128
sensual experience, 218
Sepoy Revolt (1857), 300, 319
sermon, Friday, 154
seven scholars of Medina, 26
sex, extramarital (*zināʾ*), 335
sexual desires, Prophet's control of, 78
sexual equality, 217
sexuality, women's, 337
Sezgin, Fuat, 43, 44, 93, 229, 230, 232
Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī (d. 1949), 303
Al-Shaʿbī (d. 105/723–724?), 147, 206, 207
Shādhān ibn Jabraʾīl, 291
shādhdh (unusual) traditions, 20, 165
shafāʿa, 190, 193, 254
al-Shāfiʿī, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs (d. 204/820), 33, 34, 46, 64, 65, 84, 123, 143, 154, 189, 193, 196, 209, 213, 214, 216, 218, 232, 270, 317 (*see also Risāla* of al-Shāfiʿī)
Shāfiʿī school, 34, 211, 212, 217, 265, 299, 311
Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1824), 299
Shāh Ismāʿīl Shahīd (d. 1830), 299
Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), 299, 301, 302, 307, 311, 318–320, 331; approach to hadith, 299; descendants of, 300
Shahīd al-Thānī, 284
Shahrur, Muhammad (b.1938), 339–344
Shaikh, Saʾdiyya, 351
Shākir, Aḥmad Muḥammad (d. 1958), 306–308, 312
Shamāʾil (of Tirmidhī), 304
shamāʾil/khaṣāʾiṣ, 84, 196
Shams al-Dīn al-Harawī (d. 829/1426), 177
sharʿ (revelation), 205
sharḥ (pl. *shurūḥ*), 160; 161; *see also* commentaries
Sharīʿa, 34, 205, 223, 247, 269, 272, 274; and Sufi practices, 269
Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, 290
Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015), 283, 289
*sharīf*s, 310
sharṭ (protasis), 168
shaṭḥiyyāt (ecstatic sayings), 69
al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), 249
Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, 268
shaving of hair, 274
Shaw, George Bernard, 3
al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad, 194, 318–320; students of, 300
al-Shaybānī, Muḥammad (d. 189/804–805), 141, 214, 302
Shaykh al-Mufīd, 290
Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa, *see* al-Ṭūsī, 290
shaykh (Sufi master), 97, 270, 272, 273, 274

Shaykhayn (two masters; al-Bukhārī and Muslim), 152
Shiʿa-Sunni relations, 286
Shihāb ibn Khirāsh, 19, 20, 21
Shiʿism, 8, 197, 281–292; approaches to hadith, 64, 281–292; biographies, 90; collections, 76, 287; commentaries, 290; divine sayings, 70; Four Books, 281; hadith, 6, 8, 69, 253, 256, 281, 283, 287, 294; hadiths, 189; imams, 2, 59, 71, 85, 282, 285; isnāds, 289; law, 212, 282; law books, 212; light-knowledge, 273; religious authority, 317; sects, 284; and Sunnis, 59; theory of the imamate, 252; Twelvers, 69
Shoemaker, Stephen, 50–52
shrines, pilgrimage to, 290, 291
Shuʿayb, 103
Shuʿba (d. 160/776–777), 29, 100
Shurayḥ, 146
shyness, attributed to Muhammad, 79
al-Sibāʿī, Muṣṭafā (d. 1958), 325
Sicily, 166
sick, visiting, 80
Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, 178
Siddiqui, Muhammad Zubayr, 43
Ṣidqī, Muḥammad Tawfīq, 323, 330
signs of prophethood, 82
Ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta (Six Books), 282 *see also al-Kutub al-sitta*
Sihālawī, Mulla Niẓām al-Dīn al- (d. 1748), 300
silence, women enjoined to, 335
silsila, 8, 273
sin, 164, 165, 242, 253; believers guilty of, 253, 254; original, 337
Sinai, Mount, 60
Sinai, Nicolai, 238
Sind (province), 298
single-strand narrations, *see aḥad*
sinners, 168
sīra, 59, 76, 82, 87, 90, 170, 195, 223, 238, 271, 329, 330; portrayal of Muhammad, 81–82
ṣirāṭ, 254
Sirhindī, Aḥmad (d. 1624), 298
Sitz im Leben, 121
Six Books, *see Kutub al-sitta*
Sixteen Books, *see Uṣūl al-sitta ʿashar*, 287
skepticism, scholarly, 9, 47, 52, 118, 225, 229, 232, 234, 236, 329, 330; Cook, 55; Goldziher, 43; Juynboll, 48; Schacht, 47
slander against ʿAʾisha, 190
slaughtering animals, 144, 147; mechanical slaughter-houses, 329
slaves, 21, 208; zakat on, 208
sleep: purification following, 142; visions in, 62, 63
small hadith collections, 70
social and intellectual culture, 312
social and intellectual elites, 319
social capital, 6, 311
social conformity, 274
social contexts, 7, 328, 346
social conventions, 274
social custom, 35
social deviancy, 274
social dynamics, 346
social institutions, 273, 316
social practices, critique of, 171
social relations, 336
socks, leather, 142, 143
software programs, 309
Solomon, 61
sonnaonline.com, 131
soul, 267
source reconstruction, 44, 49–51, 53, 55, 118, 124, 128–232
sources: ancillary, 52; common, 121, 124; common link, 120; criticism, 9, 45; decisive, 282; early, 26, 27, 59, 292; early Islamic history, 3, 9, 40, 44; French, 350; hadith, 19, 179, 311; Ibn Ḥajar's, 20; Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra*, 49; image of Muhammad in, 75; Islamic law, 187, 272, 299; of knowlege, 273; literary, 44, 113; manuscript, 298; Muhammad's life, 10, 40, 42; Muslim, 17; narrators, 16, 20, 21, 200; for narrator evaluation, 30, 33; problem of, 55; Qurʾan, 258; reconstruction of, 49; reliability, 33; silence of, 225; Sunni, 59; of al-Ṭabari, 232; third-century, 44; Urdu, 179; variant traditions, 121
South Africa: Deobandis, 297

