THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY SUNNITE HADITH CRITICISM

The Taqdima of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī
(240/854-327/938)

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## CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................................................................................... vii

I. Ḥadīth in the Time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim ......................................................... 1

II. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī: Life and Works .............................................. 11

III. The *Taqdima* .......................................................................................... 41

IV. The Testimonial Evidence ................................................................. 53

V. The Biographical Evidence ................................................................. 57

VI. The Documentary Evidence ............................................................. 80

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 127

Bibliography ....................................................................................................... 131

Index .................................................................................................................. 141
INTRODUCTION

In the most basic terms, ḥadīth are the texts recording the words and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad. Although these texts were avidly studied by Muslims for centuries, it is generally acknowledged that Ignaz Goldziher inaugurated the modern era of ḥadīth scholarship in the West with the second volume of his *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1890). Despite the fact that this widely-ranging work remains the best general introduction to the study of ḥadīth, it is primarily remembered for publicizing the view that most ḥadīth were fabricated many years after the death of the Prophet. He believed that most ḥadīth do not accurately portray the words and deeds of the Prophet. Goldziher argued that partisans in the early doctrinal struggles forged ḥadīth in order to provide Prophetic confirmation for their own views and therefore for the modern scholar the chief value of ḥadīth lies in the light they shed on the later development of Islam rather than the life and views of the Prophet.

Since the time of Goldziher, scholars have examined different source material and drawn different conclusions about the authenticity of ḥadīth as Prophetic documents. Joseph Schacht built on the work of Goldziher in the article “A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions”\(^1\) and the book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*.\(^2\) For the most part, he set aside the numerous reports in the classical sources describing the history of ḥadīth transmission. Instead, he examined the actual usage of ḥadīth in the earliest surviving works on law. He discovered that the ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet were not accorded any special status in the early texts and in fact were in some works outnumbered by references to later figures. This led him to question whether there ever was “an authentic core of information going back to the time of the Prophet.”\(^3\) Although his name is commonly associated with the radical rejection of the authenticity of all ḥadīth, Schacht’s actual position was less controversial. He cautioned that we must consider every legal tradition as a product of a later date.

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\(^1\) *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1949, 143–54.


\(^3\) “Revaluation,” 147.
“until the contrary is proved.” Researchers working with other material have reached conclusions broadly similar to those of Schacht.

While other scholars challenged Schacht’s conclusions, they did not for the most part attempt to re-interpret the evidence of the early legal texts he used. Instead, they drew attention to the reports in the classical sources describing the early use of writing to record hadith, which they regarded as the guarantor of the authenticity of the hadith. This view is well presented by Nabia Abbott in the second volume of her *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* and Fuat Sezgin in the first volume of his *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. Sezgin concluded that hadith were transmitted in written form from the time of the Prophet while Abbott placed the beginning of writing hadith about a century later. More recently, another scholar has examined the same material and concluded that the writing of hadith did not begin until considerably later.

G.H.A. Juynboll took a different approach to the problem of the origin of the hadith. In his *Muslim Tradition*, he included a study entitled “A tentative Chronology of the Origins of Muslim Tradition (pp. 9–76).” Here he turned to the genre of historical reports known

4 “Revaluation,” 149. Noel Coulson argues “that an alleged ruling of the Prophet should be tentatively accepted” until its falsity is demonstrated; *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh, 1964), 65. He also presents his views on hadith in “European Criticism of Hadith Literature” in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the Umayyad Period*, ed. A.F.L. Beeston et al. (Cambridge, 1983), 317–21.


as “firsts” (awā’īl), which purports to document who initiated certain practices. These reports were first organized into collections in the fourth/tenth century and cover a wide variety of firsts from both Islamic and pre-Islamic times. Juynboll’s systematic analysis of the reports pertaining to the study of hadīth led him to conclude that “the earliest origins of standardized hadīth cannot be traced back earlier than, at most, to the seventies or eighties of the first century”\(^{12}\) and that the systematic authentication of hadīth did not begin any earlier than 130/747.\(^{13}\)

Although very few scholars have, like Schacht, gone so far as to question whether any authentic hadīth exist, little has been done to recover them.\(^{14}\) Juynboll candidly doubts whether a method can be found to separate the authentic hadīth from the unauthentic: “Surely it is unlikely that we will ever find even a moderately successful method of proving with incontrovertible certainty the historicity of the ascription of such to the prophet but in a few isolated instances.”\(^{15}\) Elsewhere, he suggests the best tool is “a keen sense for what seems true and what false.”\(^{16}\) Largely lacking from the discussion over the genuineness of the hadīth has been an examination of the methods the early collectors used to authenticate them.\(^{17}\) After all, no one has ever claimed that all hadīth are genuine and early Muslim scholars accepted that hadīth were altered and forged outright for both laudable and evil motives. The traditional Sunnite view holds that the hadīth contained in certain collections gathered by individuals living two centuries after the death of the Prophet are more or less genuine. Although there are many reports praising the intelligence,
scrupulousness and energy of these early collectors, for the medieval Muslim the authenticity of the ḥadīth in these books rested ultimately on the consensus of the Muslim Community that they were authentic.\(^{18}\) (It has been pointed out that the notion that consensus can confirm the authenticity of these collections itself rests on a ḥadīth from these collections.)\(^{19}\)

The present study examines the early Sunnite collectors of ḥadīth and the techniques they employed to determine the genuineness of ḥadīth. In the second volume of his aforementioned *Muhammedanische Studien* (p. 144), Goldziher stated that the criticism of ḥadīth transmitters reached maturity with Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (240/854–327/938). Although a comprehensive examination of all of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s works would be very valuable, this study concentrates on the *Taqdimaat al-ma’rifah li-Kitāb al-Jarh wa-l-ta’dīl*. The *Taqdima* is Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s introduction to his famous biographical dictionary *Kitāb al-Jarh wa-l-ta’dīl* and is aimed at providing a defence of the techniques of the collectors of ḥadīth against the polemical attacks of their detractors. In it he purports to trace the history of ḥadīth criticism from its earliest practitioners up to the time of his own father, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (195/811–277/890). The present work emphasizes those aspects of the *Taqdima* which link it most closely to the milieu in which it was written and the general principles of the collectors of ḥadīth. It is hoped that this approach will illuminate not only Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his work, but also the movement of the critics in general.

\(^{18}\) See, for example, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 170–71.

\(^{19}\) Wael Hallaq drew attention to the circularity of the classical argument in his paper “The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem,” delivered 19 March 1998 at the conference *Ḥadīth: Text and History* at the Centre for Islamic Studies of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.
CHAPTER ONE

ḤADĪTH IN THE TIME OF IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM

The earliest centuries of Islam witnessed the emergence of a number of competing sects, a sight which distressed Muslims of widely varying backgrounds who feared that Islam would disintegrate into innumerable feuding factions. Thinkers in some circles came to regard this breakdown of the perceived cohesion of the original Muslim community as the product of the differing approaches to the formulation of doctrine prevailing among the various sects. They felt that if consistency could be imposed in the way doctrines were arrived at, uniformity in the doctrines themselves would follow naturally. With this purpose in mind, some scholars advocated the primacy of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth in doctrinal matters. The chief obstacle to the application of this program was the presence of contradictions within the ḥadīth corpus. Some scholars tried to resolve these contradictions through the use of reason. Others, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim was among their number, authenticated ḥadīth on the basis of what they considered to be the objective criteria of ḥadīth criticism.

I. The Adherents of Ḥadīth and their Rivals

For most of first two centuries following the death of the Prophet, Muslim intellectual life was divided up among a number of major cities. Although these intellectual centers were never completely isolated from one another, the general orientation of their inhabitants appears to have been inward. The work of the scholars in these centers, although often of a high intellectual caliber, was characterized by an approach to the formulation of doctrine which seemed inconsistent and haphazard in the light of the rigorous attitudes of later times. These early scholars drew their doctrines from a number of sources, including the Qurʾān, local custom, their own notions of fairness and what they knew of the teachings of the Prophet, his Companions, the Followers and other early scholars. Among these pioneers, we find little of the consuming interest in identifying the
main sources of doctrine (ṣūāl) and determining their relative priority that is so pronounced in succeeding generations.¹

Working in relative isolation and employing different methods, it is not surprising that the early religious scholars arrived at conflicting answers to the questions facing the Muslim community. Early on, certain thinkers began to recognize this as a problem, especially in the field of law where practical considerations made uniformity particularly desirable. We find that a call for legal uniformity is already sounded in the treatise al-Risāla fi ʾṣaḥābah of Ibn al-Muqaffa² (ca. 102/720–139/756)² and a century later it was al-Jahiz (ca. 160/776–255/868) who made the same point in the tract entitled Kītab al-Futūḥ.³

The reports concerning various caliphs asking scholars to draw up a single legal code for promulgation in the Muslim empire, whatever their ultimate historicity, also bear witness to the persistence and prevalence of the ideal of legal uniformity.⁴

With the passage of time, some scholars came to call for the placement of greater emphasis on the ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet. Ḥadīth were connected with the concept of sunna, a practice rendered normative by the prestige an earlier personage. In the nature of things, this practice was usually known only by means of reports and the ḥadīth were the reports which served as the documentation of the practice of past authorities. There were many figures, including the Prophet Muhammad, his Companions and the Followers, whose views the earliest Muslim scholars considered authoritative to some degree. The demand which sprung up in some quarters that special emphasis be given to the ḥadīth of the Prophet is best understood as a product of the impulse towards uniformity. Whereas the consultation of a number of different authorities on a given question was bound to yield a number of different answers, one might reasonably expect that the reference to a single authority would pro-

¹ J. Schacht, Origins, 6–10.
duce a single answer. The Prophet represented the one figure whose authority all Muslims respected. Echoing a verse of the Qurʾān (4:59), the great scholar of hadith Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (270/884–354/965) says of him, “In the case of a disagreement, it is necessary to refer to his sunna, since he is the undisputed resort of all.”

Ibn Abī Ḥātim was one of those who called for increased reliance on the hadith from the Prophet. For him, the Muslim intellectual world was divided into two camps on the basis of their approach to the sources of religious doctrine. On the one side were the “adherents of hadith” (ahl al-hadith or aṣḥāb al-hadīth), the scholars like himself who demanded that hadith be given priority in the derivation of doctrine. Opposed to this view were the “ahl al-raʾy” and “ahl al-kalām.” These were the scholars who maintained the old approach to the sources. (Collectively he calls the ahl al-raʾy and the ahl al-kalām the “Kūfans” or “Irāqians” in reference to the supposed birthplace of their doctrines. For the same reason, he sometimes calls his own colleagues the “Ḥijazians.”) In particular, it was the prominence these scholars gave to the use of human reason in the formulation of doctrine that attracted the scorn of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his fellows. The designations ahl al-raʾy and ahl al-kalām imply that the members of these movements preferred using their own intellect in the formulation of doctrines to relying on divine guidance in the form of the Qurʾān and hadith. The term “raʾy” originally meant a “considered opinion” and was wholly neutral in connotation. When employed by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, it means the formulation of an opinion in the field of law in a capricious and arbitrary fashion. He uses the term most often in reference to the members of what we now recognize as the Ḥanafite law school. “Kalām” is the concept corresponding to raʾy in the field of theology and means “speculative theology.” Again the implication is that rather than consult the Prophet’s dictates on theological matters, these scholars favored exercising their own intellects. Most often the name “ahl al-kalām” was applied to the members of the Muʿtazilite theological movement.

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The main objection of the adherents of ḥadīth to the approach of the āhl al-ra'y and āhl al-kalām was that the exercise of reason was necessarily arbitrary, and it was precisely this arbitrariness which precluded any possibility of uniformity. Ibn Qutayba (213/828–276/889), a sympathizer with the adherents of hadith, contrasts the āhl al-kalām with the arithmeticians, geometricians and engineers, whose procedures always yield a single answer to a given problem, and with physicians, who, inculcated with the knowledge of the ancients, always make the same diagnosis on the basis of a particular pulse rate or urine sample. The āhl al-kalām, he asserts, are divided into innumerable groups, each of which disagrees with all of the others. This problem is innate because to differ is inherent in the minds, wills, and preferences of human beings. You almost never see two people in agreement so that each of them chooses what the other chooses and rejects what the other rejects, except in the case of the reliance of the one upon the other (taqlīd).8

In the minds of the adherents of ḥadīth, submission to the authority of the Prophet as embodied in the ḥadīth provided the only escape from this variance and contradiction.

The āhl al-ra'y and āhl al-kalām found themselves extremely vulnerable to the attacks of the adherents of ḥadīth. They could not reject the authority of the ḥadīth of the Prophet outright, if for no other reason than that these reports had long held a place in their own doctrines. The problem for them was to keep their own hadith while rejecting those that contradicted their doctrines. The stance they did adopt was one of skepticism in the authentication of ḥadīth. In other words, they represented themselves as not rejecting the words of the Prophet, but rather doubting whether most ḥadīth in fact accurately represented his words. On the one hand, they refused to accept any ḥadīth that was not mutawātīr, that is transmitted in

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each era after the Prophet by a number of transmitters so large as to exclude the possibility of a conspiracy. On the other hand, the Kūfans also rejected those ḥadīth which did not meet various internal criteria they stipulated. Throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, we find the Kūfans fighting a rearguard action against the thesis of the adherents of ḥadīth while simultaneously trying to accommodate it into their own teachings.⁹

II. Ḥadīth Commentary and Criticism

The personality most closely associated with the doctrine of the Kūfans was Abū Ḥanīfa (ca. 80/699–ca. 150/767) and he became the main target of Ḥijāzian attacks. The thesis of the adherents of ḥadīth is succinctly articulated in a report from Ḥaṣṣ b. Ghiyāth (d. 194/809): “I used to study with Abū Ḥanīfa. One day I heard him give five different answers to a single question. So I got up and left him and studied ḥadīth.”¹⁰ Their assertion that the reliance on ḥadīth always led to a single answer was largely wishful thinking, for at an early date they found themselves victims of their own success. As exclusive reference to the ḥadīth of the Prophet grew more common, the number of opinions ascribed to him increased until, in many cases, several points of view on a given question found expression in ḥadīth. The growth in the number of ḥadīth posed both theoretical and practical problems for them. On the theoretical side, the great promise of ḥadīth was uniformity. This benefit was contingent on the ability of scholars to extract a single answer for each question from the corpus of ḥadīth. Their failure to do so would provide ammunition for those who argued against using them. From the practical standpoint, the scholar already convinced of the authority of ḥadīth faced the problem of determining which of those addressing a given issue was authentic.

The adherents of ḥadīth took two different approaches to this dilemma. Some ventured to thread their way through the contradictory ḥadīth by rational means. The first major exponent of this


approach was the famous jurist Shāfī‘ī (150/767–204/820)\(^{11}\) and in later centuries this approach continued to be most frequently associated with the adherents to his legal doctrines.\(^{12}\) It is is found in Shāfī‘ī’s own \textit{Ikhtilāf al-hadīth} and \textit{Risāla, Kūḥāb al-Amr wa-l-nahy} of his disciple Muzanā (175/792–264/877), \textit{Tā’wīl nukhtalīf al-hadīth} of Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Tahdīb al-āthār} of Ṭabarī (224/839–310/923), and \textit{Naṣīikh al-hadīth wa-mansūkhuhi} of Ibn Shahīn (297/909–385/995).\(^{13}\) Those who chose this route were often handcuffed by an overriding desire to defend the authenticity of the greatest number of hadīth. Therefore, their energies were largely expended in harmonization.\(^{14}\)

Shāfī‘ī put forth the guiding principle of this movement in his \textit{Ikhtilāf al-hadīth}: “If it is possible that two [apparently contradictory] hadīth be used together, they should be used together.”\(^{15}\) To resolve apparent contradictions, Shāfī‘ī generally postulates one of three basic conditions:

1. There exists a certain amount of latitude on the issue and the various hadīth define its permissible boundaries.
2. One of the hadīth applies in one particular circumstance and the other(s) elsewhere.
3. One of the hadīth abrogated the other(s).\(^{16}\)

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\(^{11}\) Sezgin, \textit{GAS}, 1:484–90.


