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IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ AL-SHAHRAZŪRĪ AND THE ISNĀD

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This article examines the role of the isnād in the thought of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (577/1181–643/1245) and other later ḥadīth experts. In earlier times, isnāds had been scrutinized to determine the authenticity of ḥadīth. After the appearance in the third/ninth century of the great collections of sound ḥadīth, like those of Bukhārī (194/810–256/870) and Muslim (202/817–261/875), scholars came to regard this function of the isnād as less important. In fact, most students of ḥadīth in Ayyūbid and later times primarily saw the isnād as a conduit for elevation. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ recognized this and attempted to reconcile the earlier and later opinions regarding the purpose of the isnād.

I. INTRODUCTION

AFTER THE COMPOSITION of the main authoritative collections in the third/ninth century, the prime activity in the field of Sunni ḥadīth is particularly well illustrated in the *Muqaddima* of the Ayyūbid-era *muḥaddith* Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. A major example of ḥadīth scholarship of the era in which it was written, his *Muqaddima* was thereafter, moreover, one of the most detailed and influential works on the subject.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (577/1181–643/1245) composed the *Muqaddima* at a time of unprecedented interest. The Ayyūbid and other contemporary rulers not only financially underwrote the recitation of ḥadīth texts, but also supported such recitations by attending them personally. The Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya, where Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ composed the *Muqaddima* during his tenure as its director, was only one of several institutions founded in the era devoted to the propagation of ḥadīth.

But by the time of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the classical Muslim view of mankind in general and ḥadīth transmitters in particular considered them both locked in irreversible decline. Ḥadīth transmitters no longer played any role as guarantors of the authenticity of the texts as they once had in the past. Yet the ḥadīth classes remained full of students! What were these students looking for? They were looking for "elevation" (*ʿulūw*), which, simply put, means the isnāds with the fewest intermediaries. From the *Muqaddima* and other texts, the various recognized forms of elevation and the theory behind them can be seen fairly clearly, and other evidence proves the profound extent of royal patronage for its spread and cultivation.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ claimed basically that elevation was significant because fewer intermediaries meant that there were fewer places where errors could enter the text. This assertion is repeated by classical, and even some modern Western, authors. What will be seen, though, is that elevation made a mockery of textual transmission, a fact often bewailed by the classical scholars who were appalled by the ruin they saw enveloping themselves and the validity of ḥadīth transmission.

But the significance of elevation lay in the realm of spirituality rather than of the transmission of knowledge. The background of the composition of the *Muqaddima* suggests certain affinities between the circulation of ḥadīth and the circulation of Prophetic relics. Elevation turned ḥadīth into a special kind of relic. It allowed the believer to come into closer contact with the spiritual power of the Prophet. Whereas the believer was stuck at his own historically (inferior) station in terms of years (*taʾrīkh*), by a different view of time, shorter isnāds allowed him to be closer to the Prophet in terms of generations (*ṭabaqāt*).

II. ḤADĪTH AND RELICS

Toward the end of his life, al-Niẓām b. Abi 'l-Ḥadīd (570/1175–625/1228) arrived at the fortress of Khilāṭ

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near Lake Van in eastern Anatolia, carrying one of the sandals of the Prophet Muḥammad.[1] This specimen—from the left foot, according to the best opinions—had originally belonged to one of the Prophet's wives, Maymūna bint al-Ḥārith. We are told that for at least a century it had been in the possession of al-Niẓām's family and that they were Damascenes bearing some distinction in the world of learning and textual transmission, although the sources unfortunately offer few particulars. Al-Niẓām himself enjoyed a minor reputation as a scholar of ḥadīth and appears to have made his living by traveling from city to city and from court to court, collecting gifts for displaying his relic.

Throughout history the sandals of the Prophet have had an enduring appeal[2] and al-Niẓām was not the first to exploit their popularity. A scene similar to the one that would unfold on his arrival in Khilāṭ had been enacted four and a half centuries earlier. We read that one day a man made a gift of what he claimed to be one of the sandals of the Prophet to the ᶜAbbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785). Al-Mahdī kissed it, placed it on his eyes and ordered that the man be given ten thousand dirhams as a reward. However, after the man left, the savvy caliph confided to his companions:

> Do you think that I do not know that the Messenger of God never saw this sandal, let alone wore it? If we had called [this man] a liar, he would have said to the people, "I brought the sandal of the Messenger of God to the Commander of the Faithful and he refused to accept it from me." Those who believed him would outnumber those who rejected his report, because it is one of the characteristics of the common people to incline toward their own kind and support the weak against the strong, even if [the weak person] is the one who is in the wrong. So we bought his tongue, accepted his gift and [pretended to] credit what he said. In our opinion this serves our ends better and is preferable.[3]

The individual to whom al-Niẓām brought his sandal was the Ayyūbid prince al-Ashraf Mūsā. Upon beholding al-Niẓām's relic al-Ashraf too "stood up and descended from his iwan. He took the sandal, kissed it, placed it on his eyes and wept." There is nothing, however, to suggest that al-Ashraf's adoration of the relic was anything but sincere. His greatest worry was that the holy sandal would elude his grasp. Regrettably, it turned out that al-Niẓām had no intention of parting with his treasure and in fact planned to leave with it very soon. The urge to cut off a small piece of the sandal to keep for himself gnawed at al-Ashraf. He slept on the matter and on awakening concluded that if everyone followed this course of action, there would soon be

[1] Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aᶜyān*, vol. 8 in 2 parts. (Hyderabad, 1370/1951–1371/1952), 8(2): 713; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-'l-wafayāt*, ed. Hellmut Ritter et al. (Istanbul/Wiesbaden, 1931ff), 7: 176–78; Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanbalī, *Shifāʾ al-qulūb fī manāqib Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Nāẓim Rashīd (Baghdad, 1978), 293; Nuᶜaymī, *al-Dāris fī taʾrīkh al-madāris*, ed. Jaᶜfar al-Ḥasanī, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1948/1367–1951/1370), 2: 295; Maqqarī, *Fatḥ al-Muᶜtāl fī madḥ al-niᶜāl* (Hyderabad, 1334), 357; ᶜAlmawī, *Mukhtaṣar Tanbīh al-ṭālib wa-irshād al-dāris*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1366/1947), 11; R. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes* (Amsterdam, 1845), 421–23; R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols* (Albany, 1977), 212–13. *Pace* David S. Margoliouth ("The Relics of Mohammed," *Moslem World* 27 [1937], 25), the Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadīd known as Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadīd al-Khaṭīb—who actually died in 546 rather than 646—mentioned Ibn al-Qalānisī's *Dhayl Taʾrīkh Dimashq* (ed. H. F. Amerdroz, Leiden, 1908, 316–17) is not the person who showed al-Ashraf the sandal.

[2] From the twentieth century, see Aḥmad Abu 'l-Wafāʾ al-Sharqāwī, *al-Qaṣīda al-Wafāʾīya fī waṣf al-naᶜl al-sharīfa al-nabawīya* (Cairo, ca. 1383) and Muḥammad Ṭāhir b. ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Kurdī al-Makkī, *Tabarruk al-Ṣaḥāba bi-āthār Rasūl Allāh wa-bayān faḍlihī al-ᶜaẓīm*, 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1394/1974), 34–52.

[3] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1349/1931), 5: 394. This would appear to have been the sandal preserved by the family of the Companion Shaddād b. Aws, see Dhahabī, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuᶜayb al-Arnaᶜūṭ, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981–1409/1988), 2: 463. A more famous version of this story concerns a transmitter of ḥadīth who sought to curry favor with al-Mahdī by adding a few words to a ḥadīth, thus making it legalize wagering on pigeon races, the caliph's hobby. The caliph granted the man the traditional ten thousand dirhams and, when he went on his way, denounced him as a liar against the Messenger of God and ordered the slaughter of the royal pigeons; Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-Majrūḥīn min al-muḥaddithīn wa-'l-ḍuᶜafāʾ wa-'l-matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, 3 vols. (Mecca, n.d.), 1: 66; al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Madkhal ilā maᶜrifat al-Iklīl*, ed. and trans. James Robson (London, 1953), 28–29 (Arabic), 30 (English); al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh*, 12: 323–24; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Mawḍūᶜāt*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ᶜUthmān, 3 vols. (Medina [i.e. Cairo], 1386/1966–1388/1968), 1: 42; Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iᶜtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ᶜAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1382/1963), 3: 338; Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī, *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-fikar* (Benares, 1394/1974), 71.

nothing left of the precious artifact. Instead, he courted al-Niẓām's favor with gifts and an appointment at a religious institution. He was soon rewarded for his altruism, for al-Niẓām died within a few months, leaving him the sandal.

Although al-Ashraf disagreed with al-Mahdī over the authenticity of the Prophetic relics in circulation, he too respected their power as points around which popular feeling could coalesce. When he took over Damascus in 626/1229, the sandal figured in his program to alter the ideological orientation of the city. The Damascus al-Ashraf found was still under the influence of his dynamic predecessor al-Muᶜaẓẓam, who had controlled the city since 594/1198. After al-Muᶜaẓẓam's death in 624/1227, his son Dāwūd succeeded him as the prince of Damascus. Although al-Ashraf and al-Muᶜaẓẓam were both sons of the Ayyūbid prince al-ᶜĀdil (d. 615/1218) and in fact were born only a day apart, rarely have two brothers differed more. It is a testament to al-Muᶜaẓẓam's independence of mind that while most of the Ayyūbids may be characterized as adherents of a kind of moderate Ashᶜarite Shāfiᶜism, he was a Ḥanafite. He supported Ḥanafism in Damascus to the full extent that his purse allowed and played an active role in shaping the scholarly life of the city. His missionary zeal even led him to found a Ḥanafite *madrasa* in the Ḥanbalite suburb of al-Ṣāliḥīya. His liberalism meant that his rule in Damascus was a time of relative freedom for the religious minorities and a period of efflorescence for philosophy and the other "sciences of the Ancients." Those who suffered were the Ḥanbalites and the Shāfiᶜites who shared the literalist theological views of the Ḥanbalites.

While al-Muᶜaẓẓam was ruling in Damascus, his brother al-Ashraf was campaigning in the northern and eastern reaches of the Ayyūbid domains. He was a Shāfiᶜite, but he opposed the Ashᶜarite theology sponsored by the majority of his family[4] and instead endorsed the Ḥanbalite viewpoint. When al-Ashraf succeeded in ousting Dāwūd in 626/1229, who had continued to pursue his father's policies, although with less vigor, the new ruler intended to reshape the city according to his own design. Non-Muslims were ousted from their official positions and the additions which they had been allowed to make to their houses of worship under al-Muᶜaẓẓam were torn down. The study of the sciences of the ancients was stamped out.[5]

One pillar of al-Ashraf's rehabilitation of Damascus seems to have been to encourage the study of ḥadīth. A number of schools of ḥadīth already existed there before he took over the city. The Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīya, the institution Nūr al-Dīn al-Zanjī (controlled Damascus from 541/1146 until his death in 569/1174) founded in 566/1170, is said to have been the first school of ḥadīth in the Islamic world.[6] In addition, around 593/1197 Saladin's confidant Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (529/1135–596/1200) built a structure of uncertain description known as the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Fāḍilīya in the district of al-Kallāsa, near the Umayyad Mosque.[7] But the rule of al-Muᶜaẓẓam was a bad time for the study of ḥadīth. In 611/1214, the widening of a canal destroyed the revenue-producing properties of the Nūrīya and, because no attempt was made to compensate the school, it went bankrupt.[8] The only new foundation for the propagation of ḥadīth in this period appears to have been a modest affair. In 617/1220 a wealthy refugee from Jerusalem Sharaf al-Dīn b. ᶜUrwa (d. 620/1223) was given permission to convert a storage area in the Great Mosque into a center for ḥadīth.[9]

Not only did al-Ashraf re-endow the Nūrīya, he erected two new schools, one within the walls of the city and the other in the Damascene suburb of al-Ṣāliḥīya. The inner Ashrafīya was where the prince decided to store the sandal. As R. Stephen Humphreys has pointed out, al-Ashraf's decision was motivated by a connection he perceived between the sandal and the ḥadīth school.[10] The school was easily accessible to the public and near the prince's personal residence in the citadel. Ḥadīth schools seem to have had a much higher public profile than law schools, which, with the exception of occasional commemorative lessons, were only rarely visited by members of the general populace. Regular recitations of ḥadīth texts attracted an audience far broader than

[4] Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn*, ed. ᶜAlī Muḥammad ᶜUmar, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1392/1972), 1: 317.

[5] Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ᶜala 'l-Rawḍatayn*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1366/1947), 156.

[6] For Nūr al-Dīn's school of ḥadīth, see Nikita Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn: Un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades (511–569 H./1118–1174)*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1967), 3:762–64 and Akram Ḥasan al-ᶜUlabī, *Khiṭaṭ Dimashq* (Damascus, 1410/1989), 90–93.

[7] Nuᶜaymī, *Dāris*, 1: 89–96; ᶜAlmawī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 16–17; ᶜUlabī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 84.

[8] Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 87; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-'l-nihāya*, 14 vols. (1351/1932–1358/[1939]), 13: 67; Nuᶜaymī, *Dāris*, 1: 99–100.

[9] Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, 8(2): 632; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 136; Nuᶜaymī, *Dāris*, 1: 82–89; ᶜAlmawī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 15–16; ᶜUlabī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 82–83.

[10] *From Saladin*, 213.

the ordinary contingent of stipendiary students at the school, and recitations in the presence of the most celebrated transmitters were public events of great magnitude. The sandal was also intended to be visited by the public. Al-Ashraf had a sumptuous receptacle crafted for his prize and appointed a special caretaker who earned forty *Nāṣirī* dirhams a month for displaying it to the public every Monday and Thursday.[11] In fact, until Tamerlame carried it off in 803/1401, al-Ashraf's sandal remained one of the major attractions of Damascus. Visitors and local residents sought it out. A member of the great Damascene family, the Banū ᶜAsākir, composed a tract on the Prophet's sandal.[12] Scholars from the western Islamic lands were particularly taken with the prize and the sight of it inspired an effusive outpouring of verse.[13] In times of trouble, people had resort to it for protection: "The populace of Damascus used to seek intercession by means of the Prophetic sandal when problems befell them and they witnessed its spiritual power."[14]

There may have been other reasons that led al-Ashraf to locate the sandal in his new school. It is possible that a linguistic affinity between the ḥadīth and the sandal influenced al-Ashraf. The common Arabic word for "relic," namely *athar*, was also regularly treated as a synonym of *ḥadīth*, in the sense of the accounts of the words and deeds of the Prophet.[15] In addition, scholars and the populace at large circulated stylized representations of the holy sandals on paper and leather bearing isnāds establishing their provenance similar in form to the ones attached to ḥadīth.[16] Magical powers were ascribed to these replicas. It was claimed that they repelled the evil eye and eased the pain of women in childbirth.[17] Furthermore, it will be seen that al-Ashraf and his contemporaries believed that ḥadīth when recited possessed, like relics, the power to bring individuals into a closer relationship with the sacred power of the Prophet.