South Asia: Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 299; Deobandis, 297; hadith commentaries, 179; hadith studies, 298, 301; madrasas, 182
sovereignty, loss of, 299
speaking ill of people, 29
specialists in hadith, 9, 16, 19, 176, 213, 256, 266, 310, 311, 315
specialization in hadith (*al-takhaṣṣuṣ fī al- ḥadīth*), 311
speech, divine, 67, 70
Speight, Marston, 225, 228
spider *isnād*s, 117
Spirit, 62
spirits of believers, 267
spiritual education, 273
spiritual elite, 275
spiritual guide, 272
spirituality, 69, 270; associated with Adam, 337
spiritual realm, 267
spittle, healing qualities of Muhammad's, 81
spreading *isnād*s, 47
Sprenger, Aloys, 39–42, 45, 321
standard editions of hadith, 10
standardized exams, 303
states, mystical (*aḥwāl*), 266
stations, mystical (*maqāmāt*), 266
Stauth, Georg, 232
sternness, attributed to Muhammad, 82
Stetter, Eckart, 85
stories: miracle, 52; Prophetic, 83
Strangeness, *see gharīb al-ḥadīth*
straw carpet, more useful than a childless woman, 335
straying from the path, *see bidʿa*
strict constructionism, 278
strong *isnād*s, 40
structure: grammatical, 168; hadith collections, 92, 98; hadiths, 344; isnāds, 117; literary, 198
student-teacher relationships, 50
students, 19, 27, 33, 35, 98, 99, 119, 138, 153, 173, 174; of al-Bukhārī, 108; of companions, 154; *dawrat al-ḥadīth*, 301; of al-Firabrī, 108; gatherings of, 94, 101; of hadith, 300; of Ibn ʿAbbās, 229; lectures to, 97, 99, 233; madrasa, 297; of Malik, 98; modern, 310; narration to, 153; novice, 154; poverty, 301; South Asian, 300; transmission by, 30, 92, 97; of al-Zuhrī, 102
style, literary, 197, 229
subject, organization by, 140
submission, 258
subsidiary (*farʿi*), 246, 254, 257
substance, 243
substantive content, 115, 117, 121, 126 *see also matn*
successors: *see al-tābiʿūn*
al-Suddī, 236
sufficiency of the Qurʾan, 322 *see also* Qurʾanists
Sufi (term), 275
Sufis: early, 265; lodges, 177; orders, 305; quotation of hadith, 265
Sufism, 7, 69, 71, 190, 198, 199, 218, 258, 265, 266, 268–275, 285, 318; adepts, 59; aesthetics, 271; antecedents, 267; Ashʿarī influence, 245; authority, 273, 274, 277; brotherhoods, 273, 320 (*see also ṭarīqa*); criticisms, 271; Deoband, 275; early, 267; al-Ghazālī, 271; growth of, 271; hadith, 7, 198, 265, 266, 268–270, 277–279; inspiration, 274 (*see also ilhām*); *isnād*, 273, 274; institutions, 277, 278; knowledge, 271, 272; and Muʿtazila, 267; opposition to, 265, 266, 269, 272, 273; poetry, 270; and Salafism, 272, 275, 278; states and stations, 266; *taṣawwuf*, 267; terminology, 265; use of hadith, 53; and weak hadith, 271
Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿazila, 267
Sufyān al- Thawrī (d. 161/778?), 97, 142, 156, 207, 231, 232
Sufyān ibn ʿUyayna, 115, 236
Sufyān al-Thawrī, 1, 23, 29, 146
ṣuḥuf, 93
al-Sulamī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 412/1021), 198, 265, 266, 268, 270, 274, 285
al-Sulamī, Muʿammar ibn ʿAbbād (d. 215/829), 243
Sulaym ibn Qays, 286
Sulayman ibn Yasar, 208
summer verse, 124–127