It will be noticed that in each of the three cases the authenticity of all of the hadith is maintained. Even when abrogation is postulated, the authenticity of the hadith is not challenged, although the ruling it contains is no longer held to be valid.

Other members of the movement of the ahl al-hadith acknowledged that the contradiction between various hadith was real and attempted to distinguish which of the hadith on a given issue were right and which were wrong by examining their authenticity. They scrutinized the history of the transmission of the hadith from one scholar to another down through time. By the beginning of the third/ninth century it had already become customary to attach to each hadith the record of its transmission, known as the “isnad,” and it was to this that these scholars directed their attention. Their procedures for examining isnads will be described in detail in Chapter VI.17

The difference between the two approaches was the difference between commentary and criticism. The hadith commentator, like the Qur’ān commentator, treated the canon as if it were closed and attempted to work within its bounds. The critic of hadith manipulated the boundaries of the canon to avoid contradiction, removing any objectionable material. It is likely that the differences between these methods stem from their emergence in different environments. The commentator was bent on establishing the authority of hadith at all costs, something that the critic took for granted. While trying to resolve the vexatious contradictions, the commentator was simultaneously forced to avoid offering an opening to his Kūfān rivals who were eager for any pretext to reject a hadith in conflict with their own dogmas. As might be expected, hadith commentary, torn between its two virtually exclusive objectives, was usually labored and often utterly unconvincing.18 These separate approaches may not have been wholly inimical, but there were few scholars who made significant contributions in both domains before the fourth/tenth century.19

19 For a discussion of the rather perfunctory manner the early critics treated
Ibn Abī Ḥātim was a critic of ḥadīth. As a group, the critics, like all of the other contemporary schools of thought, were informally and loosely constituted. They were characterized in the first place by their insistence on the exclusive reliance on the Qurʾān and ḥadīth as sources for religious doctrine and they also shared a more or less uniform body of legal and theological teachings. The critics correspond, to a large extent, to those early scholars whom the Arabic historians would later identify as “Ḥanbalites.” Although Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not appear to have been familiar with the use of the word “Ḥanbalite” in this sense (or with any of the other names later applied to the schools of law), he certainly recognized Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855) as a forebear who had shared most of his own aims, methods and beliefs.

The critics of ḥadīth held an extreme position in the debate over reason. Their ardor for expelling human reason from the formation of doctrine is epitomized in two phrases which acquired something near the status of slogans among them, “lā adri” (I do not know) and “bi-lā kayf” (Without [asking] how). The phrase “lā adri” was to be the response to any legal question not expressly covered by the Qurʾān and ḥadīth. The critic was not to compromise his principles by resorting to raʾy even if his failure to give an answer to the question brought disappointment.21 “Bi-lā kayf” represented the desired stance to be taken on theological dogmas. If the Qurʾān or ḥadīth said that something was so, it was so. It had to be accepted without question and it was felt that speculation on the subject beyond the textual indications would only lead to divisiveness.22

Hadith criticism was the practical embodiment of the philosophy of the critics. Their desire to avoid the arbitrariness inherent in the exercise of human reason led them to seek an objective method for authenticating hadith which would, as a consequence of its objectivity, yield completely consistent results. On two occasions in the Taqdimā, Ibn Abī Ḥātim asserts that, using hadith criticism, scholars working independently are able to reach the same conclusion without collusion.23 This proved a persuasive argument for the efficacy of hadith criticism. `Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/813) said, “To the ignorant, our rejection of hadith appears to be soothsaying (kabanna).”24 The ignorant in question were most often the ahl al-ra’ and ahl al-kalim who, having no use for hadith criticism, failed to study it. This is the subject of the report which Ibn Abī Ḥātim chose to lead off the chapter on his father, Abū Ḥātim, in the Taqdimā.

A prominent and intelligent adherent of ra’y came to me [i.e. Abū Ḥātim] with a notebook [of hadith] and submitted it to me for examination. I said about one of [the hadith], “This is an erroneous (khata’) hadith into which its transmitter interpolated another hadith.” I said in regard to another, “This is a spurious (bisti) hadith.” I said about another, “This is a rejected (munkar) hadith.” I said about another, “This is a false (kadhib) hadith. The rest of them are sound hadith.” He said to me, “How do you know that this one is erroneous, that one is spurious and the other is false? Did the transmitter of this book tell you that I erred or lied in such-and-such hadith?” I said, “No, I do not know who the transmitter of this volume is. However, I do know that this is erroneous and that is spurious and the other is false.” He said, “Do you pretend to have supernatural power?” I said, “This is not pretense to any supernatural power.” He said, “What is the proof for what you say?” I said, “Ask someone who is as proficient as me about what I said. If we agree, you know that we were not speaking randomly; we spoke only with understanding.” He said, “Who is someone who is as proficient as you?” I said, “Abū Zur’a.” He said, “Abū Zur’a will say what you said?” I said yes. [The adherent of ra’y] said, “This is strange.” He took [his volume] and wrote my remarks about these hadith on a sheet of paper. Then he returned to me and he had written down the remarks of Abū Zur’a about the hadith. What I had called “spurious” Abū Zur’a called “false.” I said, “False’ and ‘spurious’ are the same.” What I had called “false” Abū Zur’a called “spurious.” What I had called “rejected” he called “rejected,”

23 Taqdimā, 350, 358.
just as I had. What I had called “sound” Abū Zur‘a called “sound.” [The adherent of ra‘y] said, “How odd! Both of you are in agreement without there being any collusion between you.” I said, “That shows you that we were not speaking at random. We spoke only from the knowledge and experience that were granted to us.”

Thus, we find that the charges of those who attacked ḥadīth criticism often centered on the assertion that it was essentially arbitrary in its operation. For instance, the Mu‘tazilite Abu ʿl-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) devotes one section of his Qabūl al-akhbār wa-ma‘rifat al-rijāl to dredging up negative reports regarding most of the important scholars of ḥadīth in an attempt to show that no such person as a completely reliable transmitter existed. In this way, he hoped to demonstrate that the preferences of the critics for one transmitter over another were unjustified. This had earlier been attempted by Ḥusayn al-Karābī (d. 245/859) in his Kitāb al-Mudallīsīn (or al-Tadīsī), which Balkhī and other opponents of the critics used extensively. Similar issues are addressed by the critics in their own works, presumably in response to the arguments of their rivals. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Taqdimā was also an attempt to defend ḥadīth criticism, although on historical rather than on rational grounds.


56 Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, mustaḥāb 14m; see Fuṣād Sayyid, Fihrist al-makhbūtāt: mustaḥāb al-ḥadīth (Cairo, 1375/1956), 273. It seems that this work is identical to the one ascribed to Balkhī under the title Naqī al-Sīrānī, see Rāmahurmuzī, al-Muḥaddith al-fāsil, 309, n. 3.

CHAPTER TWO

IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM AL-RĀZĪ: LIFE AND WORKS

In many respects Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s career was typical for a scholar of hadith of his era. As a boy he studied with the transmitters in his hometown of al-Rayy and when he grew older he travelled to the chief intellectual centers of the Islamic world to collect hadith. After his journeys he returned home to teach and write. Although he encountered many of the conflicting intellectual and religious currents of his day while abroad, his career appears to have been most profoundly shaped by the competition between the critics and their opponents in al-Rayy. It was in response to the attacks against hadith criticism that he wrote the Taqdimā.

I. Sources

Little is known about Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī. Although he is a famous figure in the history of Muslim scholarship and is mentioned in many works, the sources do not permit an entirely satisfactory reconstruction of his life. At present the researcher must rely heavily on the classical biographical dictionaries.1 These treatments assumed

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a standard form at a fairly early date and vary primarily in their length. Although he is claimed by both the Shafi‘ites and Hanbalites, their representations of him differ only slightly in emphasis. For later generations of Muslims, he was a uncontroversial figure, revered for his contributions to the hadith, a discipline which lost much of its sectarian character with the passage of time.

The information in the biographical dictionaries derives from three basic sources. The first is what Ibn Abi Ḥātim himself wrote. Because all of his books are collections of transmitted material with isnāds, it is possible to trace the source of nearly every word in them. This, however, proves less useful than may be expected, for he rarely supplies information regarding where and when he received his reports. (The exception to this pattern is Adab al-Shafi‘i wa-manāqibuhū[2] where in many instances his isnāds do record where he studied with his informants.) Thus the authors of the biographical dictionaries are able list his teachers, but are usually unable to provide more than a few circumstantial details concerning his relations with them. It

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2 Ed. ‘Abd al-Ghanī ‘Abd al-Khāliq (Cairo, 1372/1953).
might be expected that Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s own great work of personality criticism, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-ta’dīl*, would flesh out the picture, yet this is not actually the case. He does devote entries to some of the scholars he met, but not to all of them. Furthermore, he has a tendency to be very brief in his description of his dealings with them, usually limiting himself to “I wrote ḥadīth from him in . . .,” rarely even giving the date of the meeting.

We are fortunate that one of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s students was sufficiently inspired to write about him. The biography (*tarjama*)—a *musannaf*, or “collection of reports”—by Abu Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ʿIbrahīm al-Rāzī al-Khaṭīb served as the fundamental source of information about Ibn Abī Ḥātim for later writers. The work itself has not survived, but about fifteen reports from it are quoted in later accounts of his life. This material consists of stories recorded from the lips of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, descriptions of events ‘Alī b. Ḥātim witnessed, and reports he collected from others. Little is known about this author: he is described as a resident of Mecca and incidental remarks indicate that he was a student of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and attended his funeral in al-Rayy.

The last major source for the life of Ibn Abī Ḥātim is *al-Irshād fī ma‘rifat ‘ulamā’ al-hadīth* (2:683–84) of Abū Ya‘lā al-Khaṭībī (367/977–446/1054). The author of this geographically-arranged biographical dictionary was an admirer of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, rating him as one of the four great *imāms* of the age. The entry on Ibn Abī Ḥātim is actually quite brief and consists of two parts. The first is a synopsis of his career and the second is a passage explaining the reason he died childless. The work of Abū Ya‘lā al-Khaṭībī is less valuable than that of ‘Alī b. Ḥātim, yet does provide a important list of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s works, mentioning some unknown to later scholars.

II. Al-Rayy

Both Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father spent the better part of their life in al-Rayy, an ancient city near the site of present-day Tehran. The political history of the city in the late third/ninth century seems
to have been one of almost continuous turmoil, with one ruler following another in dizzying succession. More relevant to the career of Ibn Abī Ḥātim was the tension between the religious factions which provided a constant backdrop for the political upheavals. The Arabic historians employed the term “‘asabīyāt” to refer to this kind of tension and the violent civil disturbances it often caused. These factional rivalries were characteristic of the eastern lands of the Islamic world, with the constitution of the competing groups varying from city to city.\(^5\) The tensions in al-Rayy are some of the earliest ones for which we have documentation and they persisted unabated until the city’s destruction by the Mongols in the seventh/thirteenth century.

Our knowledge of the religious tensions in al-Rayy in the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim is somewhat imprecise, but the outline is clear: the Ḥijāzians were in competition with the Kūfans and the Kūfans had the upper hand. Our main source for this information is the Taqdimā, which makes only oblique references to the conflict itself. Most of these concern Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s teacher Abū Zur‘a, a scion of a well-to-do family who began his career as one of the *ahl al-rā’y*, apparently attaining a certain stature among them, but later gave his allegiance to the *ahl al-hadīth*. Abū Zur‘a says, “God blessed us and we came to learn the error of the masses (*al-qawm*).”\(^6\) It appears that Abū Zur‘a’s conversion took place while he was on a journey and he kept it secret for some time after his return to al-Rayy.\(^7\) The reports in the *Taqdimā* are primarily devoted to enumerating the risks Abū Zur‘a ran by his abandonment of his former beliefs, including the threat of exile, imprisonment and beating, and are found in the section entitled “The Beginning of Abū Zur‘a’s display of opposition


\(^7\) I infer this from the report concerning the letter of Iṣḥāq b. Rāhawayh to Abū Zur‘a; *Taqdimā*, 342.
to the *ahl al-ra'y*, his preaching the tenets of the *sunna* and his exposing himself to injury from the masses.\(^8\)

It is specifically mentioned that Abū Zur'a's teaching brought him into conflict with Muḥammad b. Muqāṭil al-Rāzī (d. 248/862),\(^9\) who, we are informed by a passage preserved from Ibn Bābawayh's now-lost history of al-Rayy,\(^10\) was the head of the local *ahl al-ra'y* and prominent in *fiqh*. As the *qādī* of al-Rayy and a student of the great Ḥanafite scholar Shaybānī, he suffered from a bad reputation in ḥadīth circles. When a student asked Bukhārī (194/810–256/870)\(^11\) whether the Muḥammad b. Muqāṭil he was transmitting from was the one in al-Rayy, he declared that he would prefer falling "from the sky to the ground" to transmitting from Muḥammad b. Muqāṭil al-Rāzī.\(^12\)

Later sources confirm the impression of the sectarian conflict given in the *Taqdimat*, although it may be questioned whether the conditions they describe are applicable in detail to the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The great traveller Maqdisī (d. ca. 380/990), who visited al-Rayy in the time of the Buyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ‘Abbād (d. 385/995), found two separate groups of Ḥanafites in al-Rayy.\(^13\) The city proper was dominated by Najjārites while Za'farānites controlled the countryside. The principal difference between these sects, Maqdisī informs us, was that the Najjārites regarded the Qur'ān as created while the Za'farānites suspended judgement on the question. He also mentions that there were many Ḥanbalites—who in theology correspond to the critics of ḥadīth—and that they formed a strong party

\(^8\) *Taqdimat*, 347.


in the city. He writes that the disagreements between the groups over the creation of the Qur’ān sometimes led to civil disturbances (‘asabiyāt). Abū Dulaf (d. ca. 350/961), who visited al-Rayy before 333/944, remarks on the predilection for violence and bloodshed among the populace in what is most likely a reference to this unrest.14 By the time of Maqdisi’s visit, some attempt at a compromise had been made because the Shāﬁ’ites and Ḥanafites, i.e. the Hijāzians and Kūfans, alternated daily in the honor of leading the prayers in the city’s main congregational mosque.