The presence of the holy sandal was not all that rendered al-Ashraf's school of ḥadīth prominent. A generous endowment and the prestige of royal patronage attracted some of the most famous scholars Damascus produced, among them Abū Shāma (599/1203–665/1268), Nawawī (d. 676/1277), Mizzī (654/1256–742/1341), Ibn Kathīr (ca. 700/1300–774/1373)[18] and four Subkīs, including Tāj al-Dīn (d. 769/1368) and his father Taqī al-Dīn (683/1284–756/1355). The man al-Ashraf made the first professor was the Shāfiᶜite legal scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī. It was during his tenure at the Ashrafīya, which lasted from 630/1233 until his death in 643/1245, that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wrote his classic book on the study of ḥadīth, *Kitāb Maᶜrifat anwāᶜ ᶜilm al-ḥadīth*, more popularly known as the *Muqaddima*.[19]

[11] Maqqarī, *Fatḥ*, 355, 357. See also Ibn al-Ḥawrānī, *Kitāb Ziyārāt al-Shām* (Damascus, 1327), 7.

[12] It is intriguing that the Damascene Abu 'l-Yumn b. ᶜAsākir (614/1217–686/1287), a student of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, in his work on the holy sandal—apparently entitled *Timthāl al-naᶜl al-sharīf* (*sic*), see Maqqarī, *Fatḥ*, 126—does not provide an illustration of the sandal in the Ashrafīya, but rather one of a different sandal going back to ᶜĀ'isha, and not Maymūna (*Fatḥ*, 130–31). Maqqarī's description (p. 9) of Abu 'l-Yumn's work indicates that the fragment preserved in Maktabat al-Asad, Damasus (no. 4581, see Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Fahras makhṭūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhirīya: al-muntakhab min makhṭūṭāt al-ḥadīth*, Damascus, 1390/1970, 78–79) represents a substantial portion of the original text.

[13] Maqqarī includes a large amount of this poetry in *Fatḥ al-Muᶜtāl* and in *Azhār al-riyāḍ fī akhbār ᶜIyāḍ*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā et al., 4 vols. (Cairo, 1358/1939–1361/1942), 2: 224–82.

[14] Maqqarī, *Fatḥ al-Muᶜtāl*, 362.

[15] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ claims that Khurasānian jurists used to restrict the use of the term *athar* to reports of the words and actions of the Companions, the first generation of Muslims, rather than those of the Prophet; *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. ᶜĀ'isha ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, 2d ed. (Cairo, 1989), 194–95. Nawawī notes that the *muḥaddithūn* applied the term *athar* to reports from both the Prophet and his Companions; *al-Taqrīb li-'l-Nawawī* (Cairo, 1388/1968), 8.

[16] Ruᶜaynī (592/1196–666/1268) gives an account of his teacher copying for him a representation of a holy sandal which the teacher had taken from Ibn Bashkuwāl and Ibn al-ᶜArabī; *Barnāmaj shuyūkh al-Ruᶜaynī*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ (Damascus, 1381/1962), 29.

[17] Maqqarī, *Azhār al-riyāḍ*, 2: 262.

[18] It would be interesting to know what Ibn Kathīr thought of the authenticity of the sandal. In *Bidāya*, 10: 153, he repeats the story of al-Mahdī and the sandal and he does mention al-Ashraf's sandal a couple of times (13: 135, 147), but makes no personal comment.

[19] It is unclear to me what evidence Ibn Ḥajar had at his disposal indicating that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wrote the book in the Ashrafīya; *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 5; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-rāwī fī sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī* (*sic*), ed. ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb ᶜAbd al-Laṭīf, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Cairo, 1385/1966), 1: 52–53. Certainly he taught it there; *Barnāmaj al-Tujībī*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Manṣūr (Libya, 1981), 139–40.

Like the original Ayyūbids, Taqī al-Dīn Abū ᶜAmr ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shahrazūrī[20] was a Kurdish Shāfiᶜite from northern Iraq. He was born in 577/1181 in one of the villages in the area of Shahrazūr, a cultural satellite of the city of Irbil. He began his studies under his father, a scholar of some local renown, and later went to Mosul to complete them. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ then embarked on a lengthy journey to the major scholarly centers of the east, including Baghdad, Nishapur, Marv, Qazwin and Hamdan. At this time he became interested in ḥadīth and studied with a number of the most important transmitters of his day.

The first formal teaching position we know that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ occupied was the professorship of the Asadīya,[21] a Shāfiᶜite law school in Aleppo. It appears that he began there around 608/1211 and he may have left as early as 610/1213.[22] We do not hear of him again until 615/1218, when he took over the professorship of the Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥīya in Jerusalem, an important institution founded by Saladin in 588/1192. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ may well have served in this prestigious position for decades. However, in the next year al-Muᶜaẓẓam, who controlled Jerusalem as well as Damascus, order the destruction of the city walls. He felt that he was incapable of defending Jerusalem from the Crusaders and sought to lessen the military value of the city. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ joined the great exodus of Muslims from the city.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ next found himself in the unfriendly environment of al-Muᶜaẓẓam's Damascus. Not only did he suffer the handicap of being a Shāfiᶜite in a city ruled by a Ḥanafite prince, but his theological beliefs were close to those of the Ḥanbalites, whom al-Muᶜaẓẓam despised. Despite his sedulous networking, it was not until 623/1226 (or 622) that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ received his first formal teaching position in Damascus, the professorship of the Raḥāwīya. Even then the legitimacy of his holding this position was contested.

Things went much better for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ once al-Ashraf took over Damascus four years later. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's ideological orientation closely matched that of the new prince and he became one of the leading scholars of the city. His new prominence was reflected in his appointment as the professor of the newly established Inner Shāmīya in 628/1220. He reached the pinnacle of his career when he was appointed as professor of the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya upon its opening. By his death in 25 Rabiᶜ II 643/19 September 1245, he was one of the most respected scholars in the city and he left behind a number of influential legal rulings, which were eventually collected. Although his funeral was well attended, it perhaps could have been more dignified. The Khwārazmians and Egyptians were besieging Damascus at the time, so that the burial party had to run out the city gate, bury him, and run back as fast as they could. In later times people seeking his intercession visited his grave.

III. THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF ḤADĪTH IN THE *MUQADDIMA*

One of the most notable aspects of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima* is its departure from the basic tone of the earlier books on the sciences of ḥadīth. His was perhaps the first popular work on this subject. It is not popular in the sense that it was pitched to a broad audience. In fact the opposite was true. Almost immediately it was recognized that the work had to be shortened and simplified to render its contents accessible to the average student. Rather it was popular in the sense that it tried to strike a practical accommodation between the transmission of ḥadīth as currently pursued and the strict regulations of the masters of the past. Almost all of the works in the genre of *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* begin with condemnations of the sorry state into which ḥadīth scholarship had fallen. The *Muqaddima* does too, but Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's tone is sympathetic and his criticisms are not particularly specific: there are simply not as many scholars of ḥadīth as there used to be and those individuals who do now occupy themselves with ḥadīth are careless and poorly trained. The moral outrage of *al-Kifāya fī ᶜilm al-riwāya* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (394/1002–463/1071), for example, is absent.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's equanimity in the face of the decline in the qualifications of those who transmitted ḥadīth grew out of a fundamentally pessimistic view of human history. Mankind, having seen its best days, was now locked in progressive decline. The standards the titans of the past had imposed on themselves could simply not be

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[20] The most important accounts of the life of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ by his contemporaries are Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, 8(2): 757–58; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 175–76; and Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aᶜyān*, ed. Iḥsān ᶜAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1968–72), 3: 243–45. The present discussion of the life of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ is an abridgement of the one that will appear with my translation of the *Muqaddima*.

[21] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aᶜlāq al-khaṭīra fī dhikr umarāʾ al-Shām wa-'l-Jazīra*, vol. 1, part 1 (Aleppo), ed. Dominique Sourdel (Damascus, 1953), 103–4.

[22] Dominique Sourdel, "Les Professeurs de Madrasa à Alep aux XIIe–XIIIe siècles d'apres Ibn Shaddād," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 13 (1949–51): 102, n. 30.

met by the pygmies who succeeded them. Reasonable people could only expect less from lesser men.

The theme of human degeneration had a hoary history in Islam. A ḥadīth from the Prophet confirmed that Man would only get worse: "The best people are my generation, then those who will follow them and then those who will follow them."[23] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's student Abū Shāma could quote the remarks of the first/seventh-century authority Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114) decrying the degeneration already apparent in the scholars of his day.[24] Two centuries after Wahb, Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (270/884–354/965) rated his fellow students of ḥadīth as either brainless accumulators or law students who tossed "the entirety of the *sunna* over their shoulders."[25] He saw it as a sign that the Day of Judgment was at hand.

This decline had practical consequences for later scholars of ḥadīth. In terms of ḥadīth transmission, the generation of the Prophet, the Companions, was perfect. They enjoyed "collective *taʿdīl*"[26] and "did not even know what lying was."[27] After their passing, their place was taken by transmitters who were susceptible to error and who even committed forgery. That degeneration eventually led to the use of personality criticism (*al-jarḥ wa-'l-taʿdīl*) to banish mistakes and frauds from the ḥadīth corpus. Personality criticism ascribed the perceived defects in certain ḥadīth to the deficiency of those who transmitted the text. In the most innocent cases, a minor error crept into a text through the inattention or carelessness of one of its transmitters. More sinister were the malicious inventions of the adherents of false doctrines who spread forged ḥadīth to promote their baseless beliefs. A gigantic literature of multi-volume works rated thousands of the figures of the past in terms of their capacity as transmitters of ḥadīth.

The deterioration of the generations immediately after the Companions was bad enough, but a far more disastrous human decline later spelt the end of the personality criticism. Now so few transmitters could measure up to the accepted standards that there was no point at all in examining them. Abū ʿAmr b. al-Murābiṭ (680/1281–752/1351) asserted that the catastrophe that put an end to meaningful personality criticism took place at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century.[28] Dhahabī (673/1274–748/1348) pushed the date back to the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. For him, this marked the dividing line between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns." He examined the modern transmitters and threw up his hands in despair.

> If I had allowed myself to criticize this type, I would have found only a few unobjectionable, since the majority of them do not know what they transmit and do not understand this matter.[29]

Of course, Dhahabī could not resist the temptation of commenting on a number of post-third/ninth-century transmitters. Unfortunately, he does not tell us specifically what he imagined happened to the scholars who died after the year three hundred, although he did perceive a general decline in the quantity as well as the quality of ḥadīth scholars beginning at that time.[30] We may also note that in the fourth/tenth century commentators began to complain regularly about the transmitters of ḥadīth around them.[31] It would seem that the contemplation of the old stories lauding the strictness of the

[23] Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Ludolf Krehl and T. Juynboll, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1862–1908), 2: 416 (K. Faḍāʾil Aṣḥāb al-Nabī, al-bāb al-awwal); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 8 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 7: 184–86 (K. Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥāba). For the remarks of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and a slightly earlier scholar on this ḥadīth, see *Fatāwā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ([Cairo], n.d.), 16–17 and Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fīmā nusiba ila 'l-imām Abi 'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* (Damascus, 1347), 143ff.

[24] Abū Shāma, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Muʾammil li-'l-radd ila 'l-amr al-awwal* in *Majmūʿat al-Rasāʾil al-Munīrīya*, 4 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 3: 22.

[25] *Majrūḥīn*, 1: 10–15.

[26] The expression is that of G.H.A. Juynboll, see *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship in Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge, 1983), 190.

[27] Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-'l-taʾrīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981), 2: 634.

[28] Sakhāwī, *al-Iʿlān bi-'l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma [ahl] al-taʾrīkh*, ed. Franz Rosenthal (Beirut, n.d.), 92; trans. F. Rosenthal, *History of Muslim Historiography*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1968), 338–39.

[29] *Mīzān*, 1: 4. See also Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi 'l-ḍuʿafāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, 2 vols. (Aleppo, 1391/1971), 1: 4; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad, 1329–31), 1: 8–9, 5: 396; Laknawī, *al-Rafʿ wa-'l-takmīl fi 'l-jarḥ wa-'l-taʿdīl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo, n.d.), 12–13.

[30] *Bayān zaghal al-ʿilm wa-'l-ṭalab*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Damascus, 1348), 11.

[31] In addition to the passage mentioned above from Ibn Ḥibbān's *Majrūḥīn*, see Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-sunna fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Yūsuf al-Kattānī, 2 vols. (Rabat, n.d.), 1: 107–8 and al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. al-Sayyid Muʿaẓẓam Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1937), 1–2.

transmitters of the past and the profound reverence for the collections produced by Bukhārī (194/810–256/870) and Muslim (202/817–261/875) and the other third/ninth-century authorities created in the mind of later scholars an image of an irretrievable golden age. The imperfect reality they knew first-hand could only fall short of this idealized past.

Where the lack of reliable transmitters in later times had consequences was in the authentication of ḥadīth not designated as sound by the ancient authorities. When a ḥadīth had not previously been authenticated, it could not now be declared sound. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ flatly ruled that it was no longer possible for scholars to authenticate ḥadīth on their own.

