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THE CANONIZATION OF AL-BUKHĀRĪ AND MUSLIM:
THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE SUNNI ḤADĪTH CANON

VOLUME ONE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
I.1. Introduction.....	1
I.2. Thesis.....	4
I.3. Scholarship on the <i>Sahīhayn</i> and the Ḥadīth Canon.....	8
I.4. Addressing the <i>Sahīhayn</i> as a Canon.....	17
I.5. Note on the Sources and Approaches of This Study.....	18
II. THE STUDY OF CANONS AND CANONIZATION.....	22
II.1. Introduction.....	22
II.2. Canons in Context and the Emergence of Canon Studies.....	24
II.3. Canon Studies and the Islamic Tradition.....	37
II.4. Theoretical Tools and Common Historical Processes: Canon Studies and the Ḥadīth Canon.....	47
II.4.a. Canons and Community.....	48
II.4.b. <i>Kanōn</i> and the Measure of Revealed Truth.....	51
II.4.c. The Principle of Charity and Canonical Culture.....	53
II.5. Conclusion.....	58
III. THE GENESIS OF AL-BUKHĀRĪ AND MUSLIM.....	60
III.1. Introduction.....	60
III.2. The Development of Ḥadīth Literature.....	61
III.3. The <i>Sahīh</i> Movement and the Bifurcation of the Ḥadīth Tradition.....	68
III.4. The Continuity of the Living <i>Isnād</i>	74
III.5. Reality: The Life and Works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.....	80
III.6. Reality: Al-Bukhārī, <i>Sāhib al-Sahīh</i>	81
III.6.a. The <i>Sahīh</i>	86
III.6.b. Legal Identity and Method.....	88
III.6.c. Al-Bukhārī and the Controversy over the Created Wording of the Qur’ān.....	92
III.7. Reality: Muslim, the Junior Partner.....	101
III.7.a. Muslim’s Methodology in his <i>Sahīh</i>	102
III.8. Perception: Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the Greatest Generation.....	108
III.9. Reception: The Immediate Response to al-Bukhārī’s and Muslim’s Works.....	113
III.10. Conclusion.....	123

IV.	A “PERIOD OF INTENSE CANONICAL PROCESS”: IMAGINATION AND THE STUDY OF THE <i>SAHĪHAYN</i> IN THE LONG FOURTH/TENTH CENTURY	
IV.1.	Introduction.....	125
IV.2.	The <i>Mustakhraj</i> Genre.....	131
IV.3.	<i>Mustakhraj</i> : The <i>Sahīhayn</i> as Formative Texts.....	134
IV.4. a.	Al-Ismā‘īlī: Rationalist <i>Muḥaddith</i>	138
IV.4. b.	Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī and Shiite-Sunni Polemic.....	141
IV.4. c.	Abū ‘Awāna and an Independent Legal Path.....	142
IV.4.	<i>Itlal</i> and <i>Ilzāmāt</i> : Interaction with the Standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.....	145
IV.5.	Required Study: Clarifying an Unclear Subject.....	152
IV.6.	Regional and Temporal Distribution of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Network.....	158
IV.6. a.	Naysābūr: The Hometown Cult of Muslim.....	158
IV.6. b.	Jurjān: A Cult of al-Bukhārī Among Friends.....	163
IV.6. c.	Bağdad: Inheriting the Study of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Among the Bagħdad Knot.....	166
IV.6. d.	Other: Isfahan and Central Asia.....	171
IV.6. e.	An End to Regional Cults After 370AH.....	172
IV.7.	The <i>Sahīhayn</i> Network: A Shāfi‘ī Enterprise.....	173
IV.8.	Intense Canonical Process: Imagining a New Epistemological Status for Ḥadīth Books.....	184
IV.9.	Why the <i>Sahīhayn</i> ?.....	192
IV.10.	Conclusion: The Eve of Canonization.....	194
V.	CANON AND COMMUNITY: AL-ḤĀKIM AL-NAYSĀBŪRĪ AND THE CANONIZATION OF THE <i>SAHĪHAYN</i>	
V.1.	Introduction.....	198
V.2.	The Life and Works of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.....	199
V.3.	Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in al-Ḥākim’s Vision of Ḥadīth.....	206
V.4.	The <i>Shuriṭ</i> According to al-Ḥākim: The Requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.....	208
V.4. a.	Two <i>Rāwīs</i> and the Elimination of <i>Jahāla</i>	209
V.4. b.	Doubling Transmission: 1 → 2 → 4.....	213
V.4. c.	A Standard for Authenticity and a Standard for the <i>Sahīhayn</i>	217
V.5.	Admitted Exceptions: <i>al-Mustadrak</i> and the Standards of the <i>Shaykhayn</i> as Ideal Rather Than Reality.....	219
V.6.	Al-Ḥākim’s Politics: The Expansion of the Authentic Umbrella....	221
V.7.	Al-Ḥākim’s <i>Mubtadi‘a</i> and the Ten Thousand.....	225
V.8.	Al-Ḥākim’s Target Audience: The Mu’tazilites and Their Criteria for Authentic Ḥadīths.....	230
V.9.	The <i>Mustadrak</i> as a Common Measure of Authenticity.....	234
V.10.	The Discourse of Legal Theory: The Consensus of the Umma on Ḥadīth.....	236

V.10. a. The Ḥanafīs.....	238
V.10. b. The Later Mu'tazilites.....	242
V.10. c. The Shāfi'i/Ash'arī Orthodoxy.....	243
V.10. d. The Ḥanbalī Orthodoxy: Abū Ya'lā Ibn al-Farrā'.....	248
V.10. e. The Mālikīs.....	250
V.10. f. Al-Ḥākim and the Consensus of the Umma.....	251
V.11. A New Common Ground between the Ḥanbalī/Über-Sunnis and the Shāfi'i/Ash'arī Schools.....	251
V.12. An Articulate Über-Sunni: Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī.....	253
V.13. Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī: A Consummate Shāfi'i and Ash'arī.....	259
V.14. The <i>Sahīhayn</i> Canon: The Authority of Convention and Common Ground.....	261
V.15. Conclusion: Why the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Now?.....	265
 VOLUME TWO	
VI. THE CANON AND THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY: THE <i>SAHĪHAYN</i> AS MEASURE OF AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITATIVE REFERENCE AND EXEMPLUM	
VI.1. Introduction.....	269
VI.2. 1. The Need for a Common Measure of Authenticity: The <i>Sahīhayn</i> in Scholarly Debate.....	271
VI.2. <i>Takhrīj</i> : Applying the Measure of Authenticity.....	272
VI.3. The Origins of <i>Takhrīj</i> Among the Students of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.....	280
VI.4. The Historical Application of <i>Takhrīj</i>	285
VI.4. a. Polemics and Debate.....	286
VI.4. b. Bolstering Formative Texts.....	295
VI.4. c. Misuse of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Canon.....	309
VI.5. 2. The Need for an Authoritative Reference: The <i>Sahīhayn</i> and Non-Ḥadīth Specialists.....	310
VI.6. 3. The Need for an Exemplum: Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i> and the Canon that Sets the Rule.....	319
VI.7. The Limits of the Canon's Authority: The Dialogic Power of the <i>Sahīhayn</i>	325
VI.8. Conclusion.....	336
VII. THE PRINCIPLE OF CHARITY AND THE CREATION OF CANONICAL CULTURE	
VII.1. Introduction.....	339
VII.2. The Beginnings of Canonical Culture: Between 390-460/1000-1070.....	341
VII.3. The Character of the Canonical Culture: Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī	

	and Defining the Personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.....	346
VII.4.	Charity and the Maintenance of Canonical Culture.....	356
VII.4. a.	Reinventing the Etiology: Charity and Legitimizing al-Bukhārī's <i>Sahīh</i>	357
VII.4. b.	Charity and Maintaining the Superiority of al-Bukhārī over Muslim.....	361
VII.4. c.	Charity and Muslim's Meeting with Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī... .	363
VII.5.	Reconciling the Canon with Convention: the <i>Sahīhayn</i> and the Rules of Ḥadīth.....	366
VII.5. a.	Charity and <i>Tadlīs</i>	367
VII.5. b.	Charity and Transmitters.....	372
VII.6.	Rebutting Earlier Criticisms.....	378
VII.7.	Conclusion.....	386
VIII.	THE CANON AND CRITICISM: ICONOCLASM AND REJECTION OF CANONICAL CULTURE FROM IBN AL-ṢALĀH TO THE MODERN SALAFI MOVEMENT	
VIII.1.	Introduction.....	389
VIII.2.	Rejection of the Canonical Culture: Criticism after Ibn al-Ṣalāh... .	391
VIII.3.	Iconoclasm and Institutional Security in Islamic Civilization: The Salafī Tradition.....	394
VIII.3. a.	Revival and Reform in the Early Modern and Modern Periods.....	395
VIII.3. b.	Traditionalist Salafis in the Middle East.....	401
VIII.4.	Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Ṣan'ānī: A Yemeni Salafī.....	407
VIII.5.	Shāh Waliyyallāh and the First Condemnation of Criticizing the Canon.....	413
VIII.6.	Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī: Iconoclast Extraordinaire.....	417
VIII.7.	Against the Canon: Al-Albānī's Criticism of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> and His Detractors.....	423
VIII.8.	Conclusion: Al-Albānī's Reply and the Continuity of Iconoclastic Ḥadīth Criticism.....	431
IX.	CANON AND SYNECDOCHE: THE <i>SAHĪHAYN</i> IN NARRATIVE AND RITUAL	
IX.1.	Introduction.....	436
IX.2.	Delimiting the Infinite: Managing the Sunna through the Ḥadīth Canon.....	437
IX.3.	Synecdoche in Ritual: Usage of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Canon in Ritual Contexts.....	439
IX.3. a.	Supplicatory and Medicinal Rituals.....	443
IX.3. b.	Calendrical Rituals.....	446
IX.3. c.	Political Rituals	448
IX.4.	The Ritual Power of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> : the Muḥammadan Blessing.....	451

IX.5.	The Canon and Synecdoche in Narrative: A Salvational Trope in a Narrative of Decline and Salvation.....	455
IX.5. a.	Kh ^w āje ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī and the Beginning of Synecdoche in Narrative.....	459
IX.5. b.	Al-Ghazzalī’s Return to the Straight Path: the <i>Sahīhayn</i> as Synecdoche.....	461
IX.5. c.	Al-Dhahabī’s Narrative of Islamic History: the <i>Sahīhayn</i> as Synecdoche.....	464
IX.6.	Conclusion.....	467
 X. CONCLUSION		
X.1.	Problems in Approaches.....	469
X.2.	Why the <i>Sahīhayn</i> and Not Other Books?.....	471
X.3.	What Forces Led to the Canonization of the <i>Sahīhayn</i> ?.....	474
X.4.	Why Did the Canon Form at the Beginning of the Fifth/ Eleventh Century?.....	481
X.5.	Did the Canon Emerge from Ferment and Strife?.....	485
X.6.	Was the Canon a Response to Shiism or the Product of the Seljuq State?.....	486
X.7.	Was the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Canon the Product of or Limited to a Specific Region?.....	490
X.8.	Conclusion.....	495
 APPENDICES		
	Appendix I: References for the <i>Sahīhayn</i> Network.....	497
	Appendix II: Divorce Oaths.....	501
	Appendix III: The Question of the Attribution of the <i>Sahīhayn</i>	503
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		507

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I.

Introduction

Introduction

In 465/1072-3, the grand vizier of the Seljuq Empire, a statesman so spectacularly powerful that he was hailed as Nizām al-Mulk (The Order of the Realm), heard of a scholar who possessed a particularly authoritative copy of the most famous collection of traditions (*ḥadīth*) related from the Prophet Muhammad: the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). Nizām al-Mulk ordered this scholar brought to his newly founded religious college in the Iranian city of Naysābūr, where the vizier gathered the children of the city's judges, scholars and other notables to hear a reading of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*.¹ Why did Nizām al-Mulk order such a promulgation of the *Sahīh*, and why did he convene the next generation of the Sunni Muslim elite in attendance?

Nizām al-Mulk stood at the intersection of the great forces of Islamic religious history at a time when Sunni Islam was coalescing in its institutional form. While serving the Seljuq sultans, who were generously endowing educational institutions for the Ḥanafī legal school, he established his Nizāmiyya college network in the principal cities of the empire for the use of the rival Shāfi‘ī school. Yet he also held ḥadīth study circles that glorified the ‘partisans of hadīth (*ashāb al-hadīth*)’ closely associated with the

¹ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5), selections made by Abū Iṣhāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣarīfīnī (d. 641/1243-4), *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, ed. Muḥammad Kāzem al-Ḥamūdī (Qom: Jamā‘at al-Modarresīn, 1403/1983), 65.

contending Ḥanbalīs.² These policies unfolded in the threatening shadow of the Sunni Seljuqs' principal rival, the Ismā‘īlī Shiites, whose assassins would eventually bring Niẓām al-Mulk's career to an end.

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

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

² Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *al-Muntazam fī tārīkh al-umam wa al-mulūk*, ed. Muhammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā and Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā, 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1412/1992); 16:190-1, 304; 17:32; see also ‘Abd al-Hādī Ridā, “Amālī Niẓām al-Mulk al-wazīr al-saljūqī fī al-ḥadīth,” *Majallat Ma ḥad al-Makhtūtāt al-Arabiyya* 5, no. 2 (1959): 355. Ibn al-Jawzī had evidently seen the founding charter of the Baghdad Niẓāmiyya. From the material of his transmission sessions, it is clear that Niẓām al-Mulk made a special effort to hear ḥadīths that were shibboleths of Sunnism as opposed to Mu‘tazilism, such as reports affirming that the believers will see God on the Day of Judgment; Ridā, “Amālī,” 356, 366. See also Richard W. Bulliet, “The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century,” in *Islamic Civilization 950-1150*, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973), 85 ff.

³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 16:190-1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thesis

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

ḥadīths they considered authentic (*sahīh*). This act broke stridently with the practices of the transmission-based school and thus met with significant disapproval in the immediate wake of the authors' careers.

In the early fourth/tenth century, however, the initial controversy surrounding the *Sahīhayn* and their authors dissipated as a relatively small and focused network of scholars from the moderate Shāfi‘ī tradition began appreciating the books' utility. These scholars found the *Sahīhayn* ideal vehicles for articulating their relationship to the Prophet's normative legacy as well as standards against which to measure the strength of their own ḥadīth collections. Employing the *Sahīhayn* for these purposes required intimate familiarity with the two books and thus spurred an intensive study of the works and their authors' methodologies. Simultaneously, during this period between the end of the third/ninth and the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the broader Muslim community began imagining a new level of authority for Prophetic traditions. Scholars representing a wide range of opinion started to conceive of certain ḥadīths and ḥadīth collections as providing loci of consensus amid the burgeoning diversity of Islamic thought.

One scholar in particular inherited the body of scholarship on the *Sahīhayn* and harnessed the two works as a new measure of authenticity for evaluating reports attributed to the Prophet. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) recognized that the *Sahīhayn* possessed tremendous polemical value as common measures of ḥadīth authenticity that met the requirements of both the transmission-based scholars whom he championed and the Mu‘tazilites whom he bitterly opposed. He thus conceived of the criteria that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had used in compiling their works as a standard he claimed authorized a vast new body of ḥadīths binding on both parties. A cadre of his

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beyond the *Sahīhayn*'s role as a measure of authenticity, an authoritative reference and exemplum among Sunni scholars, the canon has played an important role in a variety of ritual domains and broader historical narratives about Islamic civilization. Here the *Sahīhayn* assume a synecdochic role for the Prophet himself, essentializing his intangible role as a liminal figure and medium of blessing. The two works have also come to serve as a literary trope, concretely symbolizing the primordial purity of the Prophet's true teachings in the Sunni tradition's narrative vision of itself.

Scholarship on the *Sahīhayn* and the Ḥadīth Canon

Western scholars have regularly spoken of ‘canonical’ ḥadīth collections in Islamic civilization.⁶ This recognition follows the Muslim sources themselves, which refer to this canon in a myriad of ways, such as ‘the relied-upon books (*al-kutub al-muṭamad ʿalayhā*)’, ‘the Four Books,’ ‘the Five Books,’ ‘the Six Books,’ and finally ‘the Authentic Collections (*Sihāh*).’ We can discern three strata of the Sunni ḥadīth canon.

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

The perennial core has been the *Sahīhayn*. Beyond these two foundational classics, some fourth/tenth-century scholars refer to a four-book selection that adds the two *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888) and al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915). The Five Book canon, which is first noted in the sixth/twelfth century, incorporates the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892). Finally the Six Book canon, which hails from the same period, adds either the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886), the *Sunan* of al-Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995) or the *Muwatta'* of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). Later compendia often included other ḥadīth collections as well.⁷ None of these books, however, has enjoyed the esteem of al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections.

A study tackling the entirety of the Sunni ḥadīth canon would require many more volumes than the present project allows. Because the *Sahīhayn* form the unchanging core of the Sunni ḥadīth canon, and because the roles that the two books have played and the

⁷ Saīd b. al-Sakan of Egypt (d. 353/964) and Ibn Manda of Isfahan (d. 395/1004-5) mention the four foundational books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī (see Chapter 4 nn. 174 and 175). Although he did not denote them as a unit, the fifth/eleventh-century Shāfi'i scholar Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) stated that the six collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) had identified a substantial amount of the authentic ḥadīths in circulation. Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113), who spent most of his life in Iran and greater Syria, described the Six Books as the *Sahīhayn*, the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī, and the *Sunans* of al-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfi'i of Qazvīn (d. 623/1226) also enumerates this six-book series. The Andalusian Mālikī ḥadīth scholar, al-Saraqusṭī (d. 524/1129), on the other hand, counts the Six Books as those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and Mālik. Al-Rāfi'i's father, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'i (d. 580/1184), wrote a book called *Hāwī al-uṣūl min akhbār al-rasūl*, which included all the hadīths from the collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah, as well as the *Musnad* of al-Shāfi'i. Al-Silafi of Alexandria (d. 576/1180), Abū Bakr al-Hāzimī (d. 584/1188-9) and al-Nawawī of Damascus (d. 676/1277) mention only Five Books: the works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī. See Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī, *Ma ῤifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, ed. Sayyid Kusrawī Ḥasan, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1412/1991), 1:106; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'i, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, ed. 'Azīz Allāh al-'Uṭāridī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1408/1987), 1:377; 2:49; Abū Tāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafi, "Muqaddimat al-hāfiẓ al-kabīr Abī Tāhir al-Silafī," in Ḥamad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma īlim al-sunan*, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya, 1401/1981), 4:358; Muhyī al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb li'l-Nawawī* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad 'Alī Subayḥ, 1388/1968), 4; Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad al-Maqdisī and Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Hāzimī, *Shurūt al-a'imma al-sitta wa shurūt al-a'imma al-khamṣa*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Quds, 1387/[1967]).

station they have achieved differ qualitatively from the other components of the canon, this study only addresses the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. A comprehensive study of the Sunni ḥadīth canon as a whole must wait until another day.

Oddly, although the broader ḥadīth canon and the *Sahīhayn* are frequently mentioned in Western scholarship, neither topic has received significant attention. Despite its having been published over a century ago, the work of the prescient Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921 CE) remains the most profound and detailed study of the ḥadīth canon. His interest in the entire span of the ḥadīth tradition and his special attention to the question of the ḥadīth canon have made his study the most useful to date. Even Muslim authors who regularly criticize Goldziher and other elder statesmen of Orientalism quote him in order to explain when certain ḥadīth collections entered the canon.⁸ Following the predominant Sunni division of the ḥadīth canon into the *Sahīhayn* and the four *Sunans* of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, Goldziher devotes separate sections to each of these two groups. He was able to fix approximately where and by what time the four *Sunans* had gained canonical status and the Six Book canon had formed. He asserts that this authoritative selection coalesced gradually and was in place by the seventh/thirteenth century, perceptively adding that the Maghrib and the Islamic heartlands had varying definitions of what constituted the canon.⁹

Aside from Goldziher's appreciable contributions to our understanding of the ḥadīth canon's emergence, his most astute observation was that formidable questions

⁸ See, for example, Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqī, *Hadīth Literature: its Origin, Development & Special Features*, ed. Abdal Hakim Murad (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 73-4.

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

about the canon await answers. He evinces a particular pessimism about dating the canonization of the *Sahīhayn*. “[W]e cannot establish with chronological accuracy the date which brought the *consensus publicus* for the two *Sahīhs* to maturity...,” he states.¹⁰ Goldziher also notes the extreme difficulty of determining why the ḥadīth canon was closed and why it excluded certain collections, such as the *Sahīh* of Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), written almost immediately after the *Sahīhayn*.¹¹ The present study will offer answers to both these questions.

Goldziher also made a rare foray into the function of the ḥadīth canon and the nature of the veneration for al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works. He submits that the ḥadīth canon as a whole served as a legal “reference in order to find out the traditional teachings about a given question.”¹² He touches on other functions of al-Bukhārī’s work in particular, raising the possibility of a ritual dimension to the canon and its role in defining communal identity. He notes how oaths were sworn on al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*, an honor otherwise reserved for the Qur’ān.¹³ Most importantly, Goldziher hints that the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works was a dynamic process of interaction between the texts and the needs of the Muslim scholarly community.¹⁴ In our discussion of the multivalent functions of the *Sahīhayn* canon in Chapters Six and Nine, both the insight and limitations of Goldziher’s comments will become evident.

¹⁰ Goldziher, 240.

¹¹ Goldziher, 239.

¹² Goldziher, 240.

¹³ Goldziher, 234.

¹⁴ Goldziher, 222.

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

Since Goldziher, scholars investigating Islamic intellectual history or evaluating the sources for the formative first three centuries of the Muslim community have found acknowledging the existence of the ḥadīth canon inevitable. Few discussions of Islamic thought or society fail to mention the canon and the unique status of the *Sahīhayn*. Most scholars, however, have been content to either reproduce Goldziher's conclusions or devote only cursory remarks to the issue.¹⁷ The superficial character of these observations stems from the frequency with which they treat the ḥadīth canon as ancillary to some greater discussion, such as early Islamic historiography or a survey of the

¹⁵ Goldziher, 247.

¹⁶ Goldziher, 236-7.

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

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

Scholars have generally perceived the canonical ḥadīth collections as representative of the Sunni worldview, and as such they have discussed them as a final chapter in a development of Islamic orthodoxy in the third/ninth century. Henri Lammens attributed the success of the Six Books to "the fact that they came at the right

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

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

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

time, at the moment when Qurānic religion was about to take definitive shape....”²¹ In the conclusion to *The Eye of the Beholder*, a study on how the Sunni community articulated an image of the Prophet as an act of self-definition, Uri Rubin refers to the large collections that appeared in this century as “canonical ḥadīth compilations” that defined orthodox Muslim stances. They “served as the venue for the authoritative formulation of an Islamic sense of spiritual and legal identity in Umayyad and early Abbasid times....”²² Rubin thus recognizes the intimate connection between these canonical works and the question of communal identity, but his focus on Islamic origins prevents him from further pursuing this discussion.

Similarly, other scholars concerned with Islamic historiography and the development of the ḥadīth tradition have stressed that the *Sahīhayn* and their authors represent the culmination of ḥadīth study. Thus, in his *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Age*, Tarif Khalidi states that in Muslim’s time “Hadith had reached its quantitative limits and spelled out its method.”²³ “Bukhārī and Muslim,” he adds, “gave definitive shape to Hadith.”²⁴ Both Rubin and Khalidi’s works focus on the writing of the *Sahīhayn* as one of the seals of orthodoxy, paying little attention to their role as a medium through which an ongoing process of institutional authorization and communal identification would take place.

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

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

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

²⁴ Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 59.

Scholarship that addresses the continuing development of ḥadīth literature after the appearance of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections has granted more space to discussions of the canon. It has not, however, followed the promising lead of Goldziher's work. In his *Islam: the View from the Edge*, Richard Bulliet refers to the canonical ḥadīth collections as a watershed event in the Muslim community's transition from the oral transmission of the Prophet's sunna to limiting it to specific texts. He prefers to identify the formation of the canon with this transition rather than with the genesis of the *Sahīhayn* themselves. Following Goldziher, he thus says that the "evolution of hadith culminated in the general acceptance, by the thirteenth century, of six books of sound traditions as canonical, at least for the Sunni majority of the population."²⁵ In his valuable discussion of the development of ḥadīth literature in the *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, Mohammad Abd al-Rauf straddles the two opinions: that the special recognition of the *Sahīhayn* followed on the heels of their compilation, and that their final canonization took place in the seventh/thirteenth century. Thus Abd al-Rauf describes how al-Bukhārī's book in particular was "almost immediately and universally acknowledged as the most authentic work in view of the author's stringent authentication requirements."²⁶ But after the famous systematizer of the ḥadīth sciences, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), announced that the Muslim community (*umma*) had decisively

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

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

acknowledged the *Sahīhayn*'s unquestioned authenticity, “no more criticism [of the two books] could be tolerated....”²⁷

Modern Muslim scholarship on this question resembles its Western counterpart in its failure to answer questions about the canon's emergence and functions. This is largely due to the polemic motivation of Muslim authors addressing this subject. Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir's *Makānat al-Sahīhayn* (The Place of the *Sahīhayn*) (1994)²⁸ proceeds from an orthodox Sunni standpoint and seeks to defend al-Bukhārī and Muslim's work from opponents who criticize them. The Ibādī Sa‘īd b. Mabrūk al-Qanūbī's ingenious *al-Sayf al-ḥādd fī al-radd ‘alā man akhadha bi-ḥadīth al-āḥād fī masā’il al-i’tiqād* (The Incisive Sword: a Refutation of Those that Use Āḥād Ḥadīths in Questions of Dogma)²⁹ (1997-8) and the Twelver Shiite Muḥammad Ṣādeq Najmī's *Sayrī dar Sahīhayn: sayr va barrasī dar do ketāb-e mohemm va madrak-e ahl-e sonnat* (A Voyage through the *Sahīhayn*: an Exploration and Examination of two Important Books and Sources of the Sunnis) (2001)³⁰ approach the issue of the *Sahīhayn* from sectarian stances seeking to shed light on what they consider undue Sunni reverence for the two works. Although they offer few analytical insights into the function or formation of the canon, these three books provide invaluable citations and guide the reader to pertinent primary sources. These Arabic and Persian-language secondary sources are thus indispensable aids in studying the *Sahīhayn*.

²⁷ Abd al-Rauf, “*Ḥadīth* Literature,” 285.

²⁸ Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn* (Jeddah: Dār al-Qibla li'l-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1415/1994).

²⁹ Sa‘īd b. Mabrūk al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd fī al-radd ‘alā man akhadha bi-ḥadīth al-āḥād fī masā’il al-i’tiqād*, 3rd ed. (Oman: n.p., 1418/[1997-8]).

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

Without them, navigating the vast expanses of the Islamic intellectual heritage would be nearly impossible.

Addressing the *Sahīhayn* as a Canon

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

Conversely, some scholars have cultivated an acute sensitivity to employing the term 'canon' when treating the *Sahīhayn* and the other authoritative ḥadīth collections. The term 'canon' is so culturally loaded and so inevitably evokes the Biblical tradition that a commendable commitment to distinguishing the Islamic tradition from the

Occidental has led some to deny that any ḥadīth canon existed. Whether or not one can discuss the history of the *Sahīhayn* in the language of canons and canonicity, however, requires an investigation of these fecund terms and their historical application.

Note on the Sources and Approaches of this Study

The study of canonization is a study of historical perceptions more than historical reality. Although al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their *Sahīhs* are the centerpiece of this story, they are not its primary actors. It is the community that received, used and responded to their legacies that forged the *Sahīhayn* canon. Establishing the background, context and historical realities of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's careers is certainly essential for appreciating the genesis of the canon. This study, however, is not about the *Sahīhayn* as much as it is about the drama that unfolded around them. This interest in reception and perception as opposed to reconstructing an authenticated textual or historical reality spares us a prolonged focus on the questions of textual authenticity that so concern scholars of early Islamic history. As we will see in Chapter Three, surviving textual sources from the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries provide multi-dimensional and generally reliable biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Sources from this period also leave little doubt that the texts of the *Sahīhayn* reached complete, although certainly not polished, forms during their author's lives.³¹ For us, however, the true significance of the details of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's lives lies in their roles as stimuli for later Muslims looking back at these two personages.

³¹ See Appendix III.

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

The *Sahīhayn* are arguably the most famous and prominent books in the Sunni tradition after the Qur'ān, and al-Bukhārī and Muslim are titanic figures in Islamic civilization. We must thus cast a very wide net in the sources we examine for tracing the historical development of the canon. Narrative sources such as biographical dictionaries and local histories provide invaluable source material. The *Tārīkh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), the *Muntazam fī tārīkh al-umūm w'al-mulūk* of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), the *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'* and *Tadhkira al-huffāz* of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), and the *Daw' al-lāmi 'li 'ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* of al-Sakhawī (d.

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

902/1497) exemplify these two genres. In addition to providing essential biographical data, these works also record of the manner in which al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their books were perceived in different periods and localities.

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

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

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

II.

The Study of Canons and Canonization

Introduction

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

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

the ways they are interpreted and used. The Greek work *kanòn* originally meant ‘measuring stick’ or a tool used to guarantee straightness, thus connoting the notion of a standard. Aristotle employed the term in the context of the virtuous man, whom he considered to be ‘the standard of good measure’ in ethics.¹ Epicurus would consider logic to be the ‘*kanòn*’ of true knowledge.² In the early Christian tradition the word soon also acquired the meaning of a ‘list,’ and over the centuries the term ‘canon’ has come to indicate a set of authoritative or exemplary texts within a specific community of readers. Fierce debates have raged of late and much ink has been spilled in efforts to provide more exact definitions for this denotation of the word.³ Its true and global import, however, is best grasped not through restricting it to an exhaustive definition, but rather through viewing its reflections in the myriad studies on canons and canonicity produced by scholars from different fields. By examining the variety of canons, their commonalities, and efforts to distill the essence of canonicity, we can identify common historical processes and acquire conceptual tools useful for understanding the emergence and function of the ḥadīth canon in Islam.

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

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

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

Canons in Context and the Emergence of Canon Studies

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

An early attempt to study canonization as a phenomenon in religious traditions was Allan Menzies' prescient 1897 article "The Natural History of Sacred Books: Some Suggestions for a Preface to the History of the Canon of Scripture." Menzies ultimately aims at applauding the Christian Biblical canon for its unique excellence and assumes an evolution of religion from primitive to advanced, but his work nonetheless possesses

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

remarkable foresight. Indeed, Menzies' description of the raw emotive forces that build canons beautifully encapsulates the place of ḥadīth in the Muslim worldview.

These are:

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

In this article, Menzies sets forth what he considers the two essential conditions for the formation of any scriptural canon: “the existence of books which the nation is prepared to recognize as the norm of its religion,” and “the existence of a religious authority of sufficient power to prescribe to the nation what books it shall receive as that norm.”⁶

Menzies’ approach to canons and canonization touches on themes central to later examinations of the issue. Even at this early stage of theorizing the canon, we see the importance of communal identity (Menzies’ “nation”), authority and a standard, or norm, for truth and authenticity in a religious community. Menzies’ stipulation of an extant and sufficiently powerful “religious authority” to declare and enforce the canon is compelling, raising questions about the potential forms such authorities could assume across various communities.

Further study of scriptural canons owes a great deal to the investigation of the formation of the Old and New Testament canons, which began in earnest in Germany during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The rival works of Theodor

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

⁶ Allan Menzies, “The Natural History of Sacred Books,” 90.

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

The approach to canon *qua* canon owes much to the field of literary criticism. Classical Greek literary and aesthetic criticism originated in the book *Kanòn* of the mimetic artist Polycletus (fl. 450 BCE). Although merely a manual on how to most perfectly mimic the human form in sculpture, Polycletus' work was appreciated by later classical figures in ways the author never intended, with Pliny the Elder stating that Polycletus' exemplary statues were the “canon,” or standard for artistic expression.⁷ Although he never uses the Greek term *kanòn* in his *Poetics*, Aristotle presents aesthetic criteria for the literary genres of epic and tragedy.⁸ Each genre culminates in an unsurpassable masterpiece, such as the Homeric epics or Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, which themselves embody the standards of excellence for that genre. Implied is the notion that there exists a set of these exemplary works, a collection that one might term a canon. Indeed later Hellenistic scholars applied the term to a group of books whose high

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

⁸ Aristotle uses the term in his *Nicomachean Ethics* in the context of the good person as “‘a canon and measure’ of the truth.” See Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 289.

level of language made them worthy of imitation.⁹ In the classical Greek and Hellenistic worlds, the term canon thus communicated the notion of ‘model’ or ‘exemplum,’ “a set of unsurpassable masterpieces to be studied and copied by all later practitioners in the field.”¹⁰

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

The masterful literary and hermeneutic scholarship of Frank Kermode, exemplified in his book *The Classic* (1975), made the daring and lasting association between the notion of the literary classic, a shared historical vision, and empire.¹¹ For Kermode the exemplification of the pre-modern literary canon was Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which embodied both the Catholic Church’s and European rulers’ dream of a Holy Roman Empire.¹² Not only was a canon an expression of a shared worldview, it could

⁹ Metzger, 289.

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

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

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

entail the imperial extension and maintenance of that vision. Kermode addressed literary and scriptural canon through a unified approach in 1979 with his hermeneutic study *The Genesis of Secrecy: on the Interpretation of Narrative* and his article “Institutional Control of Interpretation.”¹³ These studies linked the canon more closely to notions of hermeneutic authority, control and the institutional constraint of a scholarly or priestly class.

The 1970’s and 1980’s saw the publication of a wave of comprehensive studies on the formation of the Biblical canon, with a renewed emphasis on the role of the canon in forging identity. Through numerous books and articles James Sanders exerted a strong influence on canon studies, adopting the term ‘canonical criticism’ for the study of the “function of authoritative traditions in the believing communities....”¹⁴ Principally aimed at undoing the historical-critical obsession with finding the original *sitz im leben* of Biblical texts, his interests lie in the way that the needs of a community shape and define a canonical corpus. Sanders focuses on the “period of intense canonical process” between the crafting of a text by its author and the stabilization of a discrete canon. “It was in such periods that the faithful of believing communities... shaped what they received in ways that rendered it most meaningful and valuable for them.”¹⁵ Due to very real and pressing needs that appear in this period, a society’s conception of the authority a text could acquire leaps forward. For Sanders, it is not merely the canonization of text that changes its ontological status; rather, the pressing needs and dynamics of a faith

¹³ See Kermode, “Institutional Control of Interpretation,” *Salmagundi* 43 (1979): 72-87.

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

¹⁵ Sanders, 30.

community lead to a leap in that society's conception of what authority a text can attain.¹⁶ Canonization is therefore not simply a ritual of raising a text's ontological status that a community can perform at any time. Communities undergo certain processes in which they acquire the imaginative ability to canonize. These ideas were further developed in Kermode's article "The Canon" (1987) in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*.¹⁷

Canon studies has also generated a number of studies in comparative religion. Miriam Levering's volume *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (1989) tackled issues of canonization and authority in a wide range of scriptural traditions. Kendall W. Folkert's chapter on "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture'" in this collection presents a novel distinction between the scriptural power of a canonical text and its actual physical presence in ritual. Gerald T. Sheppard's influential entry on "Canon" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* spreads this loaded term out along a continuum between the two poles that he terms Canon 1 and Canon 2.¹⁸ The first represents the notion of canon as a criterion between truth and falsehood, inspired and uninspired. Canon 2 manifests itself as a list, catalog or "fixed collection, and/or standardized text."¹⁹ Sheppard proposes these two denotations of canon as "an illuminating heuristic device" for examining the textual traditions of different faiths.²⁰

¹⁶ Sanders, 32-33.

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

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

¹⁹ Sheppard, "Canon," 66.

²⁰ Sheppard, 64.

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

A landmark issue of *Critical Inquiry* in the early 1980's, developed into a book in 1984, brought canon studies fully under the rubric of critical theory and the postmodernist focus on the politics of expression. This volume pursued the structural study of the canon and its relationship to power and communal identity by bringing together articles on literary, scriptural, musical and theoretical topics. Its editor, Robert von Hallberg, built on the recognition that canons had become commonly understood as expressions of social and political power. Referring specifically to questions of aesthetics, he states that "the question is not whether or not canons serve political functions, but rather how fully their potential functions account for their origins and limit

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

²² Smith, "Sacred Persistence," 49.

their utility.”²³ The most striking essay in this collection is Gerald Burns’ “Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures.” In this chapter Burns addresses the distinction between scripture and canon. He moves away from a previous supposition that defines scripture as authoritative and open to additional texts, as opposed to a canon, which is authoritative but closed. Instead, he asserts that the defining characteristic of canons is their power. Canons are not simply inspired or authentic collections of texts, they are “binding on a group of people.”²⁴ Burns goes on to link this powerful notion of the canon as binding to the act of a public reading of the text. He recalls the story of *Deuteronomy*’s discovery in *2 Kings*. In c. 621 BCE a Jewish priest finds this bound revelation from God in the Temple and brings it to King Josiah, who immediately rends his clothes in awe. Furthermore, he orders the new text read to the people.²⁵ Burns adds that Ezra was also commanded to read the Torah to his people in public places as part of his reconstruction of the Jewish community in Palestine.²⁶ For Burns, the Biblical canon is primarily textual power, and the binding act of canonization takes place through an authoritative public reading of the text in front of a populace it compels to heed and obey.

The 1980’s and 1990’s saw a series of books and articles that turned these new theoretical models back on scriptural and literary traditions. Edward Said’s *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983) and Lilian S. Robinson’s essay “Treason our Text:

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

²⁴ Gerald L. Burns, “Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures,” in *Canons*, 67.

²⁵ Burns, 69-70.

²⁶ Burns, 87.

Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon,”²⁷ represent attacks on the concept of a literary canon from the two dominant trends of feminist and post-colonial studies. A conference held at the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religion in 1997 produced a massive volume entitled *Canonization and Decanonization*, which includes essays addressing the phenomenon of scriptural canonization but also examining the canonical traditions of every major religion. In another collection, Guy Stroumsa’s fascinating essay “The Body of Truth and its Measures: New Testament Canonization in Context” emphasizes that “[c]anonization processes should be understood as part and parcel of religious and social processes of identification.”²⁸ This article seconds Metzger’s emphasis on the role of the Gnostic²⁹ and Montanist³⁰ movements in the articulation of the New Testament but also points out the effect that Christian-Jewish polemics had on the formation of these two communities. Christians and Jews each claimed to possess the correct interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the former with the oral teachings of Christ and the latter through the hermeneutic tradition descending from the Oral Torah revealed

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

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

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

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

to Moses at Sinai. That the New Testament's codification of Christ's words and the Mishna's setting down the interpretive methods of the Rabbis found written expression in the late second or early third centuries CE suggests that both communities were canonizing "secondary" holy texts. These were competing keys to understanding and unlocking a shared legacy.³¹ In this strongly polemical context, Stroumsa's discussion of the Greek expression "*kanòn tès alètheias*," the 'rule of revealed truth,' as used by Irenaeus in his writings against what he considered heretical Christian sects, illustrates a powerfully normative function of "canon" as the criterion distinguishing truth from heresy.³²

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

The study of canons in law has proven much more insular than its literary or scriptural counterparts. Recently, however, interdisciplinary scholars such as Stanley Fish have brought legal canons under the aegis of canon studies. Lenora Ledwon's

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

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

³³ Stroumsa, 308.

collection *Law and Literature: Text and Theory* (1996) is one of the most comprehensive efforts to join these two fields. More recently, J.M. Balkin and Sanford Levinson produced a collection of essays addressing specific questions of canonicity and law. Although these essays deal with topics of an explicitly legal nature, the editors' introduction articulates a visionary and overarching aim for canon studies: "[t]he study of canons and canonicity is the very key to the secrets of a culture and its characteristic modes of thought."³⁴ They echo truisms of canon studies such as the important influence of ferment and change on the visibility of a canon, but also explore topics unplumbed by other scholars. Balkin and Levinson introduce the idea of "deep canonicity," or those canonical modes of thinking, master narratives and canonical examples that form the background for a culture's process of expression and argument.³⁵ Most importantly, however, Balkin and Levinson were perhaps the first scholars since Sanders stressed the "multivalency" of canonical texts to explain how canons can function differently depending on the audience that they are supposed to guide or bind together.³⁶

The study of legal canons has also produced some of the most articulate and incisive observations about the phenomenon of the canon in general. Stanley Fish's 1993 article "Not for an Age but for All Time: Canons and Postmodernism," published in *The Journal of Legal Education*, identifies the intersection of legal and literary canons in the

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

³⁵ Balkin and Levinson, 15-18.

³⁶ Balkin and Levinson, 8.

realm of high culture, where both fields stress the “valorization of the life of the mind.”³⁷ Fish, often considered one of the most vigorous critics of canons in society, stresses the probative force possessed by canonical works. Addressing a case in which a judge rejected a proposed law banning all forms of racist expression because it would prohibit teaching Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, Fish notes that “if Shakespeare is on your side in an argument, the argument is over.” Much like Irenaeus’ *kanòn* as ‘rule of revealed truth,’ Fish concludes that the function of the canon is not to encourage thought, but rather to stop it. His explanation for Shakespeare’s compelling power harks back to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, for the bard is “the very canon – role, norm, measure, standard – in relation to which canonicity is established.” A text becomes canonical when a community recognizes that it is the thing to which “all workers in the enterprise,” or, in Aristotle’s case, the genre, aspire.³⁸

A new standard in canon studies was set by Moshe Halbertal’s 1997 *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority*. In this work, Halbertal uses the Judaic tradition as a case study to synthesize applicable theory on the canon both as it pertains to the Hebrew Bible and the phenomenological study of canonization. In doing so, Halbertal draws on fields ranging from jurisprudence to the philosophy of language. Unlike previous scholars, however, he constructs a revolutionary yet practical framework for studying the relationship between canonization, authority and identity in what he terms “text centered communities,” whose members are bound together through a common

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

³⁸ Fish, 12-15.

commitment to canonical texts. Halbertal explains that a text centered community exhibits several characteristics. Firstly, expertise in the canonical text is a source of authority and prestige within the community. Secondly, the study of the canonical text is itself an act of devotion urged upon all. Thirdly, the text becomes “a locus of religious experience,” with those who pore over or imbibe it engaging in “a religious drama in and of itself.” Finally, the canonical text defines the boundaries of the community. It is the only recourse and source for the justification of ideas.³⁹ “In a text centered community the boundaries of a community are shaped in relation to loyalty to a shared canon,” asserts Halbertal.⁴⁰

Another important concept explored in *People of the Book* is the notion of formative texts, a type of canonical text that serves as a template for the development of expression and interpretation within a community. Beyond simply being a classic worthy of study and imitation, “[a] formative text is one in which progress in the field [, in this case, of understanding revealed law] is made through interpretation of that text.”⁴¹

Halbertal also proposes a principle by which the vague and intangible notion of canonicity can be gauged. Drawing from literary hermeneutics, Halbertal employs the well-traveled Principle of Charity (a concept whose development and use will be traced later in this chapter), stipulating that the canonicity of a scripture can be measured by the charity with which it is read and interpreted. If a community reads a text in the best possible light, attempting to minimize internal contradictions and reconcile notions of

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

⁴⁰ Halbertal, 129.

⁴¹ Halbertal, 94.

truth established by the text with those evident in the outside world, their reading is charitable and the text's canonicity secure. Readings that either highlight problems within the text or challenge its probity by preferring external truths, such as those provided by modern science, pose threats to the canon and indicate a decrease in the text's holiness.

Halbertal's work thus constitutes a new stage of canon studies. His promulgation of discrete definitions and conceptual tools for the study of canons in text centered communities is a corollary to Menzies' prescient if parochial work a century earlier. Both scholars grasp that canonization in religious communities is an insuppressible reality and that our understanding of canonization is nothing more than a tool for understanding "the secrets of a culture and its characteristic modes of thought."⁴² As von Hallberg noted, it has been widely acknowledged that sacred canons are intimately bound to the profanity of self-identification and authority. Given this reality, our ability to increase our knowledge of what the great Muslim scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) called "the truth of things (*haqā'iq al-umūr*)" hinges on our mastery of a lexicon and conceptual framework capable of advancing our understanding of how canons are informed by and govern historical processes.

Canon Studies and the Islamic Tradition

The study of canons emerged in the West. With the exception of more global efforts such as those of Kendall Folkert and Jonathan Z. Smith, inquiries into canons and canonization have often been directly tied to the religious or literary aspects of

⁴² Balkin and Levinson, 4.

Christianity or Judaism. To what extent can the history of certain authoritative ḥadīth collections in Islamic civilization be read in this light? Scholars of Islam, Islamic civilization and its varied genres of literary and religious expression have been cautious in applying approaches developed in the Occidental tradition to their corresponding fields. One might argue that scholars of other civilizations should not blunder into seeing canons where none exist or assume that they function in the same manner as those in the West. As Folkert has pointed out, Western scholars of South Asian scriptural traditions had been misrepresenting the nature and contents of the Jain canon since 1882. Not only had generations of scholars based their understanding of the Jain canon on only one primary source, their conceptualization of a canon as a discrete and complete list of texts distracted them from that fact that “it is not specific texts or scriptures” but a specific “class of knowledge” that the Jain community considered authoritative.⁴³

Tackling the mighty task of summing up the “Muslim Canon” from Late Antiquity to the modern era, Aziz al-Azmeh is thus duly cautious in his contribution to the *Canonization and Decanonization* volume. Al-Azmeh confines himself to discussing in the broadest terms how the Islamic scriptural tradition of the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth took shape over centuries as part of a process of communal identification. He admits that his efforts are hobbled by the primitive state of Islamic studies, which leads him to identify more questions than he answers. As a result, he concludes that the process of

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

canonization in the Muslim tradition is “historically obscure except in some of its details.”⁴⁴

Two more directed forays into the study of the canon in the Islamic legal and literary world have been William Hanaway’s article “Is there a Canon of Persian Poetry?” (1993) and Brannon Wheeler’s *Applying the Canon in Islam: the Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Hanafī Scholarship* (1996). Hanaway believes that one of a canon’s primary functions is that of a “heavy weapon to fire at the enemy as well as a means of defining the collective self.”⁴⁵ He thus cites the homogeneity of the courtly audience to which classical Persian poetry was addressed, the lack of any “significant other” or “counter canon” contesting it, as evidence against the existence of a poetic canon in medieval Persia.⁴⁶ Here he echoes scholars such as Kermode, Blenkinsopp and Metzger’s argument that it was communal tension and competing identities that defined the canons of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.⁴⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith’s inclusive definition of a religious canon proved more easily applicable to Islamic tradition, and Brannon Wheeler employed it to understand how the Ḥanafī school of legal scholarship in Islam preserved the authority of the

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

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

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

⁴⁷ See Metzger, 90-104.

Qu’rānic revelation and the Prophet’s precedent through its chain of authorized legal interpreters.⁴⁸

Hanaway and Wheeler’s studies are extremely valuable, but they nonetheless demonstrate the Scylla and Charybdis of forcing a conceptual framework onto the complex terrain of textual history. This framework may distract a scholar from crucial areas that might otherwise be explored, and accommodating the idiosyncrasies of the local tradition in question might neutralize a theory’s efficacy. Hanaway’s focus on a very narrow definition of a canon, for example, limited his inquiry to determining whether one existed or not. But canon studies have proven the diversity of approaches to the issue of canonicity and identified the manifold functions canons can serve. If, as Moshe Halbertal contends, “canon and heresy are twins,”⁴⁹ must we seek the emergence of religious canons only in times of ideological combat or sectarian strife? Is this role of a weapon in conflict an essential function of a canon? Or, as Menzies alone has argued, is the formulation of a religious canon the result of consolidation in the wake of tumult?⁵⁰

Conversely, the definition of canon that Wheeler borrows from Smith proves too broad and insubstantial when he tackles the topic of the ḥadīth canon. Wheeler’s *Applying the Canon in Islam* is in and of itself a fascinating study of the Islamic legal tradition, affirming von Hallberg’s stance by concluding that the notion of canon in the Ḥanafī case “is best understood as a device to promote the pedagogical agenda of those

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

⁴⁹ Halbertal, 5.

⁵⁰ Menzies, 91.

who use certain texts to represent the authority of the past.”⁵¹ Wheeler’s applied definition of canon, however, is so distanced from the physicality of a text that the distinction between ‘canonicity’ and ‘authority’ in his study sometimes collapses.⁵² In terms of Sheppard and Folkert’s distinction between Canon 1, the criterion of truth in interpretation, and Canon 2, or a set of representative texts, Wheeler emphasizes the former to the latter’s exclusion.

Describing the role of the Six Books, he explains that “[t]he Six Books are different attempts to delineate in ‘written’ form what was, at that time, considered to be the ‘text’ of the Sunnah.” For Wheeler, however, these attempts do not merit mention as a canon. The author follows Schacht and others in emphasizing al-Shāfi‘ī’s (d. 204/819-20) transition from local schools of customary law to an exclusive reliance on Muhammad’s precedent as a source of law. He thus states that it was the entirety of the Prophet’s sunna that was canonized as opposed to certain collections of his ḥadīth. Wheeler warns that “the canonical text of the Sunnah... is not to be equated with a particular book or a group of books, nor even necessarily with a written text.”⁵³ This distinction between the incalculably vast and amorphous corpus of the Prophet’s legacy and distinct collections of ḥadīth is valuable. What lies unrealized in Wheeler’s dismissal of physical tomes, however, is that those books that the community recognized as successful efforts to “delineate... the ‘text’ of the Sunnah” themselves became a canon

⁵¹ Wheeler, 2. See also page 238.

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

⁵³ Wheeler, 59. Here Wheeler repeats the same oversight committed by Sheppard, whose very brief discussion of ḥadīth describes the Sunna, as manifested in ḥadīth, as providing a “normative and, therefore, ‘canonical’ (canon 1) guide to Muslim exegesis.” See Sheppard, 67.

(Canon 2). As we shall see in Chapter Nine, it was precisely these books' ability to function as physical, manageable symbols of the Prophet's sunna that met a need in the Muslim community and necessitated the ḥadīth canon. Because he has chosen a definition of 'canon' easily divorced from actual physical texts and has instead understood 'canon' on the ethereal plane of religious authority, Wheeler misses a truly canonical function of the Six Books.

A skeptic might argue that any Western definition of canon might adulterate our perceptions of other traditions. Should we even employ the term 'canon' in our reading of ḥadīth literature and its functions, or is our belief that it could fit into our compartments of canon and canonicity naive?

A more germane question might be whether popular senses of scriptural canon in the West really acknowledge the potential subtleties and varied stages of a canon's development. The great scholar of Islamic law, Bernard Weiss, for example, dismisses the existence of a ḥadīth canon in Sunni Islam by stating that in Islamic civilization "[God] guides no council of elders or divines in the formation of a sacred canon...."⁵⁴ Indeed, at first glance the acephalous, consensus-based religious leadership in classical Islam might seem completely incomparable to the Pauline authority or council-driven first few centuries of Christian history that gave us the Biblical canon. As our view shifts, however, these images dissolve into one another. It seems evident that neither the Christian nor the Jewish scriptural canons were the products of councils or the decrees they issued. Rather, they emerged gradually through consensus, external pressures and

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

liturgical use within these two believing communities.⁵⁵ Indeed, the final exercise of papal power that yielded the present canon of the Catholic Bible, declaring its text infallible and making any rejection of its content anathema, did not occur until as late as the Council of Trent in 1546.⁵⁶ The Biblical canon had thus existed for well over a millennium before it reached the stringency imposed on the Qu’rānic text by the caliph ‘Uthmān (d. 35/655) less than two decades after the death of the Prophet.

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

⁵⁵ There is startling agreement on this point; see Metzger, 7; Kermode, “The Canon,” 601; Stroumsa, 314.

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

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

⁵⁸ Citing a report about this order that appears in Muḥammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī’s (d. 189/805) recension of the *Muwatta'*, Nabia Abbott states that ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz did not order the recording of the whole sunna, just aspects relating to administrative concerns. There are numerous reports that the

Weiss's intention-driven understanding of canon formation, drawn no doubt from the general belief that New Testament writings were produced and received as canonical texts *ab initio*, further limits his ability to conceive of a ḥadīth canon. He states that, while the Qur'ānic text "may be regarded as a canon of sorts, the great compilations of Sunnaic *hadīth* material are definitely not canons." Rather, he continues, "they represent a purely individual attempt on the part of the renowned compilers to gather together what was in their judgment the most reliable of the Sunnaic material known to them."⁵⁹ Here one must ask if the authors of the synoptic gospels were striving to do anything more than set down on paper "what was in their judgment" the most appropriate understanding of Christ's life. Canon studies have demonstrated unequivocally that canonization is not the product of an author's intention, but rather of a community's reception of texts.

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

Abbasid caliphs al-Mansūr, al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd tried to make Mālik b. Anas' *Muwatta'* the source of imperial law; see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:26; and Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Mālik* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-`Arabī, 2002), 184-6.

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

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

precisely the role of synecdochic symbols for the Prophet's sunna in a community that understood the need to delimit an otherwise amorphous entity?

Although canon studies may be a product of the Western intellectual tradition, it has been demonstrated that even within one civilization the term 'canon' is multivalent. Within this diversity, however, canon studies has recognized that communities' authorizing of texts involves common historical processes and changes the way these texts function and are used. Addressing concerns about whether or not one can truly term the Bible a 'canon,' Kermode states that "works transmitted inside a canon are understood differently from those without...."⁶¹ It is thus ultimately the manner in which the Muslim community has treated the *Sahīhayn* and the functions that they have served, not any external and rigid definitions of canon, that have determined the two works' canonicity. Acknowledging that they have occupied a position of authority in the Sunni tradition is simply recognizing a historical reality.

The reality of the ḥadīth canon as an indigenous product of Muslims' understanding of their own scriptural tradition is exemplified by the historical writing of Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318), the famous minister and court historian of the Ilkhan Mongol sultan Ghāzān Khān (d. 703/1304). Directing the writing of one of humanity's first world histories in the wake of Ghāzān's conversion to Islam, this Persian scholar, physician and historian devotes a section of its introduction to an epistemology of historical knowledge. The reports from the past on which historians rely, he explains, fall into two categories. The first are so well known (*tavātor*) that they convey epistemological certainty. The vast majority of information, however, falls into the

⁶¹ Kermode, "The Canon," 609.

second category of less well-attested narrations (*āḥād*), which are subject to doubt and distortion. Even reports culled from eyewitnesses can transform and eventually become cause for disagreement as they pass from person to person. This reality, he states, has even affected the Prophet’s legacy. “The foremost *imāms*,” however, “conducted thorough research and made certain selections, and they called them the Authentic [Collections] (*Sīhāh*).” “All else,” he adds “remains within the sphere of doubt and hesitation.”⁶²

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

The unique status of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥs* similarly constitutes an undeniable historical reality in Islamic civilization. From his seat in Delhi, capital of the Muslim Moghul Empire in the 1700’s, Shāh Waliyyallāh (d. 1762 CE) summarized the

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

legal and doctrinal controversies that had unfolded over more than a millennium of Islamic history in his masterpiece, *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha* (God’s Conclusive Argument). In his chapter on ḥadīth, he concludes that “as for the two *Sahīhs* [of al-Bukhārī and Muslim], the scholars of ḥadīth have agreed that everything in them attributed to the Prophet is absolutely authentic...,” adding that “anyone who belittles their stature is guilty of corruptive innovation (*mubtadi’*) and not following the path of the believers.”⁶³

The existence of the ḥadīth canon in general, and the exceptional canonical status of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections in particular, are thus historical realities that we ignore at our own peril. Noting opportunities for using the tools developed in canon studies to better understand and articulate the form and function of the ḥadīth canon is nothing more than responding to voices from within the Islamic tradition that call us to view it as part of a broader phenomenon.

Theoretical Tools and Common Historical Processes: Canon Studies and the Ḥadīth Canon

The present study is thus not theory-driven, and neither is it comparative. The story of the ḥadīth canon must be read on its own. It does, however, recognize that any canon represents the interaction of text, authority and communal identification. The above discussions of different canons and the phenomenon of canonicity have highlighted this common historical process and provided a conceptual lexicon that is useful for addressing the ḥadīth canon. Investigating this issue in light of the way other literary and scriptural communities have conceived of canonization can bring elements

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

otherwise unperceived into relief. In tackling a subject that lies at the nexus of text, community and authority, we must expect to address the same themes as studies of other canons. It is the extent to which the Muslim community's perception and use of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs* meets these expectations that justifies this approach. Ultimately, it is the prominence of questions of self-definition, the institutionalization of religious authority and a qualitative change in the way the community viewed these two works that qualifies them as canonical.

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

a. Canons and Community

A collection of texts may become authoritative, but they are not binding on all mankind. Canons are necessarily the creations of specific communities or audiences. Because the act of authorizing certain books inevitably draws lines excluding other works, canons have been understood as tools of inclusion and exclusion within a broader community. As Gerald Burns and Joseph Blenkinsopp have observed in the case of the Hebrew scriptures, “what we call ‘canon’ is intelligible only in the context of conflicting claims to control the redemptive media and, in particular, to mediate and interpret authoritatively the common tradition.”⁶⁴ Scriptural canons thus form when certain sections of a community attempt to monopolize the true interpretation of a religious

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

message shared by all its members, excluding those audiences that identify with the non-canonical.

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

⁶⁵ Gerald Sheppard, "Canon," 3:63.

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

⁶⁷ Pagels, 81-5; Metzger, 153-7.

gospels heretics. Halbertal's stipulation that "canon and heresy are twins" succinctly represents this vein of scholarship.⁶⁸

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

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

⁶⁸ Halbertal, 5.

⁶⁹ Hanaway, 3.

Sahīhayn canon as an inclusive effort to force various sects to recognize a common medium for discussing the Prophet's legacy.

b. Kanòn and the Measure of Revealed Truth

Despite its overwhelming denotation of “authoritative list” in the modern and many pre-modern minds, the *kanòn* that meant “measure” to Aristotle and lent itself so readily to the “rule of revealed truth” in early Christian polemic has survived as one of the most useful tools for conceptualizing canonicity. Canon studies has emphasized canonization as an impetus for interpretative activity, with Kermode underscoring that authorizing books transforms them into potentially inexhaustible mines of interpretation. “‘Licensed for exegesis,’” he concludes, “such is the seal we place upon our canonical works.”⁷⁰ This focus has somewhat overshadowed the role of the canon as a categorical measure of truth, a tool that Fish notes is designed to end discussion rather than encourage it. Here the *kanòn* as measure is “an authority that can be invoked in the face of almost any counterevidence because it is its own evidence and stronger in its force than any other.”⁷¹

Indeed, the original purpose of the *kanòn tès alètheias*, or ‘measure of revealed truth,’ advanced by Irenaeus was to limit interpretation of the gospels. Just as the early church father had proclaimed an authorized collection of four gospels, so had he propounded a hermeneutic lens to ensure an orthodox reading of his canon. When reading rich and pregnant texts like the Gospel of John, so favored by many Gnostics,

⁷⁰ Kermode, “Institutional Control,” 83.

⁷¹ Fish, 12.

one must apply “the measure of revealed truth” that interprets them in as literal a manner as possible and in the light of Jesus’ ‘true’ teachings. To open the doors of esoteric interpretation of the canonical gospels would mimic the methods of pagan philosophers such as the Stoics, who interpreted Homer’s epics allegorically.⁷² Irenaeus sought to end the subversive preaching of the Montanist movement of Asia Minor, whose wandering prophets claimed to be seized by the Holy Ghost and proclaimed the continuing revelation of Christ in the community. The message and authority of Christ thus had to be contained in the canon and interpreted properly. As rabbis debating questions of holy law had declared when some scholars claimed God had validated their position in a dream, “we do not listen to voices from heaven.”⁷³ For Irenaeus, the canon as text and *kanòn* as measure were guarantors of an orthodox monopoly on interpretation. In J.Z. Smith’s definition of the canon as a tool in which the authority of a tradition is deposited in order to extend its implementation into future circumstances, Irenaeus’ “measure of truth” would be a trump card in determining the authentic vision of Christianity. Indeed the authority of his canon, Irenaeus claimed, stemmed from their authenticity. He had chosen his “four-formed gospel” because they were the only books supposedly written by eyewitnesses of the events they described.⁷⁴

Like Irenaeus, Muslim scholars of ḥadīth have been preoccupied with questions of authenticity. The traditions of the Prophet were certainly subject to interpretation as

⁷² Pagels, 117.

⁷³ The modern Shāfi‘ī scholar Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Latīf Fūda concurs, stating that “inspiration (*ilhām*) is not a conduit for revealed knowledge (*ilm*) among the people of truth;” see <http://www.al-razi.net/website/pages/warakat.htm>, part 10 (last accessed 9/14/2005).

⁷⁴ Pagels, 111.

scholars applied them to questions of law, morality and doctrine; but it was the question of authenticity that was paramount in their collection and criticism. The more authentic the Prophetic report, the more authoritative. In the elaboration of the faith, and certainly in inter-school polemics, “interpretation is a function of authentication (*al-ta’wīl far ‘alā al-ithbāt*).” While Irenaeus’ canon required a canonical lens for proper viewing, for ḥadīth collections the *kanōn* of truth was the canonical books themselves. A collection deemed an authentic repository for the Prophet’s hermeneutic authority was the tool through which that authority could be employed decisively in the further elaboration of Islam. For Kermode the canon is licensed of exegesis; for Muslims a canonical ḥadīth collection was licensed for common use.

c. The Principle of Charity and Canonical Culture

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

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

The Principle of Charity has also found significant use in the study of language.

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

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

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

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

Kermode calls “that concordance of beginning, middle and end which is the essence of our explanatory fictions....”⁷⁸

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

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

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

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

⁸⁰ Halbertal, 28.

⁸¹ Halbertal, 29.

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

The Principle of Charity is ideally suited for studying the canonization of the *Sahīhayn* because the canonical culture surrounding them has depended entirely on the compatibility of the two texts and their authors with prevailing notions of truth and authenticity.⁸² From the early second/eighth century, many pious Muslims who collected the sayings of their Prophet recognized that an exacting criticism of both those who reported these traditions and the traditions themselves was necessary to identify forged material.⁸³ Their opponents from among the Muslim rationalists and the more analogy-based legal schools of Iraq, however, were very skeptical of their claims to be able to

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

⁸³ For an example of such early focus on the technical details of ḥadīth transmission in the mid second/eighth century, see Abū Zur‘a al-Dimashqī (d. 280/894), *Tārīkh Abī Zur‘a al-Dimashqī*, ed. Khālid Mānsūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1417/1996), 193.

collect and authenticate statements transmitted orally. The image that the ḥadīth scholars therefore cultivated in the Muslim community highlighted their caution, lack of tolerance for lapses in memory or inconsistencies in transmission, and an almost pathological devotion to amassing and sifting through the Prophet's legacy. The idealized *muḥaddith* (hadīth scholar) was singularly devoted to mastering the Prophet's word, dismissing as corruptive innovation anything that did not extend back to him. For them the ḥadīth's chain of transmission (*isnād*), the only lifeline to the Prophet's teachings and an Islam unpolluted by the cosmopolitan religious atmosphere of the Near East, became the center of a cult of authenticity. "The *isnād* for us is religion; were it not for the *isnād*," they claimed, "whoever wanted could say whatever they wanted."⁸⁴ It was the very authenticity of these *isnāds*, however, that the ḥadīth scholars' opponents doubted. To canonize the *Sahīhayn*, the hadīth scholars' cult of authenticity had to become both more intensified and accepted in the wider Sunni community. It was argued, as we shall see, that these two demanding books met the whole community's requirements for ḥadīth authenticity. The canon thus rested on a claim that required the approval of segments of the community that had been perennially mistrustful of the hadīth scholars' methodology and the ever-critical ḥadīth scholars themselves. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, a perpetual reinforcing of this cult of authenticity would prove the salient feature of the canonical culture surrounding the two works. The two books and their authors had to be lifted above their peers and any possibility of error. The extent to which different segments of the Sunni community gradually extended the

⁸⁴ "Al-*isnād* 'indanā dīn, law lā al-*isnād* la-qāla man shā'a mā shā'a, wa lākin idhā qīla lahu man *haddathaka baqīya*," see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1417/1997), 6:164.

charity of this unblemished authenticity to al-Bukhārī and Muslim and their works charts the emergence of this canonical culture.

Conclusion

Whether scriptural, legal or literary, canons lie at the intersection of text, authority and communal identification. They are no more unique to the Occidental tradition than these three seminal notions. Indeed, canons are undeniable historical realities that change the manner in which the books function and are treated by their audiences. Where exactly the canon of the *Sahīh* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim fits in this nexus is a question only a study devoted to their unique history can answer. The remarkable efforts of scholars such as J.Z. Smith, Halbertal and Kermode to understand canons in their various contexts, however, must serve as guides in alerting us to the possibilities and perhaps even the inevitabilities facing the study of a canon's emergence and functions. Canon studies has drawn our attention to the role of the canon as a possible tool for inclusion in community. It has provided the Principle of Charity as a device to measure canonicity and chart the development of a canonical culture. Finally, we can conceive of the canon as a common measure of truth in which the authority of tradition is deposited for later application. As Menzies, the earliest student of canonization as phenomenon, so ably pointed out, a canon must begin with books.⁸⁵ What, then, was the genesis of those two books that allowed Muslims to stand “where the first disciples stood..., to listen to the Master’s words, and overhear perhaps even his secret thoughts and prayers,” feeling

⁸⁵ Menzies, 90.

“what that spirit was which reached the Master from the upper region and passed forth from him to other men...?”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Menzies, 83.

III.

The Genesis of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

Introduction

Leafing through the pages of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* today, the book seems to be the natural culmination of the Muslim study of the Prophetic legacy: Muḥammad’s authenticated words and actions, enclosed in a dozen volumes. For the ḥadīth scholars and pious Muslims of the third/ninth century, however, ḥadīths were not bound tomes taken off the shelf and read. They were living links to the Prophet and the manifestation of his charismatic authority in everyday life. Although Muslim scholars of the first three centuries of Islam strove to prevent forged ḥadīths from being attributed to the Prophet, even in the case of dubious transmissions the powerful formula “the Messenger of God said...” made reports from Muḥammad *prima facie* compelling to many jurists. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s compilation of works limited to authenticated reports was thus a revolutionary act. The two *Sahīhs* were eventually destined for canonization, but in the decades after their authors’ deaths important segments of the scholarly community saw them as an insolent departure from tradition. The *Sahīhayn* possessed an elitism and finality that clashed with the manner in which ḥadīth-based jurists employed the Prophetic legacy. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s work thus constituted a split in the ḥadīth tradition; although the *Sahīhayn* would go on to become an authoritative institution, they would exist side by side with the continued amassing of Prophetic traditions through the living *isnād*.

The Development of Ḥadīth Literature

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

¹ ‘Khurāsān’ as a topographical and administrative term has had a wide range of meanings. In the early Islamic period the name was often used to denote the region extending from Western Iran to Transoxiana. Today it is a relatively contained province in Eastern Iran with its capital at Mashhad. We will use the name as the geographer al-Muqaddisī (d. after 380/990) did, namely to describe the area in Eastern Iran centered on the four major cities of Naysābūr, Merv, Herat and Balkh. We will distinguish this region from Transoxiana, with its Zarafshān River cities of Bukhara and Samarqand; Anon., *Hudūd al-Ālam: the Regions of the World*, trans. and ed. V. Minorsky (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 102-109; Paul Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 172-90; C.E. Bosworth, “Khurāsān,” *EI*².

Al-Bukhārī, like generations of dedicated and pious Muslims before him, devoted his life to answering the question that lies at the heart of the Islamic religious tradition: how does one live according to God's will as revealed in the Qur'ān and taught by His prophet? Almost two centuries before al-Bukhārī set off on his pilgrimage, the same road had carried the Muslim armies into Eastern Iran and Transoxiana as they triumphantly spread their new religion outwards in time and space from its epicenter in the Hijāz. His voyage back to Mecca, the Prophet's home and location of the Ka'ba, fulfilled the duty ordained upon all Muslims to return to the place where God had revealed their religion and where the Prophet had served as its first authoritative interpreter.

In the two hundred years since the beginning of the Islamic tradition, Muslims such as al-Bukhārī had turned back again and again to the authoritative legacy of the Prophet's teachings as it radiated outwards through the transmission and interpretation of pious members of the community. In Medina, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 108/726-7), the grandson of the first caliph of Islam, and Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/713), the son-in-law of the most prolific student of the Prophet's legacy, Abū Hurayra, became two of the leading interpreters of the new faith after the death of the formative first generation of Muslims. Their interpretations of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's legacy, as well as those of founding fathers such as ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, were collected and synthesized by the seminal Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). In Kufa, the Prophet's friend and pillar of the early Muslim community, ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd, instructed his newly established community on the tenets and practice of Islam as it adapted to the surroundings of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Iraq. His disciple

[‘]Alqama b. Qays (d. 62/681), transmitted these teachings to a promising junior, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī (d. 95/714), who in turn passed his approaches and methods of legal reasoning to Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120/738). His student of eighteen years, Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), would become a cornerstone of legal interpretive effort in Iraq and the eponym of the Ḥanafī law school. Unlike Medina, the Prophet’s adopted home where his legacy thrived in the form of living communal practice, the polyglot environment of Kufa teemed with ancient doctrines and practices foreign to the early Muslim community. Many such ideas found legitimization in the form of spurious reports attributed to the Prophet, and Abū Ḥanīfa thus preferred a cautious reliance on the Qur’ān and his own reasoning rather than risk acting on these fraudulent ḥadīths.

By the mid-second century, there had emerged two general trends in interpreting and applying Islam in its newly conquered lands. For both these trends, the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s implementation of that message were the only constitutive sources of authority for Muslims. The practice and rulings of the early community, who participated in establishing the faith and inherited the Prophet’s hermeneutic authority, were the lenses through which scholars like Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik understood these two sources. Scholars like ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Awzāī of Beirut (d. 157/773-4) thus stated that “religious knowledge (*ilm*) is what has come to us from the Companions of the Prophet; what has not is not knowledge.”² When presented with a situation for which the Qur’ān and the well-known teachings of the Prophet and his Companions provided no clear answer, scholars like Abū Ḥanīfa relied on their own interpretations of the these

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

sources to respond. Early Muslim intellectuals like Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/890) referred to such scholars as ‘*ahl al-ra’y*,’ or the practitioners of individual legal reasoning.³ Other pious members of the community preferred to limit themselves to the opinions of the earliest generations and more dubious reports from the Prophet rather than opine in a realm they felt was the purview of God and His Prophet alone. The great Baghdad scholar Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) epitomized this transmission-based approach to understanding law and faith in his famous statement: “you hardly see anyone applying reason (*ra’y*) [to some issue of religion or law] except that there lies, in his heart, some deep-seated resentment (*ghill*). A weak narration [from the Prophet] is thus dearer to me than the use of reason.”⁴ Such transmission-based scholars, referred to as the ‘partisans of ḥadīth (*ahl al-hadīth*)’, preferred the interpretations of members of the early Islamic community to their own. For them the Muslim confrontation with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Near East threatened the unadulterated purity of Islam. A narcissistic indulgence of human reason would encourage the agendas of heresy and the temptation to stray from God’s revealed path. Only by clinging stubbornly to the ways of the Prophet and his righteous successors could they preserve the authenticity of their religion.

It was in this milieu that the tradition of ḥadīth literature emerged. Although Muslims had been memorizing or writing down the words of the Prophet and his followers from an early period,⁵ the first major ḥadīth collections, called *musannafs*, were

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

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

⁵ An example of an early collection of ḥadīth is the *sahīfa* of Hammām b. Munabbih (d. 101/719), a disciple of Abū Hurayra, which includes 138 ḥadīths; for more information on the unsystematic collection of writing ḥadīth in the first two centuries of Islam, see Abd al-Rauf, “*Hadīth* Literature,” 272. For more

essentially transcripts of the legal discourse that had developed during the first two centuries of Islam. Arranged into chapters dealing with different legal or ritual questions, they were topical records of pious Muslims' efforts to respond to questions about proper faith and practice. Mālik b. Anas' *Muwatṭa'* is thus a mixture of Prophetic ḥadīths, the rulings of his Companions, the practice of the scholars of Medina and the opinions of Mālik himself.⁶ The *muṣannaf* of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) is similarly a collection of reports from the Prophet, Companions and Successors such as 'Atā' b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. 114/732).⁷

During the late second and early third centuries, however, the prevalence of specious ḥadīths being attributed to the Prophet led to the emergence of a shared three-tiered process of authentication among the transmission-based scholars in cities such as Medina, Basra, Baghdad and Naysābūr. In the first tier, scholars such as Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālisī (d. 204/818) and Ibn Ḥanbal strove to anchor core doctrine and practice in the teachings of the Prophet. They thus compiled collections limited to reports possessing explicit chains of transmission (*isnād*) going back to Muḥammad. These ***musnad*** collections would have proven a very effective first line of defense against material

on the emergence of historical writings, see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition*; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 12 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 1:53-84; Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 279; Muhammad al-A'zamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2000); Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, trans. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 158.

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

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

entering the Islamic tradition from outside sources; Ibn Ḥanbal and other early transmission-based scholars paid no heed to material lacking an *isnād*.⁸

These *isnāds*, however, could be forged or inauthentic material simply equipped with one and then circulated. In what constituted the second tier of ḥadīth criticism, Iraqi scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845) and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234/849) evaluated the quality of these *isnāds* by collecting opinions about the transmitters who comprised them. As Scott C. Lucas has determined in his study of Ibn Sa‘d and Ibn Ḥanbal’s work, they drew on two previous generations of ḥadīth-transmission critics: that of Mālik and his contemporaries like Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776), and the next generation of the great Basran critics ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/814) and Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qattān (d. 198/813).⁹ Ibn Sa‘d amassed a huge dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters, his *Tabaqāt*, that included statements from respected ḥadīth authorities rating transmitters for honesty, piety and their command of the material they purveyed. In addition, works like the *Tabaqāt* and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī’s *Ilal* also tried to ascertain the personal links between different narrators in order to assure the continuity of transmission and establish the most secure links to the Prophet. A liar, a forgetful person or a break in the *isnād* could thus weaken the reliability of a ḥadīth.

Finally, the third tier consisted of demanding corroboration for ḥadīths being circulated among the network of ḥadīth transmitters that spread from Yemen to

⁸ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī quotes the famous early *muḥaddith* Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776) as saying, “all religious knowledge (*ilm*) which does not feature ‘he narrated to me’ or ‘he reported to me’ is vinegar and sprouts (*khall wa baql*);” al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Kitāb al-madkhal ilā ma ῲifat kitāb al-iklīl*, ed. Ahmad b. Fāris al-Sulūm (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1423/2003), 58.

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

Transoxiana. Even though a ḥadīth narration might possess a sound *isnād*, it was considered unreliable if only one out of several students of a famous transmitter reported it from him. Reports that either conflicted with others similar to it or lacked corroboration were deemed likely errors. A genre of books identifying these *īlal* (flaws) thus arose with the work of ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Ḥanbal.

Although such scholars applied these three tiers of criticism to their corpora of ḥadīths, they did not dispense with weaker material or require a report to be sound (*sahīh*) in order to function in deriving laws. Ibn Ḥanbal’s massive *Musnad* of approximately thirty thousand ḥadīths represented a lifetime of collection and review, with the compiler adding or removing reports as he became aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Ibn Ḥanbal himself, however, admitted that his collection contained weak ḥadīths.¹⁰ As he declared, he readily employed these lackluster ḥadīths in situations where no stronger reports could be found.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal is reported as saying that none of the twenty-eight narrations of the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet tells ‘Ammār b. Yāsir that he will be killed by the rebellious party (*al-fi’ā al-bāghiya*, ie. Mu‘āwiya), several of which he includes in his *Musnad*, are correct; see Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), *al-Muntakhab min al-īlal li l-Khallāl*, ed. Abū Mu‘ādh Tāriq b. ‘Awad Allāh (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1419/1997), 222; for a famous Hanbalī’s rebuttal of this attribution to Ibn Ḥanbal, see Ibn Rajab, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, ed. Maḥmūd Sha‘bān ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd et al. (Medina: Maktabat al-Gharāba al-Athariyya, 1417/1996), 3:310. For a more general statement on this from a later ḥadīth scholar, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrzūrī, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, ed. ‘A’isha ‘Abd al-Rahmān (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1411/1990), 286.

¹¹ Ibn Hanbal is quoted by later scholars as saying that “if we are narrating [ḥadīths] about prohibition or permissibility (*al-halāl wa al-harām*) we are strict, but if we are narrating them in matters of the virtues [of the early community] and similar matters, we are lax;” Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb ‘an al-Musnad li l-imām Aḥmad* (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1386/1967), 12.

The *Sahīh* Movement and the Bifurcation of the Ḥadīth Tradition

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

This notion of legal and ritual utility strongly influenced other scholars who soon followed in al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s footsteps. Their students and colleagues Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/888), Muḥammad b. Ḫasan al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) and Ahmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915),¹⁴ as well as Muḥammad b. Yazīd Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886) aimed at providing collections of ḥadīths that combined this utility with high

¹² Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, “*Hadīth* Literature,” 274.

¹³ Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Sahīh Muslim* (Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭba‘at Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣubayḥ, [1963]), 1:22. Al-Bukhārī is also quoted as rejecting the use of non-*sahīh* ḥadīths in issues of prohibition (*tahlīl wa tahrīm*); Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār fī ma ṫifat ‘ulūm al-āthār*, ed. Muḥammad Subḥī b. Ḥasan Ḥallāq (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 72.

¹⁴ There is some doubt as to whether al-Nasā’ī studied with al-Bukhārī, with scholars such as al-Nawawī affirming this and al-Dhahabī saying that al-Nasā’ī never transmitted from al-Bukhārī; see al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām wa wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa al-aḥādīth*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf, Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūṭ and Sāliḥ Mahdī ‘Abbās (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1988-present), 19:241.

standards of authenticity. These collections nonetheless did feature reports that their authors acknowledged as weak but included either because they were widely used among jurists or because they, like Ibn Ḥanbal, could find no *sahīh* ḥadīth addressing that particular topic.¹⁵ Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353/964), who lived mostly in Egypt, collected a small *sahīh* consisting of ḥadīths necessary for legal rulings but whose authenticity he claimed was agreed on by all.¹⁶

Other contemporaries of al-Bukhārī and Muslim adhered more to the requirement of authenticity than to legal utility. Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), an early pivot of the Shāfi‘ī school who both studied with and transmitted ḥadīth to al-Bukhārī and Muslim, compiled a *sahīh* work he entitled *Mukhtaṣar al-mukhtaṣar min al-musnad al-ṣahīh ʻan al-nabī* (The Abridged Abridgement of the *Sahīh Musnad* from the Prophet).¹⁷ Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Bujayrī of Samarqand (d. 311/924)

¹⁵ See Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī’s letter to the scholars of Mecca, where he states that he alerts the reader to any ḥadīth with a “serious weakness (*wahn shadid*);” “Risālat al-imām Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī ilā ahl Makka fī waṣf Sunanī,” *Thalāth rasā’il fī ʻilm muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū‘at al-Islāmiyya, 1417/1997), 37; Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5) also states that Abū Dāwūd included weak ḥadīths if he could find no reliable reports on a certain subject; see Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn Manda, *Shurūt al-a’imma/Risāla fī bayān faḍl al-akhbār wa sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-āthār wa haqīqat al-sunan wa taṣhīḥ al-riwāyat*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Farīwā’ī (Riyadh: Dār al-Muslim, 1416/1995), 73.

¹⁶ This book was called *al-Muntaqā* and was highly esteemed by Ibn Ḥazm. See Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustatrafa fī bayān mashhūr kutub al-sunna al-musharrifa*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1400/[1980]), 20; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, ed. Zakariyā ‘Umayrāt, 4 vols. in 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1419/1998), 3:231 (biography of Ibn Ḥazm).

¹⁷ This work would later become known as *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma*. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) calls this book *Mukhtaṣar al-mukhtaṣar* because Ibn Khuzayma had made it out of a bigger collection; al-Khalīl b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khalīlī, *al-Iṛshād fī ma ṛifat ʻulamā’ al-ḥadīth*, ed. ‘Āmir Ahmad Haydar (Mecca: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), 313. In his very brief introduction to his *Sahīh*, Ibn Khuzayma says that this book contains material “that an upright (*ʻadl*) transmitter narrates from another upstanding transmitter continuously to [the Prophet] (ṣ) without any break in the *isnād* nor any impugning (*jarḥ*) of the reports’ transmitters;” see Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Khuzayma, *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A‘ẓamī, 5 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, [1970?]), 1:3. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī felt that Ibn Khuzayma’s collection should be ranked closely after al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s *Sahīhs* because the author also demanded

produced a collection called *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*.¹⁸ Even the famous historian and exegete Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī (d. 310/923) attempted a gigantic *ṣahīḥ musnad* called *Kitāb tahdhīb al-āthār*, but died before he finished it.¹⁹ Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī’s (d. 354/965) massive *Sahīḥ* has been highly esteemed by Muslim scholars and is usually considered the last installment in the *sahīḥ* movement (although three *sahīḥ* works were evidently produced in the fifth/eleventh century).²⁰

Although the *sahīḥ* movement seems a natural progression of the collection and criticism of Prophetic ḥadīths, it possessed an inherent elitism and a definitiveness that clashed with underlying characteristics of ḥadīth transmission in the Muslim community. Since the early days of Islam, the transmission of ḥadīths was a means for everyday Muslims to bind themselves to the inspirational authority of the Prophet and incorporate his charisma into their lives.²¹ Like all early Muslim scholarship, the collection and study of ḥadīths was not the product of institutions of learning; it was undertaken by devout

authenticity (*sihha*); al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*, ed. Maḥmūd Taḥhān (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1403/1983), 2:185.

¹⁸ Umar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142-3), *al-Qand fī dhikr ʻulamā’ Samarcand*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Tehran: Ayene-ye Mīrāth, 1420/1999), 472; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 387.

¹⁹ The full work would have included legal, linguistic and other kinds of commentary; see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:202. The surviving work has been published as *Tahdhīb al-āthār wa tafsīl al-thābit ʻan Rasūl Allāh min al-akhbār*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, 5 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Madanī, 1982), idem, *Tahdhīb al-āthār: al-juz’ al-maqūd*, ed. ‘Alī Rīdā b. ‘Abdallāh (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma’mūn li'l-Turāth, 1995).

²⁰ It is difficult to determine whether or not these works were actually collections devoted to authentic ḥadīths or just utilized the word *ṣahīḥ* in the title. Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Muqātī al-Tanūkhī (d. 407/1016), a Shiīte ḥadīth scholar, evidently had a *Ṣahīḥ*. Ibn Ḥazm had a book called *al-Jāmi‘ fī ṣahīḥ al-ḥadīth bi’ikhtiṣār al-asānīd*, and Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ahmad al-Kūkhamaythī (?) (d. 491/1098) wrote book of 800 *juz’* called *Bahr al-asānīd fī ṣahīḥ al-masānīd* that was never studied; see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aṭ-ṭā’im al-nubalā’*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūt (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1982), 17:650; idem, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:230 and 4:21.

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

individuals whose eventual knowledge and pious allure earned them positions of respect and authority in their communities.²² In the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, however, a new perspective emerged in Muslim society. A self-aware scholarly and educated class (*al-khāṣṣa*) appeared which began distinguishing itself from the masses (*al-‘āmma*).²³ The great legal theorist Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/819-20) thus divided knowledge of Islamic law and ritual into that which is demanded of the masses (*‘āmm*) and the purview of the scholars (*khāṣṣ*). This bifurcation between plebeians and specialists also appears in the introduction to Muslim’s *Sahīh* collection. Just as al-Shāfi‘ī articulates the domain and duties of a scholarly elite, so does Muslim urge a specialized corps of ḥadīth scholars to study the sunna and guide the regular folk, who should not concern themselves with amassing ḥadīths beyond a few authentic reports. Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī evinces the same legal paternalism in a letter to the scholars of Mecca explaining the content and structure of his *Sunan*. He may not, he explains, alert the reader to all the weaknesses of a ḥadīth because “it would be harmful to the masses (*al-‘āmma*)” to reveal such minor flaws to them. This might undermine their faith in the report’s legal applicability.²⁴

Furthermore, for Muslim and Abū Dāwūd, their authentic collections provided all the legal and ritual knowledge an ordinary Muslim required. Abū Dāwūd states

²² This did not mean that one could not earn money studying ḥadīth. Some scholars asked fees for narrating ḥadīths, but this was the subject of much controversy in the scholarly community. Yahyā b. Ma‘īn expended his large inheritance on ḥadīth study, but we must assume that much of this probably went to overhead such as paper supplies; see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 160-2.

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

²⁴ Abū Dāwūd, “Risāla,” 50.

confidently that he knows of “nothing after the Qur’ān more essential for people to learn than this book [his *Sunan*], and a person would suffer no loss if he did not take in anymore knowledge (*an lā yaktuba min al-ilm*) after this book.”²⁵ If the masses of Muslims should leave the collection and criticism of ḥadīths to a class of specialists, and this elite had now provided them with definitive references, what use were the activities of other ḥadīth scholars?

This elitism and definitiveness was therefore not directed simply at the masses of Muslims. It also addressed the bulk of more serious ḥadīth collectors, whose laxity in criticism and irresponsible leadership had motivated Muslim to write his *Sahīh* in the first place. He believed that many of those scholars who strove to collect as many ḥadīths as possible regardless of their quality were doing so only to win the acclaim of the masses, who would express in awe “how numerous are the ḥadīths so and so has collected!”²⁶ In the introduction to his *Sahīh*, Muslim expresses serious concern over those who claim to be ḥadīth scholars transmitting material of dubious nature to the exclusion of well-known and well-authenticated ḥadīths. They provide this material to the common people and thus mislead them in their faith. It is this fact, he says, that has made him feel comfortable about producing a work restricted to only authentic material.²⁷ It is in fact the duty of those who understand the science of ḥadīth to leave the common folk with

²⁵ Abū Dāwūd, “Risāla,” 46.

²⁶ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:22.

²⁷ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:6.

trustworthy reports only. To do otherwise would be a sin (*āthim^{an}*), for the masses would believe and act on these ḥadīths.²⁸

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

Such a rejection of the *sahīh* movement’s ethos is extreme, but it differs only in degree from the practice of traditionists like Ibn Ḥanbal. Reports traced back to the Prophet, bearing his name and conveying his authority were *prima facie* compelling.³⁰ Not even a problematic *isnād* to such a figure could undermine the authority he commanded. Even in legal issues members of the Muslim community depended on weak or mediocre ḥadīths, and such ḥadīths were indispensable in fields like the history of the

²⁸ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:22.

²⁹ Muslim, *Kitāb al-tamyīz*, ed. Muhammad Muṣṭafā al-A‘zamī (Riyadh: Maṭba‘at Jāmi‘at Riyād, [1395/1975]), 123. Muslim’s younger contemporary al-Tirmidhī also notes objections to critically evaluating narrators; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Iṭlal al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1398/1978), 1:43.

³⁰ Abū Zahra, *Ibn Hanbal*, 243.

Prophet's campaigns, contextualizing Qur'ānic verses or recounting the virtues of the Prophet's Companions.³¹

From a modern perspective it seems difficult to understand why the study or legal use of ḥadīths did not culminate naturally with the *sahīh* movement. Why would scholars elaborating law and doctrine they considered rooted in revelation rely on questionable reports when they now had purely authentic collections at their disposal? Answering this question a century after the *sahīh* movement, the seminal systemitizer of the ḥadīth tradition al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) explained that using problematic ḥadīths to interpret law was an established practice going back as far as the great legal scholar Abū Ḥanīfa. Furthermore, different ḥadīth critics employed different criteria for authenticity; just because one strict scholar considered a narration weak does not entail that a less demanding legal scholar might not find it acceptable.³²

The Continuity of the Living *Isnād*

The *sahīh* movement thus marks a bifurcation in ḥadīth literature. In the wake of the *sahīh* collections, particularly the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the study of ḥadīth would diverge into two parallel streams that would clash and interact as the centuries progressed. Their relationship with one another would remain one of tension, sometimes complementary and sometimes destructive, between the living transmission of

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

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

ḥadīth through the *isnād* and the definitive and institutional power acquired by authentic ḥadīth collections. The canonical destiny of the *Sahīhayn*, the two works that inaugurated and epitomized the *sahīh* movement, will be discussed in the following chapters. Here at the genesis of the *Sahīhayn*, however, we must not allow the canonical status these works would acquire to distract us from their powerful alter-ego in the ḥadīth tradition: the continuity of ḥadīth transmission through the living *isnād*.

The ḥadīth tradition from which the *Sahīhayn* emerged remained preoccupied with the continued transmission of ḥadīths through personal study. The strong legal and pietistic attachment to the living *isnād* of transmitters back to the Prophet continued to drive the ḥadīth tradition, and both the oral transmission of ḥadīths and the compilation of major non-*sahīh* works continued unabated. Scholars with strong affiliation to legal schools such as the Shāfi‘ī Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) compiled ḥadīth collections supporting their *madhhab*’s positions. His massive *al-Sunan al-kubrā* represents a landmark in the Shāfi‘ī legal school, supporting its detailed case law with a myriad of reports from the Prophet and his Companions. During the fourth/tenth century several Ḥanafī scholars produced *musnad* collections of the ḥadīths used by Abū Ḥanīfa and his students. Even non-Ḥanafīs like Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī (d. 430/1038) participated in efforts to find chains going back to the Prophet for Abū Ḥanīfa’s reports.³³ The Mālikī scholar Ibn al-Jabbāb (d. 322/934) even created a *musnad* version of the *muṣannaf*-style *Muwatta*.³⁴

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

³⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:25.

The personal collection of ḥadīths expanded after and even despite the *sahīh* movement, with ḥadīth collectors amassing titanic works in the fourth/tenth century. Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) of Isfahan compiled a huge collection, his *Muṭjam al-kabīr*, that amounted to two hundred *juz'*s.³⁵ His pride lay in gathering rare ḥadīths found nowhere else as well as their relatively short *isnāds*. Authenticity was not one of his concerns.³⁶ ‘Alī b. Ḥamshādh of Naysābūr (d. 338/950) produced a personal *musnad* twice as large as al-Ṭabarānī's, and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Māsarjisī of Naysābūr (d. 365/976) compiled a *musnad* of an astounding one thousand three hundred *juz'*s.³⁷

Even as late as the sixth/twelfth century, for some it was the primacy of continued transmission through the living *isnād* that defined the *muḥaddith*. In his history of his native Bayhaq and its prominent citizens, for example, Ibn Funduq ‘Alī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169-70) states that “a ḥadīth from the reports of the Prophet (ṣ) will be given for each of the scholars and *imāms* of ḥadīth.”³⁸ Even in very brief entries, Ibn Funduq does indeed provide a narration that goes directly back to the Prophet for almost all the scholars he details. His focus on living *isnāds* dominates his *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq*; in a history a great part of which is devoted to ḥadīth scholars, he only once mentions an

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

³⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:85-7.

³⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:50, 111.

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

actual ḥadīth collection: the *Sunan al-kubrā* of the city's towering native doyen, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī.³⁹ We know that many of the scholars featured in *Tārīkh-e Bayhaq*, including Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, heard and mastered major ḥadīth collections such as the *Sahīhayn*. Yet so dominant is the role of personal transmission from the Prophet in the worldview of Ibn Funduq that the study or communication of such ḥadīth books goes undocumented. Soon after Ibn Funduq, however, in the early seventh/thirteenth century, the compilation of ḥadīth books with *isnāds* back to the Prophet generally ceased and scholarly energy was devoted to studying existing collections.

These living *isnāds* survived so long, however, because they carried significant pietistic weight due to both their Prophetic origin and their ability to trace Muhammad's authority outward through the venerated heirs to his legacy. The staunchly orthodox seventh/thirteenth century Sufi 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) began most of the chapters of his popular manual on Sufism, *Awārif al-ma 'arif*, with ḥadīths whose *isnāds* extend from him to the Prophet. Many of these chains reach the Prophet through major figures in the Sufi tradition, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) and Abū Nu'aym al-İsbahānī.⁴⁰

This is not to suggest that books played no role in the continuation of living *isnāds*. A transmitter's book could simply serve as a vehicle for passing on his material. ḥadīth collections like al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* or Mālik's *Muwatta'* were transmitted from teacher to student in the same manner as an individual ḥadīths. For ḥadīth scholars,

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

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

however, any referral to such books was contingent upon hearing them from a transmitter. A book could not simply be taken off the shelf and used. Like a single report, only a student copying a text in the presence of his teacher could protect against the vagaries and errors of transmission.⁴¹ Furthermore, for ḥadīth scholars this act of becoming part of the text's *isnād* to the author is what rendered the book legally compelling. Speaking from this transmission-based perspective, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Khayr al-Ishbīlī (d. 575/1179) said that no one could introduce a statement with the formula "the Prophet said..." without possessing some personal chain of transmission back to the Prophet for that report.⁴² Scholars like al-Qushayrī and al-İsbahānī through whom al-Suhrawardī linked himself by *isnād* back to the Prophet had set their ḥadīths down in book-form. The authority and credence of the living *isnād*, however, proved more compelling to al-Suhrawardī than simply citing these books.

The importance of continued ḥadīth transmission as opposed to a raw reliance on books of ḥadīth had important implications for the development of legal institutions. During and after the fifth/eleventh century, both jurists and ḥadīth scholars found it necessary to respond to the question "if you find a well-authenticated copy of a *sahīh*

⁴¹ Abū Bakr Ahmād b. Mālik al-Qaṭī (d. 368/979), who was the principal transmitter of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* from his son 'Abdallāh, was severely criticized for transmitting one of Ibn Ḥanbal's books from a copy which he had not heard directly from his teacher. Although al-Qaṭī had in fact heard this book previously, the copy he had used was destroyed in a flood, leaving him with only the other copy. This case demonstrates the sensitivity of ḥadīth scholars to the question of aural transmission (*samā'*); even a respected scholar who had actually heard a book from his teacher could be criticized for relying on another copy of that same book if he had not received *samā'* for that copy; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdað*, 4:293-4.

⁴² Muḥammad b. Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *Fahrasat mā rawāhu 'an shuyūkhihi min al-dawāwīn al-muṣannafā fī duriūb al-īlm wa anwā' al-ma 'arif* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijārī, 1963), 17; Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 62. The issue of the orality of knowledge in Islamic civilization and its tension with the written book, see Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 13-22; Paul L. Heck, "The Epistemological Problem of Writing in Islamic Civilization: al-Haṭīb al-Baġdādī's (d. 463/1071) *Taqyīd al-īlm*," *Studia Islamica* 94 (2002): 85-114, esp. 96.

collection, can you act on or transmit its contents?" Summarizing the majority opinion of the transmission-based scholars, Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) states that in the absence of a formal transmission of the text (*samā'*), one should neither narrate any of the book's contents to others nor feel obligated to act on its legal implications.⁴³ Without transmission, the text simply had no power.

Scholars articulating legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and the vast majority of jurists from the different Sunni *madhhabs* disagreed totally with this transmission-based stance. Acknowledging the prohibition of the *muḥaddithūn*, the great Shāfi‘ī jurist and theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) asserts that one can utilize a ḥadīth collection even without hearing it through an *isnād*.⁴⁴ Here he follows his teacher Imām al-Ḥaramayn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), who states that if a ḥadīth appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* one can transmit it, act on it and ask others to do so as well.⁴⁵ This opinion concurs with the Mālikī jurist Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) and the vast majority of jurists and legal theorists.⁴⁶

⁴³ Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl fī ahādīth ar-rasūl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā’ūt, 15 vols. ([Beirut]: Dār al-Mallāh 1389/1969), 1:88.

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

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

⁴⁶ Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī al-Qurtubī, *al-Ishāra fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Awād (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1418/1997), 162–3; Speaking on behalf of all jurists (*fuqahā’*), Ahmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Barhān al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 518/1124) repeats al-Ghazzālī’s above quote. Al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505) states that the earlier Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī legal theorist Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) claimed a consensus on this stance. There is also a report from al-Shāfi‘ī himself allowing this; Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī, *Fath al-mughīth*, ed. ‘Alī Ḥusayn ‘Alī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1424/2003), 1:83; ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, *al-Ajwiba al-fādila li ’l-as’ila al-‘ashara al-kāmila*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Μaṭbū‘at al-Islāmiyya, 1383/1963), 62. Ibn al-Salāh, however, reports that some Mālikī scholars reject narrating from a ḥadīth book for which one lacks *samā’*; Ibn al-Salāh, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 360; see also Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 241–2. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, seemingly trying to bridge the gap between ḥadīth

Reality: the Life and Works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

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

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

scholars and jurists, provides no definitive stance in his *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya*. He provides ten instances of earlier scholars narrating from books they found with no *samā‘*; on four occasions these earlier scholars negatively evaluate this act, and on two others they make sure to clarify that they are narrating from a text without *samā‘*; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya fī ma ḥifat ʿilm uṣūl al-riwāya*, ed. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Dimyāṭī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Hudā, 1423/2003), 2:361-6.

463/1071) in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* and Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) in his *Tārīkh al-islām*. Fragments of *Tārīkh Naysābūr* have also survived in an eighth/fourteenth century abridgement by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Khalīfa (fl. 720/1320).⁴⁷ But since al-Ḥākim was one of the central figures in the canonization of the *Shaykhayn*, we must be very wary of relying on his work for reconstructing pre-canonical perceptions of the *Sahīhayn*. Unfortunately, he represents the only real source for early information about Muslim in particular. Both Muslim and al-Ḥākim were citizens of Naysābūr, however, and al-Ḥākim's father met the great traditionist. We may thus feel more comfortable relying on al-Ḥākim in outlining Muslim's life and work in their native city.

Reality: al-Bukhārī, *Sāhib al-Ṣahīḥ*

Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra b. Bardizbeh al-Ju‘fī al-Bukhārī was born in Bukhara in 194/810. His family were wealthy landowners (*dehqān*), and his great-grandfather had converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism at the hands of Yamān al-Ju‘fī, the Arab governor of the city.⁴⁸ Al-Bukhārī himself lived off properties he rented out for monthly or yearly income.⁴⁹ He started studying ḥadīth at a

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

⁴⁸ Abū Aḥmad ‘Abdallāh Ibn ‘Adī al-Jurjānī, *Asāmī man rawā ‘anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī min mashāyikhīhi alladhi na dhakaruhum fī Jāmi‘ihī al-ṣahīḥ*, ed. Badr b. Muḥammad al-‘Ammāsh (Medina: Dār al-Bukhārī, 1415/[1994-5]), 59.

⁴⁹ Al-Dhahabī cites Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥātim al-Warrāq, al-Bukhārī's secretary, as saying that al-Bukhārī had a piece of land that he would rent every year for 700 *dirhams*. He quotes al-Bukhārī as saying: “I used to acquire (*astaghillu*) every month 500 *dirhams*, and I spent it all in the quest for knowledge;” al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:263-4; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī and ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. Bāz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1418/1997), 664.

young age, learning from local Bukharan experts, and in his late teens he began writing books on the sayings of the Companions and the Successors. His pilgrimage to Mecca at age sixteen was the beginning of a long career of traveling which took him to study with the most vaunted ḥadīth scholars of his day. In Khurāsān he visited Balkh, Merv and Naysābūr, where he studied with Ishāq b. Rāhawayh (d. 238/853). In western Iran he stayed in Rayy and made numerous trips to Baghdad, where he studied with Ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā b. Maṭīn. In Basra he heard from ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, who would become one of his main teachers, and Abū ‘Aṣim Dāḥhāk al-Nabīl (d. 212/827). He also studied in Wāsiṭ, Kufa and Medina. In Mecca he heard from ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219/834), and also went to Egypt and coastal cities like ‘Asqalān and Ḥims in greater Syria. There is some debate on whether he visited the cities of upper Mesopotamia (al-Jazīra),⁵⁰ and it is unclear whether he reached Damascus.⁵¹

Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī reported in his *Tārīkh Naysābūr* that al-Bukhārī arrived in Naysābūr for the last time in 250/864-5. Later Muslim sources convey the impression that he fairly quickly gained the enmity of Naysābūr’s senior ḥadīth scholar, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (d. 258/873), who had him expelled from the city due to his statement that the physical recitation (*lafż*) of the Qur’ān was created. Our earliest sources, however, suggest a more prolonged prelude to al-Bukhārī’s expulsion. We indeed do know from Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī’s (d. 327/938) *al-Jarḥ wa al-taṣlīl*, our earliest source

⁵⁰ Al-Subkī cites his teacher al-Mizzī’s rejection of al-Ḥākim’s claim that al-Bukhārī had entered the Jazīra and heard from people like Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abdallāh b. Zurāra al-Raqqī, Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya al-kubrā*, ed. Mahmūd Muḥammad al-Tanāḥī and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalwī, 10 vols. ([Cairo]: Ḫāṣa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1383-96/1964-76), 2:214.

⁵¹ Ibn ‘Asākir lists al-Bukhārī in his history of Damascus. For more on al-Bukhārī’s teachers, see Fuat Sezgin, *Buhārī’nin Kaynakları* (Istanbul: İbrahim Horoz Basimevi, 1956).

on al-Bukhārī, that al-Dhuhlī publicly condemned al-Bukhārī for his beliefs about the *lafz* of the Qur’ān.⁵² Furthermore, our sources are also unanimous that he used this as a pretext to demand al-Bukhārī’s expulsion from Naysābūr.

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

Ibn ‘Adī furnishes another reason for al-Dhuhlī’s animosity towards al-Bukhārī. He reports third hand from al-Dhuhlī’s son, Ḥaykān b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī⁵⁴ (d. 267/881), that he asked his father: “what is with you and this man – meaning Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl – when you are not one of those from whom he transmits (*wa lasta min rijālihi fī al-ilm*)? He said, ‘I saw him in Mecca and he was following Shamkhaḍa, (Ibn ‘Adī: Shamkhaḍa is a Kufan Qadarite) and when I reached [al-Bukhārī], he said, ‘I entered Mecca and I didn’t know anyone from among the ḥadīth scholars, while Shamkhaḍa knew them, so I would follow him so that he would acquaint me with them; so what is the shame in that?’”⁵⁵ Interestingly, with the exception of the encyclopedic Ibn ‘Asākir (d.

⁵² ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Abī Hātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarh wa al-Ta‘dīl*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1959), 4:1:182-3.

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

⁵⁴ Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:220.

⁵⁵ Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 66-7.

571/1176), Ibn ‘Adī’s report appears in none of the later sources.⁵⁶ There is not even any evidence that Ibn ‘Adī’s younger contemporary, al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, took it into consideration in his discussion of al-Bukhārī’s relationship with al-Dhuhlī. Since later apologists for al-Bukhārī never acknowledged it, and it was the *lafz* scandal and not this accusation which attracted detractors, we have no reason to doubt the provenance and veracity of Ḥaykān’s report. It thus seems likely that the *lafz* incident was not the immediate cause of al-Dhuhlī’s dislike for al-Bukhārī or the latter’s expulsion. It was merely a pretext, the last episode in an aversion that al-Dhuhlī had developed for al-Bukhārī earlier in his lengthy tenure in Naysābūr.

After his consequent expulsion from Naysābūr, al-Bukhārī returned to his native Bukhara in what would prove the last year of his life. He was soon driven from there as well. The Tāhirid *amīr* of Bukhara, Khālid b. Aḥmad (oddly also surnamed al-Dhuhlī), entertained many ḥadīth scholars, such as Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī (d. 294/906), as guests at his court.⁵⁷ He even ordered the ḥadīth scholar Naṣr b. Aḥmad al-Kindī ‘Naṣrak’ (d. 293/905-6) to come to his court and make him a *musnad*.⁵⁸ When he requested al-Bukhārī to provide his children with a private reading of the *Sahīh* and the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, the scholar refused to extend the *amīr* preferential treatment. Using al-Bukhārī’s controversial stance on the Qur’ān, the *amīr* ordered his expulsion from

⁵⁶ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muhibb al-Dīn Abū Sa‘īd ‘Umar al-‘Amrawī, 80 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1997), 52:95.

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

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

Bukhara. Tired and intimidated, al-Bukhārī passed through the city of Nasaf before dying in the village of Khartank a few miles from Samarcand.⁵⁹

Al-Bukhārī's early works consisted of musings on the sayings of the Companions and the Successors. These writings later matured into a much more ambitious project. He began his *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* (The Great History) while a young man in Medina. The extant work is a massive biographical dictionary of over 12,300 entries.⁶⁰ He is reported to have revised it at least three times over the course of his life, a fact that Christopher Melchert's analysis of the *Tārīkh* corroborates.⁶¹ Al-Bukhārī consistently provides neither full names nor evaluations of the persons in question, focusing instead on locating each subject within the vast network of ḥadīth transmission. The *Tārīkh* seems to have no connection to the author's *Sahīh*.⁶² Al-Bukhārī produced two smaller dictionaries of ḥadīth transmitters as well as the much smaller *Kitāb al-du'afā'*, a book on weak narrators. In addition, he wrote several smaller topical works, such as his *Khalq afāl al-ibād* (On the Created Actions of Men) and *Kitāb raf' al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt* (Book on Raising One's Hands in Prayer). There are reports that al-Bukhārī also produced an *īlal* book as well as a large *musnad*, both now lost.⁶³

⁵⁹ J. Robson, "al-Bukhārī," *EI*².

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

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

⁶² Melchert, "Bukhārī and Early ḥadīth Criticism," 12.

⁶³ Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 679.

a. *The Ṣahīḥ*

Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣahīḥ*, actually titled *al-Jāmi' al-musnad al-ṣahīḥ al-mukhtaṣar min amūr Rasūl Allāh wa sunanīhi wa ayyāmīhi* (The Abriged Authentic Compilation of the Affairs of the Messenger of God, his Sunna and Campaigns),⁶⁴ was a mammoth expression of his personal method of ḥadīth criticism and legal vision. It covers the full range of legal and ritual topics, but also includes treatments of many other issues such as the implication of technical terms in ḥadīth transmission and the authority of *āhād* ḥadīths (reports transmitted by only a few chains of transmission) in law.⁶⁵ The *Ṣahīḥ* consists of ninety seven chapters (*kitāb*), each divided into subchapters (*bāb*). The subchapter titles indicate the legal implication or ruling the reader should derive from the subsequent ḥadīths, and often include a short comment from the author.⁶⁶ Such short legal discussions often feature ḥadīths not naming al-Bukhārī's *shaykh* (termed *ta'īq* or *ḥadīth mu'allaq*) or a report from a Companion for elucidation. Al-Bukhārī often repeats a Prophetic tradition, but through different narrations and in separate chapters. Opinions have varied about the exact number of 'ḥadīths' in the *Ṣahīḥ*, since between the notion of

⁶⁴ Abū Naṣr Ahmad al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ‘Abdallāh al-Laythī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifā, 1407/1987), 1:23. For a discussion of the title of the *Ṣahīḥ*, see ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, *Taḥqīq ismāy al-Ṣahīhayn wa ism Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū'at al-Islāmiyya, 1414/1993), 9-12.