III. Birth and Early Education

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī was born in al-Rayy in 240/854. The roots of his family ultimately reached back to the village of Jazz near Isfahan.15 Although the date of the family’s migration from Jazz to al-Rayy is unknown, relatives from Jazz still used to visit the family in al-Rayy during the lifetime of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s grandfather.16 In addition to “Rāzī,” Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father are given the nisba “Ḥanẓalī.” Two explanations for its origin were proposed. The first derives the nisba from a place name, “the ḍarb Ḥanẓala” in al-Rayy, where, it is said, the family lived and Abū Ḥātim’s mosque was located. However, according to ‘Ali b. Ibrāhīm, Ibn Abī Ḥātim claimed that his relatives were clients of the tribe of Tamīm b. Ḥanẓala b. Ḥaṭṭafān. “Tamīmī” and “Ḥaṭṭafānī” are also sometimes given as nisbas of both Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father.17

Abū Ḥātim, in a gesture intended, no doubt, to signify his views on the relative priority of the sources of doctrine, forbade his young son to take up ḥadīth before he had completed the study of the

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16 Abū Nu’aym, Akhkbār Iṣbāḥān, 2:201; al-Khaṭṭīb al-Baḡdāḍī, Taʾrīḵ, 2:74.
17 The fullest discussions of this matter are in Yaqūt, Baldān, 2:348–49 and Samʿānī, Anṣāb, 2:279. Dhahabī gives the name of the tribe as “Tamīm b. Ḥanẓala b. Yarbit” in Siyar, 13:247.
Qur’ān. This Ibn Abī Ḥātim did under the tuition of al-Faḍl b. Shādhān al-Rāzī (also known as “al-Nīsābūrī,” d. 260/873), an unusual figure, whom the theologian Abu ʿl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (260/874–324/935) characterized as a Shiʿite transmitter of ḥadīth. An individual of high attainments, he wrote 180 works and was especially expert in the variant readings (girāʾāt) of the Qur’ān. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 400/1009) cites him as a source of information on the history of the Qur’ān in his Fihrist. It is surprising to encounter so distinguished a figure teaching the Qur’ān to the youngsters of al-Rayy and perhaps this is the reason that Ibn Abī Ḥātim thought it worth mentioning. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father also took ḥadīth from him.

Once his study of the Qur’ān had been completed, Ibn Abī Ḥātim began to collect ḥadīth from the transmitters living in al-Rayy and those foreign scholars who happened to visit the city. At this time al-Rayy was a center of ḥadīth scholarship. The renowned Ḥanafī expert in ḥadīth, Ṭahāwī (239/853–321/993), declared that the three greatest ḥadīth scholars of his time lived in al-Rayy, namely Abū Ḥātim, Abū Zurʿa and Ibn Wāra. The most extensive treatment of the career of Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Rāzī (195/811–277/890) is that dedicated to him by his son in the Taqdimā (pp. 349–75). Abū Ḥātim was born in al-Rayy in 195/811 and took up the study ḥadīth at the age of fourteen. A year later he was already serving as a teaching assistant (mustamāḥ) for a local scholar. In 213/828 he left home to pursue his studies abroad and did not return for eight years, during which he performed the pilgrimage and visited every city of any importance for ḥadīth scholarship in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and the Hejaz. He claimed to have walked a thousand farsākhhs (about 6,000 km.) before he stopped keeping count and the hardships he suffered in his quest for ḥadīth are proudly recounted in the Taqdimā, forming some of the most stirring passages of the work. It is also in these passages that we catch a glimpse of the humor and humanity of a great scholar in a way rarely displayed in the early Arabic biographical literature.

18 Sezgin, GAS, 1:537–38.
21 Jarh, 3(2):63.
23 Sezgin, GAS, 1:153.
Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s other principal mentor was Abū Zurʿa ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (200/815–264/878). Some of the sources tie him by blood to Ibn Abī Ḥātim; there is, however, disagreement over the exact nature of the relationship. As has been mentioned above, Abū Zurʿa began his career as one of the ahl al-raʾy, but later went over to the ahl al-hadīth. An outstanding scholar, he is said to have collected several hundred thousand hadīth in the course of his extensive travels which carried him to Iraq, Syria, Egypt and the holy cities of Arabia. In Egypt he copied the works of Shāfiʿī from al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān al-Murādī (d. 270/883), the famous pupil of Shāfiʿī, with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim later studied. Abū Zurʿa was particularly proud of his close relationship with the great scholar Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, at whose home he stayed when visiting Baghdad. Later his health declined and in 264/878 he died, with a hadīth on his lips, from a combination of the plague and a gastric malady. His tomb in al-Rayy was still preserved three centuries after his death.

Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Wāra al-Rāzī, known as Ibn Wāra (d. 270/884), was the third great scholar of hadīth living in al-Rayy during Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s youth. In Jarḥ (4[1]:79–80), Ibn Abī Ḥātim says that he studied with Ibn Wāra, but he does not elaborate any further. Ibn Abī Ḥātim appears to have worked much less extensively with him than with Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa. Ibn Wāra is also a more obscure figure. He was born in the last decade of the second/eighth century and he travelled extensively, studying hadīth with many scholars, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. He made at least two trips to Egypt, once to copy the Egyptian versions of the works of Shāfiʿī.

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24 Sezgin, G4S, 1:145.
26 Sezgin, G4S, 1:474.
28 Aṣāb al-Shafiʿī, 59–60.
The local scholars encouraged the visitors to al-Rayy to hold classes and Ibn Abī Ḥātim also took advantage of these. Foremost among the foreign scholars with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied in al-Rayy was Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Nisābūrī (202/817–261/875), the publication of which outraged the scholars of al-Rayy.

IV. Travels

As was customary for a ḥadīth scholar in the third/ninth century, Ibn Abī Ḥātim left his home to further his studies. His first journey was with his father in 255/868, when, in conjunction with the pilgrimage, they visited the ḥadīth centers of Iraq, Syria and the Hejaz. His second journey was in 262/875 to collect ḥadīth in Egypt and Syria and his third in 264/877 took him to Isfahan. He also performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in 260/873. At this time ḥadīth

29 Sczgin, Gās, 1:136–43.
30 Ḥanīfī, 4(1):182–83. Abū Zur‘a considered Muslim’s undertaking to write such a work in the first place extremely presumptuous. He also made two specific charges against the work. 1) Not all of the transmitters cited were reliable. 2) Writing such a work would provide ammunition for the “ṣaḥīḥ of ḥadīth.” It was feared that, whenever a ḥadīth not found in the work was cited against them, they would say, “This is not in the book of authentic ḥadīth!” and use that as an pretext for ignoring the ḥadīth. Defending himself against the first charge, Muslim stated that while it was true that some ḥadīth transmitted by unreliable transmitters were to be found in the book, these same ḥadīth were also known through reliable lines of transmission, but he had chosen the former for inclusion because they were shorter. In regard to the second charge, he explained that when he called his work “Ṣaḥīḥ” he did not mean to imply that only the ḥadīth included in it were authentic and all others were unauthentic. He had only meant that the hadith that were included were authentic. Ibn Wārā also leveled the second charge against Muslim and refused to teach him any ḥadīth until he apologized. Muslim apologized; Barda‘ī, Da‘afā‘, 2:674–77; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ta‘rikh, 4:273–74; Hāzimī, Sharī‘ al-‘a‘īma al-khamsa, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (bound with Ibn al-Qaysarānī, Sharī‘ al-‘a‘īma al-sitā, Cairo, n.d.), 79–83; Ibn al-Salāh, Siyānat Sahih Muslim min al-‘ibādā wa-l-ṣalāt wa-l-himayyutun min al-ṣuqā‘ wa-l-saqāf, ed. Muwaffaq b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir (Beirut, 1404/1984), 97–98; Ibn Rushayd, Kitāb al-Sunan al-abyard wa-l-mawrid al-am‘ān fi l-mu‘āthama bāyy al-imāmīn fi l-sanad al-mu‘a‘t, ed. Muḥammad al-Habbī b. al-Khūja (Tunis, 1397/1977), 138–40; Dihāḥabī, Sīyar, 12:571.
31 ‘Ali b. Ibrāhīm records that Ibn Abī Ḥātim made three journeys, which is rather confusing because in the same passage he indicates that Ibn Abī Ḥātim actually left al-Rayy four times. The word he uses for journey is “riḥla,” apparently in the specific sense of “riḥla fi ṣalāb al-ṣam,” or “a journey to collect ḥadīth.” He may not have considered Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s pilgrimage in 260/873 a “riḥla.”
studies were largely unstructured. Students came and went as they pleased and studied with whomever they liked, with the chief attractions being the great scholars of the age who were recognized as watersheds in the flow of ḥadīth from one generation to the next. Many of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s teachers are now little more than names to us, but it is clear that his overriding aim was to gather the threads of ḥadīth criticism from earlier generations. When he finally returned to al-Rayy for good, he had studied with the greatest ḥadīth scholars of his age.

A. First Journey to Collect Ḥadīth

In 255/868, at the age of fifteen, Ibn Abī Ḥātim joined his father on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The biographer ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm says that it was not until they arrived at Dhu ’l-Ḥulayfā, a village located a few kilometers outside of Medina, that Ibn Abī Ḥātim reached puberty. This pleased his father since it meant that his son, as an adult, would receive the full religious benefit of his pilgrimage. For his part, Ibn Abī Ḥātim accepted it as another example of the good luck he enjoyed throughout his life. He and his father availed themselves of the opportunity to collect ḥadīth in the cities they passed through and made several detours for this purpose, studying in Baghdad, Samarrā, Damascus, Wāṣīt and al-Kūfā.

Baghdad was the intellectual capital of the Islamic world and its significance for the students of ḥadīth lay in the fact that it had been the home of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Yahyā b. Maʿīn (158/775–233/847), scholars whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his Taqdimā memorializes as distinguished experts in ḥadīth criticism. Many of their students still taught there and these were the individuals whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father sought out. The most prominent student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that they met in Baghdad was ‘Abd Allāh (213/828–290/903), one of the two gifted sons of Ibn Ḥanbal who played major roles in the preservation and propagation of his teachings. (In 264/877, Ibn Abī Ḥātim would encounter the other, Ṣālīḥ, in Isfahan.) He later corresponded with ‘Abd Allāh, obtaining his father’s technical comments on specific ḥadīth (‘ilal al-ḥadīth) and his declarations on

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33 Sezgin, GÂS, 1:511.
religious questions (masāʾil) from him in this fashion. Ibn Abī Ḥātim was also a prominent student of Yahyā b. Maʿīn.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim also studied with ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī (200/816–271/884) in Baghdad. Although he appears to have been very prominent during his lifetime, the standard sources give us little information about him, for they are preoccupied, to the exclusion of much else, by the reports that he drank wine. He was the student of a number of scholars, but his greatest importance came from his role as the chief transmitter of the Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh of Yahyā b. Maʿīn. He was the source of much of the material from and about Yahyā b. Maʿīn that Ibn Abī Ḥātim used in the Taqīdima and his other works.

It is most likely that it was in Baghdad that Ibn Abī Ḥātim met ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī (200/816–282/895), however, there is no positive indication of this, for his entry in Jarḥ (3[1]:153) has not survived intact. Dārimī's home was in Herat, but he travelled extensively. He studied law with Shāfīʿī’s famous pupil Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. Yahyā al-Buwayṭī (d. 231/845) and ḥadīth with Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (161/777–234/849), Ishāq b. Rāhawayh (161/778–238/852) and Yahyā b. Maʿīn. Like ʿAbbās al-Dūrī, he served as an important channel for the teachings of Yahyā b. Maʿīn. Dārimī wrote several works, including one attacking the Muʿtazilite scholar Bishr al-Marāṣī (d. 218/833) and a polemic entitled Kitāb al-Radd ʿala l-Jahmiyya. Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself would later write a tract against the Jahmites.

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36 Published as volumes 3 and 4 of Ahmad Muḥammad Nūr Sayf, Yahyā ibn Maʿīn wa-Taʾrīkhuhū, 4 vols. (Mecca [i.e. Cairo], 1979).
37 Sezgin, GÂS, 1:600–1.
38 Sezgin, GÂS, 1:491.
39 Sezgin, GÂS, 1:108.
41 Sezgin, GÂS, 1:616–17.
Ibn Abī Ḥātim performed the pilgrimage a second time in 260/873. His father Abū Ḥātim was 65 years old by this time, which may have been what kept him from accompanying his son again. Ibn Abī Ḥātim left al-Rayy in the company of a number of local scholars of hadīth, of whom only the poorly-known Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭihrānī (d. 271/884) is named.

B. Second Journey to Collect Hadīth.

In 262/875 Ibn Abī Ḥātim made his second journey to collect hadīth. He was now Abū Ḥātim’s only surviving son and his father initially refused to allow him to go. But in the face of his son’s insistence and the intervention of Abū Zur‘a, Abū Ḥātim eventually relented, imposing the condition that he return within a certain period of time. This trip took him to Egypt and Syria. In 262/875 he reached Egypt, where he studied hadīth in both al-Fusṭāṭ and Alexandria. Al-Fusṭāṭ, near the site where Cairo would later be founded in the fourth/tenth century, was a great scholarly center where the legacy of Shāfi‘ī survived in the form of jurist’s students. Ibn Abī Ḥātim would later go on to write a biography of Shāfi‘ī.

Probably the most important scholar whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim met in al-Fusṭāṭ was al-Rabi‘ b. Sulaymān, whose reputation rests on the fact that he was a favorite pupil of Shāfi‘ī and one of the main transmitters of his works. Although al-Rabi‘ himself was not regarded as much of a legal mind, Abū Isma‘īl Muḥammad b. Isma‘īl al-Tirmidhī knew of two hundred students from all corners of the Islamic world who had attended his teaching circle to hear the works of Shāfi‘ī. On his own trip to al-Fusṭāṭ in 228/842, Abū Zur‘a was surprised by the amount to be learned in Egypt and resorted to sell-

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43 The “fi sanatī thiyya‘” in Dhahabi, Siyār, 13:266 is an obvious mistake for the “fi sanatī siti‘a‘” given in the other sources.
44 The works which deal with hadīth transmitters, even Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Jarh (3[2]:240), have very little to say about Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭihrānī other than that he was well travelled, having taught in al-Rayy, Syria, Alexandria and Baghdad. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father studied with him in al-Rayy and Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied with him on his own in Baghdad and Alexandria. Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭihrānī eventually settled in Ascalon, where he died in 271/884 (Ya‘qūt has 261, which is clearly a mistake); al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Taḥrīh, 2:271–72; Ya‘qūt, Buldān, 3:564–65; Dhahabī, Tadhkira, 610–11; Ṣafādī, Waqīf, 3:24; Ibn Hajar, Tahḏīhāb, 4:24; Ṣuyūṭī, Ḥum al-muhaḍdhara fi ta‘rīkh Misr wa-t-‘Qāhirah, ed. Muḥammad Abu ʿl-Fadl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1387/1967–1387/1968), 1:349.
ing some cloth he had brought with him in order to pay a copyist for the works of Shāfi‘ī through al-Rabī‘. Abū Ḥātim had also studied with al-Rabī‘ when he was in Egypt and he served as an intermediary for many of the reports ascribed to al-Rabī‘ in his son’s Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī wa-manāqibuhū. Al-Rabī‘ spent his entire life in Egypt. Born in 174/790, he began his career as a teaching assistant in the mosque of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in al-Fusṭāṭ. Shāfi‘ī took him under his wing and when al-Rabī‘ married in 201/816, he furnished a portion of the dowry and secured him employment as a muezzin. When al-Rabī‘ died in 270/883, his fame was such that the Tūlūnid ruler of Egypt Khumārawayh (r. 270/884–282/896) presided at his funeral.

Another highly esteemed scholar with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied in Egypt was Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (182/799–268/882), the son of the prominent jurist ‘Abd Allah b. al-Ḥakam (155/772–214/829) and the brother of the historian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 257/870). Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s father had studied with Muhammad earlier and material from him also figures prominently in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s biography of Shāfi‘ī.