> These days it is no longer feasible for someone to apprehend sound ḥadīth on his own by merely examining isnāds. [This is] because in every isnād of that [kind of ḥadīth] you can find among its transmitters someone who relied [exclusively] in its transmission upon what was in his book and lacked the retention, accuracy, and exactitude that are stipulated for sound ḥadīth. So, for the recognition of sound and fair ḥadīth, the matter reverts to relying on what the authorities in ḥadīth designated [as such] in their well-known and well-respected compositions.[32]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's blanket assertion that it is impossible to authenticate more ḥadīth was the most controversial statement in the *Muqaddima*. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773/1372–852/1449) said that everyone who abridged the work disagreed with him on that point[33] and there was a general feeling that a qualified scholar should be able to authenticate ḥadīth not previously authenticated.[34]

Be that as it may, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's claim reflected the historical reality that efforts to authenticate more ḥadīth, irrespective of their theoretical validity, dropped off after the third/ninth century. The last great attempt to create a comprehensive collection of authentic ḥadīth from scratch seems to have been the fourth/tenth-century *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ ʿala 'l-taqāsīm wa-'l-anwāʿ* of Ibn Ḥibbān. Although this work has not been without its admirers and Ibn Ḥibbān's many writings show him to have been perhaps the keenest mind to have ever worked in ḥadīth, it never achieved anything like the popularity accorded to major collections of the preceding century. After Ibn Ḥibbān's day, scholars from time to time brought forth supplementary volumes of ḥadīth that their own personal efforts had led them to accept as authentic.[35] These too were met with reservations. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (569/1173 or 567-643/1245), a contemporary of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ who had settled in al-Ṣāliḥīya, did put together a collection of ḥadīth not included in Bukhārī or Muslim which he believed to be authentic, entitled *al-Aḥādīth al-mukhtāra mimmā laysa fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī aw Muslim*.[36] Although regarded in some quarters[37] as superior to *al-Mustadrak ʿala 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* of al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (321/933–405/1014) from two centuries earlier, this surely is a case of damning with faint praise. Neither work had much resonance among contemporaries or later generations.

Even granting Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's point, the absence of suitable transmitters was not as calamitous as it could have been. There remained a way out. For authentic ḥadīth, scholars could rely on the great classical collections compiled centuries earlier which between them preserved the entire body of authentic ḥadīth.

> The ḥadīth that have been established as sound or fall between soundness and sickness have been recorded and written down in the comprehensive collections that the

[32] *Muqaddima*, 159–60. See also idem, *Ṣiyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-ikhlāl wa-'l-ghalaṭ wa-ḥimāyatuhū min al-isqāṭ wa-'l-saqaṭ*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir ([Beirut], 1404/1984), 115. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ also felt that one had to rely on the verdict of past authorities in regard to which ḥadīth could be declared weak; *Muqaddima*, 286.

[33] Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1: 145.

[34] E.g., Nawawī, *Taqrīb*, 6; ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa-'l-īḍāḥ li-mā uṭliqa wa-ughliqa min Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ʿUthmān (Cairo, 1389/1969), 23–24; idem, *al-Tabṣira wa-'l-tadhkira*, ed. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿIrāqī al-Ḥusaynī, 3 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 1: 67–68; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. Rabīʿ b. Hādī ʿUmayr, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Riyadh, 1408/1988), 1: 271–73. It should be noted that disagreement with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ on this point did not indicate the rejection of his view on the decline of transmitters; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth* [*ʿalā*] *sharḥ Alfīyat al-ḥadīth li-'l-ʿIrāqī*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Medina, 1388/1968–1389/1969), 1: 45.

[35] For a list of the non-canonical attempts to collect authentic ḥadīth, see Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa li-bayān mashhūr kutub al-sunna al-musharrafa*, 3d ed. (Damascus, 1383/1964), 20–26.

[36] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid al-jawharīya fī taʾrīkh al-Ṣāliḥīya*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Damascus, n.d.), 1: 131–32, 134; Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmi 'l-kutub wa-'l-funūn*, ed. Šerefettin Yaltkaya, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1360/1941–1362/1943), 2: cols. 1624–25 (as *al-Mukhtāra fi 'l-ḥadīth*); Laknawī, *al-Ajwiba al-fāḍila li-'l-asʾila al-ʿashara al-kāmila*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo, 1384/1964), 87, n. 4; 153, n. 1; Albānī, *Fahras*, 325–26.

[37] E.g., Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 1: 38.

> authorities in ḥadīth put together. It is not conceivable that any of these ḥadīth escaped the attention of all of these authorities, even if it is possible that some of these ḥadīth escaped the attention of some of the authorities.[38]

In regard to the identity of what he calls "the well-known and well-respected compositions," Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was vague. Of course, the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Bukhārī and Muslim are mentioned, as well as a number of other collections, but he seems to have wanted to avoid delineating a specific body of works. Nevertheless, he was willing to accept as authentic any ḥadīth that an early authority designated as sound, either by an explicit reference to that very ḥadīth or implicitly through including it in a collection devoted to authentic ḥadīth. And in general, later Muslims agreed on viewing the five or six so-called "canonical" collections as the main sources of sound ḥadīth.[39]

The general decline in transmitters in later centuries therefore did not affect these authoritative collections. Even in the transmission of the "well-known and well-respected compositions" after the time of their original compilers, the reliability of the modern transmitter played no meaningful role. The abstract mechanism of collective acumen replaced the reliability of the individual transmitters as the guarantor of the authenticity of ḥadīth texts: the far-flung popularity of these works made it unlikely that anyone could succeed in altering them without detection.[40] When a later scholar transmitted an authentic ḥadīth also found in one of the great collections, the authenticity of the ḥadīth was entirely based on the declaration of the earlier compiler and not on the transmission of his more recent counterpart.[41] Thus, the modern transmitters of ḥadīth were in such cases entirely removed from the equation.

The reduced role assigned to the later transmitters of ḥadīth seems to have justified the relaxation of the traditional rules of transmission. Early scholars of ḥadīth insisted that a student must hear a text recited out loud in the presence of a legitimate transmitter for his own later transmission of the text to be valid. They regularly condemned the *ṣaḥafī*s, those who took their ḥadīth directly from written texts without bothering to hear them recited. Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī al-Sijzī (d. 444/1052) asserted that "the law (*al-shar'*) does not permit the transmission of something that was not heard."[42] The second caliph 'Umar (r. 13/634–23/644) is said to have expressed his disapproval of this practice in characteristically emphatic terms: "Whenever one of you finds a book containing knowledge that you did not hear from a scholar, place it in a container of water and soak it in there until the black [of the ink] becomes mixed with the white [of the paper]."[43] Some people felt that the Jews came to deviate from the teachings of their prophets when they abandoned oral transmission: *kānū yarawna anna Banī Isrā'īl innamā ḍallū min kutub wajadūhā 'an ābā'ihim*.[44] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ seems to be endorsing the importance of oral transmission when he writes, "The way to avoid misreading is to take ḥadīth from the mouth of people possessing knowledge and accuracy. Whoever is deprived of that and instead takes and learns his ḥadīth from books is likely to corrupt the ḥadīth and is unable to keep from changing and misreading the text."[45]

If a scholar now wanted to use a text, he was not obliged to obtain it through the traditional methods. He could just "consult a copy of the text (*aṣl*) which he himself or another reliable person has collated against numerous sound copies transmitted through several different channels."[46] Nawawī, who would eventually come

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[38] *Muqaddima*, 307.

[39] For a brief discussion of the process which led to the selection of these works, see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, tr. S. M. Stern, 2 vols. (London, 1971), 2: 237–43.

[40] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 160, 173; idem, *Ṣiyāna*, 115; Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat*, 1:271; Ibn al-Wazīr, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim fi 'l-dhabb 'an sunnat Abi 'l-Qāsim* (Cairo, 1385), 18–20.

[41] *Muqaddima*, 307.

[42] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 333.

[43] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya fī 'ilm al-riwāya* (Hyderabad, 1357), 353; *Sakhāwī, Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 137.

[44] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-'Ilal wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl*, ed. Talât Koçyğit and Ismail Cerrahoğlu, only vol. 1 was published in this edition (Ankara, 1963), 42; Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb, *Kitāb al-'Ilm* in *Min kunūz al-sunna*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Damascus, n.d.), 145. In Abū Khaythama's version, *wajadūhā* is replaced by *warithūhā*, which conveys an identical significance in this context, i.e., they obtained the texts without actually having heard them. For recent examinations of the attitudes regarding writing in early Islam, see Michael Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in early Islam," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 437–530, and M. J. Kister, "Lā taqra'ū l-qur'āna 'alā l-muṣḥafiyyīn wa-lā taḥmilū l-'ilma 'anī l-ṣaḥafiyyīn: Some notes on the Transmission of Ḥadīth," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 22 (1998): 127–62.

[45] *Muqaddima*, 400.

[46] *Muqaddima*, 173; idem, *Ṣiyāna*, 115. See also Johann Fück, "Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buḫārī's Traditionssammlung," *Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 79. More specifically, what Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ

to teach at the Ashrafīya, lowered the bar even further. He asserted that a single "verified and reliable copy" would suffice for collation.[47]

Although the *Muqaddima* seems to have been the first manual on the sciences of ḥadīth to endorse this view, it is clear that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was merely validating a concession that legal scholars had long recognized.[48] A century before Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ibn Barhān (479/1086–518/1124) documented this view:

> All legal scholars subscribe to the doctrine that acting upon a ḥadīth does not depend upon having audition of it. Rather, when, for instance, a copy of the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s or book of *sunna*s seems sound to [the scholar], it is permissible to act on [the contents of the book], even if he does not have audition [of it].[49]

Even Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's most outspoken critic in Damascus, the Ashᶜarite Shāfiᶜite ᶜIzz al-Dīn b. ᶜAbd al-Salām (577/1181 or 578–660/1262), agreed with him on this point. He saw it as an instance of the procedures traditionally employed in other fields of scholarly endeavor, like grammar, lexicography, and medicine, being transferred to the study of law and ḥadīth.[50] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ regarded this dispensation as an absolute necessity: "If [the validity of] putting a doctrine into practice did depend on [its] having been related [according to the traditional standards], it would become impossible to act on transmitted material, because of the infeasibility of meeting the standards of relation in our time."[51]

If one was no longer required to obtain a text by the approved methods and the aim of collecting ḥadīth was no longer to authenticate them, what drove the continued oral transmission of texts? In Ayyūbid and later times, students flocked to the classes of the most desirable transmitters, who themselves enjoyed the status of international celebrities. According to Ibn Ṭūlūn (880/1475–953/1546) all levels of society were infected with the fervor to hear ḥadīth: "The young and old, the poor and rich, and the ignorant and learned all participate in it."[52] However, he dryly observed that "the study of ḥadīth" had become about "something other than the ḥadīth."[53] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ repeatedly states that the main reason to transmit information orally is to perpetuate a singular blessing which God had bestowed on the Muslim community.

> The continuance of the chain of the isnād (*silsilat al-isnād*) by which this community has been distinguished has become the principal reason for the isnāds being passed around apart from [those in the well-respected collections].[54]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was not the first to give voice to the notion that cohesive chains of transmission for religious doctrine were a special characteristic of the Muslim community. Al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī recognized the isnād as a peculiarly Muslim institution.[55] Abū ᶜAlī al-Jayyānī (427/1035–498/1105) counted the isnād as one of the three things with which God had distinguished Muslims from the adherents of other faiths.[56] The renowned

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did was expand the eighth means of transmission, which he calls *wijāda* (*Muqaddima*, 358–60). Formerly, transmission by this means—and it was often regarded as highly dubious—was limited to texts written in the handwriting of their author. In fact, al-Qaḍī ᶜIyāḍ calls this means of transmission *khaṭṭ* in his *al-Ilmāᶜ ilā maᶜrifat uṣūl al-riwāya wa-taqyīd al-ᶜilm*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1389/1970), 116. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has attempted to subsume texts not in their author's handwriting under this heading as well.

[47] *Taqrīb*, 6. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat*, 1: 384; ᶜIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 1: 82. Certain earlier scholars had allowed the transmission of a text without any collation at all, if this circumstance was disclosed; Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 239; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 377–78.

[48] For a dissenting opinion on the validity of the transmission of texts without audition—which seems to have been the only one from a later authority which the writers on this topic could lay their hands on—see Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *al-Fihrist* (Cairo, 1382/1963), 16–17.

[49] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 1: 59; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1: 151; Laknawī, *Ajwiba*, 61.

[50] Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1: 152; Laknawī, *Ajwiba*, 63–64. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī and Muḥammad Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh published the documents of one of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's disputes with ᶜIzz al-Dīn as *Musājala ᶜilmīya bayn al-imāmayn al-ᶜIzz ibn ᶜAbd al-Salām wa-Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Damascus, 1380).

[51] *Muqaddima*, 360. This sentiment is repeated in most other discussions of this issue, e.g. Nawāwī, *Taqrīb*, 28; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 139.

[52] *Naqd al-ṭālib li-zaghal al-manāṣib*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān and Khālid Muḥammad Duhmān (Beirut, 1412/1992), 98.

[53] *Naqd al-ṭālib*, 97. Ibn Ṭūlūn appears to be paraphrasing Dhahabī here, see Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn*, 1: 188–89.

[54] *Muqaddima*, 160. See also pp. 307, 313, 341.

[55] *Al-Mustadrak ᶜala 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā ᶜAbd al-Qādir ᶜAṭā', 4 vols. (Beirut, 1411/1990), 1: 41.

[56] Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 160. Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Sharaf aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, ed. Mehmed Saîd Hatîboğlu (Ankara, 1972), 40. The two other special features were extensive genealogies (*ansāb*) and desinential word inflections (*iᶜrāb*).

heresiographer Ibn Ḥazm (384/994–456/1064) boasted of the transmission of Muslim doctrines by generations of reliable scholars. Jews and Christians, he asserted, can lay claim to only an inferior form of transmission from their important religious figures and that in only a few isolated instances.[57] Yet in 783/1381, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ījī wrote that the continuity of the chain of transmission was all but severed even in the Muslim community.[58]

For Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and later writers, preserving the continuity of the isnāds becomes the end that can justify any means, serving as a universal excuse for deviations from the traditional strictures. Yet does this lofty objective really explain why so many Muslims spent their time attending the recitation of texts? It must be admitted that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's conception of the new purpose of the isnād possesses a certain grandeur. Were it not for the students of ḥadīth, all would be lost and Muslims would end up being no better than the Jews and Christians. On the other hand, it is fair to ask whether this was really uppermost in the mind of the students who attended the ḥadīth recitations. It was eventually expressed that to the extent that the perpetuation of the isnāds was really incumbent on Muslims, it was a duty placed upon them as a community and not as individuals.[59] Perhaps the students had more personal motives.

