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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE CANONIZATION OF AL-BUKHĀRĪ AND MUSLIM:

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE SUNNI ḤADĪTH CANON

VOLUME ONE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2006

UMI Number: 3226644

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And they made their camp near [the tents of] Maysūn...

Where the sun forever rose first over the dry land...

- Jundub b. Suʿūd al-Asmarī

To Maisoon, who inspires me to seek knowledge

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

in Turkey for its hospitality; the Khizāna al-ʿĀmma in Rabat; the Maktabat al-Asad

in Damascus; the Süleymaniye Library, the Topkapı Sarayı Library and the Istanbul

University Rare Books Library for allowing me continuous access to their unparalleled

manuscript collections; and Drs. Gozashte and Pakechi at the Greater Islamic

Encyclopedia (*Dā'erat al-maʿāref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*) in Tehran, for their valuable

assistance. Of course, this dissertation would not exist if not for the University of

Chicago, its singular Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and the

great Regenstein Library. I must also thank Shaykh Osama al-Syed Mahmoud and ʿImād

al-Dīn ʿAbbās Saʿīd in Cairo and Muḥammad Mujīr al-Khaṭīb in Damascus for their

patient assistance.

Finally, I must acknowledge the honor of working in the shadow of two great

minds, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, as well as the

inimitable generations of scholars who preceded and followed them in elaborating the

Islamic scholarly tradition. I feel as the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk did when he said:

"Indeed I know that I am not worthy of this, but I wish to tie myself to the train of those

who transmit the ḥadīths of God's Messenger, may the peace and blessings of God be

upon him."

ABSTRACT

The two ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, are the most

revered books in Islamic civilization after the Qur'ān. This dissertation addresses how,

when and why these two books achieved this station and identifies their principal

functions in Islamic civilization. This study approaches these question through the lens

of canonization, a process of interaction between text, authority and communal

identification. During the lives of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in the years immediately

after their deaths, their compilation of ḥadīth collections devoted solely to authentic

Prophetic reports proved controversial within the Sunni community. In the fourth/tenth

century, however, a network of Shāfiʿī scholars began studying the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and

employing them as standards against which to measure their own ḥadīths. In the late

fourth/tenth century, the influential Sunni ḥadīth scholar al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī adopted

this notion of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a standard of authenticity and applied it to polemical

purposes: he claimed that the standards used by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in selecting

ḥadīths met the requirements of both Sunni ḥadīth scholars and their rationalist foes.

Spreading outward from al-Ḥākim's students in the early fifth/eleventh century, the idea

of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a common standard of authenticity, authoritative reference and

exemplum of ḥadīth scholarship gained currency among Sunni scholars. In the

seventh/thirteenth century, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also acquired a significance in Muslim societies

far beyond scholarly debate. From Mali to India, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works

became symbols for the Prophet's charismatic authority and liminality in the realms of

ritual and historical narrative. From the fifth/eleventh century onward, the Sunni

tradition built up a canonical culture around the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their authors that recast the

history of the two books and affirmed their authoritative station. Some ḥadīth scholars,

however, did not accept this attempt to protect the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as institutions of authority.

Instead, these scholars continued to apply the methods of ḥadīth criticism to them. This

tension has continued with the emergence of the Salafī movement and the scholarship of

Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī in the modern period, where the standing of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* has

crystallized Muslim debate over text, authority and communal identification.

DATES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Dates in this dissertation will follow the *Hijrī*/Common Era format for all dates through the eleventh/seventeenth century. After that, *Hijrī* dates are of little use, and only CE dates will be provided.

The phrase "may the peace and blessings of God be upon him (*ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa sallam*)" that usually follows the Prophet Muḥammad's name in Muslim sources will be abbreviated as (ṣ). The phrase "may God be pleased with him/her/them (*raḍiya Allāh ʿan...*) that usually follows the names of Companions will be represented with (r).

I.

INTRODUCTION

I.1. Introduction

In 465/1072-3, the grand vizier of the Seljuq Empire, a statesman so spectacularly

powerful that he was hailed as Niẓām al-Mulk (The Order of the Realm), heard of a

scholar who possessed a particularly authoritative copy of the most famous collection of

traditions (ḥadīth) related from the Prophet Muḥammad: the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī (d.

256/870). Niẓām al-Mulk ordered this scholar brought to his newly founded college in

the Iranian city of Naysābūr, where the vizier gathered the children of the city's judges,

scholars and other notables to hear a reading of al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ.[1] Why did Niẓām al-

Mulk order such a promulgation of the Ṣaḥīḥ, and why did he convene the next

generation of the Sunni Muslim elite in attendance?

Niẓām al-Mulk stood at the intersection of the great forces of Islamic religious

history at a time when Sunni Islam was coalescing in its institutional form. While

serving the Seljuq sultans, who were generously endowing educational institutions for the

Ḥanafī school of law, he established his Niẓāmiyya college network in the principal cities

of the empire for the use of the rival Shāfiʿī school. Yet Niẓām al-Mulk also held ḥadīth

study circles that glorified the 'partisans of ḥadīth (aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth)' closely associated

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[1] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5), selections made by Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣarīfīnī (d. 641/1243-4), Tārīkh Naysābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq, ed. Moḥammad Kāẓem al-Ḥamūdī (Qom: Jamāʿat al-Modarresīn, 1403/1983), 65.

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with the contending Ḥanbalī school.[2] These policies unfolded in the threatening shadow
of the Sunni Seljuqs' principal rival, the Ismāʿīlī Shiites, whose assassins would
eventually bring Niẓām al-Mulk's career to an end.

In this divided milieu, Niẓām al-Mulk sought to foster a common ground of Sunni
Islam. In 469/1076-77, when the leading Shāfiʿī scholar of Baghdad tried to win Niẓām
al-Mulk's support in a bitter debate with Ḥanbalī rivals, the vizier sent him a missive
refusing to intervene on his behalf. "We believe in bolstering the Sunni ways (al-sunan),
not building up communal strife (al-fitan)," he explained. "We undertook the building of
this [Niẓāmiyya] college in order to support and protect the people of knowledge and the
welfare of the community, not for creating divisions amongst Muslims (tafrīq al-
kalima)."[3]

By gathering the children of the empire's scholarly and administrative elite
around a reading of al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ, Niẓām al-Mulk was reinforcing a sense of Sunni
communalism. As we shall see, by the vizier's time scholars from most of the disputing
legal and theological schools that would comprise the Sunni fold had together deemed the
Ṣaḥīḥayn, the two 'Authentic' ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī and his student Muslim b.
al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), authoritative representations of the Prophet's legacy. By

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[2] Ibn al-Jawzī had evidently seen the founding charter of the Baghdad Niẓāmiyya; Abū al-Faraj
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-umam wa al-mulūk, ed. Muḥammad
ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1412/1992);
16:190-1, 304; 17:32; see also ʿAbd al-Hādī Riḍā, "Amālī Niẓām al-Mulk al-wazīr al-saljūqī fī al-ḥadīth,"
Majallat Maʿhad al-Makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya 5, no. 2 (1959): 355. From the material of his transmission
sessions, it is clear that Niẓam al-Mulk made a special effort to hear ḥadīths that were shibboleths of
Sunnism as opposed to Muʿtazilism, such as reports affirming that the believers will see God on the Day of
Judgment; Riḍā, "Amālī;" 356, 366. See also Richard W. Bulliet, "The Political-Religious History of
Nishapur in the Eleventh Century," in Islamic Civilization 950-1150, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford: Cassirer,
1973), 85 ff.

[3] Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 16:190-1.

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convening this reading, Niẓām al-Mulk was inculcating al-Bukhārī's book as a touchstone of Sunni identity in the impressionable young minds of the next generation.

The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus forms part of the greater drama of the formation of Sunni Islam. Niẓām al-Mulk's fifth/eleventh-century world brought together all the leading characters in this saga. Among them were the textualist Ḥanbalīs and the more rationalist Shāfiʿīs, both heirs to the heritage of 'the partisans of ḥadīth' but divided over the role of speculative theology in Islam. We also find the Ḥanafīs, rooted in their own distinct, ḥadīth-wary hermeneutic tradition. These groups composed competing 'orthodoxies,' each independent and self-righteously justified. The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim is the story of how these and other disjointed segments of what became the Sunni community forged a common language for addressing the shared heritage of the Prophet's legacy (sunna).

This drama began in the classical period, but it has continued into modern times. Indeed, the questions that arise in a study of the formation, function and status of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon reflect tensions between the competing schools of thought within today's Sunni community. Why does a modern Ḥanafī scholar from India seeking to defend his school against Salafī critics prominently cite a ḥadīth from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* on the cover of his book?[4] Why does a Salafī scholar insist on his right to criticize al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections, while his opponents vociferously condemn him for "violating the integrity of these motherbooks"?[5] These questions fuel fierce debates in Muslim

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[4] Abdur-Rahman Ibn Yusuf, *Fiqh al-Imam: Key Proofs in Hanafi Fiqh*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara: White Thread Press, 2003), cover.

[5] See www.sunnah.org/history/Innovators/al_albani.htm, last accessed 5/31/04.

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discourse today, but they descend from the centuries of historical development that forged and maintained the canon of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

After the Qur'ān, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are the two most venerated books in Sunni Islam. Yet until now no one has explained this undeniable reality. This study examines the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in order to discover how, when and why the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s attained their authoritative station. It explores the nature of this authority, the tensions surrounding it, and the roles that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon has played in Islamic civilization.

I.2. Thesis

Canons form at the nexus of text, authority and communal identification. Their formation, however, is neither a random nor an inevitable process. Canonization involves a community's act of authorizing specific books in order to meet certain needs. It entails the transformation of texts, through use, study, and appreciation, from nondescript tomes into powerful symbols of divine, legal or artistic authority for a particular audience. In their own time, al-Bukhārī and Muslim were accomplished representatives of the transmission-based tradition of Islamic law. Like their teacher, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), they saw collecting and acting on the reports of the early Muslim community as the only legitimate means by which believers could ascertain God's will and live according to it. Yet they were only two of many such scholars, with al-Bukhārī's career in particular marred by scandal. For over two centuries after al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's deaths, the study and collection of ḥadīths continued unabated. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim's remarkable contribution came with their decision to compile

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books devoted only to ḥadīths they considered authentic (ṣaḥīḥ). This act broke

stridently with the practices of the transmission-based school and thus met with

significant disapproval in the immediate wake of the authors' careers.

In the fourth/tenth century, however, the initial controversy surrounding the

Ṣaḥīḥayn and their authors dissipated as a relatively small and focused network of

scholars from the moderate Shāfiʿī tradition began appreciating the books' utility. These

scholars found the Ṣaḥīḥayn ideal vehicles for articulating their relationship to the

Prophet's normative legacy as well as standards against which to measure the strength of

their own ḥadīth collections. Employing the Ṣaḥīḥayn for these purposes required

intimate familiarity with the two books and thus spurred an intensive study of the works

and their authors' methodologies. Simultaneously, during this period between the end of

the third/ninth and the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the broader Muslim community began

imagining a new level of authority for Prophetic traditions. Scholars representing a wide

range of opinion started to conceive of certain ḥadīths and ḥadīth collections as providing

loci of consensus amid the burgeoning diversity of Islamic thought.

One scholar in particular inherited the body of scholarship on the Ṣaḥīḥayn and

harnessed the two works as a new measure of authenticity for evaluating reports

attributed to the Prophet. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) recognized that the

Ṣaḥīḥayn possessed tremendous polemical value as common measures of ḥadīth

authenticity that met the requirements of both the transmission-based scholars whom he

championed and the Muʿtazilites whom he bitterly opposed. He thus conceived of the

criteria that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had used in compiling their works as a standard he

claimed authorized a vast new body of ḥadīths binding on both parties. A cadre of his

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students, hailing from the rival Ḥanbalī and Shāfiʿī strains of the transmission-based school, agreed on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a commonly accepted tract of the Prophetic past. Drawing on developments in legal theory that were common to all the major non-Shiite schools of the fifth/eleventh century, they declared that the community's supposed consensus on the reliability of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* guaranteed the absolute certainty of their contents.

This ability of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections to serve as an acknowledged convention for discussing the Prophet's authenticated legacy would serve three important needs in the Sunni scholarly culture of the fifth/eleventh century. As the division between different schools of theology and law became more defined, scholars from the competing Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī schools quickly began employing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a measure of authenticity in debates and polemics. By the early eighth/fourteenth century, even the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī school had found adopting this convention inevitable. With the increased division of labor between jurists and ḥadīth scholars in the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also became an indispensable authoritative reference for jurists who lacked expertise in ḥadīth evaluation. Finally, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works served as standards of excellence that could shape the science of ḥadīth criticism as scholars from the fifth/eleventh to the seventh/thirteenth century sought to systematize the study of the Prophet's word.

The authority of the canon as a measure of authenticity, however, was an illusion conjured up in the dialogic space of debate and exposition. It vanished outside such interactive arenas. Scholars directed the compelling authority of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* only

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against others, and within the closed doors of one school of law or theology, they had no compunction about ignoring or criticizing reports from either collection.

Although occasional criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* continued even after their canonization at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century, advocates of institutional Sunnism found it essential to protect the two works and the important roles they played. Beginning at the turn of the fourth/tenth century and climaxing in the mid-seventh/thirteenth, a set of predominately Shāfiʿī scholars created a canonical culture around the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that recast the two books' pre-canonical pasts as well as those of their authors according to the exigent contours of the canon. The canonical culture of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also had to reconcile instances where al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methods had fallen short of what had emerged as the common requirements of Sunni ḥadīth criticism in the centuries after their deaths.

While most influential participants in the Sunni tradition accepted the canonical culture of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, some ḥadīth scholars refused to compromise the critical standards of ḥadīth study to safeguard the canon. The tension between the majority's commitment to the institutional security of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and this iconoclastic strain came to a head with the emergence of the modern ḥadīth-based Salafī movement in the eighteenth century. In a conflict that reflects the anxieties of redefining Islam in the modern world, the impermissibility of criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* has become a rallying cry for those devoted to defending the classical institutions of Islamic civilization against the iconoclastic Salafī call to revive the primordial greatness of Islam through the ḥadīth tradition.

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Beyond the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s role as a measure of authenticity, an authoritative

reference and exemplum among Sunni scholars, the canon has played an important role in

a variety of ritual domains and broader historical narratives about Islamic civilization.

Here the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have become a synecdochic representation of the Prophet himself,

essentializing his role as a liminal figure and medium of blessing. The two works have

also come to serve as a literary trope, symbolizing the primordial purity of the Prophet's

true teachings in the Sunni tradition's vision of itself.

I.3. Scholarship on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the Ḥadīth Canon

Western scholars have regularly spoken of 'canonical' ḥadīth collections in

Islamic civilization.[6] This recognition follows the Muslim sources themselves, which

refer to this canon in a myriad of ways, such as 'the relied-upon books (*al-kutub al-*

muʿtamad ʿalayhā),' 'the Four Books,' 'the Five Books,' 'the Six Books,' and finally 'the

Authentic Collections (*Ṣiḥāḥ*).' We can discern three strata of the Sunni ḥadīth canon.

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[6] For examples, see G.E. von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History 600-1258* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), 95; Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:332; Norman Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 189; Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 19; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 224; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 1:62; Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 191; Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh Century Baghdad* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 40; Shahab Ahmad, "Mapping the World of a Scholar in Sixth/twelfth Century Bukhara: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 120, no. 1 (2000): 25; G.H.A Juynboll, "Ṣaḥīḥ" *Encyclopaedia of Islam* CD-ROM Edition v. 1.0, henceforth *EI²*; Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East 600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116; Sabine Schmidtke, "The *ijāza* from ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Samāhījī to Nāṣir al-Jārūdī al-Qaṭīfī: A Source for the Twelver Shiʿi Scholarly Tradition of Baḥrayn," in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 73; Natana J. DeLong Bas, *Wahhabi Islam* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2004), 46; Harald Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions: a Survey," *Arabica* 52, no. 2 (2005): 206.

The perennial core has been the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Beyond these two foundational classics,

some fourth/tenth-century scholars refer to a four-book selection that adds the two

*Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888) and al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915). The Five Book canon,

which is first noted in the sixth/twelfth century, incorporates the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī (d.

279/892). Finally the Six Book canon, which hails from the same period, adds either the

Sunan of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886), the *Sunan* of al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) or the *Muwaṭṭa'*

of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). Later ḥadīth compendia often included other collections

as well.[7] None of these books, however, has enjoyed the esteem of al-Bukhārī's and

Muslim's works.

A study tackling the entirety of the Sunni ḥadīth canon would require many more

volumes than the present project allows. Because the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* form the unchanging core

of the canon, and because the roles that the two books have played and the station they

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[7] Saʿīd b. al-Sakan of Egypt (d. 353/964) and Ibn Manda of Isfahan (d. 395/1004-5) mention the four
foundational books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasāʾī (see Chapter 4 ns. 175 and 176).
Although he did not denote them as a unit, the fifth/eleventh-century Shāfiʿī scholar Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī
(d. 458/1066) stated that the six collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, al-Tirmidhī and
Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) had identified a substantial amount of the authentic ḥadīths in circulation. Abū
al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113), who spent most of his life in Iran and greater Syria,
described the Six Books as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī, and the *Sunan*s of al-Nasāʾī, Abū
Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfiʿī of Qazvīn (d. 623/1226) also enumerates
this six-book series. The Andalusian Mālikī ḥadīth scholar, al-Saraqusṭī (d. 524/1129), on the other hand,
counts the Six Books as those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī and Mālik. Al-
Rāfiʿī's father, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāfiʿī (d. 580/1184), wrote a book called *Ḥāwī al-uṣūl min
akhbār al-rasūl*, which included all the ḥadīths from the collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī,
Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, and Ibn Mājah, as well as the *Musnad* of al-Shāfiʿī. Al-Silafī of Alexandria (d.
576/1180), Abū Bakr al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584/1188-9) and al-Nawawī of Damascus (d. 676/1277) mention only
Five Books: the works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasāʾī. See Abū Bakr
Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī, *Maʿrifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, ed. Sayyid Kusrawī Ḥasan, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-
Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1412/1991), 1:106; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāfiʿī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*,
ed. ʿAzīz Allāh al-ʿUṭāridī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1408/1987), 1:377; 2:49; Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b.
Muḥammad al-Silafī, "*Muqaddimat al-ḥāfiẓ al-kabīr Abī Ṭāhir al-Silafī*," in Ḥamd b. Muḥammad al-
Khaṭṭābī, *Maʿālim al-sunan*, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, 1401/1981), 4:358; Muḥyī al-
Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb li 'l-Nawawī* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ʿAlī
Ṣubayḥ, 1388/1968), 4; Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad al-Maqdisī and Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ
al-aʾimma al-sitta wa shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-
Quds, 1387/[1967]).

have achieved differ qualitatively from the other components of the canon, this study

only addresses the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. A comprehensive study of

the Sunni ḥadīth canon as a whole must wait until another day.

Oddly, although the broader ḥadīth canon and the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are frequently

mentioned in Western scholarship, neither topic has received significant attention.

Despite its having been published over a century ago, the work of the prescient

Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921 CE) remains the most profound and detailed study of

the ḥadīth canon. His interest in the entire span of the ḥadīth tradition and his special

attention to the question of the ḥadīth canon have made his study the most useful to date.

Even Muslim authors who regularly criticize Goldziher and other elder statesmen of

Orientalism quote him in order to explain when certain ḥadīth collections entered the

canon.[8] Following the predominant Sunni division of the ḥadīth canon into the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

and the four *Sunan*s of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, Goldziher

devotes separate sections to each of these two groups. He was able to fix approximately

where and by what time the four *Sunan*s had gained canonical status and the Six Book

canon had formed. He asserts that this authoritative selection coalesced gradually and

was in place by the seventh/thirteenth century, perceptively adding that the Maghrib and

the Islamic heartlands had varying definitions of what constituted the canon.[9]

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[8] See, for example, Muḥammad Zubayr Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development & Special Features*, ed. Abdal Hakim Murad (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 73-4.

[9] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II*, trans. and ed. S.M. Stern and G.R. Barber (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1971), 242, 244. Goldziher's German original, *Mohammedanische Studien*, was published in 1889-90.

Aside from Goldziher's appreciable contributions to our understanding of the ḥadīth canon's emergence, his most astute observation was that formidable questions about the canon await answers. He evinces a particular pessimism about dating the canonization of the Ṣaḥīḥayn. "[W]e cannot establish with chronological accuracy the date which brought the *consensus publicus* for the two Ṣaḥīḥs to maturity...," he states.[10] Goldziher also notes the extreme difficulty of determining why the ḥadīth canon was closed and why it excluded certain collections, such as the Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), written in the same period as the Ṣaḥīḥayn.[11] The present study will offer answers to both these questions.

Goldziher also made a rare foray into the function of the ḥadīth canon and the nature of the veneration for al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works. He submits that the ḥadīth canon as a whole served as a legal "reference in order to find out the traditional teachings about a given question."[12] He touches on other functions of al-Bukhārī's work in particular, raising the possibility of a ritual dimension to the canon and its role in defining communal identity. He notes how oaths were sworn on al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ, an honor otherwise reserved for the Qur'ān.[13] Most importantly, Goldziher hints that the canonization of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works was a dynamic process of interaction between the texts and the needs of the Muslim scholarly community.[14] In our discussion

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[10] Goldziher, 240.

[11] Goldziher, 239.

[12] Goldziher, 240.

[13] Goldziher, 234.

[14] Goldziher, 222.

of the multivalent functions of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in Chapters Six and Nine, both the insight and limitations of Goldziher's comments will become evident.

Goldziher also makes a unique effort to explain how the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were both venerated and open to criticism. The heart of the canonical status of the books, he explains, was not a claim of infallibility regarding al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, but rather the community's demand that they be recognized as legally compelling indicators of "religious praxis" on the basis of the community's consensus on their authenticity. He says: "[v]eneration was directed at this canonical work [al-Bukhārī's collection] as a whole but not to its individual lines and paragraphs."[15] Goldziher concludes that "the veneration [of the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim] never went so far as to cause free criticism of the sayings and remarks incorporated in these collections to be considered impermissible or unseemly...."[16] As we shall see in Chapter Eight, Goldziher's assessment proves correct until the early modern period, when criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* became anathema to many scholars.

Since Goldziher, scholars investigating Islamic intellectual history or evaluating the sources for the formative first three centuries of the Muslim community have found acknowledging the existence of the ḥadīth canon inevitable. Few discussions of Islamic thought or society fail to mention the canon and the unique status of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Most scholars, however, have been content to either reproduce Goldziher's conclusions or

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[15] Goldziher, 247.

[16] Goldziher, 236-7.

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devote only cursory remarks to the issue.[17] The superficial character of these observations stems from the frequency with which they treat the ḥadīth canon as ancillary to some greater discussion, such as early Islamic historiography or a survey of the sources of Islamic law. Such studies have followed Goldziher by dating the emergence of the canon from anywhere between the collections' compilation in the third/ninth century to the seventh/thirteenth century, devoting little thought to the actual nature or function of the canon within the community. In his unparalleled study of Islamic civilization, for example, Marshall Hodgson only notes the existence of "canonical collections" of ḥadīth, adding that al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥs* "came to be revered as especially holy."[18] In his otherwise comprehensive study of the formation of Islamic dogma and society in the second and third centuries Hijri, Josef van Ess acknowledges the existence of the ḥadīth canon but does not devote further attention to it.[19] Other excellent studies of Muslim scholarly culture in the classical period cast similarly cursory glances at the ḥadīth canon, interpreting it as a natural product of the salient role Prophetic traditions played in Islamic thought. In *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, for example, Daphna Ephrat states that "by the third Muslim century, hadith had also achieved a central place in Muslim religious life, and the basic canons of the prophetic Sunna had been codified."[20]

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[17] For a deferral to Goldziher by one of the leading Western scholars on ḥadīth, see Eerik Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī and the Isnād," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122, no. 3 (2002): 488.

[18] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:332.

[19] Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:62.

[20] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 40.

Scholars have generally perceived the canonical ḥadīth collections as representative of the Sunni worldview, and as such they have discussed them as a final chapter in the development of Islamic orthodoxy in the third/ninth century. Henri Lammens attributed the success of the Six Books to "the fact that they came at the right time, at the moment when Qorānic religion was about to take definitive shape...."[21] In the conclusion to *The Eye of the Beholder*, a study on how the Sunni community articulated an image of the Prophet as an act of self-definition, Uri Rubin refers to the large collections that appeared in this century as "canonical ḥadīth compilations" that defined orthodox Muslim stances. They "served as the venue for the authoritative formulation of an Islamic sense of spiritual and legal identity in Umayyad and early Abbasid times...."[22] Rubin thus recognizes the intimate connection between these canonical works and the question of communal identity, but his focus on Islamic origins prevents him from pursuing this discussion further.

Similarly, other scholars concerned with Islamic historiography and the development of the ḥadīth tradition have stressed that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their authors represent the culmination of ḥadīth study. Thus, in his *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Age*, Tarif Khalidi states that in Muslim's time "Hadith had reached its quantitative limits and spelled out its method."[23] "Bukhārī and Muslim," he adds, "gave

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[21] H. Lammens, *Islām: Beliefs and Institutions*, trans., Sir E. Denison Ross (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., [1926]), 79.

[22] Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 224.

[23] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43.

definitive shape to Hadith."[24] Both Rubin and Khalidi focus on the writing of the

Saḥīḥayn as one of the seals of orthodoxy, paying little attention to their role as a medium

through which an ongoing process of institutional authorization and communal

identification would take place.

Scholarship that addresses the continuing development of ḥadīth literature after

the appearance of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections has granted more space to

discussions of the canon. It has not, however, followed the promising lead of Goldziher's

work. In his *Islam: The View from the Edge*, Richard Bulliet refers to the canonical

ḥadīth collections as a watershed event in the Muslim community's transition from the

oral transmission of the Prophet's sunna to limiting it to specific texts. He prefers to

identify the formation of the canon with this transition rather than with the genesis of the

Saḥīḥayn themselves. Following Goldziher, he thus says that the "evolution of hadith

culminated in the general acceptance, by the thirteenth century, of six books of sound

traditions as canonical, as least for the Sunni majority of the population."[25] In his

valuable discussion of the development of ḥadīth literature in the *The Cambridge History

of Arabic Literature*, Muhammad Abd al-Rauf straddles the two opinions: that the special

recognition of the *Saḥīḥayn* followed on the heels of their compilation, and that their final

canonization took place in the seventh/thirteenth century. Thus Abd al-Rauf describes

how al-Bukhārī's book in particular was "almost immediately and universally

acknowledged as the most authentic work in view of the author's stringent authentication

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[24] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 59.

[25] Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, 19.

requirements."[26] But after the famous systematizer of the hadīth sciences, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), announced that the Muslim community (*umma*) had decisively acknowledged the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s unquestioned authenticity, "no more criticism [of the two books] could be tolerated...."[27]

Modern Muslim scholarship on this question resembles its Western counterpart in its failure to answer questions about the canon's emergence and functions. This is largely due to the polemic motivation of Muslim authors addressing this subject. Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir's *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (The Place of the Ṣaḥīḥayn) (1994)[28] proceeds from an orthodox Sunni standpoint and seeks to defend al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work from opponents who criticize them. The Ibāḍī Saʿīd b. Mabrūk al-Qanūbī's ingenious *al-Sayf al-ḥādd fī al-radd ʿalā man akhadha bi-ḥadīth al-āḥād fī masāʾil al-iʿtiqād* (The Incisive Sword: A Refutation of Those Who Use Āḥād Ḥadīths in Questions of Dogma)[29] (1997-8) and the Twelver Shiite Moḥammad Ṣādeq Najmī's *Sayrī dar Ṣaḥīḥayn: sayr va barrasī dar do ketāb-e mohemm va madrak-e ahl-e sonnat* (A Voyage through the Ṣaḥīḥayn: An Exploration and Examination of two Important Books and Sources of the Sunnis) (2001)[30] approach the issue of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* from non-Sunni stances seeking to

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[26] Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature – I: The Development of the Science of *Ḥadīth*," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature until the End of the Umayyad Period*, eds. A.F.L. Beeston et al. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 275.

[27] Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 285.

[28] Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Jeddah: Dār al-Qibla liʾl-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1415/1994).

[29] Saʿīd b. Mabrūk al-Qanūbī, al-Sayf al-ḥādd fī al-radd ʿalā man akhadha bi-ḥadīth al-āḥād fī masāʾil al-iʿtiqād, 3rd ed. (Oman: n.p., 1418/[1997-8]).

[30] Moḥammad Ṣādeq Najmī, *Sayrī dar Ṣaḥīḥayn: sayr va barrasī dar do ketāb-e mohemm va madrak-e ahl-sonnat* ([Tehran]: Daftar-e Enteshārāt-e Eslāmī, 1379/[2001]).

shed light on what they consider undue Sunni reverence for the two works. Although they offer few analytical insights into the function or formation of the canon, these three books provide invaluable citations and guide the reader to pertinent primary sources. These Arabic- and Persian-language secondary sources are thus indispensable aids in studying the *Saḥīḥayn*. Without them, navigating the vast expanses of the Islamic intellectual heritage would be nearly impossible.

I.4. Addressing the *Saḥīḥayn* as a Canon

Scholars of Islamic history have been unsuccessful in addressing questions concerning the ḥadīth canon in great part because they have not sufficiently articulated what precisely canons are, why they form and how they function. As Goldziher sensed, canons are not agents that simply leap onto the stage of history. They are created by communities in acts of authorization and self-definition because they meet certain pressing needs for their audiences. Studies on canons have proven that they are complicated creatures, whose emergence and functions must be examined as a network of interactions between a community's needs, its conceptions of authority, and the nature and uses of specific texts. Goldziher realized that in order to understand the canonical place of the *Saḥīḥayn* one had to appreciate their functions. In the absence of clear expectations about what these could be, however, Goldziher's efforts to explore the canon could not move beyond insightful observations. A more comprehensive discussion of the emergence and function of the *Saḥīḥayn* canon requires a sensitivity to issues of communal identity, institutional authority and the way in which texts can serve as mediums for their expression.

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Conversely, some scholars have cultivated an acute sensitivity to employing the term 'canon' when treating the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the other authoritative ḥadīth collections. The term 'canon' is so culturally loaded and so inevitably evokes the Biblical tradition that a commendable commitment to distinguishing the Islamic tradition from the Occidental has led some to deny that any ḥadīth canon existed. Whether or not one can discuss the history of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the language of canons and canonicity, however, requires an investigation of these fecund terms and their historical application.

I.5. Note on the Sources and Approaches of this Study

The study of canonization is a study of historical perceptions more than of historical reality. Although al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their *Ṣaḥīḥ*s are the centerpiece of this story, they are not its primary actors. It is the community that received, used and responded to their legacies that forged the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. Establishing the background, context and historical realities of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's careers is certainly essential for appreciating the genesis of the canon. This study, however, is not about the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as much as it is about the drama that unfolded around them. This interest in reception and perception as opposed to reconstructing an authenticated textual or historical reality spares us a prolonged focus on the questions of textual authenticity that so concern scholars of early Islamic history. As we will see in Chapter Three, surviving textual sources from the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries provide multi-dimensional and generally reliable biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Sources from this period also leave little doubt that the texts of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* reached complete,

although perhaps not polished, forms during their respective authors' lives.[31] For us, however, the true significance of the details of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's lives lies in their roles as stimuli for later Muslims looking back at these two personages.

Of course, this does not in any way relieve us of our duty to assume a historical critical approach to our source material; the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon is one of the most salient features of Sunni orthodoxy and thus has attracted a tremendous amount of sacralizing attention from the Sunni tradition. According to the historical critical method, we will exert all efforts to rely on multiple sources of close temporal proximity to the subjects they address, relying on isolated or later works only if the probability of their accuracy outweighs that of contrivance. If a source does not meet the requirements of the Principle of Contextual Credibility, which dictates that a source must conform to the known features of its historical context, and the Principle of Dissimilarity, which states that a non-'orthodox' account probably precedes an 'orthodox' one, then we must treat it as suspect from a historical critical standpoint.[32] Such material, however, remains tremendously valuable in charting the development of historical perceptions about al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are arguably the most famous and prominent books in the Sunni tradition after the Qur'ān, and al-Bukhārī and Muslim are titanic figures in Islamic civilization. We must thus cast a very wide net in the sources we examine for tracing the

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[31] See Appendix III.

[32] For a valuable and very concise discussion of these important principles of the historical critical method, see Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: a Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 202-7.

historical development of the canon. Narrative sources such as biographical dictionaries and local histories provide invaluable source material. The *Tārīkh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), the *Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-umam w'al-mulūk* of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), the *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'* and *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), and the *Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* of al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) exemplify these two genres. In addition to providing essential biographical data, these works also record the manner in which al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their books were perceived in different periods and localities.

Normative sources from the various genres of ḥadīth literature provide another major source for the history of the canon. Ḥadīth collections that postdate the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, such as al-Baghawī's (d. 516/1122) *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*; works on the technical science of ḥadīth collection and criticism, such as al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth* and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's (d. 852/1449) *al-Nukat 'alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*; dictionaries of ḥadīth transmitters such as al-Khalīlī's (d. 446/1054) *al-Irshād fī ma'rifat 'ulamā' al-ḥadīth*, and commentaries on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* such as Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī* provide the bulk of data on the manner in which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were studied and used by the Sunni community. We must also draw from a wider range of normative sources. Works on jurisprudence, such as the *Kitāb al-mabsūṭ* of al-Sarakhsī (d.ca. 490/1096); legal theory, such as the *Kitāb al-burhān* of al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085); mysticism, like the *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* of 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), and sectarian literature, such as 'Abd al-Jalīl Abū al-Ḥusayn Qazvīnī's (fl. 560/1162) *Ketāb-e naqḍ*, allow crucial glimpses into the various usages of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* beyond the limited realm of ḥadīth study.

As this study continues into the modern period, even the most recent Muslim scholarship can serve as a source for grasping the nature and function of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. Furthermore, the modern period furnishes oral sources such as lectures from scholarly centers like Cairo's al-Azhar University, or the recorded lectures of Salafī *shaykh*s like Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999 CE).

Historians can only work with what history has preserved for them. Like all other historical data, the sources on the origins, development and function of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon have been subject to the vicissitudes of time and fortune. Our ability to collect and interpret such data is similarly prisoner to our own interpretive choices and biases. Yet we must have answers, whatever they may be, and for the period since the two books emerged as a canon their very prominence in Islamic civilization has preserved a plethora of textual sources in manuscript or published form. For the occasionally disreputable period of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's pre-canonical gestation, we have only what Muslim scholars dutifully preserved for us. That we can even attempt a history of this early period is a testament to the integrity of those tireless 'seekers of knowledge (*talabat al-ʿilm*)' who for centuries led pack animals weighed down with notebooks from teacher to teacher along the dusty road between Baghdad and Khurāsān.

II.

THE STUDY OF CANONS AND CANONIZATION

II.1. Introduction

What happens when a book begins to be read as a classic or part of a selection of classics? A sentence or turn of phrase, previously bereft of significance beyond its literal import, is suddenly pregnant with meaning and worthy of exegesis. What happens if a collection of texts is deemed an authentic conduit to God's will or legal right? Its very ontological status is raised, and minute inconsistencies within the texts themselves or challenges from outside sources can undermine the very definition of truth to which a community adheres. In neither of these cases were the texts themselves agents. Rather it was their body of readers who, out of a need for exemplary literature or select writings through which to approach the divine, made the books more than a sum of their pages, endowing them with a new authority and significance. This elevation binds these texts, their writers and audiences together in a new authoritative relationship. It creates a new universe of possible meanings and functions for these valorized works. This reverence or appreciation of the texts draws lines around the audience, including, excluding and defining the community. At this nexus of text, authority and communal identity, a canon has been formed.

Regardless of their specific qualities, canons can be studied as a unified phenomenon that appears when communities authorize certain texts, radically changing

the ways they are interpreted and used. The Greek work *kanòn* originally meant

'measuring stick' or a tool used to guarantee straightness, thus connoting the notion of a

standard. Aristotle employed the term in the context of the virtuous man, whom he

considered to be 'the standard of good measure' in ethics.[1] Epicurus would consider

logic to be the '*kanòn*' of true knowledge.[2]

In the early Christian tradition Paul used the word to refer to the 'straight path' of

correct belief, and 'canon' soon acquired the meaning of the 'list' of sacred writings that

guided the believer. Over the centuries the term 'canon' has thus come to indicate a set

of authoritative or exemplary texts within a specific community of readers. Fierce

debates have raged of late and much ink has been spilled in efforts to provide more exact

definitions for this denotation of the word.[3] Its true and global import, however, is best

grasped not through restricting it to an exhaustive definition, but rather through viewing

its reflections in the myriad studies on canons and canonicity produced by scholars from

different fields. By examining the variety of canons, their commonalities, and efforts to

distill the essence of canonicity, we can identify common historical processes and acquire

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[1] Jan Gorak, *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea* (London: Athlone, 1991); 10, 17. For a brief history of the word 'canon,' see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 289-93. For a more engaged discussion of this historical definition, see Gerald T. Sheppard's "Canon," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 3:62-9.

[2] Harry Gamble, *The New Testament Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 15.

[3] In his study of the canon as a tool of social control, M.B. Ter Borg, for example, tries to distill the "primordial definition" for the concept of canon, concluding that its essence is that of an "objectified standard rule"; see M.B. Ter Borg, "Canon and Social Control," in *Canonization and Decanonization*, ed. A. van der Kooij and K. van der Toorn (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 411-2; see also Jonathan Z. Smith's "Canons, Catalogues and Classics" in the same volume, pgs. 299-303.

conceptual tools useful for understanding the emergence and function of the ḥadīth canon in Islam.

II.2. Canons in Context and the Emergence of Canon Studies

Canons have generally occurred in scriptural, literary or legal contexts. It was thus in these fields that the study of canons and canonization began.[4] In the 1970s, however, the various strands of critical theory and postmodernism penetrated these arenas and presented a common challenge to the master narrative of canons and objective criteria. Although there remains scholarship devoted to religious, literary and legal canons, these fields have increasingly adopted the common language of hermeneutic studies in a joint investigation of the "politics of interpretation." Leading experts such as Frank Kermode and Stanley Fish have exemplified this development, as they straddle Biblical studies and literature, and literature and law, respectively. This unified field of canon studies has matured enough to produce a series of reflections on debates over the notion and value of canons, and works such as Jan Gorak's *The Making of the Modern Canon* (1991) have traced the Western concept of 'the canon' from its origins in classical Greece until modern times.

An early attempt to study canonization as a phenomenon in religious traditions was Allan Menzies's prescient 1897 article "The Natural History of Sacred Books: Some Suggestions for a Preface to the History of the Canon of Scripture." Menzies ultimately

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[4] Scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith, H.J. Adriaanse and Jan Assmann have sought to remind audiences that it is the theological usage of canon that lies at the root of all modern discussion of the issues; see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Canons, Catalogues and Classics," and H.J. Adriaanse's "Canonicity and the Problem of the Golden Mean" in *Canonization and Decanonization*; 295, 316.

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aims at applauding the Christian Biblical canon for its unique excellence and assumes an

evolution of religion from primitive to advanced, but his work nonetheless possesses

remarkable foresight. Indeed, Menzies's description of the raw emotive forces that build

canons beautifully encapsulates the place of ḥadīth in the Muslim worldview. These

forces are:

> books which place the believer where the first disciples stood, which enable
> him to listen to the Master's words, and overhear perhaps even his secret
> thoughts and prayers, so that he feels for himself what that spirit was which
> reached the Master from the upper region and passed forth from him to other
> men....[5]

In this article, Menzies sets forth what he considers the two essential conditions for the

formation of any scriptural canon: "the existence of books which the nation is prepared to

recognize as the norm of its religion," and "the existence of a religious authority of

sufficient power to prescribe to the nation what books it shall receive as that norm."[6]

Menzies's approach to canons and canonization touches on themes central to later

examinations of the issue. Even at this early stage of theorizing the canon, we see the

importance of communal identity (Menzies's "nation"), authority and a standard, or

norm, for truth and authenticity in a religious community. His stipulation of an extant

and sufficiently powerful "religious authority" to declare and enforce the canon is

compelling, raising questions about the potential forms such authorities could assume

across various communities.

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[5] Allan Menzies, "The Natural History of Sacred Books: Some Suggestions for a Preface to the History of the Canon of Scripture," *American Journal of Theology* 1 (1897): 83.

[6] Allan Menzies, "The Natural History of Sacred Books," 90.

Further study of scriptural canons owes a great deal to the investigation of the formation of the Old and New Testament canons, which began in earnest in Germany during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The rival works of Theodor Zahn (1888-92) and Adolf Harnak (1889) were formative in this field. In the twentieth century, Hans von Campenhausen's *Die Entstehung der christlichen Bibel* (1969) is undoubtedly the most frequently cited, although it has been surpassed by Bruce Metzger's definitive *The Canon of the New Testament* (1987). In 1977 a series of studies on the Old Testament, most notably Joseph Blenkinsopp's *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins*, focused on the canon of the Hebrew Bible but bound it to the universal issues of communal conflict and identity, thus providing an apt point of transition into the study of the canon as a phenomenon.

The approach to canon *qua* canon owes much to the field of literary criticism. Classical Greek literary and aesthetic criticism originated in the book *Kanòn* of the mimetic artist Polycletus (fl. 450 BCE). Although merely a manual on how to most perfectly mimic the human form in sculpture, Polycletus's work was appreciated by later classical figures in ways the author never intended, with Pliny the Elder stating that Polycletus's exemplary statues were the "canon," or standard for artistic expression.[7] Although he never uses the Greek term *kanòn* in his *Poetics*, Aristotle presents aesthetic criteria for the literary genres of epic and tragedy.[8] Each genre culminates in an unsurpassable masterpiece, such as the Homeric epics or Sophocles's tragedy *Oedipus*

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[7] Jan Gorak, *The Making of the Modern Canon*, 11.

[8] Aristotle uses the term in his *Nicomachean Ethics* in the context of the good person as "'a canon and measure' of the truth." See Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 289.

Rex, which themselves embody the standards of excellence for that genre. Implied is the notion that there exists a set of these exemplary works, a collection that one might term a canon. Indeed, later Hellenistic scholars applied the term to a group of books whose high level of language made them worthy of imitation.[9] In the classical Greek and Hellenistic worlds, the term canon thus communicated the notion of 'model' or 'exemplum,' "a set of unsurpassable masterpieces to be studied and copied by all later practitioners in the field."[10]

Since the advent of the novel and the bourgeois tragedy in the eighteenth century, the fixed canon of classical literature has dissolved amid debate over which works of literature merit the title of masterpiece and who possesses the authority to pronounce them canonical. Following the post-modernist assault on the cultural systems and normative assumptions that framed both scriptural and literary canons, the study of canons and canonization as phenomena has progressed continuously during the last quarter century. Much of this discussion has centered on the proper place of a literary or cultural canon within a modern pluralistic society, an issue that Jan Gorak has termed "the canon debate."

The masterful literary and hermeneutic scholarship of Frank Kermode, exemplified in his book *The Classic* (1975), made the daring and lasting association between the notion of the literary classic, a shared historical vision, and empire.[11] For

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[9] Metzger, 289.

[10] Gorak, *The Making of the Modern Canon*, 11.

[11] See Frank Kermode, *The Classic* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 23 and 28.

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Kermode the exemplification of the pre-modern literary canon was Virgil's *Aeneid*,

which embodied both the Catholic Church's and European rulers' dream of a Holy

Roman Empire.[12] Not only was a canon an expression of a shared worldview, it could

entail the imperial extension and maintenance of that vision. Kermode addressed literary

and scriptural canon through a unified approach in 1979 with his hermeneutic study *The*

Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative and his article "Institutional

Control of Interpretation."[13] These studies linked the canon more closely to notions of

hermeneutic authority, control and the institutional constraint of a scholarly or priestly

class.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the publication of a wave of comprehensive studies on

the formation of the Biblical canon, with a renewed emphasis on the role of the canon in

forging identity. Through numerous books and articles, James Sanders exerted a strong

influence on canon studies, adopting the term 'canonical criticism' for the study of the

"function of authoritative traditions in the believing communities...."[14] Principally aimed

at undoing the historical-critical obsession with finding the original *sitz im leben* of

Biblical texts, his interests lie in the way that the needs of a community shape and define

a canonical corpus over time. Sanders focuses on the "period of intense canonical

process" between the crafting of a text by its author and the stabilization of a discrete

canon. "It was in such periods that the faithful of believing communities... shaped what

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[12] Jan Gorak, *Critic of Crisis: A Study of Frank Kermode* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 62.

[13] See Kermode, "Institutional Control of Interpretation," *Salmagundi* 43 (1979): 72-87.

[14] James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 24.

they received in ways that rendered it most meaningful and valuable for them."[15] Due to very real and pressing needs that appear in this period, a society's conception of the authority a text could acquire leaps forward. For Sanders, it is not merely the canonization of a text that changes its ontological status; rather, the pressing needs and dynamics of a faith community lead to a leap in that society's conception of what authority a text can attain.[16] Canonization is therefore not simply a ritual of raising a text's ontological status that a community can perform at any time. Rather, communities undergo certain processes in which they acquire the imaginative ability to canonize. These ideas were further developed in Kermode's article "The Canon" (1987) in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*.[17]

Canon studies has also generated a number of studies in comparative religion. Miriam Levering's volume *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (1989) tackled issues of canonization and authority in a wide range of scriptural traditions. Kendall W. Folkert's chapter on "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture'" in this collection presents a novel distinction between the scriptural power of a canonical text and its actual physical presence in ritual. Gerald T. Sheppard's influential entry on "Canon" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* spreads this loaded term out along a continuum

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[15] Sanders, 30.

[16] Sanders, 32-33.

[17] See Kermode, "The Canon," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987).

between two poles that he terms Canon 1 and Canon 2.[18] The former represents the notion of canon as a criterion between truth and falsehood, inspired and uninspired. Canon 2 manifests itself as a list, catalog or "fixed collection, and/or standardized text."[19] Sheppard proposes these two denotations of canon as "an illuminating heuristic device" for examining the textual traditions of different faiths.[20]

One of religious studies' most influential contributions came in 1977 when Jonathan Z. Smith presented a definition of the canon as a religious phenomenon partially based on several sub-Saharan African religious traditions. Smith claims that canonization is "one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity."[21] That ingenuity, he proposes, is the hermeneutic process by which a religious community applies the tradition delineated by the canon to new problems. "A canon," Smith states, "cannot exist without a tradition and an interpreter."[22] Through canonizing a set of texts, a tradition can deposit religious authority in a manageable and durable form. Later interpreters of that tradition can then bring the authority embodied in this canon to bear on new issues.

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[18] Folkert uses the same distinction with no reference to Sheppard in his "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture," published in 1989; see "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture'," in *Rethinking Scripture*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 173.

[19] Sheppard, "Canon," 66.

[20] Sheppard, 64.

[21] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 52. This chapter was originally presented as a lecture in 1977, then published in W.S. Green, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press and Brown University, 1978), 1:11-28.

[22] Smith, "Sacred Persistence," 49.

A landmark issue of *Critical Inquiry* in the early 1980s, developed into a book in 1984, brought canon studies fully under the rubric of critical theory and the postmodernist focus on the politics of expression. This volume pursued the structural study of the canon and its relationship to power and communal identity by bringing together articles on literary, scriptural, musical and theoretical topics. Its editor, Robert von Hallberg, built on the recognition that canons had become commonly understood as expressions of social and political power. Referring specifically to questions of aesthetics, he states that "the question is not whether or not canons serve political functions, but rather how fully their potential functions account for their origins and limit their utility."[23] The most striking essay in this collection is Gerald Burns's "Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures." In this chapter Burns addresses the distinction between scripture and canon. He moves away from a previous supposition that defines scripture as authoritative and open to additional texts, as opposed to a canon, which is authoritative but closed. Instead, he asserts that the defining characteristic of canons is their power. Canons are not simply inspired or authentic collections of texts, they are "binding on a group of people."[24] Burns goes on to link this powerful notion of the canon as binding to the act of a public reading of the text. He recalls the story of *Deuteronomy*'s discovery in *2 Kings*. In ca. 621 BCE, a Jewish priest finds this bound revelation from God in the Temple and brings it to King Josiah, who immediately rends his clothes in awe.

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[23] Robert von Hallberg, "Introduction," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2-3.

[24] Gerald L. Burns, "Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures," in *Canons*, 67.

Furthermore, he orders the new text read to the people.[25] Burns adds that Ezra was also

commanded to read the Torah to his people in public places as part of his reconstruction

of the Jewish community in Palestine.[26] For Burns, the Biblical canon is primarily textual

power, and the binding act of canonization takes place through an authoritative public

reading of the text in front of a populace it compels to heed and obey.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a series of books and articles that turned these new

theoretical models back on scriptural and literary traditions. Edward Said's *The World,*

the Text and the Critic (1983) and Lilian S. Robinson's essay "Treason our Text:

Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon,"[27] represent attacks on the concept of a

literary canon from the two dominant trends of feminist and post-colonial studies. A

conference held at the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religion in 1997 produced a

massive volume entitled *Canonization and Decanonization*, which includes essays

addressing the phenomenon of scriptural canonization and also examining the canonical

traditions of every major religion. In another collection, Guy Stroumsa's fascinating

essay "The Body of Truth and its Measures: New Testament Canonization in Context"

emphasizes that "[c]anonization processes should be understood as part and parcel of

religious and social processes of identification."[28] This article seconds Metzger's

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[25] Burns, 69-70.

[26] Burns, 87.

[27] See Lilian S. Robinson, "Treason our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon," in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

[28] See Guy G. Stroumsa, "The Body of Truth and its Measures: New Testament Canonization in Context," in *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte*, eds. Holger Preissler and Hubert Seiweret (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 1994), 314.

emphasis on the role of the Gnostic[29] and Montanist[30] movements in the articulation of the New Testament but also points out the effect that Christian-Jewish polemics had on the formation of these two communities. Christians and Jews each claimed to possess the correct interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the former with the oral teachings of Christ and the latter through the hermeneutic tradition descending from the Oral Torah revealed to Moses at Sinai. That the New Testament's codification of Christ's words and the Mishna's setting down the interpretive methods of the Rabbis found written expression in the late second or early third centuries CE suggests that both communities were canonizing "secondary" holy texts. These were competing keys to understanding and unlocking a shared legacy.[31] In this strongly polemical context, Stroumsa's discussion of the Greek expression "*kanòn tès alètheias,*" the 'rule of revealed truth,' as used by Irenaeus in his writings against what he considered heretical Christian sects, illustrates a powerfully normative function of "canon" as the criterion distinguishing truth from heresy.[32]

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[29] Gnosticism: this broad and flexible mantle applies to the diverse groups of early Christians who believed that the material world was inherently evil and the creation of an evil force (demiurge). Christ was a divine redeemer (aeon) sent from the true God, bringing salvational knowledge that would allow that elect who gained access to it to rejoin the higher realms of light and truth. Gnostics favored the *Gospel of John* as well as that of Thomas, one of the Gnostic gospels uncovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945.

[30] Montanism: started by the former priest Montanus in the second half of the second century CE, this ecstatic Christian movement began in Asia Minor and quickly spread throughout the Mediterranean basin. Montanus and his two female companions believed in the continuing revelation of the Holy Ghost to the Christian community in the form of trances and prophetic outbursts.

[31] Stroumsa, 315-16; see also Sanders, 14.

[32] Stroumsa, 314. See also Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 114-141.

Stroumsa also highlights the distinction between cultural and religious canons. The cementing of the New Testament as a religious canon in the late second century proved a very separate event from its emergence in the fourth century as a cultural canon, or selection of classics to be studied as part of the curriculum of an educated man in the Roman world.[33] The notion of the scriptures functioning as a cultural as well as a religious canon highlights the importance of Kermode's discussion of "the classic" and its power to extend a communal vision through the imperial gravity that 'proper taste' and 'proper edification' exert in a society.

The study of canons in law has proven much more insular than its literary or scriptural counterparts. Recently, however, interdisciplinary scholars such as Stanley Fish have brought legal canons under the aegis of canon studies. Lenora Ledwon's collection *Law and Literature: Text and Theory* (1996) is one of the most comprehensive efforts to join these two fields. More recently, J.M. Balkin and Sanford Levinson produced a collection of essays addressing specific questions of canonicity and law. Although these essays deal with topics of an explicitly legal nature, the editors' introduction articulates a visionary and overarching aim for canon studies: "[t]he study of canons and canonicity is the very key to the secrets of a culture and its characteristic modes of thought."[34] They echo truisms of canon studies such as the important influence of ferment and change on the visibility of a canon, but also explore topics unplumbed by other scholars. Balkin and Levinson introduce the idea of "deep canonicity," or those

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[33] Stroumsa, 308.

[34] J.M. Balkin and Sanford Levinson, eds., *Legal Canons* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 4.

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canonical modes of thinking, master narratives and canonical examples that form the background for a culture's process of expression and argument.[35] Most importantly, however, Balkin and Levinson were perhaps the first scholars since Sanders stressed the "multivalency" of canonical texts to explain how canons can function differently depending on the audience that they are supposed to guide or bind together.[36]

The study of legal canons has also produced some of the most articulate and incisive observations about the phenomenon of the canon in general. Stanley Fish's 1993 article "Not for an Age but for All Time: Canons and Postmodernism," published in *The Journal of Legal Education*, identifies the intersection of legal and literary canons in the realm of high culture, where both fields stress the "valorization of the life of the mind."[37] Fish, often considered one of the most vigorous critics of canons in society, stresses the probative force possessed by canonical works. Addressing a case in which a judge rejected a proposed law banning all forms of racist expression because it would prohibit teaching Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Fish notes that "if Shakespeare is on your side in an argument, the argument is over." Much like Irenaeus's *kanòn* as 'rule of revealed truth,' Fish concludes that the function of the canon is not to encourage thought, but rather to stop it. His explanation for Shakespeare's compelling power harks back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, for the bard is "the very canon – role, norm, measure, standard – in relation to which canonicity is established." A text becomes canonical when a

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[35] Balkin and Levinson, 15-18.

[36] Balkin and Levinson, 8.

[37] Stanley Fish, "Not for an Age but for All Time: Canons and Postmodernism." *Journal of Legal Education* 43 (1993): 13.

community recognizes that it is the thing to which "all workers in the enterprise," or, in Aristotle's case, the genre, aspire.[38]

A new standard in canon studies was set by Moshe Halbertal's 1997 *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority*. In this work, Halbertal uses the Judaic tradition as a case study to synthesize applicable theory on the canon as it pertains to both the Hebrew Bible and the phenomenological study of canonization. In doing so, Halbertal draws on fields ranging from jurisprudence to the philosophy of language. Unlike previous scholars, however, he constructs a revolutionary yet practical framework for studying the relationship between canonization, authority and identity in what he terms "text centered communities," whose members are bound together through a common commitment to canonical texts. Halbertal explains that a text centered community exhibits several characteristics. First, expertise in the canonical text is a source of authority and prestige within the community. Second, study of the canonical text is itself an act of devotion urged upon all. Third, the text becomes "a locus of religious experience," with those who pore over or imbibe it engaging in "a religious drama in and of itself." Finally, the canonical text defines the boundaries of the community. It is the only recourse and source for the justification of ideas.[39] "In a text centered community the boundaries of a community are shaped in relation to loyalty to a shared canon," asserts Halbertal.[40]

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[38] Fish, 12-15.

[39] Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7-8.

[40] Halbertal, 129.

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Another important concept explored in *People of the Book* is the notion of

formative texts, a type of canonical text that serves as a template for the development of

expression and interpretation within a community. Beyond simply being a classic worthy

of study and imitation, "[a] formative text is one in which progress in the field[, in this

case, of understanding revealed law] is made through interpretation of that text."[41]

Halbertal also proposes a principle by which the vague and intangible notion of

canonicity can be gauged. Drawing from literary hermeneutics, Halbertal employs the

well-traveled Principle of Charity (a concept whose development and use will be traced

later in this chapter), stipulating that the canonicity of a scripture can be measured by the

charity with which it is read and interpreted. If a community reads a text in the best

possible light, attempting to minimize internal contradictions and reconcile notions of

truth established by the text with those evident in the outside world, their reading is

charitable and the text's canonicity secure. Readings that either highlight problems

within the text or challenge its probity by preferring external truths, such as those

provided by modern science, pose threats to the canon and indicate a decrease in the

text's holiness.

Halbertal's work thus constitutes a new stage of canon studies. His promulgation

of discrete definitions and conceptual tools for the study of canons in text centered

communities is a corollary to Menzies' prescient if parochial work a century earlier.

Both scholars grasp that canonization in religious communities is an irrepressible reality

and that our understanding of canonization is nothing more than a tool for understanding

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[41] Halbertal, 94.

"the secrets of a culture and its characteristic modes of thought."[42] As von Hallberg noted, it has been widely acknowledged that sacred canons are intimately bound to the profanity of self-identification and authority. Given this reality, our ability to increase our knowledge of what the great Muslim scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) called "the truth of things (*ḥaqā'iq al-umūr*)" hinges on our mastery of a lexicon and conceptual framework capable of advancing our understanding of how canons are informed by and govern historical processes.

II.3. Canon Studies and the Islamic Tradition

The study of canons emerged in the West. With the exception of more global efforts such as those of Kendall Folkert and Jonathan Z. Smith, inquiries into canons and canonization have often been directly tied to the religious or literary aspects of Christianity or Judaism. To what extent can the history of certain authoritative ḥadīth collections in Islamic civilization be read in this light? Scholars of Islam, Islamic civilization and its varied genres of literary and religious expression have been cautious in applying approaches developed in the Occidental tradition to their corresponding fields in Islamic studies. One might argue that scholars of other civilizations should not blunder into seeing canons where none exist or assume that they function in the same manner as those in the West. As Folkert has pointed out, Western scholars of South Asian scriptural traditions had been misrepresenting the nature and contents of the Jain canon since 1882. Not only had generations of scholars based their understanding of the

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[42] Balkin and Levinson, 4.

Jain canon on only one primary source, their conceptualization of a canon as a discrete

and complete list of texts distracted them from the fact that "it is not specific texts or

scriptures" but a specific "class of knowledge" that the Jain community considered

authoritative.[43]

Tackling the mighty task of summing up the "Muslim Canon" from late

Antiquity to the modern era, Aziz al-Azmeh is thus duly cautious in his contribution to

the *Canonization and Decanonization* volume. Al-Azmeh confines himself to discussing

in the broadest terms how the Islamic scriptural tradition of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth

took shape over centuries as part of a process of communal identification. He admits that

his efforts are hobbled by the primitive state of Islamic studies, which leads him to

identify more questions than he answers. As a result, he concludes that the process of

canonization in the Muslim tradition is "historically obscure except in some of its

details."[44]

Two more directed forays into the study of the canon in the Islamic legal and

literary worlds have been William Hanaway's article "Is there a Canon of Persian

Poetry?" (1993) and Brannon Wheeler's *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization*

and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship (1996). Hanaway

believes that one of a canon's primary functions is that of a "heavy weapon to fire at the

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[43] John E. Cort, "Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jain Scripture," in *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. Jeffrey R. Timm (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 171-2.

[44] Aziz al-Azmeh, "The Muslim Canon from Late Antiquity to the Era of Modernism," in *Canonization and Decanonization*, 197 and 203. Al-Azmeh's critical description of Orientalist scholarship as "far too philologically technical and detailed in its approach and furtive in its conclusions" seems unfair given his evaluation of the state of the field (see al-Azmeh, 193). Such caution and attention to detail must precede any attempts at more general conclusions.

enemy as well as a means of defining the collective self."[45] He thus cites the

homogeneity of the courtly audience to which classical Persian poetry was addressed, and

the lack of any "significant other" or "counter canon" contesting it, as evidence against

the existence of a poetic canon in medieval Persia.[46] Here he echoes the argument of

scholars such as Kermode, Blenkinsopp and Metzger that it was communal tension and

competing identities that defined the canons of the Hebrew Bible and the New

Testament.[47] Jonathan Z. Smith's inclusive definition of a religious canon proved more

easily applicable to Islamic tradition, and Brannon Wheeler employed it to understand

how the Ḥanafī school of legal scholarship in Islam preserved the authority of the

Qur'ānic revelation and the Prophet's precedent through its chain of authorized legal

interpreters.[48]

Hanaway's and Wheeler's studies are extremely valuable, but they nonetheless

demonstrate the Scylla and Charybdis of forcing a conceptual framework onto the

complex terrain of textual history. This framework may distract a scholar from crucial

areas that might otherwise be explored, while accommodating the idiosyncrasies of the

local tradition in question might neutralize a theory's efficacy. Hanaway's focus on a

very narrow definition of a canon, for example, limited his inquiry to determining

whether one existed or not. But canon studies has proven the diversity of approaches to

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[45] William L. Hanaway Jr., "Is there a Canon of Persian Poetry?" *Edebiyât* 4, no. 1 (1993): 3

[46] Hanaway, 3; for a reply, see Julia Rubanovich, "Literary Canon and Patterns of Evaluation in Persian Prose on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion," *Studia Iranica* 32 (2003): 47-76, esp. 48.

[47] See Metzger, 90-104.

[48] See Brannon M. Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

the issue of canonicity and identified the manifold functions canons can serve. If, as Moshe Halbertal contends, "canon and heresy are twins,"[49] must we seek the emergence of religious canons only in times of ideological combat or sectarian strife? Is this role of a weapon in conflict an essential function of a canon? Or, as Menzies alone has argued, is the formulation of a religious canon the result of consolidation in the wake of tumult?[50]

Conversely, the definition of canon that Wheeler borrows from Smith proves too broad and insubstantial when he tackles the topic of the ḥadīth canon. Wheeler's *Applying the Canon in Islam* is in and of itself a fascinating study of the Islamic legal tradition, affirming von Hallberg's stance by concluding that the notion of canon in the Ḥanafī case "is best understood as a device to promote the pedagogical agenda of those who use certain texts to represent the authority of the past."[51] Wheeler's applied definition of canon, however, is so distanced from the physicality of a text that the distinction between 'canonicity' and 'authority' in his study sometimes collapses.[52] In terms of Sheppard's and Folkert's distinction between Canon 1, the criterion of truth in interpretation, and Canon 2, a set of representative texts, Wheeler emphasizes the former to the latter's exclusion.

Describing the role of the Six Books, he explains that "[t]he Six Books are different attempts to delineate in 'written' form what was, at that time, considered to be

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[49] Halbertal, 5.

[50] Menzies, 91.

[51] Wheeler, 2. See also page 238.

[52] See, for example, Wheeler, 18, where one can often interchange the words "canonize" and "authorize" with little change in meaning.

the 'text' of the Sunnah." For Wheeler, however, these attempts do not merit mention as

a canon. The author follows Schacht and others in emphasizing al-Shāfiʿī's (d. 204/819-

20) transition from local schools of customary law to an exclusive reliance on

Muḥammad's precedent as a source of law. He thus states that it was the entirety of the

Prophet's sunna that was canonized as opposed to certain collections of his ḥadīth.

Wheeler warns that "the canonical text of the Sunnah... is not to be equated with a

particular book or a group of books, nor even necessarily with a written text."[53] This

distinction between the incalculably vast and amorphous corpus of the Prophet's legacy

and distinct collections of ḥadīth is valuable. What lies unrealized in Wheeler's dismissal

of physical tomes, however, is that those books that the community recognized as

successful efforts to "delineate... the 'text' of the Sunnah" themselves became a canon

(Canon 2). As we shall see in Chapter Nine, it was precisely these books' ability to

function as physical, manageable symbols of the Prophet's sunna that met a need in the

Muslim community and created one of the canonical dimensions of the Ṣaḥīḥayn.

Because he has chosen a definition of 'canon' easily divorced from actual physical texts

and has instead understood 'canon' on the ethereal plane of religious authority, Wheeler

misses a truly canonical function of the Six Books.

A skeptic might argue that any Western definition of canon might adulterate our

perceptions of other traditions. Should we even employ the term 'canon' in our reading

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[53] Wheeler, 59. Here Wheeler repeats the same oversight committed by Sheppard, whose very brief discussion of ḥadīth describes the Sunna, as manifested in ḥadīth, as providing a "normative and, therefore, 'canonical' (Canon 1) guide to Muslim exegesis." See Sheppard, 67.

of ḥadīth literature and its functions, or is our belief that it could fit into our compartments of canon and canonicity naive?

A more germane question might be whether popular senses of scriptural canon in the West really acknowledge the potential subtleties and varied stages of a canon's development. The great scholar of Islamic law, Bernard Weiss, for example, dismisses the existence of a ḥadīth canon in Sunni Islam by stating that in Islamic civilization "[God] guides no council of elders or divines in the formation of a sacred canon...."[54] Indeed, at first glance the acephalous, consensus-based religious leadership in classical Islam might seem completely incomparable to the Pauline authority or council-driven first few centuries of Christian history that gave us the Biblical canon. As our view shifts, however, these images dissolve into one another. It seems evident that neither the Christian nor the Jewish scriptural canons were the products of councils or the decrees they issued. Rather, they emerged gradually through consensus, external pressures and liturgical use within these two believing communities.[55] Indeed, the final exercise of papal power that yielded the present canon of the Catholic Bible, declaring its text infallible and making any rejection of its content anathema, did not occur until as late as the Council of Trent in 1546.[56] The Biblical canon had thus existed for well over a

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[54] Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 266.

[55] There is startling agreement on this point. See Metzger, 7; Kermode, "The Canon," 601; Stroumsa, 314.

[56] Metzger, 246. For more on the various sessions of the Council of Trent and its decrees, see Eugene F. Rice Jr. and Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe 1460-1559* (New York: W.N. Norton and Company, 1994), 174-5; and Joseph G. Prior, *The Historical Critical Method in Catholic Exegesis* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1999), 11.

millennium before it reached the stringency imposed on the Qur'ānic text by the caliph 'Uthmān (d. 35/655) less than two decades after the death of the Prophet.

Even when the long centuries of consensus on the Tanakh were sealed with a final debate over the *Song of Songs* and the *Esther* scroll, it was the tremendous scholarly reputation of Rabbi Akiva and not the edict of the Sanhedrin that gained these two books admittance into the canon. Biblical scholars like Guy Stroumsa and Blenkinsopp even reject the notion that it was the Council of Jamnia ca. 90 CE that resulted in the final closure of the Hebrew Bible canon.[57] Indeed, the state-sponsored promulgation of the Qur'ānic text by 'Uthmān, or state attempts (even if unsuccessful) to produce official compilations of fiscal ḥadīths or the Prophet's biography under the caliphs 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720) and al-Manṣūr (d. 158/775), seem much more suited to prevalent Western ideas of a decreed canon than the truly gradual maturation of the Biblical canon.[58] Why, then, must we tie canonization so firmly to councils?

Weiss's intention-driven understanding of canon formation, drawn no doubt from the general belief that New Testament writings were produced and received as canonical texts *ab initio*, further limits his ability to conceive of a ḥadīth canon. He states that while the Qur'ānic text "may be regarded as a canon of sorts, the great compilations of

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[57] Stroumsa, 308; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 3; Sanders, 10-11.

[58] Citing a report about this order that appears in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī's (d. 189/805) recension of the *Muwaṭṭa'*, Nabia Abbott states that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz did not order the recording of the whole sunna, but only aspects relating to administrative concerns. There are numerous reports that the Abbasid caliphs al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd tried to make Mālik b. Anas's *Muwaṭṭa'* the source of imperial law; see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:26; and Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Mālik* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 2002), 184-6.

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Sunnaic *ḥadīth* material are definitely not canons." Rather, he continues, "they represent a purely individual attempt on the part of the renowned compilers to gather together what was in their judgment the most reliable of the Sunnaic material known to them."[59] Here one must ask if the authors of the synoptic gospels were striving to do anything more than set down on paper "what was in their judgment" the most appropriate understanding of Christ's life. Ultimately, canon studies has demonstrated unequivocally that canonization is not the product of an author's intention, but rather of a community's reception of texts.

Like Wheeler, Weiss concludes that "while the Qur'ān was a fairly discrete entity with discernible boundaries, the body of *ḥadīth* narratives constituted an amorphous mass whose boundaries no one could hope to catch sight of, at least with any degree of clarity." Yet on the same page he acknowledges the crucial role of the canonical ḥadīth collections. The concept of the Prophet's 'sunna,' he states, "conjures up the great compilations of *ḥadīth* material such as those of al-Bukhārī and Muslim."[60] Should we not, then, consider the possibility that the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim played precisely the role of synecdochic symbols for the Prophet's sunna in a community that understood the need to delimit an otherwise amorphous entity?

Although canon studies may be a product of the Western intellectual tradition, it has been demonstrated that even within one civilization the term 'canon' is multivalent. Within this diversity, however, canon studies has recognized that when communities authorize texts this involves common historical processes that change the way these texts

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[59] Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 260, cf. 266.

[60] Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 260.

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function and are used. Addressing concerns about whether or not one can truly term the Bible a 'canon,' Kermode states that "works transmitted inside a canon are understood differently from those without...."[61] It is thus ultimately the manner in which the Muslim community has treated the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the functions that they have served, not any external and sometimes rigid definitions of canon, that determine the two works' canonicity. Acknowledging that they have occupied a position of authority in the Sunni tradition is simply recognizing a historical reality.

The reality of the ḥadīth canon as an indigenous product of Muslims' understanding of their own scriptural tradition is exemplified by the historical writing of Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318), the famous minister and court historian of the Ilkhan Mongol sultan Ghāzān Khān (d. 703/1304). Directing the writing of one of humanity's first world histories in the wake of Ghāzān's conversion to Islam, this Persian scholar, physician and historian devotes a section of its introduction to an epistemology of historical knowledge. The reports from the past on which historians rely, he explains, fall into two categories. The first are so well known (*tavātor*) that they convey epistemological certainty. The vast majority of information, however, falls into the second category of less well-attested narrations (*āḥād*), which are subject to uncertainty and distortion. Even reports culled from eyewitnesses can transform and eventually become cause for disagreement as they pass from person to person. This reality, he states, has even affected the Prophet's legacy. "The foremost *imāms*," however, "conducted thorough research and made certain selections, and they called them the

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[61] Kermode, "The Canon," 609.

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Authentic [Collections] (*Ṣiḥāḥ*)." "All else," he adds, "remains within the sphere of doubt and hesitation."[62]

Rashīd al-Dīn was not writing a religious history. The overpowering charisma of the "Golden Family" of Genghis Khan and the dictates of classical Persian political theory occupied him far more than the distinctly theological or sectarian concerns of the first centuries of Islam. The Islam to which the Mongol rulers of Iran and Rashīd al-Dīn himself had converted was a fully mature civilization that initiated its citizens into a cosmopolitan worldview and shared vision of history. Rashīd al-Dīn's historical epistemology is itself a product of Hellenistic Near Eastern discussions over mediate and immediate (apodictic) knowledge. Yet even in this context, the Six "authentic" ḥadīth collections represent religious and social order amid the polyglot historical roots of Islamic civilization. The *Ṣiḥāḥ* canonized a tract of the past, securing the Prophetic authority so central to Islamic communal identification in the medium of specific texts.

The unique status of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s similarly constitutes an undeniable historical reality in Islamic civilization. From his seat in Delhi, capital of the Muslim Moghul Empire in the 1700s, Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762 CE) summarized the legal and doctrinal controversies that had unfolded over more than a millennium of Islamic history in his masterpiece, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha* (God's Conclusive Argument). In his chapter on ḥadīth, he concludes that "as for the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s [of al-Bukhārī and Muslim], the scholars of ḥadīth have agreed that everything in them attributed to the

[62] Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿe tavārīkh*, ed. Moḥammad Rūshan and Moṣṭafā Mūsavī (Tehran: Nashr-e Elborz, 1373/[1994]), 1: 9-10.

Prophet is absolutely authentic," adding that "anyone who belittles their stature is guilty

of corruptive innovation (*mubtadi ʿ*) and not following the path of the believers."[63]

The existence of the ḥadīth canon in general, and the exceptional canonical status

of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections in particular, are thus historical realities that we

ignore at our own peril. Noting opportunities for using the tools developed in canon

studies to better understand and articulate the form and function of the ḥadīth canon is

nothing more than responding to voices from within the Islamic tradition that call us to

view the ḥadīth canon as part of a broader phenomenon.

II.4. Theoretical Tools and Common Historical Processes: Canon Studies and the Hadīth Canon

The present study is thus not theory-driven, nor is it comparative. The story of

the ḥadīth canon must be read on its own. It does, however, recognize that any canon

represents the interaction of text, authority and communal identification. The foregoing

discussion of different canons and the phenomenon of canonicity has highlighted this

common historical process and provided a conceptual lexicon that is useful for addressing

the ḥadīth canon. Investigating this issue in light of the way other literary and scriptural

communities have conceived of canonization can bring elements otherwise unperceived

into relief. In tackling a subject that lies at the nexus of text, community and authority,

we must expect to address the same themes as studies of other canons. It is the extent to

which the Muslim community's perception and use of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥs*

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[63] Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī. *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 2 vols. in 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, [1978]), 1:134.

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meets these expectations that justifies this approach. Ultimately, it is the prominence of questions of self-definition, the institutionalization of religious authority and a qualitative change in the way the community viewed these two works that qualifies them as canonical.

Having reviewed the development of canon studies, let us now elaborate more fully some of the central themes and constructs that will be employed in the study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon.

II.4. a. *Canons and Community*

Texts may become authoritative, but they are not binding on all mankind. Canons are necessarily the creations of specific communities or audiences. Because the act of authorizing certain books inevitably draws lines excluding other works, canons have been understood as tools of inclusion and exclusion within a broader community. As Gerald Burns and Joseph Blenkinsopp have observed in the case of the Hebrew scriptures, "what we call 'canon' is intelligible only in the context of conflicting claims to control the redemptive media and, in particular, to mediate and interpret authoritatively the common tradition."[64] Scriptural canons thus form when certain sections of a community attempt to monopolize the true interpretation of a religious message shared by all its members, excluding those audiences that identify with the non-canonical.

In the case of the formation of the New Testament canon, one of the first to advance a set of authoritative media for understanding Christ's legacy was the second-

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[64] Burns, 81; Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon*, 96.

century Gnostic Marcion.[65] His list of works, one of the first 'canons,' excluded the Hebrew Bible as the corrupt revelation of the Old Testament God who had plunged the world into darkness. The true salvational teachings of Christ that could reunite man's soul with the Divine, Marcion contended, were contained solely in a purified version of Luke's gospel and a selection of Paul's letters.[66] Championing what would become orthodox Christianity, Irenaeus, the second-century bishop of Lyons and inveterate enemy of the Gnostics, responded by affirming the unity of the Old and New Testaments. More importantly, he proclaimed a closed canon of only the "four-formed gospel" of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books alone, not the myriad of other gospels circulating among Christians at the time, captured Jesus's life and teachings; like the four directions of the compass, there could be no more and no less.[67] As scholars such as Metzger and Elaine Pagels have shown, the formation of the New Testament canon cannot be grasped without acknowledging the catalyst of Marcion's heretical counter-canon. By declaring that only certain books were authentic and binding for Christians, Irenaeus had dubbed not only the Gnostics but also the audiences of other innocuous gospels heretics. Halbertal's stipulation that "canon and heresy are twins" succinctly represents this vein of scholarship.[68]

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[65] Gerald Sheppard, "Canon," 3:63.

[66] Kermode, "Institutional Control," 77. For an excellent treatment of Marcion's beliefs and sources, see Metzger, 90-94.

[67] Pagels, 81-5; Metzger, 153-7.

[68] Halbertal, 5.

This conception of canonicity as tied to competing claims to the control of a common tradition has so dominated canon studies that Hanaway concluded that the absence of such a "significant other" as an opponent in Medieval Persian literature precluded the existence of a canon of Persian poetry. This trend's commanding role in canon studies is not difficult to understand. Canons are necessarily vehicles for identification, and just as 'non-canonical' works are a byproduct of their formation, so they must delineate a new community of believers from the old, wider audience.

Such valid assumptions have, however, left unexplored another function of canons in community. Canons can also emphasize inclusion and agreement more than exclusivity. They can function as a tool of reconciliation, a medium for communication or for creating common ground between adversaries. Although a canon might be advanced as a polemical tool by one sect in a time of strife, it need not serve to exclude other forms of redemptive media. Rather, its compelling power could dwell in its broad appeal. As Hanaway contends, canons may serve chiefly as a "heavy weapon to fire at the enemy,"[69] but only evidence also accepted by that enemy will prove compelling in debate. Even in polemic, a canon's power must spring from its status as part of a shared language. Considering the powerful role of the consensus (*ijmā*) of the Muslim community in Islamic epistemology, we must take care to consider the emergence of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon as an inclusive effort to force various sects to recognize a common medium for discussing the Prophet's legacy.

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[69] Hanaway, 3.

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II.4. b. Kanòn *and the Measure of Revealed Truth*

Despite its overwhelming denotation of "authoritative list" in modern and many

pre-modern minds, the *kanòn* that meant "measure" to Aristotle and lent itself so readily

to the "rule of revealed truth" in early Christian polemic has survived as one of the most

useful tools for conceptualizing canonicity. Canon studies has emphasized canonization

as an impetus for interpretative activity, with Kermode underscoring that authorizing

books transforms them into potentially inexhaustible mines of interpretation. "'Licensed

for exegesis,'" he concludes, "such is the seal we place upon our canonical works."[70]

This focus has somewhat overshadowed the role of the canon as a categorical measure of

truth, a tool that Fish notes is designed to end discussion rather than encourage it. Here

the *kanòn* as measure is "an authority that can be invoked in the face of almost any

counterevidence because it is its own evidence and stronger in its force than any other."[71]

Indeed, the original purpose of the *kanòn tès alètheias*, or 'measure of revealed

truth,' advanced by Irenaeus was to limit interpretation of the gospels. Just as the early

church father had proclaimed an authorized collection of four gospels, so had he

propounded a hermeneutic lens to ensure an orthodox reading of his canon. When

reading rich and pregnant texts like the Gospel of John, so favored by many Gnostics,

one must apply "the measure of revealed truth" that interprets them in as literal a manner

as possible and in the light of Jesus's 'true' teachings. To open the doors of esoteric

interpretation of the canonical gospels would mimic the methods of pagan philosophers

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[70] Kermode, "Institutional Control," 83.

[71] Fish, 12.

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such as the Stoics, who interpreted Homer's epics allegorically.[72] Irenaeus sought to end

the subversive preaching of the Montanist movement of Asia Minor, whose wandering

prophets claimed to be seized by the Holy Ghost and proclaimed the continuing

revelation of Christ in the community. The message and authority of Christ thus had to

be contained in the canon and interpreted properly. As rabbis debating questions of holy

law had declared when some scholars claimed that God had validated their position in a

dream, "we do not listen to voices from heaven."[73] For Irenaeus, the canon as text and

kanòn as measure were guarantors of an orthodox monopoly on interpretation. In J.Z.

Smith's definition of the canon as a tool in which the authority of a tradition is deposited

in order to extend its implementation into future circumstances, Irenaeus's "measure of

truth" would be a trump card in determining the authentic vision of Christianity. Indeed,

the authority of his canon, Irenaeus claimed, stemmed from its authenticity. He had

chosen his "four-formed gospel" because they were the only books supposedly written by

eyewitnesses of the events they described.[74]

Like Irenaeus, Muslim scholars of ḥadīth have been preoccupied with questions of

authenticity. The traditions of the Prophet were certainly subject to interpretation as

scholars applied them to questions of law, morality and doctrine, but it was the question

of authenticity that was paramount in their collection and criticism. The more authentic

the Prophetic report, the more authoritative it was. In the elaboration of the faith, and

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[72] Pagels, 117.

[73] The contemporary Shāfiʿī scholar Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda concurs, stating that "inspiration (*ilhām*) is not a conduit for revealed knowledge (*ʿilm*) among the people of truth"; see http://www.al-razi.net/website/pages/warakat.htm, part 10 (last accessed 9/14/2005).

[74] Pagels, 111.

certainly in inter-school polemics, "interpretation is a function of authentication (*al-ta'wīl far' 'alā al-ithbāt*)." While Irenaeus's canon required a canonical lens for proper viewing, for ḥadīth collections the *kanòn* of truth was the canonical books themselves. A collection deemed an authentic repository for the Prophet's hermeneutic authority was the tool through which that authority could be employed decisively in the further elaboration of Islam. For Kermode the canon is licensed for exegesis; for Muslims a canonical ḥadīth collection was licensed for common use.

II.4. c. *The Principle of Charity and Canonical Culture*

One of the most useful conceptual tools for studying the emergence and development of the ḥadīth canon is the Principle of Charity, a notion only recently applied to canonicity. In its most general sense, the Principle of Charity assumes that people interpret signs in the best possible light. It was first developed as a tool of analytical philosophy, and later explored by N.L. Wilson in a 1959 issue of *Review of Metaphysics*. Wilson proposes that, presented with a field of data or propositions, humans will choose the designation that makes the maximum number of statements true.[75] Here an individual forced to come to terms with a set of propositions treats reality with charity, reading its 'text' in the best possible light. He charitably assumes a system must exist, so he reasons that one should select the data that best support some notion of order.

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[75] N.L. Wilson, "Substance without Substrata," *Review of Metaphysics* 12, no. 4 (1959): 532.

The Principle of Charity has also found significant use in the study of language. Members of a speech community all subscribe to rules that govern the common activities of construction and interpretation, so every sentence and expression is a new proposition that must fit into this shared system. If one's interlocutor says, "I ran the light at the introspection," one would automatically assume that he or she had meant to say 'intersection.' At a certain point in conversation, it becomes more likely that a speaker has simply erred than that he or she is trying to subvert grammar or convention.[76] It is not simply due to a reliance on the stability of convention that one treats the interlocutor's remarks with charity; we automatically view them in the best possible light in order to uphold the very conventions of language that allow us to understand one another. As Donald Davidson explains, "We do this sort of off the cuff interpretation all the time, deciding in favour of reinterpretation of words in order to preserve a reasonable theory of belief."[77] As a result, context can overwhelm isolated or fleeting divergences in an otherwise consistent system.

The Principle of Charity has been similarly applied to the communication between author and reader through the medium of text. In textual interpretation, the Principle involves approaching a work with the assumption that its author is rational and that its elements of plot, theme and character conform to some sense of order. Here grammar and semantic convention morph into notions of intra-textual uniformity and interpretive harmony. The Principle of Charity manifests the reader's need for what

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[76] See Willard Quine, *Word & Object* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1960), 59.

[77] Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 196.

Kermode calls "that concordance of beginning, middle and end which is the essence of our explanatory fictions...."[78]

Drawing on Ronald Dworkin's *Law's Empire*, Halbertal extends the Principle of Charity to the domain of canonicity.[79] Given several possible interpretations of a canonical passage, the 'correct' one will be the one that supports the text's internal consistency and compatibility with accepted notions of truth or propriety. Canonizing a legal or scriptural text thus "not only endows it with authority but also requires a commitment to make the best of it."[80] The Principle of Charity recognizes that in the case of a scriptural or legal canon, "there is an a priori interpretive commitment to show the text in the best possible light. Conversely, the loss of this sense of obligation to the text is an undeniable sign that it is no longer perceived as holy." Halbertal thus stipulates the principle that "the degree of canonicity of a text corresponds to the amount of charity it receives in its interpretation."[81]

The assumed existence of an ordered reality in Wilson's study, and the manifest authority of linguistic context and convention in a speech community, here become the worldview that a community has constructed around a canonized text. One might refer to this surrounding system as the text's **canonical culture**. It is the system that trains readers or listeners to interpret a canonical text in a reverential manner and with suitable

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[78] Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35-36.

[79] For an analysis and commentary on Dworkin's work, see Andei Marmor, *Interpretation and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Pres, 1992), 57-60.

[80] Halbertal, 28.

[81] Halbertal, 29.

awe. In short, canonical culture obliges readers to treat the canon with charity. Unlike grammar or linguistic convention in a speech community, however, a canonical culture cannot be taken for granted or unconsciously defended. It must be consciously created and nurtured through careful control of the manner in which the canon is read and discussed. Upholders of this canonical culture must themselves actively propagate it and condemn its breaches. A canonical culture would demand that interpreters of the canon observe certain respectful formalities, accord the text and its authors the proper accolades and gloss over possible flaws. Like a language, however, one can identify the rules of canonical culture and recognize certain violations of its grammar. By measuring the charity extended, one can observe the construction of a canonical culture as it seeks to cast a text, and perhaps even its author, in the best possible light. Once one gains a familiarity with this canonical culture, one can detect lapses and even perceive its participants interacting with its boundaries and demands.

The Principle of Charity is ideally suited for studying the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* because the canonical culture surrounding them has depended entirely on the compatibility of the two texts and their authors with prevailing notions of truth and authenticity.[82] From the early second/eighth century, many pious Muslims who collected the sayings of their Prophet recognized that an exacting criticism of both those who reported these traditions and the traditions themselves was necessary to identify forged material. Their opponents from among the Muslim rationalists and the more analogy-based legal schools of Iraq, however, were very skeptical of their claims to be able to

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[82] For a very brief but parallel discussion of the "critical gentleness" with which Muslim scholars treated their canonical texts, see Aziz al-Azmeh, "The Muslim Canon," 212.

collect and authenticate statements transmitted orally. The image that the ḥadīth scholars therefore cultivated in the Muslim community highlighted their caution, lack of tolerance for lapses in memory or inconsistencies in transmission, and an almost pathological devotion to amassing and sifting through the Prophet's legacy. The idealized *muḥaddith* (ḥadīth scholar) was singularly devoted to mastering the Prophet's word, dismissing as corruptive innovation anything that did not extend back to him. For them the ḥadīth's chain of transmission (*isnād*), the only lifeline to the Prophet's teachings and an Islam unpolluted by the cosmopolitan religious atmosphere of the Near East, became the center of a cult of authenticity. "The *isnād* for us is religion; were it not for the *isnād*," they claimed, "whoever wanted could say whatever they wanted."[83] It was the very authenticity of these *isnāds*, however, that the ḥadīth scholars' opponents doubted. To canonize the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the ḥadīth scholars' cult of authenticity had to become both more intensified and accepted in the wider Sunni community. It was argued, as we shall see, that these two demanding books met the whole community's requirements for ḥadīth authenticity. The canon thus rested on a claim that required the approval of segments of the community that had been perennially mistrustful of the ḥadīth scholars' methodology and the ever-critical ḥadīth scholars themselves. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, a perpetual reinforcing of this cult of authenticity would prove the salient feature of the canonical culture surrounding the two works. The two books and their authors had to be lifted above their peers and any possibility of error. The extent to which different

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[83] "*Al-isnād ʿindanā dīn, law lā al-isnād la-qāla man shāʾa mā shāʾa, wa lākin idhā qīla lahu man ḥaddathaka baqiya;*" see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1997), 6:164.

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segments of the Sunni community gradually extended the charity of this unblemished authenticity to al-Bukhārī and Muslim and their works charts the emergence of this canonical culture.

II.5. Conclusion

Whether scriptural, legal or literary, canons lie at the intersection of text, authority and communal identification. They are no more unique to the Occidental tradition than are these three seminal notions. Indeed, canons are undeniable historical realities that change the manner in which the books function and are treated by their audiences. Where exactly the canon of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim fits in this nexus is a question only a study devoted to their unique history can answer. The remarkable efforts of scholars such as J.Z. Smith, Halbertal and Kermode to understand canons in their various contexts, however, must serve as guides in alerting us to the possibilities and perhaps even the inevitabilities facing the study of a canon's emergence and functions. Canon studies has drawn our attention to the role of the canon as a possible tool for inclusion in a community. It has provided the Principle of Charity as a device to measure canonicity and chart the development of a canonical culture. Finally, we can conceive of the canon as a common measure of truth in which the authority of tradition is deposited for later application. As Menzies, the earliest student of canonization as phenomenon, so ably pointed out, a canon must begin with books.[84] What, then, was the genesis of those two books that allowed Muslims to stand "where the

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[84] Menzies, 90.

first disciples stood..., to listen to the Master's words, and overhear perhaps even his secret thoughts and prayers," feeling "what that spirit was which reached the Master from the upper region and passed forth from him to other men...?"[85]

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[85] Menzies, 83.

III.

THE GENESIS OF AL-BUKHĀRĪ AND MUSLIM

III.1. Introduction

Leafing through the pages of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* today, the book seems to be the

natural culmination of the Muslim study of the Prophetic legacy: Muḥammad's

authenticated words and actions, enclosed in a few volumes. For the ḥadīth scholars and

pious Muslims of the third/ninth century, however, ḥadīths were not bound tomes taken

off the shelf and read. They were living links to the Prophet and the manifestation of his

charismatic authority in everyday life. Although Muslim scholars of the first three

centuries of Islam strove to prevent forged ḥadīths from being attributed to the Prophet,

even in the case of dubious transmissions the powerful formula "the Messenger of God

said..." made reports from Muḥammad *prima facie* compelling to many jurists. Al-

Bukhārī's and Muslim's compilation of works limited to authenticated reports was thus a

revolutionary act. The two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s were eventually destined for canonization, but in the

decades after their authors' deaths important segments of the scholarly community saw

them as an insolent departure from tradition. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* possessed an elitism and

finality that clashed with the manner in which ḥadīth-based jurists employed the

Prophetic legacy. Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work thus constituted a split in the ḥadīth

tradition; although the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would go on to become an authoritative institution, they

would exist side by side with the continued amassing of Prophetic traditions through the living *isnād*.

III.2. The Development of Ḥadīth Literature

When he was sixteen years old, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī left his hometown of Bukhara in Transoxiana with his mother and brother Aḥmad on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The small party would probably have attached themselves to one of the merchant caravans carrying luxury goods west along the Silk Road. They would have passed through the bustling garrison-city of Merv before climbing the mountains to Sarakhs and then descending into the rolling green and golden valleys of Khurāsān.[1] They would have made a stop in the city of Naysābūr, its northernmost orchards lying against the foothills of the mountains. As they continued west along the northern edge of the Iranian desert, they would have passed through Bayhaq, the great commercial and scholarly center of Rayy, before voyaging across the Zagros Mountains and down onto the flood plain of Iraq. They may have stopped in Baghdad, the "navel of the world" and a throbbing center of trade, scholarship and political intrigue. They would have continued along the caravan trail, now crowded more with pilgrims than merchants, across the north Arabian deserts to the rugged mountains of the Ḥijāz. Skirting jagged

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[1] 'Khurāsān' as a topographical and administrative term has had a wide range of meanings. In the early Islamic period the name was often used to denote the region extending from Western Iran to Transoxiana. Today it is a relatively contained province in Eastern Iran with its capital at Mashhad. We will use the name as the geographer al-Muqaddisī (d. after 380/990) did: to describe the area in Eastern Iran centered on the four major cities of Naysābūr, Merv, Herat and Balkh. We will distinguish this region from Transoxiana, with its Zarafshān River cities of Bukhara and Samarqand; Anon., *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam: The Regions of the World*, trans. and ed. V. Minorsky (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 102-109; Paul Wheately, *The Places Where Men Pray Together* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 172-90; C.E. Bosworth, "Khurāsān," *EI².*

ridges interspaced by yellow tracts of sand, they would have ended their journey where

Islam began over two centuries earlier, in the dry and rocky valley of Mecca.

Al-Bukhārī, like generations of dedicated and pious Muslims before him, devoted

his life to answering the question that lies at the heart of the Islamic religious tradition:

how does one live according to God's will as revealed in the Qur'ān and taught by His

Prophet? Almost two centuries before al-Bukhārī set off on his pilgrimage, the same

road had carried the Muslim armies into Eastern Iran and Transoxiana as they

triumphantly spread their new religion outwards in time and space from its epicenter in

the Ḥijāz. His voyage back to Mecca, the Prophet's home and location of the Ka'ba,

fulfilled the duty ordained upon all Muslims to return to the place where God had

revealed their religion and where the Prophet had served as its first authoritative

interpreter.

In the two hundred years since the beginning of the Islamic tradition, Muslims

such as al-Bukhārī had turned back again and again to the authoritative legacy of the

Prophet's teachings as it radiated outwards through the transmission and interpretation of

pious members of the community. In Medina, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d.

108/726-7), the grandson of the first caliph of Islam, and Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (d.

94/713), the son-in-law of the most prolific student of the Prophet's legacy, Abū Hurayra,

became two of the leading interpreters of the new faith after the death of the formative

first generation of Muslims. Their interpretations of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's legacy,

as well as those of founding fathers such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, were collected and

synthesized by the seminal Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). In Kufa, the

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Prophet's friend and pillar of the early Muslim community, 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3), instructed his newly established community on the tenets and practice of Islam as it adapted to the surroundings of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Iraq. His disciple 'Alqama b. Qays (d. 62/681) transmitted these teachings to a promising junior, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī (d. 95/714), who in turn passed his approaches and methods of legal reasoning to Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120/738). His student of eighteen years, Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), would become a cornerstone of legal interpretive effort in Iraq and the eponym of the Ḥanafī school of law. Unlike Medina, the Prophet's adopted home where his legacy thrived in the form of living communal practice, the polyglot environment of Kufa teemed with ancient doctrines and practices foreign to the early Muslim community. Many such ideas found legitimation in the form of spurious reports attributed to the Prophet, and Abū Ḥanīfa thus preferred a cautious reliance on the Qur'ān and his own reasoning rather than to risk acting on these fraudulent ḥadīths.

By the mid-second century, there had emerged two general trends in interpreting and applying Islam in its newly conquered lands. For both these trends, the Qur'ān and the Prophet's implementation of that message were the only constitutive sources of authority for Muslims. The practice and rulings of the early community, who participated in establishing the faith and inherited the Prophet's hermeneutic authority, were the lenses through which scholars like Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik understood these two sources. Scholars like 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awzā'ī of Beirut (d. 157/773-4) thus stated that "religious knowledge ('ilm) is what has come to us from the Companions of the

Prophet; what has not is not knowledge."[2] When presented with a situation for which the

Qur'ān and the well known teachings of the Prophet and his Companions provided no

clear answer, scholars like Abū Ḥanīfa relied on their own interpretations of these sources

to respond. Early Muslim intellectuals like Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/890) referred to such

scholars as '*ahl al-ra'y*,' or the practitioners of individual legal reasoning.[3] Other pious

members of the community preferred to limit themselves to the opinions of the earliest

generations and more dubious reports from the Prophet rather than to opine in a realm

they felt was the purview of God and His Prophet alone. The great Baghdad scholar

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) epitomized this transmission-based approach to

understanding law and faith in his famous statement: "You hardly see anyone applying

reason (*ra'y*) [to some issue of religion or law] except that there lies, in his heart, some

deep-seated resentment (*ghill*). A weak narration [from the Prophet] is thus dearer to me

than the use of reason."[4] Such transmission-based scholars, referred to as 'the partisans

of ḥadīth (*ahl al-ḥadīth*),' preferred the interpretations of members of the early Islamic

community to their own. For them the Muslim confrontation with the cosmopolitan

atmosphere of the Near East threatened the unadulterated purity of Islam. A narcissistic

indulgence of human reason would encourage the agendas of heresy and the temptation

to stray from God's revealed path. Only by clinging stubbornly to the ways of the

Prophet and his righteous successors could they preserve the authenticity of their religion.

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[2] Abū 'Umar Yūsuf Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa faḍlihi*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān, 2 vols. (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, [1968]), 2:36.

[3] For more on this subject, see Christopher Melchert, "Traditionist-Jurisprudents and the Framing of Islamic Law," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2001): 383-406, esp. 385.

[4] Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, [1965]), 239.

It was in this milieu that the tradition of ḥadīth literature emerged. Although

Muslims had been memorizing or writing down the words of the Prophet and his

followers from an early period,[5] the first major ḥadīth collections, called *muṣannafs*, were

essentially transcripts of the legal discourse that had developed during the first two

centuries of Islam. Arranged into chapters dealing with different legal or ritual questions,

they were topical records of pious Muslims' efforts to respond to questions about proper

faith and practice. Mālik b. Anas's *Muwaṭṭa'* is thus a mixture of Prophetic ḥadīths, the

rulings of his Companions, the practice of the scholars of Medina and the opinions of

Mālik himself.[6] The *muṣannaf* of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) is similarly a collection of

reports from the Prophet, Companions and Successors such as ʿAṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ (d.

114/732).[7]

During the late second and early third centuries, however, the prevalence of

specious ḥadīths being attributed to the Prophet led to the emergence of a shared three-

tiered process of authentication among the transmission-based scholars in cities such as

Medina, Basra, Baghdad and Naysābūr. In the first tier, scholars such as Abū Dāwūd al-

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[5] An example of an early collection of ḥadīth is the *ṣaḥīfa* of Hammām b. Munabbih (d. 101/719), a disciple of Abū Hurayra, which includes 138 ḥadīths; for more information on the unsystematic collection of written ḥadīth in the first two centuries of Islam, see Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 272. For more on the emergence of historical writings, see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition*; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 12 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 1:53-84; Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 279; Muḥammad al-Aʿzamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2000); Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, trans. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 158.

[6] Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī's recension of the *Muwaṭṭa'*, which was transmitted to the West into Andalusia, contains 1,720 narrations, of which 613 are statements of the Companions, 285 of the Successors and 61 with no *isnād* at all; Abd al-Rauf, "Ḥadīth Literature," 273.

[7] For more on Ibn Jurayj, see Harald Motzki, "The *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī as a Source of Authentic *Aḥādīth* of the First Century A.H," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50 (1991): 1-21.

Ṭayālisī (d. 204/818) and Ibn Ḥanbal strove to anchor core doctrine and practice in the teachings of the Prophet. They thus compiled collections limited to reports possessing explicit chains of transmission (*isnād*) going back to Muḥammad. These *musnad* collections would have proven a very effective first line of defense against material entering the Islamic tradition from outside sources; Ibn Ḥanbal and other early transmission-based scholars paid no heed to material lacking an *isnād*.[8]

These *isnāds*, however, could be forged or inauthentic material simply equipped with one and then circulated. In what constituted the second tier of ḥadīth criticism, Iraqi scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234/849) evaluated the quality of these *isnāds* by collecting opinions about the transmitters who comprised them. As Scott C. Lucas has determined in his study of Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Ḥanbal's work, they drew on two previous generations of ḥadīth-transmission critics: that of Mālik and his contemporaries like Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776), and that of the next generation of the great Basran critics ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/814) and Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198/813).[9] Ibn Saʿd amassed a huge dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters, his *Ṭabaqāt*, which included statements from respected ḥadīth authorities rating transmitters for honesty, piety and their command of the material they conveyed. In addition, works like the *Ṭabaqāt* and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī's *ʿIlal* also tried to ascertain the personal links between different narrators in order to assure the continuity of transmission

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[8] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī quotes the famous early *muḥaddith* Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776) as saying, "all religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) which does not feature 'he narrated to me' or 'he reported to me' is vinegar and sprouts (*khall wa baql*)"; al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Kitāb al-madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-iklīl*, ed. Aḥmad b. Fāris al-Sulūm (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1423/2003), 58.

[9] See Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics: Ḥadīth Literature and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

and establish the most secure links to the Prophet. A liar, a forgetful person or a break in the *isnād* could thus weaken the reliability of a ḥadīth.

Finally, the third tier consisted of demanding corroboration for ḥadīths being circulated among the network of ḥadīth transmitters that spread from Yemen to Transoxiana. Even though a ḥadīth narration might possess a sound *isnād*, it was considered unreliable if only one out of several students of a famous transmitter reported it from him. Reports that either conflicted with others similar to them or lacked corroboration were deemed likely errors. A genre of books identifying these *ʿilal* (flaws) thus arose with the work of ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Ḥanbal.

Although such scholars applied these three tiers of criticism to their corpora of ḥadīths, they did not dispense with weaker material or require a report to be sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) in order to function in deriving laws. Ibn Ḥanbal's massive *Musnad* of approximately thirty thousand ḥadīths represented a lifetime of collection and review, with the compiler adding or removing reports as he became aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Ibn Ḥanbal himself, however, admitted that his collection contained weak ḥadīths.[10] As he

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[10] Ibn Ḥanbal is reported as saying that none of the twenty-eight narrations of the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet tells ʿAmmār b. Yāsir that he will be killed by the rebellious party (*al-fiʾa al-bāghiya*, ie. Muʿāwiya), several of which he includes in his *Musnad*, are correct; see Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), *al-Muntakhab min al-ʿIlal li ʾl-Khallāl*, ed. Abū Muʿādh Ṭāriq b. ʿAwaḍ Allāh (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1419/1997), 222; for a famous Ḥanbalī's rebuttal of this attribution to Ibn Ḥanbal, see Ibn Rajab, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, ed. Maḥmūd Shaʿbān ʿAbd al-Maqṣūd et al. (Medina: Maktabat al-Gharāba al-Athariyya, 1417/1996), 3:310. For a more general statement on this from a later ḥadīth scholar, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, ed. ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1411/1990), 286.

declared, he readily employed these lackluster ḥadīths in situations where no stronger reports could be found.[11]

III.3. The Ṣaḥīḥ Movement and the Bifurcation of the Ḥadīth Tradition

Two of Ibn Ḥanbal's students, however, found such latitude in the use of weak ḥadīths unnecessary. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) were the first to produce *muṣannaf* collections devoted only to ḥadīths they felt met the requirements of authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*). Their books were the first wave of what Muhammad Abd al-Rauf terms "the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement."[12] Unlike Ibn Ḥanbal, Muslim felt that there were enough *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths in circulation that transmission-based scholars could dispense with less worthy narrations in elaborating Islamic law and doctrine.[13] Such thinking represented a new stage in the critical study of ḥadīth but continued the transmission-based legal strain in Islamic scholarly culture. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim made the authenticity always prized by ḥadīth scholars paramount in their books, but the works themselves were still *muṣannaf*s designed for use as comprehensive legal and doctrinal references.

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[11] Ibn Ḥanbal is quoted by later scholars as saying that "if we are narrating [ḥadīths] about prohibition or permissibility (*al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*) we are strict, but if we are narrating them in matters of the virtues [of the early community] and similar matters, we are lax"; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb ʿan al-Musnad li 'l-imām Aḥmad* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1386/1967), 12.

[12] Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 274.

[13] Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣubayḥ, [1963]), 1:22. Al-Bukhārī is also quoted as rejecting the use of non-*ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths in issues of prohibition (*taḥlīl wa taḥrīm*); Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār fī maʿrifat ʿulūm al-āthār*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣubḥī b. Ḥasan Ḥallāq (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 72.

This notion of legal and ritual utility strongly influenced other scholars who soon

followed in al-Bukhārī and Muslim's footsteps. Their students and colleagues Abū

Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/888), Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) and Aḥmad

b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915),[14] as well as Muḥammad b. Yazīd Ibn Mājah (d.

273/886), aimed at providing collections of ḥadīths that combined this utility with high

standards of authenticity. These collections nonetheless did feature reports that their

authors acknowledged as weak but included either because they were widely used among

jurists or because they, like Ibn Ḥanbal, could find no ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth addressing that

particular topic.[15] Saʿīd b. ʿUthmān Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353/964), who lived mostly in Egypt,

also collected a small ṣaḥīḥ book consisting of ḥadīths necessary for legal rulings and

whose authenticity he claimed was agreed on by all.[16]

Other contemporaries of al-Bukhārī and Muslim adhered more to the requirement

of authenticity than to legal utility. Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), an

early pivot of the Shāfiʿī school who both studied with and transmitted ḥadīths to al-

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[14] There is some doubt as to whether al-Nasāʾī studied with al-Bukhārī, with scholars such as al-Nawawī affirming this while al-Dhahabī said that al-Nasāʾī never transmitted from al-Bukhārī; see al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām wa wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa al-aʿlām*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ and Ṣāliḥ Mahdī ʿAbbās (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1988-present), 19:241.

[15] See Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī's letter to the scholars of Mecca, where he states that he alerts the reader to any ḥadīth with a "serious weakness (*wahn shadīd*)"; "Risālat al-imām Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī ilā ahl Makka fī waṣf Sunanihi," *Thalāth rasāʾil fī ʿilm muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, ed ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1417/1997), 37; Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5) also states that Abū Dāwūd included weak ḥadīths if he could find no reliable reports on a certain subject; see Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma/Risāla fī bayān faḍl al-akhbār wa sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-āthār wa ḥaqīqat al-sunan wa taṣḥīḥ al-riwāyāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Farīwāʾī (Riyadh: Dār al-Muslim, 1416/1995), 73.

[16] This book was called *al-Muntaqā* and was highly esteemed by Ibn Ḥazm. See Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa fī bayān mashhūr kutub al-sunna al-musharrafa*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1400/[1980]), 20; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, ed. Zakariyyā ʿUmayrāt, 4 vols. in 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1419/1998), 3:231 (biography of Ibn Ḥazm).

Bukhārī and Muslim, compiled a *ṣaḥīḥ* work he entitled *Mukhtaṣar al-mukhtaṣar min al-*

musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ ʿan al-nabī (The Abridged Abridgement of the *Ṣaḥīḥ Musnad* from the

Prophet).[17] Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Bujayrī of Samarqand (d. 311/924)

produced a collection called *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*.[18] Even the famous historian and exegete

Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) attempted a gigantic *ṣaḥīḥ musnad* called

Kitāb tahdhīb al-āthār, but died before he finished it.[19] Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī's (d.

354/965) massive *Ṣaḥīḥ* has been highly esteemed by Muslim scholars and is usually

considered the last installment in the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement (though three *ṣaḥīḥ* works were

evidently produced in the fifth/eleventh century).[20]

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[17] This work would later become known as *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma*. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) calls this book *Mukhtaṣar al-mukhtaṣar* because Ibn Khuzayma had made it out of a bigger collection; al-Khalīl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād fī maʿrifat ʿulamāʾ al-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Mecca: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), 313. In his very brief introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn Khuzayma says that this book contains material "that an upright (*ʿadl*) transmitter narrates from another upstanding transmitter continuously to [the Prophet] (ṣ) without any break in the *isnād* nor any impugning (*jarḥ*) of the reports' transmitters"; see Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Aʿẓamī, 5 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, [1970?]), 1:3. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī felt that Ibn Khuzayma's collection should be ranked closely after al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s because the author also demanded authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*); al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, ed. Maḥmūd Ṭaḥḥān (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1403/1983), 2:185.

[18] ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142-3), *al-Qand fī dhikr ʿulamāʾ Samarqand*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Tehran: Āyene-ye Mīrāth, 1420/1999), 472; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 387.