From Egypt Ibn Abī Ḥātim went to Beirut and visited other cities on the Levantine coast. He continued on to Damascus and the fortified cities on the Byzantine frontier. He passed through Baghdad again on the way home. He was, we are told, so brilliant that in a short period of time he was able to accomplish what would have taken others much longer. ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm records an anecdote Ibn Abī Ḥātim related illustrating the hectic schedule imposed on him by his father’s time restriction:

We had been in Egypt for seven months without having so much as tasted meat broth. Every day was divided up between attending the classes of various teachers and every night was devoted to copying and collating. One day a companion and I went to see a teacher, only to be told that he was sick. On our way home we saw a nice fish and bought it. When we arrived at our lodgings, the time had already

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45 Taqdimā, 340; Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī, 75; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 3:246.
46 Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī, 273, 125.
47 Szczepaniak, GAS, 1:474.
48 Szczepaniak, GAS, 1:467–68.
49 Szczepaniak, GAS, 1:355–56.
50 Jāh, 3(1):175.
come for another class and, as a consequence, we were unable to prepare the fish. We went to the class and continued thus for three days and the fish was about to go bad. We ate it raw since we did not have enough time to give it to someone to cook.\textsuperscript{51}

Ibn Abī Ḥātim noted that this tale illustrated the incompatibility of knowledge and comfort.

C. Third Journey to Collect Ḥadīth

Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s final journey was in 264/877 to Isfahan, where he met Ṣāliḥ (203/818–265/878),\textsuperscript{52} the other famous son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who was the qāḍī there. Like his brother ʿAbd Allāh, Ṣāliḥ played a large role in the transmission of their father’s religious views. People used to write him with questions of religious significance and these he would submit to his father. Ṣāliḥ had also studied with Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīṣī (133/750–203/818)\textsuperscript{53} and the ḥadīth critic ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī. Ibn Abī Ḥātim took many of Ibn al-Madīnī’s critical judgements from Ṣāliḥ and corresponded with him. The sources mention that Ibn Abī Ḥātim also studied with Yūnus b. Ḥabīb al-Iṣbahānī (d. 267/880)\textsuperscript{54} and Usayd b. ʿĀṣim (d. 270/883)\textsuperscript{55} in Isfahan. The former was best known for being a transmitter of the Musnad of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīṣī and the latter is known only as a scholar of ḥadīth who travelled extensively.

V. Later Life and Death

After his journey to Isfahan in 264/877, Ibn Abī Ḥātim was content to remain in al-Rayy for the rest of his life. He carried on what appears to have been an extensive correspondence with several of the scholars he had met on his trips. We do not know how he earned his living. He married shortly after his first pilgrimage in 255/868, at the age of sixteen. He and his wife remained together for some seventy years but produced no children, a circumstance that attracted the attention of later authors.\textsuperscript{56} A pious legend related by Abū Ya‘lā

\textsuperscript{51} Dhahabī, Siyar, 13:266; id., Tadhkira, 3:830; Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh, 41:339–40.
\textsuperscript{52} Sezgin, G4S, 1:510.
\textsuperscript{53} Sezgin, G4S, 1:97–98.
\textsuperscript{54} Abū Nuʿaym, Akhbār Iṣbahānī, 2:345–46.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s kunya “Abū Muḥammad” did not imply that he had a son
al-Khalīlī ascribed it to an illness which afflicted him when he was a boy and which his father magically cured.

Abū Ḥātim knew the greatest name of God. One day his son fell ill. Abū Ḥātim resisted invoking the greatest name in prayer since he had no desire to gain the fruits of this world with it. However when the illness worsened, he despaired and invoked the greatest name in prayer. His son recovered. In a dream Abū Ḥātim was informed, “I have answered your prayer. However, your son will now produce no children.”

According to another opinion, Ibn Abī Ḥātim simply never touched his wife, perhaps out of pious motives.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s reputation for personal religiosity earned him a place in the pietist tradition of Islam. Abū Ya‘lā al-Khalīlī said that he was considered to be a saint (mān al-ʿabdāl). One legend which several scholars recount, not always without skepticism, depicts his special relationship with God. It concerns his issuance of a pass to heaven as recompense for a charitable act. This legend is found in two basic forms. The first revolves around the rebuilding of a city wall.

The wall of one of the frontier cities had collapsed. Ibn Abī Ḥātim said to the people, “Are you not going to rebuild it?” and exhorted them to reconstruct it. He detected some hesitancy among them, so he said, “Who will rebuild it, when I guarantee that God will grant that person entrance into Paradise?” One of the merchants stood and said, “Write this guaranty for me with your own hand. Here are one thousand dinars for the rebuilding.” So Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote the guaranty on a slip of paper. The wall was rebuilt and shortly after that the merchant happened to die. When the people attended his funeral, a slip of paper fluttered out from the burial shroud. It turned out to be the slip of paper that Ibn Abī Ḥātim had written for him. On the back of it was written, “We have fulfilled the guaranty for you. Do not do this again.”

In the other version of the same story, ascribed to al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Ṣaffār, who claimed that Ibn Abī Ḥātim related it to

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named Muḥammad, for boys were often given a kunya at an early age. His father defended this custom with testimony from the ḥadīth; ‘Abbādī, Tābaqāt, 40.

57 Dhahabī, Sīyar, 13:266.
58 Iḥṣā, 2:683–84.
60 Al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Ṣaffār (d. 372/982) was an unreliable transmitter from
him, a friend in Isfahan sends Ibn Abī Ḥātim a shipment of grain to sell in al-Rayy and asks him to use the proceeds to buy him a house there. He sells the grain, however, he goes on to distribute the money to the poor and then writes his friend to inform him that he has purchased a mansion for him in Paradise. The friend expresses his satisfaction with the transaction but nevertheless prudently requests a receipt, which Ibn Abī Ḥātim furnishes. Later in a dream Ibn Abī Ḥātim is informed that his promise has been kept, but is warned not to try anything of the sort again.  

Before Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s death in 327/938, the last reference to him that can be dated goes back to the year 275/888. According to the geographer and historian Yāqūt, it was in this year that Ahmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Madharāʾī conquered al-Rayy.  

Madharāʾī had formerly been the secretary of the Turkish general Kūṭīkīn b. Sāṭūkīn, whose father had conquered al-Rayy in 266/879. For Yāqūt, Madharāʾī’s conquest was a turning point in the history of the city since he instituted Shi‘ism as the official cult (i.e. azhara ‘l-tashayyu’) and that spelled the end of Sunnism there. The new ruler began to honor the local Shi‘ites and this official patronage led to the appearance of a spate of books of Shi‘ite cast from would-be protégés. Yāqūt singles out Ibn Abī Ḥātim by mentioning that he presented the new ruler with a number of books, one of which was on “the merits of the family of the Prophet” (fadā’il ahl al-bayy).  

It is rather difficult to gauge Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s prestige among his contemporaries, but one interesting report does give us some inkling of the fame he enjoyed during his own lifetime. It concerns a disagreement between two prominent scholars in Baghdad who decide to place their dispute before him for settlement.

Herat who travelled extensively; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ta’rīkh, 3:8–9; Ibn Hajar, Lisān, 2:261.  

Dhahabi, Siyar, 13:267; id., Tadhkira, 3:831; Subki, Tabaqat, 3:326; Dāwūdī, Tabaqat, 1:280.  

Yaqūt, Buldān, 2:901 (Yaqūt gives the nisba as “Māridān”). Although H.L. Gottschalk does not seem to have been aware of this reference, he rejects the notion that the Madharāʾī mentioned in Tabari’s Ta’rīkh—who was, without a doubt, the individual Yaqūt discusses—was a member of the powerful family which operated in Egypt; Die Mādarāʾījin: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Ägyptens unter dem Islam (Berlin, 1931), 29, n. 1; 52, n. 1.  

Although we do not know exactly what distinguished a Sunnite from a Shi‘ite in this period, the question of the alleged Shi‘ism of Ibn Abī Ḥātim should be addressed. Louis Massignon attributes to him “une sorte de semi-shi‘isme” which he describes in a note as a “semi-shi‘isme bien mitigé,” giving ‘Ali precedence over ‘Uthmān
One day Ibn Sa‘id\(^6^4\) related a ḥadith in Baghdad and made a mistake in its iṣnād. Ibn ‘Uqda\(^6^5\) censured him for it. So the students of Ibn Sa‘id attacked Ibn ‘Uqda and took themselves to the vizier ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā and he imprisoned Ibn ‘Uqda. The vizier said, “Who can be asked or consulted?” They said, “Ibn Abī Ḥātim.” The vizier wrote to him, asking about that. Ibn Abī Ḥātim examined and considered the matter and it turned out that Ibn ‘Uqda was right about the ḥadith. Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote that to the vizier. He released Ibn ‘Uqda and his prestige increased.\(^6^6\)

This incident cannot be dated with complete exactness; ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā served as vizier twice, from 300/912 to 304/916 and again in 314/926, before dying in 334/945. In any case, many years had passed since Ibn Abī Ḥātim had last been seen in Baghdad and the report is evidence of a far-flung renown.

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while it affirmed, in agreement with Shāfi‘ī, that the only mahdī would be ‘Īsā; La Passion de Huseyn Ibn Monsir Hallâj, 4 vols. (Paris, 1975), 1:463; trans. Herbert Mason, The Passion of al-Hallâj, 4 vols. (Princeton, 1982), 1:416 (Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s name is given incorrectly here). The assertion that Ibn Abī Ḥātim gave precedence to ‘Alī over ‘Uṯmān is based on the authority of Abu ‘l-Faḍl Ahmad b. ‘Alī al-Sulaymānī (d. 404/1013), who lists Ibn Abī Ḥātim as one of the six scholars of ḥadith who gave ‘Alī precedence over ‘Uṯmān. (The other five named are al-A‘mash, Abū Ḥanīfa, Shu’ba b. al-Hajjāj, ‘Abd al-Razzāq and ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā.) Dhahabī, Mīzān, 2:588; Ibn Hajar, Lisan, 3:432–33. Sunnites tend to place ‘Uṯmān and ‘Alī on the same level or to rank the merit of the first four caliphs according to the order of their accession, which would give ‘Uṯmān precedence over ‘Alī. Dhahabī and Ibn Hajar regard Abu ‘l-Faḍl al-Sulaymānī’s statement with skepticism. It is more than likely that his assertion was entirely the result of his having come across Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s name in the iṣnād of a ḥadith claiming that ‘Alī had precedence over ‘Uṯmān. For what it is worth, it may be mentioned that in his Jāmi‘, under the letter ‘ayn, Ibn Abī Ḥātim places the name “‘Umar” before “‘Uṯmān,” and “‘Uṯmān” before “‘Alī.” Massion’s assertion that Ibn Abī Ḥātim believed that the mahdī would be ‘Īsā is based on Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s transmission of a ḥadith of Shāfi‘ī, through Yūnus b. ‘Abd Allāh, containing among other things the words “... there is no mahdī but ‘Isa ...”.” Subki, Tabaqāt, 1:280–81. Shi‘ītes, as a rule, identify ‘Alī or one of his descendants as the mahdī; Sunnites hold that the mahdī will be ‘Īsā. None of these indications is unimpeachable. It is not out of the question that Ibn Abī Ḥātim subscribed to an unusual doctrinal formulation which combined the doctrine of ‘Alī’s precedence over ‘Uṯmān with mainstream Ḥanbalism. If this were the case—and it is by no means clear that it was—, it perhaps would have been more to the point to call this a slightly modified form of Ḥanbalism rather than a very modified form of semi-Shi‘ism.

\(^6^4\) Abū MuhammAD Yahiyya b. Muṭṭammat b. Sa‘īd al-Baḡdādī (228/842–318/930); Sezgin, GASF, 1:176.


\(^6^6\) Al-Khaṭīf al-Baḡdādī, Ta’rīkh, 5:18; Ibn ‘Asākir, Ta’rīkh, 4:1:343; Dhahabī, Siyar, 15:348.
Ibn Abī Ḥātim died in the month of Muharram in the year 327/938. Abū Ya'lā al-Khalili records that before his death he ordered that the notes of his father and Abū Zur'a be buried. He did this, most likely, because he felt they contained material which would tarnish their reputation.\textsuperscript{67} His own works he placed in a charitable trust (\textit{waqf}) and appointed the judge 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn al-Dārastī\textsuperscript{68} as his executor. At his funeral, the preacher 'Ali b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī\textsuperscript{69} eulogized him to the biographer 'Ali b. Ibrāhīm: “For eighty years [he was] a man on a single path and he never deviated from the way.”\textsuperscript{70} Abū Ya'lā al-Khalili wrote that it was claimed that, “The \textit{sunna} in al-Rayy was sealed by Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī.”\textsuperscript{71}

VII. Works

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's fame rests on his proximity to the two great scholars Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a, on his reputation for piety and on the many books he wrote. The earliest record of his literary output is the one provided about a century after his death by Abū Ya'lā al-Khalili in his \textit{Irshād}:

He has writings too famous [to need] to be described on law, the dates [of the ḥadīth transmitters] and the differences of opinion of the Companions, the Followers and the other ancient scholars.\textsuperscript{72}

It is a pity that Abū Ya'lā al-Khalili did not bother to name these books, because none of these topics unambiguously corresponds to


\textsuperscript{68} 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn al-Dārastī (the \textit{nisba} is recorded in several different forms) is mentioned in a few anecdotes connected with Ibn Abī Ḥātim, but is otherwise unknown.


\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Irshād}, 2:683.

any of the nineteen books and book titles that have reached us.\(^73\) This may suggest that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote more works than we can now identify. Later, Yaḥyā b. Manda (434/1043–511/1118) would supply the titles of several now-lost works in an important passage quoted in a number of biographical dictionaries.\(^74\) It is clear that Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s primary interest was in the reports transmitted from the earlier generations of Muslims, in particular from the Prophet Muḥammad. His works fall into three broad categories: the technical aspects of ḥadīth criticism, theology and religious subjects, biography and history.

A. Works of Ḥadīth Criticism

1. *Bayān khaṭa‘ Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī fi ’l-Ta’rīkh*\(^75\)
   
   (Sezgin, *GAŠ*, 1:179, no. 6)

Sakhāwī (831/1427–902/1497) mentions in his *Flān*\(^76\) that he possessed a book by Ibn Abī Ḥātim criticizing the famous ḥadīth scholar Bukhārī and it is likely that this is the one. There was no love lost between Bukhārī and the scholars of al-Rayy. In 250/864, Bukhārī visited the city and Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur‘a attended his classes. Some time after he left, the news reached them that he subscribed to the doctrine that one’s recitation of the Qur‘ān was created, an opinion which they found obnoxious, and as a consequence they rejected his transmissions out of pique.\(^77\) In the introduction to *Bayān* (p. 2), Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts that when Bukhārī’s *Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh [al-kabīr]*\(^78\) was brought to Abū Zur‘a, he undertook to correct the mistakes in it, and later Ibn Abī Ḥātim went over Abū Zur‘a’s corrections with his father. In most instances Abū Ḥātim accepted the emendations of Abū Zur‘a. The vast majority of the corrections concern the distortion of the names of transmitters and Abū Zur‘a

\(^73\) In *Muḥjam al-kutub* (p. 121) Ibn al-Mibrad—or his continuator—does ascribe a *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Ṣahāba wa’l-Tābī‘īn* to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, perhaps on the basis of this passage.


\(^75\) Published as *Ta’limmat bayān khaṭa‘ al-Bukhārī fi Ta’rīkhī*; ed. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu‘allimī al-Yamānī (Hyderabad, 1370/1961).