IV. THE AYYŪBIDS AND ELEVATION

For our answer we must direct our attention to another work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the foundation document of Ashrafīya *infra* dated 29 Ramaḍān 632/17 June 1235. In it he stipulated the particulars of the disbursement of the revenues of the endowment, specifying the salaries of the various functionaries of the school—including the custodian of the holy sandal (*khādim al-athar al-sharīf al-nabawī*)—the stipends of the students, and the amounts to be spent on materials and maintenance. He also formulated a provision to attract visiting transmitters of ḥadīth:

> When a transmitter possessing elevation of audition (*shaykh lahū ʿulūw samāʿ*) of the kind one travels for comes—and he may stay at the Dār al-Ḥadīth—he will be given two dirhams every day. When he finished, he will be given thirty dinars, each worth seven dirhams. This applies if he comes from outside of Syria.[60]

The sum of money offered to this kind of transmitter is substantial. For perspective, we may note that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ as the school's resident transmitter of ḥadīth (*al-shaykh al-muḥaddith*) was at ninety dirhams a month the highest paid ordinary functionary. What was this "elevation of audition" that was worth so much money?

In its most basic sense, elevation of audition represented the "proximity" (*qurb*) of an individual to a significant figure in the line of transmission of a single ḥadīth or collection of ḥadīth. Usually the significant figure was the Prophet in the case of a single ḥadīth or the compiler in the case of a collection of ḥadīth. Determining the level of proximity was simple enough: the intervening transmitters were counted with each level of separation being called a *daraja* or "degree."

This proximity distinguished a desirable transmitter of a particular ḥadīth or book of ḥadīth from his competitors. It was so important that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ went so far as to assert that the transmitter was under an obligation to inform his students if he knew of another transmitter who had the same text with a more elevated, i.e., shorter, isnād.[61] In practice, the scholars of this era preferred shorter isnāds unless there was a special reason not to do so. After transmitting one ḥadīth, Abu 'l-Yumn b. ʿAsākir (614/1217–686/1287) explained that he also had the same text with a more elevated isnād, but he recited the low one since it contained the names of his ancestors whose memory he desired to keep fresh.[62] Silafī (ca. 475/1082–576/1180) preferred one isnād for a particular text because it contained an abundance of great jurists, "despite its lowness" (*nuzūl*).[63] More frivolous reasons for ignoring elevation also came into play. Individuals would from time to time put aside elevation to

[57] *Al-Faṣl fi 'l-milal wa-'l-ahwāʾ wa -'l-niḥal*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1317–21), 2: 81–84.

[58] Rosenthal, *History*, 225.

[59] Ibn al-Wazīr, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim*, 16; Laknawī, *Ajwiba*, 24.

[60] The *waqfīya* of the inner Ashrafīya is preserved in Taqī al-Din al-Subkī, *Fatāwā al-Subkī*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1355–56), 2: 108–13; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Lumʿāt al-barqīya fi 'l-nukat al-taʾrīkhīya* (Damascus, 1348), 20–25; ʿAbd al-Qādir Badrān, *Munādamat al-aṭlāl wa-musāmarat al-khayāl*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (Damascus, n.d.), 25–28. Ibn Kathīr is the one who tells us that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ drew it up; *Bidāya*, 13: 168.

[61] *Muqaddima*, 422.

[62] Ibn Rushayd, *Kitāb al-Sanan al-abyan wa-'l-mawrid al-amʿan fi 'l-muḥākama bayn al-imāmayn fi 'l-sanad al-muʿanʿan*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb b. al-Khūja (Tunis, 1397/1977), 82.

[63] Birzālī, *Mashyakhat qāḍi 'l-quḍāt Ibn Jamāʿa*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1408/1988), 1: 439.

transmit from someone for the sake of his unusual name or to transmit from an inhabitant of a particular locale to complete an *arbaᶜūn buldānīya*, a collection of forty ḥadīth from transmitters in forty different cities. A transmitter named "Tammām" changed his name to "Aḥmad" when he came to suspect that the only reason people heard ḥadīth from him was because his name began with the letter *tāʾ*.[64] Students sought out an undistinguished transmitter named "Dhu 'l-Nūn" because of his unusual name.[65] As a general rule, an isnād with audition at each link—i.e., every transmitter heard the text in the presence of his teacher—was preferred over a shorter one not distinguished in this fashion.[66]

Interest in elevation was not new in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's day and in fact had been growing for centuries. At the beginning of the third/ninth century we encounter a number of transmitters who claimed to be the long-lived students of Anas b. Mālik (d. ca. 93/712), one of the last to die of the Companions of the Prophet. They offered their credulous auditors ḥadīth at only a single remove from the Prophet. Not content with lying about their age, they also forged many of the ḥadīth they taught.[67] No doubt, these implausible individuals with their preposterous claims and weak ḥadīth contributed to the general feeling that elevation was intellectually disreputable. More significantly, there was a belief that a fundamental opposition existed between elevation and accuracy, since it was rare that these traits would be combined in a single person. When a choice had to be made, the serious student was obliged to favor accuracy over elevation. ᶜUbayd Allāh b. ᶜAmr (101/720–181/797) said, "A ḥadīth with a long but sound isnād is better than a ḥadīth with a short but weak isnād,"[68] and ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (118/736–181/797) commented, "Excellence in an isnād does not consist of proximity (*qurb al-isnād*) but rather the soundness of its transmitters."[69]

The experts of the third/ninth century—including the compilers of the great collections—seem to have been largely unconcerned with elevation and they certainly did not use it as a measure of the authenticity of ḥadīth.[70] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855) assured his students, "If you miss a ḥadīth with elevation, you will find it with lowness and it will not harm you in terms of your religion or your intellect."[71] Despite the lack of encouragement from the greatest authorities, interest in elevation seems to have grown among the populace at large. It is treated extensively in the two major fourth/tenth-century ḥadīth manuals, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil* (pp. 214–37) of Rāmahurmuzī (d. ca. 360/970) and *Kitāb Maᶜrifat ᶜulūm al-ḥadīth* (pp. 5–14) of al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī. Indeed, al-Ḥākim made elevation and its opposite (i.e.,

[64] Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Durrat al-ḥijāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Muḥammad al-Aḥmadī Abu 'l-Nūr, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1390/1970–1974), 1: 100.

[65] Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Durra*, 1: 269.

[66] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 23; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 172; Zakarīyāʾ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī ᶜalā Alfīyat al-ᶜIrāqī* (published with ᶜIrāqī, *al-Tabṣira wa-'l-tadhkira*), 2: 264.

[67] See Abū Yaᶜlā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 1: 177–78; al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Maᶜrifa*, 9–10.

[68] Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-taᶜdīl*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Muᶜallimī al-Yamānī, 4 vols. in 8 parts (Hyderabad, 1371/1952–1373/1953), 1(1): 24.

[69] Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ᶜIlal al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Ṣubḥī Jāsim al-Ḥamīd (Baghdad, n.d.), 91.

[70] Muslim, when defending himself against the charge that some of the ḥadīth in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* had defective isnāds, claimed that he also had them with sound isnāds but chose to include the versions with elevation, which he called *irtifāᶜ*; Bardhaᶜī, *al-Ḍuᶜafāʾ wa-'l-kadhdhābīn wa-'l-matrūkin min aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, in Saᶜdī al-Hāshimī, *Abū Zurᶜa wa-juhūduhū fī 'l-sunna al-nabawīya*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (al-Manṣūra, 1409/1989), 2:674–77; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4: 273–74; Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-khamsa*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (bound with Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *Shurūṭ al-aʾimma al-sitta*, Cairo, n.d.), 79–83; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyāna*, 97–98; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 12: 571; Ibn Rushayd, *Sanan*, 138–40; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1:98. There is no evidence to support the contention of Ibn al-Qaysarānī—quoted in Sakhāwī's *Fatḥ al-Mughīth* (3: 8–9)—that Bukhārī was interested in elevation. The specious claim that Bukhārī chose not to transmit Mālik's ḥadīth from Shāfiᶜī because he preferred to publish them with a more elevated line of transmission was originally put forth by the partisans of Shāfiᶜī to account for the fact that he was the only one of the four imāms not to be cited in either of the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s. The forgotten dispute surrounding the question of Shāfiᶜī's reliability as a transmitter of ḥadīth is treated in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Masʾalat al-iḥtijāj bi-'l-Shāfiᶜī fīmā usnida ilayhi* (see Albānī, *Fahras*, 269) and Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Bayān khaṭaʾ man akhṭaʾa ᶜala 'l-Shāfiᶜī* (Beirut, 1402/1983 [*sic*]).

[71] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Ādāb al-Shāfiᶜī wa-manāqibuhū*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Ghanī ᶜAbd al-Khāliq (Cairo, 1372/1953), 58–59; Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-'l-durar*, ed. Ḥāmid ᶜAbd al-Majīd and Ṭahā al-Zaynī, 1 vol. (all published) (Cairo, 1406/1986), 1: 23; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1: 44; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Naqd al-ṭālib*, 98. It is interesting to compare the definitive statements of these early scholars with the paltering response Ibn Ḥajar gave centuries later when he was asked whether it is better to take ḥadīth from a skilled scholar or from an untrained but more elevated transmitter; Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 25–26.

nuzūl) the first two topics discussed in his work. Nevertheless, he warned against sacrificing other concerns for the sake of elevation.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's discussion of the different forms of elevation in the *Muqaddima*[72] seems to have been based, at least loosely, on an earlier one put forth by Ibn al-Qaysarānī (448/1056–507/1113),[73] who, we are told, was the first to divide elevation into five basic classes. Later writers conservatively maintained the basic five-part taxonomy, although they, like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, felt free to change the constituent categories. Three of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's five principal classes of elevation concern the isnād taken as a whole. The first of these is based on the number of intermediaries between the student and the Prophet relative to other isnāds. This is what Ibn Ḥajar would later call "absolute elevation" (*al-ʿulūw al-muṭlaq*).[74] To obtain this type of elevation, later enthusiasts avidly collected the ḥadīth that the compilers of the great collections had with short isnāds.[75] The *thulāthīyāt* of Bukhārī—i.e., those ḥadīth in which he is separated from the Prophet by only three intermediaries—were collected a number of times.[76] The great popularity of certain minor collections lacking any special religious significance—*al-Jaʿdīyāt*, *Juzʾ Ibn ʿArafa*, *Majlis* (or *Juzʾ*) *al-biṭāqa*, *al-Ghaylānīyāt*, *al-Thaqafīyāt*, etc.—during the Ayyūbid era was solely due to the elevated ḥadīth they contain.[77]

The second principal class of elevation focuses on the number of intermediaries in the line of transmission between the student and someone Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ vaguely characterizes as "a ḥadīth authority" (*imām min aʾimmat al-ḥadīth*), irrespective of the number of intermediaries separating that authority from the Prophet. It would seem that the popular zeal to obtain the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim and the *musnads* ascribed to the likes of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Shāfiʿī (150/767–204/820) through the shortest line of transmission fell into this type.[78]

In the next century, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1303) termed the third basic class of elevation "elevation through replacement" (*ʿulūw al-tanzīl*),[79] because the transmitters in two different isnāds were figuratively equated on the basis of their relative positions in the isnāds. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ analyzes the special lexicon that emerged to express the most desirable of the possible relationships. The first two terms correlate two of the student's isnāds for a particular ḥadīth, one passing through a great collector—for instance, Bukhārī or Muslim—and another version not passing through him. An "agreement" (*muwāfaqa*) was when the second isnād intersected that of the great collector at the level of the collector's teacher. A "substitution" (*badal*) occurred when the second isnād intersected that of the great collector at "a teacher other than the teacher of [for instance] Muslim." In practice, the two isnāds most commonly met at the level of the teacher of the teacher of the great compiler. In neither case was it required that the alternate isnāds have fewer intermediaries than the version passing through the famous collector, but, as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ explains, no one would bother with them if they did not.

The two other terms relevant to elevation through replacement, "equivalence" (*musāwāh*) and "hand-shaking" (*muṣāḥafa*), did concern the student's elevation relative to that of Bukhārī, Muslim, and the compilers of the other famous collections of ḥadīth. In short, the student competed with the great compiler. The first term applied when the number of intermediaries between the student and the Prophet and the number between the compiler and the Prophet were the same for a certain ḥadīth. "Hand-shaking" was when the student's isnād was a single link longer than compiler's, i.e., the student's teacher possessed the "equivalence." In these cases, if the isnāds did happen to intersect, it would necessarily be at a

[72] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 440–47. Cf. Leonard Librande, "The Categories High and Low as Reflections on the *Riḥlah* and *Kitābah* in Islām," *Der Islam* 55 (1978): 278.

[73] This is noted in ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 253 and elsewhere. I have not come across a reference to the title of the exact work in which Ibn al-Qaysarānī gave his scheme, although a tract of his entitled *al-ʿUlūw wa-'l-nuzūl*, which I have not read, is found in Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus (see Albānī, *Fahras*, 67). This work would seem to be the same as the book entitled *Masʾalat al-ʿulūw wa-'l-nuzūl fi 'l-ḥadīth* mentioned in Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 2: col. 1662. A *Masʾalat al-ʿulūw* is also ascribed to Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qadāma in Ibn Mibrad, *Muʿjam al-kutub*, ed. Yusrā ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Bishrī (Riyadh, 1989), 94.

[74] *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 106.

[75] Ṭībī, *al-Khulāṣa fī uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, ed. Ṣubhī al-Sāmarrāʾī (Beirut, 1405/1985), 55. See also Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ*, 3: 11 and ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 254.

[76] For a list of these works, see Yūsuf al-Kattānī, *Rubāʿīyāt al-imām al-Bukhārī* (Rabat, 1404/1984), 138–39.

[77] Irāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 254; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 11.

[78] Some, like Ibn Ḥajar (*Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 106), did explicitly include the authors of the great collections here while others, like Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (*al-Iqtirāḥ fī bayān al-iṣṭilāḥ*, Beirut, 1406/1986, 47), made elevation in regard to possession of the collections of Bukhārī, Muslim and "the authors of the famous books" a separate class.