sun, 276
Sunan Abī Dāwūd, 34, 87, 164, 174, 303
Sunan al-Arbaʿa (the Four Sunan), 166, 302
sunan al-hudā, 66
Sunan Ibn Māja, 31
Sunan al-Nasāʾī, 163, 184
Sunan al-Tirmidhī, 34, 141–145, 173, 303
sunlight and moonlight, 61
sunna, 7, 26, 28, 41, 64, 143, 189, 206–208, 210, 223, 228, 242–244, 247–250, 252, 253, 258, 259, 275, 298, 304, 317, 320, 324, 327–329, 338–340, 342, 343, 347; Aḥmad Khān on, 322; authority of, 299; of Caliphs, 210; concept of, 200, 317, 339, 340, 343; conceptual distinction from hadith, 339; conceptual fluidity, 317; in Constitution of Pakistan, 325; definition, 243; deviation from, 254; dual revelation, 317; hadith, 317, 329, 339, 340, 327; living, 329; of Medina, 95; mutawātir, 324; plurality of, 317; opposition to, 165; revelation of, 65; rules over the Qurʾan, 339; al-Shāfiʿī, 210, 211; and *sīra*, 223; sunna, 83–85, 318, 323, 326; theology of, 341, 342
Sunni commentators, 172
Sunni hadith, 66, 189, 201, 275; canon, 8, 180, 287, 297, 300–303, 305, 312; collections, 76; criticism, 218; handbooks, 213; scholars, 8, 218, 300; scholarship, 285; Shiʿa use of, 212, 282, 283
Sunni Islam, 15, 64, 69, 192, 207, 212; and the Shiʿa, 8, 69, 198, 245, 281–283; South Asia, 299
Sunni *kalām*, 261
superiors (*fuḍalāʾ*), 176
supports, *see isnād*s
*sura*s, 64, 126
Sūrat al-Nisāʾ, 124–128
suspicion, 337
Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al- (d. 910/1505), 19, 63, 64, 163, 169, 175, 194–196, 225, 300, 307
sweets and honey, Prophet's fondness for, 79, 86
syllogism, 342
syngrammata, 96, 98, 99
synoptic comparison, 234
syntax, 301, 302
Syria, 99, 106, 107, 268, 291, 339