\(^76\) *Sakhāwī*, *Flān*, 220; trans. F. Rosenthal, 437.


\(^78\) 4 vols. in 8 parts (Hyderabad, 1361–65).
claimed that these errors arose when Būkhārī copied the names from unpointed texts. Two centuries later, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī noted that the version of Būkhārī’s Taʿrīkh which arrived in al-Rayy must have differed from the one that was known to succeeding generations, for it does not contain many of the mistakes of the scholars of al-Rayy attributed to him.

2. *Itlāl al-ḥadīth* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 2)

This work has survived and has been published. It consists of the replies of Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a to Ibn Abī Ḥātim's questions concerning some three thousand ḥadīth with defective isnāds. The ḥadīth are arranged by subject and in each case the defect is specified. *Kitāb al-Itlāl al-kabīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's contemporary, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, is a work on a similar topic, although its arrangement was different.

3. *Itlāb al-jaḥ wa-l-taḍāl* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:178–79, no. 1)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's most important effort in the realm of personality criticism was his famous *Itlāb al-jaḥ wa-l-taḍāl*. In the work's introductory section (1[1]:38), he gives a brief sketch of his plan:

In our relation of personality criticism (*al-jaḥ wa-l-taḍāl*) in our present book, we proceeded straightaway to those expert and knowledgeable in it, the earliest [of them] and then the latest, until our relation wound up with my father and Abū Zur'a. We did not relate from some people who have spoken on that [topic] because of the meagerness of their expertise in it. We ascribed each relation to its relater and the response to its author. We examined the differences in the statements of the *imāns* regarding the transmitters they were asked about and left out the contradiction in their statements. We attached the appropriate and most likely responses from [the *imāns*] to each [transmitter] who was examined. Nevertheless, we have mentioned many names which have not been subjected to ḥadīth criticism, recording them in order that the book include all those from whom ḥadīth (*al-ʿilm*) have been transmitted, in the hope of finding criticism

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80 Mādīh awḥām, 1:15.
81 2 vols. (Cairo, 1343–44).
82 *Itlāl al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr*, ed. Hamza Dib Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Amman, 1406/1986). It should be noted that Tirmidhī's book has not survived in its original form and its present arrangement by legal topic is the work of a later hand.
on them [in the future]. We will attach [the critical judgements] to them later. We arranged all of the names alphabetically and we further arranged the more common names alphabetically by the name of their fathers, in order to make it easy for the researcher to find what he wants and direct himself to where he needs to go.

Jarḥ is a comprehensive work of personality criticism, containing about eighteen thousand entries. The entries are brief as a rule, recording the subject’s teachers, his students and assessments of his merits as a transmitter from Abū Ḥātim, Abū Zur‘a and other prominent critics.

According to Abū Ahmad al-Ḥākim al-Kabīr (285/898–378/988), the composition of Jarḥ was inspired by the arrival in al-Rayy of Bukhārī’s Taʾrīkh.

I was in al-Rayy and one day I saw them reading the Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdil to Ibn Abī Ḥātim. When they finished, I said to Ibn ‘Abdawayh al-Warrāq,83 “What kind of joke is this? I see you reading Muḥammad b. Ḥisma’il al-Bukhārī’s Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh in its entirety to your teacher and you have attributed it to Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim.” [Ibn ‘Abdawayh] said, “You should know that when [Bukhārī’s] book was brought to Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim, they said, ‘This is excellent and indispensable information. We ought not transmit it on anybody’s authority but our own.’ So they made Ibn Abī Ḥātim sit until he had asked them about the transmitters in it one by one. They added to it and subtracted from it and Ibn Abī Ḥātim attributed it to them.”84

The claim that the scholars of al-Rayy plagiarized Bukhārī’s Taʾrīkh is puzzling. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Muʿallimī al-Yamanī, the editor of both Jarḥ and Bukhārī’s Taʾrīkh, has pointed out in his introduction to the Taqdima, that even the most cursory comparison of the two works reveals that this is not the case. As their titles suggest, the works of Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim differ greatly in emphasis. While Bukhārī supplies dates for many transmitters, often he neglects to provide any evaluation of their reliability. On the other hand, Jarḥ contains few dates, but assesses the reliability of

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83 He seems to be unknown outside of this anecdote.
almost every transmitter. Ibn Abī Ḥātim does appear to have taken (without acknowledgement) a number of the shortest entries directly from Bukhārī’s book. The transmitters treated in these would appear to be those whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim—as he describes in his introduction—included for the sake of completeness, although he had not yet come across any critical judgement on them.

Like Bukhārī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim adheres to a more or less alphabetical arrangement of the transmitters. It appears that Taʾrīkh was the first work of the kind arranged in this fashion. (The arrangements of the two books do differ in that Bukhārī piously begins his book with the “Muḥammads,” while Ibn Abī Ḥātim places them in their correct alphabetical position.) It is likely that seeing this novel arrangement adopted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim is what caused the surprise of Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim al-Kabīr and blinded him to the obvious differences in the contents of the two works.

It is worth noting that although Bukhārī’s Taʾrīkh and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Jarḥ were highly admired and widely cited by later authors, neither work represents a true prototype of the biographical dictionary devoted to ḥadīth transmitters as it subsequently developed. In terms of arrangement, most later authors preferred a strict alphabetical ordering of the entries. Furthermore, works like Dhahabi’s Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ and Ibn Ḥajar’s Taḥdīb al-tahdīb include judgements on the reliability of the transmitters along with dates. In many instances, they also provide additional information for the most part lacking in the earlier works, creating more textured portraits which humanize the subjects to a much greater degree. Although the technical component—for the most part lifted directly from the earlier works—remained prominent, the later dictionaries also attempted to answer the question What kind of people were the early transmitters?

4. Kūtāb al-Kūnā

Yaḥyā b. Manda mentions that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a work bearing this title. Most likely it was similar to a work with the identical title by Bukhārī (Hyderabad, 1360), which treats the transmitters who were most commonly known by their paidonymic (kunya), rather than by their given name (ʾism). Therefore it seems possible that what Yaḥyā b. Manda refers to as a separate book is in fact the last section of Jarḥ, which addresses this same topic.
5. *Kitāb al-Marāsīl* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 4)

This work is extant and has been published. In ḥadīth criticism for the transmission of a scholar from another to be considered valid, it is necessary that there be evidence that they met. *Marāsīl* is an alphabetical list of scholars who transmitted ḥadīth from people with whom they did not actually study. ‘Ali b. al-Madīnī had earlier written a work in this domain entitled *Kitāb al-‘Ilal*, which Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes extensively. *Al-Marāsīl* of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (202/817–275/888) is a wholly different kind of work, being a collection of ḥadīth with interrupted isnāds.


As the title “The Introduction to the *Kitāb al-Jarh wa-l-ta‘dīl*” indicates, this work was intended to provide a foundation for Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s great work of personality criticism. The phrase “*taqdimat al-ma‘rifa*” translates the Greek *prōmōsikon*, with the literal meaning of “the provision of advance knowledge.” Yaḥyā b. Manda lists the *Taqdimat* as a work separate from *Jarh*, giving it the title *Kitāb Taqdimat al-jarh wa-l-ta‘dīl*. The *Taqdimat* will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters of the present study.

B. Works on Theology and other Religious Subjects

7. *Aṣl al-sunna wa-ṣīqād al-dīn* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 8)

This is apparently the work which Ibn Abī Ya‘lā refers to as *Kitāb al-Sunna*. This short tract survives in a single copy preserved in Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus (no. 3748, ff. 166a–168a) and is reproduced, with minor differences, in Abu ‘l-Qāsim al-Lālaka‘ī’s *Sharḥ usūl ṣīqād al-ṣīna wa-l-jama‘a*. In this work, Ibn Abī Ḥātim records the theological views of his father and Abū Zur‘a.

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85 This work has been published a number of times. The edition used in the present book is that of Subhān al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā‘ī (Baghdad, 1386/1967).
8. Kitāb Fadā’il ahl al-bayt
As was mentioned above, the historian Yaqūt says that Ibn Abī Ḥātim presented to the ruler of al-Rayy, Ahmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Madharaṭī, a book on “the merits of the family of the Prophet.”\textsuperscript{98} It is unclear whether this was the exact title of the book. The work has not survived, although on the basis of its title it can be deduced that it was a collection of reports illustrating the outstanding qualities of the various members of the family of the Prophet.

9. Kitāb Fawā’id al-Rāżīyīn
The title of this lost work is given variously as Kitāb Fawā’id ahl al-Rayy or Fawā’id al-Rāżīyīn.\textsuperscript{99} Abū Zur‘a wrote a work entitled Kitāb al-Rāżīyīn and it too is now lost. Abū Zur‘a’s book was a collection of the ḥadīth transmitted by the scholars of al-Rayy, arranged by transmitter.\textsuperscript{91} Although no description of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s book has reached us, there is every reason to believe that it was substantially identical to that of his mentor, perhaps with the addition of comments from Abū Ḫātim.

10. Kitāb al-Fawā’id al-kabīr
Yaḥyā b. Manda ascribes a book entitled Kitāb al-Fawā’id al-kabīr to Ibn Abī Ḥātim.\textsuperscript{92} It, like Kitāb Fawā’id al-Rāżīyīn, has not reached us, nor is it anywhere described. Chances are that it was similar to his Kitāb al-Rāżīyīn, although not limited to the city of al-Rayy in its purview. We know of a collection of ḥadīth from Abū Zur‘a called Kitāb al-Fawā’id,\textsuperscript{93} which has also not survived. Again, it seems likely that Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s work closely resembled that of Abū Zur‘a.

\textsuperscript{98} See above, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{91} Bardhā‘î, Du‘afā‘, 2:582–83.
\textsuperscript{92} This book is called Kitāb al-Fawā’id al-kabīr in İsmail Paşa’s Hadīyat al-‘arīfīn (1:col. 513), his İdāh al-ma’ānîn (2:col. 209) and the 1951 edition of Kutubî (1:542).
\textsuperscript{93} Bardhā‘î, Du‘afā‘, 2:686.
11. Al-Musnad

Yaḥyā b. Manda attributes to Ibn Abī Ḥātim a musnad, a general collection of Prophetic ḥadīth. A persistent tradition insists that a “musnad” is a collection of ḥadīth arranged according to the Companion who transmitted them from the Prophet. In reality, the term “musnad” only implies that all the hadith included have isnāds. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārīmī (181/797–255/869) seems to have called his ḥadīth collection a “musnad,” although the material is arranged by subject (bāḥ). The term “sunnan” has come to be customarily applied to that type of work. “Sunnan” only means that the contents are prescriptive, i.e. the hadith illustrate sunnās, and thus, like “musnad,” does not indicate any particular arrangement of the material. The title of “musnad” was frequently applied to posthumous compilations of an individual’s transmissions, such as Musnad al-Shāfī‘ī. Musnad ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and the various musnads of Abū Ḥanīfa. In these cases, the musnad was a scholarly exercise undertaken by some later admirer who would cull all of the hadith a particular figure quotes in his works and elsewhere and place them in a single book. In applying the title of “musnad” to such a work, the compiler avoided making any claims in regard to the authenticity or character of the hadith, beyond the implication that they had isnāds. The mechanical arrangement of the hadith according to the transmitting Companion was favored in this sort of work because it was easily applied. It is not clear, therefore, whether Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself composed the Musnad ascribed to him, which according to Ibn Manda was originally in a thousand parts (juz’), or whether it was the work of a later hand. A small number of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s hadith transmitted by Abu ‘l-Ḥasan b. al-Qaṣṭār (d. 397/1007) have been preserved in two manuscripts in Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus.

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54 See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s comments on the composition of al-Asāmī’s recension; Ṭabaqat, 1:292.
12. *Kitāb al-Radd `ala l-Jahmiya* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 10)

The existence of this now-lost treatise is attested to in several works. Its title indicates that it was polemical attack against the Jahmites. Ibn Abī Ḥātim's venture in this field was by no means the first and the topic appears to have been quite popular with the adherents of ḥadīth. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Radd `ala l-zanādiqa wa-l-Jahmiya*, Bukhārī's *Kitāb Khalq afḍāl al-ibād wa-l-radd `ala l-Jahmiya wa-āshāb al-ta'īf* and Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-Ikhtilāf fi l-lafz wa-l-radd `ala l-Jahmiya wa-l-mushabbihā* have survived and been published. As has already been mentioned, Uthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied, also wrote a *Kitāb al-Radd `ala l-Jahmiya*. Short passages from Ibn Abī Ḥātim's work are quoted in a number of later books. Dhahābī describes the treatise as "a large compilation" (μυσανναφ καβίρ) which demonstrated Ibn Abī Ḥātim's status as an "imām." 

13. *Kitāb al-Tafṣīr* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 3)

Ibn Kathīr describes the work as "the copious commentary which contained the entire body of transmitted material [and] in which [Ibn Abī Ḥātim] surpasses the commentary of Ṭabarī and all others up to our time." Sections of this work have been preserved in manuscripts in three Middle Eastern libraries. Part of this commentary has recently been published in two volumes under the title *Tafṣīr al-Qurʾān al-‘azīm musnada an al-Rasūl wa-l-Ṣahabah wa-l-Ṭābiʿīn*. The first volume gives the commentary on al-Fāṭiḥa and al-Baqara

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59 Ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1349).

60 See above, p. 21.


63 Dhahahbī, Siyar, 13:264; id., Tadhkira, 3:830.

64 Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, 11:191.
(verses 1–141) and the second volume covers Āl ʿImrān (verses 1–167).
In his brief introduction Ibn Abī Ḥātim explains his motivation for composing the work and the procedure he followed:

A group of my brethren asked me to produce a Qurʾān commentary, summarizing [the reports] with the soundest isnāds, and omitting the [alternate] lines of transmission, the lexicographical illustrations, the variant readings, and the stories and information pertaining to the revelation of the verses. [They requested] that we proceed straightaway to the commentary, stripped of anything else, pursuing the commentary of the verses so that there is not a single word of the Qurʾān for which a commentary exists which I do not cover. I assented to their request. So, I have sought to bring out that work with the reports soundest in regard to isnād and most full in regard to substance. When I found a commentary from the Prophet, I did not mention along with him any of the Companions who said the same thing. When I found [a commentary] from the Companions, if they were in agreement, I cited it from the most exalted of them in stature with the soundest isnād and [then] named those who agreed with them, omitting the isnād. If they disagreed, I cited their disagreement and gave an isnād for each one of them, and named those who agreed with them, omitting the isnāds. If I did not find [a commentary] from the Companions and I found [one] from the Followers, I treated what I found [coming] from them in the same fashion I described in regard to the Companions. Likewise, I did the same in regard to the next generation and those after them.105

This procedure was in consonance with the philosophy of the critics. As a rule, their Qurʾān commentary was limited to the citation of the ḥadith touching upon the verses. This was in contrast to the doctrine of the Zāhīrites who forbade the use of ḥadīth to explicate the Qurʾān. The assignment of priority first to the Prophet, then to his Companions and finally to the Followers and others was also typical of the critics.

14. Thawāb al-aʿmāl
This work has not survived and Samʿānī is the only one to mention it.106 Judging by its title, it seems to have been a collection of

reports dealing with the heavenly reward granted for the performance of certain religious acts. Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes a chapter to the analysis of various defective Ḥadīth on this subject in his ‘Iḥl al-ḥadīth (2:172–78). Shiʿite authors especially cultivated this genre.