⁶⁵ Al-Bukhārī's chapter on Transmitted Knowledge (*Kitāb al-ilm*), for example, includes proof for his contention that the two technical phrases in ḥadīth transmission, "akhabaranā" and "haddathanā," are equivalent in meaning. In his chapter on the permissibility of using *āhād* hadīths in law, he includes a section on how the Prophet and his companions heeded the reports of individual women; see Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī sharḥ Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. Bāz and Muhammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1418/1997), 1:191-2; *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ilm, bāb 4*; and *Fath al-bārī*, 13:302, #7267; *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb akhbār al-āhād, bāb 6*.

⁶⁶ The best discussion to date of the nature of al-Bukhārī's legal commentary is Muhammad Fadel's "Ibn Hajar's *Hady al-Sārī*: A Medieval Interpretation of the Structure of al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣahīḥ*: Introduction and Translation," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54 (1995):161-195.

a ḥadīth as a ‘tradition’ (a saying attributed to the Prophet) and a ‘narration’ (one version of that saying narrated by a specific *isnād*) the definition of ‘ḥadīth’ can vary widely. Generally, experts have placed the number of full-*isnād* narrations at 7,397, with Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) counting a total of 9,082 including all the incomplete *isnāds*. Of these around 4,000 are repetitions, placing the number of Prophetic traditions between 2,602 (Ibn Ḥajar’s lowest count) and the more widely accepted 3,397-4,000.⁶⁷

Unlike Muslim, al-Bukhārī provides no methodological introduction to his *Sahīh*. As we shall see in Chapter Five, Islamic scholars spilled a great deal of ink attempting to reconstruct his requirements (*rasm* or *shurūt*) for authenticity (*siḥha*) from his *Sahīh* and *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*. With the exception of some statements gleaned from his extant works, however, our understanding of al-Bukhārī’s methods depends totally on either these later analyses or on statements attributed to al-Bukhārī in later sources.⁶⁸ It is generally believed that in his *Sahīh* al-Bukhārī followed his teacher ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī in requiring some proof that at each link in the *isnād* the two transmitters had to have narrated ḥadīths to one another in person at least once. Later scholars like al-Qādī ‘Iyād b. Mūsā (d. 544/1149) verified this by locating an occurrence of “he narrated to us (*haddathānā*)” between every two transmitters at each link in al-Bukhārī’s *isnāds*.⁶⁹ This

⁶⁷ Abd al-Rauf, “*Hadīth Literature*,” 274-5; Ibn Kathīr Ismā‘īl b. Abī Ḥafṣ (d. 774/1374), *al-Bā’ith al-hathīth sharh Ikhtisār ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1423/2003), 22. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states that al-Bukhārī’s book contains 4,000 Prophetic traditions (*uṣūl*); Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim min al-ikhlāl wa al-ghalāt*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1987), 101-2; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 648-53; Mullā Khāṭir, 41.

⁶⁸ An example of al-Bukhārī revealing his methods would be his statement in *Kitāb raf‘al-yadayn* that one narration adding a phrase in the *matn* of a ḥadīth (literal *matn* addition) is allowed if the narration is authentic (*idhā thabata*); al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb raf‘al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*, ed. Badī‘ al-Dīn al-Rāshidī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1416/1996), 131-3.

⁶⁹ For an excellent discussion of al-Bukhārī’s requirement, listen to Abū Ishaq al-Huwaynī, “*Silsilat sharh shart al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*,” from

is crucial for *isnāds* where transmission is recorded by the vague phrase “from/according to (*‘an*).” Unlike the transmission terms “he narrated to us” or “he reported to us (*akhbaranā*)”, “from / according to” could be used by someone who never met the transmitter of the ḥadīth in question. This means that in al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* any *isnād* with “from (*‘an*) so and so” in the *isnād* is theoretically equivalent to “so and so narrated to us directly.”

b. Legal Identity and Method

Al-Bukhārī’s never explicitly adhered to any of the nascent schools of law, though he was eventually claimed by all four *madhhabs*. He studied with several scholars closely associated with al-Shāfi‘ī, like al-Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī (d. 245/859) and Abū Thawr (d. 240/854). Although al-Bukhārī never narrates ḥadīths through al-Shāfi‘ī, the Shāfi‘ī biographers Abū ‘Āsim Muḥammad al-‘Abbādī (d. 458/1066) and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) use these scholarly links to tie al-Bukhārī to the school’s founder.⁷⁰ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā al-Ḥanbalī (d. 526/1131-2) claims al-Bukhārī was a Ḥanbalī because he transmitted ḥadīths and legal rulings from Ibn Ḥanbal, and some Mālikīs have considered him one of their own because he transmitted the *Muwatta’*. Even later

http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Scholar&iw_a=series&series_id=1437 (last accessed 2/1/04). The most exhaustive works on this issue are Muḥammad b. ‘Umar Ibn Rushayd, *al-Sanan al-abyan wa ’l-mawrid al-am ‘an fī al-muḥākama bayn al-imāmayn fī al-sanad al-mu ‘an ‘an*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥabīb b. Khawja (Tunis: Matba‘at al-Dār al-Tūnisīyya, 1397/1977), esp. 22-32; Khālid Maṣṣur ‘Abdallāh al-Durays, *Mawqif al-imāmayn al-Bukhārī wa Muslim min ishtirāt al-laqyā wa al-samā’ fī al-sanad al-mu ‘an ‘an bayn al-muta ṫṣirīn* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd and Sharikat al-Riyād, 1417/1997).

⁷⁰ Abū ‘Āsim Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-‘Abbādī, *Kitāb Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā’ aš-Šāfi‘īyya*, ed. Gösta Vitestam (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 53-4; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya al-kubrā*, 2:214.

Ḥanafīs claim al-Bukhārī, since they argue that one of his teachers, Ibn Rāhawayh, was Ḥanafī.⁷¹

An examination of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*, however, reveals that he was an independent scholar unconstrained by any particular school.⁷² In contrast to all four Sunni schools of law, he allows those who have had intercourse during the Ramadān fast to expiate their sin by performing charity but does not require them to repeat the day of fasting. In another break with the schools, he allows someone who has had intercourse and not performed ablutions (*junub*) to read the Qur'ān.⁷³ He also permits reading the Qur'ān in the bathroom, declares *'umra* to be mandatory just like *hajj*, and allows women not to veil themselves (*iḥtijāb*) in the company of slaves.⁷⁴

Al-Bukhārī obliquely sets forth his legal methodology in what may have originally been a separate work but now constitutes the penultimate chapter of the *Sahīh*, the *Kitāb al-iṭiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna* (the Book of Clinging to [God's] Book and the Sunna).⁷⁵ From the author's often detailed subchapter headings and the Prophetic and Companion traditions that he includes, the reader gleans a minimalist approach to law closely tied to the revealed sources. The Prophet has been sent with the totality of guidance to mankind, and adhering to his message is the key to salvation. The precedent

⁷¹ Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. Abū Ḥāzim Usāma b. Ḥasan and Abū al-Zahrā' Ḥāzim 'Alī Bahjat, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), 1:254-9; al-Ḥusaynī 'Abd al-Majīd Hāshim, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī muḥaddith^{an} wa faqīh^{an}* (Cairo: Miṣr al-'Arabiyya, n.d.), 167.

⁷² J. Robson agrees in his entry on al-Bukhārī; see J. Robson, "al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl," *EI*².

⁷³ Hāshim, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī muḥaddith^{an} wa faqīh^{an}*, 190-1.

⁷⁴ 'Abd al-Khāliq 'Abd al-Ghanī, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Sahīhuhi* (Jedda: Dār al-Manāra, 1405/1985), 146.

⁷⁵ For the tremendous implications of the chapter I am indebted to my friend and colleague Dr. Scott C. Lucas.

in the community, from the time of the first caliph Abū Bakr, is not to deviate from the Prophet's sunna. The next subchapter, however, is entitled "Concerning what is hated about asking too many questions," including a ḥadīth in which the Prophet states that the believer's greatest crime is to inquire about something previously unmentioned and thus cause its prohibition for the whole community.⁷⁶ Al-Bukhārī's opposition to the use of excessive legal reasoning and speculation manifests itself in his subchapters on "the condemnation of *ra'y* and excessive *qiyās* (*takalluf al-qiyās*)" and how the Prophet himself would not answer a question until God had revealed the answer to him.⁷⁷ Al-Bukhārī does, however, allow limited analogical reasoning based on the Prophet's answer to a man who had refused to acknowledge a black child to whom his wife had just given birth. The Prophet enlightens the man by asking him rhetorically if his camels are always the same color as their parents.⁷⁸

In the dichotomy between the *ahl al-hadīth* and the *ahl al-ra'y*, al-Bukhārī clearly identified himself with the transmission-based jurists. In the *Sahīh*, he uses his chapter headings and brief comments to differ on twenty-seven occasions with "a certain person (*ba' d al-nās*)."⁷⁹ Fourteen of these instances occur in a chapter devoted solely to rebutting the use of legal devices (*hiyal*), which were employed predominantly by Ḥanafis to

⁷⁶ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:328; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-i 'tiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna*, bāb 3 / #7289.

⁷⁷ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:349-359; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-i 'tiṣām bi'l-kitāb wa al-sunna*, bāb 7-8.

⁷⁸ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:366-7, #7314. This section is entitled *bāb man shabbaha aṣlān ma lūmān bi-aṣlin mubīn wa qad bayyana al-Nabī (ṣ) ḥukmahumā li-yafshama al-sā'il* (He who compares a known basis (*aṣl*) to another clear basis (*aṣl mubīn*), and the Prophet (ṣ) has clarified their ruling so that one can understand).

circumvent the literal requirements of their school's law.⁷⁹ Al-Bukhārī condemns *hiyal* using the famous ḥadīth that all deeds are judged by their intention.⁸⁰ In this al-Bukhārī was following the precedent of tradition-based jurists such as Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), who vehemently rejected the use of *hiyal*.⁸¹ Since the positions he rejects are associated with the Ḥanafī school, it seems almost certain that al-Bukhārī was referring to Abū Ḥanīfa. Al-Bukhārī, for example, disagrees with the well-known Ḥanafī laxity on defining intoxicants. Al-Bukhārī considers *tilā'* (reduced grape juice) to be a type of wine (*nabīdh*), while Ḥanafīs do not.⁸²

Outside his *Sahīḥ*, however, al-Bukhārī's disagreement with Abū Ḥanīfa and the *ahl al-ra'y* in general manifests itself in virulent contempt. He introduces his *Kitāb raf' al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt* as “a rebuttal of he (*man*) who rejected raising the hands to the head before bowing” and “misleads the non-Arabs on this issue (*abhama 'alā al-'ajam fi*

⁷⁹ 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Ghunaymī al-Maydānī al-Dimashqī (d. 1298/1880-1), *Kashf al-iltibās 'ummā awrada al-imām al-Bukhārī 'alā ba 'd al-nās*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyya, 1414/1993), 19; see Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 12:404-425.

⁸⁰ Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 12:405; *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ḥiyal*, bāb 1. For a recent discussion of *hiyal* in the Ḥanafī school and Islamic legal thought in general, see Satōe Horii, “Reconsideration of Legal Devices (*hiyal*) in Islamic Jurisprudence: the Ḥanafīs and their “Exits” (*makhārij*),” *Journal of Islamic Law and Society*, 9, no. 3 (2002): 312-357. The author describes how the Ḥanafī tradition used *hiyal* to provide people means by which to escape the more difficult sanctions of law in everyday life. It is also probable, in my opinion, that the emphasis that the early Ḥanafīs placed on the formal structure of *qiyās*, where the ruling must inhere whenever its immediate cause (*illa*) appears, made *hiyal* attractive. They allowed scholars to preserve the logical continuity of the *qiyās* system while avoiding some of its admittedly unjust or unfairly difficult results; a scholar could maintain the system of *qiyās* by acknowledging that the ruling inhered in the case, but then use a *ḥila* to deal more justly with it. The two manners in which *hiyal* were misunderstood by their opponents, that they were a means to cheat God's law or that they represented inappropriate rational gymnastics, would both have offended al-Bukhārī.

⁸¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:404 (biography of Abū Ḥanīfa), where Ibn al-Mubārak is quoted as saying “whoever looks into the Book of *Hiyal* of Abū Ḥanīfa has made permissible the impermissible and forbidden what is allowed.” See also Christopher Melchert, “The Adversaries of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,” *Arabica* 44 (1997): 236.

⁸² Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 11:696, #6685; *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-aymān wa al-nudhūr*, bāb 21.

dhālika)... turning his back on the sunna of the Prophet and those who have followed him....” He did this “out of the constrictive rancor (*haraja*) of his heart, breaking with the practice (*sunan*) of the Messenger of God (ṣ), disparaging what he transmitted out of arrogance and enmity for the people of the *sunan*; for heretical innovation in religion (*bid’ā*) had tarnished his flesh, bones and mind and made him revel in the non-Arabs’ deluded celebration of him.”⁸³ The object of this derision becomes clear later in the text, when al-Bukhārī includes a report of Ibn al-Mubārak praying with Abū Ḥanīfa (whom he calls by his first name and patronym, Nu‘mān b. Thābit). When Ibn al-Mubārak raises his hands a second time before bowing, Abū Ḥanīfa asks sarcastically, “aren’t you afraid you’ll fly away? (*mā khashīta an taṭīra?*),” to which Ibn al-Mubārak replies, “I didn’t fly away the first time so I won’t the second.”⁸⁴

c. Al-Bukhārī and the Controversy over the Created Wording of the Qur’ān

In light of al-Bukhārī’s strong identification with the *ahl al-hadīth*, it seems difficult to believe that radical members of that camp ostracized him for his stance on the Qur’ān. The issue of the createdness of the Qur’ān had begun in the early Abbasid period, when a group of Muslim rationalists that the transmission-based scholars and later Sunni orthodoxy would refer to as the Jahmiyya began asserting that God did not speak in the anthropomorphic sense of the word, for this would necessitate Him having organs of speech. Since this would belittle a power beyond the scope of human comparison,

⁸³ Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb raf‘al-yadayn fī al-salāt*, 20. This virulence is totally absent in Bukhārī’s chapters on this issue in his *Sahīh*; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 2:277-84. Note that the above mentioned edition of this text contains an error on this page; the editor read as “*mustaḥiqq*” what can only be “*mustakhif*”

⁸⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb raf‘al-yadayn*, 107.

they said that the Qur'ān and other instances of God's speech (such as Him speaking to Moses) were sounds that He created in order to convey His will to His domain.⁸⁵ These rationalists were similarly opposed to other manifestations of anthropomorphism, such as the notion that God could be seen by the believers on the Day of Judgment, that He could sit on a throne or descend to the lowest heavens at night.⁸⁶ They also rejected ideas equally incompatible with a rationalist demeanor, like the punishment of the grave (*‘adhāb al-qabr*).⁸⁷ Muslims who believed that the community should rely on the literal revelation received from the Prophet and his interpretation of the Qur'ān as preserved in the sunna of the early Muslim community, however, saw this rationalist movement as an attack on the textual authenticity of Islam. These traditionalists, who believed that one should not discuss these issues speculatively, opposed all instances of what they saw as the rationalist denial of God's attributes (*ta‘til*). Relying on the text of the Qur'ān, ḥadīths and the stances of prominent members of the early community, books such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *al-Radd ‘alā al-zanādiqa wa al-jahmiyya* (Refutation of the Heretics and Jahmiyya) asserted that God did in fact speak, that the Qur'ān was one of His uncreated attributes, that He did mount His throne and that the believers would receive the beatific vision.

⁸⁵ Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran" *Orientalia Hispanica Volumen 1*, ed. J.M. Barral (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 506. For interesting discussions of the debate over the nature of the Qur'ān and its *lafz* from within the Muslim tradition, see al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya*, 2:117-20 (biography of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Karābī); Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawā‘iq al-mursala*, 2 vols. in 1 (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Madanī, [n.d.]), 2:304-17; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:223; ‘Abd al-Khāliq ‘Abd al-Ghanī, *Al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Ṣahīhuhi*, 156-67.

⁸⁶ There is some indication that the third caliph to preside over the *mīḥna*, al-Wāthiq, added a denial of the beatific vision to the agenda of the inquisition; Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 143.

⁸⁷ Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," 510. See also Martin Hinds, "Mīḥna," *EI*².

The traditionalists' objections were not simply academic; they equated the assertion that the Qur'ān was created with calling God Himself created. Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qattān asked rhetorically of those who said the Qur'ān is created, “how do you create (*taṣna ūn*) [the Qur'ānic verses] ‘say He is the One God (*qul huwa Allāh aḥad*; Qur'ān 112:1),’ how do you create ‘indeed I am Allāh, there is no deity besides Me (*innanī anā Allāh, lā ilāh illā anā*; Qur'ān 14:20).’”⁸⁸ Moreover, the Qur'ān had become a bulwark of social capital in the emerging civilization of Islam. When a famous Ḥanafī judge, ʻIsā b. Abān (d. 221/836), who upheld the createdness of the Qur'ān, was presiding over a dispute between a Muslim and a Jew he asked the Muslim to swear “By God besides whom there is no other deity (*wa-lلāh alladhi lā ilāha illā huwa*).” His opponent objected, demanding that the judge make him swear by the real Creator, since these words were in the Qur'ān, which Muslims claimed was created.⁸⁹ The circulation of this story among traditionalists indicates that they felt that a belief in the createdness of the Qur'ān threatened its paramount role in society.

In the early third/ninth century, however, the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) instituted a purge of these traditionalist beliefs from the empire's corps of judges. His Inquisition (*miḥna*) was directed at those people who claimed to be the upholders of the Prophet's sunna and defenders of the community's unified identity, but, he claimed, were in reality demeaning God's greatness by putting the Qur'ān on par with His essence. The rationalists behind this movement, including many of the Ḥanafī judges

⁸⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afāl al-ibād*, ed. ʻAbd al-Rahmān ʻUmayra (Riyadh: Dār al-Maʻarif al-Sūdiyya, 1398/1978), 33; cf. Josef van Ess, “Ibn Kullāb et la *Mihna*,” *Arabica* 37 (1990): 198.

⁸⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11:160 (biography of ʻIsā b. Abān). For another reference to the controversy over this type of verse, see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:195 (biography of al-Nasā'ī).

of Baghdad and Samarra, rejected the idea upheld by the traditionalists that the Qu’rān was co-external with God, for that would mean that God was not the only eternal being.⁹⁰

Many of these rationalists were primarily concerned with polemics against Christian scholars who attempted to corner Muslims into accepting the divine nature of Christ by comparing him with the Qur’ān. If God states in the Qur’ān that Jesus is the word of God, just like the holy book itself, and that book is uncreated and co-eternal with God, then is Jesus not also co-eternal with God?⁹¹ Is it so absurd, then, to believe that in the beginning he was the Word, and that the Word was with God? In addition to rejecting the anthropomorphic claim that God spoke in the literal sense, these rationalists thus also insisted that the Qur’ān was created (*muḥdath*) as opposed to being an eternal attribute (*qadīm*) of God.

The grueling torture, imprisonment or humiliation of prominent and widely-respected ḥadīth scholars such as Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maṭīn and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī in the Baghdad *Miḥna* left an enduring and bitter impression on the ḥadīth scholar community. Although al-Ma’mūn and his two successors’ inquisition did not have as powerful a presence in Khurāsān and Transoxiana, it had increased the enmity between the *ahl al-hadīth* scholars and the Jahmī/Mu’tazilite/Ḥanafī rationalists who had

⁹⁰ Madelung, “The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran,” 516; Hinds, “Miḥna;” Melchert, “The Adversaries of Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal,” 238-9. For a critique of current scholarship on the *miḥna*, see Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 192-202.

⁹¹ Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 64; Madelung, “The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran,” 517. Madelung believes that the Muslim rationalist argument that the traditionalists were unintentionally abetting their Christian adversaries was more of an excuse for their attacks on the *ahl al-hadīth*. Muḥammad Abū Zahra, however, holds that the Mu’tazila and al-Ma’mūn were in fact sincerely concerned with defending Islamic doctrine from Christian and other rationalist opponents. There is also an interesting story about the distinction between *muḥdath* (created) and *qadīm* (eternal) being integral to an interfaith discussion between Hārūn al-Rāshīd and the sovereign of India; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:340.

prosecuted it. During the lifetime of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in the decades after their deaths, the question of the nature of the Qur’ān in particular remained a touchstone for the resentment built up between these groups. In Iraq Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/890) wrote *al-Ikhtilāffī al-lafz wa al-radd ‘alā al-Jahmiyya wa al-mushabbiha* (Disagreement over the *Lafz* and the Rebuttal of the Jahmiyya and the Anthropomorphists),⁹² and Ibn Abī Hātim also wrote a book refuting the Jahmiyya.⁹³ Even as late a scholar as al-Tabarānī (d. 360/971) wrote a book condemning those espousing a belief in the created Qur’ān.⁹⁴ In Naysābūr, when someone who upheld the createdness of the Qur’ān arrived in town the ḥadīth scholar Abū al-‘Abbās al-Sarrāj (d. 313/925) ordered the people in the market to curse him, and they complied.⁹⁵

The tremendous tension surrounding this issue led the most conservative section of the traditionalists to declare anathema anyone who asserted that the wording of the Qur’ān (*lafz*), the physical sound of the book being recited or its written form on a page, was created. This most intolerant end of the traditionalist spectrum, what George Makdisi called “ultra-conservatives,”⁹⁶ included the standard portrayal of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Akhram (d. 301/913-4), Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Dhuhlī of Naysābūr and others. These über-Sunnis repudiated any traditionists who did

⁹² Al-Bukhārī is not mentioned in this book, although Ibn Ḥanbal is; see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ikhtilāffī al-lafz wa al-radd ‘alā al-jahmiyya wa al-mushabbiha*, ed. Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sa‘āda, 1349/[1930]).

⁹³ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:34.

⁹⁴ Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Manda, “Manāqib al-Shaykh Abī al-Qāsim al-Tabarānī,” MS Esad Efendi 2431, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul: 14b.

⁹⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:215.

⁹⁶ George Makdisi, “Ash‘arī and the Ash‘arites in Islamic Religious History,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962):39.

not declare that the Qur’ān was God’s eternal speech and utterly increase. Those who simply proclaimed that the Qur’ān was God’s speech and then were silent, even those that collapsed under the weight of the Inquisition such as ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, were dubbed the “Those who stopped short (*wāqifiyya*)” and often equated with Jahmīs.⁹⁷ As Christopher Melchert observes, the über-Sunnis saw them as doubly dangerous because they were “self-proclaimed traditionalists” who identified themselves with the *ahl al-hadīth/ahl al-sunna* camp. The über-Sunnis thus reserved some of their fiercest diatribe for these folk.⁹⁸ Melchert has astutely identified this group between the über-Sunnis and their rationalist adversaries, dubbing them “the semi-rationalists.” He includes a diverse selection of scholarly figures, from al-Shāfi‘ī’s most famous disciple al-Muzanī to the great historian and exegete al-Tabarī.⁹⁹ The identifying characteristic of what Melchert

⁹⁷ Wilferd Madelung, “The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran,” 521. Although Ibn Hanbal narrates some ḥadīths from ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī in his *Musnad*, one of his son’s students, al-Uqaylī, said that when he studied Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Kitāb al-ṣīlāt* with Ibn Hanbal’s son ‘Abdallāh he saw that Ibn Ḥanbal had crossed out ‘Alī’s name in many *isnāds* and replaced it with “a man.” Nonetheless, al-Uqaylī affirms that ‘Alī’s ḥadīths are reliable; Muhammad b. ‘Amr al-Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-ḍū’ qāfā’ al-kabīr*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mu’īr Amīn Qal’ajī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1404/1984), 3:239.

⁹⁸ Melchert, “The Adversaries of Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal,” 252.

⁹⁹ Melchert’s evidence for al-Tabarī’s stance on this issue (see Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-mīzān* {Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1330/[1912]}), 3:295 [biography of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī] is meager (as Melchert himself admits elsewhere, the charge “looks anachronistic”). In his *al-Tabṣīr fī ma ẓulim al-dīn*, al-Tabarī cleverly avoids discussing the issue of the *lafz* of the Qur’ān. He explicitly states that the Qur’ān is neither created nor a creator – the *ahl al-hadīth* position – supporting his stance with a long logical argument. On the issue of the *lafz* of the Qur’ān, however, al-Tabarī refers the reader to his discussion of the acts of humans (*af’al al-ibād*). In this discussion, he rejects the Qadarī and Jahmī position (the latter that men have no control over their acts) and embraces the third position, that of the *jamhūr ahl al-ithbāt* (the majority of those who affirm God’s power over destiny), namely that God guides those destined for faith to faith and vice versa. He does not clearly state, however, whether or not men’s acts are created. His exact position on the *lafz* issue thus remains unclear. See al-Tabarī, *al-Tabṣīr fī ma ẓulim al-dīn*, ed. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Azīz al-Shibl (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āsimah, 1416/1996); 167-76, 200-5; cf. Melchert, “The Adversaries of Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal,” 245-7; idem, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th and 10th Centuries C.E* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 195.

admits is a loosely-knit group is their belief that the *lafz* of the Qur'ān is created. He includes al-Bukhārī in this number because he upheld this stance.

Yet it is not very accurate to employ the term “rationalist” in any sense when describing al-Bukhārī, since he was a diehard traditionalist. Rather, we should view him as a representative of Ibn Ḥanbal’s original traditionalist school who fell victim to its most radical wing. Indeed al-Bukhārī’s *Khalq afūl al-ibād* constitutes the earliest representation of the position taken by Ibn Ḥanbal, a figure often coopted by later groups to legitimize their stances.¹⁰⁰ Al-Bukhārī wrote this work within years of Ibn Ḥanbal’s death in 241/855, and he incisively identified the polemical circus that had already grown up around Ibn Ḥanbal’s persona:

And as for what the two sects [of the rationalists and ḥadīth scholars] that claim proof for themselves from Aḥmad, many of their reports [from him] are not reliable. Perhaps they have not understood the precise subtlety of his stance (*diqqat madhhabihi*). It is known that Aḥmad and all the people of knowledge hold that God’s speech is uncreated and that all other speech is created. Indeed they hated discussing and investigating obscure issues, and they avoided the people of dialectical theology (*kalām*), speculation (*al-khwād*) and disputation (*tanāzu'*) except on issues in which they had [textual] knowledge.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal’s role as a figure on which different schools of thought have projected their particular stances is well-known. Ibn Ḥanbal is most famous for stating that “he who says my wording of the Qur’ān is created is *Jahmī*, and he who says it is not created is guilty of *bid‘a*.” Another, less likely, report through Ibn Ḥanbal’s student Ibrāhīm al-Harbī tells of someone asking Ibn Ḥanbal about a group of people who say that “our wording of the Qur’ān is created.” He replied, “The slave approaches God through the Qur’ān by five means, in which [the Qur’ān] is not created: memorizing in the heart, reading by the tongue, hearing by the ear, seeing with the eye, and writing by the hand. The heart is created and what it memorizes is not; the reading (*tilāwa*) is created but what is read is not; hearing is created but what is heard is not; sight is created but what is seen is not; and writing is created but what is written is not;” Ibn al-Qayyim, *Mukhtaṣar al-sawā’iq al-mursala*, 2:313-4; for another example of attributions to Ibn Ḥanbal, see Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh li-mā uṭliqa wa ughliqa min Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh Shāhīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1420/1999), 205.

¹⁰¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afūl al-ibād*, 62.

Al-Bukhārī's allegiance to the *ahl al-hadīth* camp and Ibn Ḥanbal himself is thus obvious. He even quotes Ibn Ḥanbal as evidence for his position on the *lafz*.¹⁰²

Melchert admits that the semi-rationalists were a diverse group, but it seems more accurate to group al-Bukhārī with the traditionalist camp of Ibn Ḥanbal than with al-Ṭabarī, whose explanation of why the Qur'ān is uncreated consists of several pages of logic discussing accidents and whether or not speech can inhere in the essence (*dhāt*) of a thing. Also, Melchert's description of the semi-rationalists as "insinuating the tools of the rationalists into traditionalist practice" would hardly place al-Bukhārī in the environs of the rationalist camp. None of al-Bukhārī's extant works employ Islamicate logic or the philosophical jargon found in al-Ṭabarī's discussion.¹⁰³

It is more accurate to describe al-Bukhārī as a conservative traditionalist trying to navigate the contradictions inherent in the blunt *ahl al-sunna* creed touted by the über-Sunnis like al-Dhuhlī. Al-Bukhārī knew that the Qur'ān was God's uncreated speech, but he also knew that God creates humans' actions, as the *ahl al-sunna* had insisted in their attacks on the free-will position of their Qadarite opponents. What, then, does one say of the Qur'ān when it becomes manifested in a human act such as recitation or writing?

From our earliest sources about al-Bukhārī's life, it seems that he was very reluctant to discuss this issue at all. He would understandably have viewed it as speculation (*khawād*) and thus tried to avoid it. Our earliest substantial source on al-

¹⁰² Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af'āl al-ibād*, 108.

¹⁰³ Al-Bukhārī's *Khalq af'āl al-ibād* is little more than a collection of proof texts from Prophetic ḥadīths and earlier Muslim authorities, including Ibn Ḥanbal himself. Only at the very end of his book does al-Bukhārī resort to what could be termed dialectics, such as the use of constructions like "if someone says... let it be said to him" or terms like *bayān*. Often when this work does resort to dialectical arguments, they center on combating his opponents' use of ḥadīths. See al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af'āl al-ibād*, 105-6; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya*, 2:229.

Bukhārī, Ibn ‘Adī, includes a story he heard from a group of his teachers which tells of al-Bukhārī refusing to answer questions about the nature of the Qur’ān’s wording until absolutely pressed, saying ““The Qur’ān is God’s speech, uncreated, and the acts of men are created, and inquisition (*imtiḥān*) is heresy (*bid’ā*).”¹⁰⁴

Al-Bukhārī’s defense against the accusations of the über-Sunnis, his *Khalq af’al al-ibād*, displays this same caution. The first section of the book is devoted solely to narrations from earlier pious authorities such as Sufyān al-Thawrī that affirm the increase nature of the Qur’ān and condemn anyone who holds that position as a Jahmī or unbeliever. The second section argues that the acts of men are created, relying on Qur’ānic verses and reports from such vaunted traditionalists as Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qatṭān. Al-Bukhārī himself rarely comments, but does assert that men’s actions, voices, and writing are created. He then begins introducing narrations from the Prophet that suggest that it is permissible to sell and buy printed copies of the Qur’ān.¹⁰⁵ Finally, he provides a ḥadīth of the Prophet enjoining Muslims to “beautify the Qur’ān with your voices” and a report from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that there will come a time when nothing remains of the Qur’ān except its written form.¹⁰⁶ These reports insinuate that physical manifestations of the Qur’ān do indeed belong to the material world. The author then returns to refuting the rationalists, reemphasizing that the belief that human acts are created is not heresy

¹⁰⁴ Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 64-5. This story also appeared in al-Ḥākim’s *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, narrated from Ibn ‘Adī. See al-Dhahabī *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:266.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af’al al-ibād*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ “Ya’ti ‘alā al-nās zamān lā yabqā min al-islām illā ismuhu wa lā min al-qur’ān illā rasmuhu;” al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af’al al-ibād*, 66-7.

(*bid'a*).¹⁰⁷ Only at this point does al-Bukhārī begin actively arguing that the sound of the Qur'ān being recited is created.

Reality: Muslim, the junior partner

Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī was born in 206/821 in Naysābūr. He first heard from Iṣhāq b. Rāhawayh and Yāḥyā b. Yāḥyā al-Tamīmī (d. 224-6/839-41) in his hometown before leaving for a pilgrimage to Mecca in 220/835. In the Ḥijāz he heard from ‘Abdallāh b. Maslama al-Qa‘nabī (d. 220-1/835-6), a favorite transmitter of Mālik's *Muwatta'*, and others. He later visited Baghdad to hear from Ibn Ḥanbal and also went to Basra. He went to greater Syria, Egypt and Rayy, where he met several times with Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī (d. 264/878) and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277/890). A few years before his death he settled in Naysābūr, where he became one of the senior ḥadīth scholars in the city and a central figure for study.¹⁰⁸ It was there that he studied and became acquainted with al-Bukhārī. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, whose father met Muslim, recalls that Muslim's “place of business (*matjar*) was Khān Maḥmash,” where his father saw him narrating ḥadīths. Muslim's livelihood also came from his properties at Ustū which came from “the progeny (*a qāb*) of the females of his family.”¹⁰⁹ He died in 261/875 at the age of fifty-five.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af‘al al-ibād*, 102-4.

¹⁰⁸ In his biography of Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn al-Qabbānī (d. 289/901-2) al-Dhahabī notes Abū ‘Abdallāh b. al-Akhrām (d. 344/955) saying: “the people of ḥadīth used to gather around him (*‘indahu*) after Muslim,” al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:183.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:187.

Muslim left many more works than his elder contemporary. His most famous, of course, was his *Şahīh*, originally titled *al-Musnad al-şahīh*.¹¹⁰ Muslim also produced two larger collections, a *muṣannaf* and a *musnad*, representing the sum total of the ḥadīth corpus from which he selected his *Şahīh*. Ibn al-Jawzī does not believe that anyone ever transmitted this large *musnad* from Muslim.¹¹¹ He also produced several biographical dictionaries. The largest one, his *Tabaqāt*, simply provides the names of the ḥadīth transmitters in the generations after the Prophet. Other smaller works, such as the *Munfaridāt*, the *Wihdān* and the *Dhikr man laysa lahu illā rāwin wāhid min ruwāt al-ḥadīth*, detail people who lack more than one transmitter from them.¹¹² Like al-Bukhārī and many other ḥadīth masters of his age, Muslim produced a book of criticized narrations (*Kitāb al-ilal*), and, a work of the same ilk but designed for a more general audience. This *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* has survived in part, and along with Muslim's involved introduction to his *Şahīh*, provides invaluable information about its author and his leanings.

a. Muslim's Methodology in his *Şahīh*

One of the most prominent statements Muslim makes about his methodology is his comparatively lax requirement for ascertaining whether a link in an *isnād* marked by “from / according to (‘an)” actually occurred through personal contact. When “‘an” is

¹¹⁰ This is somewhat misleading, since Muslim's work is topically organized, not a *musnad*. Abū Khayr al-Ishbīlī recorded the full title as *al-Musnad al-şahīh al-mukhtaṣar min al-sunan bi-naql al-‘adl ‘an al-‘adl ‘an rasūl Allāh s*; Abū Ghudda, *Tahqīq ismay al-Şahīhayn*, 33-4.

¹¹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:171.

¹¹² One such work has been published under the title *al-Munfaridāt wa al-wahdān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bandārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1408/1988).

used, Muslim does not require affirmative proof that the two transmitters actually met, but rather that they were contemporaries with no “clear indication (*dalāla bayyina*)” that they did not meet. Here Muslim calls upon the example of Mālik, Shu‘ba, Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qattān and ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī, who “only felt compelled to find a guarantee of direct transmission (*samā‘*) if the narrator was known to conceal his immediate source (*mudallis*).”¹¹³ In this Muslim openly breaks with what scholars have determined about al-Bukhārī and his teacher ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī. Muslim acknowledges that there are those who uphold that position, but he angrily asserts that they lack precedent from earlier ḥadīth masters.¹¹⁴ The notion that affirming one meeting between two transmitters somehow assures direct transmission for all their ḥadīths, he states, is absurd. He provides examples of *isnāds* where two narrators who had met nonetheless occasionally transmitted via an intermediary concealed by a “*an*” link in the *isnād*.¹¹⁵ Moreover, those who adhere to this position are unnecessarily dismissing many authentic ḥadīths. “If we were to count the authentic reports (*al-akhbār al-sihāh*) . . .,” he says, “that would be maligned by the claim of this claimant, we would not be able to measure the extent.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:26.

¹¹⁴ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:23, 28. The majority of later commentators assumed that Muslim meant al-Bukhārī, but Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1374) believes he intended ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī. The most comprehensive treatment of this question occurs in ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda’s third appendix to al-Dhahabī’s *al-Mūqīza*. He feels the person in question cannot be al-Bukhārī because, assuming Muslim wrote his introduction before he completed the book, he would not even have met al-Bukhārī at the time; he only met his teacher in 250-1 AH when al-Bukhārī came to Naysābūr; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-hathīth*, 45; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza fī ʻulūm muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Islāmiyya, 1405/1084), 122-140.

¹¹⁵ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:24-5.

¹¹⁶ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:26.

In his introduction, Muslim divides ḥadīths and their concomitant transmitters into three groups, stating that he will rely on two of them in his *Sahīh*. The first consists of the well-established ḥadīths whose transmitters do not lapse into the “excessive confusion” (*takhlīt fāhish*) into which many *muhaddiths* stumble. Having exhausted this group, he will proceed to the reports of transmitters who are not as masterful as the first group but nonetheless “are characterized by pious behavior (*satr*), honesty and pursuing knowledge.” He will not take reports from the third group, which consists of those who either forge ḥadīths or whose material differs beyond reconciliation with that of superior scholars.¹¹⁷

Muslim’s *Sahīh* contains far fewer chapters than al-Bukhārī’s, with only fifty-four, and lacks al-Bukhārī’s legal commentary. It has many more narrations, numbering about 12,000, with 4,000 repetitions. According to Muslim’s companion Aḥmad b. Salama al-Bazzār (d. 286/899), who was with Muslim for fifteen years while he wrote the *Sahīh*, this number is based on Muslim’s very *isnād*-based definition of a ḥadīth. If he had heard the same tradition from two *shaykhs*, he considered it to be two ḥadīths.¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) places the number of Prophetic traditions in the *Sahīh* at around 4,000.¹¹⁹ Unlike al-Bukhārī, Muslim keeps all the narrations of a certain ḥadīth in the same section. Muslim also diverges significantly from al-Bukhārī in his exclusion of Companion ḥadīths and narrations without full *isnāds* (*ta ḥiqāt*) as commentary.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:4-5.

¹¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:186; Abd al-Rauf, “*Hadīth* Literature,” 275.

¹¹⁹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 101-2.

¹²⁰ Scholars have generally counted only 12-14 instances of incomplete *isnāds* (*ta ḥiq*) used for commentary in Muslim’s book; cf. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 77.

Muslim's *Sahīh* overlaps a great deal with that of his teacher al-Bukhārī; according to Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Jawzaqī (d. 388/998), whose book *al-Muttafaq* combined the two books, there are 2,326 common traditions.¹²¹ The two scholars drew on essentially the same pool of transmitters, with approximately 2,400 narrators in common.¹²² Al-Bukhārī narrated from only about 430 that Muslim did not, while Muslim used about 620 transmitters al-Bukhārī excluded.¹²³

Scholars have generally devoted much less attention to Muslim's legal positions, perhaps because his *Sahīh* is more simply a ḥadīth book than al-Bukhārī's legally charged work.¹²⁴ Not only does Muslim's book cover many fewer legal topics than his teacher, his chapters often provide support for both sides of a particular issue. Indeed he may have left his subchapters without titles, and he never raged as angrily as al-Bukhārī in any of his extant works.¹²⁵ Muslim thus does not appear in al-‘Abbādī or al-Subkī's roster of the Shāfi‘ī school. Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, on the other hand, does include him in the *Tabaqāt al-*

¹²¹ Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Salāh*, ed. Mas‘ūd ‘Abd al-Hamīd al-Sa‘dāfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1414/1994), 69–70. Ibn Hajar states that al-Jawzaqī considers the same tradition from two different Companions to be one ḥadīth. This would mean that his account of the number of ḥadīths common to both the *Sahīhs* is probably much lower than other Muslim scholars might consider.

¹²² This number was arrived at by Abū al-Faḍl Muhammād b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī b. al-Qaysarānī (d. 507/1113); Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 182.

¹²³ This number was arrived at by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and quoted by Ibn al-Salāh; Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 84.

¹²⁴ In the introduction to his *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*, al-Ismā‘īlī states that one of the reasons al-Bukhārī's book is superior to both Muslim's and Abū Dāwūd's is that he provides better explanation of the legal implications of the ḥadīth; see Tāhir al-Jazā‘irī al-Dimashqī (d. 1338/1919–20), *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū al-Ghudda, 2 vols. (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū‘at al-Islāmiyya, 1416/1995), 1:305.

¹²⁵ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1407/1987), 1:129.

hanābila, emphasizing his narrations from Ibn Ḥanbal and his discussing ḥadīth

narrators with him.¹²⁶

These sources leave little doubt concerning Muslim's identification with the transmission-based school. Muslim reportedly criticized Abū Ḥanīfa and the *ahl al-ra'y*, but in this he is simply one of the legions of ḥadīth scholars who held that opinion. His comments certainly lack al-Bukhārī's ferocity. Al-Jawzaqī quotes him as saying that Abū Ḥanīfa was "a practitioner of legal analogy whose ḥadīths are problematic (*sāhib ra'y, muqtarib al-hadīth*)."¹²⁷ In the introduction to his *Sahīh*, Muslim also gives a report condemning answering questions for which one has no textual recourse (*ilm*) or narrating from untrustworthy people.¹²⁸ Like al-Bukhārī, Ibn Ḥanbal and other *ahl al-hadīth*, this position represents the rejection of speculation on issues of dogma (*khawd*).

Unlike al-Bukhārī, Muslim managed to avoid the controversy that plagued the latter part of his senior's career. Although later sources report that Muslim explicitly shared al-Bukhārī's stance on the created *lafz* of the Qur'ān, there is no early evidence for this. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, who notes al-Bukhārī's *lafz* scandal, mentions nothing of the sort in his entry on Muslim. When al-Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 344/955) of Naysābūr asked his father whose book he should imitate, al-Bukhārī or Muslim's, his father directed him towards Muslim's *Sahīh* because he was not tainted by the *lafz* issue.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibn Abī Ya'la, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 1:311-2.

¹²⁷ Ibn al-Najjār, *Kitāb al-radd ʻalā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʻAbd al-Qādir ʻAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyya, 1417/1997), 101.

¹²⁸ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:13.

¹²⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:75; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8.

Nonetheless, Muslim also fell out with al-Dhuhlī, who seems to have been unable to bear serious competition in Naysābūr. Like al-Bukhārī's case, al-Dhuhlī's animosity towards Muslim was not sudden. Al-Hākim reports from Tāhir b. Aḥmad, who heard Muslim's student Makkī b. ‘Abdān say that when Dāwūd b. ‘Alī al-Zāhirī (d. 270/884) came to Naysābūr to study with Ishāq b. Rāhawayh they held a discussion (*al-nazar*) session for him. Al-Dhuhlī's son Ḥaykān (d. 267/881) and Muslim, at that time no older than thirty-two, attended. Ḥaykān gave his opinion on an issue, and Dāwūd scolded him (*zabarahu*), saying 'Be silent, youth!' Muslim did not rally to his side. Ḥaykān then went back to his father and complained about Dāwūd. Al-Dhuhlī asked who was with him in the debate, and Ḥaykān replied, "Muslim, and he did not support me." Al-Dhuhlī bellowed, "I take back all that I transmitted to him (*raja ʻtu ʻan kull mā haddathtuhu bihi*)."¹³⁰ When Muslim heard this he "collected all that he had written from him in a basket and sent it to him, saying 'I won't narrate from you ever,'" then left to study with ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd. (d. 249/863).¹³⁰ Al-Hākim, however, feels that the last part of this story is inaccurate. He states that Muslim continued to associate and study with al-Dhuhlī until al-Bukhārī's *lafz* scandal some twenty years later. When al-Dhuhlī prohibited his students from attending al-Bukhārī's lessons, Muslim stood up and left al-Dhuhlī's circle, sending a porter to him with all the material he had received from him.¹³¹ That the tension between Muslim and al-Dhuhlī was longstanding dovetails with an otherwise bizarre quote from Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, who criticized Muslim as unreasonable,

¹³⁰ Cited from al-Hākim's *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:187; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:93.

¹³¹ Al-Hākim as quoted in al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:188, cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103 for the same narration with the same *isnād* through al-Hākim.

saying “If he had tended properly to (*dārā*) Muḥammad b. Yaḥya [al-Dhuhlī] he would have become a man!”¹³²

Perception: al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the Greatest Generation

To the *ahl al-hadīth* community, in the decades after their deaths al-Bukhārī and Muslim were simply two accomplished scholars among many. They studied at the hands of titans and were survived by cohorts who often outshone them in the eyes of fourth/tenth century ḥadīth authorities. To best understand their place in this context, we shall compare perceptions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim with those of their teachers, such as ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, Ishaq b. Rāhawayh and Ibn Ḥanbal; and their peers, like al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī and his colleague Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī.

Our earliest sources leave no doubt that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were certainly respected authorities whose talents were widely recognized. Al-Ḥākim narrates from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mudhakkir that Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) said, “I have not seen beneath the heavens one more knowledgeable in ḥadīth than Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī.”¹³³ Ibn ‘Adī heard al-Bukhārī’s student Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firabī (d. 320/932) say that al-Najm b. al-Faḍl had seen the Prophet in a dream, with al-Bukhārī walking behind him exactly in his footsteps.¹³⁴ Oddly, there is little explicit praise for

¹³² Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 12:187; 19:341.

¹³³ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, ed. Mu‘azzam Husayn (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1385/1966), 93.

¹³⁴ Ibn ‘Adī, *al-Kāmil fī du‘afā’ al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1405/1985), 1:140.

Muslim in the early sources. In a rare Persian quote, al-Ḥākim cites Ishāq b.

Rāhawayh saying “What a man [Muslim] is!”¹³⁵

Later sources of course overflow with reports about both men’s abilities, phrased in the hyperbolic style so common to Muslim scholarly expression. Al-Khaṭīb quotes Ibn Ḥanbal’s saying that the mastery of ḥadīth (*hifz*) ends with four people from Khurāsān: Abū Zur‘a, al-Bukhārī, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) and al-Ḥasan b. Shujā‘ al-Balkhī (d. 266/880).¹³⁶ In *Tārīkh Baghdād* we also find a quote from al-Bukhārī’s Basran teacher Muḥammad b. Bashshār Bundār (d. 252/866) saying that “the ḥadīth masters (*huffāz*) of the world are four...:” Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī in Rayy, Muslim in Naysābūr, al-Dārimī in Samarqand and al-Bukhārī in Bukhara.¹³⁷

Yet in our earliest sources instances of such hyperbolic praise often ignore al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Even Muslim’s colleague Aḥmad b. Salama is reported to have said, “I have not seen after Ishāq [b. Rāhawayh] and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā [al-Dhuhlī] someone with more command of ḥadīth (*ahfaz li-al-hadīth*), nor more knowledgeable as to their meanings, than Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs [al-Rāzī].”¹³⁸ In his book on al-Bukhārī’s teachers, Ibn ‘Adī records a statement from another of their contemporaries, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khurrādh (d. 281-4/894-8). He says that “the most prodigious in memory (*ahfaz*) I have seen are four: Muḥammad b. Minhāl al-Ḍarīr, Ibrāhīm b.

¹³⁵ “*mardī keh īn būd;*” al-Ḥākim, *Ma’rifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 98.

¹³⁶ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:21, 10:326 (biography of Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī); Yāqūt b. ‘Abdallāh al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229), *Mu’jam al-buldān*, 6 vols. (Tehran: Maktabat al-Asadī, 1965), 1:714.

¹³⁷ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:16; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:89.

¹³⁸ Al-Ḥākim, *Ma’rifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 95-96; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:73.

Muhammad. b. ‘Ar‘ara, Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim [al-Rāzī].”¹³⁹ Even reports only found in later sources often neglect the two scholars. In al-Dhahabī’s *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, Abū Ishaq Ibrāhīm Ibn Ūrama of Isfahan (d. 266/880) is quoted as saying during al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s lifetimes that “now there remain only three in the world: al-Dhuhlī in Khurāsān, Ibn al-Furāt in Isfahan, and [al-]Ḥasan b. ‘Alī] al-Ḥulwānī (d. 243/857-8) in Mecca.”¹⁴⁰

But how did ḥadīth scholars in the century after al-Bukhārī and Muslim view them in holistic surveys of the ḥadīth tradition? The earliest impression we have comes from Abū Ḥātim’s son Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s (d. 327/938) monumental treatise on the discipline of ḥadīth criticism, *al-Jarḥ wa al-taṣlīl* (Criticism and Approval). At the beginning of the work, the author provides lengthy and laudatory chapters devoted to pillars of the ḥadīth tradition such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Wakī‘ b. Jarrāḥ. This section ends with the great scholars Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, but also includes Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī and the author’s father. Although al-Bukhārī and Muslim both died before the two Rāzīs, Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes only short and unremarkable entries to them in the main biographical body of his dictionary. For al-Bukhārī he states that his father and Abū Zur‘a rejected his ḥadīth after al-Dhuhlī wrote informing them of his view on the Qur’ān.¹⁴¹ Muslim receives a similarly plain entry with the compliment

¹³⁹ Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 138; idem, *al-Kāmil*, 1:143.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:80. For Ibn Ūrama’s biography, see al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:40; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:151. For al-Ḥulwānī, see al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:377-8; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 196-7. For Ibn al-Furāt, see al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:96-7.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa al-taṣlīl*, 2:3:191.

“trustworthy, one of the ḥadīth masters (*huffāz*) with a knowledge of ḥadīth.”¹⁴²

Neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim merited a place in the last great generation of their teachers.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s view is of course very biased; his inclusion of his father and his close associate Abū Zur‘a in the pantheon of great ḥadīth scholars was no doubt an act of discretion. In examining the initial reception of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works, however, it is biased perception that interests us. For Ibn Abī Ḥātim, one of the most influential figures in the development of ḥadīth criticism, Muslim is negligible and al-Bukhārī anathema. As we shall see, the cadre of Rāzī ḥadīth scholars based in Rayy provided the earliest and most vocal reaction to al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s careers.

In his *Kitāb al-majrūhīn* (Book of Criticized Narrators), Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965) includes a review of the various generations of ḥadīth scholars who had toiled to preserve the legacy of the Prophet. The generation that inherited this trade and learned from masters like Mālik b. Anas and Shu‘ba b. al-Hajjāj consists of Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī (the three biggest), Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, ‘Ubaydallāh al-Qawāṣīrī (d. 235/850) and Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 234/848). The next generation, which “took from them this path of criticism” he lists as al-Dhuhlī, al-Dārimī, Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī.¹⁴³ Here we clearly see a division between al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s generation and that of their teachers from whom they derived their skills. The two scholars, however, receive no special attention.

¹⁴² Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta‘līl*, 4:1:182-3.

¹⁴³ Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-majrūhīn min al-muḥaddithīn al-du‘afā’ wa al-matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Wa‘y, 1396/1976), 1:54-7.

In his early work on the discipline of ḥadīth transmission, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil* (The Virtuous Ḥadīth Scholar), al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmhurmuzī (d. 360/970-1) lists five generations of great ḥadīth collectors who brought together the transmitted materials of various regions. His third generation includes men like Ibn Ḥanbal and Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, his fourth the likes of al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, and Abū Dāwūd. The fifth and final generation includes Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Nasā’ī, al-Ṭabarī and others.¹⁴⁴ Al-Bukhārī and Muslim appear nowhere.

In his *al-Kāmil fī ẓu ʻafā’ al-rijāl* (The Complete Book on Weak Transmitters), Ibn ‘Adī (d. 365/975-6) places al-Bukhārī at the beginning of the final generation (*tabaqā*) of ḥadīth scholars. Although this generation includes Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Abū Zur‘a as well as al-Nasā’ī, Muslim never appears. These scholars follow the era of men like Ibn Ḥanbal, Ishāq b. Rāhawayh and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī. Ibn ‘Adī quotes the litterateur *cum* ḥadīth scholar Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839) of Naysābūr on the definitive place of this greatest generation: “[Mastery of] ḥadīth stopped at four people: Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maṭīn, and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī.”¹⁴⁵

Muslim scholars outside the Sunni traditionalist fold also grasped the prominence of the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and his contemporaries. The Mu’tazilite Abū Qāsim al-Balkhī (known as al-Kābī, d. 319/931) wrote his *Qubūl al-akhbār* (The Acceptance of Reports) as a weapon against the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. In it he gathered damning judgments on respected Sunni ḥadīth transmitters from prominent members of the *ahl al-*

¹⁴⁴ Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmhurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāḍil bayn al-rāwī wa ’l-wā’i*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb ([Beirut]: Dār al-Fikr, 1391/1971), 229-31.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn ‘Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 1:129.

ḥadīth themselves. Yet al-Balkhī never refers to Muslim and does not mention al-Bukhārī in the chapter citing evaluations of Sunni transmitters.¹⁴⁶ Instead, he relies principally on Ibn Ḥanbal, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, Abū Khaythama, al-Shāfi‘ī, Mālik, and Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn.

In his *Fihrist*, written in 377/987-8, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. after 385-8/995-8) lists al-Bukhārī and Muslim as just two of sixty-three transmission-based jurists in Islamic history. Along with others like Sufyān al-Thawrī, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and al-Tirmidhī, he describes them simply as experts and trustworthy narrators (*thiqā*).¹⁴⁷ Neither of their biographies, however, matches that of the later Kufan chief judge and ḥadīth scholar Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Ismā‘il al-Mahāmilī (d. 330/942); Ibn al-Nadīm states that no one was more knowledgeable than him in ḥadīth.¹⁴⁸

Reception: the Immediate Response to al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s Works

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim functioned as magnets for ḥadīth transmission during their lives, selecting choice narrations for the *Sahīhs* that formed their lasting legacy. But strikingly enough, they themselves proved insignificant in the continuing transmission of ḥadīth through living *isnāds*. In his annals listing the significant ḥadīth scholars who died in the second half of the third/ninth century and the first few decades of the fourth/tenth, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) lists seventeen who studied with Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, twenty-

¹⁴⁶ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abdallāh al-Kābī al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akhbār wa ma ‘rifat al-rijāl*, ed. Abū ‘Amr al-Ḥusaynī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1421/2000), 2:149.

¹⁴⁷ Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970; Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1998), 555-6. Citations are to the Kazi edition.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 560; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 193; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 8:19-22.

two with ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, but only one with al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Indeed other contemporaries of al-Bukhārī and Muslim completely obviated their role in the transmission of ḥadīths. Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī of Baghdad heard from what al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī terms “uncountable masses” of ḥadīth transmitters, including Ibn Ḥanbal, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn. He died at the age of 104 or 110 in 317/929-30 and was thus much sought after for his elevated *isnād* to that greatest generation. The major scholars who heard from al-Baghawī directly, such as al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), or through his *isnād*, like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, had no need to refer to transmitters like al-Bukhārī or Muslim for living transmission.¹⁴⁹ Even in the case of ḥadīths that appeared in Muslim’s *Sahīḥ*, for example, later ḥadīth scholars like al-Dhahabī preferred to narrate them through al-Baghawī in their own ḥadīth collections.¹⁵⁰

This focus on the living *isnād* and the veneration paid to previous generations of ḥadīth scholars also dominates the immediate reception of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works in the ḥadīth community. The ḥadīth scholars’ conception of their own tradition as shown in the early and mid fourth/tenth century works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn ‘Adī distinguishes between the colossal generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and that of their students al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Many in the ḥadīth community, for example the influential bloc of Rāzī scholars in Rayy, immediately

¹⁴⁹ Al-Baghawī is often referred to as Ibn Manī‘ or even Ibn Bint al-Manī‘. Some were skeptical of al-Baghawī’s narration from Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn. Al-Khalīlī says that he could narrate from one hundred shaykhs that no one else in his time had met; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 192.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:159.

balked at what they perceived as the elitism and finality of the two works, accusing al-Bukhārī and Muslim of insolence.

The reaction of the Rayy scholars to Muslim's *Sahīh* during his own lifetime portrays his work as an act of egoism that could undermine the legal methodology of the transmission-based scholars. The chief critics of Muslim's *Sahīh* were Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī and his colleague Muḥammad b. Muslim Ibn Wāra al-Rāzī (d. 270/884). Along with Abū Hātim, Abū Zur'a was an institution of ḥadīth study in Rayy. Even at middle age he had earned the respect of prominent scholars such as Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, who said that "any ḥadīth that Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī does not know has no basis."¹⁵¹ Muslim met several times with the two Rāzīs and their colleague Ibn Wāra in Rayy. Their reaction to his *Sahīh* clearly communicates the initial shock that the notion of a book of purely authentic ḥadīths had on some scholars in the ḥadīth community. It has been preserved in Abū Zur'a's *Kitāb al-du'afā' wa ajwibatuhu 'alā as'ilat al-Bardha ī*, a compilation of both Abū Zur'a and Abū Hātim's opinions on transmitters as transcribed by their student Abū 'Uthmān Sa'īd b. 'Amr al-Bardhaī (d. 292/905), who also studied with Muslim:

I saw Abū Zur'a mention the *Sahīh* book written by Muslim b. al-Hajjāj, then [that of] al-Faḍl al-Ṣā'igh¹⁵² based upon it (*'alā mithālihi*). Abū Zur'a said to me: these are people who wanted prominence (*taqaddum*) before their time, so they did something for which they show off (*yatashawwafūn bihi*); they wrote books the likes of which none had written before to gain for themselves precedence (*riyāsa*) before their time.' One day, when I was present, a man came to [Abū Zur'a] with the *Sahīh* transmitted from Muslim, and Abū Zur'a started to look through it. When he came across ḥadīths from Asbāt b. Naṣr he said to me, 'How far this is from *sahīh*! He includes Asbāt

¹⁵¹ Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 1:141.

¹⁵² This is Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-'Abbās al-Ṣā'igh al-Rāzī (d. 270/883). I have found no other mention of this book. See al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 12:363; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:133-4; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:149-50.

b. Naṣr in his book!‘ Then he saw in the book Qaṭan b. Nusayr, so he said to me, ‘This is even more overwhelming than the first one! Qaṭan b. Nusayr [incorrectly] attributed ḥadīths from Thābit [al-Bunānī] to Anas [b. Mālik].’ Then he looked and said, ‘[Muslim] narrates from Aḥmad b. Īsā al-Miṣrī in his *Sahīh* book, did you not see the people of Egypt complaining that Aḥmad b. Īsā,’ and he pointed to his tongue as if to say, ‘lies’, then said to me, ‘[Muslim] narrates from the likes of them and leaves out [ḥadīths] from Muḥammad b. ‘Ajlān and those like him. He is making a path for the people of heresy (*bida*) against us, for they see that they can respond to a ḥadīth that we use as proof against them by saying ‘That is not in the *Sahīh*!’

I saw him denigrating the book and censuring it, so when I returned to Naysābūr on the second occasion I mentioned to Muslim b. al-Hajjāj Abū Zur‘a’s rejection of his narrations in the book from Asbāt b. Naṣr, Qaṭan b. Nusayr and Aḥmad b. Īsā. Muslim said to me, ‘Indeed I did deem [the book] “*Sahīh*,” and what ḥadīths I included from Asbāt, Qaṭan and Aḥmad have been narrated by [other] trustworthy narrators (*thiqāt*) from their [Asbāt, Qaṭan and Aḥmad’s] *shaykhs*, except that these [I included] came from [Asbāt and them] through shorter *isnāds* (*bi-l-irtifā*). But I also have these [hadīths] from those who are more reliable than them [Asbāt et al.] via long *isnāds* (*bi-nuzūl*)... and the core report of the ḥadīth is well known through the transmission of trustworthy transmitters.’

Muslim came to Rayy and it reached me that he went out to Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Wāra, and he received him coldly (*fa-jafāhu*) and chastised him for the book, saying essentially what Abū Zur‘a said: this opens us up to the people of *bida*. So Muslim apologized to him and said, ‘Indeed I produced this book and declared it authentic (*siḥāḥ*), but I did not say that that ḥadīths I did not include in this book are weak. Rather, I produced this from *sahīh* ḥadīths to be a collection for me and those who transmit from me without its authenticity being doubted. I did not say that everything else is weak...’ and Ibn Wāra accepted Muslim’s apology and transmitted [the book].¹⁵³

¹⁵³ This quote is found in its entirety in Abū Zur‘a ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī, *Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī wa juhūduhu fi al-sunna al-nabawiyya ma‘a tāhqīq kitābihī al-Du‘āfā’ wa ajwibatihī ‘alā as’ilat al-Bardha* 7, ed. Sa‘dī al-Hāshimī, 3 vols. (Medina, Cairo: Dār al-Wafā’ and Maktabat Ibn al-Qayyim, 1409/1989), 2:674-6; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:28-30 (biography of Aḥmad b. Īsā al-Tustarī al-Miṣrī); al-Maqdisī and al-Hāzimī, *Shurūt al-a’imma al-sitta wa shurūt al-a’imma al-khamṣa*, 60-3; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:135-6; cf. for partial quotes, Ibn al-Šalāh *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 99-100; cf. Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya fi tabaqāt al-ḥanafiyya*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, [1914]), 2:430.

Al-Bardhaī's report is so charged that it seems miraculous we have received it from a provenciated source.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Abū Zur'a and Ibn Wāra's reaction to the *Sahīh* as well as Muslim's concessions highlight issues that would later prove some of the most hotly debated questions in the ḥadīth tradition. The Rayy scholars raise three objections to Muslim's *Sahīh*. First, they decry it as impudent glory-seeking. Secondly, they disagree with Muslim's judgment concerning the reliability of some transmitters, arguing that his criteria are flawed and subjective.¹⁵⁵ Finally, they worry that producing a *sahīh* compilation could hinder the use of other ḥadīths that would be considered lackluster in comparison. Absolute authenticity had never been the determining factor in the use of ḥadīths in either elaborating law or polemics with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*'s rationalist foes. We thus detect the immediate and palpable fear that a definitive *sahīh* book would be used to exclude all other materials.

The concerns of the Rāzī's seem to have been pervasive, with al-Bukhārī also attracting criticism from younger experts like al-Nasā'ī for the seemingly

¹⁵⁴ Sa'dī al-Hāshimī's edition of al-Bardhaī's text is based on a manuscript from the Köprülü Library in Istanbul (#3/40 in a 2 *juz'* notebook). This report appears in above sources but it is always narrated through the same initial *isnād* from al-Bardhaī. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Hāzimī have *isnāds* to Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqānī ← Abū al-Ḥusayn Ya'qūb b. Mūsā al-Ardabīlī ← Aḥmad b. Tāhir b. al-Najm al-Mayyānījī ← Sa'id b. 'Amr al-Bardhaī. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054), who does not mention this story, tells us that al-Bardhaī studied with Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī. The *isnād* of Abū Zur'a → al-Bardhaī → Aḥmad b. Tāhir b. al-Najm al-Mayyānījī is also established elsewhere separately by al-Khalīlī; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*; 109, 129, 286.

¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, Muslim is quoted by his student Makkī b. 'Abdān as supposedly saying, "I showed my book to Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī and everything that he indicated as having a flaw (*illa*) I left out. And what he said, 'this is *sahīh* with no *illa*', I included." The earliest appearance of this quote I have found is in the work of Abū 'Alī al-Ghassānī al-Jayyānī of Andalusia (d. 498/1105); *al-Tanbīh ʻalā al-awhām al-wāqi'a fī Ṣahīh al-imām Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1421/2000), 39; al-Qādī 'Iyād, *Ikmāl al-mu'lūm bi-fawā'id Muslim*, ed. Yahyā Ismā'īl, 9 vols. (Mansūra, Egypt: Dār al-Wafā', 1419/1998), 1:82; Ibn al-Šalāh, *Šiyānat Ṣahīh Muslim*, 68; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣahīh Muslim*, 1:121.

arbitrary omission of ḥadīths from respected transmitters like Suhayl b. Abī Ṣāliḥ.¹⁵⁶

Both al-Bukhārī and Muslim were thus forced on more than one occasion to deny that their works encompassed all authentic ḥadīths. Muslim did so in the body of his *Sahīh* in a rare response to a question, saying that his book only contains those authentic ḥadīths that “were agreed upon (*ajma ʻū ʻalayhā*)” and excludes other worthy ones.¹⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Adī provides an early quote from al-Bukhārī that he had left many *sahīh* reports out of his collection, which he entitled an “abridged (*mukhtaṣar*)” compilation, in order to keep its size manageable.¹⁵⁸ We shall see in Chapter Five how prophetic the Rāzīs’ concerns were.

Muslim’s response to Ibn Wāra provides a fascinating glimpse into the pre-canonical life of his *Sahīh*. If a canon is a text endowed with authority and made binding on a community, its converse is a powerless text that reaches no farther than its author. Yet this is precisely how Muslim is forced to describe his *Sahīh* in order to placate Ibn Wāra. He is forced to reduce his book to a private “collection for me and those who transmit from me.” In the face of resistance, we thus see that Muslim was obliged to deny his work the features that would one day accord it canonical status.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Muhammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, “Su’ālāt Abī ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī li’l-Dāraqutnī,” MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, Istanbul: 162a.

¹⁵⁷ *Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb al-tashahhud*. Later analysts believed that the group that Muslim was referring to as “having agreed on” these ḥadīths consisted of Ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maṭīn, ‘Uthmān b. Abī Shayba and Sa‘īd b. Maṇṣūr al-Khurāsānī; Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Raslān al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1402-3), *Mahāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, in *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāh wa Mahāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, 162.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 68.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Bukhārī is also reported to have shown his *Sahīh* to senior scholars such as ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Ḥanbal. This report only appears in a very late source, however, Ibn Hajar’s (d. 852/1449) *Hady al-sārī*. He quotes Abū Ja‘far Muhammad b. ‘Amr al-‘Uqaylī’s (d. 323/934) statement that these scholars

One of the earliest recorded reactions to al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* seconds the accusation of impudence leveled at Muslim by Abū Zur'a. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964)¹⁶⁰ recorded a story about al-Bukhārī that paints him as a plagiarist whose brilliant *Sahīh* was truly the work of his famous teacher 'Alī b. al-Madīnī. Maslama reports that 'Alī had a book detailing the flaws in various ḥadīth narrations (*Kitāb al-īlal*)¹⁶¹ that represented his mastery of ḥadīth criticism. One day when 'Alī had gone to view some of his properties, al-Bukhārī came to one of his sons and bribed him to lend him the book, which al-Bukhārī promptly had duplicated by a copyist. When 'Alī returned and held a session for ḥadīth study, al-Bukhārī's knowledge rivaled his teacher's. 'Alī grasped what had occurred from his student's exact imitation of his own work and was so saddened that he eventually died of grief. Having no further need of his

acknowledged the authenticity of the *Sahīh* with the exception of four ḥadīths. This information does not appear in the one work that has survived from al-'Uqaylī, his *Kitāb al-du'afā' al-kabīr*. Ibn Hajar had access to at least one other work by al-'Uqaylī, his *Kitāb al-sahāba*, so he might have had a source for this quote. Al-'Uqaylī was very familiar with al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* (one of his principal sources in his *Kitāb al-du'afā'*) and his *Sahīh*, and he had studied with Ibn Ḥanbal's son 'Abdallāh. It is thus not improbable that he could have transmitted this information about the evaluation of the *Sahīh*. But since 'Alī b. al-Madīnī died in 234/849, whatever al-Bukhārī might have showed him was probably only a very early draft of the work. See Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*; 7, 676; al-'Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-du'afā' al-kabīr*, 1:48-9 (editor's introduction).

¹⁶⁰ In his *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, the only place I have found this story, Ibn Hajar cites the source only as "Maslama." We know that this is Maslama b. Qāsim, however, because in his *al-Mu'lām bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Khalfūn (d. 636/1238-9) duplicates the first line of the story (*allafā 'Alī b. al-Madīnī Kitāb al-īlal wa kāna qānūn bihi...*) exactly in a quote from Maslama b. Qāsim. Ibn Hajar's version then continues with the insulting story above, while in Ibn Khalfūn's version Maslama goes on to tell how 'Alī did not lend his book to anyone or narrate it because of its valuable content, then states "and he [Maslama] mentioned the story (*wa dhakara al-qisṣa*)."
See Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Khalfūn, *al-Mu'lām bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Ādil b. Sa'd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1421/2000), 464.

¹⁶¹ This book could not possibly be 'Alī's *Kitāb al-īlal* that has come down to us today. While the book Maslama describes contains what seems to be the sum total of 'Alī's corpus of ḥadīth criticism, his extant work is very small and only deals with several dozen narrations. It is possible that the book mentioned here is a work of 'Alī's that Ibn al-Nadīm describes as a *musnad* accompanied with *īlal* commentary; see Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 556.

teacher, al-Bukhārī returned to Khurāsān and compiled his *Sahīh*, gaining fame and followers.¹⁶²

Maslama b. Qāsim was from Cordova, but sometime before 320/932 he traveled east to Egypt, greater Syria, Mecca, Wāsiṭ, Basra, Baghdad and Yemen before returning to Spain after losing his vision.¹⁶³ He certainly had a copy of al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, since Ibn Ḥajar states that Maslama compiled a one-volume book on ḥadīth transmitters (*tārīkh fī al-rijāl*) intended to cover those not mentioned in al-Bukhārī dictionary (including some of Maslama's own contemporaries).¹⁶⁴ Maslama probably heard the story about al-Bukhārī stealing his teacher's work after his arrival in the Islamic heartlands (ie. after 320/932) but before his death in 353/964. We can thus assume that it was in circulation by at least the early 300/900's.

This story is almost certainly untrue, since refusing to transmit one's work to students would be extremely unusual among scholars of ḥadīth. Maslama's own preoccupation with al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* and the fact that the story recognizes that the *Sahīh* was a major accomplishment points to a more subtle motivation. Regardless of the

¹⁶² Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1415/1994), 9:44; Najmī, *Sayrī dar Ṣahīḥayn*, 72.

¹⁶³ Maslama was criticized as a weak transmitter, but was defended by others who said that he simply was not very intelligent (*da if al-‘aql*). He was also accused of anthropomorphism, but, in light of the controversial material he recorded about al-Bukhārī, these are probably reactionary *ad hominem* attacks by later commentators; see Muhammad b. al-Futūh al-Humaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fi dhikr wulāt al-Andalus wa asmā’ ruwāt al-ḥadīth wa ahl al-fiqh wa al-adab*, ed. Muḥammad b. Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nashr al-Thaqāfi al-Islāmī, 1371/[1952]), 324; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:98; idem, *Siyar a lām al-nubalā’*, 16:110; idem, *Mizān al-i‘tidāl*, ed. ‘Alī Muhammād al-Bajāwī, 4 vols. ([Beirut]: Dār Ihyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, n.d. Reprint of the Cairo edition published by Ḫisā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-4), 4:112 (citations are to the Beirut edition); cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 6:35-6; cf. al-Jazā’irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar*, 1:302. Although he visited Baghdad, al-Khaṭīb does not mention him in his history.

¹⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 6:35. Here Ibn Ḥajar quotes Abū Ja‘far al-Māliqī’s *Tārīkh*. We know that Maslama’s *Tārīkh* included such contemporaries as Abū Ja‘far al-‘Uqaylī (d. 323/934), since this is one of the sources al-Dhahabī relies on for his biography of al-‘Uqaylī in *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*.

high quality of his *Sahīh*, al-Bukhārī's work clashed with the atavistic traditionalism endemic among the *ahl al-hadīth*. For them the community was always in decline as it grew more distant from the Prophet, and students could do no more than try to preserve their masters' knowledge. The creator of Maslama's story could only interpret al-Bukhārī's unprecedented contribution as an act of insubordination.

Maslama's *Tārīkh*, however, illustrates another important aspect of the community's reception of al-Bukhārī's works: for decades after his death al-Bukhārī was much better known for his *Tārīkh* than for his *Sahīh*. In his *Muntazam*, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions someone narrating al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* fully a century before the first person is mentioned as narrating his *Sahīh*.¹⁶⁵ Also, almost seventy years before the first scholar compiled a ḥadīth collection using the *Sahīh* as a template, al-Ḥusayn b. Idrīs al-Anṣārī (d. 301/913-4) used the *Tārīkh* as a format for his own biographical dictionary.¹⁶⁶ When al-Bukhārī's student and a compiler of a famous ḥadīth collection himself, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, said that he had never seen anyone with al-Bukhārī's command of the narrations of ḥadīth and the lives of their transmitters, he was referring explicitly to the scholar's *Tārīkh al-kabīr*.¹⁶⁷ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Daghūlī (d. 325/936-7) of Sarakhs, who had studied ḥadīth with al-Bukhārī's rival al-Dhuhlī, nonetheless said that al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* was one of the four books with which he never parted.¹⁶⁸ Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUqaylī's (d. 323/934) *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kabīr* (Great Book of Weak

¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 13:362 and 15:270.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:192.

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:32.

¹⁶⁸ The others were al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, Khalīl b. Aḥmad's dictionary *Kitāb al-‘ayn*, and the cultured political treatise *Kalīla wa dimna*; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:30.

Transmitters) relies on al-Bukhārī as the single largest source of evaluations for transmitters. Al-‘Uqaylī frequently refers to al-Bukhārī’s *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, which he calls the scholar’s “great book (*al-kitāb al-kabīr*),” but never mentions the *Sahīh*.¹⁶⁹ The only occasion on which al-Rāmhurmuzī mentions al-Bukhārī in his *al-Muhaddith al-fāḍil* is in relation to his *Tārīkh*.¹⁷⁰

While it was Muslim’s *Sahīh* that attracted the critical ire of the ḥadīth scholars in Rayy, al-Bukhārī’s *Tārīkh* became the locus of drama and debate for the Rāzī’s. In the first written response to any aspect of al-Bukhārī’s *oeuvre*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim penned a short book correcting errors he detected in the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, his father and Abū Zur‘a’s involvement with the *Tārīkh* became even more problematic when a prominent *muḥaddith* of Naysābūr, Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥākim (d. 378/988), accused them of plagiarizing al-Bukhārī’s work. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, Abū Aḥmad’s friend and student, reports from him that when he was in Rayy once he saw Ibn Abī Ḥātim reading his *al-Jarḥ wa al-taṣlīl* to students. He recognized its contents as that of al-Bukhārī’s *Tārīkh* and inquired as to why Ibn Abī Ḥātim had attributed this work to his father and Abū Zur‘a. A student replied that al-Bukhārī’s *Tārīkh* had so impressed Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur‘a that they had taken it as the basis of their work, sitting with Ibn Abī Ḥātim so that he could record some modifications to the work and then ascribe it to them.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Al-‘Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-du‘afā’ al-kabīr*; 1:285, 3:345, 4:292.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Rāmhurmuzī, *al-Muhaddith al-fāḍil*, 310.

¹⁷¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Mūdiḥ awḥām al-jam‘ wa al-tafrīq*, 2 vols (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1378/1959), 1:8-9; Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu‘jam al-buldān*, 2:799; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:124. Yāqūt and al-Dhahabī’s reports are taken from al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, but al-Dhahabī’s lacks the last concluding statement that Ibn Abī Ḥātim attributed the book to his father and Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī. Abū

Conclusion

As the next chapter will demonstrate, the *Sahīhayn*, and Muslim's *Sahīh* in particular, quickly became objects of study and imitation in Khurāsān, Eastern Iran and eventually Baghdad. We have seen, however, that during their lives and in the immediate wake of their deaths al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs* met with rejection and scorn among important elements of the ḥadīth scholar community. The tradition of ḥadīth collection and study rested on a veneration for the past as the repository of the Prophet's sunna and the only authentic source for interpreting Islam. Although they had developed a methodology for distinguishing between authentic and forged ḥadīths, for transmission-based scholars the Prophet's charismatic authority rendered even weaker ḥadīths legitimate tools for understanding the faith. For scholars like Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, a collection limited to purely authentic ḥadīths unnecessarily delimited the potential application of the Prophet's sunna in Muslim life and debate. Furthermore, ḥadīth scholars cultivated a worldview in which later generations could at best struggle to preserve their predecessors' transmission of the normative past. During al-Bukhārī and Muslim's lives and the century after their death, ḥadīth scholars' native perception of their tradition viewed them as merely two experts among many, placing them in positions junior to their teachers. Al-Bukhārī in particular was also tainted with scandal and accusations of heresy. For Abū Zur'a, his colleagues in Rayy and for whomever first circulated accusations of al-Bukhārī's plagiarism, the *Sahīhayn* were acts of

Aḥmad al-Hākim also voices his accusations in his own *Kitāb al-kunā*, which al-Dhahabī quotes in his biography of al-Bukhārī and which is also partially and lazily quoted in al-Khalīlī's *al-Irshād*; see al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:259; Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 11-12.

insubordination by students seeking to supplant their teachers and defy tradition. For common Muslims and scholars alike the collection and transmission of ḥadīths through living *isnāds* back to the Prophet remained a dominant pious and legally significant activity for centuries after the *sahīh* movement. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim would prove insignificant in the continued transmission of ḥadīths, but their *Sahīhs* became institutions that soon rivaled it.

IV.

A ‘Period of Intense Canonical Process’: Imagination and the Study of the *Sahīhayn* in the Long Fourth/Tenth Century

Introduction

With the exception of Deuteronomy’s revelation to the court of King Josiah in II Kings, canonical texts do not fall intact from the heavens. Whether scriptural or literary, they pass through phases of use and study within a community before their canonization. Scripture must earn the devotion of a congregation before priests can declare it authoritative, and a body of critics must first study and explore literary works before dubbing them classics. Books are thus not written as canons. This status is bestowed upon them by a community engaged in a process of self-identification or authorizing institutions. The books of the New Testament were not all written as scripture, a role already played by the Greek edition of the Hebrew Bible in early Christian communities. What became the canonized New Testament was a diverse selection of writings used in services that eventually became widely-recognized guides to Christian devotion. The usage of the word canon as ‘list’ in the first centuries C.E. originated in this roster of familiar books.¹ The books of the New Testament canon had therefore already proven effective at conveying a particular understanding of Christ’s mission to a certain audience.

¹ Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 17-18.

This process of use and familiarization was not limited to passive reception.

Paul's canonical epistle to the Corinthian congregation (2 Corinthians) probably originally consisted of at least two separate letters written at different times and later pasted together for circulation amongst Paul's churches.² Such editorial activity highlights the role of clerics or scholars in molding proto-canonical texts after they have left the hands of their authors. In the words of James Sanders, this "period of intense canonical process" between the crafting of a text and the stabilization of a discrete canon represents a crucial interaction between text and audience. It is in these periods that audiences "shaped what they received in ways that rendered [the texts] most meaningful and valuable for them."³

Periods of intense canonical process are thus periods of intensive study. Before the emergence of a canon, texts must receive critical attention from scholars who catalog their contents, detail their merits and build around them that edifice of oral or written scholarship that distinguishes the familiar and valued from the banal or unknown. Beyond the valorization that a scholarly class bestows on written works, in pre-modern times intense study was required merely to produce a coherent text. The folkloric tradition of the Trojan War thrilled multitudes of small Greek audiences for most of the first millennium B.C.E. Yet as a scattered and diverse body of oral epic the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could never have become classics of Hellenistic literature or cornerstones of the Western literary canon. The first 'edition' of the Homeric epics was produced by Antimachus of Colophon (fl. 410 B.C.E.) after centuries of fermenting as an oral-

² Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 299.

³ Sanders, 30.

formulaic tradition. In the great Hellenistic Library of Alexandria, scholars like Zenodotus of Ephesus (fl. 270 B.C.E.) initiated the first studies of the Homeric epics, editing and collecting manuscripts, creating lexicons and producing a standardized vulgate tradition. Alexandrian scholarship on Homeric works continued unabated in the following decades, with great writers and critics such as Apollonius of Rhodes and Rhianus of Crete debating and producing critical editions.⁴ It was these relatively standardized texts that Hellenistic scholars declared the ‘canons’ of Greek language worthy of imitation.

Certain Muslim scholars recognized that an intensive familiarization with a text was a prerequisite for its canonization. Shāh Waliyyullāh of Delhi (d. 1176/1762) felt that the treatment a book received after its composition was a crucial characteristic of a mainstay authentic ḥadīth collection. In addition to its author purposing a work of authentic ḥadīths and succeeding in that task, such a book must be studied, its rare or difficult (*gharīb*) words explained and its legal implications derived. It must be edited, refined (*tahdhīb*), and historians must identify all the transmitters as well as their death dates.⁵ Thus in the century after al-Bukhārī’s death, scholars strove painstakingly to understand his methodology, identify his obscure transmitters (sometimes only referred to by their first names) and locate all the narrations of one Prophetic tradition scattered throughout his work.

⁴ Rudolph Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 148-9.

⁵ Shāh Waliyyullāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1:133.

Yet periods of intense canonical process do not only involve this requisite study and familiarization with a text. Separately, they involve the community developing the conceptual ability to endow texts with some binding authority. For a canon to form, a community must be able and obliged to imagine texts that have transcended the normal status of books as objects of study or usage and can play some loftier role. Periods of intense canonical process are times in which communities' conception of the authority a text can acquire leaps forward due to real and pressing needs.⁶

Although the *Sahīhayn* met with resistance during the lives of their authors and in the wake of their deaths, al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works quickly emerged as formative texts in certain areas of the Nile-Oxus region. Beginning in Muslim's home city of Naysābūr and later in Jurjān and Baghdad, scholars began viewing the *Sahīhs* not as threats to the living transmission of the Prophet's sunna but rather as vehicles for expressing their personal link to his authority and interpreting his teachings according to their own local agendas. Ḥadīth scholars began using the *Sahīhayn* and the methods of their authors as templates for their own ḥadīth collections. These *mustakhraj* books, however, required a detailed mastery of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters, the permutations of the ḥadīths they included as well as their requirements for authenticity. The *mustakhraj* cults that formed in Naysābūr around Muslim's *Sahīh*, in Jurjān around al-Bukhārī's, and finally in Baghdad around the conjoined *Sahīhayn* thus sparked a flurry of studies on the two books and their constitutive elements. Scholars not only detailed al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works, they also interacted with their methodologies. Just as Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī had questioned Muslim's right to delimit authentic traditions, so did

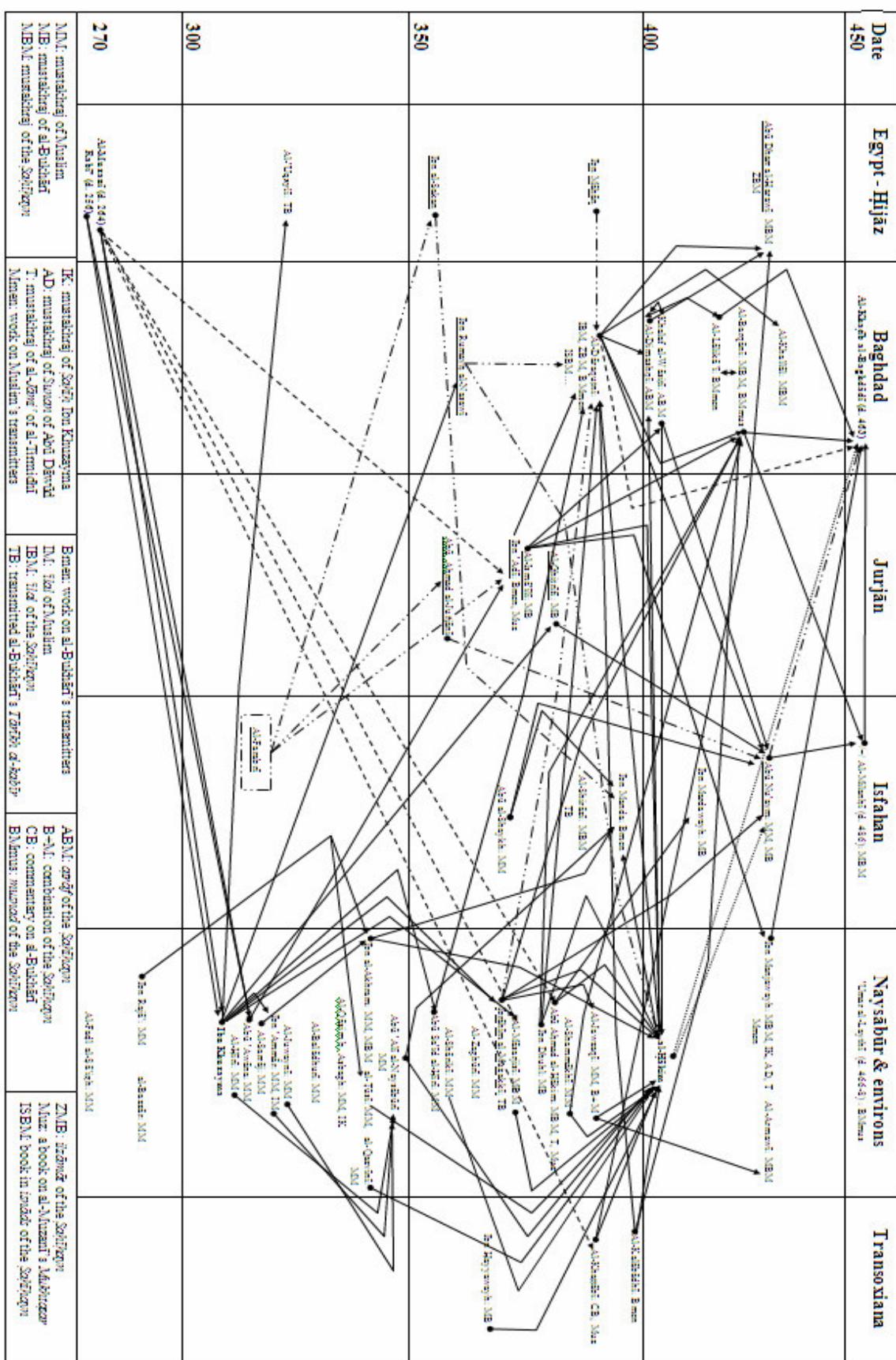
⁶ Sanders, 32-33.

later scholars apply their own requirements for authenticity to the *Sahīhayn*, identifying what they considered errors and questioning why other ḥadīths had not merited a place in the collections.

As we shall see, the network of scholars who devoted themselves to employing and studying al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs* between the last quarter of the third/ninth century and the first half of the fifth/eleventh was distributed with remarkable geographic and chronological consistency. Equally important, however, was their ideological makeup. The study of the *Sahīhayn* fell to neither the über-Sunnis who had ostracized al-Bukhārī nor the historically ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafīs. It was a more moderate group of transmission-based scholars belonging to the nascent Shāfi'ī school that forged the proto-canonical network.

In this chapter we will examine this network of scholars and their accomplishments during what one might term the long fourth century, that period between the deaths of the *Shaykhayn* and the widespread acknowledgment of the canon in the mid fifth/eleventh century. In the context of the *Sahīhayn*'s saga this periodization is not merely heuristic. As we shall see, it reflects the uniqueness of a time characterized by fleeting genres and an often frustrating liminality in Islamic intellectual culture.

The long fourth century also proved a period in which important elements of the broader Muslim community began articulating the notion of a ḥadīth collection acting as a locus of communal consensus. Whether as common ground between different schools of thought or simply common references in an increasingly diverse ḥadīth tradition, this period of intense canonical process left the Muslim community with the imaginative capability of endowing ḥadīth works with a new epistemological status.



***Sahīhayn* Network Chart:
Study and Usage in the Long Fourth Century**

Key:

- : Personal study relationship / teacher-student relationship
- : Transmission of a scholar's books to another scholar
- : Transmission or transmitter of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*
- : Transmission or transmitter of Muslim's *Sahīh*

The above chart describes the location, dates, written works and scholarly relationships of the network of scholars who studied and employed the *Sahīhayn* between 270 and 450AH. When required, some later figures are included with their death dates noted. For references, see Appendix I.

The *Mustakhraj* Genre

The phenomenon of the *mustakhraj* forms a bizarrely short and circumscribed chapter in the history of Islamic religious thought. These works were produced from about 270/880 to 480/1085 in the Nile-Oxus region and then exited the stage of cultural expression.⁷ They mark a transitional period between the time when one could realistically cultivate one's own *isnāds* to the Prophet and the time when books of *hadīth* replaced this direct connection. A scholar produced a *mustakhraj* by compiling a book of *hadīths* based on an existing collection that he used as a template. For each of the *hadīths* in the template book the author would use his own narration of the *hadīth*, with the *isnād* extending from him back to the Prophet. The very term *mustakhraj* connotes, “seeking to include” certain narrations from the Prophet. *Isnāds* in these *mustakhrajs* would

⁷ There may be one exception to this. Al-Dhahabī says that ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203) wrote a 48 *juz'* book entitled *al-Miṣbāḥ fī ‘uyūn al-ḥadīth al-ṣihāḥ* in which he reproduced the *hadīths* of the *Sahīhayn* with his own *isnāds*. This is the only mention of this book, however; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:446-7.

generally join with the *isnāds* of the template collection at the teacher of the original collector, following the same *isnād* from that point to the Prophet.⁸

*Mustakhraj*s could vary in the degree to which they adhered to the format and contents of the template collection. Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī’s (d. 430/1038) *mustakhraj* of Muslim’s *Sahīh* is remarkably faithful to the contents of the original, generally replicating them down to the details of each narration. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ismā‘īlī’s (d. 371/981-2) *mustakhraj* of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, now lost, appears to have been so faithful that if he could find no other transmission of a ḥadīth he would narrate it through al-Bukhārī and his student al-Firabrī, the transmitter from whom al-Ismā‘īlī received the *Sahīh*.⁹ Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Hīrī of Naysābūr (d. 311/923-4) spent years working on a *mustakhraj* meeting Muslim’s requirements for authenticity to the extent that he voyaged to Iraq and the Ḥijāz for a few ḥadīths needed to complete it.¹⁰ Other *mustakhraj*s were far more lenient. Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq **Abū ‘Awāna** al-Isfarāyīnī’s (d. 312/924-5) work departs from Muslim’s *Sahīh* on many occasions in both content and structure.¹¹ Although the great Moroccan ḥadīth scholar of the early twentieth century, Muhammad b. Ja‘far al-Kattānī (d. 1927), asserts that Ibn al-Jārūd al-Naysābūrī’s (d.

⁸ For useful discussion of the *mustakhraj* genre and related topics, see Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 167; Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anżār fī ma ṛifat ʻulūm al-āthār*, 40-2; Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn Daqīq al-‘Id, *al-Iqtirāḥ fī bayān al-iṣtilāh*, ed. Qaḥṭān ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Dūrī ([Baghdad]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu’ūn al-Dīniyya, 1982), 317; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 86-7; al-Sakhawī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:57.

⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:319.

¹⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:337-8; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:402-3.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that the great Muslim analyst of the ḥadīth tradition, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) notes that, although Abū ‘Awāna’s book has been dubbed a *mustakhraj* of *Sahīh Muslim*, it deviates from it a great deal, and that even the author notes that on some occasions; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 67.

307/919-20) *al-Muntaqā* is a *mustakhraj* of Ibn Khuzayma's *Sahīh*, it is less than a fifth of the *Sahīh*'s size and bears only the most superficial structural similarities.¹² Joint *mustakhrajs* of the *Sahīhayn* were also more lax in following the format of the template collections, generally just listing ḥadīths found in the works and noting how al-Bukhārī or Muslim included them.

A genre of ḥadīth literature similar to the *mustakhraj* is that of *atrāf*, or an index of ḥadīths by the key components of their *matns*. A book of the *atrāf* of the *Sahīhayn* would list all their ḥadīths by the beginning of the *matn* or its key component, and then provide all the transmissions of that tradition found in the two works.¹³ Unlike *mustakhrajs*, which are organized along the chapter structure of the template book, *atrāf* books usually present the ḥadīths according to the Companion at the beginning of the *isnād*.

From a modern standpoint it seems difficult to discern the purpose or utility of producing a *mustakhraj*. Why reproduce a copy of an existing ḥadīth collection? Why not boast one's own corpus of ḥadīths or express one's own legal or doctrinal vision? *Mustakhrajs* certainly did not replace original ḥadīth collections. Many ḥadīth scholars from the long fourth century, such al-Māsarjisī, produced gargantuan personal *musnads* alongside *mustakhrajs* of the *Sahīhayn*.

¹² Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 20. Ibn al-Jārūd's text contains no introduction explaining the nature of his work. See Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Jārūd al-Naysābūrī, *Kitāb al-muntaqā min al-sunan al-musnada ‘an Rasūl Allah (s)*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Hāshim al-Yamānī al-Madanī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Fajjāla al-Jadīda, 1382/1963).

¹³ Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 125; Abū Mas‘ud Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī, “Aṭrāf al-Bukhārī wa Muslim,” MS 1164, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus; Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī, “Aṭrāf Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī wa Muslim,” MS 1162, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus.

The motivation for producing a *mustakhraj* lies on two levels. First, we must remember that for transmission-based scholars a ḥadīth collection could not simply be opened up and cited; one needed to have heard it from an authorized chain of transmitters who in turn had heard it from its author. Abū Muḥammad Qāsim b. Aṣbagh al-Mālikī of Cordova (d. 340/951) traveled east in 274/887-8 to study in Iraq and access the wealth of transmitted material in the heartlands of Islam. When he discovered that he had “missed” his chance to hear the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd from its author, he produced a *mustakhraj* of the work.¹⁴ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī states that he composed his *mustakhraj* of Muslim for the benefit of those who had “missed” hearing that book.¹⁵ When Qāsim b. Aṣbagh realized he had missed his opportunity to be incorporated into the chain of transmitters of Abū Dāwūd’s book, he reconstructed his own version of his *Sunan*. Abū Nu‘aym, who died about 170 years after Muslim, similarly offered Muslim’s book to his contemporaries with his own intact link to the Prophet. Yet how could a scholar “miss” his chance to hear a book when all he had to do was find an authorized transmitter of the work? As we shall see, this would entail relying on an unappealingly long chain of transmission back to the Prophet, an act that a ḥadīth scholar was loathe to do.

Mustakhraj: the Ṣahīhayn as Formative Texts

The second level on which the *mustakhraj* attracted ḥadīth scholars of the long fourth century was the manner in which the template collection served as a formative text

¹⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:49; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:192-3. He also produced a short collection called *al-Muntaqā*, which al-Dhahabī says is the equal of Muslim’s *Ṣahīh* in authenticity and is based on the chapter structure of Ibn al-Jārūd’s *al-Muntaqā*. See al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 20.

¹⁵ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *al-Musnad al-mustakhraj ‘alā Ṣahīḥ al-imām Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismā‘īl al-Shāfi‘ī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1417/1996), 1:89-90.

through which scholars could engage the Prophet's authoritative legacy. Formative texts are those works that serve as textual fora for members of a community to express their own relationship with the source of authority in their tradition. In Judaic law, the elaboration of ritual law or its adaptation to the new challenges of the day takes place through the rabbi's interpretive interaction with the Torah, Mishna and Talmud. They provide the formative texts through which he establishes a relationship between the Lawmaker and the needs of his community. Formative texts thus do not simply embody the authority of the Lawmaker, they serve as a vehicle for the believer to extend that authority into his own context.

The potential for a ḥadīth collection to function as a formative text stems from the essential magnetism that the ḥadīth medium exerted on Muslims. A direct transmission from Muhammad, the living *isnād* to his legacy, tied Muslims to the Prophetic charisma. The *isnād* incorporated the transmitter into the chain of hermeneutic interpreters. They could then draw on the Prophet's normative precedent and manifest it in their daily lives, where his exemplum dominated the arenas of law and social mores. The Prophet's message had moved out from Islam's epicenter in space and time through generations of interpreters who had inherited and transformed his teachings, and the *isnād* was the tie that bound the scholar to that one true source of authority. At its most basic, the *mustakhraj* was a collection of these transmissions, a vehicle for expressing and establishing one's relationship to the source of hermeneutic authority.

Scholars of the Islamic tradition thus placed great value on proximity to the Prophetic legacy. In the face of Abū Zur'a's barbed critiques, Muslim defended his use of flawed narrations in his *Sahīh* by asserting that they had shorter *isnāds* than more

reliable but longer versions of the same Prophetic traditions. Muslim's aspiration for elevated *isnāds* echoed his senior contemporary Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba's (d. 235/849) exhortation that "seeking elevated *isnāds* is part of religion (*talab al-isnād al-ālī min al-dīn*)."¹⁶ *Mustakhraj*s represented a forum in which ḥadīth scholars could display the elevation or quality of their personal narrations from the Prophet. Abū Nu'aym 'Abdallāh al-Haddād (d. 517/1123) of Isfahan once faced criticism from an opponent who faulted him for not having an elevated *isnād* to Muslim's *Sahīh*. Al-Haddād replied that while he did not have an elevated *isnād* for the book itself, he had heard Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's *Mustakhraj* of the *Sahīh* from his father. He boasted that:

If you heard [the *Mustakhraj*] from my father it would be as if you had heard [Muslim's ḥadīths] from 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (a famous transmitter of Muslim's *Sahīh*); and if I wanted I would say: as if you had heard them from al-Julūdī (an earlier transmitter of Muslim's *Sahīh*); and if I wanted to say: it would be as if you had heard them from Ibn Sufyān (who transmitted the *Sahīh* from Muslim) – I would not be lying. And if I wanted I would say: it was as if you had heard them from Muslim himself. [The *Mustakhraj*] has some even more elevated ḥadīths, so that if you heard them from my father it would be as if you, al-Bukhārī and Muslim had all heard them from the same teacher.¹⁷

Here al-Haddād used Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's *Mustakhraj* of Muslim's collection to assert his own proximity to the Prophet. This conversation occurred in the sixth/twelfth century, long after the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and al-Haddād uses the two icons as benchmarks for rating his own link to the Prophet. Abū Nu'aym's *Mustakhraj* features such elevated *isnāds*, al-Haddād implies, that by reading it even in his own time one could become al-Bukhārī and Muslim's equal. When Qāsim b. Aṣbagh

¹⁶ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 6.

¹⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:43.

“missed” his opportunity to hear Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan* from its author, what he had missed was the chance to transmit the work with a respectably short *isnād* to the Prophet. When faced with hearing the work from one of Abū Dāwūd’s students, and thus adding another transmitter between himself and the Prophet, he felt it was more appealing to reconstitute the work with his own, shorter *isnāds*.

Mustakhrajs, however, did not merely afford an opportunity to prove *isnāds*’ elevation. They also provided a stage for demonstrations of their authenticity. For twelve out of the thirty-six known *mustakhrajs* of the *Sahīhayn* we have explicit evidence that the authors attempted to meet certain requirements for authenticity (*sīḥha*), often imitating those of al-Bukhārī or Muslim. This sometimes became a cause of much concern and tension for scholars. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad **al-Barqānī** (d. 425/1033-4), a premier student of the *Sahīhayn*, admitted with regret to having used one person in his *mustakhraj* who was not up to al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards.¹⁸ Abū al-‘Abbās Muḥammad b. Ishaq **al-Sarrāj** (d. 313/925) generally tried to stand by Muslim’s standards, but was lax in order to get more ḥadīths from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁹

Yet the *mustakhraj* was not simply a vehicle for demonstrating the quality of one’s link to the Prophet. It served as a stage for interpretation according to the specific needs and leanings of the scholar who produced it. The narrations that scholars chose as counterparts to al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s ḥadīths often differed in significant ways from those of the *Sahīhayn*, expressing the authors’ own stances on the topic. The compilers of these *mustakhrajs* could also alter the organization or chapter titles of their works in

¹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:333.

¹⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:215.

addition to adding their own commentary. The following examples demonstrate the manner in which the *Sahīhayn* served as formative texts that enabled later scholars to interpret and apply the Prophetic legacy according to their own specific needs.

a. *Al-Ismā’īlī: Rationalist Muḥaddith*

Abū Bakr al-Ismā’īlī (d. 371/981-2) built up his corpus of ḥadīths in Baghdad, Rayy and Khurāsān before returning to his native Jurjān and becoming a local institution of ḥadīth study.²⁰ Along with a vast *musnad*, he displayed his legal acumen by composing a work on Shāfi‘ī legal theory (*uṣūl*) called *Tahdhīb al-naẓar* and writing a rebuttal of the Ḥanafī legal theorist al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/982). Al-Ismā’īlī seems to have shared a great deal in common with what would emerge as Ash‘arī doctrine in the decades after his death. The Mu‘tazilite Buyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ‘Abbād (d. 385/995) sent him a very complimentary letter, an honor usually reserved for those scholars the vizier considered acceptably rationalist.²¹ It is thus not surprising that al-Ismā’īlī, like Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī himself and later Ash‘arites, found it necessary to publicly affirm his *ahl al-sunna* identity. Al-Dhahabī provides a transmission in which al-Ismā’īlī upholds what he calls the *ahl al-hadīth* creed, including the duty “to accept without deviation what God spoke in His book and what has been transmitted authentically (*sahīhat bihi al-riwāya*) from His messenger (§).” In line with the standard Sunni creed,

²⁰ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291. Al-Khalīlī says al-Ismā’īlī wrote books on al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

²¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Tabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘īyya*, ed. Yahyā al-Zayn ‘Alī Najīb, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1413/1992), 1:417-418. For more about al-Ismā’īlī and his family, see Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 107 ff.

he also describes God “by those attributes by which He has described Himself and His Prophet described Him... with no question as to how (*bilā kayfa*).”²²

Al-Ismā‘īlī’s insistence on such matters belies an aversion to anthropomorphism consistent with the more rationalist traces we have of his personal leanings. His *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* reveals how he used the work as a forum to arguing his own stances on ḥadīths dealing with subjects traditionally problematic for Muslim rationalists. In a ḥadīth describing the Day of Judgment, al-Bukhārī narrates from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī:

I heard the Prophet say: Our Lord [will] reveal His shin (*‘an sāqihī*) and every believing man and woman will prostrate to Him. But he who prostrated in the worldly life for the sake of reputation, he will go to prostrate, but his back will merely straighten again.²³

Al-Ismā‘īlī notes that in the Qur’ānic verse to which this ḥadīth alludes, “[God] will reveal a shin, and they will be called to prostrate but will not be able to (Qur’ān 68:42),” features the indefinite, “a shin (*‘an sāq*)” rather than the narration’s definite “His shin (*‘an sāqihī*).” Al-Ismā‘īlī then provides another narration with the original Qur’ānic wording “yakhshifu *‘an sāq*,” which he favors because of “its agreement with the wording of the Qur’ān in that sentence.” Ibn Hajar, one of our best sources for al-Ismā‘īlī’s work, explains the scholar’s stance. “He does not think that God is possessed of members and limbs due to what that entails of resemblance to created beings (*mushābahat al-makhlūqīn*).” Al-Ismā‘īlī was not the only scholar of his time to feel discomfort with al-Bukhārī’s narration. His contemporary Abū Sulaymān Hamd al-Khāṭṭābī (d. 388/998)

²² Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:106-7.

²³ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, #4919; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tafsīr*, *sūra* 68, *bāb* 2.

wrote in his commentary on al-Bukhārī's work that this ḥadīth refers metaphorically to God revealing His power (*qudra*).²⁴

Al-Ismāʻīlī's rationalist streak reveals itself elsewhere in his *Mustakhraj* to the extent that he even questions the authenticity of one of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīths. Describing how Abraham will throw his polytheist father into Hellfire on the Day of Judgment, the Prophet says: "Abraham [will] throw his father and say, 'O Lord, indeed you promised not to humiliate me (*tukhzinī*) on the day they are all resurrected.' God [will] reply, 'Indeed I have prohibited Heaven to the disbelievers (*al-kāfirīn*).'"²⁵ Ibn Hajar notes that al-Ismāʻīlī found the very basis of this ḥadīth problematic (*istashkala ... hadhā al-ḥadīth min aṣlihi*) and criticized its authenticity (*sīḥha*) after he included it in his *Mustakhraj*.

Al-Ismāʻīlī notes that:

This ḥadīth contradicts the evident meaning (*zāhir*) of God's words that 'Abraham's praying for his father's forgiveness was but the fulfillment of a promise he had made to him, and when it became clear to him that [his father] was an enemy of God he disassociated himself from him...' (Qur'ān 9:114).²⁶

Al-Ismāʻīlī thus concludes that:

There is some question as to the authenticity of this report from the standpoint that Abraham knew that God does not fail in His promises (*lā yūkhilfū al-mī’ūd*), so how could he consider what happened to his father humiliation when he knew that [God would punish him on the Day of Judgment for his disbelief]?²⁷

²⁴ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 8:857-8; cf. al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-hādd*, 146.

²⁵ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, #4768-9; *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *kitāb al-tafsīr*, *sūra* 26, *bāb* 2. This ḥadīth is a narration of another ḥadīth found in *Fath* #3350; *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā'*, *bāb* 8, which discusses the story in more detail. See also Qur'ān, 26:87.

²⁶ “*wa mā kāna istighfār Ibrāhīm li-abīhi illā ‘an mawīda wa ‘adahā iyyāhu fa-lammā tabayyana lahu annahu ‘aduwwun lillāh tabarra ‘a minhu...*”

²⁷ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 8:641-2; see also al-Jazā’irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:332.

b. *Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī and Shiīte-Sunni Polemic*

Muslim's *Sahīh* includes a subchapter on "Proof that loving the Anṣār and ‘Alī (r) is a part and indication of faith and that hating them is a sign of hypocrisy (*al-dalīl ‘alā anna ḥubb al-anṣār wa ‘Alī (r) min al-īmān wa ‘alāmātihi wa bughdahum min ‘alāmāt al-nifāq*)."²⁸ This subchapter includes five narrations about the importance of loving the Anṣār, four of them using the love→believer vs. hatred→hypocrite distinction. It ends with one narration in which the Prophet details the importance of loving ‘Alī using exactly the same construction. In his *Mustakhraj* Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī (d. 430/1038) provides ḥadīths that perfectly mirror the layout and content of Muslim's chapter, with five for the Anṣār and one for ‘Alī. The significant difference appears in the subchapter title, which Abū Nu‘aym lists as "On the Love for the Anṣār as a Sign of Faith (*āyat al-īmān*). There is no mention of ‘Alī.²⁸

This small difference might seem unimportant until one views it in the context of Abū Nu‘aym's other writings. Most importantly, he cultivated an ongoing interest in debating the Imāmī Shiah using ḥadīths. Abū Nu‘aym's *Kitāb al-Imāma wa al-radd ‘alā al-Rāfiḍa* (Book of the Imamate and a Rebuttal of those who Reject the Caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar) provides a manual for debating the Shiīte claim that ‘Alī should have been the first caliph. The book is organized along dialectic lines, with the structure "if your opponent says... then you say." Many of the debates in the work revolve around the tensions between the different ḥadīths used as proof texts by Shiites and Sunnis. Abū

²⁸ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *al-Musnad al-mustakhraj*, 1:156-157.