taʿammuq (deep analysis), 302
taʿaṣṣub (bigotry), 245
ṭabaqāt, 16, 25
Ṭabarānī, 19
Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al- (d. 310/923), 63, 64, 66, 67, 196, 224, 226, 228, 232, 234, 236; Tafsīr, 223, 229, 307
al-tābiʿūn (successors of the companions), 45, 46, 48, 84, 93, 94, 100, 103, 142, 143, 153, 189, 195, 208–210, 223, 224, 226, 228, 233, 235, 248, 339
Tablet, primordial, 276
tablīgh wa-risāla, 70
Tablīghī Jamāʿat, 178, 304
taboo against writing hadith, 102
Ṭabrisī, Abū Manṣūr (d. c. 560/1165), 291
Ṭabrisī, Ḥasan ibn Faḍl, 291
Tabūk, 22
taḍʿīf (deeming inauthentic), 308
tadwīn (hadith collection), 93–94; *tadwīn* movement, 93
tafaqquh, 154
al-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr, 226
tafsīr, 2, 10, 53, 87, 144, 189, 193, 194, 201, 216, 224–233, 241, 243, 282, 300, 302, 315, 336; of Ibn ʿAbbās, 230; exegetical hadiths, 8, 223, 226–229, 231–235; hadith-based, 224; Goldziher on, 226; *isnād*s, 229, 231; *isrāʾīliyyat*, 231; of al-Kalbī, 230; nature of, 224; opposition to, 227; origins, 232; Shiʿi works, 285, 286; and sunna, 224, 228; al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 229
Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), 245, 256, 261
Ṭaḥāwī, Abū Jaʿfar al- (d. 321/933), 161, 170, 210, 212, 243, 300
Tahdhīb al-kamāl (of al-Mizzī), 20, 33, 309
Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb (of Ibn Ḥajar), 20, 21, 30, 33, 215
al-Ṭaḥḥān, Maḥmūd, 308
taḥqīq al-makhṭūṭāt, 298, 305, 311
takbīr, 211

takfīr, 255
al-takhaṣṣuṣ fī al-ḥadīth (hadith specialization), 297, 311
takhrīj al-ḥadīth, 167, 298, 305, 307–309, 311
takmila, 170, 174, 175
Ṭalab al-ʿilm, 97
Talbi, Mohamed, 216, 218
taʿlīq, 160, 161
Talmud, 91, 92, 106
al-Ṭanāḥī, Maḥmūd, 306
tanzīh, 242
tanzīl/*inzāl*, 60, 61, 71
Taqī al-ʿUthmānī, Muḥammad, 181, 183, 303
taqlīd, 35, 159, 248, 299, 303, 305, 319; rejection of, 319; repudiation of, 321, 323
Taqrīb al-tahdhīb (of Ibn Ḥajar), 20, 21, 33, 215
tarbiya (education), 273, 275, 308
tarīkh, 16, 30
Taʾrīkh al-kabīr (of Bukhārī), 31, 32
taʾwīl, 160
Tarīm, 275
ṭarīq al-nubuwwa (the Prophetic path), 298
Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya, 299
ṭarīqa (pl. *ṭuruq*), 273, 274, 299
tarjama, 168
taṣawwuf, 267, 269, 275
taṣfiya (purification), 308
taṣḥīḥ (deeming authentic), 308
ṭaṣnīf (systematic arrangement by chapter), 93, 95, 99, 140; movement, 95
tawakkul (reliance on God), 268
tawassul (seeking the intervention of a saint), 272
tawātur, 118, 218, 250, 251, 255, 256
tawḍīḥ, 160
tawḥīd, 245
Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān (d. 106), 105
al-Ṭayālisī, Abū Dāwūd (d. 203–204/819–820), 95, 120, 125–128, 306
al-Taymī, Muḥammad ibn Ibrahīm, 1
technology: advances, 311; computer, 131; impact on hadith study, 297; printing, 171, 178
Tehran, 288
ten companions promised paradise, 66
terminology, 189, 218; hadith, 16, 26, 32, 34, 210, 312; Sufi, 267, 275; written records, 95
testimony: court, 213, 218; expert, 211; false, 214
text-critical techniques, 121–123, 129
textbooks, 308, 312
texts, 18, 24, 26, 27, 175, 248, 302; accuracy of, 15; adherence to, 197; allegorical, 258; analysis of, 174; Arabic, 164; commentaries on, 167; critical editions, 309; derivation of legal rules, 302; digitized, 309; emergence of, 25; fixed body of, 323; handwritten, 301; *Imāmī*, 285; interpretation of, 147, 153, 156, 172, 258; legal, 154, 258; manuscript sources, 311; as medium of instruction, 26, 99; narratives, 304; practical implications of, 15; primary, 35; printed, 300, 306; publishing, 298, 300; reading of, 301; reliable, 108; sound, 26, 147; standardization of, 306; student aids, 303; study of, 301; transmitted, 249, 260; univocal reading of, 320; vocalized, 306; well-attested, 17; written, 103
textual criticism, 40, 53, 120, 122; *matn* analysis, 50, 54, 129, 173; textual additions, 121; textual brevity, 122; textual disparities, 123, 124, 173
textual evidence, 120, 345
textual fluidity, 121, 126, 127
textual indicants, *see adilla*
textualist hermeneutics, 336, 347
thabat (catalog of transmissions), 310, 312
thabt, 22
Thaʿlabī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Naṣr (d. 422/1031), 206
tharīd, 80, 86
Thawrī, Sufyān al- (d. 161/778?), 102
theologians, 6, 8, 118, 241–244, 248, 249, 251–253, 256, 257, 259, 290
theological debates, 189
theology, 42, 71, 237, 241–261 *passim*, 302, 338, 343, 347; Ashʿarī, 260; Barelvī, 276; controversies, 42, 197, 247, 275, 302, 328; disputable issues, 243; doctrines, 62,

