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THE TRANSMISSION AND COLLECTION
OF PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Despite its seemingly arcane nature, the hadith tradition emerged in the early days of Islam as a practical solution to the needs of the Muslim community. In the wake of the Prophet's death, his teachings served as an obvious source of guidance for the nascent Islamic community as it struggled to determine how to live according to God's will now that he was gone. The study of hadiths began as a practical attempt to gather, organize, and sift through the authoritative statements and behavior attributed to the Prophet. In the subsequent centuries, the hadith tradition developed to meet new needs as they evolved. By the close of the tenth century, the transmission and collection of hadiths had acquired a new dimension – quite apart from the contents of any hadith, the report and its *isnād* became a medium of connection to the Prophet that created authority and precedence within the Muslim community. The development of hadith literature is thus best understood in light of the two general functions that hadiths fulfilled, that of an authoritative maxim used to elaborate Islamic law and dogma, and that of a form of connection to the Prophet's charismatic legacy.

This chapter traces the origins and development of Sunni hadith transmission and collection from the beginning of Islam until the modern period. Any mention of the notion of 'authenticity' or 'authentic (*sahīh*)' hadiths in this chapter refers to the Sunni Muslim criteria for reliability and its system of hadith criticism, the mechanics of which will be discussed fully in the next chapter. 'Authentic' or 'forged' here thus has no necessary correlation to whether or not

the Prophet Muhammad *really* said that statement or not. Debates over 'what really happened' in the history of hadith will occupy us in Chapter 8.

INHERITING THE PROPHET'S AUTHORITY

In Islam, religious authority emanates from God through His Prophet. Whether by referring to the Prophet's teachings directly or through the methods of religious problem-solving inherited from him, only through a connection to God and His Prophet does a Muslim acquire the right to speak authoritatively about Islamic law and belief. In the formative period of Islam, Muslims thus 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. It was the form through which this authoritative legacy was transmitted – whether via Prophetic reports or methods of legal reasoning – that created different schools of thought in the early Islamic period and led to the emergence of the hadith tradition.

In the Prophet's adopted home, the city of Medina, al-Qāsim b. Muhammad 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 hadiths, 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 Quran and the Prophet's legacy, as well as those of founding fathers such as the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb, were collected and synthesized by the famous Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796). In Kufa, the Prophet's friend and pillar of the early Muslim community, ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd (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 ʿAlqama b. Qays (d. 62/681) transmitted these teachings to a promising junior, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 95/714), who in turn passed on his approaches and methods of legal reasoning to Hammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120/738). His student of eighteen years, Abū Hanīfa (d. 150/767), would become a cornerstone of legal study in Iraq and the eponym of the Hanafī school of law. Unlike Medina, the cradle of the Muslim community where Muhammad's legacy thrived as

living communal practice, the diverse 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 hadiths falsely attributed to the Prophet. Abū Hanīfa thus preferred relying cautiously on the Quran, well-established hadiths and the methods of legal reasoning learned from his teachers rather than risk acting on these fraudulent hadiths.

By the mid eighth century, two general trends in interpreting and applying Islam had emerged in its newly conquered lands. For both these trends, the Quran 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, which participated in establishing the faith and inherited the Prophet's authority, were the lenses through which scholars like Abū Hanīfa and Mālik understood these two sources. Another early scholar, ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Awzāʿī of Beirut (d. 157/773–4), thus stated that 'religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) is what has come to us from the Companions of the Prophet; what has not is not knowledge.'[1] In Sunni Islam, a Companion is anyone who saw the Prophet while a Muslim and died as a Muslim. When presented with a situation for which the Quran and the well-known teachings of the Prophet and his Companions provided no clear answer, scholars like Abū Hanīfa relied on their own interpretations of these sources to respond. Such scholars were known as the *ahl al-raʾy*, or the Partisans of Legal Reasoning.

Other pious members of the community preferred to limit themselves to the opinions of the earliest generations of Muslims and more dubious reports from the Prophet rather than speculate in a realm they felt was the exclusive purview of God and His Prophet. The great scholar of Baghdad, Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/855), epitomized this transmission-based approach to understanding law and faith in his famous statement: 'You hardly see anyone applying reason (*raʾy*) [to some issue of religion or law] except that there lies, in his heart, some deep-seated resentment. An unreliable narration [from the Prophet] is thus dearer to me than the use of reason.'[2] Such transmission-based scholars, referred to as 'the Partisans of Hadith (*ahl al-hadīth*),' 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 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.

For the *ahl al-hadīth*, reports traced back to the Prophet, bearing his name and conveying his authority, were *prima facie* compelling. Even if a scholar were not sure that a hadith was reliable, the powerful phrase 'the Messenger of God said...' possessed great authority. Many unreliable hadiths were used in efforts to understand the meaning of Quranic words, to reconstruct the campaigns of the Prophet, to document the virtues of the Companions or simply in preaching that exhorted Muslims towards piety. Even in legal issues, where as we shall see scholars like Ibn Hanbal were more rigorous about authenticating hadiths, *ahl al-hadīth* scholars sometimes depended on unreliable hadiths. It was amid this vying between the *ahl al-hadīth* and *ahl al-ra'y* schools that the Sunni hadith tradition emerged.

EARLY HADITH COLLECTION AND WRITING

From the beginning of Islam, Muhammad's words and deeds were of the utmost interest to his followers. He was the unquestioned exemplar of faith and piety in Islam and the bridge between God and the temporal world. Although, as we shall see, there was controversy over setting down the Prophet's daily teachings in writing, it is not surprising that those Companions who knew how to write tried to record the memorable statements or actions of their Prophet. As paper was unknown in the Middle East at the time (it was introduced from China in the late 700s), the small notebooks they compiled, called *sahīfa*s, would have consisted of papyrus, parchment (tanned animal skins), both very expensive, or cruder substances such as palm fronds. Although there is some evidence that the Prophet ordered the collection of his rulings on taxation, these *sahīfa*s were not public documents; they were the private notes of individual Companions.[3] Some of the Companions recorded as having *sahīfa*s were Jābir b. 'Abdallāh, 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, Abū Hurayra and 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Ās.

Certain Companions were more active in amassing, memorizing, and writing down hadiths than others. Like grandchildren eager to collect stories and recollections about a grandparent they barely knew, we find that it is often the most junior Companions of the Prophet who

1. Abū Hurayra: 5,300 hadiths
2. Ibn 'Umar: 2,600 hadiths
3. Anas b. Mālik: 2,300 hadiths
4. Aisha: 2,200 hadiths
5. Ibn 'Abbās: 1,700 hadiths

Figure 2.0 Leading Hadith Transmitters from the Companions

became the most prolific collectors and transmitters of hadiths. Abū Hurayra (d. 58/678), who knew the Prophet for only three years, is the largest single source for hadiths, with approximately 5,300 narrations in later hadith collections.[4] Although he did not write hadiths down in his early career, by his death Abū Hurayra had boxes full of the *sahīfa*s he had compiled.[5] 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, the son of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, was twenty-three years old when the Prophet died and is the second largest source for hadiths, with approximately 2,600 narrations recorded in later collections. Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/686–8), who was only fourteen years old (or nine according to some sources) when the Prophet died, is the fifth largest source, with around 1,700 hadiths.[6]

Since Companions like Ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurayra only knew the Prophet for a short time, they apparently amassed their vast numbers of hadiths by seeking them out from more senior Companions. Abū Hurayra is thus rarely recorded as saying 'I heard the Prophet of God say...' – more often he simply states indirectly that 'the Prophet said ...' Just as today we regularly quote people whom we did not hear directly, this would have been normal for the Companions. The obsession with specifying direct oral transmission with no intermediary, which characterized later hadith scholarship (see Chapter 3), did not exist during the first generations of Islam. Ibn 'Abbās probably heard only forty hadiths directly from the Prophet. The rest he frequently narrates by saying 'the Prophet of God said...' or through a chain of transmission of one, two, or even three older Companions.[7]

Not surprisingly, those who spent a great deal of intimate time with the Prophet were also major sources of hadiths. Anas b. Mālik, who entered the Prophet's house as a servant at the age of ten, and the Prophet's favorite wife, Aisha, count as the third and fourth most prolific hadith sources, with approximately 2,300 and 2,200 narrations in

later books respectively.[8] Interestingly, those Companions who spent the most time with the Prophet during his public life rank among the least prolific hadith transmitters. The Prophet's close friend and successor, Abū Bakr, his cousin/son-in-law 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, and close advisor 'Umar are the sources for only 142, 536 and 537 hadiths respectively. These prominent early Muslims, who were looked to as leaders responsible for decisions and religious rulings after the Prophet's death, seem to have preserved the spirit of Muhammad's teachings in their actions and methods of reasoning rather than by citing his hadiths directly.

When reading books of hadiths, at first it appears arbitrary which Companion narrates a hadith from the Prophet. Certain Companions, however, demonstrated particular interests and expertise in certain subjects. The Prophet's wives, especially Aisha, not surprisingly serve as the sources for hadiths about the Prophet's personal hygiene, domestic habits, and sexual life. Most of the hadiths in which the Prophet instructs his followers about the protocol for using dogs – animals whose saliva is considered ritually impure by most Muslims – for hunting come from the Companion 'Adī b. Hātim, who clearly was very curious about this topic.

So dominant is the presence of Muhammad in the formative period of Islam that we forget that after his death it was his Companions who assumed both complete religious and political leadership in the community. It was Companions like Ibn 'Abbās in Mecca, Ibn Mas'ūd in Kufa and Salmān al-Fārisī in Isfahan who had the responsibility of teaching new generations of Muslims and new converts about the religion of a prophet they had never known. The generation who learned Islam from the Companions and in turn inherited from them the mantle of the Prophet's authority became known as the **Successors** (*al-tābi'ūn*). Like the Companions, they too recorded those recollections that their teachers recounted to them about the Prophet's words, deeds, and rulings. In addition to compiling their own *sahīfa*s from the lessons of the Companions, these Successors also passed on the Companions' own *sahīfa*s.

Some of the early *isnād*s that appear most regularly in hadith collections seem to be a record of *sahīfa*s being handed down from teacher to student or from father to son. We thus often find the *sahīfa-isnād* of Abū Hurayra to 'Abd al-Rahmān, to his son al-'Alā'. The Successor Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī received the *sahīfa* of the Companion Jābir b. 'Abdallāh, and one of the most famous Successors, al-Hasan

al-Basrī (d. 110/728), received the *sahīfa* of the Companion Samura b. Jundub. An example of a *sahīfa* that has survived intact today, the *sahīfa* of the Successor Hammām b. Munabbih (d. 130/747), contains 138 hadiths from the Prophet via Abū Hurayra.[9]

The vast preponderance of the hadiths that the Successors heard from the Companions, however, was not in written form. Arabian society of the seventh and eighth centuries had a highly developed tradition of oral poetry, and the Companions more often recounted their memories of the Prophet in oral form only. Even to modern readers accustomed to writing everything down, this is understandable to an extent; to them the Prophet was a contemporary figure whose words and deeds lived on in their memories as freshly as we remember our own teachers or parents. Only rarely do we put down these memories on paper.

Of course, the Prophet was no average person, and many of his Companions did seek to record his legacy even during his own lifetime. There are several hadiths, however, in which the Prophet warns his followers not to record his words out of fear that they might be confused with God's words as revealed in the Quran. As the Quran was still being set down in writing during the Prophet's lifetime by numerous scribes and in many private notebooks, collections of the Prophet's teachings might easily be conflated with the holy book. We thus find a famous hadith in which the Companion Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī states, 'We used not to write down anything but the testimony of faith said in prayer (*al-tashahhud*) and the Quran.' In another hadith, the Companion Zayd b. Thābit states that the Prophet had forbidden his followers to write down any of his words.[10]

It was unrealistic, however, that a lawmaker and political leader like the Prophet could allow *no* written record keeping. It would simply have been impossible for Muslims to preserve accurately the teachings they heard from the Prophet without some recourse to writing. Alongside hadiths banning writing, we thus also find reports encouraging it. The Companion Anas b. Mālik is even quoted as saying, 'We did not consider the knowledge of those who did not write it down to be [real] knowledge.'[11] We thus also find hadiths in which the Prophet allows new Muslims visiting from outside Medina to record lessons he gave in a sermon.[12]

This contradictory evidence concerning the writing down of hadiths has proven very problematic for both Muslim and Western scholars. Some Muslim scholars, such as the Damascene prodigy

al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), have reconciled the material by assuming that the reports condemning the writing of hadiths came from the earlier years of the Prophet's career, when he was concerned about his words being mistaken for the Quran. Permission to write down his teachings would have come later, when the Quran had become more established in the minds of Muslims, and the Prophet's role as the leader of a functioning state required some written records.[13]

Western scholars, on the other hand, have often understood the tension between the writing of hadiths and its prohibition to reflect competing values within the Islamic hadith tradition itself. In Islam, religious knowledge is primarily oral in nature – a written book only serves as a guide for the oral recitation of its contents. On a conceptual level, it is almost as if written pages are dead matter that only comes alive when read aloud. It is interesting that the importance of oral knowledge kept the debate, over whether or not one should write down hadiths, alive into the 1000s CE, over two hundred years after it had been rendered moot by the popularization of written hadith collections!

In the early Islamic period, however, this focus on orality was very practical. The Arabic alphabet was still primitive, and many letters were written identically and could only be distinguished from one another by context. Even today, the Arabic script does not indicate short vowels. We can imagine an English sentence written with only consonants and a few vowels, such as 'I wnt t ht the bll.' Is it 'I want to hit the ball,' 'I want to hit the bell, ' 'I went to hit the ball,' *et cetera*? We could only know the correct reading of the sentence if we knew its context. With the Arabic script, then, knowing the context and even the intended meaning of a written text is essential for properly understanding it. The *sahīfa*s of the Companions and Successors thus only served as memory-aids, written skeletons of hadiths that would jog the author's memory when he or she read them.