[79] Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, *Iqtirāḥ*, 47–48; Sakāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 18.

level very remote from that of the great collector. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ points out that in his day this class of elevation was one of the prime areas of interest and Sakhāwī (830/1427–902/1497) said that teachers drew attention to instances of "equivalence" and "hand-shaking" in their ḥadīth "to excite interest in them and energize those seeking them."[80]

Naturally, with the passage of centuries, it would become rarer and rarer for a student to be able to claim the last two relationships for himself and then only when the author of the ḥadīth collection for some reason happened to have the ḥadīth through a chain of transmission that was very long for his time. Badr al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa (639/1241–733/1333), an assiduous student of ḥadīth who began collecting in 646/1248 at the age of seven and later went on to write an abridgement of the *Muqaddima*,[81] could lay claim to only a single instance of "equivalence." This was a ḥadīth in which Nasāʾī (215/830–303/915), one of the latest of the collectors in whom the seekers of evaluation showed interest was separated from the Prophet by an extraordinary ten intermediaries.[82] Nasāʾī, for his part, had never heard of an isnād longer than that.[83] Nevertheless, Ibn Jamāʿa still had to fudge a little. The ḥadīth with this isnād does not actually appear in Nasāʾī's famous so-called "smaller" *Sunan*; rather it was taken from his much more obscure collection of the ḥadīth of Mālik.[84] The eighth/fourteenth-century expert Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (725/1325–806/1404) remarked that by his time these kinds of elevation had totally ceased to exist and that the terms had come to be applied to cases where the student and the famous collector had isnāds of equal length *for different ḥadīth*: "In three ḥadīth there are ten people between me and the Prophet. Nasāʾī had a ḥadīth in which ten people separated him from the Prophet. This is 'equivalence' for us."[85]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's two other main classes of elevation were conceptually different from the first three. While the first three were considered "elevation of distance" (*ʿulūw al-masāfa*), i.e., the number of intermediaries, the last two were "elevation of characteristic" (*ʿulūw al-ṣifa*) in regard to the transmitter or his teacher.[86] They concerned individual links in isnāds and were consulted as tie-breakers to determine which isnād had the greatest elevation when the intervening transmitters were equal in number. The first of these derived from the date of a transmitter's death. When two or more transmitters related the same ḥadīth from a common teacher, the transmission of the one who died first was considered more elevated. As an example, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cites a ḥadīth that he has from al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūri through two separate lines of transmission of equal length. In one of these, Bayhaqī (384/994–458/1066) transmits from al-Ḥākim, and in the other Abū Bakr b. Khalaf (398/1008–487/1094) transmits from him. He regards the first as more elevated because Bayhaqī predeceased Ibn Khalaf by twenty-nine years.

The student attained an absolute form of elevation when a certain number of years, either thirty or fifty according to varying opinions, elapsed after the death of his teacher. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's final principal class of elevation was derived from the date a transmitter heard a ḥadīth. The date of audition was examined in the same fashion as the date of death. When two or more transmitters related the same ḥadīth from the same teacher, the transmission of the one who heard it first was considered more elevated and the student also attained a form of elevation when a certain number of years passed after he had heard a ḥadīth. It was recognized that measuring elevation in the last two ways would sometimes produce conflicting results.[87]

Although elevation could be said to inhere in an abstract fashion in an isnād, to obtain the quality for himself the student had to turn to the living individual who transmitted the ḥadīth. There were extraordinary ways in which an isnād could be telescoped. The inclusion of a macrobiotic helped.[88] The presence of Bābā Yūsuf al-Harawī, who was said to have lived for three hundred years, gave the nineteenth-century Damascene scholar Ibrāhīm al-ʿAṭṭār (1232/1816–1314/1897) what he called "the most elevated isnād [of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of

[80] *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 16.

[81] *Al-Manhal al-rawī fī mukhtaṣar ʿulūm al-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ramaḍān in *Majallat Maʿhad al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabīya* 21 (1975): 29–116, 196–255 (reprinted Damascus, 1406/1986); ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut, 1410/1990). Ibn Jamāʿa's more famous *Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ wa-'l-mutakallim fī adab al-ʿālim wa- 'l-mutaʿallim* (Hyderabad, 1353) is also indebted to the *Muqaddima*.

[82] Birzālī, *Mashyakha*, 1: 343–51.

[83] *Sunan al-Nasāʾī (bi-sharḥ al-Suyūṭī wa-ḥāshīyat al-Sindī)*, 8 vols. (Cairo, ca. 1930), 2: 172 (K. al-Iftitāḥ, B. al-Faḍl fī qirāʾat qul huwa Allāh aḥad).

[84] ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 259.

[85] Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 166–67. See also ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 259; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 15.

[86] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 9, 18; Zakarīyāʾ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 2: 253.

[87] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 22.

[88] For a discussion of this, see Ignaz Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1899), lxx–lxxvi.

Bukhārī] found on the face of the earth today."[89] Some disposed of superfluous intermediaries by taking their ḥadīth from dreams. Ibn Ḥajar took two ḥadīth from an individual in Homs whose teacher had received them in a dream of the Prophet.[90] A resident of Irbil, Abū ᶜAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Bustī (500/1106–584/1188), longed to hear a certain ḥadīth and his wish was granted when a dream of Prophet was vouchsafed to an acquaintance. He declared, "A single transmitter [i.e., the acquaintance] comes between me and the Prophet!"[91]

However, normally for a transmitter to possess "elevation" in its most quintessential form, two circumstances—both of which were largely out of his control—had to come together: precocity and longevity.[92] Either through good fortune or the conscientiousness of his parents, he had to have been brought at an early age to hear a famous text from an individual who himself possessed elevation.[93] The diligent Abū Shāma started to take his son Abu 'l-Ḥaram Muḥammad to hear texts before he reached the age of four.[94] The transmitter also had to outlive most of the other members of his generation. Unfortunately, little Muḥammad died at the age of eight and one-half years, by which time he had already heard ḥadīth from about one hundred and forty teachers.[95] The Baghdadi transmitter Ḥanbal b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ruṣāfī (ca. 510/1116–604/1207) was more fortunate.[96] The prominent Sufi and Ḥanbalite ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (470/1077–561/1166) instructed his father to name him "Ḥanbal" and to take him to hear the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as soon as he became old enough. In 523/1129 Ḥanbal was duly led to hear the *Musnad* from its most elevated living transmitter, Hibat Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn (432/1040–525/1131), who was separated from the imām by only three transmitters. Ḥanbal went on to win the tontine among the students of Hibat Allāh. As he grew older and his fellows passed away one by one, he became sought out by local and foreign students who desired to hear the *Musnad*. That fate seemed to distribute elevation randomly without regard for merit only heightened its cachet.

Although seeking elevation was nothing new, the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries were a period of great activity, especially in the western Islamic lands. Silafī was one of the first to exploit the increased popular demand for elevation. Dhahabī, with the perspective given by the passage of a couple of centuries, regarded this great entrepreneur of elevation as the Prometheus who fetched the flame of elevation from the altars of the east.[97] Born in Isfahan—a city famed for its long-lived transmitters[98]—Silafī ended his youthful wanderings in Fāṭimid Alexandria in 511/1117. Apparently he had tired of the road, for he married a rich woman and left the city only once after that. Most of his literary output was of a self-promotional nature, catalogues of his wares, enumerating the transmitters he had heard and received licenses from, and endorsements in the form of lists of the students who had visited him. Before his death in 576/1180, at the age of about one hundred years, he achieved the status of an international celebrity. Silafī's renown was durable enough to survive the collapse of the Fāṭimids and the advent of the Ayyūbids. Saladin and his brother al-ᶜĀdil personally sought Silafī out in Alexandria, and were rewarded with a reprimand for talking in class.[99]

It was common for ambitious students to undertake journeys to hear ḥadīth from the transmitters carrying the

[89] Muḥyī al-Dīn al-ᶜAṭṭār, *Kitāb Intikhāb al-ᶜawālī wa-'l-shuyūkh al-akhyār min fahāris thabat shaykhinā Ibrāhīm al-ᶜAṭṭār* ([Damascus], [ca. 1900]), 15. Fullānī theorized that the isnād containing Bābā Yūsuf al-Harawī (nicknamed Seh ṣad sāle) had been confined to the village of Abarqūh, near Yazd, until a fairly late date, thereby explaining how it could have been unknown to earlier experts like Ibn Ḥajar and Suyūṭī; *Qatf al-thamar fī rafᶜ asānīd al-muṣannafāt fī 'l-funūn wa-'l-athar* (Hyderabad, 1328), 12–15.

[90] Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 122.

[91] Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Taᵓrīkh Irbil*, ed. Sāmī b. al-Sayyid Khamās al-Ṣaqqār, 2 vols. (Baghdad, 1980), 1: 91.

[92] Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe/XIIIe siècle: Vie et structures religieuses d'une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), 185–86.

[93] In the time period under consideration here, the verb most commonly used for an older relative taking a child to hear ḥadīth from an elevated transmitter is *asmaᶜa*, for instance "*iᶜtanā bihī abūhu wa-asmaᶜahū*;" Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Taᵓrīkh ᶜulamāᵓ Baghdad* (*al-musammā Muntakhab al-Mukhtār*), ed. ᶜAbbās al-ᶜAzzāwī (Baghdad, 1357/1938), 24. *Asmaᶜa* is also sometimes used in the sense more ordinarily assigned to *sammaᶜa*, i.e., "to grant somebody audition of a text."

[94] Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 170; Pouzet, *Damas*, 186.

[95] Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 176.

[96] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 432.

[97] Leonard Librande, "Al-Dhahabī's Essay *Amṣār dhawāt al-āthār*," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 32–33 (1980–81): 143.

[98] Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73), 1: 296.

[99] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 28; Subkī *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiᶜīya al-kubrā*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1383/1963–[1396]/1976), 6: 38.

highest degrees of elevation. Naturally, not everyone who desired elevation had the time and means to make the pilgrimage to those who possessed it. One of the chief elements of Ayyūbid religious policy was state support of the pursuit of elevation. This assumed its most concrete form in the construction of ḥadīth schools, the two Ashrafīyas being the most prominent examples. Additionally, the Ayyūbids sponsored the importation of elevation into their lands.[100] As we have seen in the *waqfīya* of the Ashrafīya, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ required "elevation of audition of the kind one travels for" from the visiting teacher of ḥadīth who was to be generously rewarded. One of the most remarkable features of this time was the emergence of a strange traffic in old men, to satisfy the craving for elevation among those who could not leave home. (For cultural reasons, women seem to have been less mobile, although still accessible to pilgrims. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ comes down in favor of the validity of an audition granted by an unseen agent behind a screen.[101])

As al-Niẓām did with his sandal, the elevated transmitters of ḥadīth texts took to the roads to exploit their special gift. According to Ibn al-Mustawfī,[102] word of Ḥanbal—the elevated transmitter of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Musnad*—reached the former lieutenant of Saladin and munificent patron of traditional Islam, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Gökböri (r. 586/1190–630/1232), in Irbil. He had been frustrated because there was no one (elevated enough?) to teach in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Muẓaffarīya, which he had founded in 594/1198. So he wrote to the authorities in Baghdad, requesting—and providing in advance the full expenses—that Ḥanbal, by this time one of the two surviving students of Ibn al-Ḥuṣayn, and another octogenarian, Ibn Ṭabarzadh (516/1123–607/1210), be translated to Irbil. They arrived in 602/1205 and transmitted there for several months. Soon, this came to the attention of the great Ayyūbid ḥadīth aficionado, the son of Saladin, al-Muḥsin Aḥmad (d. 634/1236), and he wrote requesting their presence in Syria.[103] This move was held up until the authorities in Baghdad again granted permission. As soon as they did, Ḥanbal and Ibn Ṭabarzadh were whisked off on a tour of Mosul, Ḥarrān, Aleppo, and finally in 603/1207 Damascus, where al-Muᶜaẓẓam was to hear them. Both men made out very well financially and on their return to Baghdad were able to set themselves up as merchants.

Some people felt uneasy about this transaction, particularly the pecuniary element, which seems to have even bothered Ḥanbal. A dream informed one individual that Ibn Ṭabarzadh had gone to Hell for teaching ḥadīth for money.[104] This sign of divine disfavor did little to discourage others, and the prospect of financial gain was enough to overcome the scruples of a number of elderly transmitters. Ibn al-Majd (605/1208–643/1245), the grandson of Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma, tells us[105] that in 630/1233 he was in Baghdad and resolved to bring a teacher of Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* home to Damascus. His intention was to recruit one of the surviving students of the celebrated Abu 'l-Waqt al-Sijzī (458/1066–553/1158), who was himself only three intermediaries removed from Bukhārī.[106] His first choice was the eighty-some-year-old Ibn Rūzba (ca. 542/1147–633/1235), who, in fact, had already toured in Syria. Four years earlier he had taught Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in Raᵓs ᶜAyn, Ḥarrān, and Aleppo. He had been booked to go to Damascus too, but al-Ashraf and al-Kāmil's siege of the city caused him to renege on this part of the deal and he had failed to refund all of his advance. Ibn al-Majd was chagrined to discover that Ibn Rūzba had "tasted gain"—he had received fifty dinars from al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜĀdil II on his previous tour—and now made exorbitant demands. The same was true of Ibn al-Majd's second choice, the eighty-four-year-old Ibn al-Qaṭīᶜī (546/1151–634/1236). In desperation he then approached another ancient student of Abu 'l-Waqt, Ibn al-Zabīdī, whom for some reason he initially did not want. For his own part, Ibn al-Zabīdī too was hesitant, at least until his son reminded him that he was seventy dinars in debt. As it turned out, everything went well. Ibn al-Zabīdī made a great splash in Damascus. Al-Ashraf in particular was delighted by his arrival and fêted him during Ramadan, personally hearing Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from him. He was then installed in the newly-opened inner Ashrafīya, where he drew great crowds. Later, he was brought to the Damascene suburb of al-Ṣāliḥīya, where

[100] Al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī commemorated their personal efforts in this realm in his *Tarwīḥ al-qulūb fī dhikr mulūk Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 2d ed. (Beirut, 1983).