85, 172; feminist, 337; and gender, 337, 341; hadith on, 42, 243, 287, 290, 302; *Imāmī*, 285; origins, 2, 42; rationalistic approaches, 336, 348; reason in, 207; Sufism, 246; works, 285, 289
thiqa, 22
throne, divine, 260, 276
thubūt (authenticity), 250
al-Thumālī, Abū Ḥamza, 285
ṭibb (medicine), 80; *Ṭibb al- aʾimma*, 289
Ṭibb al-Riḍā, 285
Tirmidh (city), 269
al-Tirmidhī, al- (d. 279/892), 18, 31, 33, 68, 70, 78, 140, 141–145, 155, 156, 161, 211, 212, 267–269, 273, 274; commentaries, 303; *Shamāʾil*, 300, 304; *Sunan*, 34, 141–145, 166, 173, 300, 302, 306
tomb, interrogation in, 254
topical collections, 29, 30, 315
topoi, use in hadith, 85
Torah, 61, 92
tortoise, eating, 146
Tottoli, Roberto, 7, 187, 224, 238
traditionalism, 8, 107, 189, 191, 192, 195, 207, 210, 245, 330
traditionists, 46, 97, 99, 101, 106, 109, 112, 114, 124, 210, 215, 246, 289, 290, 320
transactions, financial, 303
transmission, 2, 5, 6, 10, 31, 41, 48, 50, 62, 69, 70, 82, 84, 86, 92, 94, 97, 98, 105, 106, 108, 116, 118–121, 125–128, 141, 143, 173, 191, 197, 207, 229, 233, 236, 251, 256, 270, 273, 282, 290, 301, 310, 312, 325, 344, 345, 353; audited, 96; *isnād*s, 5, 45, 46, 76, 115, 121, 200, 229, 251, 285, 310;; from memory, 105; by multiple authorities, 118; oral, 120, 122, 235, 325; paths of, 50; patterns of, 49; reliability, 250; single strand, 116, 126; *tawātur*, 250; terminology, 229
transmission history, 234
transmission of hadiths from memory, 105
transmitted evidence, 246, 247, 249, 257, 260
transmitters, 5, 20, 49, 52, 76, 87, 93, 96, 108, 117–121, 124, 161, 168, 170, 171, 174, 180, 189, 192, 195, 197, 198, 200, 213, 214, 216, 223, 235, 254, 259, 260, 327, 344
Transnational Islamic movements, 312
Transoxania, 267, 269
travel: to collect hadith, 119; fasting during, 142; and salat, 22, 23, 142
treasure, God compared to, 271
treaties concluded by Muhammad, 82
trees, 80, 144
Trench, Battle of the, 50
tribes, 21
triplications, 85
trustworthiness: attributed to Muhammad, 82; of hadith narrators, 191, 214, 215, 251
truth: claims, 256; conviction of, 251; and falsehood, 249; and lying, 214; scale of, 339
truthfulness of narrators, 23
Tucson, 330
Tunisia, 216
Turkey, 15, 315, 316, 330; hadith project, 319; hadith reform, 316
Turkish, 353
ṭuruq, see ṭarīqa
Ṭūs (city), 269
Ṭūsī, Nāṣir al-Dīn ibn Ḥamza (d. c. 600/1204), 281, 286, 288, 290, 291
al-Tustarī, Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 283/896), 267, 268
Twelve Imams, 281, 283, 289; Twelfth Imam, 289, 290
Twelvers, 53