Nu‘aym tells his opponent that “if you use reports (*akhbār*) as proof then it follows that you must accept them from your opponents... reports (*akhbār*) are thus for you and against you.”²⁹ One of the main proof texts employed by Shiites was Muslim’s above mentioned ḥadīth of the believers’ duty to love ‘Alī and the hypocrites disregard for him.³⁰ Abū Nu‘aym rebuts this proof text by alerting his opponent to the other reports in which the Prophet says the same thing about the Anṣār.³¹ The pro-‘Alī ḥadīth thus has no probative force in issues of succession, for “if [the opponent] says ‘that has been narrated from so and so and so and so,’ let it be said to him ‘[material] opposing that has [also] been related. So if you use reports (*akhbār*) as proof, since [all] the reports contest one another, [the reports] fail (*saqatat*).’”³² The subtle polemic embodied in Abū Nu‘aym’s subchapter title in his *Mustakhraj* now becomes evident, since it buries the pro-‘Alid ḥadīth in the folds of a chapter he defines as strictly addressing the love of the Anṣār. For Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, minimizing the importance and visibility of this ḥadīth and highlighting the similar compliments paid the Anṣār is a critical part of his anti-Shiite polemic.

c. Abū ‘Awāna and an Independent Legal Path

²⁹ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma wa al-radd ‘alā al-rāfiqa*, ed. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Faqīhī (Medina: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa al-Hikam, 1415/1994), 217.

³⁰ For a modern example of the polemical use of this ḥadīth, see Muḥammad Şādeq Najmī, *Sayrī dar Saḥīhayn*, 77.

³¹ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 244.

³² Abū Nu‘aym, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 230.

Abū ‘Awāna Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 312/924-5) studied the legal scholarship of al-Shāfi‘ī at the hands of the latter’s two most renowned Egyptian students, Rabī‘ b. Sulaymān al-Murādī (d. 256/870) and Abū Ibrāhīm Ismā‘il al-Muzanī (d. 264/878). Al-Dhahabī describes Abū ‘Awāna as the first to introduce that school to the famous Khurāsānī city of Isfarāyīn, later home to generations of great Shāfi‘ī scholars.³³ Abū ‘Awāna’s *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-musnad al-mukharraj ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (The Authentic *Musnad* Collection Based on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*), however, reveals an independent legal mind unconstrained by rigid loyalty to Muslim’s book or al-Shāfi‘ī’s opinions. On the famous issue of what invalidates your prayer if it passes in front of you, al-Shāfi‘ī had rejected a Prophetic ḥadīth stating that a black dog, a woman or a donkey invalidates prayer. We know from a source that predates Abū ‘Awāna, Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī’s (d. 294/906) *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā’* (The Differing Opinions of Jurists), that al-Shāfi‘ī based his opinion on a report from ‘Ā’isha where she objects to this notion, angrily telling the Companion who narrated the ḥadīth that “you’ve compared us to dogs!”³⁴ Three narrations of ‘Ā’isha’s objection appear in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*,³⁵ yet Muslim also includes a lengthy section of ḥadīths that support the idea that these three things do indeed invalidate prayer. In Muslim’s work these conflicting reports are buried among a range of other topics, such as ḥadīths enjoining physically obstructing people who refuse to stop passing in front of someone engaged in prayer. Other ḥadīths in this subchapter state that

³³ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:3.

³⁴ Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā’*, ed. Muḥammad Tāhir Hakīm (Riyadh: Adwā’ al-Salaf, 1420/2000), 161.

³⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ṣalāt, al-i tirāq bayn yaday al-muṣallī*.

one can protect oneself by building up a small mound or placing something the size of the back of a saddle in front of oneself while praying.³⁶ The material that Muslim puts forth thus offers the reader no concrete conclusion, while al-Shāfi‘ī acts definitively on ‘Āisha’s report.

In Abū ‘Awāna’s *Mustakhrāj*, this issue is greatly simplified. Moreover, the author adheres to a stance opposing al-Shāfi‘ī. He includes a chapter called “The Size of the Barrier [by which] Nothing that Passes in front of Someone Praying can Harm Him (*miqdār al-sutra allatī lā yudirru al-muṣallī man yamurru bayn yadayhi*).” He states immediately after the chapter heading that if you do not have this barrier then a black dog, a woman or a donkey do indeed violate prayers if they pass in front of you, and that a line drawn in the dirt is not sufficient protection (as Ahmad b. Hanbal claimed).³⁷ He then provides seven narrations backing up his point, most of which also appear in Muslim’s *Sahīh*. They instruct the reader to build these saddle-back-sized barriers in front of himself to prevent his prayer from being broken.³⁸

Here we see that Abū ‘Awāna has taken a large, assorted and ultimately legally inconclusive chapter of Muslim’s *Sahīh* and compressed it into a treatment of one problem: women, black dogs and donkeys invalidate prayer. To this he supplies an immediate solution: placing something in front of you while you pray. As we have mentioned earlier, it was the often inconclusive character of Muslim’s *Sahīh* that diverted

³⁶ *Sahīh Muslim*: *kitāb al-ṣalāt*, *qadr mā yustaru al-muṣallī*.

³⁷ Abū ‘Awāna Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, *Musnad Abī ‘Awāna Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī*, 4 vols. [vol. 3 missing] (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Jam‘iyyat Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1362-85/1942-63), 2:49. The missing sections of the *Musnad* have now been published as *al-Qism al-mafqud min Musnad Abī ‘Awāna*, ed. Ayman ‘Arif al-Dimashqī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1995).

³⁸ Abū ‘Awāna, *Musnad*, 2:30-1.

legal attention from the work. Abū ‘Awāna’s *mustakhrāj* not only greatly simplifies this topic, it also transforms it into a legal text expressing the author’s independent thought. Despite his ties to al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū ‘Awāna breaks with him on other salient issues as well, such as al-Shāfi‘ī’s insistence on saying “In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate (*bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*)” aloud in certain prayers.³⁹ As Wael Hallaq has demonstrated, in this period *madhhabs* were not yet rigid sets of legal stances. They were common hermeneutic traditions still being elaborated by the scholars who followed them. Al-Shāfi‘ī himself was thus only *primus inter pares* among the jurists who followed his tradition.⁴⁰ Abū ‘Awāna’s work demonstrates how a *mustakhrāj* could function as independent hermeneutic expressions of the Prophet’s legal authority within the nascent Shāfi‘ī school.

***Ilal* and *Ilzāmāt*: Interaction with the Standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim**

When Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī read through Muslim’s *Sahīh* he criticized the lines its author had drawn in compiling his collection. He found flaws in some of the narrations Muslim had declared authentic and criticized his failure to include other worthy material. Abū Zur‘a’s reaction to the *Sahīh* foreshadowed the emergence of two closely related genres of ḥadīth literature addressing the *Sahīhayn* during the long fourth century: books of *ilal* (flaws) and *ilzāmāt* (recommended additions).

Books detailing the obscure flaws of transmission, or *ilal*, represented the third tier of ḥadīth criticism discussed in the previous chapter. They had thus existed since at

³⁹ Abū ‘Awāna, *Musnad*, 2:133-5.

⁴⁰ Wael Hallaq, “From Geographical to Personal Schools?: A Reevaluation,” *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 1 (2001): 24-5.

least the early third/ninth century. The long fourth century, however, saw the appearance of *īlal* works devoted specifically to weeding out such flaws from the *Sahīhayn*. These works illustrate the multiplicity of approaches existing in the ḥadīth-critic community; a scholar critiquing the *Sahīhayn* was effectively juxtaposing his methods and standards of ḥadīth criticism with those used by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, critically applying his definition of ‘authentic’ to their works. We have two surviving criticisms of the *Sahīhayn* from this period. The earliest is Muḥammad b. Aḥmad **Ibn ‘Ammār** al-Shahīd’s (d. 317/929-30) *īlal* of Muslim’s *Sahīh*. The most famous and comprehensive work, however, is the *Kitāb al-tatabbu‘* of the dominant Baghdad ḥadīth scholar ‘Alī b. ‘Umar al-Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995).

As the third tier of ḥadīth criticism, the study of *īlal* had always targeted two categories of flaws: independent and comparative. Critics first focused on flaws that independently undermined the strength of an *isnād*. A *sahīh* ḥadīth should possess an uninterrupted chain of trustworthy and competent transmitters that reached back to the Prophet.⁴¹ Ḥadīth critics thus searched for weak or error-prone transmitters as well as breaks between links in the *isnād* (*inqitā‘*). Broken transmissions included reports that someone who had never met the Prophet attributed directly to him (termed *mursal*) or that were actually the statements of the Prophet’s Companions (termed *mawqūf*).⁴² This stage of criticism was subjective, as different critics applied different standards to their material. Muslim’s decision to consider two narrators joined by the vague phrase “from /

⁴¹ For appropriate expressions of this definition, see Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:23; Ibn Khuzayma, *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma*, 1:3; Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Sahīh Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘arif, [1952]), 1:112.

⁴² For examples of these flaws in our earliest extant *īlal* work, see ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, *al-Īlal*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā A‘zamī ([n.p.]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1392/1972); 81, 104, 110.

according to (*an*)” provided they were contemporaries proved a controversial choice for later scholars who upheld more rigid standards for transmission. Al-Bukhārī’s inclusion of a ḥadīth narrated by the extremist Khārijite Imrān b. Ḥittān, who praised the caliph ‘Alī’s murderer in poetry, would prove similarly problematic for critics less forgiving of such ‘heresies.’

The second breed of flaws on which *ilal* criticism focused was comparative. Scholars acknowledged two comparative signs of unreliable narrations: disagreement (*khilāf*) and a lack of corroboration (*tafarrud*). These two concepts existed in relative space, for both rested on the critic gathering all the available narrations of a ḥadīth and examining which were the most well-established. If a specific narration differed with the bulk of other transmissions or with that of a master ḥadīth scholar, it was generally deemed weak. If one student transmitted a narration of a ḥadīth without the corroboration of his classmates, it was similarly declared unreliable.

A central theme in this comparison of *isnāds* was the layered notion of ‘Addition’ (*ziyāda*), a concept that Muslim scholars of this period commonly considered unified but which subsumed three very different phenomena. The first can be termed ***Isnād Addition***, which occurred when one narration of a ḥadīth added a transmitter not found in the other *isnāds*. The second, termed ***Literal Matn Addition***, involved one narration of a ḥadīth adding material to the text of the report. Finally, ***Normative Matn Addition*** occurred when one narration of a report that was generally considered to be the statement of a Companion (*mawqūf*) was elevated and attributed to the Prophet.⁴³

⁴³ For a more detailed and involved discussion of the phenomenon of Addition (*ziyāda*) see Jonathan A.C. Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon: al-Dāraqutnī’s Adjustment of the *Sahihayn*,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2004): 8-11.

This comparison of narrations was also a subjective process. If, out of a selection of ten narrations of a tradition from reliable transmitters, only one was attributed to the Prophet while the others were the words of a Companion, most ḥadīth critics would consider the exception defective. This tradition would thus not be *sahīh*, since it had been established as not extending back to the Prophet. Another critic, however, might trust the lone transmitter and choose his as the correct narration of the ḥadīth, declaring it an authentic Prophetic statement. Muslim seems to have often been more lax on such matters than his fourth/tenth century critics. In the introduction to his *Sahīh* he states that he accepts a transmitter's uncorroborated material provided he not deviate blatantly from his cohorts.⁴⁴ As Ibn 'Ammār and al-Dāraqutnī's work demonstrates, on many occasions it seems that Muslim's desire to locate a reliable, uninterrupted narration to the Prophet led him to ignore the often better established but flawed versions of the ḥadīth.

Many of the flaws that Ibn 'Ammār identifies in Muslim's *Sahīh* thus revolve around demonstrating how the most well-established version of one of Muslim's ḥadīths is actually a broken or weak transmission. Out of a total of thirty-six criticized narrations from the *Sahīh*, Ibn 'Ammār locates thirteen instances of inappropriate Addition (4 *Isnād* Addition, 4 Literal *Matn* Addition, 5 Normative *Matn* Addition), and nine instances of a break in the *isnād* (*inqitā'*). Ibn 'Ammār also reveals other areas in which he differs with Muslim's methodology. He finds fault with one narration because an earlier ḥadīth

⁴⁴ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:6

scholar could find no trace of it in the transmitter's personal notebooks.⁴⁵ For another narration Ibn 'Ammār explains that an error occurred because the transmitter had buried his books and begun narrating from memory. Here we see that Ibn 'Ammār adhered more to al-Bukhārī's school of thought, which appreciated written sources as an invaluable bulwark against error, despite the emphasis that the ḥadīth-scholar community placed on oral transmission.⁴⁶

While Ibn 'Ammār's relatively early *īlal* work only tackled Muslim's *Sahīh*, fifty years later al-Dāraqutnī critiqued both the *Sahīhayn*. His *Kitāb al-tatabbu'* criticizes two hundred and seventeen narrations, one hundred from Muslim's *Sahīh*, seventy eight from al-Bukhārī's and thirty-two shared by both collections.⁴⁷ Like Ibn 'Ammār, al-Dāraqutnī's comments frequently involve instances of inappropriate Addition, especially in Muslim's work. Unlike Muslim, he only accepted Addition, either *Isnād* or *Matn*, when it enjoyed the support of a preponderance of experts.⁴⁸ Al-Dāraqutnī also reveals a stringency absent in al-Bukhārī's method. The Baghdad scholar chastises al-Bukhārī for narrating a ḥadīth from the arch-Khārijite 'Imrān b. Hīttān, citing his deviant beliefs (*sū'i iqādihī*).⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibn 'Ammār Abū al-Faḍl al-Shahīd, *'Ilal al-ahādīth fī kitāb al-sahīh li-Muslim b. al-Hajjāj*, ed. 'Alī b. Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī (Riyadh: Dār al-Hijra, 1412/1991), 109.

⁴⁶ Al-Bukhārī states that "books are more accurate (*ahfaz*) for the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ilm*), since a person could transmit something and then return to a book and [it turns out] that it is as in the book;" see his *Kitāb raf' al-yadayn fī al-ṣalāt*, 82.

⁴⁷ For a more exact break-down of these narrations, see Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 11.

⁴⁸ For more on al-Dāraqutnī's stance on Addition/*zīyāda*, see Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 31-4.

⁴⁹ 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Dāraqutnī, *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu'*, ed. Muqbil b. Hādī b. Muqbil (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, [1978]), 333.

Unlike Ibn Ḥanbal, Ḥamd al-Khaṭṭābī, as well as later ḥadīth critics such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and Mullā ‘Alī Qārī’ (d. 1014/1606), neither Ibn ‘Ammār nor al-Dāraqutnī criticized any ḥadīth found in the *Sahīhayn* for ideological or polemical reasons.⁵⁰ In only one instance does either of the scholars even directly address the legal implications of any ḥadīth. Ibn ‘Ammār rejects a narration from Muslim’s *Sahīh* stating that the Prophet did not perform *‘umra* after the battle of Hunayn because it contradicted another authentic ḥadīth asserting that he did.⁵¹ In fact al-Dāraqutnī demonstrates astonishing objectivity in his critique: although he had compiled an entire book of ḥadīths devoted to affirming that God would grant the believers a vision of Himself on the Day of Judgment, al-Dāraqutnī explicitly rejects a unique narration in *Sahīh Muslim* supporting exactly that belief.⁵²

The second genre of ḥadīth literature closely related to *īlal* was that of *ilzāmāt*. These works listed ḥadīths that the authors believed al-Bukhārī and Muslim should have included in their two collections. Only four *ilzāmāt* works, also known as *mustadraks*, were produced, all of them based on both al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s *Sahīhs* in tandem. The remarkable *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī will receive sufficient attention in the next chapter. ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad Abū Dharr al-Harawī’s (d. 430/1038) one-volume

⁵⁰ See, for examples, Ibn Qudāma, *al-Muntakhab min al-īlal*, 66–7; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:591; Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Manār al-munīf fī al-sahīh wa al-daīf*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Aleppo: Maktab al-Matbū’at al-Islāmiyya, 1970), 78; Nūr al-Dīn Mullā ‘Alī b. Sultān al-Qārī, *al-Asrār al-marfū’ā fī al-akhbār al-mawdū’ā*, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sā’id Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1405/1985), 319.

⁵¹ Ibn ‘Ammār, 93.

⁵² See Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon,” 21.

mustadrak of the *Sahīhayn* appears not to have survived.⁵³ Ahmad b. ‘Alī al-‘Awālī of Naysābūr (fl. 420/1030?) made a *sahīh* selection of ḥadīths from his teacher Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad al-Bālawī (d. 410/1019) that met the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*‘alā shart al-shaykhayn*).⁵⁴ The only other extant work from this genre comes from al-Harawī’s teacher, al-Dāraqutnī. Scholars have closely identified his *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt* with his above-mentioned *Kitāb al-tatabbu‘*, and they have often been transmitted as one unit.

Ilzāmāt works applied al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s own standards to ḥadīths left out of their works. Unlike *īlal* works, this entailed a further application of the *Shaykhayn*’s methods and not a juxtaposition with those of later critics. Like his critique of the *Sahīhayn*, al-Dāraqutnī did not use his *ilzāmāt* as a means for advancing his own legal or doctrinal positions. There is an almost total separation between the ḥadīths that al-Dāraqutnī addended to the *Sahīhayn* and those that he selected for his own legal reference, his *Sunan*. At no point, for example, does he claim that one of the narrations included in his *Sunan* should have been featured in the *Sahīhs*.⁵⁵

What remains slightly unclear is how these scholars understood and articulated al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s requirements for authenticity. Al-Dāraqutnī’s *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt* implies he considered himself well acquainted with the two scholars’ methodologies, and his student Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11) confidently refers to Muslim’s

⁵³ Al-Fārisī *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 607. Here the author states that Abū Dharr produced a *mustakhraj* of both *Sahīhs*. Al-Harawī’s *mustakhraj* of Muslim was criticized for narrating from transmitters unworthy of Muslim’s standards; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*; 3:201-3, 244.

⁵⁴ ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 472.

⁵⁵ Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon,” 20-21.

“usual methods (*rasm*).”⁵⁶ The only explicit studies devoted to this subject, however, seem to be al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s separate monographs on al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s requirements.⁵⁷ Both these works, however, have been lost.

Both *ilzāmāt* and *īlal* activities seem to have been fairly informal among scholars of the long fourth century. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s teacher Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakā’ī (d. 418/1027-8), for example, noted incidentally in his *Sharḥ uṣūl i ṭiqād ahl al-sunna wa ’l-jamā’ā* (Exposition of the Principles of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā’ā* Creed) that a certain ḥadīth met Muslim’s requirements and should have been included in his *Sahīh* (*yalzamuhu ikhrājuhu*).⁵⁸ In addition to his *Kitāb al-tatabbu’*, al-Dāraquṭnī criticized at least thirteen other narrations from Muslim’s *Sahīh*. These were not set down in any extant books, but have survived in a rebuttal by al-Dāraquṭnī’s student Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī.⁵⁹

Required Study: Clarifying an Unclear Subject

As templates for *mustakhraj*s, al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections served as formative texts for scholars to interpret and implement the Prophet’s normative legacy in new times. Through *īlal* and *ilzāmāt* works ḥadīth scholars of the long fourth century critically engaged the standards of authenticity established by the *Shaykhayn*. Both the

⁵⁶ Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī Kulayb (Riyadh: Dār al-Warrāq, 1419/1998), 298.

⁵⁷ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Madkhal ilā ma ḥifrat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 72.

⁵⁸ Abū al-Qāsim Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakā’ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl i ṭiqād ahl al-sunna wa ’l-jamā’ā*, ed. Aḥmad b. Sa‘d b. Ḥamdān al-Ghāmidī, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Tayba, 1415/1994), 4:878.

⁵⁹ See Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*; 187, 195, 198, and 203, for examples.

mustakhraj and the *īlal / ilzāmāt* genres required an exhaustive knowledge of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections. Scholars seeking to partially reproduce their *isnāds* or understand their requirements for authenticity needed to identify all of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's chains of transmission. These genres of scholarly activity thus spurred a myriad of subsidiary studies on the *Sahīhayn*. *Mustakhrajs* themselves often included elucidations of obscure transmitters. Al-Ismā‘īlī's work, for example, identifies a narrator in one *isnād* whom al-Bukhārī refers to simply as 'al-Maqburī' as the famous Successor Sa‘īd al-Maqburī.⁶⁰

Those who transmitted al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs* also contributed to clarifying some of the collections' indistinct features and deciphering textual vagaries. **Ibn al-Sakan** (d. 353/964) of Baghdad settled in Egypt after years of travel and became an important transmitter of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*.⁶¹ He received his text of the *Sahīh* directly from al-Bukhārī's student al-Firabrī (d. 320/932) and attempted to clarify as many of the ambiguous transmitters as possible through his own research. As a result, his recension of the *Sahīh* became one of the most definitive studies of al-Bukhārī's men.⁶² Abū Dharr al-Harawī was a Mālikī who settled among the Bedouin near Mecca and visited the city every year for pilgrimage as well as to narrate ḥadīths. He brought together the three disparate transmissions of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* from Abū Ishāq al-

⁶⁰ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 13:371.

⁶¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:100; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:88-9. He transmitted *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* to Ibn Asad al-Juhanī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Mufarrah and Abū Ja‘far b. ‘Awn.

⁶² Later scholars testify to the importance of Ibn al-Sakan's work; see Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī, *al-Ta‘rif bi-shuyūkh ḥaddaṭha ‘anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī fī kitābihī wa ahmala ansābahu wa dhikr mā yu‘rafūn bihi min qabā‘ilihim wa buldānihim*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1418/1998), 11.

Mustamlī of Balkh, al-Kushmīhanī of Merv and Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥamawayh of Sarakhs. These were the three most prominent students of al-Firabrī, the primary transmitter of the *Sahīh* from its author.⁶³ More importantly, al-Harawī noted the variations among the three transmissions and attempted to honestly reconstitute the original text.⁶⁴

Differences between various narrations of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* occasionally proved noticeable. Besides al-Firabrī, Ibrāhīm b. Ma'qil al-Nasafī (d. 295/907-8) and Ḥammād b. Shākir's (d. 290/902-3) transmissions of the text also survived for several centuries. Ḥammād b. Shākir's recension, however, contained two-hundred fewer narrations than that of al-Firabrī, while Ibrāhīm's was three-hundred less.⁶⁵

Transmitters could also play more substantial editorial roles. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī reports that when Abū Iṣhāq al-Mustamlī examined al-Firabrī's copy of the *Sahīh* he noticed that some sections were still in draft form, with a number of chapter headings lacking ḥadīths, or ḥadīths with no chapter headings. Al-Mustamlī states that he and his fellow students attempted to arrange unsorted material in its proper place (*fa-aḍafnā ba ḫdhālik ilā ba ḫd*).⁶⁶

⁶³ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:201; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:287.

⁶⁴ Ibn Daqīq al-Īd, *al-Iqtirāh fī bayān al-iṣṭilāh*, 299.

⁶⁵ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-idāh*, 26-7. Ibn Ḥajar explains that Ibrāhīm and Ḥammād heard incomplete versions of the *Sahīh* from al-Bukhārī and that al-Firabrī's recension represents the final product (*asl al-taṣnīf*); Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 69. For more information on the details of the transmission of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs*, see Chapter 7 n. 99. For a discussion of the attribution and textual authenticity of the two works, see Appendix III.

⁶⁶ Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhu al-Taṣlīl wa al-tajrīḥ li-man kharaja lahu al-Bukhārī fī al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, ed. Abū Lubāba Ḥusayn, 3 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Liwā‘, 1406/1986), 1:310-1; Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384), *al-Kawākib al-darārī fī sharḥ Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 25 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1358/1939), 1:5.

Most importantly, the long fourth century saw the emergence of studies specifically devoted to identifying and describing al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters. The earliest examples of this genre are limited to identifying al-Bukhārī's immediate sources. Ibn 'Adī's *Asāmī man rawā 'anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī* and Muhammad b. Ishāq **Ibn Manda** (d. 395/1004-5) of Isfahan's *Asāmī mashāyikh al-imām al-Bukhārī* represent the first two generations of these transmitter studies. Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Kalābādhī (d. 398/1008) of Bukhara produced the most comprehensive listing of all al-Bukhārī's transmitter.⁶⁷ Yet it was not until the early fifth/eleventh century that a book was compiled on the men of Muslim's *Sahīh*: this was the book of Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Manjawayh of Naysābūr (d. 428/1036-7). Al-Dāraqutnī was the first to write a biographical dictionary covering both the *Sahīhayn*. His student al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī and the Baghdad scholar al-Lālakā'ī each repeated this task several years later.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Although originally titled *al-Hidāya wa al-irshād fī ma ḥifat ahl al-thiqā wa al-sadād alladhīna akhraja lahum al-Bukhārī fī Sahīhihi*, this work is often referred to as *Rijāl Sahīh al-Bukhārī*.

⁶⁸ Al-Hākim's small work is entitled *Tasmiyat man akhrajahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim wa mā infarada bihi kull minhumā*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūt (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya and Dār al-Jinān, 1407/1987). This genre continued beyond the scope of our long fourth century. Abū 'Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105) made efforts to complete the task of identifying al-Bukhārī's obscure transmitters (see above note 62). The Mālikī jurist Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wrote a book collecting critical opinions on al-Bukhārī's men entitled *Kitāb al-ta'āil wa al-tajrīh li-man rawā 'anhu al-Bukhārī fī al-Sahīh* (see al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaqrafa*, 154; n. 66 above). Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) combined Ibn Manjawayh and al-Kalābādhī's two works in *Kitāb al-jam 'bayn kitābay Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-Isbahānī*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyya, 1323/[1905]). 'Abdallāh b. Ahmad al-Shantānī of Cordova (d. 522/1128) wrote a book correcting some of al-Kalābādhī's oversights called *Kitāb bayān 'ammā fī kitāb Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī min al-nuqsān* as well as a work on Muslim's men entitled *Kitāb al-minhāj*. Aḥmad b. Ahmad al-Hakkārī (d. 763/1362) also wrote a book on the men of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Finally, one of the most useful studies on this topic is Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl Ibn Khalfūn's (d. 636/1238-9) work on al-Bukhārī and Muslim's teachers, *al-Mu'lūm bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Ādil b. Sa'd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1421/2000); al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:47; Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:131.

Al-Dāraqutnī's *oeuvre* constituted the first and most impressive holistic study of the *Sahīhayn* as two complementary texts. He authored no less than eleven books detailing various aspects of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's work. In addition to his biographical dictionary of their transmitters, he compiled separate lists of the transmitters who comprised al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *isnāds* after the generation of the Companions.⁶⁹ He emphasized the complementary relationship of the two works in his listing of the Companions featured in both the *Sahīhs* as well as those that each book used exclusively. He also made a study of the different transmissions of the *Sahīhayn* after their authors' deaths.⁷⁰ The functional nature of these studies reveals itself in the book that al-Dāraqutnī tailored to his interest in expanding the number of verified authentic hadīths through *ilzāmāt* work. He composed a book solely on the Companions through whom reliable hadīths were transmitted but were not included in the *Sahīhayn* (*Dhikr al-sahāba alladhīna ṣahhat al-riwāya ‘anhum wa laysū fī al-Sahīhayn*).⁷¹

An examination of the studies devoted to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters reveals a gradually increasing mastery of the two *Sahīhs* as the long fourth century progressed. Moreover, we are alerted to another central feature of the network of *Sahīhayn* scholars in this period: the serious regional boundaries that still constricted the

⁶⁹ These two works, *Dhikr asmā’ al-tābi’īn wa man ba ‘dahum mimman ṣahhat riwāyatuhu min al-thiqāt īnd Muḥammad b. Ismā’īl al-Bukhārī*, and *Dhikr asmā’ al-tābi’īn wa man ba ‘dahum mimman ṣahhat riwāyatuhu īnd Muslim*, have been published together as *Dhikr asmā’ al-tābi’īn*, ed. Burhān al-Danawī and Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūt, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1985).

⁷⁰ For the unpublished works, *Asmā’ al-sahāba allatī ittafaqa fīhā al-Bukhārī wa Muslim wa mā infarada bihi kull minhumā*, *Kitāb fī dhikr riwāyāt al-Sahīhayn* and al-Dāraqutnī’s dictionary of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s transmitters, see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:207-9.

⁷¹ This work remains unpublished, al-Dāraqutnī, “Dhikr asmā’ al-sahāba alladhīna ṣahhat al-riwāya ‘anhum wa laysū fī al-Sahīhayn,” MS 7159, Maktabat al-Asad, Damascus: fols. 197b-198a.

movement of texts and information. In Jurjān, Ibn ‘Adī was unable to identify one of al-Bukhārī’s teachers mentioned in the *Ṣahīḥ*, Sa‘īd b. Marwān, listing him as unknown (*lā yu‘raf*).⁷² Even Ibn Manda, who died some thirty years after Ibn ‘Adī, fails to mention this Sa‘īd b. Marwān in his book on al-Bukhārī’s sources. It is not until Abū Naṣr al-Kalābādhī, who died a mere three years after Ibn Manda but lived mainly in Bukhara, that we find a listing for Sa‘īd b. Marwān b. ‘Alī Abū ‘Uthmān al-Baghdādī (d. 252/866), who lived and died in Naysābūr.⁷³

Why was neither Ibn ‘Adī nor Ibn Manda able to identify this transmitter? Sa‘īd b. Marwān had narrated ḥadīths to two major scholars in his adopted home city of Naysābūr, Ibn Khuzayma and his disciple Ibn al-Jārūd. Ibn ‘Adī, however, never traveled to the Khurāsān region, and neither he nor his close friend al-Ismā‘īlī had any contact with Ibn Khuzayma or his student. It is therefore not surprising that Ibn ‘Adī ignores Ibn Khuzayma completely in the list of great ḥadīth scholars in his *al-Kāmil*.⁷⁴ Conversely, Ibn Manda visited both Bukhara and Naysābūr. But we know from al-Ḥākim, however, that he had completed his book on al-Bukhārī’s teachers *before* staying in Naysābūr and possibly before arriving in Bukhara.⁷⁵ It seems that, like Ibn ‘Adī, Ibn Manda never had access to information about Sa‘īd b. Marwān of Naysābūr.

⁷² Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 110.

⁷³ Al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:872. Al-Ḥākim benefited from al-Kalābādhī; see his *Tasmiyat man akhrajahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, 123.

⁷⁴ For a biography of Sa‘īd b. Marwān al-Baghdādī, see Ibn Khalfūn, *al-Mu‘lim bi-shuyūkh al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, 514-5. Ibn Khalfūn lists another Sa‘īd b. Marwān as well, namely Sa‘īd b. Marwān b. Sa‘īd Abū ‘Uthmān al-Azdī from the Jazīra. Ibn Wāra and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī narrated from him, and al-Bukhārī notes him in his *Tārīkh al-kabīr*. It is very unlikely that this was the Sa‘īd b. Marwān to which Ibn ‘Adī was referring, since he was very familiar with Ibn Wāra and Abū Ḥātim, both of whom appear in his *al-Kāmil*.

⁷⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:320-4.

Regional and Temporal Distribution of the *Sahīhayn* Network

Ibn ‘Adī and Ibn Manda’s failure to identify Sa‘īd b. Marwān illustrates one of the salient characteristics of the study of the *Sahīhayn* in the long fourth century. Although ḥadīth scholars traversed the Islamic world from Andalusia to Central Asia, resilient regional cults still developed according to material constraints like the availability of certain texts as well as the functionalist and ideological preferences of local scholarly communities. The *Sahīhayn* Network of the long fourth century revolved around three of these regional schools: Naysābūr, Jurjān and Baghdad.

a. *Naysābūr and the Hometown Cult of Muslim*

Naysābūr was the birthplace of the *mustakhraj* phenomenon, and it was in the city and its environs that the genre flourished most intensively. From the time of Muslim’s death until the close of the long fourth century, scholars devoted *mustakhrajs* to the *Sahīh* of the city’s native son. In addition, Naysābūr scholars also crafted *mustakhrajs* of Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan*, the *Jāmi‘* of al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Khuzayma’s *Sahīh*. It was only in the mid 300/900’s, however, that the city’s scholars developed an interest in al-Bukhārī’s collection.

Naysābūr was the lynchpin of the Eastern Islamic lands during the Classical period. Astride the road that ran from Baghdad to Central Asia and beyond, it was an inevitable commercial way-station and bustling center of scholarly activity. The city’s intellectual landscape was divided sharply between the Hanafī school, with its strong ties to Mu‘tazilite doctrine, and the transmission-based *ahl al-sunna*, who generally identified

with the teachings of al-Shāfi‘ī.⁷⁶ In the decades after the city laid Muslim to rest at the head of one of its major squares, Naysābūr’s transmission-based legal culture was dominated by Muḥammad b. Ishāq **Ibn Khuzayma**. Declared “*imām* of the *imāms*,” Ibn Khuzayma was described by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī as “the foremost [scholar] by agreement of all of his age,” an authority on the teachings of al-Shāfi‘ī and a source of religious rulings (*fatwās*).⁷⁷ He studied with al-Shāfi‘ī’s most illustrious students, al-Rabī‘ and al-Muzanī, and was relied upon greatly by Ibn Surayj (d. 305/917-18), the Baghdad scholar around whom the Shāfi‘ī legal school coalesced more concretely.⁷⁸ Ibn Khuzayma rigidly upheld the über-Sunni stance on the nature of the Qur’ān, stating that anyone who believed it to be created was an unbeliever.⁷⁹ A poem by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā of Naysābūr testifies to Muslim and Ibn Khuzayma’s stations in the city’s pantheon of scholars:

So set aside all thought of Jūrjān, for indeed our scholars
 In the land of Naysābūr are more illustrious by far; so why the sadness?
 No one can be compared to Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā.⁸⁰
 If tested his glory would suffice you.
 And his student Ishāq [b. Rāhawayh] how great he is (*li-llāh darruhu*)!
 Indeed, along with al-Ribātī, their virtue is not hidden.
 Abū al-Azhar al-Mifḍāl then Ibn Hāshim,
 And Muslim, they are the lords of ḥadīth so do not deny it.
 And who is their equal in prodigious memory and station?
 ...
 And from us too, Ibn Ishāq the Khuzaymī, our *shaykh*

⁷⁶ See Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 36-40.

⁷⁷ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 120; Bulliet, *Patricians*, 62.

⁷⁸ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, 104; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 312-3; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:233-6.

⁷⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:205.

⁸⁰ Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Tamīmī al-Naysābūrī (d. ca. 220/835); see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:259.

Our source of pride, *shaykh* of all *shaykhs* in his time.
 Indeed he was for Islam a pillar and pivot.
 May God water well a grave with such a *shaykh* buried within.⁸¹

One of Ibn Khuzayma's colleagues also exercised a tremendous amount of influence in Naysābūr. Abū al-‘Abbās Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm **al-Sarrāj** (d. 313/925) was one of the city's leading scholars. A student of Ishāq b. Rāhawayh and a teacher of Ibn Khuzayma, both al-Bukhārī and Muslim studied ḥadīth with him. He was an inveterate critic of the Ḥanafī school and active prosecutor of those who upheld the created wording of the Qur'ān.⁸² Al-Sarrāj also produced one of the earliest *mustakhrajs* of Muslim's *Sahīh*.

Scholars in Naysābūr began using Muslim's collections as a template for *mustakhrajs* almost immediately after his death. Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī mentioned that Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās al-Ṣā'igh of Rayy (d. 270/883) had done so during Muslim's lifetime.⁸³ Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Rajā' (d. 286/899) studied with many of Muslim's teachers but nonetheless produced a *mustakhraj* called *al-Sahīh al-mukharraj ‘alā kitāb Muslim*.⁸⁴ Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama al-Bazzār (d. 286/899), Muslim's companion to whom he had dedicated the *Sahīh*, also wrote a *mustakhraj*.⁸⁵ As the *Sahīhayn* Network Chart demonstrates, scholars studying or living in Naysābūr and its immediate environs

⁸¹ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 177-8.

⁸² Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 310-11; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 1:264-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:215; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:462-4.

⁸³ Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-ḍu‘afā’ wa ajwibatuhu ‘alā as’ilat al-Bardha 7*, 2:674.

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:186; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:288.

⁸⁵ Al-Dhahabī states that people like Abū Nu‘aym al-Isbahānī also called the work *Sahīh Aḥmad b. Salama*; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:408; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60; idem, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:156.

continued to produce waves of *mustakhrajs* on Muslim's collection. Fully ten had been compiled before Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb **Ibn al-Akhram** (d. 344/955) finally produced one of the *Sahīhayn* together.⁸⁶ Almost two decades later al-Māsarjisī (d. 365/976) devoted another *mustakhraj* to the *Sahīhayn*.⁸⁷ Yet in the century after Ibn al-Akhram's death Naysābūr produced eight more *mustakhrajs* of Muslim, four of the combined *Sahīhayn* but only one devoted solely to al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*.

Although al-Bukhārī was not a native of Naysābūr like Muslim, he resided in the city for approximately five years during which time he narrated his *Sahīh* to circles of ḥadīth students.⁸⁸ Why then did scholarly activity in the city seem so oblivious of al-Bukhārī's work until Ibn al-Akhram and al-Māsarjisī's writings? The answer lies in the qualitative preference Muslim enjoyed in his hometown as well in the accusations of heresy that had tainted al-Bukhārī's name. When Abū al-'Abbās b. Sa'īd **Ibn 'Uqda** (d. 332/944), who taught many Naysābūris, was asked who was more knowledgeable, al-Bukhārī or Muslim, he eventually replied that al-Bukhārī occasionally made mistakes with reports transmitted from Syrians because he had only received these in written form. He thus sometimes thought that a person mentioned once by his name and once by patronymic was two people. Conversely, he notes, Muslim rarely made errors concerning transmission (*ilal*), because he avoided al-Bukhārī's practice of including additional ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds*.⁸⁹ Abū 'Alī al-Naysābūrī (d. 349/960), who

⁸⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:55; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:312-3; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 315.

⁸⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:110-11; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:337-8.

⁸⁸ We know from al-Kalābādhī that al-Bukhārī had been narrating his work to students since at least 248 AH. He arrived in Naysābūr in about 250 AH; al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī*, 1:24.

⁸⁹ Al-Ḥākim Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 101; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90.

had traveled widely in areas such as Egypt, Jurjān and Merv, concluded that “there is not beneath the heavens (*taht adīm al-samā’*) [a book] more authentic than the book of Muslim.”⁹⁰ Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Abū Ishāq al-Muzakkī (d. 362/973), a student of Ibn Khuzayma and Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, proved to be a major link between Naysābūr and scholarly circles in Baghdad and Isfahan. He instructed al-Dāraqutnī, al-Barqānī, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī as well Abū Nu‘aym al-Īṣbahānī. Although al-Muzakkī transmitted a number of Muslim’s works (presumably his *Sahīh* was among them) on his many visits to Baghdad, he only transmitted al-Bukhārī’s *Tārīkh al-kabīr* to the exclusion of his *Sahīh*.⁹¹

This delayed attention to al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* also stemmed from the scandal of the *lafz* of the Qur’ān. Two of the most influential transmission-based scholars in the city, Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj, both aggressively attacked anyone who upheld a belief in the created wording of the holy book. Even Ibn al-Akhram, who composed the first joint al-Bukhārī/Muslim *mustakhraj*, did so only after responding to al-Sarrāj’s request to complete one solely based on Muslim’s *Sahīh*.⁹² Abū al-Walīd Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Umawī (d. 344/955) expressed a desire to craft a *mustakhraj* of al-Bukhārī’s work, but his father instructed him to follow Muslim due to al-Bukhārī’s scandal.⁹³ It is thus no

⁹⁰ Ibn Manda heard this directly from Abū ‘Alī; see Ibn Manda, *Shurūt*, 71; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:70-2; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:80. Ibn Ḥajar suggests that Abū ‘Alī may not have ever seen al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*, but this is unlikely since the work was certainly in circulation in the regions he visited; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

⁹¹ Al-Muzakkī must have visited Baghdad more than once, since at the time of his recorded visit in 316/928-9 both al-Dāraqutnī and al-Barqānī would have been too young to have heard from him; al-Dāraqutnī never voyaged east from Iraq. See al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:165-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:289-90.

⁹² Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:55; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:312-3.

⁹³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Šiyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 90; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:75; idem *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:417-8.

surprise that, with the exception of Ibn al-Akhram and al-Māsarjisī, all the conjoined *Sahīhayn mustakhrajs* in Naysābūr and the only one devoted solely to al-Bukhārī appeared only after the generation of scholars who had studied with Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj had died (see *Sahīhayn* Network Chart). Only at that point could scholars like Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim (d. 378/988), a judge who worked in Naysābūr's environs and whom al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī calls one of most knowledgeable concerning the requirements of authenticity (*shurūt al-sahīh*), state: "may God bless *imām* Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl [al-Bukhārī], for it was he who set forth the foundations (*al-uṣūl*) [of ḥadīth] and elucidated them to the people. All those who have come after him, like Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, have taken from his book (the *Sahīh*)."⁹⁴

b. Jurjān: a Cult of al-Bukhārī among Friends

On a map, the small province of Jurjān on the southeast coast of the Caspian Sea does not seem far from Naysābūr and its satellite cities of Tūs, Juvayn and Isfarāyīn. The intimidating Elborz Mountains, however, separate Jurjān's littoral marshes and densely treed mountainsides from these Khurāsānī centers as well as the great city of Rayy. Yet during the mid fourth/tenth century Jurjān constituted an important center of ḥadīth study in its own right. More specifically, it was home to three friends who formed a bastion of scholarly interest in al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*. The region produced no *mustakhrajs* of any other ḥadīth work. Two of these scholars in particular emerged as extremely influential figures in the historical development of ḥadīth literature. We have already relied on

⁹⁴ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 187; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:123-4. For Abū Aḥmad's quote see al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380.

[‘]Abdallāh Abū Aḥmad **Ibn ‘Adī** (d. 365/975-6) as the earliest significant source on al-Bukhārī’s life and work. He gained renown, however, for his voluminous dictionary of problematic ḥadīth transmitters, *al-Kāmil fī du ‘afā’ al-rijāl*, that became the foundation for many later works in that genre. The *Kāmil* enjoyed immediate popularity and quickly spread among scholarly circles in major cities like Baghdad. Ibn ‘Adī’s younger contemporary in Baghdad, al-Dāraqutnī, said that the work sufficed for all needs in that genre.⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Adī traveled widely in Iraq, Syria, the Ḥijāz and Egypt and was deeply versed in the school of al-Shāfi‘ī. He wrote a juridical manual called *al-Intiṣār* based on the chapter structure of al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar*, the most famous abridgment of the Shāfi‘ī tradition’s formative text, al-Shāfi‘ī’s *Umm* (The Motherbook).⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Adī not only served as an important transmitter of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* from al-Firabrī in Jurjān,⁹⁷ he also wrote the aforementioned first work on al-Bukhārī’s sources.

When Ibn ‘Adī died, his close friend and colleague al-Ismā‘īlī (d. 371/981-2) led his funeral prayer.⁹⁸ As we have noted in the preceding discussion of al-Ismā‘īlī’s *Mustakhraj*, this scholar adhered to al-Shāfi‘ī’s transmission-based legal tradition and also exhibited marked rationalist tendencies. Al-Ismā‘īlī was so well-respected that several ḥadīth scholars, including al-Dāraqutnī, felt that he should have compiled his own

⁹⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:245.

⁹⁶ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291-2; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:102-3. The various recensions of the *Umm* are most likely collections of all the works narrated by Rabī‘ b. Sulaymān from al-Shāfi‘ī; Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi‘ī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1416/1996), 148-50.

⁹⁷ Ibn ‘Adī transmitted *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* to people like ‘Amr Ahmad b. Muḥammad. al-Astarābādhī; Abū al-Qāsim Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī (d. 427/1035-6), *Tārīkh Jurjān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘īd Khān et al. (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1387/1967), 106.

⁹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:241.

sahīh instead of following in al-Bukhārī's footsteps. It was reported that when news of his death reached Baghdad, over three-hundred ḥadīth scholars, merchants and jurists from both the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī schools gathered in the main mosque to mourn him for several days.⁹⁹ Although al-Ismā‘īlī produced no independent study of al-Bukhārī's work, his *Mustakhrāj* remained an indispensable reference work for students and scholars of the *Sahīh*, even late ones such as Ibn Ḥajar.

Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Aḥmad **al-Ghiṭrīfī** (d. 377/987-8) was the least accomplished of the Jurjān scholars. He was a very close associate of al-Ismā‘īlī as well as his son's tutor.¹⁰⁰ Like his friend, al-Ghiṭrīfī also composed a *mustakhrāj* of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*. Although his father was from Naysābūr, he lived almost his entire life in Jurjān. He visited Rayy and Baghdad, and was the only Jurjān scholar to have heard from Ibn Khuzayma in Naysābūr.¹⁰¹

Why did this cluster of Jurjān scholars prove such redoubt partisans of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* to the exclusion of Muslim's and the other major fruits of the *sahīh* movement? This phenomenon may have partially resulted from a limited exposure to Muslim's work. As the *Sahīhayn* Network Chart demonstrates, there are almost no personal links between Jurjān and Naysābūr, where the cult of Muslim's *Sahīh* matured. Ibn ‘Adī thus excludes both Muslim and Ibn Khuzayma from his list of noteworthy ḥadīth scholars and does not seem to have had access to valuable information about al-Bukhārī's Naysābūr sources. Like the case of Muslim's collection in Naysābūr, however, the Jurjān

⁹⁹ Al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 87; cf. al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya*, 3:8; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 14:281-2.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:120.

¹⁰¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:614-5.

scholars also considered *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī* to be a more accurate representation of the Prophet's legacy. Al-Ismā‘īlī argues in the introduction to his *Mustakhrāj* (his *Madkhal*) that al-Bukhārī's book is superior to Muslim's because the latter “set out to do what [al-Bukhārī] sought to do, and took from him or from his books, except that he did not restrict himself [in what he included] as much Abū ‘Abdallāh [al-Bukhārī] did, and he narrated from a large number from whom Abū ‘Abdallāh would not deign to narrate (*lam yata‘arrad... li l-riwāya ‘anhum*).” He adds that al-Bukhārī's *Sahīḥ* also bested Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* because he had higher standards for selecting ḥadīths as well as better explanations of their legal implications.¹⁰² Abū al-Qāsim Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī (d. 427/1035-6), author of the local history of Jurjān (*Tārīkh Jurjān*), relies on al-Bukhārī ten times in his history for information about ḥadīth transmitters.¹⁰³ Although al-Sahmī interacted with several scholars who cultivated equal interests in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, including al-Dāraqutnī, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, he never mentions Muslim in his work. He does, however, note two people as hearing *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

c. Baghdad: Inheriting the Study of the Ṣahīhayn among the Baghdad Knot

As the *Ṣahīhayn* Network Chart demonstrates, Baghdad inherited the study of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections from both Jurjān and Naysābūr. From the mid

¹⁰² Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 11; al-Jazā‘irī, *Tawjīh al-naṣar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:305. For a short summary of this, see Muhyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā’ wa al-lughāt*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, [1977]), 1:74.

¹⁰³ Al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 488. Al-Sahmī is connected to al-Bukhārī by the *isnād* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Abdān ← Muḥammad b. Sahl ← al-Bukhārī.

fourth/tenth century to the mid fifth/eleventh, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate hosted a knot of scholars who pioneered the study of the two works as complementary units. The genesis of this close association of experts lay in the seminal work of 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Dāraqutnī, whose eleven treatises on the *Sahīhayn* have proven some of the most influential books on the subject. In particular, his joint critical study, *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu'*, has attracted scholarly attention up to the present day. Al-Dāraqutnī brought these two previous centers of study together through his personal scholarly relationships with Abū Sa'īd al-Hīrī, Ibrāhīm al-Muzakkī, al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī and Ibn Dhuhl of Naysābūr, and Ibn 'Adī of Jurjān. He also interacted with scholars from farther a field in Central Asia, such as al-Kalābādhī. He received at least two transmissions of Muslim's *Sahīh*, one from Ibn Māhān in Egypt and one from Ibrāhīm al-Muzakkī. He heard *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* from Abū Sa'īd Aḥmad Ibn Rumayh (d. 357/967-8) and most probably from others as well.¹⁰⁴

Al-Dāraqutnī mentored another of the most influential scholars on the *Sahīhayn* in the long fourth century. Originally from Khwarazm in Transoxiana, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muhammad al-Barqānī, (d. 425/1033-4) traveled extensively throughout Khurāsān before settling in Baghdad, accompanied by a massive personal library. It was al-Barqānī who set down and assembled one of al-Dāraqutnī's most famous and voluminous works, his prodigious *Kitāb al-īlal*.¹⁰⁵ Unlike his teacher, however, al-Barqānī managed to study extensively with al-Ismā'īlī and became the most important transmitter of his

¹⁰⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:96; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 5:210-1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:379.

Mustakhraj.¹⁰⁶ Al-Barqānī's interest in the *Sahīhayn* led him to compile a *musnad* version of the two works as well as a joint *mustakhraj*.¹⁰⁷ Al-Barqānī fell into the gray area of the transmission-based tradition that was gradually separating into the über-Sunni Ḥanbalī school and the more moderate Shāfi‘ī strain. He was later identified as a Shāfi‘ī, no doubt due to his apprenticeship with al-Dāraqutnī but more probably because of his role as a teacher to three of the most prominent Shāfi‘ī scholars of the fifth/eleventh century: Abū Ishaq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (who relies heavily upon him as a source for his history of Baghdad). Yet al-Barqānī also had strong ties to the tradition evolving around Ibn Ḥanbal: he studied with Abū Bakr b. Mālik al-Qaṭī (d. 368/978-9), the main transmitter of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* from his son ‘Abdallāh.¹⁰⁸

Another important member of the knot of Baghdad ḥadīth scholars studying the two *Sahīhs* was al-Dāraqutnī's student Abū Maṣ‘ud Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11). Al-Khaṭīb describes him as having a “strong interest in the *Sahīhayn*,” which he expressed in his famous *Atrāf* of the two works.¹⁰⁹ Although this book exists today in only partial and unpublished form, ḥadīth scholars as far flung as Abū ‘Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105), who never left Andalusia, and the ninth/fifteenth century Cairene

¹⁰⁶ For al-Barqānī's transmission of the *Mustakhraj*, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:281-2; for al-Barqānī's role in transmitting al-Ismā‘īlī's teachings, see al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-iḍāḥ*, 187.

¹⁰⁷ The first part of this *mustakhraj* has been published as *al-Juz’ al-awwal min al-takhrīj li-ṣahīḥ al-ḥadīth ‘an al-shuyūkh al-thiqāt ʿalā sharṭ kitāb Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī wa kitāb Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī aw ahadīhimā*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Bārī Riḍā Būshshāma al-Jazā’irī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1420/1999).

¹⁰⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 5:137-40; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:333; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘īyya*, 1:363-5; 15:242; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:464-8; idem, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:183.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 6:170-1.

Ibn Ḥajar regularly drew on it.¹¹⁰ In addition to the *Atrāf*, the only book of Abū Mas‘ūd to have reached us alludes to an interesting tension between the author and his teacher, al-Dāraqutnī. Abū Mas‘ūd’s *Kitāb al-ajwiba ‘ammā ashkala al-shaykh al-Dāraqutnī ‘alā Ṣahīh Muslim b. al-Hajjāj* (Book of Responses to what al-Dāraqutnī Criticized from the *Ṣahīh* of Muslim b. al-Hajjāj) contains rebuttals to twenty-five narrations that al-Dāraqutnī points out as problematic as well as several suggested *ilzāmāt*.¹¹¹ In addition, Abū Mas‘ūd rejects al-Dāraqutnī’s referral to Abū Zur‘a’s criticism of four of Muslim’s narrators.¹¹² Although we know little about his legal stances, Abū Mas‘ūd clearly cultivated a close personal relationship with the scholar later considered the third reviver of the Shāfi‘ī school, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016).¹¹³ When Abū Mas‘ūd died, Abū Ḥāmid led his funeral prayer and managed his will (as his *wasīlā*).¹¹⁴

One of Abū Mas‘ūd’s colleagues, Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d.c. 400/1010) also produced a three or four volume *aṭrāf* of the *Ṣahīhayn* (one volume, seven *juz’*s, of

¹¹⁰ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (742/1341) states that he relied on al-Dimashqī and al-Wāsiṭī’s *Atrāf* of the *Ṣahīhayn* in his index of the Six Books; al-Mizzī, *Tuhfat al-ashrāffī ma ḥifat al-aṭrāf*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), 1:102.

¹¹¹ These *ilzāmāt* do not appear in al-Dāraqutnī’s *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu‘*; see Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 287-303.

¹¹² See Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 331. These criticized narrators are Asbāt b. Naṣr, Qaṭān, Aḥmad b. ʿĪsa al-Miṣrī, and Ja‘far b. Sulaymān, three of whom Abū Zur‘a mentioned in his criticism of Muslim’s *Ṣahīh*.

¹¹³ Mahdī Salmāsī, “Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī,” *Dā’erat al-ma‘āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, ed. Kāzem Bojnūrdī (Tehran: Merkez-e Dā’erat al-Ma‘āref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmī, 1368/[1989]), 5:318; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:132-4.

¹¹⁴ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:170-1; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:180. Reports that Abū Mas‘ūd studied with Ibn Khuzayma seem difficult to believe, since the latter died in 311/924.

which has survived in manuscript form).¹¹⁵ He studied with al-Ismā‘īlī as well as many scholars in Baghdad but eventually abandoned scholarship and devoted himself to business. Nonetheless, prominent experts such as al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and Abū Nu‘aym al-Īṣbahānī studied at Khalaf’s hands.¹¹⁶

The last noteworthy scholar of the Baghdad knot was Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Lālakā’ī (d. 418/1027-8). Born in Rayy, he studied ḥadīth there before moving to Baghdad where he studied with the city’s pillar of the Shāfi‘ī tradition, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī. Al-Lālakā’ī compiled a biographical dictionary of the *Sahīhayn*, which has since been lost, but his most famous work was his *Kitāb al-Sunna*.¹¹⁷

Along with Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Khallāl, (d. 439/1047), who wrote a *mustakhraj* of the *Sahīhayn*,¹¹⁸ these scholars constituted a relatively close-knit society characterized by an adherence to the Shāfi‘ī tradition and a shared interest in al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works. Three out of the five studied directly with al-Dāraqutnī, the progenitor of an approach to the *Sahīhayn* as complementary texts. Al-Barqānī describes the close scholarly association among this cluster in the following manner. One day al-Lālakā’ī approached him because he had heard Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī mention that Muslim had included a certain narration of the ḥadīth “the signs of a hypocrite are

¹¹⁵ Al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭrafa*, 125.

¹¹⁶ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdađ*, 8:329-30; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:179-80.

¹¹⁷ This has been published as *Sharḥ uṣūl i ‘tiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā‘a*, ed. Aḥmad b. Sa‘d b. Ḥamdan al-Ghāmidī, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1415/1994); al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:456-7; idem, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:189. Al-Lālakā’ī’s book on the men of the *Sahīhayn* is referred to as a book of Muslim’s transmitters by Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ (d. 775/1374); Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Ḥāwī fī bayān āthār al-Tahāwī*, ed. Yūsuf Aḥmad, 3 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1419/1999), 1:60.

¹¹⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdađ*, 7:437-8; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:205; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 29:471-2.

three...,” and he wanted al-Barqānī to find it for him in the *Sahīh*. Al-Barqānī looked through his combined *musnad* of the *Sahīhayn* and discovered that the narration did not exist. This vindicated al-Lālakā’ī suspicion that Abū Mas‘ūd had mixed up one of the names in the *isnād*. Al-Barqānī recalls how Khalaf al-Wāsitī was also mistaken about this narration.¹¹⁹

d. Other: Isfahan and Central Asia

Not all studies of the *Sahīhayn* during the long fourth century emerged from Naysābūr, Jurjān or Baghdad. Several important scholars worked independently of these regional camps. Al-Kalābādhī (d. 398/1008) traveled to Khurāsān and Iraq, but he spent most of his life in Transoxiana.¹²⁰ The first scholar to produce a commentary on one of the *Sahīhayn*, that of al-Bukhārī, was Abū Sulaymān Ḥamad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī of Bust (d. 388/998). Although he studied in Baghdad and narrated ḥadīths to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Dharr al-Harawī and al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, he remained a relative outsider in the main regional centers of study. He spent most of his time in Bust, in the far east of Khurāsān. Even there his pietistic inclinations kept him far from public life. In one poem he wrote “indeed I am a stranger among Bust and her people... though my family and kin are there.”¹²¹ Al-Khaṭṭābī’s primary ḥadīth interest lay in the *Sunan* of

¹¹⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:71-2.

¹²⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:201; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:154-5; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:355.

¹²¹ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya*, 3:284; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:166-7; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:149-150; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 14:129. Ibn al-Jawzī errs in al-Khaṭṭābī’s death date; he includes him among those who died in 349 AH.

Abū Dāwūd, on which he wrote a famous commentary. It was only after some of his students in Balkh pressured him to write a commentary on al-Bukhārī's work that he composed his *A lām al-hadīth fī sharḥ Sahīh al-Bukhārī*. Al-Khaṭṭābī also wrote a work on the vocabulary of al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, and his opinions on legal theory became a source for later Shāfi‘ī scholars.¹²²

Several important scholars from the *Sahīhayn* Network also hailed from Isfahan. In addition to being one of the most influential ḥadīth scholars of his time, we have already noted Ibn Manda's contribution to the study of al-Bukhārī's sources. Before him Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Abdān al-Shīrāzī (d. 388/998) moved between Khurāsān and the western Iranian cities of Ahwāz and Isfahan. He produced a joint *mustakhrāj* and also narrated al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*.¹²³ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Mūsā Ibn Mardawayh (d. 416/1025-6) wrote a *mustakhrāj* of al-Bukhārī,¹²⁴ and Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī's separate *mustakhrājs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim have already been discussed. As the *Sahīhayn* Network Chart demonstrates, however, Isfahan never became a united camp or developed a local tradition of studying al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Its scholars lived at different times and were more connected with the centers of Naysābūr and Baghdad than with each other.

e. An End to Regional Cults after 370AH

¹²² Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 3:289-90.

¹²³ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:161; cf. al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 335.

¹²⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:169.

The study of the *Sahīhayn* in the long fourth century thus breaks down along clear chronological and geographical lines. The initial popularity that Muslim's work enjoyed as a template for *mustakhrajs* in his home city of Naysābūr later developed into a more diverse interest that subsumed al-Bukhārī's collection as well as other products of the *sahīh* movement. The cluster of colleagues in Jurjān remained relatively isolated from Khurāsān and thus cultivated an exclusive interest in al-Bukhārī. Beginning with al-Dāraqutnī, the network of Baghdad scholars inherited the legacies of both regions and thus pioneered the study of the two works as a pair.

By the 370/980's, however, the regional cults of al-Bukhārī or Muslim had disappeared. After the death of al-Ghiṭrīfī, Jurjān faded into geographical and historical obscurity. The Baghdad knot was built on the study of the two works together, and by 370 AH in Muslim's native Naysābūr a study of the conjoined *Sahīhayn* as well as other major products of the *sahīh* movement eclipsed the strict focus on his *Sahīh*.

The *Sahīhayn* Network: A Shāfi‘ī Enterprise

The *Sahīhayn* Network of the long fourth century exhibits another striking characteristic: the study of the two works seems to have been an exclusively Shāfi‘ī endeavor. Although the profound work of George Makdisi, Wael Hallaq and Christopher Melchert has shed light on the formation of the Sunni *madhhabs*, discussing trends in legal and ritual identification still proves very difficult in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. The indistinct intellectual landscape of this period resists attempts to apply the construct of the clearly defined Sunni *madhhabs*, in part because it preceded institutions like the *madrasa* that would later play important roles their expression. Hallaq therefore

describes this period as one of “indistinguishable plurality.”¹²⁵ This period retains the startling diversity of early Islam, as schools of law usually dismissed as phenomena of the second and third centuries survived. It was only in 347/958-9, for example, that the last *muftī* of the Awzā’ī school died in Damascus.¹²⁶ One of the most important transmitters of Muslim’s *Sahīh*, al-Julūdī (d. 368/979), followed the moribund *madhab* of Sufyān al-Thawrī.¹²⁷

Indeed, the undeniable presence of the regularized four Sunni schools marks the end of the long fourth century. With a cadre of scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085), and Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), for example, we can for the first time feel totally at ease discussing a broad and unshakable guild-like loyalty to a Shāfi’ī school. Only in the ample wake of the long fourth century can we rely on the well-worn stereotypes that al-Ḥasan b. Abī Bakr al-Naysābūrī spoke to in 536/1142 when he told a congregation “be Shāfi’ī but not Ash‘arī, be Ḥanafī but not Mu’tazilī, be Ḥanbalī but not anthropomorphist.”¹²⁸

In the long fourth century the arena for the study of the *Sahīhayn* extended from Transoxiana to the Hijāz. There the enduring distinction between the “two sects (*al-fariqān*)” of the transmission-based and reason-based scholars still ruled. The Ḥanafīs/*ahl al-ra’y* were developing a keener interest in ḥadīth, but the school retained its

¹²⁵ Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61.

¹²⁶ Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi’ī*, 339.

¹²⁷ This according to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. See, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 107; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16: 302.

¹²⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 18:31.

link with the Mu'tazilite doctrine so anathema to the *ahl al-hadīth*. The doyen of the Ḥanafī ḥadīth tradition, Abū Ja'far al-Tahāwī of Egypt (d. 321/933), seems to have been in a minority with his distance from Mu'tazilism. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), the most prominent Iraqi Ḥanafī of his time, is also described as a leading Mu'tazilite (*kāna ra's'an fī al-i tizāl*).¹²⁹ Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Tanūkhī, who learned *fīqh* from al-Karkhī, was from a "house of ḥadīth" but was nonetheless Mu'tazilite.¹³⁰ 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Tanūkhī (d. 342/953) was also a Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar knowledgeable in Mu'tazilite *kalām*.¹³¹

It was the monolithic construct of the *ahl al-hadīth* that was becoming increasingly insufficient for describing the divisions among transmission-based scholars. There two distinct strains were emerging. Al-Bukhārī's persecution at the hands of fellow ḥadīth scholars illustrated a break between the conservative über-Sunni interpretation of Ibn Ḥanbal's legacy and a more moderate transmission-based approach, which Melchert has dubbed "semi-rationalist." These two strains would later emerge as two competing parties in the Sunni Islamic heartlands, the Shāfi'i/Ash'arī camp and its rival Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni school. In the long fourth century, however, these two budding schools shared a common heritage. Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī heard the entirety of al-Shāfi'i's *oeuvre* from Rabī', yet he is claimed as a Ḥanbalī.¹³² Ibn Abī Ḥātim devoted a work to

¹²⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:85; cf. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtadā (d. 839/1437), *Ṭabaqāt al-muṭazila*, ed. Suzanna Diwald-Wilzer (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hayāt, [198-]), 130.

¹³⁰ Ibn al-Murtadā, *Ṭabaqāt al-muṭazila*, 108.

¹³¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 14:90.

¹³² See Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi'i*, 148; Henri Laoust, "Ḥanabila," *EI*².

the virtues of al-Shāfi‘ī but is similarly claimed by Ḥanbalīs.¹³³ This ambiguity was deeply rooted in the career of Ibn Ḥanbal himself, for it is reported that he considered al-Shāfi‘ī to be his century’s reviver of the faith.¹³⁴ The Mālikī school, based in Egypt and the lands of the Maghrib, proves tangential to the *Sahīhayn* Network. Only Qāsim b. Aṣbagh of Cordova and Abū Dharr al-Harawī belonged to the Mālikī school.

Identifying the porous boundaries between the emerging Ḥanbalī and Shāfi‘ī strains is challenging in the long fourth century. In the early stages one cannot yet consistently identify legal schools through tell-tale shibboleths like the Shāfi‘ī insistence on the voiced *basmala*. An early scholar like Abū ‘Awāna is considered the person who brought the Shāfi‘ī school to Isfaraīn, but he broke with what became important *madhab* stances such as the *basmala* and the issue of what invalidates prayer.

The distinction between the two transmission-based strains becomes more evident in their attitudes towards rationalism in perennial controversies such as the *lafz* of the Qur’ān and the use of speculative theology (*kalām*). Melchert describes how by the early fourth/tenth century a “vague Shāfi‘ī school” had emerged that “comprised both a particular system of jurisprudence and a particular theological tendency.” “It was a compromise,” he states, espousing traditionalist tenets but very often defending them rationally.¹³⁵ In the early 300/900’s this distinction is problematic, since an incontrovertibly Shāfi‘ī scholar like Ibn Khuzayma proved one of the most ruthless critics of those who upheld the created wording of the Qur’ān. Yet by the time of al-Khaṭīb al-

¹³³ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:47-8.

¹³⁴ Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 29.

¹³⁵ Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 70.

Baghdādī in the mid 400/1000's, this intransigence on questions of rationalism had become a hallmark of the Ḥanbalī school, not the Shāfi'īs. Al-Khaṭīb began his scholarly career as a Ḥanbalī, but moved to the Shāfi'ī camp after his Ḥanbalī cohorts relentlessly criticized his indulgence in Ash'arī rationalist discourse. Ibn al-Jawzī, a later Ḥanbalī openly offended by al-Khaṭīb's defection, notes how the newly christened Shāfi'ī began mocking Ibn Ḥanbal's legendary intransigence on the issue of the created Qur'ān.¹³⁶ An incontestable Shāfi'ī, al-Dāraqutnī distrusted a reliance on reason and rejected famous hadīths praising it. Yet he also evinced an appreciation for the use of *kalām*. He reportedly told Abū Dharr al-Harawī that one of the founding members of the Ash'arī school, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), was "the *imām* of Muslims and the defender of the religion (*al-dhābb ʻan al-dīn*)."¹³⁷ Despite his personal aversion to speculation, al-Dāraqutnī had himself written a refutation of the Mu'tazila and probably understood its utility in defending against rationalist opponents.

Perhaps the most effective way to identify the two strands, however, is through personal relationships and textual transmission. Even after the dawn of the *madrasa* and the distinct Sunni *madhhabs* in the late fifth/eleventh century, Daphna Ephrat asserts that it was the bonds of personal loyalty between teachers and their students that proved the most cohesive.¹³⁸ In the long fourth century both the emerging Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī camps expressed themselves most clearly through the teachings of specific individuals

¹³⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 16:132.

¹³⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:202.

¹³⁸ Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 88. For a fascinating study on the tight links between the development of Sufism in Khurāsān and the Shāfi'ī tradition, see Margaret Malamud, "Sufi Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 3. (1994): 427-442, esp. 430.

with strong attachments to the legacies of the two eponymous founders. The nascent schools extended out from these individuals, whom Melchert refers to as “local chiefs”¹³⁹ through teacher/student relationships and through the study of their formative texts.

The epicenter of the Shāfi‘ī pedagogical and textual tradition were his most prominent students, Rabī‘ and al-Muzanī. Their student Ibn Khuzayma became a bastion of the Shāfi‘ī tradition in his native Naysābūr. Another student of Rabī‘, Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī (d. 294/906) of Samarqand, became one of the first scholars to discuss the “*madhab*” of al-Shāfi‘ī and elaborate his stances on legal theory.¹⁴⁰ Later Baghdad scholars such as Ibn Surayj and Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī also served as pivots for the Shāfi‘ī tradition during the long fourth century. In addition to scholarly relationships with these pillars, the Shāfi‘ī tradition propagated itself through the transmission of its formative text, al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Shāfi‘ī’s *Umm*. While the Shāfi‘ī scholar al-Ismā‘īlī produced an independent treatise on legal theory, many of the nascent school’s adherents preferred to write commentaries or studies on the *Mukhtaṣar*.

The tradition of Ibn Ḥanbal likewise propagated itself through a network of scholars tied closely to the school’s two formative texts, Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad* and what developed as the definitive collection of his legal opinions. Ibn Ḥanbal’s son ‘Abdallāh served as the most committed transmitter of his teachings, crafting a finished draft of his father’s *Musnad*. Abū Bakr al-Qatī‘ī transmitted the *Musnad* from Ibn Ḥanbal’s son and became central figure in disseminating his teachings. The earliest extant collection of Ibn

¹³⁹ Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 87.

¹⁴⁰ Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *al-Sunna*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baṣīrī (Riyadh: Dār al-Āṣimah, 1422/2001), 231. The entire second half of this work consists of a discussion of al-Shāfi‘ī’s school of thought on the issue of abrogation (*naskh*).

Ḥanbal's legal and doctrinal responsa, the *Kitāb al-masā'il*, was the work of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī.¹⁴¹ In addition, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī also collected a selection of Ibn Ḥanbal's *responsa*, and later the school also claimed his son Ibn Abī Ḥātim as a member. Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923-4) traveled extensively in a quest to unite Ibn Ḥanbal's legal legacy and compiled a massive collection of his opinions as well as other works such Ibn Ḥanbal's *īlal*. He also wrote the first roster of Ḥanbalīs. Al-Khallāl's student Abū al-Qāsim al-Khiraqī (d. 334/945-6) edited his master's work and produced the school's formative legal text, the *Mukhtaṣar*.¹⁴²

The intellectual landscape of Iraq and Iran in the long forth century thus consisted of three dominant schools: the Ḥanafī *ahl al-ra'y*, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnīs and the nascent Shāfi‘ī tradition. In order to place the network of *Sahīhayn* scholars in this milieu, we can identify Shāfi‘īs as exhibiting three major characteristics. Firstly, they are not Ḥanafī. Secondly, they tend to be more moderate than their über-Sunni counterparts. Finally, they exist within a network of personal and textual relationships with bastions of the school such as Ibn Khuzayma and al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*.

Oddly, not a single scholar from the *Sahīhayn* Network is claimed as Ḥanafī in the definitive rosters of the school.¹⁴³ While Ḥanafī scholars did not participate in the study of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works, they did play noted roles in the transmission of

¹⁴¹ This work has been published as Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb masā'il al-imām Ahmad*, 16 vols. (Beirut: Muḥammad Amīn Damaj, [197-]).

¹⁴² For more information, see Laoust, “Hanābilā,” *EI*²; Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 179-188; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, 144-6; Nimrod Hurvitz, *The Formation of Hanbalism: from Piety to Power* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2002), 78-90.

¹⁴³ The most comprehensive is the *Jawāhir al-mudīyya* of Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ (d. 775/1374). For an earlier list, al-‘Abbādī’s *Tabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘īyya* includes a lengthy list of scholars whom this fifth/eleventh-century scholar considered Ḥanafī; al-‘Abbādī, *Tabaqāt al-fuqahā’*, 2 ff.

the two texts.¹⁴⁴ According to Ibn al-Şalāh, the critical transmitter of Muslim's *Sahīh*, Ibn Sufyān, was probably Ḥanafī.¹⁴⁵ Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ṣaffār (d. 471/1078-9), one of the most prolific transmitters of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* from al-Kushmīhanī, was Ḥanafī.¹⁴⁶ Abū Ṭālib al-Husayn b. Muḥammad al-Hāshimī (d. 512/1118-1119), one of the main transmitters of the *Sahīh* from the famous Meccan female student of al-Kushmīhanī, Karīma al-Marwaziyya, was also Ḥanafī.¹⁴⁷

It is perplexing why Ḥanafīs would actively and enthusiastically transmit al-Bukhārī and Muslim's *Sahīhs* but not study the works. One possible explanation lies in the function of the *mustakhrajs* that sparked the flurry of interest in the *Sahīhayn*. *Mustakhrajs* were interpretations of formative texts that allowed transmission-based scholars to express and elaborate their relationship with the source of hermeneutic authority in Islam. For Ḥanafīs this role was already played by the school's formative legal texts. For them the chain of legal scholars emanating from Abū Ḥanīfa and his students provided that link to the Prophet's message.

¹⁴⁴ Here we must note the work of Abū al-Layth al-Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983-4 or 393/1002-3), a Hanafī jurist and exegete of Transoxiana. One of his lesser known works, *al-Laṭā'if al-mustakhraja min Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Useful Niceties Derived from *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*), would seem to have been small collection of the author's musing on elements from the *Ṣahīḥ* but could not have qualified as either a commentary on the work or a study of its ḥadīth science dimensions. The unique manuscript of the *Laṭā'if* was in the rare books library at Istanbul University, and was "lost" after the terrible 1999 earthquake. Some Turkish scholars debate whether the work ever existed.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn al-Şalāh, *Siyānat Ṣahīḥ Muslim*, 107; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 14: 267. Ibn Sufyān is not, however, included in Ibn Abī al-Wafā's *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya fī tabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya*.

¹⁴⁶ Abū Muḥammad Muhyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir Ibn Abī al-Wafā, *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya fī tabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw, 5 vols. (Gīza: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1398-1408/1978-1988), 3: 215; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3: 245.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4: 32.

Neither did the network of *Sahīhayn* scholars identify with the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni tradition. Only one member of this group, Ibn Manda, is listed as Ḥanbalī in Ibn Abī Ya‘lā’s *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*.¹⁴⁸ The Ḥanbalī school seemed to prefer critics of al-Bukhārī or Muslim such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and his son Ibn Abī Ḥātim.¹⁴⁹ None of the well-known Ḥanbalīs of the period such as Abū Bakr al-Najjād (d. 348/959-60) of Baghdad, Abū Bakr al-Ājurī (d. 360/971) and al-Ḥasan b. Ḥāmid al-Warrāq (d. 403/1012-13) appears in the *Sahīhayn* Network. Given al-Bukhārī’s pariah status among über-Sunnis, it is not difficult to understand why they did not participate in the study and transmission of his *Sahīh*. We have already discussed how the dominant scholarly presence of the über-Sunnis Ibn Khuzayma and al-Sarrāj in Naysābūr played in central part in preventing the study of al-Bukhārī’s collection in that city. The attitude of über-Sunni members of the Baghdad scholarly community did not differ. Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Barbahārī (d. 329/940-1) was one of the Ḥanbalī tradition’s most outspoken advocates in Baghdad. He never mentions al-Bukhārī in his manifesto of the *ahl al-hadīth* creed, the *Sharḥ al-sunna* (Explanation of the Sunna), but he does assert that anyone who says that the *lafz* of the Qur’ān is created is a heretic (*mubtadi‘*).¹⁵⁰ Although he did not officially belong to the Ḥanbalī *madhab*, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Aḥmad **Ibn Shāhīn** (d. 385/996) provides another interesting example of this scholarly strain in the Abbasid capital. Ibn Shāhīn heard from many of the same teachers as his contemporary al-Dāraqutnī, whom

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2: 142-3.

¹⁴⁹ Laoust, “Ḥanābila,” *EI*².

¹⁵⁰ Abū Muḥammad al-Hasan al-Barbahārī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Khālid b. Qāsim al-Raddādī (Beirut: Dār al-Samī‘ī; Riyad: Dār al-Salaf, 1421/2000), 92.

he enlisted at least once to review his ḥadīth corpus.¹⁵¹ Yet Ibn Shāhīn is completely absent in the network of *Sahīhayn* scholars. In his *Sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-sunna wa ma ḛrifat sharā'i 'al-dīn wa al-tamassuk bi'l-sunan* (Explanation of the Ways of the *Ahl al-Sunna*, Knowledge of Religious Law and Clinging to the Sunna), he echoes al-Barbahārī by narrating that anyone who says that the *lafz* of Qur'ān is created is Jahmī, or worse.¹⁵²

Still, how do we explain the absence of über-Sunni interest in Muslim's *Sahīh*? Unlike al-Bukhārī, he was not tainted by the *lafz* scandal. It seems most likely that in the first half of the fourth/tenth century Muslim's collection was simply not well-circulated in the Ḥanbali/über-Sunni bastion of Baghdad. We know that the work had limited circulation in places like Jurjān and seems to have been relatively unknown in the Hijāz through the first half of the fourth/tenth century. Al-'Uqaylī (d. 323/934) of Mecca knew al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* intimately but never refers to Muslim in any form in his *Kitāb al-du 'afā'*. That al-'Uqaylī totally rejects a ḥadīth found in Muslim's *Sahīh* without mentioning the work reinforces the notion that he was ignorant of it.¹⁵³ Another notable non-Khurāsānī ḥadīth scholar of the mid 300/900's was al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rāmhurmuzī. Like al-'Uqaylī, he makes no mention of Muslim.

¹⁵¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11: 264-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27: 107.

¹⁵² Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Aḥmad Ibn Shāhīn, *Sharḥ madhāhib ahl al-sunna wa ma ḛrifat sharā'i 'al-dīn wa al-tamassuk bi'l-sunan*, ed. 'Ādil b. Muḥammad (Cairo: Mu'assasat Qurṭuba, 1415/1995), 32.

¹⁵³ This hadīth is "If two caliphs receive allegiance kill the second of them... (*idhā būyi 'a li-khalifatayn fa-qtulū al-ākhir minhumā...*), and al-'Uqaylī criticizes it in his biography of Faḍāla b. Dīnār. He says: "narration on this topic is not sound (*wa al-riwāya fī hādhā al-bāb ghayr thābit*)."¹⁵⁴ We know this represents a blanket dismissal of the ḥadīth because when al-'Uqaylī merely criticizes narrations he uses the term 'wajh'; al-'Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-du 'afā'*, 3: 1144.

Unlike the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis, members of the Shāfi‘ī tradition actively accommodated al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In their treatises on the Sunni creed and proper *ahl al-sunna* stances, both al-Barbahārī and Ibn Shāhīn had implicitly condemned al-Bukhārī for his stance on the *lafz* issue. The later Shāfi‘ī al-Lālakā’ī, however, affirms both al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s worthiness as commendable Sunnis. His *Kitāb al-Sunna* focuses overwhelmingly on the controversial sectarian issues of the nature of the Qur’ān and the definition of faith (*īmān*). Yet he cites al-Bukhārī as one of a small set of exemplary figures who upheld the Sunni definition of faith as including both a profession of belief and proper practice (*qawl wa ‘amal*). Al-Lālakā’ī lists al-Bukhārī in the company of al-Awzā’ī, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi‘ī and al-Muzanī, even including two quotations from him.¹⁵⁴ He also lists both al-Bukhārī and Muslim as two of the scholars who upheld the uncreated nature of the Qur’ān, along with Abū Zur‘a, Abū Hātim al-Rāzī and Abū Dāwūd.¹⁵⁵ Al-Lālakā’ī’s book, in fact, represents the first work in the Sunni creed genre to accept al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The *Sahīhayn* Network proved fairly accommodating to rationalists as well. Both Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī and Abū Dharr al-Harawī were Ash‘arīs, and al-Ismā‘īlī had marked rationalist tendencies.

Out of the forty-four scholars in the network who composed works on the *Sahīhayn*, fully fourteen (32%) studied with or instructed Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Surayj, Rabī‘ al-Murādī or al-Muzanī directly. Six (14%) of them either wrote books based on al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar* or composed their own works on al-Shāfi‘ī’s legal method. Ten (23%) are later explicitly referred to as Shāfi‘īs by al-

¹⁵⁴ Al-Lālakā’ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl i ‘tiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā‘a*, 5: 959.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Lālakā’ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl i ‘tiqād ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā‘a*, 1: 302.

Dhahabī. He calls Abū al-Naḍr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Al-Ṭūsī (d. 344/955)

“shaykh al-shāfi‘īyya,” which should not surprise us since he studied extensively with Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī in Samarqand.¹⁵⁶ Abū al-Walīd Ḥassān b. Muḥammad al-Umawī of Naysābūr (d. 344/955) studied *fiqh* in Baghdad with Abū al-‘Abbās Ibn Surayj and composed legal rulings (*aḥkām*) for the *madhhab*. He even had a ring patterned after Rabī‘ b. Sulaymān and al-Shāfi‘ī’s rings.¹⁵⁷

Intense Canonical Process: Imagining a New Epistemological Status for ḥadīth Books

The long fourth century had not simply seen a profound interest in the *Sahīhayn* among a relatively limited network of scholars. In this period before the canonization of the two works, we also see the appearance of what Frank Kermode called a “canonical habit of mind” in the Muslim community in general.¹⁵⁸ For the first time Muslim scholars began discussing the ḥadīth tradition in terms that endowed certain books with a sense of communal and epistemological preeminence. Among ḥadīth scholars this derived from personal convictions about the broad acceptance and overwhelming utility of certain books. For legal theorists this resulted from an increased application of the notion of the community’s authoritative consensus, *ijmā‘*, to the ḥadīth corpus. What lay behind both these perceptions, however, was a new conception of what kind of authority

¹⁵⁶ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 176; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3: 73; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25: 311-12; cf. al-‘Abbādī, *Kitāb tabaqāt al-fuqahā’*, 77.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīḥ Muslim*, 90; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:75; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25: 417-8; cf. al-‘Abbādī, *Kitāb tabaqāt al-fuqahā’*, 74.

¹⁵⁸ Kermode, “The Canon,” 601.

certain ḥadīths and specific ḥadīth collections could exercise. It was in this period

that the Sunni community imagined a new epistemological status for ḥadīth works.

The notion of authoritative consensus (*ijmā'*) has ancient origins in Islam. In addition to functioning as one of the primary means of justifying decisions during the time of the Companions and their followers, it arose quickly as a tool in debates between the early schools of law in cities like Kufa.¹⁵⁹ By the time of the eponymous founders of the four *madhhabs*, ḥadīths were circulating that established the consensus of the community as a source of legal and doctrinal authority. One of the most famous was the tradition in which the Prophet says “my community will not agree on error (*lā tajtami ʻu ummatī ʻalā al-dalāla*).”¹⁶⁰ In correspondences between al-Awzā’ī and Abū Ḥanīfa’s chief disciple Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), each contested the other’s claim that his stances enjoyed the consensus of the Muslim community.¹⁶¹ Later, al-Shāfi’ī and Ibn Ḥanbal grew very skeptical of such claims about *ijmā'*. Although they acknowledged that it existed as a source of authority among Muslims, they limited it to fundamental issues such as the ordination of the five daily prayers that truly enjoyed total communal

¹⁵⁹ Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20. For more discussion on the development of *ijmā'*, see idem, “On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 18 (1986): 427-54. An important step that needs to be taken in fixing the emergence of the notion of consensus is properly dating a report that Abū Nu‘aym al-Īsbahānī cites by a chain of transmission from the Successor ‘Atā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ, “what the umma has come together on is stronger for us than the *isnād* (*mā ijma’at ʻalahyi al-umma aqwā’ īndanā min al-isnād*);” Abū Nu‘aym al-Īsbahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā’ wa tabaqāt al-asfiyā’*, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī and Maṭba’at al-Sā’āda, [1351-1357/1932-1938]), 3: 314 (biography of ‘Atā’).

¹⁶⁰ Wahba al-Zuhaylī, *Uṣūl al-fiqh al-islāmī*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āşir, 1406/1986), 1:488. See also, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, ed. Abū al-Wafā’ al-Afghānī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1414/1993, reprint of the Lajnat Iḥyā’ al-Ma‘ārif al-Nu‘māniyya edition from Hyderabad, citation are to Beirut edition), 1: 299.

¹⁶¹ Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, 260-1; Zafar Ishaq Ansari, “Islamic Juristic Terminology before Šāfi’ī: a Semantic Analysis with Special Reference to Kūfa,” *Arabica* 19 (1972): 282-7.

consensus. Their skepticism was well-founded, as the later Shāfi‘ī jurist Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) estimated that “the questions on which *ijmā‘* has been invoked (*masā‘il al-ijmā‘*) number more than twenty thousand.”¹⁶²

By the time of al-Shāfi‘ī in the early third/ninth century the notion of universally agreed-upon precedent from the Prophet was manifesting itself in scholarly discourse. Al-Shāfi‘ī placed “*sunna* on which consensus has been achieved” on the same level of legal compulsion as the Qur’ān. As opposed to ḥadīth with limited attestation (*khāss*), those who knowingly rejected such reports must repent immediately.¹⁶³ Even later in the thought of the Ibn Surayj, however, this articulation remained primitive.¹⁶⁴

Al-Ṭabarī discussed these most authoritative instances of the Prophet’s sunna in the more technical terms of ḥadīth study. These were reports so widely-transmitted (*mustafid qāti‘an*) that they are epistemologically certain. Indeed rejecting them places one outside the pale of Islam. These include reports such as the ḥadīth ordering stoning as a punishment for adultery.¹⁶⁵ More importantly, however, on two occasions al-Ṭabarī refers to certain reports that are not massively transmitted (*āḥād*) but nonetheless convey a great deal of certainty. Al-Ṭabarī describes a ḥadīth in which God states that He will remove certain people from Hellfire after they have been appropriately punished for their sins as coming from “someone whose transmission prohibits error, oversight or lying and

¹⁶² Al-Zuhaylī, *Uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1:489.

¹⁶³ See Normal Calder, “*Ikhtilāf* and *Ijmā‘* in al-Shafi‘ī’s *Risala*,” *Studia Islamica* 58 (1983): 60, 74-8.

¹⁶⁴ Ibn Surayj, “al-Waḍā‘i‘ li-mansūs al-sharā‘i‘,” ed. Șāliḥ al-Duwaysh (unpublished manuscript), 2:672-3. Here Ibn Surayj states that the consensus of the umma on a report is merely one way in which a ḥadīth is established as legally compelling. I am totally indebted to my friend and colleague Ahmed El Shamsy from Harvard University for this citation and for providing me with the text itself.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 161.

yields certainty (*ilm*)....”¹⁶⁶ We thus see nascent in al-Tabarī’s thought the idea that certain transmitters or collectors could themselves guarantee the authenticity and epistemological yield of non-massively transmitted (*āḥād*) ḥadīths.

The concept of universally agreed upon ḥadīths extended beyond Sunni circles. The Mu’tazilite Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī writes in his *Qubūl al-akhbār* that the ultimate test for determining a good narrator or report is its accordance with the Qur’ān, the sunna “agreed upon by consensus (*mujma` alayhi*),” the *ijmā`* of the *umma*, the ways of the early community and the Mu’tazilite slogans of justice (*‘adl*) and God’s unicity (*tawḥīd*).¹⁶⁷

Although Abū Nu‘aym al-Īṣbahānī lived a century later than these scholars, his work nonetheless affords an interesting glimpse into the place of ḥadīth consensus in sectarian debates. One of the chief impediments he faced in his dialectical handbook for debating Imāmī Shiites was the different repertoires of ḥadīths from which the two sides drew proof texts. As a solution to this lack of common ground, al-Īṣbahānī proposed that “the recourse at that point is to what the *umma* has agreed on after the Prophet (ṣ), and those authentic (*sahīh*) reports (*akhbār*) from him that the scholars have transmitted and are **uncontested** (*lā dāfi` lahā*).”¹⁶⁸ Abū Nu‘aym is not admitting any parity between

¹⁶⁶ Al-Tabarī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 185. For the other instance, see 212. Although he does not cite it from any sources, this ḥadīth appears in the *Saḥīhayn*. See *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-riqāq, bāb sifāt al-janna wa al-nār; Saḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb ithbāt al-shafā`a wa ikhrāj al-muwāḥhidīn min al-nār*. Another ḥadīth he cites in this context appears in the collections of Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn Khuzayma.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akhbār*, 1:17. Even earlier, al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868-9) had mentioned a report accepted by consensus (*khabar mujtama` alayhi*) as one of the four sources of knowledge, citing the founder of the Mu’tazilite school, Wāsil b. ‘Atā’ (d. 131/750), as the originator of this idea; Marie Bernand, “la Notion de ‘Ilm chez les premiers Mu’tazilites,” *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972): 26.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Īṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-īmāma*, 244. Although he does not cite any collections, the ḥadīths he then presents are all found in either al-Bukhārī or Muslim, with one in al-Tirmidhī’s collection.

Sunni and Shiite ḥadīths; quite the opposite, he maintains that Sunnis actually uphold standards for using ḥadīths as proof texts, while Shiites use forged reports.¹⁶⁹ But here we see the notion of shared and commonly accepted material that neither camp can contest.

The epistemological status of these universally accepted reports and their role in deriving law also began receiving more attention in the long fourth century. Unlike al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Ḥanbal, who believed *āḥād* traditions of the Prophet could be used to determine issues of dogma and abrogate Qur’ānic verses, the Ḥanafī tradition remained very wary of endowing these relatively uncorroborated reports with such authority. The concept of universally accepted ḥadīths, however, emerged as a common ground acceptable to Ḥanafīs. Like al-Ṭabarī, the early Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Jaṣṣāṣ of Rayy (d. 370/982), acknowledged that there exists a category of reports that lack massive transmission (*tawātur, istifāda*) but nonetheless convey epistemological certainty.¹⁷⁰ For these *āḥād* ḥadīths to yield such knowledge and function in abrogating Qur’ānic verses, for example, certain indications (*dalāla*) must accompany them assuring their authenticity. These include reports that enjoy the consensus (*ijmā‘*) of the *ummā*’s scholars, such as the report denying members of a family guaranteed a portion of the deceased’s estate from receiving additional inheritance (*lā waṣiyya li-wārith*).¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Al-Īṣbāhānī, *Kitāb al-imāma*, 241.

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion of al-Jaṣṣāṣ’s legal theory, see Marie Bernand, “Ḥanafī *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* through a Manuscript of al-Ǧaṣṣāṣ,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 4 (1985): 623-35.

¹⁷¹ Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-musammā al-Fuṣūl fī al-uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Tāmir, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1420/2000), 1:532-5. The numerous narrations of this ḥadīth have been individually criticized, but scholars have generally agreed that the text of the ḥadīth is too widely attested and has

Following the earlier Ḥanafī scholar ʻIsā b. Abān, al-Jaṣṣāṣ states that *āḥād* reports that are used in important issues of dogma and ritual (*umūr al-diyānāt*) must be widespread (*shā'i'a mustafīda*) in the *umma*, which accepts (*talaqqathā*) and acts on them.¹⁷²

Among ḥadīth scholars, this new epistemological status attainable by ḥadīths is evident in a revised historical conception of the ḥadīth tradition. This new vision viewed the *sahīh* movement in general and certain collections in particular as loci of scholarly consensus. While previously we have seen that scholars such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim identified the pinnacle of the ḥadīth tradition with the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal and ignored the existence of the *sahīh* movement, Ibn Manda's perspective is very different. Like Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn ‘Adī and Ibn Ḥibbān, he lists the generations (*tabaqāt*) of ḥadīth scholars up to the generation of Ibn Ḥanbal, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Ma‘īn. In a novel step, however, he then mentions the “four *imāms*” who produced the *sahīh* books: al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā’ī. He notes other less impressive installments of the *sahīh* movement as well, such as the works of al-Dārimī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Khuzayma and Ahmad b. Abī ‘Aṣim al-Nabīl. Although they followed in the footsteps of the four *imāms*, “they were less skilled.”¹⁷³ This generation that Ibn Manda describes as studying at the hands of Ibn Ḥanbal and his cohort, however, has achieved an unprecedented

been accepted too widely to be false. Al-Shāfi‘ī even described it as effectively *mutawātil*; Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ*, 5:467-9; cf. Abū Ibrāhīm Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Amīr al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār li-ma īn Tanqīḥ al-anzār*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn ‘Uwayda, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1417/1997), 1:229.

¹⁷² Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:548. Such reports include the ḥadīth of the Prophet accepting the word of one Bedouin that the new moon of Ramaḍān was visible.

¹⁷³ Ibn Manda, *Shurūt al-a‘imma*, 42-43; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 14:135 (biography of al-Nasā’ī).

station. “Al-Bukhārī, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Ḥulwānī, al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zur‘a, Abū Ḥātim, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasā’ī... make up the generation (*tabaqā*) accepted [by all] by consensus, and their knowledge trumps all others (*wa bi- ِilmihim yuḥtajju ʿalā sā’ir al-nās*).”¹⁷⁴ Ibn Manda thus articulates the notion that the generation of al-Bukhārī and Muslim represents a compelling concentration of knowledge agreed upon by all. More importantly, this mastery is articulated in the *sahīh* collections of four scholars who embody the authority of their age.

Implicit in Ibn Manda’s genealogy of the ḥadīth tradition is the same problem that Abū Nu‘aym faced in his polemic: the vast corpus of ḥadīths had become too broad and diverse to be succinctly studied and employed. Specific outstanding collections that embody the utility of the ḥadīth tradition should thus be viewed as common references. Ibn Manda echoes a statement attributed to the Egyptian ḥadīth scholar and transmitter of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*, Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353/964). Disturbed by the great number of ḥadīth collections flooding the book markets, a group of ḥadīth scholars gathered at Ibn al-Sakan’s house asking him to direct them to what books they should study at the expense of others. Ibn al-Sakan entered his house and reemerged with four books, saying “these are the foundations (*qawā’id*) of Islam: the books of Muslim, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā’ī.”¹⁷⁵ These four collections are thus not only the most important for students of

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Manda, *Shurūṭ al-a’imma*, 67-8.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥazm ‘Alī b. Aḥmad, “[Two ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* – One from al-Bukhārī and One from Muslim – that Ibn Ḥazm Considers Forgeries],” MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, 28b; al-Maqdisī, *Shurūṭ*, 16; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:93.

ḥadīth, they also provide the common references to be shared by all. Ibn al-Sakan's own *sahīh* work, in fact, may have been little more than a digest of these four books.¹⁷⁶

The notion that a ḥadīth collection can serve as the locus for consensus and legal, doctrinal common ground appears even more clearly in the work of Ibn Manda's contemporary, al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998). He states in the introduction of his commentary on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* that the collection is:

a noble book unique in the science of religion... approved by all people. It has become the ultimate recourse for differences of opinion amongst the various sects of the learned and the generations of scholars... the people of Iraq, Egypt, the lands of the West, and still more from among the cities and regions of the Earth, rely upon it.¹⁷⁷

Acknowledging the Khurāsānī cradle of the *Sahīhayn* Network, he notes that the scholars of that region preferred those two works and books based on their requirements, although he personally considers Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* more legally useful.¹⁷⁸ Al-Khaṭṭābī describes al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* in language similar but less grandiose to his accolades of the *Sunan*, with an emphasis on authenticity as opposed to legal utility:

It has become a treasure for [our] religion, a mine for [its] sciences. It has become, due to the quality of its criticism (*naqdīhī*) and the severity of its articulation (*sabk*) a judge (*hakam*) in the umma in what is sought out from among ḥadīths as authentic or weak.¹⁷⁹

Ibn Manda, Ibn al-Sakan and al-Khaṭṭābī provide no extensive or concrete explanations for their evaluations of these works as loci of consensus in law and ḥadīth.

¹⁷⁶ Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhawī, *Bughyat ar-rāghib al-mutamannī fī khatm al-Nasā'ī*, ed. Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm b. Zakariyyā (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1991), 38.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma ʿalim al-sunan*, 1:6.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma ʿalim al-sunan*, 1:6.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Khaṭṭābī, *A lām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Sa‘d Āl-Su‘ūdī, 4 vols. (Mecca: Mu’assasat Makka li-al-Ṭibā'a wa al-I'lām, [n.d.]), 1:102.

Neither do they articulate their specific authority or epistemological yield. What is nonetheless clear, however, is that the community of transmission-based legal scholars was beginning to see a proto-canonical of ḥadīth collections as extant and necessary.

Why the *Sahīhayn*?

When examining the *mustakhraj* and *īlal / ilzāmāt* phenomena, one cannot help but ask why these fleeting genres focused so predominantly on the *Sahīhayn*. The resilient regional barriers of the first half of the long fourth century cannot provide a full explanation for the nature of the *mustakhraj* genre, since the *Sahīhayn* were not the only collections used as templates even within one region. Muslim's *Sahīh* enjoyed favored status in his home city of Naysābūr, but the city and its environs also saw the production of three *mustakhrajs* based on Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, two on al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*, and one *mustakhraj* of Ibn Khuzayma's *Sahīh* (with Ibn al-Jārūd's *Muntaqā* a possible second). Scholars in Naysābūr thus could and did see other collections as attractive and available formative texts.

Having exhausted the path of material constraint, we must ultimately turn to matters of functionalism and scholarly preference. As al-Ismā'īlī, Ibn 'Uqda and Abū 'Alī al-Naysābūrī's testimonies prove, many scholars of the *Sahīhayn* Network simply felt that a specific work was the most accurate and useful presentation of the Prophet's legacy. Al-Ismā'īlī favored al-Bukhārī's collection over Muslim's *Sahīh*, Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* as well as the *Sunan* of al-Hulwānī (d. 243/857-8) because in his eyes it provided a more authentic selection of ḥadīths and a better analysis of their legal content. Conversely, Ibn 'Uqda felt Muslim's work outshone al-Bukhārī's because it was more

purely a collection of ḥadīths without the incomplete narrations and commentary added for legal elucidation. Al-Ismā‘īlī and Ibn ‘Uqda were attracted to the differing functional methodologies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but why did Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī favor Muslim’s work above all others? Such matters of scholarly preference lie beyond our ken.

Certainly, if ḥadīth scholars of the long fourth century hoped to prove the quality of their *isnāds* by composing *mustakhraj*s, it seems logical to choose the most rigorous collections as templates. This explains why all the template collections were products of the *sahīh* movement and not earlier works like Mālik’s *Muwatta’*. In fact the only work one might call a *mustakhraj* of the *Muwatta’*, the *Kitāb al-tamhīd* of Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), was effectively an attempt to place Mālik’s work on equal footing with other *sahīh* books. Because the *Muwatta’* is replete with ḥadīths lacking complete *isnāds*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr set out to collect complete narrations. As Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr makes clear in his introduction, one of his goals in the *Tamhīd* is to establish Mālik’s book according to the language and requirements of the *sahīh* movement.¹⁸⁰

The nature of the *Sahīhayn* also partly explains why they were the only works to prompt *īlal* or *ilzāmāt* studies in this period. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were two of the only scholars to purpose works devoted solely to *sahīh* ḥadīths. Others such as Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī acknowledged that they relied on weak or lackluster narrations when necessary. Consequently, as al-Khaṭṭābī noted, the *Sahīhayn* and the notion of their authors’ “conditions (*shart, rasm*)” proved attractive targets for study. Only with works

¹⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwatta’ min al-ma īnī wa al-asānīd*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ahmād al-‘Alawī and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Kabīr al-Bakrī, 2nd ed., 26 vols. (Rabat: Wizārat ‘Umūm al-Awqāf wa al-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982), 1:7.

that set uniform standards could one apply these standards elsewhere. Only with authors who claimed to include only authentic material could one object that certain hadīths fell short of this measure.

Yet even in this matter, we cannot escape the aesthetics of critical preference. Ibn Khuzayma also sets up a clear requirement for authenticity (*sīḥha*) on the first page of his *Sahīh*. But despite the arguably unparalleled accolades al-Ḥākim grants him, al-Ḥākim found Ibn Khuzayma an unsatisfactory judge of authentic reports (*sīḥha*).¹⁸¹ Although some scholars like al-Khaṭīb said that Ibn Khuzayma's work deserved mention alongside the *Sahīhayn*, his collection never accumulated critical studies.¹⁸²

Conclusion: the Eve of Canonization

Having explored the *Sahīhayn* Network of the long fourth century, we find ourselves on the eve of their canonization. Among Mu'tazilites, ḥadīth-minded Sunnis like al-Ṭabarī, the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī theorist al-Jaṣṣāṣ and even in the realm of Sunni-Shiite polemic there had arisen the idea that ḥadīths could enjoy the consensus of the *ummā* and thus wield tremendous epistemological authority. Among transmission-based scholars this concept expressed itself in a proto-canonical of ḥadīth collections that certain scholars felt provided loci of legal and narrative consensus.

But how did this period of intense study affect al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works? One can best answer this question by referring to *sahīh* ḥadīth collections that never

¹⁸¹ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 313.

¹⁸² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Jāmi' li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi'*, 2:185. It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century that 'Umar b. 'Alī Ibn Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401) added the men of Ibn Khuzayma to al-Mizzī's ever-expanding biographical dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters; Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Lahz al-lihāz*, ed. Zakariyyā 'Umayrāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1419/1998), 130.

attained canonical status. In his brief explanation of why *Sahīḥ Ibn Hibbān* did not become one of the famous Six Books, the Azhar scholar Muḥammad al-Qīṭī states curtly that Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) narrated from unknown transmitters (*majāhīl*).¹⁸³ This negative evaluation of Ibn Ḥibbān's work originated as early as the writings of his own student, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.¹⁸⁴ Yet as our review of transmitter studies has shown, the earliest work on al-Bukhārī's teachers freely admits that at least one of his sources in the *Sahīḥ* was also unknown. It was only after another two generations of study that al-Kalābādhī discovered the identity of this transmitter. Ibn Ḥibbān died almost a century after al-Bukhārī and lived in an era which he himself bemoaned as a sad time, when people no longer wrote *sahīḥ* books.¹⁸⁵ Had his *Sahīḥ* received the generations of scholarly attention devoted to the *Sahīḥayn* during the long fourth century it might also have been purged of unknown transmitters. Al-Ḥākim might have read it with glowing approval. Indeed, later scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1374) and Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1404) did champion Ibn Ḥibbān's work as an exceptional source for authentic ḥadīth.¹⁸⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, they were simply too late.

Conversely, the extraordinary efforts of the *Sahīḥayn* Network scholars to produce definitive texts of al-Bukhārī's collection and identify his methods and transmitters made the work an ideal candidate for canonization. As we shall see in the

¹⁸³ Muḥammad al-Qīṭī, *Qānūn al-fikr al-islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Baṣā’ir, 1424/2004), 145.

¹⁸⁴ See al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīḥ al-aṣkār*, 1:66; cf. al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:56.

¹⁸⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Sahīḥ Ibn Hibbān*, 1:58.

¹⁸⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 1:256; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 23; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 30; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 164-5.

next chapter, it was claims about al-Bukhārī and Muslim's methods and transmitters that lay at the center of the case for their authority.

We must now also ask how this “period of intense canonical process” involved the community shaping and appreciating these texts in ways that made them “most meaningful and valuable?”¹⁸⁷ A number of scholars in the long fourth century immediately seized the *Sahīhayn* as formative texts for engaging the Prophetic legacy and expressing their relationship with it. Their interest spawned the period’s concentrated studies of the two works. It was not, however, the need that drove the *mustakhraj* genre that would result in the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Expressing one’s relationship to the Prophet’s legacy and interpreting his teachings through living *isnāds* remained the unique obsession of ḥadīth scholars. The canonization of the *Sahīhayn* would have to involve a broader Muslim community.

It would be the *ilzāmāt* genre, which extended al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards for authenticity to new ḥadīths, that proved crucial. It was the standards of the two scholars that served as that measure of truth in which the authority of the lawmaker could be deposited and then extended into new territory. It is no surprise that the one scholar of the long fourth century to have dealt exclusively with the standards of the *Shaykhayn* is the one scholar we have conspicuously avoided until now. He is the focal point of the *Sahīhayn* Network to whom all roads lead. Until al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s seminal career we see that the nexus of canonicity, that of text, authority and communal identification, had not yet coalesced. Transmitters like Ibn al-Sakan, Abū Dharr al-Harawī and the various scholars who produced studies of the *Sahīhayn* in effect succeeded in producing

¹⁸⁷ Sanders, 30.

definitive, fully dimensional texts of the two works. But the *Sahīhayn* were not authoritative even for their local *mustakhraj* cults. Unlike most post-canonicalization critics, al-Ismā‘īlī, Ibn ‘Ammār and al-Dāraqutnī include no word of apology or explanation for criticizing the two works. Before al-Hākim the *Sahīhayn* are simply tools and objects of interest for local communities of transmission-based scholars. After him the canon had formed.

V.
Canon and Community:
Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and the Canonization of the *Sahīhayn*

Introduction

Around the turn of the fourth/tenth century, the *Sahīh* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim first emerged as *kanōns* of authenticity. Representatives from the two divergent strains of the transmission-based school, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the nascent Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī camp, together agreed on the *Sahīhayn* as common references for the Prophet’s authentic legacy. The study and exploration of the *Sahīhayn* took place at the hands of a network of devoted ḥadīth scholars, but the canonization of the two works would result from the activities of a different cadre. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī formed the common link. He both inherited and participated in the study of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections, yet he employed the *ilzāmāt* genre for a new ideological purpose. Al-Ḥākim’s vision of the critical standards that the two scholars had followed in compiling their works was designed to meet the demands of both Sunni ḥadīth scholars and the ḥadīth-wary Mu‘tazilites who rivaled them. Al-Ḥākim used the “standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” as a measure of authenticity to extend this common requirement to a vast new body of ḥadīths.

In the long fourth century, the broader Muslim community developed a new vision of the authority that Prophetic ḥadīths could attain when validated by communal consensus. By the mid fifth/eleventh century, this leap had led legal theorists from the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Mu‘tazilite, Ḥanbalī and Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī schools to a common belief that

ḥadīths accepted by the umma yielded epistemological certainty. It was this principal that two of al-Ḥākim’s close associates, one from the budding Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī tradition and the other from the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni school, would use to declare the *Sahīhayn* a common body of authentic ḥadīths agreed on by these two vying groups.

The Life and Works of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī

Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī was born in 321/933 in Naysābūr and began studying ḥadīth at the age of nine. Although throughout his career he studied extensively with over two thousand teachers in Kufa, Rayy, Baghdad, Ābādān, Hamadhān, Merv and Transoxiana, approximately half of his teachers hailed from his native Naysābūr.¹ His primary mentors in the sciences of ḥadīth collection and criticism were three major members of the *Sahīhayn* Network: Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī, Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraqutnī, as well as Muḥammad b. ‘Umar Ibn al-Jī‘ābī (d. 355/966).² Al-Ḥākim traveled twice to Baghdad for his studies, once as a youth and again in 368/978-9.³ Throughout his career he and his Baghdad teacher al-Dāraqutnī had an uneasy and tense relationship. Al-Ḥākim’s student al-Khalīlī mentions that his teacher sat and discussed (*nāzara*) ḥadīth with al-Dāraqutnī and that the latter was pleased with the student from Naysābūr.⁴ In another report, however, it is said that when al-Ḥākim arrived in Baghdad he asked to see al-Dāraqutnī’s collection of ḥadīths from a

¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:163.

² Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:165.

³ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324.

⁴ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324. Al-Subkī frankly admits that al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraqutnī were often at odds; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:164.

certain *shaykh*. When the young scholar looked at the first ḥadīth and saw it was from a transmitter whom he considered weak, he threw down the papers and never looked at them again.⁵ As we shall see, al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraqutnī would remain in a continuous correspondence characterized by serious disagreements over the nature of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s methods.

In Naysābūr’s rigid division between the Ḥanafī school and transmission-based scholars, al-Ḥākim adhered firmly to the latter’s moderate Shāfi‘ī strain. He studied the Shāfi‘ī tradition with Abū Sahl al-Šu‘lūkī (d. 369/980) as well as others and even composed a book on the virtues of the school’s eponymous founder (*Fadā’ il al-Shāfi‘ī*).⁶ He complained about the way in which the Ḥanafī Muḥammad b. Sa‘id al-Bawraqī used to forge ḥadīths for that school, such as a report claiming that the Prophet said “there will be in my umma a man named Abū Ḥanīfa, and he will be its lamp... and there will be in my umma a man named Muḥammad b. Idrīs [al-Shāfi‘ī] whose strife (*fitna*) is more harmful than the that of Satan (*Iblīs*).”⁷

Like many participants in the early Shāfi‘ī tradition, al-Ḥākim cultivated relationships with practitioners of dialectical theology. In fact, he studied extensively with two of the architects of the Ash‘arī school. He attended the lessons of Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), who held him in high regard, and also produced a sizable selection (*intakhaba*

⁵ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:94. Al-Khaṭīb adds, “or so he said (*aw kamā qāl*).”