15. Zuhd al-thamāniya min al-Tābiʿīn (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 7)
This treatise, which is preserved in a single manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3748, ff. 160a–166a) and has recently been published as a small pamphlet, consists of anecdotes illustrating the asceticism, abstinence and probity of eight members of the second generation of Muslims, namely ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd Allāh, Uways al-Qaraṣ, Ḥarim b. Ḥayyān, al-Rabīʿ b. Khuthaym, Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, al-Aswad b. Yazīd, Masrūq b. al-Ajdaʿ and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. It is difficult to determine Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s role in the composition of this work, for all of the reports come from a single transmitter, ʿAlqama b. Marthad (d. 120/738). A number of second/ninth- and third/tenth-century Ḥadīth scholars wrote on zuhd, including Abū Ḥātimī and Abū Zurʿa, both of whom composed works entitled Kitāb al-Zuhd. The objections of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s teacher al-Faḍl b. Shādhān to several of the Followers under discussion show that the concept of a group of eight exemplars of zuhd was specifically Sunnite.

16. An untitled work on dreams and visions
The same manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3748) which contains the only surviving copies of Aṣl al-sunna and Zuhd al-thamāniya also preserves a few folios (168b–171b) which seem to represent a fragment of a hitherto-undocumented composition of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The work bears no title and in its present state contains about a dozen reports concerning the communication of spiritual knowledge, especially about the afterlife, through the agency of dreams and visions. As far as can be made out—the manuscript is in very poor condition—all of the reports reached Ibn Abī Ḥātim through


108 A portion of this work is preserved in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3765, ff. 138a–146a) under the title Min Kitāb al-Zuhd ʿan Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn al-Mundhir al-Ḥanzalī.

109 Ibn Ḥajar, Iṣbaḥa, 4:153; Sezgin, GAS, 1:145.

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar al-Waṣiṭī. Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes (Jahān 4[1]:125) that this obscure individual had settled in Baghdad and that he and his father studied with him. Presumably this occurred in Baghdad and therefore may be dated to 256/870. The report of his which al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī quotes in Taʿrīkh Baghdād (3:420) is consistent with the character of the contents of the manuscript.

C. Works on Biography and History

17. ʿĀdāb al-Shāfīʿī wa-manāqibuhū (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 5)  
Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s biography of the eponym of the Shāfīʿī law school is preserved in a single manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 13950). The work is a pleasant compendium of reports, many of which he collected during his sojourn in Egypt in 262/875 directly from the imām’s surviving students. This immediacy accounts for the unusual vividness which characterizes the work. The contents are extremely varied, including information on Shāfīʿī’s life and theological doctrines, as well as reports illustrating his expertise in the Arabic language and his generosity. The book also preserves three adabistic treatises ascribed to him, one on the terms for headwounds (pp. 238–41), another on the names applied to camels at the various stages of their lifecycle (pp. 242–46) and the last on the genealogy of the Quraysh and Hashimites (pp. 246–70).111 This is the earliest surviving biography of Shāfīʿī and is quoted frequently in later accounts of his life.

18. Kitāb Makka  
The evidence that this work ever existed is slender. Sakhāwī is the only one to mention it,112 listing it as one of the histories of Mecca in Flān. This implies that the work dealt with ḥadīth transmitters who had some connection with the holy city, either having lived or visited there. Just before this, Sakhāwī lists Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s name under the heading of those who wrote works on the special characteristics (fudāʿīl) of Mecca. This would be a collection of reports indicating the merits of Mecca and its superiority to all other cities.

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111 The work on headwounds would seem to be Kitāb al-Shijāj and the work on camels a portion of Kitāb Alvān al-ṣibl wa-ʿt-ghanam wa-ṣifātiḥa wa-asnāniḥa, both of which Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr ascribes to Shāfīʿī in al-Intiqā’ fi ʿadāʿīl al-thulāṭa al-dīmmat al-fuqaha’ Mašk wa-ʿt-Shāfīʿī wa-Abī Hanīfa (Cairo, 1350), 109.
Here he gives Ibn Abī Ḥātim the kunya “Abu ’l-Faraj” instead of “Abū Muḥammad.” It is impossible to tell whether both references are to the same work or to two separate works. The confusion over the kunya is also puzzling. It may be that Sakhāwī is referring to a different Ibn Abī Ḥātim. On the other hand, it would not have been unusual for a scholar of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s inclinations to have composed either a history of the scholars of Mecca or a work praising the city.

19. Manāqib Ahmad

In addition to his work on Shāfi‘i, Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a work on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. The title Manāqib Ahmad is given by Dāwūdī,113 while the historian of the Ḥanbalites Ibn Abī Ya’lā and those dependent on him refer to the work as Faḍā’il imāmin Āḥmad.114 Sakhāwī in al-Jawāhir wa-’l-durar115 and Ibn Rajab in Sharḥ Ilal al-Tirmidhī (p. 181) mention that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a book on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, but do not provide a specific title. The work itself has not survived, although it was most likely a counterpart to his work on Shāfi‘i.

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113 Dāwūdī, Tabaqāt, 1:280.
114 Tabaqāt, 2:55; Ibn Muflīh, Maqṣid, 2:106 (Faḍā’il Āḥmad); ‘Ulaymī, Minhaj, 2:18.
115 In F. Rosenthal, History, 594.
CHAPTER THREE

THE TAQDIMA

In the Taqdisma, Ibn Abi Ḥātim justifies the employment of ḥadīth criticism in his own day on basis of the precedent set by prestigious Ḥijāzian scholars of earlier generations. He links these early authorities to his contemporaries by means of a genealogy illustrating the passage of ḥadīth criticism from one generation to the next. To make the case that these early scholars were critics of ḥadīth, he cites and arranges a wide variety of transmitted material in a framework determined by his conception of the history of ḥadīth transmission.

I. The Aim of the Taqdisma

Most third/ninth and fourth/tenth century works on ḥadīth criticism are prefaced by introductions which typically have both technical and polemical aspects. The technical matters usually involve the definition of terms and explanation of procedures, those things which another student would care to know about. On polemical side are the defenses and justifications of ḥadīth criticism aimed at the attacks of the ahl al-ra’y and ahl al-kalām. Ibn Abi Ḥātim’s Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa’l-ta’dil is unusual in that it has two separate introductions. There is an introductory section directly attached to it which runs to thirty-eight pages in the printed text and is wholly typical of the genre, as it touches upon both technical and polemical issues. In addition, the title of the separate volume Taqdimat al-ma’rifah li-Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa’l-ta’dil, or “Introduction to Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa’l-ta’dil,” clearly indicates that it too was conceived as an introduction to Jarḥ, and it is almost entirely polemical in character.

In the Taqdisma Ibn Abi Ḥātim constructs a genealogy which connects ḥadīth criticism to prestigious scholars from earlier generations. Although the Taqdisma addresses the objections of the ahl al-ra’y and ahl al-kalām, its author was preaching to the choir. Associating ḥadīth criticism with the likes of Malik and Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, as is done in the Taqdisma, would mean little outside of Ḥijāzian circles. Ibn Abi Ḥātim targets those Ḥijāzian scholars whose faith may have been
undermined by the Kūfans. He does not offer a point by point refutation of the Kūfans, but a blanket affirmation of the legitimacy and validity of hadīth criticism. His reassuring message is that hadīth criticism is firmly based in the practice of their famous Ḥijāzian forebears.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim chose the form of the tabaqāt-work as most suited to his polemical purpose. The tabaqāt is an indigenous Arabic historiographical expression in which noteworthy individuals are arranged by generation.1 The span of each generation is roughly fixed by student-teacher relationships, with the members of one generation being the teachers of the next.2 By its nature, such a scheme does not yield a strict chronology but rather an approximate and relative one. The tabaqāt-work is like the isnād in that it illustrates the passage of knowledge from one generation to the next; but whereas the isnād serves this purpose for a single text, the tabaqāt-work does so for an entire body of doctrine. The Taqdimā purports to be the record of the transmission of the method of hadīth criticism from its first practitioners to Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur‘a, Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s principal mentors and his main sources for the technical judgements in jarh. In fact, what Ibn Abī Ḥātim does is anachronistically project the critical technique of his contemporaries back three generations to scholars unacquainted with it, in order to provide prestigious precedents for its usage. Ibn Abī Ḥātim was not the only scholar to attempt to justify hadīth criticism on basis of its usage by earlier scholars, but the Taqdimā is the most ambitiously conceived and elaborately executed work of this kind.

II. The Composition of the Taqdimā

The success of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s genealogy hinges on his making a plausible case that the eighteen scholars who form his four tabaqas were critics. The amount of space devoted to each critic varies greatly,

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2 Ibn Ḥibbān discusses his use of this principle in Kitāb al-Thiqāt (Hyderabad, 1973ff.), 9:293–97.
with more generally allotted to the early ones. This correlates with
the difficulty involved in making the case for the earlier scholars’
status as critics. Everyone knew that ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī was a critic
of ḥadīth, so Ibn Abī Ḥātim gives him only a page and a half. The
notion that Malik was a critic must have astounded many people—
since he certainly was not—and we find that Ibn Abī Ḥātim has to
devote thirty-five pages to marshalling evidence that he was one.³
The exceptions to this general pattern are the later critics, Ahmad
b. Ḥanbal, Abū Zur‘a and Abū Ḥātim. By giving them more exten-
sive entries, Ibn Abī Ḥātim sought to fix them firmly in the genealogy
he had established as the three most prominent exponents of ḥadīth
criticism in the third/ninth century.

In these chapters Ibn Abī Ḥātim almost entirely restricts himself
to the citation of transmitted reports with their isnāds. For the
purpose of analysis, we can divide this material into three types which
will be examined in the following chapters, testimonial, biographical
and documentary. In restricting himself to the citation of material
handed down from earlier times, Ibn Abī Ḥātim exhibits the pref-
erence of the critics for relying on past authorities. It may appear
that by adopting this approach, an author sacrificed a good deal of
creative freedom and yoked himself to an excessively clumsy mode
of expression. This was true to a degree, but less so than it would
perhaps appear at first glance, since the literary tradition from which
Ibn Abī Ḥātim drew his reports was exceptionally rich and varied.
Furthermore, because these short reports were shorn of any context,
there was little to restrict the interpretation of them.⁴ By his selec-
tion and arrangement, he provided a context of his own design and
thereby influenced the reader’s interpretation.

The greatest threat facing the author of a work like the Taqīṣma
was that readers would not recognize the role which he intended a
particular report to play in his argument. Ibn Abī Ḥātim succeeded
in overcoming this obstacle by a number of devices, all of which
had already been employed in the composition of the great ḥadīth
collections. Of these, the most useful and systematically applied is

³ For an explicit enunciation of this principle by a compiler of a book of ṭabaqāt,
see al-Qādi ‘Abd al-Jabbar, Fadl al-Ḥizāl, 228.
⁴ For remarks on this, see Marshall Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, 3 vols. (Chicago,
(Cambridge, 1980), 5.
the grouping of reports under section titles to signal the desired interpretation.\textsuperscript{5} The title apprises the reader of what to look for when he encounters the report. To restrict ourselves to a single illustration of the utility of the sectional titles, we may cite the report in which Abū Zur‘a says that he was once asked to put some salt in a stew and he then added so much that the dish could no longer be eaten (pp. 348–49). Without help, we would be lucky to divine the reason this report was included in the \textit{Taqdima}. Fortunately, we are rescued by the heading stating that this report was meant to show the high-minded scholar’s obliviousness to worldly matters.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim sometimes employs commentary to make his point. On whole his commentary is quite limited, usually only a few words, and he resorts to it in only the most baffling situations. As an example of the ḥadīth criticism of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, he gives the following report from Dhu‘ayb b. ‘Amr al-Sahmī al-Madīnī:

I asked Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, “Did you hear anything from Šāliḥ [b. Nabhān], the client of al-Taw‘ama [bint Umayya b. Khalaf al-Qurashi]?” He said, “Yes, this and this and this. . . .” He gestured with his hand—meaning that he did it a lot. [Sufyān said,] “I studied with him while his saliva was running [down his chin]”—that is, from old age—“I do not know any of our colleagues who transmits from him, not Mālik b. Anas nor anyone else.” (\textit{Taqdima}, 35)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim explains, “So it became clear that Ibn ‘Uyayna was critical (\textit{muntaqiq}) of the transmitters of reports, for I do not know that he transmitted anything from Šāliḥ, the client of al-Taw‘ama.” In other words, we know that Ibn ‘Uyayna made a critical decision to reject Šāliḥ because he did not transmit any of his ḥadīth, although he had collected them. Without the crucial bit of information, it would by no means be clear that this report indicated that Ibn ‘Uyayna practiced ḥadīth criticism.

Abridgement is the third of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s basic techniques for making himself understood. Although it may seem rather cavalier, scholars of this era also abridged the ḥadīth of the Prophet. Abū Dāwūd al-Sījištānī describes the composition of his \textit{Sunan},

Sometimes I abridged the long ḥadīth because, if I had recorded them at length, some of those who heard them would not recognize nor

understand the legal issue addressed in them. For that reason, I abridged them.\(^6\)

On occasion, Ibn Abī Ḥātim prunes the unessential and distracting elements from a long report in order to clarify its message. Abridgement is most easily recognizable in the cases where he cites both the original and the shortened version of the report. (No doubt he also shortened other reports; however, without knowing the exact form in which a given report reached him, it is impossible to determine which.) We find a clear example of abridgement at the beginning of the chapter on Abū Zur'a, where Ibn Abī Ḥātim records the text of a letter Ishāq b. Rāhawayh wrote to Abū Zur'a. Later, in the section of the chapter devoted to demonstrating the exalted stature of Abū Zur'a in the eyes of other scholars, he cites a passage taken from this letter to show Ibn Rāhawayh's esteem for Abū Zur'a.\(^7\)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim appears to have been extremely conscientious in the citation of transmitted material, even in cases where he did not entirely agree with the sentiments expressed. In one version of the story of Sufyān al-Thawrī's interview with the caliph al-Mahdī, the pious man utters words which betray his alarm and fear, at which point Ibn Abī Ḥātim confesses his frustration: "I would rather that he said something other than that, that is, something about trusting in God or the like" (p. 106). Needless to say, his interpretations of the reports are not always convincing. More than anything else, perhaps, his failures in this regard speak to his essential honesty in the reproduction of the material he cites, for, if he had desired, he certainly could have altered many of the reports to fit his requirements better.

### III. The Form of the Taqdīma

Ibn Abī Ḥātim structured the *Taqdīma* in accordance with his conception of the history of ḥadīth scholarship, and in the introductory section of the work he gives a synopsis of this history. Two models

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\(^7\) *Taqdīma*, 329, 344. A passage from the letter is also cited on p. 342 and is misquoted. It should be noted that Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not attribute this passage directly to the letter, but rather to Abū Zur'a. He seems to have faithfully recorded Abū Zur'ā's faulty recollection of the text of the letter.
of the disposition of the knowledge of the Prophet after his death were current in early Ḥijāzian circles. These models, which may be called the Medinese and the diffusionist, were put into juxtaposition in the famous epistolary exchange between Mālik and al-Layth b. Saʿd. Mālik advocated the Medinese model, asserting that the knowledge of the Prophet was embodied in the ḥadīth and practice of the people of Medina. Muhammad lived the last years of his life in Medina and it was therefore felt that the residents of this city were in the best position to know his teachings. This thinking informs Mālik’s Muwatta’, a digest of Medinese legal thought and practice. Al-Layth b. Saʿd maintained that the doctrines of the Prophet were dispersed throughout the Islamic world by the migrations of his Companions during the conquests. This was the model adopted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and the other scholars of ḥadīth. They respected Medina as the home of the Prophet, but in practice gave no special priority to the ḥadīth emanating from any particular locale.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes that God sent Muhammad as His messenger to all people. It was he whom God made the recipient of the Qurʾān, and it was he whom God made the source of explanation for the Holy Book.