ʿUbāda ibn Ṣāmit, 24
ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, 286
ʿUbayd Allāh al-Marāfiqī, 212, 213
ʿUbayda ibn ʿAmr al-Salmānī (d. 72/691), 100
ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, 286
Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, 225, 235, 253
ʿubbād (pietists), 266
UCLA, 330
Uḥud, 50
UK: Deobandis, 297
ʿulamaʾ, 177, 310, 347; Ahl-i Ḥadīth, 303; anti-reformist, 310; Arab, 305; India, 298, 305; Pakistan, 326; Saudi, 321

al-ʿulūm al-āliyya, 300
ʿulūm al-ḥadīth, 34, 341, 342
ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAziz (r. 717–720), 26, 28, 94, 208
ʿUmar ibn Ḥamza, *see* al-ʿUmarī al-Madanī, 215
ʿUmar ibn al- Khaṭṭāb (r. 634–644), 2, 68, 93, 106, 115, 124, 128, 147, 208, 225–227
ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad, 215
umarāʾ, 177
ʿUmarī al-Madanī, 215
Umayyads, 42, 94, 107, 113; administrative practice, 209; codification of tradition, 106; court, 102
ʿUmdat al-qārī (of al-ʿAynī), 175
umma, 44, 80, 164, 166, 187, 191, 230, 231, 242, 252, 254, 275, 326, 328, 335, 340, 341, 346
Ummat-i Muslima, 323
ummī, 85
unbelief, 255
United States, 15; Deobandis in, 297
universe: creation of, 248; spiritual, 267
universities: Islamic University in Medina, 321; Jamia Milli, 324; study of hadith in, 298, 308, 311; University of Chicago, 330; Western, 15
unknowability, divine, 205
unusual traditions, *see gharīb al-ḥadīth*
ʿUqaylī (d. 322/934), 32
urban guilds, 274
urbanitas, 270 *see also adab*
Urdu, 303, 330
urination in a mosque, 79
ʿurs celebrations, 320
ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94/713), 49–51, 54, 55, 94, 95, 101, 137, 138, 234, 237
Usmania press, 300
Uṣūl al- arbaʿ miʾa, 286
uṣūl al-dīn, 242, 243
uṣūl al-fiqh, 163, 207, 213, 218, 241, 249–252, 281, 342, 346
uṣūl al-hadīth, 16, 26
Uṣūl al-kāfī, 288
Uṣūl al-sitta ʿashar (Sixteen Books), 287
uṣūliyyūn, 342
usury, 154, 329
ʿUṭāridī, ʿAbd al- Jabbār al- (d. 272/886), 114
ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, 178, 208, 210, 225
ʿUthmānī, Muḥammad Taqī al- (b. 1943), 169, 174, 175, 178
ʿUthmānī, Shabbīr Aḥmad (d. 1949), 164, 171, 174, 178
Uways al-Qarnī, 274
Uwaysis, 274
ʿUyūn al-akhbār (of Ibn Qutayba), 198

van den Bergh, Simon, 330
van Ess, Josef, 71, 117
variant readings, 225
variant traditions, 45, 49, 50, 86, 115, 120, 123, 124, 126, 165, 234
variation, textual, 65, 120, 121, 124, 126
Vedas, 5
veneration of relics, 318
verification (*takhrīj*), 307, 308, 309
vernacularization of hadith study, 297
Versteegh, Cornelius H.M., 225, 230, 231
virtues, 271, 304
vision (*ruʾyā*), 67
visions, 68, 72, 353
von Kremer, Alfred, 41
Vows and oaths, 144

waḥy, 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 69–71, 321; *waḥy ghayr maṭlū*, 317, 321, 339; *waḥy maṭlū*, 70, 317; *waḥy bil-lafẓ*, 71
Wāʾil ibn Ḥujr, 211
wājib, 169
Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, 97
Walīd (Caliph), 94
Walīd II, assassination of, 102
Wallawī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAli al- (b. 1947), 164, 172, 179
Wansbrough, John, 9, 51, 114, 115, 224, 229, 232
Wāqidī, al- (d. 823), 53, 68, 82; *Maghāzī*, 195
Wāqifa, 284
warathat al-anbiyāʾ, 269
warners, 81