⁶ Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:164; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:156.

⁷ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:379.

‘alayhi) of ḥadīths from the famous Shāfi‘ī jurist, legal theoretician and theologian Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027).⁸

Al-Ḥākim eventually became a leading member of the ḥadīth scholar community in Naysābūr. Not only was he sought out for opinions on the authenticity of ḥadīths and the reliability of narrators, he also exercised a great deal of authority in the community. One of al-Ḥākim’s main teachers assigned him as the agent for his pious endowment (*waqf*) and charged him with running a small ḥadīth school called Dār al-Sunna.⁹ Al-Ḥākim towered over the multitudes of students who flocked to the city to study the Prophet’s legacy. The famous Sufi exegete, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), who was accused of forging ḥadīths for the Sufi cause, had heard a number of ḥadīths from the great Naysābūr *muḥaddith* Abū al-‘Abbās al-Asamm (d. 346/957). Only after al-Ḥākim’s oversight had ended with his death in 405/1014 at the age of eighty-four, however, could the Sufi openly transmit what he had heard to students.¹⁰

Al-Ḥākim’s interest in ḥadīth dominated his *oeuvre*. Aside from his book on al-Shāfi‘ī, a contribution to the Proofs of Prophecy (*Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*) genre, and his landmark biographical dictionary of Naysābūr, al-Ḥākim’s works revolved around the science of ḥadīth criticism. Well before he reached the age of seventy he had written a selection of one ḥadīth from each of his teachers (*muṣṭam al-shuyūkh*), a book of *īlal*, as well as a ḥadīth work called *Kitāb al-iklīl* about the Prophet’s campaigns for the local

⁸ Cf. al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:162; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:164; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:438.

⁹ Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 6.

¹⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:245.

military governor (*Sāhib al-jaysh*).¹¹ Much more important, however, was the introduction to that work, which served to familiarize the lay reader with the types of authentic and defective (*saqīm*) reports as well as the levels of narrator criticism.¹² He also wrote an introduction to his treatments of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works, called *al-Madkhāl ilā al-Sahīh* (or *al-Sahīhayn*), in which the author gives a tantalizing indication of his vision of the *Shaykhayn*'s criteria and their range of acceptable narrators. In addition, he states that he wrote one book on each of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's criteria for authenticity as well as a work on those reports that one of the two scholars had included to the exclusion of the other.¹³

Probably around the age of sixty-five, al-Hākim penned his famous and comprehensive treatise on the sciences of ḥadīth, the *Maṭrīfat ʻUlūm al-ḥadīth* (Knowledge of the Sciences of Hadīth). Divided into fifty-two chapters, this book discusses the technical terms used in ḥadīth criticism and transmission, lists the different generations of transmitters, gives brief biographies of major ḥadīth scholars and outlines material essential for a ḥadīth student. Al-Hākim's opinions and the chapter structure of

¹¹ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 325.

¹² Al-Hākim, *al-Madkhāl ilā maṭrīfat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 51. We know al-Hākim had composed the *Iklīl*, its introduction, his *Madkhāl ilā al-Sahīh*, as well as his *Muzakkī al-akhbār* well before 389 AH, because we know his *Maṭrīfat ʻUlūm al-ḥadīth* was being transmitted widely as early as that date, and in that work the author refers the reader to the above mentioned books; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:157; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:162.

¹³ This last work was titled *Mā infarada kull wāhid min al-imāmayn bi-ikhrājihī*. For lists of al-Hākim's oeuvre, see Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *Tabaqāt*, 1:199-200; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:170; al-Hākim, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 38-42 (editor's introduction); al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:156. Al-Hākim had other small books on legal matters, such as a work called *Kayfiyyat ṣalāt al-ḍuhā* (How to Pray the Late Morning Prayer), a work called *Farā'id al-fawā'id* and a forty ḥadīth collection (also known as his *Shi'ūr aṣhāb al-ḥadīth*) which was widely studied in Qazvīn; al-Rāfi'i, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*; 1:337, 341, 346; 2:45, 58.

his *Ma ḥīfa* would exercise tremendous influence on the genre of ḥadīth's technical discipline (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) for centuries.¹⁴

The work with which we are most concerned in this chapter was evidently one of the last al-Ḥākim composed: a voluminous *ilzāmāt* of the *Ṣahīhayn* entitled *al-Mustadrak*. This work differed both qualitatively and quantitatively from the *ilzāmāt* works of al-Ḥākim's teacher al-Dāraqutnī and his student Abū Dharr al-Harawī. Unlike al-Dāraqutnī's diminutive *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt*, which consists of only one hundred and nine hadīths, and Abū Dharr al-Harawī's lost *Mustadrak*, which was only one volume, al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak* is a multivolume work. Unlike al-Dāraqutnī's random and incidental collection of hadīths, the *Mustadrak* is organized topically in *muṣannaf* form.¹⁵

Al-Ḥākim's works on the technical discipline of ḥadīth study were widely read even during his own lifetime, and several scholars responded to his work. His student al-Khalīlī notes that al-Ḥākim was sometimes not sufficiently discriminating or clear in his writings. The criticisms of his colleagues thus led him to review and clarify his work.¹⁶ ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Sa‘īd of Egypt (d. 409/1019), for example, wrote to al-Ḥākim with some criticisms of his *al-Madkhāl ilā al-Ṣahīh*, for which al-Ḥākim thanked him.¹⁷ Farther

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's famous *Muqaddima*, for example, is based on the chapter structure of the *Ma ḥīfa*, to the extent that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ included a certain chapter (on *afrād*) which he felt was covered elsewhere simply because al-Ḥākim had a chapter on it; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 95.

¹⁵ The Cairo edition of the *Mustadrak* occupies five volumes; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣahīhayn*, ed. Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1417/1997). See also Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon,” 11. The *Mustadrak* has fewer chapters (47) than al-Bukhārī or Muslim's *Ṣahīhs*, but seems to be inspired by both the works' ordering. Only 3 chapters appear in the *Mustadrak* that do not appear in either of the *Ṣahīhayn* (*kitāb al-hijra*, *kitāb qism al-fay'* and *kitāb tawārīkh al-mutaqaddimīn min al-anbiyā'*).

¹⁶ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 324.

¹⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:168; this work has survived in manuscript form, entitled “Bayān awḥām al-Ḥākim fī al-Madkhāl,” MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, İstanbul: fol. 200a- 206a.

west than Egypt, we know that even within the author's lifetime (by 389/998-9) some ḥadīth scholars in Andalusia possessed copies of his *Ma'rifa*.¹⁸ In the Islamic heartlands of Iraq and Iran, al-Ḥākim's student Abū Nu'aym al-Īṣbahānī had a copy of his *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, his *Madkhal ilā al-Ṣahīh* and many of his other books.¹⁹ Although al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī never met al-Ḥākim, he relies on information and reports from him extensively through a myriad of intermediaries in his *Tārīkh Baghdād*.²⁰

Yet al-Ḥākim's adherence to the moderate Shāfi'i tradition and some of his interpretive choices in his *Mustadrak* precipitated a clash with more conservative members of the transmission-based community. Specifically, al-Ḥākim's statement that two pro-Alid ḥadīths known as the ḥadīth *al-Tayr*²¹ and the ḥadīth of *Ghadīr Khumm*²² met the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim led certain ḥadīth scholars to accuse him of Shiism. These accusations are well documented; writing not long after al-Ḥākim's death, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī notes several reports about the ḥadīth *al-Tayr* and al-Ḥākim leaning towards Shiism.²³ Al-Ḥākim's student al-Khalīlī alludes to the accusations

¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:165-6.

¹⁹ See, for example, al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:73. See also n. 96 below.

²⁰ Al-Khaṭīb does not refer to al-Ḥākim as such in his biography of him, calling Ibn al-Bayyīf instead. Most of the time al-Khaṭīb refers to him as Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Naysābūrī, but at least once he calls him al-Ḥākim; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:438.

²¹ In this ḥadīth the Prophet is eating a fowl and calls on God to "bring me the most beloved of your creation," at which point 'Alī enters and eats with the Prophet. See *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-manāqib, bāb manāqib 'Alī*.

²² In this ḥadīth the Prophet says, "Whoever's master I am, 'Alī is his master (*man kuntu mawlāhu fa-'Alī mawlāhu*)." See Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1246), *al-Radd 'alā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 129; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:168. For these ḥadīths, see al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak: kitāb ma'rifat al-ṣahāba, bāb ba'd faḍā'il 'Alī*.

²³ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:94; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:109; Abū Tāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180), *Mu'jam al-safar*, ed. 'Abdallāh 'Umar al-Bārūdī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), 99.

leveled against his teacher when he writes that “For me he was an ocean, and all that was hurled at him could not detract from that (*ra’aytu hu fī kull mā ulqiya ‘alayhi bahr^{an} lā yujižuhu ‘anhu*).”²⁴ More extreme reports have also survived, such as stories that ḥadīth scholars blockaded al-Ḥākim in his house and that he disliked Mu‘āwiya so much that he could not bring himself to narrate a ḥadīth praising him in order to placate his opponents. Such reports, however, appear only in later sources compiled by al-Ḥākim’s critics, such as Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Muntażam*.²⁵

This accusation of Shiism was probably baseless, resembling the scandal that had earlier tarnished al-Bukhārī’s reputation. Both he and al-Ḥākim were attacked by extreme members of the transmission-based school for their more moderate stances. Al-Ḥākim’s most vocal critics were all prominent über-Sunnis: the Ḥanbalī Khwāje ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), Muhammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) and Ibn al-Jawzī.²⁶ Much like al-Shāfi‘ī himself, al-Ḥākim’s Shāfi‘ī identity led to accusations of Shiism. Al-Shāfi‘ī had based his legislation on issues of rebellion (*al-bughāt*) on the premise that ‘Alī had dealt righteously and appropriately with Mu‘āwiya’s uprising against the caliphate. Combined with his affection for the family of the Prophet, such thinking led to a trial before the Abbasid caliph in which al-Shāfi‘ī had to defend himself against accusations of Shiism.²⁷ Al-Ḥākim upheld this Shāfi‘ī position, quoting the great

²⁴ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 325. The editor of this text vowels the word ‘yujižhu,’ which I think is incorrect.

²⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 15:109-10.

²⁶ See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:174-5; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 5:233; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 15:110.

²⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Ma‘rifat al-ruwāt al-mutakallam fīhim bimā lā yūjibū al-radd*, ed. Abū ‘Abdallāh Ibrāhīm Sa‘īdāy (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1406/1986), 49-50; cf. Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi‘ī*, 22-3.

Shāfi‘ī Ibn Khuzayma as saying that anyone who fought ‘Alī on the issue of the caliphate was a rebel (*bāghin*).²⁸

The furor that al-Hākim caused with his approval of the two pro-Alid ḥadīths also seems to have been accidental. The ḥadīths themselves had been verified by earlier Sunni scholars such as al-Nasā’ī and al-Tirmidhī. In al-Hākim’s time, however, the reports had become anathema to certain elements of the ḥadīth community. Whereas al-Nasā’ī was only vaguely criticized for not praising Mu‘āwiya sufficiently, when a scholar of al-Hākim’s time, Ibn al-Saqqā’ (d. 371/981-2), narrated the ḥadīth *al-Tayr* in a mosque he was expelled, confined to his house and the place where he sat in the mosque washed clean.²⁹ It thus seems probable that the accusations of Shiism resulted from al-Hākim’s Shāfi‘ī approval of ‘Alī’s position against Mu‘āwiya and his authentication of two ḥadīths that had become touchstones for anti-Shiite sentiment among the *ahl al-hadīth*.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in al-Hākim’s Vision of ḥadīth

As the *Sahīhayn* Network Chart in the previous chapter demonstrates, al-Hākim acted as a magnet for studies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s work. Like his teacher, al-Dāraqutnī, al-Hākim’s scholarly activities revolved around the *Sahīhayn* and the methods of their authors. Unlike earlier scholars like al-Ismā‘īlī, however, al-Hākim’s appreciation for the *Sahīhayn* did not involve their legal merits. For al-Hākim, al-Bukhārī and Muslim represented the pinnacle of skill and achievement in the realm of

²⁸ This is based on the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet tells ‘Ammār b. Yāsir that he will be killed by the rebellious party (ie. Mu‘āwiya); al-Hākim, *Ma‘rifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 105.

²⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:117. For the accusations of al-Nasā’ī, see *ibid.*, 2:194-5; al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-aṣkār*, 1:199.

ḥadīth criticism in particular. He writes in his *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, that “all regions testify to the superiority of Khurāsān in the knowledge of authentic ḥadīths... due to the precedence of the two *imāms*, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Bukhārī and Abū al-Ḥusayn [Muslim] al-Naysābūrī, and their lone mastery (*tafarrudihimā*) of that science.”³⁰ Unlike the other members of the *Sahīhayn* Network who viewed the works only as formative texts or objects of study, al-Ḥākim endowed them with a loftier station. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s books embodied the highest level of critical stringency, and for him they were key pillars of the science of ḥadīth criticism itself. In the *Ma’rifat*’s chapter on authentic ḥadīths, al-Ḥākim begins with a description of reports that seem to have authentic *isnāds* but in fact possess fatal weaknesses perceptible only to master critics. He concludes that if a ḥadīth does not have an *isnād* found in one of the *Sahīhayn*, one must subject it to thorough examination for such hidden flaws (*illa*).³¹ Inclusion in one or both of the *Sahīhayn* thus tremendously bolsters the credibility of a narrator or his reports. In al-Ḥākim’s chapter on how ḥadīth scholars have treated narrators with non-Sunni beliefs, he uses the *Sahīhayn* to demonstrate that mild heretics are acceptable sources. Abān b. Tagħlib (d. 140-1/757-9), for example, was a known Shiite who once narrated a ḥadīth attacking the caliph ‘Uthmān. But al-Ḥākim states that he is nonetheless “trustworthy, with his ḥadīths included in the *Sahīhayn*.” Despite Mālik’s rejection of Ibrāhīm b. Tahmān (d. 168/784) for being a Murji’ite, al-Ḥākim defends him in the same manner.³²

³⁰ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā ma’rifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 72.

³¹ Al-Ḥākim, *Ma’rifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 75.

³² Al-Ḥākim, *Ma’rifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 168-9. Al-Ḥākim lists Ibrāhīm as a one of the famous trustworthy *imāms* of his generation; *ibid.*, 308. Al-Ḥākim himself states that one has to be a proselytizer of heresy to be placed outside the pale of ‘adāla; al-Ḥākim, *Ma’rifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 67.

Al-Ḥākim did not, however, consider al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections infallible. He himself criticizes some of Muslim's selections. He mentions a narration of the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet states that the best generations are the first three generations of Muslims, adding "that ḥadīth is included in the *Sahīh* of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, but it has a remarkable flaw (*illa qajība*)."³³ Such critiques come as no surprise, since al-Ḥākim did not feel that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had designed their works to be totally free of error. In the introduction to his *Mustadrak*, he states that his work will consist of ḥadīths meeting al-Bukhārī and Muslim's standards but that "it is not possible to include [only] what has no flaws (*illa*), for indeed they [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] did not even claim this for themselves...."³⁴ Here we see the first of several inconsistencies in al-Ḥākim's methodology. If the *Sahīhayn* are secure sources whose *isnāds* require little critical attention, how can he so readily admit that they contain flawed reports? We will be better able to solve this riddle once we have addressed al-Ḥākim's purpose in employing the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

The *Shurūt* According to al-Ḥākim: the Requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

Although scholars such as Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī and al-Dāraqutnī regularly refer to the standards (*shart* / *shurūt* / *rasm*) of al-Bukhārī or Muslim in their extant works, al-Ḥākim seems to be the only scholar of the long fourth century to have devoted specific treatises to this subject. These works have unfortunately been lost, but it appears

³³ Al-Ḥākim, *Ma ṛifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 52; cf. al-Dāraqutnī, *Kitāb al-ilzāmāt wa al-tatabbu'*, 501-2. See also al-Qanabī, *al-Sayf al-hādd*, 137 for more examples.

³⁴ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

that they did not succeed in clearly explaining al-Hākim’s school of thought on the topic. The scholar’s ambiguous and inconsistent writings on the requirements for *sahīh* hadīths in general and al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s methodologies in particular have confounded ḥadīth experts from al-Hākim’s time to the present day.³⁵ It is therefore necessary to establish the most accurate understanding of al-Hākim’s stance, which has generally been interpreted in one of three ways. Firstly, al-Hākim’s writings have led many scholars to believe that he considered the elimination of unknown transmitters from the *isnād* of a ḥadīth to be essential for its inclusion in both the general category of *sahīh* and in the *Sahīhayn*. Other scholars have interpreted al-Hākim’s vision of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards as requiring what we will define as ‘doubling transmission.’ Finally, the third and most accurate camp has understood that al-Hākim intended both the above meanings in his definition of the *Shaykhayn*’s conditions.

a. Two *Rāwīs* and the Elimination of *Jahāla*

The first interpretation of al-Hākim’s writings on the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim centers on the qualities of the transmitters they employed. The notion that a narrator needed to be well-established as a transmitter in order to form part of a *sahīh* *isnād* exerted a tremendous influence among ḥadīth scholars. The presence of an unknown transmitter in a report’s *isnād* was one of the foremost obstacles in its achieving a *sahīh* rating.³⁶ By the time of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Sunni scholars had

³⁵ One of the more recent attempts to grasp al-Hākim’s definition of the *shurūt* comes from Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī. See his *Zafar al-amānī*, ed. Taqī al-Dīn al-Nadawī (United Arab Emirates: Dār al-Qalam, 1415/1995), 69–71.

³⁶ For a discussion of this, see Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 102.

agreed almost unanimously that a person needed at least two established narrators (*rāwī*) transmitting from him in order to avoid being condemned as “unknown (*majhūl*).”³⁷ The first explicit formulation of this principle is usually attributed to al-Bukhārī’s great adversary al-Dhuhlī.³⁸ This concept, however, was clearly already applied in practice during al-Dhuhlī’s time. Muslim had dedicated an entire work to listing transmitters who only had one transmitter (*rāwī*) from them, thus falling short of the requirements necessary for a *sahīh isnād*. Al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915) also composed a short work on this subject, and al-Hākim himself devoted a chapter to it in his *Ma’rifat ‘ulūm al-hadīth*.³⁹ The opposite of unknown transmitters were “well-known (*mashhūr*)” ones whose testimony and transmission could validate those of others.⁴⁰

Al-Hākim’s work leaves little doubt that he intended the elimination of anonymity to be an essential feature of a *sahīh* hadīth as well as a requirement of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In the *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, al-Hākim describes ten levels of *sahīh* hadīths. He notes how the first five levels are agreed on by all and are found in the collections of

³⁷ Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:290. Later scholars such as Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Qattān al-Fāṣī (d. 628/1230-1) attempted to qualify this generally consistent rule. For a discussion of such attempts, see Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 192-198; Ibn al-Salāh, *Muqaddima*, 296; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 117-8; al-Laknawī, *al-Raf‘ wa al-takmil fī al-jarh wa al-ta’dīl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, 8th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1425/2004), 256-60. Al-Shāfi’ī (d. 204/819-20) himself is attributed with the quote that you cannot accept the narration of an unknown; al-Bayhaqī, *Ma’rifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, 1:75, 81.

³⁸ See al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:290; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:82. Ibn al-Jawzī, however, traces this requirement back to Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Nūḥ Abū Ishāq al-Zāhid (d. 295/907-8); Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 13:73.

³⁹ See Ahmād b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, *Thalāth rasā’il hadīthiyya*, ed. Mashhūr Ḥasan Maḥmūd Salmān and ‘Abd al-Karīm Ahmād al-Warīkāt (al-Zarqā’), Jordan: Maktabat al-Manār, 1408/1987), 27-50; al-Hākim, *Ma’rifat ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, 195-200.

⁴⁰ The technical term *mashhūr* was already in use during the first half of the third/ninth century and appears in Muslim’s writings; Muslim, *al-Munfaridāt wa al-wāhdān*, 88.

established experts used as proof texts (*kutub al-a'imma al-muhtajj bihā*).⁴¹ The bottom five levels, on the other hand, fail to meet the requirements for authenticity of certain schools of thought. The highest level of *sahīh*, he explains, consists of reports narrated by a Companion whose identity and reputation as a narrator of ḥadīths has been established. This occurs, al-Ḥākim elaborates, when one proves that two known Successors have narrated ḥadīths from that Companion, thus freeing him of “anonymity (*jahāla*).” This report is then narrated from that Companion by a Successor who is equally well established as a transmitter. The same follows for the next generations until al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s teachers. As this last clause suggests, al-Ḥākim concludes by stating that this is the level of ḥadīths found in the *Sahīhayn*, and that their number does not exceed ten thousand.⁴² Al-Ḥākim then proceeds to define the other levels of authentic ḥadīths, which do not include those featured in the *Sahīhayn*.⁴³

In the *Ma’rifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, written long after the *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, al-Ḥākim provides only one definition for *sahīh* ḥadīths. Abandoning the multiple levels of authentic narrations, he restates his definition of the highest level: a *sahīh* ḥadīth is narrated from the Prophet by a Companion freed of anonymity by having two upright Successors (*tābi‘ ʻādil*) who generally transmit from him. The ḥadīth is then accepted and transmitted widely among (*yatadāwaluhu... bi’l-qubūl*) scholars from that point on.

⁴¹ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā ma’rifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 107.

⁴² Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā ma’rifat kitāb al-Iklīl*; 73, 78. Scholars like al-Laknawī have admitted that this passage and the following description of *ṣihha* from the *Ma’rifat* could support the notion of doubling transmission. See al-Laknawī, *Zafar al-amānī*, 69-71.

⁴³ Again falling into inconsistency, al-Ḥākim notes that al-Bukhārī and Muslim include one narration each that belongs in the fourth level of universally accepted ḥadīths; see James Robson, trans., *An Introduction to the Science of Tradition* (London: Luzac and Co., 1953), 19.

He likens this mass transmission to continuous levels of testimony by witnesses in court (*shahāda*).⁴⁴ Invoking this analogy between bearing witness and transmitting hadīths on the topic of eliminating anonymity was odd for a Sunni *muḥaddith*, although it was especially common among Mu‘tazilites.⁴⁵ The reason for this bizarre comment will become clear when we discuss al-Hākim’s target audience.

Support for this interpretation of al-Hākim’s vision of the *Sahīhayn*’s criteria comes from one of his senior students, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī. He held that al-Bukhārī and Muslim demanded that each narrator in the *isnād* have the two transmitters required to eliminate anonymity. Although this close student of al-Hākim should have provided more productive insights into his school of thought, al-Bayhaqī’s comments are frustratingly brief. In his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* he states definitely that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not narrate from a Companion or Successor with only one transmitter. Thus, he states that they therefore did not include hadīths from one Mu‘āwiya b. Hīda because only one person ever narrated material from him.⁴⁶ Another scholar very familiar with al-Hākim’s works as well as the *Sahīhayn*, Abū ‘Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī of Andalusia (d. 498/1105), states that Hākim’s definition of *sahīh* aimed at the elimination of *majhūls*.

⁴⁴ Al-Hākim, *Ma ḥifat ʿulūm al-hadīth*, 77.

⁴⁵ The invocation of the notion of witnessing (*shahāda*) was more common in the context of establishing the upstanding character (*ʿadāla*) of a transmitter; see Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:7 and al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:285. For an excellent discussion of rejecting the analogy with regards to the number of transmitters needed to eliminate *jahāla*, with references to all the Ash‘arī theorists who rejected this analogy as the basis for requiring two transmitters, see al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 117-8. For a Hanafī rejection, see al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:567-8.

⁴⁶ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Atā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1420/1999), 4:176. See also see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:187. It is interesting to note that this Mu‘āwiya is not included in Muslim’s *Munfaridāt*.

He therefore required each Companion and Successor to have two narrators establishing him as a viable transmitter.⁴⁷

This definition of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's criteria and the requirements for authentic ḥadīths in general, however, was very controversial. Even during his own lifetime, al-Ḥākim's colleagues attempted to correct his understanding. In fact, in his own *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim quotes the text of a letter al-Dāraqutnī sent him debating his claim that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included ḥadīths only from narrators with two transmitters from them. Al-Dāraqutnī objects, "indeed al-Bukhārī, God bless him, included a ḥadīth from... Qays b. Abū Hāzim from Mirdās al-Aslāmī (r) from the Prophet of God..., and Mirdās has no transmitter other than Qays." Al-Dāraqutnī provides three more cases in which al-Ḥākim's rule fails to apply, but the scholar gives no response.⁴⁸

b. Doubling Transmission: 1 → 2 → 4

A second interpretation of al-Ḥākim's writings on the requirements of the *Sahīhayn* revolved around the transmission of the actual report and not the status of its transmitters. This school of thought interpreted the same passages mentioned above as requiring what we can term 'doubling transmission,' namely a report whose narrators doubled at each stage of transmission: one Companion narrated to two Successors, who

⁴⁷ Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, *Ikmāl al-Mu’im bi-fawā’id Muslim*, 1:83; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:189.

⁴⁸ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:558-9. Generations of scholars such as Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Hāzimī (d. 584/1188-9), Ibn al-Ṣalāh, al-Nawawī, al-‘Irāqī and Ibn Hajar have echoed al-Dāraqutnī's disapproval of al-Ḥākim's claim about al-Bukhārī and Muslim's standards. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Hāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-a’imma al-khamṣa*, 35-36; Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *Muqaddima*, 554-6; al-Nawawī, *Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:140; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 122; Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 110.

together narrated to four from the next generation. Al-Hākim's colleague and student Ibn Manda upheld this criterion, calling for two to three narrators at the level of Successor. He added that al-Bukhārī and Muslim based their books on this requirement, falling short only on a few occasions (*illā ahruf^{an}*). Abū al-Faḍl b. Tāhir al-Maqdīsī, who wrote the first comprehensive book on the requirements of the Six Books, believed that this was the proper interpretation of al-Hākim's description of the ultimate level of *sahīh* ḥadīths and those found in the *Sahīhayn*.⁴⁹ The great Andalusian scholar and traveler Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1145) also explicitly states in the introduction to his commentary on Bukhārī's *Sahīh* that the author required doubling transmission for each ḥadīth.⁵⁰ Abū Bakr al-Hāzimī (d. 584/1188-9) similarly interprets al-Hākim's definition in the *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*.⁵¹ Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr explains *sahīh* narrations by replicating al-Hākim's list of the five universally accepted levels, echoing him further by adding that fewer than ten thousand reports meet the highest level. He considers the possibility that al-Hākim meant the requirement of eliminating unknowns, but ultimately deems the doubling transmission interpretation more likely. Many scholars, Ibn al-Athīr explains, did indeed require this for authenticity (*sīḥha*). He adds that this is the highest

⁴⁹ Al-Maqdīsī, *Shurūt al-a'imma al-sitta*, 15.

⁵⁰ Although it seems that Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī's commentary is lost, his statement was repeated by Ibn Rushayd in his rebuttal of this opinion based on the example of the ḥadīth “actions are by intention (*innamā al-a'māl bi'l-niyyāt*),” Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawḍīḥ nukhbāt al-fikar fī muṣṭalaḥ ahl al-athar*, ed. ‘Abd al-Samī’ al-Anīs and ‘Iṣām Fāris al-Ḥarstānī (Amman: Dār ‘Iṣām, 1419/1999), 23-24.

⁵¹ Al-Hāzimī, *Shurūt al-a'imma al-khamṣa*, 24.

standard of authenticity, “so who is more deserving of it (*ajdar*) than al-Bukhārī and Muslim?”⁵²

We can appreciate these scholars’ interpretation of al-Hākim’s definition of the *Sahīhayn*’s requirements by examining an underappreciated source for al-Hākim’s thought: a question and answer session recorded by his student Mas‘ūd b. ‘Alī al-Sijzī of Naysābūr (d. 438-9/1046-8). It goes as follows. When al-Hākim is asked why al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from Ḥamīd al-Tawīl ← Anas and not from Yazīd [b. Tahmān] al-Raqāshī ← Anas, he replied that other men corroborated Ḥamīd’s narrations from Anas while Yazīd was on his own.⁵³ In this work al-Hākim is also mentioned as saying that, for al-Bukhārī, “ḥadīths do not become well-known except by being narrated by two trustworthy transmitters who agree on the narration (*al-hadīth lā yashtahiru ʻindahu illā bi-thiqatayn yattafiqān ʻalā riwāyatihī*).”⁵⁴ Finally, al-Hākim’s description of a *sahīh* hadīth as being transmitted like a series of testimonies (*shahāda*) leaves little doubt that he intended doubling transmission as a criterion. Islamic law required the testimony of two upstanding males in most legal matters. It thus seems clear that al-Hākim felt that al-Bukhārī and Muslim required ḥadīths to be transmitted by the same number at every stage of transmission.

With the exception of Ibn Manda, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī and Ibn al-Athīr, later commentators who followed this interpretation of al-Hākim’s work vehemently rejected

⁵² Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʻ al-usūl fī ahādīth al-Rusūl*, 1:161-163. Ibn al-Athīr adds that this requirement would be impossible to meet in his own time, since ḥadīth transmissions had become far too diffuse. Here he echoes al-Ghazzālī a century earlier; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʻ al-usūl*, 1:70; al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 255.

⁵³ Al-Hākim, *Suʼālāt Masʻūd b. ʻAlī al-Sijzī ma ʻa as ʼilat al-baghdādiyyīn ʻan ahwāl al-ruwāt*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1988), 223-4.

⁵⁴ Al-Hākim, *Suʼālāt Masʻūd b. ʻAlī al-Sijzī*, 209.

it as an accurate expression of the *Sahīhayn* criteria. Al-Maqdisī exclaims that doubling transmission was an admirable ideal, but one that totally fails to describe the reality of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's books. Al-Hāzimī says that he has been shocked how this palpably false notion had become so widespread, demolishing al-Hākim's claim with a long list of examples.⁵⁵ These scholars note that the very first ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* has only one transmitter for the first three levels of the *isnād*!⁵⁶ Ibn Ḥajar roundly rejects all scholars who interpret al-Hākim's explanations as meaning doubling transmission.⁵⁷ He believes that al-Hākim's *Madkhal ilā al-Iklīl*, where he identifies the top level of *sahīh* with al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and his *Ma ḫifa*, which universalizes this definition, both clearly intend the elimination of anonymity. Like earlier scholars, he rejects both these standards as patently inaccurate representations of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's criteria.⁵⁸

Ibn Ḥajar's teacher, Zayn al-Dīn al-Īraqī, invokes the authoritative testimony of al-Hākim's senior disciple al-Bayhaqī to disprove the notion of doubling transmission. He quotes a letter in which al-Bayhaqī skeptically mentions that one Abū Muḥammad al-Juwainī (d. 438/1047) had cited a ḥadīth scholar who had required doubling transmission

⁵⁵ Al-Hāzimī, *Shurūt*, 15, 24.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl*, 1:161-163. Ibn al-Athīr acknowledges these criticisms, but retorts that al-Hākim knew what he was doing and must have come to this conclusion after intensive study. Turning to principles of Islamicate logic, he argues that whoever objects to al-Hākim's position could certainly have delved no deeper than he did. A critic is thus merely negating al-Hākim's statement. Invoking the principle that the affirmative supersedes the negative (*al-muthbit mugaddam ʻulā al-nāfi*), he concludes that al-Hākim's position prevails. In any case, it may be that al-Hākim had more information at his disposal, so later scholars should assume the best of him.

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 110.

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 41-42.

for authenticity. No scholars of the *ahl al-hadīth*, al-‘Irāqī asserts, ever upheld that opinion.⁵⁹

c. A Standard for Authenticity and a Standard for the *Sahīhayn*

In my opinion, the most accurate interpretation of al-Hākim’s definition of the *Sahīhayn* criteria comes first from a scholar that many later commentators underestimated. The North African ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Mayyānīshī (d. 583/1187) recognized that al-Hākim distinguished between the requirements for authentic reports in general and the standards employed by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in particular. Al-Mayyānīshī’s definition for a *sahīh* hadīth quotes al-Hākim’s *Ma ḥīfa* verbatim, even citing him clearly as the source. As for the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, al-Mayyānīshī states (obviously) that they limited their works to authentic hadīths, namely reports narrated from the Prophet by two companions, then four successors etc.⁶⁰ Here the scholar provides an unmistakable description of doubling transmission.

Al-Mayyānīshī’s younger contemporary, Ibn al-Jawzī, also understood that al-Hākim had intended two separate definitions. Firstly, he required the elimination of *majhūl* narrators for *sahīh* hadīths in general. Secondly, he defined the *Sahīhayn*’s

⁵⁹ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 21. No mention of doubling transmission appears in the text of a letter preserved from al-Bayhaqī to al-Juwaynī in al-Subkī’s *Tabaqāt al-shāfi’iyya*; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi’iyya*, 5:77-90.

⁶⁰ ‘Umar al-Mayyānīshī, “*Mā lā yasa ‘u al-muhaddith jahluhu*,” in *Khamas rasa’il fī ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1423/2002), 266. The text of al-Mayyānīshī’s work seems to have been corrupted slightly at some crucial point in the transmission process, since it reads “and four Successors from each one of the Companions (*wa mā naqalahu ‘an kull wāhid min al-sahāba arba ‘a min al-tābi’īn*).” All laters scholars reacting to this passage, however, gloss over this and interpret the passage as meaning 1 → 2, not 1 → 4. It thus seems possible that some copyist mistakenly added “from each one” to the text; cf. al-Mayyānīshī, *Mā lā yasa ‘u al-muhaddith jahluhu*, ed. Subhī al-Sāmarrā’ī (Baghdad: Sharikat al-Tab’ wa al-Nashr, 1387/1967), 9.

criteria as doubling transmission, with the ḥadīth being relayed by “two upstanding narrators from two upstanding narrators (*‘adlayn ‘an ‘adlayn*).” Like al-Maqdisī, al-Ḥāzimī and Ibn Ḥajar, however, Ibn al-Jawzī deems both these standards reprehensible (*qabīḥ*) assessments of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards. Instead, Ibn al-Jawzī says that al-Bukhārī and Muslim required simply “a reliable transmitter and a well-known report (*al-thiqā wa al-iṣtihār*).”⁶¹

At first glance, the writings al-Ḥākim’s most well-known student, al-Bayhaqī, present the one opposing piece of evidence to the argument that al-Ḥākim intended two separate definitions. In his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* al-Bayhaqī clearly states that the *Sahīhayn* excluded narrators with only one transmitter. This does not necessitate, however, that al-Ḥākim believed that al-Bukhārī and Muslim added no other requirements, such as doubling transmission. Since al-Bayhaqī never provides any systematic discussion of al-Ḥākim’s school of thought or the standards of the *Shaykhayn*, we cannot dismiss anything due to absence of evidence. Al-‘Irāqī’s reading of al-Bayhaqī’s letter to Abū Muḥammad al-Juwainī suggests that al-Bayhaqī questioned whether doubling transmission was an existing requirement for authenticity among ḥadīth scholars. Yet al-‘Irāqī admits that his explanation interpolates a great deal. He cautiously states that “it is as if al-Bayhaqī saw [this requirement] in Abū Muḥammad al-Juwainī’s words and was alerting him that it is not known among transmission-based scholars.”⁶²

⁶¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-mawdū ‘āt*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, 3 vols. (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1386-88/1966-68), 1:33-34.

⁶² Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 21.

Al-Mayyānīshī and Ibn al-Jawzī’s interpretation of al-Ḥākim’s work seems to be the most convincing. Considering the well-established principle of rejecting reports through *majhūl* narrators, it is very reasonable to conclude that al-Ḥākim considered their elimination to be an essential feature of an authentic chain of transmission. In light of the al-Ḥākim’s statements to al-Sijzī and the legion of ḥadīth scholars who upheld the interpretation of doubling transmission, it seems equally certain that al-Ḥākim also considered this to be part of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s requirements.

Admitted Exceptions: *al-Mustadrak* and the Standards of the *Shaykhayn* as Ideal rather than Reality

Al-Ḥākim’s writings leave no doubt that he was aware that many ḥadīths from the *Sahīhayn* did not live up to his definition of their authors’ criteria. Indeed, as al-Dāraqutnī’s letter proves, al-Ḥākim faced criticisms of his definition of their criteria during his own lifetime. He nonetheless retained total faith in his “requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.” What is evident is that al-Ḥākim understood these “requirements” as an ideal that the two masters strove to achieve in their work rather than a consistent reality. In the *Mustadrak* al-Ḥākim thus admits that al-Bukhārī and Muslim did not always meet their own requirements for eliminating *majhūls*.⁶³ In his responses to Mas‘ūd al-Sijzī’s questions, al-Ḥākim admits that one of Muslim’s transmitters, Fuḍayl b.

⁶³ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:47.

Marzūq, did not meet Muslim's own standards for authenticity and that he should not have narrated from him in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (*fa-ība ʻalā Muslim bi-ikhrājihī fī al-ṣaḥīḥ*).⁶⁴

How could al-Ḥākim compile an entire ḥadīth collection replicating al-Bukhārī and Muslim's methodologies when he acknowledged that even these two giants could not always meet their own standards? Although al-Ḥākim envisioned the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*'s requirements as very restrictive and claimed that the contents of his *Mustadrak* fulfilled them, his actual application of them proved latitudinarian. As he notes in the introduction to his *Mustadrak*, he simply compiled the work from ḥadīths narrated by transmitters that appeared in one or both of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, or those "like" them. He adds haphazardly that Addition by a trustworthy transmitter (*ziyādat al-thiqā*) does not constitute a flaw in ḥadīth (*illa*).⁶⁵ As we discussed in Chapter Three, however, selecting reliable *isnāds* only represented half of the ḥadīth scholars' critical methodology; even reports narrated via such transmitters had to be examined for corroboration or irregularities such as inappropriate Addition.

Al-Ḥākim's vague and lax methods led many later scholars to severely criticize the authenticity of material found in the *Mustadrak*. The consummate Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zayla‘ī (d. 762/1361) struck at the heart of al-Ḥākim's strategy: he had relied on the same transmitters as al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but he did not thoroughly examine his material to sift weak narrations from those enjoying

⁶⁴ Al-Ḥākim, *Suʻālāt Masūd b. Alī al-Sijzī*, 109. Scholars like al-Nawawī, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Bulqīnī and al-Sakhawī felt that al-Ḥākim exempted the Companions from the *Shaykhayn*'s requirement for two *rāwīs*; see al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:327; ‘Umar al-Bulqīnī, *Mahāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, in *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa mahāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, 296-7; al-Sakhawī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:68.

⁶⁵ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39-40. For a useful attempt to understand al-Ḥākim's methods, see al-San‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1:69 ff., 100 ff.

corroboration. “Simply because a transmitter is used in [one of] the *Sahīhs*,” al-Zaylaī explains, “this does not entail that if he is found in another ḥadīth, that ḥadīth meets al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s standards.”⁶⁶ Al-Dhahabī thus concluded that the *Mustadrak* was seriously flawed and detracted from al-Ḥākim’s reputation.⁶⁷ According to him, only one fourth of the work’s contents actually meet the standards of the *Sahīhayn*, with another quarter of its ḥadīths being authentic but not meeting their requirements. The remaining half, he states, is of dubious reliability.⁶⁸ Along the same lines, Ibn Ḥajar admits that he cannot comprehend how al-Ḥākim could have included certain material in his *Mustadrak*. He notes how al-Ḥākim even used transmitters he himself considered weak and had thus consigned to his *Kitāb al-ḍu’afā’* (Book of Weak Narrators). Ibn Ḥajar believes that al-Ḥākim was too skilled a scholar to make such simple mistakes, but if he knew that some material was unreliable and yet included it anyway, then “this is a tremendous betrayal (*khiyāna ‘azīma*).” Ibn Ḥajar tried to excuse the great scholar by explaining that he wrote the *Mustadrak* near the end of his life when senility had taken its toll.⁶⁹

Al-Ḥākim’s Politics: the Expansion of the Authentic Umbrella

⁶⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zaylaī, *Naṣb al-rāya li-ahādīth al-Hidāya*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awāma, 5 vols. (Jedda and Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Rayyān and Dār al-Qibla al-Thaqāfiyya al-Islāmiyya, 1418/1997), 1:342.

⁶⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:166. Al-Dhahabī states, “Would that he had not composed the *Mustadrak*, for his poor comportment in it detracted from his virtues (*wa laytahu lam yuṣannif al-Mustadrak, fa-innahu ghadḍa min faḍā’ilihi bi-sū’ tasarrufihi*.”

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anżār*, 38. Al-Bulqīnī states that approximately one hundred ḥadīths in the *Mustadrak* are forgeries (*mawḍū’*); al-Bulqīnī, *Mahāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, 164.

⁶⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 5:233.

The motivation behind al-Hākim’s controversial definition of the requirements of the *Sahīhayn* as well as the cause of his inconsistency in applying them become clear, however, when one appreciates the true purpose of the *Mustadrak*. He did not compose this work as a legal reference, like Abū Dāwūd, or as an expression of the body of ḥadīths he had personally collected in his career, like al-Ṭabarānī. Rather, al-Hākim’s intentions were polemical.

The unbroken thread running throughout al-Hākim’s career was his concerted drive to increase the number of ḥadīths considered authentic in the wider Muslim community. Yet this was a matter of great controversy even among Sunni ḥadīth scholars, with some maintaining that the umma had grown too distant from the Prophet to produce authentic ḥadīths. Al-Hākim’s colleague Ibn Manda, for example, thus stated that “anyone who produces (*yukharriju*) *sahīh* ḥadīths today is either relying on too lengthy an *isnād* (*yanzilu*) or is lying.”⁷⁰ On the other hand, many shared al-Hākim’s vision of expanding the number of reports considered authentic. Ibn al-Akhram once admitted that he had wasted his life working on his *mustakhraj* of Muslim and regretted having written a joint *mustakhraj* of the *Sahīhayn* (*Mukhtaṣar al-sahīh al-muttafaq ‘alayhi*) because “it is our obligation (*min haqqinā*) to strive in increasing the *sahīh* ḥadīths.”⁷¹

Al-Hākim’s opponents among the ḥadīth scholars, however, were not his principal concern. Relatively early in his career, he had asked how it was possible that some groups believed that the ḥadīths of the Prophet amounted to no more than ten thousand

⁷⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:158.

⁷¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:55

reports. The Companions, he exclaimed, numbered at least four thousand and spent over twenty years in the company of the Prophet! One ḥadīth scholar alone had memorized over five-hundred thousand ḥadīths.⁷² Such ludicrous claims limiting the number of reliable ḥadīths disconcerted al-Ḥākim terribly, and he thus urged ḥadīth scholars to avoid circumscribing the body of authentic reports. He objected, for example, to his teacher al-Māsarjisī's research on the total number of transmitters in the *Sahīhayn*. A group of “heretics and deniers (*mubtadi'a wa mulhida*)”,⁷³ he explained, were using these statements made by transmission-based scholars against them to defame (*yashtumūna*) the use of ḥadīths.⁷⁴ Much later in his career, in his very succinct introduction to the *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim reiterated the same complaint. “There has emerged in our time a group from among the heretics (*mubtadi'a*) who defame the narrators of traditions, [saying]: the totality of your ḥadīths that are authentic (*yasiḥhu*)

⁷² Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā ma ṛifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 81-3.

⁷³ The term *mulhida* here should probably neither be understood in its true technical sense of “atheists” or “religious skeptics,” nor in the later denotation of Ismā‘īlīs. As Madelung has discussed, al-Ash‘arī described *mulhid* as a term encompassing those who deny God’s attributes (*mu’attil*), crypto-Zoroastrians (*zandiqā*) as well as other bizarre heresies. In the sixth/twelfth century in Iran the term had come to denote Ismā‘īlīs. The Māturīdī theologian Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) thus wrote a refutation of the sect entitled *Kitāb al-ifsād li-khudā ‘ahl al-ilhād*. Al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) concurs that in this time in Khurāsān Ismā‘īlīs were also called *mulhids*. Although even in the early fourth/tenth century there was Ismā‘īlī missionary activity in Naysābūr, we should not assume that al-Ḥākim intended this group with his reference. He was neither a theologian nor a heresiographer, so his addition of the label *mulhida* to *mubtadi'a* probably just represents another denigration of his opponents. Considering that transmission-based scholars of Rayy felt that the Mu‘tazilites of the city had joined forces with Ismā‘īlī rebels in an uprising in the city in 420/1029, a ḥadīth scholar of al-Ḥākim’s time may not have even distinguished between Mu‘tazilites and Ismā‘īlīs. See S.M. Stern, “The early Ismā‘īlī missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23 (1960): 56-90, esp. 76; W. Madelung, “Mulhid,” *EI*²; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 15:196; see also n. 82 below.

⁷⁴ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sahīh*, 112.

does not reach ten thousand, and all these [other] *isnāds* amount only about one thousand *juz'*s, all of them weak, not authentic.”⁷⁵

Although al-Ḥākim reverently describes the *Sahīhayn* as two works “whose mention has spread far and wide (*intashara dhikruhumā fī al-aqtār*),” he based his mission to expand the umbrella of authentic ḥadīths on the premise that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had neither intended nor succeeded in including all of the authentic reports in their works.⁷⁶ Thus, someone’s exclusion from the *Sahīhayn* must not be interpreted as a criticism of their reliability.⁷⁷ A wide body of ḥadīths and ḥadīth transmitters still existed that met the standards of the *Shaykhayn*, and al-Ḥākim proved this through an innovative reading of Muslim’s introduction to his *Sahīh*. He concluded that of the two levels of narrators from which Muslim said he would draw in compiling his collection, the author had only exhausted the first and had died before he could include ḥadīths from the second level.⁷⁸

Al-Ḥākim’s interpretation of al-Bukhārī’s work is even more creative. That scholar had provided no introduction to his *Sahīh*, so al-Ḥākim treated al-Bukhārī’s cumulative *oeuvre* as the key to understanding his requirements. He viewed al-Bukhārī’s biographical dictionary *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* as the total body of transmitters who comprised the scholar’s ḥadīth worldview. Based on the research conducted earlier by al-Māsarjisī, he set the number of transmitters in the *Tārīkh* at about forty thousand. But all

⁷⁵ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

⁷⁶ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:39.

⁷⁷ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sahīh*, 114.

⁷⁸ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā ma ṛifat kitāb al-Iklīl*, 78; idem, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sahīh*, 112; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 91.

the reliable transmitters who narrated authentic material and appear in the *Sahīhayn* amount to only about two thousand. Al-Ḥākim then turned to al-Bukhārī's list of weak transmitters (his *Kitāb al-du ʻafā'*), which included about seven hundred names, as a list of those whom al-Bukhārī considered unacceptable. After subtracting the narrators al-Bukhārī used in the *Sahīh* and those he considered weak from the forty thousand transmitters included in the *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, al-Ḥākim concluded that more than thirty thousand acceptable transmitters "remain between the house and the gate." By drawing on this untapped body of reliable transmitters and also targeting subjects that al-Bukhārī had omitted in his *Sahīh* one could thus add to the number of traditions meeting al-Bukhārī's standards.⁷⁹

Al-Ḥākim's *Mubtadi ʻa* and the Ten Thousand

Who were these "heretics (*mubtadi ʻa*)" whose claim that there existed only ten thousand authentic ḥadīths so plagued al-Ḥākim throughout his career? Unfortunately, the scholar provides little description of them beyond the brief complaints found in his works. But he does offer two important clues as to their identity. First, he quotes al-Bukhārī's teacher Aḥmad b. Sinān al-Qattān (d. 259/872-3) using the term *mubtadi* 'to indicate those who oppose ḥadīth and transmission-based scholars.'⁸⁰ We could infer from this that during al-Ḥākim's time *mubtadi ʻa* served as a transmission-based

⁷⁹ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sahīh*, 112.

⁸⁰ "There is not a *mubtadi* 'in the world that does not hate the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, and when a man becomes a *mubtadi* 'the sweetness of ḥadīth is torn from his heart;'" al-Ḥākim, *Ma ḥrifat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 5.

nomenclature for the reason-based Ḥanafīs or Mu‘tazilites who constantly criticized the *ahl al-hadīth*’s heavy reliance on *āḥād* reports.

Other evidence for the usage of the term suggests it denoted the Mu‘tazilites more specifically. According to Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), in 408/1017-18 the Abbasid caliph al-Qādir (d. 422/1031) publicly demanded, in the famous Qādirī creed, the repentance of the “*mubtadi‘a*.” Ibn al-Jawzī elaborates that the caliph was requiring “the Mu‘tazilite-Ḥanafī jurists (*fuqahā’*) to repent” and disassociate themselves from Mu‘tazilism (*al-iṭizāl*), which, like Shiism (*al-rafd*), the caliph called “counter to Islam.”⁸¹ In a letter written to the caliph in 420/1029-30, the Buyid *amīr* Yamīn al-Dawla mentions the twin perils of “the sinful Bāṭinīs (*al-bāṭiniyya al-fajara*)” and “the Mu‘tazilite heretics (*mu‘tazila mubtadi‘a*).”⁸² *Mubtadi‘a* thus appears to have indicated Mu‘tazilite and not Shiites in these contexts. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that in 460/1067-8 the jurists and ḥadīth scholars (*al-fuqahā’ wa ahl al-hadīth*) of Baghdad congregated and demanded that the Qādirī doctrine be publicly promulgated once again, because the Mu‘tazilite teacher Abū al-Walīd was insisting on teaching his school’s doctrine. One scholar stood up in the gathering and cursed the Shiites (*Rāfiḍa*), then another rose to separately curse the “*mubtadi‘a*. ”⁸³

Ibn al-Jawzī was writing almost a century and a half after these events, but his *Muntaẓam* often relies on earlier histories such as *Tārīkh Baghdād*. The promulgation of

⁸¹ “*al-mukhālifa li ‘l-islām . . .*,” Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:125; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:258. Al-Khaṭīb, who saw the caliph many times, explains that the ruler wrote treatises declaring the Mu‘tazila infidels (*ikfār*).

⁸² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:195.

⁸³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:106.

the Qādirī creed in 408/1017-8 was a well-known event, and Ibn al-Jawzī had documentary evidence for its wording.⁸⁴ Moreover, he was a member of the *ahl al-hadīth* extraordinaire and was even more vehemently opposed to the *ahl al-ra'y* than al-Hākim had been. We can therefore safely assume that he understood the term in approximately the same manner as al-Hākim. From this evidence, we can thus deduce that the term *mubtadi'a* frequently denoted the Mu'tazila.

The second clue that al-Hākim provides for identifying these *mubtadi'a* is their claim that there are only ten thousand *sahīh* ḥadīths. The most obvious candidate for such a group would be the Mu'tazilites, who cultivated a continuous skepticism about the flood of *āḥād* ḥadīths adduced by transmission-based scholars. The *Faḍl al-i ṭizāl* (Virtue of Mu'tazilism) of the Shāfi'i Mu'tazilite al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār of Rayy (d. 415/1025) supports this conclusion. He states that he and his Mu'tazilite colleagues are very critical of those who employ significant numbers of ḥadīths in scholarly discourse.⁸⁵ Although he uses such *āḥād* ḥadīths in debates with his transmission-based opponents, he does so only so they would not doubt his affection for the Prophet's sunna. In their own theology, however, Mu'tazilites limit themselves to epistemologically certain evidence (*adilla qat'iyya*) such as the Qur'ān.⁸⁶ Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār refers to the Mu'tazilites' discriminating standards in his rebuttal of a serious transmission-based accusation: that

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:279-82. The actual wording of the creed as provided by Ibn al-Jawzī, however, does not include the term *mubtadi'a*.

⁸⁵ Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī and al-Hākim al-Jishmī, *Faḍl al-i ṭizāl wa ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya, 1393/1974), 193.

⁸⁶ Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-i ṭizāl*, 156.

Mu'tazilites use too few ḥadīths. The only reason, he states, that the Mu'tazilites limit their use of ḥadīths is that *āḥād* reports have too high a probability of being false.⁸⁷

Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* provides similar evidence for this outstanding *ahl al-hadīth* grievance with the Mu'tazilites.⁸⁸ In 456/1064 partisans of the transmission-based school physically attacked the Mu'tazilite Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mu'tazilī (d. 478/1085-6), whom Ibn al-Jawzī mocks as having narrated only one ḥadīth.⁸⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī hurls the same accusation at the famous Shāfi'i Mu'tazilite Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044).⁹⁰

But why did the Mu'tazilites to whom al-Ḥākim refers set the number of authentic ḥadīths at ten thousand and not some other number? This is so because it was the number of ḥadīths considered to be contained in the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Ḥākim's *mubtadi'a* opponents told him that this was the number of *sahīh* ḥadīths "in your school (*indakum*)," namely the *ahl al-hadīth*. Al-Ḥākim himself stated that the top level of authentic ḥadīth identified with the *Sahīhayn* did not exceed ten thousand.⁹¹ Al-Ḥāzimī concluded from this that the Mu'tazilites' number was based on estimations of how many ḥadīths the *Sahīhayn* contained.⁹² This number must indicate the number of Prophetic traditions,

⁸⁷ Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Fadl al-i'tizāl*, 195.

⁸⁸ Conflict between the transmission-based school and their opponents on this matter seems to have extended back to the time of al-Bukhārī and Muslim themselves. Ibn al-Salāḥ quotes someone telling Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī "Is it not said that the ḥadīths of the Prophet are only four thousand?" He replies, "Whoever says that, may God jar his teeth, this is the claim of the heretic crypto-Zoroastrians (*zanādiqa*), for who can account [all] the ḥadīths of the Messenger of God (ṣ)...?;" Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 494.

⁸⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:247.

⁹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:300.

⁹¹ See n. 42 above.

⁹² Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-a'imma al-khamṣa*, 32.

since Aḥmad b. Salama had counted twelve thousand narrations in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* alone, and al-Ḥākim’s teacher al-Jawzaqī had placed the total number of narrations (*turuq*) in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at 25, 480.⁹³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ placed the number of traditions (*uṣūl*) in each of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* at four thousand, amounting to a total of eight thousand.⁹⁴ Considering that scholars generally put the number of Prophetic traditions in al-Bukhārī’s book at 3,397-4,000 and that of Muslim’s at between 4,000 and 8,000, the average number for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* combined would be approximately 9,700.⁹⁵

Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī provides further evidence that the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* were an important tool in the Mu‘tazilites’ polemics against the transmission-based school. He reports that someone who “belittles the acceptance of reports” said that al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* only uses some two thousand transmitters; all the others are thus clearly unreliable for ḥadīth scholars. Abū Nu‘aym responds with a lengthy quotation from al-Ḥākim’s *Madkhal ilā al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, reiterating al-Ḥākim’s argument that al-Bukhārī’s *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* contains over thirty thousand acceptable but untapped transmitters.⁹⁶

This Mu‘tazilite attack was a reoccurring theme in al-Ḥākim’s career and almost certainly served as his primary motivation in composing the *Mustadrak*. Just as Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī had feared over a century earlier, the Sunnis’ opponents had made use of the esteemed standards set by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in order to object to reports lying outside the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Indeed, al-Ḥākim’s Mu‘tazilite interlocutors condemned the

⁹³ Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 70; al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:50.

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 101-2.

⁹⁵ For the wide range of opinions on this, see Chapter 3, nn. 67, 119, 120.

⁹⁶ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *Mustakhraj*, 1:52.

thousands of ḥadīths not included in the two works as defective (*saqīma*). In order to understand how the *Mustadrak* embodied al-Ḥākim’s response to this attack, we must trace the history of the Mu’tazilite treatment of Prophetic traditions until al-Ḥākim’s time.

Al-Ḥākim’s Target Audience: the Mu’tazilites and their Criteria for Authentic ḥadīths

As Josef van Ess has demonstrated, Mu’tazilites found themselves forced to adjust the place of Prophetic traditions in their legal and doctrinal epistemologies following the Sunni victory in the Baghdad Inquisition (*Mihna*). When Dirār b. ‘Amr (fl. 195/810) established Mu’tazilism as a cosmological system, ḥadīth played no major role. He rejected the *āḥād* reports adduced as evidence by his transmission-based opponents in favor of the Qur’ān and reason, and this position was taken up by Abū Bakr al-Āṣamm (d. 201/816) of the Basran Mu’tazilite school. Van Ess postulates that in the wake of al-Shāfi‘ī’s championing the use of *āḥād* ḥadīths in law as well as the compilation of major ḥadīth collections in the late second/eighth century, Mu’tazilites found themselves forced to meet the challenges posed by the transmission-based school. Another early member of the Basran school, Abū Hudhayl (d. 200/915), thus tackled the epistemological problem of ḥadīth with numerical requirements. With him we see Mu’tazilites beginning to limit the use of ḥadīths to those they considered massively transmitted beyond the scope of error (*mutawātir*). For a ḥadīth to be accepted in discussions of dogma, Abū Hudhayl required twenty separate transmitters to meet the conditions of *tawātur*. For legal

matters, he only demanded four.⁹⁷ The Basran Mu'tazilite and polymath al-Jāḥīz (d.

255/869) also required four narrations for a report to qualify as authentic.⁹⁸

With the end of the Baghdad Inquisition (*Mihna*) in 234/848, the Mu'tazilite position against the transmission-based scholars was further weakened.⁹⁹ Ironically, it was during the classical period of Mu'tazilism from the late third/ninth century to the early fifth/eleventh that the school had to increasingly compromise with its opponents. In this period Mu'tazilites began serious studies of ḥadīth comparable to those of their transmission-based adversaries. Although Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī of Baghdad (d. 384/994) was Mu'tazilite, ḥadīth scholars considered him reliable as a transmitter, and he composed a book on the ḥadīth of the Mu'tazila.¹⁰⁰ Abū Saʿīd Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Sammān of Rayy (d. 434 or 445/1042-3 or 1053-4) was one of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's ḥadīth teachers but was a Ḥanafī *imām* of the Mu'tazilites.¹⁰¹

In matters of law, both the Baghdad and Basran schools of Mu'tazilism dropped their requirements for authenticating legal ḥadīths to two narrators at each link in the *isnād* – the same doubling transmission that al-Hākim required. The doyen of the Basran school, Abū ʿAlī Al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/933) explicitly demanded doubling transmission for

⁹⁷ Josef van Ess, “L’Autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie mu’tazilite,” in *La Notion d’autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. George Makdisi et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, c. 1982), 216-7.

⁹⁸ Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 43.

⁹⁹ Van Ess, “L’Autorité de la tradition,” 220.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 3:353.

¹⁰¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 3:213.

āhād ḥadīths to be admitted in “legal matters (*al-shur iyyāt*).”¹⁰² Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/913), who lived mostly in Naysābūr and whose works gained a wide readership in the region, compromised similarly.¹⁰³ In his *Qubūl al-akhbār*, he still demanded massively transmitted ḥadīths (*mutawātir*) for theological doctrine (*uṣūl al-kalām*) and “general legal indications (*al-amr al-āmm*).” For deriving laws (*furū'*), however, he believed that one need only provide a report transmitted by two or three people to two or three upstanding (*‘adl*) people at each level of the *isnād*. He equates this with the requirements for testimony in court.¹⁰⁴

The Mu‘tazilites’ final compromise to the transmission-based Sunnis occurred during al-Ḥākim’s lifetime. This brings us to the career of al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār of Rayy, which represented a major shift in the Mu‘tazilite school. While previously Mu‘tazilites had generally associated with the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī *madhab*, al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār retained his loyalty to the Shāfi‘ī school after embracing Mu‘tazilite doctrine.¹⁰⁵ As a Shāfi‘ī, he was obliged to accept rulings from *āhād* ḥadīths in matters of

¹⁰² Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Baṣrī, (d. 436/1044), *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muhammed Hamidullah et al., 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1964), 2:623; al-Juwainī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 1:607; Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’ Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hanbalī (d. 458/1066), *al-Uddā fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Ahmād b. ‘Alī Sīr al-Mubārak, 3 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1400/1980), 3:861; Abū Ishaq al-Shirāzī, *al-Tabṣira fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muhammed Ḥasan Hītū (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1400/1980), 312; al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 255; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, 43; idem, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 23.

¹⁰³ Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 425-30 ; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9 :392 ; Ibn al-Murtadā, *Tabaqāt al-mu‘tazila*, 88-9.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Balkhī, *Qubūl al-akhbār*, 1: 17-18. For a short discussion of *al-amr al-āmm*, see Aron Zysow, “Mu‘tazilism and Māturīdism in Ḥanafī Legal Theory,” in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 252 ff.

¹⁰⁵ Richard C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu‘tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997) 43; cf. Ibn al-Murtadā, *Tabaqāt al-mu‘tazila*, 112-113.

law even if they lacked the multiple narrations that earlier Mu'tazilites such as al-Balkhī and al-Jubbā'ī had required. In his *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār thus states that, while discussing issues of dogma and theology (*diyāna*) requires massively transmitted reports (*mutawātir*), deriving law (*furu 'al-fiqh*) necessitates only one or two narrations.¹⁰⁶

By the time al-Hākim was writing in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, the Mu'tazilites' standard for authentic ḥadīth admissible in discussions of law thus generally demanded doubling transmission. Al-Hākim's teacher and author of a famous *sahīh* work, Ibn Ḥibbān, had earlier railed against this stance.¹⁰⁷ Responding to those who rejected *āḥād* ḥadīths lacking doubling transmission, Ibn Ḥibbān exclaims "there exists no report from the Prophet (ṣ) narrated by two upstanding transmitters (*‘adlāy*), each one of them from two upstanding transmitters until it ends at the Prophet (ṣ)!" Those who uphold such stringent requirements, he adds, "have intended to abandon all of the sunna (*sunan*)."¹⁰⁸ Al-Hāzimī says that the Mu'tazila were in fact the only group to require a certain number of transmitters for the acceptance of *āḥād* ḥadīths. As al-Balkhī had stated, they based this on the requirements for court testimony.¹⁰⁹

Al-Hākim was no doubt extremely familiar with the Mu'tazilite demands for authentic ḥadīths as expressed by both al-Balkhī and al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār. Not only did al-Balkhī reside in Naysābūr for many years just before al-Hākim's birth, his writings

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 108.

¹⁰⁷ For al-Hākim's link to Ibn Ḥibbān, see al-Subki, *Tabaqāt*, 4:156.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Sahīh Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:118.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Hāzimī, *Shurūt al-a'imma al-khamsa*, 47.

also enjoyed popularity in the city. Al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār lived in Khurāsān at the same time as al-Hākim, and several of his students also lived in Naysābūr.¹¹⁰ We cannot know exactly where al-Hākim encountered the Mu‘tazilites whose criticism he noted in his *al-Madkhāl ilā al-Iklīl*, his *al-Madkhāl ilā al-Saḥīḥ* and finally his *Mustadrak*, but he would have had ample opportunity in his native Naysābūr.

The *Mustadrak* as Common Measure of Authenticity

The polemical aim of al-Hākim’s *Mustadrak* and the underlying reason for his inclusion of doubling transmission in al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s criteria now becomes clear. Al-Hākim devoted his career to increasing the number of authentic Prophetic traditions in circulation. For him the work of al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the highest standards of critical rigor, but their two collections had by no means exhausted the pool of *sahīh* ḥadīths. The threat that worried, and motivated, al-Hākim throughout his career was the Mu‘tazilite claim that only the *Saḥīḥayn* were admissible as authentic. For al-Hākim, the response to this criticism lay in the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. By defining their criteria as requiring reports free from transmitters deemed unknown by Sunni ḥadīth scholars and possessing the doubling transmission that Mu‘tazilites required, al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards became a measure of authenticity accepted by all. The *Mustadrak* constituted the fruit of al-Hākim’s efforts; it applied standards he believed compelled the acceptance of both Sunnis and Mu‘tazilites alike to a massive new corpus of Prophetic traditions.

¹¹⁰ Ibn al-Murtadā, *Tabaqat al-mu‘tazila*, 116–7. Among them Abū Rashīd Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī and Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Mayzūkī.

In this new light, al-Hākim's non-sequitur remark that authentic ḥadīths must circulate among scholars like "testimony upon testimony" now also becomes clear. Since the Mu'tazila were a key target audience of his expansion of authentic ḥadīths, his definition of *sahīḥ* had to meet their requirements. Ibn Ḥajar alludes to this matter while discussing the doubling transmission requirement of the Mu'tazilite al-Jubbā'ī. He says "this is what al-Hākim was getting at (*wa ilayhi yūmi'u kalām al-Hākim*)."¹¹¹ And indeed Ibn Ḥajar was quite justified in concluding that al-Hākim's standards somehow involved the Mu'tazila. As Ibn Ḥibbān had angrily explained, the notion of requiring doubling narration was totally alien to Sunni transmission-based scholars.

We can now better understand why al-Hākim conceived of the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim more as an ideal than a reality, and why he adhered so fiercely to his definition of their requirements in the face of tremendous opposing evidence. For him, the two scholars' requirements embodied a *kanōn* of authenticity accepted by the broader community of Sunnis and the Mu'tazila. Unlike ḥadīth collections of the past, the purpose of the *Mustadrak* was not simply to record al-Hākim's personal corpus of ḥadīths or compile a legal reference for transmission-based scholars. Al-Hākim's effort was political. It aimed at demonstrating that both the *Sahīhayn* and material that measured up to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's standards met the requirements of two opposing scholarly camps. This notion of the *Sahīhayn* as common ground was to prove central in the two works' canonization.

Yet how could al-Hākim have expected his audience to grasp the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as he defined them if they caused later scholars so much

¹¹¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-nazar*, 23.

difficulty? Al-Ḥākim’s extant works suggest that the answer lies in the immediacy of his intended audience. Both al-Ḥākim’s responses to Maṣ‘ūd al-Sijzī and his elliptical analogy between transmission and court testimony illustrate that the scholar relied more on his personal interaction with others and their familiarity with context than on detailed expositions of his theories. The introduction to the *Mustadrak* is thus no manifesto; in fact, it consists of slightly more than a single page of disorganized text. Only in another text does al-Ḥākim make his sole reference to his two treatises on the methodologies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.¹¹² But these also appear to have been ephemeral, and not a single later scholar mentions them. This explains why the *Mustadrak* was never treated as a polemic by later analysts. Only by reconstructing the context of al-Ḥākim’s works and reading them against the grain could a later scholar understand his motivations and target audience. Just as he felt comfortable providing only the most tantalizing references to the dreaded “*mubtadi‘a*” and his “standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim,” so must he have assumed that the bustling scholarly circles of Naysābūr would have grasped his intent.

The Discourse of Legal Theory: the Consensus of the Umma on Ḥadīth

Al-Ḥākim pioneered the notion of the *Sahīḥayn* as a commonly accepted measure of authenticity and a tool for extending this authority to ḥadīths outside the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The wider acceptance of the *Sahīḥayn* in this role, however, depended on the status that the various Muslim schools of thought were willing to grant *āḥād* ḥadīths. By the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, the broader

¹¹² See Chapter 4 n. 57.

Muslim community, including transmission-based scholars, Ḥanafīs, Mu'tazilites and even mainstream Shiites had accepted the notion that certain Prophetic traditions had received uniform approval and were above doubt. Shortly thereafter, by the mid fifth/eleventh century, the major legal schools in Iraq and Iran had acknowledged this class of reports and incorporated it into their epistemological systems.¹¹³ A shared conceptual and even linguistic notion of the umma's "acceptance (*al-talaqqī bi 'l-qubūl*)" appeared among later Mu'tazilites, Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs, Ḥanbalīs/über-Sunnis and the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī school. These agreed-upon reports formed a new middle tier: one that yielded an epistemological certainty below the almost unattainable confidence conveyed by unimpeachable mass-transmission (*tawātur*) but above the mere probability yielded by normal *āḥād* ḥadīths. The *āḥād* ḥadīths that had received the consensus of the community produced a level of certainty sufficient for such lofty and restricted tasks as abrogating the Qur'ān and elaborating dogma.¹¹⁴ This widely-accepted notion of the

¹¹³ The issue of the epistemological yield of *āḥād* ḥadīths and their potential uses in deriving law and dogma is a long and complicated one. The oldest aspect of the debate centers on whether or not *āḥād* ḥadīths are admissible in deriving laws and are legally compelling. This debate raged between Mu'tazilites like Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Ulayya (d. 218/833) and the transmission-based scholars like al-Shāfi'ī. Even among those who accepted that *āḥād* ḥadīths were legally compelling, however, there was debate over whether or not they yield religious knowledge strong enough to elaborate dogma (*i'tiqād*) and/or govern worship (*ta'abbud*). Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs and the transmission-based Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī schools further disagreed over what kind of *āḥād* ḥadīths could delineate or specify Qur'ānic rulings such as cutting off the hand of a thief. In addition, scholars debating the subject did not adhere to a rigid set of terminology. In other debates, scholars used the terms *ilm al-yaqīn* and *ilm al-zann* to indicate certain knowledge and probable knowledge respectively. In the debate over the yield of *āḥād* ḥadīths and the effect of the community's consensus, however, the term *ilm* denoted certain knowledge (ie. equivalent to the epistemological strength of the Qur'ān in deriving law and dogma) and *zann* meant probable knowledge (ie. sufficient only for deriving substantive law). For a discussion of the epistemological yield of *mutawātir*, *mashhūr* and *āḥād* ḥadīths as well as the general historical development of these concepts, see Wael Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability and Certainty in Sunnī Legal Thought," in *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence*, ed. Nicholas Heer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 3-31; idem, "The Authenticity of Prophetic ḥadīth: a Pseudo-problem," *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999): 75-90, esp. 80-1.

¹¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya was the first to collect a list of scholars from various schools who upheld this stance. From the Ḥanafīs he listed: al-Sarakhsī. From among the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arīs: Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī, Abū Hāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, Ibn Fūrak, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazzālī. From the Ḥanbalīs:

epistemological transformation that *āḥād* ḥadīths could undergo when agreed upon by all would prove an essential element in the canonization of the *Sahīhayn*.

a. *The Hanafīs*

Systematic discussions of the role of ḥadīth in the Ḥanafī epistemological system seem to have originated with the writings of the early Ḥanafī judge ʻIsā b. Abān (d. 221/836). Later Ḥanafī legal theorists such as al-Jaṣṣāṣ regularly quoted his works at length. Our earliest extant works of Ḥanafī legal theory trace their discussions of ḥadīth back to Ibn Abān, who originated the tripartite distinction of reports into those massively-transmitted (*mutawātir*), well-known (*mashhūr*) and *āḥād*. Unfortunately, we must depend on later scholars such as al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī of Khurāsān (d. ca. 490/1096) for explanations of Ibn Abān’s thought. Since these two scholars generally adhered to Ibn Abān’s theories, we can treat their expositions as illustrations of Ḥanafī legal theory in Rayy and Khurāsān during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.

Al-Sarakhsī states that Ibn Abān believed that *mutawātir* ḥadīths yielded epistemologically certain apodictic knowledge (*ilm ḍarūrī*); anyone who heard the report was immediately certain its contents were authentic without any consideration. *Mashhūr* ḥadīths yielded epistemologically certain acquired knowledge (*ilm muktasab*); only those able to properly contemplate the report’s transmission would grasp its total

Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’, Ibn ‘Aqīl, Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Zāghūnī, Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmadī, Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Khaṭīb. From the Mālikīs he mentions: al-Qādī Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. The list is repeated by later ḥadīth scholars such as Abū Ḥafṣ al-Bulqīnī and Ibn Ḥajar with several additions such as Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī and the leading Mu’tazilites; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘fatāwā*, 13:351-2; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 31; al-Bulqīnī, *Mahāsin al-istilāh*, 172; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 113.

authenticity.¹¹⁵ *Āḥād* ḥadīths provided mere probability (*zann*), which was suitable only for elaborating law in certain circumstances. Al-Sarakhsī, who also upholds this opinion, states that *mashhūr* reports begin as *āḥād* ḥadīths but then spread out like *mutawātir*. Their epistemological strength stems from the fact that the umma has accepted them (*qubūl*). Such ḥadīths include the famous Prophetic tradition allowing believers to wipe water on their socks during ablution instead of having to remove them to wipe their feet (*al-mash’ ʻalā al-khuffayn*). Because *mashhūr* reports yield certain knowledge, they can be used to abrogate, adjust or add on to Qur’ānic rulings in the Ḥanafī school. Although al-Sarakhsī admits that *mashhūr* reports cannot produce the highest level of certainty that results from *mutawātir*, scholarly consensus on their authenticity (*talaqqat bi’l-qubūl*) endows *mashhūr* reports with “assuring knowledge” (*‘ilm al-tuma’ nīniyya*).¹¹⁶

Although few of his works have survived, we know from later sources that the great Mu’tazilite Ḥanafī master of the first half of the fourth/tenth century, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Ubaydallāh al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), also elevated *āḥād* ḥadīths agreed upon by the scholars to a higher level than normal reports. Unlike others, however, he believed that the consensus (*ijmā’*) of the umma, in and of itself, caused no epistemological change in the ḥadīth. It simply indicated the existence of some compelling proof (*hujja*) for the

¹¹⁵ Al-Sarakhsī, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, 1:292

¹¹⁶ Al-Sarakhsī, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, 1:292-3; cf. al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:548.

authenticity of the report, since consensus would not have occurred without such evidence.¹¹⁷

Another Ḥanafī legal theorist of the fourth/tenth century follows Ibn Abān in his tripartite distinction. In his brief treatise on Ḥanafī legal theory, Abū ‘Alī Ahmād b. Iṣhāq al-Shāshī (d. 344/955-6) defines *mashhūr* as a report that begins as *āḥād* and becomes widespread in the second and third generations (*‘asr*). Finally, the umma accepts it with consensus (*talaqqathu bi ‘l-qubūl*). *Mashhūr* reports yield “assured knowledge (*ilm al-tuma ‘nīniyya*),” and those who reject them are heretics (*mubtadi’*). Unlike *āḥād* ḥadīths, al-Shāshī states, scholars do not differ over whether or not such reports are legally compelling. As examples, he provides the ḥadīth of wiping over the socks as well as the ḥadīth enjoining stoning as a punishment for adulterers.¹¹⁸

We have already discussed al-Jassāṣ’s opinions on *āḥād* ḥadīths enjoying the consensus of umma and on which scholars have acted in law; he admits them as

¹¹⁷ Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad*, 2:556. This information does not appear in al-Karkhī’s short extant *uṣūl* work. See, Abū al-Hasan ‘Ubaydallāh al-Karkhī, *al-Uṣūl allatī ‘alayhā madār furū‘ al-ḥanafīyya* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Adabiyya, [n.d.]).

¹¹⁸ Abū ‘Alī Ahmad b. Muhammād Nizām al-Dīn al-Shāshī, *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*, ed. Muhammād Fayd al-Hasan al-Kankuhī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1402/1982), 269-72. For his biography, see Ibn Abī al-Wafā, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, 1:262. There is significant debate over the identity of the author of this text as well as when he lived. Three editions of the work have been published, each attributed to a different Shāshī. In addition to the above mentioned work, one is attributed to Iṣhāq b. Ibrāhīm Abū Ya‘qūb al-Shāshī al-Khurāsānī (d. 325/937), who lived mostly in Egypt (see Ibn Abī al-Wafā, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, 1:364) and has been published as *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* (Delhi: Kotob-khāne-ye Rashīdeyye, [1963]). Finally, the most recent edition attributes the work to another Nizām al-Dīn al-Shāshī (fl. 700’s/1300’s) and is published as *Uṣūl al-Shāshī: mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-fiqh al-islāmī*, ed. Muhammād Akram Nadwī and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2000). Murteza Bedir has argued that the *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* cannot have predated the work of the Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muhammād al-Bazdawī of Samarqand (d. 482/1089). The edition used here contains some references to figures (al-Dabūsī {d. 430/1038}, for example) who died after the fourth/tenth century, so at the very least we can be sure that additions were made to the text. The bulk of the work, however, seems to be representative of other Ḥanafī *uṣūl* treatises from the late fourth/tenth to mid fifth/eleventh centuries, so there is little reason to assume the whole work dates from a later time. Suggestions that *Uṣūl al-Shāshī* is a work of Shāfi‘ī *uṣūl* are untenable given the distinctly Ḥanafī contents and format of the book. See Murteza Bedir, “The Problem of *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*,” *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 415-36.

compelling evidence in issues of law and dogma (*umūr al-diyānāt*).¹¹⁹ Al-Jaṣṣāṣ describes such reports as “widespread (*mustafīda*).”¹²⁰ His discussion of reports, in fact, devotes significant space to defending the use of *āḥād* ḥadīths from groups such as the Mu‘tazila who attack them.¹²¹

A significant development seems to have occurred in the Ḥanafī use of the term *mashhūr* between the time that al-Jaṣṣāṣ was writing in the mid fourth/tenth century and al-Sarakhsī in the second half of the fifth/eleventh. While al-Sarakhsī felt that *mashhūr* reports could abrogate or adjust Qur’ānic rulings, al-Jaṣṣāṣ limited that power to *mutawātir* ḥadīths.¹²² Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī also maintained that only *mutawātir* ḥadīths could abrogate the holy book. Yet it appears that this change involved a semantic shift in the usage of the term *mashhūr* rather than any revolution in Ḥanafī epistemology. All these scholars believed that the ḥadīth of wiping one’s socks was sufficiently well-attested to abrogate the Qur’ān. But while Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī and al-Jaṣṣāṣ had considered it *mutawātir*,¹²³ al-Shāshī and al-Sarakhsī considered it *mashhūr*.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 4, nn. 172 and 172.

¹²⁰ Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:548.

¹²¹ See al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:560 and 1:568-73. It is interesting to note that al-Jaṣṣāṣ’s treatment of ḥadīth incorporates significant amounts of technical terminology used by transmission-based scholars in their evaluation of reports, such as “approval (*ta’dīl*)” and “accuracy (*dabīt*).” al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 2:25.

¹²² Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:449.

¹²³ Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Uṣūl*, 1:467, 518.

b. The Later Mu'tazilites

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) was a product of late Mu'tazilism. Like his teacher, al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, he espoused Mu'tazilite theology while belonging to the Shāfi'i school of law. His work on legal theory, the *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, would become one of the most influential works in that genre and provide a framework for many later Shāfi'i *uṣūl* books.¹²⁴ Abū al-Ḥusayn's stance on the epistemological yield of *āḥād* ḥadīths reflected the Shāfi'i/Ash'arī position embraced as orthodox among almost all Sunnis: such ḥadīths yield only probable knowledge (*zann*), but are nonetheless legally compelling (*mūjib al-'amal*).¹²⁵ The consensus of the umma, however, alters this completely. He explains that, "as for the *wāhid* [ie. *āḥād* ḥadīth] when the umma has come to consensus as to what it entails (*muqtadāhu*) and deemed it authentic, then its authenticity is epistemologically certain (*yuqta u 'alā sihhatihī*)."¹²⁶

There does not appear to be any evidence that the later Mu'tazilites endowed the term *mashhūr* with any technical meaning. In his *Fadl al-i 'tizāl*, however, al-Qādī 'Abd

¹²⁴ This is the opinion of the later Mu'tazilite Abū Sa'īd al-Muḥassīn b. Muḥammad al-Hākim; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Tabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, 119.

¹²⁵ Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, 2:570. For what became the stance of the Ash'arī orthodoxy, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya*, 2:557; idem, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, ed. 'Ādīl b. Yūsuf al-'Azzāzī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1417/1996), 1:278; al-Juwainī, *Sharḥ al-Waraqāt fī ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad 'Alī Šubayḥ, [1965]), 12; al-Shīrāzī, *al-Tabṣira*, 315; al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 252. For a similar Mālikī opinion, see Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, *al-Ishāra fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 207-8, and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:2, 8. For a Ḥanbalī discussion of the school's stance and an explanation of the conflicting quotes of Ibn Ḥanbal on this matter, see Abū Ya'lā Ibn al-Farrā', *al-Udda*, 3:861, 900. For the Ḥanafī position, see Ahmād b. Muḥammad al-Ghaznawī, *Uṣūl fiqh al-Ghaznawī*, ed. Muḥammad Tu'mat al-Quḍāt (Amman: n.p., 1421/2001), 31.

¹²⁶ Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*, 2:555.

al-Jabbār does use the term to describe a “well-known” ḥadīth that he employs as a proof text.¹²⁷

c. The Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī Orthodoxy

Although Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī served as the eponym and inspiration of the Ash‘arī school of speculative theology, its tenets and doctrine took shape mainly through the work of three scholars who lived in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh century: the Baghdad Mālikī Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Abū Ishaq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) and Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015). The influential Buyid vizier and intellectual al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ‘Abbād described these three figures colorfully thus: “al-Bāqillānī is an engulfing sea, Ibn Fūrak a silent serpent (*sall muṭriq*) and al-Isfarāyīnī a burning fire.”¹²⁸ Here we will focus only on Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarāyīnī, the two scholars who played salient roles in the articulation of the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī orthodoxy that would compete with the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni orthodoxy for ascendancy in fifth/eleventh century Baghdad.

Abū Ishaq al-Isfarāyīnī was probably born in 337/949 in the city of Isfarāyīn, a town nestled in the gateway to the northern mountains of Khurāsān and separated from the main road running from Bayhaq to Naysābūr by a grassy valley and a chain of hills. He studied ḥadīth intensively with scholars such as al-Ismā‘īlī and also attended the lessons of his older contemporary Ibn Fūrak. He was sought out as a ḥadīth expert, and

¹²⁷ Al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Fadl al-i ṫizāl*, 195.

¹²⁸ “al-Bāqillānī baḥr muḡrīq wa Ibn Fūrak ṣall muṭriq wa al-Isfarāyīnī nār muḥrīq;” ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 152; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:438; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:257.

among the students to whom he transmitted ḥadīth were al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and the great Shāfiʻī of Baghdad Abū al-Tayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058). Al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī in particular studied Abū Ishāq’s works in depth. Among the other noteworthy figures who studied law, legal theory, ḥadīth and theology at Abū Ishāq’s hands were the other great Shāfiʻīs of the age: Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) as well as the famous Sufī systematizer Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072).¹²⁹

Abū Ishāq spent many years studying in Baghdad, but retired to his native Isfaraīn to teach. He also undertook a visit to the court of Maḥmūd al-Ghaznavī in Ghazna in order to debate the Karrāmiyya. Upon the request of the scholars of Naysābūr, he traveled to that city and taught at a school built there for his use. When he died, his body was carried back to Isfaraīn for burial.¹³⁰

In his addendum to al-Ḥākim’s *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5) says that Abū Ishāq’s works “will last until the Day of Judgment, God willing.”¹³¹ God’s will was not forthcoming, however, and almost nothing of Abū Ishāq’s writings has survived. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) said that his books were too vast to be contained in tomes;¹³² he wrote a treatise on legal theory, Shāfiʻī substantive law and another on the art of dialectic, but it seems that he devoted a great deal of

¹²⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:353-5; cf. Mohammad Javād Hojjetī Kermānī, “Abū Ishāq Isfaraīnī,” *Dār’erat al-ma ʻaref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 5:158-9; ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 151-2; al-Subkī, *al-Tabaqāt*, 4:259.

¹³⁰ Kermānī, “Abū Ishāq al-Isfaraīnī,” *Dār’erat al-ma ʻaref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 5:158-9.

¹³¹ ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 151-2.

¹³² Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:170.

attention to attacking the Mu'tazila. He penned one work entitled *al-Mukhtaṣar fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-i ʿizāl wa al-qadar* (Abbreviated Refutation of the Mu'tazila and those Believers in Free Will) and another named *al-Jāmi` al-haly fī uṣūl al-dīn wa al-radd ʿalā al-mulhidīn* (The Ornamented Concordance of the Principles of Dogma and a Refutation of the Non-believers). In addition, Abū Ishaq engaged in several debates with the Mu'tazilite al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār.¹³³

Despite the fact that none of these works have survived, Abū Ishaq's scholarly opinions appear frequently in later Shāfi'i works on legal theory, and figures like al-Shīrāzī and Ibn al-Šalāḥ recognized the importance of Abū Ishaq's role in formulating the Shāfi'i/Ash'arī stances on issues like abrogation and consensus.¹³⁴ Later Shāfi'i legal theorists have thus preserved Abū Ishaq's stance on the issues of the epistemological yield of ḥadīths and the effect of consensus. From the works of Imām al-Haramayn al-Juwainī and al-Ghazzālī, we know that Abū Ishaq matched the Ḥanafī tripartite division of reports, identifying ḥadīths as *mutawātir*, *āḥād* and a middle tier called *mustafid* (reminiscent of al-Jaṣṣāṣ's terminology). While *mutawātir* reports yielded certain apodictic knowledge (*ilm darūrī*) and *āḥād* ḥadīths mere probability (*zann*), these *mustafid* reports conveyed “epistemologically certain discursive knowledge (*ilm naẓarī*).” Like the *ilm muktasab* that Ḥanafīs attributed to *mashhūr* reports, this discursive knowledge resulted from a consideration of the report's transmission. Abū

¹³³ Kermānī, “Abū Ishaq Isfarāyīnī,” 5:158–9; al-Abbādī, *Kitāb Tabaqāt al-fuqahā'*, 104. Partial transcripts or quotations from some of these debates seem to have survived. See al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:261; Mulla 'Alī Qāri'(d. 1014/1606), *Sharh al-Fiqh al-akbar*, ed. Marwān Muḥammad al-Sha'īr (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1417/1997), 123.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Abū Ishaq al-Shīrāzī, *Sharh al-luma'*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd Turkī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988), 1:573; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:170.

Ishāq defined this middle tier as those reports on which the *imāms* of ḥadīth (*a’immat al-hadīth*) had reached consensus.¹³⁵

Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī’s career mirrors in many aspects that of his senior colleague Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak, who also belonged to the Shāfi‘ī school. Ibn Fūrak studied in Baghdad, spent a period in the Buyid capital of Rayy and then moved to Naysābūr to teach at a *madrasa* built specifically for him. There he remained until the last years of his life, when he accompanied Abū Ishāq to the Ghaznavid court to debate the Karrāmiyya sect.¹³⁶ Unlike Abū Ishāq, several of Ibn Fūrak’s writings have survived. Like him, though, the main opponents that he addresses are the Mu‘tazila. The most noteworthy is his exposition of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī’s school of speculative theology, entitled *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash‘arī* (The Essential Positions of al-Ash‘arī). In addition, he authored a condensed work on *uṣūl* entitled *Kitāb al-hudūd fī al-uṣūl* (Definitions in Legal Theory). Finally, he devoted a book to interpreting problematic ḥadīths in a manner that trod a middle path between Mu‘tazilite rationalism and über-Sunni anthropomorphism.¹³⁷

In his *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash‘arī*, Ibn Fūrak employs Prophetic traditions very carefully. He admits authentic ḥadīths as evidence in describing God’s attributes if they

¹³⁵ Cf. al-Juwainī, *al-Burhān*, 1:584; al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 244. Both al-Ghazzālī and al-Juwainī disagree with Abū Ishāq on this matter; cf. al-Juwainī, *al-Kāfiya fī al-jadal*, ed. Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Ḫasā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1399/1979), 55-6.

¹³⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, “Ibn Fūrak,” *EI²*; M.A.S Abdel Haleem, “Early Islamic Theological and Juristic Terminology: *Kitāb al-Hudūd fī l-uṣūl*, by Ibn Fūrak,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54, no. 1 (1991): 5-41.

¹³⁷ These works have been published as: Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb al-hudūd fī al-uṣūl*, ed. Mohamed al-Sulaymani (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999); idem, *Muğarrad maqālāt al-Aš‘arī: exposé de la doctrine d’al-Aš‘arī*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Beirut : Dar al-Machreq, 1987); idem, *Bayān muškil al-ahādit des Ibn Fūrak*, ed. Raimund Köbert (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1941).

can convey the appropriate epistemological certainty, denying that He is *Hannān* because “there has not been established to that effect an authentic report (*khabar saḥīḥ*) on which predicating attributes to Him could depend.”¹³⁸ Ibn Fūrak admits the ambiguity in the Ash‘arī stance on the ability of ḥadīths to abrogate the Qur’ān. He states that al-Ash‘arī required a report be *mutawātir* or have the ruling of *tawātur* in order to abrogate the holy book, although he admits that in their capacity as a restriction of Qur’ānic rulings (*takhsīṣ*), abrogation can in effect occur with *āḥād* ḥadīths as well.¹³⁹ In his *Kitāb al-hudūd fī al-uṣūl*, Ibn Fūrak bisects reports into *mutawātir* and *āḥād*; the first conveys epistemologically certain apodictic knowledge (*‘ilm darūrī*), while he defines *āḥād* ḥadīths as all those that do not meet the requirements of *mutawātir* and thus do not yield any certain knowledge.¹⁴⁰

Later sources, however, provide an impression of a more nuanced understanding of reports that allows for the tripartite division present in Abū Ishāq’s thought. Al-Juwaynī states that Ibn Fūrak believed that reports which scholars had accepted with consensus were “of assured authenticity (*mahkūm bi-ṣidqīhi*),” even if these scholars did not act on their legal implications.¹⁴¹ Ibn Ḥajar states that Ibn Fūrak believed that if an *āḥād* ḥadīth became “*mashhūr*” with well-established transmission, it could yield certain discursive knowledge (*‘ilm naẓarī*).¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Ibn Fūrak, *Muğarrad maqālāt al-As̄arī*, 57.

¹³⁹ Ibn Fūrak, *Muğarrad maqālāt al-As̄arī*, 199.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb al-hudūd fī al-uṣūl*, 150.

¹⁴¹ Al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 1:585.

¹⁴² Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 29-30.

d. The Ḥanbalī Orthodoxy: *Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’*

During the late fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh century, in major cities tension between the two increasingly divergent strains of the transmission-based school became more intense. In Baghdad, partisans of the conservative Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and those of the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī camp competed with one another for intellectual ascendancy and state patronage. Both were and remain competing orthodoxies in Sunni Islam.

Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’ al-Ḥanbalī (d. 458/1066) of Baghdad served as the pivot for the Ḥanbalī school in the fifth/eleventh century and was the single most influential formulator of its legal theory. He wrote a commentary on the Ḥanbalī formative text, the *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Khiraqī, and authored the school’s first significant *uṣūl* text, *al-Udda*.¹⁴³ Through his writings on issues such as God’s attributes and the fundamentals of doctrine (*uṣūl al-dīn*), he proved himself an inveterate opponent of the Mu‘tazila and the burgeoning Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī orthodoxy. Among his many works we thus find a rebuttal of Ash‘arism (*al-Radd ‘alā al-Ash‘ariyya*).¹⁴⁴ This Ḥanbalī-Ash‘arī disagreement centered on the proper interpretation of Qur’ānic verses and ḥadīths dealing with God’s attributes and movement. Ibn al-Farrā’ believed that true proponents of the Prophet’s legacy accept the meaning of such reports at face value, while Ash‘arīs deigned to interpret them figuratively.¹⁴⁵ This enmity, however, ironically masked a growing rapprochement

¹⁴³ Ibn al-Farrā’ himself notes that an earlier Ḥanbalī, al-Ḥasan b. Hāmid al-Warrāq (d. 403/1012-13), wrote a work on *uṣūl al-fiqh* which seems not to have survived; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 7: 213 (biography of al-Ḥasan).

¹⁴⁴ For a list of Ibn al-Farrā’’s works, see Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:175.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:179.

between the Ash‘arīs and leading elements of the Ḥanbalī school. Ibn al-Farrā’, for example, found himself forced to admit that the wording of the Qur’ān was indeed created, and by penning a work of *uṣūl* structured like those of his opponents he was in effect agreeing to join in the discourse established by the Ḥanafis, Mu‘tazilites and Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs.¹⁴⁶

In his work on Ḥanbalī legal theory, *al-Udda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Ibn al-Farrā’ explains, that while *āḥād* ḥadīths only convey probability (*zann*), when the umma reaches consensus (*ijmā'*) on some piece of evidence such as a ḥadīth (*an yatallaqāhu bi'l-qubūl*), the report then yields certain knowledge (*ilm*). According to the general rules of reality (*āda*), no ḥadīth could enjoy this level of credibility and not be correct.¹⁴⁷ In another work attempting to reconcile Ibn Ḥanbal’s contrasting statements on issues of dogma, Ibn al-Farrā’ reveals that he shares the other schools’ view on the special capacity of these approved *āḥād* ḥadīths. For an *āḥād* ḥadīth to be considered as proof on an issue such as seeing God on the Day of Judgment, he explains, the umma must have accepted it with consensus (*talaqqathu bi'l-qubūl*).¹⁴⁸

Ibn al-Farrā’ does not acknowledge a middle tier of reports, only mentioning *āḥād* and *mutawātir*. Interestingly, however, he does refer to the term *mashhūr* in his effort to translate the jargon used by earlier ḥadīth scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal into terms comprehensible in the arena of legal theory. He explains that ḥadīth scholars employed

¹⁴⁶ Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Masā'il al-'aqdiyya min Kitāb al-riwāyatayn wa al-wajhayn*, ed. Su‘ūd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khalaf (Riyadh: Aqwā' al-Salaf, 1419/1999), 77 ff.

¹⁴⁷ Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Udda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 3:900-1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Masā'il al-'aqdiyya*, 70.

mashhūr for “a report whose transmissions have become massively widespread (*tawātara*).”¹⁴⁹

e. *The Mālikīs*

Although Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī was Mālikī and later Ash‘arīs such as Abū Dharr al-Harawī also belonged to the legal school, Mālikīs were not as prominent contributors to discourse on epistemology or legal theory as the Shāfi‘īs. Al-Bāqillānī seems to be the exception in not mentioning any special status for *āḥād* ḥadīths on which the community had agreed. Nonetheless, Ibn Ḥajar mentions that al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Mālikī of Baghdad (d. 422/1031-2) insisted in his *Kitāb al-Mulakhkhaṣ* (which has probably not survived) that the authenticity of that which the umma accepted with consensus was absolute.¹⁵⁰ For him *tawātur* and the consensus of the umma were the only means by which transmitted material could yield epistemological certainty.¹⁵¹ Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, another prominent Mālikī of the fifth/eleventh century, also stated that there are six circumstances in which *āḥād* ḥadīths can yield *īlm*, one of which is when the umma has accepted the *āḥād* ḥadīth with consensus (*talaqqathu bi ’l-qubūl*).¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Udda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 3:930.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Salāḥ*, 113.

¹⁵¹ Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Alī al-Mālikī, *al-Ishrāf ʿalā nukat masā’il al-khilāf*, ed. al-Ḥabīb b. Ṭāhir, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 1:233.

¹⁵² Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, ed. Abdel-Magid Turki (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1407/1986), 330.

f. Al-Hākim and the Consensus of the Umma

Although al-Hākim attended the lessons of Ibn Fūrak, studied closely with Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and transmitted ḥadīths from him, his work bears little trace of this ubiquitous agreement on the effect of consensus on the epistemological yield of ḥadīths. Furthermore, he does not employ the widespread terms *mashhūr* or *mustafid* in the technical sense explored above. Perhaps the closest he comes to acknowledging the role of *ijmā'* or utilizing its associated jargon is his statement that authentic reports must be “circulated with acceptance (*bi'l-qubūl*)” among ḥadīth scholars.¹⁵³ Such feeble data, however, do not establish any link between al-Hākim’s methodology and that of the legal theorists of his time. Although al-Hākim associated with giants in the field of law, legal theory and theology, he was ultimately only a ḥadīth scholar. He offered the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a *kanōn* of authenticity binding for ḥadīth scholars and Mu'tazilites alike, but it was his students and colleagues from among the ranks of the legal theorists who truly declared the two works common ground. For them the widely-accepted notion that *āḥād* ḥadīths that had earned the acceptance of the umma could be declared epistemologically certain would provide the key for canonizing the *Sahīhayn*.

A New Common Ground between the Ḥanbalī/Über-Sunni and the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī Schools

The role of the *Sahīhayn* as an authoritative common ground between two of the major scholarly camps of the early fifth/eleventh century expressed itself in the careers of two of al-Hākim’s close associates: his teacher and colleague Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d.

¹⁵³ Al-Hākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 77.

418/1027) and his student Abū Naṣr ‘Ubaydallāh b. Sa‘īd al-Wā’ilī al-Sijzī (d. 444/1052). A slightly later figure, Imām al-Ḥaramayn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085), soon reiterated this new standing for the two books. Beyond their belief in the Qur’ānic revelation and a general Sunni loyalty, a common reverence for al-Bukhārī or the *Sahīhayn* constituted the only firm common ground between figures whose relationships with one another were otherwise characterized by bitter enmity.

A discussion of the role of the *Sahīhayn* as a common denominator in the scholarly community must begin with three landmark quotations from Abū Ishaq, Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī and al-Juwainī.¹⁵⁴ Al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) cites Abū Ishaq’s statement from his lost *Kitāb fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Abū Ishaq asserted:

The authenticity of the reports in the *Sahīhayn* is epistemologically certain in terms of their texts (*uṣūlihā wa mutūnihā*), and no disagreement can occur concerning them. If disagreement does occur, it is over the transmissions and narrators (*turuq wa ruwātihā*). Anyone whose ruling disagrees with a report and does not provide some acceptable interpretation (*ta’wīl sā’igh*) for the

¹⁵⁴ Although we have no extant proof of these quotes from the three scholars themselves, this should not lead us to reject their provenance. Only one of al-Wā’ilī’s works has survived; none of Abū Ishaq al-Isfarāyīnī’s books is extant. Furthermore, both al-Wā’ilī and al-Juwainī’s quotes are of a decidedly oral nature (see Appendix on Divorce Oaths), and we should not be surprised not to find the quote in the many works of al-Juwainī that have survived. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ provides an *isnād* back to al-Juwainī for his quote, which suggests at least some documentation. Al-Juwainī’s contemporary, Abū Muẓaffar Maṇṣūr al-Sam’ānī of Naysābūr (d. 489/1096), describes *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī* with the statement “it has been said that the authenticity from the Prophet of what is in it is absolutely certain.” This proves that this claim was known during al-Juwainī’s lifetime, providing a firm *terminus ante quem* that is relatively close chronologically to the earliest quote, namely that of al-Isfarāyīnī. In light of these circumstances, we should not equate an absence of documentary evidence for these quotes with an evidence of absence. One claim does exist for a declaration about al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works before that of al-Isfarāyīnī, but this lacks credibility: Ibn Ḥajar states elliptically that al-Jawzaqī (d. 388/998) also declared the material in the *Sahīhayn* to be absolutely authentic due to the consensus of the umma, but we have no other mention or evidence of this. The quote does not appear in al-Jawzaqī’s *al-Muttafaq*. Furthermore, why would al-Jawzaqī’s student al-Ḥākim never mention his teacher’s statement among his accolades of the *Sahīhayn*? Another figure who supposedly made this claim somewhat later was Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. ‘Abd al-Khāliq al-Yūsufī (d. 574/1178-9) of Mecca, about whom we know very little. See Abū al-Muẓaffar Maṇṣūr b. Muḥammad al-Sam’ānī, *Qawāṭī ‘al-adilla fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Tawba, 1418/1998), 2:500; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 116; ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8 vols. in 4 (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijārī, [1960]), 4:248.

report, we negate his ruling, for the umma has accepted these reports with consensus.¹⁵⁵

We also cannot be sure when exactly Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī made the following statement:

Scholars (*ahl al-ilm*), the jurists among them and others, have reached consensus (*ajma'a*) that, if a man swears that if anything in al-Bukhārī's collection that has been reported from the Prophet (ṣ) is not authentic and that the Prophet (ṣ) indeed did not say it he will divorce his wife, he would not be breaking his word and the wife would stay as she was in his custody (*hibālatihi*).¹⁵⁶

Finally, al-Juwaynī is quoted as saying:

If a man swore that he would divorce his wife if something in the books of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that they had declared authentic is not [really] from the words of the Prophet (ṣ), I would not oblige him to divorce her and he would not be violating his oath due to the consensus of the Muslim umma on the authenticity of the two books.¹⁵⁷

An Articulate Über-Sunni: Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī

We are already familiar with the life and career of the great Shāfi'i theorist, ḥadīth scholar and Ash'arī theologian Abū Ishāq al-Isfārāyīnī, for the Shāfi'i tradition has sufficiently recorded and honored his legacy. Conversely, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī has never received his due from the school to which he belonged and for which he battled so fiercely. Ibn Abī Ya'lā devotes no entry to him in the *Tabaqāt al-*

¹⁵⁵ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 4:261.

¹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Šalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 168. Abū Naṣr's statement was echoed later by someone that Ibn al-‘Imād identifies only as Ibn al-Ahdal; see Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:135 (biography of al-Bukhārī). I have found only one instance of the divorce oath trope being used to testify to the authenticity of a ḥadīth collection other than the *Ṣahīhayn*, namely the *Muwatta'* of Mālik. In his *Tartīb al-madārik*, al-Qādī ‘Iyād quotes Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī as saying, “if a man swore by divorce that Mālik’s ḥadīths that are in the *Muwatta'* are all authentic (*ṣihāh*), he would not be violating his oath. If he swore by the ḥadīths of another he would be.” Although this source is late, it is entirely possible that this attribution is correct. As we shall see in the next chapter, such statements gave voice to the Mālikī desire to put the *Muwatta'* on par with or above the *Ṣahīhayn*; al-Qādī ‘Iyād, *Tartīb al-madārik fī taqrīb al-masālik li-ma rīfat a'lām madhhab Mālik*, ed. Ahmad Bakir Mahmud, 5 vols. in 3 (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1387/1967), 1:196.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn al-Šalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 86.

ḥanābila, although he does respectfully mention a letter Abū Naṣr wrote to Ibn al-Farrā’ from Mecca praising one of the latter’s books.¹⁵⁸ Abū Naṣr’s sole surviving work, however, leaves no doubt as to his allegiances. He was an über-Sunni who viewed Ibn Ḥanbal as the culmination of the Islamic religious tradition. After al-Shāfi‘ī’s convoluted attempts at theorizing Islamic law had left Muslims confused, Ibn Ḥanbal took what he could from al-Shāfi‘ī’s work as well as that of Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa, and restored the pure tradition of complying with the Prophet’s sunna.¹⁵⁹

Abū Naṣr extends the budding Ash‘arī school no mercy. He condemns al-Bāqillānī, Abū Ishaq al-Isfārāyīnī and Ibn Fūrak as the “*imāms* of misguidance (*a’immat al-dalāl*)” of his time. For, although they reject some opinions of the Mu‘tazila, they reject more from the partisans of ḥadīth (*ahl al-athar*).¹⁶⁰ Abū Naṣr is unconvinced by the Ash‘arī use of speculative reasoning to trump the Mu‘tazila, whom he is convinced are a spent force. He explains that while Ash‘arīs purport to debate the Mu‘tazila, they are in fact with them. Indeed, “they are viler than them (*akhass hāl'an*).”¹⁶¹

Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī was born in the Iranian province of Sijistān to a family that followed the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.¹⁶² He soon split from his father’s school, however, and traveled to Khurāsān and Ghazna. In 404/1014 he undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca,

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 2:173. I have not seen al-Wā’ilī mentioned in any secondary source works on the period or the Ḥanbalī school.

¹⁵⁹ Abū Naṣr ‘Ubaydallāh b. Sa‘īd al-Wā’ilī al-Sijzī, *Risālat al-Sijzī ilā ahl Zabīd fī al-radd ‘alā man ankara al-harf wa al-ṣawt*, ed. Muḥammad b. Karīm b. ‘Abdallāh (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1414/1994), 215.

¹⁶⁰ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 223.

¹⁶¹ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*; 81, 222. He considers the last generation of Mu‘tazila to be ‘Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ṣāhib Ibn ‘Abbād.

¹⁶² This is the cause of Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī’s outrageous inclusion in Ḥanafī biographical dictionaries, see below n. 163.

then visited Baghdad, Egypt and Basra before returning to Mecca, where he remained until his death.¹⁶³

Abū Naṣr studied ḥadīth with al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, probably in Naysābūr, and clearly respected him a great deal. He seems to have viewed him as an exemplary ḥadīth scholar. Abū Naṣr would tell a story about his teacher's encounter with the famous litterateur Badīr̄ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008) upon his arrival in Naysābūr to a crowd of admirers. When al-Hamadhānī awed onlookers by memorizing a hundred lines of poetry after one hearing and then belittled the memorization of ḥadīths, al-Ḥākim decided the time had come to put this bonvivant litterateur in his place. He approached him and asked him to memorize a *juz'* of ḥadīths. When he returned a week later to test al-Hamadhānī, he could not remember the specifics of the *isnāds*. Al-Ḥākim scolded him for mocking something more difficult to memorize than poetry and told him "know your place (*i'raf nafsak*)."¹⁶⁴

Abū Naṣr seems to have produced very few works, only one of which has survived. His *al-Radd ʻalā man ankara al-ḥarf wa al-ṣawt* (Rebuttal of Those who Deny [that God's Speech Consists of] Words and Sounds), written as a letter to the people of Zabīd in Yemen, is probably an summary of his *magnum opus*, the *Kitāb al-ibāna al-kubrā*. Al-Dhahabī praises both this work and its author, whom he lauds with the unique accolade

¹⁶³ Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī tahdhīb al-ansāb*, 3:351-2; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:187, Ibn al-Jawzī errs in his death date, which he has as 469 AH; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:654-6; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 30:95-97; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, vol. 19, ed. Riḍwān al-Sayyid (Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1413/1993), 19:372-3, "Abū Naṣr Sijzī," *Dā'erat al- ma īref-e bozorg-e eslāmi*, 6:318-9; Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir al-mudīyya*, 2:495; Ibn Qutlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 39.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:173.

“the *imām* of the knowledge of the sunna (*imām ʿilm al-sunna*).”¹⁶⁵ He explains that the work dealt incisively with questions of the Qur’ān’s nature and God’s attributes.¹⁶⁶ The *Rebuttal* itself addresses numerous topics, such as the nature of the Qu’rān, God’s speech, His sitting on the throne, the beatific vision, and His descending to the lowest heavens at night. The *Ibāna* was read during its author’s lifetime, for Ibn Taymiyya tells us that when Abū Naṣr and the Ash‘arī Abū Dharr al-Harawī were both in Mecca they fell into a serious argument over the nature of the Qur’ān and the *Ibāna*.¹⁶⁷ In addition, later scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cite Abū Naṣr’s ḥadīth work on the narration of sons from their fathers as the definitive book in that genre.¹⁶⁸

The *Ibāna* indicates that Abū Naṣr possessed a deep understanding of both Ash‘arī and Mu‘tazilite thought as well as the Ash‘arī mission of defending Sunnism using the Mu‘tazilites’ rational tools. The Mu‘tazila claimed that speech consists of words and sounds, which are created. Since Sunnis believed that the Qur’ān was God’s speech, it must also be created. The Ash‘arīs circumvented this trap by denying that God spoke in sounds; rather, His speech was figurative. His words were “meaning inhering in the essence of the Speaker (*ma ʿnā qā’im bi-dhāt al-mutakallim*).” Abū Naṣr rejects the Ash‘arī position, stating that it was well-understood amongst Arabs that the term “speech (*kalām*)” denoted actual words.¹⁶⁹ The Ash‘arīs claimed that God “spoke” only in the

¹⁶⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:211.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:654.