[19] The full work would have included legal, linguistic and other kinds of commentary; see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:202. The surviving work has been published as *Tahdhīb al-āthār wa tafṣīl al-thābit ʿan Rasūl Allāh min al-akhbār*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, 5 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1982), idem, *Tahdhīb al-āthār: al-juzʾ al-mafqūd*, ed. ʿAlī Riḍā b. ʿAbdallāh (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʾmūn liʾl-Turāth, 1995).

[20] It is difficult to determine whether or not these works were actually collections devoted to authentic ḥadīths or just utilized the word *ṣaḥīḥ* in the title. Abū al-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (d. 407/1016), a Shiite ḥadīth scholar, evidently had a *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Ibn Ḥazm had a book called *al-Jāmiʿ fī ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥadīth bi-ikhtiṣār al-asānīd*, and Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Kūkhmaythī (?) (d. 491/1098) wrote book of 800 *juzʾ*'s called *Baḥr al-asānīd fī ṣaḥīḥ al-masānīd* that was never studied; see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1982), 17:650; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:230 and 4:21.

Although the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement seems a natural progression of the collection and criticism of Prophetic ḥadīths, it possessed an inherent elitism and a definitiveness that clashed with underlying characteristics of ḥadīth transmission in the Muslim community. Since the early days of Islam, the transmission of ḥadīths was a means for everyday Muslims to bind themselves to the inspirational authority of the Prophet and incorporate his charisma into their lives.[21] Like all early Muslim scholarship, the collection and study of ḥadīths was not the product of institutions of learning; it was undertaken by devout individuals whose eventual knowledge and pious allure earned them positions of respect and authority in their communities.[22] In the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, however, a new perspective emerged in Muslim society. A self-aware scholarly and educated class (*al-khāṣṣa*) appeared which began distinguishing itself from the masses (*al-ʿāmma*).[23] The great legal theorist Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819-20) thus divided knowledge of Islamic law and ritual into that which is demanded of the masses (*ʿāmm*) and that which is the purview of the scholars (*khāṣṣ*). This bifurcation between plebeians and specialists also appears in the introduction to Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection. Just as al-Shāfiʿī articulates the domain and duties of a scholarly elite, so does Muslim urge a specialized corps of ḥadīth scholars to study the sunna and guide the regular folk, who should not concern themselves with amassing ḥadīths beyond a few authentic

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[21] For the function of Prophetic ḥadīth as a relic of the Prophet, see Eerik Dickenson, "*Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī and the Isnād*," 481-505.

[22] This did not mean that one could not earn money studying ḥadīth. Some scholars asked fees for narrating ḥadīths, but this was the subject of much controversy in the scholarly community.

[23] For more on this development, see Jonathan A.C. Brown, "The Last Days of al-Ghazzālī and the *ʿāmm, khāṣṣ* and *khāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ* of the Sufi World," *Muslim World* 96, no. 1 (2006): 97 ff.

reports. Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī evinces the same legal paternalism in a letter to the scholars of Mecca explaining the content and structure of his *Sunan*. He may not, he explains, alert the reader to all the weaknesses of a ḥadīth because "it would be harmful to the masses (*al-ʿāmma*)" to reveal such minor flaws to them. This might undermine their faith in the report's legal applicability.[24]

Furthermore, for Muslim and Abū Dāwūd, their authentic collections provided all . the legal and ritual knowledge an ordinary Muslim required. Abū Dāwūd states confidently that he knows of "nothing after the Qur'ān more essential for people to learn than this book [his *Sunan*], and a person would suffer no loss if he did not take in any more knowledge (*an lā yaktuba min al-ʿilm*) after this book."[25] If the masses of Muslims should leave the collection and criticism of ḥadīths to a class of specialists, and this elite had now provided them with definitive references, what use were the activities of other ḥadīth scholars?

This elitism and definitiveness was therefore not directed simply at the Muslim masses. It also addressed the bulk of more serious ḥadīth collectors, whose laxity in criticism and irresponsible leadership had motivated Muslim to write his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the first place. He believed that many of those scholars who strove to collect as many ḥadīths as possible regardless of their quality were doing so only to win the acclaim of the masses, who would express in awe, "How numerous are the ḥadīths so and so has collected!"[26] In

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[24] Abū Dāwūd, "Risāla," 50.

[25] Abū Dāwūd, "Risāla," 46.

[26] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:22.

the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim expresses serious concern over those who claim to be ḥadīth scholars transmitting material of dubious nature to the exclusion of well-known and well-authenticated ḥadīths. They provide this material to the common people and thus mislead them in their faith. It is this fact, he says, that has made him feel comfortable about producing a work restricted to only authentic material.[27] It is in fact the duty of those who understand the science of ḥadīth to leave the common folk with trustworthy reports only. To do otherwise would be a sin (*āthim*^{an}), for the masses would believe and act on these ḥadīths.[28]

The *ṣaḥīḥ* movement therefore entailed a departure from the mainstream transmission-based scholars and from the masses whose amateur ḥadīth collection was a means of tying themselves to their Prophet. In fact, there were some who opposed the very notion of criticizing *isnād*s and the narrators who comprised them. Muslim addresses his *Kitāb al-tamyīz* (Book of Distinguishing) to someone who had been censured for distinguishing between *ṣaḥīḥ* and incorrect ḥadīths, or asserting that "so and so has erred in his narration of a ḥadīth." Muslim explains that these skeptics accuse those who attempt to distinguish between correct and incorrect narrations of "slandering the righteous forefathers (*al-ṣāliḥīn min al-salaf al-māḍīn*)" and "raising accusations (*mutakharriṣ*) in things of which they have no knowledge, making claims to knowledge of the unknown (*ghayb*) which they cannot attain."[29]

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[27] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:6.

[28] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:22.

[29] Muslim, *Kitāb al-tamyīz*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Aʿẓamī (Riyadh: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat Riyāḍ, [1395/1975]), 123. Muslim's younger contemporary al-Tirmidhī also notes objections to critically evaluating narrators; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr ([n.p.]: [n.p], 1398/1978), 1:43.

Such a rejection of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement's ethos is extreme, but it differs only in

degree from the practice of traditionists like Ibn Ḥanbal. Reports traced back to the

Prophet, bearing his name and conveying his authority, were *prima facie* compelling.[30]

Not even a problematic *isnād* to such a figure could undermine the authority he

commanded. Even in legal issues, scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal and Abū Dāwūd depended on

weak or mediocre ḥadīths, and such ḥadīths were indispensable in fields like the history

of the Prophet's campaigns, contextualizing Qur'ānic verses or recounting the virtues of

the Prophet's Companions.[31]

From a modern perspective it seems difficult to understand why the study or legal

use of ḥadīths did not culminate naturally with the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. Why would scholars

elaborating law and doctrine they considered rooted in revelation rely on questionable

reports when they now had purely authentic collections at their disposal? Answering this

question a century after the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, the seminal systematizer of the ḥadīth

tradition, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014), explained that using ḥadīths with

problematic *isnāds* to interpret law was an established practice going back as far as the

great legal scholar Abū Ḥanīfa. If the early Muslims had acted on a report from the

Prophet, for example, then the fact that later ḥadīth critics could not find a strong *isnād*

for the report should not affect its legal reliability – practice had already proven its

authenticity. Furthermore, different ḥadīth critics employed different criteria for

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[30] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 243.

[31] Ibn Ḥanbal, for example, is reported not to have demanded full *isnāds* for ḥadīths relating to
Qur'ānic exegesis, the campaigns of the Prophet (*maghāzī*) and apocalyptic prophesies (*malāḥim*); see Ibn
Taymiyya, *Majmū'fatāwā shaykh al-islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-
'Āṣimī, vol. 13 (Riyadh: Maṭābi' al-Riyāḍ, 1382/1963), 346; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:74.

authenticity; just because one strict scholar considered a narration weak does not mean that a less demanding legal scholar might not find it acceptable.[32]

III.4. The Continuity of the Living *Isnād*

The *ṣaḥīḥ* movement thus marks a bifurcation in ḥadīth literature. In the wake of the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections, particularly the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the study of ḥadīth would diverge into two parallel streams that would clash and interact as the centuries progressed. Their relationship with one another would remain one of tension, sometimes complementary and sometimes destructive, between the transmission of individual ḥadīths through living *isnād*s back to the Prophet and the definitive and institutional power acquired by authentic ḥadīth collections. The canonical destiny of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the two works that inaugurated and epitomized the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, will be discussed in the following chapters. Here at the genesis of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, however, we must not allow the canonical status these works would acquire to distract us from their powerful alter-ego in the ḥadīth tradition: the continuity of ḥadīth transmission through the living *isnād*.

The ḥadīth tradition from which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* emerged remained preoccupied with the continued transmission of ḥadīths through personal study long after al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The strong legal and pietistic attachment to the living *isnād* of transmitters back to the Prophet continued to drive the ḥadīth tradition, and both the oral transmission of ḥadīths and the compilation of major non-*ṣaḥīḥ* works continued unabated. Scholars

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[32] It is important to note that such weak ḥadīths were problematic from the standpoint of ḥadīth scholars, not for Abū Ḥanīfa; al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-iklīl*, 66-8.

with strong affiliation to legal schools such as the Shāfiʿī Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) compiled ḥadīth collections supporting their *madhhab*'s positions. His massive *al-Sunan al-kubrā* represents a landmark in the Shāfiʿī legal school, supporting its detailed case law with a myriad of reports from the Prophet and his Companions. During the fourth/tenth century several Ḥanafī scholars produced *musnad* collections of the ḥadīths used by Abū Ḥanīfa and his students. Even non-Ḥanafīs like Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038) participated in efforts to find chains going back to the Prophet for Abū Ḥanīfa's reports.[33] The Mālikī scholar Ibn al-Jabbāb (d. 322/934) even created a *musnad* version of the *muṣannaf*-style *Muwaṭṭaʾ*.[34]

The personal collection of ḥadīths expanded after and even despite the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, with ḥadīth collectors amassing titanic works in the fourth/tenth century. Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) of Isfahan compiled a huge collection, his *Muʿjam al-kabīr*, that amounted to two hundred *juzʾ*'s.[35] His pride lay in gathering rare ḥadīths found nowhere else as well as their relatively short *isnād*s. Authenticity was not one of his concerns.[36] ʿAlī b. Ḥamshādh of Naysābūr (d. 338/950) produced a personal *musnad* twice as large as al-Ṭabarānī's, and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Māsarjisī of

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[33] See Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:414-6.

[34] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:25.

[35] A *juzʾ* seems to have been a fascicule of about 20 folios. To contextualize what this meant in terms of size, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī's (d. 741/1341) well-known biographical dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, whose present-day published form consists of thirty-five volumes and occupies two library shelves, was 250 *juzʾ*'s; see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:194; Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī, 25 vols. ([Baghdad]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shuʾūn al-Dīniyya, [1978-]).

[36] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:85-7.

Naysābūr (d. 365/976) compiled a *musnad* of an astounding one thousand three hundred *juz's.*[37]

Even as late as the sixth/twelfth century, for some it was the continued transmission of ḥadīths through living *isnāds*, not the study of existing ḥadīth collections, that defined the *muḥaddith*. In his history of his native Bayhaq and its prominent citizens, for example, Ibn Funduq ʿAlī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169-70) states that "a ḥadīth from the Prophet (ṣ) will be given for each of the scholars and *imāms* of ḥadīth."[38] Even in very brief entries, Ibn Funduq does indeed provide a narration of a ḥadīth that goes directly back to the Prophet for almost all the scholars he details. His focus on living *isnāds* for individual ḥadīths dominates his *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq*; in a history a great part of which is devoted to ḥadīth scholars, he only once mentions an actual ḥadīth collection: the *Sunan al-kubrā* of the city's towering native doyen, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī.[39] We know that many of the scholars featured in *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq*, including Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, heard and mastered major ḥadīth collections such as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Yet so dominant is the role of personal transmission from the Prophet in the worldview of Ibn Funduq that the study or communication of such ḥadīth books goes undocumented. Soon after Ibn Funduq, however, in the early seventh/thirteenth century, producing compilations consisting of ḥadīths whose *isnāds* extended back to the Prophet generally ceased and scholarly energy was devoted to studying existing collections.

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[37] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:50, 111.

[38] Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq* (Tehran: Chāpkhāne-ye Kānūn, 1317/[1938]), 137.

[39] Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq*, 183.

These living *isnāds* had flourished for so long, however, because they carried

significant pietistic weight due to both their Prophetic origin and their ability to trace

Muhammad's authority outward through the venerated heirs to his legacy. The staunchly

orthodox seventh/thirteenth-century Sufi 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) began most

of the chapters of his popular manual on Sufism, *'Awārif al-ma 'ārif*, with hadīths whose

isnāds extend from him to the Prophet. Many of these chains reach the Prophet through

major figures in the Sufi tradition, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) and

Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī.[40]

This is not to suggest that books played no role in the continuation of living

isnāds. A hadīth scholar's book could simply serve as a vehicle for passing on his

transmitted material. Hadīth collections like al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* or Mālik's *Muwatta'*

were transmitted from teacher to student in the same manner as individual hadīths. For

hadīth scholars, any referral to such books was contingent upon hearing them from a

chain of transmitters back to the author. A book could not simply be taken off the shelf

and used. Like a single report, only a student copying a text in the presence of his teacher

could protect against the vagaries and errors of transmission.[41] Furthermore, for hadīth

[40]Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-ma 'ārif*, ed. Adīb al-Kamdānī and Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Mecca: al-Maktaba al-Makkiyya, 1422/2001), 1: 49, 60.

[41] Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Mālik al-Qaṭī'ī (d. 368/979), who was the principal transmitter of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* from his son 'Abdallāh, was severely criticized for transmitting one of Ibn Ḥanbal's books from a copy which he had not heard directly from his teacher. Although al-Qaṭī'ī had in fact heard this book previously, the copy he had used was destroyed in a flood, leaving him with only the other copy. This case demonstrates the sensitivity of hadīth scholars to the question of aural transmission (*samā'*); even a respected scholar who had actually heard a book from his teacher could be criticized for relying on another copy of that same book if he had not received *samā'* for that copy; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:293-4. Another fourth/tenth-century scholar, the Ḥanbalī Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997), was also criticized for poor *samā'* practices. A scholar who had received Abū al-Qāsim al-Baghawī's (d. 317/929-30) *Mu'jam al-ṣaḥāba* through Ibn Baṭṭa refused to grant any hadīths he found in that book a *ṣaḥīḥ* rating because Ibn Baṭṭa's *isnād* to the book's author was broken. This demonstrates the continuity between the *isnāds* in a

scholars this act of becoming part of the text's *isnād* to the author is what rendered the

book legally compelling. Speaking from this transmission-based perspective, Abū Bakr

Muḥammad b. Khayr al-Ishbīlī (d. 575/1179) said that no one could introduce a statement

with the formula "the Prophet said..." without possessing some personal chain of

transmission back to the Prophet for that report.[42] Scholars like al-Qushayrī and al-

Iṣbahānī, through whom al-Suhrawardī linked himself by *isnād* back to the Prophet, had

set their ḥadīths down in book-form. The religious capital gained by providing living

isnāds for ḥadīths transmitted through them, however, proved more compelling to al-

Suhrawardī than simply citing their books.

The tension between this centrality of living transmission for ḥadīth books and the

emerging independent authority of the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections had important implications for

the development of legal institutions in the fifth/eleventh century. In this period (and

later on), both jurists and ḥadīth scholars found it necessary to respond to the question,

"If you find a well-authenticated copy of a *ṣaḥīḥ* collection, can you act on or transmit its

contents?" Summarizing the majority opinion of the transmission-based scholars, Majd

al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) states that in the absence of a formal transmission of the

text (*samāʿ*), one should neither narrate any of the book's contents to others nor feel

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book and the *isnāds* to a book in this period – a problem in the manner in which a book was transmitted
affected the reliability of the material in the book; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:373.

[42] Muḥammad b. Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *Fahrasat mā rawāhu ʿan shuyūkhihi min al-dawāwīn al-
muṣannafa fī ḍurūb al-ʿilm wa anwāʿ al-maʿārif* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijārī, 1963), 17; Ibn al-Wazīr,
Tanqīḥ al-anẓār, 62. On the issue of the orality of knowledge in Islamic civilization and its tension with
the written book, see Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, 13-22; Paul L. Heck, "The Epistemological
Problem of Writing in Islamic Civilization: al-Khaṭīb al-Baġdādī's (d. 463/1071) *Taqyīd al-ʿilm*," *Studia
Islamica* 94 (2002): 85-114, esp. 96.

obligated to act on its legal implications.[43] Without transmission, the text simply had no

power.

Scholars articulating legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and the majority of Sunni jurists

disagreed totally with this transmission-based stance. Acknowledging the prohibition of

the *muḥaddithūn*, the great Shāfiʿī jurist and theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.

505/1111) asserts that one can utilize a ḥadīth collection even without hearing it through

an *isnād*.[44] Here he follows his teacher Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d.

478/1085), who states that if a ḥadīth appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* one can transmit it, act

on it and ask others to do so as well.[45] This opinion concurs with the Mālikī jurist Abū al-

Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) and the vast majority of jurists and legal theorists.[46] The

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[43] Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-rasūl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūṭ, 15 vols. ([Beirut]: Dār al-Mallāḥ 1389/1969), 1:88.

[44] Al-Ghazālī qualifies this by demanding that the copy be well-authenticated; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl min taʿlīqāt al-uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Hītū ([Damascus]: n.p., [1970]), 269.

[45] Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Dīb, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1400/[1980]), 1:647.

[46] Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ishāra fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿAwaḍ (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1418/1997), 162-3; Speaking on behalf of all jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Barhān al-Shāfiʿī (d. 518/1124) repeats al-Ghazālī's above quote. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) states that the earlier Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī legal theorist Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) claimed a consensus on this stance. There is also a report from al-Shāfiʿī himself allowing this; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥusayn ʿAlī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1424/2003), 1:83; ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, *al-Ajwiba al-fāḍila li 'l-as'ila al-ʿashara al-kāmila*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1383/1963), 62. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, however, reports that some Mālikī scholars reject narrating from a ḥadīth book for which one lacks *samāʿ*; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 360; see also Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 241-2. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, seemingly trying to bridge the gap between ḥadīth scholars and jurists, provides no definitive stance in his *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya*. He provides ten instances of earlier scholars narrating from books they found with no *samāʿ*; on four occasions these earlier scholars negatively evaluate this act, and on two others they make sure to clarify that they are narrating from a text without *samāʿ*; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya fī maʿrifat ʿilm uṣūl al-riwāya*, ed. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Dimyāṭī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Hudā, 1423/2003), 2:361-6.

legal utility of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as institutions distinct from the continued tradition of ḥadīth transmission will resurface later in discussions of the two works' canonization.

III.5. Reality: The Life and Works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

This study focuses on the perception of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as icons. Yet it is important to understand the historical reality from which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* romance developed. Because al-Bukhārī and Muslim were eventually canonized, any accurate portrait of them in their own context must depend on the earliest possible sources and on the evidence they themselves left behind. As we will see later in Chapter Seven, it was not until the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century that a canonical culture formed around al-Bukhārī and Muslim. By referring to their own works and consulting early biographies that preceded this shift towards hagiography, we can broadly outline al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's careers as well as the immediate reactions to their work.

Very brief biographies or references to al-Bukhārī and Muslim appear in fourth/tenth century works such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī's (d. 327/938) *al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*, Ibn Ḥibbān's (d. 354/965) *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn*, and Ibn al-Nadīm's (d. after 385-8/995-8) *al-Fihrist*. More detailed early information for al-Bukhārī's life and career occurs in sources like Ibn ʿAdī al-Jurjānī's (d. 365/975-6) two books: *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl* and *Asāmī man rawā ʿanhum Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī min mashāyikhihi alladhīna dhakarahum fī Jāmiʿihi al-ṣaḥīḥ*. For both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the *Tārīkh Naysābūr* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) provides our earliest comprehensive source. Although now lost, this work was quoted at length by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d.

463/1071) in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* and Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) in his

Tārīkh al-islām. Fragments of *Tārīkh Naysābūr* have also survived in an

eighth/fourteenth-century abridgement by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Khalīfa (fl.

720/1320).⁴⁷ But since al-Ḥākim was one of the central figures in the canonization of the

Shaykhayn (the 'two *shaykh*s,' an honorific for al-Bukhārī and Muslim), we must be very

wary of relying on his work for reconstructing pre-canonical perceptions of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.

Unfortunately, he represents the only real source for early information about Muslim in

particular. Both Muslim and al-Ḥākim were citizens of Naysābūr, however, and al-

Ḥākim's father met the great traditionist. We may thus feel more comfortable relying on

al-Ḥākim in outlining Muslim's life and work in their native city.

III.6. Reality: al-Bukhārī, *Ṣāḥib al-Ṣaḥīḥ*

Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra b. Bardizbeh al-

Juʿfī al-Bukhārī was born in Bukhara in 194/810. His family were wealthy landowners

(*dehqān*), and his great-grandfather had converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism at the

hands of Yamān al-Juʿfī, the Arab governor of the city.⁴⁸ Al-Bukhārī himself lived off

properties he rented out for monthly or yearly income.⁴⁹ He started studying ḥadīth at a

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⁴⁷ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, recension and translation by Moḥammad b. Ḥosayn Khalīfe-ye
Nīshābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, ed. Moḥammad Reḍā Shafīʿī Kadkanī (Tehran: Āgāh, 1375/[1996]).

⁴⁸ Abū Aḥmad ʿAbdallāh Ibn ʿAdī al-Jurjānī, *Asāmī man rawā ʿanhum Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-
Bukhārī min mashāyikhihi alladhīna dhakarahum fī Jāmiʿihi al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Badr b. Muḥammad al-ʿAmmāsh
(Medina: Dār al-Bukhārī, 1415/[1994-5]), 59.

⁴⁹ Al-Dhahabī cites Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥātim al-Warrāq, al-Bukhārī's secretary, as saying that al-
Bukhārī had a piece of land that he would rent every year for 700 *dirhams*. He quotes al-Bukhārī as saying:
"I used to acquire (*astaghillu*) every month 500 *dirhams*, and I spent it all in the quest for knowledge"; al-

young age, learning from local Bukharan experts, and in his late teens he began writing

books on the sayings of the Companions and the Successors. His pilgrimage to Mecca at

age sixteen was the beginning of a long career of traveling that took him to study with the

most vaunted ḥadīth scholars of his day. In Khurāsān he visited Balkh, Merv and

Naysābūr, where he studied with Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh (d. 238/853). In western Iran he

stayed in Rayy and made numerous trips to Baghdad, where he studied with Ibn Ḥanbal

and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn. In Basra he heard from ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, who would become one of

his main teachers, and Abū ʿĀṣim Daḥḥāk al-Nabīl (d. 212/827). He also studied in

Wāsiṭ, Kufa and Medina. In Mecca he heard from ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī (d.

219/834), and also went to Egypt and coastal cities like ʿAsqalān and Ḥimṣ in greater

Syria. There is some debate on whether he visited the cities of upper Mesopotamia (al-

Jazīra),[50] and it is unclear whether he reached Damascus.[51]

Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī reported in his *Tārīkh Naysābūr* that al-Bukhārī arrived in

Naysābūr for the last time in 250/864-5. Later Muslim sources convey the impression

that he fairly quickly gained the enmity of Naysābūr's senior ḥadīth scholar, Muḥammad

b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (d. 258/873), who had him expelled from the city due to his statement

that the physical recitation (*lafẓ*) of the Qur'ān was created. We indeed do know from

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Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:263-4; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1418/1997), 664.

[50] Al-Subkī cites his teacher al-Mizzī's rejection of al-Ḥākim's claim that al-Bukhārī had entered the Jazīra and heard from people like Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbdallāh b. Zurāra al-Raqqī; Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAlī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw, 10 vols. ([Cairo]: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1383-96/1964-76), 2:214.

[51] Ibn ʿAsākir lists al-Bukhārī in his history of Damascus. For more on al-Bukhārī's teachers, see Fuat Sezgin, *Buhârî'nin Kaynakları* (Istanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basimevi, 1956).

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Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī's (d. 327/938) *al-Jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*, our earliest source on al-Bukhārī, that al-Dhuhlī publicly condemned al-Bukhārī for his beliefs about the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān.[52] Furthermore, our sources are also unanimous that he used this as a pretext to demand al-Bukhārī's expulsion from Naysābūr.

Early information from al-Ḥākim and Ibn 'Adī, however, suggests that the tension between al-Bukhārī and al-Dhuhlī was multifaceted and grew over some time. The earliest report mentioning the *lafẓ* scandal in detail, given by Ibn 'Adī, includes no mention of al-Dhuhlī or of al-Bukhārī's expulsion. It certainly portrays al-Bukhārī falling into disfavor with ḥadīth scholars due to his views on the Qur'ān, but concludes with him retiring to his residence in Naysābūr, not leaving the city. This is not surprising, as al-Ḥākim states that al-Bukhārī's last stay in Naysābūr was lengthy, lasting five years.[53]

Ibn 'Adī furnishes another reason for al-Dhuhlī's animosity towards al-Bukhārī. He reports third-hand from al-Dhuhlī's son, Ḥaykān b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī[54] (d. 267/881), that he asked his father, "What is with you and this man – meaning Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl – when you are not one of those from whom he transmits (*wa lasta min rijālihi fī al-'ilm*)? He said, 'I saw him in Mecca and he was following Shamkhada, (Ibn 'Adī: Shamkhada is a Kufan Qadarite) and when I reached [al-Bukhārī], he said, "I entered Mecca and I didn't know anyone from among the ḥadīth scholars,

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[52] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1959), 4:1:182-3.

[53] As cited by al-Dhahabī; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:250.

[54] Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:220.

while Shamkhada knew them, so I would follow him so that he would acquaint me with them; so what is the shame in that?""[55] Interestingly, with the exception of the encyclopedic Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176), Ibn ʿAdī's report appears in none of the later sources.[56] There is not even any evidence that Ibn ʿAdī's younger contemporary, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, took it into consideration in his discussion of al-Bukhārī's relationship with al-Dhuhlī. Since later apologists for al-Bukhārī never acknowledged it, and it was the *lafẓ* scandal and not this accusation which attracted detractors, we have no reason to doubt the provenance and veracity of Ḥaykān's report. It thus seems likely that the *lafẓ* incident was not the immediate cause of al-Dhuhlī's dislike for al-Bukhārī or of the latter's expulsion. It was merely a pretext, the last episode in an aversion that al-Dhuhlī had developed for al-Bukhārī earlier during his lengthy tenure in Naysābūr.

After his consequent expulsion from Naysābūr, al-Bukhārī returned to his native Bukhara in what would prove the last year of his life. He was soon driven from there as well. The Ṭāhirid *amīr* of Bukhara, Khālid b. Aḥmad (coincidentally also surnamed al-Dhuhlī), entertained many ḥadīth scholars, such as Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī (d. 294/906), as guests at his court.[57] He even ordered the ḥadīth scholar Naṣr b. Aḥmad al-Kindī 'Naṣrak' (d. 293/905-6) to come to his court and make him a *musnad*.[58] When he requested al-Bukhārī to provide his children with a private reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and the

[55] Ibn ʿAdī, *Asāmī*, 66-7.

[56] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd ʿUmar al-ʿAmrawī, 80 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1997), 52:95.

[57] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:225-6.

[58] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:310-11 (biography of Khālid b. Yaḥyā); Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 13:48.

Tārīkh al-kabīr, the scholar refused to extend the *amīr* preferential treatment. Using al-Bukhārī's controversial stance on the Qur'ān, the *amīr* ordered his expulsion from Bukhara. Tired and intimidated, al-Bukhārī passed through the city of Nasaf before dying in the village of Khartank a few miles from Samarqand.[59]

Al-Bukhārī's early works consisted of musings on the sayings of the Companions and the Successors. These writings later matured into a much more ambitious project. He began his *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* (The Great History) while a young man in Medina. The extant work is a massive biographical dictionary of over 12,300 entries.[60] He is reported to have revised it at least three times over the course of his life, a fact that Christopher Melchert's analysis of the *Tārīkh* corroborates.[61] Al-Bukhārī consistently provides neither full names nor evaluations of the persons in question, focusing instead on locating each subject within the vast network of ḥadīth transmission. The *Tārīkh* seems to have no connection to the author's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[62] Al-Bukhārī produced two smaller dictionaries of ḥadīth transmitters as well as the much smaller *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafā'*, a book on weak narrators. In addition, he wrote several smaller topical works, such as his *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād* (On the Createdness of Men's Actions) and *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt* (Book

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[59] J. Robson, "al-Bukhārī," *EI²*.

[60] Melchert, "Bukhārī and Early Ḥadīth Criticism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 121, no. 1 (2001): 8. Oddly, extant copies of *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* feature no female transmitters. Al-Ḥākim, however, quotes Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn al-Māsarjisī as saying that the book contains approximately forty thousand (sic!) "men and women." It thus seems likely that at some crucial point in the transmission of our extant manuscript tradition, a last volume containing women was lost. See al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Rabīʿ b. Hādī ʿUmayr al-Madkhalī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1404/1984), 111.

[61] See Melchert, "Bukhārī and Early Ḥadīth Criticism," 9; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:7.

[62] Melchert, "Bukhārī and Early Ḥadīth Criticism," 12.

on Raising One's Hands in Prayer). There are reports that al-Bukhārī also produced an *ʿilal* book as well as a large *musnad*, both now lost.[63]

III.6. a. *The Ṣaḥīḥ*

Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, actually titled *al-Jāmiʿ al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-mukhtaṣar min umūr Rasūl Allāh wa sunanihi wa ayyāmihi* (The Abridged Authentic Compilation of the Affairs of the Messenger of God, his Sunna and Campaigns),[64] was a mammoth expression of his personal method of ḥadīth criticism and legal vision. It covers the full range of legal and ritual topics, but also includes treatments of many other issues such as the implication of technical terms in ḥadīth transmission and the authority of *āḥād* ḥadīths (reports transmitted by only a few chains of transmission) in law.[65] The *Ṣaḥīḥ* consists of ninety-seven chapters (*kitāb*), each divided into subchapters (*bāb*). The subchapter titles indicate the legal implication or ruling the reader should derive from the subsequent ḥadīths, and often include a short comment from the author.[66] Such short

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[63] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 679.

[64] Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ʿAbdallāh al-Laythī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1407/1987), 1:23. For a discussion of the title of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, see ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, *Taḥqīq ismay al-Ṣaḥīḥayn wa ism Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1414/1993), 9-12.

[65] Al-Bukhārī's Chapter on Transmitted Knowledge (*Kitāb al-ʿIlm*), for example, includes proof for his contention that the two technical phrases in ḥadīth transmission, "*akhbaranā*" and "*ḥaddathanā*," are equivalent in meaning. In his chapter on the permissibility of using *āḥād* ḥadīths in law, he includes a section on how the Prophet and his companions heeded the reports of individual women; see Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbdallāh b. Bāz and Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1418/1997), 1:191-2; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ʿIlm, bāb* 4; and *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:302, #7267; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb akhbār al-āḥād, bāb* 6.

[66] The best discussion to date of the nature of al-Bukhārī's legal commentary is Mohammad Fadel's "Ibn Ḥajar's *Hady al-Sārī*: A Medieval Interpretation of the Structure of al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*: Introduction and Translation," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54 (1995):161-197.

legal discussions often feature ḥadīths not naming al-Bukhārī's immediate source (termed

ta ʿlīq or *ḥadīth muʿallaq*) or a report from a Companion for elucidation. Al-Bukhārī

often repeats a Prophetic tradition, but through different narrations and in separate

chapters. Opinions have varied about the exact number of 'ḥadīths' in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, since

between the notion of a ḥadīth as a 'tradition' (a saying attributed to the Prophet) and a

'narration' (one version of that saying narrated by a specific *isnād*) the definition of

'ḥadīth' can vary widely. Generally, experts have placed the number of full-*isnād*

narrations at 7,397, with Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) counting a total of 9,082 including all

the incomplete *isnād*s. Of these around 4,000 are repetitions, placing the number of

Prophetic traditions between 2,602 (Ibn Ḥajar's lowest count) and the more widely

accepted figure of 3,397-4,000.[67]

Unlike Muslim, al-Bukhārī provides no methodological introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

As we shall see in Chapter Five, later scholars spilled a great deal of ink attempting to

reconstruct his requirements (*rasm* or *shurūṭ*) for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) from his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and

al-Tārīkh al-kabīr. With the exception of some statements gleaned from his extant

works, however, our understanding of al-Bukhārī's methods depends totally on either

these later analyses or on statements attributed to al-Bukhārī in later sources.[68] It is

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[67] Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 274-5; Ibn Kathīr Ismāʿīl b. Abī Ḥafṣ (d. 774/1374), *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth sharḥ Ikhtiṣār ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1423/2003), 22. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states that al-Bukhārī's book contains 4,000 Prophetic traditions (*uṣūl*); Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-ikhlāl wa al-ghalaṭ*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1987), 101-2; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 648-53; Mullā Khāṭir, 41.

[68] An example of al-Bukhārī revealing his methods would be his statement in *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn* that one narration adding a phrase in the *matn* of a ḥadīth (literal *matn* addition) is allowed if the narration is authentic (*idhā thabata*); al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*, ed. Badīʿ al-Dīn al-Rāshidī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1416/1996), 131-3.

generally believed that in his *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī followed his teacher ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī in

requiring some proof that at each link in the *isnād* the two transmitters had to have

narrated ḥadīths to one another in person at least once. Later scholars like al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ

b. Mūsā (d. 544/1149) verified this by locating an occurrence of "he narrated to us

(*ḥaddathanā*)" between every two transmitters at each link in al-Bukhārī's *isnāds*.[69] This

is crucial for *isnāds* where transmission is recorded by the vague phrase "from/according

to (ʿan)." Unlike the transmission terms "he narrated to us" or "he reported to us

(*akhbaranā*)," "from / according to" could be used by someone who never met the

transmitter of the ḥadīth in question. This means that in al-Bukhārī's *Saḥīḥ* any *isnād*

with "from (ʿan) so and so" in the *isnād* is theoretically equivalent to "so and so narrated

to us directly."

III.6. b. *Legal Identity and Method*

Al-Bukhārī's never explicitly adhered to any of the nascent schools of law,

though he was eventually claimed by all four *madhhabs*. He studied with several

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[69] The most exhaustive work on this issue from a medieval Muslim scholar is Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Ibn Rushayd's (d. 721/1321) *al-Sanan al-abyan wa'l-mawrid al-am ʿan fī al-muḥākama bayn al-imāmayn fī al-sanad al-mu ʿan ʿan*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥabīb b. Khawja (Tunis: Maṭbaʿat al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya, 1397/1977), esp. 22-32. The first scholar known to have attributed this stance to al-Bukhārī and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī was al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ. See Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī (d. 628/1231), *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īhām al-wāqiʿ ʿayn fī kitāb al-Aḥkām*, ed. al-Ḥusayn Āyat Saʿīd, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṭayba, 1418/1997), 2:576-7. Several modern Muslim scholars have devoted extensive studies to the question of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's stances on ḥadīths transmitted by ʿan. In his innovative work *Ijmāʿ al-muḥaddithīn ʿalā ʿadam ishtirāṭ al-ʿilm bi'l-samāʿ fī al-ḥadīth al-mu ʿan ʿan bayn al-muta ʿāṣirīn*, al-Sharīf Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī argues that al-Bukhārī never actually required proof of personal contact, but that this had been incorrectly inferred by al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, whose conclusion about al-Bukhārī's methods were parroted uncritically by virtually all later scholars of ḥadīth; al-Sharīf Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī, *Ijmāʿ al-muḥaddithīn ʿalā ʿadam ishtirāṭ al-ʿilm bi'l-samāʿ fī al-ḥadīth al-mu ʿan ʿan bayn al-muta ʿāṣirīn* (Beirut: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1421/2001). See also, Khālid Manṣur ʿAbdallāh al-Durays, *Mawqif al-imāmayn al-Bukhārī wa Muslim min ishtirāṭ al-luqyā wa al-samāʿ fī al-sanad al-mu ʿan ʿan bayn al-muta ʿāṣirīn* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd and Sharikat al-Riyāḍ, 1417/1997).

scholars closely associated with al-Shāfiʿī, like al-Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī (d. 245/859) and

Abū Thawr (d. 240/854). Although al-Bukhārī never narrates ḥadīths through al-Shāfiʿī,

the Shāfiʿī biographers Abū ʿĀṣim Muḥammad al-ʿAbbādī (d. 458/1066) and Tāj al-Dīn

al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) use these scholarly links to tie al-Bukhārī to the school's

founder.[70] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Ḥanbalī (d. 526/1131-2) claims al-Bukhārī was a Ḥanbalī

because he transmitted ḥadīths and legal rulings from Ibn Ḥanbal, and some Mālikīs have

considered him one of their own because he transmitted the *Muwaṭṭa'*. Even later

Ḥanafīs claim al-Bukhārī, since they argue that one of his teachers, Ibn Rāhawayh, was

Ḥanafī.[71]

An examination of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, however, reveals that he was an

independent scholar unconstrained by any particular school.[72] In contrast to all four

Sunni schools of law, he allows those who have had intercourse during the Ramaḍān fast

to expiate their sin by performing charity but does not require them to repeat the day of

fasting. In another break with the schools, he allows someone who has had intercourse

(*junub*) and not performed ablutions to read the Qur'ān.[73] He also permits reading the

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[70] Abū ʿĀṣim Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ aš-Šāfiʿiyya*, ed. Gösta Vitestam (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 53-4; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, 2:214.

[71] Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. Abū Ḥāzim Usāma b. Ḥasan and Abū al-Zahrāʾ Ḥāzim ʿAlī Bahjat, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 1:254-9; al-Ḥusaynī ʿAbd al-Majīd Hāshim, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī muḥaddithᵃⁿ wa faqīhᵃⁿ* (Cairo: Miṣr al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.), 167.

[72] J. Robson agrees in his entry on al-Bukhārī; see J. Robson, "al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl," *EI²*.

[73] Hāshim, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī muḥaddithᵃⁿ wa faqīhᵃⁿ*, 190-1.

Qur'ān in the bathroom, declares 'umra to be mandatory just like ḥajj, and allows women

not to veil themselves (iḥtijāb) in the company of slaves.[74]

Al-Bukhārī obliquely sets forth his legal methodology in what may have

originally been a separate work but now constitutes the penultimate chapter of the Ṣaḥīḥ,

the Kitāb al-i'tiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna (the Book of Clinging to [God's] Book and the

Sunna).[75] From the author's often detailed subchapter headings and the Prophetic and

Companion traditions that he includes, the reader gleans a minimalist approach to law

closely tied to the revealed sources. The Prophet has been sent with the totality of

guidance to mankind, and adhering to his message is the key to salvation. The precedent

in the community, from the time of the first caliph Abū Bakr, is not to deviate from the

Prophet's sunna. The next subchapter, however, is entitled "Concerning what is hated

about asking too many questions," including a ḥadīth in which the Prophet states that the

believer's greatest crime is to inquire about something previously unmentioned and thus

cause its prohibition for the whole community.[76] Al-Bukhārī's opposition to the use of

excessive legal reasoning and speculation manifests itself in his subchapters on "the

condemnation of ra'y and excessive qiyās (takalluf al-qiyās)" and how the Prophet

himself would not answer a question until God had revealed the answer to him.[77] Al-

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[74] 'Abd al-Khāliq 'Abd al-Ghanī, al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Ṣaḥīḥuhu (Jedda: Dār al-Manāra, 1405/1985), 146.

[75] For the tremendous implications of the chapter I am indebted to my friend and colleague Dr. Scott C. Lucas.

[76] Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ al-bārī, 13:328; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-i'tiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna, bāb 3 / #7289.

[77] Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ al-bārī, 13:349-359; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-i'tiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna, bāb 7-8.

Bukhārī does, however, allow limited analogical reasoning based on the Prophet's answer

to a man who had refused to acknowledge a black child to whom his wife had just given

birth. The Prophet enlightens the man by asking him rhetorically if his camels are always

the same color as their parents.[78]

In the dichotomy between the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the *ahl al-ra'y*, al-Bukhārī clearly

identified himself with the transmission-based jurists. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, he uses his chapter

headings and brief comments to differ on twenty-seven occasions with "a certain person

(*baʿd al-nās*)." Fourteen of these instances occur in a chapter devoted solely to rebutting

the use of legal devices (*ḥiyal*), which were employed predominantly by Ḥanafīs to

circumvent the literal requirements of their school's law.[79] Al-Bukhārī condemns *ḥiyal*

using the famous ḥadīth that all deeds are judged by their intention.[80] In this al-Bukhārī

was following the precedent of tradition-based jurists such as Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn al-

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[78] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:366-7, #7314. This section is entitled *bāb man shabbaha aṣlᵃⁿ ma 'lūmᵃⁿ bi-aṣlin mubīn wa qad bayyana al-Nabī (ṣ) ḥukmahumā li-yafhama al-sā'il* (He who compares a known basis (*aṣl*) to another clear basis (*aṣl mubīn*), and the Prophet (ṣ) has clarified their ruling so that one can understand).

[79] ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ghunaymī al-Maydānī al-Dimashqī (d. 1298/1880-1), *Kashf al-iltibās 'ammā awrada al-imām al-Bukhārī 'alā ba 'd al-nās*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1414/1993), 19; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 12:404-425.

[80] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 12:405; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ḥiyal, bāb* 1. For a recent discussion of *ḥiyal* in the Ḥanafī school and Islamic legal thought in general, see Satoe Horii, "Reconsideration of Legal Devices (ḥiyal) in Islamic Jurisprudence: The Ḥanafīs and their "Exits" (makhārij)," *Journal of Islamic Law and Society*, 9, no. 3 (2002): 312-357. The author describes how the Ḥanafī tradition used *ḥiyal* to provide people means by which to escape the more difficult sanctions of law in everyday life. It is also probable, in my opinion, that the emphasis that the early Ḥanafīs placed on the formal structure of *qiyās*, where the ruling must inhere whenever its immediate cause (*ʿilla*) appears, made *ḥiyal* attractive. They allowed scholars to preserve the logical continuity of the *qiyās* system while avoiding some of its admittedly unjust or unfairly difficult results; a scholar could maintain the system of *qiyās* by acknowledging that the ruling inhered in the case, but then use a *ḥīla* to deal more justly with it. The two manners in which *ḥiyal* were misunderstood by their opponents, that they were a means to cheat God's law or that they represented inappropriate rational gymnastics, would both have offended al-Bukhārī.

Mubārak (d. 181/797), who vehemently rejected the use of *ḥiyal*.[81] Since the positions he

rejects are associated with the Ḥanafī school, it seems almost certain that al-Bukhārī was

referring to Abū Ḥanīfa. Al-Bukhārī, for example, disagrees with the well-known Ḥanafī

laxity on defining intoxicants. Al-Bukhārī considers *ṭilā'* (reduced grape juice) to be a

type of wine (*nabīdh*), while Ḥanafīs do not.[82]

Outside his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, however, al-Bukhārī's disagreement with Abū Ḥanīfa and the

ahl al-ra'y in general manifests itself in virulent contempt. He introduces his *Kitāb rafʿ*

al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt as "a rebuttal of he (*man*) who rejected raising the hands to the head

before bowing" in prayer and "misleads the non-Arabs on this issue (*abhama ʿalā al-*

ʿajam fī dhālika)... turning his back on the sunna of the Prophet and those who have

followed him...." He did this "out of the constrictive rancor (*ḥaraja*) of his heart,

breaking with the practice (*sunan*) of the Messenger of God (ṣ), disparaging what he

transmitted out of arrogance and enmity for the people of the *sunan*; for heretical

innovation in religion (*bidʿa*) had tarnished his flesh, bones and mind and made him revel

in the non-Arabs' deluded celebration of him."[83] The object of this derision becomes

clear later in the text, when al-Bukhārī includes a report of Ibn al-Mubārak praying with

Abū Ḥanīfa (whom he calls by his first name and patronym, Nuʿmān b. Thābit). When

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[81] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:404 (biography of Abū Ḥanīfa), where Ibn al-Mubārak is quoted as saying, "Whoever looks into the Book of *Ḥiyal* of Abū Ḥanīfa has made permissible the impermissible and forbidden what is allowed." See also Christopher Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 236.

[82] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 11:696, #6685; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-aymān wa al-nudhūr, bāb* 21.

[83] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*, 20. This virulence is totally absent in Bukhārī's chapters on this issue in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 2:277-84. Note that the above-mentioned edition of this text contains an error on this page; the editor read as "*mustaḥiqqᵃ*ⁿ" what can only be "*mustakhiffⁿ*."

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Ibn al-Mubārak raises his hands a second time before bowing, Abū Ḥanīfa asks

sarcastically, "Aren't you afraid you'll fly away? (*mā khashīta an taṭīra?*)," to which Ibn

al-Mubārak replies, "I didn't fly away the first time so I won't the second."[84]

III.6. c. *Al-Bukhārī and the Controversy over the Created Wording of the Qur'ān*

In light of al-Bukhārī's strong identification with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, it seems

difficult to believe that radical members of that camp ostracized him for his stance on the

Qur'ān. The issue of the createdness of the Qur'ān had begun in the early Abbasid

period, when a group of Muslim rationalists that the transmission-based scholars and later

Sunni orthodoxy would refer to as the Jahmiyya began asserting that God did not speak

in the anthropomorphic sense of the word, for this would necessitate Him having organs

of speech. Since this would belittle a power beyond the scope of human comparison,

they said that the Qur'ān and other instances of God's speech (such as His speaking to

Moses) were sounds that He created in order to convey His will to His domain.[85] These

rationalists were similarly opposed to other manifestations of anthropomorphism, such as

the notion that God could be seen by the believers on the Day of Judgment or that He

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[84] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn*, 107.

[85] Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran"
Orientalia Hispanica Volumen 1, ed. J.M. Barral (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 506. For interesting discussions of the debate over the nature of the Qur'ān and its *lafẓ* from within the Muslim tradition, see al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, 2:117-20 (biography of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Karābīsī); Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 2 vols. in 1 (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, [n.d.]), 2:304-17; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:223; ʿAbd al-Khāliq ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Ṣaḥīḥuhu*, 156-67.

could sit on a throne or descend to the lowest heavens at night.[86] They also rejected ideas

equally incompatible with a rationalist demeanor, like the punishment of the grave

(*'adhāb al-qabr*).[87] Muslims who believed that the community should rely on the literal

revelation received from the Prophet and his interpretation of the Qur'ān as preserved in

the sunna of the early Muslim community, however, saw this rationalist movement as an

attack on the textual authenticity of Islam. These traditionalists, who believed that one

should not discuss these issues speculatively, opposed all instances of what they saw as

the rationalist denial of God's attributes (*ta'ṭīl*). Relying on the text of the Qur'ān,

ḥadīths and the stances of prominent members of the early community, books such as

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *al-Radd 'alā al-zanādiqa wa al-jahmiyya* (Refutation of the Heretics

and the Jahmiyya) asserted that God did in fact speak, that the Qur'ān was one of His

uncreated attributes, that He did mount His throne and that the believers would receive

the beatific vision.

The traditionalists' objections were not simply academic; they equated the

assertion that the Qur'ān was created with calling God Himself created. Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd

al-Qaṭṭān asked rhetorically of those who said the Qur'ān is created, "How do you create

(*taṣna'ūn*) [the Qur'ānic verses] 'say He is the One God (*qul huwa Allāh aḥad*; Qur'ān

112:1),' how do you create 'indeed I am Allāh, there is no deity besides Me (*innanī anā*

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[86] There is some indication that the third caliph to preside over the *miḥna*, al-Wāthiq, added a denial of the beatific vision to the agenda of the inquisition; Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 143.

[87] Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," 510. See also Martin Hinds, "Miḥna," *EI²*.

Allāh, lā ilāh illā anā; Qur'ān 14:20).'"[88] Moreover, the Qur'ān had become a bulwark of

social capital in the emerging civilization of Islam. When a famous Ḥanafī judge, ʿĪsā b.

Abān (d. 221/836), who upheld the createdness of the Qur'ān, was presiding over a

dispute between a Muslim and a Jew, he asked the Muslim to swear "By God besides

whom there is no other deity (*wa'llāh alladhī lā ilāha illā huwa*)." His opponent

objected, demanding that the judge make him swear by the real Creator, since these

words were in the Qur'ān, which Muslims claimed was created.[89] The circulation of this

story among traditionalists indicates that they felt that a belief in the createdness of the

Qur'ān threatened its paramount role in society.

In the early third/ninth century, however, the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (d.

218/833) instituted a purge of these traditionalist beliefs from the empire's corps of

judges. His Inquisition (*miḥna*) was directed at those people who claimed to be the

upholders of the Prophet's sunna and defenders of the community's unified identity, but,

he claimed, were in reality demeaning God's greatness by putting the Qur'ān on par with

His essence. The rationalists behind this movement, including many of the Ḥanafī judges

of Baghdad and Samarra, rejected the idea upheld by the traditionalists that the Qur'ān

was co-external with God, for that would mean that God was not the only eternal being.[90]

Many of these rationalists were primarily concerned with polemics against Christian

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[88] Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayra (Riyadh: Dār al-Maʿārif al-Suʿūdiyya, 1398/1978), 33; cf. Josef van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb et la *Miḥna*," *Arabica* 37 (1990): 198.

[89] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11:160 (biography of ʿĪsā b. Abān). For another reference to the controversy over this type of verse, see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:195 (biography of al-Nasāʾī).

[90] Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," 516; Hinds, "Miḥna"; Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," 238-9. For a critique of current scholarship on the *miḥna*, see Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 192-202.

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scholars who attempted to corner Muslims into accepting the divine nature of Christ by comparing him with the Qur'ān. If God states in the Qur'ān that Jesus is the Word of God, just like the holy book itself, and that book is uncreated and co-eternal with God, then is Jesus not also co-eternal with God?[91] Is it so absurd, then, to believe that in the beginning he was the Word, and that the Word was with God? In addition to rejecting the anthropomorphic claim that God spoke in the literal sense, these rationalists thus also insisted that the Qur'ān was created (*muḥdath*) as opposed to being an eternal attribute (*qadīm*) of God.

The grueling torture, imprisonment or humiliation of prominent and widely respected ḥadīth scholars such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī in the Baghdad *Miḥna* left an enduring and bitter impression on the ḥadīth scholar community. Although al-Ma'mūn and his two successors' inquisition did not have as powerful a presence in Khurāsān and Transoxiana, it had increased the enmity between the *ahl al-ḥadīth* scholars and the Jahmī/Muʿtazilite/Ḥanafī rationalists who had prosecuted it. During the lifetime of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in the decades after their deaths, the question of the nature of the Qur'ān in particular remained a touchstone for the resentment built up between these groups. In Iraq, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/890) wrote *al-Ikhtilāf fī al-lafẓ wa al-radd ʿalā al-Jahmiyya wa al-mushabbiha* (Disagreement over

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[91] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 64; Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," 517. Madelung believes that the Muslim rationalist argument that the traditionalists were unintentionally abetting their Christian adversaries was more of an excuse for their attacks on the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Muḥammad Abū Zahra, however, holds that the Muʿtazila and al-Ma'mūn were in fact sincerely concerned with defending Islamic doctrine from Christian and other rationalist opponents. There is also an interesting story about the distinction between *muḥdath* (created) and *qadīm* (eternal) being integral to an interfaith discussion between Hārūn al-Rāshīd and the sovereign of India; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:340.

the *Lafz* and the Rebuttal of the Jahmiyya and the Anthropomorphists),[92] and Ibn Abī

Ḥātim also wrote a book refuting the Jahmiyya.[93] Even as late a scholar as al-Ṭabarānī

(d. 360/971) wrote a book condemning those espousing a belief in the created Qur'ān.[94]

In Naysābūr, when someone who upheld the createdness of the Qur'ān arrived in town,

the ḥadīth scholar Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Sarrāj (d. 313/925) ordered the people in the market

to curse him, and they complied.[95]

The tremendous tension surrounding this issue led the most conservative section

of the traditionalists to declare anathema anyone who asserted that the wording of the

Qur'ān (*lafz*), the physical sound of the book being recited or its written form on a page,

was created. This most intolerant end of the traditionalist spectrum, what George

Makdisi called "ultra-conservatives,"[96] included the standard portrayal of Aḥmad b.

Ḥanbal, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad Ibn al-Akhram (d. 301/913-4), Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-

Dhuhlī of Naysābūr and others. These über-Sunnis repudiated any traditionists who did

not declare that the Qur'ān was God's eternal speech and utterly increate. Those who

simply proclaimed that the Qur'ān was God's speech and then were silent, even those

who collapsed under the weight of the Inquisition such as ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, were dubbed

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[92] Al-Bukhārī is not mentioned in this book, although Ibn Ḥanbal is; see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ikhtilāf fī al-lafz wa al-radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa al-mushabbiha*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Saʿāda, 1349/[1930]).

[93] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:34.

[94] Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā Ibn Manda, "Manāqib al-Shaykh Abī al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī," MS Esad Efendi 2431, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul: 14b.

[95] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 2:215.

[96] George Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962):39.

"Those who stopped short (*wāqifiyya*)" and often equated with Jahmīs.[97] As Christopher

Melchert observes, the über-Sunnis saw them as doubly dangerous because they were

"self-proclaimed traditionalists" who identified themselves with the *ahl al-ḥadīth/ahl al-*

sunna camp. The über-Sunnis thus reserved some of their fiercest diatribe for these

folk.[98] Melchert has astutely identified this group between the über-Sunnis and their

rationalist adversaries, dubbing them "the semi-rationalists." He includes a diverse

selection of scholarly figures, from al-Shāfiʿī's most famous disciple, al-Muzanī, to the

great historian and exegete al-Ṭabarī.[99] The identifying characteristic of what Melchert

admits is a loosely-knit group is their belief that the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān is created. He

includes al-Bukhārī in this number because he upheld this stance.

Yet it is not very accurate to employ the term "rationalist" in any sense when

describing al-Bukhārī, since he was a diehard traditionalist. Rather, we should view him

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[97] Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," 521. Although Ibn Ḥanbal narrates some ḥadīths from ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī in his *Musnad*, one of his son's students, al-ʿUqaylī, said that when he studied Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al- ʿilal* with Ibn Ḥanbal's son ʿAbdallāh he saw that Ibn Ḥanbal had crossed out ʿAlī's name in many *isnāds* and replaced it with "a man." Nonetheless, al-ʿUqaylī affirms that ʿAlī's ḥadīths are reliable; Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿajī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1404/1984), 3:239.

[98] Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," 252.

[99] Melchert's evidence for al-Ṭabarī's stance on this issue (see Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān* {Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1330/[1912]}), 3:295 [biography of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī] is meager (as Melchert himself admits elsewhere, the charge "looks anachronistic"). In his *al-Tabṣīr fī ma ʿālim al-dīn*, al-Ṭabarī cleverly avoids discussing the issue of the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān. He explicitly states that the Qur'ān is neither created nor a creator – the *ahl al-ḥadīth* position – supporting his stance with a long logical argument. On the issue of the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān, however, al-Ṭabarī refers the reader to his discussion of the acts of humans (*afʿāl al- ʿibād*). In this discussion, he rejects the Qadarī and Jahmī position (the latter that men have no control over their acts) and embraces the third position, that of the *jamhūr ahl al-ithbāt* (the majority of those who affirm God's power over destiny), namely that God guides those destined for faith to faith and vice versa. He does not clearly state, however, whether or not men's acts are created. His exact position on the *lafẓ* issue thus remains unclear. See al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr fī ma ʿālim al-dīn*, ed. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Shibl (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1416/1996); 167-76, 200-5; cf. Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," 245-7; idem, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ Centuries C.E* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 195.

as a representative of Ibn Ḥanbal's original traditionalist school who fell victim to its most radical wing. Indeed, al-Bukhārī's *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād* constitutes the earliest representation of the position taken by Ibn Ḥanbal, a figure often co-opted by later groups to legitimize their stances.[100] Al-Bukhārī wrote this work within years of Ibn Ḥanbal's death in 241/855, and he incisively identified the polemical circus that had already grown up around Ibn Ḥanbal's persona:

> And as for the two sects [of the rationalists and ḥadīth scholars] that claim
> proof for themselves from Aḥmad, many of their reports [from him] are not
> reliable. Perhaps they have not understood the precise subtlety of his stance
> (*diqqat madhhabihi*). It is known that Aḥmad and all the people of
> knowledge hold that God's speech is uncreated and that all other speech is
> created. Indeed they hated discussing and investigating obscure issues, and
> they avoided the people of dialectical theology (*kalām*), speculation (*al-
> khawḍ*) and disputation (*tanāzuʿ*) except on issues in which they had [textual]
> knowledge.[101]

Al-Bukhārī's allegiance to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* camp and Ibn Ḥanbal himself is thus obvious. He even quotes Ibn Ḥanbal as evidence for his position on the *lafẓ*.[102]

Melchert admits that the semi-rationalists were a diverse group, but it seems more accurate to group al-Bukhārī with the traditionalist camp of Ibn Ḥanbal than with al-

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[100] Ibn Ḥanbal's role as a figure on which different schools of thought have projected their particular stances is well known. Ibn Ḥanbal is most famous for stating that "he who says my wording of the Qur'ān is created is *Jahmī*, and he who says it is not created is guilty of *bidʿa*." Another, less likely, report through Ibn Ḥanbal's student Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī tells of someone asking Ibn Ḥanbal about a group of people who say that "our wording of the Qur'ān is created." He replied, "The slave approaches God through the Qur'ān by five means, in which [the Qur'ān] is not created: memorizing in the heart, reading by the tongue, hearing by the ear, seeing with the eye, and writing by the hand. The heart is created and what it memorizes is not; the reading (*tilāwa*) is created but what is read is not; hearing is created but what is heard is not; sight is created but what is seen is not; and writing is created but what is written is not"; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawāʿiq al-mursala*, 2:313-4; for another example of attributions to Ibn Ḥanbal, see Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ li-mā uṭliqa wa ughliqa min Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh Shāhīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1420/1999), 205.

[101] Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al ʿibād*, 62.

[102] Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 108.

Ṭabarī, whose explanation of why the Qur'ān is uncreated consists of several pages of logic discussing accidents and whether or not speech can inhere in the essence (*dhāt*) of a thing. Also, Melchert's description of the semi-rationalists as "insinuating the tools of the rationalists into traditionalist practice" would hardly place al-Bukhārī in the environs of the rationalist camp. None of al-Bukhārī's extant works employ Islamicate logic or the philosophical jargon found in al-Ṭabarī's discussion.[103]

It is more accurate to describe al-Bukhārī as a conservative traditionalist trying to navigate the contradictions inherent in the blunt *ahl al-sunna* creed touted by the über-Sunnis like al-Dhuhlī. Al-Bukhārī knew that the Qur'ān was God's uncreated speech, but he also knew that God creates humans' actions, as the *ahl al-sunna* had insisted in their attacks on the free-will position of their Qadarite opponents. What, then, does one say of the Qur'ān when it becomes manifested in a human act such as recitation or writing?

From our earliest sources about al-Bukhārī's life, it seems that he was very reluctant to discuss this issue at all. He would understandably have viewed it as speculation (*khawḍ*) and thus tried to avoid it. Our earliest substantial source on al-Bukhārī, Ibn 'Adī, includes a story he heard from a group of his teachers that tells of al-Bukhārī refusing to answer questions about the nature of the Qur'ān's wording until

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[103] Al-Bukhārī's *Khalq af'āl al-'ibād* is little more than a collection of proof texts from Prophetic ḥadīths and earlier Muslim authorities, including Ibn Ḥanbal himself. Only at the very end of his book does al-Bukhārī resort to what could be termed dialectics, such as the use of constructions like "if someone says… let it be said to him" or terms like *bayān*. Often when this work does resort to dialectical arguments, they center on combating his opponents' use of ḥadīths. See al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af'āl al-'ibād*, 105-6; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya*, 2:229.

absolutely pressed, saying, "The Qur'ān is God's speech, uncreated, and the acts of men are created, and inquisition (*imtiḥān*) is heresy (*bidʿa*)."[104]

Al-Bukhārī's defense against the accusations of the über-Sunnis, his *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, displays this same caution. The first section of the book is devoted solely to narrations from earlier pious authorities such as Sufyān al-Thawrī that affirm the increate nature of the Qur'ān and condemn anyone who holds the contrary position as a Jahmī or unbeliever. The second section argues that the acts of men are created, relying on Qur'ānic verses and reports from such vaunted traditionalists as Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān. Al-Bukhārī himself rarely comments, but does assert that men's actions, voices and writing are created. He then begins introducing narrations from the Prophet that suggest that it is permissible to sell and buy written copies of the Qur'ān.[105] Finally, he provides a ḥadīth of the Prophet enjoining Muslims to "beautify the Qur'ān with your voices" and a report from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that there will come a time when nothing remains of the Qur'ān except its written form.[106] These reports insinuate that physical manifestations of the Qur'ān do indeed belong to the material world. The author then returns to refuting the rationalists, reemphasizing that the belief that human acts are created is not heresy (*bidʿa*).[107] Only at this point does al-Bukhārī begin actively arguing that the sound of the Qur'ān being recited is created.

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[104] Ibn ʿAdī, *Asāmī*, 64-5. This story also appeared in al-Ḥākim's *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, narrated from Ibn ʿAdī. See al-Dhahabī *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:266.

[105] Al-Bukhārī. *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 59-60.

[106] "*Ya'tī ʿalā al-nās zamān lā yabqā min al-islām illā ismuhu wa lā min al-qur'ān illā rasmuhu*"; al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 66-7.

[107] Al-Bukhārī. *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 102-4.

III.7. Reality: Muslim, the Junior Partner

Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī was born in 206/821 in Naysābūr.

He first learned ḥadīth from Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh and Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Tamīmī (d. 224-

6/839-41) in his hometown before leaving for a pilgrimage to Mecca in 220/835. In the

Ḥijāz he heard from ʿAbdallāh b. Maslama al-Qaʿnabī (d. 220-1/835-6), a favorite

transmitter of Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, and others. He later visited Baghdad to hear from Ibn

Ḥanbal and also went to Basra. He went to greater Syria, Egypt and Rayy, where he met

several times with Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 264/878) and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277/890).

A few years before his death he settled in Naysābūr, where he became one of the senior

ḥadīth scholars in the city and a central figure for study.[108] It was there that he studied

and became acquainted with al-Bukhārī. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, whose father met

Muslim, recalls that Muslim's "place of business (*matjar*) was Khān Maḥmash," where

his father saw him narrating ḥadīths. Muslim's livelihood also came from his properties

at Ustū which came from "the progeny (*aʿqāb*) of the females of his family."[109] He died

in 261/875 at the age of fifty-five.

Muslim left many more works than his elder contemporary. His most famous, of

course, was his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, originally titled *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*.[110] Muslim also produced two

larger collections, a *muṣannaf* and a *musnad*, representing the sum total of the ḥadīth

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[108] In his biography of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn al-Qabbānī (d. 289/901-2), al-Dhahabī notes Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Akhram (d. 344/955) saying, "The people of ḥadīth used to gather around him (ʿindahu) after Muslim"; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:183.

[109] Cited in al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:187.

[110] This is somewhat misleading, since Muslim's work is topically organized, not a *musnad*. Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī recorded the full title as *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-mukhtaṣar min al-sunan bi-naql al-ʿadl ʿan al-ʿadl ʿan rasūl Allāh ṣ*; Abū Ghudda, *Taḥqīq ismay al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 33-4.

corpus from which he selected his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Ibn al-Jawzī does not believe that anyone ever

transmitted this large *musnad* from Muslim.[111] He also produced several biographical

dictionaries. The largest one, his *Ṭabaqāt*, simply provides the names of the ḥadīth

transmitters in the generations after the Prophet. Other smaller works, such as the

Munfaridāt, the *Wiḥdān* and the *Dhikr man laysa lahu illā rāwin wāḥid min ruwāt al-*

ḥadīth, detail people who lack more than one transmitter from them.[112] Like al-Bukhārī

and many other ḥadīth masters of his age, Muslim produced a book of criticized

narrations (*Kitāb al-ʿilal*) and a work of the same ilk but designed for a more general

audience, the *Kitāb al-tamyīz*. This latter work has survived in part, and along with

Muslim's involved introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, provides invaluable information about its

author and his leanings.

III.7. a. *Muslim's Methodology in his Ṣaḥīḥ*

One of the most prominent statements Muslim makes about his methodology is

his comparatively lax requirement for ascertaining whether a link in an *isnād* marked by

"from/according to (*ʿan*)" actually occurred through personal contact. When "*ʿan*" is

used, Muslim does not require affirmative proof that the two transmitters actually met,

but rather that they were contemporaries with no "clear indication (*dalāla bayyina*)" that

they did not meet. Here Muslim calls upon the example of Mālik, Shuʿba, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd

al-Qaṭṭān and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, who "only felt compelled to find a guarantee of

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[111] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:171.

[112] One such work has been published under the title *al-Munfaridāt wa al-waḥdān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bandārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1408/1988).

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direct transmission (samā ʿ) if the narrator was known to conceal his immediate source (*mudallis*)."[113] In this Muslim openly breaks with what scholars have determined about al-Bukhārī and his teacher ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. Muslim acknowledges that there are those who uphold that position, but he angrily asserts that they lack precedent from earlier ḥadīth masters.[114] The notion that affirming one meeting between two transmitters somehow assures direct transmission for all their ḥadīths, he states, is absurd. He provides examples of *isnāds* where two narrators who had met nonetheless occasionally transmitted via an intermediary concealed by a " *ʿan*" link in the *isnād*.[115] Moreover, those who adhere to this position are unnecessarily dismissing many authentic ḥadīths. "If we were to count the authentic reports (*al-akhbār al-ṣiḥāḥ*)...," he says, "that would be maligned by the claim of this claimant, we would not be able to measure the extent."[116]

In his introduction, Muslim divides ḥadīths and their concomitant transmitters into three groups, stating that he will rely on two of them in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The first consists of the well-established ḥadīths whose transmitters do not lapse into the "excessive confusion" (*takhlīṭ fāḥish*) into which many *muḥaddiths* stumble. Having exhausted this group, he will proceed to the reports of transmitters who are not as masterful as the first

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[113] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:26.

[114] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:23, 28. The majority of later commentators assumed that Muslim meant al-Bukhārī, but Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1374) believes he intended ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. Several modern Muslim scholars have also dealt with this question. In his comprehensive treatment of this question in the third appendix to his edition of al-Dhahabī's *al-Mūqiza*, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda states that the person in question cannot be al-Bukhārī. Assuming Muslim wrote his introduction before he completed the book, he would not even have met al-Bukhārī at the time; he only met his teacher in 250-1 AH when al-Bukhārī came to Naysābūr; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 45; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiza fī ʿulūm muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1405/1084), 122-140.

[115] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:24-5.

[116] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:26.

group but nonetheless "are characterized by pious behavior (*satr*), honesty and pursuing knowledge." He will not take reports from the third group, which consists of those who either forge ḥadīths or whose material differs beyond reconciliation with that of superior scholars.[117]

Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains far fewer chapters than al-Bukhārī's, with only fifty-four, and lacks al-Bukhārī's legal commentary. It has many more narrations, numbering about 12,000, with 4,000 repetitions. According to Muslim's companion Aḥmad b. Salama al-Bazzār (d. 286/899), who was with Muslim for fifteen years while he wrote the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, this number is based on Muslim's very *isnād*-based definition of a ḥadīth. If he had heard the same tradition from two *shaykh*s, he considered it to be two ḥadīths.[118] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) places the number of Prophetic traditions in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* at around 4,000.[119] Unlike al-Bukhārī, Muslim keeps all the narrations of a certain ḥadīth in the same section. Muslim also diverges significantly from al-Bukhārī in his exclusion of Companion ḥadīths and narrations without full *isnād*s (*ta ʿlīqāt*) as commentary.[120]

Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* overlaps a great deal with that of his teacher al-Bukhārī; according to Abū Bakr Muḥammad. b. ʿAbdallāh al-Jawzaqī (d. 388/998), whose book *al-Muttafaq* combined the two books, there are 2,326 common traditions.[121] The two

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[117] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:4-5.

[118] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:186; Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 275.

[119] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 101-2.

[120] Scholars have generally counted only 12-14 instances of incomplete *isnād*s (*ta ʿlīq*) used for commentary in Muslim's book; cf. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 77.

[121] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. Masʿūd ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Saʿdafī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1414/1994), 69-70. Ibn Ḥajar states that al-Jawzaqī considers the same tradition from

scholars drew on essentially the same pool of transmitters, with approximately 2,400 narrators in common.[122] Al-Bukhārī narrated from only about 430 that Muslim did not, while Muslim used about 620 transmitters al-Bukhārī excluded.[123]

Scholars have generally devoted much less attention to Muslim's legal positions, perhaps because his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is more simply a ḥadīth book than al-Bukhārī's legally charged work.[124] Not only does Muslim's book cover many fewer legal topics than his teacher's, his chapters often provide support for both sides of a particular issue. Indeed, he may have left his subchapters without titles, and he never raged as angrily as al-Bukhārī in any of his extant works.[125] Muslim thus does not appear in al-ʿAbbādī or al-Subkī's roster of the Shāfiʿī school. Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, on the other hand, does include him in the *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, emphasizing his narrations from Ibn Ḥanbal and his discussing ḥadīth narrators with him.[126]

These sources leave little doubt concerning Muslim's identification with the transmission-based school. Muslim reportedly criticized Abū Ḥanīfa and the *ahl al-ra'y*,

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two different Companions to be one ḥadīth. This would mean that his account of the number of ḥadīths common to both the *Ṣaḥīḥs* is probably much lower than other Muslim scholars might consider.

[122] This number was arrived at by Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī b. al-Qaysarānī (d. 507/1113); Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 182.

[123] This number was arrived at by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and quoted by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 84.

[124] In the introduction to his *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Ismāʿīlī states that one of the reasons al-Bukhārī's book is superior to both Muslim's and Abū Dāwūd's is that he provides better explanation of the legal implications of the ḥadīth; see Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī al-Dimashqī (d. 1338/1919-20), *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū al-Ghudda, 2 vols. (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1416/1995), 1:305.

[125] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1407/1987), 1:129.

[126] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:311-2.

but in this he is simply one of the legion of ḥadīth scholars who held that opinion. His

comments certainly lack al-Bukhārī's ferocity. Al-Jawzaqī quotes him as saying that

Abū Ḥanīfa was "a practitioner of legal analogy whose ḥadīths are problematic (*ṣāḥib*

ra'y, muḍṭarib al-ḥadīth)."[127] In the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim also gives a report

condemning answering questions for which one has no textual recourse (*ʿilm*) or narrating

from untrustworthy people.[128] Like al-Bukhārī, Ibn Ḥanbal and other *ahl al-ḥadīth*, this

position represents the rejection of speculation on issues of dogma (*khawḍ*).

Unlike al-Bukhārī, Muslim managed to avoid the controversy that plagued the

latter part of his senior's career. Although later sources report that Muslim explicitly

shared al-Bukhārī's stance on the created *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān, there is no early evidence for

this. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, who notes al-Bukhārī's *lafẓ* scandal, mentions nothing of the

sort in his entry on Muslim. When al-Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 344/955) of

Naysābūr asked his father whose book he should imitate, al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's, his

father directed him towards Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* because he was not tainted by the *lafẓ*

issue.[129]

Nonetheless, Muslim also fell out with al-Dhuhlī, who seems to have been unable

to bear serious competition in Naysābūr. Like in al-Bukhārī's case, al-Dhuhlī's

animosity towards Muslim was not sudden. Al-Ḥākim reports from Ṭāhir b. Aḥmad, who

heard Muslim's student Makkī b. ʿAbdān say that when Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-Ẓāhirī (d.

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[127] Ibn al-Najjār, *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1997), 101.

[128] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:13.

[129] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:75; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8.

270/884) came to Naysābūr to study with Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh they held a discussion (al-naẓar) session for him. Al-Dhuhlī's son Ḥaykān (d. 267/881) and Muslim, at that time no older than thirty-two, attended. Ḥaykān gave his opinion on an issue, and Dāwūd scolded him (zabarahu), saying, "Be silent, youth!" Muslim did not rally to his side. Ḥaykān then went back to his father and complained about Dāwūd. Al-Dhuhlī asked who was with him in the debate, and Ḥaykān replied, "Muslim, and he did not support me." Al-Dhuhlī bellowed, "I take back all that I transmitted to him (raja'tu 'an kull mā haddathtuhu bihi)." When Muslim heard this he "collected all that he had written from him in a basket and sent it to him, saying, 'I won't narrate from you ever,'" then left to study with 'Abd b. Ḥumayd (d. 249/863).[130] Al-Ḥākim, however, feels that the last part of this story is inaccurate. He states that Muslim continued to associate and study with al-Dhuhlī until al-Bukhārī's lafẓ scandal some twenty years later. When al-Dhuhlī prohibited his students from attending al-Bukhārī's lessons, Muslim stood up and left al-Dhuhlī's circle, sending a porter to him with all the material he had received from him.[131] That the tension between Muslim and al-Dhuhlī was longstanding dovetails with an otherwise bizarre quote from Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, who criticized Muslim as unreasonable, saying, "If he had tended properly to (dārā) Muḥammad b. Yaḥya [al-Dhuhlī] he would have become a man!"[132]

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[130] Cited from al-Ḥākim's Tārīkh Naysābūr, al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 20:187; Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq, 58:93.

[131] Al-Ḥākim as quoted in al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 20:188, cf. al-Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdād, 13:103 for the same narration with the same isnād through al-Ḥākim.

[132] Cf. al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 12:187; 19:341.

III.8. Perception: al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the Greatest Generation

To the *ahl al-ḥadīth* community, in the decades after their deaths al-Bukhārī and Muslim were simply two accomplished scholars among many. They studied at the feet of titans and were survived by cohorts who often outshone them in the eyes of fourth/tenth century ḥadīth authorities. To best understand their place in this context, we shall compare perceptions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim with those of their teachers, such as ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh and Ibn Ḥanbal; and of their peers, like al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī and his colleague Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī.

Our earliest sources leave no doubt that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were certainly respected authorities whose talents were widely recognized. Al-Ḥākim narrates from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mudhakkir that Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) said, "I have not seen beneath the heavens one more knowledgeable in ḥadīth than Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī."[133] Ibn ʿAdī heard al-Bukhārī's student Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firabrī (d. 320/932) say that al-Najm b. al-Faḍl had seen the Prophet in a dream, with al-Bukhārī walking behind him exactly in his footsteps.[134] Oddly, there is little explicit praise for Muslim in the early sources. In a rare Persian quote, al-Ḥākim cites Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh saying, "What a man [Muslim] is!"[135]

Later sources, of course, overflow with reports about both men's abilities, phrased in the hyperbolic style so common to Muslim scholarly expression. Al-Khaṭīb quotes Ibn

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[133] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muʿaẓẓam Ḥusayn (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1385/1966), 93.

[134] Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1405/1985), 1:140.

[135] "*mardī keh īn būd*"; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 98.

Hanbal's saying that the mastery of ḥadīth (ḥifẓ) ends with four people from Khurāsān: Abū Zurʿa, al-Bukhārī, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) and al-Ḥasan b. Shujāʿ al-Balkhī (d. 266/880).[136] In *Tārīkh Baghdād* we also find a quote from al-Bukhārī's Basran teacher Muḥammad b. Bashshār Bundār (d. 252/866) saying that "the ḥadīth masters (ḥuffāẓ) of the world are four...:" Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī in Rayy, Muslim in Naysābūr, al-Dārimī in Samarqand and al-Bukhārī in Bukhara.[137]

Yet in our earliest sources, instances of such hyperbolic praise often ignore al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Even Muslim's colleague Aḥmad b. Salama (d. 286/899) is reported to have said, "I have not seen after Isḥāq [b. Rāhawayh] and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā [al-Dhuhlī] someone with more command of ḥadīth (aḥfaẓ li'l-ḥadīth), nor more knowledgeable as to their meanings, than Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs [al-Rāzī]."[138] In his book on al-Bukhārī's teachers, Ibn ʿAdī records a statement from another of their contemporaries, ʿUthmān b. ʿAbdallāh b. Khurrzādh (d. 281-4/894-8). He says that "the most prodigious in memory (aḥfaẓ) I have seen are four: Muḥammad b. Minhāl al-Ḍarīr, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad. b. ʿArʿara, Abū Zurʿa and Abū Ḥātim [al-Rāzī]."[139] Even reports only found in later sources often neglect the two scholars. In al-Dhahabī's *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Ūrama of Isfahan (d. 266/880) is quoted as saying during al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's lifetimes that "now there remain only three in the world: al-

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[136] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:21, 10:326 (biography of Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī); Yāqūt b. ʿAbdallāh al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229), *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 6 vols. (Tehran: Maktabat al-Asadī, 1965), 1:714.

[137] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:16; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:89.

[138] Al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 95-96; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:73.

[139] Ibn ʿAdī, *Asāmī*, 138; idem, *al-Kāmil*, 1:143.

Dhuhlī in Khurāsān, Ibn al-Furāt in Isfahan, and [al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī] al-Ḥulwānī (d. 243/857-8) in Mecca."[140]

But how did ḥadīth scholars in the century after al-Bukhārī and Muslim view them in holistic surveys of the ḥadīth tradition? The earliest impression we have comes from Abū Ḥātim's son Ibn Abī Ḥātim's (d. 327/938) monumental treatise on the discipline of ḥadīth criticism, *al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl* (Criticism and Approval). At the beginning of the work, the author provides lengthy and laudatory chapters devoted to pillars of the ḥadīth tradition such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Wakīʿ b. Jarrāḥ. This section ends with the great scholars Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, but also includes Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī and the author's father. Although al-Bukhārī and Muslim both died before the two Rāzīs, Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes only short and unremarkable entries to them in the main biographical body of his dictionary. For al-Bukhārī he states that his father and Abū Zurʿa rejected his ḥadīths after al-Dhuhlī wrote informing them of his view on the Qurʾān.[141] Muslim receives a similarly plain entry with the compliment "trustworthy, one of the ḥadīth masters (*ḥuffāẓ*) with knowledge of ḥadīth."[142] Neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim merited a place in the last great generation of their teachers.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's view is of course very biased; his inclusion of his father and his close associate Abū Zurʿa in the pantheon of great ḥadīth scholars was no doubt an act of discretion. In examining the initial reception of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works,

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[140] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:80. For Ibn Ūrama's biography, see al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:40; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:151. For al-Ḥulwānī, see al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:377-8; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 196-7. For Ibn al-Furāt, see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:96-7.

[141] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*, 2:3:191.

[142] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*, 4:1:182-3.

however, it is precisely such biased perception that interests us. For Ibn Abī Ḥātim, one of the most influential figures in the development of ḥadīth criticism, Muslim is negligible and al-Bukhārī anathema. As we shall see, the cadre of Rāzī ḥadīth scholars based in Rayy provided the earliest and most vocal reaction to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's careers.

In his *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn* (Book of Criticized Narrators), Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965) includes a review of the various generations of ḥadīth scholars who had toiled to preserve the legacy of the Prophet. The generation that inherited this trade and learned from masters like Mālik b. Anas and Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj consists of Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (the three biggest), Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, ʿUbaydallāh al-Qawārīrī (d. 235/850) and Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 234/848). The next generation, which "took from them this path of criticism," he lists as al-Dhuhlī, al-Dārimī, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī.[143] Here we clearly see a division between al-Bukhārī and Muslim's generation and that of the teachers from whom they derived their skills. The two scholars, however, receive no special attention.

In his early work on the discipline of ḥadīth transmission, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil* (The Virtuous Ḥadīth Scholar), al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/970-1) lists five generations of great ḥadīth collectors who brought together the transmitted materials of various regions. His third generation includes men like Ibn Ḥanbal and Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, his fourth the likes of al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zurʿa and Abū

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[143] Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn min al-muḥaddithīn al-ḍuʿafāʾ wa al-matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Waʿy, 1396/1976), 1:54-7.

Ḥātim al-Rāzī, and Abū Dāwūd. The fifth and final generation includes Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Nasāʾī, al-Ṭabarī and others.[144] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim appear nowhere.

In his al-*Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl* (The Complete Book on Weak Transmitters), Ibn ʿAdī (d. 365/975-6) places al-Bukhārī at the beginning of the final generation (*ṭabaqa*) of ḥadīth scholars. Although this generation includes Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī as well as al-Nasāʾī, Muslim never appears. These scholars follow the era of men like Ibn Ḥanbal, Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. Ibn ʿAdī quotes the litterateur *cum* ḥadīth scholar Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839) of Naysābūr on the definitive place of this greatest generation: "[Mastery of] ḥadīth stopped at four people: Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī."[145]

Muslim scholars outside the Sunni traditionalist fold also grasped the prominence of the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and his contemporaries. The Muʿtazilite Abū Qāsim al-Balkhī (known as al-Kaʿbī, d. 319/931) wrote his *Qubūl al-akhbār* (The Acceptance of Reports) as a weapon against the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. In it he gathered damning judgments on respected Sunni ḥadīth transmitters from prominent members of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* themselves. Yet al-Balkhī never refers to Muslim and does not mention al-Bukhārī in the chapter citing evaluations of Sunni transmitters.[146] Instead, he relies

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[144] Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmahurmuzī, al-*Muḥaddith al-fāḍil bayn al-rāwī wa ʾl-wāʿy*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAjjāj al-Khaṭīb ([Beirut]: Dār al-Fikr, 1391/1971), 229-31.

[145] Ibn ʿAdī, al-*Kāmil*, 1:129.

[146] Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbdallāh al-Kaʿbī al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akhbār wa maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Abū ʿAmr al-Ḥusaynī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1421/2000), 2:149.

principally on Ibn Ḥanbal, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, Abū Khaythama, al-Shāfiʿī, Mālik, and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn.

In his *Fihrist*, written in 377/987-8, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. after 385-8/995-8) lists al-Bukhārī and Muslim as just two of sixty-three transmission-based jurists in Islamic history. Along with others like Sufyān al-Thawrī, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and al-Tirmidhī, he describes them simply as experts and trustworthy narrators (*thiqa*).[147] Neither of their biographies, however, matches that of the later Kufan chief judge and ḥadīth scholar Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Ismāʿīl al-Maḥāmilī (d. 330/942); Ibn al-Nadīm states that no one was more knowledgeable than him in ḥadīth.[148]

III.9. Reception: the Immediate Response to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's Works

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim functioned as magnets for ḥadīth transmission during their lives, selecting choice narrations for the *Ṣaḥīḥs* that formed their lasting legacy. But strikingly enough, they themselves proved insignificant in the continuing transmission of ḥadīth through living *isnāds*. In his annals listing the significant ḥadīth scholars who died in the second half of the third/ninth century and the first few decades of the fourth/tenth, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) lists seventeen who studied with Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, twenty-two with ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, but only one with al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Indeed, other contemporaries of al-Bukhārī and Muslim completely obviated their role in the

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[147] Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970; Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1998), 555-6. Citations are to the Kazi edition.

[148] Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 560; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 193; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:19-22.

transmission of ḥadīths. Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī of Baghdad

heard from what al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī terms "uncountable masses" of ḥadīth

transmitters, including Ibn Ḥanbal, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn. He died at the

age of 104 or 110 in 317/929-30 and was thus much sought after for his elevated *isnād* to

that greatest generation. The major scholars who heard from al-Baghawī directly, such as

al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), or through his *isnād*, like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, had no need

to refer to transmitters like al-Bukhārī or Muslim for living transmission.[149] Even in the

case of ḥadīths that appeared in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, for example, later ḥadīth scholars like

al-Dhahabī preferred to narrate them through al-Baghawī in their own ḥadīth

collections.[150]

This focus on the living *isnād* and the veneration paid to previous generations of

ḥadīth scholars also dominates the immediate reception of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's

works in the ḥadīth community. The ḥadīth scholars' conception of their own tradition,

as shown in the early and mid-fourth/tenth-century works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Ibn

Ḥibbān and Ibn ʿAdī, distinguishes between the colossal generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and

ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and that of their students al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Many in the ḥadīth

community, such as the influential bloc of Rāzī scholars in Rayy, immediately balked at

what they perceived as the elitism and finality of the two works, accusing al-Bukhārī and

Muslim of insolence.

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[149] Al-Baghawī is often referred to as Ibn Manīʿ or even Ibn Bint al-Manīʿ. Some were skeptical of al-Baghawī's narration from Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn. Al-Khalīlī says that he could narrate from one hundred shaykhs that no one else in his time had met; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 192.

[150] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:159.

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The reaction of the Rayy scholars to Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* during his own lifetime portrays his work as an act of egoism that could undermine the legal methodology of the transmission-based scholars. The chief critics of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* were Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī and his colleague Muḥammad b. Muslim Ibn Wāra al-Rāzī (d. 270/884). Along with Abū Ḥātim, Abū Zurʿa was an institution of ḥadīth study in Rayy. Even at middle age he had earned the respect of prominent scholars such as Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, who said that "any ḥadīth that Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī does not know has no basis."[151] Muslim met several times with the two Rāzīs and their colleague Ibn Wāra in Rayy. Their reaction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* clearly communicates the initial shock that the notion of a book of purely authentic ḥadīths had on some scholars in the ḥadīth community. It has been preserved in Abū Zurʿa's *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ wa ajwibatuhu ʿalā asʾilat al-Bardhaʿī*, a compilation of both Abū Zurʿa's and Abū Ḥātim's opinions on transmitters as transcribed by their student Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd b. ʿAmr al-Bardhaʿī (d. 292/905), who also studied with Muslim:

> I saw Abū Zurʿa mention the *Ṣaḥīḥ* book written by Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, then [that of] al-Faḍl al-Ṣāʾigh[152] based upon it (*ʿalā mithālihi*). Abū Zurʿa said to me, "These are people who wanted prominence (*taqaddum*) before their time, so they did something for which they show off (*yatashawwafūn bihi*); they wrote books the likes of which none had written before to gain for themselves precedence (*riyāsa*) before their time." One day, when I was present, a man came to [Abū Zurʿa] with the *Ṣaḥīḥ* transmitted from Muslim, and Abū Zurʿa started to look through it. When he came across ḥadīths from Asbāṭ b. Naṣr he said to me, "How far this is from *ṣaḥīḥ*! He includes Asbāṭ b. Naṣr in his book!" Then he saw in the book Qaṭan b. Nusayr, so he said to me, "This is even more overwhelming than the first one! Qaṭan b. Nusayr [incorrectly] attributed ḥadīths from Thābit [al-Bunānī] to Anas [b. Mālik]."

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[151] Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, 1:141.

[152] This is Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-ʿAbbās al-Ṣāʾigh al-Rāzī (d. 270/883). I have found no other mention of this book. See al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 12:363; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:133-4; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:149-50.

Then he looked and said, "[Muslim] narrates from Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Miṣrī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* book: did you not see the people of Egypt complaining that Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā," and he pointed to his tongue as if to say, 'lies,' then said to me, "[Muslim] narrates from the likes of them and leaves out [ḥadīths] from Muḥammad b. ʿAjlān and those like him. He is making a path for the people of heresy (*bidaʿ*) against us, for they see that they can respond to a ḥadīth that we use as proof against them by saying 'That is not in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*!'"

I saw him denigrating the book and censuring it, so when I returned to Naysābūr on the second occasion I mentioned to Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj Abū Zurʿa's rejection of his narrations in the book from Asbāṭ b. Naṣr, Qaṭan b. Nusayr and Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā. Muslim said to me, "Indeed I did deem [the book] 'Ṣaḥīḥ,' and what ḥadīths I included from Asbāṭ, Qaṭan and Aḥmad have been narrated by [other] trustworthy narrators (*thiqāt*) from their [Asbāṭ, Qaṭan and Aḥmad's] *shaykh*s, except that these [that I included] came from [Asbāṭ and them] through shorter *isnāds* (*biʾl-irtifāʿ*). But I also have these [ḥadīths] from those who are more reliable than them [Asbāṭ et al.] via longer *isnāds* (*bi-nuzūl*)... and the core report of the ḥadīth is well known through the transmission of trustworthy transmitters."

Muslim came to Rayy and it reached me that he went out to Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Wāra, and he received him coldly (*fa-jafāhu*) and chastised him for the book, saying essentially what Abū Zurʿa said: this opens us up to the people of *bidaʿ*. So Muslim apologized to him and said, "Indeed I produced this book and declared it authentic (*ṣiḥāḥ*), but I did not say that that ḥadīths I did not include in this book are weak. Rather, I produced this from *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths to be a collection for me and those who transmit from me without its authenticity being doubted. I did not say that everything else is weak..." and Ibn Wāra accepted Muslim's apology and transmitted [the book].[153]

Al-Bardhaʿī's report is so charged that it seems miraculous we have received it from a provenciated source.[154] Indeed, Abū Zurʿa and Ibn Wāra's reaction to the

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[153] This quote is found in its entirety in Abū Zurʿa ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāzī, *Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī wa juhūduhu fī al-sunna al-nabawiyya maʿa taḥqīq kitābihi al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa ajwibatihi ʿalā asʾilat al-Bardhaʿī*, ed. Saʿdī al-Hāshimī, 3 vols. (Medina, Cairo: Dār al-Wafāʾ and Maktabat Ibn al-Qayyim, 1409/1989), 2:674-6; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:28-30 (biography of Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Tustarī al-Miṣrī); al-Maqdisī and al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-sitta wa shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, 60-3; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:135-6; cf. for partial quotes, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 99-100; cf. Abū Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya fī ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw, 5 vols. (Gīza: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1398-1408/1978-1988), 4:569.

[154] Saʿdī al-Hāshimī's edition of al-Bardhaʿī's text is based on a manuscript from the Köprülü Library in Istanbul (#3/40 in a 2 *juzʾ* notebook). This report appears in the above sources but it is always narrated through the same initial *isnād* from al-Bardhaʿī. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Ḥāzimī have *isnāds*

Ṣaḥīḥ as well as Muslim's concessions highlight issues that would later prove some of the most hotly debated questions in the ḥadīth tradition. The Rayy scholars raise three objections to Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ. First, they decry it as impertinent glory-seeking. Second, they disagree with Muslim's judgment concerning the reliability of some transmitters, arguing that his criteria are flawed and subjective.[155] Finally, they worry that producing a ṣaḥīḥ compilation could hinder the use of other ḥadīths that would be considered lackluster in comparison. Absolute authenticity had never been the determining factor in the use of ḥadīths in either elaborating law or polemics with the ahl al-ḥadīth's rationalist foes. We thus detect the immediate and palpable fear that a definitive ṣaḥīḥ book would be used to exclude all other materials.

The concerns of the Rāzīs seem to have been pervasive, with al-Bukhārī also attracting criticism from younger experts like al-Nasā'ī for the seemingly arbitrary omission of ḥadīths from respected transmitters like Suhayl b. Abī Ṣāliḥ.[156] Both al-

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to Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqānī ← Abū al-Ḥusayn Ya'qūb b. Mūsā al-Ardabīlī ← Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. al-Najm al-Mayyānijī ← Sa'īd b. 'Amr al-Bardha'ī. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054), who does not mention this story, tells us that al-Bardha'ī studied with Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī. The isnād of Abū Zur'a → al-Bardha'ī → Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. al-Najm al-Mayyānijī is also established elsewhere separately by al-Khalīlī; cf. al-Khalīlī, al-Irshād; 109, 129, 286.

[155] Interestingly, Muslim is quoted by his student Makkī b. 'Abdān as supposedly saying, "I showed my book to Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī and everything that he indicated as having a flaw ('illa) I left out. And what he said, 'This is ṣaḥīḥ with no 'illa,' I included." The earliest appearance of this quote I have found is in the work of Abū 'Alī al-Ghassānī al-Jayyānī of Andalusia (d. 498/1105); al-Tanbīh 'alā al-awhām al-wāqi'a fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1421/2000), 39; al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, Ikmāl al-mu'lim bi-fawā'id Muslim, ed. Yaḥyā Ismā'īl, 9 vols. (Manṣūra, Egypt: Dār al-Wafā', 1419/1998), 1:82; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 68; al-Nawawī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1:121.

[156] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, "Su'ālāt Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī li'l-Dāraquṭnī," MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, Istanbul: 162a.

Bukhārī and Muslim were thus forced on more than one occasion to deny that their works encompassed all authentic ḥadīths. Muslim did so in the body of his Ṣaḥīḥ in a rare response to a question, saying that his book only contains those authentic ḥadīths that "were agreed upon (ajmaʿū ʿalayhā)" and excludes other nonetheless worthy ones.[157] Ibn ʿAdī provides an early quote from al-Bukhārī that he had left many ṣaḥīḥ reports out of his collection, which he entitled an "abridged (mukhtaṣar)" compilation, in order to keep its size manageable.[158] We shall see in Chapter Five how prophetic the Rāzīs' concerns were.

Muslim's response to Ibn Wāra provides a fascinating glimpse into the pre-canonical life of his Ṣaḥīḥ. If a canon is a text endowed with authority and made binding on a community, its converse is a powerless text that reaches no farther than its author. Yet this is precisely how Muslim is forced to describe his Ṣaḥīḥ in order to placate Ibn Wāra. He is forced to reduce his book to a private "collection for me and those who transmit from me." In the face of resistance, we thus see that Muslim was obliged to deny his work the features that would one day accord it canonical status.[159]

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[157] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb al-tashahhud. Later analysts believed that the group that Muslim was referring to as "having agreed upon" these ḥadīths consisted of Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, ʿUthmān b. Abī Shayba and Saʿīd b. Manṣūr al-Khurāsānī; Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Raslān al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1402-3), Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ, in Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ, 162.

[158] Ibn ʿAdī, Asāmī, 68.

[159] Al-Bukhārī is also reported to have shown his Ṣaḥīḥ to senior scholars such as ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Ḥanbal. This report only appears in a very late source, however: Ibn Ḥajar's (d. 852/1449) Hady al-sārī. He quotes Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-ʿUqaylī's (d. 323/934) statement that these scholars acknowledged the authenticity of the Ṣaḥīḥ with the exception of four ḥadīths. This information does not appear in the one work that has survived from al-ʿUqaylī, his Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr. Ibn Ḥajar had access to at least one other work by al-ʿUqaylī, his Kitāb al-ṣaḥāba, so he might have had a source for this quote. Al-ʿUqaylī was very familiar with al-Bukhārī's al-Tārīkh al-kabīr (one of his principal sources in

One of the earliest recorded reactions to al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* seconds the

accusation of impudence leveled at Muslim by Abū Zurʿa. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī

(d. 353/964)[160] recorded a story about al-Bukhārī that paints him as a plagiarist whose

brilliant *Ṣaḥīḥ* was truly the work of his famous teacher ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. Maslama

reports that ʿAlī had a book detailing the flaws in various ḥadīth narrations (*Kitāb al-*

ʿilal)[161] that represented his mastery of ḥadīth criticism. One day when ʿAlī had gone to

view some of his properties, al-Bukhārī came to one of his sons and bribed him to lend

him the book, which al-Bukhārī promptly had duplicated by a copyist. When ʿAlī

returned and held a session for ḥadīth study, al-Bukhārī's knowledge rivaled his

teacher's. ʿAlī grasped what had occurred from his student's exact imitation of his own

work and was so saddened that he eventually died of grief. Having no further need of his

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his *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ*) and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and he had studied with Ibn Ḥanbal's son ʿAbdallāh. It is thus not improbable that he could have transmitted this information about the evaluation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. But since ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī died in 234/849, whatever al-Bukhārī might have showed him was probably only a very early draft of the work. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 7, 676; al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr*, 1:48-9 (editor's introduction).

[160] In his *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, the only place I have found this story, Ibn Ḥajar cites the source only as "Maslama." We know that this is Maslama b. Qāsim, however, because in his *al-Muʿlim bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl Ibn Khalfūn (d. 636/1238-9) duplicates the first line of the story (*allafa ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī Kitāb al-ʿilal wa kāna ḍanīnᵃⁿ bihi...*) exactly in a quote from Maslama b. Qāsim. Ibn Ḥajar's version then continues with the insulting story above, while in Ibn Khalfūn's version Maslama goes on to tell how ʿAlī did not lend his book to anyone or narrate it because of its valuable content, then states "and he [Maslama] mentioned the story (*wa dhakara al-qiṣṣa*)." See Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl Ibn Khalfūn, *al-Muʿlim bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿĀdil b. Saʿd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1421/2000), 464.

[161] This book could not possibly be ʿAlī's *Kitāb al-ʿilal* that has come down to us today. While the book Maslama describes contains what seems to be the sum total of ʿAlī's corpus of ḥadīth criticism, his extant work is very small and only deals with several dozen narrations. It is possible that the book mentioned here is a work of ʿAlī's that Ibn al-Nadīm describes as a *musnad* accompanied by *ʿilal* commentary; see Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 556.

teacher, al-Bukhārī returned to Khurāsān and compiled his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, gaining fame and followers.[162]

Maslama b. Qāsim was from Cordova, but sometime before 320/932 he traveled east to Egypt, greater Syria, Mecca, Wāsiṭ, Basra, Baghdad and Yemen before returning to Spain after losing his vision.[163] He certainly had a copy of al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, since Ibn Ḥajar states that Maslama compiled a one-volume book on ḥadīth transmitters (*tārīkh fī al-rijāl*) intended to cover those not mentioned in al-Bukhārī's dictionary (including some of Maslama's own contemporaries).[164] Maslama probably heard the story about al-Bukhārī stealing his teacher's work after his arrival in the Islamic heartlands (i.e. after 320/932) but before his death in 353/964. We can thus assume that it was in circulation by at least the early 300/900s.

This story is almost certainly untrue, since refusing to transmit one's work to students would be extremely unusual among scholars of ḥadīth. Maslama's own preoccupation with al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* and the fact that the story recognizes that the

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[162] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1415/1994), 9:44; Najmī, *Sayrī dar Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 72.

[163] Maslama was criticized as a weak transmitter, but was defended by others who said that he simply was not very intelligent (*ḍaʿīf al-ʿaql*). He was also accused of anthropomorphism, but, in light of the controversial material he recorded about al-Bukhārī, these are probably reactionary *ad hominem* attacks by later commentators; see Muḥammad b. al-Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fī dhikr wulāt al-Andalus wa asmāʾ ruwāt al-ḥadīth wa ahl al-fiqh wa al-adab*, ed. Muḥammad b. Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nashr al-Thaqāfī al-Islāmī, 1371/[1952]), 324; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:98; idem, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, 16:110; idem, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, 4 vols. ([Beirut]: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, n.d. Reprint of the Cairo edition published by ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-4), 4:112 (citations are to the Beirut edition); cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 6:35-6; cf. al-Jazāʾirī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar*, 1:302. Although he visited Baghdad, al-Khaṭīb does not mention him in his history.

[164] Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 6:35. Here Ibn Ḥajar quotes Abū Jaʿfar al-Māliqī's *Tārīkh*. We know that Maslama's *Tārīkh* included such contemporaries as Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUqaylī (d. 323/934), since this is one of the sources al-Dhahabī relies on for his biography of al-ʿUqaylī in *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*.

Ṣaḥīḥ was a major accomplishment points to a more subtle motivation. Regardless of the high quality of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī's work clashed with the atavistic traditionalism endemic among the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. For them the community was always in decline as it grew more distant from the Prophet, and students could do no more than try to preserve their masters' knowledge. The creator of Maslama's story could only interpret al-Bukhārī's unprecedented contribution as an act of insubordination.

Maslama's *Tārīkh*, however, illustrates another important aspect of the community's reception of al-Bukhārī's works: for decades after his death, al-Bukhārī was much better known for his *Tārīkh* than for his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In his *Muntaẓam*, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions someone narrating al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* fully a century before the first person is mentioned as narrating his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[165] Also, almost seventy years before the first scholar compiled a ḥadīth collection using the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a template, al-Ḥusayn b. Idrīs al-Anṣārī (d. 301/913-4) used the *Tārīkh* as a format for his own biographical dictionary.[166] When al-Bukhārī's student and a compiler of a famous ḥadīth collection himself, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, said that he had never seen anyone with al-Bukhārī's command of the narrations of ḥadīth and the lives of their transmitters, he was referring explicitly to the scholar's *Tārīkh al-kabīr*.[167] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Daghūlī (d. 325/936-7) of Sarakhs, who had studied ḥadīth with al-Bukhārī's rival al-Dhuhlī, nonetheless said that

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[165] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 13:362 and 15:270.

[166] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:192.

[167] Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:32.

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al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* was one of the four books with which he never parted.[168] Abū Jaʿfar

al-ʿUqaylī's (d. 323/934) *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr* (Great Book of Weak Transmitters)

relies on al-Bukhārī as the single largest source of evaluations for transmitters. Al-

ʿUqaylī frequently refers to al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, which he calls the scholar's

"great book (*al-kitāb al-kabīr*)," but never mentions the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[169] The only occasion on

which al-Rāmahurmuzī mentions al-Bukhārī in his *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil* is in relation to

his *Tārīkh*.[170]

While it was Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that attracted the critical ire of the ḥadīth scholars in

Rayy, al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* became the locus of drama and debate for the Rāzīs. In the

first written response to any aspect of al-Bukhārī's *oeuvre*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim penned a short

book correcting errors he detected in the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*. The involvement of Ibn Abī

Ḥātim, his father and Abū Zurʿa with the *Tārīkh* became even more problematic when a

prominent *muḥaddith* of Naysābūr, Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥākim (d.

378/988), accused them of plagiarizing al-Bukhārī's work. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, Abū

Aḥmad's friend and student, reports from him that when he was in Rayy once he saw Ibn

Abī Ḥātim reading his *al-Jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl* to students. He recognized its contents as that

of al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* and inquired as to why Ibn Abī Ḥātim had attributed this work to

his father and Abū Zurʿa. A student replied that al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* had so impressed

Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa that they had taken it as the basis of their work, sitting with

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[168] The others were al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, Khalīl b. Aḥmad's dictionary *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, and the cultured political treatise *Kalīla wa dimna*; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:30.

[169] Al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr*, 1:285, 3:345, 4:292.

[170] Al-Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil*, 310.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim so that he could record some modifications to the work and then ascribe it to them.[171]

III.10. Conclusion

As e next chapter will demonstrate, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in particular, quickly became objects of study and imitation in Khurāsān, Eastern Iran and eventually Baghdad. We have seen, however, that during their lives and in the immediate wake of their deaths al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s met with rejection and scorn among important elements of the ḥadīth scholar community. The tradition of ḥadīth collection and study rested on a veneration for the past as the repository of the Prophet's sunna and the only authentic source for interpreting Islam. Although they had developed a methodology for distinguishing between authentic and forged ḥadīths, for transmission-based scholars the Prophet's charismatic authority rendered even weaker ḥadīths legitimate tools for understanding the faith. For scholars like Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, a collection limited to purely authentic ḥadīths unnecessarily delimited the potential application of the Prophet's sunna in Muslim life and debate. Furthermore, ḥadīth scholars cultivated a worldview in which later generations could at best struggle to preserve their predecessors' transmission of the normative past. During al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's lives and the century after their deaths, ḥadīth scholars' native perception of

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[171] Al-Khaṭīb, *Mūḍiḥ awhām al-jamʿ wa al-tafrīq*, 2 vols (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1378/1959), 1:8-9; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:799; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāẓ*, 3:124. Yāqūt and al-Dhahabī's reports are taken from al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, but al-Dhahabī's lacks the last concluding statement that Ibn Abī Ḥātim attributed the book to his father and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī. Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim also voices his accusations in his own *Kitāb al-kunā*, which al-Dhahabī quotes in his biography of al-Bukhārī and which is also partially and lazily quoted in al-Khalīlī's *al-Irshād*; see al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:259; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 11-12.

their tradition viewed them as merely two experts among many, placing them in positions junior to their teachers. Al-Bukhārī in particular was also tainted with scandal and accusations of heresy. For Abū Zurʿa, for his colleagues in Rayy and for whomever first circulated accusations of al-Bukhārī's plagiarism, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were acts of insubordination by students seeking to supplant their teachers and defy tradition. For common Muslims and scholars alike the collection and transmission of ḥadīths through living *isnād*s back to the Prophet remained a dominant pious and legally significant activity for centuries after the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim would prove insignificant in the continued transmission of ḥadīths, but their *Ṣaḥīḥ*s became institutions that soon rivaled it.

IV.

A 'PERIOD OF INTENSE CANONICAL PROCESS':

IMAGINATION AND THE STUDY OF THE *ṢAḤĪḤAYN* IN THE LONG

FOURTH/TENTH CENTURY

IV.1. Introduction

With the exception of Deuteronomy's revelation to the court of King Josiah in II

Kings, canonical texts do not fall intact from the heavens. Whether scriptural or literary,

they pass through phases of use and study within a community before their canonization.

Scripture must earn the devotion of a congregation before priests can declare it

authoritative, and a body of critics must first study and explore literary works before

dubbing them classics. Books are thus not written as canons. This status is bestowed

upon them by a community engaged in a process of self-identification or authorizing

institutions. The books of the New Testament were not all written as scripture, a role

already played in early Christian communities by the Greek edition of the Hebrew Bible.

What became the canonized New Testament was a diverse selection of writings used in

services that eventually became widely recognized guides to Christian devotion. The

usage of the word canon as 'list' in the first centuries C.E. originated in this roster of

familiar books.[1] The books of the New Testament canon had therefore already proven

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[1] Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 17-18.

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effective at conveying a particular understanding of Christ's mission to a certain audience.

This process of use and familiarization was not limited to passive reception. Paul's canonical epistle to the Corinthian congregation (2 Corinthians) probably originally consisted of at least two separate letters written at different times and later pasted together for circulation amongst Paul's churches.[2] Such editorial activity highlights the role of clerics or scholars in molding proto-canonical texts after they have left the hands of their authors. In the words of James Sanders, this "period of intense canonical process" between the crafting of a text and the stabilization of a discrete canon represents a crucial interaction between text and audience. It is in these periods that audiences "shaped what they received in ways that rendered [the texts] most meaningful and valuable for them."[3]

Periods of intense canonical process are thus periods of intensive study. Before the emergence of a canon, texts must receive critical attention from scholars who catalog their contents, detail their merits and build around them that edifice of oral or written scholarship that distinguishes the familiar and valuated from the banal or unknown. Beyond the valorization that a scholarly class bestows on written works, in pre-modern times intense study was required merely to produce a coherent text. The folkloric tradition of the Trojan War thrilled multitudes of small Greek audiences for most of the first millennium B.C.E. Yet as a scattered and diverse body of oral epic the *Iliad* and

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[2] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 299.

[3] Sanders, 30.

Odyssey could never have become classics of Hellenistic literature or cornerstones of the Western literary canon. The first 'edition' of the Homeric epics was produced by Antimachus of Colophon (fl. 410 B.C.E.) after centuries of fermenting as an oral-formulaic tradition. In the great Hellenistic Library of Alexandria, scholars like Zenodotus of Ephesus (fl. 270 B.C.E.) initiated the first studies of the Homeric epics, editing and collecting manuscripts, creating lexicons and producing a standardized vulgate tradition. Alexandrian scholarship on Homeric works continued unabated in the following decades, with great writers and critics such as Apollonius of Rhodes and Rhianus of Crete debating and producing critical editions.[4] It was these relatively standardized texts that Hellenistic scholars declared the 'canons' of Greek language worthy of imitation.