These *sahīfa*s could not thus simply be picked up and read. One had to hear the book read by its transmitter in order to avoid grave misunderstandings of the Prophet's words. If hadith transmitters had reason to believe that a certain narrator had transmitted hadiths without hearing them read by a teacher, in fact, they considered this a serious flaw in the authenticity of that material. Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī had heard only part of the Companion Jābir b. 'Abdallāh's *sahīfa* read aloud by Jābir, and this undermined his reliability in transmission for some Muslim hadith critics. Some early hadith transmitters, like

'Atā' b. Muslim al-Khaffāf, were so concerned about their books of hadiths being read and misunderstood after their deaths that they burned or buried them![14]

Of course, this practical and cultural emphasis on direct oral transmission did not mean that Muslims ignored the reliability of written records. Even when transmitting a hadith orally, it was best for a scholar to be reading it from his book. The famous hadith scholar Ibn Ma'īn (d. 233/848) thus announced that he preferred a transmitter with an accurate book to one with an accurate memory.[15] By the early 700s CE, setting down hadiths in writing had become regular practice. The seminal hadith transmitter and Successor Muhammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) considered writing down hadiths to be absolutely necessary for accurate transmission.

Collectors like al-Zuhrī were encouraged to collect and record hadiths by the Umayyad dynasty, which assumed control of the Islamic empire in 661 CE. The Umayyad governor 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān requested that the Successor Kathīr b. Murra send him records of all the hadiths he had heard from the Companions.[16] 'Abd al-'Azīz's son, the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, ordered the governor of Medina to record all the hadiths concerning administrative and taxation matters.[17]

Another important question that arose during the early transmission and collection of hadiths was whether or not one had to repeat a hadith word for word or if one could just communicate its general meaning. Most early Muslim scholars understood that keeping track of the exact wording of hadiths was not feasible and that 'narration by the general meaning (*al-riwāya bi'l-ma'nā*)' was an inescapable reality. The Companion Wāthila b. Asqa' had admitted that sometimes the early Muslims even confused the exact wording of the Quran, which was universally well-known and well-preserved. So how, he asked, could one expect any less in the case of a report that the Prophet had said just once? Al-Hasan al-Basrī is reported to have said, 'If we only narrated to you what we could repeat word for word, we would only narrate two hadiths. But if what we narrate generally communicates what the hadith prohibits or allows then there is no problem.' Some early Muslim scholars insisted on repeating hadiths exactly as they had heard them. Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) even repeated grammatical errors in hadiths that he had heard.[18] Eventually, Muslim scholars arrived at the compromise that one could paraphrase a hadith provided that one was learned enough to understand its meaning properly.[19]
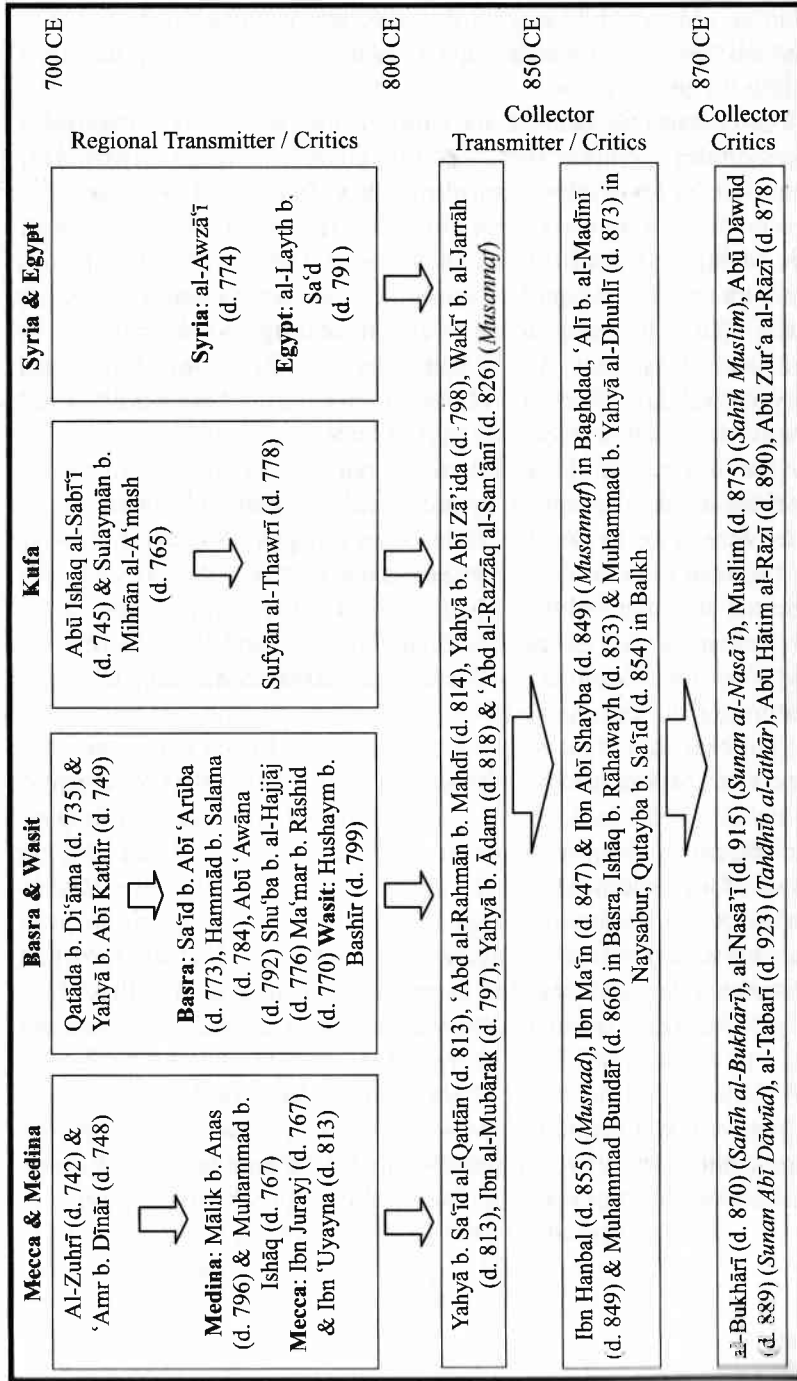
Figure 2.1 Transmission and Criticism of Hadiths from the Companions of the Prophet and Successors

TRANSCRIPTS OF LEGAL DEBATES: THE EMERGENCE OF *MUSANNAF* COLLECTIONS

If we imagine the world of Islam in the early and mid eighth century CE, the next stage of hadith literature appears as a direct reflection of Muslim scholarly discourse of the time. We can picture the prominent Successor al-Hasan al-Basrī, who had studied with Companions like Anas b. Mālik and who had been brought up in the house of one of the Prophet's wives, as a pillar of piety in Basra and recourse for the questions of the city's inhabitants. Seated under a reed awning, al-Hasan would answer questions concerning how to pray, how to divide inheritance and how to understand God's attributes by drawing on all the religious knowledge he had gained. He might reply by quoting the Quran or something that his mother had heard from the Prophet. On other occasions he might tell his audience how ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib, whom he had met as a young man, had ruled on a particular case. Sometimes al-Hasan might use his own understanding of the principles put forth in the Quran or the Prophet's teachings to provide a new answer to a question. A few decades later in Medina, we can picture Mālik b. Anas seated against one of the pillars of the Prophet's mosque and answering questions in a similar way.

The first organized works of Islamic scholarship, called **musannaf**s, or 'books organized topically,' were basically transcripts of this legal discourse as it 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 faith and practice. The earliest surviving *musannaf*, Mālik's *Muwatta'*, is thus a mixture of Prophetic hadiths, the rulings of his Companions, the practice of the scholars of Medina, and the opinions of Mālik himself. The version of the *Muwatta'* that became famous in North Africa and Andalusia contains 1,720 reports. Of these, however, only 527 are Prophetic hadiths; 613 are statements of the Companions, 285 are from Successors, and the rest are Mālik's own opinions.[20] Likewise, the earliest known *musannaf*, that of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), was a collection of reports from the Prophet, Companions, and Successors such as ʿAtā' b. Abī Rabāh (d. 114/732). Another famous scholar from this period who compiled a *musannaf* was the revered scholar of Kufa, Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778).

A very large *musannaf* surviving from this earlier period was written by a student of Mālik and Ibn Jurayj, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī

(d. 211/826), but is much larger than the one-volume *Muwatta'*. The *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq, an inhabitant of Yemen, is eleven printed volumes. As Figure 2.2 demonstrates, 'Abd al-Razzāq drew mostly from his teachers Ma'mar b. Rāshid and Ibn Jurayj.[21] Another famous *musannaf*, written by a scholar from the generation of 'Abd al-Razzāq's students, comes from the hadith scholar of Baghdad, Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849). Figure 2.2 provides an example of the type of material and sources that a *musannaf* would draw upon.

Chapter on Whether or not One Should Wipe One's Head with the Water Remaining from One's Hands

From 'Abd al-Razzāq, from Ma'mar, who said that he was informed by someone who heard al-Hasan [al-Basrī] say, 'It suffices you to wipe your head with what water is left over in your hands from ablution.' **(Note: this is a Successor opinion with an incomplete *isnād*)**

From 'Abd al-Razzāq, from Isrā'īl [b. Yūnus], from Mūsā b. Abī 'Ā'isha, who said that he heard Mus'ab b. Sa'd, when a man asked him, say, 'I perform my ablutions and wash my face and arms, and what water is in my hands suffices me for my head, or I get new water for my head. Nay, rather, get new water for your head.' **(Note: this is a Successor opinion with a complete *isnād*)**

'Abd al-Razzāq said that Ma'mar informed him, from Nāfi' that Ibn 'Umar used to get new water for wiping his head. **(Note: this is a Companion opinion with a complete *isnād*)**

From 'Abd al-Razzāq, from Ibn Jurayj, who said that he was informed by 'Ajlān that the Prophet used to wipe his ears along with his face one time and wipe his face. Then he would put his palms in the water and wipe his head from front to back to the back of his neck, then his temples. Then he would wipe his ears once – all of this with what water he had in his hand from that one wipe. **(Note: this is a Prophetic hadith with an incomplete *isnād*)**

From 'Abd al-Razzāq, from Ibn Jurayj, who said, 'I said to 'Atā', "Is it with the water left over from your face that you wipe your head?" and he said, "No, I put my hands in the water and wipe with them, and I do not shake the water off them or wait for them to dry. In fact I try to keep the hairs [on my hands and arms] wet."' **(Note: this is a Successor opinion with a complete *isnād*)**

Figure 2.2 Subchapter from 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Musannaf* Concerning Ablutions

In many ways, the *musannaf* genre predates the emergence of classical hadith literature rather than being part of it. If hadith collections are characterized by a predominant focus on reports from the Prophet that include *isnād*s as a means for critics to verify their authenticity, then books like the *Muwatta'* and the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq are not technically hadith collections. Both Mālik and 'Abd al-Razzāq cite rulings of Companions and Successors more frequently than they cite Prophetic hadiths. But even when quoting the Prophet directly, the obsession with complete, unbroken chains of transmission that would characterize the classical period of hadith collection is absent. Even when Mālik does cite Prophetic hadiths, on sixty-one occasions he completely omits the *isnād* and simply states, 'The Prophet said...' Rather, we should think of *musannaf*s as early works of Islamic law that represent the diversity of sources from which legal and doctrinal answers could be sought during the first two centuries of Islam. In a *musannaf*, a scholar like Mālik was trying to answer questions with the resources he felt were reliable and was not concerned with proving their authenticity according to a rigid system of *isnād* authentication.

Of course, *musannaf*s would serve a very important function in law, hadith literature, and hadith criticism. Later scholars would turn to *musannaf*s to know the legal opinions of Companions and Successors, and hadith critics would use them as evidence when investigating whether a hadith was really something said by the Prophet or a statement actually made by a Companion or Successor.

But if Muhammad was the ultimate interpreter of God's will, why would a scholar like Mālik so infrequently rely on his words in a *musannaf* collection? This question has cast a shadow of doubt over the authenticity of the hadith corpus, a question addressed in Chapter 8. Here, however, we can provide a few possible explanations. As Figure 2.1 demonstrates, during the time of Mālik and Ibn Jurayj hadith transmission was localized. When Mālik was asked by a student whether or not one should wash in between one's toes when performing ritual ablutions, he said that it was not required. Another student, 'Abdallāh b. Wahb, objected, saying that in his native Egypt they had a hadith through the Companion Mustawrid b. Shaddād telling how the Prophet did wash between his toes. Hearing the *isnād*, Mālik said, 'That hadith is good, and I had not heard it until this moment.' He acted on it from that point on.[22] It is not surprising that Mālik had not heard the hadith, since he only left his home in Medina

to perform pilgrimage to the nearby city Mecca. Many of the hadiths that were widespread in Syria, Egypt, or among the students of Abū Hanīfa in Iraq were unknown to him. It is thus very likely that Mālik did not cite a Prophetic hadith on an issue because he knew of none. As Figure 2.1 indicates, it was only among the generation of Mālik's students, and even more so among their students, that hadith scholars traveled widely in order to unify the corpus of hadiths.

In addition, *musannaf*s drew on such a wide variety of authoritative figures because they were all legitimate inheritors of the Prophet's authority. The Companions, who had lived with the Prophet for years and understood the principles upon which he acted, and the Successors, who learned from them, were seen as the carriers of the Prophet's message and were heeded accordingly. Even a scholar like Mālik, living in the generation after the Successors, was so esteemed as a pious interpreter of the Prophet's message that he could give his opinion without citing any sources at all.