¹⁶⁷ “Abū Naṣr Sijzī,” *Dā’erat al- ma ʿaref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 6:318.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Ṭrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īqdāḥ*, 273; Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, *Fath al-bāqī bi-sharḥ alfiyyat al- Ṭrāqī*, ed. Thanā’allāh al-Zāhidī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 562.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 81-2.

figurative (*majāzī*) sense because, if He actually articulated words, this would be anthropomorphism (*tajsīm, tashbīh*).¹⁷⁰

Against this, Abū Naṣr defends the über-Sunnis' literalist interpretation of God speaking or moving in space. He states that his party is the true *ahl al-sunna* "who stand fast on what the early generations (*salaf*) had transmitted to them from the Messenger of God (ﷺ)" and rely on the traditions of the Companions where God and His Prophet are silent.¹⁷¹ Reports about God speaking, ascending His throne or descending to the lowest heavens have been bequeathed to the Muslims of the present day by upstanding and trustworthy *imāms* like Mālik through many corroborating reports (*turuq mutasāwiya*).¹⁷²

Abū Naṣr's position on the epistemological yield of *āḥād* ḥadīths reveals an acuity and cunning approach to dialectic. He acknowledges that most scholars believe that *āḥād* ḥadīths are only compelling in law (*‘amal*). They do not yield certainty (*ilm*) like massively-transmitted reports (*mutawātir*). He replies using the Ash‘arīs' own position that *tawātur* is not defined by a fixed number of reports, but rather by circumstances that lead to the total alleviation of doubt concerning the authenticity of the message. This could occur with one hundred narrations, four or even less depending on circumstances. Most ḥadīths dealing with God's attributes, he continues, have been transmitted in sufficient number to alleviate doubt and make the heart feel at ease.¹⁷³ He mocks the Ash‘arīs' attempts to defend against the Mu‘tazila using rational argumentation without

¹⁷⁰ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 82.

¹⁷¹ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 99.

¹⁷² Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 186.

¹⁷³ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 187.

recourse to ḥadīths that are “*āḥād* and do not yield *ilm*”. How can they say that a

sahīh āḥād ḥadīth does not yield *ilm* but their reason does!¹⁷⁴

Although Abū Naṣr never provides a systematic discussion of the different levels of ḥadīths and their epistemological yields, he employs the notions of consensus and other terminology of the legal theorists of his day. This should not surprise us, for we know that he read Ibn al-Farrā’s works.¹⁷⁵ He describes one ḥadīth as “*sahīh mashhūr*” and as having been “accepted by the umma (*talaqqathu al-umma bi-al-qubūl*).¹⁷⁶ In fact, in a brief listing of the different kinds of Prophetic traditions, he lists reports that enjoy the consensus of the umma as the opposites of those that scholars have abandoned and not acted on.¹⁷⁷

As Abū Naṣr’s quotation about the umma’s consensus on al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* indicates, he respected the work highly. On the controversial issue of God speaking audibly, he cites al-Bukhārī for his inclusion of a ḥadīth in which God calls to the believers on the Day of Judgment with a voice.¹⁷⁸ On another occasion he describes a ḥadīth as “occurring in the *Sahīh* (*jā’ā fī al-Sahīh*).”¹⁷⁹ His work makes no specific

¹⁷⁴ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*; 81, 101.

¹⁷⁵ See n. 158 above.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 151. This ḥadīth, “*inna Allāh tajāwaza lī-ummātī mā haddathat bihi anfusuhā mā lam tatakallam aw ta’mal bihi*,” appears in Muslim’s *Sahīh*. See *Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb 58*.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 206.

¹⁷⁸ “*istashhadā bihi al-Bukhārī fī kitābihi al-Sahīh*;” al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 164. Hadīth: *yāḥshuru Allāh al-nās yawm al-qiyāma....* For a discussion of this Prophetic tradition, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 13:555-561; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tawhīd, bāb 32*.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 174. This ḥadīth, “*yāḥmilu al-samāwāt ‘alā aṣba‘ wa al-arḍayn ‘alā aṣba‘ ...*” appears in the *Sahīhayn; Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tawhīd, bāb qawl Allāh limā khalaqtu bi-yadī; Sahīh Muslim: kitāb ṣifāt al-munāfiqīn, bāb ṣifat al-qiyāma wa al-janna wa al-nār*.

mention of Muslim's *Sahīh*. When urging Muslims to resort to the ḥadīth collections of those who have stood out as experts on Islam and the Prophet's legacy, he names as examples the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, Ibn al-Athram, ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dārimī (d. 280/894) and Ḥarb b. Ismā‘īl al-Sīrjānī (d. 280/893-4).¹⁸⁰ Given his esteem for al-Bukhārī's collection, it seems odd that he does not include his *Sahīh* in this list. But Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī was first and foremost a loyal Ḥanbalī, and the four collections that he mentions are all the works of Ibn Ḥanbal's close associates.

Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī: a Consummate Shāfi‘ī and Ash‘arī

Born 419/1028 in the constellation of villages called Jovayn astride the winding road from Bayhaq to Isfarāyīn in the hills near Naysābūr, ‘Abd al-Mālik b. ‘Abdallāh al-Juwaynī studied Shāfi‘ī law and Ash‘arī theology in Naysābūr until the new Seljuq administrator of the city declared that “[Abū al-Ḥasan] al-Ash‘arī is guilty of innovation in religion (*mubtadi‘*) worse than the Mu‘tazilites.”¹⁸¹ Al-Juwaynī thus fled to Baghdad and then to the Hijāz in 450/1058. He became one of the most sought after masters of his school, teaching in Mecca and Medina and earning the honorary title “*imām* of the two Sanctuaries (*al-haramayn*).” When the great administrator Niẓām al-Mulk came to power, al-Juwaynī became one of his favorites. The vizier invited the scholar to return to

¹⁸⁰ Al-Wā’ilī, *al-Radd*, 223.

¹⁸¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:340; see also, Bulliet, “The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century,” 82 ff.

Naysābūr and teach at his state-sponsored college, the Niẓāmiyya. He remained in the city until his death in 478/1085.¹⁸²

Al-Juwainī produced extremely important works in the fields of legal theory, Shāfi‘ī substantive law and Ash‘arī theology. His *Waraqāt* (The Pages) and his *Kitāb al-burhān* (Book of Demonstration) have remained two of the most standard texts for teaching the principles of jurisprudence in the Shāfi‘ī school. In addition, his massive twenty-volume *fiqh* work entitled *Nihāyat al-matlab fī dirāyat al-madhab* (The End of the Question for Knowing the Path) served as the formative text around which all later legal references in the Shāfi‘ī school would revolve.¹⁸³ Al-Juwainī also composed a seminal work on Ash‘arī theology entitled *al-Shāmil* (The Comprehensive Book) as well as another book rebutting the Mu‘tazilite school.

The study of ḥadīth was certainly al-Juwainī’s weakest field. He did receive an *ijāza* from Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī (although be it as a child) and was very familiar with the *Sunan* of al-Dāraqutnī, which he employed as a source of legal ḥadīths and narrator criticism (*jarḥ wa ta dīl*).¹⁸⁴ We also know that he received a copy of Muslim’s *Sahīh* from Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Husayn b. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī (d. 499/1105-6).¹⁸⁵ Al-Dhahabī, however, questioned his mastery of the *sahīh* collections. He points out that in the *Kitāb*

¹⁸² ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 508; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18:468-77; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 5:171-88; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, 19:171-5; C. Brockelmann and L. Gardet, “al-Djuwaynī,” *EI*; Hallaq, “Caliphs, Jurists and the Saljuqs in the Political Thought of Juwayni,” *Muslim World* 74, no 1 (1984): 27-8.

¹⁸³ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, 19:173; ‘Alī Jum‘a, *al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī wa madrasatuhu al-fiqhiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Risāla, 1425/2004), 80-82.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 5:171, 182.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 305.

al-burhān al-Juwaynī describes the ḥadīth in which the Prophet approves of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal’s decision to use his own reasoning when no Qur’ānic or Prophetic injunctions exists as “recorded in the *sahīhs*, with its authenticity agreed upon (*mudawwan fī al-sīhāh muttafaq ‘alā sīhātihī*).”¹⁸⁶ Al-Bukhārī, however, expressly rejects this ḥadīth as unreliable.¹⁸⁷

The *Sahīhayn* Canon: the Authority of Convention and Common Ground

The above three quotations of al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī and al-Juwaynī provide the first historical evidence for the *Sahīhayn* functioning as texts authorized by representatives of a certain community. In these three cases, representatives from the two opposing strains of the transmission-based school had affirmed a common source for discussing the authentic legacy of the Prophet. For one Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni and two Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs, the works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim had authenticated a common tract of the Prophetic past. This agreement authorized the *Sahīhayn* by demonstrating that the three scholars all acknowledged a common body of proof texts, which were guaranteed by the mutually recognized communal consensus of the ‘scholars’ or ‘umma.’

We must note that the quotations of al-Wā’ilī and al-Juwaynī do not directly identify the authority of the *Sahīhayn* as that of legal compulsion. Rather, they focus on

¹⁸⁶ Al-Dhababī, *Siyar*, 18:471-2; al-Safadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, 19:173; al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 2:882. Al-Subkī contests his teacher al-Dhababī’s condemnation of Juwaynī’s ḥadīth skills, saying that the Mu‘ādh ḥadīth is in al-Tirmidhī’s collection; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 5:187-8. This is immaterial, however, since al-Juwaynī had claimed that the authenticity of the ḥadīth was agreed upon – a statement that al-Bukhārī’s dismissal undermines.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Bukhārī considered the ḥadīth of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal telling the Prophet what steps he would take in deciding the correct course of action (the Qur’ān, the Prophet’s precedent, then his own reason) to be weak because one of the narrators, al-Ḥārith b. ‘Amr al-Thaqafī, was *majhūl*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:139-40.

the two works' total authenticity and the authority that this created for the books as a convention within a community of discourse. The two statements took place in a context that was uniquely interactive.¹⁸⁸ The formula of swearing to divorce one's wife in order to prove the truth of a statement was a trope among scholars and possibly a wider segment of society in the classical Islamic world.¹⁸⁹ It was a rhetorical statement made in a dialectic context. Al-Juwainī and Abū Naṣr's statements were thus responses to stimuli designed to test the conventions to which they subscribed. They made these statements because some questioner or adversary had elicited them. Perhaps someone had probed the two scholars for their opinion on the *Sahīhayn* or questioned the authenticity of al-Bukhārī or Muslim's collections. Their responses showed that the scholars acknowledged a common convention to which both were accountable. They recognized a new canon regarding sources for the Prophet's sunna.

This role of drawing inclusive lines for a community that certainly encompassed the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs but also may have included other groups such as the declining Mu‘tazila was unique to the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Isfarāyīnī, who penned polemical works against the Mu‘tazilites, felt he could claim the *Sahīhayn* as an authoritative common ground in his work on legal theory. Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī, who denigrated Abū Ishaq al-Isfarāyīnī as one of the most destructive religious forces of his time, nonetheless seconds his evaluation of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*'s reliability. Years later, al-Juwainī echoed Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī's evaluation, including Muslim's *Sahīh* as well.

¹⁸⁸ This context should not suggest that these statements were haphazard or hasty. Al-Wā’ilī's statement contains a cautious distinction between the total contents of al-Bukhārī's work, which contains numerous reports from the Companions as well as the author's commentary, and reports directly attributed to the Prophet.

¹⁸⁹ See Appendix on Divorce Oaths.

What is truly shocking is that al-Juwainī detested Abū Naṣr both personally and ideologically. Once while strolling through the book market in Mecca, he found al-Wā'ilī's book *Mukhtaṣar al-bayān* (probably an abbreviation of his *Ibāna*). In a lost refutation entitled *Naqd kitāb al-Sijzī* (Refutation of al-Sijzī's Book), he describes the work as dealing the nature of the Qur'ān and "saying that Ash'arīs are unbelievers (*kuffār*)."¹⁹⁰ Al-Juwainī states, "I have never seen an ignoramus (*jāhil*" more daring in calling people unbelievers and hastier in judging the *imāms*...."¹⁹⁰ Considering that Abū Naṣr and al-Juwainī considered each others' positions anathema on issues ranging from ritual law to the nature of the Qur'ān and God's attributes, the *Sahīhayn* (or, for Abū Naṣr, *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*) were one of the few articles on which they actually agreed.

Bridging the chasm between these two strains of transmission-based scholars was not merely a personal matter. In the fifth/eleventh century, Baghdad was plagued by internecine violence between the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arīs. Throughout 469/1076-7 and 470/1077-8, for example, debates between Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī and his Ḥanbalī opponents spilled into the streets, where mobs supporting the two groups ruthlessly hurled bricks at one another.¹⁹¹ Only state intervention could end the quarrel. On the level of doctrine and public religious symbol, the *Sahīhayn* could thus serve as one of the few threads joining these two parties, the canon which bound both together as one community.

¹⁹⁰ Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī (d. 756/1356), *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl fī al-radd ʻalā ibn al-Zafīl*, ed. Muhammād Zāhid al-Kawtharī and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz Sa'd 'Atīyya ([Cairo]: Maṭba'at al-Sā'āda, 1356/1937), 19-20.

¹⁹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:171-2.

The notion of consensus (*ijmā'* or *talaqqī al-umma bi'l-qubūl*) provided the key to authorizing these two works within the expanded boundaries of a widened Sunni Islam. As we have seen, the augmenting effect of communal consensus on *āḥād* ḥadīths proved a common discourse among the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Mu'tazilite, Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī and Ḥanbalī schools in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. It was to this epistemological authority that Abū Ishāq, Abū Naṣr and al-Juwainī turned to order to empower the new ḥadīth canon.

Clearly, however, the entire Muslim world did not consider the two works totally authentic. Imāmī Shiites, for example, would never have subscribed to this opinion. How, then, should we understand these claims? *Ijmā'* was fundamentally self-centered. Scholars invoking it were attempting to make their beliefs normative by ascribing them to a wider community whose boundaries existed only as long and as far as participants in the debate permitted them. As al-Juwainī states, *ijmā'* does not include those Muslim heretics (*mubtadi'a*) whom “we have declared unbelievers.”¹⁹² The efficacy of an argument by *ijmā'* thus depended entirely on the opponents willingness to consider themselves beholden to the same “we,” the same community, invoked by the speaker.

In essence, then, *ijmā'* is prescriptive and not a description of reality.¹⁹³ Someone who invokes the authority of consensus is attempting to force another to heed evidence he considers universally compelling. In this sense, the actual boundaries of the umma mentioned by Abū Ishāq al-Isfārāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwainī prove

¹⁹² Al-Juwainī's requirements for inclusion in *ijmā'* are vague and highly subjective, generally restricting it to qualified jurists and legal theorists (*uṣūlī*). He states that the opinions of vaguely named “heretics (*mubtadi'a*)” may be considered depending on circumstance; al-Juwainī, *al-Burhān*, 2:684-5, 689.

¹⁹³ This follows Snouck Hurgronje, Goldizer and Makdisi. See Makdisi, “Hanbalite Islam,” in *Studies on Islam*, ed. and trans. Merlin L. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 253.

immaterial. In reality, asserting the authenticity of the ḥadīths in the *Ṣahīḥayn* could extend only as far as those willing to accept the premises of mainstream Sunni ḥadīth criticism as it existed in the fifth/eleventh century. This claim of consensus would not even have convinced a great Sunni *muḥaddith* like al-Dāraqūṭnī, whose standards for Addition had proven more stringent than al-Bukhārī or Muslim's.¹⁹⁴ On the rhetorical plane, however, invoking the authority of consensus on the *Ṣahīḥayn* could prove compelling provided one's opponent also upheld the status of the two books. Claims made about *ijmā'* on the *Ṣahīḥayn* thus depended on an opponent's commitment to imagining the same authoritative station for the two books and acknowledge the same conventions of argument.

Conclusion: Why the *Ṣahīḥayn* Now?

As the long fourth century came to a close around 450/1058, a cadre of ḥadīth scholars and legal theorists from the transmission-based schools had put forth al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections as texts wielding the authority of a common convention. Yet the *Ṣahīḥayn* were not necessarily the most widely used ḥadīth collections. Mālikīs could rely on the *Muwatta'*, Ḥanbalīs on the *Musnad*. Even Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī clearly favored Abū Dāwūd's collection; al-Juwainī relied more on al-Dāraqūṭnī's *Sunan*. Moreover, when Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī made his proclamation about the *Ṣahīḥayn* many decades has passed since ḥadīth scholars such as Ibn al-Sakan and jurists like al-Khaṭṭābī had articulated the possibility and need for ḥadīth works that could act as loci of consensus.

Why canonize the *Ṣahīḥayn*, and why now?

¹⁹⁴ Brown, "Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon," 31-34.

It was al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī who provided the necessary catalyst for the transformation of al-Bukhārī and Muslim into *kanōns* of authenticity. He served as a magnet for studies of the *Sahīhayn*, inheriting two works the contents of which had been thoroughly studied and whose transmitters had been painstakingly identified. No other ḥadīth collections had received the ceaseless attention devoted to the *Sahīhayn* and their authors' methods, and no other works had consistently earned the admiration of the community of ḥadīth scholars. Most importantly, no other collections could conceivably bear the claims that al-Ḥākim made about their author's methods and the status of their transmitters.

The genre of *ilzāmāt* had been established by al-Dāraqutnī, but al-Ḥākim transformed it from an obscure and personal activity into a polemical tool. The mission of expanding the number of authentic ḥadīths in circulation motivated al-Ḥākim throughout his career, and the concept of the “requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” furnished the vehicle for doing so. He identified the methodologies that the two scholars employed in compiling their works with the highest level of critical stringency. Apparently conscious that he was acting more on ideals than reality, al-Ḥākim defined their standards in a manner that met the requirements of both Sunni ḥadīth scholars and the Mu‘tazilites whose attacks on the transmission-based school had irked him throughout his career. In his *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim presented the standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a *kanòn* of authenticity that could endow a vast new body of ḥadīths with the reliability of the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Ḥākim’s work became very influential very quickly, attracting commentary and spreading as far as Andalusia during the author’s lifetime.

Al-Ḥākim and most of the *Sahīhayn* Network worked within the realm of hadīth collection and criticism, but his colleague Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and his student Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī participated in the wider discourse of epistemology, law and legal theory. Indeed, the broader Muslim community had earlier imagined the authority with which *ijmā‘* could endow ḥadīths, and ḥadīth scholars had begun conceiving of the ḥadīth collection as a possible locus of communal consensus. It was only during the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, however, that legal discourse among a wide variety of schools had collectively articulated that the *ijmā‘* of the umma could raise *āḥād* ḥadīths from yielding mere probability to total certainty. Abū Ishāq and Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī combined these notions of the ḥadīth collection as a common ground and the authority endowed by *ijmā‘* in their proclamation of the absolute authenticity of al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim’s *Sahīhs*. Al-Juwaynī seconded this declaration, proving that the *Sahīhayn* could bridge the serious enmity between the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni and Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī camps.

These developments endowed the *Sahīhayn* with a new potential authority within the body of transmission-based scholars. They had been acknowledged as a common ground and a convention recognized by both the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis and the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī schools. Moreover, both al-Ḥākim and the scholars who declared the community’s authoritative consensus on the two books envisioned a canon that reached beyond the boundaries of the transmission-based school. With the end of the long fourth century we thus find that members of the transmission-based schools had authorized two texts that both defined an existing convention for discussing the Prophet’s legacy and carried the potential to extend that convention to a wider community. What would come

of this potential beyond the three figures of al-Isfarāyīnī, al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī?

Only by meeting widespread needs within the scholarly community could the *Sahīhayn* canon take root.

VI.

The Canon and the Needs of the Community:

The *Sahīhayn* as Measure of Authenticity, Authoritative Reference and Exemplum

Introduction

At some moment around the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century, the *Sahīhayn* emerged as authoritative representations of the Prophet's sunna among the transmission-based Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī schools. Beyond that theoretical singularity when a book becomes more than the sum of its pages, however, canonization involves forces greater than the career of one remarkable individual, like al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, or the isolated declarations of others, like Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī or Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī. It represents the choice of a community to transform texts into authoritative institutions, to endow them with authority because doing so allows them to meet certain needs or perform certain essential functions.

The authorization of the *Sahīhayn* indeed met three important needs in the Sunni scholarly community of the mid fifth/eleventh century. Firstly, the canon provided a common measure of authenticity for scholars from different legal schools engaged in debate, exposition of their doctrines or efforts to bolster the ḥadīths they employed as proof texts. Spreading out from al-Ḥākim's students and prominent members of the *Sahīhayn* Network to leading scholars among the Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī schools in Iraq and Iran, the two works became an authoritative convention for evaluating attributions of the Prophet's interpretive authority. This canon would become

indispensable for scholars, for citing a ḥadīth as being included in one or both of the *Sahīhayn* endowed it with an authenticity guaranteed by the umma's consensus. By the mid eighth/fourteenth century, even the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī school found acknowledging this convention essential. Secondly, in a time when jurisprudence was growing increasingly distant from the specialization of ḥadīth criticism, the institution of the canon also began playing an important role as an authoritative reference for jurists who lacked the expertise necessary to independently evaluate ḥadīths. Finally, the *Sahīhayn* canon was not simply a conventional tool for authorizing Prophetic reports. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim also became the exemplum that could shape the science of ḥadīth collection and criticism itself. Therefore, as institutions such as the *madrasa* formed, schools of law solidified and the field of legal theory fully matured, the mid fifth/eleventh century saw the *Sahīhayn* emerge as powerful institutions for jurists searching for conventions of debate or authoritative references, as well as ḥadīth scholars struggling to systematize the study of the Prophet's word.

The nature of the authority that the *Sahīhayn* canon wielded, however, was far from absolute. The power of the canon was bound intimately to the interactive functions it fulfilled. It was an illusion conjured up as convention in the dialogic space of debate and exposition. Within the closed circles of legal or theological schools, however, scholars had no compunction about rejecting al-Bukhārī and Muslim's ḥadīths.

1. The Need for a Common Measure of Authenticity: the *Sahīhayn* in Scholarly Debate

Traditions of the Prophet were *prima facie* compelling for Muslim scholars. Certainly among their own colleagues, the jurists of a particular legal school felt no pressure to provide rigorous chains of transmission for ḥadīths used in elaborating their common body of law. In such circumstances, it was not necessary to go beyond simple attributions of Prophetic authority. The issue of a ḥadīth's authenticity arose only when opinions clashed, when competing parties employing the Prophet's normative legacy as a proof text challenged the reliability of one another's evidence.

The Baghdad Shāfi‘ī Abū Ishaq al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083) emphasized this need for a common measure of authenticity in his manual on juridical debate, the *Kitāb al-ma ūna fī al-jadal*. Engaging his Ḥanafī counterparts proved an alluring interest for al-Shirāzī, and he authored two other works on issues of disagreement between the two schools.¹ In the *Kitāb al-ma ūna*, al-Shirāzī addresses the possibility of a situation in which a Shāfi‘ī scholar faces demands to produce an *isnād* for a ḥadīth he has adduced as evidence. If an opponent demands that one provide a chain of transmission, one should simply refer them to “a relied upon book (*kitāb mu ūtamad*).” The difficulty in providing or rebutting evidence only arises when one’s own ḥadīth is not found “the *sunan*.²

It was this need for a common measure of authenticity in the context of debate or exposition that the *Sahīhayn* canon so effectively fulfilled. Indeed, al-Bukhārī and

¹ Abū Ishaq al-Shirāzī, *Kitāb al-ma ūna fī al-jadal*, ed. ‘Abd al-Majid Turkī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408/1988), 55 (editor’s introduction). These two works are *al-Nukat fī al-masā’il al-mukhtalaffīhā bayn al-imāmayn Abī Ḥanīfa wa al-Shāfi‘ī* and *Tadhkirat al-mas’ūlīn fī al-khilāf bayn al-Ḥanafī wa al-Shāfi‘ī*.

² Abū Ishaq al-Shirāzī, *Kitāb al-ma ūna fī al-jadal*, 160.

Muslim's works had acquired a powerful air of legal compulsion by al-Shīrāzī's time.

As Abū Ishāq al-Isfārāyīnī had declared, to rule against a ḥadīth found in the *Sahīhayn* without some convincing excuse was to oppose the consensus of the Muslim community. Writing some sixty years after al-Isfārāyīnī's death, al-Ghazzālī emphasized how widespread the notion that the contents of two books were legally compelling had become. In his *al-Mankhūl min ta'līqāt al-uṣūl*, a work on legal theory directed against Ḥanafī opponents of the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī school, al-Ghazzālī states casually that:

We know that a *muftī*, if a question proves too difficult for him and he looks through one of the *Sahīhayn*, comes across a ḥadīth that addresses his aim, it is not permitted for him to turn away from it, and he is obligated to rely on it (*al-ta'wīl*). He who permits [turning away from the ḥadīth] has broken with the consensus [of the umma] (*kharāqa al-ijmā'*).³

That al-Ghazzālī does not feel obliged to prove this claim, but rather employs it axiomatically to argue a separate point, illustrates how compelling an institution the *Sahīhayn* had become by the late fifth/eleventh century. It was thus in debates or polemical writings that the *Sahīhayn* canon functioned most clearly as a vehicle by which a scholar could wield the authoritative consensus of the community against his opponent.

Takhrīj: Applying the Measure of Authenticity

The *Sahīhayn* canon thus found its most salient application in the *takhrīj* of ḥadīths, or citing the various collections in which a report appears. In theory, a scholar seeking to provide such validating references for his ḥadīths could cite any ḥadīth collection he wished. The attempt to prove the reliability of a report, however, hinged

³ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 269. For the importance of consensus in the formation and maintenance of orthodoxy in Islam, and the equation of breaking it with disobeying the Prophet, see Devon Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 48-53.

inevitably on the quality of the collections to which he referred. *Takhrīj* therefore generally involved the products of the *sahīh* movement, especially the Six Books and later the *Sahīhs* of Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Ḥibbān and the *Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim. As we shall see, referring to the *Sahīhayn* canon differed qualitatively from citing these other respected collections. Not only did al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works alone enjoy the claim of the community's consensus on the authenticity of their contents, they also better accorded with the rules of Sunni ḥadīth criticism as they coalesced in the mid fifth/eleventh century and beyond.

Takhrīj using al-Bukhārī and Muslim, however, did not serve merely as a stamp of approval for the relatively limited quantity of material featured in their collections. Taking advantage of the differing narrations or multiform permutations of a single Prophetic tradition, scholars like the Shāfi‘ī Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) were able to extend the measure of authenticity to material that differed significantly from the actual contents of the *Sahīhayn*. Later scholars such as al-‘Irāqī, Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī thus took al-Bayhaqī and others to task for telling their readers that a ḥadīth appears in the *Sahīhayn* when in fact al-Bukhārī or Muslim included only the basic *isnād* (*asl al-isnād*) or general text of the report.⁴

More importantly, the critical standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, however a scholar might choose to define them, continued as a stamp of legitimacy which could extend the consensus on the *Sahīhayn* to new bodies of ḥadīth. In his treatise on Sufism, entitled *Safwat al-taṣawwuf* (The Essence of Sufism), Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113) proudly states that he will not use any poorly-attested (*gharīb*) ḥadīths in his

⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*; 81; al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:60-1.

arguments against opponents. Rather, he will rely only on those found in the *Sahīhayn*, which “the umma of Muslims has accepted with consensus, as well as that which meets [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]’s requirements (*shartihimā*) but that they did not include.”⁵ Here the dual power of the *Sahīhayn* canon is clear in the authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s text themselves and in their capacity as a *kanòn* by which their authority could be extended to outside ḥadīths.

Until today, the “requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” have retained this function as a vehicle in which the authorizing consensus of the community can be deposited for later application. In the perennial debate over seeking the intercession of dead saints (*tawassul*), the modern scholar Yūsuf Hāshim al-Rifā‘ī defends this practice against detractors by invoking a ḥadīth in which the caliph ‘Uthmān tells a man seeking aid to call upon the late Prophet for assistance in gaining God’s favor. Al-Rifā‘ī avers that this ḥadīth meets the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, “so there remains nothing one could criticize or denounce in the authenticity of the ḥadīth.”⁶

The array of sources that could be invoked in *takhrīj* led ḥadīth scholars to contemplate a system of ranking the various respected ḥadīth collections. As we have seen above, al-Hākim had pioneered this by associating the *Sahīhayn* and their requirements with the highest level of authentic ḥadīths. In his *Shurūt al-a’imma al-khamṣa*, al-Hāzimī (d.584/1188) uses the students of the early ḥadīth transmitter al-Zuhrī (d. 124/743) as a template for ranking the critical stringency of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū

⁵ Al-Maqdisī, *Safwat al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Ghādah al-Muqaddam ‘Adrah (Beirut: Dār al-Muntakhab al-‘Arabī, 1995), 133.

⁶ Yūsuf al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Rifā‘ī, *Adillat ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā‘a* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sā‘āda, 1405/1985), 96.

Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī. Al-Bukhārī only drew from the top level, consisting of scholars like Mālik, while Muslim also relied on the second tier. Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī resorted to the third level, while al-Tirmidhī plumb the depths of the fourth.⁷

Since debate often pitted al-Bukhārī and Muslim or one of these two scholars' critical requirements against one another, there gradually developed a more detailed ranking strictly for the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Mayyānīshī (d. 583/1187) concluded that the highest level of reliability belongs to ḥadīths on which both al-Bukhārī and Muslim agreed. The second level consists of reports that only one of them included. The third level features reports that meet their requirements but do not appear in the *Sahīhayn*, and the lowest level consists of ḥadīths that fail to meet those conditions but nonetheless possess good *isnāds*.⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī followed al-Mayyānīshī, adding several lower levels of ḥadīths such as forged reports.⁹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ developed the final form of this ranking system, which consisted of ḥadīths:

- 1) Agreed on by al-Bukhārī and Muslim
- 2) Only included in al-Bukhārī
- 3) Only included in Muslim
- 4) Meeting the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim
- 5) Meeting only the requirements of al-Bukhārī
- 6) Meeting only the requirements of Muslim
- 7) ḥadīths that are *sahīh* but do not meet al-Bukhārī or Muslim's requirements¹⁰

⁷ Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūt al-a'imma al-khamṣa*, 43-4.

⁸ Al-Mayyānīshī, 262-3.

⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Mawdū'at*, 1:32-5.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 169. This ranking has been followed by almost all later scholars, some of whom have discussed the levels in more detail; see Abū al-Fayd Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī al-Faṣīḥ al-Harawī (d. 837/1434), *Jawāhir al-uṣūl fī ʿilm ḥadīth al-Rasūl*, ed. Abū al-Maṣ'ālī Aṭṭhar al-Mubārakfūrī (Medina: al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, [1973?]), 19; Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 107; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 98-102.

These rankings were not simply exercises in empty contemplation. If we understand these evaluations as judgments about the functional value of ḥadīth collections, we must appreciate that they arose as responses to pressing questions within the scholarly community. As Monroe Beardsley states in his discussion of instrumentalism in aesthetics, “statements of value are to be regarded as proposed solutions to *problems* of value, that is, situations in which choices have to be made.”¹¹ Scholars faced situations in which they had to choose between competing authentic ḥadīths. As Ibn al-Wazīr notes incisively in his comparison between the critical methods of Muslim and Abū Dāwūd, “Know that the purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that the ḥadīths of Muslim are preferable to those of Abū Dāwūd in the case of competition (*ta ẓruq*) between them....”¹²

Indeed, these comprehensive rankings emerged in the wake of seminal attempts to systematize the Sunni study of ḥadīth. Although scholars such as Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī (d. 349/960) and al-Ismā‘īlī (d. 371/981-2) had been evaluating collections such as the *Sahīhayn* from a relatively early date, concerted efforts to rank the various products of the *sahīh* movement seem to have started suddenly in the early and mid sixth/twelfth century.¹³ This followed works like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya* (The Sufficient Work on the Science of Transmission), which were attempts to

¹¹ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), 543.

¹² Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anzār*, 81.

¹³ Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) seems to have been an exception. Al-Dhahabī reports that he ranked the best ḥadīth collections as the *Sahīhayn*, the *Muntaqā* of Ibn al-Sakan, the *Muntaqā* of Ibn al-Jārūd, the *Muntaqā* of Qāsim b. Aṣbagh, then the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī and then thirty other books; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:231.

authoritatively recognize choices that Sunni ḥadīth scholars, jurists and legal theorists had made about the transmission, evaluation and usage of ḥadīths. Scholars like al-Ḥāzimī found themselves forced to see where the methods of al-Bukhārī and Muslim fit within the shared rules of ḥadīth study articulated in the writings of systematizers like al-Ḥākim, al-Khaṭīb and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071).

Ranking al-Bukhārī’s critical stringency above that of Muslim, for example, acknowledged significant and practical principles that had emerged as orthodoxy among Sunni ḥadīth critics. On the issue of when one could accept the vague phrase “from/according to (*‘an*)” in an *isnād* as not masking a break in transmission, it was the school of thought adhered to by al-Bukhārī and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī that became the mainstream stance. These two masters had required proof that the transmitter employing “from/according to” had actually met at least once the person from whom he claimed to narrate. Muslim, on the other hand, had only required that they be contemporaries with a possibility of having met one another.¹⁴ In his *al-Kifāya*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī declares that the community of ḥadīth scholars had come to consensus that requiring at least one meeting was correct. When Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr sought to apply the criteria of the *sahīh* movement to Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭa’*, he therefore turned to al-Bukhārī’s requirements as the prevailing rule. Almost every major ḥadīth scholar or critic since, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), has followed Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and al-Khaṭīb’s formulations of the rules governing the use of “from/according to (*‘an*).”¹⁵ Ranking Muslim slightly below al-

¹⁴ See above Chapter 3, section on Muslim’s Methodology in his *Sahīh*.

¹⁵ For the majority (al-Bukhārī’s stance), see, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī, *Muwaṭṭa’ al-imām Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Alawī b. ‘Abbās al-Mālikī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma‘ al-Thaqafī, 1425/2004), 38; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:12; al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 2:229; Abū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qattān (d.

Bukhārī in critical stringency thus amounted to tailoring the canon to the contours of convention among ḥadīth scholars.

The superiority of the *Sahīhayn* over other respected ḥadīth collections used for *takhrīj* also had palpable implications in scholarly debate. This shines forth clearly in a seventh/thirteenth century debate that raged between the towering Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and his contemporary al-‘Izz b. ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1261-2)¹⁶ over the permissibility of a type of supererogatory prayer known as *salāt al-raghā’ib*. The evidence for this type of prayer hinged on a ḥadīth adduced by al-Ghazzālī in his pietistic work, *Iḥyā’ ʻulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). Although both Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām agreed that this report was weak, the former felt that people should still be allowed to perform the prayer, while the Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām argued that “paving the way for lying about the Messenger of God is not permitted (*al-tasabbub ilā*

628/1230), *al-Iqnā’ fī masā’il al-ijmā’*, ed. Ḥusayn b. Fawzī al-Šāfi‘ī, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīthiyya li’l-Tibā’ā wa al-Nashr, 1424/2004), 1:66-7; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 220; Ibn Rushayd, *al-Sanan al-abyan*, 32; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza*, 45-6; Khalīl b. Kaykaldī al-‘Alā’ī (d. 761/1359), *Jāmi’ al-taḥṣīl fī aḥkām al-marāṣīl*, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Baghdad: al-Dār al-‘Arabiyya li’l-Tibā’ā, 1398/1978), 134 ff.; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 44-5; al-Bulqīnī, *Mahāsin al-iṣṭilāh*, 224-5; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:360-5; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Tabsira wa al-tadhkira*, ed. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-‘Irāqī al-Ḥusaynī (Fez: al-Maṭba‘a al-Jadīda, 1353/[1935]), 1:162; al-Sakhawī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:202-213; al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīḥ al-afkār*, 1:299. Al-Nawawī seems to favor Muslim’s stance in his *Taqrīb*, but states that al-Bukhārī’s is correct in his *Sharḥ* of Muslim; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb li’l-Nawawī min uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣubayḥ, 1388/1968), 10; idem, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:145; Ibn Daqīq effectively favors Muslim’s stance; Ibn Daqīq, *al-Iqtirāh*, 207; Ibn Jamā‘a favors Muslim’s stance; Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Jamā‘a, *Manhal al-rāwī fī ʻulūm al-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sayyid Nūḥ (Mansoura, Egypt: Dār al-Wafā’, 1402/1981), 175. As does the Ḥanafī al-Faṣīḥ al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 29. The later Ḥanafī Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’ also favors Muslim’s school; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Sharḥ Musnad Abī Ḥanīfa*, ed. Khalīl Muhyī al-Dīn Maṭīs (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, [n.d.]), 10. Al-Ḥākim does not address the issue of requiring a meeting; al-Ḥākim, *Maṛīfat ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, 43-4. For more modern analyses of this debate, see al-Laknawī, *Zafar al-amānī*, 235-40; Khaldūn al-Aḥdab, *Aṣbāb ikhtilāf al-muhaddithīn*, 2 vols. (Jeddah: Dār Kunūz al-‘Ilm, 1422/2001), 1:179-96.

¹⁶ See al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi’l-wafayāt*, vol. 18, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid (Wiesbaden and Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1408/1988), 18:520-2

al-kadhib ‘alā Rasūl Allāh lā yajūz).¹⁷ In the course of letters these two scholars wrote to one another publicly debating the issue, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ defended his point of view by arguing that “the ḥadīth has *sahīh* narrations,” citing a ḥadīth from Ibn Mājah’s *Sunan* as evidence.¹⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, however, refuted him by pointing out that one of the transmitters in Ibn Mājah’s *isnād* was a known liar (i.e. Ya‘qūb b. al-Walīd al-Madīnī).¹⁹

Although by the time of al-Maqdisī in the early sixth/twelfth century many scholars in the Islamic heartlands considered Ibn Mājah’s *Sunan* to be part of the well-respected “Six Book” ḥadīth canon, the work could not deliver the decisive authority of the *Sahīhayn*. A rigorous critic like al-Dāraqutnī had disapproved of only two hundred and seventeen narrations from al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s books and only two of their narrators. Al-Dhahabī, however, counted no less than one thousand weak narrations from the approximately 4,341 ḥadīths in Ibn Mājah’s *Sunan*.²⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām was thus on much steadier ground when he cited a ḥadīth from *Sahīh Muslim* to support his position.²¹ Given the possible implications of choosing one collection over another for *takhrīj* in a debate, it is not surprising that scholars in Baghdad asked al-Maqdisī to write a book explaining the differing criteria of the Six Books.²²

¹⁷ Al-Albānī and Muhammad Zāhir al-Shāwīsh, eds., *Musājala ʻilmīyya bayn al-imāmayn al-jalīlayn al- Izz Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām wa Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, [1960]), 5.

¹⁸ Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʻilmīyya*, 17.

¹⁹ Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʻilmīyya*, 32.

²⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:279. For another instance in which the Shāfi‘ī Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī confidently states that a ḥadīth from Ibn Mājah is inauthentic, see his *Tabaqāt*, 4:13 (biography of al-Bayhaqī); also, Abū al-Fayḍ Aḥmad al-Ghumārī (d. 1960), *al-Mughīr ‘alā ahādīth al-Jāmi ‘al-ṣaghīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Rā’id al-‘Arabī, 1402/1982), 89–90.

²¹ Al-Albānī et al., *Musājala ʻilmīyya*, 8.

²² Al-Maqdisī, *Shurūt al-a’imma al-sitta*, 10.

The Origins *Takhrīj* among the Students of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī

In the light of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's leading role in the canonization of the *Sahīhayn*, it seems natural that we find the first concerted application of this new measure of authenticity in the work of his students. The actual earliest known use of al-Bukhārī and Muslim for the *takhrīj* of ḥadīths, however, occurs in the work of another member of the *Sahīhayn* Network who never studied with al-Ḥākim: Hibatallāh al-Lālakā'ī (d. 418/1027-8), one of the scholars in the Baghdad knot.²³ At several points in his *Sharḥ uṣūl i ṭiqād ahl al-sunna*, al-Lālakā'ī adduces ḥadīths as evidence and then supports them by stating that al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included them (*akhrajahu*) in their *Sahīhs*.²⁴ This format was a natural outgrowth of the *mustakhraj* techniques of al-Lālakā'ī's colleagues such as al-Barqānī (d. 425/1033-4). Like the *mustakhraj*, *takhrīj* functioned to display the quality of a scholar's ḥadīths. Instead of following the format of other *mustakhraj* authors like Abū 'Awāna or Abū Nu'aym al-İsbahānī, who simply replicated the template collection with their own *isnāds*, al-Barqānī's joint *Mustakhraj* of the *Sahīhayn* lists his narration of a ḥadīth and then notes that al-Bukhārī, Muslim, or both

²³ I have found one earlier occurrence, but I believe it to be a later addition to the text. In his work on the differences of opinions amongst jurists, Ibn al-Mundhir (d. 318/930-1) cites a ḥadīth and then says “*akhrajahu al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*.” This is probably a later addition, since in the early fourth/tenth century people did not generally refer to al-Bukhārī as such (if they referred to him at all), calling him Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl or Abū 'Abdallāh. Using ‘al-Bukhārī’ as shorthand was a result of the *mustakhraj* period, and no *mustakhajs* of al-Bukhārī had been produced during Ibn al-Mundhir’s time; Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mundhir, *al-Ishrāf ʻulā madhab ahl al-īlm*, ed. Muḥammad Sa‘īd Mubayyad (Idlib, Syria and Doha: Maktabat al-Ghazzalī and Maktabat Dar al-Faṭḥ, 1415/1994), 96.

²⁴ Al-Lālakā'ī, *Sharḥ uṣūl i ṭiqād ahl al-sunna*, 1:108 (for al-Bukhārī), 1:87, 4:876 (for al-Bukhārī and Muslim), 1:85 (for Muslim). On one occasion “al-Bukhārī included it...” is added in the margin by a later copyist. That this addition is noticeable bolsters the reliability of the remaining instances as parts of the author’s original work.

“included it (*akhrajahu*).”²⁵ *Takhrīj* simply involved using this tactic when composing other books.

The use of al-Bukhārī and Muslim to consistently and confidently affirm the authenticity of ḥadīths or the reliability of transmitters, however, can be traced to two of al-Ḥākim’s students: Abū Ya’lā Khalīl b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) and Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066). The first of these two, al-Khalīlī, employed the *Sahīhayn* as a tool for establishing the reliability of transmitters in his short but valuable biographical dictionary of ḥadīth scholars, *al-Irshād fī ma ṛifat ʻulamā’ al-ḥadīth* (Guidance for Knowing the Scholars of ḥadīth). Al-Khalīlī hailed from Qazvīn, where he worked for a time as a judge, but studied extensively with al-Ḥākim in Naysābūr. From among the other members of the *Sahīhayn* Network, he only studied with al-Ghiṭrīfī.²⁶ His link to the Jurjān cult of al-Bukhārī might explain his favoring al-Bukhārī over Muslim as a source for citation. His admiration for al-Bukhārī is clear, for he calls him “the *imām* agreed on by all without contest.”²⁷ Al-Khalīlī introduces at least nineteen men as transmitters al-Bukhārī included in his *Sahīh*. He cites another eighteen as transmitters from both the *Sahīhayn*. He only relies on Muslim’s *Sahīh* independently twice, however, and mentions no other works as a means of *takhrīj*.

Using al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity for ḥadīths began in earnest with Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, who was well-known as one of al-Ḥākim’s most senior students. When later scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cited al-

²⁵ See al-Barqānī, *al-Juz’ al-awwal min al-takhrīj li-ṣahīḥ al-ḥadīth*.

²⁶ Al-Rāfi‘ī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, 2:501-4; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:214; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 30:120-1; idem, *Siyar*, 17:666-8.

²⁷ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 377.

Ḩākim's opinions or his works, it was most frequently through a chain of transmission from al-Bayhaqī. Al-Ḩākim provided one of al-Bayhaqī's primary reservoirs of ḥadīths, since, according to al-Dhahabī, he did not have the books of al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah or al-Nasā'ī at his disposal. He did, however, possess a camel load of ḥadīth books from al-Ḩākim. In addition to al-Ḩākim, he also studied extensively with Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, al-Barqānī and Ibn Fūrak, who served as another major source of al-Bayhaqī's ḥadīths.²⁸

Al-Bayhaqī was an amazingly prolific scholar. In fact, al-Dhahabī believed that he was capable of founding his own *madhab* had he so wished. Instead, al-Bayhaqī authored an *oeuvre* that became such a bastion of the Shāfi‘ī school that Imām al-Haramayn al-Juwainī considered al-Bayhaqī to be the only person to whom al-Shāfi‘ī was indebted. Al-Bayhaqī organized al-Shāfi‘ī's statements and proof texts in the massive *Ma‘rifat al-sunan wa al-āthār* and then compiled his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, a huge ḥadīth collection backing up every detail of Shāfi‘ī substantive law with Prophetic traditions as well as opinions from the Companions. Al-Bayhaqī was sought out as expert on Shāfi‘ī *fiqh* and al-Muzanī's *Mukhtasar*.²⁹ Both later Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs and Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis respected and relied on his work. The staunch Ash‘arī Ibn ‘Asākir heard his whole *oeuvre* from his students, and the Ḥanbalī Khwāja ‘Abdallāh had *ijāzat* from him.³⁰

²⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18: 165.

²⁹ ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 127-8.

³⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 30:438-41; idem, *Siyar*, 18:163-70.

Al-Bayhaqī's output was representative of the new Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī orthodoxy.

Works such as his *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Introduction to the Great Sunan) and the *Sunan* itself champion the Shāfi‘ī transmission-based legal methodology and the school's body of substantive law. In works like his *Khilāfiyyāt* (The Disagreements), al-Bayhaqī defends the school's positions against its Ḥanafī opponents. He affirms the transmission-based trust in the revealed text of the sunna for understanding dogma, while simultaneously validating Ash‘arī efforts to interpret God and His attributes rationally. Discussing the hugely divisive controversy over the wording (*lafz*) of the Qur’ān, for example, he states simply that all transmission-based scholars believe that the Qur’ān is the uncreated word of God. While some scholars might prefer not to discuss the issue, others like al-Bukhārī (and al-Bayhaqī himself) have chosen to distinguish between the physical manifestation of the Qur’ān and the text itself. Nonetheless, all belong to the same unified school.³¹

We can clearly appreciate the manner in which al-Bayhaqī employed the *Sahīhayn* as a measure of authenticity in a sample of four works intended to affirm his Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī position. Stylistically, his use of the phrase “al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included it” after a ḥadīth reflects his teacher al-Barqānī and also al-Lālakā’ī’s work. Beginning with the first ḥadīth in his *Kitāb al-Asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*, a treatise on God’s names and attributes, and then wherever possible throughout the book, al-Bayhaqī uses inclusion in al-Bukhārī and Muslim collections to establish reliability.³² He pursues the

³¹ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Hāshidī, 2 vols. (Jedda: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1413/1993), 2:17.

³² Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*, 1:17-18.

same tactic in his *Khilāfiyyāt*.³³ In a work intended to provide ḥadīths proving the existence of the *bête noire* of Muslim rationalists, the punishment in the grave (*‘adhāb al-qabr*), al-Bayhaqī uses the canonical formula “al-Bukhārī and/or Muslim included it (*akhrajahu*)” for eighty-eight out of the four hundred and thirty (20%) narrations in the book. He only twice mentions other collections such as Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan* and Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad*.³⁴ Al-Bayhaqī’s *al-Sunan al-kubrā* represents the most extensive use of the *Sahīhayn* canon for *takhrīj*. In a sample of the 1,472 narrations constituting his lengthy chapter on ritual purity (*tahāra*), al-Bayhaqī refers to inclusion by al-Bukhārī, Muslim or both 23.5% of the time. The only other work he refers to for *takhrīj*, Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan*, appears only 0.6% of the time (9 instances).

Another student and follower of al-Ḥākim’s school of thought, Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, also provides some of the earliest usages of the *Sahīhayn* canon as a measure of authenticity. In his biographical dictionary of Isfahan, *Dhikr akhbār İsbahān*, he uses the phrase “the ḥadīth is authentic by agreement (*al-hadīth sahīh muttafaq ‘alayhi*)” to validate his own narration of a Prophetic ḥadīth.³⁵ Here he follows an earlier member of the *Sahīhayn* Network, Ibn al-Akhram, who had entitled his joint *mustakhraj* of the *Sahīhayn* “The *Sahīh* by Agreement (*al-Sahīh al-muttafaq ‘alayhi*).”³⁶ In his landmark biographical dictionary of Sufism and asceticism, *Hilyat al-awliyā’*, Abū Nu‘aym also

³³ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Khilāfiyyāt*, ed. Mashhūr b. Ḥasan Āl-Salmān, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Şamī’ī, 1415/1995), 1:48.

³⁴ See Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Ithbāt ‘adhāb al-qabr*, ed. Sharaf Maḥmūd al-Quḍāt (Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1403/1983).

³⁵ Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *Tārīkh İsbahān / Dhikr akhbār İsbahān*, ed. Sayyid Khusrawī Ḥasan, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1410/1990), 1: 21.

³⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:55.

uses al-Bukhārī and Muslim as direct stamps of approval for ḥadīths he includes in the work's entries.³⁷

We know that employing the canon for *takhrīj* had also begun in Baghdad by the mid fifth/eleventh century. Abū Nu‘aym’s student and a main inheritor of the *Sahīhayn* Network (see Chapter Four chart), al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, used the *Sahīhayn* canon dramatically to establish the authenticity of a selection of 173 of his ḥadīths that he narrated in a ḥadīth dictation session. He invokes the inclusion of al-Bukhārī, Muslim or both for 57% of his reports. He invokes no other work for *takhrīj*, and only declares one ḥadīth to be *sahīh* that does not appear in the one of the *Sahīhayn*.³⁸ Al-Khaṭīb reiterates the paramountcy of the *Sahīhayn* in his vision of the ḥadīth sciences when he instructs students that the two works should form the basis of any curriculum in ḥadīth study.³⁹

The Historical Application of *Takhrīj*

We have located both the epicenter of the *Sahīhayn* canon and its initial use as a measure of authenticity in the seminal work of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and his students from the Shāfi‘ī school. We will now examine how and when the canon spread to the Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī and Imāmī Shiite schools. We will focus on the two most salient means in which scholars used the *Sahīhayn* canon as a common measure of authenticity: polemics, and employing the canon to fortify a school’s formative legal or ḥadīth texts.

³⁷ See, for examples, Abū Nu‘aym al-İsbahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, 3:205 (al-Bukhārī), 8:261 (Muslim).

³⁸ See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Fawā’id al-muntakhaba al-ṣihāḥ wa al-gharā’ib*, ed. Khalīl b. Muḥammad al-‘Arabī (Giza: Maktabat al-Taw‘īyya al-Islāmiyya, 1415/1995). See p. 206 for the one instance.

³⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jāmi‘ li-ikhtilāf al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*, 2: 185.

a. Polemics and Debate

In the mid fifth/eleventh century, prominent adherents of the Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī schools all began employing the *Sahīhayn* canon as a measure of authenticity in polemics and expositions of their schools’ doctrines. It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century, however, that the Ḥanafīs also adopted the canon for this use.

Al-Bayhaqī’s categorical reinforcement of the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī catalog stands out as both the earliest and most stunning application of the canon in his school’s history. It seems clear, however, that this intensive recourse to the *Sahīhayn* hinged on al-Bayhaqī’s proximity to al-Ḥākim and the canonization of the two works. Although other Shāfi‘ī jurists of this period did employ the *Sahīhayn* canon, no one matched the concentrated use found in al-Bayhaqī or al-Khalīlī’s works. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), for example, was a contemporary member of the Shāfi‘ī school in Baghdad who was also engaged in the process of explicating and establishing Shāfi‘ī substantive law. However, he made very limited use of the *Sahīhayn* canon for *takhrīj* in his legal reference, *al-Hāwī al-kabīr fī fiqh madhab al-imām al-Shāfi‘ī* (The Great Compendium of the Shāfi‘ī School of Law). On only two occasions in his voluminous explanation of the school’s law does he use inclusion in al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s collections to support the authenticity of ḥadīths that al-Shāfi‘ī had invoked as proof texts.⁴⁰

It is not surprising that one of the earliest employers of the *Sahīhayn* as a measure of authenticity came from the Ḥanbalī camp which cooperated with the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs in

⁴⁰ See Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Hāwī al-kabīr fī fiqh madhab al-imām al-Shāfi‘ī*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwad and ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1414/1994), 1:140; 17:71.

canonizing the two works. Like his correspondent, Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī, the great Ḥanbalī Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’ (d. 458/1066) was an inveterate opponent of the Ash‘arīs and their figurative interpretation of God’s attributes. Like al-Bayhaqī, however, he used the canon to bolster the authority of the ḥadīths he cited as proof texts on such controversial issues. In 456/1064, Ibn al-Farrā’ held a session for dictating ḥadīths to students (*majlis imlā’*) and tackled the perennially divisive issue of seeing God on the Day of Judgment (*ru’yat al-Bārī*), rejected by rationalists such as the Mu’tazila and interpreted figuratively by Ash‘arīs. He narrated a ḥadīth in which the Prophet looks at the full moon and then tells his followers, “Indeed you will see your Lord with your own eyes (*īyān^{an}*).” Ibn al-Farrā’ adds “this ḥadīth is *sahīḥ*; al-Bukhārī included it..., and it is as if I heard it from al-Bukhārī.”⁴¹ Here Ibn al-Farrā’ uses both his own proximity in the *isnād* to al-Bukhārī and the latter’s inclusion of the ḥadīth in his *Sahīḥ* as a means for augmenting its authority. In his treatise on legal theory, *al-Udda*, Ibn al-Farrā’ similarly uses al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīḥ* to validate a report proving that a five-year old could effectively hear ḥadīth transmitted.⁴²

Ibn al-Farrā’ also utilizes the canon in his work on issues of dogma (*uṣūl al-dīn*), the *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad*. The author devotes his attention in this work primarily to his Mu’tazilite and Ash‘arī opponents, treating controversial topics such as God’s attributes, the punishment of the grave, and the issue of appropriate rule in Islam (*imāma*). In his

⁴¹ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 2:172; *Fath* # 7435; *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tawhīd/bāb 24*.

⁴² Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Udda*, 3:950. This is the ḥadīth from the Companion Maḥmūd b. Rabī‘ saying, “aqaltu min al-Nabī (ṣ) majjat^{an} majjahā fī wajhī wa anā ibn khamas sinnīn,” *Fath* #77; *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ilm, bāb matā yaṣihhu samā‘ al-ṣaghīr*. Note that Ibn al-Farrā’’s version has the wording “fiyya (my mouth)” instead of “wajhī (my face).”

subchapter on the existence of magic (*siḥr*), he argues against the Mu‘tazila, saying that both the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth affirm it. He invokes the ḥadīth in which ‘Ā’isha recounts how a Jewish sorcerer once cast a spell on the Prophet, adding that “this is a well-known (*mashhūr*) ḥadīth that al-Bukhārī and others from the *muḥaddithūn* have mentioned.”⁴³ He also mentions that some ḥadīths are “included in the *Sahīh*,” a phase that generally denotes inclusion in one or both of the *Sahīhayn* (here it evidently refers to Muslim’s work).⁴⁴ Besides al-Bukhārī, he only once mentions another ḥadīth scholar as narrating a report, namely al-Dāraqutnī; in this case, however, he places no emphasis on the source as a guarantor of authenticity. Ibn al-Farrā’s son, Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, also occasionally uses al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity in his discussion of the differences between Ḥanbalīs and Ash‘arīs on issues such as God’s attributes.⁴⁵ This use of the canon continues in later Ḥanbalī works such as Ibn ‘Aqīl’s (d. 513/1119) *al-Wāḍih fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, until the end of the sixth/twelfth century.⁴⁶

Among Ḥanbalīs, it was the Neo-Ḥanbalite cadre of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) that exhibited the most cunning and aggressive usage of the *Sahīhayn* canon. The two works served as powerful weapons

⁴³ Abū Ya‘lā Ibn al-Farrā’, *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Wadī‘ Zaydān Ḥaddād (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974), 168. This specific version of the ḥadīth “saḥara al-nabī (s) yahūdī min al-yahūd...,” appears in *Sahīh Muslim*, see *Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-salām, bāb al-siḥr*. A slightly different wording appears in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, see *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tibb, bāb 47 / Fatḥ # 5763*.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Farrā’, *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad*, 224; *Sahīh Muslim: Kitāb al-imāra, bāb al-istikhlāf wa tarkihi*. This ḥadīth goes as follows: ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar ←‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb: *in atruku fa-qad taraka khayr minnī, rasūl Allāh, wa in astakhlifū faqad istakhlafa man huwa khayr minnī, ya nī Abā Bakr.*’ Ibn al-Farrā’s version inverts Muslim’s word order.

⁴⁵ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābiya*, 2:182.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Abū al-Wafā’ ‘Alī Ibn ‘Aqīl, *al-Wāḍih fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. George Makdisi (Wiesbaden and Beirut: Steiner Verlag, 1423/2002), 3:191; 4b:200, 436.

in polemics against Ash‘arīs over issues such as God’s attributes, the nature of the Qur’ān and invoking the intercession of dead saints. Asserting the literalist position that one should accept the outward meaning of Qur’ānic verses or Prophetic ḥadīths describing God’s movements, Ibn al-Qayyim calls his Ash‘arī opponents’ attention to al-Bukhārī’s narrations of ḥadīths asserting that God is indeed physically above us in the heavens. He exploits al-Bukhārī’s position of extreme respect among both Ash‘arīs and Ḥanbalī/über-Sunnis to his advantage, sarcastically implying that his opponents would condemn this venerable figure as an anthropomorphist. Ibn al-Qayyim states in a verse of poetry:

And from among you, al-Bukhārī the ‘anthropomorphist’ has narrated it,
Nay an anthropomorphist who attributes to God a [physical] position above
us (*mujassim fawqānī*).⁴⁷

On the issue of visiting the graves of prophets and seeking their assistance, Ibn al-Qayyim challenges the orthodox tenet that they are indeed alive in their graves and able to respond to the invocation of pilgrims.⁴⁸ One of the ḥadīths that scholars had produced as evidence for this stance describes Moses praying in his grave. Ibn al-Qayyim, however, argues that al-Bukhārī’s decision to exclude the ḥadīth from his *Sahīh* demonstrates its weakness, as does al-Dāraqutnī’s claim that it is actually the opinion of a Companion (hence, *mawqūf*).⁴⁹ Not only does Ibn al-Qayyim use al-Bukhārī as a

⁴⁷ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-saqīl*, 65.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim’s argument against visiting graves, and an Ash‘arī response, see Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 168-94.

⁴⁹ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-saqīl*, 155.

measure of truth to reinforce his position, he also exploits exclusion from the work to undermine his opponent's evidence.

Like others, Mālikīs employed the *Sahīhayn* canon in debates or expositions of their school's positions. It is little surprise that the first Mālikī to employ the *Sahīhayn* canon as a measure of authenticity had studied extensively at the hands of a member of the *Sahīhayn* Network, Abū Dharr al-Harawī. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) of Cordova travelled east in 426/1035 and studied with al-Harawī for three years in Mecca before moving to the Abbasid capital to study with al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and others.⁵⁰ With such prolonged exposure to one of the most prominent member of the *Sahīhayn* Network, al-Bājī confidently employed the canon in his book defending Mālikī *uṣūl*, the *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*. This work is an aggressive exposition of Mālikī legal theory, often targeting Ḥanafī or über-Sunni opponents. Although al-Bājī makes only a few references to al-Bukhārī, Muslim, or any other ḥadīth collections for that matter, these references clearly illustrate the function of the *Sahīhayn* canon in the author's thought.⁵¹ One of al-Bājī's primary concerns in the *Iḥkām* is mounting a defense of juridical reasoning (*qiyās*) against those über-Sunnis who reject any rulings not based directly on revealed text (*nass*). He lists the various Prophetic reports that his opponents cite as evidence against the use of reason, but rebuts them by stating that these are defective and too unreliable to be compelling. He asks his opponents how they could invoke such feeble ḥadīths in the face of the reports that he had advanced as evidence, "most of which the two *imāms* [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] have agreed on including in the

⁵⁰ D.M. Dunlop, "al-Bādjī, Abū al-Walīd," *EI*².

⁵¹ For these instances, see Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*; 591, 744.

Sahīh[ayn].” “This is what the people have agreed on as authentic,” he adds, noting that only one of his opponents’ ḥadīths appears in the *Sahīhayn*.⁵²

Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī’s commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, his *al-Muntaqā*, shares many of the same concerns as his *uṣūl* work. Although it primarily seeks to explain and elaborate on the positive law laid out by Mālik, the author’s perspective is consistently both comparative and polemical. He is as eager to prove the the correctness of Mālik’s school as to explain it. Al-Bājī thus occasionally relies on the *Sahīhayn* to validate Mālik’s legal positions. Defending his stance on the necessity of the *taslīm* (turning one’s head and saying ‘peace be upon you’ at the end of prayer) for exiting a prayer against Ḥanafī opponents, al-Bājī states, “the proof of the correctness (*sīḥha*) of Mālik’s position is [a ḥadīth] that al-Bukhārī narrated....” He also employs the canon conversely to cast doubt on the authenticity of opposing ḥadīths. He rejects reports that offer more information on the Prophet’s *taslīm* than those found in the *Muwaṭṭa'* by stating, “al-Bukhārī did not include any of them, and what Muslim included are reports that allow for interpretation (*yaḥtamilu al-ta’wīl*).”⁵³

The Ḥanafī school seems to have been much slower to adopt the *Sahīhayn* canon as a measure of authenticity. Although, as we discussed in Chapter Four, Ḥanafī scholars played an active role in transmitting al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections during the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries, they did not develop the strong interests in studying or utilizing the two works demonstrated by the Shāfi‘ī *Sahīhayn* Network or

⁵² Al-Bājī, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, 610.

⁵³ Al-Bājī, *al-Muntaqā sharh al-Muwaṭṭa'*, 7 vols. in 4 ([Cairo]: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, [1982]), 1:169. For an extensive discussion of the *taslīm* in early works of law and ḥadīth, see Yasin Dutton, “An Innovation from the Time of the Banī Hāshim’: Some Reflections on the *Taslīm* at the End of the Prayer,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 16 (2005): 147-8.

later scholars like al-Bayhaqī. In the seventh/thirteenth century, the Damascene Ḥanafī Abū al-Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Badr al-Mawṣilī (d. 622/1225) produced a simplified digest of the *Sahīhayn*, and Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād al-Khilāṭī (d. 652/1254) devoted a book to Muslim’s collection.⁵⁴ It was not until the eighth/fourteenth century, however, that Ḥanafīs began using the *Sahīhayn* to validate ḥadīths. Writing in the Chagataid and Ilkhanid Mongol realms of Iran and Central Asia, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī (d. 730/1329-30)⁵⁵ employs them briefly but effectively in his *Kashf al-asrār*, (Revealing the Secrets) a commentary on the Ḥanafī *uṣūl* treatise written by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī of Samarqand (d. 482/1089). Responding to criticisms that one of the transmitters of a ḥadīth he uses was weak, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz retorts that al-Bukhārī “is a pillar to be followed in that science [of ḥadīth], the *imām* of that craft, so his including that [hadīth] suffices as proof of its authenticity (*sīhha*)....”⁵⁶ The author thus leaves his readers no doubt about the legitimizing power of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*. In general, however, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s *Kashf al-asrār* makes a very limited use of the *Sahīhayn* in this manner.

By the time scholars like al-Bayhaqī and Ibn al-Farrā’ were putting the *Sahīhayn* canon to use as a measure of authenticity, Imāmī Shiism had taken crucial steps in articulating its doctrine and outlining its sources. In 329/940 the twelfth *imām*’s absence was declared permanent, and leadership in the community fell into the hands of scholars

⁵⁴ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, 3:180. Al-Mawṣilī’s work is published as *al-Jam‘ bayn al-Sahīhayn*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, 2 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1416/1995).

⁵⁵ For his biography, see Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, 2:428; Ibn Qutlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 35.

⁵⁶ Al-Anṣārī, *Fath al-bāqī*, 76.

pending the *imām*'s return. The collections that would become the Imāmī ḥadīth canon had all been produced: Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī's (d. 329/940) *al-Kāfi*, Ibn Bābawayh's (d. 381/991) *Man lā yaḥduruhu al-faqīh* and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Tūsī's (d. 460/1067) two works, *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*.⁵⁷

In the same period, tensions between Imāmī Shiites and Sunnis rose markedly with the rise of Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī power in Egypt and Syria, the terror wreaked by the Ismā‘īlī assassins, and the impending threat of the sect's missionary activities in the central Islamic lands of the Seljuq Empire. For the Imāmī Shiite minorities living in the Karkh district of Baghdad or in the great Iranian cities of Rayy and Naysābūr, being identified with the Ismā‘īlī threat presented a constant danger. Imāmī scholars like Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Rashīd b. ‘Abd al-Jalīl Abī al-Ḥusayn Qazvīnī (d. ca. 560/1165) thus expended great efforts in trying to both defend Imāmī doctrine in the face of Sunni critiques and educate Sunnis on the important differences between their own, Imāmī school and the Ismā‘īlīs.

Imāmī Shiites like Qazvīnī did not identify with Sunni ḥadīth collections at all, for they considered the Companions on whom collectors like al-Bukhārī had relied most heavily, such as Abū Hurayra, to be brazen liars.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the authority that the *Sahīhayn* commanded within the Sunni community provided Qazvīnī with an important tool for defending his school. His *Ketāb-e naqqād* (The Refutation) represents a comprehensive effort to validate Imāmī doctrine and practice in Sunni eyes as well as to

⁵⁷ Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 5. For discussion of the contents and uses of the canonical Shiite ḥadīth collections, see Robert Gleave, “Between *Hadīth* and *Fiqh*: the ‘Canonical’ Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*,” *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2001): 350-382.

⁵⁸ For a Shiite study of Abū Hurayra, see ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Abū Hurayra* (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā’, 1397/1977).

educate his readers on the trenchant differences between Imāmī and Ismā'īlī Shiites.

Qazvīnī frequently cites famous Sunni works such as al-Tabarī's *Tafsīr* as proof texts, obliging Sunnis to heed "one of their own *imāms*."⁵⁹ In response to Sunni accusation that Shiites rely on weak ḥadīths and lies, he says that they are narrated via reporters who are mostly "Sunnis" and "Hanafis" and are to be found in the books of these "two sects (*farīqayn*)."⁶⁰ Qazvīnī adds that the Sunni ḥadīth scholars (*ashāb al-hadīth*) accept many of these reports.⁶¹

Qazvīnī often refers to the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the umma and of the ḥadīth scholars in his arguments for Shiite stances.⁶¹ Responding to Sunni criticisms of Shiite claims that 'Alī was the first person to ever have that name, he invokes as evidence the *Sahīhayn* and other books of the *ashāb al-hadīth* that "are relied upon (*keh mo tamadast*)."⁶² Qazvīnī tells his opponents to "take up the *Sahīhayn*" and find the ḥadīth which says that 'Alī's name is written on the leg of God's throne and on the doorway to Paradise as the brother of Muhammad. Since both these structures existed before the creation of the world, 'Alī is doubtless the first person to have been so named.⁶²

⁵⁹ Nāṣir al-Dīn 'Abd al-Jalīl Abū al-Ḥusayn Qazvīnī Rāzī (fl. 560/1162), *Kitāb-e naqd-e ma ḫefat beh ba ḫ-e mathāleb al-naqṣeb fī naqd ba ḫ-fadā'eh al-ravāfed*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥosaynī Ormavī ([Tehran]: Chāp-khāne-ye Sepehr, 1331-1371/[1952]), 392.

⁶⁰ Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqd*, 654-5.

⁶¹ For example, see Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqd*, 557.

⁶² Nāṣir al-Dīn Qazvīnī, *Ketāb-e naqd*, 576-8. Neither of these two ḥadīths actually appears in the *Sahīhayn* or the other Six Books: "I saw on the night I was taken up to the heavens, inscribed on the leg of the throne and the doorway of Paradise that 'The garden of Eden was planted by the hands of Muhammad, the purest of My creation, and I have supported him with 'Alī' (*ra'a ytu laylat usriya bī ilā al-samā' muthabbat*" *'alā sāq al-'*arsh wa bāb al-janna an ghurisat jannat 'Adn bi-yaday Muḥammad safwatī min khalq ayyadtuhu bi-'Alī)," and "It was written on the doorway to Paradise that 'There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God, and 'Alī is the brother of Muhammad' before God created the heavens and the earth by two thousand years (*maktūb 'alā bāb al-janna 'lā ilāh illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh 'Alī akhū Muḥammad qabla an yakhlūqa Allāh al-samāwāt wa al-ard bi-alfay īm*)."

The *Sahīhayn* and other respected Sunni ḥadīth collections also provided the later Imāmī theologian of Baghdad, Rādī al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Mūsā Ibn Tāwūs (d. 664/1266), with authoritative proof texts to use against Sunnis. In his study of Ibn Tāwūs’ library, Etan Kohlberg states that he possessed copies of the *Sahīhayn* “for polemical pro-Alid traditions included in them....” He also relied on Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī’s (d. 488/1095) combination of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collection, *al-Jam‘ bayn al-Sahīhayn*, as a more convenient source.⁶³

There can be no quantitative comparison between al-Bayhaqī’s overwhelming employment of the *Sahīhayn* canon to validate his ḥadīths and Ibn al-Farrā’, al-Māwardī, al-Bājī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī or Qazvīnī’s more limited use. In general, these scholars employed the *Sahīhayn* canon only sparingly. Unlike al-Bayhaqī and other students of al-Hākim, their work does not overflow with authorizing references to al-Bukhārī and Muslim. As ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s reverential invocation of al-Bukhārī’s authority and al-Bājī’s explicit referral to the community’s consensus on the *Sahīhayn* demonstrate, however, these scholars were aware of the *Sahīhayn* canon’s etiology and utility even if they only invoked it occasionally.

b. Bolstering Formative Texts

Although al-Bayhaqī had used the canon to comprehensively buttress Shāfi‘ī substantive law in the mid fifth/eleventh century, the remaining three Sunni *madhhabs* followed very different paths in their recourse to the *Sahīhayn* to bolster their formative

⁶³ Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 324-5.

ḥadīth or legal texts. Their approaches to the canon for this purpose would depend on either the nature of their formative text or their attitude towards the *Sahīhayn* canon itself.

It was only at the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century that Ḥanbalī scholars like Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) started to seriously reinforce the ḥadīths used in elaborating their school's substantive law by *takhrīj* through al-Bukhārī, Muslim and other products of the *sahīh* movement. In his commentary on the Ḥanbalī formative legal text, al-Khiraqī's *Mukhtaṣar*, Ibn Qudāma mentions that one of his goals in explicating Ibn Ḥanbal's *madhab* is the *takhrīj* of the ḥadīths al-Khiraqī had used as proof texts. He states that he will cite them "from the books of the *imāms* from among the scholars of ḥadīth, so that [these reports] might inspire trust in what they indicate, and to distinguish between the authentic and flawed [reports], so that what is well-established can be relied upon and what is unknown can be abandoned."⁶⁴

The task of undertaking *takhrīj* on the school's most prominent ḥadīth collection, Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, daunted scholars for centuries. The sheer inertia of Ibn Ḥanbal's massive work has thwarted almost every scholarly attempt to systematically evaluate the authenticity of its contents or make the work more accessible. The *Musnad* consists of over forty thousand narrations, thirty thousand excluding repetitions, and clearly contains a great deal of material that does not warrant a *sahīh* rating. Discussions over its authenticity have thus generally revolved not around the question of whether the *Musnad* was totally reliable, but on whether or not its more lackluster narrations ever reached the level of fatal weakness or forgery. Because a systematic analysis would be a titanic feat,

⁶⁴ Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Turkī and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw, 15 vols. (Cairo: Hajr, 1406/1986), 1:5.

claims on this matter were often mere guesswork. Al-Dhahabī attempted to cast the *Musnad* in a good light by optimistically asserting that there are only a “few (*qalīl*)” ḥadīths found in the *Sahīhayn* that do not appear in the *Musnad*. He could not conceal the questionable status of the rest of the book’s contents, however, and added that one should not take the *Musnad*’s contents as proof (*hujja*) because it has many reports that are too weak and even forged.⁶⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 806/1404) also listed numerous ḥadīths from the *Musnad* that they believed were clearly forgeries.

It was not until the career of al-‘Irāqī’s student Ibn Ḥajar (a Shāfi‘ī) that a scholar succeeded in performing at least a preliminary *takhrīj* of the contents of Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad*. This feat, however, was only subsidiary to Ibn Ḥajar’s primary purpose in the work: rendering the *Musnad* more accessible to scholars by compiling a huge index (*atrāf*) of its contents. He did note, however, in which other main ḥadīth collections Ibn Ḥanbal’s material appears, identifying al-Bukhārī and Muslim, among others, to bolster the authenticity of the *Musnad*’s ḥadīths.⁶⁶ Ibn Ḥajar tackled the issue of authenticity in the *Musnad* more directly by writing a rebuttal of al-‘Irāqī’s list of nine forged ḥadīths found in the work, often referring to al-Bukhārī and Muslim to back them up.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 11:329 (biography of Ibn Ḥanbal).

⁶⁶ The wide net Ibn Ḥajar uses in his attempt at the *takhrīj* of the *Musnad*’s contents includes: the *Sahīhayn*, the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, al-Dārimī and al-Dāraqutnī, the *Sahīhs* of Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Hibbān and Abū ‘Awāna, as well as al-Hākim’s *Mustadrak*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Atrāf Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Zuhayr b. Nāṣir al-Nāṣir, 10 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr and Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, 1414/1993).

⁶⁷ See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb ‘an al-Musnad li ’l-imām Aḥmad*, 39.

In theory, the *Sahīhayn* canon would have proven extremely useful to Mālikī efforts to bolster their school's formative text: Mālik's *Muwatta'*. The feat that al-Bayhaqī performed for ḥadīths supporting the Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī school, al-Bājī's student Abū 'Umar Yūsuf b. 'Abdallāh **Ibn 'Abd al-Barr** (d. 463/1071) accomplished for the *Muwatta'*.⁶⁸ The Cordovan scholar's gargantuan *Kitāb al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwatta'* (*min al-ma īnī wa al-masānīd*, twenty-four printed volumes, constitutes a comprehensive commentary on Mālik's *magnum opus*. In addition to discussing the legal, doctrinal and ritual implications of the material contained in the *Muwatta'*, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr attempts to establish the text in the language of the *sahīhs* movement. Because the *Muwatta'* predated the exclusive focus on Prophetic ḥadīths and uninterrupted chains of transmission emphasized by the *sahīhs* and *sunan* books, the work's large number of Successor opinions and incomplete *isnāds* compromised its strength as a ḥadīth reference. Ever a fly in the ointment, the Zāhirī maverick Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) thus attacked the Mālikī opinion that the *Muwatta'* was the best ḥadīth book by listing it as thirty-first in his own ranking of thirty-six books. He placed it well below collections containing only Prophetic reports, amid books that mix "the words of the Prophet with those of others."⁶⁹

Oddly, although Ibn 'Abd al-Barr had the *Sahīhayn*, the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and other ḥadīth collections at his disposal, he made little use of them in

⁶⁸ Al-Bājī himself produced a larger commentary on the *Muwatta'* from which he drew his *Muntaqā*. This larger text dealt with Mālik's *isnāds* more than the abridgement; Abd al-Rauf, "Ḥadīth Literature," 280.

⁶⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:231. It is interesting that Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012), one of the first scholars to take *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* to the Maghrib, compiled a collection of the material in the *Muwatta'* with complete *isnāds* in his *Kitāb al-mulakhkhas*; it amounted to only 527 ḥadīths. This work has been published as: Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī, *Muwatta' al-imām Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad b. 'Alawī b. 'Abbās al-Mālikī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-Thaqafī, 1425/2004); cf. al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustatrafa*, 12.

bolstering Mālik’s reports.⁷⁰ In fact, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr rarely resorts to *takhrīj* at all.

On only a handful of occasions throughout the work does he refer to major ḥadīth collections.⁷¹ Instead, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr relies on his own mastery of the criteria established by “those requiring authentic [ḥadīths] in their compilations” to rate and reinforce material in the *Muwatta’*.⁷² Each narration discussed in the *Tamhīd* begins with a rating such as *muttaṣil musnad* (extending to the Prophet with an uninterrupted *isnād*) or *musnad saḥīḥ* (extending to the Prophet, authentic). Occasionally Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr reiterates the strength of Mālik’s ḥadīths with statements such as “this ḥadīth is authentic, its authenticity agreed upon by all” or “*musnad muttaṣil* according to the people of knowledge.”⁷³ In the case of *mursal* reports (those in which a Successor quotes the Prophet without citing a Companion) and other defective chains of transmission, the author musters sound ḥadīth narrations to support them.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s contribution proved formidable. He found complete *isnāds* for all except four of the ḥadīths in the *Muwatta’* that had lacked them. It was not until two centuries later that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, a Shāfi‘ī by allegiance, succeeded in reinforcing the remaining four ḥadīths. In his *Risāla fī waṣl al-balāghāt al-arba‘*, he argues that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included a ḥadīth conveying the same meaning as Mālik’s report,

⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr even had a book entitled *al-Ajwiba ‘alā al-masā’il al-mustaghhraba min al-Bukhārī* (Answers to Peculiar Questions in al-Bukhārī); Ahmād b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Qastallānī (d. 923/1517), *Irshād al-sārī li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, [1971], reprint of an 1886-8 edition), 1:43.

⁷¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr occasionally notes that a ḥadīth was included by al-Nasā’ī, Abū Dāwūd, or al-Bukhārī. For examples, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 3: 265; 4: 194-5, 313; 5:227, 253.

⁷² Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 1:12.

⁷³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 6:17; 8:11.

“*innī la-ansā aw unassā lā asunna* (indeed I forget or am caused to forget, [but then]

I do not create sunna)” and finds narrations from the Six Books for the three other hadīths.⁷⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s work and the final addition of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ elicited so much confidence among Mālikīs that the famous Egyptian commentator on the *Muwatta'*, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710) stated unequivocally, “the truth is that the *Muwatta'* is *sahīh* with no exceptions.”⁷⁵ The twentieth-century Mauritanian scholar of the *Sahīhayn*, Muḥammad Ḥabīb Allāh al-Shinqītī (d. 1944 CE) exclaimed that there was now “no difference between al-Bukhārī and the *Muwatta'*.⁷⁶

Yet why did Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, al-Bājī, and other early commentators on the *Muwatta'* such as Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1145) not employ the *Sahīhayn* canon to systematically validate Mālik’s reports?⁷⁷ Al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* could certainly have proven invaluable for this task, for Mālik’s transmissions in the *Muwatta'* furnished perhaps the largest single source for al-Bukhārī’s work. No fewer than six hundred (35.3%) of the *Muwatta'*’s narrations appear in the *Sahīh*.⁷⁸ The answer to this

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Risāla fī wasl al-balāghāt al-arba'*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Siddīq al-Ghumārī (Casablanca: Dār al-Tibā'a al-Ḥadīthiyya, 1400/1979), 15; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb 31; Muwatta': kitāb al-sahw*.

⁷⁵ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī, *Sharh Muwatta' al-imām Mālik*, 5 vols. ([Cairo]: Matba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1381/1961), 1:13. We will see below that this claim exceeded even those made about the *Sahīhayn*, where some exceptions were made for flawed ḥadīths. Some earlier figures such as the Ḥanafī al-Mughūlṭāy (d. 762/1361) brought the *Muwatta'* to the same level as al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* not by praising the former but by denigrating the latter. Al-Mughūlṭāy states that the *ta’līq* ḥadīths in al-Bukhārī’s book are far more compromising than Mālik’s incomplete *isnāds*; *ibid.*, 1:12.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Risāla*, 3-4 (editor’s introduction).

⁷⁷ In his commentary on the *Muwatta'*, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī frequently uses the *Sahīhayn* as well as other famous *sunans* such that of al-Nasā’ī for *takhrīj* of hadīths he mentions in his comments, but not to back up the hadīths of Mālik himself; see Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī, *Kitāb al-qabas fī sharh Muwatta' Mālik b. Anas*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh Walad-Karīm (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1992).

⁷⁸ Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin Kaynakları*, 305.

conundrum may lie in that very fact: Mālikīs realized that the *Sahīhayn* were effectively built upon the *Muwatṭa'*. To use the *Sahīhayn* to shore up Mālik's work would thus be tantamount to referring to a reproduction to prove the worth of an original. Indeed, Mālikīs frequently cited early reports of al-Shāfi‘ī saying “there is no book after the book of God most high which is more useful (*anfa'*) than the *Muwatṭa'* of Mālik,” or of the great Basran ḥadīth critic ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/814) saying “we know of no book in Islam after the book of God most high which is more authentic (*asāḥih*) than the *Muwatṭa'* of Mālik.”⁷⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr sets forth this myriad praise of the *Muwatṭa'* in the introduction to his *Tamhīd*, adding other reports such as ‘Abdallāh b. Wahb’s (d. 197/813) statement that “whoever has copied (*kataba*) the *Muwatṭa'* of Mālik need write nothing more on what is permissible and forbidden (*al-ḥalāl wa al-harām*).”⁸⁰

Among Mālikīs, the *Muwatṭa'* was thus the true foundation of the *sahīh* movement on which later masterpieces like the *Sahīhayn* were built. Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī states in the introduction of his commentary on al-Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi* ‘that al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* “is the second basis (*asl*) in the realm [of ḥadīth], but the *Muwatṭa'* is the first basis (*al-asl al-awwal*), and on them have been built all others” such as the collections of Muslim and al-Tirmidhī.⁸¹ Al-Qādī ‘Iyād thus speaks of the *Muwatṭa'* and the *Sahīhs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as “the three mother-books (*al-ummahāt al-thalāth*),” “the authentic collections of reports (*āthār*) that have been agreed upon as

⁷⁹ Ibn Hibbān, *Kitāb al-majrūḥīn*, 1:41-2.

⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Kitāb al-tamhīd*, 1:78. For the other quotes praising the *Muwatṭa'*, see ibid., 1:76-79; cf. al-Qādī ‘Iyād, *Tartīb al-madārik*, 1:191.

⁸¹ Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī, *Sahīh al-Tirmidhī bi-sharḥ al-imām Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Mālikī*, 13 vols. in 5 (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Miṣriyya bi’l-Azhar, 1350/1931), 1:5.

foremost throughout the ages, and that the scholars have accepted in all the rest of the regions (*sā'ir al-amṣār*).” These works are “the *uṣūl* of every *aṣl*... and the principles of the sciences of traditions (*mabādi’ ulūm al-āthār*)....”⁸²

Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, neither al-Bājī nor Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī’s commentaries on the *Muwatta’* make use of the *Sahīhayn* canon to support the authenticity of Mālik’s material. Rather, al-Bājī exudes confidence in the foundational role of the *Muwatta’* and the unanimity of the community’s approval of Mālik’s ḥadīths. He admits, for example, that Mālik’s report about ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar’s never attending Friday prayer without perfuming and anointing himself with oils lacks a *sahīh isnād* (ie. it does not extend back to the Prophet). But al-Bājī argues that this is unnecessary, since the umma had acted on this ḥadīth and “accepted it with consensus (*talaqqathu bi’l-qubūl*).” The report thus enjoyed a guarantee of authenticity far beyond that provided by a mere *sahīh isnād*.⁸³

As with their late recourse to the *Sahīhayn* canon in debate and exposition, it was only in Mamluk Cairo of the eighth/fourteenth century that Ḥanafīs turned to al-Bukhārī and Muslim to bolster their school’s formative legal and ḥadīth texts. With the exception of al-Mawṣilī and al-Khilāṭī in the seventh/thirteenth century, only at this time did Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholars begin systematically studying and employing the *Sahīhayn*. ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān Ibn al-Turkumānī (d. ca. 747/1347), a Ḥanafī judge in Egypt, was a prominent teacher of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*; Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī even numbered among his students.⁸⁴

Another Ḥanafī teacher of al-‘Irāqī’s in Cairo, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abdallāh b. Qalīj al-

⁸² Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād b. Mūsā, *Mashāriq al-anwār ‘alā siḥāḥ al-āthār*, ed. Bal‘amshī Aḥmad Yagan, 2 vols. ([Rabat]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1402/1982), 1:27.

⁸³ Al-Bājī, *al-Muntaqā*, 1:203.

⁸⁴ Ibn Fahd, *Lahz al-lihāz*; 91, 93-4.

Mughūṭāy (d. 762/1361) wrote a famous commentary on *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*.⁸⁵ It was Ibn al-Turkumānī's students, however, who first systematically employed the *Sahīhayn* canon to legitimize major Ḥanafī ḥadīth collections.

Muhyī al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir **Ibn Abī al-Wafā’** (d. 775/1374) served as a Ḥanafī *muftī* in Mamluk Cairo and eventually produced the most comprehensive biographical dictionary of the Ḥanafī school.⁸⁶ In a personal addendum to this dictionary, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ explains how he was assigned the task of validating Ḥanafī ḥadīths using canonical collections. His teacher Ibn al-Turkumānī had been approached by a Mamluk *amīr* who, like most of the Turkish military elite, subscribed to the Ḥanafī *madhab*.⁸⁷ This *amīr* evidently enjoyed debating issues of religious law with scholars from an opposing school, probably the dominant Shāfi‘ī *madhab*, but had consistently stumbled before his adversaries' demands for his ḥadīth sources. The *amīr* would reply, “we have the book of [Abū Ja‘far] al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933),” but complained to Ibn al-Turkumānī that “if we mention a ḥadīth from it to our opponents they say to us, ‘we will not listen to anything except what is in al-Bukhārī and Muslim....’” Ibn al-Turkumānī replied to the *amīr* that, “most of the ḥadīths in al-Ṭahāwī are [also] in al-Bukhārī and Muslim or the *Sunans* [of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī and Ibn Mājah], and other books of the ḥadīth masters (*huffāz*)....” The *amīr* thus asked him to

⁸⁵ Ibn Fahd, *Lahz al-lihāz*, 87.

⁸⁶ Ibn Fahd, *Lahz al-lihāz*, 105.

⁸⁷ Ulrich Haarmann, “Joseph’s law – the careers and activities of Mamluk descendants before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78. For a discussion about the partisan obstinence of the Shāfi‘ī chief judge of Mamlūk Cairo, see Sherman Jackson, “The Primacy of Domestic Politics: Ibn Bint al-A‘azz and the Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in Mamūk Egypt,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 1 (1995): 52-65.

find citations for all of al-Ṭahāwī’s material based on those books. In a typical scholarly manner, the judge replied, “I do not have the time for that, but I have someone from my students (*ashābī*) to do it.” Ibn al-Turkumānī handed the task to his son, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Māridīnī, who then assigned it to a younger student: Ibn Abī al-Wafā’.⁸⁸

Provided with reference books from the *amīr*’s own library, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ proceeded to supplement the contents of al-Ṭahāwī’s *Sharḥ ma īnī al-āthār* with narrations from “well-known ḥadīth books (*al-kutub al-mashhūra*), namely the *Sahīhayn*, the Four *Sunans* as well as other *musnads*, detailing what is authentic, acceptable or weak.”⁸⁹

Although Ibn Abī al-Wafā’’s finished work, *al-Hāwī fī bayān āthār al-Ṭahāwī*, occasionally refers to other works such as Ibn Khuzayma’s *Sahīh*, it is inclusion in the *Sahīhayn* in particular, or meeting al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards, that furnish the author’s principal means for validating al-Ṭahāwī’s ḥadīths. Indeed, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ bends the *Sahīhayn* canon to maximum use. Even when a ḥadīth appears with a chain of transmission not approved by al-Bukhārī or Muslim, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ asserts “the basic text (*asl*) of the ḥadīth is in the *Sahīhayn*.⁹⁰ Conversely, if the text of one of al-Ṭahāwī’s ḥadīths does not appear in the *Sahīhayn* but its *isnād* does, he states that “its *isnād* is an *isnād* from the *Sahīhayn*.⁹¹ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ proves even more flexible in employing the legitimizing power of the canon: if one narrator in the *isnād* did not earn a place in al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s works, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ still insists that “the rest of the *isnād* is

⁸⁸ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, Hyderabad edition, 2:431.

⁸⁹ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Hāwī fī bayān āthār al-Ṭahāwī*, ed. Yūsuf Aḥmad, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Imiyya, 1419/1999), 1:24.

⁹⁰ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Hāwī*, 1:94.

⁹¹ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Hāwī*, 1:50, where it occurs twice.

men of the *Sahīhayn*.⁹² He also makes use of al-Hākim's application of "the requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim" in the *Mustadrak* to authorize reports, sometimes declaring in his own opinion that certain ḥadīths meet the conditions of the *Shaykhayn*.⁹³

The task of reinforcing the ḥadīths cited in the one of the Ḥanafī school's leading legal references, the *Hidāya* of Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Abū Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. 593/1196-7) fell to another of Ibn al-Turkumānī's students: ‘Abdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Zaylātī of Cairo (d. 762/1361).⁹⁴ A friend and colleague of the Shāfi‘ī Zayn Dīn al-‘Irāqī, al-Zaylātī's *Nasb al-rāya fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Hidāya* stands out as one of the most clear and accessible works of ḥadīth literature.⁹⁵ The great Indian Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar of Cairo, Muḥammad Murtadā Al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), later performed the same service for a selection of ḥadīths on which Ḥanafīs had historically relied for deriving law (*aḥkām*). In his *Kitāb ūqūd al-jawāhir al-munīfa*, he states that he will validate these ḥadīths by showing their narrations in the Six Books.⁹⁶

Why did the Ḥanafīs begin employing the canon almost three centuries after their Shāfi‘ī counterparts? With al-Hākim's *Mustadrak* and the declarations of his associates

⁹² Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Hāwī*, 1:61, 142.

⁹³ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Hāwī*, 1:49, 64, 75, 85, 120. He notes, for example, that "al-Hākim narrated through him [Fahd b. Sulaymān] in his *Mustadrak*, so he meets the requirements of the *Shaykhayn*."

⁹⁴ Ibn Hajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aṣyān al-mi’ā al-thāmina*, ed. ‘Abd al-Wāarith Muḥammad ‘Alī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1418/1997), 2:188-9.

⁹⁵ Ibn Hajar did a second generation *takhrīj* on the *Hidāya* after he had finished with his *takhrīj* of al-Rāfi‘ī's *sharḥ* of al-Ghazzālī's *Wasīt* upon the request of some Ḥanafī students; see Ibn Hajar, *al-Dirāya fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Hidāya*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Hāshim al-Yamānī al-Madānī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Fajjāla al-Jadīda, 1384/1964), 10.

⁹⁶ Muḥammad Murtadā al-Zabīdī, *Kitāb ūqūd al-jawāhir al-munīfa*, ed. Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwī al-Albānī (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1406/1985), 17.

from the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī and Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni camps, the *Sahīhayn* emerged as authoritative texts within the transmission-based community. The Ḥanafī school, however, constituted the bulk of the reason-based school to which the transmission-based scholars remained in steadfast opposition. Just as ḥadīth scholars like al-Bukhārī and al-Ḥākim had condemned Ḥanafīs for departing from the Prophet’s true sunna, so did the Ḥanafīs like Abū Muṭīr Makḥūl al-Nasafī (d. 318/930) consider the *ahl al-ḥadīth* brainless literalists, capable of merely parroting the Prophet’s words but not of understanding his message.⁹⁷

This Ḥanafī contempt for transmission-based scholars tainted the school’s view of al-Bukhārī. This comes as no surprise in the light of the *muḥaddith*’s virulent criticism of Abū Ḥanīfa in his *Kitāb raf‘ al-yadayn* and his general criticism of the reason-based school in his *Sahīh*. In the chapter on the issue of milk-relationships (*riḍā*) in his mammoth work of Ḥanafī substantive law, the famous Ḥanafī jurist and legal theorist al-Sarakhsī (d. ca. 490/1096) produces an amazingly insulting story about al-Bukhārī. He tells how al-Bukhārī upheld the opinion that if two children drink milk from the same ewe they would become milk-siblings, prohibited from one day marrying one another (*ḥurmat al-riḍā*). When the great *muḥaddith* supposedly visited his native Bukhara and began answering the legal questions of its citizens, the leading Ḥanafī of the city, Abū Ḥafṣ Ahmad b. Ḥafṣ (d. 217/832), told him that he was unqualified to give expert legal opinions. Al-Bukhārī ignored him and continued to answer questions. When someone asked about the issue of drinking milk from the same ewe, the people found al-Bukhārī’s response so preposterous that they expelled him from the city.

⁹⁷ Marie Bernard. “Le Kitāb al-radd ‘alā l-bida‘ d’Abū Muṭīr Makḥūl al-Nasafī,” *Annales Islamologiques* 16 (1980): 121-2.

It goes without saying that al-Bukhārī probably did not espouse this opinion and that the story is apocryphal; earlier sources make it clear that al-Bukhārī's expulsion from Bukhara came at the *amīr*'s orders at the end of his life, and Abū Ḥafṣ died before al-Bukhārī reached full maturity.⁹⁸ The story, however, provides a somewhat comic foil for al-Sarakhsī, who proceeds to explain that if two youths drink the milk of the same animal they would in no way become milk-siblings. The milk-sibling relationship is analogous to kinship, and just as humans cannot be related to animals, so that relationship cannot be established by an animal's milk.⁹⁹ Over two hundred years later, the Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū Barakāt 'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) reproduced the same insulting story to prove a fundamental principle in the Ḥanafī school: "a ḥadīth scholar who is not a jurist (*al-muhaddith ghayr al-faqīh*) errs often." In other words, only specialized jurists are qualified to derive laws from Prophetic traditions.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Abī al-Wafā' includes the same story about al-Bukhārī in his Ḥanafī biographical dictionary, *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya*.¹⁰¹

Ḥanafīs seem to have maintained a skeptical distance from the *Sahīhayn* canon into the eighth/fourteenth century. Yet it was an inevitable feature of the scholarly environment with which they had to come to terms. As his account of how he came to

⁹⁸ Also, al-Bukhārī's *Sahīḥ* lacks a chapter on milk-relationships (*al-riḍāḥ*). He covers the topic in four subchapters in the book on marriage, but makes no claim about animal's milk; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 9:174. On al-Bukhārī's expulsion from Bukhara, see above Chapter 3, n. 59.

⁹⁹ Al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūt*, 2nd ed., 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 197-), 30:297; Ibn Abī al-Wafā', *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya*, 1:166 (biography of Aḥmad b. Ḥafṣ Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kabīr).

¹⁰⁰ Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad al-Qāsimī al-Dimashqī, *Hayāt al-Bukhārī*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1412/1992), 48.

¹⁰¹ See n. 99 above.

apply the *Sahīhayn* canon to a Ḥanafī ḥadīth collection suggests, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ was responding to outside polemical pressures rather than acting on any reverence for al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s work. In fact, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ reveals a deep cynicism towards the canonical culture surrounding the two collections. Discussing how Shāfi‘īs assert the authenticity of a ḥadīth that al-Tahāwī had declared weak by arguing that it is included in Muslim’s *Sahīh*, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ states that Shāfi‘īs “cannot show off [the ḥadīth] (*yatajawwahūna*) to us because it comes from Muslim, for [many] things appear in Muslim, and showing it off does not bolster [their position] in situations of confused narrations (*iḍtirāb*, text has *iḍtirām*).” Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ then embarks on what may be the lengthiest and most comprehensive existing enumeration of the types of flaws appearing in the *Sahīhayn*, detailing consistently weak chains of transmission as well as the problematic texts of certain ḥadīths. Referring to Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī’s warning to Muslim upon reading his *Sahīh*, Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ concludes “God bless Abū Zur‘a, for he spoke the truth.” In Ibn Abī al-Wafā’’s opinion, the *Sahīhayn* had indeed “made a path for the people of *bid‘a*” and been bent to polemical and partisan purposes.¹⁰² A more playful contempt for the canon appeared in the career of a slightly earlier Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar who visited Cairo, Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr al-Kalābādhī al-Bukhārī (d. 700/1300). When this scholar would see a handsome youth, he would play on his own name (al-Bukhārī) and say “that is *sahīh* according to the requirements of al-Bukhārī.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, Hyderabad edition, 2:430-3.

¹⁰³ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, Giza edition, 3:455. Invoking religious idiom in homoerotic literature was common; see J.W. Wright Jr., “Masculine Allusion and the Structure of Satire in Early

Misuse of the *Sahīhayn* Canon

The authority that the *Sahīhayn* or the “requirements of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” carried in debates was very alluring. In the time before standardized texts, easily accessible indices and long before searchable databases, knowing the exact contents of capacious ḥadīth collections like the *Sahīhayn* proved impossible to all but accomplished scholars. Both among the less masterful of the scholarly class and less literate segments of society, it was difficult to restrain the legitimizing authority of the *Sahīhayn* to the actual contents of the books. It was tempting to claim that a ḥadīth supporting one’s position had met al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s standards.

Qazvīnī had made a valiant attempt to defend Imāmī beliefs by claiming that certain pro-‘Alid reports were included in the *Sahīhayn*. Unfortunately, the ḥadīths he cites stating that ‘Alī’s name is written on the leg of God’s throne or above the doorway to Paradise are nowhere to be found in the two collections, nor do they appear in any of the Six Books, as was mentioned above.¹⁰⁴ This overstepping of the boundaries of the canon was not limited to non-Sunnis who may not have been well-acquainted with Sunni ḥadīth collections. The prominent Cairene Ḥanafī Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. ‘Ubaydallāh al-Ardabīlī (d. 875/1471) approached the Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholar Abū ‘Abdallāh

‘Abbāsid Poetry,’ in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J.W. Wright Jr. and Everett K. Rowson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

¹⁰⁴ See n. 62.

Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī (d. 902/1497) with a list of ḥadīths the status and citations of which he was unsure. In the majority of al-Sakhawī’s responses in his book *al-Ajwiba al-‘aliyya ‘an al-as’ila al-Dimyātiyya*, the scholar replies that the ḥadīths have been falsely ascribed to some ḥadīth collection or critic. Seven ḥadīths had been falsely cited from *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, eight from *Sahīḥ Muslim* and three from al-Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi*.¹⁰⁵

2. The Need for an Authoritative Reference: the *Sahīhayn* and Non-Ḥadīth Specialists

The *Sahīhayn* met a second important need exhibited by the Sunni community in the mid fifth/eleventh century: that of a common authoritative ḥadīth reference for non-specialists. This need stemmed from an increasing division of labor between jurists like al-Shīrāzī and ḥadīth scholars in the mid fifth/eleventh century. With the establishment of *madrasas* in cities like Baghdad, Naysābūr, and Merv in this period, a space had been created that primarily emphasized the study of law (*fīqh*) as opposed to the pietistic or scholarly transmission of ḥadīths.¹⁰⁶ Unlike the transmission-based scholars of al-Bukhārī’s time, who had compiled their *musannafs* as expressions of their own legal thought, many of the mid fifth/eleventh century denizens of the *madrasas* lacked expertise in ḥadīth criticism. Although Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī had been sought out as a

¹⁰⁵ Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī, *al-Ajwiba al-‘aliyya ‘an al-as’ila al-Dimyātiyya*, ed. Mish‘al b. Bānī al-Mutayrī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), al-Bukhārī: 81, 87, 101, 149, 112, 131, 145; Muslim: 99, 110, 139, 134, 143, 145, 151; al-Tirmidhī: 76, 108, 131.

¹⁰⁶ George Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1961): 10-11; idem, “Hanbalite Islam,” in *Studies on Islam*, ed. and trans. Merlin L. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 230.

ḥadīth scholar, legal theorist and theologian alike, two generations later Shāfi‘ī scholars like al-Shīrāzī and al-Juwainī were focusing more narrowly on elaborating substantive law, theology and legal theory. They needed to turn to established ḥadīth collections with widely-respected standards in order to validate their legal stances or ḥadīths.

The role of the *Sahīhayn* as an authoritative reference was embryonic in al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s work, where he proffered the *Sahīhayn* as a protective canopy for authentic Prophetic reports.¹⁰⁷ In his lengthy treatise on *uṣūl*, the *Sharḥ al-luma‘*, al-Shīrāzī builds on this theme in an attempt to meet the jurists’ needs. He explains that Shāfi‘ī jurists accept ḥadīths from “senior ḥadīth scholars (*kibār aṣḥāb al-hadīth*)” without research or question. Like a judge trusts a witness once he has proven his reliability, so can jurists trust the authenticity of these critics’ material. Al-Shīrāzī mentions al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and Yahyā b. Ma‘īn as examples, as well as major jurists who had also mastered ḥadīth, such as Mālik and Ibn Ḥanbal.¹⁰⁸

The articulation of this need for authoritative references and the suitability of the *Sahīhayn* to meet it appear most clearly in discussions on the office of *muftī* (jurisconsult, a term often conflated with *mujtahid*), the legal expert from whom the population sought rulings. In his description of the necessary qualifications for a *muftī*, al-Shīrāzī states that he must possess a command of the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence: the Qur’ān, the Prophet’s sunna, consensus and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). In terms of the sunna, the *muftī* must know which ḥadīths to accept and which to reject. But al-Shīrāzī exempts the

¹⁰⁷ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Ma ῲfat ʻulūm al-hadīth*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ al-luma‘*: 2:634.

muftī from the requirement of mastering the intricacies of *isnād* or ḥadīth criticism, for “if we made knowing that [ḥadīth] by its *isnād* obligatory for each *mujtahid*, this would lead to great difficulty, for that requires a lifetime.” Instead, a *muftī* should rely on “the *imāms* of the *ashāb al-hadīth*” like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Dāraqutnī and Abū Dāwūd.¹⁰⁹ A contemporary Shāfi’ī in Naysābūr, Abū al-Muzaffar al-Sam‘ānī, (d. 489/1096), lists “the relied upon books” for such purposes as the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī first and foremost, then that of Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, the *Mustakhraj* of Abū ‘Awāna and finally the *Sahīhs* of Abū ‘Abbās al-Daghūlī and Ibn Ḥibbān.¹¹⁰

Al-Ghazzālī concurs, stating that a *muftī* or *mujtahid* must rely on critical collections of ḥadīths that distinguish between authentic and unreliable material.¹¹¹ When working with ḥadīths that have been accepted as authentic by the umma, one need not scrutinize their chains of transmission (*lā hāja bihi ilā al-naẓar fī isnādihī*). The *muftī* should thus follow al-Bukhārī and Muslim in the evaluation of narrators, since these two critics only narrated from those whose uprightness (*‘adāla*) they had established. Al-Ghazzālī cautions that if one does not concede to following these two experts on issues of *isnād* evaluation, one would have to master that science oneself. He adds that “this is a tall order (*tawīl*), and is, in our time, with the massive number of intermediaries (*wasā’iṭ*) [in the chains of transmission], very difficult (*‘asīr*).”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Abū Ishaq al-Shirāzī, *Sharḥ al-luma'*, 2:1033-4.

¹¹⁰ Al-Sam‘ānī, *Qawāti‘ al-adilla*, 2:499-500; cf. al-Juwainī, *al-Burhān*, 2:1333.

¹¹¹ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 459.

¹¹² Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mustasfā*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Šādir, 1995), 2:200-2.

In his discussion of the requirements for a *muftī* in the Ḥanafī school, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī echoes this division of labor and reliance on canonical ḥadīth collections. Like al-Shīrāzī, he requires the *mujtahid* or *muftī* to have command of the sunna and know the ḥadīths dealing with legal rulings (*ḥadīth al-ahkām*). The jurist, however, need not memorize this material. Rather, he must have at his disposal a vetted copy (*aṣl muṣaḥḥah*) of one of the *ahkām* ḥadīth collections such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim or Abū Dāwūd as a reference.¹¹³

Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī expresses the same opinion for the Mālikī school. He states that those who have achieved the expertise necessary to critically examine ḥadīths can evaluate reports on their own, just al-Bukhārī and Muslim did. “But he who has not achieved that condition,” he adds, “must follow those two [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] for ḥadīths he claims to be authentic, pausing (*tawaqquf*) at what they did not include in their *Sahīhs*.¹¹⁴

It is at this point that the split in the ḥadīth tradition initiated by the *sahīh* movement again comes into focus. The canonization of the *Sahīhayn* and their use as measures of authenticity transformed them into institutions of authority in the Muslim community. This institutional role emerged as a counterweight to the focus on the chain of transmission as the sole vehicle for tying Muslim scholars to the hermeneutic authority of the Prophet’s words. The consensus of the umma on the *Sahīhayn* and their subsequent use as a reference in implementing the Prophet’s authority meant that books

¹¹³ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Ahmad al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār ‘an uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, 4 vols. in 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1394/1974), 4:15.

¹¹⁴ Al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhi al-Ta dīl wa al-tajrīh*, 1:310.

could replace the authoritative source provided by the living *isnād*. When al-Shīrāzī explains that jurists can replace a direct link to the Prophet and a mastery of evaluating its authenticity with reference books vetted and authorized for that purpose, he obviates the need for an intensive study of *isnāds*.

The diverging paths of the jurists and ḥadīth scholars becomes evident when we juxtapose al-Shīrāzī’s discussion of *muftīs* with that of two of his Shāfi‘ī contemporaries more rooted in ḥadīth study than legal theory or substantive law. In Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī’s discussion of the *muftī*’s requirements we find no mention of resorting to reference works. He merely repeats al-Shāfi‘ī’s original requirement that a *muftī* himself master the sources of legislation and know which ḥadīths to accept or reject.¹¹⁵ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also repeats these fundamental requirements, stating that “a *muftī* will not be able to [meet these requirements] unless he has been excessive (*akthara*) in writing the reports of the early generations and hearing ḥadīths.” The chasm separating him from al-Shīrāzī widens further when al-Khaṭīb recounts, rhetorically no doubt, how Ibn Ḥanbal required someone to know at least five hundred thousand ḥadīths before he could act as a *muftī*.¹¹⁶

The most dramatic step in proposing the *Sahīhayn* as institutions of authority to which scholars seeking to evaluate ḥadīths could turn came almost two centuries later, with the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245). By the late sixth/twelfth century, Muslims no longer compiled massive collections of ḥadīth with living *isnāds* back to the Prophet,

¹¹⁵ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Dīya’ al-Rahmān al-A‘ẓamī, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Riyadh: Aḍwā’ al-Salaf, 1420/[1999-2000]), 1:169.