[101] *Muqaddima*, 330–31.

[102] *Taᵓrīkh Irbil*, 1: 159–63, 329. The description of this tour presented by Ibn al-Mustawfī is not entirely compatible with the accounts preserved in the other sources, such as Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 510, where it is said that Ibn Ṭabarzadh went to Syria *after* Ḥanbal.

[103] According to al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, al-Malik al-Muḥsin heard ḥadīth from Ibn Ṭabarzadh and Ḥanbal in Irbil; *Tarwīḥ*, 76.

[104] Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Mustafād min Dhayl Taᵓrīkh Baghdād*, ed. Muḥammad Mawlūd Khalaf and Bashshār ᶜAwwād Maᶜrūf (Beirut, 1406/1986), 370; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 511.

[105] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22: 359.

[106] Fück, "Überlieferungsgeschichte," 78.

he transmitted Shāfiʿī's *Musnad*, in addition to Bukhāri's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, to general acclaim. Ibn al-Zabīdī returned to Baghdad and died within a year. His visit was epochal. By virtue of his brief stay in Damascus, he is known as *musnid al-Shām*, which may be translated as "the man who brought the isnād to Syria,"[107] and years later there were still individuals identified as "the students of the students of Ibn al-Zabīdī" (*aṣḥāb aṣḥāb Ibn al-Zabīdī*).[108]

V. ELEVATION AND AUTHENTICITY

Although it is easy to determine who possessed elevation and to what degree, the particular attraction of this quality cannot be as readily grasped. Like beauty and high birth, it bestowed on its carrier a desirability that was undeniably powerful but somewhat impervious to analysis. We are not alone in experiencing this difficulty. The early commentators seldom seemed able to articulate clearly why seeking elevation was important. In the first place they display an unhelpful tendency to muddle elevation with the topic of the usage of isnāds in general. As if a purpose could not be assigned to the isnād other than that of conveying elevation, they rehearse the standard repertoire of reports encouraging the student to respect isnāds. The same was true of the ancient practice of traveling to collect ḥadīth. In the thought of Rāmahurmuzī, traveling and elevation have already become inseparable, thus allowing him to formulate an equation that must have seemed logical to him: "Limiting oneself to being low in the isnād is to nullify traveling to collect ḥadīth.[109] It hardly needs to be stressed that in earlier centuries the acquisition of elevation was not the foremost aim of the majority of those who traveled to collect ḥadīth.[110] The reports al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cities in *al-Riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*[111] contain scarcely any reference to elevation, although he elsewhere endorses Rāmahurmuzī's view.[112]

Most commonly, those who did attempt to explain why people sought elevation simply put forth that it was "part of right religion"[113] or more specifically a *sunna*.[114] The term *sunna* was usually reserved for acts sanctified by a ḥadīth from the Prophet, although here it is difficult to imagine how in the nature of things he could have provided any kind of meaningful precedent for collecting ḥadīth with short isnāds. One senses that some of those who suggest that the pursuit of elevation was a *sunna* are using the term in a non-technical fashion, meaning by it nothing more than "custom." Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, for instance, is claimed to have said, "Seeking the elevated isnād is a *sunna* of those who came before."[115] Others, like al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī,[116] were game to show that the Prophet tolerated, even if he never seems to have positively encouraged or participated in, the quest for elevation. The general thrust was that one should avoid intermediaries. This argument was almost subversive, for the whole theoretical justification for ḥadīth transmission rested on the principle that one *must* accept information from trustworthy intermediaries, and this was a point that the early adherents of the ḥadīth struggled to establish. It appears that the polemical fires that had once raged over this issue had cooled sufficiently to allow this inconsistency to pass unnoticed.

For his part, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ argued in favor of elevation on practical grounds. He linked the passion for the shortest isnād to the traditionally recognized responsibility to acquire the soundest version of the text.

> Elevation keeps defectiveness away from the isnād, because it is possible for defectiveness to come, either inadvertently

[107] Tahānawī's definition of *musnid* as *"man yarwi 'l-ḥadīth bi-isnādihī sawāʾan kāna ʿindahū ʿilm bihī aw laysa lahū illā mujarrad al-riwāya"* hardly seems adequate considering the honorific sense the term usually carries; *Qawāʿid fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo, 1392/1972), 28.

[108] E.g., ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 262.

[109] Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil bayn al-rāwī wa-'l-wāʿī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAjjāj al-Khaṭīb (Beirut, 1391/1971), 216. See also L. Librande, "High and Low," 267–73. A similar argument was made against the permissibility of transmission by *ijāza*; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 332–33.

[110] See the remarks to this effect in Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 5–6; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 161; Zakarīyāʾ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 2: 252.

[111] This tract was published in *Majmūʿat rasāʾil fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrāʾī (Medina [i.e., Cairo], 1389/1969).

[112] *Al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa-ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, (Beirut, 1996), 33, 378.

[113] Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 1: 156; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Riḥla*, 47.

[114] E.g., al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *ʿUlūm*, 5, 7; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 438.

[115] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiʿ*, 37–38; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 438; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bāʿith al-ḥathīth ilā maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo, 1355/1937), 191; ʿIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 251; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 5; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 160; Laknawī, *Ajwiba*, 24.

[116] *ʿUlūm*, 5–6.

> or deliberately, from each transmitter in the isnād. Therefore, a small number of men represents a small number for sources of defectiveness and a large number of men represents a large number for sources of defectiveness. This much is patently clear.[117]

Despite the antithesis that earlier commentators had perceived between elevation and reliability, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's successors were glad to accept his suggestion which, if nothing else, put this popular practice on familiar ground. Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd later wrote in his synopsis of the *Muqaddima*: "I do not know of a good reason to favor elevation other than that it is closer to authenticity and fewer errors."[118] Others said much the same thing.[119]

The explanation offered by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ appears so satisfactory that to look for any other would seem almost a denial of the obvious. However, was the connection between elevation and the authenticity of texts "patently clear"? If so, why do we find commentators objecting to elevation as it was commonly understood? Some of these tried to redefine elevation, claiming that true elevation consisted of transmission by reliable intermediaries, irrespective of their number. The Saljuk vizier Niẓām al-Mulk argued, "In my opinion, the elevated ḥadīth is the one authentically from the Messenger of God, even if its transmitters [i.e., intermediaries] number one hundred."[120] An ascetic condemned elevation as a worldly vanity.[121] Others recommended that the student pursue the opposite of elevation, "lowness," i.e., isnāds containing many intermediaries, because the more exacting exertions of scrutinizing the more numerous transmitters should theoretically bring greater spiritual rewards.[122] Furthermore, it was recognized that the early authorities like Bukhārī and Muslim were for the most part immune to the charms of elevation. Ibn al-Samᶜānī (537/1143–618/1221) quipped that it was only because this was the case that later scholars were able to rejoice in their own "equivalences" and "hand-shakings": "It is not elevated in regard to you, but it is low in regard to Bukhārī."[123] More seriously, we are forced to examine whether Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's equation of elevation with accuracy is tenable in the light of what we learn of actual practice. In fact, commentators never tired of decrying the way elevation's twin demands for precocity and longevity tended to reduce to the level of formalities crucial aspects of the transmission of ḥadīth formerly regulated by pedagogical concerns. Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd described people as being mad for elevation and wrote, "The desire of later scholars to seek elevation has grown so great that it has become a cause of much damage in the discipline."[124]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ examines two forms of the oral transmission of ḥadīth texts in the *Muqaddima*: audition of the speech of the transmitter (*al-samāᶜ min lafẓ al-shaykh*) and recitation to the transmitter (*al-qirāᵓa ᶜala 'l-shaykh*).[125] They differ in that in the first the transmitter recites the text himself, and in the second the text is recited by someone else in his presence. Most experts regarded both of them as acceptable. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's treatment is highly technical and tends to concentrate on practical questions, it is still possible to discern that the highest theoretical priority in oral transmission was the preservation of the integrity of the ḥadīth text. However, two complementary stipulations governed the attainment of this end. First, the transmitter was obliged to ensure that the text was recited in his class in the exact form he heard it from his teacher. And second, the only version of the text licit for the individual receiving the text to transmit later on was the one he heard in the class.[126] Thus, the transmitter had to be someone who intellectually possessed the knowledge and attentiveness necessary to fulfill his obligation and

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[117] *Muqaddima*, 437. See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 33; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 8.

[118] *Iqtirāḥ*, 266; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 8.

[119] Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 107.

[120] *Muqaddima*, 447–48; Ibn Kathīr, *Bāᶜith*, 196; ᶜIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 265; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 25. For the vizier's activities in the discipline of ḥadīth, see ᶜAbd al-Hādī Riḍā, "Amālī Niẓām al-Mulk al-wazīr al-Saljūqī fi 'l-ḥadīth," *Majallat Maᶜhad al-makhṭūṭāt al-ᶜarabīya* 5 (1378–79/1959): 349–78 and Denise Spellberg, "Nizām al-Mulk's Manipulation of Tradition," *Muslim World* 78 (1988): 111–17.

[121] Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd, *Iqtirāḥ*, 266; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 7, 25.

[122] Rāmahurmuzī, *Muḥaddith*, 216; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 32–33; Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd, *Iqtirāḥ*, 267; Ibn Kathīr, *Bāᶜith*, 191; ᶜIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 252–53; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 7–8; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 172; Zakarīyāᵓ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 2: 252–53.

[123] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 445.

[124] *Iqtirāḥ*, 266. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 137; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 19.

[125] *Muqaddima*, 316–31.

[126] Scholars of ḥadīth and jurists were forced to permit transmission of ḥadīth by paraphrase (*bi-'l-maᶜnā*) in theory because in their eyes the textual variations displayed by a number of ḥadīth were evidence that their forebears had practiced it. In historical times transmitters were given no option but to reproduce the text exactly as they heard it; see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 394–96.

who would respect it morally. The moral obligation was not so heavy on the person receiving the text—it was not even necessary that he be a Muslim[127]—but he did have to possess the capacity to retain the text in the form given to him.

We find that both the student and the teacher often fell short of the prescribed standard. Nowhere was the tendency of elevation to override legitimate educational concerns more evident than in the debate over the question of the earliest allowable age for a student to take up the study of ḥadīth. Historically, the question appears to have been controversial and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ canvasses radically different opinions in his examination of it.[128] Although it may reasonably be doubted whether the early Syrians in actuality refused to let their sons study ḥadīth before the age of thirty and the Kūfans before twenty, as reports quoted by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and others maintain, these figures could appear plausible because many scholars did regard the study of ḥadīth as an important and difficult discipline that demanded complete mental maturity from those embarking on it.

On the other hand, the natural impulse of parents was to take their child to hear ḥadīth as early as possible so that he could enjoy the highest degree of elevation, regardless of whether there was any hope of the child retaining them. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ personally respected the traditional stricture that the auditor be intellectually capable of retaining the text he heard. He argued that the determination of a child's suitability for audition be based on his individual mental competence rather than on his attainment of a specific age. However, the threshold he advocated was rather low. The child had to be able to understand what was said to him and respond to questions. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ admits that in practice a student had to be only five years old to be credited with audition, irrespective of the stage of mental development he had reached by that age.[129] This threshold was derived from a ḥadīth in which a Companion claims to remember the Prophet squirting water in his face when he was either four or five. On the particular feat of reasoning, Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (476/1088–544/1149)—a scholar who was deeply disturbed by the decline of standards—bitterly remarked, "There is a proof for everything."[130] This was a distinct departure from past ages. Dhahabī notes that the great-grandfather of Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Baghawī (241/829–317/929) started to take the latter to class when he was ten and a half and remarks, "We do not know of any one in that era who studied ḥadīth and recorded them in writing younger than he."[131]

As one might expect, many of the less advanced children attending the ḥadīth classes had little idea of what was going on around them. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ complained that children lacking even the most minimal capacity—even acquaintance with the Arabic language[132]—were granted audition: "Many times a young boy who cannot understand the majority of what his mother says to him attends the class."[133] Ibn Kathīr reflected on his own auditions as a child:

> This is the reality today in our time. Those who can understand and those who cannot attend, along with those sitting far from the speaker, those who doze, those who talk amongst themselves and children who cannot be kept under control. Rather they play most of the time and they do not occupy themselves with the essentials of the audition. But for all of these audition used to be recorded in the presence of our teacher, the expert Abu 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī.[134]

As this passage suggests, the immediate object of these early auditions was to have the child's name inscribed in a document most commonly known as the *ṭabaqa* (also called *tasmīʿ* and *samāʿ*). Mizzī, it should be noted, was not an ordinary transmitter but rather an accomplished scholar and the author of a number of distinguished works. Ibn Kathīr's unedifying portrait of the transfer of elevation is confirmed by other sources. In one particularly appalling instance, a student tells of attending a class without even knowing which of those present was granting the audition.[135]

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[127] *Muqaddima*, 312.

[128] *Muqaddima*, 312–15. The distinction Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ attempts to make between the earliest age for hearing ḥadīth and the earliest age for writing them was unknown in the first centuries of Islam.

[129] Children younger than even five were regularly brought to these sessions, although were only credited with "being in attendance" and did not acquire actual audition. We find the audition of very young scholars described thus: *samiʿa ḥuḍū-ran* . . . , e.g., Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 91 (a two-year-old), 168 (a four-year-old).

[130] *Mashāriq al-anwār ʿalā ṣiḥāḥ al-āthār*, 2 vols. (n.p., 1333), 1: 3. Also see his remarks in *Ilmāʿ*, 62–64 and Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's in *Iqtirāḥ*, 232.

[131] *Siyar*, 14: 441.

[132] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Ilmāʿ*, 142. See also Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 321; idem, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 15.

[133] *Mashāriq al-anwār*, 1: 3.

[134] *Bāʿith*, 132; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 46.

[135] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Tabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿīya*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAlī Najīb, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1413/1992), 1: 238–39; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19: 618; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 51.

The *ṭabaqa* commemorated the recitation of the text, listing those who were present as well as the name and author of the text and the name of the transmitter, the date and the place of the audition, and often other pertinent information.