THE *MUSNAD* ERA AND THE EMERGENCE OF HADITH LITERATURE PROPER

The shift from the variety of the *musannaf* to the focus on Prophetic hadiths that characterizes hadith literature occurred with the emergence of the **musnad** collections in the late eighth and early ninth centuries CE. While *sahīfa*s had been mere *ad hoc* collections, and *musannaf*s were arranged as topical references, *musnad* collections were organized according to *isnād*. All the hadiths narrated from a certain Companion would fall into one chapter, then all those transmitted from another into the next, *et cetera*. The appearance of *musnad* collections occurred due to impetuses from both the broader study of Islamic law and within the more narrow community of Muslim hadith critics.

During the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the regional schools of Islamic law, each based on the teachings and interpretation of learned figures like Mālik and Abū Hanīfa, faced a new challenge. A young scholar named Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), who had studied with Mālik in Medina and the students of Abū Hanīfa in Iraq, and had traveled widely in Egypt and Yemen, asserted that it should be the direct hadiths of the Prophet and not his precedent as understood by local scholars that supplemented the Quran as the

second major source of law. In the face of a contrasting hadith that they had not previously known, al-Shāfiʿī argued, the followers of Mālik and Abū Hanīfa should take the Prophet's words over the stances of their local schools. Through his students and especially the study of his major legal work, the *Umm* (The Motherbook), al-Shāfiʿī had an immediate and powerful influence on *ahl al-hadīth* jurists. From this point on in the hadith tradition, the testimony of Muhammad would trump all other figures of authority and become the predominant focus of hadith collections. *Musnad*s reflected this interest, as they focused almost entirely on Prophetic hadiths and included Companion or Successor opinions only as occasional commentaries.

Quite apart from broader questions of legal theory, the burgeoning class of Muslim hadith critics that emerged in the mid and late eighth century had good reason to start organizing their personal hadith collections along *isnād* lines. First, the growing number of reports erroneously attributed to the Prophet had made the *isnād* an indispensable tool. Limiting hadith collections to material that had an *isnād* was a solid first line of defense against hadith forgery – if you claimed that the Prophet had said something but could provide no *isnād*, your hadith had no place in a *musnad*. Second, as we will see in the next chapter, the single most important factor in judging the reliability of a hadith transmitter was determining if he or she was corroborated in the material he or she reported. In order to know if a hadith transmitter is corroborated in his transmissions, critics compared the hadiths he reported to those of others who studied with his teachers. Thus we find that many *musnad*s, such as that of al-Rūyānī (d. 307/919–20), are organized into chapters and subchapters in the following fashion:
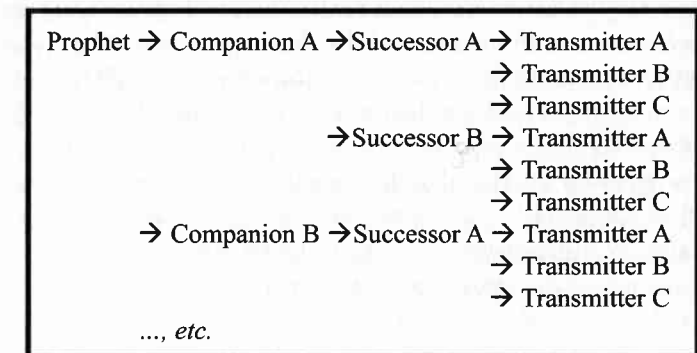
Prophet → Companion A → Successor A → Transmitter A
→ Transmitter B
→ Transmitter C
→ Successor B → Transmitter A
→ Transmitter B
→ Transmitter C
→ Companion B → Successor A → Transmitter A
→ Transmitter B
→ Transmitter C
..., *etc.*

Figure 2.3 *Musnad* Organization

In order to determine whether or not Transmitter A is generally corroborated in the material he or she transmits, we need only flip through the chapters of the *musnad* comparing the hadiths that Transmitter A related from each Successor with those of Transmitters B and C.

The earliest known *musnad*, which has also survived intact, is that of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (d. 204/818). The most famous *musnad* is that of Ibn Hanbal, which consists of about 27,700 hadiths (anywhere from one fourth to one third of which are repetitions of hadiths via different narrations) and was actually assembled into final form by the scholar's son. Ibn Hanbal claimed he had sifted the contents of his *Musnad* from over 750,000 hadiths and intended it to be a reference for students of Islamic law. Although he acknowledged that the book contained unreliable hadiths, he supposedly claimed that all its hadiths were admissible in discussions about the Prophet's Sunna – if it was not in his *Musnad*, he claimed, it could not be a proof in law.[23]

Other well-known and widely read *musnad*s from the ninth century include those of al-Humaydī (d. 219/834), of al-Hārith b. Abī Usāma (d. 282/896), of al-Musaddad (d. 228/843), of Abū Bakr al-Bazzār (d. 292/904–5), and of the Hanafī scholar Abū Yaʻlā al-Mawsilī (d. 307/919). The largest *musnad* ever produced, which has tragically not survived, was that of Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889).

Instead of compiling large *musnad*s that included the hadiths of numerous Companions, some scholars devoted books to only one Companion: Abū Bakr al-Marwazī (d. 292/904–5), for example, compiled a small *musnad* with all the hadiths he had come across transmitted from the Companion Abū Bakr.

Although some *musnad*s, like that of al-Bazzār, contained some discussion of the flaws (*ʻilal*) found in the *isnād*s of a hadith, in general *musnad*s were not limited to hadiths their compilers believed were authentic. Instead, they functioned as storehouses for **all** the reports that a certain hadith scholar had heard. As Figure 2.1 shows, by the time of Ibn Hanbal, hadith collectors were no longer constrained by regional boundaries. Hadith collectors like Muhammad b. Yahyā al-Dhuhlī or Qutayba b. Saʻīd were originally from Nishapur in Iran and Balkh in Afghanistan, but they traveled throughout the Muslim world on what was known as 'the voyage in the quest for knowledge (*al-rihla fī talab al-ʻilm*)' to collect hadiths from transmitters like ʻAbd al-Razzāq in Yemen or Layth b. Saʻd in Egypt. Throughout their travels they recorded the hadiths they heard in their *musnads*

regardless of their authenticity or their legal and doctrinal implications. The staunch Sunni Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad* thus contains a hadith – shocking to the sensibility of Sunni Muslims – that describes how an early copy of the Quran had been stored under Aisha's bed only to be found and partially eaten by a goat, leaving the record of God's revelation permanently truncated![24]

THE *SAHĪH* AND *SUNAN* MOVEMENT

*Musannaf*s and *musnad*s both had their advantages: *musannaf*s were conveniently arranged by subject, and *musnad*s focused on Prophetic hadiths with full *isnād*s. From the early ninth to the early tenth century, a large number of respected *ahl al-hadīth* jurists combined the two genres in the form of **sunan / sahīh** books. A *sunan* was organized topically, and thus easily used as a legal reference, but also focused on Prophetic reports with full *isnād*s. More importantly, the *ahl al-hadīth* jurists who compiled these *sunan*s devoted great efforts to assuring or discussing the authenticity of the books' contents. In general, the authors of *sunan* books sought only to include hadiths that had been relied upon by Muslim scholars and were known to be authentic either because they had strong *isnād*s or because the community of scholars had agreed that they truly reflected the Prophet's teachings. This new focus on producing collections of hadiths with an emphasis on authenticity led many of the collections produced in the *sunan* movement to be dubbed *sahīh* (authentic) books by either their authors or later Muslim readers. Two of the earliest known *sunan*s are those of Saʻīd b. Mansūr al-Khurāsānī (d. 227/842) and ʻAbdallāh al-Dārimī (d. 255/869).

Two participants in the *sunan* movement in particular, Muhammad b. Ismāʻīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and his student Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Naysābūrī (d. 261/875), broke with the *ahl al-hadīth*'s traditional willingness to use weak hadiths in law. Unlike their teacher Ibn Hanbal, al-Bukhārī and Muslim felt that there were enough authentic hadiths in circulation that the *ahl al-hadīth* jurists could dispense with less worthy narrations. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were thus the first to produce hadith collections devoted **only** to hadiths whose *isnād*s they felt met the requirements of authenticity. Their books were the first wave of what some have termed 'the *sahīh* movement.'[25] Known as

the *Sahīhayn* (literally 'the two *Sahīh*s'), the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim would become the most famous books of hadith in Sunni Islam. It is therefore worth examining their contents and structure.

It is reported that al-Bukhārī devoted sixteen years to sifting the hadiths he included in his *Sahīh* from a pool of six hundred thousand narrations.[26] The finished work was not a mere hadith collection – it was a massive expression of al-Bukhārī's vision of Islamic law and dogma backed up with hadiths the author felt met the most rigorous standards of authenticity. The book 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 hadith transmission. The book consists of ninety-seven chapters, each divided into subchapters. The subchapter titles indicate the legal implication or ruling the reader should derive from the subsequent hadiths, and often include a short comment from the author or a report from a Companion or Successor elucidating the hadith. Al-Bukhārī often repeats a Prophetic tradition, but through different narrations and in separate chapters. Opinions have varied about the exact number of hadiths in the *Sahīh*, depending on whether one defines a 'hadith' as a Prophetic tradition or a narration of that tradition. Generally, experts have placed the number of full-*isnād* narrations at 7,397. Of these many are repetitions or different versions of the same report, with the number of Prophetic traditions at approximately 2,602.[27]

Muslim's *Sahīh* is much more a raw hadith collection than al-Bukhārī's work. It contains far fewer chapters (only fifty-four) and lacks al-Bukhārī's legal commentary. It has many more narrations, numbering about twelve thousand, with Muslim scholars placing the number of Prophetic traditions at around four thousand. Unlike al-Bukhārī, Muslim keeps all the narrations of a certain hadith in the same section. Muslim also diverges significantly from al-Bukhārī in his exclusion of commentary reports from Companions and later figures.

There is considerable overlap between the *Sahīhayn*. Muslim scholars generally put the number of traditions found in both books at 2,326. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim drew on essentially the same pool of transmitters, sharing approximately 2,400 narrators. Al-Bukhārī narrated from only about 430 that Muslim did not, while Muslim used about 620 transmitters al-Bukhārī excluded.

Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's works had a great deal of influence on their students and contemporaries. Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), a

central figure in the Shāfi'ī school who studied with al-Bukhārī and Muslim, compiled a *sahīh* work that came to be known as *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma*. Abū Hafs 'Umar al-Bujayrī of Samarqand (d. 311/924) produced a collection called *al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, and even the famous historian and exegete Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī (d. 310/923) attempted a gigantic *sahīh* work but died before he finished it. Sa'īd b. al-Sakan (d. 353/964) of Egypt also collected a small *sahīh* book consisting of hadiths necessary for legal rulings and whose authenticity he claimed was agreed on by all. Ibn Khuzayma's student Ibn al-Jārūd (d. 307/919–20) compiled a similar work called *al-Muntaqā* (The Select). Ibn Hibbān al-Bustī's (d. 354/965) massive *Sahīh* is usually considered the last installment in the *sahīh* movement.

Other participants in the *sahīh* movement also focused on hadiths with strong and reliable *isnād*s, but they nonetheless featured some reports that they acknowledged as being unreliable but included either because they were widely used among jurists or because the authors, like Ibn Hanbal, could find no reliable hadith addressing that topic. Four of these books in particular attained great renown. The *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), a close student of Ibn Hanbal, contains about 4,800 hadiths and focuses on reports used in deriving law. The author alerts the reader to any narrations which have serious flaws in their *isnād*s. The *Jāmi'* of Muhammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), one of al-Bukhārī's disciples, contains about 3,950 hadiths and also focuses on hadiths that different schools of law had used as legal proofs. It also includes detailed discussions of their authenticity. Although al-Tirmidhī's *sunan* does include some unreliable hadiths, the author notes their status. As such, later scholars often called the work *Sahīh al-Tirmidhī*. Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/916), another student of al-Bukhārī, compiled two *sunan*s: the larger one contained many hadiths that the author acknowledged as unreliable. The smaller one, known as the *Mujtabā* (The Chosen), contains 5,750 hadiths and focused on reliable hadiths only. It has thus been known as *Sahīh al-Nasā'ī*. Finally, Muhammad b. Yazīd b. Mājah's (d. 273/887) *Sunan* is an interesting case. Although the author seems to have tried to include only reliable hadiths, some later Muslim scholars noted that as much as one fourth of the book's 4,485 hadiths are actually unreliable.[28]

With the *sahīh*/*sunan* movement, the hadith tradition had reached a watershed. The works of scholars like al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Tirmidhī were possessed of a definitiveness that seemed both to reject

many aspects of the culture of hadith transmission and to offer themselves as the ultimate hadith references for legal scholars. Muslim wrote his *Sahīh* as a response to what he saw as the laxity and misplaced priorities of hadith scholars and transmitters. He believed that those scholars who strove to collect as many hadiths as possible regardless of their quality were doing so only to impress others.[29] Muslim expressed serious concern over would-be hadith scholars who transmitted material of dubious nature to the exclusion of well-known and well-authenticated hadiths. They provided this material to the common people when in fact it is hadith scholars' duty to leave the common folk with trustworthy reports only. Muslim composed his *Sahīh* to fulfill this function. Abū Dāwūd expressed a similar purpose for his *Sunan*. He states confidently that he knows of 'nothing after the Quran 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 after it.'[30]

TOPICAL HADITH WORKS

During the ninth and tenth centuries, Sunni hadith scholars were not merely writing comprehensive *sunan* works. They also compiled collections of hadiths dealing with individual topics. In fact, these specific treatises were often bound together to form a *sunan* or added on to the standard legal chapters of a *sunan* to add a new component to the work.

The earliest genre of topical works was that of *zuhd*, or asceticism and pious excellence. These books included hadiths describing the Prophet's supreme piety and abstention from any religiously ambiguous behavior, as well as the superlative practice of early Muslim saints and even pre-Islamic prophets. The earliest known book of *zuhd* is that of Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797). The great hadith transmitters and collectors Wakī' b. al-Jarrāh (d. 197/812) and Ibn Hanbal also compiled books of *zuhd*. Even as late as the eleventh century the Shāfi'ī scholar Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) wrote a hadith collection devoted to the *zuhd* theme.