¹¹⁶ Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, 2:330, 344-5.

like al-Bayhaqī's *Sunan*. In a time when the critical rigor of giants like al-Bukhārī seemed to be fading into history, Ibn al-Šalāh pondered how jurists or even ḥadīth scholars should evaluate ḥadīths they came across in the course of study or debate. He argued that "if we find some report in a ḥadīth notebook that seems to have a *sahīh isnād* but is neither in the *Sahīhayn* nor indicated as *sahīh* in a book of the relied-upon, well-known *imāms*, we do not dare insist that it is authentic (*lā natajāsaru ʻalā jazm al-hūkm bi-sihhatihī*)."¹¹⁷ Ibn al-Šalāh's call rested on his belief that ḥadīth transmission in his time had deteriorated so much from the rigorous standards of yesteryear that ḥadīth scholars were no longer able to trust their transmissions from earlier sources. Consequently, "knowing the *hasan* and *sahīh* depended on the *imāms* of ḥadīth having specified this in their well-known, relied-upon works that... have been preserved against alteration and scribal error (*tahrīf*)."¹¹⁸ "Most of what is sought out from the *isnāds* circulating [today]," he concludes, "falls outside this pale."¹¹⁷ Beginning with Ibn al-Šalāh's follower al-Nawawī, scholars understood this as a position tantamount to ending the evaluation of ḥadīths in favor of a total reliance on *sahīh* collections.¹¹⁸

This dramatic call to equate all *sahīh* ḥadīths with the contents of the *Sahīhayn* and other *sahīh* books embraced the jurists' need for authoritative references at the

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-Šalāh, *Muqaddima*, 159-60.

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Šalāh probably meant that one could no longer declare ḥadīths transmitted by living *isnāds* and not found in major collections authentic. As for ḥadīths found in earlier compilations that included reports of various levels of reliability, such as al-Ṭabarānī's *Muṣṭaqbā*, Ibn al-Šalāh was probably not arguing against ruling on the authenticity of this material. It was in this sense, however, that Ibn al-Šalāh's comments were understood from the time of his follower al-Nawawī on. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) devoted a small treatise to this subject in which he clarified Ibn al-Šalāh's statement but then proceeded to himself declare and end to the authentication of ḥadīths due to the inability of later scholars to conduct proper *īlal* criticism. See

expense of the ḥadīth scholars' methodology.¹¹⁹ The function of the two books as authoritative institutions therefore emerged as a source of tension between scholars whose chief affiliation was to the study of law and others who focused more on ḥadīth. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was first and foremost a Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholar, as his efforts to eliminate the last vestiges of doubt from the *Muwatta'* suggest, his interests lay in strengthening scholarly institutions. His call indeed amounted to declaring the victory of the authoritative institution of the *sahīh* book over the living *isnād*. Reacting with predictable tension to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's argument, almost all later ḥadīth scholars understandably rejected the notion that they were unqualified to independently evaluate ḥadīths; as Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī explained, “this was the ḥadīth scholars' job.”¹²⁰

What emerged as a consensus among scholars in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's provocative claim was a balance between the jurists' needs for authorized institutions housing the Prophet's legacy and the ḥadīth scholars' focus on the living *isnād* as the link to his authority. The *Sahīhayn* would serve as the primary reference for non-specialists, while qualified ḥadīth scholars could continue evaluating new material they came across. Ibn Ḥajar thus instructs jurists who are browsing through a *musnad* or *sunan* work but are not ḥadīth experts to refer to the *Sahīhayn* to see if a report is authentic or not. If al-Bukhārī or Muslim did not include the report, one should see if some other *imām*

¹¹⁹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states that one could also find *sahīh* ḥadīths in the books of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī and al-Dāraqutnī, but that one could not assume that all their contents were authentic, since this was not the criterion of their compilers. *Sahīh* books, however, such as that of Ibn Khuzayma, could provide this security; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 163-4.

¹²⁰ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 27; idem, *al-Tabṣira wa al-tadhkira*, 1:67; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 6; Ibn Jamā'a, 130; al-Bulqīnī, 159; al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 21; al-Sakhawī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:63-4.

declared it authentic.¹²¹ Other ḥadīth scholars, like al-Nawawī, al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1402-3) and Ibn al-Wazīr seconded the notion that those who have the expertise must independently evaluate *isnāds*, but those that do not must rely on the *Sahīhayn*, their *mustakhrajs* and *ilzāmāt* works.¹²²

The role of the *Sahīhayn* as a reference for non-specialists evaluating the reliability of Prophetic reports had profound implications for pietistic literature: if a ḥadīth had earned al-Bukhārī or Muslim's stamp of approval, one need not provide an *isnād* when citing it. The Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholar Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣ‘ūd al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), dubbed “the Reviver of the Sunna (*Muhyī al-sunna*),” demonstrated how the *Sahīhayn* canon could simplify the use of ḥadīths in the religious life of regular Muslims. He explains that his most famous work, the pietistic manual *Maṣābiḥ al-sunna*, is culled from the books of the great ḥadīth *imāms* to help people implement the Prophet’s sunna in daily life. The work is small and portable, for a very simple reason: al-Baghawī omits the contents’ *isnāds*. Instead, the author divides the ḥadīths in each chapter into two sections, “authentic (*ṣihāḥ*)” and “good (*hisān*).” The authentic section consists only of reports from al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works, while the less reliable “*hisān*” ḥadīths come from the collections of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī and other respected compilers. The reader thus relies on the source of the ḥadīths to know their reliability. Those coming from the *Sahīhayn* are considered automatically

¹²¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 149.

¹²² Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīḥ al-anzār*, 40; see n. 120.

reliable, whereas al-Baghawī states that he will alert the reader to any weaknesses in the ḥadīths of the “good” section.¹²³

It is clear that in cities like Damascus in the early seventh/thirteenth century, inclusion in the *Sahīhayn* exercised potent authority among the everyday Muslims al-Baghawī was targeting. Even the laity held the contents of the two works in unique veneration. A common citizen, for example, asked Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ for a legal ruling about the ḥadīth “He who repents for a sin is like one without sin (*al-tā’ib min al-dhanb ka-man lā dhanb lahu*),” inquiring whether or not it was in the *Sahīhayn* and how it relates to the issue of that person’s legal competence.¹²⁴ Of the twenty-one recorded requests that the Shāfi‘ī prodigy al-Nawawī (who began his studies in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s death and remained firmly within his orbit in ḥadīth study), received from everyday citizens of Damascus asking if a certain ḥadīth was authentic or not, the scholar employs the *Sahīhayn* in four responses (most are negative).¹²⁵ One questioner even inquires directly if the *Sahīhayn* or other famous collections include any non-authentic ḥadīths. Al-Nawawī replies that all the ḥadīths of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are authentic, while the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā’ī include varied levels of weak and sound ḥadīths.¹²⁶

¹²³ Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas‘ūd al-Baghawī, *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*, 2 vols in 1 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, [197-]), 1:2.

¹²⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, [1980]), 19. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ replies that the *ḥadīth* was not in al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s collections nor does it have a firm *isnād* (*isnād thabit*).

¹²⁵ Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā al-imām al-Nawawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1402/1982), 177-192. For example, one person asks about whether the ḥadīth “*lā ṣalāt li-jār al-masjid illā fī al-masjid*” is in the *Sahīhayn*; *ibid.*, 191.

¹²⁶ Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwa*, 177.

The referential role of the *Sahīhayn* canon even facilitated the study of ḥadīth among aspiring young students. Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī produced a manual using the *Sahīhayn* in the same manner as al-Baghawī but designed it for students of ḥadīth. In the introduction to this book, his *Taqrīr al-asānīd fī tartīb al-masānīd*, al-‘Irāqī explains that he has collected a selection of ḥadīths for his son, since a student of ḥadīth needs to memorize a number of reports in order to dispense with carrying heavy loads of books. Since in his time chains of transmission had grown too long to have one's own living *isnād* to the Prophet, al-‘Irāqī states that he has collected ḥadīths from the books of early scholars (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) instead. If the ḥadīth appears in the *Sahīhayn*, he states, he provides no *isnād*, because its authenticity is “agreed on (*muttafaq ‘alayhi*).” If the report is not found in al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s works, he provides *isnāds* from other major collections.¹²⁷

3. The Need for an Exemplum: Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the Canon that Sets the Rule

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not just used to prove the authenticity of Prophetic reports, but also to authoritatively shape the study of ḥadīth. Just as the *Sahīhayn* canon served as a trump card in debates over individual ḥadīths, so did scholars like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ employ it to elaborate the tenets of ḥadīth transmission, criticism and its applications in deriving law. As Stanley Fish notes in his discussion of the durability of literary canons, “if Shakespeare is on your side in an argument, the argument is over.”¹²⁸ In this sense both Shakespeare’s works and the *Sahīhayn* are

¹²⁷ Al-‘Irāqī, *Taqrīr al-asānīd fī tartīb al-masānīd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1419/1998), 14.

¹²⁸ Fish, 12-15.

canonical in that they are standards that can be employed to set the rules of a genre.

They are the *kanòn* to be imitated, the exemplum in whose ingenious pages lie the methods of mastering a science. Aristotle thus employs Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his exposition of the proper components and characteristics of epic poetry. Amid his discussion of how well Homer embodied excellence in this genre, he states, "Homer deserves acclaim for many things, but especially because he alone among [epic] poets is well aware of what he himself should do."¹²⁹ For Aristotle, Homer's conscious mastery of his art provides the ultimate example for appreciating and writing epic. Homer's unparalleled methods themselves act as Aristotle's proof texts. As Fish realizes, a text thus becomes canonical when a community recognizes that it is the thing to which "all workers in the enterprise," or, in Aristotle's case, the genre, "aspire."¹³⁰

Just as Aristotle invoked Homer, prominent architects of the ḥadīth tradition declared al-Bukhārī and Muslim the exemplum that sets the rule. Ibn Ḥajar states that "there is no doubt about the preeminence of al-Bukhārī and Muslim over both the people of their own time and those who came after them from among the *imāms* of that science in terms of knowledge of authentic and flawed ḥadīths...." If someone opposes their work or their judgment on authenticity, "there is no doubt that [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] supersede all others in this." "Objection," he adds, "is thus fended off from them globally...."¹³¹ Al-Ḥāzimī describes al-Bukhārī as the best of his time in hadīth collection and criticism, "and in light of the certainty of his station in these matters there

¹²⁹ Aristotle, "Poetics," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2001), 112.

¹³⁰ Fish, 12-15.

¹³¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 502.

is no way to object to him on that subject.”¹³² Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) states that not even Ibn Khuzayma or Ibn Ḥibbān approach al-Bukhārī’s mastery. As the result of his consummate skill, in the vast majority (*jamhūr*) of instances in which someone criticized material which al-Bukhārī approved, “his [al-Bukhārī’s] opinion is more favored than those of his detractors.”¹³³ Al-Maqdisī stated that the *Sahīhayn* had become “proofs for the people of Islam (*hujja li-ahl al-islām*).” He claims that ḥadīth scholars since their time have thus focused on commenting on and studying the two books, since it is not possible to add anything more to that “science (*san’ā*).”¹³⁴

One of the most obvious areas in which al-Bukhārī and Muslim impacted the rules of ḥadīth criticism was the definition of ‘authentic’ reports. Al-Baghawī testified to this when he equated the *Sahīhayn* with authentic ḥadīths in general. One of the flaws that could undermine the authenticity of a ḥadīth was “irregularity (*shudhūdh*).” The definition of ‘irregular (*shādhdh*)’ ḥadīths, according to the consensus of Sunni ḥadīth scholars by the eighth/fourteenth century, was a report that contradicted a more reliable source, such as a better-attested ḥadīth or a verse of the Qur’ān.¹³⁵ Earlier scholars like al-Khalīlī, however, had defined *shādhdh* much more broadly, and thus more dangerously, as a report whose only flaw is that it is narrated through only one chain of transmission. Here al-Khalīlī had followed his teacher al-Ḥakim al-Naysābūrī, who

¹³² Al-Ḥāzimī, *Shurūt al-a’imma al-khamṣa*, 59.

¹³³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 1:256

¹³⁴ Muhammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-jam‘ bayn kitābayn Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-Isbahānī*, 2.

¹³⁵ See al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 12; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza*, 42; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 48-50; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 88; Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 150-4; al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:244-8.

wrote that *shādhdh* ḥadīths are those narrated by a trustworthy (*thiqā*) transmitter but whose text is not corroborated (*aṣl mutāba*) from his source.¹³⁶ Later scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Ḥajar fiercely rejected al-Khalīlī's definition because it would compromise prevailing understandings of the definition for authentic ḥadīths. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ uses two ḥadīths "included in the *Sahīhayn*" that would fall under al-Khalīlī's definition to prove that it could not be true. Ibn Ḥajar underscores this objection, arguing that not even al-Bukhārī and Muslim's methodologies could live up to what al-Khalīlī had proposed.¹³⁷ Ibn Ḥajar offers his final definition for *sahīh* ḥadīths thus: "a report whose *isnād* connects to the Prophet via the narration of totally upstanding transmitters in command of what they transmit or, if not totally, supported by others like them, and is not *shādhdh* or afflicted with a flaw (*mu‘all*)."¹³⁸ Significantly, he immediately adds that he has tailored this definition specifically to al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He explains: "I say this because I have considered many of the ḥadīths of the *Sahīhayn* and have found that the ruling of *sahīh* cannot be conferred upon them without this [definition]."¹³⁸

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were also frequently invoked as the exemplum that set the rules of selecting acceptable ḥadīth transmitters. In his *Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī states that the general practice among ḥadīth scholars is not to accept any criticism of a narrator unless the critic has explained the reasons for his objection.

¹³⁶ Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 13. Here al-Khalīlī states that, contrary to al-Shāfi‘ī's opinion (and that of later orthodoxy), a *shādhdh* ḥadīth is not one that disagrees with a more reliable source, but rather what "has only one *isnād* (*laysa lahu illā isnād wāhid*)"; al-Hākim, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 148.

¹³⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 40. For more on this debate, see Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:450-62. Ibn Rajab maintains that al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others like al-Shāfi‘ī defined *shādhdh* and *munkar* differently than al-Hākim and al-Khalīlī.

¹³⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʿalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 134.

He proves this point by explaining that “this was the practice of the *imāms* from among the masters of ḥadīth and critics such as Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī.”¹³⁹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ follows al-Khaṭīb, invoking Muslim’s use of impugned transmitters, such as Suwayd b. Sa‘īd, and al-Bukhārī’s reliance on ‘Ikrima, Ibn ‘Abbās’ pro-Khārijite client.¹⁴⁰

The *Sahīhayn* canon, however, was a double edged sword that could be wielded by parties at odds with one another on the proper rules of ḥadīth criticism. The case of accepting reports from heretics (*mubtadi‘*) clearly illustrates this. Some early scholars like al-Shāfi‘ī generally permitted narrating from them, while more strict critics condemned it. A middle ground formed with scholars like Mālik and Ibn Ḥanbal who accepted ḥadīths transmitted from heretics provided they were neither extremists nor proselytizers.¹⁴¹ The Shāfi‘ī legal theorist of Baghdad, Ahmad b. ‘Alī **Ibn Barhān** (d. 518/1124), defended the Shāfi‘ī school’s stance on the issue. He states that one can accept reports from all heretics except the extremist Shiites group the Khaṭṭābiyya and Shiites who rejected the first two caliphs (*Rāfiḍa*).¹⁴² As proof, Ibn Barhān invokes the umma’s consensus on the authenticity of the *Sahīhayn*: al-Bukhārī and Muslim included

¹³⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:338.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 221.

¹⁴¹ For an informative summary of this, see al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:384 ff.; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥalal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:53–56.

¹⁴² For a discussion of the Khaṭṭābiyya, see W. Madelung, “Khaṭṭābiyya,” *EI*². Al-Dhahabī explains that al-Shāfi‘ī had not allowed narration from these groups because they allowed lying; al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīṣa*, 85.

ḥadīths narrated from Qadarites like Qatāda b. Di‘āma and the Khārijite ‘Imrān b.

Hittān, so it must be permissible for others to imitate them.¹⁴³

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, however, employs the *Sahīhayn* canon to espouse what became the more strict mainstream opinion. Like Ibn Barhān, he states that rejecting the narrations of all heretics (*mubtadi ʿūn*) is untenable because al-Bukhārī and Muslim rely on them in both their primary (*uṣūl*) and auxiliary (*shawāhid*) ḥadīths. He adds, however, that the *Sahīhayn* do not include proselytizing heretics, from whom transmission would be forbidden.¹⁴⁴

The *Sahīhayn* canon did not only serve as an exemplum that could be employed to set the rules of ḥadīth criticism. The two works could also be referred to in order to elaborate how Prophetic ḥadīths should be employed in deriving law. In his *al-Wuṣūl ilā uṣūl*, for example, Ibn Barhān describes the case advanced by some Ḥanafī scholars for the broad acceptance *mursal* ḥadīths in deriving law. Arguing against transmission-based scholars who generally considered a *mursal* ḥadīth to be flawed due to the break in its *isnād*, these Ḥanafīs had supposedly claimed that the *aṣḥāb al-hadīth* had in fact accepted them. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, they argued, had even included many *mursal* ḥadīths in their *Sahīhs*.¹⁴⁵ This claim was, of course, highly erroneous. The *Sahīhayn* are certainly

¹⁴³ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ‘Alī Abū Zayd, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Mā’rif, 1404/1984), 2:184-5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 299-300.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, 2:179.

not replete with *mursal* ḥadīths, and Muslim himself specified that *mursal* ḥadīths were not acceptable proofs (*hujja*) in the introduction to his collection.¹⁴⁶

The Limits of the Canon's Authority: the Diologic Power of the *Sahīhayn*

The power of the *Sahīhayn* canon stemmed from the assertion that the absolute authenticity of the ḥadīths they contained would validate one's stance in an argument or exposition. Although Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī's statement obliging scholars to rule according to the *Sahīhayn* had allowed for the possibility of interpreting a ḥadīth in a manner that could neutralize its legal import, this did not obscure the thrust of his declaration: ruling against a ḥadīth from the two books was tantamount to breaking consensus. Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī reinforced this claim by affirming the absolute authenticity of the two collections. Al-Ghazzālī's remark that a jurist must rule according to the *Sahīhayn* or break with *ijmā'* merely represented the crystallization of this edifice of authority built around the *Sahīhayn* in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century.

The power of the canon, however, was a façade that could only intimidate or convince those confronted with it from outside. It was an illusion conjured and maintained in the relative space between adversaries in the arena of debate, or between author and an intended reader in expository writing. An individual Ḥanafī jurist or Ash'arī theologian felt no compunction about ignoring or rejecting a ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī or Muslim's books if it clashed with his own position. As the great Ḥanafī legal

¹⁴⁶ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1:24. This claim is so ludicrous that it is difficult to believe that any educated Ḥanafī would make it. It may be that Ibn Barhān was unwittingly engaging in a 'straw man' argument.

theorist Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952) proclaimed, his default position (*aṣl*) is that any Qur’ānic verse or ḥadīth that “contradicts the stance of our school (*aṣḥābinā*) is assumed to have been either abrogated or set aside in favor of another (*tuhmalu ‘alā al-naskh aw ‘alā al-tarjīḥ*).”¹⁴⁷ Such policies led the Damascene scholar Tāhir al-Jazā’irī (d. 1920) to note incisively that, “the jurists interpret away (*yu’awwilūn*) any ḥadīth that disagrees with their *madhab*, or oppose it with another ḥadīth even if it is not well-known, even if that [first] ḥadīth is found in the *Sahīhayn*.¹⁴⁸

In general, it was not uncommon for Muslim scholars engaged in debate to insist on a rule in one context then invert it in order to defend their school’s stance in another. Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, adhered to the Ḥanbalī school that had led the campaign for the admission of *āḥād* ḥadīths in elaborating dogma as well as law. When responding to the Shiīte claim that ‘Ā’isha was guilty of unbelief (*kufr*) for fighting ‘Alī, however, Ibn al-Jawzī changed positions diametrically. He argued that the ḥadīth Shiites cited as evidence for this, “you will fight him (i.e. ‘Alī) and you will be wrong (*satuqātilīnahu wa anti zālima*),” “is all by reports of limited attestation (*āḥād*),” and “is thus not epistemologically certain by this means (*lā yuqta ‘u bi-mithlihi*).”¹⁴⁹

Treatises on the legal theory reveal the *Sahīhayn* canon’s limited existence in relative space. In general, *uṣūl* books from both the Ḥanafīs and the ‘Majority’ (*al-jamhūr*) school espoused by Shāfi‘īs, Mālikīs and most Ḥanbalīs, offer nothing but silence about the place of the *Sahīhayn* in Islamic epistemology. Even al-Khaṭīb al-

¹⁴⁷ Al-Karkhī, *al-Uṣūl allatī ‘alayhā madār furū‘ al-ḥanafiyya*, 84-5.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Jazā’irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:320. Khalīl Mullā Khāṭir agrees; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣahīhayn*, 154.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 15:296.

Baghdādī, a Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī ḥadīth scholar very aware of the rhetorical power of the *Sahīhayn* canon, reserves no place for it in his *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih* (Book of the Jurist and Law Student), a work designed to familiarize ḥadīth scholars with *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Although he notes that *āḥād* ḥadīths agreed upon by the umma yield certainty (*ilm*), he dismissingly lists “the *sunan* and the *sahīh* books (*sihāh*)” in the category of reports that convey only probability (*zann*).¹⁵⁰

One of the few instances in which the epistemological standing of the *Sahīhayn* is mentioned at all in an *uṣūl* work is a denial of any special status. Discussing the well-established fact that *āḥād* ḥadīths yield only probability, the Shāfi‘ī legal theorist Ibn Barhān (d. 518/1124) rejects the opinion of “some *ashāb al-hadīth*” who say that the authenticity of what is narrated in the *Sahīhayn* is absolutely certain (*maqtū‘ bi-sihhatihī*).¹⁵¹ He explains that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not infallible (*ma ṣūm ‘an al-khata’*), since ḥadīth scholars have criticized their work and found errors (*awhām*). If their works were epistemologically certain this would be impossible. Ibn Barhān further rejects any exceptional status for the *Sahīhayn* by arguing that the only evidence supporting this claim, the acceptance of their ḥadīths by consensus, does not prove their absolute authenticity. The Muslim community accepted the two books because they felt that their contents were legally compelling; but not all that is legally compelling is absolutely authentic.¹⁵² Although Ibn Barhān attributes this opinion to more extreme transmission-based scholars, he is in effect demolishing the argument made by his fellow

¹⁵⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb al-faqīh wa al-mutafaqqih*, 1:278.

¹⁵¹ Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, 2:172-3.

¹⁵² Ibn Barhān, *al-Wuṣūl ilā al-uṣūl*, 2:174.

Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs Abū Ishāq al-Isfaraīnī and al-Juwainī. The irony of this situation lies, of course, in Ibn Barhān’s above-mentioned claim about narrating from heretics, where he invokes the umma’s agreement on the *Sahīhayn* to prove his point. The power of the canon thus appears only in the dialogic space of debate and exposition. Even within the scope of one book like Ibn Barhān’s *al-Wuṣūl*, a scholar can wield the canon’s authority against opponents in one instance and then circumscribe it in less combative settings in another.

Although ignored or contested in *usūl* works, the source and degree of the *Sahīhayn* canon’s authority as originally declared by Abū Ishāq al-Isfaraīnī was finally properly acknowledged by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ in the seventh/thirteenth century. In several of his ḥadīth works, he states that the authenticity of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s ḥadīths “is absolutely certain, and epistemologically certain discursive knowledge (*ilm yaqīnī nazari*) occurs with [them].”¹⁵³ He exempts from this claim, however, that “small amount of material (*aḥruf yasīra*)” criticized by major scholars like al-Dāraqutnī, since one could not claim consensus on its authenticity.¹⁵⁴

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s claim proved a tempting foil for later ḥadīth scholars, who have devoted a great deal of energy to arguing for or against its validity. Those who have

¹⁵³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ went through several phases in his opinion on this issue. He states in his *Muqaddima* that he had originally believed that the ḥadīths of the *Sahīhayn*, like all *āḥād* reports, only yield probability (*zann*). Later he realized that the infallible consensus of the umma on the two works meant that what seemed like probability was in fact certainty. In this work and in his *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ asserts this for the contents of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, not just the ḥadīths that they both agreed on. His student, al-Nawawī, tells us that in another (earlier?) work (*juz’*) Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ stated that the truthfulness of what al-Bukhārī and Muslim **both** included is absolutely guaranteed. Ibn Hajar quotes this from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s lost *sharḥ* of Muslim; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:128; Ibn Hajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 112; see n. 154.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 85; idem, *Muqaddima*, 170-1.

supported the notion that the contents of the *Sahīhayn* yield certain discursive knowledge include prominent figures such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathīr, al-‘Irāqī, al-Bulqīnī, and the major late formulators of orthodoxy Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, al-Sakhawī, Zakariyyā al-Anṣarī (d. 926/1520) and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1597).¹⁵⁵ More recently, modern scholars such as Khalīl Mullā Khātīr have joined these ranks. Those who have disagreed with his claim have been far fewer in number: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s virtual disciple, al-Nawawī, his opponent al-‘Izz b. ‘Abd al-Salām, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 733/1333), and the Salafī maverick Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Amīr al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 1182/1768).¹⁵⁶

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s claim, however, has done little to earn the *Sahīhayn* any special absolute status in Sunni epistemology. Although this discussion has attracted the attention of generations of ḥadīth scholars, it has not spread beyond the limited genre of the technical study of ḥadīth science (*muṣṭalahāt al-hadīth*). *Uṣūl* texts, treatises on *madhab* law, theology or ḥadīth-based law (what is referred to as *fīqh al-sunna*) rarely go beyond the established references to *āḥād* or *mutawātir* as epistemological classes for reports. The general inconsequence of the discussion surrounding Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s statement is further revealed by the argument of his opponents. Far from constituting any massive assault on the canon, al-Nawawī’s rebuttal of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ actually affirms the

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 1:25; 618:20; idem, *Ilm al-hadīth*, ed. Mūsā Muḥammad ‘Alī ([Cairo]: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1404/1984), 100; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 30; al-Bulqīnī, 172; Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzhat al-naẓar*, 29 (Ibn Ḥajar adds another qualification to this claim, namely that it only applies to what is in the *Sahīhayn* but does not contradict their other contents); al-Sakhawī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:74 (he follows Ibn Ḥajar); al-Anṣarī, *Fath al-bāqī*, 83-4 (he also follows Ibn Ḥajar); Ahmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā al-hadīthiyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1390/1970), 92.

¹⁵⁶ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 38; al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 6; Ibn Jamā‘a, 128-9; al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Thamarāt al-naẓar fī ilm al-athar*, ed. Rā’id b. Ṣabrī b. Abī ‘Alafā (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āshima, 1417/1996); 131, 137.

canonical role of the *Sahīhayn*. Like Ibn Barhān, al-Nawawī (who is followed by Ibn Jamā'a) only rejects the notion that the community's collective acceptance of the *Sahīhayn* renders their contents epistemologically certain. The fact of this consensus on the two works stands uncontested, as does their compelling power in debate. The special status of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections, al-Nawawī argues, resides in the fact that their contents have been lifted above the need for critical examination.¹⁵⁷

The undeniable proof of the relative nature of the canon's authority, however, lies in the willingness of legal or theological schools to unhesitatingly ignore or criticize a ḥadīth from the *Sahīhayn* if it counters their positions. When this stems from a disagreement over the interpretation of a ḥadīth, it entails no transgression of the canon's authority. The Ḥanafīs al-Sarakhsī and al-Nasafī had, after all, asserted that *muḥaddiths* were not qualified to appreciate the true legal implications of their ḥadīths. On the question of *tasriya*, or tying the udders of a milk-animal-for-sale in order to temporarily increase its milk and attract buyers, Ḥanafīs rejected explicit reports from al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*. While both al-Bukhārī and the Shāfi'ī school followed a ḥadīth which granted a buyer deceived by such a scheme the right to a refund and an amount of dates in compensation, Ḥanafīs held that the original sale was valid. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī explicitly states that this ḥadīth is authentic and found in the *Sahīhayn*. Yet it contradicts juridical reasoning based on the Qur’ān and sunna and thus cannot be acted on. According to Ḥanafī jurisprudence, the Qur’ān and juridical reasoning dictated that a

¹⁵⁷ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:128.

transaction only requires the health or good quality of the item sold (*salāmat al-mabī*). A paucity of milk does not compromise this.¹⁵⁸

The Mālikī Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī also asserted the jurists' right to disagree with the legal implications of ḥadīths from the *Sahīhayn* or their authors' legal assumptions. He states that "al-Bukhārī is deferred to in the science of ḥadīth, but not in jurisprudence (*īlm al-fiqh*)...." Al-Bājī then refers to some of al-Bukhārī's chapter titles to show how he did not derive the correct rulings from his ḥadīths and that he might even have sometimes hunted for proof texts to support his own legal opinions.¹⁵⁹

Not all rejections of ḥadīths from the *Sahīhayn*, however, stemmed from differences in interpretation. Adherents of legal and theological schools sometimes actually criticized their authenticity. The Ḥanafī school, for example, rejected material from both the *Sahīhs* if their narrations proved too problematic. ḥadīths dealing with the issue of the Prophet's prayer in the event of an eclipse (*ḥadīth al-kusūf*), for example, proved exceptionally difficult to reconcile with one another. When an eclipse surprised the Muslim community, the Prophet left his house and convened a public prayer. The ḥadīths detailing his prayer, however, disagree on the number of times the Prophet bowed (*rukū'*). The Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar al-Zaylaī attempts to navigate the impossibly

¹⁵⁸ A sizable minority opinion within the Ḥanafī school, following the work of Ibn Abān, requires a narrator to have sufficient legal mastery of the materiel he transmits in order for his ḥadīth to supersede *qiyās*. Abū Hurayra, who is the Companion who transmits this ḥadīth, is not considered so qualified. See, for example, al-Shāshī, *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*, 272; 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Ahmād al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 2:381. For discussions of *tasriya*, see Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 4:458-60; al-Laknawī, *Zafar al-amānī*, 66. For this ḥadīth, known as *ḥadīth al-Muṣarrāt*; see *Fath* # 2148; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-buyū'*, *bāb al-nahy li'l-bā'i'an lā yuḥaffila al-ibil*.

¹⁵⁹ Nāṣir al-Dīn Ahmād b. Muḥammad b. al-Munayyir al-Mālikī, *al-Mutawārī ʻalā abwāb al-Bukhārī*, ed. 'Alī Ḥasan 'Alī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1990), 36. See also, al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:5 for the author's opinion.

confused web of conflicting *matns* for these ḥadīths in his *Naṣb al-rāya*, where he presents the contradictory reports from within the *Ṣahīḥayn* and the other Six Books.

The most reliable version according to al-Zaylāī is that narrated by ‘Ā’isha describing only one bow, while the others have two, three, four or five bows.¹⁶⁰ As a result, the Indian Ḥanafī Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1886-7) concludes that his school abandoned the *Ṣahīḥayn*’s ḥadīths on this issue, since they had “become grossly problematic (*iḍtaraba iḍtirāb^{an} fāhish^{an}*).”¹⁶¹

Perhaps the most starkly partisan criticism of a ḥadīth in the *Ṣahīḥayn*, however, occurs at the hands of the Shāfi‘ī school that had played such an important role in canonizing the two works. Muslim includes a narration by the Companion Anas b. Mālik in which he states that he had prayed behind the Prophet and the first three Caliphs but had heard none of them say the *basmala* out loud. Shāfi‘īs from the time of al-Dāraqutnī and al-Bayhaqī criticized this narration from *Ṣahīḥ Muslim*, which explicitly contradicted the *madhab*’s stance on the *basmala*. After a lengthy chapter in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā* featuring ḥadīths showing that one should say the *basmala* out loud during prayer, al-Bayhaqī has a chapter on ḥadīths arguing the opposite. For each tradition (cluster of narrations) opposing his school’s stance he finds some problem undermining its reliability. Al-Bayhaqī notes that the ḥadīth of Anas (narrated via al-Awzāī ← Qatāda b.

¹⁶⁰ Al-Zaylāī, *Naṣb al-rāya*, 2:225-31. ‘Ā’isha’s narration can be found in *Fath* # 1058, *Ṣahīḥ al-Bukārī*: *kitāb al-kusūf*, *bāb lā tankasifū al-shams li-mawt aḥad*. For a brief sample of the conflicting narrations of this tradition, see: **Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī**: *kitāb al-kusūf*, *bāb tūl al-sujūd fī al-kusūf*, *bāb al-ṣalāt fī kusūf al-qamar*, *bāb al-rak‘a al-ūlā fī al-kusūf atwal*; **Ṣahīḥ Muslim**: *kitāb al-kusūf*, *bāb ṣalāt al-kusūf*, *bāb mā ‘urida ‘alā al-Nabī (s) min amr al-janna wa al-nār*, *bāb dhikr al-nidā’ bi-ṣalāt al-kusūf salāt jāmi‘a*; **Sunan Abī Dāwūd**: *kitāb al-istiṣqā*, *bāb man qāla arba‘ raka‘at*.

¹⁶¹ Al-Laknawī, *Zafar al-amānī*, 400; al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-hādd*, 111. The Ḥanafīs stuck with the “default in prayer (*al-aṣl fī al-ṣalāt*)” namely that *rukū‘* occurs only once (*al-tawāḥhud fī al-rukū‘*).

Di‘āma) is featured in *Sahīh Muslim*, and he mentions that this and several other narrations through Qatāda all have sections specifically saying that “I did not hear any of them say *Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm...*” or “and they did not say [it]... out loud.” Al-Bayhaqī rebuts these narrations, however, by arguing that others had narrated this hadith from Shu‘ba ← Qatāda ← Anas without the explicit negation of the *basmala*. Relying on al-Dāraqutnī’s opinion, al-Bayhaqī favors this latter version of the ḥadīth, which al-Bukhārī includes in his *Sahīh*.¹⁶²

Oddly, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ literally uses Muslim’s narration through Anas as a textbook example of a flaw (*illa*) occurring in the text of a ḥadīth, an example that became enshrined in the pedagogical *Alfiyya* poem that al-‘Irāqī composed for ḥadīth students based on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s *Muqaddima*. Following the *takhrīj* ranking system, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ favored the version of the ḥadīth agreed upon by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, without Anas’ addition of “not one of them said [the *basmala*] out loud.” He further undermines Anas’ narration by citing one Sa‘īd b. Yazīd asking Anas about the *basmala*, to which Anas replies, “indeed you have asked me about something on which I have memorized no [ḥadīths], nor has anyone before you asked.”¹⁶³ Later prominent Shāfi‘īs such as al-‘Irāqī, Ibn Hajar and al-Anṣārī follow Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s argument.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 2:73-76, *kitāb al-ṣalāt / bāb man qāla lā yajharu bihā; Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-ṣalāt / bāb 240 / hadīth #1*; al-Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, 1:524; al-Dāraqutnī, *Sunan al-Dāraqutnī*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Hāshim al-Madanī, 4 vols. in 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Mahāsin li'l-Tibā'a, 1386/1966), 1:316. Al-Dāraqutnī does not note that any of these narrations appear in *Sahīh Muslim*, nor does he include this criticism in his *Kitāb al-tatabbu'*.

¹⁶³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 261. Al-‘Irāqī remarks how bizarre it is for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ to use a ḥadīth from Muslim as an example of a flawed narration after asserting that everything in the *Sahīhayn* is absolutely certain. He justifiably explains this, however, by adding that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had exempted material that had been criticized by great critics like al-Dāraqutnī from this claim; al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 98.

¹⁶⁴ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 98, 100; Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 2:289-91; al-Anṣārī, *Fath al-bāqī*, 198-200; cf. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 2:228-31.

Scholars like Ibn Ḥajar could not conceal the clear partisan motivations for criticizing Muslim's report and noted that opinions on its authenticity break down along *madhab* lines between those who affirm saying the *basmala* out loud and those, like the Ḥanafīs, who do not. As a Shāfi‘ī, Ibn Ḥajar ultimately sided with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's criticism of Muslim. His Ḥanafī nemesis in Cairo, Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451), consequently mocked him for rejecting a perfectly valid narration he would otherwise have considered authentic.¹⁶⁵

Leading Ash‘arī theologians such as al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazzālī also severely criticized a ḥadīth appearing in both the *Sahīhayn* in which the Prophet prays for the forgiveness of the most flamboyant hypocrite (*munāfiq*) in Medina, the Khazraj leader Abdallāh b. Ubayy.¹⁶⁶ Ibn ‘Umar narrates that when the Prophet went to pray over the deceased ‘Abdallāh’s grave, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb objected. He reminded the Prophet that God had forbidden Muslims from praying for the forgiveness of hypocrites, referring to the Qur’ānic verse “pray for their forgiveness or do not pray, even if you pray seventy times God will not forgive them (Qur’ān: 9: 80).”¹⁶⁷ The Prophet replies that in the verse God had “given [him] a choice (*khayyaranī Allah*),” and that he “will exceed seventy [times].”

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Intiqād al-i ‘tirād fī al-radd ‘alā al-‘Aynī fī sharh al-Bukhārī*, ed. Hamdī b. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī and Subḥī b. Jāsim al-Sāmarrā’ī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1413/1993), 1:369. For a discussion of Ibn Ḥajar’s astonishingly ‘academic’ rivalry with al-‘Aynī, see Anne F. Broadbridge, “Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 85-108.

¹⁶⁶ See *Sahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb tafsīr, sūra 9, bāb 13; Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-tafsīr/surat al-Tawba/Bāb 13.*

¹⁶⁷ “*istaghfir lahum aw lā tastaghfir lahum, in tastaghfir lahum sab ̄ina marrat̄an fa-lan yaghfira Allahu lahum.*”

This ḥadīth caused a great uproar amongst Ash‘arī theologians and legal theorists, because it implied that the Prophet felt that he could circumvent the command implicit in the verse, namely not to pray for hypocrites. Ibn Ḥajar explains that a great number of prominent scholars had therefore attacked the authenticity of the ḥadīth despite its widespread narrations and the *Shaykhayn*'s agreement on it. He quotes Nāṣir al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), who states that Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī said: “it is not possible to accept the ḥadīth nor that the Prophet said it.” In his *Taqrīb*, al-Bāqillānī supposedly said that “this ḥadīth is one of the *āḥād* reports whose soundness (*thubūtuhā*) is not known.”¹⁶⁸ Al-Juwainī says in his *Burhān* that “the *ahl al-ḥadīth* have not deemed this sound.”¹⁶⁹ Al-Ghazzālī agrees in his *Mustasfā*, asserting that “this is an *āḥād* report (*khabar wāhid*) which cannot be used to establish proof (*hujja*) for the implications of speech (*fī ithbāt al-lugha*), besides it is more probably (*zahara*) not *sahīh*”¹⁷⁰

Ironically, al-Ghazzālī’s objection to this ḥadīth demonstrates the paradox of the *Sahīhayn* canon and its restriction to relative space. Although he undeniably questions the authenticity of this ḥadīth in his *Mustasfā*, earlier in his *Mankhūl* he had defended it. There he insists that the Prophet’s actions in the ḥadīth neither compromised the truth of the Qur’ānic verse nor the reliability of the report. God had given him the choice to ask for forgiveness or not.¹⁷¹ Al-Ghazzālī wrote his *Mustasfā* many years after the *Mankhūl*,

¹⁶⁸ I was unable to find the statement quoted by Ibn Ḥajar in al-Bāqillānī’s *Kitāb al-tamhīd* or the 1413/1993 Mu’assasat al-Risāla edition of his *al-Taqrīb wa al-irshād*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 8:430-1.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Juwainī, *al-Burhān*, 1:458.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mustasfā*, 2:87. For my rendering of *mafhūm* and *lugha*, see Bernard Weiss, *The Search of God’s Law*, 117; Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 58.

¹⁷¹ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mankhūl*, 212.

and it is possible that he simply changed his opinion on the ḥadīth. Context, however, provides a more convincing explanation. The *Mankhūl* is generally a polemical work directed at the Ḥanafī school. In it, the ḥadīth about the Prophet praying for ‘Abdallāh’s forgiveness plays a role in the author’s defense of the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī notion of “*mafhūm al-kalām*,” or methods for deriving the indirect legal implications of a divine injunction. Specifically, al-Ghazzālī is defending this notion against Ḥanafī critics who reject the authenticity of the ḥadīth and thus its applicability as evidence for *mafhūm al-kalām*, a type of proof considered invalid among Ḥanafis.¹⁷² In his *Mustaṣfā*, a pedagogical tool written many years later after al-Ghazzālī had sworn off debate and returned to teaching at the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī-dominated Naysābūr Niẓāmiyya, he could comfortably question material that seemed to contradict the tenets of Ash‘arī theory.¹⁷³ As a young firebrand polemicist in Baghdad, however, the writer of the *Mankhūl* had to defend his Shāfi‘ī school against its Ḥanafī opponents.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

In the mid fifth/eleventh century, the *Sahīhayn* canon stood ready to fulfill important functions for Muslim scholars in cities like Baghdad and Naysābūr. Studied

¹⁷² For a discussion of a Ḥanafī perspective on one of the dimensions of *mafhūm al-kalām*, *dalīl al-khiṭāb* (i.e. the indirect implication from an injunction, so that if the Prophet says pay tithe on a certain kind of sheep one need not pay it on others), see Marie Bernand, “Ḥanafī *Uṣūl al-fiqh* through a Manuscript of al-Ğaşşāş,” 628; Əḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Sa‘ātī (d. 694/1294-5), *Nihāyat al-wuṣūl ilā ʿilm al-uṣūl*, ed. Sa‘d b. ‘Gharīr b. Mahdī al-Sulamī, 2 vols. (Mecca: Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā, 1418-19/1997-99), 2: 560 ff.

¹⁷³ For al-Ghazzālī’s oath never to engage in debate again, see Brown, “The Last Days of al-Ghazzālī,” 95.

¹⁷⁴ Abbās Eqbāl, ed., *Makātib-e fārsī-ye Ghazzālī beh nām-e fadā’el al-anām min rasā’el ḥojjet al-eslām* (Tehran: Ketābforūshī-ye Ibn Sīnā, 1333/[1954]), 12; George F. Hourani, “A Revised Chronology of Ghazali’s Writings,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 2 (1984): 290-1, 301.

extensively by the *Sahīhayn* Network, focused by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī into a measure of authenticity and authorized by scholars like Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī and al-Juwaynī, the *Sahīhayn* provided an important convention for scholarly debate and exposition. In the time when the legal discourse of the *madrasa* was drifting farther and farther from the specialized study of ḥadīth, the two works became the most authoritative ḥadīth references for jurists more narrowly focused on law. Whether used in polemics or to buttress the proof texts relied on by a particular school in the language of a common convention, the *Sahīhayn* served as the measure of authenticity for prominent Shāfi'īs, Ḥanbalīs and Mālikīs from the mid fifth/eleventh century on. In the eighth/fourteenth century even the ḥadīth-wary Ḥanafī school found itself grudgingly forced to adopt the common measure of authenticity. The canon's authority, however, was not absolute. It was a collaborative illusion summoned to provide common ground among rivals. Alone, within a particular legal or theological school, the authoritative edifice of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's ḥadīths collapsed before interpretive differences or partisan agendas.

The vaunted station of the two books, however, was not simply due to the declarations of scholars like al-Isfarāyīnī or al-Wā'ilī. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works consistently bested other respected collections used for *takhrīj* in debate by meeting the highest levels of excellence established by the Sunni ḥadīth tradition as it reached its full maturity between the fifth/eleventh and seventh/thirteenth centuries. Implicit in this success, however, lay the potential for serious tension surrounding the place and role of the *Sahīhayn* canon. Although scholars attempting to systematize the Sunni study of ḥadīth like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ often employed the *Sahīhayn* as the

exemplum that set the rule, the Sunni ḥadīth tradition operated according to rules external to the two books. As exemplified by the reaction to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s attempt to replace the living *isnād* with the *Sahīhayn*, here lay the seeds of tension between the continuing practice of ḥadīth critics and the institution of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. If the canon was to maintain its air of compelling authority in the arena of discourse, a canonical culture would have to be forged to extend the two books the charity required to reconcile this tension.

VII.

The Principle of Charity and the Creation of Canonical Culture

Introduction

By the end of the fifth/eleventh century, the *Sahīhayn* had become synonymous with authenticity in Sunni discussions of the Prophet's legacy as well as an exemplum of excellence in ḥadīth scholarship. The institution of the canon, however, faced potent challenges from two different fronts. First, the pre-canonical past of the two works was fraught with fissures. The initial negative reactions to the *sahīh* movement, al-Bukhārī's checkered career and the fact that Naysābūr scholars had ranked Muslim's collection above that of al-Bukhārī all threatened the stability of the canon. Secondly, there existed inconsistencies between al-Bukhārī and Muslim's work on the one hand and the conventions of ḥadīth criticism on the other, which had resulted in criticisms of the *Sahīhayn* by scholars like al-Dāraqūṭnī. In the post-canonical world, these inconsistencies created a tension between the institution of the canon and the Sunni ḥadīth tradition as it matured fully in the early seventh/thirteenth century.

To protect and maintain the canonicity of the *Sahīhayn* would require reconciling the canonical vision of the two works and the personas of their authors with both their pre-canonical past and the external rules of ḥadīth scholarship. This would entail reading the texts of al-Bukhārī and Muslim according to the Principle of Charity, which calls for interpreting a text in the best possible light in order to bring external notions of truth and those presupposed within the text into harmony. Just as Davidson described the Principle of Charity's function in speech communities, so would participants in elaborating Sunni

scholarly culture treat the texts of al-Bukhārī and Muslim with charity “in order to preserve a reasonable theory of belief” in the canon.¹

The worldview that demands the extension of charity to canonical texts can be termed the books’ canonical culture. It is the environment created and cultivated by the community to which the canon is bound, by an audience that recognizes that “canonizing a text... requires a commitment to make the best of it.”² Canonical culture rereads history and text to reconcile them with canonical authority. The saga of al-Bukhārī and Muslim can thus be viewed as a process of creating and maintaining the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, which emerged with the canonization of the two works in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries. The earliest surviving elaboration of the canonical culture consists of the image of al-Bukhārī and Muslim forged by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071). The personas of the two scholars that he crafts in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* established the dominant themes of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture: the place of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their works at the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship; the vindication of al-Bukhārī from the scandal of the created *lafz*; al-Bukhārī’s superiority to Muslim; and the simultaneous complementary relationship between the two. Even after constructing the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, however, generations of scholars would resort to interpretive gymnastics and editorial revisions of history in order to maintain it.

Mirroring the canonical culture established around the personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim was the extension of charity to the texts of the *Sahīhayn* themselves. Both before and after their canonization, the collection and criticism of ḥadīth functioned according to

¹ Davidson, 196.

² Halbertal, 28.

rules that were external to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works. As the Sunni ḥadīth tradition became increasingly systematized with the writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and even more so with those of Ibn al-Šalāh (d. 643/1245), the conventions of ḥadīth scholarship emerged as an institution with which the canon stood in potential tension. Examining the issues of obfuscation in transmission (*tadlīs*) and the criticism of transmitters, we shall see that the *Sahīhayn* sometimes fell short of the established standards of ḥadīth scholarship. Preserving the authority of the canon thus depended on charitable interpretations of the works that exempted them from these rules.

Divergences between the methods of the *Shaykhayn* and other ḥadīth critics had manifested themselves concretely in critiques of the *Sahīhayn*. Protecting the canonical culture would thus require three of its great proponents, Ibn al-Šalāh, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar, to employ the Principle of Charity and their mastery of the ḥadīth tradition to resolve these outstanding criticisms of the canon.

The Beginnings of Canonical Culture: between 390-460 / 1000-1070

From the evidence available, the canonical culture surrounding the *Sahīhayn* seems to have emerged in Baghdad in the period between al-Dāraqūṭnī's career in the mid to late fourth/tenth century and that of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in the mid fifth/eleventh. Considering the direct relationship that Halbertal posits between the canonicity of texts and the charity with which they are treated, it is no surprise that the construction of a canonical culture surrounding the *Sahīhayn* occurred at the same time as the emergence of the canon itself. Between approximately 390/1000 and 460/1070 the ḥadīth-scholar environment in Baghdad transformed from one open to criticism of the

Sahīhayn to a canonical culture that demanded the extension of charity to al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Although Ibn ‘Ammār al-Shahīd, al-Ismā‘īlī and al-Dāraqutnī had all exhibited profound interest in al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections, they had no compunction about criticizing the *Sahīhayn* if they felt their authors had erred. Neither did these fourth/tenth century scholars feel obliged to qualify or apologize for such critiques. Their evaluations merely represented an aspect of scholarly interest in the *Sahīhayn*, two works which did not differ ontologically from any other ḥadīth book. Only after their canonization had endowed al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections with an authoritative role and significance for communal identification did criticizing the works pose any threat. It is thus in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries that we see the elaboration of a canonical culture around the personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that required scholars to treat them with the utmost charity.

The construction of this canonical culture first becomes evident in the work of al-Dāraqutnī’s student Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī (d. 401/1010-11), a member of the Baghdad knot who penned a work defending *Sahīh Muslim* against some of al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms. His *Kitāb al-ajwiba* (Book of Responses) might have been nothing more than an exercise in objective scholarship: al-Dāraqutnī had made certain criticisms that Abū Mas‘ūd believed were incorrect. In the work, however, it becomes immediately clear that Abū Mas‘ūd’s agenda bears far more significance: he aims primarily at exonerating Muslim’s scholarly legacy from any sort of blame. Even when he admits that al-Dāraqutnī’s critiques are correct, for example, he tries to shift the blame away from Muslim to transmitters in the *isnād*. “And as for attributing the oversight to

Muslim among the others, no...,” he states in one case.³ In two instances of inappropriate Addition, Abū Mas‘ūd admits that al-Dāraqutnī was correct in objecting to Muslim’s inclusion of the narration. He defends Muslim, however, by saying that he did not have the correct version at his disposal. If he did, he would have taken it instead.⁴ In three instances he argues charitably that Muslim included the problematic version only to demonstrate its flaw.⁵

Abū Mas‘ūd’s defensiveness about Muslim’s work stands in stark contrast to al-Dāraqutnī’s impartial study.⁶ At one point al-Dāraqutnī criticizes a narration noted by Muslim but acknowledges that the scholar ultimately decided to leave it out of his *Sahīh*. For al-Dāraqutnī, whose scholarly interest lay in identifying flawed narrations regardless of where he found them, this was still worthy of note. Abū Mas‘ūd, however, objects angrily “so if he left it out, what is the meaning of attributing error to him [Muslim] in this!?”⁷

³ Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*; 152, 321.

⁴ Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*; 168, 212.

⁵ Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*; 159, 180, 188.

⁶ Yet we know that Abū Mas‘ūd also criticized some narrations in *Sahīh Muslim* in his *Atrāf al-Sahīhayn*. These criticisms, however, seem to have been restricted to Muslim’s auxiliary narrations (*mutābi’at/shawāhid*) or to have been citations of earlier criticisms such as those of al-Dāraqutnī. On one such occasion, Abū Mas‘ūd vaguely notes a “disagreement” on one of five auxiliary narrations Muslim provides for his two principal narrations of a hadīth in which the Prophet tells his followers not to kill an enemy if they have professed faith in Islam. In another case Abū Mas‘ūd follows al-Dāraqutnī in criticizing one of Muslim’s narration for omitting a transmitter. These criticisms are preserved in the surviving elements of al-Dimashqī’s *Atrāf* and also in Abū ‘Alī al-Ghassānī al-Jayyānī’s *al-Tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi’ā fi Sahīh al-imām Muslim*. See, al-Jayyānī, *al-Tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi’ā fi Sahīh al-imām Muslim*, ed. Muhammad Abū al-Fadl ([Rabat]: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1421/2000), 69 (*Sahīh Muslim: kitāb al-imān, bāb tahrīm qatl al-kāfir ba’da an qāla lā illā illā Allah*), 76. See also, Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Atrāf al-Sahīhayn*; 3b, 26b.

⁷ Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī, *Kitāb al-ajwiba*, 264.

Within a few decades of al-Dāraqutnī's death the charity called for by Abū Mas'ud had become expected. In Baghdad, the canonical culture surrounding al-Bukhārī in particular seems to have gelled by approximately 450/1060. The writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī indicate a prevailing expectation of charity in discussing al-Bukhārī's works among ḥadīth scholars. Al-Khaṭīb composed a book dealing with the overall problem of mistaken identities in biographical dictionaries of ḥadīth transmitters, entitling it *Kitāb mūdih awhām al-jam' wa al-tafrīq* (The Book of Clarifying Errors of Conflation or Distinction). Although this work criticizes a whole slew of ḥadīth scholars, al-Khaṭīb opens the book with a mistake made by al-Bukhārī in his *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*. He follows this with a fascinating statement:

It may be that some people who read these lines will assume the worst of us, believing that we intend to impugn our predecessors, exposing the faults of our venerable *shaykhs* and the scholars of yesteryear. Far from it, for by the beams of their light do we see, and by following in their clear footsteps do we distinguish [truth from falsehood]. Indeed, it is by their well-worn path that we circumvent error. Our relationship to them is nothing more than what Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā' (d. 154/771 or 157/774) said (he gives *isnād*): 'Compared to those who have come before us, we are nothing but a tiny root on the base of a great date palm.' Indeed, when God creates luminaries among men and raises up a leader for each community, he requires those that they guide to adhere to the truth that they illuminate. [Yet] God obliges those who stand by the truth and follow in their footsteps and are blessed with understanding to illuminate what [earlier scholars] neglected and to correct their oversights. This, because [these earlier scholars] were not immune to mistakes and were not totally protected from the ugly face of error. This is the right of the learned scholar over the student, and the obligation of those that follow to those who precede. We hope that this apology will be clear to whomever comes upon our book, the *History of the City of Peace (Tārīkh Baghdād)*... , for in it we have presented, from among the virtues of al-Bukhārī, material sufficient enough to clear away any suspicion of our opinion of him as well as any accusations concerning our correcting his errors...⁸

⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb mūdih awhām al-jam' wa al-tafrīq*, 1:5-6.

Al-Khaṭīb continues with a quote from al-Muzanī, saying “if a book were looked over seventy times there would still be a mistake in it, for God has not permitted that a book be *sahīh* except His book (i.e. the Qur’ān).” He quotes Ibn Ḥanbal’s son ‘Abdallāh as saying, “I read a book to my father [for checking] thirteen times, and on the fourteenth time he came up with a mistake, so he put the book down and said, ‘indeed I have denied that any book could be correct (*yāsiḥḥa*) except the book of God most high.’”⁹

Al-Khaṭīb’s tortured apology for even minor criticisms of al-Bukhārī’s identification of ḥadīth transmitters reflects an intense anxiety over reactions to his work and the powerful canonical culture that evidently surrounded the scholarly persona of al-Bukhārī by that time. Al-Khaṭīb’s homiletic invoking the sacred duty of scholarly vigilance, phrased in the idiom of the ḥadīth student’s pietistic reverence for his teachers, represents an effort to counterbalance the charity the author feels he is expected to show al-Bukhārī. Referring his readers to the formidable accolades he grants al-Bukhārī in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* (whose biography is perhaps the longest of any figure in the work) seeks to placate potential critics by calling their attention to al-Khaṭīb’s contribution and obedience to canonical culture. Read against the grain, al-Khaṭīb’s agonized preemptive defense suggests a scholarly atmosphere totally different from the one in which al-Dāraqutnī, a fellow Shāfi‘ī of Baghdad, had freely criticized al-Bukhārī less than a century earlier. When students asked him about several dozen transmitters from the *Sahīhayn* that al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915) had criticized, al-Dāraqutnī bluntly seconded most

⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb mūḍih awḥām al-jam‘ wa al-tafrīq*, 1:6.

of al-Nasā'ī's evaluations.¹⁰ Although al-Dāraqutnī's *Kitāb al-tatabbu'* contains serious and substantive criticisms of the *Sahīhayn*, its author felt no need to justify or apologize for his critique.

We cannot be sure of exactly whom al-Khaṭīb was so wary in his minor criticisms of al-Bukhārī. We know that he faced consistent intimidation from the Ḥanbalīs, from whose ranks he had defected and who publicly questioned his transmission-based Sunni allegiance.¹¹ Considering the ferocity with which the Shāfi'ī Abū Mas'ūd al-Dimashqī had defended Muslim's *Sahīh*, however, we can easily imagine that al-Khaṭīb's fellow Shāfi'ī ḥadīth scholars in Baghdad may have aroused his concern just as much as the Ḥanbalīs. Because we do not know when al-Khaṭīb wrote the *Kitāb mūdih al-awhām*, we cannot precisely date the context in which he was writing any time before his death in 463/1071. Based on the absence of any apologies in al-Dāraqutnī's critique of the *Sahīhayn*, the vehemence of Abū Mas'ūd's eventual rebuttal of his teacher and finally al-Khaṭīb's writing, we can conclude that in Baghdad a canonical culture arose around the *Sahīhayn* between 390/400 and 460/1070.

The Character of the Canonical Culture: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Defining the Personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim is a question of how the Muslim community has viewed these two scholars' legacies. Their historiographical personas thus form as much a part of the text of the canon as their actual books. The extent to

¹⁰ See al-Dāraqutnī, "Dhikr aqwām akhraja lahum al-Bukhārī wa Muslim fī kitābayhimā wa qāṣafahum al-Nasā'ī," MS Ahmet III 624, Topkapı Sarayı, İstanbul: fols. 253a -254b.

¹¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:225.

which Islamic civilization has identified the *Sahīhayn* with their authors is illustrated by their agency in the formulaic statement, “al-Bukhārī/Muslim included it...” or equating the works with their compilers in common phrases such as “the ḥadīth is in *Muslim*.” Indeed, the skill, piety and critical rigor of the two scholars served as the basis on which their authority was founded. Questioning al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s judgment or devotion to the Prophet’s legacy thus constituted a threat to the *Sahīhayn* canon itself. Although al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s apology did not even involve al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* per se, the idea of criticizing that expert’s judgment in his *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* proved sufficiently alarming to prompt an apology.

Al-Khaṭīb’s biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim provide our earliest extant expressions of the canonical culture surrounding the *Shaykhayn*. As al-Khaṭīb himself informs us, he intended his biography of al-Bukhārī in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* to describe the scholar with the proper reverence. Although al-Khalīlī’s brief biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well as fragments of al-Ḥākim’s entries have survived, the *Tārīkh Baghdād* offers us the earliest complete and, indeed, self-conscious expression of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture. The majority of biographies in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* consist only of reports from earlier sources that al-Khaṭīb presents through their *isnāds*. As a result, his role in crafting al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s biographies is that of an editor who constructs an image of the two scholars by choosing selectively from the vast pool of historiographical raw material about them.

Like all later Sunni biographers, al-Khaṭīb freely ladled out hyperbolic descriptions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s virtues, as well as those of other great scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal. There was never a dearth of praise for the guardians of the faith. Al-

Khaṭīb therefore leaves the reader with no doubt as to al-Bukhārī or Muslim's prodigious memories, piety or mastery of ḥadīth. What concerns us here is not the mere quantity of positive evaluations, however, but rather the picture that such praise paints, the contours of the personas it shapes or the unspoken problems it intends to address. A canonical culture must reconcile the history that was with the history that should have been. The culture that al-Khaṭīb elaborates thus directly addresses the most prominent issues in the saga of the *Sahīhayn*: the proper relationship between the *Shaykhayn* and the greatest generation of their teachers, appropriately acknowledging the accomplishments that the *Sahīhayn* presented, al-Bukhārī's scandal of the *lafz* of the Qur'ān, and the proper ranking of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

We have seen the problem that al-Bukhārī and Muslim's superlative scholarship presented for the atavistic logic of the ḥadīth-scholar community in the tale of al-Bukhārī plagiarizing his *Sahīh* from his teacher. Scholars such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Rāmhurmuzī did not perceive the *Sahīhayn* or their authors as superseding the greatest generation of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Maṭīn and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī. It was not until the writings of Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5) that al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the *sahīh* movement as a whole began to be seen as the pinnacle of the ḥadīth tradition. The *Sahīhayn* canonical culture would have to correct this imbalance.

Al-Khaṭīb's treatment of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus leaves little doubt about their superiority over their teachers. He cites one Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Madīnī as asserting that al-Bukhārī possessed better legal acumen (*afqah*) and was more perceptive (*absar*) than Ibn Ḥanbal. When someone objects to this provocative statement (as al-Khaṭīb's reader might), al-Madanī replies that “if you looked at al-Bukhārī and Mālik you

would see they were the same in juristic knowledge and ḥadīth.”¹² Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khaṭṭāf is quoted as saying that al-Bukhārī is more knowledgeable than Ishāq b. Rāhawayh and Ibn Ḥanbal by twenty degrees.¹³ Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Bukhārī, the great scholar’s grandson, heard his grandfather say that he did not humble himself (*istaṣghara*) in the presence of anyone except ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, but admitted that “perhaps I still mentioned ḥadīths he did not know (*ugharribu ‘alayhi*).”¹⁴ Al-Khaṭṭāb relies on a narration through al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī from Muslim’s colleague Aḥmad b. Salama, who saw “Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī place Muslim before the *shaykhs* of their time in the knowledge of authentic ḥadīths.”¹⁵

In the case of al-Bukhārī, his disgrace at the hands of the über-Sunnis in the *lafz* scandal had tarnished his name in the eyes of prominent architects of the ḥadīth tradition, such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī. The narrative constructed by al-Khaṭṭāb, however, is one of vindication in which al-Bukhārī righteously stood by what would become the orthodox

¹² Al-Khaṭṭāb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:19; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:86; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:256; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 667.

¹³ Al-Khaṭṭāb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:27; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:78; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:221, 225 (this includes an additional description of al-Bukhārī as “*al-taqī al-naqī al-‘ālim alladhī lam arā mithlahū*”); cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, ed. Fu’ād Sayyid et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1405/1985), 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671.

¹⁴ Al-Khaṭṭāb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:17; Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 125 (without the comment about knowing more ḥadīths); Ibn Abī Ya’lā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 1: 311; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:81-2; al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252), *Asāmī shuyūkh Abī ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra al-Bukhārī*, ed. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-‘Imrān ([Mecca]: Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, 1419/[1998]), 2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:252; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi l-wafayāt*, vol. 2, ed. S. Dederding (Istanbul: Maṭba‘at Wizārat al-Ma‘ārif, 1949), 208; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 669.

¹⁵ Al-Khaṭṭāb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 27; al-Qādī ‘Iyād, *Ikmāl al-mu‘īm*, 1:79; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:89-90; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 61; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:184; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37.

position on the Qur’ān.¹⁶ As the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī al-Subkī later explains, “every reasonable person knows that our wordings are from among our deeds, and that our deeds are created, and that thus our wordings are created.”¹⁷ Al-Bukhārī’s contemporary Muhammad b. Khushnām is invoked as a witness that al-Bukhārī denied the accusation that he believed the Qur’ān itself was created, insisting instead that the acts of men are created. He states that he will not change his position until proven wrong.¹⁸ For al-Bukhārī, certain of the truth of his position, “the complimenter and the detractor are the same.”¹⁹ Al-Khaṭīb relies on al-Hākim for the comeuppance of the *amīr* of Bukhara, who had used al-Bukhārī’s stance on the *lafz* of the Qur’ān to expel him from the city: he was imprisoned less than month later by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. As for Ḥurayth b. Abī al-Waraqā’, the Ḥanafī scholar whose assistance the *amīr* had enlisted in condemning al-Bukhārī, members of his family were afflicted by suffering too terrible to describe.²⁰ To further assure al-Bukhārī’s orthodox standing, al-Khaṭīb narrates a report through al-Hākim that invokes the authority of a vehement opponent of the created

¹⁶ For the Ash‘arī exposition of this stance, see al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā’ wa al-sifāt*, 2:17 ff.; al-Juwainī, *Textes apologétiques de Ġuwainī*, ed. and trans. Michel Allard (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1968), 146. By the mid fifth/eleventh century even moderate Hanbalīs, such as Ibn al-Farrā’, acknowledged that the wording of the Qur’ān was created; Ibn al-Farrā’, *al-Masā’il al-‘aqdiyya*, 77 ff. Ibn Abī Ya‘lā’s biography of al-Bukhārī includes a report that does not uphold this image, but rather has al-Bukhārī telling Ibn Ḥanbal that anyone who says that the *lafz* of the Qur’ān is created is a “*Jahmī kāfir*.” This is almost certainly an early Ḥanbalī attempt to exonerate al-Bukhārī, since his *Khalq af‘al al-‘ibād* leaves no doubt that he did in fact believe that the wording of the Qur’ān was created; Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 1:259.

¹⁷ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2: 230.

¹⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:94.

¹⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29.

²⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:32; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:97; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a‘yān*, 4:190 (Ibn Khallikān provides the most copious information about the *amīr*’s fate in Baghdad); al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:271-2; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:233; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:30; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 680; cf. Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātiḥ sharḥ Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ* (Cairo: al-Matba‘a al-Maymūniyya, 1891), 1:14.

Qur'ān, Ibn Khuzayma, saying that “there is no one under the heavens more knowledgeable in ḥadīth than al-Bukhārī.”²¹

Furthermore, al-Khaṭīb portrays al-Bukhārī’s accuser, the great *muḥaddith* Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, as both inferior to al-Bukhārī in the science of ḥadīth and motivated by petty jealousy. Al-Khaṭīb cites al-Ḥusayn al-‘Ijlī as describing Abū Zur‘a and Abū Hātim al-Rāzī listening to al-Bukhārī attentively, adding that he was “more knowledgeable than al-Dhuhlī in this and that.”²² Another contemporary of al-Bukhārī reports that he saw him and al-Dhuhlī walking together in a funeral procession. Al-Dhuhlī was asking al-Bukhārī questions, to which he replied with such ease it was as if he were reading one of the shortest *sūras* of the Qur’ān (no. 112, *sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*).²³ Al-Khaṭīb then includes two separate reports that al-Dhuhlī began attacking al-Bukhārī for his stance on the wording of the Qur’ān only after his students began deserting him and flocking to al-Bukhārī’s study circle.²⁴

The canonical culture as depicted by al-Khaṭīb also emphasizes what a momentous feat the compilation of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* represented as well as their authors’ critical stringency. He provides several reports telling us that al-Bukhārī selected his

²¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:26; al-Ḥakīm, *Ma ḥīfat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 93; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:65; al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:70; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:256; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:218; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:14.

²² Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:85; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 670.

²³ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:30; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:95; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:68; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:229; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ Ḥal al-Tirmidhī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 674; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134-5.

²⁴ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29, 30; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:91; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:228.

Sahīh from over 600,000 ḥadīths and spent ten years compiling it, intending it as “a testament (*hujja*) between [himself] and God.”²⁵ A report from al-Firabrī tells us that al-Bukhārī included only the most authentic ḥadīths, and that he performed ablutions and prayed two *rak’as* before inserting any ḥadīth in the book.²⁶ Again relying on a report from al-Ḥākim, al-Khaṭīb includes a report that Muslim compiled his *Sahīh* from a selection of 300,000 ḥadīths.²⁷ We then find the famous statement of Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī that “there is no book under the heavens more authentic than *Sahīh Muslim* in the science of ḥadīth.”²⁸

The canonical culture also reflects the nature of the *Sahīhayn* canon itself. Muslim is thus clearly ranked below al-Bukhārī. Al-Khaṭīb includes a report narrated through al-Ḥākim in which a scholar says that he once saw Muslim asking al-Bukhārī

²⁵ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9, 14; Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 1:256, 7; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:72; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:115; al-Saghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aṣyān*, 4:190; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, 2:208; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:249; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:221; Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā’il li l-hāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī*, ed. Abū ‘Abdallāh Mish‘al al-Muṭayrī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1422/2001), 344; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

²⁶ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9. Ibn ‘Adī includes a report that describes al-Bukhārī praying two *rak’as* before writing the chapter titles (*tarājim*) of his book; Ibn ‘Adī, *Asāmī*, 61; Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 1:256; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:72; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:115; cf. al-Saghānī, *Asāmī*, 2; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aṣyān*, 4:190; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:248 (al-Dhahabī notes that this meant before sitting down to work on his book); al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, 2:208; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:220; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā’il*, 344; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:136; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

²⁷ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 28; Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, 1:311; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Šiyāna Sahīh Muslim*, 67; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aṣyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:185; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

²⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; al-Qādī Iyād, *Ikmāl al-mu‘līm*, 1:80; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Šiyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 68-9; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aṣyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:186; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā’il*, 330; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

questions like a youth before his teacher.²⁹ In one instance, Muslim was so impressed with al-Bukhārī's knowledge of ḥadīth that he almost cried.³⁰ On the same occasion, Muslim professes to al-Bukhārī: "I testify that only the jealous could hate you, and that there is none like you."³¹ In a report narrated through al-Ḥākim, Muslim comes to al-Bukhārī seeking his expertise, then kisses his forehead and calls him doctor (*tabīb*) of ḥadīth and its ills/flaws (literally, *īlal*).³²

As part of the accolades he includes for Muslim, al-Khaṭīb provides the report of Ibn ‘Uqda saying that Muslim made fewer errors than al-Bukhārī because he included fewer ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds*.³³ In a rare instance of personal commentary, however, al-Khaṭīb restores the proper relationship between the two books by adding that "Muslim followed in Bukhārī's footsteps and gained from his knowledge (*nazara fī īlmihī*)... and when al-Bukhārī came to Naysābūr near the end of his life, Muslim followed him around constantly."³⁴ To further counter expert opinions ranking Muslim

²⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:29; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:89; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:70.

³⁰ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:28; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:69-70; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675.

³¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:28; al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 380; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:70; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:70; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ I�al al-Tirmidī*, 1:225; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134.

³² Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; al-Ḥākim, *Ma‘rifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 141; Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Tabaqāt al-ḥanābiyya*, 1:255; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:68, 58:91; al-Saghānī, *Asāmī*, 2 (here the author conflates the above three reports about Muslim); al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:70; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:257; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:223; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 675; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Miqrāqat al-mafātiḥ*, 1:13.

³³ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:185; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi ’l-wafāyāt*, vol. 25, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥujayrī (Beirut, 1420/1999), 25:552; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37.

³⁴ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

above al-Bukhārī, al-Khaṭīb quotes the great al-Dāraqutnī as stating, “if not for al-Bukhārī, Muslim would not have come or gone.”³⁵ The authors of other prominent *sahīh* collections are also featured complimenting al-Bukhārī in particular. In one report, al-Nasa’ī says that al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* is the best book available.³⁶ Al-Tirmidhī is quoted as calling al-Bukhārī “the ornament (*zayn*) of the umma.”³⁷

In al-Khaṭīb’s treatment of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, we also notice that the two scholars, like their works, present a unified and complementary pair. Al-Khaṭīb makes another personal addendum to a report of Muslim venerating al-Bukhārī, explaining that “Muslim used to defend (*nādala ‘an*) al-Bukhārī to the point that what happened between [Muslim] and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī got worse (*hattā awḥasha*) because of him.”³⁸ Al-Khaṭīb includes Ibn al-Akhram’s famous comment that, together, al-Bukhārī and Muslim missed very few authentic ḥadīths (*qallamā yafūtu al-Bukhārī wa Muslim mā yathbutu min al-ḥadīth*).³⁹

³⁵ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:90; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 12:117; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, 25:552; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:187; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 676; Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīh*, 1:16.

³⁶ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:9; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:74; al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:74; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā'il*, 329; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:135.

³⁷ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:26; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:79; cf. al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:11; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:221; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:29; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 671.

³⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:103. It is not obvious from the text of al-Khaṭīb’s work that he himself made this addition, but al-Ghassānī, who had both *Tārīkh Baghdād* and al-Hākim’s work, from which the report is cited, at his disposal, notes that al-Khaṭīb made this addition; Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 30; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aṣyān*, 5:194; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:188; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:37; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, 25:553; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:144.

³⁹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:102; al-Ghassānī, *al-Tanbīh*, 29; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:91.

The personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* formed the basis for all later biographies of the two scholars. Particularly in the case of al-Bukhārī, al-Khaṭīb's work actually provided one of the two largest sources for later historians. Material from the *Tārīkh Baghdād* makes up approximately 47% (52/110 reports) of al-Dhahabī's comprehensive biography of al-Bukhārī in the *Tārīkh al-islām*. 41% (11/27) of the reports making up al-Dhahabī's entry on Muslim are also found in the *Tārīkh Baghdād*.

The second major source on which later biographers such as al-Dhahabī and al-Subkī drew was al-Hākim's lost *Tārīkh Naysābūr*. Al-Hākim served as the premier source for information about Muslim in particular, since he had been a veritable Naysābūr institution. Even al-Khaṭīb, who relies on al-Hākim for only half a dozen reports in the *Tārīkh Baghdād*'s massive biography of al-Bukhārī, refers to al-Hākim for 50% (7/14) of the reports he includes in his much shorter biography of Muslim.

The *Tārīkh Bukhārā* (now lost) of Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ghunjār al-Bukhārī (d. 412/1021) was one of the earliest sources on al-Bukhārī, but al-Khaṭīb seems to have incorporated much of its material in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* through a transmission of the book from its author.⁴⁰ The other early source of original material on al-Bukhārī to which neither al-Khaṭīb nor al-Hākim had access was the *Tārīkh Samarqand* of Abū Sa‘d ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad al-Astarabādhī (d. 405/1015).

⁴⁰ See, for example, the report in which al-Bukhārī's having memorized 200,000 reports is contrasted with Ishāq b. Rāhawayh memorizing only 70,000; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:24-5; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:63-4; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:245; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:218; Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 674. Also, see the report about al-Bukhārī knowing the hadīth of Basra better than Basrans; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:15-6; Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 672-3. Al-Khaṭīb did not replicate Ghunjār's biography of al-Bukhārī in its entirety, however, since some reports appear in Ibn ‘Asākir's *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* from Ghunjār that do not appear in *Tārīkh Baghdād*. See, for example, Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:90.

Later scholars like al-Dhahabī relied on the *Tārīkh Samarqand* (now lost) for reports about al-Bukhārī's grave, which was in the vicinity of Samarqand. These include stories of al-Bukhārī's enemies visiting his grave to offer repentance, and the many miraculous phenomena that transpired around his tomb (his grave, for example, emitting a perfumed scent and eventually attracting pilgrims from far and wide).⁴¹

Although we do not know exactly how al-Hākim portrayed al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the surviving elements of his *Tārīkh Naysābūr* emphasize the same themes as al-Khaṭīb. In fact, al-Khaṭīb relied on narrations through al-Hākim in a number of the above-mentioned reports illustrating the feat involved in producing the *Sahīhayn*, al-Bukhārī and Muslim's preeminence in the pantheon of ḥadīth scholars, and al-Bukhārī's vindication against his accusers.

Charity and the Maintenance of Canonical Culture

The themes that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī emphasized, the *Sahīhayn* as the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship, al-Bukhārī's vindication, his superiority to Muslim, and the unified front of the *Sahīhayn*, would define the contours of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture from that time on. By selecting which reports to provide his readers, al-Khaṭīb's recension of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's biographies sought to bring the vagaries of history and the problematic origins of the *Sahīhayn* into accord with their authoritative station in the Sunni community.

⁴¹ Quoted from al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 1-2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:282; al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:12; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:234; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 11:30; al-Qastallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 1:39; cf. Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 15.

Yet several of these reports inherently challenged the canonical culture surrounding the two works. Through applying three levels of interpretive or editorial processes to them, however, the Sunni scholarly tradition was able to maintain and protect the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture. Firstly, the canonical culture itself exerted a subtle influence on the transmission and copying of historical works. Secondly, scholars resorted to interpretive gymnastics in order to reconcile the data of history with canonical culture. Finally, scholars actually edited problematic reports to fit expectations of how the Muslim community should view al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

a. Reinventing the Etiology: Charity and Legitimizing al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*

Compiling ḥadīth collections devoted solely to *sahīh* reports had been a revolutionary act, and venerable ḥadīth scholars like Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī had protested it. This posed a challenge to the authoritative status of the *Sahīhayn*, for how could the compilation of the two most authoritative collections have met with disapproval from leaders in the ḥadīth-scholar community? By the early sixth/twelfth century, 'Abdallāh b. Muhammad al-Baṭalyawsī of Andalusia (d. 521/1127) had reinterpreted the initial reception of the *Sahīhayn* in a manner that shifted the blame from transmission-based legal scholars like Abū Zur'a to the more reason-based 'jurists (*fuqahā'*).⁴² Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, he explains, had battled the forgery of ḥadīths until the people of their age persecuted them for it. It was this critical stringency in ḥadīth that "stirred up anger in the hearts of the jurists (*fuqahā'*) against al-Bukhārī."⁴² By the career of al-Nawawī,

⁴² Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. al-Sayyid al-Baṭalyawsī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh 'alā al-asbāb allatī awjabat al-ikhtilāf bayn al-muslimīn*, ed. Ahmād Ḥasan Kāhīl and Ḥamza 'Abdallāh Nashartī (Cairo: Dār al-I'tisām, 1398/1978), 173.

however, the urge to cast the origins of the *sahīh* movement in a better light had moved beyond reinterpreting history to revising historical reports themselves.

The impetus for the *sahīh* movement as described in al-Khaṭīb’s account of al-Bukhārī’s life is not completely clear. The great scholar’s decision to begin compiling his *Sahīh* is explained in a report narrated through al-Ḥākim from one of al-Bukhārī’s students, Ibrāhīm b. Ma‘qil al-Nasafī. Al-Bukhārī recounts that “we were with Ishāq b. Rāhawayh, and one of our companions said to us ‘if only you (plural) would compile an abridged book on the *sunan* of the Prophet (ṣ) (*kitāb^{an} mukhtasar^{an} li-sunan al-Nabī*). That stuck in my heart, and I undertook collecting this book – namely, the *Jāmi‘[al-sahīh]*.’”⁴³ Here we see that there is, in fact, no mention of that characteristic that would distinguish al-Bukhārī’s collection from previous works: its sole focus on authentic reports.

In al-Nawawī’s succinct lexical reference and biographical dictionary of the Shāfi‘ī school, the *Tahdhīb al-asmā‘ wa al-lughāt*, however, we find that the report has been transformed. Al-Nawawī also cites Ibrāhīm b. Ma‘qil al-Nasafī’s quotation from al-Bukhārī. In this version, however, a scholar says “if only you (plural) would collect an abridged book (*kitāb^{an} mukhtasar^{an}*) of the authentic *sunan* of the Messenger of God (ṣ) (*al-sahīh li-sunan al-rasūl*), and that became stuck in my heart and I undertook collecting that book.”⁴⁴ This addition of “authentic” also appears in the versions of this report

⁴³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:8.

⁴⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā‘ wa al-lughāt*, 1:74. This version of the report seems to have circulated before al-Nawawī, however, alongside the other version. Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī mentions a permutation of this version in the mid fifth/eleventh century, citing it through al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. Al-Nawawī, however, seems to have been the first to have made this version of the quote the official one; al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhi*, 1:309.

found in major later biographies of al-Bukhārī, such as Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī's (d. 846/1438) introduction to his commentary on al-Bukhārī, the *Iftitāḥ al-qāri li-Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī*.⁴⁵ Although he narrates the same report through al-Khaṭīb, in his *Hady al-sārī* Ibn Ḥajar makes Ishāq b. Rāhawayh himself the one who suggests collecting the authentic reports of the Prophet.⁴⁶

In al-Nawawī's recension of the quote, we thus see that al-Bukhārī's decision to compile a collection of authentic ḥadīths was no longer a radical departure from tradition. Rather it was recast as a response to a need expressed by fellow scholars in the company of a senior ḥadīth master. In Ibn Ḥajar's recension, the suggestion comes from Ibn Rāhawayh himself, a member of the greatest generation of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's teachers.

Al-Nawawī also includes another etiology for al-Bukhārī's *Ṣahīh*. He provides a report with no *isnād* in which al-Bukhārī states: "I saw the Prophet in a dream, and it was as if I were standing before him with a fan in my hand swatting the flies away from him (*adhubbu 'anhu*), so I asked a dream interpreter and he told me 'you are swatting lies away from him (*tadhubbu 'anhu al-kadhib*)', and this is what led me to produce the *Sahīh*."⁴⁷ In his comprehensive biographical survey of Islam's first millennium, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, this is the only etiology for the *Ṣahīh* that Ibn al-`Imād (d.

⁴⁵ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā'il*, 346. Like al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī cites al-Ḥākim (although here it is specifically al-Ḥākim's *al-Madkhal ilā ma ḥifrat rijāl al-Ṣahīhayn*). Interestingly, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn cites both versions of the report side by side.

⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 7.

⁴⁷ Al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā'*, 1:74; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 7.

1089/1679) presents.⁴⁸ The great Meccan ḥadīth scholar, Mullā ‘Alī Qārī’ (d.1014/1606), also notes that this dream propelled al-Bukhārī to compile his collection.⁴⁹ The twentieth century Moroccan scholar Fath Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Bannānī (d. 1934-5) concurs in his commentary on al-Bukhārī’s work.⁵⁰ In this dream etiology the impetus for initiating the *sahīh* movement comes through direct inspiration from the Prophet himself, phrased in the ḥadīth scholars’ commendable duty to preserve his authentic legacy.

It is important to note, however, that there was no categorical attempt to doctor the historical record. Encyclopedic and fastidious historians like Ibn ‘Asākir, al-Dhahabī and Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī (d. 1239/1824) preserved the original wording of al-Khaṭīb’s report and excluded the *isnād*-less account of al-Bukhārī’s dream.⁵¹ Nor should we assume that scholars like al-Nawawī consciously altered the report originally found in *Tārīkh Baghdād*. In the canonical culture of the *Sahīhayn*, authenticity was the defining characteristic of al-Bukhārī’s work. For the scholars who copied al-Khaṭīb’s history, it would have been an understandable oversight to interpolate the adjective “*sahīh*” into al-Bukhārī’s account. As in language, the application of the Principle of Charity means glossing over or reinterpreting momentary inconsistencies in the grammar of canonical

⁴⁸ Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 2:134.

⁴⁹ Mullā ‘Alī Qārī’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīh*, 13.

⁵⁰ Fath Allāh b. Abī Bakr al-Bannānī, *Rafd al-qārī bi-muqaddimat iftitāh Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (Rabat: al-Maṭba‘a al-Maghribiyya al-Aḥliyya, 1347/[1928-9]), 7.

⁵¹ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 52:72; al-Dhahabī, *Juz’ fīhi tarjamat al-Bukhārī*, ed. Hāshim Ibrāhīm b. Mānṣūr al-Hāshimī al-Amīr (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Rayyān, 1423/2002), 39; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:221; Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn fī bayān kutub al-ḥadīth wa aṣḥābihā al-‘uzz al-mayāmīn*, ed. and trans. Muḥammad Akram al-Nadwī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), 73-4.

culture. Working in the midst of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, a copyist could not be faulted for subconsciously correcting this ‘oversight.’

b. Charity and Maintaining the Superiority of al-Bukhārī to Muslim

The primacy of the *Sahīhayn* in the Sunni vision of the Prophet’s legacy represented both an act of communal consensus and the priorities that the Sunni tradition had set in elaborating the ḥadīth sciences. The Sunni tradition was thus heavily invested in defending the position of the two books as the acme of ḥadīth scholarship. Al-Shāfi‘ī’s statement that the *Muwatta’* was the most correct (or authentic) book after the Qur’ān thus attracted a great deal of interpretive concern. Ibn Jamā‘a and Ibn Taymiyya explain that this opinion, trumpeted by Mālikīs like Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and al-Qādī ‘Iyād, in no way proves the superiority of the *Muwatta’* to the *Sahīhayn* or undermines the umma’s consensus on the primacy of the two books. When al-Shāfi‘ī made his evaluation, they explain, al-Bukhārī and Muslim had not yet compiled their collections.⁵²

More difficult was maintaining the proper relationship between the *Sahīhayn* themselves, which proved a persistent concern for Sunni guardians of the canonical culture. Ignoring al-Bukhārī’s superiority to Muslim in matters of critical methodology threatened the received opinion and practice among ḥadīth scholars on issues like the acceptability of narrations communicated by the phrase “from/according to (*an*).” Although the vast majority of ḥadīth scholars recognized that al-Bukhārī had produced a more thorough and demanding work, the opinions of several respected figures broke with

⁵² Ibn Jamā‘a, *al-Manhal al-rāwī*, 116-7; Ibn Taymiyya, *Sīḥhat uṣūl madḥhab ahl al-Madīna*, ed. Zakariyyā ‘Alī Yūsuf (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Imām, [1964]), 34; al-Harawī, *Jawāhir al-uṣūl*, 18.

this consensus. Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī had said that Muslim’s book was the most authentic work available.⁵³ Al-Qādī ‘Iyād adds that a Maghribī scholar, Abū Marwān ‘Abd al-Malik al-Tubnī (d. 456/1064)⁵⁴ mentioned that at least one of his teachers preferred Muslim’s *Sahīh* to that of al-Bukhārī. Ibn Ḥajar and others mention that Ibn Ḥazm had also favored Muslim’s work.⁵⁵

Although al-Khaṭīb had indirectly undermined this minority opinion by mustering contrary evidence from towering sages like al-Dāraqutnī, it was Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ who first actively attempted to disarm this threat to the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture. He explains that, if Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī had meant that Muslim’s work was superior only in that it did not include ḥadīths with incomplete *isnāds* as legal commentary, this would be correct. If those scholars in the Maghrib that al-Qādī ‘Iyād mentioned preferred Muslim’s *Sahīh* because all the narrations of one Prophetic tradition are found in one place as opposed to being scattered throughout the work, this would also be a valid point. Asserting that Muslim surpassed al-Bukhārī in methodology and judging authentic ḥadīths, however, was categorically incorrect.⁵⁶

This explanation became commonplace among later defenders of the canonical culture such as al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar.⁵⁷ Al-Sakhawī’s student ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Dayba‘ (fl. 900/1500) composed a verse:

⁵³ Al-Qādī ‘Iyād, *Ikmāl al-mu’līm*, 1:80.

⁵⁴ Al-Ṣafadī has his death as 456 AH; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi’l-wafayāt*, 19:163.

⁵⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 69; al-Nawawi, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:121.

⁵⁷ See also, Mullā ‘Alī Qārī, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:16, where the author replicates Ibn Ḥajar’s discussion.

People have disputed before me concerning al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which should we favor?

I said, ‘Indeed al-Bukhārī has excelled in authenticity, as Muslim excelled in finely crafting [his book].⁵⁸

Ibn Ḥajar further attempted to neutralize Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī’s comment by suggesting that no evidence existed that the scholar had ever seen al-Bukhārī’s book.⁵⁹ The fact that certain Maghribī scholars preferred Muslim’s *Sahīh* to that of al-Bukhārī, he continued, does not entail that Muslim’s work was more reliable. Ascribing “preference (*afḍaliyya*)” to a work is not equivalent to ascribing it “greater authenticity (*aṣaḥḥiyya*).⁶⁰ Al-Subkī’s defense of the canonical culture was more blunt; he stated simply that “there is no weight to the opinion of those who favor *Sahīh Muslim* to it [*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*], since that opinion is irregular (*shādhdha*) and is thus not to be depended on.”⁶¹

c. *Charity and Muslim’s Meeting with Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī*

In all accounts of Muslim’s encounters with Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī, the tension surrounding the notion of limiting the collection of authentic reports is palpable. When one of Abū Zur‘a’s colleagues introduces Muslim as the man who had collected a book of four thousand authentic traditions, numerous reports describe Abū Zur‘a as objecting, “to whom (*li-man*) / why (*li-mā*) did he leave the rest?” This comment foreshadows the efforts of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī to increase the number of authentic hadīths in circulation and reinforces the orthodox notion that al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works did

⁵⁸ Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn*, 78.

⁵⁹ Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13; cf. idem, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 62-3.

⁶⁰ Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 13.

⁶¹ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:215.

not exhaust the corpus of authentic ḥadīths. Although Abū Zur‘a’s remark seems slightly critical of Muslim, in actuality it implicitly legitimizes the actions of later scholars who would use the “standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” to extend the authority of the canon to new material. This report thus frequently appears in later work on Muslim’s *Sahīh*.

The most complete versions of this encounter, however, include a far more critical remark by Abū Zur‘a. Ibn ‘Asākir and al-Dhahabī preserve an additional section in which Abū Zur‘a further berates Muslim in his absence for not properly respecting al-Dhuhlī. It reads:

Abū Quraysh said: We were with Abū Zur‘a, and Muslim came and greeted him. He sat down for a while and they [two] discussed ḥadīths (*tadhākarā*). When Muslim left I said to Abū Zur‘a, “he has collected 4,000 ḥadīths in ‘the *Sahīh*,’” and Abū Zur‘a said “why did he leave the rest (*li-mā taraka al-bāqī*)?” Then [Abū Zur‘a] said: “he doesn’t have any sense (*laysa li-hādhā aql*); if he’d tended properly to (*dārā*) Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā [al-Dhuhlī] he’d have become a man.”⁶²

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s rendition of this report in his *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim min al-ikhlāl wa al-ghalāt* (Preserving *Sahīh Muslim* from Ruin and Error), however, excludes Abū Zur‘a’s critical remark about al-Dhuhlī.⁶³ This truncated version is repeated in al-Nawawī’s famous commentary on Muslim’s *Sahīh* and in Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī’s *Iftitāh al-qārī li-Sahīh al-Bukhārī*.⁶⁴ These scholars’ decision to omit the second part of Abū Zur‘a’s statement represents a defense of the canonical culture surrounding the

⁶² Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 12:187; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 58:93. These two versions feature the initial wording “why did he leave the rest?” Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:341 (this version includes the wording, “to whom did he leave the rest?”)

⁶³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 101.

⁶⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:129; Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Majmū‘ fīhi rasā’il*, 336.

Sahīhayn. Not only does Abū Zur‘a’s comment belittle Muslim, accusing him of poor judgment as well as subordinating him to al-Dhuhlī, it also threatens the canonical version of the quarrel between al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Dhuhlī.

As we saw in Chapter Three, although al-Dhuhlī’s attack on al-Bukhārī certainly inflamed his quarrel with Muslim, the falling out between al-Dhuhlī and Muslim was the culmination of a series of disagreements between the two. In al-Khaṭīb’s personal commentary, however, Muslim’s alienation from al-Dhuhlī centers on the former’s stalwart and loyal defense of al-Bukhārī. In his *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, al-Hākim seconded this by reporting that only Muslim and Aḥmad b. Salama had stayed with al-Bukhārī when al-Dhuhlī denounced him.⁶⁵ This theme matured more fully in the work of Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), who asserted that Muslim was in fact the only person who stood by al-Bukhārī when the scholars of Naysābūr turned against him.⁶⁶

Abū Zur‘a’s comment challenges this narrative. Indeed, it is far more congruent with the pre-canonical notion that Muslim and al-Dhuhlī were involved in a private drama between student and teacher. Abū Zur‘a clearly sides with al-Dhuhlī, faulting Muslim for neither showing his teacher the proper respect nor finishing his education with him. To retain the additional section would be to undermine the scenario of al-Bukhārī and Muslim standing against a jealous and fickle mob driven by al-Dhuhlī, threatening al-Bukhārī’s vindication and the united front of the *Shaykhayn*.

⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 677.

⁶⁶ Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Māzarī, *al-Mu’lim bi-fawā’id Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad al-Shādhilī al-Nayfar, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1992), 1:182.

Reconciling the Canon with Convention: the *Sahīhayn* and the Rules of Ḥadīth

Although al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had often invoked al-Bukhārī and Muslim as models of excellence to be followed in the collection and criticism of Prophetic ḥadīths, these sciences functioned according to rules external to the *Sahīhayn*. Before al-Bukhārī and Muslim, generations of great critics such as Mālik b. Anas, ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī had sifted through thousands of ḥadīth notebooks sorting the strong from the weak according to their own criteria. Even in the wake of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s illustrious careers, scholars like Ibn ‘Ammār al-Shāhīd and al-Dāraqutnī flourished according to their own idiosyncratic methodologies. Al-Dāraqutnī maintained standards for transmitters that sometimes proved stricter than those of al-Bukhārī, while Ibn ‘Ammār al-Shāhīd could require a stronger reliance on written sources than Muslim. Both upheld more stringent standards for the acceptance of Addition that those employed in the *Sahīhayn*.

Even after the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, some scholars espoused standards for the evaluation of ḥadīths that far exceeded those of the *Shaykhayn*. The Shāfi‘ī legal theorist and ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Muzaffar Manṣūr al-Sam‘ānī of Khurāsān (d. 489/1096), for example, proved even more rigorous than al-Bukhārī in his requirements for using “from/according to (*‘an*)” in transmission. Beyond the mere requirement of having met at least once, he demanded that the transmitter have studied extensively with his teacher (*tūl al-suhba*).⁶⁷ ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dānī of Andalusia (d.

⁶⁷ Al-Sam‘ānī, *Qawāti‘ al-adilla*, 2:456-7.

444/1053) required the scholar narrating via “*an*” to be well-known as a narrator from that source.⁶⁸

In addition to the personal methodologies of individual scholars, the *Sahīhayn* canon might also stand in tension with the general conventions of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship. This tradition reached maturity in the writings of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, whose monumental treatise on the sciences of ḥadīth transmission and criticism became the basis for all later studies in the field.⁶⁹ With the systematization of the ḥadīth tradition that began with al-Ḥākim and solidified with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ḥadīth scholarship acquired a unified and refined authority that could present a serious challenge to the *Sahīhayn* canon. The conventions of the ḥadīth tradition comprised a body of rules that the *Sahīhayn* might occasionally fail to follow. The canon fulfilled important functions in the scholarly and lay community, so how could ḥadīth experts address instances when the two books fell short of the standards established by the ḥadīth tradition? This potential tension between the practice of ḥadīth scholars and the authoritative institution of the *Sahīhayn* canon would have to be resolved by recourse to the Principle of Charity.

a. *Charity and Tadlīs*

One of the most glaring areas in which the *Sahīhayn* occasionally ran afoul of the accepted practice of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship was *tadlīs*, or obfuscation, a phenomenon which occurred in two contexts. First, *tadlīs* could entail a student narrating something from a teacher with whom he had studied but from whom he had not actually heard that

⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth*, 45.

⁶⁹ See J. Robson, “Ḥadīth: the Study and Transmission of Tradition,” *EI*².

particular report (generally termed *tadlīs al-isnād*). Secondly, *tadlīs* could involve a student obfuscating the identity of his source (termed *tadlīs al-shaykh*). In both cases, *tadlīs* consisted of misleading others about the true immediate source of one's ḥadīths. The first type of *tadlīs* occurred commonly, and often not due to any deceptive intent. If a student attending the dictation sessions of a certain teacher excused himself to answer nature's call and later heard the material he had missed from another student, he might omit his colleague from the chain of transmission and simply state that "the teacher told us," or "the teacher said...." The second type of *tadlīs* could also be innocuous, often resulting from a transmitter assuming that his audience understood who his sources were without giving their full names. It could also, however, serve to disguise an impugned or discredited source. If a transmitter said "a notable scholar told me," he might be trying to employ a ḥadīth that he had actually heard from a person others considered unreliable or heretical.

In the wake of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's writings, what emerged as the regnant policy among Sunni ḥadīth scholars for evaluating the first type of *tadlīs* was that one could accept a report from someone known to commit *tadlīs* (called a *mudallis*) provided that he explicitly stated that he had heard the report directly (*samā'*) from his source.⁷⁰ This he could accomplish by using technical terms known to denote face-to-face transmission, such as "he narrated to us (*haddathanā*)," "I heard from him (*sami'tu*)" or "he reported to us (*akhbaranā*)."⁷¹ If the *mudallis* used a vaguer phrase, such as "from (*an*)" or "so and so said (*qāla*)," the ḥadīth could not be accepted as authentic due to a

⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Sahīḥ*, 1:122; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya*, 2:385-6; cf. al-Sam‘ānī, *Qawāti‘ al-adilla*, 2:312.

presumed break in the chain of transmission. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ affirmed this position in his classic manual on the ḥadīth sciences, and no significant objection to this policy appeared. Employing the *Sahīhayn* as an exemplum, he stated that the al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections, as well as other relied-upon books, often depended on the transmission of a *mudallis* if it was phrased in wording that eliminated any doubt about the continuity of transmission.⁷¹

As Ibn Hajar later noted, however, the *Sahīhayn* also contain numerous ḥadīths in which a *mudallis* narrates from his source via the problematic phrase “from/according to (‘an).” Here it seemed that al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections could not provide the evidence of continuous transmission required by convention among ḥadīth scholars. Only reading the *Sahīhayn* in the most favorable light could resolve the inconsistency between the canon and the rules of ḥadīth scholarship. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's follower, al-Nawawī, recognized this and authoritatively declared: “Know that what is in the *Sahīhayn* [narrated] from *mudallis*'s via [the phrase] ‘‘an’ or something like it is to be interpreted (*maḥmūl*) as having been established as direct transmission (*samā‘*) via some other narration [of the ḥadīth]. . . .”⁷²

Important ḥadīth scholars accepted al-Nawawī's extension of charity to all instances of *tadlīs* in the *Sahīhayn*. The Levantine Mamluk-period scholar Khalīl b. Kaykaldī al-‘Alā’ī (d. 761/1359) treated both al-Bukhārī and Muslim with extreme charity in his definitive monograph on the issue of broken transmissions. He explains, for example, that in the case of the famous *mudallis*, the Successor Abū al-Zubayr

⁷¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *al-Muqaddima*, 235; al-‘Alā’ī, *Jāmi‘ al-taḥṣīl*, 111-12; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-mughīth*, 1:227 ff.

⁷² Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:146.

Muhammad b. Muslim al-Makkī (d. 126/743-4), many senior ḥadīth scholars refused to use reports he narrated from the Companion Jābir b. ‘Abdallāh as proof texts. Such critics only accepted what the great Egyptian scholar al-Layth b. Sa‘d (d. 175/791) had vetted from al-Makkī. Al-‘Alā’ī, however, notes that Muslim’s *Sahīh* contains numerous ḥadīths from Jābir → al-Makkī that al-Layth did not narrate though this *isnād*. Yet he adds that it was “as if Muslim, may God bless him, was aware that these [ḥadīths] were from material that al-Layth narrated from [Jābir] even if he did not narrate them through his path [of Jābir → al-Makkī]....” Al-‘Alā’ī thus assumes Muslim knew that al-Layth had approved of this material even though it did not meet the standards scholars generally employed when evaluating al-Makkī’s ḥadīths.⁷³

After providing a long list of notorious *mudallisūn*, al-‘Alā’ī admits that “there are many ḥadīths from these [transmitters] in the *Sahīhayn*” that lack explicit evidence for direct transmission. Referring to al-Nawawī, he adds, “one *imām* has interpreted (*hamala*) this as that the *Shaykhayn* were aware of the direct transmission (*samā‘*) of the individual for that ḥadīth...but this is a lengthy matter (*wa fīhi tātwīl*).” Although al-‘Alā’ī feels that al-Nawawī’s argument is slightly tenuous, he nonetheless states that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included such reports because they had reliable evidence that their transmitters could be trusted and an uninterrupted chain of transmission guaranteed.⁷⁴

Ibn Hajar categorically supports al-Nawawī’s charitable treatment of the *Sahīhayn*. He states that any instance of *tadlīs* via “from (*‘an*)” occurring in the primary (*usūl*) narrations of the *Sahīhayn* is assumed to be a locus of direct transmission. If al-

⁷³ ‘Alā’ī, *Jāmi‘ al-taḥṣīl*, 126. For his biography, see Ibn Hajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2:52.

⁷⁴ Al-‘Alā’ī, *Jāmi‘ al-taḥṣīl*, 130.

Bukhārī or Muslim included the report of a *mudallis* using ‘from/according to (‘an)’ in the *isnād* among their auxiliary (*mutāba‘a/shawāhid*) narrations, this presented no problem since the two scholars did not uphold their rigid criteria in these cases.⁷⁵ Qutb al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 735/1335) stated that all these instances of *tadlīs* though the phrase “‘an” should be treated as direct transmission since “the instances of ‘an in the *Sahīhayn* have the status of direct transmission.”⁷⁶ Al-Dhahabī even exempted “what is in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* and similar books” from the second type of *tadlīs*, the obfuscation of one’s teacher’s identity. He explains, for example, that when al-Bukhārī states ‘Ahmad told me,’ we know he intends Ahmad b. Ḥanbal.⁷⁷

Several ḥadīth scholars who exempted the *Sahīhayn* from the standard rules governing the evaluation of *tadlīs* seemed very conscious of the charity which they had extended to the two books. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī once asked Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341), the compiler of the most comprehensive biographical dictionary of ḥadīth transmitters, if al-Bukhārī and Muslim had really made certain that all instances in their collections in which *tadlīs* had occurred were guaranteed by direct transmission. Al-Mizzī replied, “so it is said, but that is only out of giving the benefit of the doubt (*tahsīn al-zann*) to these two, since otherwise there are ḥadīths narrated by *mudallisūn* that only exist by that narration found in the *Sahīh[ayn]*.⁷⁸ Al-‘Irāqī echoes this when he explains

⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 255-6.

⁷⁶ Al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-mughīth*, 1:233. For al-Ḥalabī’s biography, see Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2:243-4.

⁷⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza*, 50.

⁷⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 256.

that the umma's consensus on the *Sahīhayn* demands that Muslims extend "the benefit of the doubt (*tahsīn al-zann*)" to the two works.⁷⁹

b. *Charity and Transmitters*

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had stated that al-Bukhārī and Muslim occasionally relied on transmitters who had been previously impugned as part of his argument that such criticisms were only valid if accompanied by some explanation. Al-Khaṭīb was only invoking al-Bukhārī and Muslim as part of this larger argument, and he was wise not to claim that none of the transmitters featured in the *Sahīhayn* had been criticized without good reason. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim relied on Ayūb b. ‘Ā’idh al-Tā’ī, for example, whom al-Bukhārī himself had accused of being a *Murji‘ite*.⁸⁰ We have already seen the example of the arch-Khārijite ‘Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, through whom al-Bukhārī transmitted a ḥadīth. As the fifth/eleventh century drew to a close, however, and the *Sahīhayn*'s role as an authoritative reference and a measure of authenticity became better established, the questionable status of some of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters emerged as a problem. If, as al-Nawawī replied in his *fatwā*, the *Sahīhayn* contained only authentic ḥadīths, how should scholars handle the presence of impugned transmitters in the two collections?

One of al-Khaṭīb's students, Muḥammad b. Futūh al-Humaydī (d. 488/1095), an Andalusian who settled in Baghdad and composed his famous combined edition of the

⁷⁹ Al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 366.

⁸⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 1:420.

Sahīhayn,⁸¹ proffered the *Sahīhayn* as an exemplum to be imitated in evaluating hadīth transmitters. The two works, in fact, provided veritable dictionaries of reliable, upstanding narrators. He asserted that the most important result of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's work was their declaration of the uprightness (*'adāla*) of all the narrators of the principal ḥadīths (*usūl*) included in the two books. Al-Ḥumaydī's claim was built on the canonical authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, for:

The testimony of those two *imāms*, or one of them, to that effect, and their declaring [that narrator] as *sahīh* is a ruling (*hukm*) that requires following, a message designed to be heeded (*yata'ayyanu al-inqiyād lahu*), and a cautioning (*nidhāra*) the disobedience of which is to be feared....⁸²

The authoritative station of al-Bukhārī and Muslim therefore demanded a charitable view of their transmitters. Al-Ḥumaydī's younger contemporary, Muḥammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī, echoed this, stating that even if some of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters had been criticized, inclusion in the *Sahīhayn* trumps this. The *Shaykhayn*, he explained, only narrated from “trustworthy, upright masters (*thiqā 'adl hāfiẓ*) with a strong probability of having heard from the preceding person in the *isnād*, except for very few instances (*ahruj*).”⁸³

It was the Mālikī ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Mufaḍḍal al-Maqdisī (d. 611/1214) who demanded total charity towards al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters by declaring famously that all those included in the *Sahīhayn* “have passed the test (*jāza al-*

⁸¹ See al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:13-14.

⁸² Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Futūḥ al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Jam 'bayn al-Sahīhayn*, ed. 'Alī Ḥusayn al-Bawwāb, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1419/1998), 1:76.

⁸³ Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-jam 'bayn kitābay Abī Naṣr al-Kalābādhī wa Abī Bakr al-İsbahānī*, 1:3.

*qantara).*⁸⁴ This principle proved axiomatic for Ibn al-Šalāḥ a few decades later. In his *Muqaddima* he says that ḥadīth scholars should not pay heed to criticism of those whom al-Bukhārī and Muslim included in the *Sahīhayn*.⁸⁵ In his defense of Muslim's *Sahīh*, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, Ibn al-Šalāḥ specifically exonerates Muslim from any criticism for using weak transmitters. All such criticisms of Muslim, he argues, can be rebutted by one of four points. Firstly, if Muslim used narrators that other experts had criticized, it is assumed (*mahmūl*) that the criticism was not adequately established. He adds, "and it is also probable that these are instances in which, even if the critic (*jārih*) did clarify his reason [for criticizing one of Muslim's men], Muslim demonstrated its falsity." Secondly, the weak narration may not be one of Muslim's primary ḥadīths, but rather one of his less rigorous auxiliary narrations (*shawāhid, mutābi āt*). Thirdly, the narrator in question may have lost his reliability only after Muslim had taken ḥadīths from him. Finally, referring to Muslim's explanation to Ibn Wāra, he might have used a narration with a weak transmitter because its *isnād* was shorter than a more reliable version.⁸⁶

Ibn al-Šalāḥ's follower, al-Nawawī, repeated these reasons for exonerating Muslim. He concluded that, although a number (*jamā'a*) of narrators from the *Sahīhayn* have been criticized, upon reflection trust (*thiqā*) is conferred upon them and one must accept their ḥadīths.⁸⁷ Moreover, al-Nawawī cunningly reinterpreted al-Khaṭīb al-

⁸⁴ Ibn Daqīq al-Īd, *al-Iqtirāh*, 327. Ibn Daqīq does not identify al-Maqdisī beyond the fact that he is his teacher's teacher and that his name is Abū al-Hasan. See al-Dhababī, *Siyar*, 22: 66-9.

⁸⁵ Ibn al-Šalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 292.

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Šalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 96 ff.

⁸⁷ Al-Nawawī, *al-Taqrīb*, 17; idem, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:134.

Baghdādī's above-mentioned argument to provide an earlier historical precedent for treating al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters with total charity. Arguing that "criticism [of narrators] is not accepted unless it is explained," al-Khaṭīb had added, "for indeed al-Bukhārī relied on (*ihtajja*) a number [of transmitters] who had been previously criticized by others..., as did Muslim b. al-Hajjāj..., Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, and more than one other...."⁸⁸ Paraphrasing al-Khaṭīb, al-Nawawī interpreted this as the extension of complete charity to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters. He states, "al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and others have said, 'what al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd used (*ihtajja bihi*) from among a number [of transmitters] who had been criticized before by others, is to be treated (*mahmūl*) as if no effective, explained criticism had been established."⁸⁹

What al-Khaṭīb had intended as evidence that criticisms of transmitters were not valid unless accompanied by some explanation al-Nawawī thus transformed into an exemption of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd's transmitters from any criticism. The charitable premise on which al-Nawawī bases this act of legerdemain, however, lacks credibility. As discussed above, some transmitters used in the *Sahīhayn* were indeed criticized with valid explanations.⁹⁰

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī was a foundational figure in the systematization of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition, but his works provided no extension of charity comparable to the statements made by al-Humaydī, al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ or al-Nawawī. Al-Nawawī's interpretive leap, however, grounded his exemption of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's

⁸⁸ Al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 1:339.