> When the audition of the text is completed in the presence of the transmitter, he writes in his own copy of the text the record of audition (*samāᶜ*) of the young boy, or he writes it for him in his father's book or that of someone else, so that it can provide testimony for the validity of his audition at the beginning of his life. The majority of the auditions of people in our day and many from earlier times are of this type.[136]

This *ṭabaqa* seems to have been unknown in the earliest centuries of Islam. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid sees it as a development of the fifth/eleventh century,[137] although we can probably push it back further. Already in the fourth/tenth century al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī bewailed the recent appearance of people "who [falsely] write records of their own auditions (*samāᶜātihim*) in old books on the spot and transmit them."[138]

For us the *ṭabaqa* epitomizes the process of formalization brought on by the pressures for elevation, for it came to occupy the place formerly held by the transmitter's actual knowledge of the text. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, noting the decadence of mankind and the necessity of preserving the continuity of the isnād, conceded, "In regard to [the transmitter's] retention [of the text], it is sufficient that one find his audition recorded in the handwriting of an unimpeachable individual and that he relate from a text conforming to the text of his teacher."[139] If the required *ṭabaqa* existed, an individual could transmit a text without any knowledge of the contents of the text. For instance, when a *ṭabaqa* bearing the name of Ibn al-Ṭallāya (d. 548/1153) was uncovered late in his life, documenting that he had heard a certain ḥadīth collection as a child, he became a popular transmitter of the text.[140] In fact, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ noted that his contemporaries regarded a transmission as valid even when the transmitter himself had no recollection of having ever heard the text.[141] After detailing the notorious laxity of the second/eighth-century transmitter ᶜAbd Allāh b. Lahīᶜa, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes, "Something similar occurs among the teachers of our day. A student brings a personal collection of ḥadīth (*juzʾ*) or a book to a teacher and says, 'This is your relation.' Then the teacher lets him recite it to him, trusting him blindly, without undertaking any investigation to ascertain the truth of that."[142] An eighth/fourteenth-century commentator on the *Muqaddima* explained that this was "because in this time the men of the *sanad* are not examined and the only aim is the survival of the chain of transmission."[143]

One consequence of the great popularity of elevation and the new prominence of the *ṭabaqa* was the appearance of doctored and forged lists of transmitters. It is sad to note that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's teacher and scion of a noble house of scholars, Ibn al-Samᶜānī, was known for clumsily adding his own name to old *ṭabaqa*s. The only transmissions of his that were considered valid were those recorded in the hand of a trustworthy individual.[144] The infamous Ibn al-ᶜUllayq (d. 601/1205) approached the problem with greater finesse, but with no more scruples. He scraped the name of one of the original auditors off the *ṭabaqa* and wrote his own in its place, treating the paper with oil to conceal the erasure.[145] The elder brother of Ibn Ṭabarzadh, Abu 'l-Baqāʾ Muḥammad (ca. 500/1107–542/1148), took a more roundabout tack: "He was a liar who placed people's names in books and then went and recited [the texts] to them."[146] (Some regarded this forgery as unnecessary. Silafī argued that the student was not even obliged to show the forgetful transmitter any evidence that he had heard the text at some point in his life.[147])

Now much of the emphasis on moral and intellectual qualifications that had formerly been placed on the transmitter shifted to the individual compiling the list of auditors (*muthbit al-samāᶜ*). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ gives quite detailed instructions regarding the proper way to compose a *ṭabaqa* and especially urges the individual drawing it

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[136] Al-Qāḍī ᶜIyāḍ, *Mashāriq*, 1: 3.

[137] "Ijāzāt al-samāᶜ fi 'l-makhṭūṭāt al-qadīma," *Majallat Maᶜhad al-makhṭūṭāt al-ᶜarabīya* 1 (1375/1955): 232–33.

[138] *ᶜUlūm*, 16.

[139] *Muqaddima*, 307.

[140] Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 7: 277. See also Ibn al-Najjār, *Mustafād*, 166.

[141] *Muqaddima*, 391, 393–94. See also al-Qāḍī ᶜIyāḍ, *Mashāriq*, 1: 3.

[142] *Muqaddima*, 391.

[143] Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, *Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ wa-taḍmīn Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. ᶜĀʾisha ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān with *Muqaddima*, 2d ed. (Cairo, 1989), 391.

[144] Ibn al-Najjār, *Mustafād*, 289. This charge is repeated in most of the biographical entries on him, although Ibn Ḥajar attempts to refute it in *Lisān*, 4: 6–7.

[145] Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 1: 340; Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 10: 178–79; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 2: 41.

[146] Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 4: 31; idem, *Siyar*, 21: 512; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 5:369.

[147] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 35.

up to be accurate and impartial in recording the names of those present. The main qualifications are that he be trustworthy and possess a distinctive style of handwriting.[148] Dhahabī, who, as we have seen, considered the reliability of transmitters to be irrelevant, stresses the need for rectitude and veracity in those who record the names of the auditors.[149]

As we might expect, because the transmitters came to be selected exclusively on the basis of their longevity, some of them fell short of the traditional moral ideal. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī accused those seeking elevation of ignoring all other considerations: "They write ḥadīth from transmitters immoral in their actions and blameworthy in their doctrines."[150] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ argued that the moral and intellectual standards for transmitters of ḥadīth had been relaxed: "Let it suffice to qualify a teacher that he be a Muslim, adult, of sound mind, and not manifestly wrong-doing or stupid."[151] Identifying transmitters of dubious character who enjoyed great popularity is not difficult. Probably none was worse than the elevated transmitter Ibn Ṭabarzadh, whom Abū Shāma characterized as "a wanton buffoon" (*khalīᶜ mājin*).[152] Despite al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's earlier condemnation of taking ḥadīth from *ahl al-mujūn wa-'l-khalᶜa*,[153] students flocked to his classes. Ibn al-Najjār tells us that he "did not understand a thing about ḥadīth (*al-ᶜilm*)." He also says that he was neglectful in matters of religion—e.g., he never prayed—and ignorant of the rudiments of personal hygiene.[154]

In practice, transmitters often appear to have had very little expertise in the texts presented to them. Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd said that elevation caused students to overlook precise and expert transmitters in favor of "those who were brought to a ḥadīth session at an early age and possess no discrimination, exactitude, or understanding."[155] As Abū Shāma tartly put it: "The majority [of transmitters] are more ignorant [than their degenerate modern students] in the transmission of ḥadīth, let alone in the understanding of them."[156] Ibn al-Qaṭīᶜī was unsuccessfully recruited by Ibn al-Majd in 630/1233 for a trip to Syria and the next year was appointed the first *shaykh* of ḥadīth in the Mustanṣirīya in Baghdad, despite the grave misgivings his colleague Ibn al-Najjār (578/1183–643/1245) had about him: "He used often to mispronounce words and he had little knowledge of the names of transmitters."[157] The correct pronunciation of proper names, especially homographic ones, was considered a measure of the competence of a transmitter since the defectiveness of the Arabic script required that they be mastered one by one.[158] It would later be claimed that Ibn al-Najjār had an ax to grind with Ibn al-Qaṭīᶜī,[159] but the general impression provided by Ibn al-Najjār is confirmed by other sources. The vizier Abu 'l-Muẓaffar b. Yūnus, for instance, condemned Ibn al-Qaṭīᶜī to his face, "Woe to you! All your life you have been reciting ḥadīth and you cannot recite a single one right!"[160]

In view of the compromises now tolerated in regard to the qualifications demanded of the student and the transmitter, we should not be surprised that the pursuit of elevation had a baleful influence on the actual recitation of texts. The traditional stipulations that the transmitter had to make sure that the text was recited the way he heard it and the student could only transmit what he heard focused attention on the recitation, the perilous moment the text became fluid and therefore vulnerable to alteration. The ḥadīth manuals, including the *Muqaddima*, fretfully scrutinize the minutiae of the recitation. What if the reciter mispronounces a word? May the auditor later transmit the correct form or does he have to reproduce it the way he heard it, although he knows it to be wrong?[161] What if the auditor is distracted for a moment and misses a word? May he ask his fellows what it is and attribute that to the transmitter or does he have to note that he took that single word from someone

[148] *Muqaddima*, 386–89. In the Asadīya Library in Damascus, I heard a curator refer to a specimen of illegible handwriting as *khaṭṭ samāᶜī*. The indecipherability of the old *ṭabaqa*s may have been the result of deliberate attempts to write in an idiosyncratic and therefore identifiable hand. For some interesting observations on the writing of *ṭabaqa*s, see ᶜAbd al-Jabbār Zakkār's introduction to Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *al-Wafayāt*, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1985–86), 1: 15–16.

[149] *Mīzān*, 1: 4. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1: 8–9; Subkī, *Kitāb Muᶜīd al-niᶜam wa-mubīd al-niqām*, ed. David W. Myhrman (London, 1908), 160; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Naqd al-ṭālib*, 158; Ibn al-Wazīr, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim*, 19–20; Laknawī, *Rafᶜ*, 12.

[150] *Kifāya*, 4.

[151] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 307.

[152] *Dhayl*, 70–71; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 510; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 4: 329.

[153] *Kifāya*, 245–46.

[154] Ibn al-Najjār, *Mustafād*, 329–30; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 510–11.

[155] *Iqtirāḥ*, 253; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 19.

[156] *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Muʾammil*, 3: 23.

[157] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 10; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 5: 47.

[158] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 590.

[159] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2: 213.

[160] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 10; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 5: 47.

[161] *Muqaddima*, 328.

else?[162] When the class grows so large that the transmitter is forced to employ a repetitor (*mustamlī*) to convey his words to the auditors furthest away, may those auditors still attribute the text to the transmitter, or do they have to acknowledge the mediation of the repetitor?[163] Suppose the auditor later comes across the text belonging to the teacher of the person who transmitted to him. May he transmit the text as it appears there—the version his teacher was charged with reproducing exactly—or is he still required to transmit the text as he heard it from his teacher?[164]

It is difficult to reconcile this painstaking treatment of the oral transmission of texts with what we learn, often from these very same documents, of the transmission as it actually took place. In practice, it appears that even Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's rather minimal directive that the transmitter "relate from a text agreeing with the text of his teacher"[165] was compromised. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ complained:

> A book of someone who is known to have audition with [one of the prospective transmitter's] teachers is borrowed or bought in the market, and it is enough that he finds upon it a vestige of a claim that it has been collated and collected.[166]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for his part criticized some of his contemporaries: "One group of lax transmitters are those who hear certain compositions and are remiss to the extent that, when they become old and they come to be needed, ignorance and greed lead them to relate texts from purchased or borrowed copies that are unsound and have not been collated."[167] Sakhāwī stated that in his day people tolerated "the recitation of an inept reader from an uncollated text" in order to perpetuate the custom of using the isnād.[168]

It is not surprising in such an environment that practices arose that tended, in a disturbing fashion, to rob the recitation of the text of its semantic character. Because no one expected the transmitter to have much familiarity with his text, he had no duty other than showing up for the class. He was not required to recite the text personally or check it for mistakes.[169] Thus Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ says, "His presence is like his absence, since he does not know his ḥadīth and is not exact in transmitting them and taking them up. He does not hold [i.e., read along in] his original text so he can recognize the errors and mistakes in [the recitation]."[170] The individual granting the audition is described as sleeping, conversing with his friends, and pondering his personal affairs during the recitation "so he is not conscious of what he hears."[171] It is telling that the question of whether an audition was valid when either the auditor or the transmitter was occupied with copying a different text received a serious airing.[172] The validity of two or more different texts being simultaneously read to a single transmitter was even mooted.[173] This discussion was prompted by the practice of the Damascene expert in the readings of the Qurʾān, ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 558/1163 or 559–643/1245), who allowed his students to recite different *sūra*s to him at the same time.

Furthermore, the recitations were raced through as quickly as possible. The Ayyūbid prince al-Ashraf took Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Ibn al-Zabīdī in eight days.[174] Although certainly respectable for an amateur, this was well off the mark set by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī two centuries earlier. In Mecca in 405/1015 he recited the whole book, containing 7,275 ḥadīth, in five days in the presence of its transmitter Karīma bint Aḥmad al-Marwazīya (d. 463/1071), who was separated from Bukhārī by only two intermediaries.[175] Eighteen years later al-Khaṭīb topped his own mark. In three extended sittings he recited the same collection in front of the transmitter Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad al-Ḥīrī (361/972–ca. 430/1039), who also was only two intermediaries away from Bukhārī. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥīrī had stopped briefly in Baghdad and al-Khaṭīb finished his frantic recitation just before his caravan returned to Nishapur.[176] Ibn al-Anmāṭī (d. 618/1221

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[162] Ibid., 328–29. [163] Ibid., 329–30. [164] Ibid., 377.

[165] Ibid., 307. A number of commentators noted that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ seems here to be contradicting his injunction that the text be collated against "numerous sound copies transmitted through several different channels" (ibid., 173) and endorsing the view that Nawawī put forth a generation later that a single "verified and reliable copy" would suffice (*Taqrīb*, 6).

[166] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Mashāriq*, 1: 3. See also, idem, *Ilmāʿ*, 142.

[167] *Muqaddima*, 390.

[168] *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 1: 334.

[169] *Muqaddima*, 324.

[170] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Mashāriq*, 1: 3. [171] Ibid.

[172] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 327–28.

[173] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 44–45. See also Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 124; idem, *Maʿrifat al-qurrāʾ al-kibār ʿala 'l-ṭabaqāt wa-'l-aʿṣār*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1969), 2: 504–5.

[174] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 123.

[175] Ibn al-Najjār, *Mustafād*, 152; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8: 265; Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 104; Maqqarī, *Fatḥ*, 366; Fück, "Überlieferungsgeschichte," 69.