[The Prophet] remained in Mecca and Medina for twenty-three years, setting up the lineaments of right religion for the people, imposing the precepts, establishing the sunna, executing the rulings, forbidding the forbidden, permitting the permissible and setting the people on path of truth by word and deed. This he continued to do until his death. (Taṣdīma, 2)

The work of the Prophet was continued by his Companions and God made them models for mankind. They preserved all that had been vouchsafed them by the Prophet and he enjoined them to pass this legacy on to others. The Muslim conquests dispersed the Companions throughout the Near East.

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9 See I. Goldziher, Muhammedanische Studien, 2:178; Muslim Studies, 2:166.
Then the Companions were dispersed to the various regions, cities and military strongholds by the conquests of foreign lands, military expeditions, and by appointment to governorships, judgeships and other legal positions. Every one of them disseminated in his region or town what he had learned and preserved from the Messenger of God. They ruled with the ruling of God and carried out matters according to what the Messenger of God established as the *sunna*. They gave the legal decisions which they were asked for on basis of what they knew about the Messenger of God’s answers to similar questions. Together with first possessing good intention and proximity to God, they gave themselves over entirely to teaching the people the prescriptions, the rules, the *sunnas*, the forbidden and the permitted, until they died. (*Taqdima*, 8)

In their new homes the Companions continued to practice and teach the *sunna* of the Prophet. The Followers walked in the footsteps of the Companions, preserving and further disseminating the *sunna*.10

Two phenomena characterize the generations following the Companions and Followers. The ḥadīth transmissions of the first two generations of Muslims had been flawless. After their demise, however, errors out of negligence and forgeries as the result of sinfulness began to appear in the ḥadīth canon. This occasioned the appearance of ḥadīth critics.11 In *Jarḥ*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes the famous report in

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10 For a different interpretation of these passages, see Brannon Wheeler, Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship (Albany, 1996), 82–91.

11 Ibn Abī Ḥātim calls the critics “al-*ulama’* al-jahābidha al-nuqqād.” The first of these terms does not require much comment. “Al-*īm*” (pl. *ulamā*) is the common word for “scholar” or “one who possesses knowledge (*ibn*).” The scholars of ḥadīth frequently use “*īm*” as a synonym for “ḥadīth.” The second word “jahbadhī” (pl. jahābidha) is a loan word from Persian. In the Muslim era the term “jahbadhī” was applied to mint officials, moneychangers and taxcollectors. At this time the value of a coin was purely intrinsic and the principal task of anyone who handled money was the detection of coins of inferior weight and purity. Hence, the word also acquired the more general sense of “someone able to distinguish quickly the good from the bad” as a skilled moneychanger distinguishes between good and bad coins. The third term, “nuqqād” (pl. nuqqād), is semantically very similar to “jahbadhī.” It means “moneychanger” or “someone able to distinguish good coin from bad.” It, too, became more generalized, acquiring the sense of “someone who can distinguish the good from the bad.” In modern Arabic, “nuqqād” has come to mean a “critic,” for instance, in a field of artistic endeavor. In describing their activity, the critics of ḥadīth regularly likened themselves to moneychangers; e.g. *Jarḥ*, 1(1):17, 18, 21; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, al-*Kifāya* fi ‘*īm* al-rwaḥāy (Hyderabad, 1357), 395, 431; id., *Al-Jāmi‘ bi-akhlāq al-rāwī wa-ṣūrāb al-sāmi‘*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ṣafāḥ b. Muhammad b. Uwayda (Beirut, 1417/1996), 398–99; Bayhaqī, *Ma‘rifat al-sunan*, 1:56–57; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 536.
which Ibn Sīrīn (33/653–110/729)\textsuperscript{12} asserts that the necessity of examining transmitters did not arise until the \textit{fitna}, or “strife.”

They did not use to ask about the isnād [of a ḥadīth]. When the \textit{fitna} took place, they asked about it. They used to look at the adherents of the \textit{sunna} (\textit{ahl al-sunna}) and their ḥadīth were accepted, and at the people of innovators (\textit{ahl al-bid`a}) and their ḥadīth were rejected.\textsuperscript{13}

Which \textit{“fitna”} is meant here has never been resolved, although modern-day scholars have expended a considerable amount of effort on question.\textsuperscript{14} A couple of other reports are less ambiguous. One in the \textit{Taqdima} ascribed to Mālik makes Zuhrī (ca. 50/670–124/742)\textsuperscript{15} the first scholar who gave isnāds with his ḥadīth. Ramahurmuzī in \textit{al-Muhaddith al-fāsil} (p. 208) quotes the declaration of Yahyā b. Sa`id al-Qattān that Sha`bī (16/640–103/721) was the first to examine isnāds.\textsuperscript{16}

The critics included in the \textit{Taqdima} span a period of about a century and a half, the earliest being the Syrian Aqwārī (ca. 88/707–157/774) and the latest Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s father, Abū Ḥātim (d. 277/890). Ibn Abī Ḥātim names each of eighteen critics in full and indicates the geographical area of his activity, but does not give either birthdates or deathdates. The critics are categorized into four \textit{tabaqas}.

\textsuperscript{12} Sezgin, \textit{CAS}, 1:633–34.
\textsuperscript{15} Sezgin, \textit{CAS}, 1:280–83.
THE CRITICS IN THE TAQDIMA

The First Тabaqa:

Medina – Mālik b. Anas [d. 179/795]
Mecca – Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna [d. 196/811]
al-Kūfah – Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/778]
al-Baṣra – Shu‘bā b. al-Ḥajjāj [d. 160/776]
              – Ḥamād b. Zayd [d. 179/795]
Damascus – Awzā‘ī [d. 157/774]

The Second Тabaqa:

al-Kūfah – Waki‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ [d. 197/812]
al-Baṣra – Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān [d. 198/813]
              – ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mādhī [d. 198/813]
Marw – ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak [d. 181/797]
Damascus – Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī [d. 188/804]
              – Abū Mushir [d. 218/833]

The Third Тabaqa:

Baghdād – Ahmad b. Ḥanbal [d. 241/855]
              – Yahyā b. Ma‘īn [d. 233/847]
al-Baṣra – ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī [d. 234/849]
al-Kūfah – Ibn Numayr [d. 234/848]

The Fourth Тabaqa:

al-Rayy – Abū Zura‘a [d. 264/878]
              – Abū Ḥātim [d. 277/890]

Nowhere does Ibn Abī Ḥātim explicitly delineate the criteria he employed in selecting the scholars for the Taqdimah. A couple of general observations, however, can be ventured. The first is that all of the scholars he includes were recognized as prominent transmitters of ḥadith. The second is that the selection of critics reflects his belief that the transmission of ḥadith started as isolated local traditions and later became a single universal tradition. These two points are put into relief by the comparison of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s critics with the list of transmitters ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī supplies in his Ḩal (pp. 36–40). Ibn al-Madīnī’s aim in composing such a list was to provide a schematic picture of the passing of hadith from one generation to the next. He gives the transmitter’s name, kunya, deathdate, and, often, tribal affiliation, and in some cases he adds other brief remarks. Ibn al-Madīnī’s list consists of three levels, the first two of which are further broken down by geographical region. His first level is that of the later Followers. The second and third levels correspond to Ibn
Abi Ḥatim’s first and second ṭabaqas, respectively. Ibn Abi Ḥatim was familiar with this list and refers to it frequently in the Taqdimā.

**TRANSMITTERS OF ALI B. AL-MADĪNĪ**

The Isnād Revolves around

1) **Medina**  
   - Zuhrī (d. 124/741)

2) **Mecca**  
   - 'Amr b. Dīnār  
     (d. 126/743)

3) **al-Baṣra**  
   - Qatāda b. Dī‘āma  
     (d. 117/735)

4)  
   - Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr  
     (d. 132/749)

5) **al-Kūfah**  
   - Abū Ishāq (d. 129/746)

6)  
   - Sulaymān b. Mihrān  
     (d. 148/765)

Those who Composed Books

1) **Medina**  
   - Malik b. Anas  
     (d. 179/795)

2)  
   - Muḥammad b. Ishāq  
     (d. 152/769)

3) **Mecca**  
   - Ibn Jurayj  
     (d. 151/768)

4)  
   - Sufyān b. ‘Uyyayna  
     (d. 198/813)

5) **al-Baṣra**  
   - Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūba  
     (d. 158/774)

6)  
   - Hammād b. Salama  
     (d. 168/784)

7)  
   - Abū ‘Awāna  
     (d. 175/791)

8)  
   - Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj  
     (d. 160/776)

9)  
   - Ma‘mar b. Rāshid  
     (d. 154/770)

10) **al-Kūfah**  
    - Sufyān al-Thawrī  
      (d. 161/778)

11) **Damascus**  
    - Awzā‘ī (d. 151/768)

12) **Wāsiṭ**  
    - Hushaym b. Bashīr  
      (d. 183/799)

The First ṭabaqa

- Malik b. Anas

- Sufyān b. ‘Uyyayna

- Hammād b. Zayd

- Sufyān al-Thawrī

- Awzā‘ī
Their Knowledge went to

1) Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198/813)
2) Yahyā b. Abī Zā'ida (d. 182/798)
3) Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 199/814)
4) ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubāрак (d. 181/797)
5) ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī (d. 198/813)
6) Yahyā b. Ādam (d. 203/818)

The Second Ṭabaqa

Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (al-Baṣra)
Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (al-Kūfa)
ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubāрак (Marw)
ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī (al-Baṣra)
Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (Damascus)
Abū Mushir (Damascus)

The Third Ṭabaqa

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (Baghdad)
Yahyā b. Maʿīn (Baghdad)
ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (al-Baṣra)
Ibn Numayr (al-Kūfā)

The Fourth Ṭabaqa

Abū Zurʿa (al-Rayy)
Abū Ḥātim (al-Rayy)

Note: The dates are those given by ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī.

The critics in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s first ṭabaqa seem to represent the most important transmitters in their respective local traditions. The Companions were dispersed throughout the Near East as a result the Muslim conquests, taking their ḥadīth with them. These they passed on to the scholars of their region and for some time their teachings remained in isolation as local traditions, which persisted through the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s first generation of critics. All of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s critics are found in Ibn al-Madīnī’s list with the exception of Ḥammād b. Zayd (d. 179/795). Ibn al-Madīnī’s omission of him is perhaps more difficult to account for than Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s inclusion, for Ḥammād was a highly esteemed figure. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī, for instance, in an oft-quoted passage names him the imām of his age in al-Baṣra. 18

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18 Taqdimā, 11.
Geography plays a much less important role in the composition of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s second ṭabaqa. It should be noted that Ibn al-Madini does not mention localities of these scholars at all. This reflects the dispersal of the independent local traditions and the beginning of the formation a single universal tradition. The agents of this dispersal were the travelling scholars of ḥadīth. It may be mentioned that Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s second ṭabaqa corresponds to Rāmahurmużr’s first ṭabaqa of scholars who travelled to collect ḥadīth in al-Muhaddith al-fāsil (p. 229). There is a high degree of correspondence between Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s second ṭabaqa and Ibn al-Madini’s third, the exceptions being Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s inclusion of the two Damascene scholars, Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (d. 188/804)\(^{19}\) and Abū Mushir (140/757–218/833).\(^{20}\) Whether this means that Ibn Abī Ḥātim felt that the local Damascene tradition persisted in isolation longer than any of the others is unclear. It may be nothing more than an idiosyncratic reflection of the comparatively extensive studies Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father undertook in Syria.

In the third and fourth ṭabaqas regionalism ceases to have any importance. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s third ṭabaqa consists of four scholars. We possess works of three of these, namely Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yahyā b. Maʿin and Ibn al-Madini, which demonstrate their conspicuous merit as critics. In this regard the inclusion of Ibn Numayr (d. 234/848) may seem somewhat peculiar, for he is far less famous than the other three. However, Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes about seven pages to the citation of examples of his critical pronouncements, demonstrating that, whatever his reputation, he was an active critic. The fourth and final ṭabaqa consists only of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s two mentors, his father Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa, the principal sources of the critical pronouncements in Ḥanḥ.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE TESTIMONIAL EVIDENCE

Having examined the basic format into which Ibn Abī Ḥātim cast the *Taqdima*, we are now prepared to look at the material he used to establish his genealogy of ḥadīth criticism. As was noted above, the success of his enterprise hinges on his being able to make the case that certain prestigious personalities from the early history of Islam were critics of ḥadīth. The material he cites consists entirely of transmitted reports, which, although extremely varied in nature, all share the characteristic of representing these individuals as critics. This chapter will examine some of the reports which may be described as testimonial in nature.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s main proof for the assertion that God has bestowed upon certain individuals the status of ḥadīth critic is the consensus of the learned within the Muslim community.¹ With this in mind, he supplies a great number of testimonials from various personages to the effect that the scholars treated in the *Taqdima* were critics of ḥadīth. Many of these testimonials take the form of straightforward declarations along the lines of “So and so was an authority in ḥadīth.” For instance, we read that Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān declared, “Mālik was an imām in ḥadīth.”² They are usually placed at the beginning of each critic’s chapter under the heading “What is said about the knowledge and understanding of . . . .”

Although most of those whose testimony Ibn Abī Ḥātim records were traditionally recognized as “Ḥijāzians,” in the introductory section of the *Taqdima* he also amasses evidence that some of the *ahl al-raʾy* were in agreement with his proposition.

If it is said, “You mentioned the unanimity of the scholars in acknowledging their [status as critics]. Yet, you know of the divergence and disagreement in method between the scholars of al-Kūfah and those of the Ḥijāz. Did Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan

¹ *Taqdima*, 3.
² *Taqdima*, 14.
agree with the group of scholars you mentioned in bearing witness to the integrity of those discriminating critics, or do we [not] find that with them?” (Taqdima, 3)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim assures us that the early Kūfān did acknowledge the first ḥadīth critics. The three scholars concerned here, Abū Ḥanīfa and his two most prominent students, Abū Yusuf (113/731–182/798)\(^5\) and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (132/749–189/805),\(^4\) were considered the founders of what would become known as the Ḥanafite law school and as such were scholars of considerable prestige in establishment circles.

The first Kūfān testimonial is based on a report from Sufyān al-Thawrī. Here Sufyān asserts his own superiority over Abū Ḥanīfa:

I did not ask Abū Ḥanīfa about anything. He used to come to me and ask me about things. (Taqdima, 3)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim comments on this brief report: “Since the image of Thawrī in the mind of [Abū Ḥanīfa] was such that he flew to him to ask about what he did not understand, it is clear proof that [Sufyān al-Thawrī] satisfied him as an authority for himself and for others.\(^6\) According to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, by consulting Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfa conceded his superiority. Of course, there is no mention at all of ḥadīth or criticism in this report, but Ibn Abī Ḥātim tends to read everything as a reference to ḥadīth in the absence of positive indications to the contrary.

In another report Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān (d. 163/779) describes Abū Ḥanīfa’s eagerness to study the ḥadīth of Mālik.