Other scholars wrote books similarly addressing the question of perfecting Muslim manners. Al-Bukhārī wrote his 'Book Devoted to Manners (*al-Adab al-mufrad*)', and a scholar named Ibn Abī al-

Dunyā (d. 281/894) of Baghdad wrote dozens of such hadith works on topics such as the importance of giving thanks, understanding dreams, and coping with sadness and grief. The hadith scholar Humayd b. Zanjawayh (d. 251/855–6) composed a book of hadiths that warned Muslims about the punishments that awaited them in Hellfire for certain deeds as well as the heavenly rewards they could expect in Paradise for goodly acts. Known as the *Kitāb al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb* (The Book of Enjoining and Warning), Ibn Zanjawayh's book was very popular and was transmitted widely. In the 1200s CE, 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Mundhirī (d. 656/1258) wrote another famous book in this genre with the same title. Al-Nasā'ī and his student Ibn al-Sunnī (d. 364/975) both wrote hadith books entitled 'Deeds of the Day and Night (*'Amal al-yawm wa al-layla*)' on the pious invocations that the Prophet would say in various daily situations. The famous young scholar of Damascus, al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), also wrote two very popular hadith books on manners and perfecting Muslim practice. His small *Adhkār* (Prayers) contains hadiths on the prayers one says before activities such as eating, drinking, and traveling with no *isnād*s but with the author's comments on their reliability. Al-Nawawī's *Riyād al-sālihīn min kalām sayyid al-mursalīn* (The Gardens of the Righteous from the Speech of the Master of Prophets) is a larger book of ethical, piety, and etiquette-related hadiths which has become extremely popular, serving as a main hadith text for the Tablīgh-i Jamā'at, one of the largest missionary institutions in the modern Muslim world.

Similarly designed to frighten readers about the impending apocalypse and coming of 'the Days of God' was an early topical hadith book written by al-Bukhārī's teacher Nu'aym b. Hammād (d. 228/842) entitled *Kitāb al-fitan* (The Book of Tribulations). *Sunan* and *sahīh* books regularly contained chapters on these apocalyptical 'tribulations' as well.

The most popular subject for topical hadith collections among Sunni scholars in the ninth and tenth centuries was the importance of adhering to the Sunna of the Prophet and the ways of the early Muslim community on issues of belief and practice. These books of '*sunna*' contained Prophetic hadiths and reports from respected early Muslims that exhorted readers to derive their understanding of religion solely from the revealed texts of the Quran and Sunna while avoiding the heretical pitfalls of speculative reasoning about God, His attributes and the nature of the afterlife. *Sunna* books emphasized

all the components of the Sunni Muslim identity as it was emerging in the eighth and ninth centuries: a reliance on transmitted knowledge instead of speculative reasoning, a rejection of the *ahl al-ra'y* legal school, an affirmation that all the Companions of the Prophet were upright (but that the best were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān then 'Alī), and political quietism. The most famous books of *sunna* are those of Ibn Hanbal's son 'Abdallāh (d. 290/903), Ibn Abī 'Āsim (d. 287/900), Muhammad b. Nasr al-Marwazī (d. 294/906), and al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941).

Some later *sunna* hadith collections went into more detail on issues of proper Sunni belief. The staunch Hanbali Sufi Khwāje 'Abdallāh al-Ansārī of Herat (d. 481/1089) wrote a multi-volume hadith work condemning speculative theology and theologians (*Dhamm al-kalām wa ahlihi*). Ibn al-Waddāh (d. 286/899) wrote a small book on heretical innovation (*Kitāb al-bid'a*), while al-Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995) wrote one treatise collecting all the hadiths affirming that Muslims would actually see God on the Day of Judgment (*Kitāb al-ru'ya*) and another one bringing together all the hadiths telling that God descends during the night to answer the prayers of the believers.

The collective affirmation that all the Companions of the Prophet were righteous and reliable transmitters of the Prophet's teachings, as opposed to the Shiite denigration of all the Companions who did not support 'Alī's claim to leadership, prompted another important topical genre in the ninth century. Books on the 'Virtues of the Companions (*fadā'il al-sahāba*)' became an important statement of Sunni belief. Ibn Hanbal thus collected all the hadiths he could find in which the Prophet described the excellence or special characteristics of each Companion in his *Fadā'il al-sahāba*. Al-Nasā'ī also wrote a shorter *Fadā'il al-sahāba* work as well as a hadith collection specifically devoted to 'Alī's virtues (*Khasā'is 'Alī*).

Although only a few books were written in the genre, books of *shamā'il*, or the virtues and characteristics of the Prophet, were extremely popular in Islamic civilization. Such books discussed all aspects of the Prophet's personality, appearance, conduct, and miracles, and were often the only books through which the less educated segments of Muslim society from Mali to India would have had contact with high religious tradition. Al-Tirmidhī's *Shamā'il* was extremely widely read, as was al-Qādī 'Iyād's (d. 544/1149) *Kitāb al-shifā*. The Egyptian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505) also wrote a later *shamā'il* work entitled *al-Khasā'is al-kubrā*. As al-Qādī 'Iyād

explained, these books were not designed to convince non-Muslims of Muhammad's prophethood, but rather to reinforce Muslims' faith in the unique and unparalleled virtues of 'the last of God's messengers.'[31]

Another genre of topical collections focused on stories about Muhammad that proved or illustrated his standing as a prophet. The most famous works of *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (proofs of prophethood) come from the eleventh-century scholars al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) and his students Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī (d. 430/1038) and Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī.

Like *musnad*s, these various monographs were unconcerned with assuring the authenticity of the hadiths they contained. In fact, books on the virtues of Companions and *sunna* often contained reports that later Sunni scholars and sometimes the authors themselves found baseless or reprehensible. The *Kitāb al-sunna* of Ibn Abī 'Āsim, that of Ibn Hanbal's son 'Abdallāh and the *Kitāb al-tawhīd* (Book of God's Unity) of Ibn Khuzayma all included a hadith describing how when God sits on His throne it squeaks like a saddle mounted by its rider. But even Ibn Hanbal's son notes the hadith's *isnād* is weak, and later Sunni scholars were so shocked by this blatant anthropomorphism that some of them called Ibn Khuzayma's book 'The Book of Heresy.'[32] In his *Fadā'il al-sahāba*, Ibn Hanbal includes a report stating that 'Alī's name is written on the doorway to Paradise, a hadith rejected by Sunni scholars as forged.[33]

The question of why hadith scholars would knowingly include unreliable or obviously forged reports in any of their books is a perpetual quandary in the study of the hadith tradition and will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. In the context of books exhorting Sunnis to the proper beliefs and worldview, however, it makes sense from the authors' standpoint. These books were often polemics aimed at other sects, such as Muslim rationalists (known as **Mu'tazilites**) or Shiites. Sunni compilers of these books were not trying to prove anything to other Sunnis, who shared their system of hadith evaluation. They 'knew' they were upholding the correct set of beliefs, so they packed their books with whatever evidence they could find to support them regardless of its reliability. Authors of books of *sunna* were arguing that, instead of relying on reason, Muslims should believe in material transmitted from the Prophet *no matter what it said*. A hadith about God's throne squeaking was as useful in this cause as more reliable hadiths.

THE HADITH CANON

It would be some time before the landmark contribution of the *sahīh* and *sunan* books was recognized. By the dawn of the eleventh century, however, a selection of these books had been recognized as authoritative. This canon of books would fulfill two important functions in Islamic civilization: providing a common language for discussing the Prophet's Sunna and providing a manageable representation of the vast hadith corpus.

Surprisingly, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's decision to compile books limited only to hadiths they deemed authentic was initially rejected by many *ahl al-hadīth* scholars. This seems counterintuitive from a modern standpoint; why would a tradition that prided itself on following the authentic legacy of the Prophet object to books of only authentic hadiths? In order to understand this we must remember that, for the *ahl al-hadīth*, authentic hadiths only represented the most reliable end of the hadith spectrum. Hadiths with less stellar *isnāds* were also used in law, and weak hadiths were used very commonly in preaching, Quranic exegesis, and books of *zuhd* and good manners.

Many *ahl al-hadīth* scholars during al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's time therefore criticized the compilation of the *Sahīhayn*. A famous hadith scholar from Rayy in Iran, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 264/878), said of the two authors, 'These are people who wanted prominence before their time, so they did something of which they could boast; they wrote books the likes of which none had written before to gain for themselves precedence.' The *ahl al-hadīth* also worried that if hadith scholars wrote books limited to authentic hadiths, their opponents from the *ahl al-raʾy* would use that as a weapon against them. Abū Zurʿa described Muslim as 'making a path for the people of heresy against us, for they see that they can respond to a hadith that we use as proof against them by saying "That is not in the *Sahīh*!" ' Under fire from such critics, al-Bukhārī and Muslim defended themselves by saying that their books did not include *all* the *sahīh* hadiths in circulation. Al-Bukhārī had only selected *sahīh* hadiths useful for his legal discussions, and Muslim had limited his book to hadiths whose authenticity he believed was agreed on by all.[34]

By the mid tenth century, however, the contribution of the *sahīh/sunan* movement was beginning to be realized. Previously, it was the collectors of the great *musnads*, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's teachers

like Ibn Hanbal and al-Humaydī, who had been viewed as the pillars of hadith scholarship. In the late 900s, however, Ibn Manda of Isfahan (d. 395/1004–5) announced that the four masters of hadith were those who had produced the *sahīh* books: al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī. Ibn Manda described these four as well as others of their generation as the group of hadith masters 'accepted by all by consensus, and their knowledge trumps all others.'[35]

The need for a selection of hadith collections acknowledged as superior by all the *ahl al-hadīth* was essential at that point in time. In light of all the *musannafs*, *musnads*, and *sunans* in circulation between the various cities that hadith scholars visited on their 'travels in search of knowledge,' which books should students focus on as the foundation for understanding the Prophet's legacy? When a group of intimidated hadith students asked the Egyptian scholar Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353/964) this question, he entered his house and reemerged with four books in his hands. 'These are the foundations of Islam,' he said, 'the books of Muslim, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī.'[36]

Different scholars had different visions of which books best represented the Prophet's Sunna. These shifting canons are usually referred to as 'The Five Books,' 'The Six Books,' or 'the Authentic Books (*al-Sihāh*).' The foundation of the canon, however, is unchanging: the four works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī. The Shāfiʿī scholar Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) adds that, together with these four, al-Tirmidhī's and Ibn Khuzayma's books had identified a substantial amount of the authentic hadiths in circulation. Muhammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) described the Six Books as those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāfiʿī of Qazvīn (d. 623/1226) also enumerates this six-book series, as does the Indian Hanafī scholar al-Saghānī (d. 650/1252), adding the *Sunan* of al-Dāraqutnī as well. The Andalusian hadith scholar, al-Saraqustī (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-Silafī of Alexandria (d. 576/1180), Abū Bakr al-Hāzimī (d. 584/1188-9), and al-Nawawī mention only Five Books: the works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī.[37] Together, the Six Books contain approximately 19,600 hadiths.

The flexible boundaries of the hadith canon make sense when we consider one of its two primary functions. Even as early as 800 CE,

al-Shāfiʿī had said that it was impossible for one person to know all the hadiths in circulation.[38] If the Prophet's Sunna was essentially boundless, the Muslim community needed a tangible and manageable selection of hadith books to represent its core. Whether the canon was five or six books, or exactly which books these were, did not affect this function.

In the 1200s and 1300s the hadith canon's ability to represent the Prophet's blessings endowed the *Saḥīḥayn* in particular with a special ritual relevance. In cities from Damascus to Timbuktu the *Saḥīḥayn* would be read in mosques as part of celebrations culminating in the month of Ramadan. Al-Bukhārī's *Saḥīḥ* in particular was read as a cure for illness from Egypt to India, and the great Moroccan conqueror Mawlā Ismāʿīl (d. 1727) had a copy of the *Saḥīḥ* carried in front of his army 'like the Ark of the Children of Israel.'[39]

The second, more important function of the hadith canon was limited to the *Saḥīḥayn* – the only two books of the canon which included exclusively authentic hadiths. These two books served as a common reference for determining hadith authenticity. In the early 1000s the two schools of law that had emerged from the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the Hanbalī and the Shāfiʿī, agreed that the contents of the *Saḥīḥayn* were totally authentic and had been agreed upon as such by the whole Muslim community. Scholars of the Mālikī school soon agreed, and by the 1300s even the hadith-wary Hanafī school had found acknowledging this convention unavoidable. For all the Sunni schools of law and theology, the *Saḥīḥayn* would be the common language for evaluating the authenticity of hadith in interschool debates.

The *Saḥīḥayn* canon was an ideal polemical weapon to use against one's opponents. But that did not mean that scholars felt they had to obey all the hadiths found in the two collections in their own work. If a scholar of the Shāfiʿī or Hanafī school of law found a hadith in al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's collections that he disagreed with, he had no compunction about criticizing its authenticity.[40]

The *Saḥīḥayn* were thus not immune to criticism. Only in the early modern and modern periods has it become controversial to criticize the *Saḥīḥayn*, but this is primarily due to Muslim scholars' eagerness to protect the status of two books that they see as symbols of an Islamic tradition under attack from modernity. It is important to note here, as will be discussed further below, that Muslim scholars recognized that other *saḥīḥ* hadiths existed *outside* the hadith canon.

THE PINNACLE OF HADITH COLLECTION AND THE END OF HADITH TRANSMISSION

As al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's critics had insisted, the *saḥīḥ* movement did not mean the end of hadith transmission and collection. Nor did it mean that Muslims believed that all the *saḥīḥ* hadiths in circulation had been recorded. In fact, from the standpoint of volume, the peak of hadith collection occurred in the tenth century – over one hundred years after the Six Books had been written.