Certain Muslim scholars recognized that an intensive familiarization with a text was a prerequisite for its canonization. Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1176/1762) felt that the treatment a book received after its composition was a crucial characteristic of a mainstay authentic ḥadīth collection. In addition to its author purposing a work of authentic ḥadīths and succeeding in that task, such a book must be studied, its rare or difficult (*gharīb*) words explained and its legal implications derived. It must be edited and refined (*tahdhīb*), and historians must identify all its transmitters as well as their death dates.[5] Thus in the century after al-Bukhārī's death, scholars strove painstakingly to understand his methodology, identify his obscure transmitters (sometimes only

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[4] Rudolph Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 148-9.

[5] Shāh Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1:133.

referred to by their first names) and locate all the narrations of one Prophetic tradition scattered throughout his work.

Yet periods of intense canonical process do not only involve this requisite study and familiarization with a text. Separately, they involve the community developing the conceptual ability to endow texts with some binding authority. For a canon to form, a community must imagine texts that have transcended the normal status of books as objects of study or usage and are able play some loftier role. Periods of intense canonical process are times in which communities' conception of the authority a text can acquire leaps forward due to real and pressing needs.[6]

Although the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* met with resistance during the lives of their authors and in the wake of their deaths, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works quickly emerged as formative texts in certain areas of the Nile-Oxus region. Beginning in Muslim's home city of Naysābūr and later in Jurjān and Baghdad, scholars began viewing the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s not as threats to the living transmission of the Prophet's sunna but rather as vehicles for expressing their personal link to his authority and interpreting his teachings according to their own local agendas. Ḥadīth scholars began using the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the methods of their authors as templates for their own ḥadīth collections. These *mustakhraj* books, however, required a detailed mastery of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters, the permutations of the ḥadīths they included as well as their requirements for authenticity. The *mustakhraj* cults that formed in Naysābūr around Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in Jurjān around al-Bukhārī's, and finally in Baghdad around the conjoined *Ṣaḥīḥayn* thus sparked a flurry

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[6] Sanders, 32-33.

of studies on the two books and their constitutive elements. Scholars not only detailed al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, they also interacted with their methodologies. Just as Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī had questioned Muslim's right to delimit authentic traditions, so did later scholars apply their own requirements for authenticity to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, identifying what they considered errors and questioning why other ḥadīths had not merited a place in the collections.

As we shall see, the network of scholars who devoted themselves to employing and studying al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥs* between the last quarter of the third/ninth century and the first half of the fifth/eleventh was distributed with remarkable geographic and chronological consistency. Equally important, however, was their ideological makeup. The study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* fell to neither the über-Sunnis who had ostracized al-Bukhārī nor the historically ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafīs. It was a more moderate group of transmission-based scholars belonging to the nascent Shāfiʿī school that forged the proto-canon.

In this chapter we will examine this network of scholars and their accomplishments during what one might term the long fourth century, that period between the deaths of the *Shaykhayn* and the widespread acknowledgment of the canon in the mid-fifth/eleventh century. In the context of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s saga this periodization is not merely heuristic. As we shall see, it reflects the uniqueness of a time characterized by fleeting genres and an often frustrating liminality in Islamic intellectual culture.

The long fourth century also proved a period in which important elements of the broader Muslim community began articulating the notion of a ḥadīth collection acting as

a locus of communal consensus. Whether as common ground between different schools of thought or simply common references in an increasingly diverse ḥadīth tradition, this period of intense canonical process left the Muslim community with the imaginative capability of endowing ḥadīth works with a new epistemological status.

Chart 1.1 The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart

Ṣaḥīḥayn **Network Chart:**
Study and Usage in the Long Fourth Century

Key:

●————————► : Personal study relationship / teacher-student relationship

●-------------► : Transmission of a scholar's books to another scholar

●-·-·-·-·-·-► : Transmission or <u>transmitter</u> of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*

●-··-··-··-► : Transmission or <u>transmitter</u> of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*

The opposing chart describes the location, dates, written works and scholarly relationships of the network of scholars who studied and employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* between 270 and 450AH. When required, some later figures are included with their death dates noted. For references, see Appendix I.

Date	Egypt - Ḥijāz	Baghdad	Jurjān	Isfahan	Naysābūr & environs	Transoxiana

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463)

Al-Milanbī (d. 486): MBM

'Umar al-Laythī (d. 466-8) : BMmus

450

Al-Khalāl: MBM

Abū Dharr al-Harawī MBM
ZBM

Abū Nu'aym: MM, MB

Ibn Manjawayh: MBM, IK, AD, T   Al-Armawī: MBM
Mmen

Al-Barqānī: MBM, BMmus

Al-Lālakā'ī: BMmen

Ibn Mardawayh: MB

Khalaf al-Wāsiṭī: ABM
Al-Dimashqī: ABM

al-Ḥākim

400

Al-Kalābādhī: Bmen

Ibn Manda: Bmen

Ibn Mshān

Al-Dāraquṭnī:
IBM, ZBM, BMmen
ISBM...

Al-Jawzaqī: MM, B+M

Al-Khaṭṭābī: CB, Muz

Al-Shīrāzī: MBM
TB

Al-Shammākhī: KIM
Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim: MBM, T, Muz
Ibn Dhuhl: MB

Al-Ghiṭrifī: MB

Al-Ismā'īlī: MB
Ibn 'Adī: Bmen, Muz

Al-Māsarjisī: MBM
Ibrāhīm al-Muzakkī: TB

Ibn Ḥayyawayh: MB

Al-Zaghūlī: MM

Abū al-Shaykh: MM

Ibn Rumaysh al-Nasawī

Al-Sharīkī: MM
Abū Sa'īd al-Iṣṭ: MM

Ibn al-Sakan

Abū Aḥmad al-Jurjānī

350

Abū 'Alī al-Naysābūrī
MM

Ibn al-Akhram: MM, MBM   al-Ṭūsī: MM,   al-Qazvīnī:
MM

Qāsim b. Aṣbagh: MM, IK

Al-Balādhurī: MM

Al-'Uqaylī: TB

Al-Juwaynī: MM
Ibn 'Ammār: MM, IM
Al-Sarrāj: MM
Abū 'Awāna: MM
Al-Iṣṭ: MM
Ibn Khuzayma

Al-Firabrī

300

Ibn Rajā': MM   Al-Bazzār: MM

Al-Muzanī (d. 264)
Rabī' (d. 256)

Al-Faḍl al-Sā'igh: MM

270

MM: *mustakhraj* of Muslim	IK: *mustakhraj* of *Ṣaḥīḥ* Ibn Khuzayma	Bmen: work on al-Bukhārī's transmitters	ABM: *aṭrāf* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*	ZMB: *ilzāmāt* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*
MB: *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī	AD: *mustakhraj* of *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd	IM: *'ilal* of Muslim	B+M: combination of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*	Muz: a book on al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*
MBM: *mustakhraj* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*	T: *mustakhraj* of al-*Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī	IBM: *'ilal* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*	CB: commentary on al-Bukhārī	ISBM: book on *isnāds* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*
	Mmen: work on Muslim's transmitters	TB: transmitted al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh al-kabīr*	BMmus: *musnad* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*	

Chart 1.1 *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart

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IV.2. The *Mustakhraj* Genre

The phenomenon of the *mustakhraj* forms a bizarrely short and circumscribed chapter in the history of Islamic religious thought. These works were produced from about 270/880 to 480/1085 in the Nile-Oxus region and then exited the stage of cultural expression.[7] They mark a transitional period between the time when one could realistically cultivate one's own *isnād*s to the Prophet and the time when books of ḥadīth replaced this direct connection. A scholar produced a *mustakhraj* by compiling a book of ḥadīths based on an existing collection that he used as a template. For each of the ḥadīths in the template book the author would use his own narration of the ḥadīth, with the *isnād* extending from him back to the Prophet. The very term *mustakhraj* connotes 'seeking to include' certain narrations from the Prophet. *Isnāds* in these *mustakhrajs* would generally join with the *isnād*s of the template collection at the teacher of the original collector, following the same *isnād* from that point to the Prophet.[8]

Mustakhrajs could vary in the degree to which they adhered to the format and contents of the template collection. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī's (d. 430/1038) *mustakhraj* of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* is remarkably faithful to the contents of the original, generally replicating them down to the details of each narration. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-

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[7] There may be one exception to this. Al-Dhahabī says that ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203) wrote a 48 *juzʾ* book entitled *al-Miṣbāḥ fī ʿuyūn aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ* in which he reproduced the ḥadīths of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* with his own *isnāds*. This is the only mention of this book, however; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:446-7.

[8] For useful discussion of the *mustakhraj* genre and related topics, see Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 167; Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār fī maʿrifat ʿulūm al-āthār*, 40-2; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, *al-Iqtirāḥ fī bayān al-iṣṭilāḥ*, ed. Qaḥṭān ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dūrī ([Baghdad]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shuʾūn al-Dīniyya, 1982), 317; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 86-7; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:57.

Ismāʿīlī's (d. 371/981-2) *mustakhraj* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, now lost, appears to have been

so faithful that if he could find no other transmission of a ḥadīth he would narrate it

through al-Bukhārī and his student al-Firabrī, the transmitter from whom al-Ismāʿīlī

received the *Ṣaḥīḥ.*[9] Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Ḥīrī of Naysābūr (d. 311/923-4)

spent years working on a *mustakhraj* meeting Muslim's requirements for authenticity to

the extent that he voyaged to Iraq and the Ḥijāz for a few ḥadīths needed to complete it.[10]

Other *mustakhraj*s were far more lenient. Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq **Abū ʿAwāna** al-Isfarāyīnī's

(d. 312/924-5) work departs from Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* on many occasions in both content and

structure.[11] Although the great Moroccan ḥadīth scholar of the early twentieth century,

Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Kattānī (d. 1927), asserts that Ibn al-Jārūd al-Naysābūrī's (d.

307/919-20) *al-Muntaqā* is a *mustakhraj* of Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is less than a fifth

of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*'s size and bears only the most superficial structural similarities.[12] Joint

*mustakhraj*s of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were also more lax in following the format of the template

collections, generally just listing ḥadīths found in the works and noting how al-Bukhārī or

Muslim included them.

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[9] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:319.

[10] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:337-8; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:402-3.

[11] It is interesting to note that the great Muslim analyst of the ḥadīth tradition, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) notes that although Abū ʿAwāna's book has been dubbed a *mustakhraj* of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, it deviates from it a great deal, and that even the author notes that on some occasions; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 67.

[12] Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 20. Ibn al-Jārūd's text contains no introduction explaining the nature of his work. See Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Jārūd al-Naysābūrī, *Kitāb al-muntaqā min al-sunan al-musnada ʿan Rasūl Allāh (ṣ)*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Hāshim al-Yamānī al-Madanī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Fajjāla al-Jadīda, 1382/1963).

A genre of ḥadīth literature similar to the *mustakhraj* is that of *aṭrāf*, or an index of ḥadīths by the key components of their *matn*s. A book of the *aṭrāf* of the Ṣaḥīḥayn would list all their ḥadīths by the beginning of the *matn* or its key component, and then provide all the transmissions of that tradition found in the two works.[13] Unlike *mustakhrajs*, which are organized along the chapter structure of the template book, *aṭrāf* books usually present the ḥadīths according to the Companion at the beginning of the *isnād*.

From a modern standpoint it seems difficult to discern the purpose or utility of producing a *mustakhraj*. Why reproduce a copy of an existing ḥadīth collection? Why not boast one's own corpus of ḥadīths or express one's own legal or doctrinal vision? *Mustakhrajs* certainly did not replace original ḥadīth collections. Many ḥadīth scholars from the long fourth century, such al-Māsarjisī, produced gargantuan personal *musnads* alongside *mustakhrajs* of the Ṣaḥīḥayn.

The motivation for producing a *mustakhraj* lies on two levels. First, we must remember that for transmission-based scholars a ḥadīth collection could not simply be opened up and cited; one needed to have heard it from an authorized chain of transmitters who in turn had heard it from its author. Abū Muḥammad Qāsim b. Aṣbagh al-Mālikī of Cordova (d. 340/951) traveled east in 274/887-8 to study in Iraq and access the wealth of transmitted material in the heartlands of Islam. When he discovered that he had "missed" his chance to hear the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd from its author, he produced a *mustakhraj* of

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[13] Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 125; Abū Masʿūd Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī, "Aṭrāf al-Bukhārī wa Muslim," MS 1164, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus; Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī, "Aṭrāf Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī wa Muslim," MS 1162, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus.

the work.[14] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī states that he composed his *mustakhraj* of Muslim

for the benefit of those who had "missed" hearing that book.[15] When Qāsim b. Aṣbagh

realized he had missed his opportunity to be incorporated into the chain of transmitters of

Abū Dāwūd's book, he reconstructed his own version of his *Sunan*. Abū Nuʿaym, who

died about 170 years after Muslim, similarly offered his own version of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* to

his contemporaries with his own intact link to the Prophet. Yet how could a scholar

"miss" his chance to hear a book when all he had to do was find an authorized transmitter

of the work?[16] As we shall see, this would entail relying on an unappealingly long chain

of transmission back to the Prophet, an act that a ḥadīth scholar was loathe to do.

IV.3. *Mustakhraj*: The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as Formative Texts

The second level on which the *mustakhraj* attracted ḥadīth scholars of the long

fourth century was the manner in which the template collection served as a formative text

through which scholars could engage the Prophet's authoritative legacy. Formative texts

are those works that serve as textual fora for members of a community to express their

own relationship with the source of authority in their tradition. In Judaic law, the

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[14] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:49; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:192-3. He also produced a short collection called *al-Muntaqā*, which al-Dhahabī says is the equal of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in authenticity and is based on the chapter structure of Ibn al-Jārūd's *al-Muntaqā*. See al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 20.

[15] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Musnad al-mustakhraj ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismāʿīl al-Shāfiʿī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1996), 1:89-90.

[16] We must certainly acknowledge the possibility that a scholar in the fourth/tenth or fifth/eleventh century may not have been able to find an authorized transmitter for a work, especially a more obscure ḥadīth collection. While in Baghdad in 478/1085, for example, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126) could not find a transmitter for a small ḥadīth folio (*ṣaḥīfa*). In the case of Qāsim b. Aṣbagh, who associated with Abū Dāwūd's students, and works as widely studied as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at the time of Abū Nuʿaym, this seems unlikely. See al-Silafī, "*Muqaddimat al-ḥāfiẓ al-kabīr Abī Ṭāhir al-Silafī*," in Ḥamd b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī, *Maʿālim al-sunan*, 4:358-9.

elaboration of ritual law or its adaptation to the new challenges of the day takes place through the rabbi's interpretive interaction with the Torah, Mishna and Talmud. They provide the formative texts through which he establishes a relationship between the Lawmaker and the needs of his community. Formative texts thus do not simply embody the authority of the Lawmaker, they serve as a vehicle for the believer to extend that authority into his own context.

The potential for a ḥadīth collection to function as a formative text stems from the essential magnetism that the ḥadīth medium exerted on Muslims. A direct transmission from Muḥammad, the living *isnād* to his legacy, tied Muslims to the Prophetic charisma. The *isnād* incorporated the transmitter into the chain of hermeneutic interpreters. They could then draw on the Prophet's normative precedent and manifest it in their daily lives, where his exemplum dominated the arenas of law and social mores. The Prophet's message had moved out from Islam's epicenter in space and time through generations of interpreters who had inherited and transformed his teachings, and the *isnād* was the tie that bound the scholar to that one true source of authority. At its most basic, the *mustakhraj* was a collection of these transmissions, a vehicle for expressing and establishing one's relationship to the source of hermeneutic authority.

Scholars of the Islamic tradition thus placed great value on proximity to the Prophetic legacy. In the face of Abū Zurʿa's barbed critiques, Muslim defended his use of flawed narrations in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* by asserting that they had shorter *isnād*s than more reliable but longer versions of the same Prophetic traditions. Muslim's aspiration for elevated *isnād*s echoed his senior contemporary Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba's (d. 235/849)

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exhortation that "seeking elevated *isnād*s is part of religion (*talab al-isnād al-ʿālī min al-dīn*)."[17] *Mustakhraj*s represented a forum in which ḥadīth scholars could display the elevation or quality of their personal narrations from the Prophet. Abū Nuʿaym ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥaddād (d. 517/1123) of Isfahan once faced criticism from an opponent who faulted him for not having an elevated *isnād* to Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Ḥaddād replied that while he did not have an elevated *isnād* for the book itself, he had heard Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī's *Mustakhraj* of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from his father. He boasted that:

> If you heard [the *Mustakhraj*] from my father it would be as if you had heard [Muslim's ḥadīths] from ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (a famous transmitter of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*); and if I wanted I would say: as if you had heard them from al-Julūdī (an earlier transmitter of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*); and if I wanted to say: it would be as if you had heard them from Ibn Sufyān (who transmitted the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Muslim) – I would not be lying. And if I wanted I would say: it was as if you had heard them from Muslim himself. [The *Mustakhraj*] has some even more elevated ḥadīths, so that if you heard them from my father it would be as if you, al-Bukhārī and Muslim had all heard them from the same teacher.[18]

Here al-Ḥaddād used Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī's *Mustakhraj* of Muslim's collection to assert his own proximity to the Prophet. This conversation occurred in the sixth/twelfth century, long after the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and al-Ḥaddād uses the two icons as benchmarks for rating his own link to the Prophet. Abū Nuʿaym's *Mustakhraj* features such elevated *isnād*s, al-Ḥaddād implies, that by reading it even in his own time one could become al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's equal. When Qāsim b. Aṣbagh "missed" his opportunity to hear Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* from its author, what he had missed was the chance to transmit the work with a respectably short *isnād* to the Prophet.

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[17] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 6.

[18] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:43.

When faced with hearing the work from one of Abū Dāwūd's students, and thus adding

another transmitter between himself and the Prophet, he felt it was more appealing to

reconstitute the work with his own, shorter *isnāds*.

*Mustakhraj*s, however, did not merely afford an opportunity to prove *isnāds'*

elevation. They also provided a stage for demonstrations of their authenticity. For

twelve out of the thirty-six known *mustakhraj*s of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* we have explicit evidence

that the authors attempted to meet certain requirements for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*), often

imitating those of al-Bukhārī or Muslim. This sometimes became a cause of much

concern and tension for scholars. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad **al-Barqānī** (d.

425/1033-4), a premier student of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, admitted with regret to having used one

person in his *mustakhraj* who was not up to al-Bukhārī' and Muslim's standards.[19] Abū

al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Isḥāq **al-Sarrāj** (d. 313/925) generally tried to stand by

Muslim's standards, but was lax in order to get more ḥadīths from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[20]

Yet the *mustakhraj* was not simply a vehicle for demonstrating the quality of

one's link to the Prophet. It served as a stage for interpretation according to the specific

needs and leanings of the scholar who produced it. The narrations that scholars chose as

counterparts to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's ḥadīths often differed in significant ways from

those of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, expressing the authors' own stances on the topic. The compilers

of these *mustakhraj*s could also alter the organization or chapter titles of their works in

addition to adding their own commentary. The following examples demonstrate the

[19] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:333.

[20] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:215.

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manner in which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* served as formative texts that enabled later scholars to interpret and apply the Prophetic legacy according to their own specific needs.

IV.3. a. *Al-Ismāʿīlī: Rationalist* Muḥaddith

Abū Bakr al-Ismāʿīlī (d. 371/981-2) built up his corpus of ḥadīths in Baghdad, Rayy and Khurāsān before returning to his native Jurjān and becoming a local institution of ḥadīth study.[21] Along with a vast *musnad*, he displayed his legal acumen by composing a work on Shāfiʿī legal theory (*uṣūl*) called *Tahdhīb al-naẓar* and writing a rebuttal of the Ḥanafī legal theorist al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/982). Al-Ismāʿīlī seems to have shared a great deal in common with what would emerge as Ashʿarī doctrine in the decades after his death. The Muʿtazilite Buyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (d. 385/995) sent him a very complimentary letter, an honor usually reserved for those scholars the vizier considered acceptably rationalist.[22] It is thus not surprising that al-Ismāʿīlī, like Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī himself and later Ashʿarites, found it necessary to publicly affirm his identification with the *ahl al-sunna*. Al-Dhahabī provides a transmission in which al-Ismāʿīlī upholds what he calls the *ahl al-ḥadīth* creed, including the duty "to accept without deviation what God spoke in His book and what has been transmitted authentically (*ṣaḥḥat bihi al-riwāya*) from His Messenger (ṣ)." In line with the standard

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[21] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291. Al-Khalīlī says al-Ismāʿīlī wrote books on al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[22] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-shāfiʿiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā al-Zayn ʿAlī Najīb, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 1413/1992), 1:417-418. For more about al-Ismāʿīlī and his family, see Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, 107 ff.

Sunni creed, he also describes God "by those attributes by which He has described

Himself and His Prophet described Him... with no question as to how (*bi-lā kayfa*)."[23]

Al-Ismāʿīlī's insistence on such matters belies an aversion to anthropomorphism

consistent with the more rationalist traces we have of his personal leanings. His

mustakhraj of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* reveals how he used the work as a forum to argue his

own stances on ḥadīths dealing with subjects traditionally problematic for Muslim

rationalists. In a ḥadīth describing the Day of Judgment, al-Bukhārī narrates from Abū

Saʿīd al-Khudrī:

> I heard the Prophet say: Our Lord [will] reveal His shin (*ʿan sāqihi*) and
> every believing man and woman will prostrate to Him. But he who
> prostrated in the worldly life for the sake of reputation, he will go to
> prostrate, but his back will merely straighten again.[24]

Al-Ismāʿīlī notes that in the Qurʾānic verse to which this ḥadīth alludes, "[God] will

reveal a shin, and they will be called to prostrate but will not be able to (Qurʾān 68:42),"

features the indefinite, "a shin (*ʿan sāq*)" rather than the narration's definite "His shin

(*ʿan sāqihi*)." Al-Ismāʿīlī then provides another narration with the original Qurʾānic

wording "*yukshafu ʿan sāq*," which he favors because of "its agreement with the wording

of the Qurʾān in that sentence." Ibn Ḥajar, one of our best sources for al-Ismāʿīlī's work,

explains the scholar's stance, "He does not think that God is possessed of members and

limbs due to what that entails of resemblance to created beings (*mushābahat al-*

makhlūqīn)." Al-Ismāʿīlī was not the only scholar of his time to feel discomfort with al-

Bukhārī's narration. His contemporary Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998)

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[23] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:106-7.

[24] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, #4919; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tafsīr, sūra* 68, *bāb* 2.

wrote in his commentary on al-Bukhārī's work that this ḥadīth refers metaphorically to God revealing His power (*qudra*).[25]

Al-Ismāʿīlī's rationalist streak reveals itself elsewhere in his *Mustakhraj* to the extent that he even questions the authenticity of one of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīths. Describing how Abraham will throw his polytheist father into Hellfire on the Day of Judgment, the Prophet says, "Abraham [will] throw his father and say, 'O Lord, indeed you promised not to humiliate me (*tukhzinī*) on the day they are all resurrected.' God [will] reply, 'Indeed I have prohibited Heaven to the disbelievers (*al-kāfirīn*).'"[26] Ibn Ḥajar notes that al-Ismāʿīlī found the very basis of this ḥadīth problematic (*istashkala ... hādhā al-ḥadīth min aṣlihi*) and criticized its authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) after he included it in his *Mustakhraj*.

Al-Ismāʿīlī notes that:

> This ḥadīth contradicts the evident meaning (*ẓāhir*) of God's words that "Abraham's praying for his father's forgiveness was but the fulfillment of a promise he had made to him, and when it became clear to him that [his father] was an enemy of God he disassociated himself from him... (Qur'ān 9:114)."[27]

Al-Ismāʿīlī thus concludes:

> There is some question as to the authenticity of this report from the standpoint that Abraham knew that God does not renege on His promises (*lā yukhlifu al-mīʿād*), so how could he consider what happened to his father humiliation when he knew that [God would punish him on the Day of Judgment for his disbelief]?[28]

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[25] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 8:857-8; cf. al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥadd*, 146.

[26] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, #4768-9; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tafsīr, sūra* 26, *bāb* 2. This ḥadīth is a narration of another ḥadīth found in *Fatḥ* #3350; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ, bāb* 8, which discusses the story in more detail. See also Qur'ān, 26:87.

[27] "*Wa mā kāna istighfār Ibrāhīm li-abīhi illā ʿan mawʿida waʿadahā iyyāhu fa-lammā tabayyana lahu annahu ʿaduwwun li-Allāh tabarra'a minhu...*"

[28] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 8:641-2; see also al-Jazāʾirī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:332.

IV.3. b. *Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī and Shiite-Sunni Polemic*

Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes a subchapter on "Proof that loving the Anṣār and ʿAlī (r)

is a part and indication of faith and that hating them is a sign of hypocrisy (*al-dalīl ʿalā*

anna ḥubb al-anṣār wa ʿAlī (r) min al-īmān wa ʿalāmātihi wa bughḍahum min ʿalāmāt al-

nifāq)." This subchapter includes five narrations about the importance of loving the

Anṣār, four of them using the love→believer vs. hatred→hypocrite distinction. It ends

with one narration in which the Prophet details the importance of loving ʿAlī using

exactly the same construction. In his *Mustakhraj*, Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038)

provides ḥadīths that perfectly mirror the layout and content of Muslim's chapter, with

five for the Anṣar and one for ʿAlī. The significant difference appears in the subchapter

title, which Abū Nu'aym lists as "On Love for the Anṣār as a Sign of Faith (*āyat al-*

īmān)." There is no mention of ʿAlī.[29]

This small difference might seem unimportant until one views it in the context of

Abū Nu'aym's other writings. Most importantly, he cultivated an ongoing interest in

debating the Imāmī Shiites using ḥadīths. Abū Nu'aym's *Kitāb al-imāma wa al-radd ʿalā*

al-rāfiḍa (Book of the Imamate and a Rebuttal of those who Reject the Caliphates of Abū

Bakr and ʿUmar) provides a manual for debating the Shiite claim that ʿAlī should have

been the first caliph. The book is organized along dialectic lines, with the structure "if

your opponent says... then you say." Many of the debates in the work revolve around the

tensions between the different ḥadīths used as proof texts by Shiites and Sunnis. Abū

Nu'aym tells his opponent that "if you use reports (*akhbār*) as proof then it follows that

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[29] Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Musnad al-mustakhraj*, 1:156-157.

you must accept them from your opponents...; reports (*akhbār*) are thus for you and against you."[30] One of the main proof texts employed by Shiites was Muslim's above-mentioned ḥadīth about the believers' duty to love ʿAlī and the hypocrites' disregard for him.[31] Abū Nuʿaym rebuts this proof text by alerting his opponent to the other reports in which the Prophet says the same thing about the Anṣār.[32] The pro-ʿAlī ḥadīth thus has no probative force in issues of succession, for "if [the opponent] says, 'That has been narrated from so and so and so and so,' let it be said to him, '[Material] opposing that has [also] been related. So if you use reports (*akhbār*) as proof, since [all] the reports contest one another, [the reports] fail (*saqaṭat*).'"[33] The subtle polemic embodied in Abū Nuʿaym's subchapter title in his *Mustakhraj* now becomes evident, since it buries the pro-ʿAlī ḥadīth in the folds of a chapter he defines as strictly addressing love of the Anṣār. For Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, minimizing the importance and visibility of this ḥadīth and highlighting the similar compliments paid the Anṣār is a critical part of his anti-Shiite polemic.

IV.3. c. *Abū ʿAwāna and an Independent Legal Path*

Abū ʿAwāna Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 312/924-5) studied the legal scholarship of al-Shāfiʿī at the hands of the latter's two most renowned Egyptian students,

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[30] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma wa al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*, ed. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Faqīhī (Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa al-Ḥikam, 1415/1994), 217.

[31] For a modern example of the polemical use of this ḥadīth, see Moḥammad Ṣādeq Najmī, *Sayrī dar Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 77.

[32] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 244.

[33] Abū Nuʿaym, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 230.

Rabī b. Sulaymān al-Murādī (d. 270/883) and Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl al-Muzanī (d. 264/878). Al-Dhahabī describes Abū ʿAwāna as the first to introduce that school to the famous Khurāsānī city of Isfarāyīn, later home to generations of great Shāfiʿī scholars.[34] Abū ʿAwāna's *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-musnad al-mukharraj ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (The Authentic *Musnad* Collection Based on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*), however, reveals an independent legal mind unconstrained by rigid loyalty to Muslim's book or al-Shāfiʿī's opinions. On the famous issue of what invalidates prayer if it passes in front of one, al-Shāfiʿī had rejected a Prophetic ḥadīth stating that a black dog, a woman or a donkey invalidates prayer. We know from a source that predates Abū ʿAwāna, Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī's (d. 294/906) *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'* (The Differing Opinions of Jurists), that al-Shāfiʿī based his opinion on a report from ʿĀ'isha where she objects to this notion, angrily telling the Companion who narrated the ḥadīth that "you've compared us to dogs!"[35] Three narrations of ʿĀ'isha's objection appear in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*,[36] yet Muslim also includes a lengthy section of ḥadīths that support the idea that these three things do indeed invalidate prayer. In Muslim's work these conflicting reports are buried among a range of other topics, such as ḥadīths enjoining physically obstructing people who refuse to stop passing in front of someone engaged in prayer. Other ḥadīths in this subchapter state that one can protect oneself by building up a small mound or placing something the size of the

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[34] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:3.

[35] Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'*, ed. Muḥammad Ṭāhir Ḥakīm (Riyadh: Aḍwā' al-Salaf, 1420/2000), 161.

[36] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ṣalāt, al-iʿtirāḍ bayn yaday al-muṣallī.*

back of a saddle in front of oneself while praying.[37] The material that Muslim puts forth

thus offers the reader no concrete conclusion, while al-Shāfiʿī acts definitively on

ʿĀʾisha's report.

In Abū ʿAwāna's *Mustakhraj*, this issue is greatly simplified. Moreover, the

author adheres to a stance opposing al-Shāfiʿī. He includes a chapter called "The Size of

the Barrier [by which] Nothing that Passes in Front of Someone Praying Can Harm Him

(*miqdār al-sutra allatī lā yuḍirru al-muṣallī man yamurru bayn yadayhi*)." He states

immediately after the chapter heading that if one does not have this barrier then a black

dog, a woman or a donkey does indeed violate prayers if it passes in front of one, and that

a line drawn in the dirt is not sufficient protection (as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal claimed).[38] He

then provides seven narrations backing up his point, most of which also appear in

Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. They instruct the reader to build these saddle-back-sized barriers in

front of himself to prevent his prayer from being broken.[39]

Here we see that Abū ʿAwāna has taken a large, assorted and ultimately legally

inconclusive chapter of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and compressed it into a treatment of one

problem: women, black dogs and donkeys invalidate prayer. To this he supplies an

immediate solution: placing something in front of you while you pray. As we have

mentioned earlier, it was the often inconclusive character of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that diverted

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[37] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ṣalāt, qadr mā yustaru al-muṣallī.*

[38] Abū ʿAwāna Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, *Musnad Abī ʿAwāna Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī*, 4 vols. [vol. 3 missing] (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Jamʿiyyat Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1362-85/1942-63), 2:49. The missing sections of the *Musnad* have now been published as *al-Qism al-mafqūd min Musnad Abī ʿAwāna*, ed. Ayman ʿĀrif al-Dimashqī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1995).

[39] Abū ʿAwāna, *Musnad*, 2:30-1.

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legal attention from the work. Abū ʿAwāna's *mustakhraj* not only greatly simplifies this topic, it also transforms it into a legal text expressing the author's independent thought. Despite his ties to al-Shāfiʿī, Abū ʿAwāna breaks with him on other salient issues as well, such as al-Shāfiʿī's insistence on saying "In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate (*bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*)" aloud in certain prayers.[40] As Wael Hallaq has demonstrated, in this period *madhhab*s were not yet rigid sets of legal stances. They were common hermeneutic traditions still being elaborated by the scholars who followed them. Al-Shāfiʿī himself was thus only *primus inter pares* among the jurists who followed his tradition.[41] Abū ʿAwāna's work demonstrates how a *mustakhraj* could function as an independent hermeneutic expression of the Prophet's legal authority within the nascent Shāfiʿī school.

IV.4. *ʿIlal* and *Ilzāmāt*: Interaction with the Standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

When Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī read through Muslim's *Sahīh*, he criticized the lines its author had drawn in compiling his collection. He found flaws in some of the narrations Muslim had declared authentic and criticized his failure to include other worthy material. Abū Zurʿa's reaction to the *Sahīh* foreshadowed the emergence of two closely related genres of hadīth literature addressing the *Sahīhayn* during the long fourth century: books of *ʿilal* (flaws) and *ilzāmāt* (recommended additions).

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[40] Abū ʿAwāna, *Musnad*, 2:133-5.

[41] Wael Hallaq, "From Geographical to Personal Schools?: A Reevaluation," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 1 (2001): 24-5.

Books detailing the obscure flaws of transmission, or *ʿilal*, represented the third

tier of ḥadīth criticism discussed in the previous chapter. They had thus existed since at

least the early third/ninth century. The long fourth century, however, saw the appearance

of *ʿilal* works devoted specifically to weeding out such flaws from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. These

works illustrate the multiplicity of approaches existing in the ḥadīth-critic community; a

scholar critiquing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* was effectively juxtaposing his methods and standards of

ḥadīth criticism with those used by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, critically applying his

definition of 'authentic' to their works. We have two surviving criticisms of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn from this period. The earliest is Muḥammad b. Aḥmad **Ibn ʿAmmār** al-

Shahīd's (d. 317/929-30) *ʿilal* of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The most famous and comprehensive

work, however, is the *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ* of the dominant Baghdad ḥadīth scholar ʿAlī b.

ʿUmar **al-Dāraquṭnī** (d. 385/995).

As the third tier of ḥadīth criticism, the study of *ʿilal* had always targeted two

categories of flaws: independent and comparative. Critics first focused on flaws that

independently undermined the strength of an *isnād*. A *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth should possess an

uninterrupted chain of trustworthy and competent transmitters that reached back to the

Prophet.[42] Ḥadīth critics thus searched for weak or error-prone transmitters as well as

breaks between links in the *isnād* (*inqiṭāʿ*). Broken transmissions included reports that

someone who had never met the Prophet attributed directly to him (termed *mursal*) or

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[42] For appropriate expressions of this definition, see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:23; Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma*, 1:3; Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, [1952]), 1:112.

that were actually the statements of the Prophet's Companions (termed *mawqūf*).[43] This

stage of criticism was subjective, as different critics applied different standards to their

material. Muslim's decision to consider two narrators joined by the vague phrase "from /

according to (*'an*)," provided they were contemporaries, proved controversial for later

scholars who upheld more rigid standards for transmission. Al-Bukhārī's inclusion of a

ḥadīth narrated by the extremist Khārijite 'Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, who praised the caliph 'Alī's

murderer in poetry, would prove similarly problematic for critics less forgiving of such

'heresies.'

The second breed of flaws on which *'ilal* criticism focused was comparative.

Scholars acknowledged two comparative signs of unreliable narrations: disagreement

(*khilāf*) and a lack of corroboration (*tafarrud*). These two concepts existed in relative

space, for both rested on the critic gathering all the available narrations of a ḥadīth and

examining which were the most well-established. If a specific narration differed with the

bulk of other transmissions or with that of a master ḥadīth scholar, it was generally

deemed weak. If one student transmitted a narration of a ḥadīth without the

corroboration of his classmates, it was similarly declared unreliable.

A central theme in this comparison of *isnāds* was the layered notion of 'Addition'

(*ziyāda*), a concept that Muslim scholars of this period commonly considered unified but

which actually subsumed three very different phenomena. The first can be termed ***Isnād***

Addition, which occurred when one narration of a ḥadīth added a transmitter not found

in the other *isnāds*. The second, termed **Literal *Matn* Addition**, involved one narration

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[43] For examples of these flaws in our earliest extant *'ilal* work, see 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, *al-'Ilal*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā A'ẓamī ([n.p.]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1392/1972); 81, 104, 110.

of a hadīth adding material to the text of the report. Finally, **Normative *Matn* Addition** occurred when one narration of a report that was generally considered to be the statement of a Companion (*mawqūf*) was elevated and attributed to the Prophet.[44]

This comparison of narrations was also a subjective process. If, out of a selection of ten narrations of a tradition from reliable transmitters, only one was attributed to the Prophet while the others were the words of a Companion, most hadīth critics would consider the exception defective. This tradition would thus not be *sahīh*, since it had been established as not extending back to the Prophet. Another critic, however, might trust the lone transmitter and choose his as the correct narration of the hadīth, declaring it an authentic Prophetic statement. Muslim often seems to have been more lax on such matters than his fourth/tenth-century critics. In the introduction to his *Sahīh* he states that he accepts a transmitter's uncorroborated material provided he not deviate blatantly from his cohorts.[45] As Ibn 'Ammār and al-Dāraqutnī's work demonstrates, on many occasions it seems that Muslim's desire to locate a reliable, uninterrupted narration to the Prophet led him to ignore the often better-established but flawed versions of the hadīth.

Many of the flaws that Ibn 'Ammār identifies in Muslim's *Sahīh* thus revolve around demonstrating how the most well-established version of one of Muslim's hadīths is actually a broken or weak transmission. Out of a total of thirty-six criticized narrations from the *Sahīh*, Ibn 'Ammar locates thirteen instances of inappropriate Addition (4 *Isnād*

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[44] For a more detailed and involved discussion of the phenomenon of Addition (*ziyāda*), see Jonathan A.C. Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon: al-Dāraqutnī's Adjustment of the *Sahīhayn*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2004): 8-11.

[45] Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:6.

Addition, 4 Literal *Matn* Addition, 5 Normative *Matn* Addition), and nine instances of a break in the *isnād* (*inqiṭā*). Ibn ʿAmmār also reveals other areas in which he differs with Muslim's methodology. He finds fault with one narration because an earlier ḥadīth scholar could find no trace of it in the transmitter's personal notebooks.[46] For another narration Ibn ʿAmmār explains that an error occurred because the transmitter had buried his books and begun narrating from memory. Here we see that Ibn ʿAmmār adhered more to al-Bukhārī's school of thought, which appreciated written sources as an invaluable bulwark against error despite the emphasis that the ḥadīth-scholar community placed on oral transmission.[47]

While Ibn ʿAmmār's relatively early *ʿilal* work tackled only Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, fifty years later al-Dāraquṭnī critiqued both the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. His *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ* criticizes two hundred and seventeen narrations, one hundred from Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, seventy-eight from al-Bukhārī's and thirty-two shared by both collections.[48] Like Ibn ʿAmmār, al-Dāraquṭnī's comments frequently involve instances of inappropriate Addition, especially in Muslim's work. Unlike Muslim, he only accepted Addition, either *Isnād* or *Matn*, when it enjoyed the support of a preponderance of experts.[49] Al-Dāraquṭnī also reveals a

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[46] Ibn ʿAmmār Abū al-Faḍl al-Shahīd, *ʿIlal al-aḥādīth fī kitāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj*, ed. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī (Riyadh: Dār al-Hijra, 1412/1991), 109.

[47] Al-Bukhārī states that "books are more accurate (*aḥfaẓ*) for the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*), since a person could transmit something and then return to a book and [it turns out] that it is as in the book"; see his *Kitāb rafʿ al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*, 82.

[48] For a more exact breakdown of these narrations, see Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 11.

[49] For more on al-Dāraquṭnī's stance on Addition/*ziyāda*, see Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 31-4.

stringency absent in al-Bukhārī's method. The Baghdad scholar chastises al-Bukhārī for narrating a ḥadīth from the arch-Khārijite 'Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, citing his deviant beliefs (sū' i 'tiqādihi).[50]

Unlike Ibn Ḥanbal, Ḥamd al-Khaṭṭābī, as well as later ḥadīth critics such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and Mullā 'Alī Qārī (d. 1014/1606), neither Ibn 'Ammār nor al-Dāraquṭnī criticized any ḥadīth found in the Ṣaḥīḥayn for ideological or polemical reasons.[51] In only one instance does either scholar even directly address the legal implications of any ḥadīth. Ibn 'Ammār rejects a narration from Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ stating that the Prophet did not perform 'umra after the battle of Ḥunayn because it contradicted another authentic ḥadīth asserting that he did.[52] In fact, al-Dāraquṭnī demonstrates astonishing objectivity in his critique: although he had compiled an entire book of ḥadīths devoted to affirming that God would grant the believers a vision of Himself on the Day of Judgment, al-Dāraquṭnī explicitly rejects a unique narration in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim supporting exactly that belief.[53]

The second genre of ḥadīth literature closely related to 'ilal was that of ilzāmāt. These works listed ḥadīths that the authors believed al-Bukhārī and Muslim should have

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[50] 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Dāraquṭnī, Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu ', ed. Muqbil b. Hādī b. Muqbil (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, [1978]), 333.

[51] See, for examples, Ibn Qudāma, al-Muntakhab min al- 'ilal, 66-7; Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ al-bārī, 13:591; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, al-Manār al-munīf fī al-ṣaḥīḥ wa al-ḍa 'īf, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyya, 1970),78; Nūr al-Dīn Mullā 'Alī b. Sulṭān Qārī, al-Asrār al-marfū 'a fī al-akhbār al-mawḍū 'a, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa'īd Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1405/1985), 319.

[52] Ibn 'Ammār, 93.

[53] See Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 21.

included in their two collections. Only four *ilzāmāt* works, also known as *mustadraks*,

were produced, all of them based on both al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s in tandem.

The remarkable *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī will receive sufficient attention in

the next chapter. ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad Abū Dharr al-Harawī's (d. 430/1038) one-volume

mustadrak of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* appears not to have survived.[54] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-ʿAwālī of

Naysābūr (fl. 420/1030?) made a *ṣaḥīḥ* selection of ḥadīths from his teacher Abū

Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Bālawī (d. 410/1019) that met the

requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*ʿalā sharṭ al-shaykhayn*).[55] The only other

extant work from this genre comes from al-Harawī's teacher, al-Dāraquṭnī. Scholars

have closely identified his *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt* with his above-mentioned *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ*,

and they have often been transmitted as one unit.

Ilzāmāt works applied al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's own standards to ḥadīths left

out of their works. Unlike *ʿilal* works, this entailed a further application of the

Shaykhayn's methods and not a juxtaposition with the methods of later critics. As with

his critique of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Dāraquṭnī did not use his *ilzāmāt* as a means for

advancing his own legal or doctrinal positions. There is an almost total separation

between the ḥadīths that al-Dāraquṭnī addended to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and those that he

selected for his own legal reference, his *Sunan*. At no point, for example, does he claim

that one of the narrations included in his *Sunan* should have been featured in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s.[56]

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[54] Al-Fārisī *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 607. Here the author states that Abū
Dharr produced a *mustakhraj* of both *Ṣaḥīḥs*. Al-Harawī's *mustakhraj* of Muslim was criticized for
narrating from transmitters unworthy of Muslim's standards; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:201-3, 244.

[55] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 472.

[56] Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 20-21.

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What remains slightly unclear is how these scholars understood and articulated al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's requirements for authenticity. Al-Dāraquṭnī's *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt* implies he considered himself well acquainted with the two scholars' methodologies, and his student Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11) confidently refers to Muslim's "usual methods (*rasm*)."[57] The only explicit studies devoted to this subject, however, seem to be al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's separate monographs on al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's requirements.[58] Both these works, however, have been lost.

Both *ilzāmāt* and *ʿilal* activities seem to have been fairly informal among scholars of the long fourth century. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's teacher Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakāʾī (d. 418/1027-8), for example, noted incidentally in his *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa 'l-jamāʿa* (Exposition of the Principles of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa* Creed) that a certain ḥadīth met Muslim's requirements and should have been included in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*yalzamuhu ikhrājuhu*).[59] In addition to his *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ*, al-Dāraquṭnī criticized at least thirteen other narrations from Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. These were not set down in any extant books, but have survived in a rebuttal by al-Dāraquṭnī's student Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī.[60]

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[57] Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī Kulayb (Riyadh: Dār al-Warrāq, 1419/1998), 298.

[58] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 72.

[59] Abū al-Qāsim Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa*, ed. Aḥmad b. Saʿd b. Ḥamdān al-Ghāmidī, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1415/1994), 4:878.

[60] See Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 187, 195, 198, and 203, for examples.

IV.5. Required Study: Clarifying an Unclear Subject

As templates for *mustakhraj*s, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections served as formative texts for scholars to interpret and implement the Prophet's normative legacy in new times. Through *ʿilal* and *ilzāmāt* works, ḥadīth scholars of the long fourth century critically engaged the standards of authenticity established by the *Shaykhayn*. Both the *mustakhraj* and the *ʿilal / ilzāmāt* genres required an exhaustive knowledge of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections. Scholars seeking to partially reproduce their *isnād*s or understand their requirements for authenticity needed to identify all of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's chains of transmission. These genres of scholarly activity thus spurred a myriad of subsidiary studies on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. *Mustakhraj*s themselves often included elucidations of obscure transmitters. Al-Ismāʿīlī's work, for example, identifies a narrator in one *isnād* whom al-Bukhārī refers to simply as 'al-Maqburī' as the famous Successor Saʿīd al-Maqburī.[61]

Those who transmitted al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s also contributed to clarifying some of the collections' indistinct features and deciphering textual vagaries. **Ibn al-Sakan** (d. 353/964) of Baghdad settled in Egypt after years of travel and became an important transmitter of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[62] He received his text of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* directly from al-Bukhārī's student al-Firabrī (d. 320/932) and attempted to clarify as many of the ambiguous transmitters as possible through his own research. As a result, his recension of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* became one of the most definitive studies of al-Bukhārī's

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[61] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:371.

[62] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:100; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:88-9. He transmitted *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to Ibn Asad al-Juhanī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Mufarraḥ and Abū Jaʿfar b. ʿAwn.

transmitters.[63] Abū Dharr al-Harawī was a Mālikī who settled among the Bedouin near Mecca and visited the city every year for pilgrimage as well as to narrate ḥadīths. He brought together the three disparate transmissions of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Abū Isḥāq al-Mustamlī of Balkh, al-Kushmīhanī of Merv and Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥamawayh of Sarakhs. These were the three most prominent students of al-Firabrī, the primary transmitter of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from its author.[64] More importantly, al-Harawī noted the variations among the three transmissions and attempted to honestly reconstitute the original text.[65]

Differences between various narrations of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* occasionally proved noticeable. Besides al-Firabrī, Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī's (d. 295/907-8) and Ḥammād b. Shākir's (d. 290/902-3) transmissions of the text also survived for several centuries. Ḥammād b. Shākir's recension, however, contained two hundred fewer narrations than that of al-Firabrī, while Ibrāhīm's was three hundred fewer.[66]

Transmitters could also play more substantial editorial roles. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī reports that when Abū Isḥāq al-Mustamlī examined al-Firabrī's copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* he noticed that some sections were still in draft form, with a number of chapter headings

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[63] Later scholars testify to the importance of Ibn al-Sakan's work; see Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī, *al-Taʿrīf bi-shuyūkh haddatha ʿanhum Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī fī kitābihi wa ahmala ansābahu wa dhikr mā yuʿrafūn bihi min qabāʾilihim wa buldānihim*, ed. Muḥammad al-Saʿīd Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1418/1998), 11.

[64] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:201; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:287.

[65] Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, *al-Iqtirāḥ fī bayān al-iṣṭilāḥ*, 299.

[66] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 26-7. Ibn Ḥajar explains that Ibrāhīm and Ḥammād heard incomplete versions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from al-Bukhārī and that al-Firabrī's recension represents the final product (*aṣl al-taṣnīf*); Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 69. For more information on the details of the transmission of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥs*, see Chapter 7 n. 100. For a discussion of the attribution and textual authenticity of the two works, see Appendix III.

lacking ḥadīths, or ḥadīths with no chapter headings. Al-Mustamlī states that he and his

fellow students attempted to arrange unsorted material in its proper place (*fa-aḍafnā ba 'd*

dhālik ilā ba 'ḍ).[67]

Most importantly, the long fourth century saw the emergence of studies

specifically devoted to identifying and describing al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's

transmitters. The earliest examples of this genre are limited to identifying al-Bukhārī's

immediate sources. Ibn 'Adī's *Asāmī man rawā 'anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā 'īl al-*

Bukhārī and Muḥammad b. Isḥāq **Ibn Manda** (d. 395/1004-5) of Isfahan's *Asāmī*

mashāyikh al-imām al-Bukhārī represent the first two generations of these transmitter

studies. Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Kalābādhī (d. 398/1008) of Bukhara produced the most

comprehensive listing of all al-Bukhārī's transmitters.[68] Yet it was not until the early

fifth/eleventh century that a work was compiled on the men of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*: this was

the book of Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Manjawayh of Naysābūr (d. 428/1036-7). Al-

Dāraquṭnī was the first to write a biographical dictionary covering both the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.

His student al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and the Baghdad scholar al-Lālakā'ī each repeated

this task several years later.[69]

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[67] Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhu al-Ta 'dīl wa al-tajrīḥ li-man kharraja lahu al-Bukhārī fī al-Jāmi ʿal-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Abū Lubāba Ḥusayn, 3 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Liwā', 1406/1986), 1:310-1; Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384), a*l-Kawākib al-darārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 25 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1358/1939), 1:5.

[68] Although originally titled *al-Hidāya wa al-irshād fī ma ʿrifat ahl al-thiqa wa al-sadād alladhīna akhraja lahum al-Bukhārī fī Ṣaḥīḥihi*, this work is often referred to as *Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

[69] Al-Ḥākim's small work is entitled *Tasmiyat man akhrajahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim wa mā infarada bihi kull minhumā*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya and Dār al-Jinān, 1407/1987). This genre continued beyond the scope of our long fourth century. Abū 'Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105) made efforts to complete the task of identifying al-Bukhārī's obscure transmitters (see above note 63). The Mālikī jurist Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wrote a book collecting critical opinions on al-Bukhārī's men entitled *Kitāb al-ta 'dīl wa al-tajrīḥ li-man rawā 'anhu al-*

Al-Dāraquṭnī's *oeuvre* constituted the first and most impressive holistic study of

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as two complementary texts. He authored no less than eleven books

detailing various aspects of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work. In addition to his

biographical dictionary of their transmitters, he compiled separate lists of the transmitters

after the generation of the Companions who comprised al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's

isnāds.[70] He emphasized the complementary relationship of the two works in his listing

of the Companions featured in both *Ṣaḥīḥ*s as well as those that each book used

exclusively. He also made a study of the different transmissions of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* after

their authors' deaths.[71] The functional nature of these studies reveals itself in the book

that al-Dāraquṭnī tailored to his interest in expanding the number of verified authentic

ḥadīths through *ilzāmāt* work. He composed a book solely on the Companions through

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Bukhārī fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ (see al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 154; n. 67 above). Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) combined Ibn Manjawayh and al-Kalābādhī's two works in *Kitāb al-jam ʿ bayn kitābay Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-Iṣbahānī*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dā'irat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1323/[1905]). ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Shantarīnī of Cordova (d. 522/1128) wrote a book correcting some of al-Kalābādhī's oversights called *Kitāb bayān ʿammā fī kitāb Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī min al-nuqṣān* as well as a work on Muslim's men entitled *Kitāb al-minhāj*. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Hakkārī (d. 763/1362) also wrote a book on the men of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Finally, one of the most useful studies on this topic is Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl Ibn Khalfūn's (d. 636/1238-9) work on al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's teachers, *al-Muʿlim bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿĀdil b. Saʿd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1421/2000); al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:47; Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:131.

[70] These two works, *Dhikr asmāʾ al-tābiʿīn wa man baʿdahum mimman ṣaḥḥat riwāyatuhu min al-thiqāt ʿind Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī* and *Dhikr asmāʾ al-tābiʿīn wa man baʿdahum mimman ṣaḥḥat riwāyātuhu ʿind Muslim*, have been published together as *Dhikr asmāʾ al-tābiʿīn*, ed. Burhān al-Danawī and Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1985).

[71] For the unpublished works, *Asmāʾ al-ṣaḥāba allatī ittafaqa fīhā al-Bukhārī wa Muslim wa mā infarada bihi kull minhumā*, *Kitāb fī dhikr riwāyāt al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* and al-Dāraquṭnī's dictionary of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters, see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:207-9.

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whom reliable ḥadīths were transmitted but were not included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (*Dhikr al-ṣaḥāba alladhīna ṣaḥḥat al-riwāya 'anhum wa laysū fī al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*).[72]

An examination of the studies devoted to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters reveals a gradually increasing mastery of the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s as the long fourth century progressed. Moreover, we are alerted to another central feature of the network of *Ṣaḥīḥayn* scholars in this period: the serious regional boundaries that still constricted the movement of texts and information. In Jurjān, Ibn 'Adī was unable to identify one of al-Bukhārī's teachers mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Sa'īd b. Marwān, listing him as unknown (*lā yu 'raf*).[73] Even Ibn Manda, who died some thirty years after Ibn 'Adī, fails to mention this Sa'īd b. Marwān in his book on al-Bukhārī's sources. It is not until Abū Naṣr al-Kalābādhī, who died a mere three years after Ibn Manda but lived mainly in Bukhara, that we find a listing for Sa'īd b. Marwān b. 'Alī Abū 'Uthmān al-Baghdādī (d. 252/866), who lived and died in Naysābūr.[74]

Why was neither Ibn 'Adī nor Ibn Manda able to identify this transmitter? Sa'īd b. Marwān had narrated ḥadīths to two major scholars in his adopted home city of Naysābūr, Ibn Khuzayma and his disciple Ibn al-Jārūd. Ibn 'Adī, however, never traveled to the Khurāsān region, and neither he nor his close friend al-Ismā'īlī had any contact with Ibn Khuzayma or his student. It is therefore not surprising that Ibn 'Adī ignores Ibn

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[72] This work remains unpublished, al-Dāraquṭnī, "Dhikr asmā' al-ṣaḥāba alladhīna ṣaḥḥat al-riwāya 'anhum wa laysū fī *al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*," MS 7159, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus: fols. 197b-198a.

[73] Ibn 'Adī, *Asāmī*, 110.

[74] Al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:872. Al-Ḥākim benefited from al-Kalābādhī; see his *Tasmiyat man akhrajahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, 123.

Khuzayma completely in the list of great ḥadīth scholars in his *al-Kāmil*.[75] Conversely,

Ibn Manda visited both Bukhara and Naysābūr. But we know from al-Ḥākim, however,

that he had completed his book on al-Bukhārī's teachers *before* staying in Naysābūr and

possibly before arriving in Bukhara.[76] It seems that, like Ibn ʿAdī, Ibn Manda never had

access to information about Saʿīd b. Marwān of Naysābūr.

IV.6. Regional and Temporal Distribution of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network

Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn Manda's failure to identify Saʿīd b. Marwān illustrates one of the

salient characteristics of the study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the long fourth century. Although

ḥadīth scholars traversed the Islamic world from Andalusia to Central Asia, resilient

regional cults still developed according to material constraints like the availability of

certain texts as well as the functionalist and ideological preferences of local scholarly

communities. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network of the long fourth century revolved around three of

these regional schools: Naysābūr, Jurjān and Baghdad.

IV.6. a. *Naysābūr and the Hometown Cult of Muslim*

Naysābūr was the birthplace of the *mustakhraj* phenomenon, and it was in this

city and its environs that the genre flourished most intensively. From the time of

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[75] For a biography of Saʿīd b. Marwān al-Baghdādī, see Ibn Khalfūn, *al-Muʿlim bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, 514-5. Ibn Khalfūn lists another Saʿīd b. Marwān as well, namely Saʿīd b. Marwān b. Saʿīd Abū ʿUthmān al-Azdī from the Jazīra. Ibn Wāra and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī narrated from him, and al-Bukhārī notes him in his *Tārīkh al-kabīr*. It is very unlikely that this was the Saʿīd b. Marwān to which Ibn ʿAdī was referring, since he was very familiar with Ibn Wāra and Abū Ḥātim, both of whom appear in his *al-Kāmil*.

[76] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:320-4.

Muslim's death until the close of the long fourth century, scholars devoted *mustakhraj*s to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of the city's native son. In addition, Naysābūr scholars crafted *mustakhraj*s of Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'* and Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. It was only in the mid 300/900s, however, that the city's scholars developed an interest in al-Bukhārī's collection.

Naysābūr was the linchpin of the eastern Islamic lands during the Classical period. Astride the road that ran from Baghdad to Central Asia and beyond, it was an inevitable commercial way station and a bustling center of scholarly activity. The city's intellectual landscape was sharply divided between the Ḥanafī school, with its strong ties to Mu'tazilite doctrine, and the transmission-based *ahl al-sunna*, who generally identified with the teachings of al-Shāfi'ī.[77] In the decades after the city laid Muslim to rest at the head of one of its major squares, Naysābūr's transmission-based legal culture was dominated by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq **Ibn Khuzayma**. Declared "*imām* of the *imām*s," Ibn Khuzayma was described by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī as "the foremost [scholar] by agreement of all of his age," an authority on the teachings of al-Shāfi'ī and a source of religious rulings (*fatwā*s).[78] He studied with al-Shāfi'ī's most illustrious students, al-Rabī' and al-Muzanī, and was relied upon greatly by Ibn Surayj (d. 305/917-18), the Baghdad scholar around whom the Shāfi'ī legal school coalesced more concretely.[79] Ibn Khuzayma rigidly upheld the über-Sunni stance on the nature of the Qur'ān, stating that

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[77] See Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 36-40.

[78] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 120; Bulliet, *Patricians*, 62.

[79] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 104; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 312-3; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:233-6.

anyone who believed it to be created was an unbeliever.[80] A poem by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā of Naysābūr testifies to Muslim's and Ibn Khuzayma's stations in the city's pantheon of scholars:

> So set aside all thought of Jūrjān, for indeed our scholars
> In the land of Naysābūr are more illustrious by far; so why the sadness?
> No one can be compared to Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā.[81]
> If tested his glory would suffice you.
> And his student Isḥāq [b. Rāhawayh], how great he is (li-llāh darruhu)!
> Indeed, along with al-Ribāṭī, their virtue is not hidden.
> Abū al-Azhar al-Mifḍāl, then Ibn Hāshim,
> And Muslim, they are the lords of ḥadīth so do not deny it.
> And who is their equal in prodigious memory and station?
> ...
> And from us, too, Ibn Isḥāq the Khuzaymī, our shaykh,
> Our source of pride, shaykh of all shaykhs in his time.
> Indeed he was for Islam a pillar and pivot.
> May God water well a grave with such a shaykh buried within.[82]

One of Ibn Khuzayma's colleagues also exercised a tremendous amount of influence in Naysābūr. Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Sarrāj (d. 313/925) was one of the city's leading scholars. A student of Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh and a teacher of Ibn Khuzayma, both al-Bukhārī and Muslim studied ḥadīth with al-Sarrāj. He was an inveterate critic of the Ḥanafī school and active prosecutor of those who upheld the created wording of the Qur'ān.[83] Al-Sarrāj also produced one of the earliest mustakhrajs of Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ.

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[80] Al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz, 2:205.

[81] Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Tamīmī al-Naysābūrī (d. ca. 220/835); see Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb, 11:259.

[82] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, Tārīkh Nīshābūr, 177-8.

[83] Al-Khalīlī, al-Irshād, 310-11; al-Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdād, 1:264-7; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz, 2:215; idem, Tārīkh al-islām, 23:462-4.

Scholars in Naysābūr began using Muslim's collections as a template for *mustakhraj*s almost immediately after his death. Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī mentioned that Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-'Abbās al-Ṣā'igh of Rayy (d. 270/883) had done so during Muslim's lifetime.[84] Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Rajā' (d. 286/899) studied with many of Muslim's teachers but nonetheless produced a *mustakhraj* called *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-mukharraj 'alā kitāb Muslim*.[85] Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama al-Bazzār (d. 286/899), Muslim's companion to whom he had dedicated the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, also wrote a *mustakhraj*.[86] As the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart demonstrates, scholars studying or living in Naysābūr and its immediate environs continued to produce waves of *mustakhraj*s on Muslim's collection. Fully ten had been compiled before Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb **Ibn al-Akhram** (d. 344/955) finally produced one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* together.[87] Almost two decades later al-Māsarjisī (d. 365/976) devoted another *mustakhraj* to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[88] Yet in the century after Ibn al-Akhram's death, Naysābūr produced eight more *mustakhraj*s of Muslim and four of the combined *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, but only one devoted solely to al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Although al-Bukhārī was not a native of Naysābūr like Muslim, he resided in the city for approximately five years, during which time he narrated his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to circles of

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[84] Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-ḍu'afā' wa ajwibatuhu 'alā as'ilat al-Bardha'ī*, 2:674.

[85] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:186; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:288.

[86] Al-Dhahabī states that people like Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī also called the work *Ṣaḥīḥ Ahmad b. Salama*; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:408; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:156.

[87] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:55; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:312-3; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 315.

[88] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:110-11; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:337-8.

ḥadīth students.[89] Why then did scholarly activity in the city seem so oblivious of al-Bukhārī's work until Ibn al-Akhram's and al-Māsarjisī's writings? The answer lies in the qualitative preference Muslim enjoyed in his hometown as well in the accusations of heresy that had tainted al-Bukhārī's name. When Abū al-ʿAbbās b. Saʿīd **Ibn ʿUqda** (d. 332/944), who taught many Naysābūrīs, was asked who was more knowledgeable, al-Bukhārī or Muslim, he eventually replied that al-Bukhārī occasionally made mistakes with reports transmitted from Syrians because he had only received these in written form. He thus sometimes thought that a person mentioned once by his name and once by his patronymic was two people. Conversely, he notes, Muslim rarely made errors concerning transmission (*ʿilal*) because he avoided al-Bukhārī's practice of including additional ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds*.[90] Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī (d. 349/960), who had traveled widely in areas such as Egypt, Jurjān and Merv, concluded that "there is not beneath the heavens (*taḥt adīm al-samāʾ*) [a book] more authentic than the book of Muslim."[91] Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Abū Isḥāq **al-Muzakkī** (d. 362/973), a student of Ibn Khuzayma and Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, proved to be a major link between Naysābūr and scholarly circles in Baghdad and Isfahan. He instructed al-Dāraquṭnī, al-Barqānī, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī as well as Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī. Although al-Muzakkī transmitted a number of Muslim's works (presumably his *Ṣaḥīḥ* was among them) on his

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[89] We know from al-Kalābādhī that al-Bukhārī had been narrating his work to students since at least 248 AH. He arrived in Naysābūr in about 250 AH; al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:24.

[90] Al-Ḥākim Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 101; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90.

[91] Ibn Manda heard this directly from Abū ʿAlī; see Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ*, 71; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:70-2; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:80. Ibn Ḥajar suggests that Abū ʿAlī may not have ever seen al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, but this is unlikely since the work was certainly in circulation in the regions he visited; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

many visits to Baghdad, of al-Bukhārī's works he only transmitted the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, to the exclusion of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[92]

This delayed attention to al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* also stemmed from the scandal of the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān. Two of the most influential transmission-based scholars in the city, Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj, both aggressively attacked anyone who upheld a belief in the created wording of the holy book. Even Ibn al-Akhram, who composed the first joint al-Bukhārī/Muslim *mustakhraj*, did so only after responding to al-Sarrāj's request to complete one based solely on Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[93] Abū al-Walīd Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Umawī (d. 344/955) expressed a desire to craft a *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī's work, but his father instructed him to follow Muslim due to al-Bukhārī's scandal.[94] It is thus no surprise that, with the exception of Ibn al-Akhram and al-Māsarjisī, all the conjoined *Ṣaḥīḥayn mustakhraj*s in Naysābūr and the only one devoted solely to al-Bukhārī appeared only after the generation of scholars who had studied with Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj had died (see *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart). Only at that point could scholars like Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim (d. 378/988), a judge who worked in Naysābūr's environs and whom al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī calls one of most knowledgeable concerning the requirements of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣaḥīḥ*), state, "May God bless *imām* Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl [al-Bukhārī], for it was he who set forth the foundations (*al-uṣūl*) [of ḥadīth]

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[92] Al-Muzakkī must have visited Baghdad more than once, since at the time of his recorded visit in 316/928-9 both al-Dāraquṭnī and al-Barqānī would have been too young to have heard from him; al-Dāraquṭnī never voyaged east from Iraq. See al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:165-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:289-90.

[93] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:55; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:312-3.

[94] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 90; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:75; idem *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8.

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and elucidated them to the people. All those who have come after him, like Muslim b. al-Hajjāj, have taken from his book (the *Ṣaḥīḥ*)."[95]

IV.6. b. *Jurjān: A Cult of al-Bukhārī Among Friends*

On a map, the small province of Jurjān on the southeast coast of the Caspian Sea does not seem far from Naysābūr and its satellite cities of Ṭūs, Juvayn and Isfarāyīn. The intimidating Elborz Mountains, however, separate Jurjān's littoral marshes and thickly forested mountainsides from these Khurāsānī centers as well as from the great city of Rayy. Yet during the mid-fourth/tenth century, Jurjān constituted an important center of ḥadīth study in its own right. More specifically, it was home to three friends who formed a bastion of scholarly interest in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The region produced no *mustakhraj*s of any other ḥadīth work. Two of these scholars in particular emerged as extremely influential figures in the historical development of ḥadīth literature. We have already relied on ʿAbdallāh Abū Aḥmad **Ibn ʿAdī** (d. 365/975-6) as the earliest significant source on al-Bukhārī's life and work. He gained renown, however, for his voluminous dictionary of problematic ḥadīth transmitters, *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, that became the foundation for many later works in that genre. The *Kāmil* enjoyed immediate popularity and quickly spread among scholarly circles in major cities like Baghdad. Ibn ʿAdī's younger contemporary in Baghdad, al-Dāraquṭnī, said that the work sufficed for all needs in that genre.[96] Ibn ʿAdī traveled widely in Iraq, Syria, the Ḥijāz and Egypt and

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[95] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 187; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:123-4. For Abū Aḥmad's quote see al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380.

[96] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:245.

was deeply versed in the school of al-Shāfiʿī. He wrote a juridical manual called *al-Intiṣār* based on the chapter structure of al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, the most famous abridgment of the Shāfiʿī tradition's formative text, al-Shāfiʿī's *Umm* (The Motherbook).[97] Ibn ʿAdī not only served as an important transmitter of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from al-Firabrī in Jurjān,[98] he also wrote the aforementioned first work on al-Bukhārī's sources.

When Ibn ʿAdī died, his close friend and colleague al-Ismāʿīlī (d. 371/981-2) led his funeral prayer.[99] As we have noted in the preceding discussion of al-Ismāʿīlī's *Mustakhraj*, this scholar adhered to al-Shāfiʿī's transmission-based legal tradition and also exhibited marked rationalist tendencies. Al-Ismāʿīlī was so well-respected that several ḥadīth scholars, including al-Dāraquṭnī, felt that he should have compiled his own *ṣaḥīḥ* instead of following in al-Bukhārī's footsteps. It was reported that when news of his death reached Baghdad, over three hundred ḥadīth scholars, merchants and jurists from both the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools gathered in the main mosque to mourn him for several days.[100] Although al-Ismāʿīlī produced no independent study of al-Bukhārī's

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[97] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291-2; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:102-3. The various recensions of the *Umm* are most likely collections of all the works narrated by Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān from al-Shāfiʿī; Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfiʿī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1416/1996), 148-50.

[98] Ibn ʿAdī transmitted *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to people like ʿAmr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. al-Astarābādhī; Abū al-Qāsim Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī (d. 427/1035-6), *Tārīkh Jurjān*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Muʿīd Khān et al. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1387/1967), 106.

[99] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:241.

[100] Al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 87; cf. al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, 3:8; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:281-2.

work, his *Mustakhraj* remained an indispensable reference for students and scholars of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, even late ones such as Ibn Ḥajar.

Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Aḥmad **al-Ghiṭrīfī** (d. 377/987-8) was the least accomplished of the Jurjān scholars. He was a very close associate of al-Ismāʿīlī as well as his son's tutor.[101] Like his friend, al-Ghiṭrīfī composed a *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Although his father was from Naysābūr, he lived almost his entire life in Jurjān. He visited Rayy and Baghdad, and was the only Jurjān scholar to have heard from Ibn Khuzayma in Naysābūr.[102]

Why did this cluster of Jurjān scholars prove such redoubt partisans of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to the exclusion of Muslim's and the other major fruits of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement? This phenomenon may have partially resulted from a limited exposure to Muslim's work. As the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart demonstrates, there were almost no personal links between Jurjān and Naysābūr, where the cult of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* matured. Ibn ʿAdī thus excludes both Muslim and Ibn Khuzayma from his list of noteworthy ḥadīth scholars and does not seem to have had access to valuable information about al-Bukhārī's Naysābūr sources. As with Muslim's collection in Naysābūr, however, the Jurjān scholars also considered *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to be a more accurate representation of the Prophet's legacy. Al-Ismāʿīlī argues in the introduction to his *Mustakhraj* (his *Madkhal*) that al-Bukhārī's book is superior to Muslim's because the latter "set out to do what [al-Bukhārī] sought to do, and took from him or from his books, except that he did not

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[101] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:120.

[102] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:614-5.

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restrict himself [in what he included] as much Abū ʿAbdallāh [al-Bukhārī] did, and he

narrated from a large number from whom Abū ʿAbdallāh would not deign to narrate (*lam*

yata ʿarraḍ... li'l-riwāya ʿanhum)." He adds that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* also bested Abū

Dāwūd's *Sunan* because the former had higher standards for selecting ḥadīths as well as

better explanations of their legal implications.[103] Abū al-Qāsim Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī

(d. 427/1035-6), author of the local history of Jurjān (*Tārīkh Jurjān*), relies on al-Bukhārī

ten times in his history for information about ḥadīth transmitters.[104] Although al-Sahmī

interacted with several scholars who cultivated equal interests in al-Bukhārī and Muslim,

including al-Dāraquṭnī, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, he never

mentions Muslim in his work. He does, however, note two people as hearing *Ṣaḥīḥ al-*

Bukhārī.

IV.6. c. *Baghdad: Inheriting the Study of the* Ṣaḥīḥayn *Among the Baghdad Knot*

As the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart demonstrates, Baghdad inherited the study of al-

Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections from both Jurjān and Naysābūr. From the mid-

fourth/tenth century to the mid-fifth/eleventh, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate hosted

a knot of scholars who pioneered the study of the two works as complementary units.

The genesis of this close association of experts lay in the seminal work of ʿAlī b. ʿUmar

al-Dāraquṭnī, whose eleven treatises on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have proven some of the most

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[103] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 11; al-Jazāʾirī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:305. For a short summary of this, see Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ wa al-lughāt*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, [1977]), 1:74.

[104] Al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 488. Al-Sahmī is connected to al-Bukhārī by the *isnād* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAbdān ← Muḥammad b. Sahl ← al-Bukhārī.

influential books on the subject. In particular, his joint critical study, *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu*', has attracted scholarly attention up to the present day. Al-Dāraquṭnī brought these two previous centers of study together through his personal scholarly relationships with Abū Saʿīd al-Ḥīrī, Ibrāhīm al-Muzakkī, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and Ibn Dhuhl of Naysābūr, and Ibn ʿAdī of Jurjān. He also interacted with scholars from farther afield in Central Asia, such as al-Kalābādhī. He received at least two transmissions of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, one from Ibn Māhān in Egypt and one from Ibrāhīm al-Muzakkī. He heard *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from Abū Saʿīd Aḥmad Ibn Rumayḥ (d. 357/967-8) and most probably from others as well.[105]

Al-Dāraquṭnī mentored another of the most influential scholars on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the long fourth century. Originally from Khwarazm in Transoxiana, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad **al-Barqānī**, (d. 425/1033-4) traveled extensively throughout Khurāsān before settling in Baghdad, accompanied by a massive personal library. It was al-Barqānī who set down and assembled one of al-Dāraquṭnī's most famous and voluminous works, his prodigious *Kitāb al-ʿIlal*.[106] Unlike his teacher, however, al-Barqānī managed to study extensively with al-Ismāʿīlī and became the most important transmitter of his *Mustakhraj*.[107] Al-Barqānī's interest in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* led him to compile a *musnad* version of the two works as well as a joint *mustakhraj*.[108] Al-Barqānī fell into the gray

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[105] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:96; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:210-1.

[106] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:379.

[107] For al-Barqānī's transmission of the *Mustakhraj*, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:281-2; for al-Barqānī's role in transmitting al-Ismāʿīlī's teachings, see al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 187.

[108] The first part of this *mustakhraj* has been published as *al-Juz' al-awwal min al-takhrīj li-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥadīth ʿan al-shuyūkh al-thiqāt ʿalā sharṭ kitāb Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī wa kitāb Muslim b. al-*

area of the transmission-based tradition that was gradually separating into the über-Sunni Ḥanbalī school and the more moderate Shāfiʿī strain. He was later identified as a Shāfiʿī, no doubt due to his apprenticeship with al-Dāraquṭnī but more probably because of his role as a teacher to three of the most prominent Shāfiʿī scholars of the fifth/eleventh century: Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (who relies heavily upon him as a source for his history of Baghdad). Yet al-Barqānī also had strong ties to the tradition evolving around Ibn Ḥanbal: he studied with Abū Bakr b. Mālik al-Qaṭīʿī (d. 368/978-9), the main transmitter of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* from his son ʿAbdallāh.[109]

Another important member of the knot of Baghdad ḥadīth scholars studying the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* was al-Dāraquṭnī's student Abū Masʿūd Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11). Al-Khaṭīb describes him as having a "strong interest in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*," which he expressed in his famous *Aṭrāf* of the two works.[110] Although this book exists today in only partial and unpublished form, ḥadīth scholars as far-flung as Abū ʿAlī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105), who never left Andalusia, and the ninth/fifteenth century Cairene Ibn Ḥajar regularly drew on it.[111] In addition to the *Aṭrāf*, the only book of Abū Masʿūd to have reached us alludes to an interesting tension between the author and his teacher, al-

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Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī aw aḥadihimā, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Bārī Riḍā Būshshāma al-Jazāʾirī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999).

[109] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:137-40; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:333; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-shāfiʿiyya*, 1:363-5; 15:242; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:464-8; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:183.

[110] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:170-1.

[111] Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) states that he relied on al-Dimashqī's and al-Wāsiṭī's *Aṭrāf* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in his index of the Six Books; al-Mizzī, *Tuḥfat al-ashrāf fī maʿrifat al-aṭrāf*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), 1:102.

Dāraquṭnī. Abū Masʿūd's *Kitāb al-ajwiba ʿammā ashkala al-shaykh al-Dāraquṭnī ʿalā*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (Book of Responses to what al-Dāraquṭnī Criticized from the

Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj) contains rebuttals to twenty-five narrations that al-

Dāraquṭnī points out as problematic as well as to several *ilzāmāt* the latter suggested.[112]

In addition, Abū Masʿūd rejects al-Dāraquṭnī's referral to Abū Zurʿa's criticism of four of

Muslim's narrators.[113] Although we know little about his legal stances, Abū Masʿūd

clearly cultivated a close personal relationship with the scholar later considered the third

reviver of the Shāfiʿī school, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016).[114] When Abū

Masʿūd died, Abū Ḥāmid led his funeral prayer and managed his will (as his *waṣīy*).[115]

One of Abū Masʿūd's colleagues, Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d. ca.

400/1010) also produced a three- or four-volume *aṭrāf* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (one volume,

seven *juz*'s, of which has survived in manuscript form).[116] He studied with al-Ismāʿīlī as

well as many scholars in Baghdad but eventually abandoned scholarship and devoted

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[112] These *ilzāmāt* do not appear in al-Dāraquṭnī's *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbuʿ*; see Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 287-303.

[113] See Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 331. These criticized narrators are Asbāṭ b. Naṣr, Qaṭan, Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Miṣrī, and Jaʿfar b. Sulaymān, three of whom Abū Zurʿa mentioned in his criticism of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

[114] Mahdī Salmāsī, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī," *Dāʾerat al-maʿāref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, ed. Kāẓem Bojnūrdī (Tehran: Merkez-e Dāʾerat al-Maʿāref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmī, 1368/[1989]), 5:318; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:132-4.

[115] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:170-1; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:180. Reports that Abū Masʿūd studied with Ibn Khuzayma seem difficult to believe, since the latter died in 311/923.

[116] Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 125.

himself to business. Nonetheless, prominent experts such as al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī studied at Khalaf's hands.[117]

The last noteworthy scholar of the Baghdad knot was Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakāʾī (d. 418/1027-8). Born in Rayy, he studied ḥadīth there before moving to Baghdad, where he studied with the city's pillar of the Shāfiʿī tradition, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī. Al-Lālakāʾī compiled a biographical dictionary of the Ṣaḥīḥayn, which has since been lost, but his most famous work was his Kitāb al-sunna.[118]

Along with Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Khallāl, (d. 439/1047), who wrote a mustakhraj of the Ṣaḥīḥayn,[119] these scholars constituted a relatively close-knit society characterized by an adherence to the Shāfiʿī tradition and a shared interest in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works. Three of the five studied directly with al-Dāraquṭnī, the progenitor of an approach to the Ṣaḥīḥayn as complementary texts. Al-Barqānī describes the close scholarly association among this cluster in the following manner. One day al-Lālakāʾī approached him because he had heard Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī mention that Muslim had included a certain narration of the ḥadīth "the signs of a hypocrite are three…," and he wanted al-Barqānī to find it for him in the Ṣaḥīḥ. Al-Barqānī looked through his combined musnad of the Ṣaḥīḥayn and discovered that the narration did not

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[117] Al-Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdād, 8:329-30; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:179-80.

[118] This has been published as Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa, ed. Aḥmad b. Saʿd b. Ḥamdān al-Ghāmidī, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1415/1994); al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 28:456-7; idem, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:189. Al-Lālakāʾī's book on the men of the Ṣaḥīḥayn is referred to as a book of Muslim's transmitters by Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ (d. 775/1374); Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, al-Ḥāwī fī bayān āthār al-Ṭaḥāwī, ed. Yūsuf Aḥmad, 3 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1419/1999), 1:60.

[119] Al-Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdād, 7:437-8; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:205; idem, Tārīkh al-islām, 29:471-2.

exist. This vindicated al-Lālakā'ī suspicion that Abū Masʿūd had mixed up one of the names in the *isnād*. Al-Barqānī recalls how Khalaf al-Wāsiṭī was also mistaken about this narration.[120]

IV.6. d. *Other: Isfahan and Central Asia*

Not all studies of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* during the long fourth century emerged from Naysābūr, Jurjān or Baghdad. Several important scholars worked independently of these regional camps. Al-Kalābādhī (d. 398/1008) traveled to Khurāsān and Iraq, but he spent most of his life in Transoxiana.[121] The first scholar to produce a commentary on one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, that of al-Bukhārī, was Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī of Bust (d. 388/998). Although he studied in Baghdad and narrated ḥadīths to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Dharr al-Harawī and al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, he remained a relative outsider in the main regional centers of study. He spent most of his time in Bust, in the far east of Khurāsān. Even there his pietistic inclinations kept him far from public life. In one poem he wrote, "Indeed I am a stranger among Bust and her people… though my family and kin are there."[122] Al-Khaṭṭābī's primary ḥadīth interest lay in the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, on which he wrote a famous commentary. It was only after some of his students in Balkh pressured him to write a commentary on al-Bukhārī's work that he

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[120] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:71-2.

[121] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:201; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:154-5; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:355.

[122] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, 3:284; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:166-7; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:149-150; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:129. Ibn al-Jawzī errs in al-Khaṭṭābī's death date; he includes him among those who died in 349 AH.

composed his *A'lām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Al-Khaṭṭābī also wrote a work on the vocabulary of al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, and his opinions on legal theory became a source for later Shāfi'ī scholars.[123]

Several important scholars from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network also hailed from Isfahan. In addition to his being one of the most influential ḥadīth scholars of his time, we have already noted Ibn Manda's contribution to the study of al-Bukhārī's sources. Before him Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Abdān al-Shīrāzī (d. 388/998) moved between Khurāsān and the western Iranian cities of Ahwāz and Isfahan. He produced a joint *mustakhraj* and also narrated al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*.[124] Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Mūsā Ibn Mardawayh (d. 416/1025-6) wrote a *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī,[125] and Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's separate *mustakhrajs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim have already been discussed. As the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart demonstrates, however, Isfahan never became a united camp or developed a local tradition of studying al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Its scholars lived at different times and were more connected with the centers of Naysābūr and Baghdad than with each other.

IV.6. e. *An End to Regional Cults After 370AH*

The study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the long fourth century thus breaks down along clear chronological and geographical lines. The initial popularity that Muslim's work enjoyed

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[123] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:289-90.

[124] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:161; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 335.

[125] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:169.

as a template for *mustakhrajs* in his home city of Naysābūr later developed into a more diverse interest that subsumed al-Bukhārī's collection as well as other products of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. The cluster of colleagues in Jurjān remained relatively isolated from Khurāsān and thus cultivated an exclusive interest in al-Bukhārī. Beginning with al-Dāraquṭnī, the network of Baghdad scholars inherited the legacies of both regions and thus pioneered the study of the two works as a pair.

By the 370/980s, however, the regional cults of al-Bukhārī and Muslim had disappeared. After the death of al-Ghiṭrīfī, Jurjān faded into geographical and historical obscurity. The Baghdad knot was built on the study of the two works together, and by 370 AH in Muslim's native Naysābūr a study of the conjoined *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as well as other major products of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement eclipsed the strict focus on his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

IV.7. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network: A Shāfiʿī Enterprise

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network of the long fourth century exhibits another striking characteristic: study of the two works seems to have been an exclusively Shāfiʿī endeavor. Although the profound work of George Makdisi, Wael Hallaq and Christopher Melchert has shed light on the formation of the Sunni *madhhabs*, discussing trends in legal and ritual identification still proves very difficult in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. The inchoate intellectual landscape of this period resists attempts to apply the construct of the clearly defined Sunni *madhhabs*, in part because it preceded institutions like the *madrasa* that would later play important roles in their expression. Hallaq

therefore describes this period as one of "indistinguishable plurality."[126] This period

retains the startling diversity of early Islam, as schools of law usually dismissed as

phenomena of the second and third centuries survived. It was only in 347/958-9, for

example, that the last *muftī* of the Awzāʿī school died in Damascus.[127] One of the most

important transmitters of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Julūdī (d. 368/979), followed the moribund

madhhab of Sufyān al-Thawrī.[128]

Indeed, the undeniable presence of the regularized four Sunni schools marks the

end of the long fourth century. With a cadre of scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, al-

Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and Abū Isḥāq al-

Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), for example, we can for the first time feel totally at ease discussing

a broad and unshakable guild-like loyalty to a Shāfiʿī school. Only in the ample wake of

the long fourth century can we rely on the well-worn stereotypes that al-Ḥasan b. Abī

Bakr al-Naysābūrī spoke to in 536/1142 when he told a congregation, "Be Shāfiʿī but not

Ashʿarī, be Ḥanafī but not Muʿtazilī, be Ḥanbalī but not anthropomorphist."[129]

In the long fourth century the arena for the study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* extended from

Transoxiana to the Ḥijāz. There the enduring distinction between "the two sects (*al-*

farīqān)" of the transmission-based and reason-based scholars still ruled. The

Ḥanafīs/*ahl al-raʾy* were developing a keener interest in ḥadīth, but the school retained its

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[126] Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61.

[127] Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfiʿī*, 339.

[128] This according to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. See, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 107; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:302.

[129] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 18:31.

link with the Mu'tazilite doctrine so anathema to the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. The doyen of the

Ḥanafī ḥadīth tradition, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī of Egypt (d. 321/933), seems to have been

in a minority with his distance from Mu'tazilism. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Ubaydallāh b. al-

Ḥusayn al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), the most prominent Iraqi Ḥanafī of his time, is also

described as a leading Mu'tazilite (*kāna ra's^{an} fī al-i'tizāl*).[130] Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-

Tanūkhī, who learned *fiqh* from al-Karkhī, was from a "house of ḥadīth" but was

nonetheless Mu'tazilite.[131] 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Tanūkhī (d. 342/953) was also a Ḥanafī

ḥadīth scholar knowledgeable in Mu'tazilite *kalām*.[132]

It was the monolithic construct of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* that was becoming

increasingly insufficient for describing the divisions among transmission-based scholars.

Two distinct strains were emerging. Al-Bukhārī's persecution at the hands of fellow

ḥadīth scholars illustrated a break between the conservative über-Sunni interpretation of

Ibn Ḥanbal's legacy and a more moderate transmission-based approach, which Melchert

has dubbed "semi-rationalist." These two strains would later emerge as two competing

parties in the Sunni Islamic heartlands, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni school and its rival

Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī camp. In the long fourth century, however, these two budding schools

shared a common heritage. Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī heard the entirety of al-Shāfi'ī's *oeuvre*

from Rabī', yet he is claimed as a Ḥanbalī.[133] Ibn Abī Ḥātim devoted a work to the

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[130] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:85; cf. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 839/1437), *Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, ed. Suzanna Diwald-Wilzer (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, [198-]), 130.

[131] Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, 108.

[132] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:90.

[133] See Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi'ī*, 148; Henri Laoust, "Ḥanābila," *EI²*.

virtues of al-Shāfiʿī but is similarly claimed by Ḥanbalīs.[134] This ambiguity was deeply

rooted in the career of Ibn Ḥanbal himself, for it is reported that he considered al-Shāfiʿī

to be his century's reviver of the faith.[135] The Mālikī school, based in Egypt and the lands

of the Maghrib, proves tangential to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network. Only Qāsim b. Aṣbagh of

Cordova and Abū Dharr al-Harawī belonged to the Mālikī school.

Identifying the porous boundaries between the emerging Ḥanbalī and Shāfiʿī

strains is challenging in the long fourth century. In the early stages one cannot yet

consistently identify legal schools through telltale shibboleths like the Shāfiʿī insistence

on the voiced *basmala*. An early scholar like Abū ʿAwāna is considered the person who

brought the Shāfiʿī school to Isfarāyīn, but he broke with what became important

madhhab stances such as the *basmala* and the issue of what invalidates prayer.

The distinction between the two transmission-based strains becomes more evident

in their attitudes towards rationalism in perennial controversies such as the *lafẓ* of the

Qur'ān and the use of speculative theology (*kalām*). Melchert describes how by the early

fourth/tenth century a "vague Shāfiʿī school" had emerged that "comprised both a

particular system of jurisprudence and a particular theological tendency." "It was a

compromise," he states, espousing traditionalist tenets but very often defending them

rationally.[136] In the early 300/900s this distinction is problematic, since an

incontrovertibly Shāfiʿī scholar like Ibn Khuzayma proved one of the most ruthless critics

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[134] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:47-8.

[135] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 29.

[136] Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 70.

of those who upheld the created wording of the Qur'ān. Yet by the time of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in the mid-400/1000's, this intransigence on questions of rationalism had become a hallmark of the Ḥanbalī school, not the Shāfiʿī. Al-Khaṭīb began his scholarly career as a Ḥanbalī, but moved to the Shāfiʿī camp after his Ḥanbalī cohorts relentlessly criticized his indulgence in Ashʿarī rationalist discourse. Ibn al-Jawzī, a later Ḥanbalī openly offended by al-Khaṭīb's defection, notes how the newly christened Shāfiʿī began mocking Ibn Ḥanbal's legendary intransigence on the issue of the created Qur'ān.[137] An incontestable Shāfiʿī, al-Dāraquṭnī distrusted a reliance on reason and rejected famous ḥadīths praising it. Yet he also evinced an appreciation for the use of *kalām*. He reportedly told Abū Dharr al-Harawī that one of the founding members of the Ashʿarī school, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), was "the *imām* of Muslims and the defender of the religion (*al-dhābb ʿan al-dīn*)."[138] Despite his personal aversion to speculation, al-Dāraquṭnī had himself written a refutation of the Muʿtazila and probably understood its utility in defending against rationalist opponents.

Perhaps the most effective way to identify the two strands, however, is through personal relationships and textual transmission. Daphna Ephrat asserts that even after the dawn of the *madrasa* and the distinct Sunni *madhhab*s in the late fifth/eleventh century, it was the bonds of personal loyalty between teachers and their students that proved the most cohesive.[139] In the long fourth century both the emerging Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī camps

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[137] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:132.

[138] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:202.

[139] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 88. For a fascinating study on the tight links between the development of Sufism in Khurāsān and the Shāfiʿī tradition, see Margaret Malamud, "Sufi

expressed themselves most clearly through the teachings of specific individuals with strong attachments to the legacies of the two eponymous founders. The nascent schools extended out from these individuals, whom Melchert refers to as "local chiefs,"[140] through teacher/student relationships and through the study of formative texts.

At the epicenter of the Shāfiʿī pedagogical and textual tradition were his most prominent students, Rabīʿ and al-Muzanī. Their student Ibn Khuzayma became a bastion of the Shāfiʿī tradition in his native Naysābūr. Another student of Rabīʿ, Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī (d. 294/906) of Samarqand, became one of the first scholars to discuss the "*madhhab*" of al-Shāfiʿī and elaborate his stances on legal theory.[141] Later Baghdad scholars such as Ibn Surayj and Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī also served as pivots for the Shāfiʿī tradition during the long fourth century. In addition to scholarly relationships with these pillars, the Shāfiʿī tradition propagated itself through the transmission of its formative text, al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Shāfiʿī's *Umm*. While the Shāfiʿī scholar al-Ismāʿīlī produced an independent treatise on legal theory, many of the nascent school's adherents preferred to write commentaries or studies on the *Mukhtaṣar*.

The tradition of Ibn Ḥanbal likewise propagated itself through a network of scholars tied closely to the school's two formative texts, Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* and what developed as the definitive collection of his legal opinions. Ibn Ḥanbal's son ʿAbdallāh

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Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 3 (1994): 427-442, esp. 430.

[140] Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 87.

[141] Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *al-Sunna*, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baṣīrī (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1422/2001), 231. The entire second half of this work consists of a discussion of al-Shāfiʿī's school of thought on the issue of abrogation (*naskh*).

served as the most committed transmitter of his teachings, crafting a finished draft of his father's *Musnad*. Abū Bakr al-Qaṭīʿī transmitted the *Musnad* from Ibn Ḥanbal's son and became a central figure in disseminating his teachings. The earliest extant collection of Ibn Ḥanbal's legal and doctrinal responsa, the *Kitāb al-masā'il*, was the work of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī.[142] Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī also collected a selection of Ibn Ḥanbal's *responsa*, and later the school claimed his son Ibn Abī Ḥātim as a member. Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923-4) traveled extensively in a quest to unite Ibn Ḥanbal's legal legacy and compiled a massive collection of his opinions as well as other works, such Ibn Ḥanbal's *ʿilal*. He also compiled the first roster of Ḥanbalīs. Al-Khallāl's student Abū al-Qāsim al-Khiraqī (d. 334/945-6) edited his master's work and produced the school's formative legal text, the *Mukhtaṣar*.[143]

The intellectual landscape of Iraq and Iran in the long fourth century thus consisted of three dominant schools: the Ḥanafī *ahl al-raʾy*, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnīs and the nascent Shāfiʿī tradition. In order to place the network of *Ṣaḥīḥayn* scholars in this milieu, we can identify Shāfiʿīs as exhibiting three major characteristics. Firstly, they are not Ḥanafī. Secondly, they tend to be more moderate than their über-Sunni counterparts. Finally, they exist within a network of personal and textual relationships with bastions of the school such as Ibn Khuzayma and al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*.

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[142] This work has been published as Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb masā'il al-imām Aḥmad*, 16 vols. (Beirut: Muḥammad Amīn Damaj, [197-]).

[143] For more information, see Laoust, "Ḥanābila," *EI²*; Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 179-188; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 144-6; Nimrod Hurvitz, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: From Piety to Power* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2002), 78-90.

Oddly, not a single scholar from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network is claimed as Ḥanafī in the definitive rosters of the school.[144] While Ḥanafī scholars did not participate in the study of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, they did play noted roles in the transmission of the two texts.[145] According to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the critical transmitter of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn Sufyān, was probably Ḥanafī.[146] Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ṣaffār (d. 471/1078-9), one of the most prolific transmitters of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from al-Kushmīhanī, was Ḥanafī.[147] Abū Ṭālib al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Hāshimī (d. 512/1118-1119), one of the main transmitters of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from the famous Meccan female student of al-Kushmīhanī, Karīma al-Marwaziyya, was also Ḥanafī.[148]

It is perplexing why Ḥanafīs would actively and enthusiastically transmit al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s but not study the works. One possible explanation lies in the function of the *mustakhraj*s that sparked the flurry of interest in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. *Mustakhraj*s were interpretations of formative texts that allowed transmission-based scholars to express and elaborate their relationship with the source of hermeneutic

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[144] The most comprehensive is the *Jawāhir al-muḍiyya* of Ibn Abī al-Wafā' (d. 775/1374). For an earlier list, al-ʿAbbādī's *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-shāfiʿiyya* includes a lengthy list of scholars whom this fifth/eleventh-century scholar considered Ḥanafī; al-ʿAbbādī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā'*, 2 ff.

[145] Here we must note the work of Abū al-Layth al-Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983-4 or 393/1002-3), a Ḥanafī jurist and exegete of Transoxiana. One of his lesser known works, *al-Laṭā'if al-mustakhraja min Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Useful Niceties Derived from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*), would seem to have been small collection of the author's musing on elements from the *Ṣaḥīḥ* but could not have qualified as either a commentary on the work or a study of its ḥadīth science dimensions. The unique manuscript of the *Laṭā'if* was in the rare books library at Istanbul University, and was "lost" after the terrible 1999 earthquake. Some Turkish scholars debate whether the work ever existed.

[146] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 107; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:267. Ibn Sufyān is not, however, included in Ibn Abī al-Wafā''s *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya fī ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafiyya*.

[147] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 3:215; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:245.

[148] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:32.

authority in Islam. For Ḥanafīs this role was already played by the school's formative

legal texts. For them the chain of legal scholars emanating from Abū Ḥanīfa and his

students provided that link to the Prophet's message.

Neither did the network of *Ṣaḥīḥayn* scholars identify with the Ḥanbalī/über-

Sunni tradition. Only one member of this group, Ibn Manda, is listed as Ḥanbalī in Ibn

Abī Yaʿlā's *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*.[149] The Ḥanbalī school seemed to prefer critics of al-

Bukhārī or Muslim such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and his son Ibn Abī Ḥātim.[150] None of the

well-known Ḥanbalīs of the period, such as Abū Bakr al-Najjād (d. 348/959-60) of

Baghdad, Abū Bakr al-Ājurrī (d. 360/971) and al-Ḥasan b. Ḥāmid al-Warrāq (d.

403/1012-13), appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network. Given al-Bukhārī's pariah status among

über-Sunnis, it is not difficult to understand why they did not participate in the study and

transmission of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. We have already discussed how the dominant scholarly

presence in Naysābūr of the über-Sunnis Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj played a central

part in preventing the study of al-Bukhārī's collection in that city. The attitude of über-

Sunni members of the Baghdad scholarly community did not differ. Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-

Barbahārī (d. 329/940-1) was one of the Ḥanbalī tradition's most outspoken advocates in

Baghdad. He never mentions al-Bukhārī in his manifesto of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* creed, the

Sharḥ al-sunna (Explanation of the Sunna), but he does assert that anyone who says that

the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān is created is a heretic (*mubtadiʿ*).[151] Although he did not officially

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[149] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:142-3.

[150] Laoust, "Ḥanābila," *EI²*.

[151] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Barbahārī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Khālid b. Qāsim al-Raddādī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣamīʿī; Riyadh: Dār al-Salaf, 1421/2000), 92.

belong to the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Aḥmad **Ibn Shāhīn** (d. 385/996)

provides another interesting example of this scholarly strain in the Abbasid capital. Ibn

Shāhīn heard from many of the same teachers as his contemporary al-Dāraquṭnī, whom

he enlisted at least once to review his ḥadīth corpus.[152] Yet Ibn Shāhīn is completely

absent in the network of *Ṣaḥīḥayn* scholars. In his *Sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-sunna wa*

maʿrifat sharāʾiʿ al-dīn wa al-tamassuk biʾl-sunan (Explanation of the Ways of the *Ahl*

al-Sunna, Knowledge of Religious Law and Clinging to the Sunna), he echoes al-

Barbahārī by narrating that anyone who says that the *lafẓ* of the Qurʾān is created is

Jahmī, or worse.[153]

Still, how do we explain the absence of über-Sunni interest in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*?

Unlike al-Bukhārī, he was not tainted by the *lafẓ* scandal. It seems most likely that in the

first half of the fourth/tenth century Muslim's collection was simply not well-circulated

in the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni bastion of Baghdad. We do know that the work had limited

circulation in places like Jurjān and seems to have been relatively unknown in the Ḥijāz

through the first half of the fourth/tenth century. Al-ʿUqaylī (d. 323/934) of Mecca knew

al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* intimately but never refers to Muslim in any form in his

Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ. That al-ʿUqaylī totally rejects a ḥadīth found in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* without

mentioning the work reinforces the notion that he was ignorant of it.[154] Another notable

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[152] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11:264-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:107.

[153] Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Aḥmad Ibn Shāhīn, *Sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-sunna wa maʿrifat sharāʾiʿ al-dīn wa al-tamassuk biʾl-sunan*, ed. ʿĀdil b. Muḥammad (Cairo: Muʾassasat Qurṭuba, 1415/1995), 32.

[154] This ḥadīth is, "If two caliphs receive allegiance kill the second of them...(*idhā būyiʿa li-khalīfatayn fa-ʾqtulū al-ākhir minhumā...*), and al-ʿUqaylī criticizes it in his biography of Faḍāla b. Dīnār, saying: "Narration on this topic is not sound (*wa al-riwāya fī hādhā al-bāb ghayr thābit*)." We know this

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non-Khurāsānī ḥadīth scholar of the mid 300/900s, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmahurmuzī, likewise makes no mention of Muslim.

Unlike the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis, members of the Shāfiʿī tradition actively accommodated al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In their treatises on the Sunni creed and proper *ahl al-sunna* stances, both al-Barbahārī and Ibn Shāhīn had implicitly condemned al-Bukhārī for his stance on the *lafẓ* issue. The later Shāfiʿī al-Lālakāʾī, however, affirms both al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's worthiness as commendable Sunnis. His *Kitāb al-sunna* focuses overwhelmingly on the controversial sectarian issues of the nature of the Qurʾān and the definition of faith (*īmān*). Yet he cites al-Bukhārī as one of a small set of exemplary figures who upheld the Sunni definition of faith as including both a profession of belief and proper practice (*qawl wa ʿamal*). Al-Lālakāʾī lists al-Bukhārī in the company of al-Awzāʿī, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfiʿī and al-Muzanī, even including two quotations from him.[155] He also lists both al-Bukhārī and Muslim as two of the scholars who upheld the uncreated nature of the Qurʾān, along with Abū Zurʿa, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Abū Dāwūd.[156] Al-Lālakāʾī's book, in fact, represents the first work in the Sunni creed genre to accept al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network proved fairly accommodating to rationalists as well. Both Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī and Abū Dharr al-Harawī were Ashʿarīs, and al-Ismāʿīlī had marked rationalist tendencies.

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represents a blanket dismissal of the ḥadīth because when al-ʿUqaylī merely criticizes narrations he uses the term 'wajh'; al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ*, 3:1144.

[155] Al-Lālakāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa*, 5:959.

[156] Al-Lālakāʾī, *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa*, 1:302.

Of the forty-four scholars in the network who composed works on the *Saḥīḥayn*,

fully fourteen (32%) directly studied with or instructed Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Ibn

Khuzayma, Ibn Surayj, Rabīʿ al-Murādī or al-Muzanī. Six (14%) of them either wrote

books based on al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar* or composed their own works on al-Shāfiʿī's

legal method. Ten (23%) are later explicitly referred to as Shāfiʿīs by al-Dhahabī. He

calls Abū al-Naḍr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. 344/955) "*shaykh al-shāfiʿiyya*,"

which should not surprise us since he studied extensively with Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-

Marwazī in Samarqand.[157] Abū al-Walīd Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Umawī of Naysābūr

(d. 344/955) studied *fiqh* in Baghdad with Abū al-ʿAbbās Ibn Surayj and composed legal

rulings (*aḥkām*) for the *madhhab*. He even had a ring patterned after Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān's

and al-Shāfiʿī's rings.[158]

IV.8. Intense Canonical Process: Imagining a New Epistemological Status for Ḥadīth Books

The long fourth century had not simply seen a profound interest in the *Saḥīḥayn*

among a relatively limited network of scholars. In this period before the canonization of

the two works, we also see the appearance of what Frank Kermode called a "canonical

habit of mind" in the Muslim community in general.[159] For the first time Muslim scholars

began discussing the ḥadīth tradition in terms that endowed certain books with a sense of

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[157] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Saḥīḥayn*, 176; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:73; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:311-12; cf. al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā'*, 77.

[158] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 90; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:75; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8; cf. al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā'*, 74.

[159] Kermode, "The Canon," 601.

communal and epistemological preeminence. Among ḥadīth scholars this derived from personal convictions about the broad acceptance and overwhelming utility of certain books. For legal theorists this resulted from an increased application of the notion of the community's authoritative consensus, ijmā ʿ, to the ḥadīth corpus. What lay behind both these perceptions, however, was a new conception of what kind of authority certain ḥadīths and specific ḥadīth collections could exercise. It was in this period that the Sunni community imagined a new epistemological status for ḥadīth works.

The notion of authoritative consensus (ijmā ʿ) has ancient origins in Islam. In addition to functioning as one of the primary means of justifying decisions during the time of the Companions and their followers, it arose quickly as a tool in debates between the early schools of law in cities like Kufa.[160] By the time of the eponymous founders of the four madhhabs, ḥadīths were circulating that established the consensus of the community as a source of legal and doctrinal authority. One of the most famous was the tradition in which the Prophet says, "My community will not agree on error (lā tajtamiʿu ummatī ʿalā al-ḍalāla)."[161] In correspondences between al-Awzāʿī and Abū Ḥanīfa's chief disciple Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), each contested the other's claim that his stances

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[160] Hallaq, A History of Islamic Legal Theories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20. For more discussion on the development of ijmā ʿ, see idem, "On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus," International Journal of Middle East Studies 18 (1986): 427-54. An important step that needs to be taken in fixing the emergence of the notion of consensus is properly dating a report that Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī cites by a chain of transmission from the Sucessor ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, "What the umma has come together on is stronger for us than the isnād (mā ijmaʿat ʿalahyi al-umma aqwā ʿindanā min al-isnād)"; Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī and Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, [1351-1357/1932-1938]), 3:314 (biography of ʿAṭāʾ).

[161] Wahba al-Zuḥaylī, Uṣūl al-fiqh al-islāmī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1406/1986), 1:488. See also, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī, ed. Abū al-Wafāʾ al-Afghānī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1414/1993, reprint of the Lajnat Iḥyāʾ al-Maʿārif al-Nuʿmāniyya edition from Hyderabad, citations are to Beirut edition), 1:299.

enjoyed the consensus of the Muslim community.[162] Later, al-Shāfiʿī and Ibn Ḥanbal

grew very skeptical of such claims about *ijmāʿ*. Although they acknowledged that it

existed as a source of authority among Muslims, they limited it to fundamental issues,

such as the ordination of the five daily prayers, that truly enjoyed total communal

consensus. Their skepticism was well-founded, as the later Shāfiʿī jurist Abū Isḥāq al-

Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) estimated that "the questions on which *ijmāʿ* has been invoked

(*masāʾil al-ijmāʿ*) number more than twenty thousand."[163]

By the time of al-Shāfiʿī in the early third/ninth century the notion of universally

agreed-upon precedent from the Prophet was manifesting itself in scholarly discourse.

Al-Shāfiʿī placed "*sunna* on which consensus has been achieved" on the same level of

legal compulsion as the Qurʾān. As opposed to ḥadīth with limited attestation (*khāṣṣ*),

those who knowingly rejected such reports must repent immediately.[164] Even later in the

thought of the Ibn Surayj, however, this articulation remained primitive.[165]

Al-Ṭabarī discussed these most authoritative instances of the Prophet's sunna in

the more technical terms of ḥadīth study. These were reports so widely transmitted

(*mustafīḍ qāṭiʿan*) that they are epistemologically certain. Indeed, rejecting them places

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[162] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 260-1; Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Islamic Juristic Terminology before Šāfiʿī: A Semantic Analysis with Special Reference to Kūfa," *Arabica* 19 (1972): 282-7.

[163] Al-Zuḥaylī, *Uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1:489.

[164] See Norman Calder, "*Ikhtilāf* and *Ijmāʿ* in al-Shafiʿiʾs *Risala*," *Studia Islamica* 58 (1983): 60, 74-8.

[165] Ibn Surayj, "al-Wadāʾiʿ li-manṣūṣ al-sharāʾiʿ," ed. Ṣāliḥ al-Duwaysh (unpublished manuscript), 2:672-3. Here Ibn Surayj states that the consensus of the umma on a report is merely one way in which a ḥadīth is established as legally compelling. I am totally indebted to my friend and colleague Ahmed El Shamsy of Harvard University for this citation and for providing me with the text itself.

one outside the pale of Islam. These include reports such as the ḥadīth ordering stoning

as a punishment for adultery.[166] More importantly, however, on two occasions al-Ṭabarī

refers to certain reports that are not massively transmitted (āḥād) but nonetheless convey

a great deal of certainty. Al-Ṭabarī describes a ḥadīth in which God states that He will

remove certain people from Hellfire after they have been appropriately punished for their

sins as coming from "someone whose transmission prohibits error, oversight or lying and

yields certainty (ʿilm)...."[167] We thus see nascent in al-Ṭabarī's thought the idea that

certain transmitters or collectors could themselves guarantee the authenticity and

epistemological yield of non-massively transmitted (āḥād) ḥadīths.

The concept of universally agreed-upon ḥadīths extended beyond Sunni circles.

The Muʿtazilite Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī writes in his *Qubūl al-akhbār* that the ultimate

test for determining a good narrator or report is its accordance with the Qurʾān, the sunna

"agreed upon by consensus (mujmaʿ ʿalayhi)," the ijmāʿ of the umma, the ways of the

early community and the Muʿtazilite slogans of justice (ʿadl) and God's unicity

(tawḥīd).[168]

Although Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī lived a century later than these scholars, his

work nonetheless affords an interesting glimpse into the place of ḥadīth consensus in

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[166] Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 161.

[167] Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 185. For the other instance, see 212. Although he does not cite it from any sources, this ḥadīth appears in the Ṣaḥīḥayn. See Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-riqāq, bāb ṣifāt al-janna wa al-nār; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb ithbāt al-shafāʿa wa ikhrāj al-muwaḥḥidīn min al-nār. Another ḥadīth he cites in this context appears in the collections of Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn Khuzayma.