[176] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, 6: 314; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 46; idem, *Jawāhir*, 1: 105; Maqqarī, *Fatḥ*, 366–67.

or 619) boasted that it took him only slightly over twenty sessions to receive from the famous Ḥanbal Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, the printed text of which runs roughly 2800 pages.[177] One of the all-time speed-kings was the lexicographer Fīrūzabādī (729/1329–817/1415), who recited Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in three days in front of the holy sandal in the Ashrafīya.[178] Ibn Ḥajar boasted of receiving Bukhārī's collection in forty hours in the Khānqāh al-Ṭaybarsīya in Cairo, which works out to a rate of around three ḥadīth a minute. His crowning achievement was taking *al-Muᶜjam al-ṣaghīr* of Ṭabarānī (260/873–360/971), containing approximately fifteen hundred ḥadīth with isnāds, in a single evening in Damascus.[179]

The high speed not only meant that the text was difficult to absorb but also that it was sometimes unintelligible. Ibn Daqīq al-ᶜĪd said, "People have become lax these days. The reciters read so fast that many of the letters, and even whole words, cannot be comprehended."[180] The reciters conserved their energy by keeping their voice down, as they had to since the readings regularly lasted, as we have seen, for hours on end. Qāḍī ᶜIyāḍ speaks of the "low murmur" (*haynama*) of the recitation.[181] And what are we to think when we read, about a ḥadīth scholar, "He used to recite correctly; however, he slurred [the recitation] so much that it could not be understood,"[182] or when another is singled out for praise, "He recited ḥadīth beautifully, correctly, and intelligibly"?[183] It seems that we cannot always take for granted that the ḥadīth could even be understood.

VI. THE MYSTERIOUS SPELL OF ELEVATION

Most commentators viewed the perceived decline of standards with resignation and tempered their criticism in recognition of their own youthful complicity. To disallow the transmissions of this type would often invalidate their own claims to prestige. When one of those in attendance at a session of audition reprimanded some children for playing, the judge Taqī al-Dīn Sulaymān b. Ḥamza al-Maqdisī (d. 715/1315) could only say, "Do not scold them. Our audition was like theirs."[184] Nevertheless, some individuals acted on their scruples. The Shāfiᶜite jurist Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. al-Mundhir flatly refused to transmit the texts he had heard as a child. He used to say, "Our *shaykh*s heard ḥadīth as children without understanding. The same is true of their *shaykh*s. I do not consider it right to relate from someone whose practice was like that."[185] A century after the death of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the elderly Dhahabī worked himself into a paroxysm of rage over what he called "the intoxication of audition":

> How can one benefit from the audition of ignorant old men who sleep while the children play and the young men talk and joke? Many of them nod off and others argue while the reciter misreads. For him, exactitude consists of saying, "or however he put it," over and over, while the babies mewl at one another.[186]

Thoroughly discouraged by the behavior of his contemporaries, he repeated the words of Sufyān al-Thawrī (ca. 95/713–161/778): "If ḥadīth were good, they would have disappeared just as all good has disappeared."[187]

Judged as education, the pursuit of elevation was clearly indefensible. The fundamental problem for early observers—as well as their modern counterparts—was that the transfer of elevation superficially mimicked education. It took place in the same setting, used the same texts, and was registered in the same fashion. However, clear-headed thinkers like al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī recognized the difference between the two processes and warned against confounding them: "The student should learn the superiority of the follower to the followed" in cases where "the advanced expert and scholar relates from a transmitter who does not know anything but transmitting [the text] from his book." He speaks of the transmission of his teacher, the accomplished author Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Ṣibghī (258/872–342/953), from a relatively minor transmitter: "Many times beginners mistakenly believe that [the minor transmitter] was [Abū Bakr b. Isḥāq's] professor (*ustadh*)."[188] In acknowledgement of this difference, students occasionally noted not just from whom they had taken a ḥadīth

[177] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22: 359.

[178] Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 103–5; Maqqarrī, *Fatḥ*, 365.

[179] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 46; idem, *Jawāhir*, 1: 104; Maqqarrī, *Fatḥ*, 366.

[180] *Iqtirāḥ*, 248. See also Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 329, n. 2.

[181] *Mashāriq*, 1: 3.

[182] Ibn al-Najjār, *Mustafād*, 411. [183] Ibid., 259.

[184] Ibn Kathīr, *Bāᶜith*, 132; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 46, see also 2: 5.

[185] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 5.

[186] *Bayān zaghal*, 6–12; Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 1: 21; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Naqd al-ṭālib*, 95–97. See also Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 7: 167, 13: 323; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 1: 46–47.

[187] For Sufyān's remarkable statement and similar ones, see Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiᶜ bayān al-ᶜilm wa-faḍlihī*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb (Cairo, 1975), 404ff.

[188] *ᶜUlūm*, 49. See also Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. *Muqaddima*, 520–22.

text with elevation but also under whom they had actually *mastered* it, for instance, "I heard it [from him] in the fashion of a student of law (*tafaqquhan*)."[189]

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the last reason one attended the transmission of a ḥadīth text was to master its contents. Indeed, if we were to ascribe a positive motive to the form textual transmission took in practice in the Ayyūbid period—and not merely bemoan it—it would be to denature the texts. Everything in the quick and dirty recitations conspired to render the contents of the book irrelevant.[190] Thus, we find the great partisan of the Ḥanafites al-Muᶜaẓẓam devoting days to hearing the *Musnad* of the eponym of the Ḥanbalite law school, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, recited to the elevated transmitter Ḥanbal. In fact, al-Muᶜaẓẓam was so taken by Ḥanbal that he personally undertook to cure the transmitter's chronic indigestion.[191] Even non-Muslims attended the sessions of elevated transmitters. Although the question of transmitters receiving material before their conversion to Islam is usually discussed with regard to the Companions who witnessed the Prophet's actions and heard his pronouncements while they were pagans and reported on them after their conversion to Islam, the topic also held relevance in later times. Sakhāwī says that non-Muslims attended the recitation of texts and their names were recorded on the *ṭabaqa* along with those of the Muslim auditors in the hope that they would one day convert and then be eligible to transmit the text. This was the case with the Jewish-born physician Yūsuf (later Muḥammad) b. ᶜAbd al-Sayyid, known as Ibn al-Dayyān al-Yahūdī (d. 757/1356), whose father took him to hear texts from Abū ᶜAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Muᵓmin al-Ṣūrī (601/1205–690/1291). In 701/1302 Ibn al-Dayyān converted to Islam and he was allowed to transmit the texts he had heard as a youth.[192] For us the question is not whether Ibn al-Dayyān's transmission of Islamic texts should have been regarded as valid but rather what led his father, who presumably had no premonition that his son would some day become a Muslim, to take him to the ḥadīth classes? If texts were not being transmitted in the audition, what was?

The significance of elevation lay in the spiritual rather than intellectual realm.[193] The great Shāfiᶜite jurist Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (393/1003–476/1083) told of a dream in which he received a ḥadīth directly from the Prophet and here we receive some inkling of the true nature of elevation.

> I was sleeping in Baghdad and I saw the Prophet, and Abū Bakr and ᶜUmar were with him. I said, "Messenger of God, many ḥadīth have reached me from you by the transmitters of reports. I want to hear a ḥadīth from you for which I will be honored in this world and which I will make a treasure for the next." He said, "*Shaykh*,"—and he called me "*shaykh*" and addressed me that way (and [Shīrāzī] used to take pleasure in that)—"Say from me, 'Whoever wants well-being, let him seek it in the well-being of others.'"[194]

Here Shīrāzī attained the pinnacle of elevation: a ḥadīth straight from the mouth of the Prophet. He says that for this ḥadīth he "will be honored in this world" and he will make it "a treasure for the next." The significance of elevation as an honor in this world is clear. To be sought out by hoards of students and fawned on by princes, as was the case with Ibn al-Zabīdī and his colleagues, certainly constituted an earthly honor. As for being a treasure in the next world, that is more elusive. The early ascetic Muḥammad b. Aslam al-Ṭūsī (ca. 180/796–242/856) asserted, "Proximity in the isnād is proximity—or a means to gain proximity—to God."[195] Ibn al-Ṣalāh, after quoting the words of Ṭūsī, continued, "He is right because proximity in the isnād is proximity to the Messenger of God and proximity to him is proximity to God."[196]

This was true as far as it goes, but the mechanism of elevation worked in a specific way suggested by Ibn

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[189] E.g., *Barnāmaj al-Ruᶜaynī*, 83.

[190] This is not to say that the texts were always *totally* denatured. In 608/1211 the caliph al-Nāṣir ordered the recitation of the *Musnad* of the Sunnite stalwart Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal at the *mashhad* of the imām Mūsā b. Jaᶜfar, with the obvious intention of offending the Shiite visitors to the shrine; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 78.

[191] Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 62; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21: 432.

[192] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 2: 4–5; 84–85; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 38. See also the remarks of the former Christian, Ibrāhīm b. Dāwūd al-Āmidī (d. 797/1395); Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aᶜyān al-miᵓa al-thāmina*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq, 5 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 1: 27.

[193] Cf. Joan E. Gilbert, "Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship and Professionalization of the *ᶜUlamāᵓ* in Medieval Damascus," *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980): 108.

[194] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18: 454; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4: 225–26.

[195] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmi*, 37; ᶜIrāqī, *Tabṣira*, 2: 251; Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 6; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 160; Zakarīyāᵓ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 2: 251. See also Badr al-Din b. Jamāᶜa, *al-Aḥādith al-tusāᶜīyāt al-isnād*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Jawād Khalaf (Cairo, 1416/1995), 2, where these words are anomalously ascribed to Yaḥyā b. Maᶜīn.

[196] *Muqaddima*, 440–41.

Daqīq al-ᶜĪd's term for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's third class of elevation, "elevation through replacement." Sakhāwī explains the meaning of the phrase: "They call it 'replacement' on account of the transmitter occupying the place of someone else."[197] This replacement could occur because elevation operated on the basis of a view of time different from ours. Two of the most popular forms of historical periodization employed by the Arabic historians were arrangment by year (*taᵓrīkh*) and arrangement by generation.[198] (It is interesting to note that the word used for "generation," *ṭabaqa*, is the same as the one most commonly applied to the document commemorating the audition of a text.) The annalistic arrangement was favored in political history, while arrangement by generation was common in biographical dictionaries. Although there were occasional attempts to define a "generation" as a specific number of years, for the most part it was acknowledged that, as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ indicates in his discussion of the concept, the sense of the term was approximate and relative.

> In common parlance, "generation" signifies a group of people with something in common. Given this, there may often be two people who belong to a single generation because they are alike in one respect and who belong to different generations in relation to something else which they do not have in common. . . . The researcher working in this discipline [i.e., ḥadīth] needs to know birthdates and deathdates as well as who their teachers were and who their students were, and the like.[199]

In practice, the question of "who their teachers were and who their students were" was paramount. Scholars after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ tended to stress circumstances (*aḥwāl*)—especially the teacher-student relationships represented in isnāds—over dates in defining a *ṭabaqa*. ᶜIrāqī said, "Often they are satisfied with the person having something in common in regard to the isnād."[200] Thus all of the individuals separated from the Prophet by a certain number of intermediaries could be seen as forming a single generation, regardless of when they were born or when they died.

Although one could not go back in time in terms of years, elevation allowed a person to go back in terms of generations: "Those who acquire an elevated isnād as children hope in their old age to belong to a generation better than the one they are in or the one after it and following it."[201] It is clear that the participants in the quest for elevation imagined this happening with a vividness we can scarcely hope to recapture. The term "hand-shaking"—applied, as stated above, to an instance when the individual's isnād for a particular ḥadīth was one link longer than that of one of the great collectors like Bukhārī or Muslim—shows that these relationships were viewed in human and concrete terms: "It is as if you met Muslim in that ḥadīth and shook his hand through it because of your having met your teacher who is 'equal' to Muslim."[202] Ibn Ḥajar explains the terminology, "It is called 'hand-shaking' because, when two people meet, the custom for the most part is to shake hands."[203]

The purpose of seeking elevation was spiritual self-improvement. Ibn Shāhīn (297/909–385/995) wrote in a volume of his elevated ḥadīth, "Through these [elevated] ḥadīth we hope to be among those about whom the Prophet said, 'The best people are my generation (*qarnī*[204]), then those who will follow them and then those who will follow them.'"[205] Thus Sakhāwī says, "Elevation brings [its possessor] closer to the excellent generations." Elevation made time elastic and gave those unlucky enough to have been born late the opportunity to enjoy the spiritual superiority of earlier generations.

VII. CONCLUSION

Like the Prophetic sandals and other relics, ḥadīth possessed the special capability of shortening the distance between the believer and the Prophet Muḥammad. This pious association led al-Ashraf to store the Prophet's sandal in his newly-established school of ḥadīth, the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya. Unlike relics, however, in the case of ḥadīth the spiritual relationship between the believer and the Prophet was manifestly and unequivocally mediated. The isnād, which had once served to guarantee the authenticity of the ḥadīth as it

[197] *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 18.

[198] Rosenthal, *History*, 71–86 and 93–95.

[199] *Muqaddima*, 667.

[200] *Tabṣira*, 3: 274–76. See also Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 351–54; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2: 380–82; Zakarīyāᵓ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 3: 274–76.

[201] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 6.

[202] *Muqaddima*, 445. See also Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 16.

[203] *Nuẓhat al-naẓar*, 109. See also Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 16; Zakarīyāᵓ al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Bāqī*, 2: 260.

[204] *Qarn* was an earlier term for *ṭabaqa*; Rosenthal, *History*, 93, 167.

[205] Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, 3: 6.

was passed down from generation to generation, both documented and quantified the believer's remoteness from the object of his desire. In medieval Islam, proximity to the Prophet had special significance because it was seen as indicative of spiritual superiority. Therefore, many people focused their attention on those versions of ḥadīth bearing the quality of elevation, relative closeness as measured by the number of intervening transmitters.

Difficulties in understanding elevation in the Ayyūbid era arise because its values differed from those formerly governing the transmission of ḥadīth. In the earliest centuries, to ensure the authenticity of the ḥadīth, it was seen as important to acquire them in a strictly regulated manner from individuals possessing the technical expertise and sense of moral obligation necessary to preserve them accurately. The appearance of the great ḥadīth collections in the third/ninth century and the later acceptance of them as the fundamental repositories of the words and deeds of the Prophet lessened the importance of the individual as the guarantor of the authenticity of the text he transmitted. This allowed people to concentrate on collecting the ḥadīth with the shortest isnāds.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's special contribution was to rationalize the pursuit of elevation, which had been institutionalized by the building of the schools of ḥadīth. This is not to deny that teachers like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ also used these venues to train individuals to appreciate ḥadīth intellectually. However, these serious scholars were far outnumbered by those who listened to the recitation of ḥadīth purely for the sake of elevation. By claiming that elevation helped to ensure the authenticity of the ḥadīth, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ justified the cultivation of both the spiritual and intellectual approaches to ḥadīth in the same space.