Indeed, the compilation of titanic personal *musnad*s continued after and even despite the *saḥīḥ* movement, with scholars in Iran continuing the tradition of collecting *musnad*s with many weak and even forged hadiths. Abū al-Qāsim al-Tabarānī (d. 360/971) of Isfahan compiled a huge collection, his *Muʿjam al-kabīr*, which is today printed in twenty-eight volumes. ʿAlī b. Hamshādh of Nishapur (d. 338/950) produced a personal *musnad* twice as large as al-Tabarānī's, and al-Hasan al-Māsarjisī of Nishapur (d. 365/976) compiled a *musnad* that if published today would occupy an astounding 182 volumes.[41] Even as late as the mid 1100s Shahrudār b. Shīrawayh al-Daylamī (d. 558/1163) compiled a famous hadith collection entitled *Musnad al-Firdaws* (The *Musnad* of Paradise).

Into the 1000s scholars with strong affiliations to certain schools of law produced massive *sunan*s and *musnad*s to bolster their schools' bodies of substantive law. The vast *Sunan al-kubrā* of the Shāfiʿī Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) is a landmark in the Shāfiʿī legal school, supporting every detail of its law code with a myriad of reports from the Prophet and his Companions. Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Asamm of Nishapur (d. 346/957) collected all the hadiths that al-Shāfiʿī had transmitted with full *isnād*s in his *magnum opus*, the *Umm*, and organized them into the *Musnad al-Shāfiʿī*.[42] Even a non-Hanafī like Abū Nuʿaym al-Isbahānī (d. 430/1038) participated in efforts to find chains going back to the Prophet for Abū Hanīfa's reports and composed a *musnad* collection of them.[43] The Mālikī scholar Ibn al-Jabbāb (d. 322/934) created a *musnad* of Mālik's hadiths.[44]

All these scholars continued to transmit hadiths in the great mosques of Iraq and Iran before audiences of hundreds and even thousands of students. These 'dictation sessions' were recorded by students in collections called **amālī** (dictations). The chief judge of Kufa, al-Husayn b. Ismāʿīl al-Mahāmilī (d. 330/942), was described

as the most knowledgeable person in hadith of his time and was famous for his *amālī*.[45] Abū al-'Abbās al-Asamm was equally well known for his dictation sessions.

Not only did hadith transmission and collection continue unabated after the *saḥīh* movement, scholars continued to identify hadiths that they felt merited the title of *saḥīh* and that al-Bukhārī and Muslim should have included in their works. The great hadith scholar of Baghdad, Abū al-Hasan al-Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995) and the Mālikī hadith master of the Hejaz, Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 430/1038), both wrote one-volume collections called *ilzāmāt* (addendums) of hadiths that they considered up to the standards of the *Saḥīhayn*. Al-Dāraqutnī's student, al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014), compiled a voluminous *ilzāmāt* work entitled *al-Mustadrak* (with approximately 8,800 hadiths) in which he sought, once and for all, to demonstrate to those opponents of the *ahl al-hadīth* the multitude of authentic hadiths that remained outside the *Saḥīhayn*.[46]

By the mid 1000s, however, it was clear that the process of recording the hadiths in circulation – regardless of whether they were authentic or forgeries – was coming to an end. In the mid eleventh century, al-Hākim's student al-Bayhaqī declared that all the hadiths that could reliably be attributed to the Prophet had been documented, and thus any previously unrecorded attributions to Muhammad should be considered *de facto* forgeries.[47] In practice, in the 1100s we see that fewer and fewer hadith scholars were able to record hadiths with full *isnād*s (even highly unreliable hadiths) back to the Prophet that had not already been written down in some earlier collection. Ibn al-Jawzī of Baghdad (d. 597/1201), for example, is the only person to have transmitted the admittedly unreliable hadith **'Sweeping the mosque is the dowry for a heavenly beauty** (*kans al-masājid muhūr hūr al-'īn*).' The last hadith that I have seen recorded with a full *isnād* is found in the *Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn* (Recording the History of the City of Qazvin) of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'ī (d. 623/1226): **'Sanjar will be the last of the Persian kings; he will live eighty years and then die of hunger.'**[48] Even this report is undoubtedly forged. By the 1300s, not even the greatest hadith scholars of their day such as Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) or Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) would dare to claim that they were in possession of a hadith reliably said by the Prophet that had gone unnoticed until their time.

THE PRACTICE OF HADITH TRANSMISSION AND CONNECTION TO THE PROPHET AFTER THE HADITH CANON

In the early period of the hadith tradition the importance of oral transmission, or **'audition (*samā'*)'**, where the student either read the hadith to his teacher or vice versa, had been very practical. One had to hear hadiths through a chain of teachers (*isnād*) because the Arabic script was too ambiguous to assure the correct understanding of any written document. The practical emphasis on oral transmission – only accepting material if it came through a living *isnād* of transmitters – was equally applicable to whole books of hadiths. The transmission of a book required the same care and concern as the transmission of an individual hadith, and collections like *Saḥīh al-Bukhārī* or Mālik's *Muwatta'* were transmitted from teacher to student in the same manner as hadiths.

For hadith scholars, any referral to a hadith collection was contingent on hearing it 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. Abū Bakr al-Qatī'ī (d. 368/979), who was the principal transmitter of Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*, was severely criticized for transmitting one of Ibn Hanbal's books from a copy which he had not heard directly from his teacher, Ibn Hanbal's son. Although al-Qatī'ī had in fact heard this book from his teacher previously, the copy he had used was destroyed in a flood, leaving him with only the other non-*samā'* copy. This case demonstrates the sensitivity of hadith scholars to the question of oral transmission. Even a respected scholar who had actually heard a book from his teacher could be criticized for relying on another copy if he had not read *that* copy in the presence of his teacher (since he would not have been able to make any corrections to it). The scholar who transmitted the *Musnad* from al-Qatī'ī, Ibn al-Mudhhib (d. 444/1052–3), was also accused of lax transmission practices. Specifically, he did not have *samā'* for certain sections of the *Musnad*. Later scholars thus explained that, because of this, 'material with unreliable texts (*matn*) and *isnād*s entered into the *Musnad*.'[49] In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries the *isnād to* the book was thus as important as the *isnād*s contained *within* the book for authenticating its hadiths. Oral transmission was the key to maintaining these *isnād*s.

In the 1000s, however, the fact that hadith collections such as the Six Books had become so well known and widely transmitted meant that scholars could relax the practical strictures of oral transmission. *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* was sufficiently widespread that if alterations were made to any one copy of the book there existed enough other transmissions of the book to identify this error. Although devout hadith scholars would maintain into the thirteenth century that one could not simply pick up a book of hadith and read it without having heard it from a transmitter via an *isnād*, Sunni scholars not specializing in hadith found this unnecessarily cumbersome. By the mid 1000s revered Sunni theologians and jurists like Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and his teacher al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) had declared that if one found a well-copied text of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* one could read and use it without an *isnād* to the book.[50]

Even among scholars focused narrowly on the study of hadith, in the 1000s the practice of *ijāza* (**permission for transmission**) began to supersede *samā'* as the medium of the *isnād*. *Ijāza* for transmission meant that instead of reading an entire hadith collection in the presence of an authorized transmitter, a student might only read part of it and receive 'permission' from the teacher to transmit the rest. Although it was a less rigorous form of authentication, *ijāza* still provided scholars with *isnāds* for books. Although this practice had existed in some forms even in the ninth century, by the mid 1000s it had become very common. Al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, author of the massive *Mustadrak*, thus gave a group of students an *ijāza* to transmit his works provided they could secure well-written copies of them.[51]

Of course, if you could get an *ijāza* for a book you had not actually read in the presence of a teacher, you could get *ijāza*s for any number of books that the teacher was able to transmit. This led to the practice of acquiring a 'general *ijāza* (*ijāza 'āmma*)' for all the books a teacher had. In the 1000s many scholars also accepted the practice of getting *ijāza*s from teachers one had not actually met at all through writing letters. This '*ijāza* for the non-present person (*ijāzat al-ma'dūm*)' meant that scholars could acquire *ijāza*s for their infant children or even for children not yet born!

This *ijāza* for transmission (*ijāzat al-riwāya*) should not be mistaken for another, much less easily attained form of *ijāza* in Islamic civilization, 'the *ijāza* of knowledge (*ijāzat al-dirāya*).' The *ijāza* of transmission served only to preserve the tradition of the *isnād*, while the *ijāza* of knowledge showed that a teacher acknowledged

that a student had mastered a text and was able to teach its contents to others.

It is evident from these developments that by the late eleventh century the transmission of hadiths and books *via* a living *isnād* possessed little practical value. Why then did it continue? Simply put, the foundational principle of the Islamic tradition, that authority comes through a connection to God and His Prophet, still dominated Muslim scholarly culture. The *isnād* was that chain that connected a scholar to the Prophet and allowed him to act as an authoritative interpreter of Islam. Hearing a hadith or a book of hadiths by an *isnād*, even if by *ijāza*, breathed a soul into otherwise lifeless pages and rendered the book legally compelling. One Arabic poem describes someone reading a book without receiving it from a teacher as 'someone trying to light a lamp with no oil.'[52] The Andalusian scholar Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī (d. 575/1179) thus stated that no one could introduce a statement with the formula 'the Prophet said...' without possessing some personal chain of transmission, even if by *ijāza*, back to the Prophet for that report.[53]

The *isnād* conveyed authority in Muslim scholarly culture, and it is no coincidence that acquiring and possessing *isnād*s was one of the means by which the Muslim scholarly elite could distinguish themselves from the laity. One of the reasons that Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī gave for requiring some form of *isnād* for quoting the Prophet was the phenomenon of uneducated simpletons preaching in mosques instead of qualified scholars. Receiving *isnād*s for books and hadiths was the equivalent of being ordained into the priesthood, and it is no surprise that even today at the Islamic Institute in Kerala, India, the graduation ceremony for Muslim scholars involves the rector of the school reading them his *isnād* for a hadith that involves the transmitters, all the way back to the Prophet, investing the student to whom they recited the hadith with the turban of a scholar.

Perhaps the last large hadith book to include full *isnād*s for every hadith it included was the *Ahādīth al-mukhtāra* (Selected Hadiths) of Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 643/1245). But even this book did not include previously unrecorded hadiths. The author's *isnād*s for his hadiths consist of his *isnād*s to earlier hadith collections, which then continue from the author of those collections back to the Prophet. After the 1200s, hadith scholars would cultivate their own fulllength *isnād*s back to the Prophet in small booklets produced only for the pietistic purpose of linking themselves to his blessings and imitating the great hadith scholars of yore. As Muhyī al-Dīn al-

Nawawī described it, collecting *isnād*s back to the Prophet is an act of 'preserving the *isnād*, which is one of the unique features of the Muslim community.'[54] The famous hadith scholar of Cairo, Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1404), thus conducted occasional *amālī* sessions in an effort to imitate the practice of earlier hadith scholars. In the twentieth century, the Moroccan hadith scholar Ahmad al-Ghumārī (d. 1960) recited hadiths with full *isnād*s back to the Prophet in dictation sessions in Cairo's al-Husayn Mosque. Today, the practice of transmitting hadiths is carried out by hearing hadiths known as ***musalsalāt***, or hadiths always transmitted in a certain context. The first hadith a student hears from his teacher is known as the *hadīth al-musalsal bi'l-awwaliyya*, 'the hadith always transmitted first': **'God the Most Merciful is merciful towards those who act with mercy – be merciful on the earth and He that is in the heavens will be merciful with you'** (see Chapter 1).

Historically, transmitting hadiths via full *isnād*s back to the Prophet carried another advantage as well. Not only did the chain connect one to Muhammad himself, it also linked one to all the great scholars of the past through whom the *isnād* passed. The staunchly orthodox 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 hadiths that reached all the way back to the Prophet through major figures in the Sufi tradition, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) and Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī.[55] These scholars had recorded their hadiths in book-form, but the religious capital gained by providing living *isnād*s for hadiths transmitted through them proved more compelling to al-Suhrawardī than simply citing their books.

*Isnād*s thus linked scholars to the great figures who had preceded them in Islamic civilization and allowed one to speak with their voices as well as that of the Prophet. As the great Sufi of the sixteenth century, al-Sha'rānī (d. 1565 CE) said, someone with an *isnād* 'is like a link in the chain, whenever he moves on any matter the whole chain, up to our master the Messenger of God, moves with him.'[56]

ELEVATION IN *ISNĀD*S, AUTHORITY, AND PRECEDENCE IN POST-CANONICAL HADITH TRANSMISSION

After the late tenth and eleventh centuries CE the primary purpose of the *isnād* was to provide a connection to the Prophet's authority and

establish a person as part of the Muslim scholarly class. As a result, one's proximity to the Prophet in the *isnād* and access to hadiths that other scholars lacked served as marks of precedence in the scholarly community. Like the importance of oral transmission (*samā'*), the notion of a short or **'elevated (*'ālī*)'** *isnād* began as a very practical concern for hadith authenticity: the fewer the links in the *isnād* to the Prophet, the fewer opportunities for error in transmission to occur. Hence we find even an early collector like Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) exhorting scholars that 'seeking elevated *isnād*s is part of religion.'[57]

By the mid 900s CE, however, seeking elevated *isnād*s had become a goal in its own right. In a society where connection to the Prophet was the source of both authority and blessing, the proximity of that connection was very valuable. As one early hadith scholar phrased it, 'A close *isnād* is closeness to God.'[58] As in any society, Muslim religious scholars and pious individuals established a system of honors and valuable items that individuals could earn or attain; like educational degrees, Muslim scholars sought out shorter and shorter *isnād*s, rarer and rarer hadiths, as a way to gain precedence, fame, and respect in their religious culture. Like coin collectors fretting over acquiring rarities, Muslims flocked to those scholars lucky enough to hear old hadith transmitters as young children, or who had heard a rare hadith from a certain transmitter from a faraway land. Such people could offer young Muslim scholars, eager to earn their place among the scholarly elite or merely to feel especially connected to their Prophet, a chance at excellence.