[168] Al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akhbār*, 1:17. Even earlier, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-9) had mentioned a report accepted by consensus (khabar mujtamaʿ ʿalayhi) as one of the four sources of knowledge, citing the founder of the Muʿtazilite school, Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/750), as the originator of this idea; Marie Bernand, "la Notion de ʿIlm chez les premiers Muʿtazilites," *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972): 26.

sectarian debates. One of the chief impediments he faced in his dialectical handbook for debating Imāmī Shiites was the different repertoires of ḥadīths from which the two sides drew proof texts. As a solution to this lack of common ground, al-Iṣbahānī proposed that "the recourse at that point is to what the *umma* has agreed on after the Prophet (ṣ), and those authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) reports (*akhbār*) from him that the scholars have transmitted and are **uncontested** (*lā dāfiʿlahā*)."[169] Abū Nuʿaym is not admitting any parity between Sunni and Shiite ḥadīths; quite the opposite, he maintains that Sunnis actually uphold standards for using ḥadīths as proof texts, while Shiites use forged reports.[170] But here we see the notion of shared and commonly accepted material that neither camp can contest.

The epistemological status of these universally accepted reports and their role in deriving law also began receiving more attention in the long fourth century. Unlike al-Shāfiʿī and Ibn Ḥanbal, who believed *āḥād* traditions of the Prophet could be used to determine issues of dogma and abrogate Qurʾānic verses, the Ḥanafī tradition remained very wary of endowing these relatively uncorroborated reports with such authority. The concept of universally accepted ḥadīths, however, emerged as a common ground acceptable to Ḥanafīs. Like al-Ṭabarī, the early Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Jaṣṣāṣ of Rayy (d. 370/982) acknowledged that there exists a category of reports that lack massive transmission (*tawātur*, *istifāḍa*) but nonetheless convey epistemological certainty.[171] For these *āḥād* ḥadīths to yield such knowledge and function in abrogating

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[169] Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 244. Although he does not cite any collections, the ḥadīths he then presents are all found in either al-Bukhārī or Muslim, with one in al-Tirmidhī's collection.

[170] Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 241.

[171] For a discussion of al-Jaṣṣāṣ's legal theory, see Marie Bernand, "Ḥanafī *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* through a Manuscript of al-Ǧaṣṣāṣ," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 4 (1985): 623-35.

Qur'ānic verses, for example, certain indications (dalāla) must accompany them assuring their authenticity. These include reports that enjoy the consensus (ijmā') of the umma's scholars, such as the report denying members of a family guaranteed a portion of the deceased's estate from receiving additional inheritance (lā waṣiyya li-wārith).[172] Following the earlier Ḥanafī scholar ʿĪsā b. Abān, al-Jaṣṣāṣ states that āḥād reports that are used in important issues of dogma and ritual (umūr al-diyānāt) must be widespread (shāʾiʿa mustafīḍa) in the umma, which accepts (talaqqathā) and acts on them.[173]

Among ḥadīth scholars, this new epistemological status attainable by ḥadīths is evident in a revised historical conception of the ḥadīth tradition. This new vision viewed the ṣaḥīḥ movement in general and certain collections in particular as loci of scholarly consensus. While previously we have seen that scholars such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim identified the pinnacle of the ḥadīth tradition with the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and ignored the existence of the ṣaḥīḥ movement, Ibn Manda's perspective is very different. Like Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn Ḥibbān, he lists the generations (ṭabaqāt) of ḥadīth scholars up to the generation of Ibn Ḥanbal, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Maʿīn. In a novel step, however, he then mentions the "four imāms" who produced the ṣaḥīḥ books: al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasāʾī. He notes other, less impressive installments of the

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[172] Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Uṣūl al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-musammā al-Fuṣūl fī al-uṣūl, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Tāmir, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1420/2000), 1:532-5. The numerous narrations of this ḥadīth have been individually criticized, but scholars have generally agreed that the text of the ḥadīth is too widely attested and has been accepted too widely to be false. Al-Shāfiʿī even described it as effectively mutawātir; Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ, 5:467-9; cf. Abū Ibrāhīm Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī, Tawḍīḥ al-afkār li-maʿānī Tanqīḥ al-anẓār, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn ʿUwayḍa, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1997), 1:229.

[173] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Uṣūl, 1:548. Such reports include the ḥadīth of the Prophet accepting the word of one Bedouin that the new moon of Ramaḍān was visible.

ṣaḥīḥ movement as well, such as the works of al-Dārimī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Khuzayma and

Aḥmad b. Abī ʿĀṣim al-Nabīl. Although they followed in the footsteps of the four

*imām*s, "they were less skilled."[174] This generation that Ibn Manda describes as studying

at the hands of Ibn Ḥanbal and his cohort, however, has achieved an unprecedented

station. "Al-Bukhārī, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Ḥulwānī, al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zurʿa, Abū Ḥātim,

Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī... make up the generation (*tabaqa*) accepted [by all]

by consensus, and their knowledge trumps all others (*wa bi- ʿilmihim yuḥtajju ʿalā sāʾir*

al-nās)."[175] Ibn Manda thus articulates the notion that the generation of al-Bukhārī and

Muslim represents a compelling concentration of knowledge agreed upon by all. More

importantly, this mastery is articulated in the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections of four scholars who

embody the authority of their age.

Implicit in Ibn Manda's genealogy of the ḥadīth tradition is the same problem that

Abū Nuʿaym faced in his polemic: the vast corpus of ḥadīths had become too broad and

diverse to be succinctly studied and employed. Specific outstanding collections that

embody the utility of the ḥadīth tradition should thus be viewed as common references.

Ibn Manda echoes a statement attributed to the Egyptian ḥadīth scholar and transmitter of

al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353/964). Disturbed by the great number of ḥadīth

collections flooding the book markets, a group of ḥadīth scholars gathered at Ibn al-

Sakan's house asking him to direct them to what books they should study at the expense

of others. Ibn al-Sakan entered his house and reemerged with four books, saying "these

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[174] Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma*, 42-43; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 14:135 (biography of al-Nasāʾī).

[175] Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma*, 67-8.

are the foundations (*qawā'id*) of Islam: the books of Muslim, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī."[176] These four collections are thus not only the most important for students of ḥadīth, they also provide the common references to be shared by all. Ibn al-Sakan's own *ṣaḥīḥ* work, in fact, may have been little more than a digest of these four books.[177]

The notion that a ḥadīth collection can serve as the locus for consensus and as legal and doctrinal common ground appears even more clearly in the work of Ibn Manda's contemporary, al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998). He states in the introduction of his commentary on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* that the collection is:

> a noble book unique in the science of religion... approved by all people. It has become the ultimate recourse for differences of opinion amongst the various sects of the learned and the generations of scholars... the people of Iraq, Egypt, the lands of the West, and still more from among the cities and regions of the Earth, rely upon it.[178]

Acknowledging the Khurāsānī cradle of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, he notes that the scholars of that region preferred those two works and books based on their requirements, although he personally considers Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* more legally useful.[179] Al-Khaṭṭābī describes al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in language similar to but less grandiose than his accolades of the *Sunan*, with an emphasis on authenticity as opposed to legal utility:

> It has become a treasure for [our] religion, a mine for [its] sciences. It has become, due to the quality of its criticism (*naqdihi*) and the severity of its

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[176] Ibn Ḥazm 'Alī b. Aḥmad, "[Two Ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* – One from al-Bukhārī and One from Muslim – that Ibn Ḥazm Considers Forgeries]," MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, 28b; al-Maqdisī, *Shurūṭ*, 16; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:93.

[177] Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī, *Bughyat al-rāghib al-mutamannī fī khatm al-Nasā'ī*, ed. Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm b. Zakariyyā (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1991), 38.

[178] Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma'ālim al-sunan*, 1:6.

[179] Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma'ālim al-sunan*, 1:6.

articulation (*sabk*) a judge (*ḥakam*) in the umma in what is sought out from among ḥadīths as authentic or weak.[180]

Ibn Manda, Ibn al-Sakan and al-Khaṭṭābī provide no extensive or concrete explanations for their evaluations of these works as loci of consensus in law and ḥadīth. Neither do they articulate their specific authority or epistemological yield. What is nonetheless clear, however, is that the community of transmission-based legal scholars was beginning to see a proto-canon of ḥadīth collections as extant and necessary.

IV.9. Why the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*?

When examining the *mustakhraj* and *ʿilal / ilzāmāt* phenomena, one cannot help but ask why these fleeting genres focused so predominantly on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The resilient regional barriers of the first half of the long fourth century cannot provide a full explanation for the nature of the *mustakhraj* genre, since the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were not the only collections used as templates even within one region. Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* enjoyed favored status in his home city of Naysābūr, but the city and its environs also saw the production of three *mustakhraj*s based on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, two on al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmiʿ*, and one *mustakhraj* of Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (with Ibn al-Jārūd's *Muntaqā* a possible second). Scholars in Naysābūr thus could and did see other collections as attractive and available formative texts.

Having exhausted the path of material constraint, we must ultimately turn to matters of functionalism and scholarly preference. As al-Ismāʿīlī, Ibn ʿUqda and Abū ʿAlī

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[180] Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Saʿd Āl-Suʿūdī, 4 vols. (Mecca: Muʾassasat Makka li-al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Iʿlām, [n.d]), 1:102.

al-Naysābūrī's testimonies prove, many scholars of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network simply felt

that a specific work was the most accurate and useful presentation of the Prophet's

legacy. Al-Ismāʿīlī favored al-Bukhārī's collection over Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Abū Dāwūd's

Sunan and the *Sunan* of al-Ḥulwānī (d. 243/857-8) because in his eyes it provided a more

authentic selection of ḥadīths and a better analysis of their legal content. Conversely, Ibn

ʿUqda felt Muslim's work outshone al-Bukhārī's because it was more purely a collection

of ḥadīths without the incomplete narrations and commentary added for legal elucidation.

Al-Ismāʿīlī and Ibn ʿUqda were attracted to the differing functional methodologies of al-

Bukhārī and Muslim, but why did Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī favor Muslim's work above all

others? Such matters of scholarly preference lie beyond our ken.

Certainly, if ḥadīth scholars of the long fourth century hoped to prove the quality

of their *isnād*s by composing *mustakhraj*s, it seems logical to choose the most rigorous

collections as templates. This explains why all the template collections were products of

the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement and not earlier works like Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. In fact, the only work

one might call a *mustakhraj* of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, the *Kitāb al-tamhīd* of Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d.

463/1071), was effectively an attempt to place Mālik's work on equal footing with other

ṣaḥīḥ books. Because the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is replete with ḥadīths lacking complete *isnād*s, Ibn

ʿAbd al-Barr set out to collect complete narrations. As Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr makes clear in

his introduction, one of his goals in the *Tamhīd* is to establish Mālik's book according to

the language and requirements of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement.[181]

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[181] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-maʿānī wa al-asānīd*, ed. Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Bakrī, 2nd ed., 26 vols. (Rabat: Wizārat ʿUmūm al-Awqāf wa al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982), 1:7.

The nature of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also partly explains why they were the only works to prompt *ʿilal* or *ilzāmāt* studies in this period. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were two of the only scholars to purpose works devoted solely to *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths. Others such as Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī acknowledged that they relied on weak or lackluster narrations when necessary. Consequently, as al-Khaṭṭābī noted, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the notion of their authors' "conditions (*sharṭ, rasm*)" proved attractive targets for study. Only with works that set uniform standards could one apply these standards elsewhere. Only with authors who claimed to include only authentic material could one object that certain ḥadīths fell short of this measure.

Yet even in this matter, we cannot escape the aesthetics of critical preference. Ibn Khuzayma also sets up a clear requirement for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) on the first page of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. But despite the arguably unparalleled accolades al-Ḥākim grants him, al-Ḥākim found Ibn Khuzayma an unsatisfactory judge of authentic reports (*ṣiḥḥa*).[182] Although some scholars like al-Khaṭīb said that Ibn Khuzayma's work deserved mention alongside the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, his collection never accumulated critical studies.[183]

IV.10. Conclusion: The Eve of Canonization

Having explored the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network of the long fourth century, we find ourselves on the eve of their canonization. Among Muʿtazilites, ḥadīth-minded Sunnis

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[182] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 313.

[183] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, 2:185. It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century that ʿUmar b. ʿAlī Ibn Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401) added the men of Ibn Khuzayma to al-Mizzī's ever-expanding biographical dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters; Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Laḥẓ al-liḥāẓ*, ed. Zakariyyā ʿUmayrāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1419/1998), 130.

like al-Ṭabarī, the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī theorist al-Jaṣṣāṣ and even in the realm of Sunni-Shiite polemic, there had arisen the idea that ḥadīths could enjoy the consensus of the *umma* and thus wield tremendous epistemological authority. Among transmission-based scholars this concept expressed itself in a proto-canon of ḥadīth collections that certain scholars felt provided loci of legal and narrative consensus.

But how did this period of intense study affect al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works? One can best answer this question by referring to *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth collections that never attained canonical status. In his brief explanation of why *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* did not become one of the famous Six Books, the Azhar scholar Muḥammad al-Qīʿī states curtly that Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) narrated from unknown transmitters (*majāhīl*).[184] This negative evaluation of Ibn Ḥibbān's work originated as early as the writings of his own student, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.[185] Yet as our review of transmitter studies has shown, the earliest work on al-Bukhārī's teachers freely admits that at least one of his sources in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* was also unknown. It was only after another two generations of study that al-Kalābādhī discovered the identity of this transmitter. Ibn Ḥibbān died almost a century after al-Bukhārī and lived in an era that he himself bemoaned as a sad time, when people no longer wrote *ṣaḥīḥ* books.[186] Had his *Ṣaḥīḥ* received the generations of scholarly attention devoted to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* during the long fourth century, it might also have been purged of unknown transmitters. Al-Ḥākim might have read it with glowing approval.

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[184] Muḥammad al-Qīʿī, *Qānūn al-fikr al-islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Baṣā'ir, 1424/2004), 145.

[185] See al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:66; cf. al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:56.

[186] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:58.

Indeed, later scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1374) and Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404) did champion Ibn Ḥibbān's work as an exceptional source for authentic ḥadīth.[187] As we will see in the next chapter, they were simply too late.

Conversely, the extraordinary efforts of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network scholars to produce definitive texts of al-Bukhārī's collection and identify his methods and transmitters made the work an ideal candidate for canonization. As we shall see in the next chapter, it was claims about al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methods and transmitters that lay at the center of the case for their authority.

We must now also ask: How did this "period of intense canonical process" involve the community shaping and appreciating these texts in ways that made them "most meaningful and valuable?"[188] A number of scholars in the long fourth century immediately seized on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as formative texts for engaging the Prophetic legacy and expressing their relationship with it. Their interest spawned the period's concentrated studies of the two works. It was not, however, the need that drove the *mustakhraj* genre that would result in the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Expressing one's relationship to the Prophet's legacy and interpreting his teachings through living *isnād*s remained the unique obsession of ḥadīth scholars. The canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would have to involve a broader Muslim community.

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[187] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 1:256; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 23; al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 30; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 164-5.

[188] Sanders, 30.

It would be the *ilzāmāt* genre, which extended al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards for authenticity to new ḥadīths, that proved crucial. It was the standards of the two scholars that served as the measure of truth in which the authority of the lawmaker could be deposited and then extended into new territory. It is no surprise that the one scholar of the long fourth century to have dealt exclusively with the standards of the *Shaykhayn* is the one scholar we have conspicuously avoided until now. He is the focal point of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network to whom all roads lead. Until al-Ḥakim al-Naysābūrī's seminal career, we see that the nexus of canonicity, that of text, authority and communal identification, had not yet coalesced. Transmitters like Ibn al-Sakan, Abū Dharr al-Harawī and the various scholars who produced studies of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in effect succeeded in producing definitive, fully dimensional texts of the two works. But the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were not authoritative even for their local *mustakhraj* cults. Unlike most post-canonization critics, al-Ismāʿīlī, Ibn ʿAmmār and al-Dāraquṭnī included no word of apology or explanation for criticizing the two works. Before al-Ḥakim the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were simply tools and objects of interest for local communities of transmission-based scholars. After him, the canon had formed.

V.

CANON AND COMMUNITY:

AL-ḤĀKIM AL-NAYSĀBŪRĪ AND THE CANONIZATION OF THE *ṢAḤĪḤAYN*

V.1. Introduction

Around the turn of the fourth/tenth century, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of al-Bukhārī

and Muslim first emerged as *kanōn*s of authenticity. Representatives from the two

divergent strains of the transmission-based school, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the

nascent Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī camp, together agreed on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as common references for

the Prophet's authentic legacy. The study and exploration of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* took place at

the hands of a network of devoted ḥadīth scholars, but the canonization of the two works

would result from the activities of a different cadre. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī formed the

common link. He both inherited and participated in the study of al-Bukhārī's and

Muslim's collections, yet he employed the *ilzāmāt* genre for a new ideological purpose.

Al-Ḥākim's vision of the critical standards that the two scholars had followed in

compiling their works was designed to meet the demands of both Sunni ḥadīth scholars

and the ḥadīth-wary Muʿtazilites who rivaled them. Al-Ḥākim used the "standards of al-

Bukhārī and Muslim" as a measure of authenticity to extend this common requirement to

a vast new body of ḥadīths.

In the long fourth century, the broader Muslim community developed a new

vision of the authority that Prophetic ḥadīths could attain when validated by communal

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consensus. By the mid-fifth/eleventh century, this leap had led legal theorists from the

Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Mu'tazilite, Ḥanbalī and Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī schools to a common belief that

ḥadīths accepted by the umma yielded epistemological certainty. It was this principle

that two of al-Ḥākim's close associates, one from the budding Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī tradition

and the other from the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni school, would use to declare the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* a

common body of authentic ḥadīths agreed on by these two vying groups.

V.2. The Life and Works of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī

Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī was born in

321/933 in Naysābūr and began studying ḥadīth at the age of nine. Although throughout

his career he studied extensively with over two thousand teachers in Kufa, Rayy,

Baghdad, Ābādān, Hamadhān, Merv and Transoxiana, approximately half his teachers

hailed from his native Naysābūr.[1] His primary mentors in the sciences of ḥadīth

collection and criticism were three major members of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network: Abū 'Alī al-

Naysābūrī, Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraquṭnī, as well as Muḥammad b. 'Umar Ibn

al-Ji'ābī (d. 355/966).[2] Al-Ḥākim traveled twice to Baghdad for his studies, once as a

youth and again in 368/978-9.[3] Throughout his career he and his Baghdad teacher al-

Dāraquṭnī had an uneasy and tense relationship. Al-Ḥākim's student al-Khalīlī mentions

that his teacher sat and discussed (*nāẓara*) ḥadīth with al-Dāraquṭnī and that the latter was

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[1] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:163.

[2] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:165.

[3] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324.

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pleased with the student from Naysābūr.[4] In another report, however, it is said that when

al-Ḥākim arrived in Baghdad he asked to see al-Dāraquṭnī's collection of ḥadīths from a

certain *shaykh*. When the young scholar looked at the first ḥadīth and saw it was from a

transmitter whom he considered weak, he threw down the papers and never looked at

them again.[5] As we shall see, al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraquṭnī would remain in a continuous

correspondence characterized by serious disagreements over the nature of al-Bukhārī's

and Muslim's methods.

In Naysābūr's rigid division between the Ḥanafī school and the transmission-

based scholars, al-Ḥākim adhered firmly to the latter's moderate Shāfiʿī strain. He

studied the Shāfiʿī tradition with Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980) as well as others and

even composed a book on the virtues of the school's eponymous founder (*Faḍāʾil al-*

Shāfiʿī).[6] He complained about the way in which the Ḥanafī Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-

Bawraqī used to forge ḥadīths for that school, such as a report claiming that the Prophet

said, "There will be in my umma a man named Abū Ḥanīfa, and he will be its lamp...

and there will be in my umma a man named Muḥammad b. Idrīs [al-Shāfiʿī] whose strife

(*fitna*) is more harmful than that of Satan (*Iblīs*)."[7]

Like many participants in the early Shāfiʿī tradition, al-Ḥākim cultivated

relationships with practitioners of dialectical theology. In fact, he studied extensively

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[4] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324. Al-Subkī frankly admits that al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraquṭnī were often at odds; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:164.

[5] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:94. Al-Khaṭīb adds, "Or so he said (*aw kamā qāl*)."

[6] Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:164; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:156.

[7] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:379.

with two of the architects of the Ash'arī school. He attended the lessons of Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), who held him in high regard, and also produced a sizable selection (*intakhaba 'alayhi*) of ḥadīths from the famous Shāfi'ī jurist, legal theoretician and theologian Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027).[8]

Al-Ḥākim eventually became a leading member of the ḥadīth scholar community in Naysābūr. Not only was he sought out for opinions on the authenticity of ḥadīths and the reliability of narrators, he also exercised a great deal of authority in the community. One of al-Ḥākim's main teachers assigned him as the agent for his pious endowment (*waqf*) and charged him with running a small ḥadīth school called Dār al-Sunna.[9] Al-Ḥākim towered over the multitudes of students who flocked to the city to study the Prophet's legacy. The famous Sufi exegete, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), who was accused of forging ḥadīths for the Sufi cause, had heard a number of ḥadīths from the great Naysābūr *muḥaddith* Abū al-'Abbās al-Aṣamm (d. 346/957). Only after al-Ḥākim's oversight had ended with his death in 405/1014 at the age of eighty-four, however, could the Sufi openly transmit what he had heard to students.[10]

Al-Ḥākim's interest in ḥadīth dominated his *oeuvre*. Aside from his book on al-Shāfi'ī, a contribution to the Proofs of Prophecy (*Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*) genre, and his landmark biographical dictionary of Naysābūr, al-Ḥākim's works revolved around the science of ḥadīth criticism. Well before he reached the age of seventy he had written a

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[8] Cf. al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:162; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:164; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:438.

[9] 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 6.

[10] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:245.

selection of one ḥadīth from each of his teachers (muʿjam al-shuyūkh), a book of ʿilal, and

a ḥadīth work called Kitāb al-iklīl about the Prophet's campaigns for the local military

governor (Ṣāḥib al-jaysh).[11] Much more important, however, was the introduction to that

work, which served to familiarize the lay reader with the types of authentic and defective

(saqīm) reports as well as the levels of narrator criticism.[12] He also wrote an introduction

to his treatments of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, called al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ (or

al-Ṣaḥīḥayn), in which the author gives a tantalizing indication of his vision of the

Shaykhayn's criteria and their range of acceptable narrators. In addition, he states that he

wrote one book on each of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's criteria for authenticity as well as a

work on those reports that one of the two scholars had included to the exclusion of the

other.[13]

   Probably around the age of sixty-five, al-Ḥākim penned his famous and

comprehensive treatise on the sciences of ḥadīth, the Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth

(Knowledge of the Sciences of Ḥadīth). Divided into fifty-two chapters, this book

discusses the technical terms used in ḥadīth criticism and transmission, lists the different

generations of transmitters, gives brief biographies of major ḥadīth scholars and outlines

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[11] Al-Khalīlī, al-Irshād, 325.

[12] Al-Ḥākim, al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl, 51. We know al-Ḥākim had composed the Iklīl, its introduction, his Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ and his Muzakkī al-akhbār well before 389 AH, because we know his Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth was being transmitted widely as early as that date, and in that work the author refers the reader to the aforementioned mentioned books; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 4:157; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:162.

[13] This last work was titled Mā infarada kull wāḥid min al-imāmayn bi-ikhrājihi. For lists of al-Ḥākim's oeuvre, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ṭabaqāt, 1:199-200; al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 17:170; al-Ḥākim, Tārīkh Nīshābūr, 38-42 (editor's introduction); al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 4:156. Al-Ḥākim had other small books on legal matters, such as a work called Kayfiyyat ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā (How to Pray the Late Morning Prayer), a work called Farāʾid al-fawāʾid and a forty ḥadīth collection, which was widely studied in Qazvīn; al-Rāfiʿī, al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn, 1:337, 341, 346; 2:45, 58.

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material essential for a ḥadīth student. Al-Ḥākim's opinions and the chapter structure of

his *Ma'rifa* would exercise tremendous influence on the genre of ḥadīth's technical

discipline (*musṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) for centuries.[14]

The work with which we are most concerned in this chapter was evidently one of

the last al-Ḥākim composed: a voluminous *ilzāmāt* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* entitled *al-*

Mustadrak. This work differed both qualitatively and quantitatively from the *ilzāmāt*

works of al-Ḥākim's teacher al-Dāraquṭnī and his student Abū Dharr al-Harawī. Unlike

al-Dāraquṭnī's diminutive *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt*, which consists of only one hundred and nine

ḥadīths, and Abū Dharr al-Harawī's lost *Mustadrak*, which was only one volume, al-

Ḥākim's *Mustadrak* is a multivolume work. Unlike al-Dāraquṭnī's random and incidental

collection of ḥadīths, the *Mustadrak* is organized topically in *muṣannaf* form.[15]

Al-Ḥākim's works on the technical discipline of ḥadīth study were widely read

even during his own lifetime, and several scholars responded to his work. His student al-

Khalīlī notes that al-Ḥākim was sometimes not sufficiently discriminating or clear in his

writings. The criticisms of his colleagues thus led him to review and clarify his work.[16]

'Abd al-Ghanī b. Sa'īd of Egypt (d. 409/1019), for example, wrote to al-Ḥākim with some

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[14] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's famous *Muqaddima*, for example, is based on the chapter structure of the *Ma'rifa*, to the extent that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ included a certain chapter (on *afrād*) which he felt was covered elsewhere simply because al-Ḥākim had a chapter on it; al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 95.

[15] The Cairo edition of the *Mustadrak* occupies five volumes; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādi'ī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1417/1997). See also Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 11. The *Mustadrak* has fewer chapters (47) than al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s, but seems to be inspired by both works' ordering. Only 3 chapters appear in the *Mustadrak* that do not appear in either of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (*kitāb al-hijra, kitāb qism al-fay'* and *kitāb tawārīkh al-mutaqaddimīn min al-anbiyā'*).

[16] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324.

criticisms of his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, for which al-Ḥākim thanked him.[17] Farther

west than Egypt, we know that even within the author's lifetime (by 389/998-9) some

ḥadīth scholars in Andalusia possessed copies of his *Maʿrifa*.[18] Al-Ḥākim was well-

known enough in the region within several decades of his death for Ibn Ḥazm (d.

456/1064), who never left Andalusia, to prominently note his opinion in the debate over

who was the most virtuous of the Prophet's Companions.[19] In the Islamic heartlands of

Iraq and Iran, al-Ḥākim's student Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī had a copy of his *Tārīkh*

Naysābūr, his *Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and probably many of his other books.[20] Although

al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī never met al-Ḥākim, he relies on information and reports from him

extensively through a myriad of intermediaries in his *Tārīkh Baghdād*.[21]

Yet al-Ḥākim's adherence to the moderate Shāfiʿī tradition and some of his

interpretive choices in his *Mustadrak* precipitated a clash with more conservative

members of the transmission-based community. Specifically, al-Ḥākim's statement that

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[17] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:168; this work has survived in manuscript form, entitled "Bayān awhām al-Ḥākim fī al-Madkhal," MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, Istanbul: fols. 200a- 206a.

[18] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:165-6.

[19] Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī, *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī al-milal wa al-ahwāʾ wa al-niḥal*, 5 vols. in 2 (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, [1964]), 4:111. Ibn Ḥazm notes that al-Ḥākim upheld the unusual position that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was the foremost Companion of the Prophet. Considering the controversy over al-Ḥākim's supposedly Shiite views (see below), however, such a report was most likely a product of polemics surrounding his position.

[20] See, for example, al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:73. See also n. 97 below.

[21] Al-Khaṭīb does not refer to al-Ḥākim as such in his biography of him, calling him Ibn al-Bayyiʿ instead. Most of the time al-Khaṭīb refers to him as Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Naysābūrī, but at least once he calls him al-Ḥākim; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:438.

two pro-Alid ḥadīths known as the ḥadīth *al-Ṭayr*[22] and the ḥadīth of *Ghadīr Khumm*[23] met the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim led certain ḥadīth scholars to accuse him of Shiism. These accusations are well documented; writing not long after al-Ḥākim's death, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī notes several reports about the ḥadīth *al-Ṭayr* and al-Ḥākim leaning towards Shiism.[24] Al-Ḥākim's student al-Khalīlī alludes to the accusations leveled against his teacher when he writes, "For me he was an ocean, and all that was hurled at him could not detract from that (*ra'aytuhu fī kull mā ulqiya 'alayhi baḥr*ᵃᵐ *lā yuJizuhu 'anhu*)."[25] More extreme reports have also survived, such as stories that ḥadīth scholars blockaded al-Ḥākim in his house and that he disliked Mu'āwiya so much that he could not bring himself to narrate a ḥadīth praising him in order to placate his opponents. Such reports, however, appear only in later sources compiled by al-Ḥākim's critics, such as Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam*.[26]

This accusation of Shiism was probably baseless, resembling the scandal that had earlier tarnished al-Bukhārī's reputation. Both he and al-Ḥākim were attacked by

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[22] In this ḥadīth the Prophet is eating a fowl and calls on God to "bring me the most beloved of your creation, (*kuntu akhdamu Rasūl Allāh {ṣ} fa-quddima li-Rasūl Allāh {ṣ} farakh mashwī...*)" at which point 'Alī enters and eats with the Prophet. See *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-manāqib, bāb manāqib 'Alī*.

[23] In this ḥadīth the Prophet says, "Whoever's master I am, 'Alī is his master (*man kuntu mawlāhu fa-'Alī mawlāhu*)." See Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1246), *al-Radd 'alā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 129; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:168. For these ḥadīths, see al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak: kitāb ma'rifat al-ṣaḥāba, bāb ba'd faḍā'il 'Alī*.

[24] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:94; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:109; Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180), *Mu'jam al-safar*, ed. 'Abdallāh 'Umar al-Bārūdī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), 99.

[25] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 325. The editor of this text vowels the word '*yuJizhu*,' which I think is incorrect.

[26] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:109-10.

extreme members of the transmission-based school for their more moderate stances. Al-Ḥākim's most vocal critics were all prominent über-Sunnis: the Ḥanbalī Khʷāje ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) and Ibn al-Jawzī.[27] Much like al-Shāfiʿī himself, al-Ḥākim's Shāfiʿī identity led to accusations of Shiism. Al-Shāfiʿī had based his legislation on issues of rebellion (al-bughāt) on the premise that ʿAlī had dealt righteously and appropriately with Muʿāwiya's uprising against the caliphate. Combined with his affection for the family of the Prophet, such thinking led to a trial before the Abbasid caliph in which al-Shāfiʿī had to defend himself against accusations of Shiism.[28] Al-Ḥākim upheld this Shāfiʿī position, quoting the great Shāfiʿī Ibn Khuzayma as saying that anyone who fought ʿAlī on the issue of the caliphate was a rebel (bāghin).[29]

The furor that al-Ḥākim caused with his approval of the two pro-Alid ḥadīths also seems to have been accidental. The ḥadīths themselves had been verified by earlier Sunni scholars such as al-Nasāʾī and al-Tirmidhī. In al-Ḥākim's time, however, the reports had become anathema to certain elements of the ḥadīth community. Whereas al-Nasāʾī was only vaguely criticized for not praising Muʿāwiya sufficiently, when a scholar of al-Ḥākim's time, Ibn al-Saqqāʾ (d. 371/981-2), narrated the ḥadīth al-Ṭayr in a mosque he was expelled, confined to his house, and the place where he sat in the mosque washed

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[27] See al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 17:174-5; Ibn Ḥajar, Lisān al-mīzān, 5:233; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 15:110.

[28] Al-Dhahabī, Maʿrifat al-ruwāt al-mutakallam fīhim bimā lā yūjibu al-radd, ed. Abū ʿAbdallāh Ibrāhīm Saʿīdāy (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1406/1986), 49-50; cf. Abū Zahra, al-Shāfiʿī, 22-3.

[29] This is based on the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet tells ʿAmmār b. Yāsir that he will be killed by the rebellious party (i.e., Muʿāwiya); al-Ḥākim, Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth, 105.

clean.[30] It thus seems probable that the accusations of Shiism resulted from al-Ḥākim's

Shāfiʿī approval of ʿAlī's position against Muʿāwiya and his authentication of two ḥadīths

that had become touchstones for anti-Shiite sentiment among the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

V.3. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in al-Ḥākim's Vision of Ḥadīth

As the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart in the previous chapter demonstrates, al-Ḥākim

acted as a magnet for studies of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work. Like his teacher, al-

Dāraquṭnī, al-Ḥākim's scholarly activities revolved around the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the methods

of their authors. Unlike earlier scholars such as al-Ismāʿīlī, however, al-Ḥākim's

appreciation for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* did not involve their legal merits. For al-Ḥākim, al-

Bukhārī and Muslim represented the pinnacle of skill and achievement in the realm of

ḥadīth criticism in particular. He writes in his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, that "All regions

testify to the superiority of Khurāsān in the knowledge of authentic ḥadīths... due to the

precedence of the two *imām*s, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Bukhārī and Abū al-Ḥusayn [Muslim] al-

Naysābūrī, and their lone mastery (*tafarrudihimā*) of that science."[31] Unlike the other

members of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network who viewed the works only as formative texts or

objects of study, al-Ḥākim endowed them with a loftier station. Al-Bukhārī's and

Muslim's books embodied the highest level of critical stringency, and for him they were

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[30] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:117. For the accusations of al-Nasāʾī, see ibid., 2:194-5; al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:199. That these two pro-Alid ḥadīths were particularly controversial in al-Ḥākim's time is also evidedent from the fact that scholars of this period devoted specific treatises to these reports. Abū al-ʿAbbās Ibn ʿUqda (d. 332/944) wrote a work on the ḥadīth of *Ghadīr Khumm*, and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and al-Ḥākim's student Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān (d. ca. 440/1048-9) wrote works on the ḥadīth of *al-Ṭayr*; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:206; cf. Aḥmad al-Ghumārī, *Fatḥ al-malik al-ʿalī bi-ṣiḥḥat ḥadīth bāb madīnat al-ʿilm ʿAlī*, ed. ʿImād Surūr ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1426/2005), 11-12.

[31] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 72.

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key pillars of the science of ḥadīth criticism itself. In the *Ma'rifa*'s chapter on authentic

ḥadīths, al-Ḥākim begins with a description of reports that seem to have authentic *isnāds*

but in fact possess fatal weaknesses perceptible only to master critics. He concludes that

if a ḥadīth does not have an *isnād* found in one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn,* one must subject it to

thorough examination for such hidden flaws (*'illa*).[32] Inclusion in one or both of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn thus tremendously bolsters the credibility of a narrator or his reports. In al-

Ḥākim's chapter on how ḥadīth scholars have treated narrators with non-Sunni beliefs, he

uses the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to demonstrate that mild heretics are acceptable sources. Abān b.

Taghlib (d. 140-1/757-9), for example, was a known Shiite who once narrated a ḥadīth

attacking the caliph 'Uthmān. But al-Ḥākim states that he is nonetheless "trustworthy,

with his ḥadīths included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn.*" Despite Mālik's rejection of Ibrāhīm b.

Ṭahmān (d. 168/784) for being a Murji'ite, al-Ḥākim defends him in the same manner.[33]

Al-Ḥākim did not, however, consider al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections

infallible. He himself criticizes some of Muslim's selections. He mentions a narration of

the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet states that the best generations are the first three

generations of Muslims, adding, "That ḥadīth is included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim b. al-

Ḥajjāj, but it has a remarkable flaw (*'illa 'ajība*)."[34] Such critiques come as no surprise,

since al-Ḥākim did not feel that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had designed their works to be

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[32] Al-Ḥākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 75.

[33] Al-Ḥākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 168-9. Al-Ḥākim lists Ibrāhīm as a one of the famous trustworthy *imāms* of his generation; ibid., 308. Al-Ḥākim himself states that one has to be a proselytizer of heresy to be placed outside the pale of *'adāla*; al-Ḥākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 67.

[34] Al-Ḥākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 52; cf. al-Dāraquṭnī, *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu'*, 501-2. See also al-Qanabī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd*, 137, for more examples.

totally free of error. In the introduction to his *Mustadrak*, he states that his work will

consist of ḥadīths meeting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards but that "it is not

possible to include [only] what has no flaws (*ʿilla*), for indeed they [al-Bukhārī and

Muslim] did not even claim this for themselves...."[35] Here we see the first of several

inconsistencies in al-Ḥākim's methodology. If the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are secure sources whose

*isnād*s require little critical attention, how can he so readily admit that they contain

flawed reports? We will be better able to solve this riddle once we have addressed al-

Ḥākim's purpose in employing the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

V.4. The *Shurūṭ* According to al-Ḥākim: The Requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

Although scholars such as Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī and al-Dāraquṭnī regularly

refer to the standards (*sharṭ / shurūṭ / rasm*) of al-Bukhārī or Muslim in their extant

works, al-Ḥākim seems to be the only scholar of the long fourth century to have devoted

specific treatises to this subject. These works have unfortunately been lost, but it appears

that they did not succeed in clearly explaining al-Ḥākim's school of thought on the topic.

The scholar's ambiguous and inconsistent writings on the requirements for *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths

in general and al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methodologies in particular have confounded

ḥadīth experts from al-Ḥākim's time to the present day.[36] It is therefore necessary to

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[35] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

[36] One of the more recent attempts to grasp al-Ḥākim's definition of the *shurūṭ* comes from Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī. See his *Ẓafar al-amānī*, ed. Taqī al-Dīn al-Nadawī (United Arab Emirates: Dār al-Qalam, 1415/1995), 69-71.

establish the most accurate understanding of al-Ḥākim's stance, which has generally been interpreted in one of three ways. First, al-Ḥākim's writings have led many scholars to believe that he considered the elimination of unknown transmitters from the *isnād* of a ḥadīth to be essential for its inclusion in both the general category of *ṣaḥīḥ* and in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Other scholars have interpreted al-Ḥākim's vision of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards as requiring what we will define as 'doubling transmission.' Finally, the third and most accurate camp has understood that al-Ḥākim intended both the above meanings in his definition of the *Shaykhayn*'s conditions.

V.4. a. Two *Rāwī*s and the Elimination of *Jahāla*

The first interpretation of al-Ḥākim's writings on the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim centers on the qualities of the transmitters they employed. The notion that a narrator needed to be well-established as a transmitter in order to form part of a *ṣaḥīḥ* *isnād* exerted a tremendous influence among ḥadīth scholars. The presence of an unknown transmitter in a report's *isnād* was one of the foremost obstacles to its achieving a *ṣaḥīḥ* rating.[37] By the time of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Sunni scholars had agreed almost unanimously that a person needed at least two established narrators (*rāwī*) transmitting from him in order to avoid being condemned as "unknown (*majhūl*)."[38] The

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[37] For a discussion of this, see Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 102.

[38] Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:290. Later scholars such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī (d. 628/1230-1) attempted to qualify this generally consistent rule. For a discussion of such attempts, see Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 192-198; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 296; al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāḥ*, 117-8; al-Laknawī, *al-Rafʿ wa al-takmīl fī al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, 8th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1425/2004), 256-60. Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819-20) himself is attributed with the quote that one cannot accept the narration of an unknown; al-Bayhaqī, *Maʿrifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, 1:75, 81.

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first explicit formulation of this principle is usually attributed to al-Bukhārī's great adversary al-Dhuhlī.[39] This concept, however, was clearly already applied in practice during al-Dhuhlī's time. Muslim had dedicated an entire work to listing transmitters who only had one transmitter (rāwī) from them, thus falling short of the requirements necessary for a ṣaḥīḥ isnād. Al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915) also composed a short work on this subject, and al-Ḥākim himself devoted a chapter to it in his Ma ʾrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth. The opposite of unknown transmitters were "well-known (mashhūr)" ones whose testimony and transmission could validate those of others.[40]

Al-Ḥākim's work leaves little doubt that he intended the elimination of anonymity to be an essential feature of a ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth as well as a requirement of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In the Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl, al-Ḥākim describes ten levels of ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīths. He notes how the first five levels are agreed on by all and are found in the collections of established experts used as proof texts (kutub al-a'imma al-muḥtajj bihā).[41] The bottom five levels, on the other hand, fail to meet the requirements for authenticity of certain schools of thought. The highest level of ṣaḥīḥ, he explains, consists of reports narrated by a Companion whose identity and reputation as a narrator of ḥadīths has been established. This occurs, al-Ḥākim elaborates, when one proves that two known

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[39] See al-Khaṭīb, al-Kifāya, 1:290; Ibn Rajab, Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī, 1:82. Ibn al-Jawzī, however, traces this requirement back to Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Nūḥ Abū Isḥāq al-Zāhid (d. 295/907-8); Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 13:73.

[40] See Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, Thalāth rasāʾil ḥadīthiyya, ed. Mashhūr Ḥasan Maḥmūd Salmān and ʿAbd al-Karīm Aḥmad al-Warīkāt (al-Zarqāʾ, Jordan: Maktabat al-Manār, 1408/1987), 27-50; al-Ḥākim, Ma ʾrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth, 195-200. The technical term mashhūr was already in use during the first half of the third/ninth century and appears in Muslim's writings; Muslim, al-Munfaridāt wa al-waḥdān, 88.

[41] Al-Ḥākim, al-Madkhal ilā ma ʾrifat kitāb al-Iklīl, 107.

Successors have narrated ḥadīths from that Companion, thus freeing him of "anonymity (*jahāla*)." This report is then narrated from that Companion by a Successor who is equally well established as a transmitter. The same follows for the ensuing generations until al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's teachers. As this last clause suggests, al-Ḥākim concludes by stating that this is the level of ḥadīths found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and that their number does not exceed ten thousand.[42] Al-Ḥākim then proceeds to define the other levels of authentic ḥadīths, which do not include those featured in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[43]

In the *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, written long after the *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, al-Ḥākim provides only one definition for *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths. Abandoning the multiple levels of authentic narrations, he restates his definition of the highest level: a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth is narrated from the Prophet by a Companion freed of anonymity by having two upright Successors (*tābiʿ ʿadil*) who generally transmit from him. The ḥadīth is then accepted and transmitted widely among (*yatadāwaluhu... bi'l-qubūl*) scholars from that point on. He likens this mass transmission to continuous levels of testimony by witnesses in court (*shahāda*).[44] Invoking this analogy between bearing witness and transmitting ḥadīths on the topic of eliminating anonymity was odd for a Sunni *muḥaddith*, although it was

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[42] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 73, 78. Scholars like al-Laknawī have admitted that this passage and the following description of *ṣiḥḥa* from the *Maʿrifa* could support the notion of doubling transmission. See al-Laknawī, *Ẓafar al-amānī*, 69-71.

[43] Again falling into inconsistency, al-Ḥākim notes that al-Bukhārī and Muslim include one narration each that belongs in the fourth level of universally accepted ḥadīths; see James Robson, trans., *An Introduction to the Science of Tradition* (London: Luzac and Co., 1953), 19.

[44] Al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 77.

especially common among Muʿtazilites.[45] The reason for this bizarre comment will became clear when we discuss al-Ḥākim's target audience.

Support for this interpretation of al-Ḥākim's vision of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s criteria comes from one of his senior students, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī. He held that al-Bukhārī and Muslim demanded that each narrator in the *isnād* have the two transmitters required to eliminate anonymity. Although this close student of al-Ḥākim should have provided more productive insights into his school of thought, al-Bayhaqī's comments are frustratingly brief. In his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* he states definitely that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not narrate from a Companion or Successor with only one transmitter. Thus, he states that they therefore did not include ḥadīths from one Muʿāwiya b. Ḥīda because only one person ever narrated material from him.[46] Another scholar very familiar with al-Ḥākim's works as well as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Abū ʿAlī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī of Andalusia (d. 498/1105), states that Ḥākim's definition of *ṣaḥīḥ* aimed at the elimination of *majhūls*. He therefore required each Companion and Successor to have two narrators establishing him as a viable transmitter.[47]

This definition of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's criteria and the requirements for authentic ḥadīths in general, however, was very controversial. Even during his own

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[45] The invocation of the notion of witnessing (*shahāda*) was more common in the context of establishing the upstanding character (*ʿadāla*) of a transmitter; see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:7 and al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:285. For an excellent discussion of rejecting the analogy with regards to the number of transmitters needed to eliminate *jahāla*, with references to all the Ashʿarī theorists who rejected this analogy as the basis for requiring two transmitters, see al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 117-8. For a Ḥanafī rejection, see al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:567-8.

[46] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1420/1999), 4:176. See also see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:187. It is interesting to note that this Muʿāwiya is not included in Muslim's *Munfaridāt*.

[47] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Ikmāl al-Muʿlim bi-fawāʾid Muslim*, 1:83; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:189.

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lifetime, al-Ḥākim's colleagues attempted to correct his understanding. In fact, in his

own *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim quotes the text of a letter al-Dāraquṭnī sent him debating his

claim that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included ḥadīths only from narrators with two

transmitters from them. Al-Dāraquṭnī objects, "Indeed al-Bukhārī, God bless him,

included a ḥadīth from... Qays b. Abū Ḥāzim from Mirdās al-Aslamī (r) from the

Messenger of God..., and Mirdās has no transmitter other than Qays." Al-Dāraquṭnī

provides three more cases in which al-Ḥākim's rule fails to apply, but the scholar gives

no response.[48]

V.4. b. Doubling Transmission: 1 →2 → 4

A second interpretation of al-Ḥākim's writings on the requirements of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn revolved around the transmission of the actual report and not the status of its

transmitters. This school of thought interpreted the same passages mentioned above as

requiring what we can term 'doubling transmission,' namely a report whose narrators

doubled at each stage of transmission: one Companion narrated to two Successors, who

together narrated to four from the next generation, and so on. Al-Ḥākim's colleague and

student Ibn Manda upheld this criterion, calling for two to three narrators at the level of

Successor. He added that al-Bukhārī and Muslim based their books on this requirement,

falling short on only a few occasions (*illā aḥruf^m*). Abū al-Faḍl b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, who

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[48] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:558-9. Generations of scholars such as Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584/1188-9), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī, al-ʿIrāqī and Ibn Ḥajar have echoed al-Dāraquṭnī's disapproval of al-Ḥākim's claim about al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, 35-36; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 554-6; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:140; al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 122; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 110.

wrote the first comprehensive book on the requirements of the Six Books, believed that

this was the proper interpretation of al-Ḥākim's description of the ultimate level of *ṣaḥīḥ*

ḥadīths and those found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[49] The great Andalusian scholar and traveler

Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1145) also explicitly states in the introduction to his

commentary on Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the author required doubling transmission for each

ḥadīth.[50] Abū Bakr al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584/1188-9) similarly interprets al-Ḥākim's definition

in the *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*.[51] Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr explains *ṣaḥīḥ* narrations by

replicating al-Ḥākim's list of the five universally accepted levels, echoing him further by

adding that fewer than ten thousand reports meet the highest level. He considers the

possibility that al-Ḥākim meant the requirement of eliminating unknowns, but ultimately

deems the doubling transmission interpretation more likely. Many scholars, Ibn al-Athīr

explains, did indeed require this for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*). He adds that this is the highest

standard of authenticity, "so who is more deserving of it (*ajdar*) than al-Bukhārī and

Muslim?"[52]

We can appreciate these scholars' interpretation of al-Ḥākim's definition of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn's requirements by examining an underappreciated source for al-Ḥākim's

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[49] Al-Maqdisī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-sitta*, 15.

[50] Although it seems that Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī's commentary is lost, his statement was repeated by Ibn Rushayd in his rebuttal of this opinion based on the example of the ḥadīth, "Actions are by intentions (*innamā al-aʿmāl biʾl-niyyāt*)"; Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawḍīḥ nukhbat al-fikar fī muṣṭalaḥ ahl al-athar*, ed. ʿAbd al-Samīʿ al-Anīs and ʿIṣām Fāris al-Ḥarstānī (Amman: Dār ʿIṣām, 1419/1999), 23-24.

[51] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, 24.

[52] Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, 1:161-3. Ibn al-Athīr adds that this requirement would be impossible to meet in his own time, since ḥadīth transmissions had become far too diffuse. Here he echoes al-Ghazālī a century earlier; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, 1:70; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 255.

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thought: a question and answer session recorded by his student Mas'ūd b. 'Alī al-Sijzī of

Naysābūr (d. 438-9/1046-8). It goes as follows. When al-Ḥākim is asked why al-

Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from Ḥamīd al-Ṭawīl←Anas and not from Yazīd [b.

Ṭahmān] al-Raqāshī ← Anas, he replied that other men corroborated Ḥamīd's narrations

from Anas while Yazīd was on his own.[53] In this work al-Ḥākim is also mentioned as

saying that, for al-Bukhārī, "ḥadīths do not become well-known except by being narrated

by two trustworthy transmitters who agree on the narration (*al-ḥadīth lā yashtahiru*

'indahu illā bi-thiqatayn yattafiqān 'alā riwāyatihi."[54] Finally, al-Ḥākim's description of

a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth as being transmitted like a series of testimonies (*shahāda*) leaves little

doubt that he intended doubling transmission as a criterion. Islamic law required the

testimony of two upstanding males in most legal matters. It thus seems clear that al-

Ḥākim felt that al-Bukhārī and Muslim required ḥadīths to be transmitted by the same

number at every stage of transmission.

With the exception of Ibn Manda, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī and Ibn al-Athīr, later

commentators who followed this interpretation of al-Ḥākim's work vehemently rejected

it as an inaccurate expression of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s criteria. Al-Maqdisī exclaims that

doubling transmission was an admirable ideal, but one that totally fails to describe the

reality of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books. Al-Ḥāzimī says that he has been shocked

how this palpably false notion had become so widespread, demolishing al-Ḥākim's claim

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[53] Al-Ḥākim, *Su'ālāt Mas'ūd b. 'Alī al-Sijzī ma'a as'ilat al-baghdādiyyīn 'an aḥwāl al-ruwāt*, ed. Muwaffaq b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1988), 223-4.

[54] Al-Ḥākim, *Su'ālāt Mas'ūd b. 'Alī al-Sijzī*, 209.

with a long list of examples.[55] These scholars note that the very first ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* has only one transmitter for the first three levels of the *isnād*.[56] Ibn Ḥajar roundly rejects all scholars who interpret al-Ḥākim's explanations as meaning doubling transmission.[57] He believes that al-Ḥākim's *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, where he identifies the top level of *ṣaḥīḥ* with al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and his *Maʿrifa*, which universalizes this definition, both clearly intend the elimination of anonymity. Like earlier scholars, he rejects both these standards as patently inaccurate representations of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's criteria.[58]

Ibn Ḥajar's teacher, Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, invokes the authoritative testimony of al-Ḥākim's senior disciple al-Bayhaqī to disprove the notion of doubling transmission. He quotes a letter in which al-Bayhaqī skeptically mentions that one Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 438/1047) had cited a ḥadīth scholar who had required doubling transmission for authenticity. No scholars of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, al-ʿIrāqī asserts, ever upheld that opinion.[59]

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[55] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ*, 15, 24.

[56] Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, 1:161-3. Ibn al-Athīr acknowledges these criticisms, but retorts that al-Ḥākim knew what he was doing and must have come to this conclusion after intensive study. Turning to principles of Islamicate logic, he argues that whoever objects to al-Ḥākim's position could certainly have delved no deeper than he did. A critic is thus merely negating al-Ḥākim's statement. Invoking the principle that the affirmative supersedes the negative (*al-muthbit muqaddam ʿalā al-nāfī*), he concludes that al-Ḥākim's position prevails. In any case, it may be that al-Ḥākim had more information at his disposal, so later scholars should assume the best of him.

[57] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 110.

[58] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 41-42.

[59] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 21. No mention of doubling transmission appears in the text of a letter preserved from al-Bayhaqī to al-Juwaynī in al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, 5:77-90.

V.4. c. A Standard for Authenticity and a Standard for the Ṣaḥīḥayn

In my opinion, the most accurate interpretation of al-Ḥākim's definition of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn criteria comes first from a scholar that many later commentators

underestimated. The North African ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Mayyānishī (d. 583/1187)

recognized that al-Ḥākim distinguished between the requirements for authentic reports in

general and the standards employed by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in particular. Al-

Mayyānishī's definition for a ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth quotes al-Ḥākim's Maʿrifa verbatim, even

citing him clearly as the source. As for the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, al-

Mayyānishī states (obviously) that they limited their works to authentic ḥadīths, namely

reports narrated from the Prophet by two Companions, four Successors etc.[60] Here the

scholar provides an unmistakable description of doubling transmission.

Al-Mayyānishī's younger contemporary, Ibn al-Jawzī, also understood that al-

Ḥākim had intended two separate definitions. First, he required the elimination of majhūl

narrators for ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīths in general. Second, he defined the Ṣaḥīḥayn's criteria as

doubling transmission, with the ḥadīth being relayed by "two upstanding narrators from

two upstanding narrators (ʿadlayn ʿan ʿadlayn)." Like al-Maqdisī, al-Ḥāzimī and Ibn

Ḥajar, however, Ibn al-Jawzī deems both these standards reprehensible (qabīḥ)

assessments of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards. Instead, Ibn al-Jawzī says that al-

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[60] ʿUmar al-Mayyānishī, "Mā lā yasaʿu al-muḥaddith jahlahu," in Khams rasāʾil fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 1423/2002), 266. The text of al-Mayyānishī's work seems to have been corrupted slightly at some crucial point in the transmission process, since it reads "and four Successors from each one of the Companions (wa mā naqalahu ʿan kull wāḥid min al-ṣaḥāba arbaʿa min al-tābiʿīn)." Doubling transmission would entail four Successors from every two Companions. All later scholars reacting to this passage gloss it as meaning 1→ 2, not 1→ 4. It thus seems possible that some copyist mistakenly added "from each one" to the text; cf. al-Mayyānishī, Mā lā yasaʿu al-muḥaddith jahlahu, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Sāmarrāʾī (Baghdad: Sharikat al-Ṭabʿ wa al-Nashr, 1387/1967), 9.

Bukhārī and Muslim required simply "a reliable transmitter and a well-known report (*al-thiqa wa al-ishtihār*)."[61]

At first glance, the writings of al-Ḥākim's most well-known student, al-Bayhaqī, present the one opposing piece of evidence to the argument that al-Ḥākim intended two separate definitions. In his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* al-Bayhaqī clearly states that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* excluded narrators with only one transmitter. This does not necessitate, however, that al-Ḥākim believed that al-Bukhārī and Muslim added no other requirements, such as doubling transmission. Since al-Bayhaqī never provides any systematic discussion of al-Ḥākim's school of thought or the standards of the *Shaykhayn*, we cannot dismiss anything due to absence of evidence. Al-'Irāqī's reading of al-Bayhaqī's letter to Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī suggests that al-Bayhaqī questioned whether doubling transmission was an existing requirement for authenticity among ḥadīth scholars. Yet al-'Irāqī admits that his explanation interpolates a great deal. He cautiously states that "it is as if al-Bayhaqī saw [this requirement] in Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī's words and was alerting him that it is not known among transmission-based scholars."[62]

Al-Mayyānishī and Ibn al-Jawzī's interpretation of al-Ḥākim's work seems to be the most convincing. Considering the well-established principle of rejecting reports through *majhūl* narrators, it is very reasonable to conclude that al-Ḥākim considered their elimination to be an essential feature of an authentic chain of transmission. In light of al-Ḥākim's statements to al-Sijzī and the legion of ḥadīth scholars who upheld the

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[61] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-mawḍū'āt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān, 3 vols. (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1386-88/1966-68), 1:33-34.

[62] Al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 21.

interpretation of doubling transmission, it seems equally certain that al-Ḥākim also considered this to be part of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's requirements.

V.5. Admitted Exceptions: *al-Mustadrak* and the Standards of the *Shaykhayn* as Ideal Rather than Reality

Al-Ḥākim's writings leave no doubt that he was aware that many ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* did not live up to his definition of their authors' criteria. Indeed, as al-Dāraquṭnī's letter proves, al-Ḥākim faced criticisms of his definition of their criteria during his own lifetime. He nonetheless retained total faith in his "requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim." What is evident is that al-Ḥākim understood these "requirements" as an ideal that the two masters strove to achieve in their work rather than a consistent reality. In the *Mustadrak* al-Ḥākim thus admits that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not always meet their own requirements for eliminating *majhūls*.[63] In his responses to Masʿūd al-Sijzī's questions, al-Ḥākim admits that one of Muslim's transmitters, Fuḍayl b. Marzūq, did not meet Muslim's own standards for authenticity and that he should not have narrated from him in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*fa- ʿiba ʿalā Muslim bi-ikhrājihi fī al-ṣaḥīḥ*).[64]

How could al-Ḥākim compile an entire ḥadīth collection replicating al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methodologies when he acknowledged that even these two giants could not always meet their own standards? Although al-Ḥākim envisioned the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s

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[63] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:47.

[64] Al-Ḥākim, *Suʾālāt Masʿūd b. ʿAlī al-Sijzī*, 109. Scholars like al-Nawawī, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Bulqīnī and al-Sakhāwī felt that al-Ḥākim exempted the Companions from the *Shaykhayn*'s requirement for two *rāwī*s; see al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:327; ʿUmar al-Bulqīnī, *Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, in *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, 296-7; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:68.

requirements as very restrictive and claimed that the contents of his *Mustadrak* fulfilled them, his actual application of them proved latitudinarian. As he notes in the introduction to his *Mustadrak*, he simply compiled the work from ḥadīths narrated by transmitters that appeared in one or both of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, or those "like" them. He adds haphazardly that Addition by a trustworthy transmitter (*ziyādat al-thiqa*) does not constitute a flaw in ḥadīth (*ʿilla*).[65] As we discussed in Chapter Three, however, selecting reliable *isnād*s only represented half of the critical methodology of ḥadīth scholars; even reports narrated via such transmitters had to be examined for corroboration or irregularities such as inappropriate Addition.

Al-Ḥākim's vague and lax methods led many later scholars to severely criticize the authenticity of material found in the *Mustadrak*. The consummate Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zaylaʿī (d. 762/1361) struck at the heart of al-Ḥākim's strategy: he had relied on the same transmitters as al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but he did not thoroughly examine his material to sift weak narrations from those enjoying corroboration. "Simply because a transmitter is used in [one of] the *Ṣaḥīḥs*," al-Zaylaʿī explains, "does not entail that if he is found in another ḥadīth, that ḥadīth meets al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's standards."[66] Al-Dhahabī thus concluded that the *Mustadrak* was

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[65] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39-40. For a useful attempt to understand al-Ḥākim's methods, see al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:69 ff., 100 ff.

[66] Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zaylaʿī, *Naṣb al-rāya li-aḥādīth al-Hidāya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwāma, 5 vols. (Jeddah and Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Rayyān and Dār al-Qibla al-Thaqāfiyya al-Islāmiyya, 1418/1997), 1:342.

seriously flawed and detracted from al-Ḥākim's reputation.[67] According to him, only

one-fourth of the work's contents actually meet the standards of the Ṣaḥīḥayn, with

another quarter of its ḥadīths being authentic but not meeting their requirements. The

remaining half, he states, is of dubious reliability.[68] Along the same lines, Ibn Ḥajar

admits that he cannot comprehend how al-Ḥākim could have included certain material in

his Mustadrak. He notes how al-Ḥākim even used transmitters he himself considered

weak and had thus consigned to his Kitāb al-ḍu'afā' (Book of Weak Narrators). Ibn

Ḥajar believes that al-Ḥākim was too skilled a scholar to make such simple mistakes, but

if he knew that some material was unreliable and yet included it anyway, then "this is a

tremendous betrayal (khiyāna 'aẓīma)." Ibn Ḥajar tried to excuse the great scholar by

explaining that he wrote the Mustadrak near the end of his life when senility had taken its

toll.[69]

V.6. Al-Ḥākim's Politics: the Expansion of the Authentic Umbrella

The motivation behind al-Ḥākim's controversial definition of the requirements of

the Ṣaḥīḥayn as well as the cause of his inconsistency in applying them become clear,

however, when one appreciates the true purpose of the Mustadrak. He did not compose

this work as a legal reference, like Abū Dāwūd, or as an expression of the body of ḥadīths

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[67] Al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:166. Al-Dhahabī states, "Would that he had not composed the Mustadrak, for his poor comportment in it detracted from his virtues (wa laytahu lam yuṣannif al-Mustadrak, fa-innahu ghaḍḍa min faḍā'ilihi bi-sū' taṣarrufihi."

[68] Ibn al-Wazīr, Tanqīḥ al-anẓār, 38. Al-Bulqīnī states that approximately one hundred ḥadīths in the Mustadrak are forgeries (mawḍū'); al-Bulqīnī, Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ, 164.

[69] Ibn Ḥajar, Lisān al-mīzān, 5:233.

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he had personally collected in his career, like al-Ṭabarānī. Rather, al-Ḥākim's intentions were polemical.

The unbroken thread running throughout al-Ḥākim's career was his concerted drive to increase the number of ḥadīths considered authentic in the wider Muslim community. Yet this was a matter of great controversy even among Sunni ḥadīth scholars. In the generation after al-Ḥākim, his own student al-Bayhaqī would make an unprecedented declaration that all the reliable ḥadīths of the Prophet had been documented, and thus any previously unrecorded attributions to Muḥammad should be considered *de facto* forgeries.[70] Already in al-Ḥākim's time, prominent scholars maintained that the umma had grown too distant from the Prophet to identify authentic ḥadīths. Al-Ḥākim's colleague Ibn Manda, for example, thus stated that "anyone who produces (*yukharriju*) *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths today is either relying on too lengthy an *isnād* (*yanzilu*) or is lying."[71] On the other hand, many shared al-Ḥākim's vision of expanding the number of reports considered authentic. Ibn al-Akhram once admitted that he had wasted his life working on his *mustakhraj* of Muslim and regretted having written a joint *mustakhraj* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (*Mukhtaṣar al-ṣaḥīḥ al-muttafaq ʿalayhi*) because "it is our obligation (*min ḥaqqinā*) to strive in increasing the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths."[72]

Al-Ḥākim's opponents among the ḥadīth scholars, however, were not his principal concern. Relatively early in his career, he had asked how it was possible that some

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[70] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 307.

[71] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:158.

[72] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:55.

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groups believed that the ḥadīths of the Prophet amounted to no more than ten thousand reports. The Companions, he exclaimed, numbered at least four thousand and spent over twenty years in the company of the Prophet! One ḥadīth scholar alone had memorized over five hundred thousand ḥadīths.[73] Such ludicrous claims limiting the number of reliable ḥadīths disconcerted al-Ḥākim terribly, and he thus urged ḥadīth scholars to avoid circumscribing the body of authentic reports. He objected, for example, to his teacher al-Māsarjisī's research on the total number of transmitters in the Ṣaḥīḥayn. A group of "heretics and deniers (mubtadiʿa wa mulḥida),"[74] he explained, were using these statements made by transmission-based scholars against them to defame (yashtumūna) the use of ḥadīths.[75] Much later in his career, in his very succinct introduction to the Mustadrak, al-Ḥākim reiterated the same complaint. "There has emerged in our time a group from among the heretics (mubtadiʿa) who defame the narrators of traditions, [saying]: the totality of your ḥadīths that are authentic (yaṣiḥḥu) does not reach ten

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[73] Al-Ḥākim, al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl, 81-3.

[74] The term mulḥida here should probably neither be understood in its true technical sense of "atheists" or "religious skeptics," nor in the later denotation of Ismāʿīlīs. As Madelung has discussed, al-Ashʿarī described mulḥid as a term encompassing those who deny God's attributes (muʿaṭṭil), crypto-Zoroastrians (zanādiqa) as well as other bizarre heresies. In the sixth/twelfth century in Iran the term had come to denote Ismāʿīlīs. The Māturīdī theologian Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) thus wrote a refutation of the sect entitled Kitāb al-ifsād li-khudāʿ ahl al-ilḥād. Al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) concurs that in this time in Khurāsān Ismāʿīlīs were also called mulḥids. Although even in the early fourth/tenth century there was Ismāʿīlī missionary activity in Naysābūr, we should not assume that al-Ḥākim intended this group with his reference. He was neither a theologian nor a heresiographer, so his addition of the label mulḥida to mubtadiʿa probably just represents another denigration of his opponents. Considering that transmission-based scholars of Rayy felt that the Muʿtazilites of the city had joined forces with Ismāʿīlī rebels in an uprising in the city in 420/1029, a ḥadīth scholar of al-Ḥākim's time may not have even distinguished between Muʿtazilites and Ismāʿīlīs. See S.M. Stern, "The early Ismāʿīlī missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 23 (1960): 56-90, esp. 76; W. Madelung, "Mulḥid," EI²; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 15:196; see also n. 83 below.

[75] Al-Ḥākim, al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ, 112.

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thousand, and all these [other] *isnāds* amount to only about one thousand *juz*'s, all of them weak, not authentic."[76]

Although al-Ḥākim reverently describes the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as two works "whose mention has spread far and wide (*intashara dhikruhumā fī al-aqṭār*)," he based his mission to expand the umbrella of authentic ḥadīths on the premise that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had neither intended to nor succeeded in including all of the authentic reports in their works.[77] Thus, someone's exclusion from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* must not be interpreted as a criticism of his reliability.[78] A wide body of ḥadīths and ḥadīth transmitters still existed that met the standards of the *Shaykhayn*, and al-Ḥākim proved this through an innovative reading of Muslim's introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He concluded that of the two levels of narrators upon which Muslim said he would draw in compiling his collection, the author had only exhausted the first and had died before he could include ḥadīths from the second level.[79]

Al-Ḥākim's interpretation of al-Bukhārī's work is even more creative. That scholar had provided no introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, so al-Ḥākim treated al-Bukhārī's cumulative *oeuvre* as the key to understanding his requirements. He viewed al-Bukhārī's biographical dictionary *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* as the total body of transmitters who comprised the scholar's ḥadīth worldview. Based on the research conducted earlier by al-

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[76] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

[77] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

[78] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 114.

[79] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 78; idem, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 112; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 91.

Māsarjisī, he set the number of transmitters in the *Tārīkh* at about forty thousand. But all

the reliable transmitters who narrated authentic material and appear in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

amount to only about two thousand. Al-Ḥākim then turned to al-Bukhārī's list of weak

transmitters (his *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ*), which included about seven hundred names, as a list

of those whom al-Bukhārī considered unacceptable. After subtracting the narrators al-

Bukhārī used in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and those he considered weak from the forty thousand

transmitters included in the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, al-Ḥākim concluded that more than thirty

thousand acceptable transmitters "remain between the house and the gate." By drawing

on this untapped body of reliable transmitters and also targeting subjects that al-Bukhārī

had omitted in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, one could thus add to the number of traditions meeting al-

Bukhārī's standards.[80]

V.7. Al-Ḥākim's *Mubtadiʿa* and the Ten Thousand

Who were these "heretics (*mubtadiʿa*)" whose claim that there existed only ten

thousand authentic ḥadīths so plagued al-Ḥākim throughout his career? Unfortunately,

the scholar provides little description of them beyond the brief complaints found in his

works. But he does offer two important clues as to their identity. First, he quotes al-

Bukhārī's teacher Aḥmad b. Sinān al-Qaṭṭān (d. 259/872-3) using the term *mubtadiʿ* to

indicate those who oppose ḥadīth and transmission-based scholars.[81] We could infer from

this that during al-Ḥākim's time *mubtadiʿa* served as a transmission-based nomenclature

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[80] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 112.

[81] "There is not a *mubtadiʿ* in the world who does not hate the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, and when a man becomes a *mubtadiʿ* 'the sweetness of ḥadīth is torn from his heart'"; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 5.

for the reason-based Ḥanafīs or Muʿtazilites who constantly criticized the *ahl al-ḥadīth's* heavy reliance on *āḥād* reports.

Other evidence for usage of the term suggests it denoted the Muʿtazilites more specifically. According to Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), in 408/1017-18 the Abbasid caliph al-Qādir (d. 422/1031) publicly demanded, in the famous Qādirī creed, the repentance of the *"mubtadiʿa."* Ibn al-Jawzī elaborates that the caliph was requiring "the Muʿtazilite-Ḥanafī jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) to repent" and disassociate themselves from Muʿtazilism (*al-iʿtizāl*), which, like Shiism (*al-rafḍ*), the caliph called "counter to Islam."[82] In a letter written to the caliph in 420/1029-30, the Buyid *amīr* Yamīn al-Dawla mentions the twin perils of "the sinful Bāṭinīs (*al-bāṭiniyya al-fajara*)" and "the Muʿtazilite heretics (*muʿtazila mubtadiʿa*)."[83] *Mubtadiʿa* thus appears to have indicated Muʿtazilites and not Shiites in these contexts. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that in 460/1067-8 the jurists and ḥadīth scholars (*al-fuqahāʾ wa ahl al-ḥadīth*) of Baghdad congregated and demanded that the Qādirī doctrine be publicly promulgated once again, because the Muʿtazilite teacher Abū al-Walīd was insisting on teaching his school's doctrine. One scholar stood up in the gathering and cursed the Shiites (*Rāfiḍa*), then another rose to separately curse the *"mubtadiʿa."*[84]

Ibn al-Jawzī was writing almost a century and a half after these events, but his *Muntaẓam* often relies on earlier histories such as *Tārīkh Baghdād*. The promulgation of

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[82] "*al-mukhālifa liʾl-islām...*"; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:125; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:258. Al-Khaṭīb, who saw the caliph many times, explains that the ruler wrote treatises declaring the Muʿtazila infidels (*ikfār*).

[83] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:195.

[84] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:106.

the Qādirī creed in 408/1017-8 was a well-known event, and Ibn al-Jawzī had documentary evidence for its wording.[85] Moreover, he was a member of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* extraordinaire and was even more vehemently opposed to the *ahl al-ra'y* than al-Ḥākim had been. We can therefore safely assume that he understood the term in approximately the same manner as al-Ḥākim. From this evidence, we can thus deduce that the term *mubtadiʿa* frequently denoted the Muʿtazilites.

The second clue that al-Ḥākim provides for identifying these *mubtadiʿa* is their claim that there are only ten thousand *saḥīḥ* ḥadīths. The most obvious candidate for such a group would be the Muʿtazilites, who cultivated a continuous skepticism about the flood of *āḥād* ḥadīths adduced by transmission-based scholars. The *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl* (Virtue of Muʿtazilism) of the Shāfiʿī Muʿtazilite al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār of Rayy (d. 415/1025) supports this conclusion. He states that he and his Muʿtazilite colleagues are very critical of those who employ significant numbers of ḥadīths in scholarly discourse.[86] Although he uses such *āḥād* ḥadīths in debates with his transmission-based opponents, he does so only so they would not doubt his affection for the Prophet's sunna. In their own theology, however, Muʿtazilites limit themselves to epistemologically certain evidence (*adilla qaṭʿiyya*) such as the Qur'ān.[87] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār refers to the Muʿtazilites' discriminating standards in his rebuttal of a serious transmission-based accusation: that

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[85] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:279-82. The actual wording of the creed as provided by Ibn al-Jawzī, however, does not include the term *mubtadiʿa*.

[86] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī and al-Ḥākim al-Jishmī, *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-muʿtazila*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya, 1393/1974), 193.

[87] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl*, 156.

Mu'tazilites use too few ḥadīths. The only reason, he states, that the Mu'tazilites limit

their use of ḥadīths is that āḥād reports have too high a probability of being false.[88]

Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* provides similar evidence for this outstanding *ahl al-*

ḥadīth grievance with the Mu'tazilites.[89] In 456/1064 partisans of the transmission-based

school physically attacked the Mu'tazilite Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mu'tazilī (d.

478/1085-6), whom Ibn al-Jawzī mocks as having narrated only one ḥadīth.[90] Ibn al-

Jawzī hurls the same accusation at the famous Shāfi'ī Mu'tazilite Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī

(d. 436/1044).[91]

But why did the Mu'tazilites to whom al-Ḥākim refers set the number of authentic

ḥadīths at ten thousand and not some other number? This is so because it was the number

of ḥadīths considered to be contained in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Ḥākim's *mubtadi'a* opponents

told him that this was the number of *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths "in your school ('indakum)," namely

the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Al-Ḥākim himself stated that the top level of authentic ḥadīths

identified with the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* did not exceed ten thousand.[92] Al-Ḥāzimī concluded from

this that the Mu'tazilites' number was based on estimations of how many ḥadīths the

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[88] Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-i'tizāl*, 195.

[89] Conflict between the transmission-based school and their opponents on this matter seems to have extended back to the time of al-Bukhārī and Muslim themselves. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ quotes someone telling Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, "Is it not said that the ḥadīths of the Prophet are only four thousand?" He replies, "Whoever says that, may God jar his teeth, this is the claim of the heretic crypto-Zoroastrians (zanādiqa), for who can account [all] the ḥadīths of the Messenger of God (ṣ)...?"; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 494.

[90] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:247.

[91] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:300.

[92] See n. 42 above.

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Ṣaḥīḥayn contained.[93] This number must indicate the number of Prophetic traditions, since Aḥmad b. Salama had counted twelve thousand narrations in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* alone, and al-Ḥākim's teacher al-Jawzaqī had placed the total number of narrations (*ṭuruq*) in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at 25,480.[94] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ placed the number of traditions (*uṣūl*) in each of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at four thousand, amounting to a total of eight thousand.[95] Considering that scholars generally put the number of Prophetic traditions in al-Bukhārī's book at 3,397-4,000 and in Muslim's at between 4,000 and 8,000, the average number for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* combined would be approximately 9,700.[96]

Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī provides further evidence that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were an important tool in the Muʿtazilites' polemics against the transmission-based school. He reports that someone who "belittles the acceptance of reports" said that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* only uses some two thousand transmitters; all the others are thus clearly unreliable for ḥadīth scholars. Abū Nuʿaym responds with a lengthy quotation from al-Ḥākim's *Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, reiterating al-Ḥākim's argument that al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* contains over thirty thousand acceptable but untapped transmitters.[97]

This Muʿtazilite attack was a recurring theme in al-Ḥākim's career and almost certainly served as his primary motivation in composing the *Mustadrak*. Just as Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī had feared over a century earlier, the Sunnis' opponents had made use of

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[93] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-a'imma al-khamsa*, 32.

[94] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 70; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:50.

[95] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 101-2.

[96] For the wide range of opinions on this, see Chapter 3, nn. 67, 119, 120.

[97] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Mustakhraj*, 1:52.

the esteemed standards set by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in order to object to reports lying

outside the *Sahīhayn*. Indeed, al-Hākim's Mu'tazilite interlocutors condemned the

thousands of hadīths not included in the two works as defective (*saqīma*). In order to

understand how the *Mustadrak* embodied al-Hākim's response to this attack, we must

trace the history of the Mu'tazilite treatment of Prophetic traditions until al-Hākim's time.

V.8. Al-Hākim's Target Audience: The Mu'tazilites and their Criteria for Authentic Hadīths

As Josef van Ess has demonstrated, Mu'tazilites found themselves forced to adjust

the place of Prophetic traditions in their legal and doctrinal epistemologies following the

Sunni victory in the Baghdad Inquisition (*Mihna*). When Dirār b. 'Amr (fl. 195/810)

established Mu'tazilism as a cosmological system, hadīth played no major role. He

rejected the *āhād* reports adduced as evidence by his transmission-based opponents in

favor of the Qur'ān and reason, and this position was taken up by Abū Bakr al-Asamm

(d. 201/816) of the Basran Mu'tazilite school. Van Ess postulates that in the wake of al-

Shāfi'ī's championing the use of *āhād* hadīths in law as well as the compilation of major

hadīth collections in the late second/eighth century, Mu'tazilites found themselves forced

to meet the challenges posed by the transmission-based school. Another early member of

the Basran school, Abū Hudhayl (d. 200/915), thus tackled the epistemological problem

of hadīth with numerical requirements. With him we see Mu'tazilites beginning to limit

the use of hadīths to those they considered massively transmitted beyond the scope of

error (*mutawātir*). For a hadīth to be accepted in discussions of dogma, Abū Hudhayl

required twenty separate transmitters to meet the conditions of *tawātur*. For legal matters, he demanded only four.[98] The Basran Muʿtazilite and polymath al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) also required four narrations for a report to qualify as authentic.[99]

With the end of the Baghdad Inquisition (*Miḥna*) in 234/848, the Muʿtazilite position against the transmission-based scholars was further weakened.[100] Ironically, it was during the classical period of Muʿtazilism from the late third/ninth century to the early fifth/eleventh that the school had to increasingly compromise with its opponents. In this period Muʿtazilites began serious studies of ḥadīth comparable to those of their transmission-based adversaries. Although Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī of Baghdad (d. 384/994) was Muʿtazilite, ḥadīth scholars considered him reliable as a transmitter, and he composed a book on the ḥadīth of the Muʿtazila.[101] Abū Saʿīd Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Sammān of Rayy (d. 434 or 445/1042-3 or 1053-4) was one of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's ḥadīth teachers but was a Ḥanafī *imām* of the Muʿtazilites.[102]

In matters of law, both the Baghdad and Basran schools of Muʿtazilism dropped their requirements for authenticating legal ḥadīths to two narrators at each link in the *isnād* – the same doubling transmission that al-Ḥākim required. The doyen of the Basran school, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915-6) explicitly demanded doubling transmission for

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[98] Josef van Ess, "L'Autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie muʿtazilite," in *La Notion d'autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. George Makdisi et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, c. 1982), 216-7.

[99] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 43.

[100] Van Ess, "L'Autorité de la tradition," 220.

[101] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:353.

[102] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:213.

āhād hadīths to be admitted in "legal matters (*al-shurʿiyyāt*)."[103] Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī

(d. 319/913), who lived mostly in Naysābūr and whose works gained a wide readership in

the region, compromised similarly.[104] In his *Qubūl al-akhbār*, he still demanded

massively transmitted hadīths (*mutawātir*) for theological doctrine (*usūl al-kalām*) and

"general legal indications (*al-amr al-ʿāmm*)." For deriving laws (*furū'*), however, he

believed that one need only provide a report transmitted by two or three people to two or

three upstanding (*ʿadl*) people at each level of the *isnād*. He equates this with the

requirements for testimony in court.[105]

The Muʿtazilites' final compromise to the transmission-based Sunnis occurred

during al-Hākim's lifetime. This brings us to the career of al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār of

Rayy, which represented a major shift in the Muʿtazilite school. While previously

Muʿtazilites had generally associated with the hadīth-wary Hanafī *madhhab*, al-Qādī

ʿAbd al-Jabbār retained his loyalty to the Shāfiʿī school after embracing Muʿtazilite

doctrine.[106] As a Shāfiʿī, he was obliged to accept rulings from *āhād* hadīths in matters of

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[103] Abū al-Husayn Muhammad b. ʿAlī al-Basrī, (d. 436/1044), *Kitāb al-muʿtamad fī usūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muhamed Hamidullah et al., 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1964), 2:623; al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 1:607; Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Hanbalī (d. 458/1066), *al-ʿUdda fī usūl al-fiqh*, ed. Ahmad b. ʿAlī Sīr al-Mubārak, 3 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1400/1980), 3:861; Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī, *al-Tabsira fī usūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Hītū (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1400/1980), 312; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 255; Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Salāh*, 43; idem, *Nuzhat al-nazar*, 23.

[104] Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 425-30; al-Khatīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:392 ; Ibn al-Murtadā, *Tabaqāt al-muʿtazila*, 88-9.

[105] Al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akbār*, 1:17-18. For a short discussion of *al-amr al-ʿāmm*, see Aron Zysow, "Muʿtazilism and Māturīdism in Hanafī Legal Theory," in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 252 ff.

[106] Richard C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Muʿtazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997) 43; cf. Ibn al-Murtadā, *Tabaqāt al-muʿtazila*, 112-113.

law even if they lacked the multiple narrations that earlier Mu'tazilites such as al-Balkhī and al-Jubbā'ī had required. In his *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār thus states that, while discussing issues of dogma and theology (*diyāna*) requires massively transmitted reports (*mutawātir*), deriving law (*furūʿ al-fiqh*) demands only one or two narrations.[107]

By the time al-Ḥākim was writing in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, the Mu'tazilites' standard for authentic ḥadīth admissible in discussions of law thus generally demanded doubling transmission. Al-Ḥākim's teacher and author of a famous *ṣaḥīḥ* work, Ibn Ḥibbān, had earlier railed against this stance.[108] Responding to those who rejected *āḥād* ḥadīths lacking doubling transmission, Ibn Ḥibbān exclaims, "There exists no report from the Prophet (ṣ) narrated by two upstanding transmitters (*ʿadlayn*), each one of them from two upstanding transmitters until it ends at the Prophet (ṣ)!" Those who uphold such stringent requirements, he adds, "have intended to abandon all of the sunna (*sunan*)."[109] Al-Ḥāzimī says that the Mu'tazila were in fact the only group to require a certain number of transmitters for the acceptance of *āḥād* ḥadīths. As al-Balkhī had stated, they based this on the requirements for court testimony.[110]

Al-Ḥākim was no doubt extremely familiar with the Mu'tazilite demands for authentic ḥadīths as expressed by both al-Balkhī and al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Not only did al-Balkhī reside in Naysābūr for many years just before al-Ḥākim's birth, his writings

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[107] Martin, *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 108.

[108] For al-Ḥākim's link to Ibn Ḥibbān, see al-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:156.

[109] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:118.

[110] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, 47.

also enjoyed popularity in the city. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār lived in Khurāsān at the same time as al-Ḥākim, and several of his students also lived in Naysābūr.[111] We cannot know exactly where al-Ḥākim encountered the Muʿtazilites whose criticism he noted in his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and finally his *Mustadrak*, but he would have had ample opportunity in his native Naysābūr.

V.9. The *Mustadrak* as Common Measure of Authenticity

The polemical aim of al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak* and the underlying reason for his inclusion of doubling transmission in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's criteria now becomes clear. Al-Ḥākim devoted his career to increasing the number of authentic Prophetic traditions in circulation. For him the work of al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the highest standards of critical rigor, but their two collections had by no means exhausted the pool of *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths. The threat that worried, and motivated, al-Ḥākim throughout his career was the Muʿtazilite claim that only the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were admissible as authentic. For al-Ḥākim, the response to this criticism lay in the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. By defining their criteria as requiring reports free of transmitters deemed unknown by Sunni ḥadīth scholars and possessing the doubling transmission that Muʿtazilites required, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards became a measure of authenticity accepted by all. The *Mustadrak* constituted the fruit of al-Ḥākim's efforts; it applied standards he believed compelled the acceptance of Sunnis and Muʿtazilites alike to a massive new corpus of Prophetic traditions.

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[111] Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Ṭabaqāt al-muʿtazila*, 116-7. Among them Abū Rashīd Saʿīd b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī and Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Mayzūkī.

In this new light, al-Ḥākim's non-sequitur remark that authentic ḥadīths must

circulate among scholars like "testimony upon testimony" now also becomes clear. Since

the Muʿtazila were a key target audience of his expansion of authentic ḥadīths, his

definition of ṣaḥīḥ had to meet their requirements. Ibn Ḥajar alludes to this matter while

discussing the doubling transmission requirement of the Muʿtazilite al-Jubbāʾī. He says,

"This is what al-Ḥākim was getting at (*wa ilayhi yūmi'u kalām al-Ḥākim*)."[112] And

indeed Ibn Ḥajar was quite justified in concluding that al-Ḥākim's standards somehow

involved the Muʿtazila. As Ibn Ḥibbān had angrily explained, the notion of requiring

doubling narration was totally alien to Sunni transmission-based scholars.

We can now better understand why al-Ḥākim conceived of the standards of al-

Bukhārī and Muslim more as an ideal than a reality, and why he adhered so fiercely to his

definition of their requirements in the face of tremendous opposing evidence. For him,

the two scholars' requirements embodied a *kanòn* of authenticity accepted by the broader

community of Sunnis and Muʿtazilites. Unlike ḥadīth collections of the past, the purpose

of the *Mustadrak* was not simply to record al-Ḥākim's personal corpus of ḥadīths or to

compile a legal reference for transmission-based scholars. Al-Ḥākim's effort was

political. It aimed at demonstrating that both the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and material that measured up

to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards met the requirements of two opposing scholarly

camps. This notion of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as common ground was to prove central in the two

works' canonization.

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[112] Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 23.

Yet how could al-Ḥākim have expected his audience to grasp the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as he defined them if they caused later scholars so much difficulty? Al-Ḥākim's extant works suggest that the answer lies in the immediacy of his intended audience. Both al-Ḥākim's responses to Mas'ūd al-Sijzī and his elliptical analogy between transmission and court testimony illustrate that the scholar relied more on his personal interaction with others and their familiarity with context than on detailed expositions of his theories. The introduction to the *Mustadrak* is thus no manifesto; in fact, it consists of slightly more than a single page of disorganized text. Only in another text does al-Ḥākim make his sole reference to his two treatises on the methodologies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.[113] But these also appear to have been ephemeral, and not a single later scholar mentions them. This explains why the *Mustadrak* was never treated as a polemic by later analysts. Only by reconstructing the context of al-Ḥākim's works and reading them against the grain could a later scholar understand his motivations and target audience. Just as he felt comfortable providing only the most tantalizing references to the dreaded "*mubtadi 'a*" and his "standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim," so must he have assumed that the bustling scholarly circles of Naysābūr would have grasped his intent.

V.10 The Discourse of Legal Theory: The Consensus of the Umma on Ḥadīth

Al-Ḥākim pioneered the notion of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a commonly accepted measure of authenticity and a tool for extending this authority to ḥadīths outside the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The wider acceptance of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in this role, however,

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[113] See Chapter 4 n. 58.

depended on the status that the various Muslim schools of thought were willing to grant

aḥād ḥadīths. By the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, the broader

Muslim community, including transmission-based scholars, Ḥanafīs, Muʿtazilites and

even mainstream Shiites had accepted the notion that certain Prophetic traditions had

received uniform approval and were above doubt. Shortly thereafter, by the mid-

fifth/eleventh century, the major legal schools in Iraq and Iran had acknowledged this

class of reports and incorporated it into their epistemological systems.[114] A shared

conceptual and even linguistic notion of the umma's "acceptance *(al-talaqqī bi'l-qubūl)*"

appeared among later Muʿtazilites, Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs, Ḥanbalīs/über-Sunnis and

Shāfiʿīs/Ashʿarīs. These agreed-upon reports formed a new middle tier: one that yielded

an epistemological certainty below the almost unattainable confidence conveyed by

unimpeachable mass-transmission *(tawātur)* but above the mere probability yielded by

normal *aḥād* ḥadīths. The *aḥād* ḥadīths that had received the consensus of the

community produced a level of certainty sufficient for such lofty and restricted tasks as

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[114] The issue of the epistemological yield of *aḥād* ḥadīths and their potential uses in deriving law and dogma is long and complicated. The oldest aspect of the debate centers on whether or not *aḥād* ḥadīths are admissible in deriving laws and are legally compelling. This debate raged between Muʿtazilites like Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿUlayya (d. 218/833) and transmission-based scholars like al-Shāfiʿī. Even among those who accepted that *aḥād* ḥadīths were legally compelling, however, there was debate over whether or not they yield religious knowledge strong enough to elaborate dogma *(iʿtiqād)* and/or govern worship *(taʿabbud)*. Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs and transmission-based Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī scholars further disagreed over what kind of *aḥād* ḥadīths could delineate or specify Qurʾānic rulings such as cutting off the hand of a thief. In addition, scholars debating the subject did not adhere to a rigid set of terminology. In other debates, scholars used the terms *ʿilm al-yaqīn* and *ʿilm al-ẓann* to indicate certain knowledge and probable knowledge respectively. In the debate over the yield of *aḥād* ḥadīths and the effect of the community's consensus, however, the term *ʿilm* denoted certain knowledge (i.e., equivalent to the epistemological strength of the Qurʾān in deriving law and dogma) and *ẓann* meant probable knowledge (i.e., sufficient only for deriving substantive law). For a discussion of the epistemological yield of *mutawātir, mashhūr* and *aḥād* ḥadīths as well as the general historical development of these concepts, see Wael Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability and Certainty in Sunnī Legal Thought," in *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence*, ed. Nicholas Heer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 3-31; idem, "The Authenticity of Prophetic Hadith: a Pseudo-problem," *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999): 75-90, esp. 80-1.

abrogating the Qur'ān and elaborating dogma.[115] This widely accepted notion of the epistemological transformation that *āḥād* ḥadīths could undergo when agreed upon by all would prove an essential element in the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.

V.10. a. *The Ḥanafīs*

Systematic discussions of the role of ḥadīth in the Ḥanafī epistemological system seem to have originated with the writings of the early Ḥanafī judge 'Īsā b. Abān (d. 221/836). Later Ḥanafī legal theorists such as al-Jaṣṣāṣ regularly quoted his works at length. Our earliest extant works of Ḥanafī legal theory trace their discussions of ḥadīth back to Ibn Abān, who originated the tripartite distinction of reports into those massively transmitted (*mutawātir*), well-known (*mashhūr*) and *āḥād*. Unfortunately, we must depend on later scholars such as al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī of Khurāsān (d. ca. 490/1096) for explanations of Ibn Abān's thought. Since these two scholars generally adhered to Ibn Abān's theories, we can treat their expositions as illustrations of Ḥanafī legal theory in Rayy and Khurāsān during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.

Al-Sarakhsī states that Ibn Abān believed that *mutawātir* ḥadīths yielded epistemologically certain apodictic knowledge (*'ilm ḍarūrī*); anyone who heard the report

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[115] Ibn Taymiyya was the first to collect a list of scholars from various schools who upheld this stance. From the Ḥanafīs he listed: al-Sarakhsī. From the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs: Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, Ibn Fūrak, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī. From the Ḥanbalīs: Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ, Ibn ʿAqīl, Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Zāghūnī, Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Khaṭīb. From the Mālikīs: al-Qāḍī Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. The list is repeated by later ḥadīth scholars such as Abū Ḥafṣ al-Bulqīnī and Ibn Ḥajar with several additions, such as Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī and the leading Muʿtazilites; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū ʿfatāwā*, 13:351-2; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 31; al-Bulqīnī, *Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, 172; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 113.

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was immediately certain, without any consideration, that its contents were authentic. *Mashhūr* hadīths yielded epistemologically certain acquired knowledge (*ʿilm muktasab*); only those able to properly contemplate the report's transmission would grasp its total authenticity.[116] *Āhād* hadīths provided mere probability (*zann*), which was suitable only for elaborating law in certain circumstances. Al-Sarakhsī, who also upholds this opinion, states that *mashhūr* reports begin as *āhād* hadīths but then spread out like *mutawātir*. Their epistemological strength stems from the fact that the umma has accepted them (*qubūl*). Such hadīths include the famous Prophetic tradition allowing believers to wipe water on their socks during ablution instead of having to remove them to wipe their feet (*al-mash ʿalā al-khuffayn*). Because *mashhūr* reports yield certain knowledge, they can be used to abrogate, modify or supplement Qurʾānic rulings in the Hanafī school. Although al-Sarakhsī admits that *mashhūr* reports cannot produce the highest level of certainty that results from *mutawātir*, scholarly consensus on their authenticity (*talaqqat bi ʾl-qubūl*) endows *mashhūr* reports with "assuring knowledge (*ʿilm al-tumaʾnīniyya*).[117]

Although few of his works have survived, we know from later sources that the great Muʿtazilite Hanafī master of the first half of the fourth/tenth century, Abū al-Hasan ʿUbaydallāh al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), also elevated *āhād* hadīths agreed upon by the scholars to a higher level than normal reports. Unlike others, however, he believed that the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the umma, in and of itself, caused no epistemological change in the hadīth. It simply indicated the existence of some compelling proof (*hujja*) for the

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[116] Al-Sarakhsī, *Usūl al-Sarakhsī*, 1:292.

[117] Al-Sarakhsī, *Usūl al-Sarakhsī*, 1:292-3; cf. al-Jassās, *Usūl*, 1:548.

authenticity of the report, since consensus would not have occurred in the first place without such evidence.[118]

Another Ḥanafī legal theorist of the fourth/tenth century follows Ibn Abān in his tripartite distinction. In his brief treatise on Ḥanafī legal theory, Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Shāshī (d. 344/955-6) defines *mashhūr* as a report that begins as *āḥād* and becomes widespread in the second and third generations (*ʿaṣr*) until, finally, the umma accepts it by consensus (*talaqqathu biʾl-qubūl*). *Mashhūr* reports yield "assured knowledge (*ilm al-ṭumaʾnīniyya*)," and those who reject them are heretics (*mubtadiʿ*). Unlike *āḥād* ḥadīths, al-Shāshī states, scholars do not differ over whether or not such reports are legally compelling. As examples, he provides the ḥadīth of wiping over the socks as well as the ḥadīth enjoining stoning as a punishment for adulterers.[119]

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[118] Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-muʿtamad*, 2:556. This information does not appear in al-Karkhī's short extant *uṣūl* work. See Abū al-Ḥasan ʿUbaydallāh al-Karkhī, *al-Uṣūl allatī ʿalayhā madār furūʿ al-ḥanafiyya* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, [n.d.]).

[119] Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Niẓām al-Dīn al-Shāshī, *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*, ed. Muḥammad Fayḍ al-Ḥasan al-Kankuhī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1402/1982), 269-72. For his biography, see Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 1:262. There is significant debate over the identity of the author of this text as well as when he lived. Three editions of the work have been published, each attributed to a different Shāshī. In addition to the above-mentioned work, one is attributed to Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm Abū Yaʿqūb al-Shāshī al-Khurāsānī (d. 325/937), who lived mostly in Egypt (see Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 1:364) and has been published as *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* (Delhi: Kotob-khāne-ye Rashīdeyye, [1963]). Finally, the most recent edition attributes the work to another Niẓām al-Dīn al-Shāshī (fl. 700s/1300s) and is published as *Uṣūl al-Shāshī: mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-fiqh al-islāmī*, ed. Muḥammad Akram Nadwī and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2000). Murteza Bedir has argued that the *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* cannot have predated the work of the Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī of Samarqand (d. 482/1089). The edition used here contains some references to figures (al-Dabūsī {d. 430/1038}, for example) who died after the fourth/tenth century, so at the very least we can be sure that additions were made to the text. The bulk of the work, however, seems to be representative of other Ḥanafī *uṣūl* treatises from the late fourth/tenth to mid-fifth/eleventh centuries, so there is little reason to assume the whole work dates from a later time. Suggestions that *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* is a work of Shāfiʿī *uṣūl* are untenable given the distinctly Ḥanafī contents and format of the book. See Murteza Bedir, "The Problem of *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*," *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 415-36.

We have already discussed al-Jaṣṣāṣ's opinions on *āhād* ḥadīths enjoying the

consensus of the umma and on which scholars have acted in law; he admits them as

compelling evidence in issues of law and dogma (*umūr al-diyānāt*).[120] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ

describes such reports as "widespread (*mustafīḍa*)."[121] His discussion of reports, in fact,

devotes significant space to defending the use of *āhād* ḥadīths from groups such as the

Muʿtazila who attack them.[122]

A significant development seems to have occurred in the Ḥanafī use of the term

mashhūr between the times that al-Jaṣṣāṣ was writing in the mid-fourth/tenth century and

al-Sarakhsī in the second half of the fifth/eleventh. While al-Sarakhsī felt that *mashhūr*

reports could abrogate or adjust Qur'ānic rulings, al-Jaṣṣāṣ limited that power to

mutawātir ḥadīths.[123] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī also maintained that only *mutawātir*

ḥadīths could abrogate the holy book. Yet it appears that this change involved a semantic

shift in the usage of the term *mashhūr* rather than any revolution in Ḥanafī epistemology.

All these scholars believed that the ḥadīth of wiping one's socks was sufficiently well-

attested to abrogate the Qur'ān. But while Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī and al-Jaṣṣāṣ had

considered it *mutawātir*,[124] al-Shāshī and al-Sarakhsī considered it *mashhūr*.

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[120] See Chapter 4, nn. 171 and 173.

[121] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:548.

[122] See al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:560 and 1:568-73. It is interesting to note that al-Jaṣṣāṣ's treatment of ḥadīth incorporates significant amounts of technical terminology used by transmission-based scholars in their evaluation of reports, such as "approval (*taʿdīl*)" and "accuracy (*ḍabṭ*)"; al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 2:25.

[123] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:449.

[124] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:467, 518.

V.10. b. *The Later Mu'tazilites*

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) was a product of late Mu'tazilism. Like his

teacher, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, he espoused Mu'tazilite theology while belonging to the

Shāfi'ī school of law. His work on legal theory, the *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, would become

one of the most influential works in that genre and provide a framework for many later

Shāfi'ī *uṣūl* books.[125] Abū al-Ḥusayn's stance on the epistemological yield of *āḥād*

ḥadīths reflected the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī position embraced as orthodox among almost all

Sunnis: such ḥadīths yield only probable knowledge (*zann*), but are nonetheless legally

compelling (*mūjib al-'amal*).[126] The consensus of the umma, however, alters this

completely. He explains that, "As for the *wāḥid* [i.e., *āḥād* ḥadīth], when the umma has

come to consensus as to what it entails (*muqtaḍāhu*) and deemed it authentic, then its

authenticity is epistemologically certain (*yuqta'u 'alā ṣiḥḥatihi*)."[127]

There does not appear to be any evidence that the later Mu'tazilites endowed the

term *mashhūr* with any technical meaning. In his *Faḍl al-i'tizāl*, however, al-Qāḍī 'Abd

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[125] This is the opinion of the later Mu'tazilite Abū Sa'īd al-Muḥassin b. Muḥammad al-Ḥākim; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, 119.

[126] Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, 2:570. For what became the stance of the Ash'arī orthodoxy, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya*, 2:557; idem, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, ed. 'Ādil b. Yūsuf al-'Azzāzī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1417/1996), 1:278; al-Juwaynī, *Sharḥ al-Waraqāt fī 'ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣubayḥ, [1965]), 12; al-Shīrāzī, *al-Tabṣira*, 315; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 252. For a similar Mālikī opinion, see Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, *al-Ishāra fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 207-8, and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:2, 8. For a Ḥanbalī discussion of the school's stance and an explanation of the conflicting quotes of Ibn Ḥanbal on this matter, see Abū Ya'lā Ibn al-Farrā', *al-'Udda*, 3:861, 900. For the Ḥanafī position, see Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghaznawī, *Uṣūl fiqh al-Ghaznawī*, ed. Muḥammad Ṭu'mat al-Quḍāt (Amman: n.p., 1421/2001), 31.

[127] Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, 2:555.

al-Jabbār does use the term to describe a "well-known" ḥadīth that he employs as a proof text.[128]

V.10. c. *The Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī Orthodoxy*

Although Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī served as the eponym and inspiration of the Ashʿarī school of speculative theology, its tenets and doctrines took shape mainly through the work of three scholars who lived in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh century: the Baghdad Mālikī Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) and Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015). The influential Buyid vizier and intellectual al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād described these three figures colorfully thus, "Al-Bāqillānī is an engulfing sea, Ibn Fūrak a silent serpent (*ṣall muṭriq*) and al-Isfarāyīnī a burning fire."[129] Here we will focus only on Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarāyīnī, the two scholars who played salient roles in the articulation of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī orthodoxy that would compete with the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni orthodoxy for ascendancy in fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad.

Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī was probably born in 337/949 in the city of Isfarāyīn, a town nestled in the gateway to the northern mountains of Khurāsān and separated from the main road running from Bayhaq to Naysābūr by a grassy valley and a chain of hills. He studied ḥadīth intensively with scholars such as al-Ismāʿīlī and also attended the

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[128] Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl*, 195.

[129] "*al-Bāqillānī baḥr mughriq wa Ibn Fūrak ṣall muṭriq wa al-Isfarāyīnī nār muḥriq*"; ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 152; al-Dhahabī. *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:438; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:257.

lessons of his older contemporary Ibn Fūrak. He was sought out as a ḥadīth expert, and among the students to whom he transmitted ḥadīth were al-Ḥakim al-Naysābūrī, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and the great Shāfiʿī of Baghdad Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058). Al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī in particular studied Abū Isḥāq's works in depth. Among the other noteworthy figures who studied law, legal theory, ḥadīth and theology at Abū Isḥāq's hands were the other great Shāfiʿīs of the age: Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) as well as the famous Sufi systematizer Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072).[130]

Abū Isḥāq spent many years studying in Baghdad, but retired to his native Isfarāyīn to teach. He also undertook a visit to the court of Maḥmūd al-Ghaznavī in Ghazna in order to debate the Karrāmiyya. Upon the request of the scholars of Naysābūr, he traveled to that city and taught at a school built there for his use. When he died, his body was carried back to Isfarāyīn for burial.[131]

In his addendum to al-Ḥākim's *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5) says that Abū Isḥāq's works "will last until the Day of Judgment, God willing."[132] God's will was not forthcoming, however, and almost nothing of Abū Isḥāq's writings has survived. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) said that his books were too vast to be contained in tomes;[133] he wrote treatises on legal theory, Shāfiʿī substantive law and the

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[130] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:353-5; cf. Moḥammad Javād Hojjetī Kermānī, "Abū Isḥāq Isfarāyīnī," *Dār'erat al-ma'āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 5:158-9; ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 151-2; al-Subkī, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 4:259.

[131] Kermānī, "Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī," *Dār'erat al-ma'āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 5:158-9.

[132] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 151-2.

[133] Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:170.

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art of dialectic, but it seems that he devoted a great deal of attention to attacking the

Mu'tazila. He penned one work entitled *al-Mukhtaṣar fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-iʿtizāl wa al-*

qadar (Abbreviated Refutation of the Muʿtazila and Those Believers in Free Will) and

another named *al-Jāmiʿal-ḥaly fī uṣūl al-dīn wa al-radd ʿalā al-mulḥidīn* (The

Ornamented Concordance of the Principles of Dogma and a Refutation of the

Nonbelievers). In addition, Abū Isḥāq engaged in several debates with the Muʿtazilite al-

Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[134]

Despite the fact that none of these works have survived, Abū Isḥāq's scholarly

opinions appear frequently in later Shāfiʿī works on legal theory, and figures like al-

Shīrāzī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ recognized the importance of Abū Isḥāq's role in formulating the

Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī stances on issues like abrogation and consensus.[135] Later Shāfiʿī legal

theorists have thus preserved Abū Isḥāq's stance on the issues of the epistemological

yield of ḥadīths and the effect of consensus. From the works of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-

Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī, we know that Abū Isḥāq matched the Ḥanafī tripartite division

of reports, identifying ḥadīths as *mutawātir*, *āḥād* and a middle tier called *mustafīḍ*

(reminiscent of al-Jaṣṣāṣ's terminology). While *mutawātir* reports yielded certain

apodictic knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*) and *āḥād* ḥadīths mere probability (*ẓann*), these

mustafīḍ reports conveyed "epistemologically certain discursive knowledge (*ʿilm*

naẓarī)." Like the *ʿilm muktasab* that Ḥanafīs attributed to *mashhūr* reports, this

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[134] Kermānī, "Abū Isḥāq Isfarāyīnī," 5:158-9; al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā'*, 104. Partial transcripts or quotations from some of these debates seem to have survived. See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:261; Mullā ʿAlī Qāri'(d. 1014/1606), *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, ed. Marwān Muḥammad al-Shaʿʿār (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1417/1997), 123.

[135] See, for example, Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ al-lumaʿ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Turkī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988), 1:573; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:170.

discursive knowledge resulted from a consideration of the report's transmission. Abū

Isḥāq defined this middle tier as those reports on which the *imāms* of ḥadīth (*a'immat al-*

ḥadīth) had reached consensus.[136]

Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī's career mirrors in many aspects that of his senior

colleague Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak, who also belonged to the Shāfiʿī school. Ibn

Fūrak studied in Baghdad, spent a period in the Buyid capital of Rayy and then moved to

Naysābūr to teach at a *madrasa* built specifically for him. There he remained until the

last years of his life, when he accompanied Abū Isḥāq to the Ghaznavid court to debate

the Karrāmiyya sect.[137] Unlike Abū Isḥāq, several of Ibn Fūrak's writings have survived.

Like him, though, the main opponents that he addresses are the Muʿtazila. The most

noteworthy is his exposition of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's school of speculative theology,

entitled *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ashʿarī* (The Essential Positions of al-Ashʿarī). In addition,

he authored a condensed work on *uṣūl* entitled *Kitāb al-ḥudūd fī al-uṣūl* (Definitions in

Legal Theory). Finally, he devoted a book to interpreting problematic ḥadīths in a

manner that trod a middle path between Muʿtazilite rationalism and über-Sunni

anthropomorphism.[138]

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[136] Cf. al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 1:584; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 244. Both al-Ghazālī and al-Juwaynī disagree with Abū Isḥāq on this matter; cf. al-Juwaynī, *al-Kāfiya fī al-jadal*, ed. Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1399/1979), 55-6.

[137] W. Montgomery Watt, "Ibn Fūrak," *EI²*; M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, "Early Islamic Theological and Juristic Terminology: *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd fī 'l-uṣūl*, by Ibn Fūrak," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54, no. 1 (1991): 5-41.

[138] These works have been published as: Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb al-ḥudūd fī al-uṣūl*, ed. Mohamed al-Sulaymani (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999); idem, *Muǧarrad maqālāt al-Asʿarī: exposé de la doctrine d'al-Asʿarī*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1987); idem, *Bayān muškil al-aḥādit des Ibn Fūrak*, ed. Raimund Köbert (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1941). Cf. Watt, "Ibn Fūrak," *EI²*.

In his *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, Ibn Fūrak employs Prophetic traditions very

carefully. He admits authentic ḥadīths as evidence in describing God's attributes if they

can convey the requisite epistemological certainty, denying that He is *Ḥannān* because

"there has not been established to that effect an authentic report (*khabar ṣaḥīḥ*) on which

predicating attributes to Him could depend."[139] Ibn Fūrak admits the ambiguity in the

Ash'arī stance on the ability of ḥadīths to abrogate the Qur'ān. He states that al-Ash'arī

required that a report be *mutawātir* or have the ruling of *tawātur* in order to abrogate the

holy book, although he admits that in its capacity as a restriction or specification of

Qur'ānic rulings (*takhṣīṣ*), abrogation can in effect occur with *āḥād* ḥadīths as well.[140] In

his *Kitāb al-ḥudūd fī al-uṣūl*, Ibn Fūrak bisects reports into *mutawātir* and *āḥād*; the first

conveys epistemologically certain apodictic knowledge ('*ilm ḍarūrī*), while *āḥād* ḥadīths

are all those that do not meet the requirements of *mutawātir* and thus do not yield certain

knowledge.[141]

Later sources, however, provide an impression of a more nuanced understanding

of reports that allows for the tripartite division present in Abū Isḥāq's thought. Al-

Juwaynī states that Ibn Fūrak believed that reports that scholars had accepted with

consensus were "of assured authenticity (*maḥkūm bi-ṣidqihi*)," even if these scholars did

not act on their legal implications.[142] Ibn Ḥajar states that Ibn Fūrak believed that if an

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[139] Ibn Fūrak, *Muǧarrad maqālāt al-Aš'arī*, 57.