Warqāʾ, 232
washing feet, 143
Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748), 242
Wāsiṭ, 21
Watt, Montgomery, 43
weaknesses, attributed to Muhammad, 79
weak traditions, *see ḍaʿīf*
websites, 3, 309
Weddings, 144
Weismann, B.G., 272
Wensinck, A.J.: *Concordance*, 306, 308; *Handbook*, 305
West: academic culture, 4; commentaries, 179; critical scholarship, 39; hadith scholarship, 3, 6, 9, 10, 115, 328; scholars, 3
white clothes, worn by Muhammad, 77
Widengren, Geo, 68
wilāya: male guardianship over women, 337, 338; sainthood, 267
wiping socks, 142, 143
wisdom, *see ḥikma*
witness: attestation of, 5; eyewitnesses, 250; reliable, 5; textual, 123
wives of the Prophet, 78
women, 54, 79, 217, 336–338, 340–342, 345, 347, 349–351; defects of, 336; derivative creation, 337; exclusion from public spaces, 345; obedience to men, 338; rational capacities, 336; striking, 79; weaknesses, 338
words: interpretation of, 161; Prophetic, 4, 17, 27, 65, 66, 91, 146, 153, 169, 187–189, 195, 198, 250, 267, 269, 271, 327; rare, 169, 171, 301, 308
world: creation of, 61, 257; divine activity in, 70, 265; globalization, 344; Islamic, 28, 191, 242, 266, 270, 271, 312; modern, 9, 330; unseen, 250
worship (*ʿibāda*), 61, 257
writing: commentaries, 171, 174; controversy over, 103; in notebooks, 103; opposition to, 99, 101, 102, 104–107; and orality, 91, 92, 230, 233; prohibition on, 104, 107; support for, 104, 107; of traditions, 26, 41, 44, 84, 91, 92, 97, 101, 103, 104, 138, 140, 164, 191, 232, 233, 236, 323
writing down traditions, 101
written notes, 107, 122
writing of traditions, 26, 41, 44, 84, 91, 92, 97, 101, 103, 104, 138, 140, 164, 191, 232, 233, 236, 323; in notebooks, 103; opposition to, 99, 101–107; prohibition on, 104, 107; support for, 104, 107
written transmission, 228

Yaḥyā ibn Abī Kathīr, 28
Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, 146
Yaḥyā ibn Ḥibbān, 24
Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (d. 233/848), 29, 30, 32, 142, 143, 218
Yahya ibn Saʿīd al-Anṣārī, 1, 115
Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198/814), 28, 29, 125, 126
Yaḥyā ibn Sallām, 193, 194
Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Maṣmūdī (d. 234/849?), 208
Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā ibn Muzayn (d. 259/872), 162
yaqīn (certain knowledge), 251
Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb, 23, 24
Yemen, 80, 99, 105, 275, 277, 300, 318; *ʿulamaʾ*, 319
younger companions, 28, 228
al-Yunīnī, Alī (d. 701/1302), 109, 111
Yunīniyya, 109
Yūsuf Binorī (d. 1977), 303
Yûsuf Efendi-zâde (d. 1167/1754), 164, 166

ẓāhir, 106, 269
ẓāhirīs, 172, 197, 258, 320
zahw, 145
Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, 163
zakat, 144, 206, 208, 329; and *ṣadaqa*, 208; on slaves or horses, 208; *zakāt al-fiṭr*, 86
Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), 65, 195, 226
Zaman, Arshad, 36
Zaman, Iftikhar, 49
Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, 172, 176, 178, 179, 303
Zaman, Muntasir, 36

ẓann, 246, 247, 251, 252, 254
ẓannī al-dalāla, 247
al-Zarkashī, Badr al-Dīn (d. 794/1392), 166
zāwiya, 177
Zayd ibn ʿAlī (d. 740), 306
Zayd ibn Aslam (d. 136/753), 24, 104
Zayd ibn Thābit, 225
Zayd (Muhammad's adopted son), 82
Zaydīs, 231, 300, 318
Zaynab bt. Jaḥsh, 82
Zāʾida, 142
zināʾ, 335
Zīrid dynasty, 176
Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh, 142
Zufar, 141
Zuhayr ibn Muʿāwiya, 23
zuhd, 285, 287
zuhhād (renunciants), 266
al-Zuhrī, Abū Muṣʿab (d. 242/857?), 208
al-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb (d. 124/741–2), 28, 50, 51, 53, 93, 94, 101, 102, 106, 140; burns writing material, 105
al-Zurqānī, Muḥammad ibn Abd al-Bāqī (d. 1122/1710), 164