Of course, in none of these cases did the authenticity of the hadith in question actually matter – hadith scholars could distinguish themselves by their short *isnād*s and their rare hadiths regardless of whether or not these *isnād*s were reliable or the rare hadiths were baseless. To return to the analogy of coin collecting, it is the rarity of the coin and its condition (analogous to the elevation of an *isnād*) not the original value of the coin (or the authenticity of the hadith) which matter to the collector.

Perhaps the most prominent example of a hadith scholar who prioritized elevated *isnād*s and rare hadiths far above authenticity was al-Tabarānī (d. 360/971), who began hearing hadiths from teachers at the age of thirteen and died at the age of one hundred. Of his many hadith collections, his three *mu'jam*s (see below), one large, one medium, and one small, are testimonies to his priorities

in hadith study. In the small and medium collections, al-Tabarānī follows each narration with a brief discussion of how rare that narration is.

Al-Tabarānī's *isnāds* border on the impossibly short. While ninth-century scholars like al-Bukhārī generally narrated by *isnāds* of four, five, six, or seven transmitters to the Prophet (and in al-Bukhārī's case, twenty-eight instances where he narrated by only three), one hundred years later al-Tabarānī still regularly narrated hadiths with four-person *isnāds*. In one case we find him narrating a hadith *via* only three people: Ja'far b. Ḥamīd al-Anṣārī ← his grandfather 'Umar b. Abān ← the Companion Anas b. Mālik, who showed him how to perform ablutions like the Prophet!

Of course, later Muslim critics cast aside this *isnād* as inauthentic since Ja'far b. Ḥamīd was unknown to anyone but al-Tabarānī.[59] But in a scholarly culture where proximity to the Prophet granted precedence regardless of authenticity, al-Tabarānī was the most sought after hadith transmitter of his time. The last of his students to die was one Ibn Rīdha (d. 440/1049), and the most long-lived person to hear al-Tabarānī's collections from him was a woman named Fāṭima al-Jūzdāniyya (d. 514/1120). If you were lucky enough to receive *ijāza* from Fāṭima as a child for al-Tabarānī's hadiths, you could be living in the late 1100s, some 550 years after the Prophet had died, with only six degrees of separation between you and him!

Two other famous hadith collections that embody the desire for connection to the Prophet, whatever the authenticity, in this period are the *Musnad al-Shihāb* (The Meteor Musnad) of the Egyptian al-Quḍā'ī (d. 454/1062) and the *Musnad al-Firdaws* of al-Daylamī (d. 558/1163). These books represent some of the last large hadith collections to feature full-length *isnāds*, but their contents are on the whole so unreliable that later scholars devoted whole books to the forged hadiths they contained and assumed any hadith cited from the books to be weak.[60]

Today, the shortest realistic *isnāds* include twenty intermediaries to the Prophet. As al-Tabarānī's impossibly short *isnād* suggests, however, a chain of transmission can be as short as one is willing to believe. A great cultivator of *isnāds* in the early modern period, Murtadā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791), claimed to have heard a hadith via an *isnād* of two *jinn* (supernatural beings living alongside humans, the origin of our word 'genie') from the Prophet.[61] A modern hadith scholar from Morocco, 'Abdallāh al-Ghumārī (d. 1993), noted that

while teaching in Fez he had met a man who claimed to have heard hadiths from his grandfather, who had heard hadiths from al-Zabīdī.[62] If we combine this with the *jinn*'s *isnād*, this would mean that in the 1990s al-Ghumārī had a hadith from the Prophet narrated by only five intermediaries! Of course, neither al-Zabīdī nor al-Ghumārī *believed* that such transmissions were reliable enough to be the basis for law or dogma. They believed that *jinn* existed, however, so these *isnāds* were worth collecting for the blessing (*baraka*) of having a close, albeit tenuous, connection to the Prophet.

Women and hadith transmission

The transmission of hadith collections and even the compilation of new ones with very elevated *isnāds* in the post-canonical era was an area in which women could excel. Because they often lived longer than men, women could become the most sought after transmitters of books. Major hadith scholars like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī traveled to Mecca to read *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the presence of Karīma al-Marwaziyya (d. 463/1071), who had an especially elevated *isnād* to the book, and Fāṭima al-Jūzdāniyya was the main transmitter of al-Tabarānī's works. Until her death in 2008, Muslim students flocked to a small village in Yemen's Hadramawt Valley to receive a hadith *ijāza* from the 105-year-old woman Ṣafiyya al-'Amdiyya.

Independent collections of hadiths by women were very rare; in the early period of hadith they were non-existent. But we know of at least two selections of hadiths from the post-canonical period compiled by women. A twelfth-century woman named Shuhda al-Kātiba (d. 574/1178–9) put together a list of 115 hadiths that she picked from books she had been authorized to transmit, often with shorter *isnāds* than the hadiths in the actual books themselves.[63] The *Musnad* of Amat Allāh Miryam al-Hanbaliyya of Nablus (d. 758/1357) has also survived until today.

MU'JAMS, THABATS, AND THE CVs OF HADITH SCHOLARS

With the transformation of hadith transmission and collection into a means of connection to the Prophet and status in the scholarly community, hadith collections emerged that were structured to display

the breadth of a hadith scholar's learning. *Mu'jam*s were books of hadiths in which the author chose a certain theme and then provided as many hadiths as possible to demonstrate the breadth of his hadith corpus within that theme. In a sense, the *mu'jam* functioned as *curriculum vitae* of the hadith scholar, displaying the range of teachers with whom he had studied, the rarity of his hadiths, and the elevation of his *isnād*s. *Mu'jam*s had emerged in the eighth century, with Abū al-Qāsim al-Baghawī's (d. 317/929–30) *Mu'jam al-sahāba*, where the author provided one hadith from him all the way back to each Companion. The *mu'jam* came into its own as a genre, however, in the tenth to the twelfth centuries.

A common theme for a *mu'jam* was a **mu'jam al-shuyūkh** (*mu'jam* of teachers), or a collection where the author provided one hadith with a full *isnād* through each of his teachers. An early example of this is the *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh* of Abū Bakr al-Ismā'īlī (d. 371/981–2) and the *Mu'jam al-saghīr* (small *mu'jam*) of al-Tabarānī. A *mu'jam al-shuyūkh* could be massive and contain far more than merely hadiths: the *mu'jam* composed by Abū Sa'd al-Sam'ānī (d. 562/1166) is published in four volumes and contains hadiths, information about his teachers' lives, and the books they studied and wrote, as well as about his own studies.

Other *mu'jam*s were designed to display the breadth of a scholar's travels in the search of hadiths. One scholar of the 1100s who was particularly well known for his elevated *isnād*s and wide travel (born in Iran, he eventually settled in Alexandria), Abū Tāhir al-Silafī (d. 576/1180) wrote three *mu'jam*s, one for his teachers in his native Isfahan, one for those in Baghdad, and one for the teachers he had heard from on his travels (the *Mu'jam al-safar*).

With the end of the general practice of writing hadith collections with full *isnād*s in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the hadith scholar's CV shifted away from using the *isnād*s of hadiths to demonstrate wide learning to using the *isnād*s of books. In the mid 1100s we thus see the emergence of *thabat*s, or collections in which a scholar listed all his *isnād*s to the books he had received permission to transmit from his teachers, in the place of *mu'jam*s. Early *thabat*s include that of the famous Andalusian hadith scholars al-Qādī 'Iyād b. Mūsā (d. 544/1149) and Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī (d. 575/1179). *Thabat*s would remain until modern times the premier medium through which scholars could demonstrate their connection to the great scholars of yesteryear, and through those books to the Prophet himself.

In the twentieth century the Moroccan hadith scholar Muhammad 'Abd al-Hayy al-Kattānī (d. 1963) compiled the *Fahris al-fahāris*, a *thabat* collection with *isnād*s to over one thousand earlier *thabat* collections!

CHANNELING THE CONNECTION TO THE PROPHET: *MUSTAKHRAJS*, COMMENTARIES, LOCAL HISTORIES, AND FORTY HADITH BOOKS

The capacity of hadith to function as a connection to the Prophet has allowed Muslim scholars to channel and mold this charismatic medium to serve a variety of scholarly and non-scholarly purposes. Hadiths have provided the material through which other discourses are constructed. From the 900s to the present day, scholars have therefore used hadiths as a medium for discussing any number of legal, doctrinal, or spiritual issues.

Mustakhrajs

The genre of *mustakhraj* books flourished from the late 800s until the early 1000s, during the period in which the focus on elevated *isnād*s became pronounced. A *mustakhraj* involved a hadith scholar taking an existing hadith collection and using it as a template for his own hadith book; so for every hadith found in the template collection, the author of the *mustakhraj* would provide his own narration of that hadith.

This seems counterintuitive – why would a scholar who had collected a large body of hadiths not write his own collection in order to express his own legal or doctrinal worldview? The reason for composing a *mustakhraj* becomes obvious when we consider the nature and objectives of the genre. First, *mustakhraj*s appeared during the period when the hadith canon was forming. As a result, collections such as the *Sahīhayn* and the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd were greatly sought after, and scholars would travel far and wide to hear the books from their authorized transmitters. If a scholar was unable to hear the books from a transmitter with an elevated *isnād* to its author, however, he would have to suffice with an unattractively long *isnād* to the book.

*Mustakhraj*s provided a solution. By reconstituting the template collection with his own, often elevated *isnād*s, a scholar could effectively possess the book without compromising the quality of his *isnād* to it. Abū Nuʿaym al-Isbahānī states that he composed his *mustakhraj* of Muslim's *Saḥīḥ* for the benefit of those who had 'missed' hearing that book from authorized transmitters. A twelfth-century scholar who had heard al-Isbahānī's *mustakhraj* bragged to friends that some of the *isnād*s for hadiths in the book were so short that he was just as close to the Prophet as Muslim had been.[64]

Second, authors of *mustakhraj*s used the template collection to display the authenticity and elevation of their own *isnād*s. We thus find that the books used as template collections for *mustakhraj*s were all products of the *sahīh* movement; dozens of *mustakhraj*s were produced based on the *Sahīhayn* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, with three on the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, one on al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmiʿ* and one on the *Sahīh* of Ibn Khuzayma. The majority of *mustakhraj*s based on the *Sahīhayn* thus attempted to replicate the criteria used for authenticity by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Finally, by selecting narrations of hadiths that varied slightly from the template collections or adjusting the chapter titles, the authors of *mustakhraj*s could introduce their own legal or doctrinal ideas into the text. In this sense, *mustakhraj*s were the first generation of commentaries on hadith collections. In the *mustakhraj* genre, the template collection served as a forum for the author to display the quality and elevation of his *isnād*s as well as to express his own doctrinal and legal vision.

Commentaries

A commentary on a hadith collection, or **sharh**, served two general functions. First, scholars composed such a work to assist students in the basic task of reading and understanding the difficult phrases, names, and obscure meanings embedded in the *isnād*s and *matn*s of a hadith work. Second, commentaries provided scholars with an opportunity to elaborate in detail on any legal, dogmatic, ritual, or historical issue that they found relevant to the hadiths in the book they were discussing. The book commented on thus acted as a medium for a much more expanded discussion in which the author could express his own vision of the Islamic worldview.

The majority of hadith commentaries were devoted to books in the hadith canon. The earliest known commentary was devoted to Mālik's

Muwatta' by the Mālikī Abū Ṭāhir al-Umawī (d. 250/864). Two other very early examples are the Shāfiʿī scholar Hamd al-Khattābī's (d. 388/998) commentaries on the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd and on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*. The first known commentary on Muslim's *Sahīh* was written by the North African scholar Muhammad b. ʿAlī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), with one devoted to the *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* by another North African, Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148). The first known commentary on *Sunan Ibn Mājah* came from the Cairene Hanafī scholar Mughaltāy (d. 762/1361). *Sunan al-Nasāʾī* would have to wait until al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505) devoted a commentary to it.

The most famous hadith commentaries overall are undoubtedly Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1449) *Fath al-bārī*, a huge commentary on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, and al-Nawawī's commentary on *Sahīh Muslim*. Both are so encyclopedic in their discussion of the hadith-science issues and broader questions raised in the *Sahīhayn* that Muslim scholars regularly cite them instead of specialized books of law or theology.

Because commentaries provided such an excellent forum for legal discussion, the hadith collections tied to specific schools of law also attracted them. Early commentaries on Mālik's *Muwatta'* came from the Mālikī scholars Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1060) of Lisbon and Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081), both of whom wrote several commentaries of various sizes on the work. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's *Kitāb al-tamhīd* and the later work of al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710) are the two best known commentaries on the *Muwatta'*. There have been occasional commentaries on the *Musnad* of Abū Hanīfa, such as that of the Meccan Mullā ʿAlī Qārī (d. 1014/1606). Al-Suyūtī wrote a small commentary on the *Musnad* of al-Shāfiʿī, and even the massive *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal has attracted occasional commentaries, such as that of the Medinan scholar Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 1726) or the Yemeni Abū al-Hasan al-Sindī (d. 1728).