[140] Ibn Fūrak, *Muǧarrad maqālāt al-Aš'arī*, 199.

[141] Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb al-ḥudūd fī al-uṣūl*, 150.

[142] Al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 1:585.

āḥād ḥadīth became *"mashhūr"* with well-established transmission, it could yield certain

discursive knowledge (*ʿilm naẓarī*).[143]

V.10. d. *The Ḥanbalī Orthodoxy: Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ*

During the late fourth/tenth and the fifth/eleventh century, in major cities tension

between the two increasingly divergent strains of the transmission-based school became

more intense. In Baghdad, partisans of the conservative Ḥanbalīs/über-Sunnis and those

of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī camp competed with one another for intellectual ascendancy and

state patronage. Both were and remain competing orthodoxies in Sunni Islam.

Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ al-Ḥanbalī (d. 458/1066) of Baghdad served as the pivot

for the Ḥanbalī school in the fifth/eleventh century and was the single most influential

formulator of its legal theory. He wrote a commentary on the Ḥanbalī formative text, the

Mukhtaṣar of al-Khiraqī, and authored the school's first significant *uṣūl* text, *al-ʿUdda*.[144]

Through his writings on issues such as God's attributes and the fundamentals of doctrine

(*uṣūl al-dīn*), he proved himself an inveterate opponent of the Muʿtazila and the

burgeoning Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī orthodoxy. Among his many works we thus find a rebuttal of

Ashʿarism (*al-Radd ʿalā al-Ashʿariyya*).[145] This Ḥanbalī-Ashʿarī disagreement centered

on the proper interpretation of Qurʾānic verses and ḥadīths dealing with God's attributes

and movement. Ibn al-Farrāʾ believed that true proponents of the Prophet's legacy accept

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[143] Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 29-30.

[144] Ibn al-Farrāʾ himself notes that an ealier Ḥanbalī, al-Ḥasan b. Ḥāmid al-Warrāq (d. 403/1012-13), wrote a work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which seems not to have survived; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:213 (biography of al-Ḥasan).

[145] For a list of Ibn al-Farrāʾ's works, see Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:175.

the meaning of such reports at face value, while Ash'arīs deigned to interpret them figuratively.[146] This enmity, however, ironically masked a growing rapprochement between the Ash'arīs and leading elements of the Ḥanbalī school. Ibn al-Farrā', for example, found himself forced to admit that the wording of the Qur'ān was indeed created, and by penning a work of *uṣūl* structured like those of his opponents he was in effect agreeing to join in the discourse established by the Ḥanafīs, Mu'tazilites and Shāfi'īs/Ash'arīs.[147]

In his work on Ḥanbalī legal theory, *al-'Udda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Ibn al-Farrā' explains that while *āḥād* ḥadīths convey only probability (*zann*), when the umma reaches consensus (*ijmā'*) on some piece of evidence such as a ḥadīth (*an yatalaqqāhu bi 'l-qubūl*), the report then yields certain knowledge (*'ilm*). According to the general rules of reality (*'āda*), no ḥadīth could enjoy this level of credibility and not be correct.[148] In another work attempting to reconcile Ibn Ḥanbal's contrasting statements on issues of dogma, Ibn al-Farrā' reveals that he shares the other schools' view on the special capacity of these consensus-approved *āḥād* ḥadīths. For an *āḥād* ḥadīth to be considered as proof on an issue such as seeing God on the Day of Judgment, he explains, the umma must have accepted it with consensus (*talaqqathu bi 'l-qubūl*).[149]

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[146] Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:179.

[147] Ibn al-Farrā', *al-Masā'il al-'aqdiyya min Kitāb al-riwāyatayn wa al-wajhayn*, ed. Su'ūd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Khalaf (Riyadh: Aḍwā' al-Salaf, 1419/1999), 77 ff.

[148] Abū Ya'lā Ibn al-Farrā', *al-'Udda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 3:900-1.

[149] Ibn al-Farrā', *al-Masā'il al-'aqdiyya*, 70.

Ibn al-Farrā' does not acknowledge a middle tier of reports, mentioning only *āhād* and *mutawātir*. Interestingly, however, he does refer to the term *mashhūr* in his effort to translate the jargon used by earlier ḥadīth scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal into terms comprehensible in the arena of legal theory. He explains that ḥadīth scholars employed *mashhūr* for "a report whose transmissions have become massively widespread (*tawātara*)."[150]

V.10. e. *The Mālikīs*

Although Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī was a Mālikī and later Ashʿarīs such as Abū Dharr al-Harawī also belonged to the legal school, Mālikīs were not as prominent contributors to the discourse on epistemology or legal theory as the Shāfiʿīs. Al-Bāqillānī seems to be the exception in not mentioning any special status for *āhād* ḥadīths on which the community had agreed. Nonetheless, Ibn Ḥajar mentions that al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Mālikī of Baghdad (d. 422/1031-2) insisted in his *Kitāb al-Mulakhkhaṣ* (which has probably not survived) that the authenticity of that which the umma accepted with consensus was absolute.[151] For him *tawātur* and the consensus of the umma were the only means by which transmitted material could yield epistemological certainty.[152] Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, another prominent Mālikī of the fifth/eleventh century, also stated

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[150] Ibn al-Farrā', *al-ʿUdda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 3:930.

[151] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 113.

[152] Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAlī al-Mālikī, *al-Ishrāf ʿalā nukat masāʾil al-khilāf*, ed. al-Ḥabīb b. Ṭāhir, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 1:233.

that there are six circumstances in which *āḥād* ḥadīths can yield *ʿilm*, one of which is when the umma has accepted the *āḥād* ḥadīth with consensus (*talaqqathu bi'l-qubūl*).[153]

V.10. f. *Al-Ḥākim and the Consensus of the Umma*

Although al-Ḥākim attended the lessons of Ibn Fūrak, studied closely with Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī and transmitted ḥadīths from him, his work bears little trace of this ubiquitous agreement on the effect of consensus on the epistemological yield of ḥadīths. Furthermore, he does not employ the widespread terms *mashhūr* or *mustafīḍ* in the technical sense explored above. Perhaps the closest he comes to acknowledging the role of *ijmāʿ* or utilizing its associated jargon is his statement that authentic reports must be "circulated with acceptance (*bi'l-qubūl*)" among ḥadīth scholars.[154] Such feeble evidence, however, does not establish any link between al-Ḥākim's methodology and that of the legal theorists of his time. Although al-Ḥākim associated with giants in the fields of law, legal theory and theology, he was ultimately only a ḥadīth scholar. He offered the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a *kanòn* of authenticity binding for ḥadīth scholars and Muʿtazilites alike, but it was his students and colleagues from among the ranks of the legal theorists who truly declared the two works common ground. For them the widely accepted notion that *āḥād* ḥadīths that had earned the acceptance of the umma could be declared epistemologically certain would provide the key to canonizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.

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[153] Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, ed. Abdel-Magid Turki (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1407/1986), 330.

[154] Al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 77.

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V.11. A New Common Ground between the Ḥanbalī/Über-Sunni and the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī Schools

The role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as an authoritative common ground between two of the major scholarly camps of the early fifth/eleventh century expressed itself in the careers of two of al-Ḥākim's close associates: his teacher and colleague Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) and his student Abū Naṣr ʿUbaydallāh b. Saʿīd al-Wā'ilī al-Sijzī (d. 444/1052). A slightly later figure, Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), soon reiterated this new standing for the two books. Beyond their belief in the Qur'ānic revelation and a general Sunni loyalty, a common reverence for al-Bukhārī or the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* constituted the only firm common ground between figures whose relationships with one another were otherwise characterized by bitter enmity.

A discussion of the role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a common denominator in the scholarly community must begin with three landmark quotations from Abū Isḥāq, Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī.[155] Al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) cites Abū Isḥāq's statement from his lost *Kitāb fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Abū Isḥāq asserted:

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[155] Although we have no extant proof of these quotes from the three scholars themselves, this should not lead us to reject their provenance. Only one of al-Wā'ilī's works has survived; none of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī's books is extant. Furthermore, both al-Wā'ilī's and al-Juwaynī's quotes are of a decidedly oral nature (see Appendix on Divorce Oaths), and we should not be surprised not to find the quote in the many works of al-Juwaynī that have survived. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ provides an *isnād* back to al-Juwaynī for his quote, which suggests at least some documentation. Al-Juwaynī's contemporary, Abū al-Muẓaffar Manṣūr al-Samʿānī of Naysābūr (d. 489/1096), describes *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with the statement, "It has been said that the authenticity from the Prophet of what is in it is absolutely certain." This proves that this claim was known during al-Juwaynī's lifetime, providing a firm *terminus ante quem* that is relatively close chronologically to the earliest quote, namely that of al-Isfarāyīnī. In light of these circumstances, we should not equate an absence of documentary evidence for these quotes with evidence of absence. One claim does exist for a declaration about al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works before that of al-Isfarāyīnī, but this lacks credibility: Ibn Ḥajar states elliptically that al-Jawzaqī (d. 388/998) also declared the material in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to be absolutely authentic due to the consensus of the umma, but we have no other mention or evidence of this. The quote does not appear in al-Jawzaqī's *al-Muttafaq*. Furthermore, why would al-Jawzaqī's student al-Ḥākim never mention his teacher's statement among his accolades of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*?

The authenticity of the reports in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is epistemologically certain in terms of their texts (*uṣūlihā wa mutūnihā*), and no disagreement can occur concerning them. If disagreement does occur, it is over the transmissions and narrators (*ṭuruq wa ruwātihā*). Anyone whose ruling disagrees with a report and does not provide some acceptable interpretation (*ta'wīl sā'igh*) for the report, we negate his ruling, for the umma has accepted these reports with consensus.[156]

Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī is attributed with the following statement:

> Scholars (*ahl al-'ilm*), the jurists among them and others, have reached consensus (*ajma 'a*) that, if a man swears that if anything in al-Bukhārī's collection that has been reported from the Prophet (ṣ) is not authentic and that the Prophet (ṣ) indeed did not say it he will divorce his wife, he would not be breaking his word and the wife would stay as she was in his custody (*ḥibālatihi*).[157]

Finally, al-Juwaynī is quoted as saying:

> If a man swore that he would divorce his wife if something in the books of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that they had declared authentic were not [really] from the words of the Prophet (ṣ), I would not oblige him to divorce her and he would not be violating his oath due to the consensus of the Muslim umma on the authenticity of the two books.[158]

Another figure who supposedly made this claim somewhat later was Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Yūsufī (d. 574/1178-9) of Mecca, about whom we know very little. See Abū al-Muẓaffar Manṣūr b. Muḥammad al-Sam'ānī, *Qawāti 'al-adilla fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Tawba, 1418/1998), 2:500; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat 'alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 116; 'Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8 vols. in 4 (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijārī, [1960]), 4:248.

[156] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:261.

[157] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 168. Abū Naṣr's statement was echoed later by someone whom Ibn al-'Imād identifies only as Ibn al-Ahdal; see Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:135 (biography of al-Bukhārī). I have found only one instance of the divorce oath trope being used to testify to the authenticity of a ḥadīth collection other than the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, namely the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik. In his *Tartīb al-madārik*, al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ quotes Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī as saying, "If a man swore by divorce that Mālik's ḥadīths that are in the *Muwaṭṭa'* are all authentic (*ṣiḥāḥ*), he would not be violating his oath. If he swore by the ḥadīths of another he would be." Although this source is late, it is entirely possible that this attribution is correct. As we shall see in the next chapter, such statements gave voice to the Mālikī desire to put the *Muwaṭṭa'* on par with or above the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*; al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik fī taqrīb al-masālik li-ma 'rifat a 'lām madhhab Mālik*, ed. Aḥmad Bakir Maḥmud, 5 vols. in 3 (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1387/1967), 1:196.

[158] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 86.

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V.12. An Articulate Über-Sunni: Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī

We are already familiar with the life and career of the great Shāfiʿī theorist, ḥadīth scholar and Ashʿarī theologian Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, for the Shāfiʿī tradition has sufficiently recorded and honored his legacy. Conversely, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī has never received his due from the school to which he belonged and for which he battled so fiercely. Ibn Abī Yaʿlā devotes no entry to him in the *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, although he does respectfully mention a letter Abū Naṣr wrote to Ibn al-Farrā' from Mecca praising one of the latter's books.[159] Abū Naṣr's sole surviving work, however, leaves no doubt as to his allegiances. He was an über-Sunni who viewed Ibn Ḥanbal as the culmination of the Islamic religious tradition. After al-Shāfiʿī's convoluted attempts at theorizing Islamic law had left Muslims confused, Ibn Ḥanbal took what he could from al-Shāfiʿī's work as well as that of Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa, and restored the pure tradition of complying with the Prophet's sunna.[160]

Abū Naṣr extends the budding Ashʿarī school no mercy. He condemns al-Bāqillānī, Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī and Ibn Fūrak as the "*imāms* of misguidance (*a'immat al-ḍalāl*)" of his time. For, although they reject some opinions of the Muʿtazila, they reject more from the partisans of ḥadīth (*ahl al-athar*).[161] Abū Naṣr is unconvinced by the Ashʿarī use of speculative reasoning to trump the Muʿtazila, whom he is convinced are a

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[159] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:173. I have not seen al-Wā'ilī mentioned in any secondary source works on the period or the Ḥanbalī school.

[160] Abū Naṣr ʿUbaydallāh b. Saʿīd al-Wā'ilī al-Sijzī, *Risālat al-Sijzī ilā ahl Zabīd fī al-radd ʿalā man ankara al-ḥarf wa al-ṣawt*, ed. Muḥammad b. Karīm b. ʿAbdallāh (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1414/1994), 215.

[161] Al-Wā'ilī, *al-Radd*, 223.

spent force. He explains that while Ash'arīs purport to debate the Mu'tazila, they are in fact with them. Indeed, "they are viler than them (akhass ḥāl^{an})."[162]

Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī was born in the Iranian province of Sijistān to a family that followed the Ḥanafī madhhab.[163] He soon split from his father's school, however, and traveled to Khurāsān and Ghazna. In 404/1014 he undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, then visited Baghdad, Egypt and Basra before returning to Mecca, where he remained until his death.[164]

Abū Naṣr studied ḥadīth with al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, probably in Naysābūr, and clearly respected him a great deal. He seems to have viewed him as an exemplary ḥadīth scholar. Abū Naṣr would tell a story about his teacher's encounter with the famous litterateur Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008) upon his arrival in Naysābūr to a crowd of admirers. When al-Hamadhānī awed onlookers by memorizing a hundred lines of poetry after one hearing and then belittled the memorization of ḥadīths, al-Ḥākim decided the time had come to put this bonvivant litterateur in his place. He approached him and asked him to memorize a juz' of ḥadīths. When he returned a week later to test al-Hamadhānī, he could not remember the specifics of the isnāds. Al-Ḥākim scolded him

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[162] Al-Wā'ilī, al-Radd; 81, 222. He considers the last generation of Mu'tazilites to be 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ṣāḥib Ibn 'Abbād.

[163] This is the cause of Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī's outrageous inclusion in Ḥanafī biographical dictionaries, see below n. 164.

[164] Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Lubāb fī tahdhīb al-ansāb, 3:351-2; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 16:187 (Ibn al-Jawzī errs in his death date, which he has as 469 AH); al-Dhahabī, Siyar,17:654-6; idem, Tārīkh al-islām, 30:95-97; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī bi-al-wafāyāt, vol. 19, ed. Riḍwān al-Sayyid (Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1413/1993), 19:372-3, "Abū Naṣr Sijzī," Dā'erat al-ma'āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī, 6:318-9; Ibn Abī al-Wafā', al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya, 2:495.

for mocking something more difficult to memorize than poetry and told him, "Know your place (i 'raf nafsak)."[165]

Abū Naṣr seems to have produced very few works, only one of which has survived. His *al-Radd 'alā man ankara al-ḥarf wa al-ṣawt* (Rebuttal of Those who Deny [that God's Speech Consists of] Words and Sounds), written as a letter to the people of Zabīd in Yemen, is probably a summary of his *magnum opus*, the *Kitāb al-ibāna al-kubrā*. Al-Dhahabī praises both this work and its author, whom he lauds with the unique accolade "the *imām* of the knowledge of the sunna (*imām 'ilm al-sunna*)."[166] He explains that the work dealt incisively with questions of the Qur'ān's nature and God's attributes.[167] The *Rebuttal* itself addresses numerous topics, such as the nature of the Qur'ān, God's speech, His sitting on the throne, the beatific vision, and His descending to the lowest heavens at night. The *Ibāna* was read during its author's lifetime, for Ibn Taymiyya tells us that when Abū Naṣr and the Ash'arī Abū Dharr al-Harawī were both in Mecca they fell into a serious argument over the nature of the Qur'ān and the *Ibāna*.[168] In addition, later scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cite Abū Naṣr's ḥadīth work on the narration of sons from their fathers as the definitive book in that genre.[169]

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[165] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:173.

[166] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:211.

[167] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:654.

[168] "Abū Naṣr Sijzī," *Dā 'erat al-ma 'āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 6:318.

[169] Al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 273; Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-bāqī bi-sharḥ alfiyyat al-'Irāqī*, ed. Thanā'allāh al-Zāhidī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 562.

The *Ibāna* indicates that Abū Naṣr possessed a deep understanding of both Ashʿarī

and Muʿtazilite thought as well as the Ashʿarī mission of defending Sunnism using the

Muʿtazilites' rational tools. The Muʿtazila claimed that speech consists of words and

sounds, which are created. Since Sunnis believed that the Qurʾān was God's speech, it

must also be created. The Ashʿarīs circumvented this trap by denying that God spoke in

sounds; rather, His speech was figurative. His words were "meaning inhering in the

essence of the Speaker (*ma ʿnā qāʾim bi-dhāt al-mutakallim*)." Abū Naṣr rejects the

Ashʿarī position, stating that it was well-understood amongst Arabs that the term "speech

(*kalām*)" denoted actual words.[170] The Ashʿarīs claimed that God "spoke" only in the

figurative (*majāzī*) sense because, if He actually articulated words, this would be

anthropomorphism (*tajsīm, tashbīh*).[171]

Against this, Abū Naṣr defends the über-Sunnis' literalist interpretation of God

speaking or moving in space. He states that his party is the true *ahl al-sunna* "who stand

fast on what the early generations (*salaf*) had transmitted to them from the Messenger of

God (ṣ)" and rely on the traditions of the Companions where God and His Prophet are

silent.[172] Reports about God speaking, ascending His throne or descending to the lowest

heavens have been bequeathed to the Muslims of the present day by upstanding and

trustworthy *imāms* like Mālik through many corroborating reports (*turuq mutasāwiya*).[173]

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[170] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 81-2.

[171] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 82.

[172] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 99.

[173] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 186.

Abū Naṣr's position on the epistemological yield of *āḥād* ḥadīths reveals an acute

and cunning approach to dialectic. He acknowledges that most scholars believe that *āḥād*

ḥadīths are only compelling in law (*'amal*). They do not yield certainty (*'ilm*) like

massively transmitted reports (*mutawātir*). He replies using the Ashʿarīs' own position

that *tawātur* is not defined by a fixed number of reports, but rather by circumstances that

lead to the total alleviation of doubt concerning the authenticity of the message. This

could occur with one hundred narrations, four or even less depending on circumstances.

Most ḥadīths dealing with God's attributes, he continues, have been transmitted in

sufficient number to alleviate doubt and make the heart feel at ease.[174] He mocks the

Ashʿarīs' attempts to parry the Muʿtazila using rational argumentation without recourse to

ḥadīths that are "*āḥād* and do not yield *'ilm*." How can they say that a *ṣaḥīḥ āḥād* ḥadīth

does not yield *'ilm* but their reason does!?[175]

Although Abū Naṣr never provides a systematic discussion of the different levels

of ḥadīths and their epistemological yields, he employs the notions of consensus and

other terminology of the legal theorists of his day. This should not surprise us, for we

know that he read Ibn al-Farrā''s works.[176] He describes one ḥadīth as "*ṣaḥīḥ mashhūr*"

and as having been "accepted by the umma (*talaqqathu al-umma bi-al-qubūl*).[177] In fact,

in a brief listing of the different kinds of Prophetic traditions, he lists reports that enjoy

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[174] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 187.

[175] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*; 81, 101.

[176] See n. 159 above.

[177] Al-Wāʾilī, *al-Radd*, 151. This ḥadīth, "*Inna Allah tajāwaza lī-ummatī mā ḥaddathat bihi anfusuhā mā lam tatakallam aw taʿmal bihi*," appears in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb 58.*

the consensus of the umma as the opposites of those that scholars have abandoned and not acted on.[178]

As Abū Naṣr's quotation about the umma's consensus on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* indicates, he respected the work highly. On the controversial issue of God speaking audibly, he cites al-Bukhārī for his inclusion of a ḥadīth in which God calls to the believers on the Day of Judgment with a voice.[179] On another occasion he describes a ḥadīth as "occurring in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*jā'a fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ*)."[180] His work makes no specific mention of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. When urging Muslims to resort to the ḥadīth collections of those who have stood out as experts on Islam and the Prophet's legacy, he names as examples the *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd, Ibn al-Athram, 'Uthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. 280/894) and Ḥarb b. Ismāʿīl al-Sīrjānī (d. 280/893-4).[181] Given his esteem for al-Bukhārī's collection, it seems odd that he does not include his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in this list. But Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī was first and foremost a loyal Ḥanbalī, and the four collections that he mentions are all the works of Ibn Ḥanbal's close associates.

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[178] Al-Wā'ilī, *al-Radd*, 206.

[179] "*istashhada bihi al-Bukhārī fī kitābihi* al-Ṣaḥīḥ"; al-Wā'ilī, *al-Radd*, 164. Ḥadīth: *yaḥshuru Allah al-nās yawm al-qiyāma....* For a discussion of this Prophetic tradition, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:555-561; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb* 32.

[180] Al-Wā'ilī, *al-Radd*, 174. This ḥadīth, "*Yaḥmilu al-samāwāt ʿalā aṣbaʿ wa al-arḍayn ʿalā aṣbaʿ...*" appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb qawl Allāh limā khalaqtu bi-yadī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb ṣifāt al-munāfiqīn, bāb ṣifat al-qiyāma wa al-janna wa al-nār.*

[181] Al-Wā'ilī, *al-Radd*, 223.

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V.13. Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī: A Consummate Shāfiʿī and Ashʿarī

Born in 419/1028 in the constellation of villages called Jovayn astride the winding

road from Bayhaq to Isfarāyīn in the hills near Naysābūr, ʿAbd al-Mālik b. ʿAbdallāh al-

Juwaynī studied Shāfiʿī law and Ashʿarī theology in Naysābūr until the new Seljuq

administrator of the city declared that "[Abū al-Ḥasan] al-Ashʿarī is guilty of innovation

in religion (mubtadiʿ) worse than the Muʿtazilites."[182] Al-Juwaynī thus fled to Baghdad

and then to the Ḥijāz in 450/1058. He became one of the most sought-after masters of his

school, teaching in Mecca and Medina and earning the honorary title "imām of the two

Sanctuaries (al-ḥaramayn)." When the great administrator Niẓām al-Mulk came to

power, al-Juwaynī became one of his favorites. The vizier invited the scholar to return to

Naysābūr and teach at his state-sponsored college, the Niẓāmiyya. He remained in the

city until his death in 478/1085.[183]

Al-Juwaynī produced extremely important works in the fields of legal theory,

Shāfiʿī substantive law and Ashʿarī theology. His Waraqāt (The Pages) and his Kitāb al-

burhān (Book of Demonstration) have remained two of the most standard texts for

teaching the principles of jurisprudence in the Shāfiʿī school. In addition, his massive

twenty-volume fiqh work entitled Nihāyat al-maṭlab fī dirāyat al-madhhab (The End of

the Question for Knowing the Path) served as the formative text around which all later

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[182] Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 15:340; see also, Bulliet, "The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century," 82 ff.

[183] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq, 508; al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 18:468-77; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 5:171-88; al-Safadī, al-Wāfī bi-al-wafāyāt, 19:171-5; C. Brockelmann and L. Gardet, "al-Djuwaynī," EI²; Hallaq, "Caliphs, Jurists and the Saljuqs in the Political Thought of Juwayni," Muslim World 74, no 1 (1984): 27-8.

legal references in the Shāfiʿī school would revolve.[184] Al-Juwaynī also composed a

seminal work on Ashʿarī theology entitled *al-Shāmil* (The Comprehensive Book) as well

as another book rebutting the Muʿtazilite school.

The study of ḥadīth was certainly al-Juwaynī's weakest field. He did receive an

ijāza from Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī (although as a child) and was very familiar with the

Sunan of al-Dāraquṭnī, which he employed as a source of legal ḥadīths and narrator

criticism (*jarḥ wa ta ʿdīl*).[185] We also know that he received a copy of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*

from Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. 499/1105-6).[186] Al-Dhahabī,

however, questioned his mastery of the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections. He points out that in the *Kitāb*

al-burhān al-Juwaynī describes the ḥadīth in which the Prophet approves of Muʿādh b.

Jabal's decision to use his own reasoning when no Qurʾānic or Prophetic injunctions exist

as "recorded in the *ṣaḥīḥ*s, with its authenticity agreed upon (*mudawwan fī al-ṣiḥāḥ*

muttafaq ʿalā ṣiḥḥatihi)."[187] Al-Bukhārī, however, expressly rejects this ḥadīth as

unreliable.[188]

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[184] Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt*, 19:173; ʿAlī Jumʿa, *al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī wa madrasatuhu al-fiqhiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Risāla, 1425/2004), 80-82.

[185] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5:171, 182.

[186] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 305.

[187] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18:471-2; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt*, 19:173; al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 2:882. Al-Subkī contests his teacher al-Dhahabī's condemnation of Juwaynī's ḥadīth skills, saying that the Muʿādh ḥadīth is in al-Tirmidhī's collection; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5:187-8. This is immaterial, however, since al-Juwaynī had claimed that the authenticity of the ḥadīth was agreed upon – a statement that al-Bukhārī's dismissal undermines.

[188] Al-Bukhārī considered the ḥadīth of Muʿādh b. Jabal telling the Prophet what steps he would take in deciding the correct course of action (the Qurʾān, the Prophet's precedent, then his own reason) to be weak because one of the narrators, al-Ḥārith b. ʿAmr al-Thaqafī, was *majhūl*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:139-40.

V.14. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Canon: The Authority of Convention and Common Ground

The above three quotations of al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī

provide the first historical evidence for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* functioning as texts authorized by a

certain community. In these three cases, representatives from the two opposing strains of

the transmission-based school affirm a common source for discussing the authentic

legacy of the Prophet. For one Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni and two Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs, the works of

al-Bukhārī and Muslim had authenticated a common tract of the Prophetic past. This

agreement authorized the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* by demonstrating that the three scholars all

acknowledged a common body of proof texts that had been guaranteed by a mutually

recognized scholarly consensus.

We must note that the quotations of al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī do not directly

identify the authority of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as that of legal compulsion. Rather, they focus on

the two works' total authenticity and the authority that this created for the books as a

convention within a community of discourse. These two statements took place in a

context that was uniquely interactive.[189] The formula of swearing to divorce one's wife in

order to prove the truth of a statement was a trope among scholars and possibly a wider

segment of society in the classical Islamic world.[190] It was a rhetorical statement made in

a dialectical context. Al-Juwaynī's and Abū Naṣr's statements were responses to stimuli

designed to test the conventions to which they subscribed. They made these statements

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[189] This context should not suggest that these statements were haphazard or hasty. Al-Wā'ilī's statement contains a cautious distinction between the total contents of al-Bukhārī's work, which contains numerous reports from the Companions as well as the author's commentary, and reports directly attributed to the Prophet.

[190] See Appendix on Divorce Oaths.

because some questioner or adversary had elicited them. Perhaps someone had probed the two scholars for their opinion on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or questioned the authenticity of al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's collections. Their responses showed that the scholars acknowledged a common convention to which both were accountable. They recognized a new canon regarding sources for the Prophet's sunna.

This role of drawing inclusive lines for a community that certainly encompassed the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs but also may have included other groups such as the declining Muʿtazilites was unique to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Isfarāyīnī, who penned polemical works against the Muʿtazilites, felt he could claim the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as an authoritative common ground in his work on legal theory. Abū Naṣr al-Wāʾilī, who denigrated Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī as one of the most destructive religious forces of his time, nonetheless seconds his evaluation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*'s reliability. Years later, al-Juwaynī echoed Abū Naṣr al-Wāʾilī's evaluation, including Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* as well. What is truly shocking is that al-Juwaynī detested Abū Naṣr both personally and ideologically. Once while strolling through the book market in Mecca, he found al-Wāʾilī's book *Mukhtaṣar al-bayān* (probably an abbreviation of his *Ibāna*). In a lost refutation entitled *Naqḍ kitāb al-Sijzī* (Refutation of al-Sijzī's Book), he describes the work as dealing with the nature of the Qurʾān and "saying that Ashʿarīs are unbelievers (*kuffār*)." Al-Juwaynī states, "I have never seen an ignoramus (*jāhilᵃⁿ*) more daring in calling people unbelievers and hastier in judging the *imāms*...."[191] Considering that Abū

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[191] Taqī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Kāfī al-Subkī (d. 756/1356), *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl fī al-radd ʿalā ibn al-Zafīl*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Saʿd ʿAṭiyya ([Cairo]: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1356/1937), 19-20.

Naṣr and al-Juwaynī viewed each others' positions as anathema on issues ranging

ritual law to the nature of the Qur'ān and God's attributes, the Ṣaḥīḥayn (or, for ł

Naṣr, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī) were one of the few articles on which they actually agree

Bridging the chasm between these two strains of transmission-based schol

not merely a personal matter. In the fifth/eleventh century, Baghdad was plagued

internecine violence between the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs.

Throughout 469/1076-7 and 470/1077-8, for example, debates between Abū Isḥāc

Shīrāzī and his Ḥanbalī opponents spilled into the streets, where mobs supporting

groups ruthlessly hurled bricks at one another.[192] Only state intervention could en

quarrel. On the level of doctrine and public religious symbolism, the Ṣaḥīḥayn cc

serve as one of the few threads joining these two parties, the canon that bound bol

together as one community.

The notion of consensus (ijmāʿor talaqqī al-umma bi'l-qubūl) provided th

authorizing these two works within the expanded boundaries of a widened Sunni ł

As we have seen, the augmenting effect of communal consensus on āḥād ḥadīths

a common discourse among the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Muʿtazilite, Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī and Ḥ

schools in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. It was to this epistemologica

authority that Abū Isḥāq, Abū Naṣr and al-Juwaynī turned in order to empower thː

ḥadīth canon.

Clearly, however, the entire Muslim world did not consider the two works

authentic. Imāmī Shiites, for example, would never have subscribed to this opinic

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[192] Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam, 16:171-2.

How, then, should we understand these claims of consensus? *Ijmā'* is fundamentally self-centered, invoked and defined by scholars attempting to make their beliefs normative by ascribing them to a wider community. This 'community' rarely actually applies to the entire Muslim world. Rather, it encompasses those Muslims who uphold correct belief or practice as imagined by the scholar invoking *ijmā'* in that moment. As al-Juwaynī states, *ijmā'* does not include those Muslim heretics (*mubtadi'a*) whom "we have declared unbelievers."[193] A claim of *ijmā'* is thus always 'accurate' from the point of view of the scholar invoking it, since anyone who disagrees with it is, according to the claimant, not truly part of the Muslim community at that moment. Claims of *ijmā'* are thus inherently subjective, and their efficacy in a debate thus depends entirely on the opponents' willingness to consider themselves beholden to the same "we," the same community, and the same terms invoked by the claimant.

In essence, then, *ijmā'* is prescriptive and not a description of reality.[194] Someone who invokes the authority of consensus is attempting to force another to heed evidence he considers universally compelling. In this sense, the actual boundaries of the umma mentioned by Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī prove immaterial. In reality, asserting the authenticity of the ḥadīths in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* could convince only those willing to accept the premises of mainstream Sunni ḥadīth criticism as it existed in the fifth/eleventh century. This claim of consensus would not even have

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[193] Al-Juwaynī's requirements for inclusion in *ijmā'* are vague and highly subjective, generally restricting it to qualified jurists and legal theorists (*uṣūlī*). He states that the opinions of vaguely named "heretics (*mubtadi'a*)" may be considered depending on the circumstances; al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 2:684-5, 689.

[194] This follows Snouck Hurgronje, Goldziher and Makdisi. See Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam*, ed. and trans. Merlin L. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 253.

convinced a great Sunni *muḥaddith* like al-Dāraquṭnī, whose standards for Addition had proven more stringent than al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's.[195] On the rhetorical plane, however, invoking the authority of consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* could prove compelling provided one's opponent also upheld the status of the two books. Claims made about *ijmā'* on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* thus depended on an opponent's commitment to imagining the same authoritative station for the two books and acknowledging the same conventions of argument.

V.15. Conclusion: Why the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Now?

As the long fourth century came to a close around 450/1058, a cadre of ḥadīth scholars and legal theorists from the transmission-based schools had put forth al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections as texts wielding the authority of a common convention. Yet the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were not necessarily the most widely used ḥadīth collections. Mālikīs could rely on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, Ḥanbalīs on the *Musnad*. Even Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī clearly favored Abū Dāwūd's collection; al-Juwaynī relied more on al-Dāraquṭnī's *Sunan* in his everyday work. Moreover, when Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī made his proclamation about the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* many decades had passed since ḥadīth scholars such as Ibn al-Sakan and jurists like al-Khaṭṭābī had articulated the possibility and need for ḥadīth works that could act as loci of consensus. Why canonize the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and why now?

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[195] Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 31-34.

It was al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī who provided the necessary catalyst for the transformation of al-Bukhārī and Muslim into *kanòn*s of authenticity. He served as a magnet for studies of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, inheriting two works the contents of which had been thoroughly studied and whose transmitters had been painstakingly identified. No other ḥadīth collections had received the ceaseless attention devoted to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their authors' methods, and no other works had consistently earned the admiration of the community of ḥadīth scholars. Most importantly, no other collections could conceivably bear the claims that al-Ḥākim made about their authors' methods and the status of their transmitters.

The genre of *ilzāmāt* had been established by al-Dāraquṭnī, but al-Ḥākim transformed it from an obscure and personal activity into a polemical tool. The mission of expanding the number of authentic ḥadīths in circulation motivated al-Ḥākim throughout his career, and the concept of the "requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" furnished the vehicle for doing so. He identified the methodologies that the two scholars employed in compiling their works with the highest level of critical stringency. Apparently conscious that he was acting more on ideals than reality, al-Ḥākim defined their standards in a manner that met the requirements of both Sunni ḥadīth scholars and the Muʿtazilites whose attacks on the transmission-based school had irked him throughout his career. In his *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim presented the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a *kanòn* of authenticity that could endow a vast new body of ḥadīths with the reliability of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Ḥākim's work became very influential very quickly, attracting commentary and spreading as far as Andalusia during the author's lifetime.

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Al-Ḥākim and most of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network worked within the realm of ḥadīth collection and criticism, but his colleague Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī and his student Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī participated in the wider discourse of epistemology, law and legal theory. Indeed, the broader Muslim community had earlier imagined the authority with which *ijmā'* could endow ḥadīths, and ḥadīth scholars had begun conceiving of the ḥadīth collection as a possible locus of communal consensus. It was only during the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, however, that legal discourse among a wide variety of schools had collectively articulated that the *ijmā'* of the umma could raise *āḥād* ḥadīths from yielding mere probability to total certainty. Abū Isḥāq and Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī combined these notions of the ḥadīth collection as a common ground and the authority endowed by *ijmā'* in their proclamation of the absolute authenticity of al-Bukhārī's and/or Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*s. Al-Juwaynī seconded this declaration, proving that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* could bridge the serious enmity between the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni and Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī camps.

These developments endowed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* with a new potential authority within the body of transmission-based scholars. They had been acknowledged as a common ground and a convention recognized by both the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni and the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī schools. Moreover, both al-Ḥākim and the scholars who declared the community's authoritative consensus on the two books envisioned a canon that reached beyond the boundaries of the transmission-based schools. With the end of the long fourth century we thus find that members of the transmission-based schools had authorized two texts that both defined an existing convention for discussing the Prophet's legacy and

carried the potential to extend that convention to a wider community. What would come of this potential beyond the three figures of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī? Only by meeting widespread needs within the scholarly community could the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon take root.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE CANONIZATION OF AL-BUKHĀRĪ AND MUSLIM:

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE SUNNI ḤADĪTH CANON

VOLUME TWO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2006

VI.

THE CANON AND THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY:

THE *ṢAḤĪḤAYN* AS MEASURE OF AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITATIVE

REFERENCE AND EXEMPLUM

VI.1. Introduction

At some moment around the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*
emerged as authoritative representations of the Prophet's sunna among the transmission-
based Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools. Beyond that theoretical singularity when a book
becomes more than the sum of its pages, however, canonization involves forces greater
than the career of one remarkable individual, like al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, or the isolated
declarations of a few, like Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī or Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī. It represents
the choice of a community to transform texts into authoritative institutions, to endow
them with authority because doing so allows them to meet certain needs or perform
certain essential functions.

The authorization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* indeed met three important needs in the Sunni
scholarly community of the mid-fifth/eleventh century. First, the canon provided a
common measure of authenticity for scholars from different legal schools engaged in
debate, exposition of their doctrines or efforts to bolster the ḥadīths they employed as
proof texts. Spreading out from al-Ḥākim's students and prominent members of the
Ṣaḥīḥayn Network to leading scholars among the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī schools in

Iraq and Iran, the two works became an authoritative convention for evaluating

attributions of the Prophet's interpretive authority. This canon would become

indispensable for scholars, for citing a ḥadīth as being included in one or both of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn endowed it with an authenticity guaranteed by the umma's consensus. By the

mid-eighth/fourteenth century, even the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī school found acknowledging

this convention essential. Second, in a time when jurisprudence was growing

increasingly distant from the specialization of ḥadīth criticism, the institution of the

canon also began playing an important role as an authoritative reference for jurists who

lacked the expertise necessary to independently evaluate ḥadīths. Finally, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

canon was not simply a conventional tool for authorizing Prophetic reports. Al-Bukhārī

and Muslim also became the exemplum that could shape the science of ḥadīth collection

and criticism itself. Therefore, as institutions such as the *madrasa* formed, schools of law

solidified and the field of legal theory fully matured, the mid-fifth/eleventh century saw

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* emerge as powerful institutions for jurists searching for conventions of

debate or authoritative references, as well as ḥadīth scholars struggling to systematize the

study of the Prophet's word.

The nature of the authority that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon wielded, however, was far

from absolute. The power of the canon was bound intimately to the interactive functions

it fulfilled. It was an illusion conjured up as convention in the dialogic space of debate

and exposition. Within the closed circles of legal or theological schools, however,

scholars had no compunction about rejecting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's ḥadīths.

VI.2. 1. The Need for a Common Measure of Authenticity: The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in Scholarly Debate

Traditions of the Prophet were *prima facie* compelling for Muslim scholars. Certainly among their own colleagues, the jurists of a particular legal school felt no pressure to provide rigorous chains of transmission for ḥadīths used in elaborating their common body of law. In such circumstances, it was not necessary to go beyond simple attributions of Prophetic authority. The issue of a ḥadīth's authenticity arose only when opinions clashed, when competing parties employing the Prophet's normative legacy as a proof text challenged the reliability of one another's evidence.

The Baghdad Shāfiʿī Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083) emphasized this need for a common measure of authenticity in his manual on juridical debate, the *Kitāb al-ma ʿūna fī al-jadal*. Engaging his Ḥanafī counterparts proved an alluring interest for al-Shīrāzī, and he authored two other works on issues of disagreement between the two schools.[1] In the *Kitāb al-ma ʿūna*, al-Shīrāzī addresses the possibility of a situation in which a Shāfiʿī scholar faces demands to produce an *isnād* for a ḥadīth he has adduced as evidence. If an opponent demands that one provide a chain of transmission, one should simply refer him to "a relied-upon book (*kitāb mu ʿtamad*)." The difficulty in providing or rebutting evidence only arises when one's own ḥadīth is not found in "the *sunan*."[2]

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[1] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Kitāb al-ma ʿūna fī al-jadal*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Turkī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1988), 55 (editor's introduction). These two works are *al-Nukat fī al-masā 'il al-mukhtalaf fīhā bayn al-imāmayn Abī Ḥanīfa wa al-Shāfi ʿī* and *Tadhkirat al-mas 'ūlīn fī al-khilāf bayn al-Ḥanafī wa al-Shāfi ʿī*.

[2] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Kitāb al-ma ʿūna fī al-jadal*, 160.

It was this need for a common measure of authenticity in the context of debate or exposition that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon so effectively fulfilled. Indeed, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works had acquired a powerful air of legal compulsion by al-Shīrāzī's time. As Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī had declared, to rule against a ḥadīth found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* without some convincing excuse was to oppose the consensus of the Muslim community. Writing some sixty years after al-Isfarāyīnī's death, al-Ghazālī emphasized how widespread the notion that the contents of the two books were legally compelling had become. In his *al-Mankhūl min taʿlīqāt al-uṣūl*, a work on legal theory directed against Ḥanafī opponents of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī school, al-Ghazālī states casually that:

> We know that if a *muftī*, if a question proves too difficult for him and he
> looks through one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, comes across a ḥadīth that addresses his
> aim, it is not permitted for him to turn away from it, and he is obligated to
> rely on it (*al-taʾwīl*). He who permits [turning away from the ḥadīth] has
> broken with the consensus [of the umma] (*kharaqa al-ijmāʿ*).[3]

That al-Ghazālī does not feel obliged to prove this claim, but rather employs it axiomatically to argue a separate point, illustrates how compelling an institution the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had become by the late fifth/eleventh century. It was thus in debates or polemical writings that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon functioned most clearly as a vehicle by which a scholar could wield the authoritative consensus of the community against his opponent.

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[3] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 269. For the importance of consensus in the formation and maintenance of orthodoxy in Islam, and the equation of breaking it with disobeying the Prophet, see Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 48-53.

VI.3. *Takhrīj*: Applying the Measure of Authenticity

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon thus found its most salient application in the *takhrīj* of

ḥadīths, or citing the various collections in which a report appears. In theory, a scholar

seeking to provide such validating references for his ḥadīths could cite any ḥadīth

collection he wished. The attempt to prove the reliability of a report, however, hinged

inevitably on the quality of the collections to which he referred. *Takhrīj* therefore

generally involved the products of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, especially the Six Books and

later the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Ḥibbān and the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim. As we

shall see, referring to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon differed qualitatively from citing these other

respected collections. Not only did al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works alone enjoy the

claim of the community's consensus on the authenticity of their contents, they also better

accorded with the rules of Sunni ḥadīth criticism as they coalesced in the mid-

fifth/eleventh century and beyond.

Takhrīj using al-Bukhārī and Muslim, however, did not merely serve as a stamp

of approval for the relatively limited quantity of material featured in their collections.

Taking advantage of the differing narrations or multiform permutations of a single

Prophetic tradition, scholars like the Shāfiʿī Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) were able

to extend the measure of authenticity to material that differed significantly from the

actual contents of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Later scholars such as al-ʿIrāqī, Ibn Ḥajar and al-

Sakhāwī thus took al-Bayhaqī and others to task for telling their readers that a ḥadīth

appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* when in fact al-Bukhārī or Muslim included only the basic *isnād* (*aṣl al-isnād*) or general text of the report.[4]

More importantly, the critical standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, however a scholar might choose to define them, continued as a stamp of legitimacy that could extend the consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to new bodies of ḥadīth. In his treatise on Sufism, entitled *Ṣafwat al-taṣawwuf* (The Essence of Sufism), Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) proudly states that he will not use any poorly attested (*gharīb*) ḥadīths in arguments against opponents. Rather, he will rely only on those found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, which "the umma of Muslims has accepted with consensus, as well as that which meets [al-Bukhārī's and Muslim]'s requirements (*sharṭihimā*) but that they did not include."[5] Here the dual power of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon is clear in the authority of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's texts themselves and in their capacity as a *kanòn* by which their authority could be extended to outside ḥadīths.

To the present day, the "requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" have retained this function as a vehicle in which the authorizing consensus of the community can be deposited for later application. In the perennial debate over seeking the intercession of dead saints (*tawassul*), the modern scholar Yūsuf Hāshim al-Rifāʿī defends this practice against detractors by invoking a ḥadīth in which the caliph ʿUthmān tells a man seeking aid to call upon the late Prophet for assistance in gaining God's favor. Al-Rifāʿī avers

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[4] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*; 81; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:60-1.

[5] Al-Maqdisī, *Ṣafwat al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Ghādah al-Muqaddam ʿAdrah (Beirut: Dār al-Muntakhab al-ʿArabī, 1995), 133.

that this ḥadīth meets the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, "so there remains nothing one could criticize or denounce in the authenticity of the ḥadīth."[6]

The array of sources that could be invoked in *takhrīj* led ḥadīth scholars to contemplate a system of ranking the various respected ḥadīth collections. As we have seen above, al-Ḥākim had pioneered this by associating the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their requirements with the highest level of authentic ḥadīths. In his *Shurūṭ al-a'imma al-khamsa*, al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584/1188) uses the students of the early ḥadīth transmitter al-Zuhrī (d. 124/743) as a template for ranking the critical stringency of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī. Al-Bukhārī only drew from the top level, consisting of scholars like Mālik, while Muslim also relied on the second tier. Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī resorted to the third level, while al-Tirmidhī plumbed the depths of the fourth.[7]

Since debate often pitted al-Bukhārī and Muslim or one of these two scholars' critical requirements against one another, there gradually developed a more detailed ranking strictly for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Mayyānishī (d. 583/1187) concluded that the highest level of reliability belongs to ḥadīths on which both al-Bukhārī and Muslim agreed. The second level consists of reports that only one of them included. The third level features reports that meet their requirements but do not appear in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and the lowest level consists of ḥadīths that fail to meet those conditions but nonetheless possess good *isnāds*.[8] Ibn al-Jawzī followed al-Mayyānishī, adding several lower levels

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[6] Yūsuf al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Rifāʿī, *Adillat ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1405/1985), 96.

[7] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-a'imma al-khamsa*, 43-4.

[8] Al-Mayyānishī, 262-3.

of ḥadīths such as forged reports.[9] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ developed the final form of this ranking

system, which consisted of ḥadīths:

1) Agreed on by al-Bukhārī and Muslim
2) Only included in al-Bukhārī
3) Only included in Muslim
4) Meeting the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim
5) Meeting only the requirements of al-Bukhārī
6) Meeting only the requirements of Muslim
7) Ḥadīths that are ṣaḥīḥ but do not meet al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's requirements[10]

These rankings were not simply exercises in empty contemplation. If we

understand these evaluations as judgments about the functional value of ḥadīth

collections, we must appreciate that they arose as responses to pressing questions within

the scholarly community. As Monroe Beardsley states in his discussion of

instrumentalism in aesthetics, "Statements of value are to be regarded as proposed

solutions to *problems* of value, that is, situations in which choices have to be made."[11]

Scholars faced situations in which they had to choose between competing authentic

ḥadīths. As Ibn al-Wazīr notes incisively in his comparison between the critical methods

of Muslim and Abū Dāwūd, "Know that the purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate

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[9] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Mawḍūʿāt*, 1:32-5.

[10] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 169. This ranking has been followed by almost all later scholars, some of whom have discussed the levels in more detail; see Abū al-Fayḍ Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī al-Faṣīḥ al-Harawī (d. 837/1434), *Jawāhir al-uṣūl fī ʿilm ḥadīth al-Rasūl*, ed. Abū al-Maʿālī Aṭhar al-Mubārakfūrī (Medina: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, [1973?]), 19; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 107; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 98-102.

[11] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: The Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), 543.

that the ḥadīths of Muslim are preferable to those of Abū Dāwūd in the case of

competition (ta ʿāruḍ) between them....ˮ[12]

Indeed, these comprehensive rankings emerged in the wake of seminal attempts to

systematize the Sunni study of ḥadīth. Although scholars such as Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī

(d. 349/960) and al-Ismāʿīlī (d. 371/981-2) had been evaluating collections such as the

Ṣaḥīḥayn from a relatively early date, concerted efforts to rank the various products of

the ṣaḥīḥ movement seem to have started suddenly in the early and mid-sixth/twelfth

century.[13] This followed works like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya

(The Sufficient Work on the Science of Transmission), which were attempts to

authoritatively recognize choices that Sunni ḥadīth scholars, jurists and legal theorists had

made about the transmission, evaluation and usage of ḥadīths. Scholars like al-Ḥāzimī

found themselves forced to see where the methods of al-Bukhārī and Muslim fit within

the shared rules of ḥadīth study articulated in the writings of systematizers like al-Ḥākim,

al-Khaṭīb and Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071).

Ranking al-Bukhārī's critical stringency above that of Muslim, for example,

acknowledged significant and practical principles that had emerged as predominant

among Sunni ḥadīth critics. On the issue of when one could accept the vague phrase

"from/according to (ʿan)" in an isnād as not masking a break in transmission, it was the

school of thought associated with al-Bukhārī and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī that became the

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[12] Ibn al-Wazīr, Tanqīḥ al-anẓār, 81.

[13] Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) seems to have been an exception. Al-Dhahabī reports that he ranked the best ḥadīth collections as the Ṣaḥīḥayn, the Muntaqā of Ibn al-Sakan, the Muntaqā of Ibn al-Jārūd, the Muntaqā of Qāsim b. Aṣbagh, then the Sunans of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī and then thirty other books; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:231.

mainstream stance. These two masters had required proof that the transmitter employing "from/according to" had actually met at least once the person from whom he claimed to narrate. Muslim, on the other hand, had only required that they be contemporaries with a possibility of having met one another.[14] In his *al-Kifāya*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī declares that the community of ḥadīth scholars had come to consensus that requiring at least one meeting was correct. When Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr sought to apply the criteria of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement to Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, he therefore turned to al-Bukhārī's requirements as the prevailing rule. Most major ḥadīth scholars or critics since then, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), have followed Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's and al-Khaṭīb's formulations of the rules governing the use of "from/according to (ʿan)."[15] Ranking Muslim slightly below al-

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[14] See above Chapter 3, section on Muslim's Methodology in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

[15] For the majority (al-Bukhārī's stance), see Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī, *Muwaṭṭaʾ al-imām Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī b. ʿAbbās al-Mālikī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-Thaqafī, 1425/2004), 38 (I have interpreted al-Qābisī's phrase *'idrāk bayyin'* as 'proof of direct transmission;' this could also mean 'clear contemporaneousness); Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:12; al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 2:229; Abū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qaṭṭān (d. 628/1231), *al-Iqnāʿ fī masāʾil al-ijmāʿ*, ed. Ḥusayn b. Fawzī al-Saʿīdī, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīthiyya li'l-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashr, 1424/2004), 1:66-7; idem, *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īhām*, 3:287; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 220; Ibn Rushayd, *al-Sanan al-abyan*, 32; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiẓa*, 45-6; Khalīl b. Kaykaldī al-ʿAlāʾī (d. 761/1359), *Jāmiʿ al-taḥṣīl fī aḥkām al-marāsīl*, ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Baghdad: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li'l-Ṭibāʿa, 1398/1978), 134 ff.; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 44-5; al-Bulqīnī, *Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, 224-5; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:360-5; al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Tabṣira wa al-tadhkira*, ed. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿIrāqī al-Ḥusaynī (Fez: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Jadīda, 1353/[1935]), 1:162; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:202-13; al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:299. Al-Nawawī seems to favor Muslim's stance in his *Taqrīb*, but states that al-Bukhārī's is correct in his *Sharḥ* of Muslim; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 10; idem, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:145. Ibn Daqīq effectively favors Muslim's stance; Ibn Daqīq, *al-Iqtirāḥ*, 207. Ibn Jamāʿa favors Muslim's stance; Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Jamāʿa, *Manhal al-rāwī fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sayyid Nūḥ (Mansoura, Egypt: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 1402/1981), 175. As does the Ḥanafī al-Faṣīḥ al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 29. The later Ḥanafī Mullā ʿAlī Qārī also favors Muslim's school; Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Sharḥ Musnad Abī Ḥanīfa*, ed. Khalīl Muḥyī al-Dīn Malīs (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, [n.d.]), 10. Al-Ḥākim does not address the issue of requiring a meeting; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 43-4. For more modern analyses of this debate, see al-Laknawī, *Ẓafar al-amānī*, 235-40; Khaldūn al-Aḥdab, *Asbāb ikhtilāf al-muḥaddithīn*, 2 vols. (Jeddah: Dār Kunūz al-ʿIlm, 1422/2001), 1:179-96; al-Sharīf Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī, *Ijmāʿ al-muḥaddithīn ʿalā ʿadam ishtirāṭ al-ʿilm bi'l-samāʿ fī al-ḥadīth al-muʿanʿan bayn al-mutaʿāṣirīn*.

Bukhārī in critical stringency thus amounted to tailoring the canon to the contours of convention among ḥadīth scholars.

The superiority of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* over other respected ḥadīth collections used for *takhrīj* also had palpable implications in scholarly debate. This shines forth clearly in a seventh/thirteenth century debate that raged between the towering Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and his contemporary al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1261-2)[16] over the permissibility of a type of supererogatory prayer known as *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*. The evidence for this type of prayer hinged on a ḥadīth adduced by al-Ghazālī in his pietistic work, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). Although both Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām agreed that this report was weak, the former felt that people should still be allowed to perform the prayer, while Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām argued that "paving the way for lying about the Messenger of God is not permitted (*al-tasabbub ilā al-kadhib ʿalā Rasūl Allāh lā yajūz*)."[17] In the course of letters these two scholars wrote to one another publicly debating the issue, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ defended his point of view by arguing that "the ḥadīth has *ṣaḥīḥ* narrations," citing a ḥadīth from Ibn Mājah's *Sunan* as evidence.[18] Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, however, refuted him by pointing out that one of the transmitters in Ibn Mājah's *isnād* was a known liar (i.e., Yaʿqūb b. al-Walīd al-Madīnī).[19]

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[16] See al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī biʾl-wafayāt*, vol. 18, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Wiesbaden and Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1408/1988), 18:520-2.

[17] Al-Albānī and Muḥammad Zāhir al-Shāwīsh, eds., *Musājala ʿilmiyya bayn al-imāmayn al-jalīlayn al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām wa Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, [1960]), 5.

[18] Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʿilmiyya*, 17.

[19] Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʿilmiyya*, 32.

Although by the time of al-Maqdisī in the early sixth/twelfth century many

scholars in the Islamic heartlands considered Ibn Mājah's *Sunan* to be part of the well-

respected "Six Book" ḥadīth canon, the work could not deliver the decisive authority of

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. A rigorous critic like al-Dāraquṭnī had disapproved of only two hundred

and seventeen narrations from al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books and only two of their

narrators. Al-Dhahabī, however, counted no less than one thousand weak narrations from

the approximately 4,341 ḥadīths in Ibn Mājah's *Sunan*.[20] Ibn 'Abd al-Salām was thus on

much steadier ground when he cited a ḥadīth from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* to support his position.[21]

Given the possible implications of choosing one collection over another for *takhrīj* in a

debate, it is not surprising that scholars in Baghdad asked al-Maqdisī to write a book

explaining the differing criteria of the Six Books.[22]

VI.4. The Origins of *Takhrīj* Among the Students of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī

· In light of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's leading role in the canonization of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn, it seems natural that we find the first concerted application of this new measure

of authenticity in the work of his students. The actual earliest known use of al-Bukhārī

and Muslim for the *takhrīj* of ḥadīths, however, occurs in the work of another member of

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network who never studied with al-Ḥākim: Hibatallāh al-Lālakā'ī (d.

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[20] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:279. For another instance in which the Shāfiʿī Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī confidently states that a ḥadīth from Ibn Mājah is inauthentic, see his *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:13 (biography of al-Bayhaqī); also, Abū al-Fayḍ Aḥmad al-Ghumārī (d. 1960), *al-Mughīr ʿalā aḥādīth al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1402/1982), 89-90.

[21] Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʿilmiyya*, 8.

[22] Al-Maqdisī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-sitta*, 10.

418/1027-8), one of the scholars in the Baghdad knot.[23] At several points in his *Sharḥ*

uṣūl i'tiqād ahl al-sunna, al-Lālakā'ī adduces ḥadīths as evidence and then supports them

by stating that al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included them (*akhrajahu*) in their *Ṣaḥīḥs*.[24]

This format was a natural outgrowth of the *mustakhraj* techniques of al-Lālakā'ī's

colleagues such as al-Barqānī (d. 425/1033-4). Like the *mustakhraj*, *takhrīj* functioned to

display the quality of a scholar's ḥadīths. Instead of following the format of other

mustakhraj authors like Abū 'Awāna or Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, who simply replicated

the template collection with their own *isnāds*, al-Barqānī's joint *Mustakhraj* of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn lists his narration of a ḥadīth and then notes that al-Bukhārī, Muslim or both

"included it (*akhrajahu*)."[25] *Takhrīj* simply involved using this tactic when composing

other books.

The use of al-Bukhārī and Muslim to consistently and confidently affirm the

authenticity of ḥadīths or the reliability of transmitters, however, can be traced to two of

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[23] I have found one earlier occurrence, but I believe it to be a later addition to the text. In his work on the differences of opinions amongst jurists, Ibn al-Mundhir (d. 318/930-1) cites a ḥadīth and then says "*akhrajahu al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*." This is probably a later addition, since in the early fourth/tenth century people did not generally refer to al-Bukhārī as such (if they referred to him at all), calling him Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl or Abū 'Abdallāh. Using 'al-Bukhārī' as shorthand was a result of the *mustakhraj* period, and no *mustakhrajs* of al-Bukhārī had been produced during Ibn al-Mundhir's time; Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mundhir, *al-Ishrāf 'alā madhhab ahl al-'ilm*, ed. Muḥammad Sa'īd Mubayyaḍ (Idilb, Syria and Doha, Qatar: Maktabat al-Ghazālī and Maktabat Dār al-Fatḥ, 1415/1994), 96. The early Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) also mentions that al-Bukhārī narrated a ḥadīth. This ḥadīth, however, does not appear in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, so al-Ṭaḥāwī was probably referring to al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, which he cited several times in his works; Abū Ja'far Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil al-āthār*, 25 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, [1968]), 1:278-9. For this citation, I am indebted to the extremely useful study by 'Abd al-Majīd Maḥmūd, *Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī wa atharuhu fī al-ḥadīth* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-'Arabiyya, 1395/1975), 119, 228-9.

[24] Al-Lālakā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād ahl al-sunna*, 1:108 (for al-Bukhārī), 1:87, 4:876 (for al-Bukhārī and Muslim), 1:85 (for Muslim). On one occasion "al-Bukhārī included it..." is added in the margin by a later copyist. That this addition is noticable bolsters the reliability of the remaining instances as parts of the author's original work.

[25] See al-Barqānī, *al-Juz' al-awwal min al-takhrīj li-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥadīth.*

al-Ḥākim's students: Abū Yaʿlā Khalīl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) and Abū

Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066). The first of these two, al-Khalīlī,

employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a tool for establishing the reliability of transmitters in his short

but valuable biographical dictionary of ḥadīth scholars, *al-Irshād fī maʿrifat ʿulamāʾ al-*

ḥadīth (Guidance for Knowing the Scholars of Ḥadīth). Al-Khalīlī hailed from Qazvīn,

where he worked for a time as a judge, but studied extensively with al-Ḥākim in

Naysābūr. From among the other members of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, he only studied

with al-Ghiṭrīfī.[26] His link to the Jurjān cult of al-Bukhārī might explain his favoring al-

Bukhārī over Muslim as a source for citation. His admiration for al-Bukhārī is clear, for

he calls him "the *imām* agreed on by all without contest."[27] Al-Khalīlī introduces at least

nineteen men as transmitters al-Bukhārī included in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He cites another eighteen

as transmitters from both the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. He only relies on Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* independently

twice, however, and mentions no other works as a means of *takhrīj*.

Using al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity for ḥadīths began in

earnest with Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, who was well-known as one of al-Ḥākim's most

senior students. When later scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cited al-

Ḥākim's opinions or his works, it was most frequently through a chain of transmission

from al-Bayhaqī. Al-Ḥākim provided one of al-Bayhaqī's primary reservoirs of ḥadīths,

since, according to al-Dhahabī, he did not have the books of al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah or al-

Nasāʾī at his disposal. He did, however, possess a camel load of ḥadīth books from al-

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[26] Al-Rāfiʿī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, 2:501-4; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:214; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 30:120-1; idem, *Siyar*, 17:666-8.

[27] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 377.

Ḥākim. In addition to al-Ḥākim, he also studied extensively with Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, al-Barqānī and Ibn Fūrak, who served as another major source of al-Bayhaqī's ḥadīths.[28]

Al-Bayhaqī was an amazingly prolific scholar. In fact, al-Dhahabī believed that he was capable of founding his own *madhhab* had he so wished. Instead, al-Bayhaqī authored an *oeuvre* that became such a bastion of the Shāfiʿī school that Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī considered al-Bayhaqī to be the only person to whom al-Shāfiʿī was indebted. Al-Bayhaqī organized al-Shāfiʿī's statements and proof texts in the massive *Maʿrifat al-sunan wa al-āthār* and then compiled his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, a huge ḥadīth collection backing up every detail of Shāfiʿī substantive law with Prophetic traditions as well as opinions from the Companions. Al-Bayhaqī was sought out as an expert on Shāfiʿī *fiqh* and al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*.[29] Both later Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs and Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis respected and relied on his work. The staunch Ashʿarī Ibn ʿAsākir heard his whole *oeuvre* from his students, and the Ḥanbalī Khʷāje ʿAbdallāh had *ijāzas* from him.[30]

Al-Bayhaqī's output was representative of the new Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī orthodoxy. Works such as his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Introduction to the Great Sunan) and the *Sunan* itself champion the Shāfiʿī transmission-based legal methodology and the school's body of substantive law. In works like his *Khilāfiyyāt* (The Disagreements), al-Bayhaqī defends the school's positions against its Ḥanafī opponents. He affirms the

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[28] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18:165.

[29] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 127-8.

[30] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 30:438-41; idem, *Siyar*, 18:163-70.

transmission-based trust in the revealed text of the sunna for understanding dogma, while simultaneously validating Ash'arī efforts to interpret God and His attributes rationally. Discussing the hugely divisive controversy over the wording (*lafz*) of the Qur'ān, for example, he states simply that all transmission-based scholars believe that the Qur'ān is the uncreated word of God. While some scholars might prefer not to discuss the issue, others like al-Bukhārī (and al-Bayhaqī himself) have chosen to distinguish between the physical manifestation of the Qur'ān and the text itself. Nonetheless, all belong to the same unified school.[31]

We can clearly appreciate the manner in which al-Bayhaqī employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a measure of authenticity in a sample of four works intended to affirm his Shāfiʿī/Ash'arī position. Stylistically, his use of the phrase "al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included it" after a ḥadīth reflects his teacher al-Barqānī and also al-Lālakā'ī's work. Beginning with the first ḥadīth in his *Kitāb al-Asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*, a treatise on God's names and attributes, and then wherever possible throughout the book, al-Bayhaqī uses inclusion in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections to establish reliability.[32] He pursues the same tactic in his *Khilāfiyyāt*.[33] In a work intended to provide ḥadīths proving the existence of the *bête noire* of Muslim rationalists, the punishment of the grave (ʿadhāb al-qabr), al-Bayhaqī uses the canonical formula "al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included it (*akhrajahu*)" for eighty-eight out of the four hundred and thirty (20%) narrations in the

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[31] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥāshidī, 2 vols. (Jedda: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1413/1993), 2:17.

[32] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*, 1:17-18.

[33] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, al-*Khilāfiyyāt*, ed. Mashhūr b. Ḥasan Āl-Salmān, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣamīʿī, 1415/1995), 1:48.

book. He only twice mentions other collections such as Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* and Ibn

Hanbal's *Musnad*.[34] Al-Bayhaqī's *al-Sunan al-kubrā* represents the most extensive use of

the *Sahīhayn* canon for *takhrīj*. In a sample of the 1,472 narrations constituting his

lengthy chapter on ritual purity (*tahāra*), al-Bayhaqī refers to inclusion by al-Bukhārī,

Muslim or both 23.5% of the time. The only other work he refers to for *takhrīj*, Abū

Dāwūd's *Sunan*, appears only 0.6% of the time (9 instances).

Another student and follower of al-Hākim's school of thought, Abū Nu'aym al-

Isbahānī, also provides some of the earliest usages of the *Sahīhayn* canon as a measure of

authenticity. In his biographical dictionary of Isfahan, *Dhikr akhbār Isbahān*, he uses the

phrase "the hadīth is authentic by agreement (*al-hadīth sahīh muttafaq 'alayhi*)" to

validate his own narration of a Prophetic hadīth.[35] Here he follows an earlier member of

the *Sahīhayn* Network, Ibn al-Akhram, who had entitled his joint *mustakhraj* of the

Sahīhayn "The *Sahīh* by Agreement (*al-Sahīh al-muttafaq 'alayhi*)."[36] In his landmark

biographical dictionary of Sufism and asceticism, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, Abū Nu'aym also

uses al-Bukhārī and Muslim as direct stamps of approval for hadīths he includes in the

work's entries.[37]

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[34] See Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Ithbāt 'adhāb al-qabr*, ed. Sharaf Mahmūd al-Qudāt (Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1403/1983).

[35] Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī, *Tārīkh Isbahān / Dhikr akhbār Isbahān*, ed. Sayyid Khusrawī Hasan, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1410/1990), 1:21. We know that Abū Nu'aym used the term '*muttafaq 'alayi*' to refer to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's agreement because he uses it in the midst of critiquing several transmitters whom he says al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not use in their *Sahīhs*; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, 1:166 (bio of Ahmad b. Yūsuf al-Manbijī).

[36] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:55.

[37] See, for examples, Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, 3:205 (al-Bukhārī), 8:261 (Muslim).

We know that employing the canon for *takhrīj* had also begun in Baghdad by the mid-fifth/eleventh century. Abū Nuʿaym's student and a main inheritor of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network (see *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network Chart), al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, used the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon dramatically to establish the authenticity of a selection of 173 of his ḥadīths that he narrated in a ḥadīth dictation session. He invokes the inclusion of al-Bukhārī, Muslim or both for 57% of his reports. He invokes no other work for *takhrīj*, and only declares one ḥadīth to be *ṣaḥīḥ* that does not appear in one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[38] Al-Khaṭīb reiterates the paramountcy of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in his vision of the ḥadīth sciences when he instructs students that the two works should form the basis of any curriculum in ḥadīth study.[39]

VI.5. The Historical Application of *Takhrīj*

We have located both the epicenter of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon and its initial use as a measure of authenticity in the seminal work of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and his students from the Shāfiʿī school. We will now examine how and when the canon spread to the Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī and Imāmī Shiite schools. We will focus on the two most salient means in which scholars used the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon as a common measure of authenticity: polemics, and employing the canon to fortify a school's formative legal or ḥadīth texts.

VI.5. a. *Polemics and Debate*

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[38] See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Fawā'id al-muntakhaba al-ṣiḥāḥ wa al-gharā'ib*, ed. Khalīl b. Muḥammad al-ʿArabī (Giza: Maktabat al-Tawʿiyya al-Islāmiyya, 1415/1995). See p. 206 for the one instance.

[39] Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jāmiʿ li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, 2:185.

In the mid-t.fth/eleventh century, prominent adherents of the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī schools all began employing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon as a measure of authenticity in polemics and expositions of their schools' doctrines. It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century, however, that the Ḥanafīs also adopted the canon for this use.

Al-Bayhaqī's categorical reinforcement of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī catalog stands out as both the earliest and most stunning application of the canon in his school's history. It seems clear, however, that this intensive recourse to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* hinged on al-Bayhaqī's proximity to al-Ḥākim and the canonization of the two works. Although other Shāfiʿī jurists of this period did employ the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, no one matched the concentrated use found in al-Bayhaqī's or al-Khalīlī's works. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), for example, was a contemporary member of the Shāfiʿī school in Baghdad who was also engaged in the process of explicating and establishing Shāfiʿī substantive law. However, he made very limited use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon for *takhrīj* in his legal reference, *al-Ḥāwī al-kabīr fī fiqh madhhab al-imām al-Shāfiʿī* (The Great Compendium of the Shāfiʿī School of Law). On only two occasions in his voluminous explanation of the school's law does he use inclusion in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's collections to support the authenticity of ḥadīths that al-Shāfiʿī had invoked as proof texts.[40]

It is not surprising that one of the earliest employers of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a measure of authenticity came from the Ḥanbalī camp, which cooperated with the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs in canonizing the two works. Like his correspondent, Abū Naṣr al-Wāʾilī, the great

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[40] See Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī al-kabīr fī fiqh madhhab al-imām al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1414/1994), 1:140; 17:71.

Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʻlā Ibn al-Farrāʼ (d. 458/1066) was an inveterate opponent of the Ashʻarīs and their figurative interpretation of God's attributes. Like al-Bayhaqī, however, he used the canon to bolster the authority of the ḥadīths he cited as proof texts on such controversial issues. In 456/1064, Ibn al-Farrāʼ held a session for dictating ḥadīths to students (*majlis imlāʼ*) and tackled the perennially divisive issue of seeing God on the Day of Judgment (*ruʼyat al-Bārī*), rejected by rationalists such as the Muʻtazilites and interpreted figuratively by Ashʻarīs. He narrated a ḥadīth in which the Prophet looks at the full moon and then tells his followers, "Indeed you will see your Lord with your own eyes (*ʻiyān^{an}*)." Ibn al-Farrāʼ adds, "This ḥadīth is *ṣaḥīḥ*; al-Bukhārī included it..., and it is as if I heard it from al-Bukhārī."[41] Here Ibn al-Farrāʼ uses both his own proximity in the *isnād* to al-Bukhārī and the latter's inclusion of the ḥadīth in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a means for augmenting its authority. In his treatise on legal theory, *al-ʻUdda*, Ibn al-Farrāʼ similarly uses al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to validate a report proving that a five-year-old could effectively hear ḥadīth transmitted.[42]

Ibn al-Farrāʼ also utilizes the canon in his work on issues of dogma (*uṣūl al-dīn*), the *Kitāb al-muʻtamad*. The author devotes his attention in this work primarily to his Muʻtazilī and Ashʻarī opponents, treating controversial topics such as God's attributes, the punishment of the grave, and the issue of appropriate rule in Islam (*imāma*). In his subchapter on the existence of magic (*siḥr*), he argues against the Muʻtazila, saying that

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[41] Ibn Abī Yaʻlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:172; *Fatḥ* # 7435; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb* 24.

[42] Ibn al-Farrāʼ, *al-ʻUdda*, 3:950. This is the ḥadīth from the Companion Maḥmūd b. Rabīʻ saying, "*ʻAqaltu min al-Nabī (ṣ) majjat^{an} majjahā fī wajhī wa anā ibn khamas sinīn*"; *Fatḥ* #77; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *kitāb al-ʻilm, bāb matā yaṣiḥḥu samāʻ al-ṣaghīr*. Note that Ibn al-Farrāʼ's version has the wording "*fiyya* (my mouth)" instead of "*wajhī* (my face)."

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both the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth affirm it. He invokes the ḥadīth in which 'Ā'isha recounts how a Jewish sorcerer once cast a spell on the Prophet, adding that "this is a well-known (*mashhūr*) ḥadīth that al-Bukhārī and others from the ḥadīth scholars (*muḥaddithīn*) have mentioned."[43] He also mentions that some ḥadīths are "included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*," a phrase that generally denotes inclusion in one or both of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (here it evidently refers to Muslim's work).[44] Besides al-Bukhārī, he only once mentions another ḥadīth scholar as narrating a report, namely al-Dāraquṭnī; in this case, however, he places no emphasis on the source as a guarantor of authenticity. Ibn al-Farrā''s son, Ibn Abī Ya'lā, also occasionally uses al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity in his discussion of the differences between Ḥanbalīs and Ash'arīs on issues such as God's attributes.[45] This use of the canon continues in later Ḥanbalī works such as Ibn 'Aqīl's (d. 513/1119) *al-Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, until the end of the sixth/twelfth century.[46]

Among Ḥanbalīs, it was the Neo-Ḥanbalite cadre of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) that exhibited the most cunning and aggressive usage of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. The two works served as powerful weapons in polemics against Ash'arīs over issues such as God's attributes, the nature of the Qur'ān

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[43] Abū Ya'lā Ibn al-Farrā', *Kitāb al-mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Wadī' Zaydān Ḥaddād (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974), 168. This specific version of the ḥadīth "*sahara al-nabī (ṣ) yahūdī min al-yahūd...*," appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, see *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-salām, bāb al-siḥr*. A slightly different wording appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṭibb, bāb 47 / Fatḥ # 5763*.

[44] Ibn al-Farrā', *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, 224; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Kitāb al-imāra, bāb al-istikhlāf wa tarkihi*. This ḥadīth goes as follows: 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar ←'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb: *In atruku fa-qad taraka khayr minnī, rasūl Allāh, wa in astakhlifu faqad istakhlafa man huwa khayr minnī, ya'nī Abā Bakr*. Ibn al-Farrā''s version inverts Muslim's word order.

[45] Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:182.

[46] See, for example, Abū al-Wafā' 'Alī Ibn 'Aqīl, *al-Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. George Makdisi (Wiesbaden and Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1423/2002), 3:191; 4b:200, 436.

and invoking the intercession of dead saints. Asserting the literalist position that one

should accept the outward meaning of Qur'ānic verses or Prophetic ḥadīths describing

God's movements, Ibn al-Qayyim calls his Ash'arī opponents' attention to al-Bukhārī's

narrations of ḥadīths asserting that God is indeed physically above us in the heavens. He

exploits al-Bukhārī's position of extreme respect among both Ash'arīs and Ḥanbalī/über-

Sunnis to his advantage, sarcastically implying that his opponents would condemn this

venerable figure as an anthropomorphist. Ibn al-Qayyim states in a verse of poetry:

> And from among you, al-Bukhārī the 'anthropomorphist' has narrated it,
> Nay, an anthropomorphist who attributes to God a [physical] position above
> us (*mujassim fawqānī*).[47]

On the issue of visiting the graves of prophets and seeking their assistance, Ibn al-

Qayyim challenges the orthodox tenet that they are indeed alive in their graves and able

to respond to the invocation of pilgrims.[48] One of the ḥadīths that scholars had produced

as evidence for this stance describes Moses praying in his grave. Ibn al-Qayyim,

however, argues that al-Bukhārī's decision to exclude the ḥadīth from his *Ṣaḥīḥ*

demonstrates its weakness, as does al-Dāraquṭnī's claim that it is actually the opinion of a

Companion (hence, *mawqūf*).[49] Not only does Ibn al-Qayyim use al-Bukhārī as a

measure of truth to reinforce his position, he also exploits exclusion from the work to

undermine his opponent's evidence.

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[47] Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl*, 65.

[48] For a discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn al-Qayyim's argument against visiting graves, and an Ash'arī response, see Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 168-94.

[49] Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl*, 155.

Like others, Mālikīs employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in debates or expositions of their school's positions. It is little surprise that the first Mālikī to employ the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon as a measure of authenticity had studied extensively at the hands of a member of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, Abū Dharr al-Harawī. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) of Cordova traveled east in 426/1035 and studied with al-Harawī for three years in Mecca before moving to the Abbasid capital to study with al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and others.[50] With such prolonged exposure to one of the most prominent members of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, al-Bājī confidently employed the canon in his book defending Mālikī *uṣūl*, the *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*. This work is an aggressive exposition of Mālikī legal theory, often targeting Ḥanafī or über-Sunni opponents. Although al-Bājī makes only a few references to al-Bukhārī or Muslim, or any other ḥadīth collections for that matter, these references clearly illustrate the function of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in the author's thought.[51] One of al-Bājī's primary concerns in the *Iḥkām* is mounting a defense of juridical reasoning (*qiyās*) against those über-Sunnis who reject any rulings not based directly on revealed text (*naṣṣ*). He lists the various Prophetic reports that his opponents cite as evidence against the use of reason, but rebuts them by stating that these are defective and too unreliable to be compelling. He asks his opponents how they could invoke such feeble ḥadīths in the face of the reports that he had advanced as evidence, "most of which the two *imām*s [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] have agreed on including in the

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[50] D.M. Dunlop, "al-Bādjī, Abū al-Walīd," *EI²*.

[51] For these instances, see Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*; 591, 744.

Ṣaḥīḥ[ayn]." "This is what the people have agreed on as authentic," he adds, noting that

only one of his opponents' ḥadīths appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn.*[52]

Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī's commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, his *al-Muntaqā*, shares

many of the same concerns as his *uṣūl* work. Although it primarily seeks to explain and

elaborate on the positive law laid out by Mālik, the author's perspective is consistently

both comparative and polemical. He is as eager to prove the correctness of Mālik's

school as to explain it. Al-Bājī thus occasionally relies on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to validate

Mālik's legal positions. Defending his stance against Ḥanafī opponents on the necessity

of the *taslīm* (turning one's head and saying 'peace be upon you' at the end of prayer) for

exiting a prayer, al-Bājī states, "The proof of the correctness (*ṣiḥḥa*) of Mālik's position

is [a ḥadīth] that al-Bukhārī narrated...." He also employs the canon conversely to cast

doubt on the authenticity of opposing ḥadīths. He rejects reports that offer more

information on the Prophet's *taslīm* than those found in the *Muwaṭṭa'* by stating, "Al-

Bukhārī did not include any of them, and what Muslim included are reports that allow for

interpretation (*yaḥtamilu al-ta'wīl*)."[53]

The Ḥanafī school seems to have been much slower to adopt the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon

as a measure of authenticity. Although, as we discussed in Chapter Four, Ḥanafī scholars

played an active role in transmitting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections during the

fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries, they did not develop the strong interests in

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[52] Al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, 610.

[53] Al-Bājī, *al-Muntaqā sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭā'*, 7 vols. in 4 ([Cairo]: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, [1982]), 1:169. For an extensive discussion of the *taslīm* in early works of law and ḥadīth, see Yasin Dutton, "An Innovation from the Time of the Banī Hāshim: Some Reflections on the *Taslīm* at the End of the Prayer," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 16 (2005): 147-8.

studying or utilizing the two works demonstrated by the Shāfiʿī *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network or later scholars like al-Bayhaqī. In the seventh/thirteenth century, the Damascene Ḥanafī Abū al-Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Badr al-Mawṣilī (d. 622/1225) produced a simplified digest of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād al-Khilāṭī (d. 652/1254) devoted a book to Muslim's collection.[54] It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century, however, that Ḥanafīs began using the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to validate ḥadīths. Writing in the Chagataied and Ilkhanid Mongol realms of Iran and Central Asia, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī (d. 730/1329-30)[55] employs them briefly but effectively in his *Kashf al-asrār* (Revealing the Secrets), a commentary on the Ḥanafī *uṣūl* treatise by Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī of Samarqand (d. 482/1089). Responding to criticisms that one of the transmitters of a ḥadīth he uses was weak, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz retorts that al-Bukhārī "is a pillar to be followed in that science [of ḥadīth], the *imām* of that craft, so his including that [ḥadīth] suffices as proof of its authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*)...."[56] The author thus leaves his readers no doubt about the legitimating power of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In general, however, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's *Kashf al-asrār* makes very limited use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in this manner.

By the time scholars like al-Bayhaqī and Ibn al-Farrāʾ were putting the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to use as a measure of authenticity, Imāmī Shiism had taken crucial steps in articulating its doctrine and outlining its sources. In 329/940 the twelfth *imām*'s absence

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[54] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 3:180. Al-Mawṣilī's work is published as *al-Jamʿ bayn al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, 2 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1416/1995).

[55] For his biography, see Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 2:428.

[56] Al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-bāqī*, 76.

was declared permanent, and leadership in the community fell into the hands of scholars pending the *imām*'s return. The collections that would become the Imāmī ḥadīth canon had all been produced: Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī's (d. 329/940) *al-Kāfī*, Ibn Bābawayh's (d. 381/991) *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī's (d. 460/1067) two works, *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*.[57]

In the same period, tensions between Imāmī Shiites and Sunnis rose markedly with the rise of Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī power in Egypt and Syria, the terror wreaked by the Ismāʿīlī assassins, and the impending threat of the sect's missionary activities in the central Islamic lands of the Seljuq Empire. For the Imāmī Shiite minorities living in the Karkh district of Baghdad or in the great Iranian cities of Rayy and Naysābūr, being identified with the Ismāʿīlī threat presented a constant danger. Imāmī scholars like Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Rashīd b. ʿAbd al-Jalīl Abī al-Ḥusayn **Qazvīnī** (d. ca. 560/1165) thus expended great efforts in trying to both defend Imāmī doctrine in the face of Sunni critiques and educate Sunnis on the important differences between their own, Imāmī school and the Ismāʿīlīs.

Imāmī Shiites like Qazvīnī did not identify with Sunni ḥadīth collections at all, for they considered the Companions on whom collectors like al-Bukhārī had relied most heavily, such as Abū Hurayra, to be brazen liars.[58] Nonetheless, the authority that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* commanded within the Sunni community provided Qazvīnī with an important

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[57] Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 5. For a discussion of the contents and uses of the canonical Shiite ḥadīth collections, see Robert Gleave, "Between *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*: the 'Canonical' Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2001): 350-382.

[58] For a Shiite study of Abū Hurayra, see ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Abū Hurayra* (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā', 1397/1977).

tool for defending his school. His *Ketāb-e naqd* (The Refutation) represents a

comprehensive effort to validate Imāmī doctrine and practice in Sunni eyes as well as to

educate his readers on the trenchant differences between Imāmī and Ismā'īlī Shiites.

Qazvīnī frequently cites famous Sunni works such as al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* as proof texts,

obliging Sunnis to heed "one of their own *imāms*."[59] In response to Sunni accusations

that Shiites rely on weak ḥadīths and lies, he says that they are narrated via reporters who

are mostly "Sunnis" and "Ḥanafīs" and are to be found in the books of these "two sects

(*farīqayn*)." Qazvīnī adds that the Sunni ḥadīth scholars (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) accept many

of these reports.[60]

Qazvīnī often refers to the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the umma and of the ḥadīth

scholars in his arguments for Shiite stances.[61] Responding to Sunni criticisms of Shiite

claims that 'Alī was the first person to ever have that name, he invokes as evidence the

Ṣaḥīḥayn and other books of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* that "are relied upon (*keh mo'tamad-

ast*)." Qazvīnī tells his opponents to "take up the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*" and find the ḥadīth that says

that 'Alī's name is written on the leg of God's throne and on the doorway to Paradise as

the brother of Muḥammad. Since both these structures existed before the creation of the

world, 'Alī is doubtless the first person to have been so named.[62]

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[59] Nāṣir al-Dīn 'Abd al-Jalīl Abū al-Ḥusayn Qazvīnī Rāzī (fl. 560/1162), *Kitāb-e naqḍ-e ma'refat beh ba'ḍ-e mathāleb al-navāṣeb fī naqḍ ba'ḍ fadā'eh al-ravāfeḍ*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥosaynī Ormavī ([Tehran]: Chāp-khāne-ye Sepehr, 1331-1371/[1952]), 392.

[60] Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqḍ*, 654-5.

[61] For example, see Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqḍ*, 557.

[62] Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqḍ*, 576-8. Neither of these two ḥadīths actually appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or the other Six Books: "I saw on the night I was taken up to the heavens, inscribed on the leg of the throne and the doorway of Paradise, 'The garden of Eden was planted by the hands of Muḥammad, the

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The *Saḥīḥayn* and other respected Sunni ḥadīth collections also provided the later

Imāmī theologian of Baghdad, Rāḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266), with

authoritative proof texts to use against Sunnis. In his study of Ibn Ṭāwūs's library, Etan

Kohlberg states that he possessed copies of the *Saḥīḥayn* "for polemical pro-Alid

traditions included in them...." He also relied on Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī's (d.

488/1095) combination of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collection, *al-Jamʿ bayn al-*

Saḥīḥayn, as a more convenient source.[63]

There can be no quantitative comparison between al-Bayhaqī's overwhelming

employment of the *Saḥīḥayn* canon to validate his ḥadīths and the more limited use of Ibn

al-Farrāʾ, al-Māwardī, al-Bājī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī or Qazvīnī. In general, these

scholars employed the *Saḥīḥayn* canon only sparingly. Unlike al-Bayhaqī and other

students of al-Ḥākim, their work does not overflow with authorizing references to al-

Bukhārī and Muslim. As ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's reverential invocation of al-Bukhārī's authority

and al-Bājī's explicit referral to the community's consensus on the *Saḥīḥayn* demonstrate,

however, these scholars were aware of the *Saḥīḥayn* canon's etiology and utility even if

they only invoked it occasionally.

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purest of My creation, and I have supported him with ʿAlī' (*ra ʾaytu laylat usriya bī ilā al-samāʾ*
muthabbatʿⁿ ʿalā sāq al-ʿarsh wa bāb al-janna an ghurisat jannat ʿAdn bi-yaday Muḥammad ṣafwatī min
khalq ayyadtuhu bi-ʿAlī)," and "It was written on the doorway to Paradise, 'There is no god but God,
Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, and ʿAlī is the brother of Muḥammad,' before God created the
heavens and the earth by two thousand years (*maktūb ʿalā bāb al-janna 'lā ilāh illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl*
Allāh ʿAlī akhū Muḥammad qabla an yakhluqa Allāh al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ bi-alfay ʿām)."

[63] Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 324-5.

VI.5. b. *Bolstering Formative Texts*

Although al-Bayhaqī had used the canon to comprehensively buttress Shāfiʿī

substantive law in the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the remaining three Sunni *madhhab*s

followed very different paths in their recourse to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to bolster their formative

ḥadīth or legal texts. Their approaches to the canon for this purpose would depend on

either the nature of their formative text or their attitude towards the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon itself.

It was only at the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century that Ḥanbalī

scholars like Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) started to seriously reinforce the ḥadīths used in

elaborating their school's substantive law by *takhrīj* through al-Bukhārī, Muslim and

other products of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. In his commentary on the Ḥanbalī formative legal

text, al-Khiraqī's *Mukhtaṣar*, Ibn Qudāma mentions that one of his goals in explicating

Ibn Ḥanbal's *madhhab* is the *takhrīj* of the ḥadīths al-Khiraqī had used as proof texts. He

states that he will cite them "from the books of the *imām*s from among the scholars of

ḥadīth, so that [these reports] might inspire trust in what they indicate, and to distinguish

between the authentic and flawed [reports], so that what is well-established can be relied

upon and what is unknown can be abandoned."[64]

The task of undertaking *takhrīj* on the school's most prominent ḥadīth collection,

Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, daunted scholars for centuries. The sheer inertia of Ibn Ḥanbal's

massive work has thwarted almost every scholarly attempt to systematically evaluate the

authenticity of its contents or make the work more accessible. The *Musnad* consists of

over forty thousand narrations (thirty thousand excluding repetitions) and clearly contains

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[64] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ
Muḥammad al-Ḥalw, 15 vols. (Cairo: Hajr, 1406/1986), 1:5.

a great deal of material that does not warrant a *ṣaḥīḥ* rating. Discussions over its

authenticity have thus generally revolved not around the question of whether the *Musnad*

was totally reliable, but on whether or not its more lackluster narrations ever reached the

level of fatal weakness or forgery. Because a systematic analysis would be a titanic feat,

claims on this matter were often mere guesswork. Al-Dhahabī attempted to cast the

Musnad in a good light by optimistically asserting that there are only a "few (*qalīl*)"

ḥadīths found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that do not appear in the *Musnad*. He could not conceal

the questionable status of the rest of the book's contents, however, and added that one

should not take the *Musnad*'s contents as proof (*ḥujja*) because it has many reports that

are too weak and even forged.[65] Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d.

806/1404) also listed numerous ḥadīths from the *Musnad* that they believed were clearly

forgeries.

It was not until the career of al-ʿIrāqī's student Ibn Ḥajar (a Shāfiʿī) that a scholar

succeeded in performing at least a preliminary *takhrīj* of the contents of Ibn Ḥanbal's

Musnad. This feat, however, was only subsidiary to Ibn Ḥajar's primary purpose in the

work: rendering the *Musnad* more accessible to scholars by compiling a huge index

(*aṭrāf*) of its contents. He did note, however, in which other main ḥadīth collections Ibn

Ḥanbal's material appears, identifying al-Bukhārī and Muslim, among others, to bolster

the authenticity of the *Musnad*'s ḥadīths.[66] Ibn Ḥajar tackled the issue of authenticity in

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[65] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 11:329 (biography of Ibn Ḥanbal).

[66] The wide net Ibn Ḥajar cast in his attempt at the *takhrīj* of the *Musnad*'s contents includes: the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, al-Dārimī and al-Dāraquṭnī, the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Ḥibbān and Abū ʿAwāna, and al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Aṭrāf Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Zuhayr b. Nāṣir al-Nāṣir, 10 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr and Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, 1414/1993).

the *Musnad* more directly by writing a rebuttal of al-'Irāqī's list of nine forged ḥadīths found in the work, often referring to al-Bukhārī and Muslim to back them up.[67]

In theory, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon would have proven extremely useful to Mālikī efforts to bolster their school's formative text, Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'*. The feat that al-Bayhaqī performed for ḥadīths supporting the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī school, al-Bājī's student Abū 'Umar Yūsuf b. 'Abdallāh **Ibn 'Abd al-Barr** (d. 463/1071) accomplished for the *Muwaṭṭa'*.[68] The Cordovan scholar's gargantuan *Kitāb al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwaṭṭa' min al-ma'ānī wa al-masānīd*, twenty-four printed volumes, constitutes a comprehensive commentary on Mālik's *magnum opus*. In addition to discussing the legal, doctrinal and ritual implications of the material contained in the *Muwaṭṭa'*, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr attempts to establish the text in the language of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. Because the *Muwaṭṭa'* predated the exclusive focus on Prophetic ḥadīths and uninterrupted chains of transmission emphasized by the *ṣaḥīḥ*s and *sunan* books, the work's large number of Successor opinions and incomplete *isnāds* compromised its strength as a ḥadīth reference. Ever a fly in the ointment, the Ẓāhirī maverick Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) thus attacked the Mālikī opinion that the *Muwaṭṭa'* was the best ḥadīth book by listing it as thirty-first in his own ranking of thirty-six books. He placed it well below collections containing only Prophetic reports, amid books that mix "the words of the Prophet with those of others."[69]

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[67] See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb 'an al-Musnad li 'l-imām Aḥmad*, 39.

[68] Al-Bājī himself produced a larger commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'* from which he drew his *Muntaqā*. This larger text dealt with Mālik's *isnāds* more than the abridgement; Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 280.

[69] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:231. It is interesting that Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012), one of the first scholars to take *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to the Maghrib, compiled a

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Oddly, although Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr had the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī and other ḥadīth collections at his disposal, he made little use of them in bolstering Mālik's reports.[70] In fact, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr rarely resorts to *takhrīj* at all. On only a handful of occasions throughout the work does he refer to major ḥadīth collections.[71] Instead, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr relies on his own mastery of the criteria established by "those requiring authentic [ḥadīths] in their compilations" to rate and reinforce material in the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*.[72] Each narration discussed in the *Tamhīd* begins with a rating such as *muttaṣil musnad* (extending to the Prophet with an uninterrupted *isnād*) or *musnad ṣaḥīḥ* (extending to the Prophet, authentic). Occasionally Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr reiterates the strength of Mālik's ḥadīths with statements such as "this ḥadīth is authentic, its authenticity agreed upon by all" or "*musnad muttaṣil* according to the people of knowledge."[73] In the case of *mursal* reports (those in which a Successor quotes the Prophet without citing a Companion) and other defective chains of transmission, the author musters sound ḥadīth narrations to support them.

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collection of the material in the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* with complete *isnād*s in his *Kitāb al-mulakhkhaṣ*; it amounted to only 527 ḥadīths. This work has been published as: Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī, *Muwaṭṭaʾ al-imām Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī b. ʿAbbās al-Mālikī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-Thaqāfī, 1425/2004); cf. al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 12.

[70] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr even had a book entitled *al-Ajwiba ʿalā al-masāʾil al-mustaghraba min al-Bukhārī* (Answers to Peculiar Questions in al-Bukhārī); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517), *Irshād al-sārī li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, [1971], reprint of an 1886-8 edition), 1:43.

[71] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr occassionaly notes that a ḥadīth was included by al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd, or al-Bukhārī. For examples, see Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 3:265; 4:194-5, 313; 5:227, 253.

[72] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:12.

[73] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 6:17; 8:11.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's contribution proved formidable. He found complete *isnād*s for

all except four of the ḥadīths in the *Muwaṭṭa'* that had lacked them. It was not until two

centuries later that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, a Shāfi'ī by allegiance, succeeded in reinforcing the

remaining four ḥadīths. In his *Risāla fī waṣl al-balāghāt al-arba'*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ argues

that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included a ḥadīth conveying the same meaning as Mālik's

report, "*Innī la-ansā aw unassā lā asunn* (indeed I forget or am caused to forget, [but

then] I do not create sunna)," and finds narrations from the Six Books for the three other

ḥadīths.[74] Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's work and the final addition of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ elicited so much

confidence among Mālikīs that the famous Egyptian commentator on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, Abū

'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710) stated unequivocally,

"The truth is that the *Muwaṭṭa'* is *ṣaḥīḥ* with no exceptions."[75] The twentieth-century

Mauritanian scholar of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Muḥammad Ḥabīb Allāh al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1944 CE)

exclaimed that there was now "no difference between al-Bukhārī and the *Muwaṭṭa'*."[76]

Yet why did Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Bājī, and other early commentators on the

Muwaṭṭa' such as Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī (d. 543/1145) not employ the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to

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[74] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Risāla fī waṣl al-balāghāt al-arba'*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. al-Siddīq al-Ghumārī (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibā'a al-Ḥadīthiyya, 1400/1979), 15; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb 31*; *Muwaṭṭa': kitāb al-sahw*.

[75] Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ Muwaṭṭa' al-imām Mālik*, 5 vols. ([Cairo]: Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1381/1961), 1:13. We will see below that this claim exceeded even those made about the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, where some exceptions were made for flawed ḥadīths. Some earlier figures such as the Ḥanafī al-Mughulṭāy (d. 762/1361) brought the *Muwaṭṭa'* to the same level as al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* not by praising the former but by denigrating the latter. Al-Mughulṭāy states that the *ta'līq* ḥadīths in al-Bukhārī's book are far more compromising than Mālik's incomplete *isnād*s; ibid., 1:12.

[76] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Risāla*, 3–4 (editor's introduction).

systematically validate Mālik's reports?[77] Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* could certainly have

proven invaluable for this task, for Mālik's transmissions in the *Muwaṭṭa'* furnished

perhaps the largest single source for al-Bukhārī's work. No fewer than six hundred

(35.3%) of the *Muwaṭṭa'*'s narrations appear in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[78] The answer to this

conundrum may lie in that very fact: Mālikīs realized that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were effectively

built upon the *Muwaṭṭa'*. To use the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to shore up Mālik's work would thus be

circular, tantamount to referring to a reproduction to prove the worth of an original.

Indeed, Mālikīs frequently cited early reports of al-Shāfiʿī saying, "There is no book after

the book of God most high that is more useful (*anfa'*) than the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik," or of

the great Basran ḥadīth critic ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/814) saying, "We know

of no book in Islam after the book of God most high that is more authentic (*aṣaḥḥ*) than

the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik."[79] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr sets forth this myriad praise of the *Muwaṭṭa'*

in the introduction to his *Tamhīd*, adding other reports such as ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb's (d.

197/813) statement that "whoever has copied (*kataba*) the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik need write

nothing more on what is permissible and forbidden (*al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*)."[80]

Among Mālikīs, the *Muwaṭṭa'* was thus the true foundation of the *ṣaḥīḥ*

movement on which later masterpieces like the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were built. Abū Bakr b. al-

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[77] In his commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī frequently uses the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as well as other famous *sunans* such that of al-Nasāʾī for *takhrīj* of ḥadīths he mentions in his comments, but not to back up the ḥadīths of Mālik himelf; see Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb al-qabas fī sharḥ Muwaṭṭa' Mālik b. Anas*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh Walad-Karīm (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1992).

[78] Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin Kaynakları*, 305.

[79] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn*, 1:41-2.

[80] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Kitāb al-tamhīd*, 1:78. For the other quotes praising the *Muwaṭṭa'*, see ibid., 1:76-79; cf. al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik*, 1:191.

'Arabī states in the introduction of his commentary on al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmiʿ* that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* "is the second basis (*aṣl*) in the realm [of ḥadīth], but the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* is the first basis (*al-aṣl al-awwal*), and on them have been built all others" such as the collections of Muslim and al-Tirmidhī.[81] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ thus speaks of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as "the three mother-books (*al-ummahāt al-thalāth*)," "the authentic collections of reports (*āthār*) that have been agreed upon as foremost throughout the ages, and that the scholars have accepted in all the rest of the regions (*sāʾir al-amṣār*)." These works are "the *uṣūl* of every *aṣl*… and the principles of the sciences of traditions (*mabādiʾ ʿulūm al-āthār*).…"[82]

Like Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, neither al-Bājī nor Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī's commentaries on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* make use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to support the authenticity of Mālik's material. Rather, al-Bājī exudes confidence in the foundational role of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and the unanimity of the community's approval of Mālik's ḥadīths. He admits, for example, that Mālik's report about ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar's never attending Friday prayer without perfuming and anointing himself with oils lacks a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād* (i.e., it does not extend back to the Prophet). But al-Bājī argues that this is unnecessary, since the umma had acted on this ḥadīth and "accepted it with consensus (*talaqqathu biʾl-qubūl*)." The report thus enjoyed a guarantee of authenticity far beyond that provided by a mere *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.[83]

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[81] Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī bi-sharḥ al-imām Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī*, 13 vols. in 5 (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Miṣriyya biʾl-Azhar, 1350/1931), 1:5.

[82] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā, *Mashāriq al-anwār ʿalā ṣiḥāḥ al-āthār*, ed. Balʿamshī Aḥmad Yagan, 2 vols. ([Rabat]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982), 1:27.

[83] Al-Bājī, *al-Muntaqā*, 1:203.

As with their late recourse to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in debate and exposition, it was only in Mamluk Cairo of the eighth/fourteenth century that Ḥanafīs turned to al-Bukhārī and Muslim to bolster their school's formative legal and ḥadīth texts. With the exception of al-Mawṣilī and al-Khilāṭī in the seventh/thirteenth century, only at this time did Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholars begin systematically studying and employing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān Ibn al-Turkumānī (d. ca. 747/1347), a Ḥanafī judge in Egypt, was a prominent teacher of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*; even Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī numbered among his students.[84] Another Ḥanafī teacher of al-ʿIrāqī's in Cairo, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Qalīj al-Mughulṭāy (d. 762/1361), wrote a famous commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.[85] It was Ibn al-Turkumānī's students, however, who first systematically employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to legitimize major Ḥanafī ḥadīth collections.

Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir **Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ** (d. 775/1374) served as a Ḥanafī *muftī* in Mamluk Cairo and eventually produced the most comprehensive biographical dictionary of the Ḥanafī school.[86] In a personal addendum to this dictionary, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ explains how he was assigned the task of validating Ḥanafī ḥadīths using canonical collections. His teacher Ibn al-Turkumānī had been approached by a Mamluk *amīr* who, like most of the Turkish military elite, subscribed to the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.[87] This *amīr* evidently enjoyed debating issues of religious law with

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[84] Ibn Fahd, *Laḥẓ al-liḥāẓ*; 91, 93-4.

[85] Ibn Fahd, *Laḥẓ al-liḥāẓ*, 87.

[86] Ibn Fahd, *Laḥẓ al-liḥāẓ*, 105.

[87] Ulrich Haarmann, "Joseph's law – the careers and activities of Mamluk descendents before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.

scholars from an opposing school, probably the dominant Shāfiʿī *madhhab*, but had

consistently stumbled before his adversaries' demands for his ḥadīth sources. The *amīr*

would reply, "We have the book of [Abū Jaʿfar] al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933)," but complained

to Ibn al-Turkumānī that "if we mention a ḥadīth from it to our opponents they say to us,

'We will not listen to anything except what is in al-Bukhārī and Muslim....'" Ibn al-

Turkumānī replied to the *amīr*, "Most of the ḥadīths in al-Ṭaḥāwī are [also] in al-Bukhārī

and Muslim or the *Sunan*s [of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī and Ibn Mājah], and

other books of the ḥadīth masters (*ḥuffāz*)...." The *amīr* thus asked him to find citations

for all of al-Ṭaḥāwī's material based on those books. In typical scholarly manner, the

judge replied, "I do not have the time for that, but I have someone from my students

(*aṣḥābī*) who can do it." Ibn al-Turkumānī handed the task to his son, Jamāl al-Dīn al-

Māridīnī, who then assigned it to a younger student: Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ.[88] Provided with

reference books from the *amīr*'s own library, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ proceeded to supplement

the contents of al-Ṭaḥāwī's *Sharḥ maʿānī al-āthār* with narrations from "well-known

ḥadīth books (*al-kutub al-mashhūra*), namely the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the Four *Sunan*s as well as

other *musnad*s, detailing what is authentic, acceptable or weak."[89]

Although Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ's finished work, *al-Ḥāwī fī bayān āthār al-Ṭaḥāwī*,

occasionally refers to other works, such as Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is inclusion in the

Ṣaḥīḥayn in particular, or meeting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards, that furnishes

the author's principal means for validating al-Ṭaḥāwī's ḥadīths. Indeed, Ibn Abī al-

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[88] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 4:571.

[89] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Ḥāwī fī bayān āthār al-Ṭaḥāwī*, ed. Yūsuf Aḥmad, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿImiyya, 1419/1999), 1:24.

Wafā' bends the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to maximum use. Even when a ḥadīth appears with a chain of transmission not approved by al-Bukhārī or Muslim, Ibn Abī al-Wafā' asserts that "the basic text (*aṣl*) of the ḥadīth is in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*."[90] Conversely, if the text of one of al-Ṭaḥāwī's ḥadīths does not appear in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* but its *isnād* does, he states that "its *isnād* is an *isnād* from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*."[91] Ibn Abī al-Wafā' proves even more flexible in employing the legitimizing power of the canon: if one narrator in the *isnād* did not earn a place in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's works, Ibn Abī al-Wafā' still insists that "the rest of the *isnād* is men of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*."[92] He also makes use of al-Ḥākim's application of "the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" in the *Mustadrak* to authorize reports, sometimes declaring in his own opinion that certain ḥadīths meet the conditions of the *Shaykhayn*.[93]

The task of reinforcing the ḥadīths cited in one of the Ḥanafī school's leading legal references, the *Hidāya* of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. 593/1196-7), fell to another of Ibn al-Turkumānī's students: ʿAbdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zaylaʿī of Cairo (d. 762/1361).[94] A friend and colleague of the Shāfiʿī Zayn Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, al-Zaylaʿī's *Naṣb al-rāya fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Hidāya* stands out as one of the most clear

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[90] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Ḥāwī*, 1:94.

[91] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Ḥāwī*, 1:50, where it occurs twice.

[92] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Ḥāwī*, 1:61, 142

[93] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Ḥāwī*, 1:49, 64, 75, 85, 120. He notes, for example, that "al-Ḥākim narrated through him [Fahd b. Sulaymān] in his *Mustadrak*, so he meets the requirements of the *Shaykhayn*."

[94] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*. ed. ʿAbd al-Wārith Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1418/1997), 2:188-9.

and accessible works of ḥadīth literature.[95] The great Indian Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar of

Cairo, Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), later performed the same service

for a selection of ḥadīths on which Ḥanafīs had historically relied for deriving law

(aḥkām). In his Kitāb ʿuqūd al-jawāhir al-munīfa, he states that he will validate these

ḥadīths by showing their narrations in the Six Books.[96]

Why did the Ḥanafīs begin employing the canon almost three centuries after their

Shāfiʿī counterparts? With al-Ḥākim's Mustadrak and the declarations of his associates

from the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī and Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni camps, the Ṣaḥīḥayn emerged as

authoritative texts within the transmission-based community. The Ḥanafī school,

however, constituted the bulk of the reason-based school to which the transmission-based

scholars remained in steadfast opposition. Just as ḥadīth scholars like al-Bukhārī and al-

Ḥākim had condemned Ḥanafīs for departing from the Prophet's true sunna, so did the

Ḥanafīs like Abū Muṭīʿ Makḥūl al-Nasafī (d. 318/930) consider the ahl al-ḥadīth

brainless literalists, capable of merely parroting the Prophet's words but not of

understanding his message.[97]

This Ḥanafī contempt for transmission-based scholars tainted the school's view of

al-Bukhārī. This comes as no surprise in light of the muḥaddith's virulent criticism of

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[95] Ibn Ḥajar did a second-generation takhrīj on the Hidāya after he had finished with his takhrīj of al-Rāfiʿī's sharḥ of al-Ghazālī's Wasīṭ upon the request of some Ḥanafī students; see Ibn Ḥajar, al-Dirāya fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Hidāya, ed. ʿAbdallāh Hāshim al-Yamānī al-Madanī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Fajjāla al-Jadīda, 1384/1964), 10.

[96] Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Kitāb ʿuqūd al-jawāhir al-munīfa, ed. Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwjī al-Albānī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1406/1985), 17.

[97] Marie Bernand, "Le Kitāb al-radd ʿalā l-bidaʿ d'Abū Muṭīʿ Makḥūl al-Nasafī," Annales Islamologiques 16 (1980): 121-2.

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Abū Ḥanīfa in his *Kitāb raf' al-yadayn* and his general criticism of the reason-based

school in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In the chapter on the issue of milk-relationships (*riḍā'*) in his

mammoth work of Ḥanafī substantive law, the famous Ḥanafī jurist and legal theorist al-

Sarakhsī (d. ca. 490/1096) produces an amazingly insulting story about al-Bukhārī. He

tells how al-Bukhārī upheld the opinion that if two children drink milk from the same

ewe they would become milk-siblings, prohibited from one day marrying one another

(*ḥurmat al-riḍā'*). When the great *muḥaddith* supposedly visited his native Bukhara and

began answering the legal questions of its citizens, the leading Ḥanafī of the city, Abū

Ḥafṣ Aḥmad b. Ḥafṣ (d. 217/832), told him that he was unqualified to give expert legal

opinions. Al-Bukhārī ignored him and continued to answer questions. When someone

asked about the issue of drinking milk from the same ewe, the people found al-Bukhārī's

response so preposterous that they expelled him from the city.