⁸⁹ Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīḥ Muslim*, 1:134.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṣan‘ānī points this out; al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīḥ al-aṣkār*, 1:99.

transmitters from the conventional rules of ḥadīth criticism as articulated by al-Khaṭīb. Moreover, generations of later ḥadīth scholars have treated al-Nawawī's paraphrase as the words of al-Khaṭīb himself!⁹¹ In his book on al-Bukhārī, the modern scholar ‘Abd al-Ghanī ‘Abd al-Khāliq attributes the statement directly to al-Khaṭīb, even omitting mention of Abū Dāwūd.⁹² Another present-day scholar, ‘Abd al-Mu‘tī Amīn Qal‘ajī has done the same.⁹³

In the wake of al-Nawawī's statement, many later pillars of the ḥadīth tradition exempted al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters from criticism. In his abridgment of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work, the Egyptian Ibn Daqīq al-Īd (d. 702/1302) acknowledges that some of al-Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters have been criticized. Explaining Abū al-Ḥasan al-Maqdisī's famous declaration that the *Sahīhayn*'s transmitters "passed the test," Ibn Daqīq states that he meant "he pays no heed to what is said [critically] about them; this is what he believes and this is our opinion." Ibn Daqīq thus instructs those seeking to determine whether or not a narrator is reliable to consult the *Sahīhayn* as a dictionary of accepted transmitters. The Muslim community's consensus on the two books, its collective decision to dub them "the two *Sahīhs*," and its referral to them for rulings on authenticity makes the two works the most reliable source.⁹⁴

⁹¹ See, for example, Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī, *Umdat al-qārī*, ed. Idārat al-Ṭibā‘a al-Munīriyya et al., 25 vols. in 12 (Beirut: Muḥammad Amīn Damaj, [1970], reprint of the 1891 Cairo edition, citations are to the Beirut edition), 1:8; Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 238.

⁹² ‘Abd al-Khāliq, *al-Imām al-Bukhārī wa Sahīhuhi*, 227.

⁹³ See al-‘Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-du‘afā‘*, 1:54 (editor's introduction).

⁹⁴ Ibn Daqīq al-Īd, *al-Iqtirāh*, 326-8.

Ibn Daqīq’s student al-Dhahabī takes the same course in his even more succinct reference for the technical terms of ḥadīth criticism. If someone is included in the *Sahīhayn*, he is automatically deemed reliable (*thiqā*) by that fact alone. If this transmitter appears only in al-Tirmidhī or Ibn Khuzayma’s collections, however, he merits the less lustrous rating of “good (*jayyid*).”⁹⁵ Al-Dhahabī further echoes his teacher: “all those included in the *Sahīhayn* have passed the test (*qafaza al-qantara*), and one cannot turn away from them (*lā ma ʻdil ʻanhu*) except by some clear evidence (*burhān*).”⁹⁶ Al-Dhahabī even urges readers to ignore criticism of those transmitters from the *Sahīhayn* that he had included in his own dictionary of impugned narrators, the *Mīzān al-i ʻtidāl* (The Scale of Judgment). He states that these criticisms “should not be heeded,” and adds that “if we open that door to ourselves, a number of the Companions, Successors and *imāms* would enter it.”⁹⁷

Al-Dhahabī’s analogy between the transmitters of the *Sahīhayn* and the Companions of the Prophet is apt, for both groups received the blanket approval of the umma. Al-ʻIrāqī recognized the comparable charity extended to these two groups when he noted that the only two classes of ḥadīth transmitters whose status is not affected by only having one narrator from them, which would normally render them *majhūl*, are the Companions and the men of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza*, 78.

⁹⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mūqīza*, 80. Ibn Hajar repeats this argument; Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 543.

⁹⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Ma ʻrifat al-ruwāt al-mutakallam fīhim*, 45.

⁹⁸ Al-ʻIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-īdāh*, 123. Al-ʻIrāqī even wrote a book on these men.

Rebutting Earlier Criticisms

The most compromising consequence of the inconsistencies between the methods that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had employed in their works and those of other prominent ḥadīth scholars was the criticisms that venerated critics made of the *Sahīhayn*. The critique of the great fourth/tenth century ḥadīth scholar, al-Dāraqutnī, as well as those of the Andalusian *muhaddith* Abū ‘Alī al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī (d. 498/1105) and the North African Mālikī ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141) proved the most problematic for the maintenance of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture. It was to these criticisms that the canonical culture’s greatest advocates, Ibn al-Ṣalāh, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar thus turned their attention. Although these three masters’ inimitable command of the ḥadīth tradition allowed them to effectively overturn many of these earlier criticisms, their defenses also relied on charitable assumptions about al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s work. Indeed the Principle of Charity imbued the notion that the *Sahīhayn*’s auxiliary narrations were not to be held to the same standard as their primary ḥadīths, as well as the claim that al-Bukhārī and Muslim included problematic narrations only because they assumed their audience would know more reliable versions.

It is important to note that the canonization of the *Sahīhayn* did not end criticism of the two works. As we saw in Chapter Six, the very illusory nature of the *Sahīhayn* canon enabled criticism of its contents even as scholars wielded it against opponents. Even scholars who actively employed the *Sahīhayn* canon occasionally criticized a ḥadīth from the two books if it contradicted the doctrines of their school of law or theology. The arch-Shāfi‘ī al-Bayhaqī thus criticized Muslim’s report demonstrating that one should not say the *basmalah* out-loud.

Hadīth scholars also continued to criticize items from the *Šahīhayn* not for partisan purposes, but as part of their unabated critical review of transmissions from the Prophet.⁹⁹ As al-‘Irāqī had said, evaluating reports was “the *muhaddiths*’ job.” Like earlier *īlal* studies, most such criticisms involved problems in the chains of transmission of certain ḥadīths, such as breaks in *isnāds* or inappropriate Addition. Al-Māzarī thus singled out fourteen instances of broken *isnāds* in Muslim’s *Šahīh*. Abū al-Ḥusayn Hibatallāh Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 563/1167-8) addended five original criticized narrations he had culled from Muslim’s *Šahīh* to the end of his copy of Ibn ‘Ammār’s *īlal* work.¹⁰⁰ A later

⁹⁹ This critical review of the *Šahīhayn* also stemmed from the very nature of manuscript transmission in the pre-print world. A constant reexamination of a text was required in order to prevent errors from creeping in as students copied their teachers’ books. Abū ‘Alī al-Jayyānī’s criticisms of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus originated from his efforts to synchronize the variant transmissions of the two texts. Although he never left Andalusia, al-Jayyānī had access to all the major recensions of the works, and produced a book on the inconsistencies and ambiguities in the *Šahīhayn*’s transmission. His criticisms of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s text therefore often involve errors that had materialized during the transmission process, though he also notes mistakes made by the authors themselves. In the case of Muslim’s work, he has a section on *īlal* not mentioned by al-Dāraqutnī in his *Kitāb al-tatabbu‘*. There, for example, he criticizes Muslim for erring in the identity of a certain transmitter and inappropriate *isnād* Addition; al-Ghassānī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi‘a fī Šahīh al-imām Muslim*; 51, 55. It is important to note that many of the errors that al-Jayyānī notes occur only in Ibn Māhān’s recension of the *Šahīh*; see *ibid.*, 73. For al-Bukhārī, he also has a short section on *īlal* in what is otherwise also a book designed to compare and correlate transmissions of his *Šahīh*; al-Ghassānī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi‘a fī al-musnad al-sahīh li l-Bukhārī*, 111-2. For studies by Muslim scholars on the transmission of al-Bukhārī’s *Šahīh* and the scholars who played a prominent role in editing it at different stages, see Ibn Rushayd, *Ifādat al-naṣīḥ fī al-ta‘rīf bi-sanad al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, ed. Muḥammad al-Habīb Ibn al-Khwāja (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya, [1973]); Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Hādī Ibn al-Mubarrad (d. 909/1503-4), *al-Ikhtilāf bayn ruwāt al-Bukhārī ‘an al-Firābrī wa riwāyāt ‘an Ibrāhīm b. Ma‘qil al-Nasafī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ Fathī Halal (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭān, 1420/1999). For modern studies on scholars who edited the authoritative versions of *Šahīh al-Bukhārī*, such as the Indian who settled in Baghdad, al-Saghānī (d. 650/1252), and the Egyptian Ḥanbalī al-Yūnīnī (d. 658/1260), see Alphonse Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1936); Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, “How al-Buhārī’s *Šahīh* was edited in the middle ages: ‘Alī al-Yūnīnī and his *Rumūz*,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 50 (1998): 191-222; and Johann Fück, “Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buhārī’s Traditionssammlung,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 60- 82 (this article has several detailed charts of the transmission of the *Šahīh*). For a discussion of the early transmission of Muslim’s *Šahīh*, see James Robson, “The Transmission of Muslim’s *Šahīh*,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1949): 46-61. For a discussion of the textual authenticity and attribution of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works, see Appendix III.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Ammār, 143-9. The author criticized these narrations for being uncorroborated from specific transmitters Muslim had cited (*tafarrud*). These impugned narrations are not found among al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms.

copyist of the same manuscript, one Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Fadl of Damascus (d. 630/1232-3), added one more narration he had found in his reading of Muslim for Normative *Matn* Addition.¹⁰¹ The boldest *isnād* criticisms of the *Ṣahīhayn* came from the great Ḥanbalī jurist, preacher and pious activist of Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200). In his famous *Kitāb al-mawḍū ʻāt* (Book of Forgeries), Ibn al-Jawzī includes at least two narrations from *Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī* and one from Muslim's collection due to various flaws in their *isnāds*.¹⁰²

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ represents the first holistic champion of the *Ṣahīhayn* against earlier criticisms. His commentary on Muslim's work has been lost, but much of his efforts at defending the *Ṣahīhayn* have survived in his *Siyānat Ṣahīḥ Muslim*. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ tries to overturn a criticism whenever possible, his main strategy centers on invoking charity: he claims that any problematic narration of a ḥadīth either comes from al-Bukhārī or Muslim's less demanding auxiliary narrations or that a correct version appears in authentic forms elsewhere. Although he is able to find evidence from other major ḥadīth collections to disprove one of al-Jayyānī's criticisms, he must resort to the Principle of Charity for rebutting al-Dāraquṭnī and al-Māzarī.¹⁰³ He objects to Māzarī's

¹⁰¹ Ibn ‘Ammār, 150-1. Here the critic was unwittingly parroting an earlier criticism made by al-Dāraquṭnī.

¹⁰² For the first criticism, see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badī ʻāt ʻalā al-Mawḍū ʻāt*, ed. Āmir Aḥmad Haydar ([Beirut]: Dār al-Janān, 1411/1991), 47; *Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-tibb, bāb shurūṭ al-ruqyā bi-Fātiḥat al-kitāb*; cf. ibid., *kitāb al-ijāra, bāb* 16, for another narration. For the second criticism, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badī ʻāt*, 212. Here al-Suyūṭī states that al-‘Irāqī had found an authentic counterpart narration for this report. This narration does not appear in any extant recensions of al-Bukhārī's collection, but Ibn al-Jawzī found it in Ḥammād b. Shākir's lost recension. For the third, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Nukat al-badī ʻāt*, 262; *Ṣahīh Muslim: kitāb al-janna wa sisāt na ʻimihā, bāb* 13; cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:333-4.

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣahīḥ Muslim*, 159-60. For an example of one of al-Māzarī's noting broken narrations, see al-Māzarī, 1:283.

statement that Muslim's *Sahīh* has fourteen narrations with breaks in their chains of transmission (*inqītā*), arguing:

This falsely conveys an impression of disarray (*yūhim khala'lān*), and that is not the case. For there is nothing of that sort, praise be to God, for he [Muslim] included these [problematic narrations], especially what has been mentioned here, as auxiliary narrations (*mutāba'a*) and included a complete version in the same book. He felt that this was sufficiently well known among the *ahl al-hadīth*, just as he narrated from a group of weak transmitters relying on the fact that these *hadīths* were known through reliable transmitters....¹⁰⁴

Here he thus relies on the argument that, although certain narrations of *hadīths* are problematic, Muslim allowed them as auxiliary reports only because he assumed his readers knew that correct versions existed elsewhere. Ibn al-Šalāh makes the same case for the incomplete *isnāds* found in al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*.¹⁰⁵ He further defends al-Bukhārī and Muslim against one of Dāraqutnī's criticisms, noting that, like almost all of al-Dāraqutnī's critiques, "it is a criticism of their [al-Bukhari and Muslim's] *isnāds* and does not remove the texts (*matn*) of their *hadīths* from the realm of authenticity (*hayyiz al-siḥha*)."¹⁰⁶ One narration of a Prophetic tradition might be flawed, but sound ones existed elsewhere that established the reliability of the Prophet's statement.

Ibn al-Šalāh's Egyptian contemporary, Rashīd al-Dīn al-Āṭṭār (d. 662/1264), also mounted a defense of Muslim against al-Māzarī's criticisms. His *Kitāb ghurar al-fawā'id al-majmū'a fī bayān mā waqa'a fī Sahīh Muslim min al-ahādīth al-maqtū'a* deals with seventy criticized narrations from Muslim's work, which he calls "exceptions to

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Šalāh, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 82; al-Nawawi, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:125.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Šalāh, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 83.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn al-Šalāh, *Siyānat Sahīh Muslim*, 177.

[Muslim's] standard method (*rasm*).” The author’s chief concern is that such criticisms pose to a threat the function of Muslim’s book as a measure of authenticity and authoritative reference. He states:

Perhaps someone looking at [al-Māzārī’s] book who does not have a great concern for ḥadīth nor any knowledge of how to collect their different narrations, might think that [these criticized ḥadīths] were among those ḥadīths that lack unbroken chains back to the Prophet, and that one can thus not use them as proof texts.

He has seen many people with this impression, which he hopes to counter by proving that all these ḥadīths in fact possess complete *isnāds*.¹⁰⁷

The most categorical defense of Muslim’s *Sahīḥ* against al-Dāraqutnī came at the hands of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s follower, al-Nawawī, whose commentary on Muslim’s work includes detailed responses to all the impugned narrations. While he and his teacher had labored to exempt al-Bukhārī and Muslim from conventions of ḥadīth criticism that occasionally proved too demanding for the *Sahīḥayn*, al-Nawawī also knew how to use these rules to the canon’s advantage. He defends Muslim against the most frequent flaw identified by al-Dāraqutnī, inappropriate Addition, by referring to the consensus arrived at by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and the majority of legal theorists (but not by most ḥadīth scholars): any Addition by a trustworthy transmitter is acceptable.¹⁰⁸ Al-Nawawī thus neutralizes al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms by demonstrating that his methods were far harsher than the accepted norm. He therefore warns his readers that al-Dāraqutnī’s methods are “the deficient principles of some ḥadīth scholars, contrary to the vast majority (*al-*

¹⁰⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn Yahyā b. ‘Alī al-Miṣrī al-‘Attār, *Kitāb Ghurar al-fawā’id al-majmū‘a fī bayān mā waqa ‘a fī Sahīḥ Muslim min al-ahādīth al-maqtū‘a*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Amīn Ballāl (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1421/2000), 140-1.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīḥ Muslim*, 1:145; cf. al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 2:516, 538.

jamhūr) of legal scholars and theorists (*ahl al-fiqh wa al-uṣūl*), so do not be swayed [by them]!”¹⁰⁹ Throughout the text of his commentary on Muslim’s work, al-Nawawī undertakes a case-by-case rebuttal of al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms.¹¹⁰

Ibn Ḥajar mirrored al-Nawawī’s defense of Muslim in the sizable introductory volume to his mammoth commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Fath al-bārī*. There Ibn Ḥajar includes a massive chapter entitled “Putting forth the ḥadīths that the ḥadīth master of his age, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraqutnī, and others, criticized... and furnishing what is available as a rebuttal.” This section includes a case-by-case response to al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms. Like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, he argues that many of the problematic narrations in al-Bukhārī’s collection come from his laxer auxiliary narrations. But while al-Nawawī excuses Muslim’s inclusion of reports with inappropriate Addition by referring to the conventions of legal theorists, Ibn Ḥajar relies more on al-Bukhārī’s peerless expertise. Al-Bukhārī possessed an unrivaled mastery of the ḥadīth sciences, Ibn Ḥajar argues, and he judged the reliability of each ḥadīth based on the circumstances (*qarā’in*) of that case. One can thus not hold him accountable to the judgment of lesser scholars or the rigid rules at which they arrived.¹¹¹

Yet Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar all found themselves forced to admit that several of al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms were undeniably correct.¹¹² Because al-Dāraqutnī was such a hugely respected figure in the pantheon of ḥadīth scholars, and

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 501 (quoted from al-Nawawī’s lost commentary on al-Bukhārī).

¹¹⁰ See for example, al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:190; 2:334 ff. The Dār al-Qalam edition of al-Nawawī’s *Sharḥ* contains an appendix with all al-Dāraqutnī’s criticisms and al-Nawawī’s responses.

¹¹¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 503, 543.

¹¹² Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:128; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 118.

because he played such a formative role in the early study of the *Sahīhayn*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar exempted the material that he criticized from the claim of consensus on the two works' absolute authenticity. Even if one could successfully rebut some of al-Dāraqutnī's criticisms, one could hardly claim consensus on those elements of the *Sahīhayn* rejected by a scholar of his caliber. These exceptions fell outside the pale of *ijmā'* and thus did not yield epistemological certainty.¹¹³

Interestingly, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's exemption of material criticized by master ḥadīth scholars from the umma's consensus actually provided a window for selectively admitting the existence of problems in the *Sahīhayn*.¹¹⁴ Because earlier pillars of the ḥadīth tradition such as al-Dāraqutnī and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr had criticized Muslim's narration negating the voiced *basmala*, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-‘Irāqī and other later Shāfi‘īs were able to champion their *madhhab*'s stance on this issue by openly discussing the report as a textbook example of a flaw (*illa*) in the text of a ḥadīth.

Other reports also contained errors beyond defense, sometimes in the content of the ḥadīth. Al-Nawawī therefore acknowledged that one of Muslim's ḥadīths saying that the first chapter of the Qur’ān revealed to the Prophet was *sūrat al-Mudaththir* (no. 74) is “weak, even false (*bātil*), and the correct [position] is that the absolute first to be revealed was ‘Read, in the name of your Lord who created... (*sūrat al-‘Alaq*, no. 96).”¹¹⁵ In the

¹¹³ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīḥ Muslim*, 87; Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 501; idem, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 116; Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon,” 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Sahīḥ Muslim*, 87.

¹¹⁵ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīḥ Muslim*, 2:565-6; *Sahīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-īmān, bāb bad’ al-wahy*, ḥadīth of Abū Salama. This criticized narration comes after numerous other narrations that confirm that the beginning of *sūrat al-‘Alaq* was indeed the first part of the Qur’ān revealed. Muslim’s inclusion of the minority report stems from the impartial methodology he followed in compiling his *Sahīḥ*. Just as he often

case of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīth that describes Adam incredulously as having been "sixty arms tall," Ibn Ḥajar admitted that "nothing has yet appeared to me that removes this problematic issue (*ishkāl*)."¹¹⁶ Such criticisms, however, were few among staunch proponents of the canon and occurred against the backdrop of these scholars' devotion to defending the *Šahīhayn* canonical culture.

In the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī's campaign for strengthening the *Šahīhayn* canonical culture, many ḥadīth scholars devoted works to defending al-Bukhārī and Muslim from criticism or trying to clarify problematic material in their works. Ibn Kathīr wrote a whole book refuting the two ḥadīths, al-Bukhārī's story of the Prophet seemingly making his miraculous voyage to Jerusalem before the start of his prophetic career and Muslim's report of the Prophet marrying Umm Ḥabība (see Chapter Eight), that Ibn Ḥazm had criticized as incontrovertibly forged.¹¹⁷ Al-‘Irāqī finished the rough draft of a small book detailing all the impugned narrations in the *Šahīhayn* and providing defenses for them, but he never completed the work.¹¹⁸ His son, Walī al-Dīn Abū Zur'a Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān (d. 826/1423) also wrote book called *al-Bayān wa al-tawḍīḥ li-man khurrija lahu fī al-Šahīḥ wa qad mussa bi-darb min al-tajrīḥ* (Elucidation and Clarification of those who Appear in the *Šahīḥ* and had been Tainted by Some Sort of

included reports with conflicting legal implications provided that all their *isnāds* were sound, so here does he include a historical report differing from other ḥadīths.

¹¹⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 6:452-3. *Šahīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitab ahādīth al-anbiyā'*, bāb 1; *Fath* # 3326; *khalaqa Allāh Ādam wa tūluhu sitūna dhirā^{an}... fa kullu man yadkhulu al-janna ‘ala šūrat Ādam, fa-lam yazal al-khalq yanquṣu hattā al-ān.*"

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-Wazīr, *Taqīḥ al-anzār*, 54; cf. Ibn Ḥazm, [Two ḥadīths from the *Šahīhayn*], 28b- 29a.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 116.

Criticism).¹¹⁹ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Umar al-Bulqīnī (d. 824/1421), the son of Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholar of Cairo, al-Bulqīnī, also wrote a book called *al-Ifhām li-mā fī al-Bukhārī min al-awhām* (Explicating the Errors found in al-Bukhārī).¹²⁰ Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm Sibṭ al-‘Ajamī al-Ḥalabī (d. 884/1479-80), another Shāfi‘ī, composed a book based on Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fath* called *al-Tawdīh li ’l-awhām al-wāqi ‘a fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Clarifying the Errors Occurring in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*). He also had a book on ambiguities in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (*Mubhamāt Muslim*) and another on the virtues of al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*Qurrat al-‘ayn fī sadl al-shaykhayn*).¹²¹

Conclusion

The pre-canonical history of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their masterpieces contained elements that did not accord with the shape and station of the *Ṣaḥīhayn* canon. As the canon emerged at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century, the environment of ḥadīth study in Baghdad transformed into a canonical culture that required a charitable reading of the text of the canon. With al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s biographies of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, we see the contours of this culture take shape and emphasize themes that reconcile the canon with history. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and their *Ṣaḥīhs* are placed at the acme of the ḥadīth tradition, erasing initial objections of the *sahīh* movement. The *Ṣaḥīhayn* are

¹¹⁹ Al-Makkī, *Lahz al-lihāz*, 5:186.

¹²⁰ Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi‘ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi‘*, 12 vols. in 6 (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, [1966]), 4:109. This book has survived in manuscript form, see *Qā’imat al-makhaṭūtāt al-‘arabiyya al-muṣawwara bi-mikrūfilm min al-jamhūriyya al-‘arabiyya al-yamaniyya* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub, 1967), # 86.

¹²¹ Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi‘*, 1:199. This book on al-Bukhārī may be the work of the author published as *al-Tawdīh li-mubhamāt al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Abū al-Mundhir al-Naqqāsh Ashraf Ṣalāḥ ‘Alī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1422/2001), which does not deal with supposed errors occurring in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

shown as the products of almost superhuman scholarly and pietistic effort. Al-Bukhārī is vindicated in the scandal of the Qur'ānic *lafz*, an early advocate of orthodoxy against a jealous adversary. As both a persona and a book, al-Bukhārī is ranked above Muslim. Nonetheless, the twin components of the *Sahīhayn* form a complimentary and conjoined pair. The construction of this canonical culture, however, did not suffice. Further interpretive and editorial efforts were required to defend the *Sahīhayn* canon against the enduring dangers of its pre-canonical past.

The personas of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were not the only element of the canon that required charity. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim were only two figures in the wider world of Sunni ḥadīth scholarship, a tradition characterized by a relative diversity of methodologies both before and after the formation of the canon. With the systemization of the Sunni ḥadīth sciences between the writings of al-Ḥākim, al-Khaṭīb and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the potential for inconsistency between this tradition and the methods of al-Bukhārī and Muslim became pronounced. On two specific topics, *tadlīs* and the criticism of transmitters, defenders of the canonical culture would have to extend full charity to the *Sahīhayn* in order to reconcile the institution of the canon and the conventions of ḥadīth study. Proponents of the canonical culture also found it necessary to address earlier criticisms that had resulted from inconsistencies between al-Bukhārī and Muslim's methods and those of other major ḥadīth scholars. Again, the Principle of Charity constituted an important tool in the arsenal of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar.

In the maintenance of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, we see a direct correspondence between the canonicity of these texts and the amount of charity they are

afforded.¹²² In all aspects of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, it was Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and his follower al-Nawawī who played the most prominent and creative roles. This should come as no surprise, for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had proven the most fervent proponent of their canonical functions. He had taken dramatic steps in declaring the infallibility of the *Sahīhayn*, and produced the boldest and most influential argument for institutionalizing al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections as authoritative references that could replace the arcane critical methodology of ḥadīth scholars. Al-Nawawī inherited his master's agenda, replicating his arguments and reinforcing the canonical edifice.

¹²² Halbertal, 29.

VIII.

The Canon and Criticism: Iconoclasm and the Rejection of Canonical Culture from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ to the Modern Salafī Movement

Introduction

Discussing the standing of the *Sahīhayn*, Goldziher concluded that veneration for them “never went so far as to cause free criticism of the sayings and remarks incorporated in these collections to be considered impermissible or unseemly....”¹ He insightfully observed that “veneration was directed at this canonical work [of al-Bukhārī] as a whole but not to its individual lines and paragraphs.”² In his *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, Daniel Brown concurs. He states that in the “classical” period there was a great deal of leeway for the criticism of the canonical collections.³ As we have seen, Goldziher and Brown’s assessments accurately describe the pre-canonical period as well as the continued criticism of the two books even after their canonization. They do not, however, recognize the important change that occurred in the dynamic of the canon and criticism in the early modern and modern periods.

Especially in recent times, criticisms of the *Sahīhayn* canon have met with remarkable hostility. Mohammad Abd al-Rauf has recognized the dramatic change in the reaction to criticism, but identifies it as the result of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s buttressing the

¹ Goldziher, 236-7.

² Goldziher, 247.

³ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111.

canonical culture in the seventh/thirteenth century. He asserts that in the wake of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s writings, “no more criticism could be tolerated....”⁴ Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī did certainly demand a charitable reading of the *Sahīhayn*, their contributions to the canonical culture marked neither a moratorium on criticism nor an actual end to it.

Indeed criticism of the *Sahīhayn* continued in force well after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī’s seminal careers. In the century after their deaths, a number of ḥadīth scholars rejected the canonical culture built around al-Bukhārī and Muslim. These objections gave voice to the long-standing tension between the drive for institutional security that had transformed the *Sahīhayn* into authoritative references and the iconoclastic strain in ḥadīth scholarship that remained steadfastly focused on the critical evaluation of individual reports.

It was the emergence of the Salafi reform movement in the eighteenth century that brought this simmering tension to a boil. Its revitalized focus on the critical study of ḥadīth, its prioritization of ḥadīth above the hermeneutic traditions of the *madhhabs* and its willingness to question *ijmā‘* attacked the very foundation of the ḥadīth canon. Two of its premier ḥadīth scholars, Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Amīr al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 1182/1768) and Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999) exemplified this critical rejection of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture. For early modern and modern advocates of the traditional schools of law or reformists concerned with defending an increasingly beleaguered Islamic civilization, these criticisms of the *Sahīhayn* came to represent a rejection of the institutions that had authorized the canon and that it served. The ferocity with which

⁴ Abd al-Rauf, “*Ḥadīth* Literature,” 285.

proponents of the *madhhabs* have attacked al-Albānī's criticism of the *Sahīhayn* in particular reflects both the canon's role as a symbol of the classical Islamic institutional tradition and its important function in scholarly culture.

Rejection of the Canonical Culture: Criticism after Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ

The *Sahīhayn* canonical culture existed to safeguard the institution of the canon and the important functions it served in the Sunni scholarly tradition. The charity extended to the two works in order to overcome the tension between the methods of their authors and the independent rules of ḥadīth criticism reflected the needs of non-ḥadīth specialists, who relied on the *Sahīhayn* as a measure of authenticity and authoritative reference. The *Sahīhayn* canon was supposed to provide these jurists with the authority of the Prophet's authentic sunna in a manageable form, sifted by those two scholars who had come to epitomize the critical rigor of the ḥadīth tradition and approved by the umma's infallible consensus.

The authoritative edifice of the canon, however, was a construct. It was the creation of scholars struggling to provide the Islamic intellectual tradition with the secure institutions it required to meet the needs of the wider Sunni community. Major late architects of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition, such as Ibn Ḥajar, embraced the canonical culture shaped by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and elaborated by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī. Yet at its heart, the ḥadīth scholar's study of the Prophet's legacy remained an austere cult of authenticity that acknowledged no source of authority beyond the chain of transmission that connected Muslims to the charisma of their Prophet. The culture of the ḥadīth scholar thus nurtured an iconoclastic strain that did not easily suffer the elaboration of

authoritative institutions above and beyond the *isnād*. Just as many ḥadīth scholars had rejected Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s call to rely on *sahīḥ* books and end the critical evaluation of ḥadīths, so did many refuse the demand to grant the *Sahīhayn* an iconic status above the conventions of ḥadīth criticism. While scholars like al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar generally accepted the cases for charity advanced by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, other ḥadīth scholars considered them baseless assertions with no grounding in the principles of the ḥadīth sciences. Criticism thus continued despite the strength of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture.

Although the great Syro-Egyptian ḥadīth master Ibn Daqīq al-Īd (d. 702/1302) had embraced the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture on the issue of exempting al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s transmitters from criticism, he exhibited skepticism over al-Nawawī’s argument on *tadlīs*. The notion of distinguishing the *Sahīhayn* from other books in this case, he explained, was baseless. Such a charitable distinction must entail one of two untenable claims. Either we are sure that al-Bukhārī and Muslim made certain that every instance of possible *tadlīs* was actually a direct transmission (*samā‘*), which we cannot know, or that the consensus (*ijmā‘*) of the umma guarantees that no such error occurred. Yet this again depends on the impossible task of scholars having ascertained that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were entirely thorough in eliminating breaks in their *isnāds*.⁵

Another Shāfi‘ī contemporary of Ibn Daqīq in Cairo, Sa‘d al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Murāḥḥal (d. 716/1317)⁶ seconded this skepticism towards Ibn al-

⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 255.

⁶ Mahdī Salmāsī, “Ibn al-Murāḥḥal,” *Dā’erat al-ma‘āref-e bozorg-e eslāmī*, 4:200-1.

Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī's exemption of al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the rules

governing *tadlīs*. In his *Kitāb al-inṣāf* (apparently lost) he explained:

Indeed, in this exemption (*istithnā'*) something makes my soul uneasy. For it is a claim without proof, especially since we have found that many of the ḥadīth masters (*huffāz*) have criticized hadīths found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* or one of them for the *tadlīs* of their narrators.⁷

The Cairene Ḥanafī Ibn Abī al-Wafā'’s rejection of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture moves beyond such skepticism, however, entering the realm of unmitigated contempt. He argues that the notion of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s transmitters having “passed the test” is preposterous. Muslim, he explains, had narrated from demonstrably weak transmitters. Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ also rejects Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s argument that one should not hold al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s auxiliary narrations to the same standard as their primary ones. Such narrations are supposed to explain the status (*ḥāl*) of a ḥadīth, and if Muslim’s collection was supposed to include only authentic reports, what do weak auxiliary reports say about the condition of his main ḥadīths?⁸ Accepting all instances of a *mudallis* narrating via “from/according to (‘an)” if they occur in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* but not in other works is similarly baseless and represents nothing more than vain posturing (*tajawwuh*).⁹

Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ then administers his *coup de grace* to the canonical culture, detailing a number of ḥadīths from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* whose contents render them unquestionably false. He mentions Muslim’s ḥadīth that “God most great created the

⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ‘alā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 255.

⁸ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, Hyderabad edition, 2:428.

⁹ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, Hyderabad edition, 2:429.

earth (*al-turba*) on Saturday...,” which contradicts the Islamic belief that the world had been created in six days (Saturday being the seventh).¹⁰ He brings up a ḥadīth from *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* that seems to recount the Prophet making his miraculous night journey to Jerusalem before he had even received his first revelation.¹¹ Finally, he notes Muslim’s report of the Prophet promising the newly converted Abū Sufyān that he will marry his daughter, Umm Ḥabība, in the wake of the Muslim conquest of Mecca.¹² Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ points out that scholars had agreed that the Prophet had already married her years earlier. The Ḥanafī dismisses the various efforts to explain this evident contradiction as vain posturing (*tajawwuh*) and “futile responses (*ajwiba ghayr tā’ila*).”¹³

Iconoclasm and Institutional Security in Islamic Civilization: the Salafī Tradition

Ibn al-Murāḥḥal and Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ rejected the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture and instead evaluated material from the two books according to the critical conventions of the ḥadīth tradition. Yet their criticisms met with no obvious reprimand. The only condemnation of criticizing the *Sahīhayn* came from Yūsuf b. Mūsā al-Malaṭī (d. 803/1400-1), a controversial Ḥanafī student of al-Mughulṭāy. His unusual and little-known statement that “anyone who looks critically (*nazara fī*) at [Sahīh] *al-Bukhārī* has become a heretic (*tazandaqa*),” however, was perceived as patently bizarre by

¹⁰ *Sahīh Muslim*: *kitāb ṣifāt al-munāfiqīn wa aḥkāmihim, bāb ibtidā’ al-khalq wa khalq Ādam ‘alayhi al-salām* (1).

¹¹ See *Fatḥ al-bārī*, #'s 349, 3886, 7517; *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*: *kitāb al-ṣalat, bāb 1, kitāb manāqib al-anṣār, bāb 41* and *42, kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb 37*.

¹² *Sahīh Muslim*: *kitāb faḍā’il al-saḥāba, bāb faḍā’il Abī Sufyān b. Ḥarb* (40).

¹³ Ibn Abī al-Wafā’, *al-Jawāhir al-mudīyya*, Hyderabad edition, 2:429-30.

contemporaries and later Muslim biographers. Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089/1679) even listed it along with allowing the consumption of hashish as an example of al-Malaṭī’s deviant opinions.¹⁴

In the early modern period, the iconoclastic strain of ḥadīth study evident in scholars like Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ would again surface in the Salafī movement, with *muḥaddiths* like Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Ṣan‘ānī and later Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. In the turbulent struggle over defining Islam in the modern era, however, their rejections of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* canonical culture would meet with fierce criticism from defenders of the classical Islamic institutions bound closely to the canon. For the first time, criticizing the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* would become anathema for many scholars.

a. Revival and Reform in the Early Modern and Modern Periods

Since the eighteenth century, movements of revival and reform arising as responses to both internal stimuli and the pervasive influence of Western civilization have dominated Islamic intellectual history. These movements have all faced the problem of determining the proper role of ḥadīth in defining Islamic law, ritual and worldview in ongoing debates about the shape that Islam should take in the modern world. **Islamic Modernists** such as the Indian Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898) have dismissed the classical tradition of ḥadīth study as incapable of guaranteeing an authentic vision of the Prophet’s sunna. They have thus rejected the role of Prophetic traditions as a central tool for interpreting Islam. Diametrically opposed to these modernists are those scholars one might refer to as **Madhab Traditionalists**, who believe that the classical

¹⁴ Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 7:40.

Islamic institutions of the law schools and Sufi guilds offer the only correct path for understanding Islam.

Lying in between these two camps on the spectrum of embracing or casting off the classical institutions of Islamic civilization are the diverse movements loosely grouped under the term ‘**Salafi**,’ or those willing to reevaluate the institutions of medieval Islam in order to revive the pure Islam of the Prophet and the first righteous generations (*salaf*) of Muslims. **Modernist Salafis** such as the Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996) have eclectically utilized elements of the classical Islamic tradition that they felt could aid in reviving this original greatness. ‘Abduh thus attempted to revive the rationalism of the Mu‘tazila, and al-Ghazālī mined the various interpretive methods of the different Sunni *madhhabs* to produce a vision of Islam that was traditionally authentic but more compatible with modernity. Both tried to curb those parts of the ḥadīth tradition that clashed with modernity by making ḥadīth more subservient to the over-arching principles of the Qur’ān and the methods of Muslim legal theorists.¹⁵ Tied to this group are the **Traditionalist Salafis**, who invert this equation: like other reformists, they seek to rejuvenate the Muslim community by reviving the primordial greatness of Islam, yet they have sought to recreate the Prophet’s sunna by making the classical study of ḥadīth paramount.

For all these reformist strains, the *Sahīhayn* have served as a powerful symbol in debates over the proper role of ḥadīth in modern times. Islamic Modernists like the

¹⁵ See Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Sunna al-nabawiyya bayn ahl al-fiqh wa ahl al-ḥadīth*, 11th edition (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1996).

Egyptian Maḥmūd Abū Rayya have used al-Bukhārī and Muslim's venerated status to severely criticize the classical ḥadīth tradition by demonstrating how even the *Sahīhayn* contain inauthentic reports.¹⁶ Daniel Brown describes how Modernist "deniers of ḥadīth have especially delighted in exposing traditions in the *sahīh* collections, especially Bukhārī and Muslim, which they take to be vulgar, absurd, theologically objectionable, or morally repugnant."¹⁷ Conversely, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī employed the canon to assist him in boldly reinterpreting the classical Islamic tradition to prove that women can hold public office and to reject seemingly backwards matters of dogma such as the punishment of the grave. Unlike Abū Rayya, he venerated al-Bukhārī and Muslim and so used their decisions not to include certain problematic ḥadīths on these issues to neutralize the reports' efficacy as proof texts.¹⁸

Because we are concerned with the tension between the *Sahīhayn* canon and the methods of ḥadīth criticism indigenous to the Islamic tradition, we will focus only on the Traditionalist Salafī and *Madhab* Traditionalists' treatment of the canon. The other two reformist strains, the Islamic Modernists and Modernist Salafīs, have been primarily concerned with reacting to the West. Sir Sayyid Ahmād Khān's dismissal of the classical ḥadīth tradition resulted from his encounters with the Orientalist William Muir, who questioned the authenticity of the ḥadīth corpus.¹⁹ Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's intellectual output and political activism were responses to European

¹⁶ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 89.

¹⁷ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 95.

¹⁸ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Turāthunā al-fikrī*, 6th edition (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003), 180-2; idem, *al-Sunna al-nabawiyya bayn ahl al-fiqh wa ahl al-ḥadīth*, 64.

¹⁹ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 33-6.

political and cultural encroachment. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's reevaluation of the proper role of women in Islamic society stemmed in part from witnessing the effective leadership of Margaret Thatcher.²⁰ Skeptical of Prophetic reports that clashed with rationalism or the expectations of modernity, but simultaneously eager to defend the ḥadīth as the repository of the Prophet's golden age, their reactionary thought yielded no systematic approach to classical methods of authenticating ḥadīths.²¹

Although Western cultural, intellectual and political domination has cast its shadow over almost every corner of Muslim discourse in the modern period, the Traditionalist Salafīs and the *Madhab* Traditionalists have been more concerned with each other's rhetoric than with the West. For Traditionalist Salafīs, the umma's immediate challenge is the corruption of the Prophet's sunna wrought by excessive loyalty to the *madhhabs* and the practices of popular religion. For the adherents of these traditions, the Salafī threat to classical Islamic institutions looms larger than Western encroachment. For both groups, Westernization and any Muslim contaminated by it are evils beyond the scope of dialogue. That they both dismiss any Muslim thinker who does not approach questions of Islam through the classical methodologies of *fiqh* or ḥadīth as

²⁰ Haifa G. Khalafallah, "Rethinking Islamic law: Genesis and Evolution in the Islamic Legal Method and Structures. The Case of a 20th Century 'Alim's Journey into his Legal Traditions: Muḥammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996)," (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2000), 89; idem, "Muslim Women: Public Authority, Scriptures and 'Islamic Law,'" in *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*, ed. Amira Sonbol (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 41-2.

²¹ See Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 37; cf. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 146 ff.

“Occidentalists (*mustaghrib*)” or “imitators of the Orientalists” testifies to their shared indigenous focus.²²

The varied strands that would make up the Traditionalist Salafī movement emerged from the various revival and reform movements that began dominating the intellectual landscape of Islamdom in the eighteenth century. The rise of the Wahhābī movement in Arabia, the Sokoto caliphate in West Africa and later the *ahl-e ḥadīth* movement in India formed part of a broader network of Islamic movements. At their core lay the objective of renewing the bond with the pure origins of Islam though a rejuvenated interest in Prophetic ḥadīth. These reformists sought to break free from the historical accretions of Islamicate civilization, condemned as *bid’ā*, and return Muslim societies to the radical monotheism (*tawḥīd*) of the Prophet’s original message. They often embraced the study of ḥadīth as the most direct means to replicating the Prophet’s ideal Medinan community and turning away from both the excesses of popular religion and the strict allegiance to specific schools of law.²³

As John Voll has identified, the shrine cities of Mecca and Medina served as a central junction in this massive revival phenomenon. With the move of prominent *muḥaddiths* such as the Cairene Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1597) and Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’ of Herat (d. 1014/1606) to the shrine cities, the Ḥijāz played host to a cadre of

²² Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1422/2002), 2:8-9. Here al-Albānī uses Abū Rayyah and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī as examples. *Madhhab* Traditionalists, however, generally use the term “imitator (*muqallid*)” only for Muslim scholars who do not follow the classical methodologies at all. Azhar *shaykhs* like al-Ghazālī would probably fall outside this category. Instead, they would be dismissed as “preachers (*dā’īya*).”

²³ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 6; Basheer M. Nafī, “Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: in Search of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī,” *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 313.

ḥadīth-oriented scholars such as Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Kurānī (d. 1101/1689), Muhammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī (d. 1165/1751) and ‘Abdallāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1722), who would exercise a tremendous influence on students from as far away as Malaysia.²⁴ These circles produced preeminent activist scholars like Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) and Shāh Waliyyallāh al-Dihlawī (d. 1762). While the thinking and programs of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Shāh Waliyyallāh differed dramatically, they both exemplified a willingness to reconsider and break with the mainstream traditions of Sunni thought as it existed in the late medieval period.²⁵ To different extents, both questioned *taqlīd*, or the practice of following an existing *madhhab* without questioning its proofs, and made a direct consultation of Prophetic ḥadīth the ultimate determinant in interpreting the message of the Qur’ān.²⁶

This common interest in reviving the study of Prophetic ḥadīth and condemning excessive or blind adherence to an established school of law ran like a common thread through most of the eighteenth century movements of revival and reform. To varying degrees, they all championed the practice of *ijtihād*, or turning anew to the Qur’ān, the Prophet’s sunna and the practices of the early community in order to find new answers to

²⁴ See, John Voll, “‘Abdallah b. Salim al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship,” *Die Welt des Islams* 43, no. 3 (2002): 356-72; idem, “Foundations for Renewal and Reform: Islamic movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509-47; idem, “Hadith Scholars and Tariqahs: an Ulama Group in the 18th century Haramayn and their Impact in the Islamic World,” *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 15 (1980): 264-73; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 19; Muhammad Ishaq, *India’s Contribution to Hadith Literature* (Dhaka: University of Dacca, 1955), 152 ff.; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 23.

²⁵ See Ahmad Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought: 1750-1850,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 3 (1993): 341-59.

²⁶ DeLong Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*, 10-13. See also, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, “Fatāwā wa masā’il al-imām al-shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb,” in *Mu’allafāt al-shaykh al-imām Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, ed. Sāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Āṭram and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Duwaysh, vol. 3 (Riyadh: Jāmi‘at Muḥammad b. Su‘ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1398/[1977]), 32.

the legal or religious problems of the day. In their focus on the early Muslim community and a return to its legacy at the expense of the later developments of Islamic orthodoxy, these movements were fundamentalist in character. They telescoped religious history, demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice the elaborate developments of classical Islāmīate civilization in order to reacquire the unity, purity and authenticity of the early community.²⁷ After the Prophet's life and the first few generations of his followers there were no more qualitative distinctions in history. In this, scholars like Shāh Waliyyallāh and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb subverted the atavistic conservatism of the Sunnī intellectual tradition, asserting that devout and competent modern Muslims were every bit as capable of understanding the message of Islam as the founders of the *madhhabs* had been.²⁸

b. Traditionalist Salafīs in the Middle East

The loosely grouped Traditionalist Salafī movement in the Middle East developed in four dispensations. The earliest, most persistent and politically active was founded by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the mid eighteenth century in central Arabia, expanding through its alliance with the Saudi family of Najd and eventually becoming the dominant religious movement on the Arabian Peninsula. A second Salafī strain appeared in the Yemeni city of Ṣan‘ā’, with the iconoclastic ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 1768) and two generations later with the reformist thinker and ḥadīth scholar

²⁷ Rudolph Peters, “Idjtihād and Taqlīd in 18th and 19th Century Islam,” *Die Welt des Islams* 20, no. 3-4 (1980): 131-2.

²⁸ Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought,” 347; Peters, “Idjtihād and Taqlīd,” 139; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 23.

Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī (d. 1839).²⁹ A third school developed in Damascus in the second half of the nineteenth century around revivalist scholars such as 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Bītār (d. 1917) and his students, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914) and Tāhir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1920).³⁰ Finally, an influential Salafi school formed in Baghdad through the Ḥanbalī revival led by the Alūsī family: Maḥmūd al-Alūsī (d. 1853), Nu'mān al-Alūsī (d. 1899) and Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī (d. 1924).³¹

These three schools were distinct from the Wahhābī movement, with both the Baghdad and Damascene school espousing a more tolerant approach to classical Sufism. Indeed their ideological fraternity with the Wahhābīs often proved dangerous for Salafis in Damascus and Baghdad. Their opponents would often accuse them of being Wahhābīs, and the Ottoman state held them under suspicion of being a Wahhābī fifth column within the empire.³² Al-Şan'ānī was a contemporary of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb himself, and despite their similar Salafi leanings, the Wahhābī proclivity towards declaring other Muslims unbelievers (*takfīr*) detracted from al-Şan'ānī's initial positive impression of the movement. He wrote in verse:

I recant that which I said about the Najdī (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb),
for things have come to me from him on which I differ.
I thought well of him and said, 'Could it be, could it be,
'That we have found someone to seek God's path and His slaves deliver?'

²⁹ Nafi, "Taṣawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture," 351.

³⁰ See David Dean Commins, "The Salafi Islamic Reform Movement in Damascus, 1885-1914: Religious Intellectuals, Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria," (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 1985); Itzchak Weisman, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle," *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (2001): 206-236; W. Ende, "Salafiyya," *EI*².

³¹ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 30.

³² Halah Fattah, "'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaykh Mahmud Shukri and the Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745-1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 138-9, 146.

...

But some of his letters have come to me from his own hand,
 Declaring all the world's peoples disbelievers intentionally.
 In this he has contrived all his proofs and,
 You see them weak as a spider's web when examined critically.³³

Nonetheless, the Damascene, Baghdad, Yemeni and Wahhābī dispensations of the Salafī phenomenon influenced one another. Scholars like al-Qāsimī and Maḥmud Shukrī al-Alūsī corresponded, and, more recently, al-Albānī used Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s books in his lessons.³⁴ Although the traditionalist Salafī school differed significantly from the apologetics and Euro-centered political activism of modernist Salafīs like ‘Abduh, the trends nonetheless informed one another.³⁵ ‘Abduh’s disciple, Rashīd Riḍā, considered al-Şan‘ānī to be the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the twelfth Islamic century.³⁶ Al-Albānī, in turn, started down the path of reformist thinking when he came across an article by Riḍā in an issue of ‘Abduh and al-Afghānī’s *al-Manār* journal.³⁷

Like the other reform movements, the Traditionalist Salafīs have aimed at reviving Islam’s original purity and greatness by clearing away the dross of later cultural accretions. Unlike Modernists, however, they have focused literally on reviving the Prophet’s sunna as expressed in the ḥadīth corpus. The primary culprits in distancing the Muslim community from the authentic sunna have been “excessive loyalty to the

³³ Al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-ḥādd*, 40. Supporters of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb dispute al-Şan‘ānī’s authorship.

³⁴ See Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī, *al-Rasā’il al-mutabādala bayn Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī wa Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-‘Ajamī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 2001). For a sample of al-Albānī’s curriculum, see Ibrāhīm Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī: muḥaddith al-‘aṣr wa nāṣir al-sunna* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1422/2001), 24.

³⁵ Weisman, “Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism,” 235.

³⁶ J.J.G. Jansen, “Shawkānī,” *EI*².

³⁷ Al-Albānī, “*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – Nash’at al-Shaykh fī Dimashq*,” lecture by al-Albānī from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

madhhabs (*al-ta‘assub al-madhhabi*),” an over-involvement in the science of speculative theology (*kalām*), and popular religious practices such as those found among Sufi brotherhoods. What al-Şan‘ānī charmingly calls “the *bid‘a* of madhhabism (*al-tamadhhub*)” causes Muslims to take the rulings of later scholars over the direct injunctions of the infallible Prophet.³⁸ The speculative sciences have led Muslims away from the textual authenticity that gives Islam its purity. Popular religion and indulging in cultural accretions have led them to engage in *bid‘a* that threatens Islam’s essential monotheism (*tawḥīd*), such as visiting graves and seeking the miracle-working of local saints.

To cure these ills, Traditionalist Salafis have not merely engaged in the study of ḥadīth, they have tried to cultivate its most critically rigorous spirit. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī’s *Qawā’id al-tahdīth min funūn muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth* (The Principles of Regeneration from the Technical Science of Ḥadīth Study) and Tāhir al-Jazā’irī’s *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar* (Examining the Principles of Transmitted Reports) resemble classical manuals on the science of ḥadīth such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s *Muqaddima*, but urge Muslims to move beyond the simple acceptance of earlier opinions when evaluating the authenticity of a ḥadīth.³⁹ Reviving the stringent spirit of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Salafis reject the lax use of weak ḥadīths in defining a Muslim’s worldview. Al-Albānī asks rhetorically: if we do not treat weak ḥadīths as such, what is the point of the science of ḥadīth criticism? “For the heart of the issue,” he explains, “is that it be highly probable,

³⁸ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Kitāb īqāz al-fikra li-murāja ‘at al-fitrā*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣubḥī b. Ḥasan al-Ḥallāq (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1420/1999), 52.

³⁹ Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 32.

without serious doubt, that the Prophet (ṣ) actually said that ḥadīth so that we can depend on him in the Sharia, and attribute rulings to him.”⁴⁰

Their work is reminiscent of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s innovative pioneering of the *sahīh* movement a millennium earlier, with their rejection of weak ḥadīths and willingness to break with the laxer standards of Ibn Ḥanbal’s greatest generation. It is thus no surprise that one of al-Albānī’s students, the Yemeni Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādiī (d. 2001), compiled the first comprehensive *sahīh* collection in almost a thousand years, a work designed to provide Muslims with all the authentic ḥadīths not included in the *Sahīhayn*.⁴¹

Salafis thus cast aside the institutions of classical Islam, relying on ḥadīths from the Prophet as the ultimate authoritative medium for transmitting the proper interpretation of the faith. According to the Salafī school, this obviates the chains of mystical and legal authority that allowed new practices such as Sufi rituals or fixed legal codes to enter Islam, merely masking departures from the authentic teachings of the Prophet. These were preserved in the authentic ḥadīths, which are accessible to any Muslim who could correctly navigate the volumes in which they were collected. The Qur’ān and the Prophet’s sunna are the only criteria for judging right from wrong. Partisanship or loyalty to a certain scholar or school should not blind Muslims from the ultimate authority of these two sources.

The Traditionalist Salafī focus on ḥadīth, reviving the ways of the early Muslim community and questioning the institutions of classical Islam that had arisen since,

⁴⁰ Al-Albānī, *Sahīḥ al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 3 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 2000), 1: 60.

⁴¹ Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Muqbil b. Hādī al-Wādiī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh mimmā laysa fī al-Sahīhayn*, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Haramayn, 1416/1995).

stemmed from the same iconoclastic strain as the Ḥanbalī reformer Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Indeed, the Wahhābī, Baghdad and Damascene schools originated in part from a renewed interest in Ibn Taymiyya's writings.⁴² As Marshall Hodgson explains, this iconoclastic strain was inherent in the ḥadīth-based Ḥanbalī tradition:

Hanbalism had never really been primarily a school of fiqh at all. It remained a comprehensive and essentially radical movement, which had elaborated its own fiqh in accordance with its own principles, but whose leaders were often unwilling to acknowledge the same kind of taqlīd as provided the institutional security of the other schools and rejected the ijmā' tradition of the living community on principle.⁴³

As we shall see, the manner in which Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya utilized the *Sahīhayn* surfaces again in the Salafī approach to the canon. As we saw in Chapter Six, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim cunningly employed the *Sahīhayn* as a rhetorical foil against their Ash'arī opponents. Ibn Taymiyya dramatically supported Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's claim about the authenticity of the two works, asserting that "[Al-Bukhārī and Muslim] do not agree on a ḥadīth except that it is authentic without a doubt" and compiling the most comprehensive list of scholars whom he claimed seconded this opinion.⁴⁴ For Ibn Taymiyya, the canon proved very useful, for al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the centerpiece for his efforts to shift the ultimate authority in determining the Prophet's true legacy towards ḥadīth scholars as opposed to the later substantive law of the jurists.⁴⁵

⁴² Weisman, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism," 210-13; Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 30.

⁴³ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3:160.

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, 18:20.

⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Ilm al-hadīth*, 112; idem, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, 13:352.

Yet, just as he treated other aspects of Sunni scholarly production, Ibn Taymiyya refused to admit any iconic status for the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. His subtle qualification that only material found in both al-Bukhārī and Muslim's works is without a doubt authentic allowed him to criticize freely reports only found in one. Unlike al-Nawawī, his public *fatwās* announced that numerous reports in al-Bukhārī or Muslim's works were flawed. He openly criticized Muslim for approving the ḥadīth of the earth being created on Saturday and the report about the Prophet marrying Abū Sufyān's daughter.⁴⁶ He noted that al-Bukhārī's work includes at least three impugned traditions, such as the ḥadīth of the Prophet marrying Maymūna while in a state of pilgrimage (*muhrim*). Ibn Taymiyya exceeded even his own boundaries by criticizing the ḥadīth of the Prophet praying after the eclipse, which appears in both the *Ṣaḥīhayn*.⁴⁷ This seemingly contradictory approach to the canon, wielding its authority as the acme of critical ḥadīth scholarship but simultaneously denying it iconic status, would reappear with the modern Salafī movement.

Muhammad b. Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī: a Yemeni Salafī

The Zaydī Shiite center of Ṣan'ā' was an unusual setting for a revival of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition. This environment, however, produced a succession of ḥadīth scholars of singular dynamism and devotion to the study of the Prophet's sunna through the medium of ḥadīth. An early progenitor was the fifteenth-century scholar Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm **Ibn al-Wazīr** (d. 840/1436). Although he sprang from Zaydī origins, Ibn al-Wazīr wrote

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 17: 235-7.

⁴⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Ilm al-ḥadīth*, 160; idem, *Majmū‘ al-fatāwā*, 18:22.

a rebuttal of this Shiīte school and then penned a massive defense of the Prophet's sunna as understood through the Sunni prism of Prophetic ḥadīth.⁴⁸ Ibn al-Wazīr's intellectual interests lay in interacting with the Sunni ḥadīth tradition, and he thus composed a commentary on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*. In this work, the *Tanqīh al-anzār*, he demonstrates an intellectual creativity unparalleled by his contemporaries in Cairo. Far from blindly following Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's chapter structure like al-‘Irāqī and others, he addresses neglected issues such as the reliability of Ibn Mājah's *Sunan* topically. He foreshadows the Salafī movement's anti-*madhhab* stance by stating that, in matters of law, it is not permitted to ignore a ḥadīth declared *sahīh* unless one can demonstrate a damning flaw in the report.⁴⁹

Although he lived over three centuries later, Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Ṣan‘ānī (b. 1099/1688, d. 1182/1768) inherited Ibn al-Wazīr's Salafī spirit, devoting a large commentary to his *Tanqīh al-anzār* and frequently citing his predecessor with great affection.⁵⁰ Like Ibn al-Wazīr, he hailed from a Zaydī background but remained steadfastly focused on the Sunni ḥadīth tradition. His *oeuvre* also consisted almost entirely of commentaries on the works of major Sunni *muhaddiths*: Ibn Daqīq's *Iḥkām al-ahkām*, Ibn Ḥajar's *Bulūgh al-marām* and al-Suyūṭī's *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr*. Al-Ṣan‘ānī's *Kitāb īqāz al-fikra li-murāja ‘at al-fitra* (The Awakening of Thought for a Return to the

⁴⁸ Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw‘ al-lāmi‘*, 6:282. This second work has been published as *al-‘Awāsim min al-qawāsim fīt al-dhabb ‘an sunnat Abī al-Qāsim*, ed. Shu‘ayb Arnā‘ūt, 2nd ed., 9 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1992). For a brief discussion of Ibn al-Wazīr and his place in Yemeni intellectual history, see Bernard Haykel, “Reforming Islam by Dissolving the *Madhāhib*: Shawkānī and His Zaydī Detractors in Yemen,” in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, 338.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 48.

⁵⁰ See, for example, al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Ḥadīth iftirāq al-umma ilā nayyif wa sab ‘in firqa*, ed. Sa‘d b. ‘Abdallāh al-Sa‘dān (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āsimah, 1415/[1994]), 95-7.

Pure Nature [of Islam]) represents an attempt to break theological discussion out of what he sees is the stupor of *taqlīd* and senseless speculation (*khawq̄*), returning it to the ways of the Salaf. He declares that blind imitation has always been mankind's pitfall, but further lambastes decadent Muslim scholars for their laziness, divisiveness, and obsequiousness. He accuses participants in speculative theology of constructing straw-man arguments for their opponents and then failing to reevaluate such useless assertions. Furthermore, if a ḥadīth or Qur'ānic verse contradicts these scholars' stance or school of thought, they try to interpret it away even if the interpretation is impossible in that context.⁵¹

Al-San‘ānī studied in Mecca and Medina with Sālim b. ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī and others, then returned to Ṣan‘ā’ to serve as the preacher in the city’s main mosque. He frequently provoked the ire of Zaydī scholars and the community’s leaders, however, with his preoccupation with studying and teaching the “classic (*ummahāt*)” Sunni ḥadīth books. More seriously, he broke with the rest of the community in his insistence on following ḥadīths instead of the Zaydī school in matters of ritual. Like al-Bukhārī before him and later the *ahl-e hadīth* in India, he insisted on raising his hands in prayer and holding them by his chest instead of by his side like other Shiites.⁵² Al-Shawkānī, al-Ṣan‘ānī’s principal biographer, held him in great personal admiration and saw him as an ideal Salafi ḥadīth scholar unafeared of breaking with social convention. He described al-

⁵¹ Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Kitāb īqāz al-fikra li-murāja ‘at al-fīṭra*, 48-50.

⁵² Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-tāli ‘bi-mahāsin man ba d al-qarn al-sābi’*, ed. Khalīl Mānṣur, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1418/1998), 2:53-5; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 275.

Şan‘ānī as one who “fled from *taqlīd* and the spuriousness of those opinions of the jurists that lacked any proof.”⁵³

Indeed, al-Şan‘ānī stands out as one of the most fearlessly iconoclastic ḥadīth scholars in Islamic history. Five centuries after Sunni consensus had solidified on the complex question of defining the uprightness (*‘adāla*) of a ḥadīth transmitter in the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Şan‘ānī proposed a total reconsideration. Whereas Sunni ḥadīth scholars had accepted Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s definition that an upstanding transmitter be “an adult Muslim of sound mind, free of the paths of sin and defects in honor (*muru‘a*),” al-Şan‘ānī’s *Thamarāt al-nażar fī ʿilm al-athar* (The Fruits of Reasoning in the Science of Traditions, written 1171/1758) argues that this elaborate definition is pointless. Rather, *‘adāla* is simply the state of “the likelihood of truthfulness (*mazannat al-sidq*).” The existing standards of uprightness, al-Şan‘ānī continues, are too lofty for the material they supposedly govern. *Muhaddiths*, like scholars in the other Islamic sciences, had become distracted in setting up principles (*uṣūl*) that do not hold up in actual application (*furu‘*).⁵⁴

Al-Şan‘ānī’s iconoclasm, however, appears most clearly in his treatment of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s works. Although he greatly respected the two masters, this maverick rejected almost every feature of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture as constructed by al-Khaṭīb, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar. He states quite simply that “we respect the *Sahīhayn*, but do not give them more station than they deserve.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-tāli‘*, 2:53.

⁵⁴ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Thamarāt al-nażar*, 125.

⁵⁵ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Thamarāt al-nażar*, 137.

Most dramatically, he rejects the claim of the umma's consensus on the two books. Although al-Nawawī had earlier refused the notion that this consensus meant that the contents of the *Sahīhayn* yielded epistemological certainty, he never questioned that *ijmā‘* ‘on the books’ authenticity had in fact occurred. Al-Şan‘ānī, on the other hand, refutes this, citing the improbability of all the Muslim scholars agreeing on the authenticity of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s ḥadīths. Are we also to assume, he asks, that everyone who had in fact approved the two books was truly familiar with their contents? Even before the *Sahīhayn* were written, he concludes, such practical difficulties in evaluating consensus had led Ibn Ḥanbal to pronounce that anyone who claimed *ijmā‘* had occurred on an issue was a liar.⁵⁶ The main ḥadīth providing justification for the infallibility of the umma’s consensus, he continues, would not even apply to the intricacies of ḥadīth criticism. The Prophet had stated that his community would not agree on “going astray (*dalāla*),” while a minor flaw in a narration can hardly merit such a title. The umma is immune to error writ large, not small oversights (*khata‘*) such as making a mistake in evaluating the *isnād* of an *āḥād* ḥadīth.⁵⁷

Al-Şan‘ānī also attacked the canonical ranking of al-Bukhārī above Muslim. He argued that the feature that had most clearly distinguished al-Bukhārī above Muslim, his requirement for at least one meeting between transmitters in narrations via “from/according to (*an*),” had little practical value and provided no real guarantee of direct transmission. How could a transmitter who may have narrated hundreds of ḥadīths from a particular teacher hear all these reports in one sitting? Considering this, what use

⁵⁶ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1:93.

⁵⁷ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1:94.

is al-Bukhārī's requirement for one meeting in guaranteeing the direct transmission of all the ḥadīths passed through this link? There still remains the possibility of a break in the *isnād (irsāl)*.⁵⁸ Just as al-Ṣan‘ānī deflates al-Bukhārī's requirement, he gives a more positive evaluation of Muslim's. Muslim's requirement for contemporaneity in ‘an transmissions was not a naïve assumption that two people who lived at the same time had heard their ḥadīths from one another; Muslim simply required the probability that the two had met for direct transmission. In reality, this was the same level of assurance provided by al-Bukhārī's theoretically more rigorous conditions.⁵⁹

Al-Ṣan‘ānī also rejects attempts to disarm the opinions of scholars who had favored Muslim's *Sahīh* over al-Bukhārī's. Unlike the standard line that “some” scholars from the Maghrib had preferred Muslim's collection, he feels that a large number of prominent ḥadīth experts had in fact favored Muslim. Furthermore, they did so for reasons more significant than Muslim's exclusion of incomplete legal-commentary reports (*ta’līqāt*) and his convenient grouping of all the narrations of a tradition in one place. Al-Ṣan‘ānī claims that he saw in the writings of al-Nawawī, Ibn Jamā‘a and Tāj al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī indications that these scholars felt *Sahīh Muslim* was more authentic than *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*. He also rejects Ibn Ḥajar's attempts to explain away Abū ‘Alī al-Naysābūrī's proclamation that Muslim's work was the most authentic book available.⁶⁰

Ibn al-Salāḥ and al-Nawawī's demands for charity on the issues of *tadlīs* and the criticism of transmitters did not convince al-Ṣan‘ānī. He reminds us that many of al-

⁵⁸ Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1:302-3.

⁵⁹ Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1: 47-8.

⁶⁰ Al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1: 50-1.

Bukhārī and Muslim's transmitters were criticized with good reason and clear explanations.⁶¹ In response to al-Nawawī's claim that instances of *mudallis*'s transmitting through *an* in the *Sahīhayn* should be treated as direct transmission, al-Şan‘ānī cites Ibn Daqīq and Ibn al-Murāḥḥal's skeptical objections.⁶² He comments that "this is a claim, but where is the proof?" Here he even breaks with Ibn al-Wazīr, who had acceded to the notion that al-Bukhārī and Muslim would not have included a *mudallis*'s narration via *an* unless they knew it occurred through another reliable *isnād*. Again, al-Şan‘ānī objects that there is no proof for such a claim.⁶³

Shāh Waliyyallāh and the First Condemnation of Criticizing the Canon

Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and al-Şan‘ānī, the great Indian scholar Shāh Waliyyallāh voyaged as a young man to the Hijāzī crucible of reformist ḥadīth scholarship and returned to his native Delhi with a heightened appreciation for the authority of the ḥadīth tradition. In terms of fluency with the labyrinth of Islamic sciences, however, he proved far more advanced than the stark ḥadīth-based Ḥanbalism of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Even al-Şan‘ānī, who grasped and engaged the Ash‘arī and Mu‘tazilite traditions of dialectical theology, did not match Shāh Waliyyallāh's innovative mixture of ḥadīth scholarship, reformed Sufism, social and political activism, and even Neo-Platonism.

⁶¹ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1: 99.

⁶² Al-Şan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1: 320 ff.

⁶³ Al-Şan‘ānī, *Tawdīh al-afkār*, 1: 323; cf. Ibn al-Wazīr, *Tanqīh al-anzār*, 144.

Unlike Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and al-Ṣan‘ānī’s preoccupation with matters of creed and ritual observation, Shāh Waliyyallāh’s career tackled the troubling political realities of India in his time. The sudden failure of Moghul imperial power after the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 marked the end of unified and effective Moghul rule in the subcontinent. Shāh Waliyyallāh was eyewitness to the terrible destruction wrought on the unprotected Moghul realm in the wake of the empire’s decay. In 1739, the Afghan conqueror Nādir Shāh sacked Delhi and caused tremendous bloodshed. Combined with a series of disastrous Afghan invasions in 1748, 1757 and 1760, these events traumatized the psyches of men like Shāh Waliyyallāh.⁶⁴ For scholars, it represented the fragmentation of Islamic society in India. As a result, as Ahmad Dallal writes, “disunity is a central a theme that occupied [Shāh Waliyyallāh] throughout his life.”⁶⁵

In his role as a scholar, teacher, social activist and his relations with local Indian rulers, Shāh Waliyyallāh sought to regain a lost unity. He believed that political power was an essential component of a rejuvenated Islamic civilization in India. In the wake of the Moghul failure, he wrote to several leaders such as the Nizām of Hyderabad asking them to take on the role of Islam’s patron and leader in the subcontinent.⁶⁶ This desire to protect communal cohesion resulted in an attitude towards religious disagreement and popular practices that was more pluralistic than Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, al-Ṣan‘ānī or the founder of the West African Sokoto Caliphate, Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817). Unlike the

⁶⁴ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 25.

⁶⁵ Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought,” 343; Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3:148.

⁶⁶ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 35.

Wahhābīs, he proved very conservative about excommunication, limiting it to cases for which the Qur’ān or ḥadīth provided direct evidence and not extending it to acts of associationism (*shirk*) such as prostrating to trees. He allowed people to visit tombs for mourning and to seek the intercession of pious people provided one did not glorify them.⁶⁷

Shāh Waliyyallāh agreed with the other reformists that excessive loyalty to the *madhhabs* had seriously hobbled the Islamic intellectual tradition and led it away from the Prophet’s true message. Yet he also recognized the tremendous utility of these institutions. He personally treated all four Sunni *madhhabs* equally, and urged scholars to use them eclectically as reservoirs of expert opinions. The ultimate determinant in selecting which school’s ruling to take, however, were the direct sayings of the Prophet. Since all the schools of law had theoretically derived their authoritative rulings from the Prophet’s sunna, the ḥadīths retained an inherent and constant superiority to these bodies of substantive law. Each generation of scholars should thus consult them anew.⁶⁸ For the masses of Sunni Muslims, however, following one of the four established *madhhabs* was essential. In India, they should adhere to the rulings of their traditional Ḥanafī school.⁶⁹

Shāh Waliyyallāh’s commitment to communal cohesion governed his attitude towards the *Sahīhayn* canon. Despite the reformist tendencies he shared with his fellow student in the Hijāz, al-Ṣan‘ānī, Shāh Waliyyallāh was no harsh iconoclast. He staunchly

⁶⁷ Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought,” 346.

⁶⁸ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 37; Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought,” 347-8.

⁶⁹ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 39; Peters, “Idjtiḥād and Taqlīd in 18th and 19th Century Islam,” 143; Marcia K. Hermansen, trans., *The Conclusive Argument from God* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2003), xxx.

defended the canon. Like the schools of law, they provided indispensable institutions for the preservation of unity in Islamic thought. He states at the beginning of his discussion of ḥadīth in his *magnum opus*, the *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha* (God's Conclusive Argument), "Know that there is no path for us to know the precepts of the Sharia or its rulings except though the reports of the Prophet (ṣ)...." Reliable books of ḥadīth, foremost the *Sahīhayn* and Mālik's *Muwatta'*, are essential for this, since "there does not exist today any non-written, reliable transmission (*riwāya... ghayr mudawwana*) [back to the Prophet]."⁷⁰ He then lists the various levels of ḥadīth collections, beginning with the top level of the *Muwatta'* and the *Sahīhayn*. Alluding to a Qur'ānic verse (Qur'ān 4:115) used to emphasize the importance of consensus (*ijmā'*) since the time of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819-20), he states:

As for the *Sahīhayn*, the ḥadīth scholars have come to a consensus that everything in them with an *isnād* back to the Prophet is absolutely authentic, that [the two books] are attested by massive transmission back to their authors, and that anyone who detracts from their standing is a heretic (*mubtadi'*) not following the path of the believers.⁷¹

This represents the first moratorium on criticism of the *Sahīhayn*. Although Abū Mas'ud al-Dimashqī, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī and Ibn Ḥajar had all rallied to al-Bukhārī and Muslim's defense, they had never condemned criticism of the *Sahīhayn* as inherently unacceptable. Even after the consolidation of the canonical culture in the seventh/thirteenth century, no one attacked the critiques of Ibn Taymiyya or the virulent criticisms of Ibn Abī al-Wafā' as violations of the canonical orthodoxy. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and

⁷⁰ Shāh Waliyyallāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1:132-3.

⁷¹ Shāh Waliyyallāh, *Hujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, 1: 134. For a discussion of the use of this verse as a proof text for *ijmā'*, see Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-`Arabī, [1964]), 469 ff.

al-Nawawī had struggled to protect the *Sahīhayn* because the books had become crucial institutions in Sunni scholarly culture. Yet in the relative stability of Mamluk Cairo attacks by critics like Ibn Abī al-Wafā' held little consequence for the sturdy and blossoming Sunni religious culture of the period.

For Shāh Waliyyallāh, the stakes had become much higher indeed. Although we do not know exactly to whom he directed his warning about criticizing the *Sahīhayn*, only a merchantman's ride away across the Indian Ocean in Yemen his contemporary al-Şan‘ānī was flagrantly dismissing the canonical culture that had been constructed to protect the institution of the *Sahīhayn*. Although Shāh Waliyyallāh was a ḥadīth-oriented reformist who sought to limit the divisive effects of the *madhhabs*, he appreciated the roles of such institutions in maintaining social, intellectual and political order in a beleaguered umma. It is not difficult to imagine that he had come across the iconoclastic thought of the young Şan‘ānī while in the H̄ijāz, perhaps in the classes of their common teacher Abū Tāhir b. Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī (d. 1732-3), and later sensed the danger it posed for his reformist agenda. While we can hardly contend that Shāh Waliyyallāh's harsh condemnation of criticizing al-Bukhārī and Muslim was an actual response to al-Şan‘ānī's writings, it might as well have been. What al-Şan‘ānī reviled as “the heresy of madhhabism,” and the baseless premises of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture, Shāh Waliyyallāh saw as essential institutions for the Islamic revival.

Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī: Iconoclast Extraordinaire

Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī was born in 1914 in Shkodër, Albania, to a family of staunchly Ḥanafī scholars. When he was nine years old, however, his family

emigrated to Syria. There the young Albānī followed in his father's footsteps and studied Ḥanafī jurisprudence with other Albanian students in Damascus. As a young man, he entered a bookstore near the Umayyad Mosque one day and found a copy of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh's reformist journal *al-Manār*. An article written by Rashīd Riḍā in particular struck al-Albānī. Riḍā was criticizing the great champion of classical Sufism, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, for his Sufi teachings and his use of unreliable ḥadīths to justify them. Al-Albānī also found the ḥadīth scholar Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī's (d. 806/1404) book detailing those weak ḥadīths that al-Ghazzālī had included in his classic *Iḥyā’ ʻulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences).⁷² These works sowed the seeds of mistrust for Sufism and weak ḥadīths in al-Albānī's heart; for him they were loopholes through which ‘inauthentic’ practices could enter Islam. Attracted by *al-Manār*'s call for the purified, Arab Islam of the Prophet's time, he began studying the ḥadīth sciences independently.

Like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb before him, al-Albānī turned against the practices of popular Sufism and the strict adherence to one school of law in the face of contradicting ḥadīths. He read through all of Ibn ‘Asākir's mammoth *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* and, discovering that the Umayyad Mosque had formerly been the Church of St. John built on his tomb, refused to pray there.⁷³ Like other Salafīs, al-Albānī considered incorporating graves into worship *bid’ā*.⁷⁴ These non-conformist ways eventually angered al-Albānī's father, who told him he needed to choose between “disbelief and

⁷² Al-Albānī, “*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – Nash’at al-Shaykh fī Dimashq*,” lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

⁷³ Al-Albānī, “*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – 2*,” lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 6/3/2004.

⁷⁴ ‘Alī, *Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī*, 23.

monotheism (*al-kufr wa al-tawḥīd*).⁷⁵ Al-Albānī replied that equally he must choose between “the sunna [of the Prophet] and *taqlīd*.” Cast out penniless by his father, al-Albānī became a watch repairer and began spending long hours in the Zāhiriyah Library in Damascus (founded by Tāhir al-Jazā’irī) poring over ḥadīth manuscripts.⁷⁵

Al-Albānī devoted himself to ḥadīth scholarship in the Salafī idiom. He undertook what became an extensive project that he would later dub “Bringing the sunna within reach of the umma (*taqrīb al-sunna bayn yaday al-umma*),” the principal aim of which was to remove what he deemed weak ḥadīths from important classical Islamic texts. It was the deleterious effects of these weak ḥadīths that had allowed the Muslim community to stray so far from the authentic legacy of the Prophet. This Salafī philosophy is best glimpsed in al-Albānī’s massive, thirteen volume work identifying weak ḥadīths entitled *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-da’ifa wa al-mawdū‘a wa ta’thīrihā al-sayyi’ fī al-umma* (The Series of Weak and Forged ḥadīths and Their Negative Effect on the Umma). He also composed books identifying the weak ḥadīths found in famous works such as al-Mundhirī’s (d. 656/1258) *al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, al-Bukhārī’s *al-Adab al-mufrad* and finally the famous Four *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī and Ibn Mājah.⁷⁶

Al-Albānī combined such focused ḥadīth scholarship with intensive scholarly activism. Through his books and preaching, he sought to reform the community around

⁷⁵ Al-Albānī compares his breaking with his father’s legal school with Abraham’s leaving his father’s idolatrous ways; see al-Albānī, “*Tarjamat al-Shaykh al-Albānī – 2*.”

⁷⁶ See al-Albānī, *Da’if Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1408/1988); idem, *Da’if Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1991); idem, *Da’if Sunan al-Nasā’ī* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1990); idem, *Da’if al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma’ārif, 1421/2000); idem, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhib wa al-tarhib* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma’ārif, 2000).

him by calling them to heed the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s sunna above all things. He traveled from city to city, speaking and writing in his attack on what he called “corrupting morals, illegitimate forms of worship and false beliefs.”⁷⁷ He called on the predominantly Ḥanafī scholars around him to ensure that their school’s rulings accorded with the sunna of the Prophet as expressed in the ḥadīth corpus. A *muftī* might advocate his school’s position on a question, but he should always provide direct evidence from the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth before doing so.⁷⁸ His books attacked innovative religious practices (*bid‘a*) and sought to eradicate them from social institutions such as funerals, wedding ceremonies, and the annual pilgrimage. His criticisms extended to state interference in religious affairs, for he rejected the Syrian government’s support for the Ḥanafī legal code as embodied in the Ottoman *Majelle* or scholars allowing interest for the sake of facilitating modern finance.⁷⁹ Eventually he was imprisoned in Syria, where he wrote a major work on al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*, and was later forced to emigrate to Jordan in 1980.

Al-Albānī, like, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Shāh Waliyyallāh, telescoped the normative dimension of time in Islamic religious history. He rejected the atavistic logic of the Islamic intellectual tradition and considered himself qualified to review the work

⁷⁷ “*akhlāq fāsida, ibrādāt mutbadi‘a wa ‘aqidāt bātila...*,” Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, “*Silsilat as’ilat Abī Ishāq al-Huwaynī li ’l-shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī*,” lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 2/13/2002.

⁷⁸ Al-Albānī, “*al-Taqlīd*,” two-part lecture from www.islamway.com, last accessed 2/12/2002.

⁷⁹ Al-Albānī, “*al-Taqlīd*,” and “*Silsilat as’ilat Abī Ishāq al-Huwaynī*.”

of the classical scholars of Islam.⁸⁰ Al-Albānī was not calling for intellectual anarchy or the neglect of scholars; like all Muslim scholars, he clearly identified a certain group known as “the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ilm*)” to whom everyday Muslims should turn for religious expertise. Nor was he rejecting the work of classical Muslim scholars; indeed al-Albānī relied entirely on earlier criticisms of ḥadīths and their transmitters in his reevaluation of the contents of famous works. Although he considered himself qualified enough to reexamine classical texts, he could not recreate the intimate access that classical scholars had to the minutiae of ḥadīth criticism. Al-Albānī’s books, such as the *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-qaṣīfa*, thus apply the opinions of classical ḥadīth masters and later critics such as Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ to texts. They are thus replete with citations from the whole range of Sunni authorities, including al-Shāfi‘ī, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Hazm.⁸¹

This telescoped vision of religious history centered on the study of ḥadīth as a continuous and living tradition in a constant state of reevaluation. When asked about his controversial criticism of a famous ḥadīth transmitter from the early Islamic period, al-Albānī replied that the science of ḥadīth criticism “is not simply consigned to books (*mastūr fī al-kutub*),”⁸² it is a dynamic process of critical review. Al-Albānī explained that one of the principles of Islamic scholarship is that “religious knowledge (*ilm*) cannot fall into rigidity (*lā yaqbalu al-jumūd*).”⁸³ It is thus not surprising that al-Albānī and his

⁸⁰ See al-Albānī, *Fatāwā al-shaykh al-Albānī*, ed. ‘Akāsha ‘Abd al-Mannān al-Tayyibī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1414/1994), 162. Here the author states that one scholar’s position cannot be taken over another’s simply because he lived earlier.

⁸¹ See, for example, al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-qaṣīfa wa al-mawdū‘a*, 13 vols, (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1422/2002), 1:141, where he draws from Ibn Hazm’s *al-Ihkām fī uṣūl al-ahkām*.

⁸² Al-Albānī, “*Silsilat as’ilat Abī Iṣhāq al-Huwaynī li’l-shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī*.”

⁸³ Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 1:4.

students are the first Muslim scholars in centuries to produce massive collections evaluating Prophetic traditions.

Al-Albānī's career has certainly been one of the most controversial in modern Islamic intellectual history. In both his legal rulings and ḥadīth evaluations, al-Albānī broke with the communal consensus of the *madhhab* traditions. Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, he was thus attacked for breaking with the infallible *ijmā‘* of the umma.⁸⁴ Although he drew almost entirely on the work of classical scholars, his reevaluation of hadīths long considered sound or relied on by elements of the Muslim community provoked controversy. *Madhhab* Traditionalists recoiled at his influential and barbed criticisms of the traditional schools of jurisprudence, broad rejection of Sufism and his controversial legal rulings. His prohibition on women wearing gold bracelets, otherwise considered a female prerogative, angered traditionalists, while his statement that women need not cover their faces drew the ire of conservatives who might otherwise embrace his fundamentalist calling.⁸⁵ Even according to his own students, al-Albānī's personality could be caustic.

A plethora of books have thus appeared attacking al-Albānī and refuting his positions, most of them from the pens of *Madhhab* Traditionalists. The Jordanian Ash‘arī theologian, Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Saqqāf, for example, composed a book entitled *Qāmūs shatā’im al-Albānī* (Dictionary of al-Albānī's Slanderings). Other scholars have more specifically criticized al-Albānī's rulings on the authenticity of ḥadīths in his *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-*

⁸⁴ For this criticism of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, see Samer Traboulsi, “An Early Refutation of Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s Reformist Views,” *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 393.

⁸⁵ Al-Albānī, *Fatāwā*, 593 ff.

da ḫfa, his *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-ṣahīḥa*, and his listing of weak reports from the Four

Sunans.⁸⁶

Al-Albānī's sometimes autodidactic education was a further affront to many Muslim scholars, who absolutely required a student to read texts at the hands of a scholar trained within an interpretive school and to eventually receive license (*ijāza*) for his understanding of that book. In the same way that Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1356) had accused Ibn Taymiyya of not learning the proper interpretation of classical texts from qualified transmitters, so have many scholars attributed al-Albānī's unacceptable positions to his lack of *ijāzas*.⁸⁷

Against the Canon: al-Albānī's Criticism of the *Ṣahīhayn* and His Detractors

Al-Albānī used the *Ṣahīhayn* canon for the same dialectical purposes as generations of Muslim scholars before him: they provided him a trump card in debates over the authenticity of ḥadīths. He acknowledged the rhetorical power of the two books, saying that “it has become like a general convention (*urf^{an} āmm^{an}*)” among Sunni scholars that anything included in the *Ṣahīhayn* is without a doubt authentic.⁸⁸ When asked about several pro-Shiite ḥadīths asserting ‘Alī’s rightful place as the Prophet’s

⁸⁶ For example, see, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Idilbī, *Kashf al-ma lūl mimmā summiya bi-Silsilat al-ahādīth al-ṣahīḥa* (Amman: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1421/2001); Maḥmūd Sa‘īd Mamdūh, *al-Ta‘rīf bi-awhām man qassama al-sunan ilā ṣahīḥ was da ḫf*, 6 vols. (Dubai: Dār al-Buhūth li'l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa Ihyā' al-Turāth, 1421/2000); Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Saqqāf, *Qāmūs shatā’im al-Albānī* (Amman: Dār al-Imām al-Nawawī, 1993).

⁸⁷ Al-Subkī, *al-Sayf al-ṣaqīl*, 63. Muhammad Abū Zahra has convincingly argued against this accusation leveled at Ibn Taymiyya. See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*; 111 ff., 118.

⁸⁸ Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Tahāwīyya* (Amman: al-Dār al-Islāmī, 1419/1998), 22.

successor, al-Albānī replied that if someone really believes these reports, he should “lay out the *Sahīhayn* before him” and find the ḥadīths in one of them as proof.⁸⁹

Yet like the Damascene firebrand Ibn Taymiyya, al-Albānī openly undermined any iconic status for the two works beyond their convenience as authoritative references in debate. He rejected the practice of some less thorough jurists who, like al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, would manipulate the legitimizing power of the “standards of al-Bukhārī and Muslim” by claiming that a ḥadīth met these criteria simply if the transmitters in its *isnād* were found in the *Sahīhayn*.⁹⁰ As his Egyptian student Abū Ishāq al-Ḥuwaynī explained, jurists cannot simply look up the narrators found in an *isnād* in a dictionary of transmitter criticism and declare the ḥadīth authentic if none of them have been impugned. The science of ḥadīth evaluation requires that one explore any corroborating or contrasting narrations of the ḥadīth to determine its reliability.⁹¹

In March, 1969, al-Albānī published an edition of ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Mundhirī’s *Mukhtaṣar Sahīḥ Muslim* as part of his efforts to provide the Muslim community with accessible versions of classical ḥadīth works expunged of all weak material. His extreme respect for al-Bukhārī and Muslim is evident, for he adds, “that is with the exception of the *Sahīhayn*, due to the scholars’ approval of these collections and their being free from weak or uncorroborated reports (*al-ahādīth al-ḍa’ifa wa al-munkara*)....”⁹² This statement, however, clearly did not accurately represent the

⁸⁹ Al-Albānī, “*al-Taqlīd*.”

⁹⁰ Al-Albānī, *Sahīḥ al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 1:70.

⁹¹ Al-Ḥuwaynī, “*Sharḥ shurūt al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*.”

⁹² ‘Abd al-‘Azīm Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1416/1996), 23.

author's stance on the *Sahīhayn*. Drawing on well-known earlier criticisms, such as the problem of Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī's *tadlīs*, al-Albānī notes in brief footnotes that about two dozen narrations in Muslim's collection contained flaws due to vagaries in their chains of transmission.⁹³ As al-Albānī's conflict with the *Madhab* Traditionalists developed, he also criticized, in his lectures and writings throughout the 1970's, '80's and '90's, ḥadīths from al-Bukhārī's collection for *isnād* and content reasons, such as the report of the Prophet marrying Maymūna while in the state of pilgrimage.⁹⁴

Al-Albānī's empty homage to the consensus on the *Sahīhayn* and his use of the two books as measures of authenticity in polemics despite his many criticisms mirrors the rhetorical duplicity with which the canon was employed in the classical period. Al-Albānī's reliance on well-established criticisms of the *Sahīhayn* does, however, clarify the seeming contradiction between such critiques and his condemnation of "Westernized" Modernist scholars who reject ḥadīths that "the umma has accepted with consensus:" he did not feel that he himself was actually criticizing any of al-Bukhārī or Muslim's ḥadīths.⁹⁵ Rather he was simply noting existing critiques made by the historical giants of ḥadīth scholarship. As he stated in defense of his noting a flaw in one of al-Bukhārī's *isnāds* earlier critiqued by al-Dhahabī, "I am not the innovator (*mubtadi'*) of this criticism...."⁹⁶

⁹³ See, for examples, al-Albānī, ed., *Mukhtasar Sahīh Muslim*; 49 (#153 for the Jābir → Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī flaw), 121 (#'s 446 and 448, which al-Albānī deems "weak"), 210 (#831, criticized for a lackluster transmitter, 'Umar b. Ḥamza), 343 (#1293, again for 'Umar b. Ḥamza), 272 (#1039 for Literal *Matn* Addition).

⁹⁴ Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Tahāwiyya*, 23.

⁹⁵ Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1422/2002), 2:8-9.

⁹⁶ Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Tahāwiyya*, 37.

Nonetheless, the outcry from the *Madhhab* Traditionalists over al-Albānī’s perceived attack on the *Sahīhayn* was ferocious. In the early 1970’s, the Syrian Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (d. 1997) published a tract against al-Albānī’s reevaluation of the *Sahīhayn*. In 1987 the Egyptian ḥadīth scholar Maḥmūd Sa‘īd MAMDŪH published a work entitled *Tanbīh al-muslim ilā ta‘addī al-Albānī ‘alā Sahīh Muslim* (Alerting the Muslim to al-Albānī’s Transgression upon *Sahīh Muslim*).⁹⁷ The Syrian-American scholar and staunch defender of the traditional Islamic schools of law, Gibril Fuad Haddad, has dubbed al-Albānī “the chief innovator of our time” and accused him of *bid‘a* for publishing “‘corrected’ editions of the two *Sahihs* of al-Bukhari and Muslim... in violation of the integrity of these motherbooks.”⁹⁸

The works of two of al-Albānī’s critics are particularly instructive in examining the dynamic between the canon and criticism. The most persistent detractor of al-Albānī’s ḥadīth scholarship has been Maḥmūd Sa‘īd MAMDŪH, who studied with two of the scholar’s most bitter adversaries, ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda and the Moroccan Sufi ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī (d. 1993). MAMDŪH has written at least four rebuttals of al-Albānī’s work on different subjects, but al-Albānī’s impudence in criticizing the *Sahīhayn* has proven the loadstone for MAMDŪH’s attacks.⁹⁹ The most incisive and comprehensive defense of the *Sahīhayn* canon, which perforce addresses al-Albānī’s

⁹⁷ Maḥmūd Sa‘īd MAMDŪH, *Tanbīh al-muslim ilā ta‘addī al-Albānī ‘alā Sahīh Muslim* ([Cairo]: [n.p.], 1408/1987).

⁹⁸ See www.sunnah.org/history/Innovators/al_albani.htm, last accessed 5/31/04.

⁹⁹ An additional example of MAMDŪH’s rebuttals of al-Albānī is his *Wuṣūl al-tahānī bi-ithbāt sunniyyat al-subḥa wa al-radd ‘alā al-Albānī*. For a tangential discussion of al-Albānī’s inappropriate criticism of al-Bukhārī, see MAMDŪH, *al-Naqd al-sahīh li-mā u‘turiḍa ‘alayhi min ahādīth al-Maṣābiḥ*, 16-7 (see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* #'s 843 and 6329).

criticisms, is the monumental *Makānat al-Šahīhayn* (The Place of the *Šahīhayn*) of the Medinan scholar Khalīl Mullā Khātir.

For *Madhab* Traditionalists, al-Albānī's criticism poses two main challenges. First, it threatens the important role of the *Šahīhayn* canon in scholarly culture. Secondly, it undermines the institutions of consensus, scholarly hierarchy and the vision of history on which the canon rests. At the root of the Traditionalists' refutations of al-Albānī's scholarship in general is his willingness to question the established practices and presuppositions of the Sunni scholarly tradition. Rejecting al-Albānī's condemnation of using weak ḥadīths in Islamic law and ritual, Mamdūh declares:

Indeed, I have concluded that his methods disagree with those of the jurists and ḥadīth scholars, and that he is creating (*yuhdīthu*) great disarray and evident disruption in the proofs of jurisprudence both generally and specifically. He lacks trust in the *imāms* of law and ḥadīth, as well as in the rich ḥadīth and law tradition handed down to us, in which the umma has taken great pride.¹⁰⁰

In contrast, Mullā Khātir reiterates the predominant non-Salafī view of Islamic religious history, in which later generations are only worthy of imitating the great scholars of yore. “Al-Bukhārī is a *mujtahid*,” he explains, “and contemporary people are imitators (*muqallid*), walking according to his principles and constraints, as well as those of others like him from among the people of knowledge.”¹⁰¹ In his rebuttal of al-Albānī’s removing weak ḥadīths from the Four *Sunans*, Mamdūh derides him for assuming that in the bygone ages Islam had been in error but that now, when the umma has devolved into the terminal and pervasive ignorance of endtime, he could return the community to the

¹⁰⁰ Mamdūh, *al-Ta’rif bi-awhām*, 1:14.

¹⁰¹ Mullā Khātir, *Makānat al-Šahīhayn*, 494.

straight path. “As if the umma,” he mocks, “was in error in the ages of light...!”¹⁰²

Concerning al-Albānī’s removal of weak ḥadīths from al-Bukhārī’s work *al-Adab al-mufrad*, Māmduḥ asks rhetorically, “I wonder, was al-Bukhārī, God bless him, unable to select the ḥadīths of *al-Adab al-mufrad* as he did with his *Ṣaḥīḥ*? ”¹⁰³ Mullā Khāṭir, who is too polite to name al-Albānī specifically, merely talks of an “upstart at the end of time (*ghirr fī ākhir al-zamān*)” who impudently challenges the umma’s consensus on the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*’s absolute authenticity.¹⁰⁴

The practical manifestation of the authority of tradition in Sunni scholarship is the notion of consensus, which transforms received opinion among scholars into a direct manifestation of God’s authority as deposited in His chosen umma. One of the primary faults that *Madhab* Traditionalists find in al-Albānī’s criticism of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is thus his rejection of the consensus declared on the two works’ authenticity. Māmduḥ states unequivocally in his *Tanbīh* that al-Albānī’s deigning to “examine critically (*al-naẓar fī*)” the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* constitutes an affront to the umma’s acceptance of the two works and attacks the *ijmā'* that ḥadīth scholars since the early 400/1000’s have declared on the two works. Even considering the possibility that some of the *isnāds* in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* contain flaws is to doubt the defining characteristic of the two books: all the material they contain is *sahīḥ* by the very dint of its inclusion.¹⁰⁵ The absolving power of *ijmā'* provides the answers to any criticisms al-Albānī might raise about the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, such as the question

¹⁰² Māmduḥ, *al-Ta’rīf bi-awhām*, 1:11. This rebuttal duplicates early rebuttals of Wahhābism, such as that of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ahmad al-Shāfi‘ī al-Azharī al-Tandatāwī’s rebuttal of Ibn abd al-Wahhāb. See Traboulsi, “An Early Refutation of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s Reformist Views,” 395.

¹⁰³ Māmduḥ, *al-Ta’rīf bi-awhām*, 1:31.

¹⁰⁴ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Māmduḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 13-14.

of *tadlīs* in the two works. Invoking the charitable declarations made by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Nawawī, Mamdūḥ explains that, “the rules of ḥadīth have determined that al-Bukhārī and Muslim were correct, and the umma has agreed on this.”¹⁰⁶ He adds that al-Albānī “throws out the *ijmā‘* of the umma and the craft of its ḥadīth masters, entering into a matter settled long ago and whose authenticity was agreed on centuries ago.”¹⁰⁷

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s canonical function as the exemplum of excellence in ḥadīth scholarship also serves as an exhibit in the canon’s defense. Their work defines the rules of ḥadīth scholarship, so who is al-Albānī to question their judgment? Mullā Khāṭir states:

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, may God bless them, they are the *imāms* of this science, the stallions of its arena, without peer in their time, the heroes of their age, in mastery, criticism, research, examination and in encompassing knowledge... there can be no objection to the *Shaykhayn*.¹⁰⁸

In addition to breaking with consensus, critics of al-Bukhārī and Muslim thus face the impossible task of superseding their ultimate expertise in ḥadīth.¹⁰⁹ Mullā Khāṭir correctly adds that nowadays ḥadīth scholars cannot access all the material that al-Bukhārī and Muslim had at their disposal but has since vanished.¹¹⁰ How can al-Albānī thus dare to correct these vaunted masters?

Like Shāh Waliyyallāh’s defense of the *Sahīḥayn* canon, Mamdūḥ and Mullā Khāṭir also reject al-Albānī’s criticisms because they threaten the canon’s well-

¹⁰⁶ Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*; 24, 53.

¹⁰⁷ Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīḥayn*; 246, 256.

¹⁰⁹ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīḥayn*, 318.

¹¹⁰ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīḥayn*, 488.

established utility. Mullā Khāṭir notes that one of the properties of the two works is that one can act on their ḥadīths without any need to prove their authenticity.¹¹¹ Perhaps his greatest objection to al-Albānī’s scholarship is the very notion of “correcting the *Sahīhayn* (*tashīh al-Sahīhayn*),” to which Mullā Khāṭir devotes an entire chapter in his book. For him the very notion of qualifying the phrase “al-Bukhārī/Muslim included it” with the comment “and it is authentic” represents unmitigated effrontery to the purpose of the canon.¹¹² Māmduḥ seconds this concern for any threat to the role of the *Sahīhayn* as authoritative references. “You see the ḥadīth masters (*huffāz*),” he states, “if they cite a ḥadīth from one of the *Sahīhayn*, that was sufficient to rule that the ḥadīth was authentic, so you do not see them researching the *isnāds*.¹¹³

Al-Albānī’s criticism of the *Sahīhayn* also manifests the Salafī threat to the principles of following an established *madhab* (*taqlīd*) and the hierarchy of scholars so valued among *Madhab* Traditionalists. Māmduḥ asserts that al-Albānī’s criticizing the *Sahīhayn* invites further criticism of the two works and is a call for unconstrained independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) instead of the proper reliance on qualified scholars (*taqlīd*). Criticizing these established institutions of Islamic scholarship “opens a door we cannot easily shut.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, it represents a challenge to the hermeneutic hierarchy of the *madhhab*s and their system of authorized interpretation of texts.

Māmduḥ states that al-Albānī’s statements contain “great dangers” since he has given “to any claimant the right to judge the ḥadīths of the *Sahīhayn* by what he sees as within the

¹¹¹ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 80.

¹¹² Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 474-6.

¹¹³ Māmduḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Māmduḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 13-14.

bounds of the scientific principles of ḥadīth.”¹¹⁵ Mullā Khāṭir’s final evaluation of correcting the *Sahīhayn* is thus that criticizing “what the umma has agreed on is pure calumny and misguidance, the greatest of losses (*al-khusrān al-mubīn*) and the fatal blow (*qāṣimat al-zahr*).”¹¹⁶

Conclusion: al-Albānī’s Reply and the Continuity of Iconoclastic ḥadīth Criticism

Al-Albānī replied to his critics with defiance. He responded to Mamdūḥ’s condemnation of his reevaluation of some of Muslim’s narrations by exclaiming, “as if, by Muslim’s inclusion of these ḥadīths, they acquired some immunity (*him^{an}*) from criticism. That is without a doubt a mistake.”¹¹⁷ In the last edition of his *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, al-Albānī states:

It is essential that I put forth a word of truth for the sake of scholarly integrity (*li l-amāna al-ilmīyya*) and exoneration from blame (*tabri’ a li l-dhamma*, sic): a scholar must admit an intellectual truth expressed by Imām al-Shāfi’ī in a narration attributed to him: God has forbidden that any except His book attain completion (*abā Allah an yatimma illā kitābuhi*).¹¹⁸

After describing a problematic ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī’s collection, he adds that this is but one of dozens of examples that demonstrate the ignorance “of those impudent ones who chauvinistically acclaim al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*, as well as that of Muslim, with blind loyalty

¹¹⁵ Mamdūḥ, *Tanbīh al-muslim*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Mullā Khāṭir, *Makānat al-Sahīhayn*, 488.

¹¹⁷ Al-Albānī, ed., *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh Muslim*, 17. Here al-Albānī seems to be directly quoting the seventh/thirteenth-century scholar of Marrakesh, Ibn al-Qattān al-Fāsī (d. 628/1231) in his massive ḥadīth work *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īthām*. See Abū al-Husayn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Qattān al-Fāsī, *Bayān al-wahm wa al-īthām al-wāqi’ayn fī kitāb al-Aḥkām*, ed. al-Husayn Āyat Sa‘īd, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Tayba, 1418/1997), 4:298.

¹¹⁸ Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Taḥāwiyya*, 23; idem, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 2:5-6.

and say with complete certainty that everything included in those two books is authentic.”¹¹⁹

Here we see al-Albānī repeating essentially the same quote cited by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī nine centuries earlier as he defended his right to criticize al-Bukhārī’s identification of transmitters (although al-Khaṭīb cites al-Shāfi‘ī’s student al-Muzanī as the source). Both deny that any book other than the Qur’ān can be free from error or attain immunity from criticism. Al-Khaṭīb played a crucial role in constructing the *Sahīhayn*’s canonical culture, but he reserved the scholar’s right to correct his predecessors. No work can achieve an impervious iconic status, for scholars always reserve the right to scrutinize it critically. Al-Albānī thus explains that “*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, despite its glory and the scholars’ acceptance of it..., has not been totally free of criticism from some scholars.”¹²⁰ Responding to the attacks of the Ḥanafī Abū Ghudda, al-Albānī correctly points out that the Ḥanafī school has a long and persistent history of criticizing the *Sahīhayn*.¹²¹

Al-Albānī clarifies that his intention is not to reduce the utility of ḥadīth collections or question the authority of Prophetic reports. He is merely noting existing criticisms of ḥadīths found in the *Sahīhayn* for the benefit of the reader. Many such criticisms pertain only to one narration of the ḥadīth and not to the Prophetic tradition itself.¹²² In fact, he says that by showing that some ḥadīths criticized in works like Ibn

¹¹⁹ Al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-ahādīth al-ṣahīha* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1416/1996), 6:2:93.

¹²⁰ Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 2:7.

¹²¹ Al-Albānī, ed., *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Taḥāwīyya*, 38-42.

¹²² Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 2:4.

Mājah's *Sunan* actually have authentic and reliable versions, he "has saved hundreds of ḥadīths from the weakness that some of their *isnāds* entail."¹²³

For al-Albānī, exempting the *Sahīhayn* from critical review constitutes a betrayal of "scholarly integrity." Embracing a canonical culture that sacrifices critical honesty for the security of scholarly institutions violates a Muslim scholar's responsibility. The acceptability of criticizing the *Sahīhayn* enunciates the contrast between this Salafī attitude towards the canonical culture and that of its staunch supporters. When Ibn al-Jawzī declared some ḥadīths from Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* forgeries because their contents seemed to contradict tenets of the faith, the great champion of the *Sahīhayn* canon, Ibn Ḥajar, wrote that we must try to reconcile this material and not dismiss it. "For if people open that door to rejecting ḥadīths," he wrote, "it would be claimed that many ḥadīths from the *Sahīhayn* were false, but God most high and the believers have refused to let this happen."¹²⁴ In contrast, the Salafī ḥadīth scholar Tāhir al-Jazā'irī argues that Ibn Taymiyya justifiably criticized a ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī's collection for unacceptable content. Al-Jazā'irī expresses surprise and concern over scholars who try to suppress discussion of mistakes in the *Sahīhayn* because they think that allowing criticism of the *matn* will open the door to the "people with agendas (*ahl al-awhā'*)."¹²⁵ He disagrees, saying that proper criticism is a worthy practice.¹²⁵ Al-Albānī echoes this sentiment, saying that proper criticism based on the principles of ḥadīth scholarship is never

¹²³ Al-Albānī, *Mukhtaṣar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 2:5.

¹²⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Nukat ʻalā kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 158.

¹²⁵ Al-Jazā'irī, *Tawjīh al-naẓar ilā uṣūl al-athar*, 1:331-2.

inappropriate. He quotes Mālik as saying that “there is not one among us who has not rebutted or been rebutted except the master of that grave [i.e. the Prophet] (ṣ).”¹²⁶

Between al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s invocation of the notion that no book except the Qur’ān is above criticism and al-Albānī’s repetition of this mantra almost a thousand years later, we see a continuous strain of iconoclastic ḥadīth scholarship that survived alongside the burgeoning canonical culture of the *Sahīḥayn*. The work of al-Dāraqutnī before the canonization of the *Sahīḥayn*, and of al-Māzarī, al-Jayyānī and Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ after it represents the continued application of the critical methods of ḥadīth scholarship despite the protective culture constructed around the icons of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Those scholars who elaborated and defended the canonical culture did so because they believed that the canon fulfilled certain crucial purposes in the scholarly community. Iconoclastic ḥadīth scholars like Ibn al-Murāḥhal and Ibn Abī al-Wafā’ did not concede to prioritizing the canonical culture above the critical standards of ḥadīth criticism.

Yet, if criticism of the *Sahīḥayn* canon was not novel, why do vociferous condemnations of these critiques only begin in the early modern period? In the case of Shāh Waliyyallāh, defending the canon was an act of protecting and consolidating the truly unifying institutions of Islam in the besieged and beleaguered Indian subcontinent. Possibly in the work of Shāh Waliyyallāh, and certainly in the case of the *Madhhab* Traditionalists, we see that attempts to quash criticisms the *Sahīḥayn* truly represent efforts of scholars committed to protecting the institutions of classical Islamic scholarship from iconoclastic reformists to whom these institutions mean little. The *Sahīḥayn* canon

¹²⁶ Al-Albānī, *Sahīḥ al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 1:25.

was both a product of and a response to the needs of the legal and theological schools as they solidified in the fifth/eleventh century. The authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim rested on the power of *ijmā'*. The *Madhab* Traditionalists' categorical rejection of criticizing al-Bukhārī and Muslim stemmed from their perception that an attack on the two books was a manifestation of the Salafi attack on consensus, scholarly hierarchy and even the valued notion of time itself. This dimension of criticizing the canon only appeared with the tremendous wave of revival and reform movements in the eighteenth century and the concomitant reemergence *en force* of the iconoclastic Salafi strain of the ḥadīth scholarship with men like al-Ṣan‘ānī and al-Albānī. Only in response to the unprecedented threats they posed to the unifying institutions of classical Islamic religious culture did these increasingly beleaguered institutions find it necessary to defend themselves.

IX.

Canon and Synecdoche: the *Sahīhayn* in Narrative and Ritual

Introduction

So far, we have discussed the *Sahīhayn* canon as a practical and powerful tool of debate and exposition. It is the *kanōn* of truth, the measure of authenticity through which the redemptive media of the Prophet's legacy can be applied decisively. It is the authoritative reference and exemplum that can be invoked to set the rule of a genre. Yet to remain focused solely on jurisprudence or the study of ḥadīth inexcusably limits the role of the Prophet's sunna in Muslim life. It ignores important dimensions of how text, authority and communal identification can interact through the medium of the Prophet's charismatic legacy. Our view has also been limited to the form of canonicity that Sheppard and Folkert conceived of as a criterion of distinction (Canon 1). As we widen our lens beyond the scholarly world, we must examine what functions al-Bukhārī and Muslim fulfilled in their capacity as Canon 2: a fixed collection and delimited text.¹

The Prophet's persona has cast a commanding shadow in Islamic civilization, but it has often remained intangible. In the centuries after their canonization, the *Sahīhayn* would thus meet a pressing need beyond their strictly scholarly functions: that of a trope representing the Prophet's legacy in the broader Sunni community. In both the realms of ritual and the construction of historical narrative in Islamic civilization, al-Bukhārī and Muslim would symbolize the Prophet's role as the pure wellspring of the faith and the

¹ Sheppard, "Canon," 66; Folkert, "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture,'" 173.

liminal point through which his community could access God's blessings. The two works would be the part that symbolized and essentialized the whole, a synecdoche for Muhammad himself.

As a literary trope, synecdoche closely resembles metonymy, or the replacement of one word with another because of some common association between them. Scholars like Hayden White, however, have distinguished between metonymy's function as a part representing the whole and synecdoche's function as a part essentializing it.² 'Fifty sails' indicates fifty ships metonymically, but the synecdoche of 'the English Crown' is the part of the royal person that essentializes the power and sovereignty of the British state. Due to the tremendous veneration that the *Sahīhayn* had earned in Sunni Islam as the most authentic reservoirs of the Prophet's legacy, they were ideally suited to essentialize it.

Delimiting the Infinite: Managing the Sunna through the Ḥadīth Canon

As Norman Calder observed, "one feature of Muslim tradition is that it acknowledges an indeterminately large body of *hadīth* literature."³ The Prophet's oral legacy within his community is amorphous and boundless, subsuming an almost infinite number of reports ranging from the most well authenticated ḥadīths to common household sayings popularly attributed to the Prophet. As Ibn Taymiyya noted at the turn of the eighth/fourteenth century, any claim to have encompassed all the extant ḥadīths

² Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 31-34.