Commentaries attained an important station in the late 1300s, when writing one on al-Bukhārī's or Muslim's *Sahīh* became the principal means for scholars throughout the Sunni Muslim world to interact with the hadith tradition. At the peak of intellectual activity in Mamluk Cairo in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, almost every hadith scholar of note wrote a commentary on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, and in India from the 1600s onward writing a commentary on one of the *Sahīhayn* was *de rigueur* for accomplished Muslim scholars.[65]

Hadith commentaries have continued to be written until modern times. The most famous commentary on al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*, the *Tuhfat al-ahwadhī* (The Gem of the Competant) of the Indian Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mubārakfūrī (d. 1935), is a regularly cited encyclopedic source for Sunni Muslim scholars worldwide. The twenty-nine-volume *Awjaz al-masālik ilā Muwatta' Mālik* (ironically titled, The Shortest of Paths to Mālik's *Muwatta'*), written by the Indian Muhammad Zakariyyā Kāndahlawī (d. 1982) is the largest commentary devoted to the one volume *Muwatta'* of Mālik.

Sometimes scholars devoted commentaries to selections of hadiths they made themselves and not to any existing books. The leading Hanafī hadith scholar of his time, the Egyptian Abū Ja'far al-Tahāwī (d. 321/933), wrote one commentary on hadiths of legal consequence to the Hanafī school, the *Sharh ma'ānī al-āthār*, and one on hadiths he found legally or doctrinally problematic, the *Sharh mushkil al-āthār*. The Sufi Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 384/994) wrote a commentary on a selection of hadiths he found morally and spiritually important, the *Bahr al-fawā'id* (Ocean of Benefits).

Local histories

From the late ninth century, scholars also began using hadiths as a medium for a less scholastic topic: narrating the history of their native city, its virtues, and the accomplishments of its inhabitants. These local histories formed part of the larger genre of biographical dictionaries that featured so prominently in Islamic civilization. In such works history is told through collective biography.

Local histories generally set forth the history of a city, the people associated with it and its role in the Islamic world. The introductory chapters on the virtues of the city usually included outrageously patriotic forged hadiths. In the eleventh century, al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī and Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī wrote local histories on their respective cities of Nishapur and Isfahan, both in Iran and both featuring this hadith: **'The people with the greatest destiny in Islam are the people of Persia** (*a'zam al-nās nasīban fī al-islām ahl fāris*).'[66] Local histories then generally list the famous inhabitants or visitors to the city in either chronological or alphabetical order, providing biographies for each entry.

Many local histories fit squarely within the genre of hadith literature because they focused on the lives and accomplishments

of hadith scholars, describing the teachers from whom they heard hadiths and the students to whom they transmitted, and rating their reliability. Local histories also included vast arrays of hadiths. The earliest known local history is the history of Wāsit in southern Iraq (*Tārīkh Wāsit*) written by Aslam b. Sahl Bahshal (d. 292/905). The work includes many hadiths, including the only known narration of the hadith through Ibn Abbas in which the Prophet condemns speaking during the Friday prayer sermon.[67]

The most famous local histories rank among the largest books written in Islamic civilization. The *History of Baghdad* (literally, *The History of the City of Peace, Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*) of al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) is fourteen printed volumes, while the mammoth *History of Damascus* (*Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*) of Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) fills eighty! Since the authors of these two books include at least one hadith for each entry, with a full *isnād* from the author through the subject in question back to the Prophet, the *History of Baghdad* and the *History of Damascus* are actually two of the largest and most important hadith collections. As with *musnad*s and *mu'jam*s, their authors were unconcerned with the authenticity of hadiths in the books, and the works are thus indispensable sources for some of the rarest and most bizarre hadiths in circulation.

Forty hadith collections

One the most common and enduring forms of using hadiths as a medium for scholarly or pious expression has been books of *Arba'ūn hadīth*, or 'Forty Hadith' books. Supposedly the first Forty Hadith book was composed by the early scholar Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) on the basis of a hadith that, although attributed to the Prophet through many narrations and permutations, Muslims have agreed is unreliable: **'Whoever memorizes for my community forty hadiths from my Sunna, I will be his intercessor on the Day of Judgment** (*man hafiza 'alā ummatī arba'īn hadīthan min al-sunna kuntu lahu shafī'an yawm al-qiyāma*).' Despite its unreliability, this hadith has served consistently as a catalyst in Islamic scholarly culture, and even Muslim scholars not known for any special interest in hadith have composed Forty Hadith collections on its basis. Among the non-hadith specialists who did so are the famous Shāfi'ī legal theorist al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and the seminal Sufi theosopher Ibn Arabi (d. 638/1240). Some of the earliest known Forty books are those of Ahmad b.

Harb al-Naysābūrī (d. 234/848) and Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī al-Dhuhlī (d. 294/905).[68]

Like *mu'jam*s, forty hadith collections could be tailored to display the elevation or rarity of a scholar's hadiths or be devoted to specific topics. Ibn 'Asākir and al-Silafī had forty hadith collections with one hadith for each of the forty lands they had visited. Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī composed one with forty hadiths important to Sufis and one with forty hadiths about the Messiah (*Mahdī*). Muhammad b. Abd al-Rahman al-Tujīnī of Morocco (d. 610/1213) wrote several forty hadith collections, including one on the topic of praying for the Prophet.

The most exorbitant displays of the breadth of a scholar's hadith corpus are certainly the forty hadith collections of Ibn al-'Abbār (d. 658/1259) and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Ghāfiqī (d. 619/1222), which were entitled 'Forty hadiths from forty different teachers from forty different books by forty different scholars via forty different *isnād*s to forty different Successors, from forty different Companions with forty different names from forty different tribes on forty different issues.'[69] Convinced that all possible forty-hadith-book themes had been exhausted, al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Naysābūrī (d. 656/1258) replicated this same topic but also drew his forty hadiths from forty different forty-hadith collections![70]

One forty hadith book in particular, al-Nawawī's 'Forty Hadiths about the Principles of the Religion (*Arba'ūn hadīth fī usūl al-dīn*)' is one of the most widely read books after the Quran among Sunni Muslims. It has served as an important tool for scholars to instruct the masses and has been the subject of numerous commentaries, such as the frequently studied *Jāmi' al-'ulūm wa al-hikam* (Compendium of the Sciences and Wisdoms) of Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1392) and Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī's (d. 974/1566) *Fath al-mubin bi-sharh al-arba'īn*.

CONSOLIDATION AND ANALYSIS IN THE LATE SUNNI TRADITION

In the wake of the emergence of the hadith canon at the dawn of the eleventh century, a process of consolidation and analysis began in parallel with the continued transmission of hadith as a medium of

connection to the Prophet. This consolidation and analysis entered a period of exceptional activity with the solidification of what we can refer to as the Late Sunni Tradition, or the version of Sunni orthodoxy that emerged in the 1300s and has characterized Islamic civilization in the Middle East and South Asia until the modern period. It consists of an institutional combination of the four Sunni schools of law, the Ash'arī or Māturīdī schools of speculative theology, and Sufi brotherhoods. A Muslim scholar in the Late Sunni Tradition would loyally follow one of the established schools of law, one of the established schools of speculative theology, and participate in one or more Sufi brotherhoods.

Digest collections

The emergence of the hadith canon resulted naturally in the composition of digest collections that combined and consolidated the canon's contents into a more manageable form. The first digests addressed the core of the hadith canon: the two *Sahīh*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. An Andalusian who moved to Baghdad, Muhammad b. Futūh al-Humaydī (d. 488/1095) combined the *Sahīhayn* into one book, noting any material that one of the two books featured apart from the other. Zayn al-Dīn al-Zabīdī (d. 893/1488) later wrote a small one-volume digest of all the hadiths of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, called *Tajrīd al-Sahīh* (Stripping Down the *Sahīh*), that removed *isnād*s and any repetitions.

Ibn Razīn al-Saraqustī (d. 524/1129) of Saragossa produced a more thorough digest of what he perceived as the hadith canon: the *Sahīhayn* and the books of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, al-Tirmidhī and Mālik. The Syrian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) replicated this work in his large and very popular *Jāmi' al-usūl min ahādīth al-rasūl*, a copy of which the great Mongol grand vizier Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) ordered to be placed in the mosque he endowed as a counterpart to the Quran. The famous scholar of Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), compiled a digest collection reflecting his loyalty to the Hanbali school; his *Jāmi' al-masānīd* combined the hadiths of the *Sahīhayn*, the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī, and the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal.[71]

Ibn Athīr's *Jāmi' al-usūl* was a huge, multivolume work. Other digests were meant to be portable, easily thumbed-through personal handbooks. Al-Husayn al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), known as 'the

Reviver of the Sunna,' wrote his one-volume *Masābīh al-sunna* (Lamps of the Sunna) for this purpose. He digested the canon into 4,434 hadiths, half of them from the *Sahīhayn*.[72] Organized topically, each chapter is divided into *sahīh* and the *hasan* (see next chapter for discussion of these terms) hadiths. The work is so small because the author omitted the *isnād*s, relying on the reputation of the books he drew on to vouch for the reliability of the hadiths.[73] Muhammad al-Khatīb al-Tabrīzī (d. *c.* 737/1337) added 1,511 hadiths to al-Baghawī's work in his expanded digest, the *Mishkāt al-masābīh* (Niche of the Lamps). The *Mishkāt* became a standard hadith textbook for Muslim religious students, especially in India, and was the subject of several commentaries, including the famous *Mirqāt al-mafātīh sharh Mishkāt al-masābīh* of Mullā 'Alī Qārī.

Supplemental collections

The Six Books contained approximately 19,600 traditions altogether, but vast numbers remained in other works. While digest works sought to consolidate the material within the canon, supplemental collections (*kutub al-zawā'id*) brought material outside the canon within easy reach of scholars. In his *Majma' al-zawā'id*, the Cairene scholar Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405) listed all hadiths from the *Musnad*s of Ibn Hanbal, Abū Ya'lā al-Mawsilī, and al-Bazzār as well as the *Mu'jam*s of al-Tabarānī that are not found in the Six Books, organized topically and without *isnād*s. Al-Haythamī also evaluated the transmitters in the *isnād* of each supplemental hadith (but, note, not necessarily the *authenticity* of the hadith itself!).[74] In his *Ithāf al-khayyira al-mahara bi-zawā'id al-masānīd al-'ashara,* Ahmad al-Būsīrī (d. 840/1436) performed the same service for the hadiths in the *Muwatta'*, the *Musnad* of al-Shāfi'ī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, *Sunan al-Dāraqutnī*, *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma*, *Sahīh Ibn Hibbān*, the *Muntaqā* of Ibn al-Jārūd, Abū 'Awāna's *Mustakhraj* of *Sahīh Muslim*, the *Mustadrak* of al-Hākim, and the *Sharh ma'ānī al-āthār* of al-Tahāwī. In his *Matālib al-'āliya bi-zawā'id al-masānīd al-thamāniya*, the great Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) added the hadiths from a wide selection of less well-known early *musnad*s: those of al-Tayālisī, al-Humaydī, Ibn Abī 'Umar, al-Musaddad, Ahmad b. Manī', Ibn Abī Shayba, 'Abd b. Humayd, al-Hārith b. Abī Usāma, Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, and al-Rūyānī.[75]

With these supplemental collections at their disposal, Muslim scholars could easily reference hadiths outside the canonical

collections as well as the rulings of major late hadith masters on their *isnād*s. The modern Yemeni scholar Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādi'ī (d. 2001) performed a similar service for *sahīh* hadiths; in his *al-Jāmi' al-sahīh mimmā laysa fī al-Sahīhayn* he collected all the hadiths he deemed authentic but that are not found in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections.

Mega-collections

Rather than collecting extra-canonical hadiths in manageable form, several late Sunni scholars attempted the more ambitious task of encompassing the whole hadith corpus in one book. The encyclopedic Shāfi'ī scholar of Egypt, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505), sought to accomplish this after he had a dream in which the Prophet appeared to him and ordered him to 'Bring forth the Sunna! Bring forth the hadiths!'[76] Al-Suyūtī attempted this in his *Jam' al-jawāmi'* (Consolidation of Compendia), also known as his *Jāmi' al-kabīr*, which has been published today in thirty large sections. In this work he synthesized the contents of all the hadith collections available to him alphabetically according to the beginning of the hadith (*taraf*) along with its *isnād*. Al-Suyūtī then took all the hadiths (10,031 in total) documenting Prophetic sayings (as opposed to actions), rated their authenticity (or most of them), and combined them in a one-volume work called *al-Jāmi' al-saghīr*. This work has become one of the most relied upon references for Muslim scholars not specializing in hadiths. Realizing he had omitted some material, al-Suyūtī penned an addendum entitled *al-Ziyāda 'alā al-Jāmi' al-saghīr*.

The Indian scholar 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Malik Muttaqī of India (d. 975/1567) took the *Jāmi' al-kabīr*, added hadiths that al-Suyūtī had missed and rearranged it topically in his massive *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa al-af'āl* (The Laborers' Treasure from the Spoken and Acted Sunna). The Egyptian 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī (d. 1621) estimated that al-Suyūtī had only succeeded in exhausting a third of the extant hadiths and objected to the widespread belief that if a hadith was not in the *Jāmi' al-kabīr* it did not exist. In his *al-Jāmi' al-azhar min hadīth al-nabī al-anwar*, al-Munāwī therefore reproduced the *Jāmi' al-kabīr* and added material that had eluded al-Suyūtī.[77] Other late scholars also complained about al-Suyūtī's omissions; the Moroccan Abū 'Alā' al-Fāsī (d. 1770–1) wrote in the margins of his

copy of the *Jāmi' al-kabīr* over five thousand hadiths that al-Suyūṭī had missed.

Indices/Aṭrāf collections

One of the most practical genres of books produced in the consolidation movement was that of *aṭrāf*. The *ṭaraf* (pl. *aṭrāf*) of a hadith was the first section of the *matn* or its most prominent section. If a scholar knew the text of the hadith and had no other information about it, an index of hadiths arranged according to *aṭrāf* would be the easiest way to find it. An *aṭrāf* work listed the *matn* of the hadith and then provided all its various chains of transmission and the books in which they appear.