It goes without saying that al-Bukhārī probably did not espouse this opinion and

that the story is apocryphal; earlier sources make clear that al-Bukhārī's expulsion from

Bukhara came at the *amīr*'s orders at the end of his life, and at any rate, Abū Ḥafṣ died

before al-Bukhārī reached full maturity.[98] The story, however, provides a somewhat

comic foil for al-Sarakhsī, who proceeds to explain that if two youths drink the milk of

the same animal they would in no way become milk-siblings. The milk-sibling

relationship is analogous to kinship, and just as humans cannot be related to animals, so

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[98] Also, al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* lacks a chapter on milk-relationships (*al-riḍā'*). He covers the topic in four subchapters in the book on marriage, but makes no claim about animal's milk; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 9:174. On al-Bukhārī's expulsion from Bukhara, see above, Chapter 3, n. 59.

that relationship cannot be established by an animal's milk.[99] Over two hundred years

later, the Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū Barakāt ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310)

reproduced the same insulting story to prove a fundamental principle in the Ḥanafī

school: "a ḥadīth scholar who is not a jurist (al-muḥaddith ghayr al-faqīh) errs often." In

other words, only specialized jurists are qualified to derive laws from Prophetic

traditions.[100] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ includes the same story about al-Bukhārī in his Ḥanafī

biographical dictionary, al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya.[101]

Ḥanafīs seem to have maintained a skeptical distance from the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon

into the eighth/fourteenth century. Yet it was an inescapable feature of the scholarly

environment with which they had to come to terms. As his account of how he came to

apply the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon to a Ḥanafī ḥadīth collection suggests, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ was

responding to outside polemical pressures rather than acting on any reverence for al-

Bukhārī's or Muslim's work. In fact, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ reveals a deep cynicism towards

the canonical culture surrounding the two collections. Discussing how Shāfiʿīs assert the

authenticity of a ḥadīth that al-Ṭaḥāwī had declared weak by arguing that it is included in

Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ states that Shāfiʿīs "cannot show off [the ḥadīth]

(yatajawwahūna) to us because it comes from Muslim, for [many] things appear in

Muslim, and showing it off does not bolster [their position] in situations of conflicting

[narrations] (iṣṭidām)." Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ then embarks on what may be the lengthiest

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[99] Al-Sarakhsī, Kitāb al-mabsūṭ, 2nd ed., 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 197-), 30:297; Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya, 1:166 (biography of Aḥmad b. Ḥafṣ Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kabīr).

[100] Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qāsimī al-Dimashqī, Ḥayāt al-Bukhārī, ed. Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1412/1992), 48.

[101] See n. 99 above.

and most comprehensive existing enumeration of the types of flaws appearing in the

Ṣaḥīḥayn, detailing consistently weak chains of transmission as well as the problematic

texts of certain ḥadīths. Referring to Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī's warning to Muslim upon

reading his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ concludes, "God bless Abū Zurʿa, for he spoke the

truth." In Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ's opinion, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had indeed "made a path for the

people of *bidʿa*" and been bent to polemical and partisan purposes.[102] A more playful

contempt for the canon appeared in the career of a slightly earlier Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar

who visited Cairo, Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr al-Kalābādhī al-Bukhārī (d.

700/1300). When this scholar would see a handsome youth, he would play on his own

name (al-Bukhārī) and say "that is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the requirements of al-Bukhārī."[103]

VI.5. c. Misuse of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Canon

The authority that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or the "requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim"

carried in debates was very alluring. In the time before standardized texts and easily

accessible indices, and long before searchable databases, knowing the exact contents of

capacious ḥadīth collections like the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* proved impossible to all but the most

accomplished scholars. Both among the less masterful of the scholarly class and less

literate segments of society, it was difficult to restrain the legitimizing authority of the

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[102] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 4:565-69.

[103] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 3:455. Invoking religious idiom in homoerotic literature was common; see J.W. Wright Jr., "Masculine Allusion and the Structure of Satire in Early ʿAbbāsid Poetry," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J.W. Wright Jr. and Everett K. Rowson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

Ṣaḥīḥayn to the actual contents of the books. It was tempting to claim that a ḥadīth supporting one's position had met al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards.

Qazvīnī had made a valiant attempt to defend Imāmī beliefs by claiming that certain pro-ʿAlid reports were included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Unfortunately, the ḥadīths he cites stating that ʿAlī's name is written on the leg of God's throne or above the doorway to Paradise are nowhere to be found in the two collections, nor do they appear in any of the Six Books, as was mentioned above.[104] This overstepping of the boundaries of the canon was not limited to non-Sunnis who may not have been well-acquainted with Sunni ḥadīth collections. The prominent Cairene Ḥanafī Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. ʿUbaydallāh al-Ardabīlī (d. 875/1471) approached the Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholar Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) with a list of ḥadīths the status and citations of which he was unsure. In the majority of al-Sakhāwī's responses in his book *al-Ajwiba al-ʿaliyya ʿan al-asʾila al-Dimyāṭiyya*, the scholar replies that the ḥadīths have been falsely ascribed to some ḥadīth collection or critic. Seven ḥadīths had been falsely cited from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, eight from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and three from al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmiʿ*.[105]

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[104] See n. 62.

[105] Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ajwiba al-ʿaliyya ʿan al-asʾila al-Dimyāṭiyya*, ed. Mishʿal b. Bānī al-Muṭayrī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), al-Bukhārī: 81, 87, 101, 149, 112, 131, 145; Muslim: 99, 110, 139, 134, 143, 145, 151; al-Tirmidhī: 76, 108, 131.

VI.6. 2. The Need for an Authoritative Reference: The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and Non-Ḥadīth Specialists

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* met a second important need exhibited by the Sunni community in the mid-fifth/eleventh century: that of a common authoritative ḥadīth reference for non-specialists. This need stemmed from an increasing division of labor between jurists and ḥadīth scholars in the mid-fifth/eleventh century. With the establishment of *madrasas* in cities like Baghdad, Naysābūr and Merv in this period, a space had been created that primarily emphasized the study of law (*fiqh*) as opposed to the pietistic or scholarly transmission of ḥadīths.[106] Unlike the transmission-based scholars of al-Bukhārī's time, who had compiled their *muṣannaf*s as expressions of their own legal thought, many of the mid-fifth/eleventh century denizens of the *madrasas* lacked expertise in ḥadīth criticism. Although Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī had been sought out as a ḥadīth scholar, legal theorist and theologian alike, two generations later Shāfiʿī scholars like al-Shīrāzī and al-Juwaynī were focusing more narrowly on elaborating substantive law, theology and legal theory. As al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) noted in his letters, the breed of jurists who were also masters of ḥadīth criticism had all but died out.[107] Legal scholars needed to turn to established ḥadīth collections with widely respected standards in order to validate their legal stances or ḥadīths.

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[106] George Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1961): 10-11; idem, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam*, ed. and trans. Merlin L. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 230.

[107] See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, 5:82.

The role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as an authoritative reference was embryonic in al-Ḥākim

al-Naysābūrī's work, where he proffered the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a protective canopy for

authentic Prophetic reports.[108] In his lengthy treatise on *uṣūl*, the *Sharḥ al-lumaʿ*, al-

Shīrāzī builds on this theme in an attempt to meet the jurists' needs. He explains that

Shāfiʿī jurists accept ḥadīths from "senior ḥadīth scholars (*kibār aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*)"

without research or question. Like a judge trusts a witness once he has proven his

reliability, so can jurists trust the authenticity of these critics' material. Al-Shīrāzī

mentions al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn as examples, as well as

major jurists who had also mastered ḥadīth, such as Mālik and Ibn Ḥanbal.[109]

The articulation of this need for authoritative references and the suitability of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn to meet it appear most clearly in discussions on the office of *muftī* (jurisconsult,

a term often conflated with *mujtahid*), the legal expert from whom the population sought

rulings. In his description of the necessary qualifications for a *muftī*, al-Shīrāzī states that

he must possess a command of the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence: the Qur'ān, the

Prophet's sunna, consensus and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). In terms of the sunna, the

muftī must know which ḥadīths to accept and which to reject. But al-Shīrāzī exempts the

muftī from the requirement of mastering the intricacies of *isnād* or ḥadīth criticism, for "if

we made knowing that [ḥadīth] by its *isnād* obligatory for each *mujtahid*, this would lead

to great difficulty, for that requires a lifetime." Instead, a *muftī* should rely on "the

*imām*s of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*" like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Dāraquṭnī and

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[108] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 75.

[109] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ al-lumaʿ*, 2:634.

Abū Dāwūd.[110] A contemporary Shāfiʿī in Naysābūr, Abū al-Muẓaffar al-Samʿānī, (d. 489/1096), lists "the relied-upon books" for such purposes as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī first and foremost, then that of Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, the *Mustakhraj* of Abū ʿAwāna and finally the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Abū ʿAbbās al-Daghūlī and Ibn Ḥibbān.[111]

Al-Ghazālī concurs, stating that a *muftī* or *mujtahid* must rely on critical collections of ḥadīths that distinguish between authentic and unreliable material.[112] When working with ḥadīths that have been accepted as authentic by the umma, one need not scrutinize their chains of transmission (*lā ḥāja bihi ilā al-naẓar fī isnādihi*). The *muftī* should thus follow al-Bukhārī and Muslim in the evaluation of narrators, since these two critics only narrated from those whose uprightness (*ʿadāla*) they had established. Al-Ghazālī cautions that if one does not defer to following these two experts on issues of *isnād* evaluation, one would have to master that science oneself. He adds, "This is a tall order (*ṭawīl*), and is, in our time, with the massive number of intermediaries (*wasāʾiṭ*) [in the chains of transmission], very difficult (*ʿasīr*)."[113]

In his discussion of the requirements for a *muftī* in the Ḥanafī school, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī echoes this division of labor and reliance on canonical ḥadīth collections. Like al-Shīrāzī, he requires the *mujtahid* or *muftī* to have command of the sunna and know the ḥadīths dealing with legal rulings (*ḥadīth al-aḥkām*). The jurist,

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[110] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ al-lumaʿ*, 2:1033-4.

[111] Al-Samʿānī, *Qawāṭiʿ al-adilla*, 2:499-500; cf. al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 2:1333.

[112] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 459.

[113] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1995), 2:200-2.

however, need not memorize this material. Rather, he must have at his disposal a vetted copy (*aṣl muṣaḥḥaḥ*) of one of the *aḥkām* ḥadīth collections such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim or Abū Dāwūd as a reference.[114]

Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī expresses the same opinion for the Mālikī school. He states that those who have achieved the expertise necessary to critically examine ḥadīths can evaluate reports on their own, just as al-Bukhārī and Muslim did. "But he who has not achieved that condition," he adds, "must follow those two [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] for ḥadīths he claims to be authentic, pausing (*tawaqquf*) at what they did not include in their *Ṣaḥīḥs*."[115]

It is at this point that the split in the ḥadīth tradition initiated by the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement again comes into focus. The canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their use as measures of authenticity transformed them into institutions of authority in the Muslim community. This institutional role emerged as a counterweight to the focus on the chain of transmission as the sole vehicle for tying Muslim scholars to the hermeneutic authority of the Prophet's words. The consensus of the umma on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and their subsequent use as a reference in implementing the Prophet's authority meant that books could replace the authoritative source provided by the living *isnād*. When al-Shīrāzī explains that jurists can replace a direct link to the Prophet and a mastery of evaluating its authenticity with reference books vetted and authorized for that purpose, he obviates the need for an intensive study of *isnād*s.

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[114] ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār ʿan uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, 4 vols. in 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1394/1974), 4:15.

[115] Al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhu al-Taʿdīl wa al-tajrīḥ*, 1:310.

The diverging paths of the jurists and ḥadīth scholars becomes evident when we juxtapose al-Shīrāzī's discussion of *muftīs* with that of two of his Shāfiʿī contemporaries more rooted in ḥadīth study than legal theory or substantive law. In Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī's discussion of the *muftī*'s requirements we find no mention of resorting to reference works. He merely repeats al-Shāfiʿī's original requirement that a *muftī* himself master the sources of legislation and know which ḥadīths to accept or reject.[116] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also repeats these fundamental requirements, stating that "a *muftī* will not be able to [meet these requirements] unless he has been excessive (*akthara*) in writing the reports of the early generations and hearing ḥadīths." The chasm separating him from al-Shīrāzī widens further when al-Khaṭīb recounts, rhetorically no doubt, how Ibn Ḥanbal required someone to know at least five hundred thousand ḥadīths before he could act as a *muftī*.[117]

The most dramatic step in proposing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as institutions of authority to which scholars seeking to evaluate ḥadīths could turn came almost two centuries later, with the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245). By Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's time, Muslims no longer compiled massive collections of ḥadīth with living *isnād*s back to the Prophet, like al-Bayhaqī's *Sunan*. In a time when the critical rigor of giants like al-Bukhārī seemed to be fading into history, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ pondered how jurists or even ḥadīth scholars should evaluate previously unrated ḥadīths they came across in the course of study or debate. He argued that, "If we find some report in a ḥadīth notebook that seems to have a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*

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[116] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Ḍiyāʾ al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 1420/[1999-2000]), 1:169.

[117] Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, 2:330, 344-5.

but is neither in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* nor indicated as *ṣaḥīḥ* in a book of the relied-upon, well-known *imām*s, we do not dare insist that it is authentic (*lā natajāsaru 'alā jazm al-ḥukm bi-ṣiḥḥatihi*)." Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's call rested on his belief that ḥadīth transmission in his time had deteriorated so much from the rigorous standards of yesteryear that ḥadīth scholars were no longer able to trust their transmissions from earlier sources. Consequently, "knowing the *ḥasan* and *ṣaḥīḥ* depended on the *imām*s of ḥadīth having specified this in their well-known, relied-upon works that... have been preserved against alteration and scribal error (*taḥrīf*)." "Most of what is sought out from the *isnād*s circulating [today]," he concludes, "falls outside this pale."[118] Beginning with his follower al-Nawawī, scholars understood Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's position as calling for an end to the evaluation of ḥadīths in favor of a total reliance on *ṣaḥīḥ* collections.[119]

This dramatic call to equate all *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths with the contents of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and other *ṣaḥīḥ* books embraced the jurists' need for authoritative references at the expense of the ḥadīth scholars' methodology.[120] The function of the two books as

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[118] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 159-60.

[119] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ probably meant that one could no longer declare ḥadīths transmitted by living *isnād*s and not found in major collections authentic. As for ḥadīths found in earlier compilations that included reports of various levels of reliability, such as al-Ṭabarānī's *Muʿjam*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was probably not arguing against ruling on the authenticity of this material. It was in this sense, however, that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's comments were understood from the time of his follower al-Nawawī on. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) devoted a small treatise to this subject, entitled *al-Tanqīḥ fī mas'alat al-taṣḥīḥ*, in which he clarified Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's statement but then proceeded to himself declare an end to the authentication of ḥadīths due to the inability of later scholars to conduct proper *ʿilal* criticism. See the edited text of this treatise in Badr al-Sayyid al-Laḥḥām, *al-Imām al-ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī wa juhūduhu fī al-ḥadīth wa ʿulūmihi* (Damascus: Dār Qutayba, 1415/1994), 460-3.

[120] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states that one could also find *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths in the books of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and al-Dāraquṭnī, but that one could not assume that all their contents were authentic, since this was not the criterion of their compilers. *Ṣaḥīḥ* books, however, such as that of Ibn Khuzayma, could provide this security; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 163-4.

authoritative institutions therefore emerged as a source of tension between scholars whose chief affiliation was to the study of law and others who focused more on ḥadīth. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was first and foremost a Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholar, as his efforts to eliminate the last vestiges of doubt from the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* suggest, his interests lay in strengthening scholarly institutions. His call indeed amounted to declaring the victory of the authoritative institution of the *ṣaḥīḥ* book over the living *isnād*. Reacting with predictable tension to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's argument, almost all later ḥadīth scholars understandably rejected the notion that they were unqualified to independently evaluate ḥadīths; as Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī explained, "this was the ḥadīth scholars' job."[121]

What emerged as a consensus among scholars in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's provocative claim was a balance between the jurists' needs for authorized institutions housing the Prophet's legacy and the ḥadīth scholars' focus on the living *isnād* as the link to his authority. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would serve as the primary reference for non-specialists, while qualified ḥadīth scholars could continue evaluating material they came across. Ibn Ḥajar thus instructs jurists who are browsing through a *musnad* or *sunan* work but are not ḥadīth experts to refer to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to see if a report is authentic or not. If al-Bukhārī or Muslim did not include the report, one should see if some other *imām* declared it authentic.[122] Other ḥadīth scholars, like al-Nawawī, al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1402-3) and Ibn al-Wazīr seconded the notion that those who have the expertise must independently

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[121] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 27; idem, *al-Tabṣira wa al-tadhkira*, 1:67; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 6; Ibn Jamāʿa, 130; al-Bulqīnī, 159; al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 21; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:63-4.

[122] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 149.

evaluate *isnāds*, but those who do not must rely on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, their *mustakhraj*s and *ilzāmāt* works.[123]

The role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a reference for non-specialists evaluating the reliability of Prophetic reports had profound implications for pietistic literature: if a ḥadīth had earned al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's stamp of approval, one need not provide an *isnād* when citing it. The Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholar Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), dubbed "the Reviver of the Sunna (*Muḥyī al-sunna*)," demonstrated how the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon could simplify the use of ḥadīths in the religious life of regular Muslims. He explains that his most famous work, the pietistic manual *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*, is culled from the books of the great ḥadīth *imām*s to help people implement the Prophet's sunna in daily life. The work is small and portable, for a very simple reason: al-Baghawī omits the contents' *isnād*s. Instead, the author divides the ḥadīths in each chapter into two sections, "authentic (*ṣiḥāḥ*)" and "good (*ḥisān*)." The authentic section consists only of reports from al-Bukhārī and Muslim, while the less reliable "*ḥisān*" ḥadīths come from the collections of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī and other respected compilers. The reader thus relies on the source of the ḥadīths to know their reliability. Those coming from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are considered automatically reliable, whereas al-Baghawī states that he will alert the reader to any weaknesses in the ḥadīths of the "good" section.[124]

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[123] Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 40; see n. 121.

[124] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd al-Baghawī, *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*, 2 vols in 1 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, [197-]), 1:2.

It is clear that in cities like Damascus in the early seventh/thirteenth century, inclusion in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* exercised potent authority among the everyday Muslims al-Baghawī was targeting. Even the laity held the contents of the two works in unique veneration. A common citizen, for example, asked Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for a legal ruling about the ḥadīth "He who repents for a sin is like one without sin (*al-tā'ib min al-dhanb ka-man lā dhanb lahu*)," inquiring whether or not it was in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and how it relates to the issue of that person's legal competence.[125] Of the twenty-one recorded requests that the Shāfiʿī prodigy al-Nawawī (who began his studies in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's death and remained firmly within his orbit in ḥadīth study), received from everyday citizens of Damascus asking if a certain ḥadīth was authentic or not, the scholar employs the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in four responses (most are negative).[126] One questioner even inquires directly if the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or other famous collections include any non-authentic ḥadīths. Al-Nawawī replies that all the ḥadīths of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are authentic, while the *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasāʾī include varied levels of weak and sound ḥadīths.[127]

The referential role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon even facilitated the study of ḥadīth among aspiring young students. Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī produced a manual using the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the same manner as al-Baghawī but designed it for students of ḥadīth. In the

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[125] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, [1980]), 19. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ replies that the *ḥadīth* was not in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's collections nor does it have a firm *isnād* (*isnād thabt*).

[126] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā al-imām al-Nawawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1402/1982), 177-192. For example, one person asks about whether the ḥadīth "*lā ṣalāt li-jār al-masjid illā fī al-masjid*" is in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*; ibid., 191.

[127] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwa*, 177.

introduction to this book, his *Taqrīr al-asānīd fī tartīb al-masānīd*, al-ʿIrāqī explains that

he has collected a selection of ḥadīths for his son, since a student of ḥadīth needs to

memorize a number of reports in order to dispense with carrying heavy loads of books.

Since in his time chains of transmission had grown too long to have any significant

number of one's own living *isnād*s to the Prophet, al-ʿIrāqī states that he has collected

ḥadīths from the books of early scholars (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) instead. If the ḥadīth

appears in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, he states, he provides no *isnād*, because its authenticity is

"agreed on (*muttafaq ʿalayhi*)." If the report is not found in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's

works, he provides *isnād*s from other major collections.[128]

VI.7. 3. The Need for an Exemplum: Aristotle's *Poetics* and the Canon that Sets the Rule

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not just used to prove the authenticity of Prophetic

reports, but also to authoritatively shape the study of ḥadīth. Just as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon

served as a trump card in debates over individual ḥadīths, so did scholars like al-Khaṭīb

al-Baghdādī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ employ it to elaborate the tenets of ḥadīth transmission,

criticism and its applications in deriving law. As Stanley Fish notes in his discussion of

the durability of literary canons, "If Shakespeare is on your side in an argument, the

argument is over."[129] In this sense both Shakespeare's works and the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are

canonical in that they are standards that can be employed to set the rules of a genre. They

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[128] Al-ʿIrāqī, *Taqrīb al-asānīd fī tartīb al-masānīd*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1419/1998), 14.

[129] Fish, 12-15.

are the *kanòn* to be imitated, the exemplum in whose ingenious pages lie the methods of

mastering a science. Aristotle thus employs Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his exposition

of the proper components and characteristics of epic poetry. Amid his discussion of how

well Homer embodied excellence in this genre, he states, "Homer deserves acclaim for

many things, but especially because he alone among [epic] poets is well aware of what he

himself should do."[130] For Aristotle, Homer's conscious mastery of his art provides the

ultimate example for appreciating and writing epic. Homer's unparalleled methods

themselves act as Aristotle's proof texts. As Fish realizes, a text thus becomes canonical

when a community recognizes that it is the thing to which "all workers in the enterprise,"

or, in Aristotle's case, the genre, "aspire."[131]

Just as Aristotle invoked Homer, prominent architects of the ḥadīth tradition

declared al-Bukhārī and Muslim the exemplum that sets the rule. Ibn Ḥajar states that

"there is no doubt about the preeminence of al-Bukhārī and Muslim over both the people

of their own time and those who came after them from among the *imām*s of that science

in terms of knowledge of authentic and flawed ḥadīths...." If someone opposes their

work or their judgment on authenticity, "there is no doubt that [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

supersede all others in this." "Objection," he adds, "is thus fended off from them

globally...."[132] Al-Ḥāzimī describes al-Bukhārī as the best of his time in ḥadīth collection

and criticism, "and in light of the certainty of his station in these matters there is no way

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[130] Aristotle, "Poetics," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2001), 112.

[131] Fish, 12-15.

[132] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 502.

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to object to him in that subject."[133] Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) states that not even Ibn

Khuzayma or Ibn Ḥibbān approach al-Bukhārī's mastery. As the result of his

consummate skill, in the vast majority (*jumhūr*) of instances in which someone criticized

material that al-Bukhārī approved, "his [al-Bukhārī's] opinion is more favored than those

of his detractors."[134] Al-Maqdisī stated that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had become "proofs for the

people of Islam (*ḥujja li-ahl al-islām*)." He claims that ḥadīth scholars since their time

have thus focused on commenting on and studying the two books, since it is not possible

to add anything more to that science (*ṣanʿa*).[135]

One of the most obvious areas in which al-Bukhārī and Muslim impacted the

rules of ḥadīth criticism was the definition of 'authentic' reports. Al-Baghawī testified to

this when he equated the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* with authentic ḥadīths in general. One of the flaws

that could undermine the authenticity of a ḥadīth was "irregularity (*shudhūdh*)." The

definition of 'irregular (*shādhdh*)' ḥadīths, according to the consensus of Sunni ḥadīth

scholars by the eighth/fourteenth century, was a report that contradicted a more reliable

source, such as a better-attested ḥadīth or a verse of the Qur'ān.[136] Earlier scholars like

al-Khalīlī, however, had defined *shādhdh* much more broadly, and thus more

dangerously, as a report whose only flaw is that it is narrated through only one chain of

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[133] Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, 59.

[134] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿal-fatāwā*, 1:256.

[135] Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-jamʿbayn kitābay Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-Iṣbahānī*, 2.

[136] See al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 12; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiẓa*, 42; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 48-50; al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 88; Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 150-4; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:244- 8.

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transmission. Here al-Khalīlī had followed his teacher al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, who

wrote that *shādhdh* ḥadīths are those narrated by a trustworthy (*thiqa*) transmitter but

whose text is not corroborated (*aṣl mutāba*) from his source.[137] Later scholars such as

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Ḥajar fiercely rejected al-Khalīlī's definition because it would

compromise prevailing understandings of the definition for authentic ḥadīths. Ibn al-

Ṣalāḥ uses two ḥadīths "included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*" that would fall under al-Khalīlī's

definition to prove that his definition was flawed. Ibn Ḥajar underscores this objection,

arguing that not even al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methodologies could live up to what al-

Khalīlī had proposed.[138] Ibn Ḥajar offers his final definition for *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths thus: "a

report whose *isnād* connects to the Prophet via the narration of totally upstanding

transmitters in command of what they transmit or, if not totally, supported by others like

them, and is not *shādhdh* or afflicted with a flaw (*muʿall*)." Significantly, he immediately

adds that he has tailored this definition specifically to al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He

explains: "I say this because I have considered many of the ḥadīths of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and

have found that the ruling of *ṣaḥīḥ* cannot be conferred upon them without this

[definition]."[139]

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were also frequently invoked as the exemplum that set

the rules of selecting acceptable ḥadīth transmitters. In his *Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya*, al-

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[137] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 13. Here al-Khalīlī states that, contrary to al-Shāfiʿī's opinion (and that of later orthodoxy), a *shādhdh* ḥadīth is not one that disagrees with a more reliable source, but rather what "has only one *isnād* (*laysa lahu illā isnād wāḥid*)"; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 148.

[138] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 40. For more on this debate, see Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:450-62. Ibn Rajab maintains that al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others like al-Shāfiʿī defined *shādhdh* and *munkar* differently than al-Ḥākim and al-Khalīlī.

[139] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 134.

Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī states that the general practice among ḥadīth scholars is not to accept

any criticism of a narrator unless the critic has explained the reasons for his objection.

He proves this point by explaining that "this was the practice of the *imāms* from among

the masters of ḥadīth and critics such as Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī and Muslim b.

al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī."[140] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ follows al-Khaṭīb, invoking Muslim's use of

impugned transmitters, such as Suwayd b. Saʿīd, and al-Bukhārī's reliance on ʿIkrima, Ibn

ʿAbbās's pro-Khārijite client.[141]

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, however, was a double-edged sword that could be wielded

by parties at odds with one another on the proper rules of ḥadīth criticism. The case of

accepting reports from heretics (*mubtadiʿ*) clearly illustrates this. Some early scholars

like al-Shāfiʿī generally permitted narrating from them, while more strict critics

condemned it. A middle ground formed with scholars like Mālik and Ibn Ḥanbal who

accepted ḥadīths transmitted from heretics provided they were neither extremists nor

proselytizers.[142] The Shāfiʿī legal theorist of Baghdad, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī **Ibn Barhān** (d.

518/1124), defended the Shāfiʿī school's stance on the issue. He states that one can

accept reports from all heretics except the extremist Shiite group the Khaṭṭābiyya and

Shiites who rejected the first two caliphs (*Rāfiḍa*).[143] As proof, Ibn Barhān invokes the

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[140] Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:338.

[141] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 221.

[142] For an informative summary of this, see al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:384 ff.; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:53-56.

[143] For a discussion of the Khaṭṭābiyya, see W. Madelung, "Khaṭṭābiyya," *EI²*. Al-Dhahabī explains that al-Shāfiʿī had not allowed narration from these groups because they allowed lying; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiẓa*, 85.

umma's consensus on the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*: al-Bukhārī and Muslim included ḥadīths narrated from Qadarites like Qatāda b. Diʿāma and the Khārijite ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, so it must be permissible for others to imitate them.[144]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, however, employs the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon to espouse what became the more strict mainstream opinion. Like Ibn Barhān, he states that rejecting the narrations of all heretics (*mubtadiʿūn*) is untenable because al-Bukhārī and Muslim rely on them in both their primary (*uṣūl*) and auxiliary (*shawāhid*) ḥadīths. He adds, however, that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* do not include proselytizing heretics, from whom transmission would be forbidden.[145]

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon did not only serve as an exemplum that could be employed to set the rules of ḥadīth criticism. The two works could also be referred to in order to elaborate how Prophetic ḥadīths should be employed in deriving law. In his *al-Wuṣūl ilā uṣūl*, for example, Ibn Barhān describes the case advanced by some Ḥanafī scholars for the broad acceptance of *mursal* ḥadīths in deriving law. Arguing against transmission-based scholars who generally considered a *mursal* ḥadīth to be flawed due to the break in its *isnād*, these Ḥanafīs had supposedly claimed that the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* had in fact accepted *mursal* reports. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, they argued, had even included many *mursal* ḥadīths in their *Ṣaḥīḥs*.[146] This claim was, of course, highly erroneous. The

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[144] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ʿAlī Abū Zayd, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1404/1984), 2:184-5.

[145] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 299-300.

[146] Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, 2:179.

Ṣaḥīḥayn are certainly not replete with *mursal* ḥadīths, and Muslim himself specified that *mursal* ḥadīths were not acceptable proofs (*ḥujja*) in the introduction to his collection.[147]

VI.8. The Limits of the Canon's Authority: The Dialogic Power of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

The power of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon stemmed from the assertion that the absolute authenticity of the ḥadīths they contained would validate one's stance in argument or exposition. Although Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī's statement obliging scholars to rule according to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had allowed for the possibility of interpreting a ḥadīth in a manner that could neutralize its legal import, this did not obscure the thrust of his declaration: ruling against a ḥadīth from the two books was tantamount to breaking consensus. Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī reinforced this claim by affirming the absolute authenticity of the two collections. Al-Ghazālī's remark that a jurist must rule according to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or break with *ijmāʿ* merely represented the crystallization of this edifice of authority built around the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century.

The power of the canon, however, was a façade that could only intimidate or convince those confronted with it from outside. It was an illusion conjured and maintained in the relative space between adversaries in the arena of debate, or between author and intended reader in expository writing. An individual Ḥanafī jurist or Ashʿarī theologian felt no compunction about ignoring or rejecting a ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's books if it clashed with his own position. As the great Ḥanafī legal theorist

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[147] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:24. This claim is so ludicrous that it is difficult to believe that any educated Ḥanafī would make it. It may be that Ibn Barhān was unwittingly engaging in a 'straw man' argument.

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952) proclaimed, his default position (*aṣl*) is that any

Qur'ānic verse or ḥadīth that "contradicts the stance of our school (*aṣḥābinā*) is assumed

to have been either abrogated or set aside in favor of another (*tuḥmalu ʿalā al-naskh aw*

ʿalā al-tarjīḥ)."[148] Such policies led the Damascene scholar Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1920) to

note incisively, "The jurists interpret away (*yu 'awwilūn*) any ḥadīth that disagrees with

their *madhhab*, or oppose it with another ḥadīth even if it is not well-known, even if that

[first] ḥadīth is found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*."[149]

In general, it was not uncommon for Muslim scholars engaged in debate to insist

on a rule in one context then invert it in order to defend their school's stance in another.

Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, adhered to the Ḥanbalī school that had led the campaign for

the admission of *āḥād* ḥadīths in elaborating dogma as well as law. When responding to

the Shiite claim that ʿĀ'isha was guilty of unbelief (*kufr*) for fighting ʿAlī, however, Ibn

al-Jawzī changed positions diametrically. He argued that the ḥadīth Shiites cited as

evidence for this, "You will fight him (i.e., ʿAlī) and you will be wrong (*satuqātilīnahu*

wa anti ẓālima)," "is all by reports of limited attestation (*āḥād*)," and "is thus not

epistemologically certain by this means (*lā yuqtaʿu bi-mithlihi*)."[150]

Treatises on the legal theory reveal the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon's limited existence in

relative space. In general, *uṣūl* books from both the Ḥanafīs and the 'Majority' (*al-*

jumhūr) school espoused by Shāfiʿīs, Mālikīs and most Ḥanbalīs offer nothing but silence

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[148] Al-Karkhī, *al-Uṣūl allatī ʿalayhā madār furūʿal-ḥanafiyya*, 84-5.

[149] Al-Jazā'irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:320. Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir agrees; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 154.

[150] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:296.

about the place of the *Sahīhayn* in Islamic epistemology. Even al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, a Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī ḥadīth scholar very aware of the rhetorical power of the *Sahīhayn* canon, reserves no place for it in his *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih* (Book of the Jurist and Law Student), a work designed to familiarize ḥadīth scholars with *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Although he notes that *āhād* ḥadīths agreed upon by the umma yield certainty (*ʿilm*), he dismissingly relegates "the *sunan* and the *sahīh* books (*sihāh*)" to the category of reports that convey only probability (*zann*).[151]

One of the few instances in which the epistemological standing of the *Sahīhayn* is mentioned at all in an *uṣūl* work is a denial of any special status. Discussing the well-established fact that *āhād* ḥadīths yield only probability, the Shāfiʿī legal theorist Ibn Barhān (d. 518/1124) rejects the opinion of "some *ashāb al-hadīth*" who say that the authenticity of what is narrated in the *Sahīhayn* is absolutely certain (*maqtū ʿbi-sihhatihi*).[152] He explains that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not infallible (*maʿsūm ʿan al-khaṭaʾ*), since ḥadīth scholars have criticized their work and found errors (*awhām*). If their works were epistemologically certain this would be impossible. Ibn Barhān further rejects any exceptional status for the *Sahīhayn* by arguing that the only evidence supporting this claim, the acceptance of their ḥadīths by consensus, does not prove their absolute authenticity. The Muslim community accepted the two books because they felt that their contents were legally compelling; but not all that is legally compelling is

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[151] Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, 1:278.

[152] Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, 2:172-3.

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absolutely authentic.[153] Although Ibn Barhān attributes this opinion to more extreme

transmission-based scholars, he is in effect demolishing the argument made by his fellow

Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and al-Juwaynī. The irony of this situation lies,

of course, in Ibn Barhān's above-mentioned claim about narrating from heretics, where

he invokes the umma's agreement on the *Sahīhayn* to prove his point. The power of the

canon thus appears only in the dialogic space of debate and exposition. Even within the

scope of one book like Ibn Barhān's *al-Wusūl*, a scholar can wield the canon's authority

against opponents in one instance and then circumscribe it in other, less combative

settings.

Although ignored or contested in *usūl* works, the source and degree of the

Sahīhayn canon's authority as originally declared by Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī was finally

properly acknowledged by Ibn al-Salāh in the seventh/thirteenth century. In several of

his hadīth works, he states that the authenticity of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's hadīths "is

absolutely certain, and epistemologically certain discursive knowledge (*ʿilm yaqīnī*

nazarī) occurs with [them]."[154] He exempts from this claim, however, that "small amount

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[153] Ibn Barhān, *al-Wusūl ilā al-usul*, 2:174.

[154] Ibn al-Salāh went through several phases in his opinion on this issue. He states in his
Muqaddima that he had originally believed that the hadīths of the *Sahīhayn*, like all *āhād* reports, yield only
probability (*zann*). Later he realized that the infallible consensus of the umma on the two works meant that
what seemed like probability was in fact certainty. In this work and in his *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, Ibn al-
Salāh asserts this for the contents of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, not just the hadīths that they both agreed
on. His follower, al-Nawawī, tells us that in another (earlier?) work (*juz'*) Ibn al-Salāh stated that the
truthfulness of what al-Bukhārī and Muslim **both** included is absolutely guranteed. Ibn Hajar quotes this
from Ibn al-Salāh's lost *sharh* of Muslim; al-Nawawī, *Sharh Sahīh Muslim*, 1:128; Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā
kitāb Ibn al-Salāh*, 112; see n. 155.

of material (*ahruf yasīra*)" criticized by major scholars like al-Dāraquṭnī, since one could not claim consensus on its authenticity.[155]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's claim proved a tempting foil for later ḥadīth scholars, who have devoted a great deal of energy to arguing for or against its validity. Those who have supported the notion that the contents of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* yield certain discursive knowledge include prominent figures such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathīr, al-ʿIrāqī, al-Bulqīnī, and the major formulators of the late Sunni tradition: Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Sakhāwī, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1597).[156] More recently, modern scholars such as Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir have joined these ranks. Those who have disagreed with his claim have been far fewer in number: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's virtual disciple, al-Nawawī, his opponent al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333), and the Salafī maverick Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1768).[157]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's claim, however, has done little to earn the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* any special absolute status in Sunni epistemology. Although this discussion has attracted the attention of generations of ḥadīth scholars, it has not spread beyond the limited genre of the technical study of ḥadīth science (*muṣṭalaḥāt al-ḥadīth*). *Uṣūl* texts, treatises on

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[155] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 85; idem, *Muqaddima*, 170-1.

[156] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*; 1:25; 618:20; idem, *ʿIlm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Mūsā Muḥammad ʿAlī ([Cairo]: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1404/1984), 100; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 30; al-Bulqīnī, 172; Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 29 (Ibn Ḥajar adds another qualification to this claim, namely that it only applies to what is in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* but does not contradict their other contents); al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:74 (he follows Ibn Ḥajar); al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-bāqī*, 83-4 (he also follows Ibn Ḥajar); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthiyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1390/1970), 92.

[157] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 38; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 6; Ibn Jamāʿa, 128-9; al-Ṣanʿānī, *Thamarāt al-naẓar fī ʿilm al-athar*, ed. Rāʾid b. Ṣabrī b. Abī ʿAlafa (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1417/1996), 131, 137.

madhhab law, theology or ḥadīth-based legal derivation (what is referred to as *fiqh al-sunna*) rarely go beyond the established references to *āḥād* or *mutawātir* as epistemological classes for reports. The general inconsequence of the discussion surrounding Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's statement is further revealed by the argument of his opponents. Far from constituting any massive assault on the canon, al-Nawawī's rebuttal of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ actually affirms the canonical role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Like Ibn Barhān, al-Nawawī (who is followed by Ibn Jamā'a) only rejects the notion that the community's collective acceptance of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* renders their contents epistemologically certain. The fact of this consensus on the two works stands uncontested, as does their compelling power in debate. Al-Nawawī affirms this; the special status of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections resides in the fact that their contents have been lifted above the need for critical examination.[158]

The undeniable proof of the relative nature of the canon's authority, however, lies in the willingness of legal or theological schools to unhesitatingly ignore or criticize a ḥadīth from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* if it counters their positions. When this stems from a disagreement over the interpretation of a ḥadīth, it entails no transgression of the canon's authority. The Ḥanafīs al-Sarakhsī and al-Nasafī had, after all, asserted that *muḥaddith*s were not qualified to appreciate the true legal implications of their ḥadīths. On the question of *taṣriya*, or tying the udders of a milk-animal-for-sale in order to temporarily increase its milk and attract buyers, Ḥanafīs rejected explicit reports from al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* discouraging the practice. While both al-Bukhārī and the Shāfiʿī school followed a

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[158] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:128.

ḥadīth that granted a buyer deceived by such a scheme the right to a refund and an amount of dates in compensation, Ḥanafīs held that the original sale was valid. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī explicitly states that this ḥadīth is authentic and found in the Ṣaḥīḥayn. Yet it contradicts juridical reasoning based on the Qurʾān and sunna and thus cannot be acted on. According to Ḥanafī jurisprudence, the Qurʾān and juridical reasoning dictated that a transaction only requires the health or good quality of the item sold (salāmat al-mabīʿ). A paucity of milk does not compromise this.[159]

The Mālikī Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī also asserted the jurists' right to disagree with the legal implications of ḥadīths from the Ṣaḥīḥayn or their authors' legal assumptions. He states that "al-Bukhārī is deferred to in the science of ḥadīth, but not in jurisprudence (ʿilm al-fiqh)...." Al-Bājī then refers to some of al-Bukhārī's chapter titles to show how he did not derive the correct rulings from his ḥadīths and that he might even have sometimes hunted for proof texts to support his own legal opinions.[160]

Not all rejections of ḥadīths from the Ṣaḥīḥayn, however, stemmed from differences in interpretation. Adherents of legal and theological schools sometimes actually criticized their authenticity. The Ḥanafī school, for example, rejected material from both Ṣaḥīḥs if their narrations proved too problematic. Ḥadīths dealing with the

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[159] A sizable minority opinion within the Ḥanafī school, following the work of Ibn Abān, requires a narrator to have sufficient legal mastery of the material he transmits in order for his ḥadīth to supersede qiyās. Abū Hurayra, who is the Companion who transmits this ḥadīth, is not considered so qualified. See, for example, al-Shāshī, Uṣūl al-Shāshī, 272; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī, Kashf al-asrār, 2:381. For discussions of taṣriya, see Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ al-bārī, 4:458-60; al-Laknawī, Ẓafar al-amānī, 66. For this ḥadīth, known as ḥadīth al-muṣarrāt, see Fatḥ # 2148; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-buyūʿ, bāb al-nahy li'l-bāʾiʿ an lā yuḥaffila al-ibil.

[160] Nāṣir al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Munayyir al-Mālikī, al-Mutawārī ʿalā abwāb al-Bukhārī, ed. ʿAlī Ḥasan ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1990), 36. See also, al-Kirmānī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 1:5 for the author's opinion.

issue of the Prophet's prayer in the event of an eclipse (*ḥadīth al-kusūf*), for example,

proved exceptionally difficult to reconcile with one another. When an eclipse surprised

the Muslim community, the Prophet left his house and convened a public prayer. The

ḥadīths detailing his prayer, however, disagree on the number of times the Prophet bowed

(*rukūʿ*). The Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar al-Zaylaʿī attempts to navigate the impossibly

confused web of conflicting *matn*s for these ḥadīths in his *Naṣb al-rāya*, where he

presents the contradictory reports from within the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the other Six Books. The

most reliable version according to al-Zaylaʿī is that narrated by ʿĀʾisha describing only

one bow, while the others have two, three, four or five bows.[161] As a result, the Indian

Ḥanafī Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1886-7) concludes that his school

had abandoned the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s ḥadīths on this issue, since they had "become grossly

problematic (*iḍṭaraba iḍṭirāb^{an} fāḥish^{an}*)."[162]

Perhaps the most starkly partisan criticism of a ḥadīth in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, however,

occurs at the hands of the Shāfiʿī school that had played such an important role in

canonizing the two works. Muslim includes a narration by the Companion Anas b. Mālik

in which he states that he had prayed behind the Prophet and the first three Caliphs but

had heard none of them say the *basmala* out loud. Shāfiʿīs from the time of al-Dāraquṭnī

and al-Bayhaqī criticized this narration from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, which explicitly contradicted

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[161] Al-Zaylaʿī, *Naṣb al-rāya*, 2:225-31. ʿĀʾisha's narration can be found in *Fatḥ* # 1058, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-kusūf, bāb lā tankasifu al-shams li-mawt aḥad*. For a brief sample of the conflicting narrations of this tradition, see: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-kusūf, bāb ṭūl al-sujūd fī al-kusūf, bāb al-ṣalāt fī kusūf al-qamar, bāb al-rakʿa al-ūlā fī al-kusūf aṭwal; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-kusūf, bāb ṣalāt al-kusūf, bāb mā ʿuriḍa ʿalā al-Nabī (ṣ) min amr al-janna wa al-nār, bāb dhikr al-nidāʾ bi-ṣalāt al-kusūf ṣalāt jāmiʿa; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd: kitāb al-istisqāʾ, bāb man qāla arbaʿ rakaʿāt.

[162] Al-Laknawī, *Ẓafar al-amānī*, 400; al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd*, 111. The Ḥanafīs stuck with the "default in prayer (*al-aṣl fī al-ṣalāt*)" namely that *rukūʿ* occurs only once (*al-tawaḥḥud fī al-rukūʿ*).

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the *madhhab*'s stance on the *basmala*. After a lengthy chapter in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*

featuring ḥadīths showing that one should say the *basmala* aloud during prayer, al-

Bayhaqī has a chapter on ḥadīths arguing the opposite. For each tradition (cluster of

narrations) opposing his school's stance, he finds some problem undermining its

reliability. Al-Bayhaqī notes that the ḥadīth of Anas (narrated via al-Awzāʿī ← Qatāda b.

Diʿāma) is featured in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and he mentions that this and several other

narrations through Qatāda all have sections specifically saying that "I did not hear any of

them say *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm...*" or "and they did not say [it]... out loud."

Al-Bayhaqī rebuts these narrations, however, by arguing that others had narrated this

ḥadīth from Shuʿba ← Qatāda ← Anas without the explicit negation of the *basmala*.

Relying on al-Dāraquṭnī's opinion, al-Bayhaqī favors this latter version of the ḥadīth,

which al-Bukhārī includes in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[163]

Oddly, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ literally uses Muslim's narration through Anas as a textbook

example of a flaw (*ʿilla*) occurring in the text of a ḥadīth, an example that became

enshrined in the pedagogical *Alfiyya* poem that al-ʿIrāqī composed for ḥadīth students

based on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*. Following the *takhrīj* ranking system, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ

favored the version of the ḥadīth agreed upon by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, without

Anas's addition of "not one of them said [the *basmala*] out loud." He further undermines

Anas's narration by citing one Saʿīd b. Yazīd asking Anas about the *basmala*, to which

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[163] Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 2:73-76, *kitāb al-ṣalāt / bāb man qāla lā yajharu bihā; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṣalāt / bāb 240 / hadith* #1; al-Bayhaqī, *Maʿrifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, 1:524; al-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Hāshim al-Madanī, 4 vols. in 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Maḥāsin li'l-Ṭibāʿa, 1386/1966), 1:316. Al-Dāraquṭnī does not note that any of these narrations appear in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, nor does he include this criticism in his *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ.*

Anas replies, "indeed you have asked me about something on which I have memorized no [hadīths], nor has anyone before you asked."[164] Later, prominent Shāfiʿīs such as al-ʿIrāqī, Ibn Hajar and al-Ansārī followed Ibn al-Salāh's argument.[165]

Scholars like Ibn Hajar could not conceal the clear partisan motivations for criticizing Muslim's report and noted that opinions on its authenticity break down along *madhhab* lines between those who affirm saying the *basmala* out loud and those, like the Hanafīs, who do not. As a Shāfiʿī, Ibn Hajar ultimately sided with Ibn al-Salāh's criticism of Muslim. His Hanafī nemesis in Cairo, Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), consequently mocked him for rejecting a perfectly valid narration he would otherwise have considered authentic.[166]

Leading Ashʿarī theologians such as al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī also severely criticized a hadīth appearing in both the *Sahīhayn* in which the Prophet prays for the forgiveness of the most flamboyant hypocrite (*munāfiq*) in Medina, the Khazraj leader Abdallāh b. Ubayy.[167] Ibn ʿUmar narrates that when the Prophet went to pray over

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[164] Ibn al-Salāh, *Muqaddima*, 261. Al-ʿIrāqī remarks how bizarre it is for Ibn al-Salāh to use a hadīth from Muslim as an example of a flawed narration after asserting that everything in the *Sahīhayn* is absolutely certain. He justifiably explains this, however, by adding that Ibn al-Salāh had exempted from this claim material that had been criticized by great critics like al-Dāraqutnī; al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 98.

[165] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 98, 100; Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 2:289-91; al-Ansārī, *Fath al-bāqī*, 198-200; cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 2:228-31.

[166] Ibn Hajar, *Intiqād al-iʿtirād fī al-radd ʿalā al-ʿAynī fī sharh al-Bukhārī*, ed. Hamdī b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Salafī and Subhī b. Jāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1413/1993), 1:369. For a discussion of Ibn Hajar's astonishingly 'academic' rivalry with al-ʿAynī, see Anne F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 85-108.

[167] See *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb tafsīr, sūra 9, bāb 13*; *Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-tafsīr/sūrat al-Tawba/Bāb 13*.

the deceased 'Abdallāh's grave, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb objected. He reminded the Prophet

that God had forbidden Muslims from praying for the forgiveness of hypocrites, referring

to the Qur'ānic verse, "Pray for their forgiveness or do not pray, even if you pray seventy

times God will not forgive them (Qur'ān: 9:80)."[168] The Prophet replies that in the verse

God had "given [him] a choice (*khayyaranī Allāh*)," and that he "will exceed seventy

[times]."

This ḥadīth caused a great uproar amongst Ash'arī theologians and legal theorists,

because it implied that the Prophet felt that he could circumvent the command implicit in

the verse, namely not to pray for hypocrites. Ibn Ḥajar explains that a number of

prominent scholars had therefore attacked the authenticity of the ḥadīth despite its

widespread narrations and the *Shaykhayn*'s agreement on it. He quotes Nāṣir al-Dīn

Aḥmad Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), who states that Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī said, "It is

not possible to accept the ḥadīth or that the Prophet said it." In his *Taqrīb*, al-Bāqillānī

supposedly said that "this ḥadīth is one of the *āḥād* reports whose soundness (*thubūtuhā*)

is not known."[169] Al-Juwaynī says in his *Burhān* that "the *ahl al-ḥadīth* have not deemed

this sound."[170] Al-Ghazālī agrees in his *Mustasfā*, asserting that "this is an *āḥād* report

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[168] "*Istaghfir lahum aw lā tastaghfir lahum, in tastaghfir lahum sab'īna marrat*ᵃⁿ *fa-lan yaghfira Allāhu lahum.*"

[169] I was unable to find the statement quoted by Ibn Ḥajar in al-Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-tamhīd* or the 1413/1993 Mu'assasat al-Risāla edition of his *al-Taqrīb wa al-irshād*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 8:430-1.

[170] Al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 1:458.

(*khabar wāḥid*) that cannot be used to establish proof (*ḥujja*) for the implications of

speech (*fī ithbāt al-lugha*); besides, it is more probably (*ẓahara*) not *ṣaḥīḥ*."[171]

Ironically, al-Ghazālī's objection to this ḥadīth demonstrates the paradox of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn canon and its restriction to relative space. Although he undeniably questions

the authenticity of this ḥadīth in his *Mustaṣfā*, earlier in his *Mankhūl* he had defended it.

There he insists that the Prophet's actions in the ḥadīth neither compromised the truth of

the Qur'ānic verse nor the reliability of the report. God had given him the choice to ask

for forgiveness or not.[172] Al-Ghazālī wrote his *Mustaṣfā* many years after the *Mankhūl*,

and it is possible that he simply changed his opinion on the ḥadīth. Context, however,

provides a more convincing explanation. The *Mankhūl* is generally a polemical work

directed at the Ḥanafī school. In it, the ḥadīth about the Prophet praying for 'Abdallāh's

forgiveness plays a role in the author's defense of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī notion of "*mafhūm*

al-kalām," or methods for deriving the indirect legal implications of a divine injunction.

Specifically, al-Ghazālī is defending this notion against Ḥanafī critics who reject the

authenticity of the ḥadīth and thus its applicability as evidence for *mafhūm al-kalām*, a

type of proof considered invalid among Ḥanafīs.[173] In his *Mustaṣfā*, a pedagogical tool

written many years later after al-Ghazālī had sworn off debate and returned to teaching at

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[171] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, 2:87. For my rendering of *mafhūm* and *lugha*, see Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 117; Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 58.

[172] Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 212.

[173] For a discussion of a Ḥanafī perspective on one of the dimensions of *mafhūm al-kalām*, *dalīl al-khiṭāb* (i.e., the indirect implication from an injunction, so that if the Prophet says pay tithe on a certain kind of sheep one need not pay it on others), see Marie Bernand, "Ḥanafī *Uṣūl al-fiqh* through a Manuscript of al-Ǧaṣṣāṣ," 628; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Saʿātī (d. 694/1294-5), *Nihāyat al-wuṣūl ilā ʿilm al-uṣūl*, ed. Saʿd b. Gharīr b. Mahdī al-Sulamī, 2 vols. (Mecca: Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, 1418-19/1997-99), 2:560 ff.

the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī-dominated Naysābūr Niẓāmiyya, he could comfortably question

material that seemed to contradict the tenets of Ashʿarī theory.[174] As a young firebrand

polemicist in Baghdad, however, the writer of the *Mankhūl* had to defend his Shāfiʿī

school against its Ḥanafī opponents.[175]

VI.9. Conclusion

In the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon stood ready to fulfill

important functions for Muslim scholars in cities like Baghdad and Naysābūr. Studied

extensively by the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, focused by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī into a measure

of authenticity and authorized by scholars like Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-

Wāʾilī and al-Juwaynī, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* provided an important convention for scholarly

debate and exposition. In a time when the legal discourse of the *madrasa* was drifting

farther and farther from the specialized study of ḥadīth, the two works became the most

authoritative ḥadīth references for jurists more narrowly focused on law. Whether used

in polemics or to buttress the proof texts relied on by a particular school in the language

of a common convention, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* served as the measure of authenticity for

prominent Shāfiʿīs, Ḥanbalīs and Mālikīs from the mid-fifth/eleventh century on. In the

eighth/fourteenth century even the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī school found itself grudgingly

forced to adopt the common measure of authenticity. The canon's authority, however,

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[174] For al-Ghazālī's oath never to engage in debate again, see Brown, "The Last Days of al-Ghazzālī," 95.

[175] ʿAbbās Eqbāl, ed., *Makātīb-e fārsī-ye Ghazzālī beh nām-e fadāʾel al-anām min rasāʾel hojjet al-eslām* (Tehran: Ketābforūshī-ye Ibn Sīnā, 1333/[1954]), 12; George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazali's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 2 (1984): 290-1, 301.

was not absolute. It was a collaborative illusion summoned to provide common ground among rivals. Alone, within a particular legal or theological school, the authoritative edifice of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's ḥadīths collapsed before interpretive differences or partisan agendas.

The vaunted station of the two books, however, was not simply due to the declarations of scholars like al-Isfarāyīnī or al-Wā'ilī. Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works consistently bested other respected collections used for *takhrīj* by meeting the highest levels of excellence established by the Sunni ḥadīth tradition as it reached its full maturity between the fifth/eleventh and seventh/thirteenth centuries. Implicit in this success, however, lay the potential for serious tension surrounding the place and role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. Although scholars attempting to systematize the Sunni study of ḥadīth like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ often employed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as the exemplum that set the rule, the Sunni ḥadīth tradition operated according to rules external to the two books. As exemplified by the reaction to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's attempt to replace the living *isnād* with the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, here lay the seeds of tension between the continuing practice of ḥadīth critics and the institution of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. If the canon was to maintain its air of compelling authority in the arena of discourse, a canonical culture would have to be forged to extend the two books the charity required to reconcile this tension.

VII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHARITY AND THE CREATION OF CANONICAL CULTURE

VII.1. Introduction

By the end of the fifth/eleventh century, the *Saḥīḥayn* had become synonymous with authenticity in Sunni discussions of the Prophet's legacy as well as an exemplum of excellence in ḥadīth scholarship. The institution of the canon, however, faced potent challenges from two different fronts. First, the pre-canonical past of the two works was fraught with fissures. The initial negative reactions to the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, al-Bukhārī's checkered career and the fact that Naysābūr scholars had ranked Muslim's collection above that of al-Bukhārī all threatened the stability of the canon. Second, there existed inconsistencies between al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work on the one hand and the conventions of ḥadīth criticism on the other. In the post-canonical world, these inconsistencies created a tension between the institution of the canon and the Sunni ḥadīth tradition as it matured fully in the early seventh/thirteenth century.

To protect and maintain the canonicity of the *Saḥīḥayn* would require reconciling the canonical vision of the two works and the personas of their authors with both their pre-canonical past and the external rules of ḥadīth scholarship. This would entail reading the texts of al-Bukhārī and Muslim according to the Principle of Charity, which calls for interpreting a text in the best possible light in order to bring into harmony external

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notions of truth and those presupposed within the text. Just as Davidson described the

Principle of Charity's function in speech communities, so would participants in

elaborating Sunni scholarly culture treat the texts of al-Bukhārī and Muslim with charity

"in order to preserve a reasonable theory of belief" in the canon.[1]

The worldview that demands the extension of charity to canonical texts can be

termed the books' canonical culture. It is the environment created and cultivated by the

community to which the canon is bound, by an audience that recognizes that "canonizing

a text... requires a commitment to make the best of it."[2] Canonical culture rereads

history and text to reconcile them with canonical authority. The saga of al-Bukhārī and

Muslim can thus be viewed as a process of creating and maintaining the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

canonical culture, which emerged with the canonization of the two works in the late

fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries. The earliest surviving elaboration of the

canonical culture consists of the image of al-Bukhārī and Muslim forged by al-Khaṭīb al-

Baghdādī (d. 463/1071). The personas of the two scholars that he crafts in his *Tārīkh*

Baghdād established the dominant themes of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture: the place of

al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their works at the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship; the vindication

of al-Bukhārī from the scandal of the created *lafẓ*; al-Bukhārī's superiority to Muslim;

and the simultaneous complementary relationship between the two. Even after

constructing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture, however, generations of scholars would

resort to interpretive gymnastics and editorial revisions of history in order to maintain it.

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[1] Davidson, 196.

[2] Halbertal, 28.

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Mirroring the canonical culture established around the personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim was the extension of charity to the texts of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* themselves. Both before and after their canonization, the collection and criticism of ḥadīth functioned according to rules that were external to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works. As the Sunni ḥadīth tradition became increasingly systematized with the writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and even more so with those of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), the conventions of ḥadīth scholarship emerged as an institution with which the canon stood in potential tension. Examining the issues of obfuscation in transmission (*tadlīs*) and the criticism of transmitters, we shall see that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* sometimes fell short of the established standards of ḥadīth scholarship. Preserving the authority of the canon thus depended on charitable interpretations of the works that exempted them from these rules.

Divergences between the methods of the *Shaykhayn* and other ḥadīth critics had manifested themselves concretely in critiques of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, such as that of al-Dāraquṭnī. Protecting the canonical culture would thus require three of its great proponents, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar, to employ the Principle of Charity and their mastery of the ḥadīth tradition to resolve these outstanding criticisms of the canon.

VII.2. The Beginnings of Canonical Culture: Between 390-460 / 1000-1070

From the evidence available, the canonical culture surrounding the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* seems to have emerged in Baghdad in the period between al-Dāraquṭnī's career in the mid- to late fourth/tenth century and that of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in the mid-

fifth/eleventh. Considering the direct relationship that Halbertal posits between the canonicity of texts and the charity with which they are treated, it is no surprise that the construction of a canonical culture surrounding the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* began at the same time as the emergence of the canon itself. Between approximately 390/1000 and 460/1070 the ḥadīth-scholar environment in Baghdad transformed from one open to criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to a canonical culture that demanded the extension of charity to al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Although Ibn ʿAmmār al-Shahīd, al-Ismāʿīlī and al-Dāraquṭnī had all exhibited profound interest in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections, they had no compunction about criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* if they felt their authors had erred. Neither did these fourth/tenth-century scholars feel obliged to qualify or apologize for such critiques. Their evaluations merely represented an aspect of scholarly interest in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, two works that did not differ ontologically from any other ḥadīth book. Only after their canonization had endowed al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections with an authoritative role and significance for communal identification did criticizing the works or their authors pose any threat.

The construction of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture first becomes evident in the work of al-Dāraquṭnī's student Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11), a member of the Baghdad knot who penned a work defending *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* against some of al-Dāraquṭnī's criticisms. His *Kitāb al-ajwiba* (Book of Responses) might have been nothing more than an exercise in objective scholarship: al-Dāraquṭnī had made certain criticisms that Abū Masʿūd believed were incorrect. In the work, however, it becomes immediately clear that Abū Masʿūd's agenda bears far more significance: he aims

primarily at exonerating Muslim's scholarly legacy from any sort of blame. Even when

he admits that al-Dāraquṭnī's critiques are correct, for example, he tries to shift the blame

away from Muslim to transmitters in the isnād. "And as for attributing the oversight to

Muslim among the others, no...," he states in one case.[3] In two instances of inappropriate

Addition, Abū Mas'ūd admits that al-Dāraquṭnī was correct in objecting to Muslim's

inclusion of the narration. He defends Muslim, however, by saying that he did not have

the correct version at his disposal. If he did, he would have taken it instead.[4] In three

instances he argues charitably that Muslim included the problematic version only to

demonstrate its flaw.[5]

Abū Mas'ūd's defensiveness about Muslim's work stands in stark contrast to al-

Dāraquṭnī's impartial study.[6] At one point in the Kitāb al-ajwiba, al-Dāraquṭnī criticizes

a narration noted by Muslim but acknowledges that the scholar ultimately decided to

leave it out of his Ṣaḥīḥ. For al-Dāraquṭnī, whose scholarly interest lay in identifying

flawed narrations regardless of where he found them, this was still worthy of note. Abū

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[3] Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī, Kitāb al-ajwiba; 152, 321.

[4] Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī, Kitāb al-ajwiba; 168, 212.

[5] Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī, Kitāb al-ajwiba; 159, 180, 188.

[6] Yet we know that Abū Mas'ūd also criticized some narrations in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in his Aṭrāf al-
Ṣaḥīḥayn. These criticisms, however, seem to have been restricted to Muslim's auxiliary narrations
(mutābi 'āt/shawāhid) or to have been citations of earlier criticisms such as those of al-Dāraquṭnī. On one
such occasion, Abū Mas'ūd vaguely notes a "disagreement" on one of five auxiliary narrations Muslim
provides for his two principal narrations of a ḥadīth in which the Prophet tells his followers not to kill an
enemy if they have professed faith in Islam. In another case Abū Mas'ūd follows al-Dāraquṭnī in criticizing
one of Muslim's narrations for omitting a transmitter. These criticisms are preserved in the surviving
elements of al-Dimashqī's Aṭrāf and also in Abū 'Alī al-Ghassānī al-Jayyānī's al-Tanbīh 'alā al-awhām al-
wāqi 'a fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim. See, al-Jayyānī, al-Tanbīh 'alā al-awhām al-wāqi 'a fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām
Muslim, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl ([Rabat]: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1421/2000), 69 (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-
īmān, bāb taḥrīm qatl al-kāfir ba 'da an qāla lā illāh illā Allāh), 76. See also, Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī,
Aṭrāf al-Ṣaḥīḥayn; 3b, 26b.

Mas'ūd, however, objects angrily, "So if he left it out, what is the meaning of attributing error to him [Muslim] in this!?"[7]

Within a few decades of al-Dāraquṭnī's death the charity called for by Abū Mas'ūd had become expected. In Baghdad, the canonical culture surrounding al-Bukhārī in particular seems to have gelled by approximately 450/1060. The writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī indicate a prevailing expectation of charity in discussing al-Bukhārī's works among ḥadīth scholars. Al-Khaṭīb composed a book dealing with the overall problem of mistaken identities in biographical dictionaries of ḥadīth transmitters, titling it *Kitāb mūḍiḥ awhām al-jam 'wa al-tafrīq* (The Book of Clarifying Errors of Conflation or Distinction). Although this work criticizes a whole slew of ḥadīth scholars, al-Khaṭīb opens the book with a mistake made by al-Bukhārī in his al-*Tārīkh al-kabīr*. He follows this with a fascinating statement:

> It may be that some people who read these lines will assume the worst of us, believing that we intend to impugn our predecessors, exposing the faults of our venerable *shaykh*s and the scholars of yesteryear. Far from it, for by the beams of their light do we see, and by following in their clear footsteps do we distinguish [truth from falsehood]. Indeed, it is by their well-worn path that we circumvent error. Our relationship to them is nothing more that what Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā' (d. 154/771 or 157/774) said (he gives *isnād*): 'Compared to those who have come before us, we are nothing but a tiny root on the base of a great date palm.' Indeed, when God creates luminaries among men and raises up a leader for each community, he requires those whom they guide to adhere to the truth that they illuminate. [Yet] God obliges those who stand by the truth and follow in their footsteps and are blessed with understanding to illuminate what [earlier scholars] neglected and to correct their oversights. This, because [these earlier scholars] were not immune to mistakes and were not totally protected from the ugly face of error. This is the right of the learned scholar over the student, and the obligation of those who follow to those who precede. We hope that this apology will be clear to whomever

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[7] Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 264.

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comes upon our book, the *History of the City of Peace (Tārīkh Baghdād)*..., for in it we have presented, from among the virtues of al-Bukhārī, material sufficient enough to clear away any suspicion of our opinion of him as well as any accusations concerning our correcting his errors...."[8]

Al-Khaṭīb continues with a quote from al-Muzanī, saying, "If a book were looked over seventy times there would still be a mistake in it, for God has not permitted that any book be *ṣaḥīḥ* except His Book (i.e., the Qur'ān)." He quotes Ibn Ḥanbal's son 'Abdallāh as saying, "I read a book to my father [for checking] thirteen times, and on the fourteenth time he came up with a mistake, so he put the book down and said, 'Indeed I have denied that any book could be perfectly correct (*yaṣiḥḥa*) except the Book of God most high.'"[9]

Al-Khaṭīb's tortured apology for even minor criticisms of al-Bukhārī's identification of ḥadīth transmitters reflects an intense anxiety over reactions to his work and the powerful canonical culture that evidently surrounded the scholarly persona of al-Bukhārī by that time. Al-Khaṭīb's homily invoking the sacred duty of scholarly vigilance, phrased in the idiom of the ḥadīth student's pietistic reverence for his teachers, represents an effort to counterbalance the charity the author feels he is expected to show al-Bukhārī. By referring his readers to the formidable accolades he grants al-Bukhārī in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* (whose biography is perhaps the longest of any figure in the work), al-Khaṭīb seeks to placate potential critics by calling their attention to his contribution and obedience to the canonical culture. Read against the grain, al-Khaṭīb's agonized preemptive defense suggests a scholarly atmosphere totally different from the one in which al-Dāraquṭnī, a fellow Shāfiʿī of Baghdad, had freely criticized al-Bukhārī less

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[8] Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb mūḍiḥ awhām al-jamʿ wa al-tafrīq*, 1:5-6.

[9] Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb mūḍiḥ awhām al-jamʿ wa al-tafrīq*, 1:6.

than a century earlier. When students asked him about several dozen transmitters from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915) had criticized, al-Dāraquṭnī bluntly seconded most of al-Nasāʾī's evaluations.[10] Although al-Dāraquṭnī's *Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ* contains serious and substantive criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, its author felt no need to justify or apologize for his critique.

We cannot be sure of exactly whom al-Khaṭīb was so wary in his minor criticisms of al-Bukhārī. We know that he faced consistent intimidation from the Ḥanbalīs, from whose ranks he had defected and who publicly questioned his transmission-based Sunni allegiance.[11] Considering the ferocity with which the Shāfiʿī Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī had defended Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, however, we can easily imagine that al-Khaṭīb's fellow Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholars in Baghdad may have aroused his concern just as much as the Ḥanbalīs. Because we do not know when al-Khaṭīb wrote the *Kitāb mūḍiḥ al-awhām*, we cannot precisely date the context in which he was writing any time before his death in 463/1071. Based on the absence of any apologies in al-Dāraquṭnī's critique of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the vehemence of Abū Masʿūd's eventual rebuttal of his teacher and finally al-Khaṭīb's writing, we can conclude that in Baghdad a canonical culture arose around the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* between 390/400 and 460/1070.

VII.3. The Character of the Canonical Culture: Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Defining the Personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

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[10] See al-Dāraquṭnī, "Dhikr aqwām akhraja lahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim fī kitābayhimā wa ḍaʿʿafahum al-Nasāʾī," MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, Istanbul: fols. 253a -254b.

[11] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:225.

The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim is a question of how the Muslim community has viewed these two scholars' legacies. Their historiographical personas thus form as much a part of the text of the canon as their actual books. The extent to which Islamic civilization has identified the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* with their authors is illustrated by their agency in the formulaic statement "al-Bukhārī/Muslim included it..." or equating the works with their compilers in common phrases such as "the ḥadīth is in *Muslim*." Indeed, the skill, piety and critical rigor of the two scholars served as the basis on which their authority was founded. Questioning al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's judgment or devotion to the Prophet's legacy thus constituted a threat to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon itself. Although al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's apology did not even involve al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* per se, the idea of criticizing that expert's judgment in his *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* proved sufficiently alarming to prompt an apology.

Al-Khaṭīb's biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim provide our earliest extant expressions of the canonical culture surrounding the *Shaykhayn*. As al-Khaṭīb himself informs us, he intended his biography of al-Bukhārī in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* to describe the scholar with the proper reverence. Although al-Khalīlī's brief biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well as fragments of al-Ḥākim's entries have survived, the *Tārīkh Baghdād* offers us the earliest complete and, indeed, self-conscious expression of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture. The majority of biographies in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* consist only of reports from earlier sources that al-Khaṭīb presents through their *isnāds*. As a result, his role in crafting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's biographies is that of an editor who

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constructs an image of the two scholars by choosing selectively from the vast pool of historiographical raw material about them.

Like all later Sunni biographers, al-Khaṭīb freely ladled out hyperbolic descriptions of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's virtues, as well as those of other great scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal. There was never a dearth of praise for the guardians of the faith. Al-Khaṭīb therefore leaves the reader with no doubt as to al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's prodigious memories, piety or mastery of ḥadīth. What concerns us here is not the mere quantity of positive evaluations, however, but rather the picture that such praise paints, the contours of the personas it shapes or the unspoken problems it intends to address. A canonical culture must reconcile the history that was with the history that should have been. The culture that al-Khaṭīb elaborates thus directly addresses the most prominent issues in the saga of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*: the proper relationship between the *Shaykhayn* and the greatest generation of their teachers, appropriately acknowledging the accomplishments that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* presented, al-Bukhārī's scandal of the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān, and the proper ranking of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

We have seen the problem that al-Bukhārī and Muslim's superlative scholarship presented for the atavistic logic of the ḥadīth-scholar community in the tale of al-Bukhārī plagiarizing his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from his teacher. Scholars such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Rāmahurmuzī did not perceive the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or their authors as superseding the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Maʿīn and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. It was not until the writings of Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5) that al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement as a whole

began to be seen as the pinnacle of the ḥadīth tradition. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture would have to correct this imbalance.

Al-Khaṭīb's treatment of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus leaves little doubt about their superiority over their teachers. He cites one Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Madīnī as asserting that al-Bukhārī possessed better legal acumen (*afqah*) and was more perceptive (*abṣar*) than Ibn Ḥanbal. When someone objects to this provocative statement (as al-Khaṭīb's reader might), al-Madanī replies, "If you looked at al-Bukhārī and Mālik you would see they were the same in juristic knowledge and ḥadīth."[12] Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khaffāf is quoted as saying that al-Bukhārī is more knowledgeable than Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh and Ibn Ḥanbal by twenty degrees.[13] Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Bukhārī, the great scholar's grandson, heard his grandfather say that he did not humble himself (*istaṣghara*) in the presence of anyone except ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, but admitted that "perhaps I still mentioned ḥadīths he did not know (*ugharribu ʿalayhi*)."[14] Al-Khaṭīb relies on a narration through al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī from Muslim's colleague Aḥmad b.

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[12] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:19; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:86; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:256; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 667.

[13] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:27; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:78; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:221, 225 (this includes an additional description of al-Bukhārī as "*al-taqī al-naqī al-ʿālim alladhī lam ara mithlahu*"); cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, ed. Fuʾād Sayyid et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1405/1985), 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671.

[14] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:17; Ibn ʿAdī, *Asāmī*, 125 (without the comment about knowing more ḥadīths); Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:311; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:81-2; al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252), *Asāmī shuyūkh Abī ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra al-Bukhārī*, ed. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān ([Mecca]: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1419/[1998]), 2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:252; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi 'l-wafayāt*, vol. 2, ed. S. Dedering (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat Wizārat al-Maʿārif, 1949), 208; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 669.

Salama, who saw "Abū Zurʻa and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī place Muslim before the *shaykhs* of their time in the knowledge of authentic ḥadīths."[15]

In the case of al-Bukhārī, his disgrace at the hands of the über-Sunnis in the *lafẓ* scandal had tarnished his name in the eyes of prominent architects of the ḥadīth tradition, such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī. The narrative constructed by al-Khaṭīb, however, is one of vindication in which al-Bukhārī righteously stood by what would become the orthodox position on the Qurʼān.[16] As the Shāfiʻī/Ashʻarī al-Subkī later explains, "Every reasonable person knows that our wordings are from among our deeds, and that our deeds are created, and that thus our wordings are created."[17] Al-Bukhārī's contemporary Muḥammad b. Khushnām is invoked as a witness that al-Bukhārī denied the accusation that he believed the Qurʼān itself was created, insisting instead that the acts of men are created. He states that he will not change his position until proven wrong.[18] For al-Bukhārī, certain of the truth of his position, "the complimenter and the detractor are the

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[15] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 27; al-Qāḍī ʻIyāḍ, *Ikmāl al-muʻlim*, 1:79; Ibn ʻAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:89-90; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 61; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:184; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37.

[16] For the Ashʻarī exposition of this stance, see al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmāʼ wa al-ṣifāt*, 2:17 ff.; al-Juwaynī, *Textes apologétiques de Ǧuwaini*, ed. and trans. Michel Allard (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1968), 146. By the mid-fifth/eleventh century even moderate Ḥanbalīs, such as Ibn al-Farrāʼ, acknowledged that the wording of the Qurʼān was created; Ibn al-Farrāʼ, *al-Masāʼil al-ʻaqdiyya*, 77 ff. Ibn Abī Yaʻlā's biography of al-Bukhārī includes a report that does not uphold this image, but rather has al-Bukhārī telling Ibn Ḥanbal that anyone who says that the *lafẓ* of the Qurʼān is created is a "*Jahmī kāfir*." This is almost certainly an early Ḥanbalī attempt to exonerate al-Bukhārī, since his *Khalq afʻāl al-ʻibād* leaves no doubt that he did in fact believe that the wording of the Qurʼān was created; Ibn Abī Yaʻlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:259.

[17] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:230.

[18] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ʻAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:94.

same."[19] Al-Khaṭīb relies on al-Ḥākim for the comeuppance of the *amīr* of Bukhara, who

had used al-Bukhārī's stance on the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān to expel him from the city: he was

imprisoned less than a month later by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. As for Ḥurayth b.

Abī al-Waraqā', the Ḥanafī scholar whose assistance the *amīr* had enlisted in

condemning al-Bukhārī, members of his family were afflicted by suffering too terrible to

describe.[20] To further assure al-Bukhārī's orthodox standing, al-Khaṭīb narrates a report

through al-Ḥākim that invokes the authority of a vehement opponent of the created

Qur'ān, Ibn Khuzayma, saying that "there is no one under the heavens more

knowledgeable in ḥadīth than al-Bukhārī."[21]

Furthermore, al-Khaṭīb portrays al-Bukhārī's accuser, the great *muḥaddith*

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, as both inferior to al-Bukhārī in the science of ḥadīth

and motivated by petty jealousy. Al-Khaṭīb cites al-Ḥusayn al-ʿIjlī as describing Abū

Zurʿa and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī listening to al-Bukhārī attentively, adding that he was

"more knowledgeable than al-Dhuhlī in this and that."[22] Another contemporary of al-

Bukhārī reports that he saw him and al-Dhuhlī walking together in a funeral procession.

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[19] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29.

[20] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:32; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:97; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, 4:190 (Ibn Khallikān provides the most copious information about the *amīr*'s fate in Baghdad); al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:271-2; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:233; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:30; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 680; cf. Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ sharḥ Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Maymūniyya, 1891), 1:14.

[21] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:26; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 93; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:65; al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:70; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:256; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:218; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671; Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:14.

[22] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:85; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 670.

Al-Dhuhlī was asking al-Bukhārī questions, to which he replied with such ease it was as if he were reading one of the shortest *sūra*s of the Qur'ān (no. 112, *sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*).[23] Al-Khaṭīb then includes two separate reports that al-Dhuhlī began attacking al-Bukhārī for his stance on the wording of the Qur'ān only after his students began deserting him and flocking to al-Bukhārī's study circle.[24]

The canonical culture as depicted by al-Khaṭīb also emphasizes what a momentous feat the compilation of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* represented as well as their authors' critical stringency. He provides several reports telling us that al-Bukhārī selected his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from over 600,000 ḥadīths and spent ten years compiling it, intending it as "a testament (*ḥujja*) between [himself] and God."[25] A report from al-Firabrī tells us that al-Bukhārī included only the most authentic ḥadīths, and that he performed ablutions and prayed two *rak'a*s before inserting any ḥadīth in the book.[26] Again relying on a report

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[23] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:30; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:95; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:68; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:229; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 674; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134-5.

[24] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29, 30; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:91; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:228.

[25] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9, 14; Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:256, 7; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:72; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:115; al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a'yān*, 4:190; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*, 2:208; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:249; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:221; Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmū 'fīhi rasā'il li'l-ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī*, ed. Abū 'Abdallāh Mish'al al-Muṭayrī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1422/2001), 344; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134; Mullā 'Alī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

[26] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9. Ibn 'Adī includes a report that describes al-Bukhārī praying two *rak'a*s before writing the chapter titles (*tarājim*) of his book; Ibn 'Adī, *Asāmī*, 61; Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:256; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:72; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:115; cf. al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a'yān*, 4:190; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:248 (al-Dhahabī notes that this meant before sitting down to work on his book); al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*, 2:208; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:220; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Majmū 'fīhi rasā'il*, 344; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:136; Mullā 'Alī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

from al-Ḥākim, al-Khaṭīb includes a report that Muslim compiled his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from a selection of 300,000 ḥadīths.[27] We then find the famous statement of Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī that "there is no book under the heavens more authentic than *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* in the science of ḥadīth."[28]

The canonical culture also reflects the nature of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon itself. Muslim is thus clearly ranked below al-Bukhārī. Al-Khaṭīb includes a report narrated through al-Ḥākim in which a scholar says that he once saw Muslim asking al-Bukhārī questions like a youth before his teacher.[29] In one instance, Muslim was so impressed with al-Bukhārī's knowledge of ḥadīth that he almost cried.[30] On the same occasion, Muslim professes to al-Bukhārī, "I testify that only the jealous could hate you, and that there is none like you."[31] In a report narrated through al-Ḥākim, Muslim comes to al-

[27] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 28; Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:311; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyāna Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 67; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:185; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

[28] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Ikmāl al-muʿlim*, 1:80; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 68-9; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:186; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmūʿ fīhi rasāʾil*, 330; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

[29] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:89; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:70.

[30] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:28; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:69-70; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675.

[31] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:28; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:70; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:70; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134.

Bukhārī seeking his expertise, then kisses his forehead and calls him doctor (*ṭabīb*) of

ḥadīth and its ills/flaws (literally, *ʿilal*).[32]

As part of the accolades he includes for Muslim, al-Khaṭīb provides the report of

Ibn ʿUqda saying that Muslim made fewer errors than al-Bukhārī because he included

fewer ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds*.[33] In a rare instance of personal commentary,

however, al-Khaṭīb restores the proper relationship between the two books by adding that

"Muslim followed in Bukhārī's footsteps and gained from his knowledge (*naẓara fī*

ʿilmihi)... and when al-Bukhārī came to Naysābūr near the end of his life, Muslim

followed him around constantly."[34] To further counter expert opinions ranking Muslim

above al-Bukhārī, al-Khaṭīb quotes the great al-Dāraquṭnī as stating, "If not for al-

Bukhārī, Muslim would not have come or gone."[35] The authors of other prominent *ṣaḥīḥ*

collections are also featured complimenting al-Bukhārī in particular. In one report, al-

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[32] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 141; Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:255; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:68, 58:91; al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 2 (here the author conflates the above three reports about Muslim); al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:70; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:257; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:223; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

[33] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:185; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi 'l-wafayāt*, vol. 25, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥujayrī (Beirut, 1420/1999), 25:552; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37.

[34] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

[35] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:117; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi 'l-wafayāt*, 25:552; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:187; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 676; Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:16.

Nasā'ī says that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* is the best book available.[36] Al-Tirmidhī is quoted as

calling al-Bukhārī "the ornament (*zayn*) of the umma."[37]

In al-Khaṭīb's treatment of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, we also notice that the two

scholars, like their works, present a unified and complementary pair. Al-Khaṭīb makes

another personal addendum to a report of Muslim venerating al-Bukhārī, explaining that

"Muslim used to defend (*nāḍala ʿan*) al-Bukhārī to the point that what happened between

[Muslim] and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī got worse (*ḥattā awḥasha*) because of

him."[38] Al-Khaṭīb includes Ibn al-Akhram's famous comment that, together, al-Bukhārī

and Muslim missed very few authentic ḥadīths (*qallamā yafūtu al-Bukhārī wa Muslim mā*

yathbutu min al-ḥadīth).[39]

The personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* formed the basis

for all later biographies of the two scholars. Particularly in the case of al-Bukhārī, al-

Khaṭīb's work actually provided one of the two largest sources for later historians.

Material from the *Tārīkh Baghdād* makes up approximately 47% (52/110 reports) of al-

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[36] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:74; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:74; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Majmūʿ fīhi rasāʾil*, 329; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:135.

[37] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:26; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:79; cf. al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:221; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671.

[38] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103. It is not obvious from the text of al-Khaṭīb's work that he himself made this addition, but al-Ghassānī, who had both *Tārīkh Baghdād* and al-Ḥākim's work, from which the report is cited, at his disposal, notes that al-Khaṭīb made this addition; Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 30; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:188; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi ʾl-wafayāt*, 25:553; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

[39] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:91.

Dhahabī's comprehensive biography of al-Bukhārī in the *Tārīkh al-islām*, and 41% (11/27) of his entry on Muslim.

The second major source on which later biographers such as al-Dhahabī and al-Subkī drew was al-Ḥākim's lost *Tārīkh Naysābūr*. Al-Ḥākim served as the premier source for information about Muslim in particular, since he had been a veritable Naysābūr institution. Even al-Khaṭīb, who relies on al-Ḥākim for only half a dozen reports in the *Tārīkh Baghdād*'s massive biography of al-Bukhārī, refers to al-Ḥākim for 50% (7/14) of the reports he includes in his much shorter biography of Muslim.

The *Tārīkh Bukhārā* (now lost) of Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad **Ghunjār** al-Bukhārī (d. 412/1021) was one of the earliest sources on al-Bukhārī, but al-Khaṭīb seems to have incorporated much of its material in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* through a transmission of the book from its author.[40] The other early source of original material on al-Bukhārī of which neither al-Khaṭīb nor al-Ḥākim seem to have made any use is the *Tārīkh Samarqand* of Abū Saʿd ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Astarābādhī (d. 405/1015). Later scholars like al-Dhahabī relied on the *Tārīkh Samarqand* (now lost) for reports about al-Bukhārī's grave, which was in the vicinity of Samarqand. These include stories of al-Bukhārī's enemies visiting his grave to offer repentance, and the many

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[40] See, for example, the report in which al-Bukhārī's having memorized 200,000 reports is contrasted with Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh memorizing only 70,000; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:24-5; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:63-4; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:245; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:218; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 674. Also, see the report about al-Bukhārī knowing the ḥadīth of Basra better than Basrans; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:15-6; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 672-3. Al-Khaṭīb did not replicate Ghunjār's biography of al-Bukhārī in its entirety, however, since some reports appear in Ibn ʿAsākir's *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* from Ghunjār that do not appear in *Tārīkh Baghdād*. See, for example, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:90. Al-Khaṭīb mentions Ghunjār's *Tārīkh Bukhārā* by name in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* as well; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:29.

miraculous phenomena that transpired around his tomb (his grave, for example, emitting a perfumed scent and eventually attracting pilgrims from far and wide).[41]

Although we do not know exactly how al-Ḥākim portrayed al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the surviving elements of his *Tārīkh Naysābūr* emphasize the same themes as al-Khaṭīb. In fact, al-Khaṭīb relied on narrations through al-Ḥākim in a number of the above-mentioned reports illustrating the feat involved in producing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Bukhārī and Muslim's preeminence in the pantheon of ḥadīth scholars, and al-Bukhārī's vindication against his accusers.

VII.4. Charity and the Maintenance of Canonical Culture

The themes that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī emphasized – the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship, al-Bukhārī's vindication, his superiority to Muslim, and the unified front of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* – would define the contours of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture from the fifth/eleventh century on. By selecting which reports to provide his readers, al-Khaṭīb's recension of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's biographies sought to bring the vagaries of history and the problematic origins of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* into accord with their authoritative station in the Sunni community.

Yet several of these reports inherently challenged the canonical culture surrounding the two works. Through applying three levels of interpretive or editorial processes to them, however, the Sunni scholarly tradition was able to maintain and

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[41] Quoted from al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 1-2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:282; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:12; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:234; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:30; al-Qasṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 1:39; cf. Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 15.

protect the *Saḥīḥayn* canonical culture. First, the canonical culture itself exerted a subtle

influence on the transmission and copying of historical works. Second, scholars resorted

to interpretive gymnastics in order to reconcile the data of history with canonical culture.

Finally, scholars actually edited problematic reports to fit expectations of how the

Muslim community should view al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

VII.4. a. *Reinventing the Etiology: Charity and Legitimizing al-Bukhārī's* Ṣaḥīḥ

Compiling ḥadīth collections devoted solely to *ṣaḥīḥ* reports had been a

revolutionary act, and venerable ḥadīth scholars like Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī had protested it.

This posed a challenge to the authoritative status of the *Saḥīḥayn*, for how could the

compilation of the two most authoritative collections have met with disapproval from

leaders in the ḥadīth-scholar community? By the early sixth/twelfth century, ʿAbdallāh b.

Muḥammad al-Baṭalyawsī of Andalusia (d. 521/1127) had reinterpreted the initial

reception of the *Saḥīḥayn* in a manner that shifted the blame from transmission-based

legal scholars like Abū Zurʿa to the more reason-based 'jurists *(fuqahāʾ)*.' Al-Bukhārī

and Muslim, he explains, had battled the forgery of ḥadīths until the people of their age

persecuted them for it. It was this critical stringency in ḥadīth that "stirred up anger in

the hearts of the jurists *(fuqahāʾ)* against al-Bukhārī."[42] By the time of al-Nawawī,

however, the urge to cast the origins of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement in a better light had moved

beyond reinterpreting history to revising historical reports themselves.

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[42] Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. al-Sayyid al-Baṭalyawsī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā al-asbāb allatī awjabat al-ikhtilāf bayn al-muslimīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Kaḥīl and Ḥamza ʿAbdallāh Nashartī (Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtiṣām, 1398/1978), 173.

The impetus for the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement as described in al-Khaṭīb's account of al-Bukhārī's life is not completely clear. The great scholar's decision to begin compiling his *Ṣaḥīḥ* is explained in a report narrated through al-Ḥākim from one of al-Bukhārī's students, Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī. Al-Bukhārī recounts that, "We were with Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, and one of our companions said to us, 'If only you (plural) would compile an abridged book on the *sunan* of the Prophet (ṣ) (*kitāb^{an} mukhtaṣar^{an} li-sunan al-Nabī*).' That stuck in my heart, and I undertook collecting this book – namely, the *Jāmiʿ* (i.e., the *Ṣaḥīḥ*)."[43] Here we see that there is, in fact, no mention of that characteristic that would distinguish al-Bukhārī's collection from previous works: its sole focus on authentic reports.

In al-Nawawī's succinct lexical reference and biographical dictionary of the Shāfiʿī school, the *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ wa al-lughāt*, however, we find that the report has been transformed. Al-Nawawī also cites Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī's quotation from al-Bukhārī. In this version, however, a scholar says, "'If only you (plural) would collect an abridged book (*kitāb^{an} mukhtaṣar^{an}*) of the authentic *sunan* of the Messenger of God (ṣ) (*al-ṣaḥīḥ li-sunan al-rasūl*),' and that became stuck in my heart and I undertook collecting that book."[44] This addition of "authentic" also appears in the versions of this report found in major later biographies of al-Bukhārī, such as Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī's (d. 846/1438) introduction to his commentary on al-Bukhārī, the *Iftitāḥ al-*

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[43] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:8.

[44] Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ wa al-lughāt*, 1:74. This version of the report seems to have circulated before al-Nawawī, however, alongside the other version. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī mentions a permutation of this version in the mid-fifth/eleventh century, citing it through al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. Al-Nawawī, however, seems to have been the first to have made this version of the quote the official one; al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhu*, 1:309.

qārī li-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.[45] Although he narrates the same report through al-Khaṭīb, in his *Hady al-sārī* Ibn Ḥajar makes Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh himself the one who suggests collecting the authentic reports of the Prophet.[46]

In al-Nawawī's recension of the quote, we are thus led to believe that al-Bukhārī's decision to compile a collection of authentic ḥadīths was no longer a radical departure from tradition. Rather it was recast as a response to a need expressed by fellow scholars in the company of a senior ḥadīth master. In Ibn Ḥajar's recension, the suggestion comes from Ibn Rāhawayh himself, a member of the greatest generation of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's teachers.

Al-Nawawī also includes another etiology for al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He provides a report with no *isnād* in which al-Bukhārī states, "I saw the Prophet in a dream, and it was as if I were standing before him with a fan in my hand swatting the flies away from him (*adhubbu ʿanhu*), so I asked a dream interpreter and he told me, 'You are swatting lies away from him (*tadhubbu ʿanhu al-kadhib*),' and this is what led me to produce the *Ṣaḥīḥ*."[47] In his comprehensive biographical survey of Islam's first millennium, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, this is the only etiology for the *Ṣaḥīḥ* that Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679) presents.[48] The great Meccan ḥadīth scholar, Mullā ʿAlī Qārī (d.1014/1606),

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[45] Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmūʿ fīhi rasāʾil*, 346. Like al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī cites al-Ḥākim (although here it is specifically al-Ḥākim's *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat rijāl al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*). Interestingly, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn cites both versions of the report side by side.

[46] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 7.

[47] Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ*, 1:74; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 7.

[48] Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134.

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also notes that this dream propelled al-Bukhārī to compile his collection.[49] The twentieth-century Moroccan scholar Fatḥ Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Bannānī (d. 1934-5) concurs in his commentary on al-Bukhārī's work.[50] In this dream etiology the impetus for initiating the ṣaḥīḥ movement comes through direct inspiration from the Prophet himself, phrased as the ḥadīth scholars' commendable duty to preserve his authentic legacy.

It is important to note, however, that there was no categorical attempt to doctor the historical record. Encyclopedic and fastidious historians like Ibn 'Asākir, al-Dhahabī and Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dihlawī (d. 1239/1824) preserved the original wording of al-Khaṭīb's report and excluded the isnād-less account of al-Bukhārī's dream.[51] Nor should we assume that scholars like al-Nawawī consciously altered the report originally found in Tārīkh Baghdād. In the canonical culture of the Ṣaḥīḥayn, authenticity was the defining characteristic of al-Bukhārī's work. For the scholars who copied al-Khaṭīb's history, it would have been an understandable oversight to interpolate the adjective "ṣaḥīḥ" into al-Bukhārī's account. As in language, the application of the Principle of Charity means glossing over or reinterpreting momentary inconsistencies in the grammar of canonical culture. Working in the midst of the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture, a copyist could not be faulted for subconsciously correcting this 'oversight.'

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[49] Mullā 'Alī Qārī, Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ, 13.

[50] Fatḥ Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Bannānī, Rafd al-qārī bi-muqaddimat iftitāḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Rabat: al-Maṭba'a al-Maghribiyya al-Ahliyya, 1347/[1928-9]), 7.

[51] Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq, 52:72; al-Dhahabī, Juz' fīhi tarjamat al-Bukhārī. ed. Hāshim Ibrāhīm b. Manṣūr al-Hāshimī al-Amīr (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Rayyān, 1423/2002), 39; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:221; Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dihlawī, Bustān al-muḥaddithīn fī bayān kutub al-ḥadīth wa aṣḥābihā al-'uzz al-mayāmīn, ed. and trans. Muḥammad Akram al-Nadwī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), 73-4.

VII.4. b. *Charity and Maintaining the Superiority of al-Bukhārī to Muslim*

The primacy of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the Sunni vision of the Prophet's legacy represented both an act of communal consensus and the priorities that the Sunni tradition had set in elaborating the ḥadīth sciences. The Sunni tradition was thus heavily invested in defending the position of the two books as the acme of ḥadīth scholarship. Al-Shāfiʿī's statement that the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* was the most correct (or authentic) book after the Qurʾān thus attracted a great deal of interpretive concern. Ibn Jamāʿa and Ibn Taymiyya explain that this opinion, trumpeted by Mālikīs like Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr and al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, in no way proves the superiority of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or undermines the umma's consensus on the primacy of the two books. When al-Shāfiʿī made his evaluation, they explain, al-Bukhārī and Muslim had not yet compiled their collections.[52]

More difficult was maintaining the proper relationship between the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* themselves, which proved a persistent concern for Sunni guardians of the canonical culture. Ignoring al-Bukhārī's superiority to Muslim in matters of critical methodology threatened the received opinion and practice among ḥadīth scholars on issues like the acceptability of narrations communicated by the phrase "from/according to (*ʿan*)." Although the vast majority of ḥadīth scholars recognized that al-Bukhārī had produced a more thorough and demanding work, the opinions of several respected figures broke with this consensus. Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī had said that Muslim's book was the most authentic work available.[53] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ adds that a Maghribī scholar, Abū Marwān

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[52] Ibn Jamāʿa, *al-Manhal al-rawī*, 116-7; Ibn Taymiyya, *Ṣiḥḥat uṣūl madhhab ahl al-Madīna*, ed. Zakariyyā ʿAlī Yūsuf (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Imām, [1964]), 34; al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 18.

[53] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Ikmāl al-muʿlim*, 1:80.

'Abd al-Malik al-Ṭubnī (d. 456/1064)[54] mentioned that at least one of his teachers preferred Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to that of al-Bukhārī. Ibn Ḥajar and others mention that Ibn Ḥazm had also favored Muslim's work.[55]

Although al-Khaṭīb had indirectly undermined this minority opinion by mustering contrary evidence from towering sages like al-Dāraquṭnī, it was Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ who first actively attempted to disarm this threat to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture. He explains that if Abū 'Alī al-Naysābūrī had meant that Muslim's work was superior only in that it did not include ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds* as legal commentary, this would be correct. If those scholars in the Maghrib that al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ mentioned preferred Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* because all the narrations of one Prophetic tradition are found in one place as opposed to being scattered throughout the work, this would also be a valid point. Asserting that Muslim surpassed al-Bukhārī in methodology and judging authentic ḥadīths, however, was categorically incorrect.[56]

This explanation became commonplace among later defenders of the canonical culture such as al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar.[57] Al-Sakhāwī's student 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Daybaʿ (fl. 900/1500) composed a verse:

> People have disputed before me concerning al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which should we favor?
> I said, "Indeed al-Bukhārī has excelled in authenticity, as Muslim excelled in finely crafting [his book]."[58]

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[54] Al-Ṣafadī has his death as 456 AH; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi 'l-wafayāt*, 19:163.

[55] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

[56] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 69; al-Nawawi, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:121.

[57] See also, Mullā 'Alī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:16, where the author replicates Ibn Ḥajar's discussion.

Ibn Ḥajar further attempted to neutralize Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī's comment by suggesting that no evidence existed that the scholar had ever seen al-Bukhārī's book.[59] The fact that certain Maghribī scholars preferred Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to that of al-Bukhārī, he continued, does not entail that Muslim's work was more reliable. Ascribing "preference (*afḍaliyya*)" to a work is not equivalent to ascribing it "greater authenticity (*aṣaḥḥiyya*)."[60] Al-Subkī's defense of the canonical culture was more blunt; he stated simply that "there is no weight to the opinion of those who favor *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* to it [*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*], since that opinion is irregular (*shādhdha*) and is thus not to be depended on."[61]

VII.4. c. *Charity and Muslim's Meeting with Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī*

In all accounts of Muslim's encounters with Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, the tension surrounding the notion of limiting the collection of authentic reports is palpable. When one of Abū Zurʿa's colleagues introduces Muslim as the man who had collected a book of four thousand authentic traditions, numerous reports describe Abū Zurʿa as objecting, "To whom (*li-man*) / why (*li-mā*) did he leave the rest?" This comment foreshadows the efforts of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī to increase the number of authentic ḥadīths in circulation and reinforces the mainstream stance that al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works

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[58] Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dihlawī, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn*, 78.

[59] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13; cf. idem, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 62-3.

[60] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

[61] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:215.

did not exhaust the corpus of authentic ḥadīths. Although Abū Zurʿa's remark seems

slightly critical of Muslim, in actuality it implicitly legitimizes the actions of later

scholars who would use the "standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" to extend the authority

of the canon to new material. This report thus frequently appears in later work on

Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ.

The most complete versions of this encounter, however, include a far more critical

remark by Abū Zurʿa. Ibn ʿAsākir and al-Dhahabī preserve an additional section in which

Abū Zurʿa further berates Muslim in his absence for not properly respecting al-Dhuhlī. It

reads:

> Abū Quraysh said: We were with Abū Zurʿa, and Muslim came and greeted
> him. He sat down for a while and they [two] discussed ḥadīths (tadhākarā).
> When Muslim left I said to Abū Zurʿa, "He has collected 4,000 ḥadīths in
> 'the Ṣaḥīḥ,'" and Abū Zurʿa said "Why did he leave the rest (li-mā taraka al-
> bāqī)?" Then [Abū Zurʿa] said, "He doesn't have any sense (laysa li-hādhā
> ʿaql); if he'd tended properly to (dārā) Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā [al-Dhuhlī]
> he'd have become a man."[62]
> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's rendition of this report in his Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-ikhlāl

wa al-ghalaṭ (Preserving Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim from Ruin and Error), however, excludes Abū

Zurʿa's critical remark about al-Dhuhlī.[63] This truncated version is repeated in al-

Nawawī's famous commentary on Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ and in Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī's

Iftitāḥ al-qārī li-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.[64] These scholars' decision to omit the second part of

Abū Zurʿa's statement represents a defense of the canonical culture surrounding the

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[62] Al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 12:187; Ibn ʿAsākir, Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq, 58:93. These two versions feature the initial wording "why did he leave the rest?" Cf. al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-islām, 19:341 (this version includes the wording "to whom did he leave the rest?").

[63] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 101.

[64] Al-Nawawī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1:129; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, Majmūʿ fīhi rasāʾil, 336.

Ṣaḥīḥayn. Not only does Abū Zurʿa's comment belittle Muslim, accusing him of poor

judgment as well as subordinating him to al-Dhuhlī, it also threatens the canonical

version of the quarrel between al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Dhuhlī.

As we saw in Chapter Three, although al-Dhuhlī's attack on al-Bukhārī certainly

inflamed his quarrel with Muslim, the falling out between al-Dhuhlī and Muslim was the

culmination of a series of disagreements between the two. In al-Khaṭīb's personal

commentary, however, Muslim's alienation from al-Dhuhlī centers on the former's

stalwart and loyal defense of al-Bukhārī. In his *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, al-Ḥākim seconded

this by reporting that only Muslim and Aḥmad b. Salama had stayed with al-Bukhārī

when al-Dhuhlī denounced him.[65] This theme matured more fully in the work of Abū

ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), who asserted that Muslim was in

fact the only person who stood by al-Bukhārī when the scholars of Naysābūr turned

against him.[66]

Abū Zurʿa's comment challenges this narrative. Indeed, it is far more congruent

with the pre-canonical notion that Muslim and al-Dhuhlī were involved in a private

drama between student and teacher. Abū Zurʿa clearly sides with al-Dhuhlī, faulting

Muslim for neither showing his teacher the proper respect nor finishing his education

with him. To retain the additional section would be to undermine the scenario of al-

Bukhārī and Muslim standing against a jealous and fickle mob driven by al-Dhuhlī,

threatening al-Bukhārī's vindication and the united front of the *Shaykhayn*.

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[65] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 677.

[66] Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Māzarī, *al-Muʿlim bi-fawāʾid Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad al-Shādhilī al-Nayfar, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1992), 1:182.

VII.5. Reconciling the Canon with Convention: The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and the Rules of Ḥadīth

Although al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had often invoked al-Bukhārī and Muslim as models of excellence to be followed in the collection and criticism of Prophetic ḥadīths, these sciences functioned according to rules external to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Before al-Bukhārī and Muslim, generations of great critics such as Mālik b. Anas, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī and ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī had sifted through thousands of ḥadīth notebooks, sorting the strong from the weak according to their own criteria. Even in the wake of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's illustrious careers, scholars like Ibn ʿAmmār al-Shahīd and al-Dāraquṭnī flourished according to their own idiosyncratic methodologies. Al-Dāraquṭnī maintained standards for transmitters that sometimes proved stricter than those of al-Bukhārī, while Ibn ʿAmmār al-Shahīd could require a stronger reliance on written sources than Muslim. Both upheld more stringent standards for the acceptance of Addition that those employed in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.

Even after the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, some scholars espoused standards for the evaluation of ḥadīths that far exceeded those of the *Shaykhayn*. The Shāfiʿī legal theorist and ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Muẓaffar Manṣūr al-Samʿānī of Khurāsān (d. 489/1096), for example, proved even more rigorous than al-Bukhārī in his requirements for using "from/according to (*ʿan*)" in transmission. Beyond the mere requirement of having met at least once, he demanded that the transmitter have studied extensively with his teacher (*ṭūl al-ṣuḥba*).[67] ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dānī of Andalusia (d.

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[67] Al-Samʿānī, *Qawāṭiʿ al-adilla*, 2:456-7.

444/1053) required the scholar narrating via " *'an*" to be well-known as a narrator from that source.[68]

In addition to the personal methodologies of individual scholars, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon might also stand in tension with the general conventions of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship. This tradition reached maturity in the writings of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, whose monumental treatise on the sciences of ḥadīth transmission and criticism became the basis for later studies in the field.[69] With the systematization of the ḥadīth tradition that began with al-Ḥākim and solidified with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ḥadīth scholarship acquired a unified and refined authority that could present a serious challenge to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. The conventions of the ḥadīth tradition comprised a body of rules that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* might occasionally fail to follow. The canon fulfilled important functions in the scholarly and lay community, so how could ḥadīth experts address instances when the two books fell short of the standards established by the ḥadīth tradition? This potential tension between the practice of ḥadīth scholars and the authoritative institution of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon would have to be resolved by recourse to the Principle of Charity.

VII.5. a. *Charity and* Tadlīs

One of the most glaring areas in which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* occasionally ran afoul of the accepted practice of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship was *tadlīs*, or obfuscation, a phenomenon that occurred in two contexts. First, *tadlīs* could entail a student narrating something

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[68] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth*, 45.

[69] See J. Robson, "Ḥadīth: the Study and Transmission of Tradition," *EI²*.

from a teacher with whom he had studied but from whom he had not actually heard that particular report (generally termed *tadlīs al-isnād*). Secondly, *tadlīs* could involve a student obfuscating the identity of his source (termed *tadlīs al-shaykh*). In both cases, *tadlīs* consisted of misleading others about the true immediate source of one's ḥadīths. The first type of *tadlīs* occurred commonly, and often not due to any deceptive intent. If a student attending the dictation sessions of a certain teacher excused himself to answer nature's call and later heard the material he had missed from another student, he might omit his colleague from the chain of transmission and simply state "the teacher said...." The second type of *tadlīs* could also be innocuous, often resulting from a transmitter assuming that his audience understood who his sources were without giving their full names. It could also, however, serve to disguise an impugned or discredited source. If a transmitter said "a notable scholar told me," he might be trying to employ a ḥadīth that he had actually heard from a person others considered unreliable or heretical.

In the wake of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's writings, what emerged as the regnant policy among Sunni ḥadīth scholars for evaluating the first type of *tadlīs* was that one could accept a report from someone known to commit *tadlīs* (called a *mudallis*) provided that he explicitly stated that he had heard the report directly (*samāʿ*) from his source.[70] This he could accomplish by using technical terms known to denote face-to-face transmission, such as "he narrated to us (*ḥaddathanā*)," "I heard from him (*samiʿtu*)" or "he reported to us (*akhbaranā*)." If the *mudallis* used a vaguer phrase, such as "from (*ʿan*)" or "so and so said (*qāla*)," the ḥadīth could not be accepted as authentic due to a

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[70] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:122; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya*, 2:385-6; cf. al-Samʿānī, *Qawāṭiʿ al-adilla*, 2:312.

presumed break in the chain of transmission. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ affirmed this position in his classic manual on the ḥadīth sciences, and no significant objection to this policy appeared. Employing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as an exemplum, he stated that al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections, as well as other relied-upon books, often depended on the transmission of a *mudallis* if it was phrased in wording that eliminated any doubt about the continuity of transmission.[71]

As Ibn Ḥajar later noted, however, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also contain numerous ḥadīths in which a *mudallis* narrates from his source via the problematic phrase "from/according to (ʿan)." Here it seemed that al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections could not provide the evidence of continuous transmission required by convention among ḥadīth scholars. Only reading the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the most favorable light could resolve the inconsistency between the canon and the rules of ḥadīth scholarship. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's follower, al-Nawawī, recognized this and authoritatively declared, "Know that what is in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* [narrated] from *mudallis*es via [the phrase] 'ʿan' or something like it is to be interpreted (*maḥmūl*) as having been established as direct transmission (*samāʿ*) via some other narration [of the ḥadīth]...."[72]

Important ḥadīth scholars accepted al-Nawawī's extension of charity to all instances of *tadlīs* in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The Levantine Mamluk-period scholar Khalīl b. Kaykaldī al-ʿAlāʾī (d. 761/1359) treated both al-Bukhārī and Muslim with extreme charity in his definitive monograph on the issue of broken transmissions. He explains,

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[71] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *al-Muqaddima*, 235; al-ʿAlāʾī, *Jāmiʿ al-taḥṣīl*, 111-12; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:227 ff.

[72] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:146.

for example, that in the case of the famous *mudallis*, the Successor Abū al-Zubayr

Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Makkī (d. 126/743-4), many senior ḥadīth scholars refused to

use reports he narrated from the Companion Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh as proof texts. Such

critics only accepted what the great Egyptian scholar al-Layth b. Saʿd (d. 175/791) had

vetted from al-Makkī. Al-ʿAlāʾī, however, notes that Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains numerous

ḥadīths from Jābir → al-Makkī that al-Layth did not narrate though this *isnād*. Yet he

adds that it was "as if Muslim, may God bless him, was aware that these [ḥadīths] were

from material that al-Layth narrated from [Jābir] even if he did not narrate them through

his path [of Jābir → al-Makkī]...." Al-ʿAlāʾī thus assumes Muslim knew that al-Layth

had approved of this material even though it did not meet the standards scholars generally

employed when evaluating al-Makkī's ḥadīths.[73]

After providing a long list of notorious *mudallis*es, al-ʿAlāʾī admits that "there are

many ḥadīths from these [transmitters] in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*" that lack explicit evidence for

direct transmission. Referring to al-Nawawī, he adds, "One *imām* has interpreted

(*ḥamala*) this as that the *Shaykhayn* were aware of the direct transmission (*samāʿ*) of the

individual for that ḥadīth...but this is a lengthy matter (*wa fīhi taṭwīl*)." Although al-

ʿAlāʾī feels that al-Nawawī's argument is slightly tenuous, he nonetheless states that al-

Bukhārī and Muslim included such reports because they had reliable evidence that their

transmitters could be trusted and an uninterrupted chain of transmission guaranteed.[74]

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[73] ʿAlāʾī, *Jāmiʿ al-taḥsīl*, 126. For his biography, see Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2:52.