³ Norman Calder, "The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy," in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 75. See also, Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*; 260, 266; Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam*, 59.

attributed to the Prophet was absurd.⁴ In order to fulfill its important role in society, ritual and law in Islamicate civilization, the Prophet's sunna thus needed to be contained in a manageable form. It is in this capacity that the *Sahīhayn* canon, and the Sunni ḥadīth canon as a whole, has served admirably.

To the extent that there existed a simple need for some sort of synecdochic delimitation, the Sunni ḥadīth canon has been relatively elastic. Beyond the *Sahīhayn*, we thus find common references to the canonical units of the Five or Six Books. Any delimited unit could theoretically stand in for the Prophet's sunna as a whole. When the great Ilkhanid vizier and historian Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) sought to properly honor God's revelation and the sunna of the Prophet in one of his pious endowments, he ordered the custodians of his mosque to produce one copy of the Qur'ān and one copy of Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl fī ahādīth ar-rasūl* (Compendium of the Texts of the Prophet's ḥadīths) every year.⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn's cause for choosing the Qur'ān for this purpose is obvious, but why did he select Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl*? The minister must have felt that the work, which condenses the ḥadīths from the *Sahīhayn*, the collections of al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd and Mālik's *Muwatta'*, effectively symbolized the Prophet's legacy and was the proper counterpart to God's revealed word. Earlier, the Alexandrian ḥadīth scholar Abū Tāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī (d. 576/1180) had equated the Prophet's legacy synecdochically with the Five Books of al-Bukhārī,

⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Raq‘ al-malām ‘an al-a’imma al-a’lām*, ed. Muhyī al-Dīn Khatīb (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1387/[1967]), 4.

⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn stipulated that the two books then be placed between the pulpit and the prayer niche (*mihrāb*) and that an invocation be said for him, so that he might receive blessings for all those who benefited from them; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Vaqfnāme-ye rob-e rashīdī: al-waqfiyya al-rashīdiyya be-khaṭṭ al-wāqef fī bayān sharā’et omūr al-waqf wa al-masāref* (Tehran: Ketāb-khāne-ye Mellī, 1350/[1972]), 167.

Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī. He stated that those who opposed (*mukhālif*) these five books on which the umma had agreed opposed the Prophet himself and are like Islam's adversaries in Christian and pagan lands (*dār al-harb*).⁶

For al-Silafī, these five books symbolized the Prophet's very words and the normative legacy that bound the Sunni community together. To disagree with their status was thus to forgo membership in the Prophet's umma. In al-Silafī's statement, we can clearly perceive the unambiguous role that this set of authoritative texts played in defining the boundaries of the orthodox community. Like Moshe Halbertal's "text centered communities," the borders of al-Silafī's 'Abode of Islam (*Dār al-Islam*)' "are shaped in relation to loyalty to a shared canon."⁷

Synecdoche in Ritual: Usage of the *Šahīhayn* Canon in Ritual Contexts

Having been endowed with a substantial religious authority in the fifth/eleventh century, al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections were well situated to dramatize religious meaning. The *Šahīhayn* canon has thus found plentiful usage in the realms of political, calendrical, and supplicatory rituals. How would these two voluminous ḥadīth books, however, be employed in a ritual setting? Kendall Folkert insightfully identified the two manners in which a canonical text can serve as a vehicle for meaning in ritual. First, a

⁶ Abū Tāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silafī, "Muqaddimat al-hāfiẓ al-kabīr Abī Tāhir al-Silafī," in al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma ẓālim al-sunan*, 4:362.

⁷ Halbertal, 129. We should note that this synecdochic use of a ḥadīth collection to represent the Prophet himself was not strictly limited to the *Šahīhayn* or canons in which the two books formed the core. Abū ʿIsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), for example, is reported to have said that if you had his *Jāmi* 'in your house, it is as if the Prophet himself was speaking in your home. Such claims, however, have been rare; the vast majority of synecdochic representations of the Prophet's sunna have centered on the *Šahīhayn* or one of the two books; al-Dhababī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:155.

canonical text can function as a collection of scriptures accessed during the ritual.

Secondly, the physical text of the canon can function as an actual participant in ritual. In this case, rather than just being a storehouse of authoritative writings, the canon can actually serve as a carrier of that authority in physical space. In addition to the contents of the books *per se*, the book itself can wield power as a symbol or icon.⁸ Reading al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* over a sick person to heal him involves the first function of the canon; the contents of the book provide some communion with a higher power and access to God's blessings. An army carrying al-Bukhārī's collection before it like an ark, however, utilizes the second mode of canonical function; the physical book is a central participant in the ritual.

When used in the first mode, the *Sahīhayn* have served as scripture in public or private readings. Reading a book in public has long been the centerpiece of the Islamicate educational and collective religious experience. Just as Halbertal describes the Jewish text centered community, Islamic religious books have been "a locus of religious experience" whose readings have constituted "a religious drama in and of itself."⁹ As Michael Chamberlain and Jonathan Berkey have shown in their studies on knowledge and society in medieval Damascus and Cairo respectively, the public reading of books was one of main forms of cultural production in the Islamicate world.¹⁰ Even today in *madrasas* from Morocco to Indonesia, students gather to hear their teacher read a text or

⁸ Folkert, "The 'Canons' of 'Scripture,'" 178.

⁹ Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 7-8.

¹⁰ Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 136; Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 210 ff.

comment on a senior disciple's (*sārid*) reading.¹¹ At Friday prayers or lessons convened in the mosque for the general public, a professional reading of the Qur'ān, ḥadīth or pietistic texts serves as the crux of the performance or lesson. Books could also be read in private settings, either by individuals, in the households of notables or the palaces of rulers for the sake of private appreciation or exclusive access to blessings.

The *Sahīhayn*, however, are not works of creative scripture, narrative or liturgical prose. They are essentially synecdochic segments cut out of the endless continuum of the Prophet's sunna, discrete instance of his normative legacy selected and arranged by al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Consisting of page after page of Prophetic ḥadīths with rare commentary, there is little beyond the editorial choices of the two scholars to provide any tangible notion of authorship. Reading the *Sahīhayn* is thus literally reading a synecdoche of the Prophet's legacy, the value of which has been assured by the two great canonical figures of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition.

Although the *Sahīhayn* could represent the sunna in a manageable form, the two works are nonetheless massive. Even professional ḥadīth scholars like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī who devoted themselves to ceaseless study sessions of al-Bukhārī's work required at least several days to complete hearing the collection from a teacher.¹² As a result, public readings of al-Bukhārī or Muslim's works could take a more accessible private-public form, with a select group of religious devotees gathering in a mosque or Sufi lodge to read the bulk of the text and the general public only participating in the

¹¹ See, for example, Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction," in *Comparing Muslim Societies*, ed. Juan R.I. Cole (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

¹² Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:222.

culmination (*khatm*) of the book.¹³ Just as the congregation attending the nightly reading of the Qur'ān during Ramadan swells at the *khatm* of the holy book on the twenty-seventh night of the month, the Night of Power, so would the *khatm* of a *Sahīh* be the public ritual focus of its reading. As a result, from the late 800/1400's we see a proliferation of books on performing the *khatm* of the *Sahīhayn* and other major ḥadīth works as well as providing vignettes about the lives of their authors, such as that of ‘Abd al-Salām b. Maḥmūd al-‘Adawī (d. 1033/1623) on al-Bukhārī's collection and that of al-Sakhāwī on Abū Dāwūd or al-Nasā’ī's *Sunans*.¹⁴

Let us now examine the three main vectors of ritual activity that have employed the *Sahīhayn*: supplicatory, calendrical and political. In all three cases, ritual use of the *Sahīhayn* seems to have begun in force during the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, approximately two to three centuries after their canonization. There is scant evidence of ritual usage for the two books in sources covering the earlier period between the careers of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and the late sixth/twelfth century, like al-Khaṭīb's *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam* or ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfi’ī's (d. 623/1226) *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*. It is not completely clear why ritual use of the *Sahīhayn* began in this period, but exploring the nature of their usages may offer explanations.

¹³ See, for example, al-Kittānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:549.

¹⁴ Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:130; al-Sakhāwī, *Badhl al-majhūd fī khatm al-Sunan li-Abī Dāwūd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Jīlānī (Riyadh: Aḍwā’ al-Salaf, 2003); idem, *Bughyat al-rāghib al-mutamannī fī khatm al-Nasā’ī*.

a. Supplicatory and Medicinal Ritual

Supplicatory rituals are rites through which people call on the supernatural for assistance. This genre of ritual activity overlaps with rituals of exchange and communion, in which humans undertake an act in the hope or expectation that the supernatural will reciprocate.¹⁵ Employing the *Sahīhayn* canon in supplicatory or medicinal rituals seems to be the earliest ritual usage of the two books. This role of the books came on the heels of the ritual attention paid in particular to al-Bukhārī's grave itself. Al-Bukhārī's place of burial near Samarqand was a locus for intercession and miracles within a century of his death, as the *Tārīkh Samārqand* of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad al-Astarabādhī (d. 405/1015) informs us.¹⁶ The Andalusian *muḥaddith* Abū 'Alī al-Jayyānī (d. 498/1105) recounts that one Abū al-Fath Naṣr b. al-Ḥasan al-Samārqandī (fl. 470/1080) visited him in Valencia in 464/1071-2 and described how the people of Samārqand had been afflicted by a terrible drought. This was only alleviated when the people of the city went to al-Bukhārī's grave and invoked God's mercy.¹⁷

An unusual ritual usage seems to have appeared for Muslim's *Sahīḥ* in the early sixth/twelfth century, when it became the vehicle for an apparently isolated ordeal of mourning. When the son of the scholar Abū al-Qāsim Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad al-Taymī (d. 535/1140-1) died, he buried him and then read *Sahīḥ Muslim* by his grave in Hamadhān. In an act reminiscent of a ritual rejoicing of the community after a transitional ordeal, the day al-Taymī finished his reading he set up a large table with

¹⁵ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 108.

¹⁶ Apud. al-Ṣaghānī, *Asāmī*, 1-2. See Chapter 7, n. 41.

¹⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 19:273-4; cf. al-Qastallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 1:29.

sweets and food and invited all his friends to join him in a feast.¹⁸ We have no other evidence, however, of the *Sahīhayn* being used in this manner.

By the 700/1300's al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* had become a well-known tool for people seeking God's intervention in times of illness and hardship within the cultural orbit of Mamluk Egypt and Syria. The Damascene Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) notes that the book was "a refuge from predicaments (*mu'dilāt*) and well-tried for responding to needs," adding that "this is a well-known matter, and if we were pushed to mention all this and what occurred with it, the explanation would be too lengthy."¹⁹ In 790/1388, one of the many instances in which the bubonic plague struck Cairo, the Shāfi'ī chief judge ordered al-Bukhārī's work read in the Azhar Mosque as a plea for relief. When the plague continued, he ordered it read again two weeks later in the Mosque of al-Hākim. In a final, desperate petition for divine succor, the judge convened a reading three days later in the Azhar Mosque with orphaned children in attendance.²⁰ Muhammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384) explains that he decided to write his onomastically focused commentary on al-Bukhārī because "a certain sultan from an important Muslim land (*ba'd ummahāt bilād al-Islām*)" (probably the Mamluk sultan) fell ill and wanted al-Bukhārī's work read over him so that its blessing (*baraka*) might cure him. The scholars charged with the reading, however, could not confidently read the *isnāds* without stumbling over the unvowelled names of the transmitters.²¹ The Cairene Ibn Hajar al-

¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:51.

¹⁹ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 2:234.

²⁰ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ḥalīl al-Maqrīzī, (d. 845/1441), *Kitāb al-sulūk li-ma ṛifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, 11 vols. in 4 (Cairo: Maṭba'a at Dār al-Kutub, 1970), 3:2:577.

²¹ Al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:5.

‘Asqalānī reported that his teacher Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Ḥamza was told by a “mystic (*ārif*)” that “*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* has not been read in a time of severity except that this has been relieved, nor [has it ever been read] when embarking a ship that sank.” He adds that Ibn Kathīr says that al-Bukhārī’s collection can be read as an invocation for rain (*istisqā*).²²

In the Ottoman Ḥijāz, the Ḥanafī émigré from Herat, Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’ (d. 1014/1606), tells us that al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* had been dubbed “the well-tried antidote (*al-tiryāq al-mujarrab*).” He quotes one Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn as saying, “I have read *al-Bukhārī* one hundred and twenty times for events (*waqā’i*) and important tasks (*muhimmāt*) of mine and of others, and the desired result occurred and the needs were met....”²³ The reputation of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* had spread as far as India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Shāh Waliyyallāh’s son, Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 1824), says that reading the work in times of severity, fear, illness, famine or drought “is a tried and tested cure.”²⁴

There is much less evidence for widespread use of Muslim’s book in medicinal or supplicatory rituals. Nonetheless, the collection did attain at least a portion of the fame of its greater counterpart. The famous central Asian ḥadīth and Qur’ān scholar Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), for example, read part of Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* at Muslim’s grave for *baraka*.²⁵

²² Ibn Hajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 14; al-Qastallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, 1:29.

²³ Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīḥ*, 1:13.

²⁴ Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn*, 75.

²⁵ Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad Yūsuf Efendizāde, “Ināyat al-mālik al-mun‘im li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,” MS 343-5 Hamidiye, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul: 1:3b.

b. *Calendrical Rituals*

Calendrical rituals impose a framework of human significance on the abstract dimension of time or the endless cycles of nature. In general, such rituals are either based on the seasons or on commemorating important moments in a community's collective experience. In the Islamic calendrical system, where the calendar year has been deliberately severed from the solar year and planting seasons, religious holidays serve as anchors in the Muslim sense of time. The month of Ramadan and the Night of Power are thus two of the markers of the Islamic year.²⁶ As we shall see, a three-month reading of the *Sahīhayn* would also effectively create a ritual 'season.'

The use of the *Sahīhayn* in calendrical rituals seems to have begun slightly later than the books' supplicatory role. From the available evidence, it seems that around the early 1300's CE al-Bukhārī's book, and to a lesser extent Muslim's, was being read in mosques to mark the consecutive months of Rajab, Sha'bān and climaxing with the celebration at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. In Cairo, the Mamluk sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq (d. 801/1399) hired a scholar to read the *Sahīhayn* in his newly founded Zāhiriyya Mosque during Sha'bān and Ramadan.²⁷ In 1515 CE, the *madrasa* of al-Sayfī Baybars was founded in Cairo and a scholar was hired specifically to read *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* during Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramadan.²⁸

²⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, 103.

²⁷ Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, 213.

²⁸ Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*; 17, 75.

Even in the far flung Songhay Empire of Mali, with its grand mud-built capital at Timbuktu, ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abdallāh al-Sa‘dī (d. after 1065/1655-6), an *imām* in Jenne and administrator in Timbuktu, tells us that the *Sahīhayn* were read in mosques during these three months. This is not surprising, since Mali’s scholars traveled and studied in the Maghrib, Egypt and the Hijāz, taking ritual practices back with them. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad Aqīt of Timbuktu (d. 991/1583) recited the *Sahīhayn* during Rajab, Sha‘bān, and Ramadan annually for over twenty years.²⁹ His contemporary, the ḥadīth scholar Aḥmad b. al-Hājj Aḥmad b. ‘Umar, was also known as “the reciter of the two *Sahīhs* in the Sankore mosque.”³⁰ Across the vast dune sea to the northwest, an anonymous mid ninth/fifteenth century scholar in Marrakesh would read al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* to the descendants of the Prophet in the city during Ramadan.³¹

Even in Syria in the late 1800’s al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* was read in the Naṣr Dome of the Umayyad Mosque in Rajab, Sha‘bān, and Ramadan with great attendance and fanfare.³² In Morocco during the same period, main mosques and Sufi lodges began reading the *Sahīh* in Rajab, continued through Sha‘bān and finished on the Night of Power in Ramadan.³³ Al-Bukhārī’s collection was also read on other important religious occasions. In 1119/1707-8, for example, ‘Abdallāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1134/1722) was

²⁹ John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: al-Sa‘dī’s Ta’rīkh al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 61. For more on scholars in Timbuktu, see Elias N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu: the Role of Muslim Scholars and Notables 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 58-126.

³⁰ Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 46.

³¹ Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, 69-70.

³² Commins, *The Salafi Reform Movement in Damascus*, 57-8.

³³ Al-Kittānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:544-5.

assigned to read the work at the Grand Mosque in Mecca upon its renovation by the orders of the Ottoman Sultan Ahmad III.³⁴

c. Political Rituals

One of the most dramatic usages of the *Sahīhayn* canon has been in the realm of political ritual, which generally serves two primary functions. First, rites of political ritual create a sense of coherence and common order among a collectivity of people. Secondly, they legitimize this sense of political community by establishing a link between it and the higher orders of the cosmos.³⁵ The usage of the *Sahīhayn* in political ritual seems to have begun in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries in Mamluk Egypt and Syria. The Mamluk army that marched out of Cairo against the Ilkhanid Mongols at the beginning of the eighth/thirteenth century was led by a person carrying *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*.³⁶ Ibn Kathīr says that in Sha'bān 766/1365, when the *amīr* Sayf al-Dīn Baydar (the Mamluk sultan's erstwhile deputy in Syria) returned to Damascus to take up the governorship of the city, prominent citizens received him with a large public celebration. These festivities involved public readings of the final sections of al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* (*khatmat al-Bukhārīyyāt*) in the Umayyad Mosque and other locations in succession at different mosques all day. Meanwhile *Sahīh Muslim* was being read at the Ḥanbalī *mihrāb* at the Nūriyya *madrasa* near the Umayyad Mosque. Ibn Kathīr was responsible for arranging all this, and he said that this had not taken place at

³⁴ Voll, “Abdallah b. Salim al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship,” 360.

³⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, 129.

³⁶ J. De. Somogyi, “Adh-Dhahabi's record of the destruction of Damascus by the Mongols in 699-700/1299-1301,” *Goldziher Memorial* 1 (1948): 361.

any other time in recent years.³⁷ When the army of the Moroccan Sa‘dian dynasty marched out of their ochre-colored southern capital of Marrakesh to fight the invading Portuguese in 998/1589-90, scholars performed a public *khatm* of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* as the army left the gates.³⁸

Perhaps the most consistently cunning exploiter of the *Sahīhayn* canon for political ritual has been the reigning ‘Alawid dynasty of Morocco. Deriving their political legitimacy from their descent from the Prophet, ‘Alawid rulers have turned to al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* as a physical manifestation of Muhammad’s legacy. The true founder of the dynasty, the conqueror and statesman Mawlā Ismā‘īl (d. 1727), sought to transform his patrimony from a family of raiders dependent on the ephemeral loyalties of local Berber tribes into a true state with a dependable standing army. He thus built up a core unit of African slave soldiers, originally captured in the conquest of gold-laden Timbuktu, to serve as the centerpiece of his army. This unit grew in size, as Mawlā Ismā‘īl had their sons trained by artisans and then enlisted in the ranks upon reaching the age of ten, until it reached the awesome size of 150,000 men.³⁹ Mawlā Ismā‘īl dubbed these soldiers “The Slaves of al-Bukhārī (*Abīd al-Bukhārī*),” for it was upon the *Sahīh* and its representation of the Prophet’s sunna that their loyalty to their ruler was based. The Moroccan archivist and historian Abū al-‘Abbās Ahmad al-Nāṣirī (d. 1315/1897) explains that, in his efforts to free himself of reliance on the fickle loyalties of tribal

³⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 14:326-7.

³⁸ Al-Kittānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:549.

³⁹ Abū al-Qāsim al-Zayyānī, *al-Bustān al-żarīf fī dawlat awlād mawlāya al-sharīf*, ed. Rashīd al-Zāwiya (Rabat: Matba‘at al-Ma‘arif al-Jadīda, [1992]), 1: 171; Maurice Delafosse, “Les débuts des troupes noires du Maroc,” *Hespéris* 3 (1923): 7-8.

forces, Mawlā Ismā‘īl gathered the leaders of his slave regiment around a copy of al-

Bukhārī’s *Sahīh*. He said:

I and you are slaves to the sunna of the Messenger of God (s) and his sacred law as collected in his book (i.e. the *Sahīh*), so all that he has commanded we will do, and all that he has forbidden we will forsake, and by it we will fight (*wa ‘alayhi nuqātil*).

He then took their oaths by that. At one end of the great parade ground that the ruler built for his praetorian at his hilltop imperial palace in Meknes, Mawlā Ismā‘īl constructed a *madrasa* named after al-Bukhārī. He ordered that copy of the *Sahīh* on which the soldiers’ oaths had been taken preserved there and that they carry it “like the Ark of the Children of Israel (*tābūt banī Isrā‘īl*)” when they went out on campaign.⁴⁰

The ‘Alawid dynasty has maintained the prominent place of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* in political rituals. When king Ḥasan I came to Rabat on Eid al-Fitr in 1873, he ordered festivities including the reading of the *Sahīh* and culminating in a large public gathering with all the city’s notables. The king also did this upon the completion of his royal palace in Rabat.⁴¹

The ‘Alawid dynasty has relied on its claim of descent from the Prophet as the central pillar of its political legitimacy in Morocco. Basing the *esprit de corps* of his praetorian on al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* and maintaining the collection as the unit’s mascot reinforced Mawlā Ismā‘īl’s chosen role as heir to the Prophet’s political authority. The *Sahīh*’s ability to stand in for the Prophet’s persona in ritual, literally carried before the king’s advancing army, was central to the logic of this political ritual. Similarly, the

⁴⁰ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istisqā li-akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-aqsā*, ed. Ja‘far al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī, 9 vols. (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1956), 7:58.

⁴¹ Al-Kittānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:547.

esteemed station of the *Sahīhayn* allowed Ibn Kathīr to help transform the arrival of the Bahī Mamluk governor in Damascus into an evocation of religious significance.

The Ritual Power of the *Sahīhayn*: the Muḥammadan Blessing

In Islam, God is the source of all *baraka*, what Josef Meri calls “the stuff of faith.”⁴² It is the blessing by which men’s felicity is ensured in the earthly life and the hereafter. Proximity to God through either piety or some link to a liminal figure entails greater access to His *baraka*.⁴³ As the receptacle of revelation and the bridge between the divine and the temporal, the Prophet is the ultimate liminal figure in Islam. As the perfect human, possessed of “tremendous character (Qur’ān 68:4),” and on whom God and the angels “shower their prayers (Qur’ān 33:56),” the figure of Muḥammad has enjoyed the greatest access to *baraka*. His persona is the most completely endowed with “the capacity to mediate between humanity and the Deity.”⁴⁴ Imitating his lifestyle and obeying his commands as embodied in the Sharia enables Muslims to approach this locus of God’s blessings. Gaining physical or aural proximity to the Prophet’s words, his relics or members of his family provides extended access to his liminality.⁴⁵ Similarly, pious

⁴² Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17.

⁴³ See G.S. Colin, “Baraka,” *EI*²; Earnest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 12.

⁴⁴ Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, 70.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the salvational role of the Prophet and his family in Egyptian popular Sufism, see Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, “Devotion to the Prophet and His Family in Egyptian Sufism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 617. For a discussion of the role of the descendants of the Prophet (*igurram*) among Berbers in Morocco, see Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, 70-80.

individuals who have themselves earned a station close to God and His blessing themselves become loci of liminality and *baraka* for others.

Like saints, who wield extraordinary powers through their proximity to God, books enjoying such proximity are also a “nexus of baraka, miracles and mediation....”⁴⁶ Michael Chamberlain describes religious knowledge (*ilm*) as a source of blessing (*baraka*) that Muslims of all social standings tried to acquire.⁴⁷ The pursuit and study of *ilm* was thus a ritual practice, equated with forms of worship such as ritual remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and canonical prayer and thus requiring the same levels of ritual purity. Acquiring knowledge was a “collective liminal experience” in which the attempt to grasp and appreciate God’s will brought the audience closer to Him.⁴⁸

Reading or listening to a performance of a ḥadīth collection was thus to increase one’s proximity to God’s blessings as deposited and dispensed through His Prophet. As J. Z. Smith states, “ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is a process for marking interest.”⁴⁹ In the ritual logic of the audience, reading Muhammad’s words is to give his person and legacy attention. To consider his example is to please God as the Prophet had pleased Him and incur that blessing which God showered upon him. It is to walk that path of liminality. The ritual of listening to or acting on a ḥadīth becomes a metaphoric act of accessing the Prophet’s blessings.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 127.

⁴⁷ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 122.

⁴⁸ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 127-9.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Towards Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103.

⁵⁰ See Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 30 ff.

The conspicuous Muslim habit of calling God's peace and blessings down upon the Prophet after every mention of his name in either written or oral expression emphasizes the role of the Prophet as a channel for access to God's *baraka*. In activities such as the Sunni canonical prayer, in fact, invocations for the Prophet's sake equal or supersede the performer's set prayers for himself or herself. Here Muḥammad becomes a proxy for the believer's own personal invocations. The Egyptian Shāfi‘ī al-Sakhawī (d. 902/1497) notes that the purpose of such intense prayer on the Prophet is "growing close to God most high by imitating His act [of blessing the Prophet] and fulfilling the right due the Prophet (ṣ)." Al-Sakhawī quotes one Abū Muḥammad al-Marjānī as saying that, "in calling your prayers on him [the Prophet], you are, in truth, because of the benefits that these prayers return to you, praying for yourself."⁵¹ The benefits of calling God's peace and blessings down upon the Prophet extend to the scholarly realm of those who write books in addition to their audiences. Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī mentions a ḥadīth that guarantees *baraka* for an author who writes "may the peace and blessings of God be upon him" after the Prophet's name. The ḥadīth states that "whoever prays (*sallā ʻalayya*) for me in a book, angels will continue to pray for him as long as my name is in that book."⁵²

In ritual, the *Sahīhayn* thus act synecdochically as a channel for God's blessings as transmitted through the Prophet. The Mamluk sultan whom al-Kirmānī mentioned as having fallen ill hoped the *baraka* of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* would cure him.⁵³ We find in the

⁵¹ Al-Sakhawī, *al-Qawl al-badī’ fī al-salāt ‘alā al-habīb al-shaftī* (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Insāf, 1383/1963), 25. "Indeed God and His angels pray upon the Prophet, O you who believe shower prayers and blessings upon him (Qur’ān 33:56)."

⁵² Al-Silafī, *al-Wajīz fī dhikr al-majāz wa al-mujīz*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr al-Biqā‘ī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1411/1991), 95.

⁵³ Al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-darārī*, 1:5.

letter of the Moroccan scholar ‘Abd al-Kabīr b. Muḥammad al-Kattānī (d. 1333/1914-5) instructions to read through al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* in mosques and houses in order to get the “Muhammadan intercession (*al-shafā‘a al-muhammadiyya*).⁵⁴ Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’ quotes Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn as crediting the miraculous powers of the *Sahīh* “to the *barakāt* of the most noble of the nobles (the Prophet) and the source of felicity, may the most favored prayers and most perfect greeting be upon him.”⁵⁵

The synecdochic function of the *Sahīhayn* in these rites provides the best explanation for why ritual usage of the canon began on any appreciable scale only in the seventh/thirteenth century. Marshall Hodgson notes that at this time Islamicate civilization in the Nile-Oxus region had reached some critical distance from the faith’s epicenter in the person of the Prophet. Society required new vehicles for bridging this divide and accessing the Prophet’s *baraka*, and the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries thus witnessed an intensified interest in pilgrimages to Muhammad’s grave in Medina, those of his purported descendants throughout the Islamic world and other local saints.⁵⁶ The *Sahīhayn* provided a textual alternative.

The popularization of the *Sahīhayn* in public rituals such as readings during Ramadan mirrors the wider popularization of communal ritual such as those practiced by Sufi brotherhoods, which began flourishing in their institutional *tariqa* form in the 600/1200’s.⁵⁷ Similarly, the initiative that the Mamluk rulers took in organizing and

⁵⁴ Al-Kittānī, *Madrasat al-Bukhārī fī al-Maghrib*, 2:545-6.

⁵⁵ Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Mirqāt al-mafātīh*, 1:13.

⁵⁶ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:453; Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 14.

⁵⁷ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9-10; J.O. Hunwick et. al., “Taṣawwuf,” *EI*.

funding public readers of the *Sahīhayn* dovetails with their general sponsorship of popular religious practices, such as building major Sufi lodges in Cairo and Damascus.⁵⁸

The Canon and Synecdoche in Narrative: A Salvational Trope in a Narrative of Decline and Salvation

Just as the *Sahīhayn* represented the Prophet's liminality and charisma, granting access to the *baraka* to which he was the key, al-Bukhārī and Muslim also became a synecdochic trope for scholars constructing narrative in Islamic history. Ḥadīth literature is not limited to the dry compilation and criticism of Prophetic reports. It encompasses a network of genres that either orbit the collection and evaluation of reports or mould these activities into forms that address specific needs. Ḥadīth-oriented biographical dictionaries like *Tārīkh Baghdād*, works on *īlal* and the technical terms of ḥadīth evaluation fit into the first category. The second category includes specific types of ḥadīth collections that could channel the Prophet's charisma through an individual scholar's personal religious expression. *Mustakhrajs*, personal *muṣams* documenting all the lands to which a collector had traveled (*riḥla*) and all the teachers from whom he had heard (*mashyakha, barnāmaj*), as well as the great ḥadīth collections themselves fall into the second. All these genres, however, together weave a meta-narrative that serves as the shared culture of ḥadīth scholars or those other Muslim sages or laity who trade on their domain.

This is a romantic narrative of decline and salvation. It constantly replays what Marshall Hodgson called “the old man’s view of history,” in which the community seems

⁵⁸ Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 12 ff.

bound inevitably towards religious and moral entropy but clings to a lingering hope for the survival of the true faith through the uniquely pious efforts of the scholar.⁵⁹ “The best of generations is the one in which I was sent, then that which comes after it, then that which follows;” this Prophetic tradition embodies the Sunni vision of religious history, as the Muslim community drifts farther and farther in time from the epicenter of the Prophet’s mission. Each successive age after that greatest community has a more tenuous grasp of the Prophet’s salvational message.

Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) thus complains that his surroundings were flooded with ever-multiplying attributions to the Prophet and dilettantes who could not tell authentic ḥadīths from forged ones.⁶⁰ His student al-Ḥākim writes in the beginning of his *Ma ḥrifat ʿulūm al-hadīth*:

Indeed, when I saw heretical innovation in religion (*bida’*) increasing in our time, and the people’s knowledge of the fundamentals of the sunna decreasing... this called me to compose a small book including all the branches of the sciences of ḥadīth that students of reports might need....⁶¹

In the introduction to his commentary on *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, al-Khaṭṭābī says:

I contemplated the recourse for the affairs of our time, such as the scarcity of *ilm*, the prevalence of ignorance (*jahl*), the dominance of the people of religious heresies (*bida’*), that many of the people’s affairs have deviated towards their different schools of thought (*madhāhib*) and turned away from the holy book and the sunna. I feared that this matter would become more severe in days to come, that knowledge will be more preciously rare (*a’azz*) due to the paucity of those whom I see today... attending faithfully to [hadīth] and attaining a sound (*sālih*) level of knowledge in it.⁶²

⁵⁹ See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1: 381; see also, Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 25; idem, “The Idea of Progress in Classical Islam,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (1981): 277-89.

⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Sahīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:58.

⁶¹ Al-Ḥākim, *Ma ḥrifat ʿulūm al-hadīth*, 2.

⁶² Al-Khaṭṭābī, *A lām al-hadīth*, 1: 102-3.

Writing over a century later in Khurāsān, al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) similarly describes the crises of heresy and ignorance on his environment: “nothing remains of the religion except its outlines (*rasm*), nor of knowledge except its name, to the point that falsity is considered to be the truth among most people in our time, and ignorance is confused with knowledge.”⁶³

In the face of this decline, the struggle of the ‘true Sunni scholars’ to preserve the legacy of the Prophet represents the only hope for personal and communal salvation. One of the most frequently quoted ḥadīths in the introductions to works of ḥadīth literature thus prophesizes: “one party from among my umma will always stand by the truth unharmed by those who forsake them until the command of God comes.”⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal is frequently quoted as identifying this sect with the *ahl al-hadīth*, whom al-Ḥākim describes as “trumping the people of heresy with the sunna of God’s messenger.”⁶⁵ Only by stubbornly clinging to the continuous study and repetition of the Prophet’s legacy can the ḥadīth tradition fulfill its destiny as the sole guardians of Islam’s pure origins.

Moreover, it is always the author’s own immediate efforts that embody this hope of salvation. Al-Baghawī thus offers his huge legal compendium of ḥadīth (*Sharḥ al-sunna*) as an attempt to revive the path of the righteous forbearers who established the

⁶³ Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Shu‘ayb Arnā’ūt and Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh, 14 vols. ([Beirut]: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1390/1971), 1: 3-4.

⁶⁴ “lā tazālu tā’ifa min ummatī zāhirīn ‘alā al-ḥaqqa lā yaḍurruhum man khadhalahum ḥattā ya’ti amr Allāh;” *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-imāra, bāb qawlīhi (s)* lā tazālu tā’ifa.... For another version, see al-Ḥākim, *Ma ḥifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 2.

⁶⁵ Yahyā b. Manda, *Juz’ fīhi manāqib al-shaykh al-Tabarānī*, 5b (quoted from al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s lost *Manāqib aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*).

religion, acting as “one striving to light a lamp in the encompassing darkness, [so that] the perplexed can be guided by it or someone seeking guidance can find the path.”⁶⁶

The notion of the *sahīh* movement as the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship, evident after the writings of Ibn Manda (d. 395/1004-5), provided a convenient trope in this narrative. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in particular came to represent the acme of critical rigor in ḥadīth study. Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) describes how, while the number of ḥadīth collections blossomed in the wake of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s careers, their authors were pursuing all sorts of agendas (*aghrād, maqāṣid*) and the glorious age of the *Shaykhayn* had vanished (*inqarada*). Even with the continued work of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā’ī, it was as if the age of al-Bukhārī and Muslim “was the sum of all ages in terms of the acquisition of that science (*īlm*), and it ended with it. Afterwards that quest waned.”⁶⁷

Because they represented the pinnacle of achievement in the ḥadīth tradition, the *Sahīhayn* could serve as the perfect symbol for the Prophet’s legacy in the narratives that scholars spun around the tension between the ‘authentic teachings of the Prophet (sunna)’ and ‘heretical innovation (*bid‘a*)’ in Islamic religious culture. Writing within a Sunni community that acknowledged the two works’ unparalleled status, scholars could wield them as representations of the salvation that came through embracing the Prophet’s authentic legacy.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, 1:3-4.

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘al-uṣūl*, 1:42.

⁶⁸ We must note that al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s function as a synecdoche in this context in no way resembles Hayden White’s analysis of tropology in Modernist European historical writing, where synecdoche describes a manner in which a historian can manipulate and transition between ideas. Rather, the *Sahīhayn* were quite literally a synecdoche for the Prophet’s authentic legacy as valued by Sunni Muslim scholars.

a. Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī and the Beginning of Synecdoche in Narrative

The earliest extant example of Muslim scholars utilizing the *Sahīhayn* as a synecdoche for the Prophet’s legacy in narrative comes from the fifth/eleventh century writing of Abū al-Fadl al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113). His teacher in the Khurāsānī city of Herat, the fierce über-Sunni Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), cuts an interesting figure in Islamic intellectual history. A staunch Ḥanbalī who condemned the cultivation of speculative theology in a massive multivolume book, he was also a committed Sufi who penned a complex work on the technical terminology of mysticism and the progressive stages towards a complete consciousness of God.⁶⁹ Al-Dhahabī cites an apparently lost text from al-Maqdisī describing the famous Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk summoning Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh to a debate in Herat. Both the vizier and his master, the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan, had arrived in Herat on a visit and had heard complaints from Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī scholars about Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh’s intolerant über-Sunnism. He had stated, for example, that he would curse anyone who denied that God was physically above the earth. Niẓām al-Mulk demanded that Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh respond to his detractors in a debate, and the scholar agreed on one condition: that he be allowed to debate his opponents only with what he had in his two sleeve pockets (*kumm*, sic!). Niẓām al-Mulk asked what the pockets contained, and Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh replied, “the Book of God,” pointing to his right sleeve (*kumm*), “and the sunna of the Messenger of God,” pointing to his left. From his right sleeve Khʷāje ‘Abdallāh then produced a copy

⁶⁹ See ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, ed. Ibrāhīm ‘Aṭwī ‘Awāḍ ([Cairo]: Maktabat Ja‘far al-Ḥadītha, [1977]) and idem, *Dhamm al-kalām wa ahlihi*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. al-‘Azīz al-Shibl, 5 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa al-Hikam, 1995).

of the Qur'ān, and from his left the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Maqdisī continues: “So the vizier looked at [Kh^wāje ‘Abdallāh’s opponents], seeking a response, and there was no one from among them who would debate him in this manner.”⁷⁰

Al-Maqdisī’s story makes clear use of the *Sahīhayn* as a synecdoche for the Prophet’s sunna. Almost a century after their canonization, al-Maqdisī and perhaps even Kh^wāje ‘Abdallāh himself understood the symbolic power of al-Bukhārī and Muslim within the wider Sunni community. In the face of the Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī schools’ ‘heretical’ use of reason and indulgence in speculative theology, al-Maqdisī portrays Kh^wāje ‘Abdallāh as standing by the two pure sources of the faith: God’s revelation and its authoritative interpretation as transmitted through the Prophet’s *ḥadīths*. The canonical text of the Qur’ān is small and easily manageable. The Prophet’s sunna, however, is not. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s books thus serve as its commonly acknowledged physical manifestation in the arena of debate. Just as they functioned as an authoritative reference and measure of authenticity, so did the *Sahīhayn* serve as a symbolic convention as well.

⁷⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:250-1. It seems impossible that someone could fit books as massive as the *Sahīhayn* in their sleeve, but *kumm* clearly indicates sleeve-pockets, and scholars are frequently described as producing large objects from them. We can reliably date this dramatic story to the late fifth/eleventh century when al-Maqdisī was writing. We should certainly not treat it as a reliable transcript of an historical event, however, for the über-Sunni al-Maqdisī shared his teacher’s leanings and furnished a highly partisan account of the debate. Moreover, although al-Maqdisī himself studied with Kh^wāje ‘Abdallāh, he reports this story second-hand through “one of our colleagues (*ashābinā*).” There is no reason to suspect that al-Dhahabī was citing a forged source from a later period, however, since most of al-Maqdisī’s prolific *oeuvre* has not survived for our examination. This absence of evidence should therefore not lead us to doubt al-Maqdisī’s authorship. Even if al-Maqdisī himself creatively altered the report of his teacher’s debate, we can nonetheless still date it to his career in the late fifth/eleventh century. For the most comprehensive list of al-Maqdisī’s works, see al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ya‘lāwī, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1411/1991), 5:735-8.

b. Al-Ghazzālī's Return to the Straight Path: the Şahihayn as Synecdoche

The seminal Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī jurist, theologian and mystic Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) has proven one of the most powerful and controversial figures in Islamic intellectual history. He became a central pillar of the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī orthodoxy, and has been honored as “the Proof of Islam (*hujjat al-Islām*)” by the multitude of later scholars who have shared his doctrinal leanings. Scholars from a wide range of temperaments, however, have also criticized him heavily for his laxity in using ḥadīths, his excessive mystical bent and his wholesale adoption of logic as a tool in Islamic thought. Al-Māzarī took al-Ghazzālī to task for attributing miracles to saints that befitted the Prophet alone. The Mālikī Abū al-Walīd al-Turtūshī, who said he had met al-Ghazzālī, described him as a great scholar who had foolishly “become a Sufi, departing from the sciences and the scholars, entering the sciences of inspiration (*al-khawātir*), the mystics (*arbāb al-qulūb*), and the murmurings of the Devil.”⁷¹ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) criticized him for ignorance in the science of narrating ḥadīths and for including forged reports in his *Iḥyā’ ʻulūm al-dīn*.⁷² Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) faulted al-Ghazzālī for placing logic at the forefront of the Islamic sciences as the common language of scholarly discussion. Al-Dhahabī was one of al-Ghazzālī’s most outspoken critics, arguing that his penchant for sciences originally foreign to Islam and straying into the realm of philosophical speculation plagued the scholar throughout his career.⁷³

⁷¹ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 6: 243.

⁷² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 17:126.

⁷³ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*; 19:330-1, 327-9.

In efforts to salvage al-Ghazzālī's image from these serious critiques, narrative about the scholar's life became a microcosm of the Sunni romance of decline and salvation. One of the earliest attempts to repair al-Ghazzālī's reputation and draw it closer to the conservative Sunni tradition as embodied in the study of ḥadīth is 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Fārisī's (d. 529/1134-5) biography of the scholar.⁷⁴ A ḥadīth-oriented Shāfi'ī who fondly and frequently identifies with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, al-Fārisī nonetheless evinces profound admiration for al-Ghazzālī. Yet his treatment of the great scholar, whom he had met more than once, focuses more on his concern for al-Ghazzālī's failings.⁷⁵ Struggling to salvage al-Ghazzālī's valuable works in fields such as jurisprudence and dogma, al-Fārisī limits his critique to al-Ghazzālī's mystical and esoteric works. He states that al-Ghazzālī went astray from the bases of Islam in books like his Persian ethical treatise *Kemyā-ye sa īdat* (The Alchemy of Felicity).⁷⁶ Al-Fārisī argues that he should never have entered into such esoteric matters because they might confuse the masses of Muslims and negatively affect their conception of proper belief.⁷⁷

The chief thrust in rehabilitating al-Ghazzālī, however, comes at the end of al-Fārisī's biography. It both portrays al-Ghazzālī as returning to the sound path of Sunnism and affirms al-Fārisī's own ḥadīth-oriented, Sunni identity. Al-Fārisī states that in the last years of his life, al-Ghazzālī occupied himself with study of ḥadīth and poring over the *Sahīhayn*. Had he lived longer, al-Fārisī opines, al-Ghazzālī would have become

⁷⁴ This has survived in part in an abridgement of his history of Naysābūr and more fully in the works of Ibn 'Asākir, al-Dhahabī and al-Subkī.

⁷⁵ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:202.

⁷⁶ 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 84.

⁷⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:326-7.

the master of this noble science. Playing on al-Ghazzālī’s honorary title, he adds “it is these two [books, the *Sahīhayn*,] that are the Proof of Islam (*hujjat al-Islam*).”⁷⁸

Establishing al-Ghazzālī’s repentance from his heretical musings in philosophy and Sufism by associating him with the *Sahīhayn* became a central tool for rehabilitating his reputation. The Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī Ibn ‘Asākir of Damascus (d. 571/1176) opens his biography of al-Ghazzālī with the statement that he had heard *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* from one Muḥammad b. ‘Ubaydallāh al-Hafṣī.⁷⁹ The Shāfi‘ī biographer Abū Sa‘d ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sam‘ānī (d. 562/1166) of Merv included a report in his entry on al-Ghazzālī that portrays him inviting one ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Rawwāsī (d. 503/1109) to stay at his house in Tūs in order to provide extended private lessons on the *Sahīhayn*. Even avid defenders of al-Ghazzālī, however, such as al-Subkī, considered this report to be a blatant forgery.⁸⁰ Al-Sam‘ānī most probably included it in his zealous efforts to affirm al-Ghazzālī’s devotion to the ḥadīth tradition. Although the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī is extremely critical of al-Ghazzālī, he also notes that late in life he occupied himself with learning the “*sahīh* collections (*al-sihāh*).”⁸¹ The great apologist for the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī tradition, al-Subkī (d. 770/1370), leaves us the most exhaustive defense of al-Ghazzālī’s legacy in his two-hundred page biography of the scholar in the *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya al-kubrā*. Al-Subkī’s defense of al-Ghazzālī centers on the same theme advanced by al-Fārisī: al-Ghazzālī’s evident recantation from the unrestricted use of speculative theology

⁷⁸ ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, 84; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 6:210-11; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:204.

⁷⁹ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 55:200.

⁸⁰ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 6: 215.

⁸¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 17:126.

in the last years of his life and simultaneous decision to devote himself to the study of the *Şahīhayn*. The Ḥanafī ḥadīth scholar and theologian Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’ provides an even more dramatic depiction of al-Ghazzālī’s final return to the straight path: al-Ghazzālī died with copy of *Şahīh al-Bukhārī* on his chest.⁸²

c. Al-Dhahabī’s Narrative of Islamic History: the Şahīhayn as Synecdoche

The Salafī-oriented Shāfi‘ī scholar Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) shines as one of the most intelligent and influential figures in Islamic intellectual history. A member of the remarkable Damascus circle of Ibn Taymiyya, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī and Ibn Kathīr, his works and those of his associates have exercised an inordinately powerful effect on the course of Sunni thought. Through his many studies on the ḥadīth sciences and remarkable biographical dictionaries, al-Dhahabī elaborated an independent ḥadīth-oriented vision of Islamic history that angered more staunch devotees of the legal and theological schools as much as it provided them indispensable benefit.⁸³ Al-Dhahabī rejected the tradition of speculative theology as well as what he perceived as the over-involved and self-indulgent complexities of the Sunni scholarly edifice. In his biography of al-Ghazzālī he urges a ḥadīth and piety-based minimalism, telling the reader that all a Muslim requires to attain success and salvation are the Qur’ān, the *Şahīhayn*, al-Nasā’ī’s *Sunan* and al-Nawawī’s two pietistic works,

⁸² Mullā ‘Alī Qāri’, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 30.

⁸³ For a harsh criticism of al-Dhahabī by one of his students, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, who also relied on him heavily in his *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya*, see al-Subkī, “Qā‘ida fī al-jarh wa al-ta‘dīl,” in *Arba‘rasā’il fī ʻulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, 6th edition (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1419/1999), 37 ff. For praise of al-Dhahabī from Indian Ḥanafīs, see al-Laknawī, *al-Raf‘ wa al-takmīl*, 286. See also, Makdisi, “Hanbalite Islam,” 240.

Riyād al-ṣāliḥīn (The Garden of the Righteous) and the *Kitāb al-adhkār* (Book of Ordinations).⁸⁴

Al-Dhahabī's *Tadhkira al-huffāz* (Aide-Mémoire of the Ḥadīth Masters) provides a concise glimpse into the scholar's conception of Islamic civilization's historical course. Unlike his gigantic *Tārīkh al-islām* (History of Islam) or his expansive *Siyar a lām al-nubalā'* (The Lives of the Noble Figures), the *Tadhkira* consists of only a few volumes devoted solely to a chronological treatment of those figures who emerged as prominent participants in the Sunni ḥadīth tradition. In rare comments at the end of some outstanding generations, al-Dhahabī includes his own evaluations of the umma's unfolding history. At the end of the first generation to succeed the Companions, for example, he describes how at this time Islam had become powerful and glorious, "having conquered the lands of the Turks in the east and Andalusia in the west."⁸⁵

After the fifth generation, consisting of scholars like Ibn Jurayj and Abū Ḥanīfa who died between 140 and 150AH, al-Dhahabī writes that, "Islam and its peoples were endowed with total might and profuse knowledge, the standards of *jihād* spread wide and the sunna (*sunan*) wide-spread." He adds that "heresy (*bid'a*) was suppressed, and those constantly speaking the truth were many. The servants [of God] were plentiful in number and the people were living at the height of prosperity with security...."⁸⁶ But after the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, the two sons of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, the strength of the state waned. Accompanying this political division, the state of

⁸⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19: 340.

⁸⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira al-huffāz*, 1:56.

⁸⁶ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira al-huffāz*, 1:179.

the faith deteriorated. The power of the Shiites and Mu'tazilites increased and the Baghdad Inquisition occurred.

The star of Shiism rose and revealed its enmity (*abdā ṣafḥatahu*), the dawn of speculative theology broke, the philosophy (*ḥikma*) of the ancients, the logic of the Greeks and astrology were all translated into Arabic. A new science thus emerged for the people, abhorrent, destructive, incongruous with the knowledge of Prophecy and not in accordance with the unity of the believers that had held the umma in well-being.⁸⁷

With the narrative of entropy and decline into religious ruin set, al-Dhahabī bemoans the weakening of scholarship since the heady days of Ibn Ḥanbal and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī's greatest generation. Al-Dhahabī specifically complains about the state of Islamic knowledge in his own time, condemning blind imitation (*taqlīd*) in law and the obsession with empty speculative theology (*kalām*). In such times, he concludes, “may God bless that individual who devotes himself to his task, who shortens his tongue, draws near to reading his Qur’ān, cries over his time (*zamānihi*) and pores over the *Sahīhayn*.⁸⁸

In his grief over the deterioration of scholarship and piety, al-Dhahabī thus calls for a return to the twin roots of Islam: the Qur’ān and the sunna of the Prophet. The route to salvation, if only on the individual level, is to embrace the holy book and those volumes that had come to represent synecdochically the Prophet's true legacy, the *Sahīhayn* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

⁸⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 1:240.

⁸⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 2:86.

Conclusion

In its roles as a measure of authenticity, authoritative reference for non-specialists and exemplum, the *Sahīhayn* canon functioned as Canon 1: a criterion between truth and falsehood. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim's books, however, played another crucial role beyond the limited circles of jurists and ḥadīth scholars. The two collections came to synecdochically represent the Prophet's legacy itself within the wider Sunni community. Ironically, in their denial of the existence of a ḥadīth canon, both Wheeler and Weiss alluded to the important function that the major Sunni collections served in their capacity as Canon 2: they delimited the vast expanse of the Prophet's sunna and embodied it in a manageable form. Whether the canonical unit of the Five Books or just the *Sahīhayn*, this circumscription drew the boundaries of the greater Sunni community. Loyalty to the canon meant loyalty to the umma.

The *Sahīhayn*'s synecdochic representation of the Prophet rendered the books invaluable in both scholarly and lay interaction with the heritage of Muhammad. In the narratives that ḥadīth-oriented Sunni scholars developed to describe the historical course of Islamic civilization, al-Bukhārī and Muslim became a trope for the straight path of adherence to the Prophet's sunna in the face of the ever-multiplying threats of heresy and iniquity. In the Sunni narrative of decline from the halcyon days of the righteous early community, the *Sahīhayn* represented salvation through a return to their teachings. More importantly, by the seventh/thirteenth century al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections had taken on prominent roles in political, calendrical and supplicatory rituals. Again, the two works symbolized the Prophet's legacy. For Mawlā Ismāʻīl they symbolized loyalty to the Prophet and the 'Alawid state that governed in his name. For the scholars who read

the *Sahīhayn* during Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramadan in Timbuktu, Cairo, Mecca or Damascus, the *Sahīhayn* imbued a set period of the year with the religious significance of the Prophet's persona. In all these instances of ritual use, but perhaps most palpably in their roles as tools of supplication, the *Sahīhayn* synecdochically represented the Prophet's access to divine blessing. Like relics or Muḥammad's descendants, the ḥadīth collections personified the Prophet's role as the intercessor between humanity and the divine.

X.

Conclusion

Problems in Approaches

Here at its conclusion, a reader may have noticed that this study has been imbued with the corporeal language and organic idiom of biology. ‘Needs’ have been ‘felt’ and ‘met.’ Sunnism ‘matured,’ and ‘strains’ within it ‘developed.’ The canon ‘emerged’ and fulfilled certain ‘functions.’ Using such phrasal representations to move from one thought to another or from particulars to the general betrays certain assumptions about the nature of the ḥadīth canon and Islamic civilization. Are we justified in treating a human society or a faith tradition as organisms that are born and mature until they attain some state of advancement?

This assumption may not have been accurate when British scholars like E.B. Tylor (d. 1917) and J.G. Frazer (d. 1941) described the global phenomenon of religion as a stage in the maturation of human consciousness. I believe it does, however, serve us faithfully in a study of Islamic intellectual history. Inquiring into the history of the *Sahīhayn* is a natural reaction to their conspicuous prominence in Sunni Islam today. Yet the fact is that Islam existed as a religion and faith tradition before al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and it flourished for at least another century without paying the two books or their authors any remarkable attention. We are thus inevitably faced with a question of change, of growth or emergence in our comparison of the two books’ status now and their standing during their authors’ time. Like the compound of Sunni orthodoxy itself, the canon *was not* then and *is now*. Faced with such a stark instance of transformation or

change, examining the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a linear process of maturation and subsequent tensions seems reasonable or even inevitable.

Perhaps the most dangerous pitfall of employing a biological metaphor for the movement of history consists of the ambiguous status it grants human agency. One could describe a ‘canon emerging’ without identifying the specific individuals or class who promulgated it. One could mention a community ‘feeling needs’ without stipulating exactly how they were expressed. We have tried to avoid these problems by adhering closely to the textual sources of history and emphasizing the role of individuals in the development of the canon. We have relied on historical actors to explain their own actions either directly through their own words or indirectly by reading their works critically against an established context. We have avoided attributing individuals’ actions to broader political, cultural or economic forces unless there exists some explicit evidence for such a link. Certainly, we may speculate about the manner in which political context or the allocation of resources affected the canon, but we cannot definitively explain the canon as the direct result of these factors without some discernable evidence.

Instead of summarizing the results of this study in abstract form (see the Thesis section in the Introduction), we conclude in a manner more useful to students of Islamic civilization and its magnificent tradition of ḥadīth scholarship. As the present study proceeded, teachers, scholars and students consistently posed the same questions about the *Sahīhayn* canon and its historical development. I have thus attempted to use these questions as a framework for summarizing the conclusion of this study.

I. Why the *Sahīhayn* and Not Other Books?

Asking why one text achieves membership in the canon and another does not poses trenchant questions about the forces that drive intellectual history and the possibility of objective scholarly evaluation. Can historians always explain choices made in the past through a materialist lens, or can historical actors establish and act on sets of aesthetics independent from material surroundings? One might contend that there is nothing intrinsic in the writings of Shakespeare that makes them better than the works of other playwrights or poets. The canonical status of *Romeo and Juliet* might ultimately hinge on the number of copies of the text that were produced at some crucial point in time, the nature of the network which distributed and performed the play, or the charisma of those scholars who promoted its study. Another, better play written by a now unknown litterateur may have disappeared into history for similar reasons. Canonicity, from this perspective, is the product of material forces and the accidents of history. It is not a matter of objective quality.

This perspective robs the critic or the scholar of his right to aesthetic evaluation; eminently a creature of the material world around him, he is no more able to escape these constraints than the texts he purports to judge. Is this in perspective accurate, or must we allow for the serendipitous variable of scholarly preference? Should we acknowledge that a well-respected critic or sincere scholar could rise above the material constraints of his day and pronounce an influential verdict on a book based on purely aesthetic grounds? It seems that the *Sahīhayn* canon was the product of both the material accidents

of history and the explicit judgments of influential Muslim scholars as to which ḥadīth collections provided the best understanding of the Prophet’s charismatic legacy.

To isolate the factors that shaped the *Sahīhayn* canon, let us review the fate of four ḥadīth collections written by prominent transmission-based Sunni scholars of the *sahīḥ* movement between 250/865 and 350/960 in the Khurāsān region: the *Sahīhayn*, the *Sahīḥ* of Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) and the *Sahīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965). All these ḥadīth scholars were Sunnis who compiled comprehensive legal and doctrinal references on ḥadīth restricted to only what they considered authentic reports. By the eighth/fourteenth century, all four collections had won approval from the Sunni scholarly community. As our judge of canonicity, let us turn to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, whose seminal study of the *Sahīhayn* and the ḥadīth tradition in fact sparked their canonization. While al-Ḥākim viewed al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s collections as the pinnacle of critical stringency and excellence in ḥadīth evaluation, he dismissed both the *Sahīḥ* of his teacher Ibn Ḥibbān and that of his exemplar Ibn Khuzayma.

Ibn Ḥibbān’s work seems to have been the victim of the accidents of history. Al-Ḥākim condemned the work of his teacher, a belated participant in the *sahīḥ* movement, due to the presence of unknown transmitters in its *isnāds*. As we know, however, early members of the *Sahīhayn* Network had also been unable to identify some of al-Bukhārī’s transmitters. Only after several generations of study were these ‘unknown’ narrators identified. For al-Ḥākim, the absence of unknown transmitters in the *Sahīhayn* proved central to his claims on the books’ authority. Had Ibn Ḥibbān lived a century earlier and produced his *Sahīḥ* at the same time as al-Bukhārī, perhaps scholars could have identified his unknown transmitters as well.

In the case of Ibn Khuzayma's *Sahīh*, however, we cannot explain its exclusion from the canon as the result of material forces or ideological pressures. Influential scholars who evaluated Ibn Khuzayma's *Sahīh* simply did not approve of his quality selections. Ibn Khuzayma was the axis of transmission-based jurisprudence, theology and ḥadīth study in Khurāsān during the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries. Our earliest sources on the period accord him accolades that dwarf those of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.¹ Yet when al-Ḥākim was asked about whether or not Ibn Khuzayma was a reliable judge of the authenticity of Prophetic reports, he replied, "that I do not say."² Al-Ismāʻīlī had preferred al-Bukhārī's legal analysis to Muslim's relative impartiality, and Ibn ‘Uqda had favored Muslim's isolated focus on Prophetic ḥadīths to al-Bukhārī's insistence on providing incomplete reports as legal commentary. Yet both these critics explicitly stated that al-Bukhārī and Muslim provided the community with eminently reliable representations of the Prophet's sunna. Ibn Khuzayma's *Sahīh* never attracted the scholarly interest heaped on the *Sahīhayn*, and its exclusion from the Six Book canon seems undeniably to be the result of his failure to inspire the same confidence in the community that canonized al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Why the *Sahīhayn* played such a salient role in ritual and narrative as opposed to other canonical ḥadīth books grew out of the unique status they achieved at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century. In Islam, an object becomes religious through a perceived link to God and His Prophet. As the community of God's last messenger, guarded against communal error by God Himself, the umma can further enunciate His will through claims

¹ Al-Ḥākim, *Tārīkh Nīshābūr*, 120.

² Al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 313.

of consensus (*ijmā'*). Goldziher thus astutely recognized that *ijmā'* was the bedrock on which Sunnism was founded.³ Claims based on the umma's consensus underpinned the *Sahīhayn* canon, and no other book after the Qur'ān could boast such recognition. As objects endowed with religious significance, the *Sahīhayn* were ideally suited to dramatize religious meaning in acts of ritual or represent it in historical narrative.

II. What Forces Led to the Canonization of the *Sahīhayn*?

We have asserted that canons form at the nexus of text, authority and communal identification. By authorizing texts, communities express, delineate and affirm their identities or boundaries. The creation of a canon thus stems from a two-fold need to embody authority in text and delineate community through text. We have also contended that the communal drama in which the canonization of the *Sahīhayn* played a salient role was the articulation of Sunnism in the medieval period. Scott C. Lucas has suggested that discovering how such initially controversial figures (from a Sunni perspective) as al-Bukhārī and Abū Ḥanīfa achieved 'Sunni' status remains an important but unanswered question in the study of this community's history.⁴ We might rephrase the question to ask how Sunnism adapted to adopt these figures into its fold.

Sunnism began as the exclusive worldview of the transmission-based scholars, whose fixation with ḥadīths and their literal interpretation was intractably rigid. The über-Sunni credo of Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī or Abū Naṣr al-Wā'ilī brooked no school of thought that had either elaborated a more varied set of interpretive tools for

³ Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 189-90; Goldziher quoted in Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 253.

⁴ Personal communication.

understanding the cosmos, like the Mu'tazila and Ash'arīs, or defined the Prophet's sunna by means other than a stubborn obsession with ḥadīths, like the Ḥanafīs.

To explain how the conservative ethos of these 'people of the sunna and community (*ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā'a*)' expanded to include the relatively diverse four schools of Sunni law as well as the Ash'arī and Māturīdī schools of theology, it may be useful to conceive of Sunnism more as a rhetorical mantra than a rigid doctrine. As it solidified in the fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, Sunnism certainly required the espousal of certain specific beliefs: the proper ranking of the Four Rightly Guided caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān then 'Alī) and the belief that the Qur'ān was uncreated, for example. Beyond such limited dogmatic tenets, however, we can envision Sunnism as an austere rhetorical call to stand fast by the Qur'ān, the Prophet's sunna and the ways of the early community in the face of foreign innovations in faith, thought and practice.

As a rhetorical mantra, Sunnism eventually proved charismatic and flexible enough that differing schools of law or theology were able to take it up in order to affirm their identification with a perceived traditionalist orthodoxy even though their own doctrines or practices might at times differ significantly from it. The theological and epistemological school of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6) epitomizes this rhetorical flexibility. Although this scholar publicly repented his Mu'tazilite rationalist ways and embraced the traditionalist beliefs of Ibn Ḥanbal and the *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā'a*, the school which developed from his writings (and perhaps his writings

themselves) continued to delve deeper into speculative theology and Hellenistic epistemology.⁵

While the über-Sunni strain of the transmission-based school was parochially limited, the legal and theological tradition that coalesced around the teachings of al-Shāfi‘ī was more open to methods of analogical reasoning and eventually Hellenistic logic and speculative thought. Just as al-Shāfi‘ī himself had accommodated analogical legal reasoning (*qiyās*) in the transmission-based methodology, so were later Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs like Abū Ishaq al-Isfaraīnī or al-Juwainī able to elaborate systems of legal theory or theology derived significantly from Mu‘tazilite rationalism while making convincing arguments for their loyalty to the ḥadīth-centric Sunni worldview. An Ash‘arī who had written extensively on speculative theology, when necessary al-Juwainī could also avow his membership in the *ahl al-sunna* by trumpeting the mantra that “the foremost [calling] is following the Salaf and rejecting religious innovation (*bid‘a*)....”⁶

Eventually, the Ḥanafī school could also imitate the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī orthodoxy and take up this elastic Sunni mantra. The Ḥanafī interpretive tradition had initially been anathema to the *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā‘a*. Original ‘Sunni’ scholars had in fact reviled early pivots of the school like Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) as heretical Jahmī rationalists.⁷ When a mid-third/ninth century Ḥanafī scholar named Ibn al-Thaljī (d. 265/879) tried to use Prophetic reports to buttress his school

⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul: Dar al-Funūn, [1928]), 280-1.

⁶ See, for example, al-Juwainī, *al-Aqīda al-Niẓāmiyya fī al-arkān al-islāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Azhariyya li'l-Turāth, 1412/1992); 23, 32.

⁷ Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī, for example, is quoted as calling Abū Ḥanīfa, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Shaybānī and Abū Yūsuf ‘Jahmī,’ al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:176.

against *ahl al-sunna* opponents, Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers devastatingly dismissed him as an ‘unbeliever.’⁸ The situation had changed dramatically by the time the Sunni edifice was established in its most concretely permanent state in the eighth/fourteenth century. By that time some Ḥanafīs had recast Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī as a proto-Sunni who had advocated the literal interpretation of the Qur’ān and ḥadīth on issues of God’s attributes.⁹

This notion of Sunnism as a rhetorical touchstone within arm’s reach of a variety of interpretive schools explains the tremendous, almost inconsistent diversity within the later Sunni tradition. A phenomenon unimaginable in the fourth/tenth-century world of the *ahl al-hadīth* and *ahl al-ra’y*, Mullā ‘Alī Qārī’ (d. 1014/1606) was a loyal Ḥanafī who, in the space of one book, quotes Ibn Ḥanbal to condemn speculative theology and logic, embraces the Ash‘arī figurative explanation of God’s attributes and describes the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī Sufi al-Qushayrī as being on the path of the Salaf.¹⁰

The development and function of the *Sahīhayn* canon mirror the development of Sunni identity. What began as the limited interest of a network of Shāfi‘ī scholars developed into a strong and shared identification with these two ḥadīth collections among Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī students of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. Representatives from both these schools agreed on the *Sahīhayn* as a common ground for identifying the Prophet’s authentic legacy. The other schools of Sunni Islam gradually adopted this convention of

⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 510-11; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2:425-5.

⁹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:449; Ibn Abī al-‘Izz al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390), *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Tahāwiyya*, 215.

¹⁰ Mullā ‘Alī Qārī’, *Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar*; 25-6, 28, 35, 63. For an expression of Mullā ‘Alī’s loyalty to the Ḥanafī legal school, see his *Tashyīt fuqahā’ al-ḥanafiyya li-tashnīt sufahā’ al-shāfi‘īyya*, Ms. 444, Yahya Tavfik Collection, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, fols. 82b-84b.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim as a measure of authenticity, authoritative reference and exemplum. Finally, even the Ḥanafīs acceded to identifying with the *Sahīhayn* as the common language for Sunni discussions of ḥadīth. Although the Shāfi‘īs, Mālikīs, Ḥanbalīs and Ḥanafīs relied mainly on their own bodies of ḥadīths for elaborating law and dogma, they all acknowledged the *Sahīhayn* as rhetorically paramount in interaction between the schools. In the seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries, when the popular religious institutions of Sunnism such as Sufi brotherhoods were coalescing, the *Sahīhayn* too became vehicles for public ritual activity.

By acknowledging the *Sahīhayn* as authoritative, the collection of legal and theological schools within Sunni Islam turned the two works into touchstones of communal identification. In order to understand how the forces of a developing sense of communalism created the canon, we must quickly review how the nature and needs of the Muslim scholarly community developed from al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s lifetime to the mid fifth/eleventh century, when the *Sahīhayn* canon found widespread use and acceptance.

In the years after the deaths of the *Shaykhayn*, Abū Zur‘a and Abū Hātim al-Rāzī continued to ply their scholarly trade in their native Rayy. The two scholars were very conservative members of the transmission-based *ahl al-ḥadīth*, drawing from the scholarship of Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Shāfi‘ī equally. Although their study of legal texts like al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar* or Ibn Ḥanbal’s *responsa* certainly informed the two Rāzīs’ legal and doctrinal opinions, their views were ultimately shaped by their own study and interpretation of ḥadīths back to the Prophet. Like the other major transmission-based scholars of their time, such as Abū Dāwūd, they each constituted their own school of

ḥadīth criticism. When Muslim brought his freshly penned *Sahīh* to Abū Zur'a, he looked through it with the eye of a scholar confidently following his own methodology of evaluating the authenticity of Prophetic reports.

Two hundred years later, the scene of Sunni scholarship had transformed dramatically. Unlike the two Rāzīs, scholars like the Shāfi'i/Ash'arī Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī were no longer willing to draw indifferently from what had become the very distinct Ḥanbalī and Shāfi'i legal schools. Yet despite this solidification of boundaries, the Sunni universe had expanded beyond the exclusive circle of self-sufficient, über-Sunni ḥadīth-based jurists to include figures like al-Juwainī, a practitioner of dialectical theology and a jurist loyal to a specific body of substantive law. Abū Zur'a and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī had personally vouched for the strength of their ḥadīths with the confidence their critical expertise inspired in their followers, but in the expanded Sunni world of the fifth/eleventh century a more institutionalized convention was required for discussing attributions to the Prophet. There existed a real need for a means to force others to acknowledge a representation of the Prophet's authoritative legacy. The *Sahīhayn* provided this common measure of authenticity. Unlike the Rāzīs, al-Shīrāzī and al-Juwainī were unable to critically vet their own corpora of ḥadīths; they needed to turn to authoritative references to provide commonly accepted reports.

In the fifth/eleventh century, and later when the Ḥanafī school adopted the canon, the *Sahīhayn* acted to both facilitate and define the expanded Sunni community. The two books provided a common source and reference through which different schools could address one another in debates and polemics. More importantly, however, the *Sahīhayn* also functioned as a mantra of communalism. When the Shāfi'i/Ash'arīs Abū Ishāq al-

Isfarāyīnī and al-Juwaynī, the Ḥanbalī/über-Sunni Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī, and the Mālikī Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī proclaimed independently that ‘the community of Muḥammad (*al-umma*)’ had agreed on the *Sahīhayn* as totally authentic vessels for the Prophet’s authoritative legacy, they affirmed their own loyalty to that shared Sunni community. More importantly, they acknowledged the membership of others who made that claim. When the Ḥanafī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī attested that al-Bukhārī’s opinion on the authenticity of a ḥadīth was absolutely definitive, he too took up this canonical mantra of Sunnism. When the Mamluks salaried scholars to read the *Sahīhayn* for three months in the mosques of Cairo or placed al-Bukhārī’s collection at the vanguard of their army, the two books embodied Sunni ritual and political communalism.

Although the pressures of communal identification create the canon, it is the canon that then defines the community. As evident in al-Silāfi’s declaration that anyone who disagrees with the Five Book ḥadīth canon places themselves outside ‘the Abode of Islam,’ the canon could certainly delineate the boundaries of the Sunni pale. Although the permissibility of criticizing the *Sahīhayn* constituted the norm for centuries, the perceived fragility of the Sunni community in early modern India led Shāh Waliyyallāh to equate belittling al-Bukhārī and Muslim with “not following the path of the believers.” The ability of texts to determine and shape community, however, is predicated on the compelling power of those books. Neither al-Silāfi nor Shāh Waliyyallāh could have made their statements before the canonization of the *Sahīhayn* at the dawn of the fifth/eleventh century. The relationship between canon and community is dialogic, but only after the community brings the canon into existence.

III. Why Did the Canon Form at the Beginning of the 5th/11th Century?

That the *Sahīhayn* canon formed and found its immediate application in the early fifth/eleventh century is not accidental. The emergence of the canon as an institution was both a part and product of the coalescence of the new Sunni order in this period, one which was characterized by the institutionalization of education, modes of patronage and clearly delineated schools of thought. The frustrating ambiguity of the fourth/tenth century, with its fluctuating and languishing categories of the *ahl al-hadīth* and *ahl al-ra'y*, and the regional laws school, faded as these more concrete divisions solidified. The two strands of the transmission-based school, the conservative über-Sunnis and the more moderate strain associated with the Shāfi‘ī tradition, gelled into the guild-like Ḥanbalī and Shāfi‘ī schools. By approximately 425/1035 the Ash‘arī school of theology had blossomed into a mature form. By 480/1090 the Mālikīs, Ḥanafīs, Shāfi‘īs and Ḥanbalīs had all composed definitive texts on legal theory, substantive law, ḥadīth and had staked their dogmatic positions in relation to one another. The proliferation of *madrasas*, founded and funded by wealthy patrons often associated with the Seljuq state, furnished a new institutional setting for the study of the religious sciences. Unlike the merchant and landlord scholars of previous generations, the salaried teachers and stipended students in these *madrasas* could pursue scholarship in a professional setting.

The institutionalization of Sunnism that spread rapidly from the fifth/eleventh century on occurred on a grand and massively important scale. As Marshall Hodgson recognized, this was in the period from 945 to 1250 CE that Islamicate civilization grew from its adaptive adolescence into a viable institutional framework for a world-

civilization.¹¹ Richard Bulliet has seconded this emphasis on the theme of institutionalization in the fifth/eleventh century emergence of Sunnism. He explains that this development was “actually the first stage in the dissemination of religious institutions and the standardization of Sunni religious norms that becomes the hallmark of later Islamic history.”¹² In particular, Bulliet highlights the transition from the living *isnād* (Bulliet’s ‘orality’)¹³ to ḥadīth collections and the ubiquitous appearance of the *madrasa* system throughout the Islamic world as the twin faces of the revolution that redefined Sunni Islam in the late fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. He links this institutionalization of education, in both the spread of the *madrasa* and the transition from living *isnāds* to books, with the formation of the Sunni ḥadīth canon, since these collections were some of the books that were taught in these schools.¹⁴

The curricula of *madrasas*, however, cannot tell us why the *Sahīhayn* achieved canonical status in this period. In cities like Qazvīn, ḥadīth study generally continued in large mosques, not *madrasas*. Furthermore, *madrasas* from Egypt to India utilized a large and varied selection of books for instruction, but none of these attained the ubiquitous and unparalleled status of the *Sahīhayn*. Instead, we must look to the needs created by the Sunni scholarly community’s act of self delineation and its search for the

¹¹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:3.

¹² Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 126-7.

¹³ I believe that the term ‘living *isnād*’ more accurately describes the phenomenon that Bulliet addresses, namely a focus and reliance on direct chains of transmission back to the Prophet as opposed to collections of ḥadīths compiled by authors and then transmitted. A shift to employing books of ḥadīths did not obviate the oral nature of study. Even today, the study and transmission of these texts is an oral activity based on the communicative act of hearing the work read.

¹⁴ Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 149.

tools required to facilitate internal coherence. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim's books had received concerted study in the long fourth century because they provided a network of influential Shāfi'i scholars with the ideal vehicles for expressing the nature and quality of their command of the Prophet's legacy. Al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī exploited this network's assiduous study of the *Sahīhayn* to transform al-Bukhārī and Muslim into widely recognized stamps of authenticity. This *kanōn*, he claimed, met the authenticity requirements of both the Sunnis and the single greatest threat to their transmission-based worldview: the Mu'tazilite attempt to limit the role of Prophetic ḥadīths in elaborating law and dogma.

While this duo of successive fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh-century needs created the canon, the relatively limited scope of the *Sahīhayn* Network and al-Hākim's career cannot explain the canon's wider proliferation. The canon flourished among al-Hākim's students and other major participants in the institutionalized Sunni orthodoxy of the fifth/eleventh century because the *Sahīhayn* fulfilled specific needs created by its solidification. The need for ḥadīths and ḥadīth collections that could function as epistemologically certain loci of consensus, felt generally in the fourth/tenth century, became more pronounced when distinct legal schools that shared a common Sunni worldview required a common convention in their ceaseless debates over the proper interpretation of the Prophet's sunna. With the institution of the *madrasa* and the division of labor among Sunni scholars in the late fifth/eleventh century, accepted references for ḥadīth criticism also became necessary for non-ḥadīth specialists. The two books provided a common language and reference for discussing the attribution of

ḥadīths among the Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī schools in the fifth/eleventh century, with the Ḥanafī school adopting this convention only in the early eighth/fourteenth century.

The adoption of the canon as a common convention for ḥadīth study was certainly related to the shift from the living *isnād* to the transmission of books. It seems, however, that this shift occurred after the canonization of the *Sahīhayn*. Al-Khalīlī (d. 446/1054) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), two scholars who readily employed the canon, still focused much more on living *isnāds* than books in the entries of their mid fifth/eleventh-century biographical dictionaries. Our sources for the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, however, indicate that *circa* 465/1072 a marked shift occurred towards noting the ḥadīth books that scholars studied as opposed to their living *isnāds*. In his history of Naysābūr, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134-5) mentions only ten people studying the *Sahīhayn* from 385/995 to 465/1072, but from 465/1072 to 545/1150 (some material was added after the author’s death by al-Ṣarīfinī [d. 641/1243-44]) he mentions fifty-five (a 550% increase). Between 385/995 and 465/1072 he mentions only eight other ḥadīth collections, such as the *Sunans* of al-Nasā’ī and Abū Dāwūd, being studied. Between 465/1072 and 545/1150 he mentions twenty (a 250% increase). In his Iraq-Khurāsān centric *al-Muntaẓam*, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions only nine instances of a scholar studying a ḥadīth book in the two hundred years between 285/898 and 485/1092. In the period of only eighty years between 485/1092 and 565/1170 he mentions seventeen (a 190% increase). Yet we know that despite these statistically dramatic changes, a strong attachment to the living *isnād* endured. Well into the 500/1100’s, scholars like Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169-70) still defined ḥadīth scholarship as the living

transmission of individual ḥadīths from the Prophet as opposed to the transmission of ḥadīth collections.

Although it is difficult to date precisely two such intangible events, it thus seems that the emergence of the *Sahīhayn* canon in the early fifth/eleventh century preceded the first indications of a shift from living *isnāds* to the transmission of books by at least fifty years. We can see this clearly in the case of scholars who employed the canon while still depending wholly on their own living *isnāds* to the Prophet. Scholars like Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and al-Khaṭīb did not need ḥadīth books to provide the content of their ḥadīth works; these they filled with their own full-length living *isnāds*. They did need collections like the *Sahīhayn*, however, to guarantee the authenticity of these ḥadīths. The canon formed because scholars needed a stamp of approval for ḥadīths, and this could only come from consensus on a ḥadīth collection.

IV. Did the Canon Emerge from Ferment and Strife?

Studies of canons and canonization have often identified periods of ideological ferment or strife as the seedbeds of scriptural canons.¹⁵ Just as a proclamation of orthodoxy rises as a response to perceived threats of interpretive plurality, so does a canon emerge as an attempt to dominate the textual landscape of a religious tradition. As a corollary, this combative emphasis in canon studies has led to a focus on canons as “heavy weapons,” tools for control and exclusion.¹⁶ Western scholars have thus not fully appreciated the capacity of canons to create common convention and bridge rifts.

¹⁵ Halbertal, 4-5; Hanaway, 3.

¹⁶ Hanaway, 3; Kermode, “Institutional Control of Interpretation,” 77.

Menzies alone argued that canons may well form in the reconstructive wake of conflict.¹⁷ Indeed, just as the *Sahīhayn* provided a common language for Sunnism, the canon resulted from the institutional consolidation of an expanded orthodoxy in the wake of tumultuous plurality.

The consistent intensification of the *Sahīhayn* canonical culture after the careers of Abū Mas‘ūd al-Dimashqī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in the late fourth/tenth and mid fifth/eleventh centuries also coincides with the consolidation of Sunnism. As Jonathan Berkey states, Sunnism of the fifth/eleventh century was engaged in a process of minimizing “sources of contention.”¹⁸ The dogged creed of communalism that Hodgson states characterized Sunnism after this period perfectly describes the canonical culture’s goal of suppressing opinions that threatened the institutional roles of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Sunni communalism demanded “loyalty to the community and its acknowledged symbols... even at the expense of all other values.” Most assuredly, the canonical culture required Sunnis to affirm the community’s consensus on the *Sahīhayn* at the expense of the established conventions of ḥadīth criticism and the historical record of al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s pre-canonical images.¹⁹

V. Was the Canon a Response to Shiism or the Product of the Seljuq State?

Although the *Sahīhayn* served as unifying bond within the Sunni community, was this broad inclusivity the byproduct of an effort to exclude non-Sunnis? Many scholars

¹⁷ Menzies, 91.

¹⁸ Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 189-90.

¹⁹ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 2:193.

have identified the emergence of institutional Sunnism in the fifth/eleventh century as a defensive reaction to the tremendous power of Shiism in the fourth/tenth century. Did the Imāmī Shiite Buyid dynasty's dominanation of the Abbasid caliphate in Iraq and Iran, and the meteoric rise of Fatimid power in Egypt, Syria and the Ḥijāz catalyze the institutional consolidation of Sunnism? Was this reaction instigated and encouraged by the threatened Sunni Seljuq state, many of whose leading functionaries fell before the daggers of Ismāʻīlī assassins?

Some scholars have deemphasized the place of state sponsorship in the consolidation of Sunnism. One of the architects of the notion of the ‘Sunni revival’ was George Makdisi, who viewed it as a victory of traditionalism and credited it to the tremendous popular appeal of the Ḥanbalī school in Baghdad, not to the Seljuq state.²⁰ Others have understood the new Sunni order through a decidedly political lens. Hodgson associated it with Niẓām al-Mulk’s *madrasa* system, which epitomized the Seljuq-fostered framework that replaced the vanished Abbasid caliphal state with a new dispensation of uniformity. This state-sponsored *madrasa* system “carried on the task of maintaining essential unity in the community’s heritage” as bequeathed by the Prophet and his Companions.²¹

The construct of a state-sponsored Sunni revival has been intimately bound to the Seljuqs’ Shiite adversaries, both the ousted Buyids and the more immediately threatening Ismāʻīlī Fatimids. Lapidus thus concluded that the fifth/eleventh-century institutionalization of a Sunni orthodoxy was a politically-led reaction to Shiite power.

²⁰ Makdisi, “Hanbalite Islam,” 237-8.

²¹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2: 48, 192.

The Abbasid caliph al-Qādir, who promulgated the famously anti-Shiite Qādirī creed in the twilight shadows of Buyid suzerainty, the Sunni Seljuqs and their successor dynasties of the Ayyubids and Mamluks all promoted an institutionalized Sunni orthodoxy as part of a drive to unite society around a state-embraced Sunni cause. This was exemplified by Nizām al-Mulk and Malikshāh's efforts to mollify through patronage all the major non-Shiite factions in the various feuds on the Baghdad-Khurāsān circuit: the Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arīs, Ḥanbalīs and Ḥanafīs.²² Bulliet, however, disagrees with equating the Sunni revival with a reaction to Shiism. Instead, we should view it as an attempt to define Sunnism according to “centrally espoused dogma” (he thus admits that it is at least in some way the result of state policy).²³ Jonathan Berkey follows Bulliet in downplaying the threat of Shiism or an anti-Shiite Seljuq policy as an engine for the crystallization of Sunnism. Bulliet and Berkey both point out that the Seljuqs often adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the powerful Imāmī Shiite interests in cities like Baghdad. Nizām al-Mulk and his master Malikshāh both married their daughters to Shiite nobles and appointed Shiite ministers.²⁴

Neither Bulliet nor Berkey, however, sufficiently notes that it was the Ismā‘īlīs and not the relatively harmless Imāmī Shiites that alarmed the Seljuq state and Sunni scholars alike. Sunni firebrands such as the caliph al-Qādir certainly condemned Imāmī Shiites, but, as Abū al-Husayn Qazvīnī found himself insisting in his *Ketāb-e naqd*, it was the Ismā‘īlīs whom the Sunnis truly feared. It was Ismā‘īlī propaganda that proved

²² Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*; 164, 173-4.

²³ Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 126-7.

²⁴ Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 148; Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 191.

so appealing to the intellectual elite in the major metropolises of the Seljuq realm, and Ismā‘īlī assassins who represented the single greatest external danger to the stability of the Seljuq dynasty. This threat had earlier sparked an unlikely alliance between the Sunni caliph al-Qādir, his Shiite Buyid overlords and the Imāmī Shiite scholars of Baghdad. In 402/1011 they jointly promulgated an anti-Ismā‘īlī manifesto directed at the encroaching Fatimid state.²⁵

While the consolidation of Sunnism in the fifth/eleventh century may well have been a response to the Fatimid threat and Ismā‘īlī propaganda, we cannot identify any direct effect on the formation of the ḥadīth canon. Shiism, whether Imāmī or Ismā‘īlī, never surfaces in the various discourses surrounding the authorization of the *Sahīhayn*. The canon was, in fact, a boon to Imāmī Shiites like Qazvīnī, who turned to al-Bukhārī and Muslim’s compelling authority in attempts to trump Sunni opponents by using their own proof texts against them. Ultimately, the *Sahīhayn* were more a unifying element within Sunnism than a tool for excluding the Shiite other.

In the sense that the Ismā‘īlī threat and any resulting Seljuq patronage of non-Shiite schools helped bring Sunnism to institutional maturity, the canon can be seen as part of a response to Shiism. This perspective only holds true, however, at the most global level of analysis. Those scholars who participated in the various discourses that produced the ḥadīth canon did not exhibit any concern for a Shiite threat in their related writings or understand the *Sahīhayn* as a tool for excluding non-Sunnis. To the contrary, the earliest recorded usages of the canon are directed at either Mu‘tazilites or adherents of other Sunni schools with an emphasis on the inclusive consensus that those who wielded

²⁵ D. Sourdèl, “al-Kādir,” *EI*².

the canon claimed it enjoyed. Abū Nu‘aym al-Īṣbahānī, a member of the *Sahīhayn* Network who was very familiar with al-Hākim’s work, thus did not refer to al-Bukhārī and Muslim in his manual for debating Imāmī Shiites. Although Abū Nu‘aym refers to ḥadīths he argues are agreed on by all Muslims, citing the *Sahīhayn* would simply have had no proof value for his opponents.

IV. Was the *Sahīhayn* Canon the Product of or Limited to a Specific Region?

The *Sahīhayn* canon germinated in the scholarly circles of Naysābūr, Jurjān and Baghdad during the first half of the long fourth century. Its articulation and early usage took place in the writings and debates of scholars traveling between the great urban centers of the Nile-Oxus Islamicate heartlands. Beyond these early stages, however, the history the *Sahīhayn* canon does not diverge markedly from the course charted by Islamic history in general. Where Sunnism flourished, the canon followed.

Roy Mottahedeh has pointed out the prominence of Khurāsānī scholars in the articulation of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition in the third/ninth century.²⁶ Richard Bulliet extends this geographical focus in both chronology and import, arguing that the institutions that characterized the Sunni revival in the great imperial center of Baghdad, such as the *madrasa*, were truly imports from the Iranian east.²⁷

The ḥadīth canon, however, was not the product of eastern Iran alone. Certainly, figures central to the canonization of the two works such as al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī

²⁶ Roy Mottahedeh, “The Transmission of Learning. The Role of the Islamic Northeast,” *Madrasa*, eds. Nicole Grandin and Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 1997), 68.

²⁷ Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 146.

resided mostly in Khurāsān. The *Sahīhayn* Network, however, that readied the two books for canonization, and the cadre of Shāfi‘ī/Ash‘arī and Ḥanbalī scholars who first promoted the canon, were first and foremost participants in the highly mobile and cosmopolitan scholarly culture that dominated Islamic civilization from the third/ninth to the sixth/twelfth centuries. Khurāsān was only one province in this wider world. Al-Dāraqutnī never voyaged east of Baghdad, Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī divided his career between the Abbasid capital and Khurāsān, and both Abū Naṣr al-Wā’ilī and al-Juwaynī spent significant portions of their careers in the Ḥijāz.

Furthermore, the expanded Sunni community to which the *Sahīhayn* canon proved so useful in the mid fifth/eleventh century and beyond was just as present in North Africa, Baghdad, Egypt, or Isfahan as eastern Iran. Scholars at any city on the great scholarly/ mercantile circuit that ran from Mecca to Transoxiana or westward to Andalusia would have appreciated the need for a common measure of authenticity, an authoritative reference or a standard of excellence in ḥadīth study. While many leading Sunni scholars certainly hailed from Khurāsān and important institutions such as the *madrasa* originated in that province in the early 400/1000’s, the *Sahīhayn* canon was a product of the far-flung urban centers and dusty roads of the dominant Ḥijāz – Baghdād – Khurāsān – Transoxiana circuit of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.

Oddly, the tremendous geographical distance between Andalusia and the central Islamicate heartlands proved unimportant in the spread and usage of the canon. While the rugged mountains between Jurjān and Naysābūr had restricted the movement of information on the *Sahīhayn* in the first half of the fourth/tenth century, the vast expanses of desert, plain and ocean between Cordova and Baghdad was of little significance in the

history of the canon. Not only did Andalusian scholars who had voyaged east, such as al-Qāsim b. Aṣbagh of Cordova and Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī of Badajoz, participate visibly in the *Sahīhayn* Network and early applications of the canon respectively, the *Sahīhayn* attracted significant attention in Andalusia itself. *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī* first arrived in Andalusia not long after it achieved fame in the East. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Asīlī (d. 392/1002), a judge in Saragossa, received the book from Abū Zayd al-Marwazī in Mecca and brought it back to Andalusia.²⁸ His teacher, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012), also brought the collection back to the North African city of Qayrawān.²⁹ Their student al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra Aḥmad al-Marīyyī (d. 435/1044), a judge in the Andalusian town of Almeria, wrote a commentary on *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī* that was in fact the first such work devoted to the book anywhere since al-Khaṭṭābī had written his *A lām al-sunan* fifty years earlier.³⁰

Two generations later, al-Jayyānī (d. 498/1105) became an important participant in the study and development of the *Sahīhayn* canon without ever leaving Andalusia.³¹ He collected six separate transmissions of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīḥ* through the author’s senior student, al-Firabrī, as well as another prominent transmission from Ibrāhīm b. Ma‘qil al-Nasafī. Al-Jayyānī had the two most famous transmissions of *Sahīḥ Muslim* as well (those of al-Qalānisī and Ibn Sufyān).³² In addition, he had copies of al-Hākim’s *Tārīkh*

²⁸ Al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis*, 240; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:560.

²⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:159.

³⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:579.

³¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:22.

³² Al-Jayyānī, *al-Tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi ‘a fī al-musnad al-ṣahīḥ li ’l-Bukhārī*, 22; idem, *al-Tanbīh ‘alā al-awhām al-wāqi ‘a fī Sahīḥ al-imām Muslim*, 35-41.

Naysābūr and his *Marifat ʻulūm al-hadīth*. Although he was writing only a few years after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's death, al-Jayyānī also had a copy of the massive *Tārīkh Baghdād*.³³ Some of the most influential studies of the *Sahīhayn*, such as al-Jayyānī's study of al-Bukhārī's teachers, al-Māzarī and al-Qādī Iyād's commentary's on *Sahīh Muslim*, came from the Maghrib. Although he was famously unaware of al-Tirmidhī's existence, Ibn Ḥazm rated the *Sahīhayn* as the two best collections of ḥadīth. After *madrasas* were founded in the Maghrib, the *Sahīhayn* became standard texts for ḥadīth study among the majority Mālikī school.³⁴

To the extreme east of the classical Islamic world, the *Sahīhayn* canon was at the vanguard of ḥadīth scholarship in South Asia as it grew steadily from the seventh/thirteenth century on. The first Indian to leave any trace of studying the *Sahīhayn* was also the first renowned ḥadīth scholar to hail from the subcontinent. A native of Lahore, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252) penned a study of al-Bukhārī's teachers, a commentary on his *Sahīh* and a famous combined edition of the *Sahīhayn*, the *Mashāriq al-anwār*.³⁵ Al-Ṣaghānī spent much of his time studying in the Ḥijāz and serving the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir, who sent him back to India from Baghdad as the Abbasid ambassador to the Delhi Sultanate. Otherwise, it was not until the 700/1300's that any real study of the *Sahīhayn* started in India proper. According to

³³ Al-Jayyānī, *al-Tanbīh ʻalā al-awhām al-wāqiʻa fī Ṣahīh al-imām Muslim*, 30-34.

³⁴ See Wadād al-Qādī, "al-Madrasa fī al-Maghrib fī ḫaw' Kitāb al-mīād li'l-Wansharīy," in *al-Fikr al-tarbawī al-islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Maqāṣid al-Islāmiyya, 1401/1981), 147.

³⁵ Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 230.

Muhammad Ishaq, the first mention of the two works comes in the work of Makhdūm

al-Mulk Sharaf al-Dīn sometime between 741/1340 and 786/1384.³⁶

This history of the *Sahīhayn* in South Asia, however, reflects the study of ḥadīth in general in that region. Although there had been limited ḥadīth scholarship in Lahore under the Ghaznavids in the late fifth/eleventh and early sixth/twelfth centuries, it was the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate that marked the beginning of continuous Muslim scholarship in northern India. Even then, however, the study of ḥadīth was limited to al-Baghawī's *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna* and al-Ṣaghānī's *Mashāriq al-anwār* (in effect, the *Sahīhayn*), the two books that provided the narrow foundations of the ḥadīth curriculum in the new Nāṣiriyā and Mu'izzī colleges in Delhi.³⁷ Ḥadīth scholarship in northern India was thus built on al-Bukhārī and Muslim's canonical status as manifested in al-Baghawī's and al-Ṣaghānī's digests of two works. 'Abd al-Awwal al-Husaynī al-Zaydpūrī (d. 968/1560), who lived in Gujarat and Delhi, wrote the first Indian commentary on al-Bukhārī's collection: the *Fayḍ al-bārī fī sharḥ Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*.³⁸ In the wake of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Sayf al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642), the Indian scholar who truly replicated the intense ḥadīth scholarship of the Islamic heartlands in India, ḥadīth study flourished in the subcontinent. From that point onward, almost every major Indian ḥadīth scholar produced a commentary on al-Bukhārī or Muslim's *Sahīḥ*. Many commentaries were written in Persian, with Sirāj Ahmad al-Mujaddadī (d. 1230/1815) even translating

³⁶ Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 77.

³⁷ Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 49.

³⁸ Ishaq, *India's Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 129.

Sahīh Muslim directly into Persian.³⁹ In light of the prominent place of the *Sahīhayn* in South Asian Islam, it is no surprise that the great Sufi scholar Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' (d. 725/1325) rebutted a ḥadīth used against him in a debate by stating, “Only that is authentic (sahih) which has been set forth in the Two Authentic Traditions (sahihain) [of Bukhari and Muslim].”⁴⁰

Conclusion

The Muslim ḥadīth tradition and the manifold roles of ḥadīth in Islamic civilization can stretch the historian’s analogical abilities to their culturally determined limits. It is not difficult to imagine that reports from the Prophet Muḥammad played a central role in the defining Islamic doctrinal and legal thought. As different schools matured and competed, it was natural that the authenticity of ḥadīths became an issue of great communal import. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim remain enduring symbols of the system of ḥadīth criticism and authentication that Muslim scholars from Andalusia to Transoxiana developed on so daunting a scale and with such internal consistency that it ranks among mankind’s greatest intellectual accomplishments. Just as we admire the logical or ethical expoundings of Peripatetic philosophers regardless of the accuracy of their conclusions today, we need only shift our gaze slightly to examine in wonder the web of intersecting lines of transmission that weave downward and outward from the Prophetic singularity along the dome of time and space.

³⁹ Ishaq, *India’s Contribution to the Study of Hadith Literature*, 143.

⁴⁰ Amīr Hasan Sijzī, *Nizam ad-din Awliya: Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*, trans. Bruce B. Lawrence (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 200.

Yet beyond the role of ḥadīth in law and doctrine, it seems almost incomprehensible how such a large number of people from all reaches of society could devote themselves so totally to collecting and sifting through reports from the Prophet. Histories like al-Khaṭīb’s *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ* or al-Dhahabī’s *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz* are replete with individuals who traveled for months simply to collect an additional version of a Prophetic report for which they already possessed one narration. Even more shocking is the obvious fact that most of these ḥadīth collectors had little concern for the actual authenticity of these reports.

Perhaps, however, the question of the canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim reminds us that such a distant and fantastic past is not actually far removed from us today. Even today, historical authenticity is not prized by all equally. Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī understood that in making authenticity paramount, one may sacrifice the tools necessary for communal coherence. As al-Albānī’s conflict with the traditional schools of law demonstrates, there are real questions as to what extent the institutional needs of the community trump ‘scholarly integrity.’ The *Ṣahīhayn* canon was shaped by communal needs and priorities as they shifted over time. What does the Muslim community need today?

Appendix I: References for *Sahīhayn* Network Chart

This appendix provides the references for the material presented in Chapter Four's *Sahīhayn* Network Chart. It is organized by the regions shown in the chart, with chronological distribution within each region.

Baghdad:

Ibn Rumayḥ Abū Sa‘īd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nasawī (d. 357/967-8): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:210-11; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:96.

Al-Dāraqutnī, ‘Alī b. ‘Umar (d. 385/995): al-Ghassānī, *Tanbīh*, 39; Brown, “Criticism of the Proto-Hadith Canon.”

Al-Lālakā’ī, Hibatallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. Manṣūr (d. 418/1027-28): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:71-2; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 28:456-7; idem *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:189.

Al-Barqānī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 425/1033-34): Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:137-40; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*; 14:281-2, 333, 379, 15:242; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Tabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘īyya*, 1:363-5; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:464-8; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:183.

Al-Dimashqī, Abū Mas‘ūd Ibrāhīm (d. 401/1010-11): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:170-1; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:180.

Khalaf b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī (d. 400/1010): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 8:329-30; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:179-80; al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustatrafa*, 125.

Al-Khallāl, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Abī Ṭālib b. al-Ḥasan (d. 439/1047): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:437-8; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:205; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 29:471-2.

Egypt and the Hijāz:

Ibn al-Sakan, Abū ‘Alī Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān al-Bazzāz (d. 353/964): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:100; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:88-9.

Abū Dharr al-Harawī, ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad (d. 430/1038): ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, 607; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:201-3, 244.

Jurjān:

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū Aḥmad al-Jurjānī (d. 373-74/983-85): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:441; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:549.

Ibn ‘Adī, ‘Abdallāh Abū Aḥmad (d. 365/975-6): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291-2; al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 106; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:102-3; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:241.

Al-Ismā'īlī, Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm Abū Bakr (d. 371/981-2): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 291; al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 87; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 14:281-2; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Tabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-shāfi'iyya*, 417-418; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:106-7; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya*, 3:8.

Al-Ghiṭrīfī, Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 377/977-8): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 292; al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, 488; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:43; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:120-22; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:614-5.

Naysābūr:

Abū Bakr al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās al-Ṣā'igh al-Rāzī (d. 270/883): Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-du‘afā' wa ajwibatuhu 'alā as'ilat al-Bardha ī*, 2:674; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 12:363; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:133-4; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 20:149-50.

Ibn Rajā', Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 286/899): Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣahīh Muslim*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:186; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:288.

Al-Bazzār, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama al-Naysābūrī (d. 286/899): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:408; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60; idem, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:156.

Ibn al-Jārūd, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī (d. 307/919-20): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:12-3.

Al-Hīrī, Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān (d. 311/923-4): al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 4:337-8; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣahīh Muslim*, 88; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:402-3; idem, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:232.

Abū ‘Awāna, Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 312/924-5 - 316): al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:525-6.

Al-Sarrāj, Abū al-‘Abbās Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm (d. 313/925): al-Khalīlī, *al-Irshād*, 310-11; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 1:264-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:462-4; idem, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 2:215.

Ibn ‘Ammār al-Shahīd, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 317/929-30): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:37; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 23:546-7.

Al-Juvaynī, Abū ‘Imrān Mūsā b. al-‘Abbās al-Naysābūrī (d. 323/934-5): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:27; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 24:139-40.

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Al-Qurtubī, Abū Muḥammad Qāsim b. Aşbagh al-Mālikī (d. 340/951): al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-huffāz*, 3:49; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 25:192-3; al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustātrafa*, 20.

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- Al-Hīrī, Abū Sa‘īd Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 353/964):** al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5:225-6; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:89; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:84.
- Abū al-Ḥasan al-Naysābūrī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (d. 355/966):** al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:68.
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- Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Abū Iṣhāq al-Muzakkī (d. 362/973):** al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:165-7; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 26:289-90.
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- Ibn Manjawayh, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-İsbahānī (d. 428/1036-7):** al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkīrat al-ḥuffāz*, 3:191; idem, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 29:208-10.

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- Al-Milanħī, Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm al-İsbahānī (d. 486/1093):** Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 17:6; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 33:17305; al-Albānī, *Fihris makhtūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Żahiriyya*, 550.

Transoxiana:

- ‘Abd al-Şamad b. Muhammed Ibn Hayyawayh (d. 368/978-9):** al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 11:43; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:290-1.
- Ḩamd b. Muhammed Abū Sulaymān al-Khāṭṭabī (d. 388/998):** Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntażam*, 14:129; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi‘īyya al-kubrā*, 3:284-90; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 27:166-7; idem, *Tadzhkirat al-huffāz*, 3:149-150.
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- ‘Umar b. ‘Alī Abū Muslim al-Laythī al-Bukhārī (d. 466-8):** al-Dhahabī, *Tadzhkirat al-huffāz*, 4:24.

Appendix II: Divorce Oaths

Swearing to divorce one's wife if one's oath is not fulfilled was a *topos* in Classical Islamic civilization. Among scholars, it functioned as rhetorical device to emphasize a person's certainty on an issue. Al-Ḥasan b. Ḥammād Sajjāda (d. 241/855-6), a ḥadīth scholar of Baghdad, thus told a man who had sworn to divorce his wife if he talked to a unbeliever that talking to someone who said the Qur'ān was created obliged a divorce.¹ This story was designed to equate a belief in the created Qur'ān with disbelief. Scholars also used the divorce oath as a test case in many legal studies.² By the 700/1300's this type of oath had grown common enough to elicit a vehement rebuttal from Ibn Taymiyya, who did not consider such socially destructive oaths to have any effect on the status of marriage.³

An early figure who often appears in the context of such vows was Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī (d. 264/878). In a story related in Ibn 'Adī's fourth/tenth century source *al-Kāmil* concerning Abū Zur'a's mastery of ḥadīth, the narrator of the story sees a man ask another man aboard a ship "what do you say about a man who swears that he'd divorce his wife three times that you have memorized 100,000 ḥadīths?" The other man puts his head down for a while and says, "Go, you and he would be upstanding in your oath, but don't bring such things up again." The narrator asks, "Who is that man?" and the other person replies, "Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī." In the *Tārīkh Baghdād*, this story is followed by another report in which a man swears by divorce that Abū Zur'a has memorized 100,000 ḥadīths, so a group of people goes to Abū Zur'a to know whether

¹ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:306 (bio of al-Ḥasan b. Ḥammād).

² See, for example, Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Asnawī (d. 776/1374-5), *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī takhrīj al-furū' al-fiqhiyya 'alā al-masā'il al-naḥwiyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa'dī ([Kuwait]: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1404/1984).

³ Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 428-430.

that man has really has divorced his wife or not. Abū Zur'a tells them that she has not been divorced.⁴

A later instance of a divorce oath being used to bolster a scholarly position occurred in the sixth/twelfth century. Abū al-'Izz Aḥmad b. 'Ubaydallāh Ibn Kādish (d. 526/1132) al-'Akbarī (or al-'Akbarawī) said, “if someone swore an oath of final divorce (*bi 'l-talāq thalāth^{an}*) that God seats Muhammad (s) on the throne, then asked me for a legal opinion [on the validity of this oath], I would say ‘You have stayed true to your word and been just.’”⁵

Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) found himself faced with a *fatwā* request from someone who had sworn to divorce his wife if his claim that al-Shāfi'ī was the greatest *imām* of his time and that his school is the best *madhab* were false. Al-Nawawī replies that divorce was not necessary here.⁶

⁴ Al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 10:333; cf. Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 1:141.

⁵ Cf. al-Qanūbī, *al-Sayf al-hādd*, 24; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:558-60; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 1:218.

⁶ Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā al-imām al-Nawawī*, 140.

Appendix III: The Question of the Attribution of the *Sahīhayn*

Several scholars have argued that the texts of the *Sahīhayn* did not stabilize until some time after the deaths of their authors. In light of such realities as “organic texts, pseudepigraphy and long-term redactional activity,” Norman Calder claimed that, “[a]pparently the product of the devoted and orderly activity of a single person, works like the *Sahīhs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim should probably be recognized as emerging into final form at least one generation later than the dates recorded for the deaths of the putative authors....”¹ Based on his analysis of a partial fifth/eleventh century manuscript of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Alphonse Mingana concluded that the text was still in a relatively fluid form at that point in time. Yet there is little available evidence suggesting that, beyond the normal permutations of manuscript transmission for texts as large and detailed as the *Sahīhayn*, either al-Bukhārī or Muslim’s books were altered substantially after their deaths.

The *Sahīhayn* are two massive works, and the vagaries of manuscript transmission introduced the possibility of frequent variation even for a text transmitted intact from its author. Several generations of editors, such as Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 430/1038), al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650/1252), and the Egyptian Ḥanbalī al-Yūnīnī (d. 658/1260), thus played important roles in collating different transmissions of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* into vulgate editions.² Such editorial

¹ Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence*, 194.

² For discussions of these different editors and their contributions, see Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī*, 16–18; Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, “How al-Buhārī’s *Sahīh* was edited in the middle ages: ‘Alī al-Yūnīnī and his *Rumūz*,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 50 (1998): 191–222; and Johann Fück, “Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buhārī’s Traditionssammlung,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 60–82.

review, however, was endemic to the pre-print world and does not reflect any instability specific to the *Sahīḥayn*.

Mingana based his assertion that al-Bukhārī's *Sahīḥ* remained in fluid form through the early fifth/eleventh century on his observation that two of the chapters of the manuscript that he examined were out of normal order and that each narration began with "al-Bukhārī informed us...," a feature not found in the dominant recensions of the text.³ Yet Mingana's partial manuscript of the *Sahīḥ* consisted of only three chapters. We have no evidence that the ordering of the remaining ninety-four chapters was irregular.

Besides Mingana's unconvincing evidence, there are other indications that al-Bukhārī's *Sahīḥ* varied slightly in content as it was transmitted from its author through his various students. We know from al-Kalābādhī that al-Bukhārī was transmitting his *Sahīḥ* during his own lifetime. Al-Kalābādhī informs us that al-Bukhārī had been narrating his *Sahīḥ* to students for at least eight years before his death.⁴ As the author was almost certainly making adjustments to his work throughout his life, it should not surprise us that the different narrations of the *Sahīḥ* from al-Bukhārī's students varied from one another. When compared with the enduring transmission of the *Sahīḥ* from al-Bukhārī's most famous student, al-Firabrī, his other student Ḥammād b. Shākir's (d. 290/902-3) recension of the text contained two-hundred fewer narrations. Ibrāhīm b. Ma'qil al-Nasafī's (d. 295/907-8) was three-hundred less.⁵ But according to Ibn Ḥajar's count, the *Sahīḥ* contains a total of 9,082 narrations of all sorts.⁶ We should thus not consider a

³ Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī*; 1, 6. 9. 14.

⁴ Al-Kalābādhī, *Rijāl Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:24.

⁵ Al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-idāh*, 26-7.

⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, 648-53.

variation of three-hundred narrations, roughly 3% of the *Sahīh*, evidence of an incomplete or fluid text.

The other major piece of evidence suggesting that al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* was edited significantly after his death has been Abū Ishāq al-Mustamlī's (d. 376/986-7) statement that, upon examining his teacher al-Firabrī's copy of the *Sahīh*, he noticed that some sections were still in draft form. Specifically, several subchapter headings lacked ḥadīths, and several ḥadīths appeared with no subchapter headings. Al-Mustamlī explains that he and his fellow students therefore tried to arrange the unsorted material in its proper place (*fa-adafnā ba ɻ d dhālik ilā ba ɻ d*).⁷ Al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*, however, contains ninety-seven chapters and approximately 3,750 subchapters. That al-Firabrī's copy of the text had what seems to be a relatively small number of missing subchapter headings does not call into question the general integrity of the text.

Evidence suggests that Muslim's *Sahīh* was also completed within his own lifetime, and there is little indication that the text mutated beyond the normal vagaries of transmission after his death. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) mentions that Muslim left his work without chapter titles, but we have no corroboration for this report, which postdates Muslim's death by some four hundred years.⁸ Otherwise, Muslim's students and contemporaries considered his collection complete at the time of his death. Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī mentioned that Abū Bakr al-Faḍl al-Ṣā'igh (d. 270/883) had composed a *mustakhraj* of the *Sahīh* during Muslim's lifetime. Muslim's colleagues Ibn

⁷ Al-Bājī, *Abū al-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī wa kitābuhi al-Ta ɻil wa al-tajrīh*, 1:310-1.

⁸ Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Sahīh Muslim*, 1:129.

Rajā' (d. 286/899) and Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Salama (d. 286/899) did the same.⁹

Presumably, *mustakhrajs* could only have been produced on the basis of completed template collections.

⁹ Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-ḍu'afā' wa ajwibatuhu 'alā as'ilat al-Bardha* 7, 2:674; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣahīh Muslim*, 89; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdaḍ*, 4:408; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 21:59-60.

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