As with other genres, *aṭrāf* collections took the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* as the first subject. Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010–11) and Khalaf al-Wāsiṭī (d. 400/1010) of Baghdad each wrote an *aṭrāf* work for the hadiths included in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections, although their books were clearly not meant for people to use as accessible indices, since the works are organized along *musnad* lines and not alphabetically. The Mālikī scholar of Andalusia, 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dānī (d. 444/1053) also wrote an early *aṭrāf* of the hadiths in the *Muwaṭṭa'*.[78]

Ibn 'Asākir composed a more useful and ultimately widely copied *aṭrāf* work of the Five Book canon. Abū al-Faḍl al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) wrote an *aṭrāf* book of the Six Books, but it was not widely used. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) wrote a much more comprehensive *aṭrāf* of the Six Books (and several smaller, minor works) entitled *Tuḥfat al-ashrāf bi-ma'rifat al-aṭrāf* (The Gem of the Noble for Knowing the *Aṭrāf*), which quickly became a mainstay for scholars. It contains 19,626 hadiths. Al-Mizzī's son-in-law, the famous Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) (no doubt attempting to impress his in-laws), compiled his *Jāmi' al-masānīd wa al-sunan al-hādī li-aqwam al-sunan*, which added the *aṭrāf* of hadiths from the *musnad*s of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Mawṣilī, al-Bazzār, the *Mu'jam al-kabīr* of al-Ṭabarānī, and the *Ma'rifat al-ṣaḥāba* of Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's *Itḥāf al-mahara bi-aṭrāf al-'ashara* listed all the *aṭrāf* of the hadiths that al-Būṣīrī had included in his *Itḥāf al-khayyira* (see above section on Supplemental Collections).

Aḥkām al-ḥadīth *works*

This genre included many fewer and less voluminous works than those composed in other genres discussed here but has exercised a significant influence on Islamic scholarship. *Aḥkām al-ḥadīth*, or 'the laws derived from hadith,' collections were books that listed hadiths regularly used in deriving Islamic law along with their ratings and the collections in which they are found. *Aḥkām al-ḥadīth* works also often included discussions of the hadiths' legal implications. This genre seems to have arisen in imitation of *aḥkām al-Qur'ān* works, which addressed the legal implications of Quranic verses. The first *aḥkām al-ḥadīth* books are the *Aḥkām al-ṣughrā* (Small *Aḥkām*), *al-Aḥkām al-wusṭā* (Medium *Aḥkām*) and *al-Aḥkām al-kubrā* (Large *Aḥkām*) of the Andalusian jurist and hadith scholar Ibn al-Kharrāt al-Ishbīlī (d. 581/1185). The famously conservative Hanbali scholar of Jerusalem, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203), wrote the very influential *'Umdat al-aḥkām* (The Foundation of Rulings), which was expanded and commented on by the Egyptian Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd (d. 702/1302) in his *Iḥkām al-aḥkām* (Bolstering the Rulings), which consisted of five hundred legal hadiths taken from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The leading Hanbali scholar Majd al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 653/1255, the grandfather of the controversial reformer Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya) wrote the three-volume *Muntaqā al-akhbār* (Choice Reports), but the most influential *aḥkām al-ḥadīth* books has been the *Bulūgh al-marām min adillat al-aḥkām* (Reaching the Aspiration for the Proofs of Legal Rulings) of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī.

Aḥkām al-ḥadīth books were written as references and teaching tools for Muslim scholars of religious law, but they became highly influential with the rise of the Salafi movements of revival and reform in the eighteenth century until today (see Chapter 9). These movements encourage a return to the original sources of Islam and highlight the importance of hadiths in Islamic law and dogma. As a result, in many cities of the Muslim world cheap pocket-copies of *Bulūgh al-marām* can be found in book stores as popular references for Muslims' daily lives. Two influential Yemeni scholars of the early modern period, Muhammad b. al-Amīr al-San'ānī (d. 1768) and Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī (d. 1834) devoted their commentaries, *Subul al-salām sharḥ Bulūgh al-marām* and *Nayl al-awṭār sharḥ Muntaqā al-akhbār*, to the *Bulūgh al-marām* and *al-Muntaqā* respectively. These commentaries have become

frequently used references and textbooks for the study of Islamic law today.

QUOTING GOD: *HADĪTH QUDSĪ*

Hadiths in which the Prophet quotes God's speech constitute a species of hadiths known as 'holy hadiths (*hadīth qudsī*).' Famous ones include God saying 'Spend [in charity], O son of Adam, and I will spend on you ... (*anfiq yā ibn Ādam unfiq 'alayk. ...*).' Qudsī hadiths are distinguished from the Quran in that they are not considered to be the *literal* word of God. Only their meaning issues from God, while their wording comes from Muhammad. Muslims believe that they were not revealed via the intermediacy of the angel Gabriel, as the Quran was. Instead, the Prophet may have heard them during his Ascension to heaven (*Mi'rāj*), in a dream or through inspiration (*ilhām*).

Several scholars authored collections of *hadīth qudsī*: Ibn 'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) expanded Forty Hadith collection, the *Mishkāt al-anwār*, consisted of 101 *hadīth qudsī*, and the Yemeni Ibn al-Dayba' (d. 944/1537) also devoted a book to this type of report.[79] 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī (d. 1621) wrote a collection entitled *al-Ithāfāt al-saniyya bi'l-ahādīth al-qudsiyya* with 272 *qudsī* hadiths in it. Muhammad al-Madanī (d. 1786) added to that book, compiling a work with the same title that included some 863 hadiths.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

There are several translations of major Sunni hadith collections. These include Mālik b. Anas's *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas*, trans. Aisha Bewley (London: Kegan Paul Intl., 1989); an excellent translation of the first chapters of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* entitled *Sahih al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Asad (Lahore: Arafat Publications, 1938); a full translation can be found in *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh Bukhārī*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997); an abridgement of Muslim's *Sahīh* entitled *Sahih Muslim*, trans. Aftab Shahryar (New Delhi: Islamic Book

Service, 2004); Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, trans. Ahmad Hasan (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1984); and the *Sunan* of al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan Nasā'ī*, trans. Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1994); a selection of hadiths from al-Bukhārī's *al-Adab al-mufrad* entitled *Moral Teachings of Islam: Prophetic Traditions from al-Adab al-Mufrad* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003); al-Nawawī's famous *Forty Hadiths*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1997); al-Tabrīzī's *Mishkāt al-masābīh* in five volumes, trans. James Robson (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963). A selection of *shamā'il* have been translated into English by Muhammad Zaynū as *al-Shamā'il al-muhammadiyya* (Fairfax, VA: Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies, 1995). The Riyadh publisher Dar al-Salam will also soon publish a set of the entire Six Book Sunni hadith canon. Dar al-Salam has also translated Ibn Hajar's famous *ahkām al-hadīth* collection, *Bulūgh al-marām* (Riyadh, 1996). Al-Nawawī's *Riyād al-sālihīn* is translated as *The Gardens of the Righteous*, trans. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (London: Curzon Press, 1975).

An Indian hadith scholar, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 1824), wrote a history of hadith literature from a Muslim perspective; it is published as *The Gardens of Hadith Scholars*, trans. Aisha Bewley (Santa Barbara, CA: White Thread Press, 2007). Although it is part of the *sīra* genre and not hadith proper, the famous biography of the Prophet edited by Ibn Hishām has been translated: *The Life of Mohammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

For discussions of the debates over writing hadiths and the importance of orality in early Islamic history, see Michael Cook's, 'The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam,' *Arabica* 44 (1997): 437–530; and Gregor Schoeler's *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl (New York: Routledge, 2006). For an excellent discussion about the importance of the *isnād* in Islam as a paradigm of connection, see William Graham's 'Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, 3 (1993): 495–522. For a study of hadith *qudsī*, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977). For a study of the early transmission of hadiths, see Scott Lucas, *Constructive Critics: Hadīth Literature and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

ENDNOTES:

1 Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa fadlihi*, vol. 2, p.36.
2 Muhammad Abū Zahra, *Ibn Hanbal*, p. 239.
3 'Abdallāh al-Ghumārī, *Tawjīh al-'ināya li-ta'rīf 'ilm al-hadīth riwāya wa dirāya*, p. 7.
4 Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, vol. 4, p. 103.
5 Yahyā Ibn Ma'īn, *Kitāb al-'ilal wa ma'rifat al-rijāl*, p. 19.
6 Al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, vol. 4, p. 103.
7 Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī sharh Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, vol. 11, p. 466. The Egyptian scholar 'Abd al-Ghanī b. Sa'īd (d. 409/1019) found four hadiths with four Companions narrating from one another in the *isnād*; ibid., vol. 13, p. 15.
8 Al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, vol. 4, p. 103.
9 Hammām b. Munabbih, *Sahīfat Hammām b. Munabbih*.
10 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd: kitāb al-'ilm, bāb fī kitāb al-'ilm*.
11 Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd al-'ilm*, p. 96.
12 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd: kitāb al-'ilm, bāb fī kitāb al-'ilm*.
13 Muhyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *Sharh Sahīh Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 357.
14 Ibn Abī Hātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarh wa al-ta'dīl*, vol. 6, p. 336.
15 Al-Khatīb, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 2, p. 85.
16 Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 7, p. 448.
17 *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-'ilm, bāb kayfa yuqbad al-'ilm*; Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition*, vol. 2, p. 26.
18 Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Harb, *Kitāb al-'ilm*, p. 32; al-Khatīb, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 2, pp. 71, 78–79.
19 Ibid., vol. 2. p. 81.
20 Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, '*Hadīth* Literature – I: The Development of the Science of *Hadīth*,' p. 273; Abū al-Hasan 'Alī al-Qābisī, *Muwatta' al-imām Mālik*.
21 Harald Motzki, 'The *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī as a Source of Authentic *Ahādīth* of the First Century A.H,' pp. 3–4.
22 Ibn Abī Hātim al-Rāzī, *al-Taqdima*, pp. 31–32.
23 Ibn Nuqta, *Kitab al-Taqyīd li-ma'rifat ruwāt al-sunan wa al-masānīd*, p. 161. For details on the numbers of hadiths in the *Musnad*, see Christopher Melchert, 'The *Musnad* of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal,' pp. 32–51.
24 *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 6, p. 269.
25 See Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, '*Hadīth* Literature – I: The Development of the Science of *Hadīth*.'
26 Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 221.
27 Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Hady al-sārī*, p. 661.
28 Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol. 13, p. 279.
29 *Sahīh Muslim: muqaddima*, introduction.
30 Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, 'Risālat al-imām Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī ilā ahl Makka fī wasf Sunanihi,' p. 46.
31 Qādī 'Iyād, *Kitāb al-shifā*, p. 153.
32 'Abdallāh b. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Kitāb al-sunna*, p. 301; Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī*, p. 404.
33 Ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb fadā'il al-sahāba*, vol. 2, p. 665.

34 Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, *Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī wa juhūduhu fī al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, p. 2:674–676; Jonathan A. C. Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, pp. 92–94.
35 Ibn Manda, *Shurūt al-a'imma*, pp. 67–68.
36 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 58, p. 93.
37 Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, p. 9.
38 Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risāla*, pp. 42–43.
39 Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, pp. 340–345.
40 Ibid., pp. 255–260.
41 Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, vol. 3, pp. 50, 111.
42 Ibn Nuqta, *al-Taqyīd li-ma'rifat ruwāt al-sunan wa al-masānīd*, p. 123.
43 See Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 1, pp. 414–416.
44 Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, vol. 3, p. 25.
45 Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, p. 560.
46 I thank my colleague Scott Lucas for this number.
47 Ibn al-Salāh, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Salāh*, p. 307.
48 Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'ī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, vol. 1, p. 452.
49 Al-Khatīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 4, pp. 293–294; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, vol. 1, pp. 511–512.
50 Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, pp. 63–64.
51 Al-Rāfi'ī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, vol. 3, p. 131.
52 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Sulaymān al-Ahdal, *al-Nafas al-yamānī*, p. 63.
53 Muhammad b. Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *Fahrasat mā rawāhu 'an shuyūkhihi*, pp. 17 ff. See also Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī, *Al-Bā'ith 'alā al-khalās min hawādith al-qussās*, p. 97.
54 Al-Nawawī, *Sharh Sahīh Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 119.
55 Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 60.
56 Ahmad al-Ghumārī, *Al-Burhān al-jalī fī tahqīq intisāb al-sūfiyya ilā 'Alī*, p. 3.
57 Al-Khalīlī, *Al-Irshād fī ma'rifat 'ulamā' al-hadīth*, p. 6.
58 Al-Khatīb, *Jāmi' akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi'*, vol. 1, p. 205.
59 Al-Tabaranī, *Al-Mu'jam al-saghīr*, p. 116.
60 Al-Suyūtī, *Jam' al-jawāmi'*, vol. 1, pp. 3–4.
61 Stefan Reichmuth, 'Murtadā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791) in Biographical and Autobiographical Accounts,' p. 75. The famous Sufi of Cairo, Shams al-Dīn al-Hanafī (d. 847/1443–4), also claimed to have had an *isnād* of two beings, one person and one *jinn*, to the Prophet; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, p. 438.
62 'Abdallāh al-Ghumārī, *Tawjīh al-'ināya*, p. 42.
63 Asma Sayeed, 'Shifting Fortunes: Women and Hadīth Transmission in Islamic History,' p. 277.
64 Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, pp. 107–108.
65 See Ishaq, *India's Contribution to Hadith Literature*.
66 Abū Nu'aym al-Isbahānī, *Dhikr akhbār Isbahān*, vol. 1, p. 23.
67 Al-Wāsitī, *Tārīkh Wāsit*, p. 125.
68 Al-'Awd, *Al-Mu'īn 'alā ma'rifat kutub al-arba'īn*, p. 29.
69 Ibid., pp. 63, 153.
70 Ibid., p. 151.
71 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-qussās wa al-mudhakkirīn*, p. 146.
72 J. Robson, trans., *Miskhat al-Masabih*, vol. 1, p. xiii.