[74] Al-ʿAlāʾī, *Jāmiʿ al-taḥsīl*, 130.

Ibn Ḥajar categorically supports al-Nawawī's charitable treatment of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn. He states that any instance of tadlīs via "from ('an)" occurring in the primary

(uṣūl) narrations of the Ṣaḥīḥayn is assumed to be a locus of direct transmission. If al-

Bukhārī or Muslim included the report of a mudallis using 'from/according to ('an)' in

the isnād among their auxiliary (mutāba'a/shawāhid) narrations, this presented no

problem since the two scholars did not uphold their rigid criteria in these cases.[75] Quṭb

al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 735/1335) stated that all these instances of tadlīs

though the phrase "'an" should be treated as direct transmission since "the instances of

'an in the Ṣaḥīḥayn have the status of direct transmission."[76] Al-Dhahabī even exempted

"what is in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and similar books" from the second type of tadlīs, the

obfuscation of one's teacher's identity. He explains, for example, that when al-Bukhārī

states, "Aḥmad told me," we know he intends Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[77]

Several ḥadīth scholars who exempted the Ṣaḥīḥayn from the standard rules

governing the evaluation of tadlīs seemed very conscious of the charity they had

extended the two books. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī once asked Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d.

742/1341), the compiler of the most comprehensive biographical dictionary of ḥadīth

transmitters, if al-Bukhārī and Muslim had really made certain that all instances in their

collections in which tadlīs had occurred were guaranteed by direct transmission. Al-

Mizzī replied, "So it is said, but that is only out of giving the benefit of doubt (taḥsīn al-

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[75] Ibn Ḥajar, al-Nukat 'alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 255-6.

[76] Al-Sakhāwī, Fatḥ al-mughīth, 1:233. For al-Ḥalabī's biography, see Ibn Ḥajar, al-Durar al-kāmina, 2:243-4.

[77] Al-Dhahabī, al-Mūqiẓa, 50.

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zann) to these two, since otherwise there are ḥadīths narrated by *mudallis*es that only exist by that narration found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ[ayn].*"[78] Al-ʿIrāqī echoes this when he explains that the umma's consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* demands that Muslims extend "the benefit of doubt (*taḥsīn al-ẓann*)" to the two works.[79]

VII.5. b. *Charity and Transmitters*

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had stated that al-Bukhārī and Muslim occasionally relied on transmitters who had been previously impugned as part of his argument that such criticisms were only valid if accompanied by some explanation. Al-Khaṭīb was only invoking al-Bukhārī and Muslim as part of this larger argument, and he was wise not to claim that <u>none</u> of the transmitters featured in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had been criticized without good reason. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim relied on Ayyūb b. ʿĀ'idh al-Ṭā'ī, for example, whom al-Bukhārī himself had accused of being a Murji'ite.[80] We have already seen the example of the arch-Khārijite ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, through whom al-Bukhārī transmitted a ḥadīth. As the fifth/eleventh century drew to a close, however, and the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s role as an authoritative reference and a measure of authenticity became better established, the questionable status of some of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters emerged as a problem. If, as al-Nawawī replied in his *fatwā*, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* contained only authentic

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[78] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 256.

[79] Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 366.

[80] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 1:420.

ḥadīths, how should scholars handle the presence of impugned transmitters in the two

collections?

One of al-Khaṭīb's students, Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095), an

Andalusian who settled in Baghdad and composed his famous combined edition of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn,[81] proffered the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as an exemplum to be imitated in evaluating ḥadīth

transmitters. The two works, in fact, provided veritable dictionaries of reliable,

upstanding narrators. He asserted that the most important result of al-Bukhārī's and

Muslim's work was their declaration of the uprightness (*ʿadāla*) of all the narrators of the

principal ḥadīths (*uṣūl*) included in the two books. Al-Ḥumaydī's claim was built on the

canonical authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, for:

> The testimony of those two *imāms*, or one of them, to that effect, and their
> declaring [that narrator] as *ṣaḥīḥ* is a ruling (*ḥukm*) that requires following, a
> message designed to be heeded (*yataʿayyanu al-inqiyād lahu*), and a
> cautioning (*nidhāra*) the disobedience of which is to be feared....[82]

The authoritative station of al-Bukhārī and Muslim therefore demanded a charitable view

of their transmitters. Al-Ḥumaydī's younger contemporary, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-

Maqdisī, echoed this, stating that even if some of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters

had been criticized, inclusion in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* trumps this. The *Shaykhayn*, he explained,

only narrated from "trustworthy, upright masters (*thiqa ʿadl ḥāfiẓ*) with a strong

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[81] See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:13-14.

[82] Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Jamʿbayn al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥusayn al-Bawwāb, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1419/1998), 1:76.

probability of having heard from the preceding person in the *isnād*, except for a very few instances (*aḥruf*ⁿ).”[83]

It was the Mālikī ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Mufaḍḍal al-Maqdisī (d. 611/1214) who demanded total charity towards al-Bukhārī’s and Muslim’s transmitters by declaring famously that all those included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* “have passed the test (*jāza al-qanṭara*).”[84] This principle proved axiomatic for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ a few decades later. In his *Muqaddima* he says that ḥadīth scholars should not pay heed to criticism of those whom al-Bukhārī and Muslim included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[85] In his defense of Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ specifically exonerates Muslim from any criticism for using weak transmitters. All such criticisms of Muslim, he argues, can be rebutted by one of four points. First, if Muslim used narrators that other experts had criticized, it is assumed (*maḥmūl*) that the criticism was not adequately established. He adds, “And it is also probable that these are instances in which, even if the critic (*jāriḥ*) did clarify his reason [for criticizing one of Muslim’s men], Muslim demonstrated its falsity.” Second, the weak narration may not be one of Muslim’s primary ḥadīths, but rather one of his less rigorous auxiliary narrations (*shawāhid, mutābiʿāt*). Third, the narrator in question may have lost his reliability only after Muslim had taken ḥadīths from him. Finally, referring to Muslim’s explanation to Ibn Wāra, he might have used a

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[83] Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-jamʿ bayn kitābay Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-Iṣbahānī*, 1:3.

[84] Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, *al-Iqtirāḥ*, 327. Ibn Daqīq does not identify al-Maqdisī beyond the fact that he is his teacher’s teacher and that his name is Abū al-Ḥasan. See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:66-9.

[85] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 292.

narration with a weak transmitter because its *isnād* was shorter than a more reliable version.[86]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's follower, al-Nawawī, repeated these reasons for exonerating Muslim. He concluded that although a number (*jamā'a*) of narrators from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have been criticized, upon reflection trust (*thiqa*) is conferred upon them and one must accept their ḥadīths.[87] Moreover, al-Nawawī cunningly reinterpreted al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's aforementioned argument to provide an earlier historical precedent for treating al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters with total charity. Arguing that "criticism [of narrators] is not accepted unless it is explained," al-Khaṭīb had added, "for indeed al-Bukhārī relied on (*iḥtajja*) a number [of transmitters] who had been previously criticized by others..., as did Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj..., Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, and more than one other...."[88] Paraphrasing al-Khaṭīb, al-Nawawī interpreted this as the extension of complete charity to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters. He states, "Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and others have said, 'What al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd used (*iḥtajja bihi*) from among a number [of transmitters] who had been criticized before by others, is to be treated (*maḥmūl*) as if no effective, explained criticism had been established.'"[89]

What al-Khaṭīb had intended as evidence that criticisms of transmitters were not valid unless accompanied by some explanation, al-Nawawī thus transformed into an exemption of al-Bukhārī's, Muslim's and Abū Dāwūd's transmitters from any criticism.

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[86] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 96 ff.

[87] Al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 17; idem, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:134.

[88] Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:339.

[89] Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:134.

The charitable premise on which al-Nawawī bases this act of legerdemain, however, lacks credibility. As discussed above, some transmitters used in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were indeed criticized with valid explanations.[90]

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī was a foundational figure in the systematization of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition – Abū Bakr b. Nuqṭa (d. 629/1231) elegized him by stating that "no one of sound thought can doubt that the later scholars of ḥadīth are utterly dependent on (*ʿiyāl ʿalā*) Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb."[91] But al-Khaṭīb's works provided no extension of charity to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* comparable to the statements made by al-Ḥumaydī, al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ or al-Nawawī. Al-Nawawī's interpretive leap, however, grounded his exemption of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters from the conventional rules of ḥadīth criticism as articulated by al-Khaṭīb. Moreover, generations of later ḥadīth scholars have treated al-Nawawī's paraphrase as the words of al-Khaṭīb himself![92] In his book on al-Bukhārī, the modern scholar ʿAbd al-Ghanī ʿAbd al-Khāliq attributes the statement directly to al-Khaṭīb, even omitting mention of Abū Dāwūd.[93] Another present-day scholar, ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿajī, has done the same.[94]

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[90] Al-Ṣanʿānī points this out; al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:99.

[91] Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ibn Nuqṭa al-Baghdādī, *Kitab al-Taqyīd li-maʿrifat ruwāt al-sunan wa al-masānīd*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1408/1988), 154.

[92] See, for example, Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdat al-qārī*, ed. Idārat al-Ṭibāʿa al-Munīriyya et al., 25 vols. in 12 (Beirut: Muḥammad Amīn Damaj, [1970], reprint of the 1891 Cairo edition, citations are to the Beirut edition), 1:8; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 238.

[93] ʿAbd al-Khāliq, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Ṣaḥīḥuhu*, 227.

[94] See al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ*, 1:54 (editor's introduction).

In the wake of al-Nawawī's statement, many later pillars of the ḥadīth tradition exempted al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters from criticism. In his abridgment of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work, the Egyptian Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302) acknowledges that some of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters have been criticized. Explaining Abū al-Ḥasan al-Maqdisī's famous declaration that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s transmitters "passed the test," Ibn Daqīq states that he meant, "He pays no heed to what is said [critically] about them; this is what he believes and this is our opinion." Ibn Daqīq thus instructs those seeking to determine whether or not a narrator is reliable to consult the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a dictionary of accepted transmitters. The Muslim community's consensus on the two books, its collective decision to dub them "the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*" and its referral to them for rulings on authenticity make the two works the most reliable source.[95]

Ibn Daqīq's student al-Dhahabī takes the same course in his even more succinct reference for the technical terms of ḥadīth criticism. If someone is included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, he is automatically deemed reliable (*thiqa*) by that fact alone. If this transmitter appears only in al-Tirmidhī's or Ibn Khuzayma's collections, however, he merits the less lustrous rating of "good (*jayyid*)."[96] Al-Dhahabī further echoes his teacher: "All those included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have passed the test (*qafaza al-qanṭara*), and one cannot turn away from them (*lā maʿdil ʿanhu*) except by some clear evidence (*burhān*)."[97] Al-Dhahabī even urges readers to ignore criticism of those transmitters from

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[95] Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, *al-Iqtirāḥ*, 326-8.

[96] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiẓa*, 78.

[97] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqiẓa*, 80. Ibn Ḥajar repeats this argument; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 543.

the *Saḥīḥayn* that he had included in his own dictionary of impugned narrators, the *Mīzān al-i'tidāl* (The Scale of Judgment). He states that these criticisms "should not be heeded," and adds that "if we open that door to ourselves, a number of the Companions, Successors and *imāms* would enter it."[98]

Al-Dhahabī's analogy between the transmitters of the *Saḥīḥayn* and the Companions of the Prophet is apt, for both groups received the blanket approval of the umma. Al-'Irāqī recognized the comparable charity extended to these two groups when he noted that the only two classes of ḥadīth transmitters whose status is not affected by only having one narrator from them, which would normally render them *majhūl*, are the Companions and the men of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.[99]

VII.6. Rebutting Earlier Criticisms

The most compromising consequence of the inconsistencies between the methods that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had employed in their works and those of other prominent ḥadīth scholars was the criticisms that venerated critics made of the *Saḥīḥayn*. The critique of the great fourth/tenth-century ḥadīth scholar, al-Dāraquṭnī, as well as those of the Andalusian *muḥaddith* Abū 'Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105) and the North African Mālikī 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141) proved the most problematic for the maintenance of the *Saḥīḥayn* canonical culture. It was to these criticisms that the canonical culture's greatest advocates, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and

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[98] Al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifat al-ruwāt al-mutakallam fīhim*, 45.

[99] Al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 123. Al-'Irāqī even wrote a book on these men.

Ibn Ḥajar thus turned their attention. Although these three masters' inimitable command of the ḥadīth tradition allowed them to effectively overturn many of these earlier criticisms, their defenses also relied on charitable assumptions about al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's work. Indeed the Principle of Charity imbued the notion that the Ṣaḥīḥayn's auxiliary narrations were not to be held to the same standard as their primary ḥadīths, as well as the claim that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included problematic narrations only because they assumed their audience would know more reliable versions.

It is important to note that the canonization of the Ṣaḥīḥayn did not end criticism of the two works. As we saw in Chapter Six, the very illusory nature of the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon enabled criticism of its contents even as scholars wielded it against opponents. Even scholars who actively employed the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon occasionally criticized a ḥadīth from the two books if it contradicted the doctrines of their school of law or theology. The arch-Shāfiʿī al-Bayhaqī thus criticized Muslim's report demonstrating that one should not say the basmala out loud.

Ḥadīth scholars also continued to criticize items from the Ṣaḥīḥayn not for partisan purposes, but as part of their unabated critical review of transmissions from the Prophet.[100] As al-ʿIrāqī had said, evaluating reports was "the muḥaddiths' job." Like

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[100] This critical review of the Ṣaḥīḥayn also stemmed from the very nature of manuscript transmission in the pre-print world. A constant reexamination of a text was required in order to prevent errors from creeping in as students copied their teachers' books. Abū ʿAlī al-Jayyānī's criticisms of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus originated from his efforts to synchronize the variant transmissions of the two texts. Although he never left Andalusia, al-Jayyānī had access to all the major recensions of the works, and produced a book on the inconsistencies and ambiguities in the Ṣaḥīḥayn's transmission. His criticisms of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's texts therefore often involve errors that had materialized during the transmission process, though he also notes mistakes made by the authors themselves. In the case of Muslim's work, he has a section on ʿilal not mentioned by al-Dāraquṭnī in his Kitāb al-tatabbuʿ. There, for example, he criticizes Muslim for erring in the identity of a certain transmitter and inappropriate isnād Addition; al-Ghassānī, Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā al-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim, 51, 55. It is important to note

earlier *ilal* studies, most such criticisms involved problems in the chains of transmission

of certain ḥadīths, such as breaks in *isnāds* or inappropriate Addition. Al-Māzarī thus

singled out fourteen instances of broken *isnāds* in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Abū al-Ḥusayn

Hibatallāh Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 563/1167-8) appended five original criticized narrations he had

culled from Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to the end of his copy of Ibn ʿAmmār's *ilal* work.[101] A later

copyist of the same manuscript, one Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Faḍl of Damascus

(d. 630/1232-3), added one more narration he had found in his reading of Muslim for

Normative *Matn* Addition.[102] The boldest *isnād* criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* came from the

great Ḥanbalī jurist, preacher and pious activist of Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200).

In his famous *Kitāb al-mawḍūʿāt* (Book of Forgeries), Ibn al-Jawzī includes at least two

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that many of the errors that al-Jayyānī notes occur only in Ibn Māhān's recension of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*; see ibid., 73. For al-Bukhārī, he also has a short section on *ilal* in what is otherwise also a book designed to compare and correlate transmissions of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*; al-Ghassānī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā al-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ li'l-Bukhārī*, 111-2. For studies by Muslim scholars on the transmission of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and the scholars who played a prominent role in editing it at different stages, see Ibn Rushayd, *Ifādat al-naṣīḥ fī al-taʿrīf bi-sanad al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ibn al-Khawja (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya, [1973]); Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Hādī Ibn al-Mubrid (d. 909/1503-4), *al-Ikhtilāf bayn ruwāt al-Bukhārī ʿan al-Firabrī wa riwāyāt ʿan Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ Fatḥī Halal (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1420/1999). For modern studies on scholars who edited the authoritative versions of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, such as the Indian who settled in Baghdad, al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252), and the Egyptian Ḥanbalī al-Yūnīnī (d. 658/1260), see Alphonse Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhāri* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1936); Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, "How al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was edited in the middle ages: ʿAlī al-Yūnīnī and his *Rumūz*," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 50 (1998): 191-222; and Johann Fück, "Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschicte von Buḫārī's Traditionssammlung," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 60-82 (this article has several detailed charts of the transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*). For a discussion of the transmission of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, see Diyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, "al-Ruwāt ʿan Muslim," in *Juzʾān ʿan al-imām Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj*, ed. Abū Yaḥyā ʿAbdallāh al-Kandarī and Abū Aḥmad Hādī al-Murrī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1416/1996); James Robson, "The Transmission of Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1949): 46-61. For a discussion of the textual authenticity and attribution of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, see Appendix III.

[101] Ibn ʿAmmār, 143-9. The author criticized these narrations for being uncorroborated from specific transmitters Muslim had cited (*tafarrud*). These impugned narrations are not found among al-Dāraquṭnī's criticisms.

[102] Ibn ʿAmmār, 150-1. Here the critic was unwittingly parroting an earlier criticism made by al-Dāraquṭnī.

narrations from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and one from Muslim's collection due to various flaws in their *isnād*s.[103]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ represents the first holistic champion of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* against earlier criticisms. His commentary on Muslim's work has been lost, but much of his efforts at defending the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have survived in his *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ tries to overturn a criticism whenever possible, his main strategy centers on invoking charity: he claims that any problematic narration of a ḥadīth either comes from al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's less demanding auxiliary narrations or that a correct version appears in authentic forms elsewhere. Although he is able to find evidence from other major ḥadīth collections to disprove one of al-Jayyānī's criticisms, he must resort to the Principle of Charity for rebutting al-Dāraquṭnī and al-Māzarī.[104] He objects to Māzarī's statement that Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* has fourteen narrations with breaks in their chains of transmission (*inqiṭā*), arguing:

> This falsely conveys an impression of disarray (*yūhim khalalᵃⁿ*), and that is not the case. For there is nothing of that sort, praise be to God, for he [Muslim] included these [problematic narrations], especially what has been mentioned here, as auxiliary narrations (*mutābaʿa*) and included a complete version in the same book. He felt that this was sufficiently well known among the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, just as he narrated from a group of weak

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[103] For the first criticism, see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badīʿāt ʿalā al-Mawḍūʿāt*, ed. ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar ([Beirut]: Dār al-Janān, 1411/1991), 47; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṭibb, bāb shurūṭ al-ruqyā bi-Fātiḥat al-kitāb*; cf. ibid., *kitāb al-ijāra, bāb* 16, for another narration. For the second criticism, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badīʿāt*, 212. Here al-Suyūṭī states that al-ʿIrāqī had found an authentic counterpart narration for this report. This narration does not appear in any extant recensions of al-Bukhārī's collection, but Ibn al-Jawzī found it in Ḥammād b. Shākir's lost recension. For the third, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badīʿāt*, 262; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-janna wa ṣifāt naʿīmihā, bāb 13*; cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:333-4.

[104] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 159-60. For an example of al-Māzarī's noting broken narrations, see al-Māzarī, 1:283.

transmitters relying on the fact that these ḥadīths were known through reliable transmitters....[105]

Here he thus relies on the argument that, although certain narrations of ḥadīths are problematic, Muslim allowed them as auxiliary reports only because he assumed his readers knew that correct versions existed elsewhere. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ makes the same case for the incomplete *isnāds* found in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[106] He further defends al-Bukhārī and Muslim against one of Dāraquṭnī's criticisms, noting that, like almost all of al-Dāraquṭnī's critiques, "it is a criticism of their [al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's] *isnāds* and does not remove the texts (*matn*) of their ḥadīths from the realm of authenticity (*ḥayyiz al-ṣiḥḥa*)."[107] One narration of a Prophetic tradition might be flawed, but sound ones existed elsewhere that established the reliability of the Prophet's statement.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's Egyptian contemporary, Rashīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 662/1264), also mounted a defense of Muslim against al-Māzarī's criticisms. His *Kitāb ghurar al-fawāʾid al-majmūʿa fī bayān mā waqaʿa fī Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-aḥādīth al-maqṭūʿa* deals with seventy criticized narrations from Muslim's work, which he calls "exceptions to [Muslim's] standard method (*rasm*)." The author's chief concern is that such criticisms pose a threat to the function of Muslim's book as a measure of authenticity and authoritative reference. He states:

> Perhaps someone looking at [al-Māzarī's] book who does not have a great concern for ḥadīth nor any knowledge of how to collect their different narrations, might think that [these criticized ḥadīths] were among those

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[105] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 82; al-Nawawi, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:125.

[106] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 83.

[107] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 177.

ḥadīths that lack unbroken chains back to the Prophet, and that one can thus not use them as proof texts.

He has seen many people with this impression, which he hopes to counter by proving that all these ḥadīths in fact possess complete *isnād*s.[108]

The most categorical defense of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* against al-Dāraquṭnī came at the hands of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's follower, al-Nawawī, whose commentary on Muslim's work includes detailed responses to all the impugned narrations. While he and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had labored to exempt al-Bukhārī and Muslim from conventions of ḥadīth criticism that occasionally proved too demanding for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Nawawī also knew how to use these rules to the canon's advantage. He defends Muslim against the most frequent flaw identified by al-Dāraquṭnī, inappropriate Addition, by referring to the consensus arrived at by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and the majority of legal theorists (but not by most ḥadīth scholars): any Addition by a trustworthy transmitter is acceptable.[109] Al-Nawawī thus neutralizes al-Dāraquṭnī's criticisms by demonstrating that his methods were far harsher than the accepted norm. He therefore warns his readers that al-Dāraquṭnī's methods are "the deficient principles of some ḥadīth scholars, contrary to the vast majority (*al-jumhūr*) of legal scholars and theorists (*ahl al-fiqh wa al-uṣūl*), so do not be swayed [by

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[108] Rashīd al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī al-Miṣrī al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb Ghurar al-fawāʾid al-majmū ʿa fī bayān mā waqa ʿa fī Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-aḥādīth al-maqṭū ʿa*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Amīn Ballāl (Riyadh: Maktabāt al-Rushd, 1421/2000), 140-1.

[109] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:145; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 2:516, 538.

them]!"[110] Throughout the text of his commentary on Muslim's work, al-Nawawī undertakes a case-by-case rebuttal of al-Dāraqutnī's criticisms.[111]

Ibn Ḥajar mirrored al-Nawawī's defense of Muslim in the sizable introductory volume to his mammoth commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Fatḥ al-bārī*. There Ibn Ḥajar includes a massive chapter entitled "Putting forth the ḥadīths that the ḥadīth master of his age, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqutnī, and others, criticized... and furnishing what is available as a rebuttal." This section includes a case-by-case response to al-Dāraqutnī's criticisms. Like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, he argues that many of the problematic narrations in al-Bukhārī's collection come from his laxer auxiliary narrations. But while al-Nawawī excuses Muslim's inclusion of reports with inappropriate Addition by referring to the conventions of legal theorists, Ibn Ḥajar relies more on al-Bukhārī's peerless expertise. Al-Bukhārī possessed an unrivaled mastery of the ḥadīth sciences, Ibn Ḥajar argues, and judged the reliability of each ḥadīth based on the circumstances (*qarā'in*) of that case. One can thus not hold him accountable to the judgment of lesser scholars or the rigid rules they employed.[112]

Yet Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar all found themselves forced to admit that several of al-Dāraqutnī's criticisms were undeniably correct.[113] Because al-Dāraqutnī was such a hugely respected figure in the pantheon of ḥadīth scholars, and because he

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[110] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 501 (quoted from al-Nawawī's lost commentary on al-Bukhārī).

[111] See for example, al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:190; 2:334 ff. The Dār al-Qalam edition of al-Nawawī's *Sharḥ* contains an appendix with all al-Dāraqutnī's criticisms and al-Nawawī's responses.

[112] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 503, 543.

[113] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:128; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat 'alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 118.

played such a formative role in the early study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar exempted the material that he criticized from the claim of consensus on the two works' absolute authenticity. Even if one could successfully rebut some of al-Dāraquṭnī's criticisms, one could hardly claim consensus on those elements of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* rejected by a scholar of his caliber. These exceptions fell outside the pale of *ijmāʿ* and thus did not yield epistemological certainty.[114]

Interestingly, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's exemption of material criticized by master ḥadīth scholars from the umma's consensus actually provided a window for selectively admitting the existence of problems in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[115] Because earlier pillars of the ḥadīth tradition such as al-Dāraquṭnī and Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr had criticized Muslim's narration negating the voiced *basmala*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-ʿIrāqī and other later Shāfiʿīs were able to champion their *madhhab*'s stance on this issue by openly discussing the report as a textbook example of a flaw (*ʿilla*) in the text of a ḥadīth.

Other reports also contained errors beyond defense, sometimes in the content of the ḥadīth. Al-Nawawī therefore acknowledged that one of Muslim's ḥadīths saying that the first chapter of the Qur'ān revealed to the Prophet was *sūrat al-Mudaththir* (no. 74) is "weak, even false (*bāṭil*), and the correct [position] is that the absolute first to be revealed was 'Read, in the name of your Lord who created... (*sūrat al-ʿAlaq*, no. 96) ."[116] In the

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[114] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 87; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 501; idem, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 116; Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 2.

[115] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 87.

[116] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:565-6; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb badʾ al-waḥy*, ḥadīth of Abū Salama. This criticized narration comes after numerous other narrations that confirm that the beginning of *sūrat al-ʿAlaq* was indeed the first part of the Qur'ān revealed. Muslim's inclusion of the minority report stems from the impartial methodology he followed in compiling his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Just as he often

case of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīth that describes Adam incredulously as having been "sixty arms tall," Ibn Ḥajar admitted that "nothing has yet appeared to me that removes this problematic issue (ishkāl)."[117] Such criticisms, however, were few among staunch proponents of the canon and occurred against the backdrop of these scholars' devotion to defending the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture.

In the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's and al-Nawawī's campaign for strengthening the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture, many ḥadīth scholars devoted works to defending al-Bukhārī and Muslim from criticism or trying to clarify problematic material in their works. Ibn Kathīr wrote a whole book refuting the two ḥadīths, al-Bukhārī's story of the Prophet seemingly making his miraculous voyage to Jerusalem before the start of his prophetic career and Muslim's report of the Prophet marrying Umm Ḥabība (see Chapter Eight), that Ibn Ḥazm had criticized as incontrovertibly forged.[118] Al-ʿIrāqī finished the rough draft of a small book detailing all the impugned narrations in the Ṣaḥīḥayn and providing defenses for them, but he never completed the work.[119] His son, Walī al-Dīn Abū Zurʿa Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 826/1423) also wrote book called al-Bayān wa al-tawḍīḥ li-man khurrija lahu fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa qad mussa bi-ḍarb min al-tajrīḥ (Elucidation and Clarification of those who Appear in the Ṣaḥīḥ and had been Tainted by Some Sort of

included reports with conflicting legal implications provided that all their isnāds were sound, so here does he include a historical report differing from other ḥadīths.

[117] Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ al-bārī, 6:452-3. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitab aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ, bāb 1; Fatḥ # 3326; khalaqa Allāh Ādam wa ṭūluhu sitūna dhirāʿⁿ... fa kull man yadkhulu al-janna ʿala ṣūrat Ādam, fa-lam yazal al-khalq yanquṣu ḥattā al-ān."

[118] Ibn al-Wazīr, Tanqīḥ al-anẓār, 54; cf. Ibn Ḥazm, [Two Ḥadīths from the Ṣaḥīḥayn], 28b- 29a.

[119] Ibn Ḥajar, al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 116.

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Criticism).[120] Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUmar al-Bulqīnī (d. 824/1421), the son of

Shāfiʿī ḥadīth scholar of Cairo, al-Bulqīnī, also wrote a book called *al-Ifhām li-mā fī al-*

Bukhārī min al-awhām (Explicating the Errors found in al-Bukhārī).[121] Aḥmad b.

Ibrāhīm Sibṭ al-ʿAjamī al-Ḥalabī (d. 884/1479-80), another Shāfiʿī, composed a book

based on Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ* called *al-Tawḍīḥ liʾl-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Clarifying

the Errors Occurring in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*). He also had a book on ambiguities in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*

(*Mubhamāt Muslim*).[122]

VII.7. Conclusion

The pre-canonical history of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their masterpieces contained

elements that did not accord with the shape and station of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. As the

canon emerged at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century, the environment of ḥadīth study

in Baghdad transformed into a canonical culture that required a charitable reading of the

text of the canon. With al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim,

we see the contours of this culture take shape and emphasize themes that reconcile the

canon with history. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their *Ṣaḥīḥ*s are placed at the acme of the

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[120] Al-Makkī, *Laḥẓ al-liḥāẓ*, 5:186. This book has been published as Abū Zurʿa Aḥmad al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bayān wa al-tawḍīḥ li-man ukhrija lahu fī al-ṣaḥīḥ wa mussaʿbi-ḍarb min al-tajrīḥ*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf Ḥūt (Beirut: Dār al-Jinān, 1410/1990).

[121] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ*, 12 vols. in 6 (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, [1966]), 4:109. This book has survived in manuscript form, see *Qāʾimat al-makhaṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya al-muṣawwara bi-mīkrūfilm min al-jumhūriyya al-ʿarabiyya al-yamaniyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub, 1967), # 86.

[122] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 1:199. This book on al-Bukhārī may be the work of the author published as *al-Tawḍīḥ li-mubhamāt al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Abū al-Mundhir al-Naqqāsh Ashraf Ṣalāḥ ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1422/2001), which does not deal with supposed errors occurring in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

ḥadīth tradition, erasing initial objections of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* are shown as the products of almost superhuman scholarly and pietistic effort. Al-Bukhārī is vindicated in the scandal of the Qur'ānic *lafẓ*, an early advocate of orthodoxy against a jealous adversary. As both a persona and a book, al-Bukhārī is ranked above Muslim. Nonetheless, the twin components of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* form a complimentary and conjoined pair. The construction of this canonical culture, however, did not suffice. Further interpretive and editorial efforts were required to defend the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon against the enduring dangers of its pre-canonical past.

The personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not the only element of the canon that required charity. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were only two figures in the wider world of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship, a tradition characterized by a relative diversity of methodologies both before and after the formation of the canon. With the systemization of the Sunni ḥadīth sciences between the writings of al-Ḥākim, al-Khaṭīb and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the potential for inconsistency between this tradition and the methods of al-Bukhārī and Muslim became pronounced. On two specific topics, *tadlīs* and the criticism of transmitters, defenders of the canonical culture would have to extend full charity to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in order to reconcile the institution of the canon and the conventions of ḥadīth study. Proponents of the canonical culture also found it necessary to address earlier criticisms that had resulted from inconsistencies between al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's methods and those of other major ḥadīth scholars. Again, the Principle of Charity constituted an important tool in the arsenals of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar.

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In the maintenance of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture, we see a direct correspondence between the canonicity of these texts and the amount of charity they are afforded.[123] In all aspects of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture, it was Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and his follower al-Nawawī who played the most prominent and creative roles. This should come as no surprise, for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had proven the most fervent proponent of their canonical functions. He had taken dramatic steps in declaring the infallibility of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and produced the boldest and most influential argument for institutionalizing al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections as authoritative references that could replace the arcane critical methodology of ḥadīth scholars. Al-Nawawī inherited his master's agenda, replicating his arguments and reinforcing the canonical edifice.

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[123] Halbertal, 29.

VIII.

THE CANON AND CRITICISM: ICONOCLASM AND THE REJECTION OF CANONICAL CULTURE FROM IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ TO THE MODERN SALAFĪ MOVEMENT

VIII.1. Introduction

Discussing the standing of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Goldziher concluded that veneration for them "never went so far as to cause free criticism of the sayings and remarks incorporated in these collections to be considered impermissible or unseemly...."[1] He insightfully observed that "veneration was directed at this canonical work [of al-Bukhārī] as a whole but not to its individual lines and paragraphs."[2] In his *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, Daniel Brown concurs. He states that in the "classical" period there was a great deal of leeway for the criticism of the canonical collections.[3] As we have seen, Goldziher's and Brown's assessments accurately describe the pre-canonical period as well as the continued criticism of the two books even after their canonization. They do not, however, recognize the important change that occurred in the dynamic of the canon and criticism in the early modern and modern periods.

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[1] Goldziher, 236-7.

[2] Goldziher, 247.

[3] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111.

Especially in recent times, criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon have met with remarkable hostility. Mohammad Abd al-Rauf has recognized the dramatic change in the reaction to criticism, but identifies it as the result of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's buttressing the canonical culture in the seventh/thirteenth century. He asserts that in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's writings, "no more criticism could be tolerated...."[4] Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī certainly did demand a charitable reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, their contributions to the canonical culture marked neither a moratorium on criticism nor an actual end to it.

Indeed, criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* continued in force well after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's and al-Nawawī's seminal careers. In the century after their deaths, a number of ḥadīth scholars rejected the canonical culture built around al-Bukhārī and Muslim. These objections gave voice to the long-standing tension between the drive for institutional security that had transformed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* into authoritative references and the iconoclastic strain in ḥadīth scholarship that remained steadfastly focused on the critical evaluation of individual reports.

It was the emergence of the Salafī reform movement in the eighteenth century that brought this simmering tension to a boil. Its revitalized focus on the critical study of ḥadīth, its prioritization of ḥadīth above the hermeneutic traditions of the *madhhab*s and its willingness to question *ijmā*ʿattacked the very foundation of the ḥadīth canon. Two of its premier ḥadīth scholars, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1768) and Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999), exemplified this critical rejection of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture. For early modern and modern advocates of the traditional

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[4] Abd al-Rauf, "*Ḥadīth* Literature," 285.

schools of law or reformists concerned with defending an increasingly beleaguered

Islamic civilization, these criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* came to represent a rejection of the

institutions that had authorized the canon and that it served. The ferocity with which

proponents of the *madhhabs* have attacked al-Albānī's criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in

particular reflects both the canon's role as a symbol of the classical Islamic institutional

tradition and the canon's important function in scholarly culture.

VIII.2. Rejection of the Canonical Culture: Criticism after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture existed to safeguard the institution of the canon

and the important functions it served in the Sunni scholarly tradition. The charity

extended to the two works in order to overcome the tension between the methods of their

authors and the independent rules of ḥadīth criticism reflected the needs of non-ḥadīth

specialists, who relied on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a measure of authenticity and authoritative

reference. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was supposed to provide these jurists with the authority

of the Prophet's authentic sunna in a manageable form, sifted by those two scholars who

had come to epitomize the critical rigor of the ḥadīth tradition and approved by the

umma's infallible consensus.

The authoritative edifice of the canon, however, was a construct. It was the

creation of scholars struggling to provide the Islamic intellectual tradition with the secure

institutions it required to meet the needs of the wider Sunni community. Major late

architects of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition, such as Ibn Ḥajar, embraced the canonical culture

shaped by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and elaborated by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī. Yet at

its heart, the ḥadīth scholar's study of the Prophet's legacy remained an austere cult of authenticity that acknowledged no source of authority beyond the chain of transmission that connected Muslims to the charisma of their Prophet. The culture of the ḥadīth scholar thus nurtured an iconoclastic strain that did not easily suffer the elaboration of authoritative institutions above and beyond the *isnād*. Just as many ḥadīth scholars had rejected Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's perceived call to rely on *ṣaḥīḥ* books and end the critical evaluation of ḥadīths, so did many refuse the demand to grant the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* an iconic status above the conventions of ḥadīth criticism. While scholars like al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar generally accepted the cases for charity advanced by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, other ḥadīth scholars considered them baseless assertions with no grounding in the principles of the ḥadīth sciences. Criticism thus continued despite the strength of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture.

Although the great Syro-Egyptian ḥadīth master Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302) had embraced the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture on the issue of exempting al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters from criticism, he exhibited skepticism over al-Nawawī's argument on *tadlīs*. The notion of distinguishing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* from other books in this case, he explained, was baseless. Such a charitable distinction must entail one of two untenable claims. Either we are sure that al-Bukhārī and Muslim made certain that every instance of possible *tadlīs* was actually a direct transmission (*samāʿ*), which we cannot know, or the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the umma guarantees that no such error occurred. Yet

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this again depends on the impossible task of scholars having ascertained that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were entirely thorough in eliminating breaks in their *isnāds*.[5]

Another Shāfiʿī contemporary of Ibn Daqīq in Cairo, Sadr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muhammad Ibn al-Muraḥḥal (d. 716/1317),[6] seconded this skepticism towards Ibn al-Salāh's and al-Nawawī's exemption of al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the rules governing *tadlīs*. In his *Kitāb al-insāf* (apparently lost) he explained:

> Indeed, in this exemption (*istithnāʾ*) something makes my soul uneasy. For it is a claim without proof, especially since we have found that many of the hadīth masters (*huffāz*) have criticized hadīths found in the *Sahīhayn* or one of them for the *tadlīs* of their narrators.[7]

The Cairene Hanafī Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ's rejection of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture moves beyond such skepticism, however, entering the realm of unmitigated contempt. He argues that the notion of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters having "passed the test" is preposterous. Muslim, he explains, had narrated from demonstrably weak transmitters. Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ also rejects Ibn al-Salāh's argument that one should not hold al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's auxiliary narrations to the same standard as their primary ones. Such narrations are supposed to explain the status (*hāl*) of a hadīth, and if Muslim's collection was supposed to include only authentic reports, what do weak auxiliary reports say about the condition of his main hadīths?[8] Accepting all instances of a *mudallis* narrating via "from/according to (ʿan)" if they occur in the *Sahīhayn* but not in

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[5] Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Salāh*, 255.

[6] Mahdī Salmāsī, "Ibn al-Muraḥḥal," *Dāʾerat al-maʿāref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 4:200-1.

[7] Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Salāh*, 255.

[8] Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya*, 4:566.

other works is similarly baseless and represents nothing more than vain posturing (*tajawwuh*).[9]

Ibn Abī al-Wafā' then administers his *coup de grace* to the canonical culture, detailing a number of ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* whose contents render them unquestionably false. He mentions Muslim's ḥadīth that "God most great created the earth (*al-turba*) on Saturday...," which contradicts the Islamic belief that the world had been created in six days (Saturday being the seventh).[10] He brings up a ḥadīth from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that seems to recount the Prophet making his miraculous night journey to Jerusalem before he had even received his first revelation.[11] Finally, he notes Muslim's report of the Prophet promising the newly converted Abū Sufyān that he will marry his daughter, Umm Ḥabība, in the wake of the Muslim conquest of Mecca.[12] Ibn Abī al-Wafā' points out that scholars had agreed that the Prophet had already married her years earlier. The Ḥanafī dismisses the various efforts to explain this evident contradiction as vain posturing (*tajawwuh*) and "futile responses (*ajwiba ghayr ṭā'ila*)."[13]

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[9] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 4:566 ff.

[10] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb ṣifāt al-munāfiqīn wa aḥkāmihim, bāb ibtidā' al-khalq wa khalq Ādam 'alayhi al-salām* (1).

[11] See *Fatḥ al-bārī*, #'s 349, 3886, 7517; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṣalat, bāb* 1, *kitāb manāqib al-anṣār, bāb* 41 and 42, *kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb* 37.

[12] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba, bāb faḍā'il Abī Sufyān b. Ḥarb* (40).

[13] Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 4:568-69.

VIII.3. Iconoclasm and Institutional Security in Islamic Civilization: The Salafī Tradition

Ibn al-Murahhal and Ibn Abī al-Wafā' rejected the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture and instead evaluated material from the two books according to the critical conventions of the ḥadīth tradition. Yet their criticisms met with no obvious reprimand. The only condemnation of criticizing the Ṣaḥīḥayn came from Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Malaṭī (d. 803/1400-1), a controversial Ḥanafī student of al-Mughulṭāy. His unusual and little-known statement that "anyone who looks critically (naẓara fī) at [Ṣaḥīḥ] al-Bukhārī has become a heretic (tazandaqa)," however, was perceived as patently bizarre by contemporaries and later Muslim biographers. Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679) even listed it along with allowing the consumption of hashish as an example of al-Malaṭī's deviant opinions.[14]

In the early modern period, the iconoclastic strain of ḥadīth study evident in scholars like Ibn Abī al-Wafā' would again surface in the Salafī movement, with muḥaddiths like Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ṣanʿānī and later Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. In the turbulent struggle over defining Islam in the modern era, however, their rejections of the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture would meet with fierce criticism from defenders of the classical Islamic institutions bound closely to the canon. For the first time, criticizing the Ṣaḥīḥayn would become anathema for many scholars.

VIII.3. a. *Revival and Reform in the Early Modern and Modern Periods*

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[14] Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 7:40.

Since the eighteenth century, movements of revival and reform arising as responses to both internal stimuli and the pervasive influence of Western civilization have dominated Islamic intellectual history. These movements have all faced the problem of determining the proper role of ḥadīth in defining Islamic law, ritual and worldview in ongoing debates about the shape that Islam should take in the modern world. **Islamic Modernists** such as the Indian Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898) have dismissed the classical tradition of ḥadīth study as incapable of guaranteeing an authentic vision of the Prophet's sunna. They have thus rejected the role of Prophetic traditions as a central tool for interpreting Islam. Diametrically opposed to these modernists are those scholars one might refer to as *Madhhab* **Traditionalists**, who believe that the classical Islamic institutions of the schools of law, theology and Sufi guilds offer the only correct path for understanding Islam.

Lying in between these two camps on the spectrum of embracing or casting off the classical institutions of Islamic civilization are the diverse movements loosely grouped under the term 'Salafī,' or those willing to reevaluate the institutions of medieval Islam in order to revive the pure Islam of the Prophet and the first righteous generations (*salaf*) of Muslims. **Modernist Salafīs** such as the Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996) have eclectically utilized elements of the classical Islamic tradition that they felt could aid in reviving this original greatness. ʿAbduh thus attempted to revive the rationalism of the Muʿtazila, and al-Ghazālī mined the various interpretive methods of the different Sunni *madhhab*s to produce a vision of Islam that was traditionally authentic but more

compatible with modernity. Both tried to curb those parts of the ḥadīth tradition that clashed with modernity by making ḥadīth more subservient to the over-arching principles of the Qur'ān and the methods of Muslim legal theorists.[15] Tied to this group are the **Traditionalist Salafīs**, who invert this equation: like other reformists, they seek to rejuvenate the Muslim community by reviving the primordial greatness of Islam, yet they have sought to recreate the Prophet's sunna by making the classical study of ḥadīth and the ways of the early community paramount.

For all these reformist strains, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have served as a powerful symbol in debates over the proper role of ḥadīth in modern times. Islamic Modernists like the Egyptian Maḥmūd Abū Rayya have used al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's venerated status to severely criticize the classical ḥadīth tradition by demonstrating how even the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* contain inauthentic reports.[16] Daniel Brown describes how Modernist "deniers of ḥadīth have especially delighted in exposing traditions in the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections, especially Bukhārī and Muslim, which they take to be vulgar, absurd, theologically objectionable, or morally repugnant."[17] Conversely, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī employed the canon to assist him in boldly reinterpreting the classical Islamic tradition to prove that women can hold high public office and to reject seemingly backward matters of dogma such as the punishment of the grave. Unlike Abū Rayya, he venerated al-Bukhārī and Muslim and so

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[15] See Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Sunna al-nabawiyya bayn ahl al-fiqh wa ahl al-ḥadīth*, 11th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1996).

[16] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 89.

[17] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 95.

used their decisions <u>not</u> to include certain problematic ḥadīths on these issues to neutralize the reports' efficacy as proof texts.[18]

Because we are concerned with the tension between the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon and the methods of ḥadīth criticism indigenous to the Islamic tradition, we will focus only on the treatment of the canon by Traditionalist Salafīs and *Madhhab* Traditionalists. The other two reformist strains, the Islamic Modernists and Modernist Salafīs, have been primarily concerned with reacting to the West. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's dismissal of the classical ḥadīth tradition resulted from his encounters with the Orientalist William Muir, who questioned the authenticity of the ḥadīth corpus.[19] Muḥammad ʿAbduh's and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's intellectual output and political activism were responses to European political and cultural encroachment. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's reevaluation of the proper role of women in Islamic society stemmed in part from witnessing the effective leadership of Margaret Thatcher.[20] Skeptical of Prophetic reports that clash with rationalism or the expectations of modernity, but simultaneously eager to defend the ḥadīth as the repository of the Prophet's golden age, the reactionary thought of the

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[18] Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Turāthunā al-fikrī*, 6th edition (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003), 180-2; idem, *al-Sunna al-nabawiyya bayn ahl al-fiqh wa ahl al-ḥadīth*, 64.

[19] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 33-6.

[20] Haifaa G. Khalafallah, "Rethinking Islamic Law: Genesis and Evolution in the Islamic Legal Method and Structures. The Case of a 20th Century 'Alim's Journey into his Legal Traditions: Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996)," (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2000), 89; ide, "Muslim Women: Public Authority, Scriptures and 'Islamic Law,'" in *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*, ed. Amira Sonbol (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 41-2.

Modernist Salafīs has yielded no systematic approach to classical methods of authenticating ḥadīths.[21]

Although Western cultural, intellectual and political domination has cast its shadow over almost every corner of Muslim discourse in the modern period, the Traditionalist Salafīs and the *Madhhab* Traditionalists have been more concerned with each other's rhetoric than with the West. For Traditionalist Salafīs, the umma's immediate challenge is the corruption of the Prophet's sunna wrought by excessive loyalty to the *madhhab*s and the practices of popular religion. For the adherents of these traditions, the Salafī threat to classical Islamic institutions looms larger than Western encroachment. For both groups, Westernization and any Muslim contaminated by it are evils beyond the scope of dialogue. That they both dismiss any Muslim thinker who does not approach questions of Islam through the classical methodologies of *fiqh* or ḥadīth as "Occidentalists (*mustaghribūn*)" or "imitators of the Orientalists" testifies to their shared indigenous focus.[22]

The varied strands that would make up the Traditionalist Salafī movement emerged from the various revival and reform movements that began dominating the intellectual landscape of Islamdom in the eighteenth century. The rise of the Wahhābī movement in Arabia, the Sokoto caliphate in West Africa and later the *ahl-e ḥadīth*

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[21] See Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 37; cf. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 146 ff.

[22] Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1422/2002), 2:8-9. Here al-Albānī uses Abū Rayya and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī as examples. *Madhhab* Traditionalists, however, generally use the term "imitator (*muqallid*)" only for Muslim scholars who do not follow the classical methodologies at all. Azhar *shaykh*s like al-Ghazālī would probably fall outside this category. Instead, they would be dismissed as "preachers (*dāʿiya* pl. *duʿāt*)."

movement in India formed part of a broader network of Islamic movements. At their

core lay the objective of renewing the bond with the pure origins of Islam though a

rejuvenated interest in Prophetic ḥadīth. These reformists sought to break free from the

historical accretions of Islamicate civilization, condemned as bid'a, and return Muslim

societies to the radical monotheism (tawḥīd) of the Prophet's original message. They

often embraced the study of ḥadīth as the most direct means to replicating the Prophet's

ideal Medinan community and turning away from both the excesses of popular religion

and the strict allegiance to specific schools of law.[23]

As John Voll has identified, the shrine cities of Mecca and Medina served as a

central junction in this massive revival phenomenon. With the move of prominent

muhaddiths such as the Cairene Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1597) and Mullā 'Alī Qārī

of Herat (d. 1014/1606) to the shrine cities, the Ḥijāz played host to a cadre of ḥadīth-

oriented scholars such as Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Kurānī (d. 1101/1689), Muḥammad Ḥayāt

al-Sindī (d. 1751) and 'Abdallāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1722), who would exercise a

tremendous influence on students from as far away as Malaysia.[24] These circles produced

preeminent activist scholars like Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) and Shāh

Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (d. 1762). While the thought and programs of Ibn 'Abd al-

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[23] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 6; Basheer M. Nafi, "Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: in Search of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 313.

[24] See John Voll, "'Abdallah b. Salim al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship," *Die Welt des Islams* 43, no. 3 (2002): 356-72; idem, "Foundations for Renewal and Reform: Islamic Movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509-47; idem, "Hadith Scholars and Tariqahs: an Ulama Group in the 18th century Haramayn and their Impact in the Islamic World," *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 15 (1980): 264-73; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 19; Muhammad Ishaq, *India's Contribution to Hadith Literature* (Dhaka: University of Dacca, 1955), 152 ff.; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 23.

Wahhāb and Shāh Walī Allāh differed dramatically, they both exemplified a willingness

to reconsider and break with the mainstream traditions of Sunni thought as it existed in

the late medieval period.[25] To different extents, both questioned *taqlīd*, or the practice of

following an existing *madhhab* without questioning its proofs, and made a direct

consultation of Prophetic ḥadīths the ultimate determinant in interpreting the message of

the Qur'ān.[26]

This common interest in reviving the study of Prophetic ḥadīths and condemning

excessive or blind adherence to an established school of law ran like a common thread

through most of the eighteenth-century movements of revival and reform. To varying

degrees, they all championed the practice of *ijtihād*, or turning anew to the Qur'ān, the

Prophet's sunna and the practices of the early community in order to find new answers to

the legal or religious problems of the day. In their focus on the early Muslim community

and a return to its legacy at the expense of the later developments of Islamic orthodoxy,

these movements were fundamentalist in character. They telescoped religious history,

demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice the elaborate developments of classical

Islamicate civilization in order to recapture the unity, purity and authenticity of the early

community.[27] After the Prophet's life and the first few generations of his followers there

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[25] See Ahmad Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought: 1750-1850," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 3 (1993): 341-59.

[26] DeLong Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 10-13. See Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, "Fatāwā wa masāʾil al-imām al-shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb," in *Muʾallafāt al-shaykh al-imām Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb*, ed. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Aṭram and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Duwaysh, vol. 3 (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat Muḥammad b. Suʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1398/[1977]), 32.

[27] Rudolph Peters, "Idjtihād and Taqlīd in 18th and 19th Century Islam," *Die Welt des Islams* 20, no. 3-4 (1980): 131-2.

were no more qualitative distinctions in history. In this, scholars like Shāh Walī Allāh

and Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb subverted the atavistic conservatism of the Sunni intellectual

tradition, asserting that devout and competent modern Muslims were every bit as capable

of understanding the message of Islam as the founders of the *madhhabs* had been.[28]

VIII.3. b. *Traditionalist Salafīs in the Middle East*

The loosely grouped Traditionalist Salafī movement in the Middle East developed

in four dispensations. The earliest, most persistent and most politically active was

founded by Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in the mid-eighteenth century in central Arabia,

expanding through its alliance with the Saud family of Najd and eventually becoming the

dominant religious movement on the Arabian Peninsula. A second Salafī strain appeared

in the Yemeni city of Sanʿāʾ, with the iconoclastic ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl

al-Sanʿānī (d. 1768) and two generations later with the reformist thinker and ḥadīth

scholar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī (d. 1839).[29] A third school developed in

Damascus in the second half of the nineteenth century around revivalist scholars such as

ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Bayṭār (d. 1917) and his students, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914)

and Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1920).[30] Finally, an influential Salafī school formed in Baghdad

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[28] Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought," 347; Peters, "Idjtihād and Taqlīd," 139; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 23.

[29] Nafi, "Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture," 351.

[30] See David Dean Commins, "The Salafī Islamic Reform Movement in Damascus, 1885-1914: Religious Intellectuals, Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1985); Itzchak Weisman, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle," *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (2001): 206-236; W. Ende, "Salafiyya," *EI²*.

through the Ḥanbalī revival led by the Alūsī family: Maḥmūd al-Alūsī (d. 1853), Nuʿmān

al-Alūsī (d. 1899) and Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī (d. 1924).[31]

These three schools were distinct from the Wahhābī movement, with both the

Baghdad and Damascene schools espousing a more tolerant approach to classical Sufism.

Indeed, their ideological fraternity with the Wahhābīs often proved dangerous for Salafīs

in Damascus and Baghdad. Their opponents would often accuse them of being

Wahhābīs, and the Ottoman state held them under suspicion of being a Wahhābī fifth

column within the empire.[32] Al-Ṣanʿānī was a contemporary of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb

himself, and despite their similar Salafī leanings, the Wahhābī proclivity towards

declaring other Muslims unbelievers (takfīr) detracted from al-Ṣanʿānī's initial positive

impression of the movement. He wrote in verse:

> I recant that which I said about the Najdī (Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb),
> for things have come to me from him on which I differ.
> I thought well of him and said, 'Could it be, could it be,
> 'That we have found someone to seek God's path and His slaves deliver?'
> ...
> But some of his letters have come to me from his own hand,
> Declaring all the world's peoples disbelievers intentionally.
> In this he has contrived all his proofs and,
> You see them weak as a spider's web when examined critically.[33]

Nonetheless, the Damascene, Baghdadi, Yemeni and Wahhābī dispensations of

the Salafī phenomenon influenced one another. Scholars like al-Qāsimī and Maḥmūd

Shukrī al-Alūsī corresponded, and, more recently, al-Albānī used Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's

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[31] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 30.

[32] Halah Fattah, "'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaykh Mahmud Shukri and the Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745-1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 138-9, 146.

[33] Al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd*, 40. Supporters of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb dispute al-Ṣanʿānī's authorship.

books in his lessons.[34] Although the Traditionalist Salafī school differed significantly from the apologetics and Euro-centered political activism of Modernist Salafīs like 'Abduh, the trends nonetheless informed one another.[35] 'Abduh's disciple, Rashīd Riḍā, considered al-Ṣanʿānī to be the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the twelfth Islamic century.[36] Al-Albānī, in turn, started down the path of reformist thinking when he came across an article by Riḍā in an issue of 'Abduh and al-Afghānī's *al-Manār* journal.[37]

Like the other reform movements, the Traditionalist Salafīs have aimed at reviving Islam's original purity and greatness by clearing away the dross of later cultural accretions. Unlike Modernists, however, they have focused literally on reviving the Prophet's sunna as expressed in the ḥadīth corpus. The primary culprits in distancing the Muslim community from the authentic sunna have been "excessive loyalty to the madhhabs (*al-taʿaṣṣub al-madhhabī*)," an over-involvement in the science of speculative theology (*kalām*), and popular religious practices such as those found among Sufi brotherhoods. What al-Ṣanʿānī charmingly calls "the *bidʿa* of madhhabism (*al-tamadhhub*)" causes Muslims to take the rulings of later scholars over the direct injunctions of the infallible Prophet.[38] The speculative sciences have led Muslims away

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[34] See Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī, *al-Rasāʾil al-mutabādala bayn Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī wa Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-ʿAjamī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2001). For a sample of al-Albānī's curriculum, see Ibrāhīm Muḥammad ʿAlī, *Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī: muḥaddith al-ʿaṣr wa nāṣir al-sunna* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1422/2001), 24.

[35] Weisman, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism," 235.

[36] J.J.G. Jansen, "Shawkānī," *EI*[2].

[37] Al-Albānī, *"Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – Nashʾat al-Shaykh fī Dimashq,"* lecture by al-Albānī from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

[38] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Kitāb īqāẓ al-fikra li-murājaʿat al-fiṭra*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣubḥī b. Ḥasan al-Ḥallāq (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 52.

from the textual authenticity that gives Islam its purity. Popular religion and indulging in cultural accretions have led them to engage in *bid'a* that threatens Islam's essential monotheism (*tawḥīd*), such as visiting graves and seeking the miracle-working of local saints.

To cure these ills, Traditionalist Salafīs have not merely engaged in the study of ḥadīth, they have tried to cultivate its most critically rigorous spirit. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī's *Qawā'id al-taḥdīth min funūn muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* (The Principles of Regeneration from the Technical Science of Ḥadīth Study) and Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī's *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar* (Examining the Principles of Transmitted Reports) resemble classical manuals on the science of ḥadīth such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*, but urge Muslims to move beyond the simple acceptance of earlier opinions when evaluating the authenticity of a ḥadīth.[39] Reviving the stringent spirit of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Salafīs reject the lax use of weak ḥadīths in defining a Muslim's worldview. Al-Albānī asks rhetorically: if we do not treat weak ḥadīths as such, what is the point of the science of ḥadīth criticism? "For the heart of the issue," he explains, "is that it be highly probable, without serious doubt, that the Prophet (ṣ) actually said that ḥadīth so that we can depend on him in the Sharia, and attribute rulings to him."[40]

Their work is reminiscent of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's innovative pioneering of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement a millennium earlier, with their rejection of weak ḥadīths and willingness to break with the laxer standards of Ibn Ḥanbal's greatest generation. It is

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[39] Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 32.

[40] Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 3 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2000), 1:60.

thus no surprise that one of al-Albānī's students, the Yemeni Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādiʿī (d. 2001), compiled the first comprehensive ṣaḥīḥ collection in almost a thousand years, a work designed to provide Muslims with all the authentic ḥadīths not included in the Ṣaḥīḥayn.[41]

Salafīs thus cast aside the institutions of classical Islam, relying on ḥadīths from the Prophet as the ultimate authoritative medium for transmitting the proper interpretation of the faith. According to the Salafī school, this obviates the chains of mystical and legal authority that allowed new practices such as Sufi rituals or fixed legal codes to enter Islam, merely masking departures from the authentic teachings of the Prophet. These were preserved in the authentic ḥadīths, which are accessible to any Muslim who could correctly navigate the volumes in which they were collected. The Qurʾān and the Prophet's sunna are the only criteria for judging right from wrong. Partisanship or loyalty to a certain scholar or school should not blind Muslims from the ultimate authority of these two sources.

The Traditionalist Salafī focus on ḥadīth, reviving the ways of the early Muslim community and questioning the institutions of classical Islam that had arisen since, stemmed from the same iconoclastic strain as the Ḥanbalī reformer Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Indeed, the Wahhābī, Baghdadi and Damascene schools originated in part

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[41] Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādiʿī, al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ mimmā laysa fī al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1416/1995).

from a renewed interest in Ibn Taymiyya's writings.[42] As Marshall Hodgson explains, this iconoclastic strain was inherent in the ḥadīth-based Ḥanbalī tradition:

> Hanbalism had never really been primarily a school of fiqh at all. It remained a comprehensive and essentially radical movement, which had elaborated its own fiqh in accordance with its own principles, but whose leaders were often unwilling to acknowledge the same kind of taqlīd as provided the institutional security of the other schools and rejected the ijmā' tradition of the living community on principle.[43]

As we shall see, the manner in which Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya utilized the Ṣaḥīḥayn surfaces again in the Salafī approach to the canon. As we saw in Chapter Six, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim cunningly employed the Ṣaḥīḥayn as a rhetorical foil against their Ashʿarī opponents. Ibn Taymiyya dramatically supported Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's claim about the authenticity of the two works, asserting that "[Al-Bukhārī and Muslim] do not agree on a ḥadīth except that it is authentic without a doubt" and compiling the most comprehensive list of scholars whom he claimed seconded this opinion.[44] For Ibn Taymiyya, the canon proved very useful, for al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the centerpiece for his efforts to shift the ultimate authority in determining the Prophet's true legacy towards ḥadīth scholars as opposed to the later substantive law of the jurists.[45]

Yet, just as he treated other aspects of Sunni scholarly production, Ibn Taymiyya refused to admit any iconic status for the Ṣaḥīḥayn. His subtle qualification that only

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[42] Weisman, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism," 210-13; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 30.

[43] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3:160.

[44] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, 18:20.

[45] Ibn Taymiyya, *ʿIlm al-ḥadīth*, 112; idem, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, 13:352.

material found in both al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works is without a doubt authentic allowed him to criticize freely reports found in only one. Unlike al-Nawawī, his public *fatwās* announced that numerous reports in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's work were flawed. He openly criticized Muslim for approving the ḥadīth of the earth being created on Saturday and the report about the Prophet marrying Abū Sufyān's daughter.[46] He noted that al-Bukhārī's work includes at least three impugned traditions, such as the ḥadīth of the Prophet marrying Maymūna while in a state of pilgrimage (*muḥrim*). Ibn Taymiyya exceeded even his own boundaries by criticizing the ḥadīth of the Prophet praying after the eclipse, which appears in both the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[47] This seemingly contradictory approach to the canon, wielding its authority as the acme of critical ḥadīth scholarship but simultaneously denying it iconic status, would reappear with the modern Salafī movement.

VIII.4. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ṣanʿānī: A Yemeni Salafī

The Zaydī Shiite center of Ṣanʿāʾ was an unusual setting for a revival of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition. This environment, however, produced a succession of ḥadīth scholars of singular dynamism and devotion to the study of the Prophet's sunna through the medium of ḥadīth. An early progenitor was the ninth/fifteenth-century scholar Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm **Ibn al-Wazīr** (d. 840/1436). Although he sprang from Zaydī origins, Ibn al-Wazīr wrote a rebuttal of this Shiite school and then penned a massive defense of the

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[46] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, 17:235-7.

[47] Ibn Taymiyya, *ʿIlm al-ḥadīth*, 160; idem, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, 18:22.

Prophet's sunna as understood through the Sunni prism of Prophetic ḥadīth.[48] Ibn al-

Wazīr's intellectual interests lay in interacting with the Sunni ḥadīth tradition, and he thus

composed a commentary on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*. In this work, the *Tanqīḥ al-

anẓār*, he demonstrates an intellectual creativity unparalleled by his contemporaries in

Cairo. Far from blindly following Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's chapter structure like al-ʿIrāqī and

others, he addresses neglected issues such as the reliability of Ibn Mājah's *Sunan*

topically. He foreshadows the Salafī movement's anti-*madhhab* stance by stating that, in

matters of law, it is not permitted to ignore a ḥadīth declared *ṣaḥīḥ* unless one can

demonstrate a damning flaw in the report.[49]

Although he lived over three centuries later, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ṣanʿānī (b.

1099/1688, d. 1768) inherited Ibn al-Wazīr's Salafī spirit, devoting a large commentary

to his *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār* and frequently citing his predecessor with great affection.[50] Like

Ibn al-Wazīr, he hailed from a Zaydī background but remained steadfastly focused on the

Sunni ḥadīth tradition. His *oeuvre* also consisted almost entirely of commentaries on the

works of major Sunni *muḥaddiths*: Ibn Daqīq's *Iḥkām al-aḥkām*, Ibn Ḥajar's *Bulūgh al-

marām* and al-Suyūṭī's *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr*. Al-Ṣanʿānī's *Kitāb īqāẓ al-fikra li-murājaʿat

al-fiṭra* (The Awakening of Thought for a Return to the Pure Nature [of Islam])

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[48] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw ʿal-lāmiʿ*, 6:282. This second work has been published as *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-
qawāṣim fī al-dhabb ʿan sunnat Abī al-Qāsim*, ed. Shuʿayb Arnā'ūṭ, 2nd ed., 9 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-
Risāla, 1992). For a brief discussion of Ibn al-Wazīr and his place in Yemeni intellectual history, see
Bernard Haykel, "Reforming Islam by Dissolving the *Madhāhib*: Shawkānī and His Zaydī Detractors in
Yemen," in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, 338.

[49] Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 48.

[50] See, for example, al-Ṣanʿānī, *Ḥadīth iftirāq al-umma ilā nayyif wa sabʿīn firqa*, ed. Saʿd b.
ʿAbdallāh al-Saʿdān (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1415/[1994]), 95-7.

represents an attempt to break theological discussion out of what he sees is the stupor of taqlīd and senseless speculation (khawḍ), returning it to the ways of the Salaf. He declares that blind imitation has always been mankind's pitfall, but further lambastes decadent Muslim scholars for their laziness, divisiveness, and obsequiousness. He accuses participants in speculative theology of constructing straw-man arguments for their opponents and then failing to reevaluate such useless assertions. Furthermore, if a ḥadīth or Qur'ānic verse contradicts these scholars' stance or school of thought, they try to interpret it away even if the interpretation is impossible in that context.[51]

Al-Ṣan'ānī studied in Mecca and Medina with Sālim b. 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī and others, then returned to Ṣan'ā' to serve as the preacher in the city's main mosque. He frequently provoked the ire of Zaydī scholars and the community's leaders, however, with his preoccupation with studying and teaching the "classic (ummahāt)" Sunni ḥadīth books. More seriously, he broke with the rest of the community in his insistence on following ḥadīths instead of the Zaydī school in matters of ritual. Like al-Bukhārī before him and later the ahl-e ḥadīth in India, he insisted on raising his hands in prayer and holding them by his chest instead of by his side like other Shiites.[52] Al-Shawkānī, al-Ṣan'ānī's principal biographer, held him in great personal admiration and saw him as an ideal Salafi ḥadīth scholar unafraid of breaking with social convention. He described al-

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[51] Al-Ṣan'ānī, Kitāb īqāẓ al-fikra li-murāja'at al-fiṭra, 48-50.

[52] Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī, al-Badr al-ṭāli' bi-maḥāsin man ba'd al-qarn al-sābi', ed. Khalīl Manṣūr, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1418/1998), 2:53-5; Metcalf, Islamic Revival in British India, 275.

Ṣanʿānī as one who "fled from *taqlīd* and the spuriousness of those opinions of the jurists that lacked any proof."[53]

Indeed, al-Ṣanʿānī stands out as one of the most fearlessly iconoclastic ḥadīth scholars in Islamic history. Five centuries after Sunni consensus had solidified on the complex question of defining the uprightness (*ʿadāla*) of a ḥadīth transmitter in the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Ṣanʿānī proposed a total reconsideration. Whereas Sunni ḥadīth scholars had accepted Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's definition that an upstanding transmitter be "an adult Muslim of sound mind, free of the paths of sin and defects in honor (*murū'a*)," al-Ṣanʿānī's *Thamarāt al-naẓar fī ʿilm al-athar* (The Fruits of Reasoning in the Science of Traditions, written 1758) argues that this elaborate definition is pointless. Rather, *ʿadāla* is simply the state of "the likelihood of truthfulness (*maẓannat al-ṣidq*)." The existing standards of uprightness, al-Ṣanʿānī continues, are too lofty for the material they supposedly govern. *Muḥaddith*s, like scholars in the other Islamic sciences, had become distracted in setting up principles (*uṣūl*) that do not hold up in actual application (*furūʿ*).[54]

Al-Ṣanʿānī's iconoclasm, however, appears most clearly in his treatment of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works. Although he greatly respected the two masters, this maverick rejected almost every feature of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture as constructed by al-Khaṭīb, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar. He states quite simply that "we respect the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, but do not give them more station than they deserve."[55]

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[53] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ*, 2:53.

[54] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Thamarāt al-naẓar*, 125.

[55] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Thamarāt al-naẓar*, 137.

Most dramatically, he rejects the claim of the umma's consensus on the two

books. Although al-Nawawī had earlier refused the notion that this consensus meant that

the contents of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* yielded epistemological certainty, he never questioned that

ijmā' on the books' authenticity had in fact occurred. Al-Ṣan'ānī, on the other hand,

refutes this, citing the improbability of all the Muslim scholars agreeing on the

authenticity of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's ḥadīths. Are we also to assume, he asks, that

everyone who had in fact approved the two books was truly familiar with their contents?

Even before the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were written, he concludes, such practical difficulties in

evaluating consensus had led Ibn Ḥanbal to pronounce that anyone who claimed *ijmā'*

had occurred on an issue was a liar.[56] The main ḥadīth providing justification for the

infallibility of the umma's consensus, he continues, would not even apply to the

intricacies of ḥadīth criticism. The Prophet had stated that his community would not

agree on "going astray (*ḍalāla*)," while a minor flaw in a narration can hardly merit such

a title. The umma is immune to error writ large, not small oversights (*khaṭa'*) such as

making a mistake in evaluating the *isnād* of an *āḥād* ḥadīth.[57]

Al-Ṣan'ānī also attacked the canonical ranking of al-Bukhārī above Muslim. He

argued that the feature that had most clearly distinguished al-Bukhārī above Muslim, his

requirement for at least one meeting between transmitters in narrations via

"from/according to (*'an*)," had little practical value and provided no real guarantee of

direct transmission. How could a transmitter who may have narrated hundreds of ḥadīths

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[56] Al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:93.

[57] Al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:94.

from a particular teacher hear all these reports in one sitting? Considering this, what use

is al-Bukhārī's requirement for one meeting in guaranteeing the direct transmission of all

the ḥadīths passed through this link? There still remains the possibility of a break in the

isnād (irsāl).[58] Just as al-Ṣanʿānī deflates al-Bukhārī's requirement, he gives a more

positive evaluation of Muslim's. Muslim's requirement for contemporaneity in ʿan

transmissions was not a naïve assumption that two people who lived at the same time had

heard their ḥadīths from one another; Muslim simply required the high probability that

the two had met for direct transmission. In reality, this was the same level of assurance

provided by al-Bukhārī's theoretically more rigorous conditions.[59]

Al-Ṣanʿānī also rejects attempts to disarm the opinions of scholars who had

favored Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ over al-Bukhārī's. Unlike the standard line that "some" scholars

from the Maghrib had preferred Muslim's collection, he feels that a large number of

prominent ḥadīth experts had in fact favored Muslim. Furthermore, they did so for

reasons more significant than Muslim's exclusion of incomplete legal-commentary

reports (taʿlīqāt) and his convenient grouping of all the narrations of a tradition in one

place. Al-Ṣanʿānī claims that he saw in the writings of al-Nawawī, Ibn Jamāʿa and Tāj al-

Dīn al-Tabrīzī indications that these scholars felt Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim was more authentic than

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. He also rejects Ibn Ḥajar's attempts to explain away Abū ʿAlī al-

Naysābūrī's proclamation that Muslim's work was the most authentic book available.[60]

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[58] Al-Ṣanʿānī, Tawḍīḥ al-afkār, 1:302-3.

[59] Al-Ṣanʿānī, Tawḍīḥ al-afkār, 1:47-8.

[60] Al-Ṣanʿānī, Tawḍīḥ al-afkār, 1:50-1.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī's demands for charity on the issues of *tadlīs* and the criticism of transmitters did not convince al-Ṣanʿānī. He reminds us that many of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's transmitters were criticized with good reason and clear explanations.[61] In response to al-Nawawī's claim that instances of a *mudallis*'s transmitting through *ʿan* in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* should be treated as direct transmission, al-Ṣanʿānī cites Ibn Daqīq and Ibn al-Muraḥḥal's skeptical objections.[62] He comments that "this is a claim, but where is the proof?" Here he even breaks with Ibn al-Wazīr, who had acceded to the notion that al-Bukhārī and Muslim would not have included a *mudallis*'s narration via *ʿan* unless they knew it occurred through another reliable *isnād*. Again, al-Ṣanʿānī objects that there is no proof for such a claim.[63]

VIII.5. Shāh Walī Allāh and the First Condemnation of Criticizing the Canon

Like Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and al-Ṣanʿānī, the great Indian scholar Shāh Walī Allāh voyaged as a young man to the Ḥijāzī crucible of reformist ḥadīth scholarship and returned to his native Delhi with a heightened appreciation for the authority of the ḥadīth tradition. In terms of fluency with the labyrinth of Islamic sciences, however, he proved far more advanced than the stark ḥadīth-based Ḥanbalism of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. Even al-Ṣanʿānī, who grasped and engaged the Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilite traditions of dialectical

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[61] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:99.

[62] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:320 ff.

[63] Al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār*, 1:323; cf. Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, 144.

theology, did not match Shāh Walī Allāh's innovative mixture of ḥadīth scholarship,

reformed Sufism, social and political activism, and even Neo-Platonism.

Unlike Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's and al-Ṣanʿānī's preoccupation with matters of

creed and ritual observation, Shāh Walī Allāh's career tackled the troubling political

realities of India in his time. The sudden failure of Moghul imperial power after the

death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 marked the end of unified and effective Moghul

rule in the subcontinent. Shāh Walī Allāh was eyewitness to the terrible destruction

wrought on the unprotected Moghul realm in the wake of the empire's decay. In 1739,

the Afghan conqueror Nādir Shāh sacked Delhi and caused tremendous bloodshed.

Combined with a series of disastrous Afghan invasions in 1748, 1757 and 1760, these

events traumatized the psyches of men like Shāh Walī Allāh.[64] For scholars, it

represented the fragmentation of Islamic society in India. As Ahmad Dallal writes,

"Disunity is a central theme that occupied [Shāh Walī Allāh] throughout his life."[65]

In his role as a scholar, teacher, and social activist and in his relations with local

Indian rulers, Shāh Walī Allāh sought to regain a lost unity. He believed that political

power was an essential component of a rejuvenated Islamic civilization in India. In the

wake of the Moghul failure, he wrote to several leaders such as the Niẓām of Hyderabad

asking them to take on the role of Islam's patron and leader in the subcontinent.[66] This

desire to protect communal cohesion resulted in an attitude towards religious

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[64] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 25.

[65] Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought," 343; Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3:148.

[66] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 35.

disagreement and popular practices that was more pluralistic than those of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, al-Ṣanʿānī or the founder of the West African Sokoto Caliphate, Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817). Unlike the Wahhābīs, he proved very conservative about excommunication, limiting it to cases for which the Qur'ān or ḥadīth provided direct evidence and not extending it to acts of associationism (*shirk*) such as prostrating to trees. He allowed people to visit tombs for mourning and to seek the intercession of pious people provided one did not glorify them.[67]

Shāh Walī Allāh agreed with the other reformists that excessive loyalty to the *madhhab*s had seriously hobbled the Islamic intellectual tradition and led it away from the Prophet's true message. Yet he also recognized the tremendous utility of these institutions. He personally treated all four Sunni *madhhab*s equally, and urged scholars to use them eclectically as reservoirs of expert opinions. The ultimate determinant in selecting which school's ruling to take, however, was the direct sayings of the Prophet. Since all the schools of law had theoretically derived their authoritative rulings from the Prophet's sunna, the ḥadīths retained an inherent and constant superiority to these bodies of substantive law. Each generation of scholars should thus consult them anew.[68] For the masses of Sunni Muslims, however, following one of the four established *madhhab*s was essential. In India, they should adhere to the rulings of their traditional Ḥanafī school.[69]

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[67] Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought," 346.

[68] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 37; Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought," 347-8.

[69] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 39; Peters, "Idjtihād and Taqlīd in 18th and 19th Century Islam," 143; Marcia K. Hermansen, trans., *The Conclusive Argument from God* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2003), xxx.

Shāh Walī Allāh's commitment to communal cohesion governed his attitude towards the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon. Despite the reformist tendencies he shared with his fellow student in the Ḥijāz, al-Ṣanʿānī, Shāh Walī Allāh was no harsh iconoclast. He staunchly defended the canon. Like the schools of law, they provided indispensable institutions for the preservation of unity in Islamic thought. He states at the beginning of his discussion of ḥadīth in his *magnum opus*, the *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha* (God's Conclusive Argument), "Know that there is no path for us to know the precepts of the Sharia or its rulings except though the reports of the Prophet (ṣ)...." Reliable books of ḥadīth, foremost the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, are essential for this, since "there does not exist today any non-written, reliable transmission (*riwāya... ghayr mudawwana*) [back to the Prophet]."[70] He then lists the various levels of ḥadīth collections, beginning with the top level of the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* and the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Alluding to a Qurʾānic verse (Qurʾān 4:115) used to emphasize the importance of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) since the time of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819-20), he states:

> As for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the ḥadīth scholars have come to a consensus that everything in them with an *isnād* back to the Prophet is absolutely authentic, that [the two books] are attested by massive transmission back to their authors, and that anyone who detracts from their standing is a heretic (*mubtadiʿ*) not following the path of the believers.[71]

This represents the first moratorium on criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Although Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar had all rallied to al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's defense, they had never condemned criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as

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[70] Shāh Walī Allāh. *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1:132-3.

[71] Shāh Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1:134. For a discussion of the use of this verse as a proof text for *ijmāʿ*, see Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, [1964]), 469 ff.

inherently unacceptable. Even after the consolidation of the canonical culture in the seventh/ thirteenth century, no one attacked the critiques of Ibn Taymiyya or the virulent criticisms of Ibn Abī al-Wafā' as violations of the canonical orthodoxy. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī had struggled to protect the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* because the books had become crucial institutions in Sunni scholarly culture. Yet in the relative stability of Mamluk Cairo, attacks by critics like Ibn Abī al-Wafā' held little consequence for the sturdy and blossoming Sunni religious culture of the period.

For Shāh Walī Allāh, the stakes had become much higher indeed. Although we do not know exactly to whom he directed his warning about criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, only a merchantman's ride away across the Indian Ocean in Yemen his contemporary al-Ṣanʿānī was flagrantly dismissing the canonical culture that had been constructed to protect the institution of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Although Shāh Walī Allāh was a ḥadīth-oriented reformist who sought to limit the divisive effects of the *madhhab*s, he appreciated the roles of such institutions in maintaining social, intellectual and political order in a beleaguered umma. It is not difficult to imagine that he had come across the iconoclastic thought of the young Ṣanʿānī while in the Ḥijāz, perhaps in the classes of their common teacher Abū Ṭāhir b. Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī (d. 1732-3), and later sensed the danger it posed for his reformist agenda. While we can hardly contend that Shāh Walī Allāh's harsh condemnation of criticizing al-Bukhārī and Muslim was an actual response to al-Ṣanʿānī's writings, it might as well have been. What al-Ṣanʿānī reviled as "the heresy of madhhabism," and the baseless premises of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture, Shāh Walī Allāh saw as essential institutions for the Islamic revival.

VIII.6. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī: Iconoclast Extraordinaire

Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī was born in 1914 in Shkodër, Albania, to a

family of staunchly Ḥanafī scholars. When he was nine years old, however, his family

emigrated to Syria. There the young Albānī followed in his father's footsteps and studied

Ḥanafī jurisprudence with other Albanian students in Damascus. As a young man, he

entered a bookstore near the Umayyad Mosque one day and found a copy of Jamāl al-Dīn

al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh's reformist journal *al-Manār*. An article written by

Rashīd Riḍā in particular struck al-Albānī. Riḍā was criticizing the great champion of

classical Sufism, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, for his Sufi teachings and his use of unreliable

ḥadīths to justify them. Al-Albānī also found the ḥadīth scholar Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī's

(d. 806/1404) book detailing those weak ḥadīths that al-Ghazālī had included in his

classic *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences).[72] These works sowed the

seeds of mistrust in al-Albānī's heart for Sufism and weak ḥadīths; for him they were

loopholes through which 'inauthentic' practices could enter Islam. Attracted by *al-*

Manār's call for the purified, Arab Islam of the Prophet's time, he began studying the

ḥadīth sciences independently.

Like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb before him, al-Albānī turned against

the practices of popular Sufism and the strict adherence to one school of law in the face

of contradicting ḥadīths. He read through all of Ibn 'Asākir's mammoth *Tārīkh madīnat*

Dimashq and, discovering that the Umayyad Mosque had formerly been the Church of St.

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[72] Al-Albānī, "*Tarjamat al-shaykh al-Albānī – Nash'at al-Shaykh fī Dimashq*," lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

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John built on his tomb, refused to pray there.[73] Like other Salafīs, al-Albānī considered incorporating graves into worship *bidʿa*.[74] These non-conformist ways eventually angered al-Albānī's father, who told him he needed to choose between "disbelief and monotheism (*al-kufr wa al-tawḥīd*)." Al-Albānī replied that equally he must choose between "the sunna [of the Prophet] and *taqlīd*." Cast out penniless by his father, al-Albānī became a watch repairer and began spending long hours in the Ẓāhiriyya Library in Damascus (founded by Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī) poring over ḥadīth manuscripts.[75]

Al-Albānī devoted himself to ḥadīth scholarship in the Salafī idiom. He undertook what became an extensive project that he would later dub "bringing the sunna within reach of the umma (*taqrīb al-sunna bayn yaday al-umma*)," the principal aim of which was to remove what he deemed weak ḥadīths from important classical Islamic texts. It was the deleterious effects of these weak ḥadīths that had allowed the Muslim community to stray so far from the authentic legacy of the Prophet. This Salafī philosophy is best glimpsed in al-Albānī's massive, thirteen-volume work identifying weak ḥadīths entitled *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa wa al-mawḍūʿa wa taʾthīrihā al-sayyiʾ fī al-umma* (The Series of Weak and Forged Ḥadīths and Their Negative Effect on the Umma). He also composed books identifying the weak ḥadīths found in famous works such as al-Mundhirī's (d. 656/1258) *al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, al-Bukhārī's *al-Adab al-*

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[73] Al-Albānī, "*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – 2*," lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

[74] ʿAlī, *Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī*, 23.

[75] Al-Albānī compares his breaking with his father's legal school with Abraham's leaving his father's idolatrous ways; see al-Albānī, "*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – 2*."

mufrad and finally the famous Four *Sunan*s of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī and Ibn Mājah.[76]

Al-Albānī combined such focused ḥadīth scholarship with intensive scholarly activism. Through his books and preaching, he sought to reform the community around him by calling them to heed the Qurʾān and the Prophet's sunna above all things. He traveled from city to city, speaking and writing in his attack on what he called "corrupting morals, illegitimate forms of worship and false beliefs."[77] He called on the predominantly Ḥanafī scholars around him to ensure that their school's rulings accorded with the sunna of the Prophet as expressed in the ḥadīth corpus. A *muftī* might advocate his school's position on a question, but he should always provide direct evidence from the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth before doing so.[78] His books attacked innovative religious practices (*bidʿa*) and sought to eradicate them from social institutions such as funerals, wedding ceremonies, and the annual pilgrimage. His criticisms extended to state interference in religious affairs, for he rejected the Syrian government's support for the Ḥanafī legal code as embodied in the Ottoman *Majelle* as well as the position of scholars who allowed interest for the sake of facilitating modern finance.[79] Eventually he was

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[76] See al-Albānī, *Ḍaʿīf Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1408/1988); idem, *Ḍaʿīf Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1991); idem, *Ḍaʿīf Sunan al-Nasāʾī* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1990); idem, *Ḍaʿīf al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1421/2000); idem, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2000).

[77] "*akhlāq fāsida, ʿibādāt mubtadiʿa wa ʿaqīdāt bāṭila...*," Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, "*Silsilat asʾilat Abī Isḥāq al-Ḥuwaynī liʾl-shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī*," lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 2/13/2002.

[78] Al-Albānī, "*al-Taqlīd*," two-part lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 2/12/2002.

[79] Al-Albānī, "*al-Taqlīd*," and "*Silsilat asʾilat Abī Isḥāq al-Ḥuwaynī*."

imprisoned in Syria, where he wrote a major work on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and was forced

to emigrate to Jordan in 1980.

Al-Albānī, like Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Shāh Walī Allāh, telescoped the

normative dimension of time in Islamic religious history. He rejected the atavistic logic

of the Islamic intellectual tradition and considered himself qualified to review the work

of the classical scholars of Islam.[80] Al-Albānī was not calling for intellectual anarchy or

the neglect of scholars; like all Muslim scholars, he clearly identified a certain group

known as "the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*)" to whom everyday Muslims should

turn for religious expertise. Nor was he rejecting the work of classical Muslim scholars;

indeed al-Albānī relied entirely on earlier criticisms of ḥadīths and their transmitters in

his reevaluation of the contents of famous works. Although he considered himself

qualified enough to reexamine classical texts, he could not recreate the intimate access

that classical scholars had to the minutiae of ḥadīth criticism. Al-Albānī's books, such as

the *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa*, thus apply the opinions of classical ḥadīth masters and

later critics such as Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ to texts. They are thus replete with citations from

the whole range of Sunni authorities, including al-Shāfiʿī, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Ḥazm.[81]

This telescoped vision of religious history centered on the study of ḥadīth as a

continuous and living tradition in a constant state of reevaluation. When asked about his

controversial criticism of a famous ḥadīth transmitter from the early Islamic period, al-

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[80] See al-Albānī, *Fatāwā al-shaykh al-Albānī*, ed. ʿAkāsha ʿAbd al-Mannān al-Ṭayyibī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1414/1994), 162. Here the author states that one scholar's position cannot be taken over another's simply because he lived earlier.

[81] See, for example, al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa wa al-mawḍūʿa*, 13 vols, (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1422/2002), 1:141, where he draws from Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*.

Albānī replied that the science of ḥadīth criticism "is not simply consigned to books (*masṭūr fī al-kutub*),"[82] it is a dynamic process of critical review. Al-Albānī explained that one of the principles of Islamic scholarship is that "religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) cannot fall into rigidity (*lā yaqbalu al-jumūd*)."[83] It is thus not surprising that al-Albānī and his students are the first Muslim scholars in centuries to produce massive collections evaluating Prophetic traditions.

Al-Albānī's career has certainly been one of the most controversial in modern Islamic intellectual history. In both his legal rulings and ḥadīth evaluations, al-Albānī broke with the communal consensus of the *madhhab* traditions. Like Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, he was thus attacked for breaking with the infallible *ijmāʿ* of the umma.[84] Although he drew almost entirely on the work of classical scholars, his reevaluation of ḥadīths long considered sound or relied on by elements of the Muslim community provoked controversy. *Madhhab* Traditionalists recoiled at his influential and barbed criticisms of the traditional schools of jurisprudence, broad rejection of Sufism and controversial legal rulings. His prohibition on women wearing gold bracelets, otherwise considered a female prerogative, angered traditionalists, while his statement that women need not cover their faces drew the ire of conservatives who might otherwise embrace his

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[82] Al-Albānī, "*Silsilat as'ilat Abī Isḥāq al-Ḥuwaynī li 'l-shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī.*"

[83] Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 1:4.

[84] For this criticism of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, see Samer Traboulsi, "An Early Refutation of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's Reformist Views," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 393.

fundamentalist calling.[85] According to even his own students, al-Albānī's personality

could be caustic.

A plethora of books have thus appeared attacking al-Albānī and refuting his

positions, most of them from the pens of *Madhhab* Traditionalists. The Jordanian Ash'arī

theologian, Ḥasan b. 'Alī Saqqāf, for example, composed a book entitled *Qāmūs shatā'im*

al-Albānī (Dictionary of al-Albānī's Slanderings). Other scholars have more specifically

criticized al-Albānī's rulings on the authenticity of ḥadīths in his *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-*

ḍaʿīfa, his *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*, and his listing of weak reports from the Four

Sunans.[86]

Al-Albānī's sometimes autodidactic education was a further affront to many

Muslim scholars, who absolutely required a student to read texts at the hands of a scholar

trained within an interpretive school and to eventually receive license (*ijāza*) for his

understanding of that book. In the same way that Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1356) had

accused Ibn Taymiyya of not learning the proper interpretation of classical texts from

qualified transmitters, so have many scholars attributed al-Albānī's unacceptable

positions to his lack of *ijāzas*.[87]

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[85] Al-Albānī, *Fatāwā*, 593 ff.

[86] For example, see Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Idilbī, *Kashf al-maʿlūl mimmā summiya bi-Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa* (Amman: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1421/2001); Maḥmūd Saʿīd Mamdūḥ, *al-Taʿrīf bi-awhām man qassama al-sunan ilā ṣaḥīḥ wa ḍaʿīf*, 6 vols. (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth li'l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa Iḥyā' al-Turāth, · 1421/2000); Ḥasan b. 'Alī Saqqāf, *Qāmūs shatā'im al-Albānī* (Amman: Dār al-Imām al-Nawawī, 1993).

[87] Al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl*, 63. Muḥammad Abū Zahra has convincingly argued against this accusation leveled at Ibn Taymiyya. See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 111 ff., 118.

VIII.7. Against the Canon: Al-Albānī's Criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and His Detractors

Al-Albānī used the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon for the same dialectical purposes as generations of Muslim scholars before him: they provided him a trump card in debates over the authenticity of ḥadīths. He acknowledged the rhetorical power of the two books, saying that "it has become like a general convention (*ʿurf*^{an} *ʿāmm*^{an})" among Sunni scholars that anything included in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is without a doubt authentic.[88] When asked about several pro-Shiite ḥadīths asserting ʿAlī's rightful place as the Prophet's successor, al-Albānī replied that if someone really believes these reports, he should "lay out the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* before him" and find the ḥadīths in one of them as proof.[89]

Yet like the Damascene firebrand Ibn Taymiyya, al-Albānī openly undermined any iconic status for the two works beyond their convenience as authoritative references in debate. He rejected the practice of some less thorough jurists who, like al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, would manipulate the legitimizing power of the "standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" by claiming that a ḥadīth met these criteria simply if the transmitters in its *isnād* were found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[90] As his Egyptian student Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥuwaynī explained, jurists cannot simply look up the narrators found in an *isnād* in a dictionary of transmitter criticism and declare the ḥadīth authentic if none of them have been impugned. The

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[88] Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya* (Amman: al-Dār al-Islāmī, 1419/1998), 22.

[89] Al-Albānī, "*al-Taqlīd*."

[90] Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 1:70.

science of ḥadīth evaluation requires that one explore any corroborating or contrasting narrations of the ḥadīth to determine its reliability.[91]

In March 1969, al-Albānī published an edition of ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Mundhirī's *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* as part of his efforts to provide the Muslim community with accessible versions of classical ḥadīth works expunged of all weak material. His extreme respect for al-Bukhārī and Muslim is evident, for he adds, "That is with the exception of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, due to the scholars' approval of these collections and their being free of weak or uncorroborated reports (*al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa wa al-munkara*)...."[92] This statement, however, clearly did not accurately represent the author's stance on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Drawing on well-known earlier criticisms, such as the problem of Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī's *tadlīs*, al-Albānī notes in brief footnotes that about two dozen narrations in Muslim's collection contained flaws due to vagaries in their chains of transmission.[93] As al-Albānī's conflict with the *Madhhab* Traditionalists developed, he also criticized, in his lectures and writings throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s, ḥadīths from al-Bukhārī's collection for *isnād* and content reasons, such as the report of the Prophet marrying Maymūna while in a state of pilgrimage.[94]

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[91] Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥuwaynī, "*Shurūṭ al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*," lecture from www.islamway.com last accessed 2/03/2004.

[92] ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1416/1996), 23.

[93] See, for examples, al-Albānī, ed., *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; 49 (#153 for the Jābir → Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī flaw), 121 (#'s 446 and 448, which al-Albānī deems "weak"), 210 (#831, criticized for a lackluster transmitter, ʿUmar b. Ḥamza), 343 (#1293, again for ʿUmar b. Ḥamza), 272 (#1039 for Literal *Matn* Addition).

[94] Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 23.

Al-Albānī's empty homage to the consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and his use of the

two books as measures of authenticity in polemics despite his many criticisms mirror the

rhetorical duplicity with which the canon was employed in the classical period. Al-

Albānī's reliance on well-established criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* does, however, clarify

the seeming contradiction between such critiques and his condemnation of "Westernized"

Modernist scholars who reject ḥadīths that "the umma has accepted with consensus": he

did not feel that he himself was actually criticizing any of al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's

ḥadīths.[95] Rather, he was simply noting existing critiques made by the historical giants of

ḥadīth scholarship. As he stated in defense of his noting a flaw in one of al-Bukhārī's

isnāds earlier critiqued by al-Dhahabī, "I am not the innovator (*mubtadi*ʾ) of this

criticism...."[96]

Nonetheless, the outcry from the *Madhhab* Traditionalists over al-Albānī's

perceived attack on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* was ferocious. In the early 1970s, the Syrian Ḥanafī

ḥadīth scholar ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (d. 1997) published a tract against al-Albānī's

reevaluation of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. In 1987 the Egyptian ḥadīth scholar Maḥmūd Saʿīd

Mamdūḥ published a work entitled *Tanbīh al-muslim ilā taʿaddī al-Albānī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ

Muslim* (Alerting the Muslim to al-Albānī's Transgression upon *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*).[97] The

Lebanese scholar and staunch defender of the traditional Islamic schools of law, Gibril

Fouad Haddad, has dubbed al-Albānī "the chief innovator of our time" and accused him

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[95] Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1422/2002), 2:8-9.

[96] Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 37.

[97] Maḥmūd Saʿīd Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim ilā taʿaddī al-Albānī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* ([Cairo]: [n.p.], 1408/1987).

of *bid'a* for publishing "'corrected' editions of the two *Sahihs* of al-Bukhari and Muslim... in violation of the integrity of these motherbooks."[98]

The works of two of al-Albānī's critics are particularly instructive in examining the dynamic between the canon and criticism. The most persistent detractor of al-Albānī's hadīth scholarship has been Maḥmūd Saʿīd Mamdūḥ, who studied with two of the scholar's bitterest adversaries, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda and the Moroccan Sufi ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī (d. 1993). Mamdūḥ has written at least four rebuttals of al-Albānī's work on different subjects, but al-Albānī's impudence in criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* has proven the lodestone for Mamdūḥ's attacks.[99] The most incisive and comprehensive defense of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, which perforce addresses al-Albānī's criticisms, is the monumental *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (The Place of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*) of the Medinan scholar Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir.

For *Madhhab* Traditionalists, al-Albānī's criticism poses two main challenges. First, it threatens the important role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in scholarly culture. Second, it undermines the institutions of consensus, scholarly hierarchy and the vision of history on which the canon rests. At the root of the Traditionalists' refutations of al-Albānī's scholarship in general is his willingness to question the established practices and presuppositions of the Sunni scholarly tradition. Rejecting al-Albānī's condemnation of using weak ḥadīths in Islamic law and ritual, Mamdūḥ declares:

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[98] See www.sunnah.org/history/Innovators/al_albani.htm, last accessed 5/31/04.

[99] An additional example of Mamdūḥ's rebuttals of al-Albānī is his *Wuṣūl al-tahānī bi-ithbāt sunniyyat al-sibḥa wa al-radd ʿalā al-Albānī*. For a tangential discussion of al-Albānī's inappropriate criticism of al-Bukhārī, see Mamdūḥ, *al-Naqd al-ṣaḥīḥ li-mā uʿturiḍa ʿalayhi min aḥādīth al-Maṣābīḥ*, 16-7 (see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ* #'s 843 and 6329).

Indeed, I have concluded that his methods disagree with those of the jurists and ḥadīth scholars, and that he is creating (*yuḥdithu*) great disarray and evident disruption in the proofs of jurisprudence both generally and specifically. He lacks trust in the *imāms* of law and ḥadīth, as well as in the rich ḥadīth and law tradition handed down to us, in which the umma has taken great pride.[100]

In contrast, Mullā Khāṭir reiterates the predominant non-Salafī view of Islamic religious history, in which later generations are only worthy of imitating the great scholars of yore. "Al-Bukhārī is a *mujtahid*," he explains, "and contemporary people are imitators (*muqallid*), walking according to his principles and constraints, as well as those of others like him from among the people of knowledge."[101] In his rebuttal of al-Albānī's removing weak ḥadīths from the Four *Sunans*, Mamdūḥ derides him for assuming that in the bygone ages Islam had been in error but that now, when the umma has devolved into the terminal and pervasive ignorance of endtime, he could return the community to the straight path. "As if the umma," he mocks, "was in error in the ages of light...!"[102] Concerning al-Albānī's removal of weak ḥadīths from al-Bukhārī's work *al-Adab al-mufrad*, Mamdūḥ asks rhetorically, "I wonder, was al-Bukhārī, God bless him, unable to select the ḥadīths of *al-Adab al-mufrad* as he did with his *Ṣaḥīḥ*?"[103] Mullā Khāṭir, who is too polite to name al-Albānī specifically, merely talks of an "upstart at the end of time

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[100] Mamdūḥ, *al-Taʿrīf bi-awhām*, 1:14.

[101] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 494.

[102] Mamdūḥ, *al-Taʿrīf bi-awhām*, 1:11. This rebuttal duplicates early rebuttals of Wahhābism, such as that of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Shāfiʿī al-Azharī al-Ṭandatāwī's rebuttal of Ibn abd al-Wahhāb. See Traboulsi, "An Early Refutation of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's Reformist Views," 395.

[103] Mamdūḥ, *al-Taʿrīf bi-awhām*, 1:31.

(*ghirr fī ākhir al-zamān*)" who impudently challenges the umma's consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s absolute authenticity.[104]

The practical manifestation of the authority of tradition in Sunni scholarship is the notion of consensus, which transforms received opinion among scholars into a direct manifestation of God's authority as deposited in His chosen umma. One of the primary faults that *Madhhab* Traditionalists find in al-Albānī's criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is thus his rejection of the consensus declared on the two works' authenticity. Mamdūḥ states unequivocally in his *Tanbīh* that al-Albānī's deigning to "examine critically (*al-naẓar fī*)" the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* constitutes an affront to the umma's acceptance of the two works and attacks the *ijmāʿ* that ḥadīth scholars since the early 400/1000s have declared on the two works. Even considering the possibility that some of the *isnāds* in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* contain flaws is to doubt the defining characteristic of the two books: all the material they contain is *ṣaḥīḥ* by very dint of its inclusion.[105] The absolving power of *ijmāʿ* provides the answers to any criticisms al-Albānī might raise about the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, such as the question of *tadlīs* in the two works. Invoking the charitable declarations made by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, Mamdūḥ explains, "The rules of ḥadīth have determined that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were correct, and the umma has agreed on this."[106] He adds that al-Albānī "throws out the *ijmāʿ* of the umma and the craft of its ḥadīth masters, entering into a matter settled long ago and whose authenticity was agreed on centuries ago."[107]

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[104] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 127.

[105] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 13-14.

[106] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*; 24, 53.

[107] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 7.

Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's canonical function as the exemplum of excellence in

ḥadīth scholarship also serves as an exhibit in the canon's defense. Their work defines

the rules of ḥadīth scholarship, so who is al-Albānī to question their judgment? Mullā

Khāṭir states:

> Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, may God bless them, they are the *imāms* of this
> science, the stallions of its arena, without peer in their time, the heroes of
> their age, in mastery, criticism, research, examination and in encompassing
> knowledge... there can be no objection to the *Shaykhayn*.[108]

In addition to breaking with consensus, critics of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus face the

impossible task of superseding their ultimate expertise in ḥadīth.[109] Mullā Khāṭir

correctly adds that nowadays ḥadīth scholars cannot access all the material that al-

Bukhārī and Muslim had at their disposal but has since vanished.[110] How can al-Albānī

thus dare to correct these vaunted masters?

Like Shāh Walī Allāh's defense of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, Mamdūḥ and Mullā

Khāṭir also reject al-Albānī's criticisms because they threaten the canon's well-

established utility. Mullā Khāṭir notes that one of the properties of the two works is that

one can act on their ḥadīths without any need to prove their authenticity.[111] Perhaps his

greatest objection to al-Albānī's scholarship is the very notion of "correcting the

Ṣaḥīḥayn (*taṣḥīḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*)*," to which Mullā Khāṭir devotes an entire chapter in his

book. For him the very notion of qualifying the phrase "al-Bukhārī/Muslim included it"

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[108] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 246, 256.

[109] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 318.

[110] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 488.

[111] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 80.

with the comment "and it is authentic" represents unmitigated effrontery to the purpose

of the canon.[112] Mamdūḥ seconds this concern for any threat to the role of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

as authoritative references. "You see the ḥadīth masters (*ḥuffāẓ*)," he states, "if they cite

a ḥadīth from one of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, that was sufficient to rule that the ḥadīth was

authentic, so you do not see them researching the *isnād*s."[113]

Al-Albānī's criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* also manifests the Salafī threat to the

principles of following an established *madhhab* (*taqlīd*) and the hierarchy of scholars so

valuated among *Madhhab* Traditionalists. Mamdūḥ asserts that al-Albānī's criticizing

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* invites further criticism of the two works and is a call for unconstrained

independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) instead of the proper reliance on qualified scholars

(*taqlīd*). Criticizing these established institutions of Islamic scholarship "opens a door

we cannot easily shut."[114] Furthermore, it represents a challenge to the hermeneutic

hierarchy of the *madhhab*s and their system of authorized interpretation of texts.

Mamdūḥ states that al-Albānī's statements contain "great dangers" since he has given "to

any claimant the right to judge the ḥadīths of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* by what he sees as within the

bounds of the scientific principles of ḥadīth."[115] Mullā Khāṭir's final evaluation of

correcting the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is thus that criticizing "what the umma has agreed on is pure

[112] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 474-6.

[113] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 7.

[114] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 13-14.

[115] Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 24.

calumny and misguidance, the greatest of losses (*al-khusrān al-mubīn*) and the fatal blow

(*qāṣimat al-ẓahr*)."[116]

VIII.8. Conclusion: Al-Albānī's Reply and the Continuity of Iconoclastic Ḥadīth Criticism

Al-Albānī replied to his critics with defiance. He responded to Mamdūḥ's

condemnation of his reevaluation of some of Muslim's narrations by exclaiming, "As if,

by Muslim's inclusion of these ḥadīths, they acquired some immunity (*him^(an)*) from

criticism. That is without a doubt a mistake."[117] In the last edition of his *Mukhtaṣar*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, al-Albānī states:

> It is essential that I put forth a word of truth for the sake of scholarly
> integrity (*li'l-amāna al-ʿilmiyya*) and exoneration from blame (*tabri'a li'l-
> dhamma*, sic): a scholar must admit an intellectual truth expressed by Imām
> al-Shāfiʿī in a narration attributed to him: God has forbidden that any except
> His Book attain completion (*abā Allah an yatimma illā kitābuhu*).[118]

After describing a problematic ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī's collection, he adds that this is but

one of dozens of examples that demonstrate the ignorance "of those impudent ones who

chauvinistically acclaim al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, as well as that of Muslim, with blind loyalty

and say with complete certainty that everything included in those two books is

authentic."[119]

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[116] Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 488.

[117] Al-Albānī, ed., *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 17. Here al-Albānī seems to be directly quoting the seventh/thirteenth-century scholar of Marrakesh, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī (d. 628/1231) in his massive ḥadīth work *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īhām*. See Ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī, *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īhām*, 4:298.

[118] Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 23; idem, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:5-6.

[119] Al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1416/1996), 6:2:93.

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Here we see al-Albānī repeating essentially the same quote cited by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī nine centuries earlier as he defended his right to criticize al-Bukhārī's identification of transmitters (although al-Khaṭīb cites al-Shāfiʿī's student al-Muzanī as the source). Both deny that any book other than the Qur'ān can be free from error or attain immunity from criticism. Al-Khaṭīb played a crucial role in constructing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s canonical culture, but he reserved the scholar's right to correct his predecessors. No work can achieve an impervious iconic status, for scholars always reserve the right to scrutinize it critically. Al-Albānī thus explains that "*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, despite its glory and the scholars' acceptance of it..., has not been totally free of criticism from some scholars."[120] Responding to the attacks of the Ḥanafī Abū Ghudda, al-Albānī correctly points out that the Ḥanafī school has a long and persistent history of criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*.[121]

Al-Albānī clarifies that his intention is not to reduce the utility of ḥadīth collections or question the authority of Prophetic reports. He is merely noting existing criticisms of ḥadīths found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* for the benefit of the reader. Many such criticisms pertain only to one narration of the ḥadīth and not to the Prophetic tradition itself.[122] In fact, he says that by showing that some ḥadīths criticized in works like Ibn Mājah's *Sunan* actually have authentic and reliable versions, he "has saved hundreds of ḥadīths from the weakness that some of their *isnāds* entail."[123]

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[120] Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:7.

[121] Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 38–42.

[122] Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:4.

[123] Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:5.

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For al-Albānī, exempting the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* from critical review constitutes a betrayal of "scholarly integrity." Embracing a canonical culture that sacrifices critical honesty for the security of scholarly institutions violates a Muslim scholar's responsibility. The acceptability of criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* enunciates the contrast between this Salafī attitude towards the canonical culture and that of its staunch supporters. When Ibn al-Jawzī declared some ḥadīths from Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* forgeries because their contents seemed to contradict tenets of the faith, the great champion of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, Ibn Ḥajar, wrote that we must try to reconcile this material and not dismiss it. "For if people open that door to rejecting ḥadīths," he wrote, "it would be claimed that many ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were false, but God most high and the believers have refused to let this happen."[124] In contrast, the Salafī ḥadīth scholar Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī argues that Ibn Taymiyya justifiably criticized a ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī's collection for unacceptable content. Al-Jazā'irī expresses surprise and concern over scholars who try to suppress discussion of mistakes in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* because they think that allowing criticism of the *matn* will open the door to the "people with agendas *(ahl al-ahwā')*." He disagrees, saying that proper criticism is a worthy practice.[125] Al-Albānī echoes this sentiment, saying that proper criticism based on the principles of ḥadīth scholarship is never inappropriate. He quotes Mālik as saying that "there is not one among us who has not rebutted or been rebutted except the master of that grave [i.e., the Prophet] (ṣ)."[126]

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[124] Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat 'alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 158.

[125] Al-Jazā'irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:331-2.

[126] Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 1:25.

Between al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's invocation of the notion that no book except the

Qur'ān is above criticism and al-Albānī's repetition of this mantra almost a thousand

years later, we see a continuous strain of iconoclastic ḥadīth scholarship that survived

alongside the burgeoning canonical culture of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The work of al-Dāraquṭnī

before the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and of al-Māzarī, al-Jayyānī and Ibn Abī al-

Wafā' after it, represents the continued application of the critical methods of ḥadīth

scholarship despite the protective culture constructed around the icons of al-Bukhārī and

Muslim. Those scholars who elaborated and defended the canonical culture did so

because they believed that the canon fulfilled certain crucial purposes in the scholarly

community. Iconoclastic ḥadīth scholars like Ibn al-Muraḥḥal and Ibn Abī al-Wafā' did

not concede to prioritizing the canonical culture above the critical standards of ḥadīth

criticism.

Yet, if criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was not novel, why do vociferous

condemnations of these critiques only begin in the early modern period? In the case of

Shāh Walī Allāh, defending the canon was an act of protecting and consolidating the

truly unifying institutions of Islam in the besieged and beleaguered Indian subcontinent.

Possibly in the work of Shāh Walī Allāh, and certainly in the case of the *Madhhab*

Traditionalists, we see that attempts to quash criticisms of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* truly represent

the efforts of scholars committed to protecting the institutions of classical Islamic

scholarship from iconoclastic reformists to whom these institutions mean little. The

Ṣaḥīḥayn canon was both a product of and a response to the needs of the Sunni legal and

theological schools as they solidified in the fifth/eleventh century. The authority of al-

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Bukhārī and Muslim rested on the power of *ijmā'*. The *Madhhab* Traditionalists' categorical rejection of criticizing al-Bukhārī and Muslim stemmed from their perception that an attack on the two books was a manifestation of the Salafī attack on consensus, scholarly hierarchy and even the valuated notion of time itself. This dimension of criticizing the canon only appeared with the tremendous wave of revival and reform movements in the eighteenth century and the concomitant reemergence *en force* of the iconoclastic Salafī strain of ḥadīth scholarship with men like al-Ṣanʿānī and al-Albānī. Only in response to the unprecedented threats they posed to the unifying institutions of classical Islamic religious culture did these increasingly beleaguered institutions find it necessary to defend themselves.

CANON AND SYNECDOCHE: THE *ṢAḤĪḤAYN* IN NARRATIVE AND RITUAL

IX.1. Introduction

So far, we have discussed the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon as a practical and powerful tool of scholarly debate and exposition. It is the *kanòn* of truth, the measure of authenticity through which the redemptive media of the Prophet's legacy can be applied decisively. It is the authoritative reference and exemplum that can be invoked to set the rule of a genre. Yet to remain focused solely on jurisprudence or the study of ḥadīth inexcusably limits the role of the Prophet's sunna in Muslim life. It ignores important dimensions of how text, authority and communal identification can interact through the medium of the Prophet's charismatic legacy. Our view has also been limited to the form of canonicity that Sheppard and Folkert conceived of as a criterion of distinction (Canon 1). As we widen our lens beyond the scholarly world, we must examine what functions al-Bukhārī and Muslim fulfilled in their capacity as Canon 2: a fixed collection and delimited set of texts.[1]

The Prophet's persona has cast a commanding shadow in Islamic civilization, but it has often remained intangible. In the centuries after their canonization, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would thus meet a pressing need beyond their strictly scholarly functions: that of a trope representing the Prophet's legacy in the broader Sunni community. In both the realms of

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[1] Sheppard, "Canon," 66; Folkert, "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture,'" 173.

ritual and the construction of historical narrative in Islamic civilization, al-Bukhārī and

Muslim would symbolize the Prophet's role as the pure wellspring of the faith and the

liminal point through which his community could access God's blessings. The two

works would be the part that symbolized and essentialized the whole, a synecdoche for

Muḥammad himself.

As a literary trope, synecdoche closely resembles metonymy, or the replacement

of one word with another because of some common association between them. Scholars

like Hayden White, however, have distinguished between metonymy's function as a part

representing the whole and synecdoche's function as a part essentializing it.[2] 'Fifty sails'

indicates fifty ships metonymically, but the synecdoche of 'the English Crown' is the part

of the royal person that essentializes the power and sovereignty of the British state. Due

to the tremendous veneration that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* had earned in Sunni Islam as the most

authentic reservoirs of the Prophet's legacy, they were ideally suited to essentialize it.

IX.2. Delimiting the Infinite: Managing the Sunna through the Ḥadīth Canon

As Norman Calder observed, "One feature of Muslim tradition is that it

acknowledges an indeterminately large body of *hadith* literature."[3] The Prophet's oral

legacy within his community is amorphous and boundless, subsuming an almost infinite

number of reports ranging from the most well authenticated ḥadīths to common

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[2] Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 31-34.

[3] Norman Calder, "The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy," in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 75. See also, Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 260, 266; Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam*, 59.

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household sayings popularly attributed to the Prophet. As Ibn Taymiyya noted at the turn

of the seventh/thirteenth century, any claim to have encompassed all the extant ḥadīths

attributed to the Prophet was absurd.[4] In order to fulfill its important role in society,

ritual and law in Islamicate civilization, the Prophet's sunna thus needed to be contained

in a manageable form. It is in this capacity that the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon, and the Sunni ḥadīth

canon as a whole, has served admirably.

To the extent that there existed a simple need for some sort of synecdochic

delimitation, the Sunni ḥadīth canon has been relatively elastic. Beyond the Ṣaḥīḥayn,

we thus find common references to the canonical units of the Five or Six Books. Any

delimited unit could theoretically stand in for the Prophet's sunna as a whole. When the

great Ilkhanid vizier and historian Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) sought to properly honor

God's revelation and the sunna of the Prophet in one of his pious endowments, he

ordered the custodians of his mosque to produce one copy of the Qur'ān and one copy of

Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-rasūl* (Compendium of the Texts of the

Prophet's Ḥadīths) every year.[5] Rashīd al-Dīn's reason for choosing the Qur'ān for this

purpose is obvious, but why did he select Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*? The minister must

have felt that the work, which condenses the ḥadīths from the Ṣaḥīḥayn, the collections of

al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd and Mālik, effectively symbolized the Prophet's

legacy and was the proper counterpart to God's revealed word. Earlier, the Alexandrian

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[4] Ibn Taymiyya, *Rafʿ al-malām ʿan al-aʾimma al-aʿlām*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn Khaṭīb (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1387/[1967]), 4.

[5] Rashīd al-Dīn stipulated that the two books then be placed between the pulpit and the prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) and that an invocation be said for him, so that he might receive blessings for all those who benefited from them; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Vaqfnāme-ye rob ʿe rashīdī: al-vaqfiyya al-rashīdiyya be-khaṭṭ al-vāqef fī bayān sharāʾeṭ omūr al-vaqf wa al-maṣāref* (Tehran: Ketāb-khāne-ye Mellī, 1350/[1972]), 167.

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ḥadīth scholar Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180) had equated the

Prophet's legacy synecdochically with the Five Books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū

Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī. He stated that those who opposed (mukhālif) these

five books on which the umma had agreed opposed the Prophet himself and are like

Islam's adversaries in Christian and pagan lands (dār al-ḥarb).[6]

For al-Silafī, these five books symbolized the Prophet's very words and the

normative legacy that bound the Sunni community together. To disagree with their status

was thus to forgo membership in the Prophet's umma. In al-Silafī's statement, we can

clearly perceive the unambiguous role that this set of authoritative texts played in

defining the boundaries of the orthodox community. Like Moshe Halbertal's "text

centered communities," the borders of al-Silafī's 'Abode of Islam (Dār al-Islām)' "are

shaped in relation to loyalty to a shared canon."[7]

IX.3. Synecdoche in Ritual: Usage of the Ṣaḥīḥayn Canon in Ritual Contexts

Having been endowed with a substantial religious authority in the fifth/eleventh

century, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections were well situated to dramatize religious

meaning. The Ṣaḥīḥayn canon has thus found plentiful usage in the realms of political,

calendrical and supplicatory rituals. How would these two voluminous ḥadīth books,

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[6] Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī, "Muqaddimat al-ḥāfiz al-kabīr Abī Ṭāhir al-Silafī," in al-Khaṭṭābī, Ma'ālim al-sunan, 4:362.

[7] Halbertal, 129. We should note that this synecdochic use of a ḥadīth collection to represent the Prophet himself was not strictly limited to the Ṣaḥīḥayn or canons in which the two books formed the core. Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), for example, is reported to have said that if you had his Jāmi' in your house, it is as if the Prophet himself was speaking in your home. Such claims, however, have been rare; the vast majority of synecdochic representations of the Prophet's sunna have centered on the Ṣaḥīḥayn or one of the two books; al-Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz, 2:155.

however, be employed in a ritual setting? Kendall Folkert insightfully identified the two

manners in which a canonical text can serve as a vehicle for meaning in ritual. First, a

canonical text can function as a collection of scriptures accessed during the ritual.

Second, the physical text of the canon can function as an actual participant in ritual. In

this case, rather than just being a storehouse of authoritative writings, the canon can

actually serve as a carrier of that authority in physical space. In addition to the contents

of the books *per se*, the book itself can wield power as a symbol or icon.[8] Reading al-

Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* over a sick person to heal him involves the first function of the canon;

the contents of the book provide some communion with a higher power and access to

God's blessings. An army carrying al-Bukhārī's collection before it like an ark, however,

utilizes the second mode of canonical function; the physical book is a central participant

in the ritual.

When used in the first mode, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* have served as scripture in public or

private readings. Reading a book in public has long been the centerpiece of the

Islamicate educational and collective religious experience. Just as Halbertal describes the

Jewish text-centered community, Islamic religious books have been "a locus of religious

experience" whose readings have constituted "a religious drama in and of itself."[9] As

Michael Chamberlain and Jonathan Berkey have shown in their studies on knowledge

and society in medieval Damascus and Cairo respectively, the public reading of books

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[8] Folkert, "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture,'" 178.

[9] Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 7-8.

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was one of the main forms of cultural production in the Islamicate world.[10] Even today in *madrasa*s from Morocco to Indonesia, students gather to hear their teacher read a text or comment on a senior disciple's (*sārid*) reading.[11] At Friday prayers or lessons convened in the mosque for the general public, a professional reading of the Qur'ān, ḥadīth or pietistic texts serves as the crux of the performance or lesson. Books could also be read in private settings, either by individuals, in the households of notables or in the palaces of rulers for the sake of private appreciation or exclusive access to blessings.

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, however, are not works of creative scripture, narrative or liturgical prose. They are essentially synecdochic segments cut out of the endless continuum of the Prophet's sunna, discrete instances of his normative legacy selected and arranged by al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Consisting of page after page of Prophetic ḥadīths with rare commentary, there is little beyond the editorial choices of the two scholars to provide any tangible notion of authorship. Reading the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is thus literally reading a synecdoche of the Prophet's legacy, the value of which has been assured by the two great canonical figures of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition.

Although the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* could represent the sunna in a manageable form, the two works are nonetheless massive. Even professional ḥadīth scholars like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī who devoted themselves to ceaseless study sessions of al-Bukhārī's work

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[10] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 136; Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 210 ff.

[11] See, for example, Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction," in *Comparing Muslim Societies*, ed. Juan R.I. Cole (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

required at least several days to complete hearing the collection from a teacher.[12] As a

result, public readings of al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's works could take a more accessible

private-public form, with a select group of religious devotees gathering in a mosque or

Sufi lodge to read the bulk of the text and the general public only participating in the

culmination (*khatm*) of the book.[13] Just as the congregation attending the nightly reading

of the Qur'ān during Ramadan swells at the *khatm* of the holy book on the twenty-

seventh night of the month, the putative Night of Power, so would the *khatm* of a *Ṣaḥīḥ*

be the public ritual focus of its reading. As a result, from the late 800/1400's we see a

proliferation of books on performing the *khatm* of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and other major ḥadīth

works as well as providing vignettes about the lives of their authors, such as that of ʿAbd

al-Salām b. Maḥmūd al-ʿAdawī (d. 1033/1623) on al-Bukhārī's collection and that of al-

Sakhāwī on Abū Dāwūd's or al-Nasāʾī's *Sunans*.[14]

Let us now examine the three main vectors of ritual activity that have employed

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*: supplicatory, calendrical and political. In all three cases, ritual use of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn seems to have begun in force during the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/

fourteenth centuries, approximately two to three centuries after their canonization. There

is scant evidence of ritual usage for the two books in sources covering the earlier period

between the careers of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and the late sixth/twelfth century, like al-

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[12] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:222.

[13] See, for example, Yūsuf al-Kattānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Lisān al-ʿArab, [198-]), 2:549.

[14] Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:130; al-Sakhāwī, *Badhl al-majhūd fī khatm al-Sunan li-Abī Dāwūd*, ed. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Jīlānī (Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2003); idem, *Bughyat al-rāghib al-mutamannī fī khatm al-Nasāʾī*.

Khaṭīb's *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam* or ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfiʿī's (d. 623/1226) *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*. It is not completely clear why ritual use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* began in this period, but exploring the nature of their usages may offer explanations.

IX.3. a. *Supplicatory and Medicinal Rituals*

Supplicatory rituals are rites through which people call on the supernatural for assistance. This genre of ritual activity overlaps with rituals of exchange and communion, in which humans undertake an act in the hope or expectation that the supernatural will reciprocate.[15] Employing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in supplicatory or medicinal rituals seems to be the earliest ritual usage of the two books. This role of the books came on the heels of the ritual attention paid in particular to al-Bukhārī's grave itself. Al-Bukhārī's place of burial near Samarqand was a locus for intercession and miracles within a century of his death, as the *Tārīkh Samarqand* of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Astarabādhī (d. 405/1015) informs us.[16] The Andalusian *muḥaddith* Abū ʿAlī al-Jayyānī (d. 498/1105) recounts that one Abū al-Fatḥ Naṣr b. al-Ḥasan al-Samarqandī (fl. 470/1080) visited him in Valencia in 464/1071-2 and described how the people of Samarqand had been afflicted by a terrible drought. This was only alleviated when the people of the city went to al-Bukhārī's grave and invoked God's mercy.[17]

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[15] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 108.

[16] Cited from al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 1-2. See Chapter 7, n. 41.

[17] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:273-4; cf. al-Qasṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 1:29.

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An unusual ritual usage seems to have appeared for Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the early

sixth/twelfth century, when it became the vehicle for an apparently isolated ordeal of

mourning. When the son of the scholar Abū al-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad al-Taymī

(d. 535/1140-1) died, he buried him and then read *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by his grave in

Hamadhān. In an act reminiscent of a ritual rejoining of the community after a

transitional ordeal, the day al-Taymī finished his reading he set up a large table with

sweets and food and invited all his friends to join him in a feast.[18] We have no other

evidence, however, of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* being used in this manner.

By the 700/1300s al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* had become a well-known tool for people

seeking God's intervention in times of illness and hardship within the cultural orbit of

Mamluk Egypt and Syria. The Damascene Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) notes that

the book was "a refuge from predicaments (*muʿḍilāt*) and well-tried for responding to

needs," adding that "this is a well-known matter, and if we were pushed to mention all

this and what occurred with it, the explanation would be too lengthy."[19] In 790/1388, one

of the many instances in which the bubonic plague struck Cairo, the Shāfiʿī chief judge

ordered al-Bukhārī's work read in the Azhar Mosque as a plea for relief. When the

plague continued, he ordered it read again two weeks later in the Mosque of al-Ḥākim. In

a final, desperate petition for divine succor, the judge convened a reading three days later

in the Azhar Mosque with orphaned children in attendance.[20] Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-

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[18] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:51.

[19] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:234.

[20] Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr, 11 vols. in 4 (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub, 1970), 3:2:577.

Kirmānī (d. 786/1384) explains that he decided to write his onamastically focused

commentary on al-Bukhārī because "a certain sultan from an important Muslim land

(ba'ḍ ummahāt bilād al-Islām)" (probably the Mamluk sultan) fell ill and wanted al-

Bukhārī's work read over him so that its blessing (baraka) might cure him. The scholars

charged with the reading, however, could not confidently read the isnāds without

stumbling over the unvoweled names of the transmitters.[21] The Cairene Ibn Ḥajar al-

'Asqalānī reported that his teacher Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Abī Ḥamza was told by

a "mystic ('ārif)" that "Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī has not been read in a time of severity except

that this has been relieved, nor [has it ever been read] when embarking a ship that sank."

He adds that Ibn Kathīr says that al-Bukhārī's collection can be read as an invocation for

rain (istisqā').[22]

In the Ottoman Ḥijāz, the Ḥanafī émigré from Herat, Mullā 'Alī Qārī

(d.1014/1606), tells us that al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ had been dubbed "the well-tried antidote

(al-tiryāq al-mujarrab)." He quotes one Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn as saying, "I have read al-

Bukhārī one hundred and twenty times for events (waqā'i') and important tasks

(muhimmāt) of mine and of others, and the desired result occurred and the needs were

met...."[23] The reputation of al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ had spread as far as India in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Shāh Walī Allāh's son, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (d.

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[21] Al-Kirmānī, al-Kawākib al-darārī, 1:5.

[22] Ibn Ḥajar, Hady al-sārī, 14; al-Qasṭallānī, Irshād al-sārī, 1:29.

[23] Mullā 'Alī Qārī, Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ, 1:13.

1824), says that reading the work in times of severity, fear, illness, famine or drought "is a tried and tested cure."[24]

There is much less evidence for widespread use of Muslim's book in medicinal or supplicatory rituals. Nonetheless, the collection did attain at least a portion of the fame of its more illustrious counterpart. The famous Central Asian ḥadīth and Qur'ān scholar Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), for example, read part of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* at Muslim's grave for *baraka*.[25]

IX.3. b. *Calendrical Rituals*

Calendrical rituals impose a framework of human significance on the abstract dimension of time or the endless cycles of nature. In general, such rituals are either based on the seasons or on commemorating important moments in a community's collective experience. In the Islamic calendrical system, where the calendar year has been deliberately severed from the solar year and planting seasons, religious holidays serve as anchors in the Muslim sense of time. The month of Ramadan and the Night of Power are thus two markers of the Islamic year.[26] As we shall see, a three-month reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would also effectively create a ritual 'season.'

The use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in calendrical rituals seems to have begun slightly later than the books' supplicatory role. From the available evidence, it seems that around the

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[24] Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dihlawī, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn*, 75.

[25] Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad Yūsuf Efendizāde, "'Ināyat al-mālik al-mun'im li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim," MS 343-5 Hamidiye, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul: 1:3b.

[26] Bell, *Ritual*, 103.

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early eighth/fourteenth century al-Bukhārī's book, and to a lesser extent Muslim's, was being read in mosques to mark the consecutive months of Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramadan, climaxing with the celebration at the end of the holy month. In Cairo, the Mamluk sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (d. 801/1399) hired a scholar to read the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in his newly founded Ẓāhiriyya Mosque during Shaʿbān and Ramadan.[27] In 1515 CE, the *madrasa* of al-Sayfī Baybars was founded in Cairo and a scholar was hired specifically to read *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* during Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramadan.[28]

Even in the far-flung Songhay Empire of Mali, with its grand mud-built capital at Timbuktu, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh al-Saʿdī (d. after 1065/1655-6), an *imām* in Jenne and administrator in Timbuktu, tells us that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were read in mosques during these three months. This is not surprising, since Mali's scholars traveled and studied in the Maghrib, Egypt and the Ḥijāz, bringing ritual practices back with them. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad Aqīt of Timbuktu (d. 991/1583) recited the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* during Rajab, Shaʿbān, and Ramadan annually for over twenty years.[29] His contemporary, the ḥadīth scholar Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar, was also known as "the reciter of the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s in the Sankore mosque."[30] Across the vast dune sea to the northwest, an

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[27] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, 213.

[28] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*; 17, 75.

[29] John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: al-Saʿdī's Taʾrīkh al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 61. For more on scholars in Timbuktu, see Elias N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu: the Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 58-126.

[30] Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 46.

anonymous mid-ninth/fifteenth century scholar in Marrakesh would read al-Bukhārī's

Ṣaḥīḥ to the descendents of the Prophet in the city during Ramadan.[31]

Even in Syria in the late 1800s, al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was read in the Naṣr Dome of

the Umayyad Mosque in Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramadan with great attendance and

fanfare.[32] In Morocco during the same period, main mosques and Sufi lodges began

reading the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in Rajab, continued through Sha'bān and finished on the Night of

Power in Ramadan.[33] Al-Bukhārī's collection was also read on other important religious

occasions. In 1119/1707-8, for example, 'Abdallāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1722) was

assigned to read the work at the Grand Mosque in Mecca upon its renovation by the

orders of the Ottoman Sultan Aḥmad III.[34]

IX.3. c. *Political Rituals*

One of the most dramatic usages of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon has been in the realm of

political ritual, which generally serves two primary functions. First, rites of political

ritual create a sense of coherence and common order among a collectivity of people.

Second, they legitimize this sense of political community by establishing a link between

it and the higher orders of the cosmos.[35] The usage of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in political ritual

seems to have begun in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries in Mamluk

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[31] Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 69-70.

[32] Commins, *The Salafi Reform Movement in Damascus*, 57-8.

[33] Al-Kattānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:544-5.

[34] Voll, "'Abdallah b. Salim al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship," 360.

[35] Bell, *Ritual*, 129.

Egypt and Syria. The Mamluk army that marched out of Cairo against the Ilkhanid

Mongols at the beginning of the eighth/thirteenth century was led by a person carrying

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.[36] Ibn Kathīr says that in Shaʿbān 766/1365, when the *amīr* Sayf al-Dīn

Baydar (the Mamluk sultan's erstwhile deputy in Syria) returned to Damascus to take up

the governorship of the city, prominent citizens received him with a large public

celebration. These festivities involved public readings of the final sections of al-

Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*khatmat al-Bukhārīyyāt*) in the Umayyad Mosque and other locations in

succession at different mosques all day. Meanwhile *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* was being read at the

Ḥanbalī *miḥrāb* at the Nūriyya *madrasa* near the Umayyad Mosque. Ibn Kathīr was

responsible for arranging all this, and he said that this had not taken place at any other

time in recent years.[37] When the army of the Moroccan Saʿdian dynasty marched out of

their ochre-colored southern capital of Marrakesh to fight the invading Portuguese in

998/1589-90, scholars performed a public *khatm* of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* as the army left

the gates.[38]

Perhaps the most consistently cunning exploiter of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon for

political ritual has been the reigning ʿAlawid dynasty of Morocco. Deriving their

political legitimacy from their descent from the Prophet, ʿAlawid rulers have turned to al-

Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* as a physical manifestation of Muḥammad's legacy. The true founder of

the dynasty, the conqueror and statesman Mawlā Ismāʿīl (d. 1727), sought to transform

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[36] J. De. Somogyi, "Adh-Dhahabi's record of the destruction of Damascus by the Mongols in 699-700/1299-1301," *Goldziher Memorial* 1 (1948): 361.

[37] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 14:326-7.

[38] Al-Kattānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:549.

his patrimony from a family of raiders dependent on the ephemeral loyalties of local Berber tribes into a true state with a dependable standing army. He thus built up a core unit of African slave soldiers, originally captured in the conquest of gold-laden Timbuktu, to serve as the centerpiece of his army. This unit grew in size, as Mawlā Ismāʿīl had their sons trained by artisans and then enlisted in the ranks upon reaching the age of ten, until it reached the awesome size of 150,000 men.[39] Mawlā Ismāʿīl dubbed these soldiers "The Slaves of al-Bukhārī (ʿAbīd al-Bukhārī)," for it was upon the Ṣaḥīḥ and its representation of the Prophet's sunna that their loyalty to their ruler was based. The Moroccan archivist and historian Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī (d. 1315/1897) explains that in his efforts to free himself of reliance on the fickle loyalties of tribal forces, Mawlā Ismāʿīl gathered the leaders of his slave regiment around a copy of al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ. He said:

> I and you are slaves to the sunna of the Messenger of God (ṣ) and his
> sacred law as collected in his book (i.e., the Ṣaḥīḥ), so all that he has
> commanded we will do, and all that he has forbidden we will forsake, and
> by it we will fight (wa ʿalayhi nuqātil).

He then took their oaths by al-Bukhārī's book. At one end of the great parade ground that the ruler built for his praetorian at his hilltop imperial palace in Meknes, Mawlā Ismāʿīl constructed a madrasa named after al-Bukhārī. He ordered that copy of the Ṣaḥīḥ

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[39] Abū al-Qāsim al-Zayyānī, al-Bustān al-ẓarīf fī dawlat awlād mawlāya al-sharīf, ed. Rashīd al-Zāwiya (Rabat: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif al-Jadīda, [1992]), 1:171; Maurice Delafosse, "Les débuts des troupes noires du Maroc," Hespéris 3 (1923): 7-8.

on which the soldiers' oaths had been taken preserved there and that they carry it "like the Ark of the Children of Israel (*tābūt banī Isrā'īl*)" when they went out on campaign.[40]

The 'Alawid dynasty has maintained the prominent place of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in political rituals. When King Ḥasan I came to Rabat on Eid al-Fitr in 1873, he ordered festivities including the reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and culminating in a large public gathering with all the city's notables. The king also did this upon the completion of his royal palace in Rabat.[41]

The 'Alawid dynasty has relied on its claim of descent from the Prophet as the central pillar of its political legitimacy in Morocco. Basing the *esprit de corps* of his praetorian on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and maintaining the collection as the unit's mascot reinforced Mawlā Ismā'īl's chosen role as heir to the Prophet's political authority. The *Ṣaḥīḥ*'s ability to stand in for the Prophet's persona in ritual, literally carried before the king's advancing army, was central to the logic of this political ritual. Similarly, the esteemed station of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* allowed Ibn Kathīr to help transform the arrival of the Baḥrī Mamluk governor in Damascus into an evocation of religious significance.

IX.4. The Ritual Power of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*: The Muḥammadan Blessing

In Islam, God is the source of all *baraka*, what Josef Meri calls "the stuff of faith."[42] It is the blessing by which men's felicity is ensured in both the earthly life and

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[40] Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istisqā li-akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-aqṣā*, ed. Ja'far al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī, 9 vols. (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1956), 7:58.

[41] Al-Kattānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:547.

[42] Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17.

the hereafter. Proximity to God through either piety or some link to a liminal figure

entails greater access to His *baraka*.[43] As the receptacle of revelation and the bridge

between the divine and the temporal, the Prophet is the ultimate liminal figure in Islam.

As the perfect human, possessed of "tremendous character (Qur'ān 68:4)," and on whom

God and the angels "shower their prayers (Qur'ān 33:56)," the figure of Muḥammad has

enjoyed the greatest access to *baraka*. His persona is the most completely endowed with

"the capacity to mediate between humanity and the Deity."[44] Imitating his lifestyle and

obeying his commands as embodied in the Sharia enables Muslims to approach this locus

of God's blessings. Gaining physical or aural proximity to the Prophet's words, his relics

or members of his family provides extended access to his liminality.[45] Similarly, pious

individuals who have themselves earned a station close to God and His blessing

themselves become loci of liminality and *baraka* for others.

Like saints, who wield extraordinary powers through their proximity to God,

books enjoying such proximity are also a "nexus of baraka, miracles and mediation...."[46]

Michael Chamberlain describes religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) as a source of blessing

(*baraka*) that Muslims of all social standings tried to acquire.[47] The pursuit and study of

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[43] See G.S. Colin, "Baraka," *EI²*; Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 12.

[44] Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, 70.

[45] For a discussion of the salvational role of the Prophet and his family in Egyptian popular Sufism, see Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, "Devotion to the Prophet and His Family in Egyptian Sufism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 617. For a discussion of the role of the descendents of the Prophet (*igurram*) among Berbers in Morocco, see Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, 70-80.

[46] Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 127.

[47] Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 122.

ʿIlm was thus a ritual practice, equated with forms of worship such as ritual remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and canonical prayer, and thus requiring the same levels of ritual purity. Acquiring knowledge was a "collective liminal experience" in which the attempt to grasp and appreciate God's will brought the audience closer to Him.[48]

Reading or listening to a performance of a ḥadīth collection was thus to increase one's proximity to God's blessings as deposited and dispensed through His Prophet. As J. Z. Smith states, "Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is a process for marking interest."[49] In the ritual logic of the audience, reading Muḥammad's words is to give his person and legacy attention. To consider his example is to please God as the Prophet had pleased Him and incur that blessing that God showered upon him. It is to walk that path of liminality. The ritual of listening to or acting on a ḥadīth becomes a metaphoric act of accessing the blessings the Prophet enjoyed.[50]

The conspicuous Muslim habit of calling God's peace and blessings down upon the Prophet after every mention of his name in either written or oral expression emphasizes the role of the Prophet as a channel for access to God's *baraka*. In activities such as the Sunni canonical prayer, in fact, invocations for the Prophet's sake equal or supersede the performer's set prayers for himself or herself. Here Muḥammad becomes a proxy for the believer's own personal invocations. The Egyptian Shāfiʿī al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) notes that the purpose of such intense prayer on the Prophet is "growing close

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[48] Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 127-9.

[49] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Towards Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103.

[50] See Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 30 ff.

to God most high by imitating His act [of blessing the Prophet] and fulfilling the right

due the Prophet (ṣ)." Al-Sakhāwī quotes one Abū Muḥammad al-Marjānī as saying, "In

calling your prayers on him [the Prophet], you are, in truth, because of the benefits that

these prayers return to you, praying for yourself."[51] The benefits of calling God's peace

and blessings down upon the Prophet extend to the scholarly realm of those who write

books in addition to their audiences. Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī mentions a ḥadīth that

guarantees *baraka* for an author who writes "may the peace and blessings of God be upon

him" after the Prophet's name. The ḥadīth states that "whoever prays (*ṣallā 'alayya*) for

me in a book, angels will continue to pray for him as long as my name is in that book."[52]

In ritual, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* thus act synecdochically as a channel for God's blessings

as transmitted through the Prophet. The Mamluk sultan whom al-Kirmānī mentioned as

having fallen ill hoped the *baraka* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* would cure him.[53] We find in the

letter of the Moroccan scholar 'Abd al-Kabīr b. Muḥammad al-Kattānī (d. 1333/1914-5)

instructions to read through al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in mosques and houses in order to get the

"Muḥammadan intercession (*al-shafā 'a al-muḥammadiyya*).[54] Mullā 'Alī Qārī quotes

Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn as crediting the miraculous powers of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* "to the *barakāt* of the

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[51] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Qawl al-badī' fī al-ṣalāt 'alā al-ḥabīb al-shafī'* (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Inṣāf, 1383/1963), 25. "Indeed God and His angels pray upon the Prophet; O you who believe shower prayers and blessings upon him (Qur'ān 33:56)."

[52] Al-Silafī, *al-Wajīz fī dhikr al-majāz wa al-mujīz*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr al-Biqā'ī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1411/1991), 95.

[53] Al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:5.

[54] Al-Kattānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:545-6.

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most noble of the nobles (the Prophet) and the source of felicity, may the most favored

prayers and most perfect greeting be upon him."[55]

The synecdochic function of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in these rites provides the best

explanation for why ritual usage of the canon began on any appreciable scale only in the

seventh/thirteenth century. Marshall Hodgson notes that at this time Islamicate

civilization in the Nile-Oxus region had reached some critical distance from the faith's

epicenter in the person of the Prophet. Society required new vehicles for bridging this

divide and accessing the Prophet's *baraka*, and the seventh/thirteenth and

eighth/fourteenth centuries thus witnessed an intensified interest in pilgrimages to

Muḥammad's grave in Medina, those of his purported descendents throughout the Islamic

world and other local saints.[56] The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* provided a textual alternative.

The popularization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in public rituals such as readings during

Ramadan mirrors the wider popularization of communal ritual such as those practiced by

Sufi brotherhoods, which began flourishing in their institutional *ṭarīqa* form in the

600/1200s.[57] Similarly, the initiative that the Mamluk rulers took in organizing and

funding public readers of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* dovetails with their general sponsorship of

popular religious practices, such as building major Sufi lodges in Cairo and Damascus.[58]

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[55] Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

[56] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:453; Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 14.

[57] J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9-10; J.O. Hunwick et. al., "Taṣawwuf," *EI²*.

[58] Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 12 ff.

IX.5. The Canon and Synecdoche in Narrative: A Salvational Trope in a Narrative of Decline and Salvation

Just as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* represented the Prophet's liminality and charisma, granting access to the *baraka* to which he was the key, al-Bukhārī and Muslim also became a synecdochic trope for scholars constructing narrative in Islamic history. Ḥadīth literature is not limited to the dry compilation and criticism of Prophetic reports. It encompasses a network of genres that either orbit the collection and evaluation of reports or mold these activities into forms that address specific needs. Ḥadīth-oriented biographical dictionaries like *Tārīkh Baghdād*, works on *ʿilal* and the technical terms of ḥadīth evaluation fit into the first category. The second category includes specific types of ḥadīth collections that could channel the Prophet's charisma through an individual scholar's personal religious expression. *Mustakhraj*s, personal *muʿjam*s documenting all the lands to which a collector had traveled (*riḥla*) and all the teachers from whom he had heard (*mashyakha, barnāmaj*), as well as the great ḥadīth collections themselves fall into the second. All these genres, however, together weave a meta-narrative that serves as the shared culture of ḥadīth scholars or those other Muslim sages or laity who trade on their domain.

This is a romantic narrative of decline and salvation. It constantly replays what Marshall Hodgson called "the old man's view of history," in which the community seems bound inevitably towards religious and moral entropy but clings to a lingering hope for

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the survival of the true faith through the uniquely pious efforts of the scholar.[59] "The best

of generations is the one in which I was sent, then that which comes after it, then that

which follows"; this Prophetic tradition embodies the Sunni vision of religious history, as

the Muslim community drifts farther and farther in time from the epicenter of the

Prophet's mission. Each successive age after that greatest community has a more tenuous

grasp of the Prophet's salvational message.

Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) thus complains that his surroundings were flooded with

ever-multiplying attributions to the Prophet and dilettantes who could not tell authentic

hadīths from forged ones.[60] His student al-Ḥākim writes in the beginning of his *Maʿrifat*

ʿulūm al-ḥadīth:

> Indeed, when I saw heretical innovations in religion (*bidaʿ*) increasing in our
> time, and the people's knowledge of the fundamentals of the sunna ·
> decreasing… this called me to compose a small book including all the
> branches of the sciences of ḥadīth that students of reports might need….[61]

In the introduction to his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, al-Khaṭṭābī says:

> I contemplated the recourse for the affairs of our time, such as the scarcity
> of *ʿilm*, the prevalence of ignorance (*jahl*), and the dominance of the people
> of religious heresies (*bidaʿ*), that many of the people's affairs have
> deviated towards their different schools of thought (*madhāhib*) and turned
> away from the holy book and the sunna. I feared that this matter would
> become more severe in days to come, that knowledge will be more
> preciously rare (*aʿazz*) due to the paucity of those whom I see today…
> attending faithfully to [ḥadīth] and attaining a sound (*ṣāliḥ*) level of
> knowledge in it.[62]

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[59] See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:381; see also, Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 25; idem, "The Idea of Progress in Classical Islam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (1981): 277-89.

[60] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:58.

[61] Al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 2.

[62] Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth*, 1:102-3.

Writing over a century later in Khurāsān, al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) similarly describes the crises of heresy and ignorance on his environment: "Nothing remains of the religion except its outlines (*rasm*), nor of knowledge except its name, to the point that falsity is considered to be the truth among most people in our time, and ignorance is confused with knowledge."[63]

In the face of this decline, the struggle of the 'true Sunni scholars' to preserve the legacy of the Prophet represents the only hope for personal and communal salvation. One of the most frequently quoted ḥadīths in the introductions to works of ḥadīth literature thus prophesies, "One party from among my umma will always stand by the truth unharmed by those who forsake them, until the command of God comes."[64] Ibn Ḥanbal is frequently quoted as identifying this sect with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, whom al-Ḥākim describes as "trumping the people of heresy with the sunna of God's messenger."[65] Only by stubbornly clinging to the continuous study and repetition of the Prophet's legacy can the ḥadīth tradition fulfill its destiny as the sole guardians of Islam's pure origins.

Moreover, it is always the author's own immediate efforts that embody this hope of salvation. Al-Baghawī thus offers his huge legal compendium of ḥadīth (*Sharḥ al-*

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[63] Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Shuʿayb Arnāʾūṭ and Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh, 14 vols. ([Beirut]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1390/1971), 1:3-4.

[64] "*Lā tazālu ṭāʾifa min ummatī ẓāhirīn ʿalā al-ḥaqq lā yaḍurruhum man khadhalahum ḥattā yaʾtiya amr Allāh*"; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-imāra, bāb qawlihi (ṣ) lā tazālu ṭāʾifa....* For another version, see al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 2.

[65] Yaḥyā b. Manda, *Juzʾ fīhi manāqib al-shaykh al-Ṭabarānī*, 5b (quoted from al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's lost *Manāqib aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*).

sunna) as an attempt to revive the path of the righteous forbears who established the religion, acting as "one striving to light a lamp in the encompassing darkness, [so that] the perplexed can be guided by it or someone seeking guidance can find the path."[66]

The notion of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement as the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship, evident after the writings of Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5), provided a convenient trope in this narrative. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in particular came to represent the acme of critical rigor in ḥadīth study. Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) describes how, while the number of ḥadīth collections blossomed in the wake of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's careers, their authors were pursuing all sorts of agendas (*aghrāḍ, maqāṣid*) and the glorious age of the *Shaykhayn* had vanished (*inqaraḍa*). Even with the continued work of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī, it was as if the age of al-Bukhārī and Muslim "was the sum of all ages in terms of the acquisition of that science (*ʿilm*), and it ended with it. Afterwards that quest waned."[67]

Because they represented the pinnacle of achievement in the ḥadīth tradition, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* could serve as the perfect symbol for the Prophet's legacy in the narratives that scholars spun around the tension between the 'authentic teachings of the Prophet (sunna)' and 'heretical innovation (*bidʿa*)' in Islamic religious culture. Writing within a Sunni community that acknowledged the two works' unparalleled status, scholars could wield

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[66] Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, 1:3-4.

[67] Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, 1:42.

them as representations of the salvation that came through embracing the Prophet's

authentic legacy.[68]

IX.5. a. Kh"āje 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī and the Beginning of Synecdoche in Narrative

The earliest extant example of Muslim scholars utilizing the Ṣaḥīḥayn as a

synecdoche for the Prophet's legacy in narrative comes from the fifth/eleventh century

writing of Abū al-Faḍl al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113). His teacher in the Khurāsānī city of

Herat, the fierce über-Sunni Kh"āje 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), cuts an interesting

figure in Islamic intellectual history. A staunch Ḥanbalī who condemned the cultivation

of speculative theology in a massive multivolume book, he was also a committed Sufi

who penned a complex work on the technical terminology of mysticism and the

progressive stages toward complete consciousness of God.[69] Al-Dhahabī cites an

apparently lost text from al-Maqdisī describing the famous Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk

summoning Kh"āje 'Abdallāh to a debate in Herat. Both the vizier and his master, the

Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan, had arrived in Herat on a visit and had heard complaints from

Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī scholars about Kh"āje 'Abdallāh's intolerant über-Sunnism. He had

stated, for example, that he would curse anyone who denied that God was physically

above the earth. Niẓām al-Mulk demanded that Kh"āje 'Abdallāh respond to his

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[68] We must note that al-Bukhārī and Muslim's function as a synecdoche in this context in no way resembles Hayden White's analysis of tropology in Modernist European historical writing, where synecdoche describes a manner in which a historian can manipulate and transition between ideas. Rather, the Ṣaḥīḥayn were quite literally a synecdoche for the Prophet's authentic legacy as valuated by Sunni Muslim scholars.

[69] See 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, Manāzil al-sā'irīn, ed. Ibrāhīm 'Aṭwī 'Awaḍ ([Cairo]: Maktabat Ja'far al-Ḥadītha, [1977]) and idem, Dhamm al-kalām wa ahlihi, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-'Azīz al-Shibl, 5 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, 1995).

detractors in a debate, and the scholar agreed on one condition: that he be allowed to debate his opponents only with what he had in his two sleeve pockets (*kumm*). Niẓām al-Mulk asked what the pockets contained, and Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh replied, "The Book of God," pointing to his right sleeve (*kumm*), "and the sunna of the Messenger of God," pointing to his left. From his right sleeve Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh then produced a copy of the Qurʾān, and from his left the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Maqdisī continues, "So the vizier looked at [Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh's opponents], seeking a response, and there was no one from among them who would debate him in this manner."[70]

Al-Maqdisī's story makes clear use of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a synecdoche for the Prophet's sunna. Almost a century after their canonization, al-Maqdisī and perhaps even Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh himself understood the symbolic power of al-Bukhārī and Muslim within the wider Sunni community. In the face of the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī schools' 'heretical' use of reason and indulgence in speculative theology, al-Maqdisī portrays Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh as standing by the two pure sources of the faith: God's revelation and its authoritative interpretation as transmitted through the Prophet's ḥadīths. The

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[70] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:250-1. It seems bizarre that someone could fit books as massive as the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in their sleeve, but scholars routinely wrote out such books in print so small that they could fit into one volume. Even a much later ḥadīth scholar like Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sindī (d. 1773) used to produce one copy of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* every year in one small volume; ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Mizjājī, *Nuzhat riyāḍ al-ijāza al-mustaṭāba*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Karīm Khaṭīb (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1997), 262. We can reliably date al-Maqdisī's dramatic story to the late fifth/eleventh century when al-Maqdisī was writing. We should certainly not treat it as a reliable transcript of an historical event, however, for the über-Sunni al-Maqdisī shared his teacher's leanings and furnished a highly partisan account of the debate. Moreover, although al-Maqdisī himself studied with Kh^{w}āje ʿAbdallāh, he reports this story second-hand through "one of our colleagues (*aṣḥābinā*)." There is no reason to suspect that al-Dhahabī was citing a forged source from a later period, however, since most of al-Maqdisī's prolific *oeuvre* has not survived for our examination. This absence of evidence should therefore not lead us to doubt al-Maqdisī's authorship. Even if al-Maqdisī himself creatively altered the report of his teacher's debate, we can nonetheless still date it to his career in the late fifth/eleventh century. For the most comprehensive list of al-Maqdisī's works, see al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Yaʿlāwī, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1411/1991), 5:735-8.

canonical text of the Qur'ān is small and easily manageable. The Prophet's sunna, however, is not. Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books thus serve as its commonly acknowledged physical manifestation in the arena of debate. Just as they functioned as an authoritative reference and measure of authenticity, so did the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* serve as a symbolic convention as well.

IX.5. b. *Al-Ghazālī's Return to the Straight Path: The* Ṣaḥīḥayn *as Synecdoche*

The seminal Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī jurist, theologian and mystic Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) has proven one of the most powerful and controversial figures in Islamic intellectual history. He became a central pillar of the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī orthodoxy, and has been honored as "the Proof of Islam (*ḥujjat al-Islām*)" by the multitude of later scholars who have shared his doctrinal leanings. Scholars from a wide range of temperaments, however, have also criticized him heavily for his laxity in using ḥadīths, his excessive mystical bent and his wholesale adoption of logic as a tool in Islamic thought. Al-Māzarī took al-Ghazālī to task for attributing to saints miracles that befitted the Prophet alone. The Mālikī Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭurṭūshī, who said he had met al-Ghazālī, described him as a great scholar who had foolishly "become a Sufi, departing from the sciences and the scholars, entering the sciences of inspiration (*al-khawāṭir*), the mystics (*arbāb al-qulūb*), and the murmurings of the Devil."[71] Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) criticized him for ignorance in the science of narrating ḥadīths and for including forged reports in his *Iḥyā'*

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[71] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6:243. For an excellent discussion of the controversy surrounding al-Ghazālī's career, see Kenneth Garden, "Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival: *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* and its Critics in Khorasan and the Maghrib," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2005).

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ʿulūm al-dīn.[72] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) faulted al-Ghazālī for placing logic at the forefront of the Islamic sciences as the common language of scholarly discussion. Al-Dhahabī was one of al-Ghazālī's most outspoken critics, arguing that his penchant for sciences originally foreign to Islam and straying into the realm of philosophical speculation plagued the scholar throughout his career.[73]

In efforts to salvage al-Ghazālī's image from these serious critiques, narrative about the scholar's life became a microcosm of the Sunni romance of decline and salvation. One of the earliest attempts to repair al-Ghazālī's reputation and draw it closer to the conservative Sunni tradition as embodied in the study of ḥadīth is ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's (d. 529/1134-5) biography of the scholar.[74] A ḥadīth-oriented Shāfiʿī who fondly and frequently identifies with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, al-Fārisī nonetheless evinces profound admiration for al-Ghazālī. Yet his treatment of the great scholar, whom he had met more than once, focuses more on his concern for al-Ghazālī's failings.[75] Struggling to salvage al-Ghazālī's valuable works in fields such as jurisprudence and dogma, al-Fārisī limits his critique to al-Ghazālī's mystical and esoteric works. He states that al-Ghazālī went astray from the bases of Islam in books like his Persian ethical treatise *Kemyā-ye saʿādat* (The Alchemy of Felicity).[76] Al-Fārisī argues that he should never

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[72] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 17:126.

[73] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:330-1, 327-9.

[74] This has survived in part in an abridgement of his history of Naysābūr and more fully in the works of Ibn ʿAsākir, al-Dhahabī and al-Subkī.

[75] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:202.

[76] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 84.

have entered into such esoteric matters because they might confuse the masses of Muslims and negatively affect their conception of proper belief.[77]

The chief thrust in rehabilitating al-Ghazālī, however, comes at the end of al-Fārisī's biography. It both portrays al-Ghazālī as returning to the sound path of Sunnism and affirms al-Fārisī's own ḥadīth-oriented, Sunni identity. Al-Fārisī states that in the last years of his life, al-Ghazālī occupied himself with study of ḥadīth and poring over the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Had he lived longer, al-Fārisī opines, al-Ghazālī would have become the master of this noble science. Playing on al-Ghazālī's honorary title, he adds, "It is these two [books, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*,] that are the Proof of Islam (*ḥujjat al-Islām*)."[78]

Establishing al-Ghazālī's repentance from his heretical musings in philosophy and Sufism by associating him with the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* became a central tool for rehabilitating his reputation. The Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (d. 571/1176) opens his biography of al-Ghazālī with the statement that he had heard *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from one Muḥammad b. ʿUbaydallāh al-Ḥafṣī.[79] The Shāfiʿī biographer Abū Saʿd ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1166) of Merv included a report in his entry on al-Ghazālī that portrays him inviting one ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rawwāsī (d. 503/1109) to stay at his house in Ṭūs in order to provide extended private lessons on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Even avid defenders of al-Ghazālī, however, such as al-Subkī, considered this report to be a blatant

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[77] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:326-7.

[78] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 84; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6:210-11; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:204.

[79] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:200.

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forgery.[80] Al-Samʿānī most probably included it in his zealous efforts to affirm al-Ghazālī's devotion to the ḥadīth tradition. Although the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī is extremely critical of al-Ghazālī, he also notes that late in life he occupied himself with learning the "ṣaḥīḥ collections (al-ṣiḥāḥ)."[81] The great apologist for the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī tradition, al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), leaves us the most exhaustive defense of al-Ghazālī's legacy in his two-hundred page biography of the scholar in the *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*. Al-Subkī's defense of al-Ghazālī centers on the same theme advanced by al-Fārisī: al-Ghazālī's evident recantation from the unrestricted use of speculative theology in the last years of his life and simultaneous decision to devote himself to the study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar and theologian Mullā ʿAlī Qārī provides an even more dramatic depiction of al-Ghazālī's final return to the straight path: al-Ghazālī died with copy of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* on his chest.[82]

IX.5. c. *Al-Dhahabī's Narrative of Islamic History: The* Ṣaḥīḥayn *as Synecdoche*

The Salafī-oriented Shāfiʿī scholar Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) shines as one of the most intelligent and influential figures in Islamic intellectual history. A member of the remarkable Damascus circle of Ibn Taymiyya, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī and Ibn Kathīr, his works and those of his associates have exercised an inordinately powerful effect on the course of Sunni thought. Through his

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[80] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6:215.

[81] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 17:126.

[82] Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 30.

many studies on the ḥadīth sciences and remarkable biographical dictionaries, al-Dhahabī

elaborated an independent ḥadīth-oriented vision of Islamic history that angered more

staunch devotees of the legal and theological schools as much as it provided them

indispensable benefit.[83] Al-Dhahabī rejected the tradition of speculative theology as well

as what he perceived as the over-involved and self-indulgent complexities of the Sunni

scholarly edifice. In his biography of al-Ghazālī he urges a ḥadīth and piety-based

minimalism, telling the reader that all a Muslim requires to attain success and salvation

are the Qur'ān, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Nasā'ī's *Sunan* and al-Nawawī's two pietistic works,

Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn (The Gardens of the Righteous) and the *Kitāb al-adhkār* (Book of

Prayers).[84]

Al-Dhahabī's *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* (Aide-Mémoire of the Ḥadīth Masters) provides

a concise glimpse into the scholar's conception of Islamic civilization's historical course.

Unlike his gigantic *Tārīkh al-islām* (History of Islam) or his expansive *Siyar a'lām al-

nubalā'* (The Lives of the Noble Figures), the *Tadhkira* consists of only a few volumes

devoted solely to a chronological treatment of those figures who emerged as prominent

participants in the Sunni ḥadīth tradition. In rare comments at the end of some

outstanding generations, al-Dhahabī includes his own evaluations of the umma's

unfolding history. At the end of the first generation to succeed the Companions, for

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[83] For a harsh criticism of al-Dhahabī by one of his students, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, who also relied on him heavily in his *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya*, see al-Subkī, "Qā'ida fī al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl," in *Arba' rasā'il fī 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, 6th edition (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1419/1999), 37 ff. For praise of al-Dhahabī from Indian Ḥanafīs, see al-Laknawī, *al-Raf' wa al-takmīl*, 286. See also, Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 240.

[84] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:340.

example, he describes how at this time Islam had become powerful and glorious, "having

conquered the lands of the Turks in the east and Andalusia in the west."[85]

After the fifth generation, consisting of scholars like Ibn Jurayj and Abū Ḥanīfa

who died between 140 and 150AH, al-Dhahabī writes, "Islam and its peoples were

endowed with total might and profuse knowledge, the standards of *jihād* spread wide and

the sunna (*sunan*) widespread." He adds that "heresy (*bidʿa*) was suppressed, and those

constantly speaking the truth were many. The servants [of God] were plentiful in number

and the people were living at the height of prosperity with security...."[86] But after the

civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, the two sons of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-

Rashīd, the strength of the state waned. Accompanying this political division, the state of

the faith deteriorated. The power of the Shiites and Muʿtazilites increased and the

Baghdad Inquisition occurred.

> The star of Shiism rose and revealed its enmity (*abdā ṣafḥatahu*), the dawn
> of speculative theology broke, the philosophy (*ḥikma*) of the ancients, the
> logic of the Greeks and astrology were all translated into Arabic. A new
> science thus emerged for the people, abhorrent, destructive, incongruous
> with the knowledge of Prophecy and not in accordance with the unity of the
> believers that had held the umma in well-being.[87]

With the narrative of entropy and decline into religious ruin set, al-Dhahabī

bemoans the weakening of scholarship since the heady days of Ibn Ḥanbal's and ʿAlī b.

al-Madīnī's greatest generation. Al-Dhahabī specifically complains about the state of

Islamic knowledge in his own time, condemning blind imitation (*taqlīd*) in law and the

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[85] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:56.

[86] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:179.

[87] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:240.

obsession with empty speculative theology (*kalām*). In such times, he concludes, "may

God bless that individual who devotes himself to his task, who shortens his tongue, draws

near to reading his Qur'ān, cries over his time (*zamānihi*) and pores over the *Sahīhayn*."[88]

In his grief over the deterioration of scholarship and piety, al-Dhahabī thus calls

for a return to the twin roots of Islam: the Qur'ān and the sunna of the Prophet. The route

to salvation, if only on the individual level, is to embrace the holy book and those

volumes that had come to represent synecdochically the Prophet's true legacy, the

Sahīhayn of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

IX.6. Conclusion

In its roles as a measure of authenticity, authoritative reference for non-specialists

and exemplum, the *Sahīhayn* canon functioned as Canon 1: a criterion between truth and

falsehood. Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books, however, played another crucial role

beyond the limited circles of jurists and ḥadīth scholars. The two collections came to

synecdochically represent the Prophet's legacy itself within the wider Sunni community.

Ironically, in their denial of the existence of a ḥadīth canon, both Wheeler and Weiss

alluded to the important function that the major Sunni collections served in their capacity

as Canon 2: they delimited the vast expanse of the Prophet's sunna and embodied it in a

manageable form. Whether the canonical unit of the Five Books or just the *Sahīhayn*,

this circumscription drew the boundaries of the greater Sunni community. Loyalty to the

canon meant loyalty to the umma.

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[88] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 2:86.

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s synecdochic representation of the Prophet rendered the books

invaluable in both scholarly and lay interaction with the heritage of Muḥammad. In the

narratives that ḥadīth-oriented Sunni scholars developed to describe the historical course

of Islamicate civilization, al-Bukhārī and Muslim became a trope for the straight path of

adherence to the Prophet's sunna in the face of the ever-multiplying threats of heresy and

iniquity. In the Sunni narrative of decline from the halcyon days of the righteous early

community, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* represented salvation through a return to their teachings. More

importantly, by the seventh/thirteenth century al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections had

taken on prominent roles in political, calendrical and supplicatory rituals. Again, the two

works symbolized the Prophet's legacy. For Mawlā Ismāʿīl they symbolized loyalty to

the Prophet and the ʿAlawid state that governed in his name. For the scholars who read

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* during Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramadan in Timbuktu, Cairo, Mecca or

Damascus, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* imbued a set period of the year with the religious significance of

the Prophet's persona. In all these instances of ritual use, but perhaps most palpably in

their roles as tools of supplication, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* synecdochically represented the

Prophet's access to divine blessing. Like relics or Muḥammad's descendents, the ḥadīth

collections personified the Prophet's role as the intercessor between humanity and the

divine.

X.

CONCLUSION

X.1. Problems in Approaches

Here at its conclusion, a reader may have noticed that this study has been imbued

with the corporeal language and organic idiom of biology. 'Needs' have been 'felt' and

'met.' Sunnism 'matured,' and 'strains' within it 'developed.' The canon 'emerged' and

fulfilled certain 'functions.' Using such phrasal representations to move from one

thought to another or from particulars to the general betrays certain assumptions about

the nature of the ḥadīth canon and Islamic civilization. Are we justified in treating a

human society or a faith tradition as organisms that are born and mature until they attain

some state of advancement?

This assumption may not have been accurate when British scholars like E.B.

Tylor (d. 1917) and J.G. Frazer (d. 1941) described the global phenomenon of religion as

a stage in the maturation of human consciousness. I believe it does, however, serve us

faithfully in a study of Islamic intellectual history. Inquiring into the history of the

Ṣaḥīḥayn is a natural reaction to their conspicuous prominence in Sunni Islam today. Yet

the fact is that Islam existed as a religion and faith tradition before al-Bukhārī and

Muslim, and it flourished for at least another century without paying the two books or

their authors any remarkable attention. We are thus inevitably faced with a question of

change, of growth or emergence in our comparison of the two books' status now and their

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standing during their authors' time. Like the compound of Sunni orthodoxy itself, the canon *was not* then and *is* now. Faced with such a stark instance of transformation or change, examining the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a linear process of maturation and subsequent tensions seems reasonable or even inevitable.

Perhaps the most dangerous pitfall of employing a biological metaphor for the movement of history consists of the ambiguous status it grants human agency. One could describe a 'canon emerging' without identifying the specific individuals or class who promulgated it. One could mention a community 'feeling needs' without stipulating exactly how they were expressed. We have tried to avoid these problems by adhering closely to the textual sources of history and emphasizing the role of individuals in the development of the canon. We have relied on historical actors to explain their own actions either directly through their own words or indirectly by reading their works critically against an established context. We have avoided attributing individuals' actions to broader political, cultural or economic forces unless there exists some explicit evidence for such a link. Certainly, we may speculate about the manner in which political context or the allocation of resources affected the canon, but we cannot definitively explain the canon as the direct result of these factors without some discernable evidence.

Instead of summarizing the results of this study in abstract form (see the Thesis section in the Introduction), we conclude in a manner more useful to students of Islamic civilization and its magnificent tradition of ḥadīth scholarship. As the present study proceeded, teachers, scholars and students consistently posed the same questions about

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon and its historical development. I have thus attempted to use these questions as a framework for summarizing the conclusion of this study.

X.2. Why the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and Not Other Books?

Asking why one text achieves membership in the canon and another does not poses trenchant questions about the forces that drive intellectual history and the possibility of objective scholarly evaluation. Can historians always explain choices made in the past through a materialist lens, or can historical actors establish and act on sets of aesthetics independent from material surroundings? One might contend that there is nothing intrinsic in the writings of Shakespeare that makes them better than the works of other playwrights or poets. The canonical status of *Romeo and Juliet* might ultimately hinge on the number of copies of the text that were produced at some crucial point in time, the nature of the network that distributed and performed the play, the charisma of those scholars who promoted its study or its resonance with some great social issue of the day. Another, better play written by a now-unknown litterateur may have disappeared into history for similar reasons. Canonicity, from this perspective, is the product of material forces and the accidents of history. It is not a matter of objective quality.

This perspective robs the critic or the scholar of his right to aesthetic evaluation; eminently a creature of the material world around him, he is no more able to escape these constraints than the texts he purports to judge. Is this perspective accurate, or must we allow for the serendipitous variable of scholarly preference? Should we acknowledge that a well-respected critic or sincere scholar could rise above the material constraints of

his day and pronounce an influential verdict on a book based on purely aesthetic grounds? It seems that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was the product of both the material accidents of history and the explicit judgments of influential Muslim scholars as to which ḥadīth collections provided the best understanding of the Prophet's charismatic legacy.

To isolate the factors that shaped the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, let us review the fate of four ḥadīth collections written by prominent transmission-based Sunni scholars of the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement between 250/865 and 350/960 in the Khurāsān region: the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965). All these ḥadīth scholars were Sunnis who compiled comprehensive legal and doctrinal references on ḥadīth restricted to only what they considered authentic reports. All four had comparable visions of what Islam and the sunna of the Prophet 'should' be. By the eighth/fourteenth century, all four collections had won approval from the Sunni scholarly community. As our judge of canonicity, let us turn to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, whose seminal study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in fact sparked their canonization. While al-Ḥākim viewed al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections as the pinnacle of critical stringency and excellence in ḥadīth evaluation, he dismissed both the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of his teacher Ibn Ḥibbān and that of his exemplar Ibn Khuzayma.

Ibn Ḥibbān's work seems to have been the victim of the accidents of history. Al-Ḥākim condemned the work of his teacher, a belated participant in the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement, due to the presence of unknown transmitters in its *isnād*s. As we know, however, early members of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network had also been unable to identify some of al-Bukhārī's transmitters. Only after several generations of study were these 'unknown' narrators

identified. For al-Ḥākim, the absence of unknown transmitters in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* proved

central to his claims on the books' authority. Had Ibn Ḥibbān lived a century earlier and

produced his *Ṣaḥīḥ* at the same time as al-Bukhārī, perhaps scholars could have identified

his unknown transmitters as well.

In the case of Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, however, we cannot explain its exclusion

from the canon as the result of material forces or ideological pressures. Influential

scholars who evaluated Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ* simply did not approve of his quality

selections. Ibn Khuzayma was the axis of transmission-based jurisprudence, theology

and ḥadīth study in Khurāsān during the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries.

Our earliest sources on the period accord him accolades that dwarf those of al-Bukhārī

and Muslim.[1] Yet when al-Ḥākim was asked about whether or not Ibn Khuzayma was a

reliable judge of the authenticity of Prophetic reports, he replied, "That I do not say."[2]

Al-Ismāʿīlī had preferred al-Bukhārī's legal analysis to Muslim's relative impartiality,

and Ibn ʿUqda had favored Muslim's isolated focus on Prophetic ḥadīths to al-Bukhārī's

insistence on providing incomplete reports as legal commentary. Yet both these critics

explicitly stated that al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the community with eminently

reliable representations of the Prophet's sunna. Ibn Khuzayma's *Ṣaḥīḥ* never attracted

the scholarly interest heaped on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and its exclusion from the Six Book canon

seems undeniably to be the result of his failure to inspire the same confidence in the

community that canonized al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

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[1] Al-Ḥākim, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 120.

[2] Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 313.

Why the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* played such a salient role in ritual and narrative as opposed to other canonical ḥadīth books grew out of the unique status they achieved at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century. In Islam, an object becomes religious through a perceived link to God and His Prophet. As the community of God's final messenger, guarded against communal error by God Himself, the umma can further enunciate His will through claims of consensus (*ijmāʿ*). Goldziher thus astutely recognized that *ijmāʿ* was the bedrock on which Sunnism was founded.[3] Claims based on the umma's consensus underpinned the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon, and no other book after the Qurʾān could boast such recognition. As objects endowed with religious significance, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were ideally suited to dramatize religious meaning in acts of ritual or represent it in historical narrative.

X.3. What Forces Led to the Canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*?

We have asserted that canons form at the nexus of text, authority and communal identification. By authorizing texts, communities express, delineate and affirm their identities or boundaries. The creation of a canon thus stems from a twofold need to embody authority in text and delineate community through text. We have also contended that the communal drama in which the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* played a salient role was the articulation of Sunnism in the medieval period. Scott C. Lucas has suggested that discovering how such initially controversial figures (from a Sunni perspective) as al-Bukhārī and Abū Ḥanīfa achieved 'Sunni' status remains an important but unanswered

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[3] Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 189-90; Goldziher quoted in Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 253. This observation is reminiscent of the Azhar adage that *ijmāʿ* is '*al-rukn al-rakīn yastanidu ilayi al-dīn.*'

question in the study of this community's history.[4] We might rephrase the question to ask how Sunnism adapted to adopt these figures into its fold.

Sunnism began as the exclusive worldview of the transmission-based scholars, whose fixation with ḥadīths and their literal interpretation was intractably rigid. The über-Sunni credo of Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī or Abū Naṣr al-Wāʾilī brooked no school of thought that had either elaborated a more varied set of interpretive tools for understanding the cosmos, like the Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarīs, or defined the Prophet's sunna by means other than a stubborn obsession with ḥadīths, like the Ḥanafīs.

To explain how the conservative ethos of these 'people of the sunna and community (*ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa*)' expanded to include the relatively diverse four schools of Sunni law as well as the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools of theology, it may be useful to conceive of Sunnism more as a rhetorical mantra than a rigid doctrine. As it solidified in the fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, Sunnism certainly required the espousal of certain specific beliefs: the proper ranking of the Four Rightly Guided caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān then ʿAlī) and the belief that the Qurʾān was uncreated, for example. Beyond such limited dogmatic tenets, however, we can envision Sunnism as an austere rhetorical call to stand fast by the Qurʾān, the Prophet's sunna and the ways of the early community in the face of foreign innovations in faith, thought and practice.

As a rhetorical mantra, Sunnism eventually proved charismatic and flexible enough that differing schools of law or theology were able to take it up in order to affirm

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[4] Personal communication.

their identification with a perceived traditionalist orthodoxy even though their own

doctrines or practices might at times differ significantly from it. The theological and

epistemological school of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935-6) epitomizes this

rhetorical flexibility. Although this scholar publicly repented his Muʿtazilite rationalist

ways and embraced the traditionalist beliefs of Ibn Ḥanbal and the *ahl al-sunna wa al-*

jamāʿa, the school that developed from his writings (and perhaps his writings themselves)

continued to delve deeper into speculative theology and Hellenistic epistemology.[5]

While the über-Sunni strain of the transmission-based school was parochially

limited, the legal and theological tradition that coalesced around the teachings of al-

Shāfiʿī was more open to methods of analogical reasoning and eventually Hellenistic

logic and speculative thought. Just as al-Shāfiʿī himself had accommodated analogical

legal reasoning (*qiyās*) in the transmission-based methodology, so were later

Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs like Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī or al-Juwaynī able to elaborate systems of

legal theory or theology derived significantly from Muʿtazilite rationalism while making

convincing arguments for their loyalty to the ḥadīth-centric Sunni worldview. An Ashʿarī

who had written extensively on speculative theology, al-Juwaynī could when necessary

also avow his membership in the *ahl al-sunna* by trumpeting the mantra that "the

foremost [calling] is following the Salaf and rejecting religious innovation (*bidʿa*)...."[6]

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[5] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul: Dār al-Funūn, [1928]), 280-1.

[6] See, for example, al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya fī al-arkān al-islāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Azhariyya li'l-Turāth, 1412/1992), 23, 32.

Eventually, the Ḥanafī school could also imitate the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī orthodoxy and take up this elastic Sunni mantra. The Ḥanafī interpretive tradition had initially been anathema to the *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa*. Original 'Sunni' scholars had in fact reviled early pivots of the school like Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) as heretical Jahmī rationalists.[7] When a mid-third/ninth century Ḥanafī scholar named Ibn al-Thaljī (d. 265/879) dared to use Prophetic reports to buttress his school against *ahl al-sunna* opponents, Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers devastatingly dismissed him as an 'unbeliever.'[8] The situation had changed dramatically by the time the Sunni edifice was established in its most concretely permanent state in the eighth/fourteenth century. By that time some Ḥanafīs had recast Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī as a proto-Sunni who had advocated the literal interpretation of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth on issues of God's attributes.[9]

This notion of Sunnism as a rhetorical touchstone within arm's reach of a variety of interpretive schools explains the tremendous, almost inconsistent diversity within the later Sunni tradition. A phenomenon unimaginable in the fourth/tenth-century world of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and *ahl al-raʾy* is exemplified by Mullā ʿAlī Qārī (d. 1014/1606), a loyal Ḥanafī who, in the space of one book, quotes Ibn Ḥanbal to condemn speculative theology and logic, embraces the Ashʿarī figurative explanation of God's attributes and

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[7] Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, for example, is quoted as calling Abū Ḥanīfa, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Shaybānī and Abū Yūsuf 'Jahmī;' al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:176.

[8] Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 510-11; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:425-5.

[9] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:449; Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390), *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 215.

describes the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī Sufi ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī as being on the path of the Salaf.[10]

The development and function of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon mirror the development of Sunni identity. What began as the limited interest of a network of Shāfiʿī scholars developed into a strong and shared identification with these two ḥadīth collections among Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī students of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. Representatives from both these schools agreed on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as a common ground for identifying the Prophet's authentic legacy. The other schools of Sunni Islam gradually adopted this convention of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity, authoritative reference and exemplum. Finally, even the Ḥanafīs acceded to identifying with the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as the common language for Sunni discussions of ḥadīth. Although the Shāfiʿīs, Mālikīs, Ḥanbalīs and Ḥanafīs had relied on their own bodies of ḥadīths in their elaboration of law and dogma, they all acknowledged the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as rhetorically paramount in interaction between the schools. In the seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries, when the popular religious institutions of Sunnism such as Sufi brotherhoods were coalescing, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* too became vehicles for public ritual activity.

By acknowledging the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as authoritative, the collection of legal and theological schools within Sunni Islam turned the two works into touchstones of communal identification. In order to understand how the forces of a developing sense of communalism created the canon, we must quickly review how the nature and needs of the

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[10] Mullā ʿAlī Qārī, *Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar*, 25-6, 28, 35, 63. For an expression of Mullā ʿAlī's loyalty to the Ḥanafī legal school, see his *Tashyīʿ fuqahāʾ al-ḥanafiyya li-tashnīʿ sufahāʾ al-shāfiʿiyya*, Ms. 444, Yahya Tavfik Collection, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, fols. 82b-84b.

Muslim scholarly community developed from al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's lifetime to the mid-fifth/eleventh century, when the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon found widespread use and acceptance.

In the years after the deaths of the *Shaykhayn*, Abū Zurʿa and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī continued to ply their scholarly trade in their native Rayy. The two scholars were very conservative members of the transmission-based *ahl al-ḥadīth*, drawing from the scholarship of Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Shāfiʿī equally. Although their study of legal texts like al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar* or Ibn Ḥanbal's *responsa* certainly informed the two Rāzīs' legal and doctrinal opinions, their views were ultimately shaped by their own study and interpretation of ḥadīths back to the Prophet. Like the other major transmission-based scholars of their time, such as Abū Dāwūd, they each constituted their own school of ḥadīth criticism. When Muslim brought his freshly penned *Ṣaḥīḥ* to Abū Zurʿa, he looked through it with the eye of a scholar confidently following his own methodology of evaluating the authenticity of Prophetic reports.

Two hundred years later, the scene of Sunni scholarship had transformed dramatically. Unlike the two Rāzīs, scholars like the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī were no longer willing to draw indifferently from what had become the very distinct Ḥanbalī and Shāfiʿī legal schools. Yet despite this solidification of boundaries, the Sunni universe had expanded beyond the excusive circle of self-sufficient, über-Sunni ḥadīth-based jurists to include figures like al-Juwaynī, a practitioner of dialectical theology and a jurist loyal to a specific body of substantive law. Abū Zurʿa and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī had personally vouched for the strength of their ḥadīths with the confidence their critical

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expertise inspired in their followers, but in the expanded Sunni world of the fifth/eleventh

century a more institutionalized convention was required for discussing attributions to the

Prophet. There existed a real need for a means to compell others to acknowledge a

representation of the Prophet's authoritative legacy. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* provided this common

measure of authenticity. Unlike the Rāzīs, al-Shīrāzī and al-Juwaynī were unable to

critically vet their own corpora of ḥadīths; they needed to turn to authoritative references

to provide commonly accepted reports.

In the fifth/eleventh century, and later when the Ḥanafī school adopted the canon,

the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* acted to both facilitate and define the expanded Sunni community. The two

books provided a common source and reference through which different schools could

address one another in debates and polemics. More importantly, however, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

also functioned as a mantra of communalism. When the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs Abū Isḥāq al-

Isfarāyīnī and al-Juwaynī, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni Abū Naṣr al-Wāʾilī, and the Mālikī

Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī proclaimed independently that 'the community of Muḥammad (*al-*

umma)' had agreed on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as totally authentic vessels for the Prophet's

authoritative legacy, they affirmed their own loyalty to that shared Sunni community.

More importantly, they acknowledged the membership of others who made that claim.

When the Ḥanafī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī attested that al-Bukhārī's opinion on the

authenticity of a ḥadīth was absolutely definitive, he too took up this canonical mantra of

Sunnism. When the Mamluks salaried scholars to read the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* for three months in

the mosques of Cairo or placed al-Bukhārī's collection at the vanguard of their army, the

two books embodied Sunni ritual and political communalism.

Although the pressures of communal identification create the canon, it is the canon that then defines the community. As evident in al-Silafī's declaration that anyone who disagrees with the Five Book ḥadīth canon places himself outside 'the Abode of Islam,' the canon could certainly delineate the boundaries of the Sunni pale. Although the permissibility of criticizing the Ṣaḥīḥayn constituted the norm for centuries, the perceived fragility of the Sunni community in early modern India led Shāh Walī Allāh to equate belittling al-Bukhārī and Muslim with "not following the path of the believers." The ability of texts to determine and shape community, however, is predicated on the compelling power of those books. Neither al-Silafī nor Shāh Walī Allāh could have made their statements before the canonization of the Ṣaḥīḥayn at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century. The relationship between canon and community is dialogic, but only after the community brings the canon into existence.

X.4. Why Did the Canon Form at the Beginning of the 5th/11th Century?

That the Ṣaḥīḥayn canon formed and found its immediate application in the early fifth/eleventh century is not accidental. The emergence of the canon as an institution was both a part and product of the coalescence of the new Sunni order in this period, one that was characterized by the institutionalization of education, modes of patronage and clearly delineated schools of thought. The frustrating ambiguity of the fourth/tenth century, with its fluctuating and languishing categories of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and *ahl al-ra'y*, and the regional laws school, faded as more concrete divisions solidified. The two strands of the transmission-based school, the conservative über-Sunnis and the more moderate strain

associated with the Shāfiʿī tradition, gelled into the guild-like Ḥanbalī and Shāfiʿī schools. By approximately 425/1035 the Ashʿarī school of theology had blossomed into a mature form. By 480/1090 the Mālikīs, Ḥanafīs, Shāfiʿīs and Ḥanbalīs had all composed definitive texts on legal theory, substantive law and ḥadīth and had staked their dogmatic positions in relation to one another. The proliferation of *madrasa*s, founded and funded by wealthy patrons often associated with the Seljuq state, furnished a new institutional setting for the study of the religious sciences. Unlike the merchant and landlord scholars of previous generations, the salaried teachers and stipended students in these *madrasa*s could pursue scholarship in a professional setting.

The institutionalization of Sunnism that spread rapidly from the fifth/eleventh century on occurred on a grand and massively important scale. As Marshall Hodgson recognized, it was in the period from 945 to 1250 CE that Islamicate civilization grew from its adaptive adolescence into a viable institutional framework for a world-civilization.[11] Richard Bulliet has seconded this emphasis on the theme of institutionalization in the fifth/eleventh-century emergence of Sunnism. He explains that this development was "actually the first stage in the dissemination of religious institutions and the standardization of Sunni religious norms that becomes the hallmark of later Islamic history."[12] In particular, Bulliet highlights the transition from the cultivation of ḥadīths with living *isnād*s (Bulliet's 'orality')[13] to the study of ḥadīth collections and the

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[11] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:3.

[12] Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 126-7.

[13] I believe that the term 'living *isnād*' more accurately describes the phenomenon that Bulliet addresses, namely a focus and reliance on direct chains of transmission back to the Prophet as opposed to collections of ḥadīths compiled by authors and then transmitted. A shift to employing books of ḥadīths did

appearance of the *madrasa* system as the twin faces of the revolution that redefined Sunni Islam in the late fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. He links this institutionalization of education, in both the transition from living *isnāds* to books and the spread of the *madrasa*, with the formation of the Sunni ḥadīth canon, since *madrasas* relied on these collections as part of their curricula.[14]

Madrasa curriculum, however, cannot tell us why the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* achieved canonical status in this period. In cities like Qazvīn, ḥadīth study generally continued in large mosques, not *madrasas*. Furthermore, *madrasas* from Egypt to India utilized a large and varied selection of books for instruction. None of these, however, attained the ubiquitous and unparalleled status of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Instead, we must look to the needs created by the Sunni scholarly community's act of self-delineation and its search for the tools required to facilitate internal coherence. Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books had received concerted study in the long fourth century because they provided a network of influential Shāfiʿī scholars with the ideal vehicles for expressing the nature and quality of their command of the Prophet's legacy. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī exploited this network's assiduous study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* to transform al-Bukhārī and Muslim into widely recognized stamps of authenticity. This *kanòn*, he claimed, met the authenticity requirements of both the Sunnis and the single greatest threat to their transmission-based worldview: the Muʿtazilite attempt to limit the role of Prophetic ḥadīths in elaborating law and dogma.

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not obviate the oral nature of study. Even today, the study and transmission of these texts is an oral activity based on the communicative act of hearing the work read.

[14] Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 149.

While the needs and contributions of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network and al-Ḥākim in particular produced the canon, they cannot explain its wider proliferation. The canon flourished among al-Ḥākim's students and other major participants in the Sunni orthodoxy of the fifth/eleventh century because the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* fulfilled specific needs created by its solidification. The need for ḥadīths and ḥadīth collections that could function as epistemologically certain loci of consensus, felt generally in the fourth/tenth century, became more pronounced when distinct legal schools that shared a common Sunni worldview required a common convention for their ceaseless debates over the proper interpretation of the Prophet's sunna. With the institution of the *madrasa* and the division of labor among Sunni scholars in the mid fifth/eleventh century, accepted references for ḥadīth criticism also became necessary for non-ḥadīth specialists. The two books provided a common language and reference for discussing ḥadīths among the Mālikī, Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools in the fifth/eleventh century, with the Ḥanafī school adopting this convention only in the early eighth/fourteenth century.

The adoption of the canon as a common convention for ḥadīth study was certainly related to the shift from the living *isnād* to the transmission of books. It seems, however, that this shift occurred after the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), two scholars who readily employed the canon, still focused much more on living *isnāds* than books in the entries of their mid-fifth/eleventh-century biographical dictionaries. Our sources for the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, however, indicate that *circa* 465/1072 a marked shift occurred toward noting the ḥadīth books that scholars studied as opposed to their living *isnāds* to

the Prophet. In his history of Naysābūr, 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5)

mentions only ten people studying the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* from 385/995 to 465/1072, but from

465/1072 to 545/1150 (some material was added after the author's death by al-Ṣarīfīnī [d.

641/1243-44]) he mentions fifty-five (a 450% increase). Between 385/995 and 465/1072

he mentions only eight other ḥadīth collections, such as the *Sunan*s of al-Nasā'ī and Abū

Dāwūd, being studied. Between 465/1072 and 545/1150 he mentions twenty (a 150%

increase). In his Iraq-Khurāsān-centric *al-Muntaẓam*, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions only nine

instances of a scholar studying a ḥadīth book in the two hundred years between 285/898

and 485/1092. In the period of only eighty years between 485/1092 and 565/1170 he

mentions seventeen (a 90% increase). Yet we know that despite these statistically

dramatic changes, a strong attachment to the living *isnād* endured. Well into the

500/1100s, scholars like Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169-70) still defined ḥadīth

scholarship as the living transmission of individual ḥadīths from the Prophet as opposed

to the study of ḥadīth collections.

Although it is difficult to date precisely two such intangible events, it thus seems

that the emergence of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon in the early fifth/eleventh century preceded the

first indications of a shift from living *isnād*s to the transmission of books by at least fifty

years. We can see this clearly in the case of scholars who employed the canon while still

depending wholly on their own living *isnād*s to the Prophet. Scholars like Abū Bakr al-

Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and al-Khaṭīb did not need ḥadīth books to provide the content of

their ḥadīth works; these they filled with their own full-length living *isnād*s. They did

need collections like the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, however, to guarantee the authenticity of these

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ḥadīths. The canon formed because scholars needed a stamp of approval for ḥadīths, and this could only come from consensus on a ḥadīth collection.

X.5. Did the Canon Emerge from Ferment and Strife?

Studies of canons and canonization have often identified periods of ideological ferment or strife as the seedbeds of scriptural canons.[15] Just as a proclamation of orthodoxy arises as a response to perceived threats of interpretive plurality, so does a canon emerge as an attempt to dominate the textual landscape of a religious tradition. As a corollary, this combative emphasis in canon studies has led to a focus on canons as "heavy weapons," tools for control and exclusion.[16] Western scholars have thus not fully appreciated the capacity of canons to create common convention and bridge rifts. Menzies alone argued that canons may well form in the reconstructive wake of conflict.[17] Indeed, just as the Ṣaḥīḥayn provided a common language for Sunnism, the canon resulted from the institutional consolidation of an expanded orthodoxy in the wake of tumultuous plurality.

The consistent intensification of the Ṣaḥīḥayn canonical culture after the careers of Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in the late fourth/tenth and mid-fifth/eleventh centuries also coincides with the consolidation of Sunnism. As Jonathan Berkey states, Sunnism of the fifth/eleventh century was engaged in a process of

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[15] Halbertal, 4-5; Hanaway, 3.

[16] Hanaway, 3; Kermode, "Institutional Control of Interpretation," 77.

[17] Menzies, 91.

minimizing "sources of contention."[18] The dogged creed of communalism that Hodgson states characterized Sunnism after this period perfectly describes the canonical culture's goal of suppressing opinions that threatened the institutional roles of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Sunni communalism demanded "loyalty to the community and its acknowledged symbols... even at the expense of all other values." Most assuredly, the canonical culture required Sunnis to affirm the community's consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at the expense of the established conventions of ḥadīth criticism and the historical record of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's pre-canonical images.[19]

X.6 Was the Canon a Response to Shiism or the Product of the Seljuq State?

Although the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* served as a unifying bond within the Sunni community, was this broad inclusivity the byproduct of an effort to exclude non-Sunnis? Many scholars have identified the emergence of institutional Sunnism in the fifth/eleventh century as a defensive reaction to the tremendous power of Shiism in the fourth/tenth century. Did the Imāmī Shiite Buyid dynasty's dominanation of the Abbasid caliphate in Iraq and Iran, and the meteoric rise of Fatimid power in Egypt, Syria and the Ḥijāz, catalyze the institutional consolidation of Sunnism? Was this reaction instigated and encouraged by the threatened Sunni Seljuq state, many of whose leading functionaries fell before the daggers of Ismāʿīlī assassins?

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[18] Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 189-90.

[19] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 2:193.

Some scholars have deemphasized the place of state sponsorship in the consolidation of Sunnism. One of the architects of the notion of the 'Sunni revival' was George Makdisi, who viewed it as a victory of traditionalism and credited it to the tremendous popular appeal of the Ḥanbalī school in Baghdad, not to the Seljuq state.[20]

Others have understood the new Sunni order through a decidedly political lens. Hodgson associated it with Niẓām al-Mulk's *madrasa* system, which epitomized the Seljuq-fostered framework that replaced the vanished Abbasid caliphal state with a new dispensation of uniformity. This state-sponsored *madrasa* system "carried on the task of maintaining essential unity in the community's heritage" as bequeathed by the Prophet and his Companions.[21]

The construct of a state-sponsored Sunni revival has been intimately bound to the Seljuqs' Shiite adversaries, both the ousted Buyids and the more immediately threatening Ismāʿīlī Fatimids. Lapidus thus concluded that the fifth/eleventh-century institutionalization of a Sunni orthodoxy was a politically led reaction to Shiite power. The Abbasid caliph al-Qādir, who promulgated the famously anti-Shiite Qādirī creed in the twilight shadows of Buyid suzerainty, the Seljuqs and their successor dynasties of the Ayyubids and Mamluks all promoted an institutionalized Sunni orthodoxy as part of a drive to unite society around a state-embraced Sunni cause. This was exemplified by Niẓām al-Mulk and Malikshāh's efforts to mollify through patronage all the major non-Shiite factions in the various feuds on the Baghdad-Khurāsān circuit: the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarīs,

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[20] Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 237-8.

[21] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:48, 192.

Ḥanbalīs and Ḥanafīs.[22] Bulliet, however, disagrees with equating the Sunni revival with a reaction to Shiism. Instead, we should view it as an attempt to define Sunnism according to "centrally espoused dogma" (he thus admits that it is at least in some way the result of state policy).[23] Jonathan Berkey follows Bulliet in downplaying the threat of Shiism or an anti-Shiite Seljuq policy as an engine for the crystallization of Sunnism. Bulliet and Berkey both point out that the Seljuqs often adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the powerful Imāmī Shiite interests in cities like Baghdad. For example, Niẓām al-Mulk and his master Malikshāh both married their daughters to Shiite nobles and appointed Shiite ministers.[24]

Neither Bulliet nor Berkey, however, sufficiently notes that it was the Ismāʿīlīs and not the relatively harmless Imāmī Shiites who alarmed the Seljuq state and Sunni scholars alike. Sunni firebrands such as the caliph al-Qādir certainly condemned Imāmī Shiites, but, as Abū al-Ḥusayn Qazvīnī found himself insisting in his *Ketāb-e naqḍ*, it was the Ismāʿīlīs whom the Sunnis truly feared. It was Ismāʿīlī propaganda that proved so appealing to the intellectual elite in the major metropolises of the Seljuq realm, and Ismāʿīlī assassins who represented the single greatest external danger to the stability of the Seljuq dynasty. This threat had earlier sparked an unlikely alliance between the Sunni caliph al-Qādir, his Shiite Buyid overlords and the Imāmī Shiite scholars of

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[22] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*; 164, 173-4.

[23] Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 126-7.

[24] Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 148; Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 191.

Baghdad. In 402/1011 they jointly promulgated an anti-Ismāʿīlī manifesto directed at the encroaching Fatimid state.[25]

While the consolidation of Sunnism in the fifth/eleventh century may well have been a response to the Fatimid threat and Ismāʿīlī propaganda, we cannot identify any direct effect on the formation of the ḥadīth canon. Shiism, whether Imāmī or Ismāʿīlī, never surfaces in the various discourses surrounding the authorization of the Ṣaḥīḥayn. The canon was, in fact, a boon to Imāmī Shiites like Qazvīnī, who turned to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's compelling authority in attempts to trump Sunni opponents by using their own proof texts against them. Ultimately, the Ṣaḥīḥayn were more a unifying element within Sunnism than a tool for excluding the Shiite other.

In the sense that the Ismāʿīlī threat and any resulting Seljuq patronage of non-Shiite schools helped bring Sunnism to institutional maturity, the canon can be seen as part of a response to Shiism. This perspective only holds true, however, at the most global level of analysis. Those scholars who participated in the various discourses that produced the ḥadīth canon did not exhibit any concern for a Shiite threat in their related writings or understand the Ṣaḥīḥayn as a tool for excluding non-Sunnis. To the contrary, the earliest recorded usages of the canon are directed at either Muʿtazilites or adherents of other Sunni schools with an emphasis on the inclusive consensus that those who wielded the canon claimed it enjoyed. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, a member of the Ṣaḥīḥayn Network who was very familiar with al-Ḥākim's work, thus did not refer to al-Bukhārī and Muslim in his manual for debating Imāmī Shiites. Although Abū Nuʿaym refers to

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[25] D. Sourdel, "al-Kādir," *EI²*.

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ḥadīths he argues are agreed on by all Muslims, citing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would simply have

had no proof value for his Shiite opponents.

X.7. Was the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Canon the Product of or Limited to a Specific Region?

The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon germinated in the scholarly circles of Naysābūr, Jurjān and

Baghdad during the first half of the long fourth century. Its articulation and early usage

took place in the writings and debates of scholars traveling between the great urban

centers of the Nile-Oxus Islamicate heartlands. Beyond these early stages, however, the

history of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon does not diverge markedly from the course charted by

Islamic history in general. Where Sunnism flourished, the canon followed.

Roy Mottahedeh has pointed out the prominence of Khurāsānī scholars in the

articulation of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition in the third/ninth century.[26] Richard Bulliet

extends this geographical focus in both chronology and import, arguing that the

institutions that characterized the Sunni revival in the great imperial center of Baghdad,

such as the *madrasa*, were truly imports from the Iranian east.[27]

The ḥadīth canon, however, was not the product of eastern Iran alone. Certainly,

figures central to the canonization of the two works such as al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī

resided mostly in Khurāsān. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network, however, that readied the two books

for canonization, and the cadre of Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī and Ḥanbalī scholars who first

promoted the canon, were first and foremost participants in the highly mobile and

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[26] Roy Mottahedeh, "The Transmission of Learning. The Role of the Islamic Northeast," *Madrasa*, eds. Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 1997), 68.

[27] Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 146.

cosmopolitan scholarly culture that dominated Islamic civilization from the third/ninth to the sixth/twelfth centuries. Khurāsān was only one province in this wider world. Al-Dāraquṭnī never voyaged east of Baghdad, Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī divided his career between the Abbasid capital and Khurāsān, and both Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī spent significant portions of their careers in the Ḥijāz.

Furthermore, the expanded Sunni community to which the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon proved so useful in the mid-fifth/eleventh century and beyond was just as present in North Africa, Baghdad, Egypt, or Isfahan as eastern Iran. Scholars in any city on the great scholarly/mercantile circuit that ran from Mecca to Transoxiana or westward to Andalusia would have appreciated the need for a common measure of authenticity, an authoritative reference or a standard of excellence in ḥadīth study. The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was a product of these far-flung urban centers and dusty roads of the dominant Ḥijāz – Baghdād – Khurāsān – Transoxiana circuit of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.

Oddly, the tremendous geographical distance between Andalusia and the central Islamicate heartlands proved unimportant in the spread and usage of the canon. While the rugged mountains between Jurjān and Naysābūr had restricted the movement of information on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in the first half of the fourth/tenth century, the vast expanses of desert, plain and ocean between Cordova and Baghdad were of little significance in the history of the canon. Not only did Andalusian scholars who had voyaged east, such as Qāsim b. Aṣbagh of Cordova and Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī of Badajoz, participate visibly in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* Network and early applications of the canon respectively, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

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attracted significant attention in Andalusia itself. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* first arrived in Andalusia not long after it achieved fame in the East. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Aṣīlī (d. 392/1002), a judge in Saragossa, received the book from Abū Zayd al-Marwazī in Mecca and brought it back to Andalusia.[28] His teacher, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012), also brought the collection back to the North African city of Qayrawān.[29] Their student al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra Aḥmad al-Marīyyī (d. 435/1044), a judge in the Andalusian town of Almeria, wrote a commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that was in fact the first such work devoted to the book anywhere since al-Khaṭṭābī had written his *Aʿlām al-sunan* fifty years earlier.[30]

Two generations later, al-Jayyānī (d. 498/1105) became an important participant in the study and development of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon without ever leaving Andalusia.[31] He collected six separate transmissions of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* through the author's senior student, al-Firabrī, as well as another prominent transmission from Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī. Al-Jayyānī had the two most famous transmissions of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* as well (those of al-Qalānisī and Ibn Sufyān).[32] In addition, he had copies of al-Ḥākim's *Tārīkh Naysābūr* and his *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. Although he was writing only a few years after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's death, al-Jayyānī also had a copy of the massive *Tārīkh*

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[28] Al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis*, 240; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:560.

[29] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:159.

[30] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:579.

[31] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:22.

[32] Al-Jayyānī, *al-Tanbīh ʿalā al-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ li 'l-Bukhārī*, 22; idem, *al-Tanbīh ʿalā al-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim*, 35-41.

Baghdād.[33] Some of the most influential studies of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, such as al-Jayyānī's study of al-Bukhārī's teachers and al-Māzarī's and al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, came from the Maghrib. Although he was famously unaware of al-Tirmidhī's existence, Ibn Ḥazm rated the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as the two best collections of ḥadīth. After *madrasas* were founded in the Maghrib, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* became standard texts for ḥadīth study among the majority Mālikī school.[34]

To the extreme east of the classical Islamic world, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was at the vanguard of ḥadīth scholarship in South Asia as it grew steadily from the seventh/thirteenth century on. The first Indian to leave any trace of studying the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* was also the first renowned Indian ḥadīth scholar in general. A native of Lahore, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252), penned a study of al-Bukhārī's teachers, a commentary on his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and a famous combined edition of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the *Mashāriq al-anwār*.[35] Al-Ṣaghānī spent much of his time studying in the Ḥijāz and serving the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir, who sent him back to India from Baghdad as the Abbasid ambassador to the Delhi Sultanate. Otherwise, it was not until the 700/1300s that any real study of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* started in South Asia proper. According to Muhammad Ishaq, the first mention of the two works comes in the work of Makhdūm al-Mulk Sharaf al-Dīn sometime between 741/1340 and 786/1384.[36]

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[33] Al-Jayyānī, *al-Tanbīh ʿalā al-awhām al-wāqiʿa fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-imām Muslim*, 30-34.

[34] See Wadād al-Qāḍī, "al-Madrasa fī al-Maghrib fī ḍawʾ Kitāb al-miʿād li'l-Wansharīy," in *al-Fikr al-tarbawī al-islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Maqāṣid al-Islāmiyya, 1401/1981), 147.

[35] Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 230.

[36] Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 77.

This history of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in South Asia, however, reflects the study of ḥadīth in that region in general. Although there had been limited ḥadīth scholarship in Lahore under the Ghaznavids in the late fifth/eleventh and early sixth/twelfth centuries, it was the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate that marked the beginning of continuous Muslim scholarship in northern India. Even then, however, the study of ḥadīth was limited to al-Baghawī's *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna* and al-Ṣaghānī's *Mashāriq al-anwār* (in effect, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*), the two books that provided the narrow foundations of the ḥadīth curriculum in the new Nāṣiriyya and Mu'izzī colleges in Delhi.[37] Ḥadīth scholarship in northern India was thus built on al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's canonical status as manifested in al-Baghawī's and al-Ṣaghānī's digests of two works. 'Abd al-Awwal al-Ḥusaynī al-Zaydpūrī (d. 968/1560), who lived in Gujarat and Delhi, wrote the first Indian commentary on al-Bukhārī's collection: the *Fayḍ al-bārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.[38] In the wake of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Sayf al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642), the Indian scholar who truly replicated the intense ḥadīth scholarship of the Islamic heartlands in India, ḥadīth study flourished in the subcontinent. From that point onward, almost every major Indian ḥadīth scholar produced a commentary on al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Many commentaries were written in Persian, with Sirāj Aḥmad al-Mujaddadī (d. 1230/1815) even translating *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* directly into Persian.[39] In light of the prominent place of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* in South Asian Islam, it is no surprise that the great Sufi scholar Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā' (d.

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[37] Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 49.

[38] Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 129.

[39] Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 143.

725/1325) rebutted a ḥadīth used against him in a debate by stating only the contents of the Ṣaḥīḥayn are assuredly authentic.[40]

X.8. Conclusion

The Muslim ḥadīth tradition and the manifold roles of ḥadīth in Islamic civilization can stretch the historian's analogical abilities to their limits. It is not difficult to imagine that reports from the Prophet Muḥammad played a central role in defining Islamic doctrinal and legal thought. As different schools matured and competed, it was natural that the authenticity of ḥadīths became an issue of great communal import. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim remain enduring symbols of the system of ḥadīth criticism and authentication that Muslim scholars from Andalusia to Transoxiana developed on so daunting a scale and with such internal consistency that it ranks among mankind's greatest intellectual accomplishments. Just as we admire the logical or ethical explications of Peripatetic philosophers regardless of the accuracy of their conclusions today, we need only shift our gaze slightly to examine in wonder the web of intersecting lines of transmission that weave downward and outward from the Prophetic singularity along the dome of time and space.

Yet beyond the role of ḥadīth in law and doctrine, it seems almost incomprehensible how such a large number of people from all reaches of society could devote themselves so totally to collecting and sifting through reports from the Prophet.

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[40] Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, *Nizam ad-din Awliya: Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*, trans. Bruce B. Lawrence (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 200.

Histories like al-Khaṭīb's *Tārīkh Baghdād* or al-Dhahabī's *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* are replete with normal individuals who traveled for months simply to collect an additional version of a Prophetic report for which they already possessed one narration. Even more shocking is the obvious fact that most of these ḥadīth collectors had little concern for the actual authenticity of these reports.

Perhaps, however, the question of the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim reminds us that such a distant and fantastic past is not actually far removed from us today. Even today, historical authenticity is not prized by all equally. Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī understood that in making authenticity paramount, one may sacrifice the tools necessary for communal coherence. As al-Albānī's conflict with the traditional schools of law demonstrates, there are real questions as to what extent the institutional needs of the community trump 'scholarly integrity.' The *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canon was shaped by communal needs and priorities as they shifted over time. What does the Muslim community need today?

APPENDIX I: REFERENCES FOR *SAHĪHAYN* NETWORK CHART

This appendix provides the references for the material presented in Chapter Four's *Sahīhayn* Network Chart. It is organized by the regions shown in the chart, with chronological distribution within each region.

Baghdad:

Ibn Rumayḥ Abū Saʿīd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nasawī (d. 357/967-8): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:210-11; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:96.

Al-Dāraquṭnī, ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 385/995): al-Ghassānī, *Tanbīh*, 39; Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon."

Al-Lālakāʾī, Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. Manṣūr (d. 418/1027-28): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:71-2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:456-7; idem *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:189.

Al-Barqānī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 425/1033-34): Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:137-40; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*; 14:281-2, 333, 379, 15:242; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-shāfiʿiyya*, 1:363-5; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:464-8; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:183.

Al-Dimashqī, Abū Masʿūd Ibrāhīm (d. 401/1010-11): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:170-1; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:180.

Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d. 400/1010): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:329-30; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:179-80; al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 125.

Al-Khallāl, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Abī Ṭālib b. al-Ḥasan (d.

439/1047): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:437-8; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:205;

idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 29:471-2.

Egypt and the Ḥijāz:

Ibn al-Sakan, Abū ʿAlī Saʿīd b. ʿUthmān al-Bazzāz (d. 353/964): al-Dhahabī,

Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:100; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:88-9.

Abū Dharr al-Harawī, ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad (d. 430/1038): ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī,

Tārīkh Naysābūr, 607; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:201-3, 244.

Jurjān:

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū Aḥmad al-Jurjānī (d. 373-74/983-85): al-Khaṭīb,

Tārīkh Baghdād, 3:441; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:549.

Ibn ʿAdī, ʿAbdallāh Abū Aḥmad (d. 365/975-6): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291-2; al-Sahmī,

Tārīkh Jurjān, 106; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:102-3; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*,

26:241.

Al-Ismāʿīlī, Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm Abū Bakr (d. 371/981-2): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291; al-

Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 87; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 14:281-2; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṭabaqāt al-*

fuqahā' al-shāfiʿiyya, 417-418; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:106-7; al-Subkī,

Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya, 3:8.

Al-Ghiṭrīfī, Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 377/977-8): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 292; al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 488; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:43; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:120-22; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:614-5.

Naysābūr:

Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-ʿAbbās al-Ṣāʾigh al-Rāzī (d. 270/883): Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ wa ajwibatuhu ʿalā as'ilat al-Bardhaʿī*, 2:674; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 12:363; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:133-4; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:149-50.

Ibn Rajāʾ, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 286/899): Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:186; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:288.

Al-Bazzār, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama al-Naysābūrī (d. 286/899): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:408; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:156.

Ibn al-Jārūd, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī (d. 307/919-20): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:12-3.

Al-Ḥīrī, Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān (d. 311/923-4): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:337-8; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 88; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:402-3; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:232.

Abū ʿAwāna, Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 312/924-5 - 316): al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:525-6.

Al-Sarrāj, Abū al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm (d. 313/925): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 310-11; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 1:264-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:462-4; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 2:215.

Ibn ʿAmmār al-Shahīd, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 317/929-30): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:37; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:546-7.

Al-Juwaynī, Abū ʿImrān Mūsā b. al-ʿAbbās al-Naysābūrī (d. 323/934-5): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:27; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 24:139-40.

Al-Balādhurī, Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭūsī (d. 329/940-1): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:72; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:169.

Al-Qurṭubī, Abū Muḥammad Qāsim b. Aṣbagh al-Mālikī (d. 340/951): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:49; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:192-3; al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 20.

Abū ʿAlī al-Naysābūrī (d. 349/960): Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ*, 71; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:70-2; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:80; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

Al-Umawī al-Qazvīnī, Abū al-Walīd Ḥassān b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 344/955): al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' aš-Šāfiʿiyya*, 74; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 90; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz̧*, 3:75; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8.

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Ibn al-Akhram, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Naysābūrī (d. 344/955): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 315; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:55; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:312-3; cf. Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ*, 73.

Al-Ḥīrī, Abū Sa'īd Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 353/964): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:225-6; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:89; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:84.

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Al-Shārikī, Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shārik al-Harawī (d. 355/966): al-'Abbādī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' aš-Šāfi'iyya*, 58; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:227-8.

Al-Zaghūrī, Abū 'Alī (d. 359/969-70): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 71.

Al-Shammākhī, Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad (d. 372/982): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:8-9; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:360-1.

Ibn Dhuhl, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. al-'Abbās al-Harawī (d. 378/988): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:335-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:634-5; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:141, 158.

Al-Māsarjisī, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad (d. 365/976): 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī tahdhīb al-ansāb*, 2:147-8; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:110-11; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:337-8.

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al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 187; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:123-4.

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Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:146; idem, *Siyar*,

16:493-4.

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Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ aš-Šāfiʿiyya, 100; ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, 153; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*

al-islām, 29:213.

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Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:105-6; idem, *Siyar*, 16:276-80.

Al-Shīrāzī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAbdān of Ahwāz (d. 388/998): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*,

335; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:161.

Ibn Manda, Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (d. 395/1004-5): al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*,

27:320-4; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:158.

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Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ, 3:169.

Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 430/1038): al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 29:274-280; Ibn al-Najjār, *Kitāb al-radd*, 145; "Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī," *Dā'erat al-maʿāref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 6:339.

Al-Milanḥī, Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm al-Iṣbahānī (d. 486/1093): Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 17:6; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 33:17305; al-Albānī, *Fihris makhṭūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhiriyya*, 550.

Transoxiana:

ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥayyawayh (d. 368/978-9): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11:43; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:290-1.

Ḥamd b. Muḥammad Abū Sulaymān al-Khāṭṭābī (d. 388/998): Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:129; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, 3:284-90; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:166-7; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:149-150.

Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Kalābādhī (d. 398/1008): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:201; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:154-5; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:355.

ʿUmar b. ʿAlī Abū Muslim al-Laythī al-Bukhārī (d. 466-8): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4:24.

APPENDIX II: DIVORCE OATHS

Swearing to divorce one's wife if one's oath is not fulfilled was a topos in classical Islamic civilization. Among scholars, it functioned as a rhetorical device to emphasize a person's certainty on an issue. Al-Ḥasan b. Ḥammād Sajjāda (d. 241/855-6), a ḥadīth scholar of Baghdad, thus told a man who had sworn to divorce his wife if he talked to an unbeliever that talking to someone who said the Qur'ān was created obliged a divorce.[1] This story was designed to equate belief in the created Qur'ān with disbelief. Scholars also used the divorce oath as a test case in many legal studies.[2] By the 700/1300s this type of oath had grown common enough to elicit a vehement rebuttal from Ibn Taymiyya, who did not consider such socially destructive oaths to have any effect on the marital status of their utterers.[3]

An early figure who often appears in the context of such vows was Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 264/878). In a story related in Ibn ʿAdī's fourth/tenth-century source al-Kāmil concerning Abū Zurʿa's mastery of ḥadīth, the narrator of the story sees a man ask another man aboard a ship, "What do you say about a man who swears that he'd divorce his wife three times that you have memorized 100,000 ḥadīths?" The other man puts his head down for a while and says, "Go, you and he would be upstanding in your oath, but

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[1] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:306 (biography of al-Ḥasan b. Ḥammād).

[2] See, for example, Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Asnawī (d. 776/1374-5), *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī takhrīj al-furūʿ al-fiqhiyya ʿalā al-masāʾil al-naḥwiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Saʿdī ([Kuwait]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1404/1984).

[3] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 428–430.

don't bring such things up again." The narrator asks, "Who is that man?" and the other person replies, "Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī." In the *Tārīkh Baghdād*, this story is followed by another report in which a man swears by divorce that Abū Zurʿa has memorized 100,000 ḥadīths, so a group of people goes to Abū Zurʿa to know whether that man has really divorced his wife or not. Abū Zurʿa tells them that she has not been divorced.[4]

A later instance of a divorce oath being used to bolster a scholarly position occurred in the sixth/twelfth century. Abū al-ʿIzz Aḥmad b. ʿUbaydallāh Ibn Kādish (d. 526/1132) al-ʿUkbarī (or al-ʿUkbarawī) said, "If someone swore an oath of final divorce (*bi'l-ṭalāq thalāth^{an}*) that God seats Muḥammad (ṣ) on the throne, then asked me for a legal opinion [on the validity of this oath], I would say, 'You have stayed true to your word and been just.'"[5]

Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) found himself faced with a *fatwā* request from someone who had sworn to divorce his wife if his claim that al-Shāfiʿī was the greatest *imām* of his time and that his school is the best *madhhab* were false. Al-Nawawī replies that divorce was not necessary here.[6]

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[4] Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:333; cf. Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, 1:141.

[5] Cf. al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd*, 24; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:558-60; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 1:218.

[6] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā al-imām al-Nawawī*, 140.

APPENDIX III: THE QUESTION OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE ṢAḤĪḤAYN

Several scholars have argued that the texts of the Ṣaḥīḥayn did not stabilize until some time after the deaths of their authors. In light of such realities as "organic texts, pseudepigraphy and long-term redactional activity," Norman Calder claimed, "Apparently the product of the devoted and orderly activity of a single person, works like the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim should probably be recognized as emerging into final form at least one generation later than the dates recorded for the deaths of the putative authors...."[1] Based on his analysis of a partial fifth/eleventh-century manuscript of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Alphonse Mingana concluded that the text was still in a relatively fluid form at that point in time. Yet there is little available evidence suggesting that, beyond the normal permutations of manuscript transmission for texts as large and detailed as the Ṣaḥīḥayn, either al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's books were altered substantially after their deaths.

The Ṣaḥīḥayn are two massive works, and the vagaries of manuscript transmission introduced the possibility of frequent variation even for a text transmitted intact from its author. Several generations of editors, such as Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 430/1038), al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252) and the Egyptian Ḥanbalī al-Yūnīnī (d. 658/1260), thus played important roles in collating different transmissions of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī into vulgate

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[1] Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence*, 194.

editions.[2] Such editorial review, however, was endemic to the pre-print world and does not reflect any instability specific to the Ṣaḥīḥayn.

Mingana based his assertion that al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ remained in fluid form through the early fifth/eleventh century on his observation that two of the chapters of the manuscript that he examined were out of normal order and that each narration began with "al-Bukhārī informed us...," a feature not found in the dominant recensions of the text.[3] Yet Mingana's partial manuscript of the Ṣaḥīḥ consisted of only three chapters. We have no evidence that the ordering of the remaining ninety-four chapters was irregular.

Besides Mingana's unconvincing evidence, there are other indications that al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ varied slightly in content as it was transmitted from its author through his various students. We know from al-Kalābādhī that al-Bukhārī was transmitting his Ṣaḥīḥ during his own lifetime. Al-Kalābādhī informs us that al-Bukhārī had been narrating his Ṣaḥīḥ to students for at least eight years before his death.[4] As the author was almost certainly making adjustments to his work throughout his life, it should not surprise us that the different narrations of the Ṣaḥīḥ from al-Bukhārī's students varied from one another. When compared with the enduring transmission of the Ṣaḥīḥ from al-Bukhārī's most famous student, al-Firabrī, his other student Ḥammād b. Shākir's (d. 290/902-3) recension of the text contained two hundred fewer narrations. Ibrāhīm b.

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[2] For discussions of these different editors and their contributions, see Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī*, 16-18; Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, "How al-Buhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was edited in the middle ages: 'Alī al-Yūnīnī and his *Rumūz*," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 50 (1998): 191-222; and Johann Fück, "Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschicte von Buhārī's Traditionssammlung," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 60- 82.

[3] Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī*; 1, 6, 9, 14.

[4] Al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:24.

Ma'qil al-Nasafī's (d. 295/907-8) was three hundred less.[5] But according to Ibn Ḥajar's count, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains a total of 9,082 narrations of all sorts.[6] We should thus not consider a variation of three hundred narrations, roughly 3% of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, evidence of an incomplete or fluid text.

The other major piece of evidence suggesting that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was edited significantly after his death has been Abū Isḥāq al-Mustamlī's (d. 376/986-7) statement that, upon examining his teacher al-Firabrī's copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, he noticed that some sections were still in draft form. Specifically, several subchapter headings lacked ḥadīths, and several ḥadīths appeared with no subchapter headings. Al-Mustamlī explains that he and his fellow students therefore tried to arrange the unsorted material in its proper place (*fa-aḍafnā ba ʿd dhālik ilā ba ʿḍ*).[7] Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, however, contains ninety-seven chapters and approximately 3,750 subchapters. That al-Firabrī's copy of the text had what seems to be a relatively small number of missing subchapter headings does not call into question the general integrity of the text.

Evidence suggests that Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was also completed within his own lifetime, and there is little indication that the text mutated beyond the normal vagaries of transmission after his death. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) mentions that Muslim left his work without chapter titles, but we have no corroboration for this report, which postdates Muslim's death by some four hundred years.[8] Otherwise, Muslim's students and

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[5] Al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īḍāḥ*, 26-7.

[6] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 648-53.

[7] Al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhu al-Taʿdīl wa al-tajrīḥ*, 1:310-1.

[8] Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:129.

contemporaries considered his collection complete at the time of his death. Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī mentioned that Abū Bakr al-Faḍl al-Ṣāʾigh (d. 270/883) had composed a *mustakhraj* of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* during Muslim's lifetime. Muslim's colleagues Ibn Rajāʾ (d. 286/899) and Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama (d. 286/899) did the same.[9] Presumably, *mustakhrajs* could only have been produced on the basis of completed template collections.

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[9] Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ wa ajwibatuhu ʿalā asʾilat al-Bardhaʿī*, 2:674; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 89; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:408; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60.

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