I went to Medina and there I wrote ḥadīth. Then I travelled to al-Kūfa and went to Abū Ḥanīfa at his house. I greeted him and he said, “With whom did you study there?” I gave him their names. He said, “Did you write any ḥadīth from Mālik b. Anas?” I said yes. He said, “Bring me what you wrote from him.” So I brought it and he called for papyrus and an inkwell and I began to dictate while he wrote. (Taqdima, 3–4)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim finds a confession of Mālik’s superiority in this report: “Abū Ḥanīfa would not have written from Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān from Mālik b. Anas while Mālik was alive, unless he was satisfied with

\(^{5}\) Sezgin, \textit{GAS}, 1:419–21.
\(^{5}\) Taqdima, 3.
[Mālik] and regarded him as reliable, especially since he designated Mālik b. Anas from among all of those whom [Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān] studied with in Medina and asked him to dictate his ḥadīth to him. ['Thus,] he made him an authority (imām) for himself and for others.'

In another report, the Egyptian scholar Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam records Shāfiʿi’s account of a conversation he had with Shaybānī over the relative merits of Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa.

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] said to me, “Who is more knowledgeable, our teacher or your teacher?”—that is Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik. I said, “Truthfully?” He said yes. I said, “I adjure you by God, who is more knowledgeable in the Qurʾān, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “Your teacher,”—that is Mālik. I said, “Who is more knowledgeable in the sunna, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “By God, your teacher.” I said, “I adjure you by God, who is more knowledgeable in the views of the Companions and the other early Muslims, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “Your teacher.” I said, “Nothing remains but analogical reasoning (qiyās) and it is based upon these things. On what does someone who does not know the sources base his analogies?”

This particular report is also recorded in the chapter in the Taqdimā on Mālik and appears twice in Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī, once to illustrate Shāfiʿī’s respect for Mālik and another time as an example of a scholarly dispute between Shāfiʿī and Shaybānī. Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī also preserves an alternate version of this same report. This version, which is recounted by another pupil of Shāfiʿī, Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā (d. 264/877), has Shāfiʿī debating whether it should have been Mālik or Abū Ḥanīfa who enjoyed the privilege of issuing legal opinions. The argument here also revolves around the question of comparative expertise in four areas, in this case, the Qurʾān, ḥadīth, the differences of opinion of the Companions and the use of reason. Shaybānī is made to concede Mālik’s superiority in the first three domains. Shāfiʿī acknowledges that Abū Ḥanīfa was “superior in the use of reason” (aʿqal), but argues that Mālik’s three superiorities outweigh Abū Ḥanīfa’s one.

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6 Taqdimā, 4.
8 Taqdimā, 12–13; Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī, 159–60, 201.
9 Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī, 201–2; al-Ḵaṭṭīb al-Baḡdādī, Taʾrīkh, 2:177–78.
In the final report, Shāfī‘ī recounts Shaybānī’s description of his studies with Mālik and the eagerness of his students to study the ḥadīth he had collected from Mālik:

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] used to say, “I personally heard between seven and eight hundred ḥadīth from Mālik.” He stayed with Mālik for three years—or about three years. When he promised the people that he would transmit ḥadīth from Mālik to them, the place where he was filled up and the people flocked to him. When he transmitted from someone else, only a small group came. [Shaybānī] said to them, “If someone were to desire to censure you for anything more than what you are doing, he would be unable to do so. When I transmit to you from your teachers, only a small group comes. I know that there is an aversion in you [toward them]. If I transmit from Mālik, the place fills up for me.”

Ibn Abī Ḥātim closes with his interpretation of the report: “By the adherence of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] to Mālik in order to transmit ḥadīth from him and disperse them among the people, [Shaybānī’s] acceptance of [Mālik] and agreement with those who made him an authority and preferred him became clear.”

The most noteworthy aspect of these passages is the comparatively mild treatment Ibn Abī Ḥātim accords Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Yūṣūf and Shaybānī. Although hardly laudatory and always making clear the inferiority of the Kūfan scholars, the reports come nowhere near the level of vituperation the critics customarily directed against their opponents. We may take as typical Fasawī’s attack against them in his Kitāb al-Maṣīḥ wa-l-ta’rīkh (2:746–94), where the Kūfans are scourged at length for faulty reasoning, disputatiousness and lying. It would be wrong to view Ibn Abī Ḥātim as a moderate in this matter, for he was himself no stranger to the harsher reports and in fact includes a number of choice specimens in Ādāb al-Shāfī‘ī (pp. 208–14). His comparative cordiality in the Taqādima is accounted for by his aim. To discredit the Kūfans here would clearly not serve his purpose, since he is enlisting them to testify in favor of the existence of the critics.

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11 Taqādima, 5.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE BIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

I. General Remarks

The bulk of the *Taqdimā* consists of material which can be described as “biographical” in character, although it must be understood that the term is being used with caution here. While these reports refer to incidents in the critics’ life, Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not attempt to write their “life story.” He makes no mention of such matters as birthdates, deathdates and parentage and he does not arrange in chronological order the information he does include. The biographical material in the *Taqdimā* is drawn from a number of genres and includes such varied items as elegiac poems and epistles, but conventional historical reports predominate. Taken individually, the reports give an impression of historicity, for there is very little of a fantastic character in the *Taqdimā*. Taken together, they betray a pronounced repetitiveness that makes it clear that conventional themes are often being invoked. In his selection of material, Ibn Abī Ḥātim focuses on the biographical incidents that reveal his critics as critics and in this respect the biographical evidence differs from the testimonial only in directness of expression.¹ As a consequence, our proper understanding of the text depends on our ability to recapture the associations these reports had for Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s audience.

To illustrate this point, we may cite two reports in the *Taqdimā* which indicate that Mālik and Awzāʿī were both quick to alter their opinions when confronted by convincing evidence. Naturally, this is an extremely laudable trait in a scholar and we might be tempted

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¹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim differentiates between two kinds of material in the *Taqdimā*, namely *awṣaṣf*, or “descriptions,” and examples of technical hadith criticism (p. 219). This distinction seems to be based on usage rather than on intrinsic considerations, for we find that at least one report does double duty. Suyūn b. ‘Uwayna declared, “How severe was Mālik’s criticism of transmitters and how knowledgeable he was in them!” Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes this report in the chapter on Ibn ‘Uwayna as an example of his criticism (p. 47) and in the chapter on Mālik by way of showing the respect Ibn ‘Uwayna had for his famous contemporary (p. 23).
to see these reports as nothing more than praise for the open-mindedness of Mālik and Awzā’ī. However, in other works we find that the adherents of ḥadīth make much of the stubbornness shown by their Kūfīan rivals in clinging to their opinions when confronted with a refutatory ḥadīth. The report about Mālik does concern his being confronted with a hadīth and while in the case of Awzā’ī no mention is made of the circumstances under which the great scholar disclosed this virtue, we may rest assured that Ibn Abī Ḥātim interpreted the report as a reference to hadīth. Thus, we find that the two reports unequivocally brand Mālik and Awzā’ī as devoted adherents to the doctrines of the critics.

Similar to these two reports is one in which a man travelled six months to bring Mālik a question from the people of his land. The man asked Mālik the question and Mālik said that he did not know the answer. The astonished and crestfallen man then asked him what he should tell his people. Mālik replied, “You will say to them, ‘Mālik said, ‘I do not know (lā ʿuhṣin).’” Here again, nothing could be more praiseworthy in a scholar than the honesty to confess his ignorance. However, the significance of this tale lies in the fact that, when Mālik said that he did not know, he meant that he did not know a passage from the Qurʾān or a hadīth addressing the question, and he did not venture a guess using his own faculty of reason. In other words, he did not stoop to practice raʿy, although there was pressure on him to provide an answer. Again, we find Mālik adhering to the tenets of the critics.

The biographical material in the Taqdimā is topically arranged and most of it revolves around a small number of motifs, four of which will be examined in this chapter. Unfortunately, our ultimate comprehension is limited by the habit of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and the other adherents of hadīth of restricting themselves to the citation of transmitted material. The motifs appear again and again in their works but are never developed. In practical terms, this means that we can

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2 Taqdimā, 31–32.
3 Taqdimā, 203–4; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 6:241.
identify a motif and to a certain degree delineate its salient features, but the reason for its importance is often unclear. It can, for instance, be said that an interest in zuhd and wara' is characteristic of the critics, and by examining the occurrences of these motifs, we can gain some idea of the critics' understanding of them. However, the reason why Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues were preoccupied with zuhd and wara' remains uncertain.

II. Dreams

The dreams cited in the Taqdima demonstrate divine approbation for the critics. Nearly all of them fall into the category which Leah Kinberg has called "legitimizing dreams." Her evidence suggests that the reliance on dreams to legitimate religious figures and their doctrines was largely confined—at least in the earlier periods—to the members of the Ḥijāzian school and that dreams concerning Abū Ḥanīfa were normally censorious. It is characteristic of these dreams, as she points out, that they lend themselves to straightforward interpretations. Although they often possess a certain "dreamlike" atmosphere, they differ from those dreams typically dealt with in Arabic works of oneiroromancy in that their point is usually quite clear, due either to their literalness or their transparent symbolism. It is interesting to note that one Ḥanafite seized upon the literalness of a dream attacking Abū Ḥanīfa as a reason for doubting its authenticity:

People have agreed unanimously that dreams are not to be interpreted according to their outward meaning. If they were, why would dream interpreters be needed?

The basic message of the dreams in the Taqdima is rarely ambiguous, even in the instances where it is mentioned that an oneirocritic was consulted.

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In the dreams in the *Taqdima*, we find the critic in one of two positions: he is either praised in the dream or he is the recipient of the dream. In the first case, sometimes the praise comes from an unidentified mysterious agency, as in the dream of Makhlaq b. Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 191/806) concerning Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī.

I saw the people assemble in a desolate area or desert. A dust cloud appeared and descended upon the heads of the people. They began going right and left and here and there. I began saying, “With whom will I go?” or “Where will I go?” Suddenly someone called from the sky, “Follow Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fazārī.” (*Taqdima*, 285–86)

More often the speaker in the dream is not a disembodied voice, but rather an important religious authority. Dreams in which the Prophet appears are common. Muḥammad b. Rumāḥ al-Miṣrī (d. 243/857) described a dream in which the Prophet expressed his approbation for Mālik b. Anas.

Forty years ago I saw the Prophet in a dream. I said, “Messenger of God, [who is to be preferred when] Mālik and al-Layth [b. Sa’d] differ over a legal question?” The Prophet said, “Mālik, Mālik, Mālik. He was the heir of my ancestor.” (*Taqdima*, 28)

We are told that the ancestor in question here is the prophet Abraham. Al-Walīd b. Muslim al-Dimashqī (d. 195/810) claimed to have seen the Prophet in a dream and to have been advised by him to embrace the teachings of Sufyān al-Thawrī.⁷

In the dreams in which the dreamer sees the critic, the venue is often Paradise. In one report,⁸ Bishr b. Bakr al-Tinnīsī (d. 205/820) recounted his dream-journey to Paradise. There he saw Mālik wearing a *qalansuwa*, a tall, cone-shaped hat of Persian origin. Mālik’s wearing of this headgear commonly affected by men of learning confirmed his status as one of their number. The sighting of Mālik in Paradise was an indication of God’s satisfaction with him and by extension a vindication of his teachings.

An individual identified as “the brother of Abū ‘Aqīl al-Qazwīnī” was made privy by means of a dream to the preparations being undertaken in Paradise to celebrate the arrival of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal.

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⁸ *Taqdima*, 28.
In a dream I saw a young man who had died in Qazwīn. I said, "What has your Lord done with you?" He said, "He forgave me." I said, "He forgave you?" He said, "Yes, and, oddly enough, so and so and so and so and so." I said, "Why do I see you in a hurry?"—for I saw that he was in a hurry. He said, "Because the people of the heavens, from the seventh to the lowest, have been occupied in putting up banners to welcome Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and I would like to welcome him." (Taqdima, 311)

The report concludes with the note that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had died about that time.

The dream interpreter Abū Karīma al-Kūfī related a dream submitted to him which revealed the divine approval for Sūfīyān al-Thawrī.

A man said that he dreamt that he was brought into Paradise. Yūnus b. ʿUbayḍ, Ibn ʿAwn, Ayyūb and Sulaymān al-Taymī—and he mentioned a number of the scholars of ḥadīth of al-Baṣra, I remember only those four—were there, conversing in one of the gardens of Paradise. He said, "I thought of Sūfīyān al-Thawrī and said to them, 'Sūfīyān was one of our good men. Why do I not see him among you?' With their eyes lifted toward the firmament, they said, 'We see Sūfīyān only as you see a star.'" (Taqdima, 122)

Sūfīyān al-Thawrī's exalted rank in Paradise reflected God's approbation for his teachings.

Dreams do not only convey the message of divine approval of the critic, sometimes they themselves are that message. According to the ḥadīth, the true dream constitutes one of the 46 (or 70) parts of prophecy.9 Although prophecy has ceased, to mitigate this loss, dreams persist as a means of communicating glad tidings to mankind.10 Ibn Qutayba calls dreams "a kind of revelation and a sort of prophecy."11 With its close association with prophecy, it is not surprising that the reception of dreams was seen to be a sign of divine favor. Legend has it that Mālik saw the Prophet in his sleep every night.12 Of the critics in the Taqdima, only Awzāʿī and Abū Zur'a are depicted as recipients of dreams. Awzāʿī's son recorded that his father had a dream in which he saw himself in Paradise:

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12 Abū Nuʿaym, Hillāla, 6:317.
My father said to me, "I want to tell you some news that will please you. I will not do so until you swear to me that you will not repeat it so long as I am alive." I said, "I do, father." He said, "[In a dream] I saw that I was placed at one of the gates of Paradise. Suddenly, one of the leaves of the door disappeared from its place. There was the Messenger of God, and with him were Abū Bakr and 'Umar, hastening to put [the leaf] back. They closed it and left. Then it disappeared again, they returned and it was secured in its place. It disappeared another time and the Messenger of God said to me, "Abd al-Rahmān, will you not grasp the door with us?" I did and it was secured. (Taqdim, 208–9)

Awzā'ī's anxiety that his son not repeat the dream is accounted for by the belief that the interpretation of the dream affected its outcome. By communicating it to an unsympathetic party, the son could have prejudiced its fulfillment. In the ḥadīth, the Prophet recommends that one reveal dreams only to scholars and friends.\(^{13}\) In one of Abū Zur'a's dreams he saw himself wearing a robe with fine stripes on it. According to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the interpretation—based on the symbolism of the striped cloak, it being the garb of a scholar—was that Abū Zur'a would become famous, which, needless to say, he had the happiness to see come true.\(^{14}\) Abū Zur'a's other dream resulted from twenty years of fretting about his own and other people's neglect of supererogation, the pilgrimage, fasting and holy war. In the dream a figure came to him, struck him on the back and reassured him, saying, "You have performed many of acts of worship. What act of worship is better than the five daily prayers in an assembly?"\(^{15}\)

That the scholars of ḥadīth accepted dreams as legitimate sources of information is clear from the sizable number of them included in their works. As mentioned above, Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself composed a monograph on this subject. Gustave E. von Grunebaum writes, "It cannot be emphasized enough that to the medieval Muslim, lay or scholar, the cognitive power of the dream does not present an epistemological problem."\(^{16}\) Not all dreams were true, however. The

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\(^{14}\) Taqdim, 346. In another report (p. 306) we are told that 'Abd al-Ḥāmid b. Hanbal wore a striped robe.

\(^{15}\) Taqdim, 347.

\(^{16}\) Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "The Cultural Function of the Dream as Illustrated
hadith mention three kinds of dreams: the true dream (i.e. good news from God), the distressing dream from Satan and the auto-inspired dream.\textsuperscript{17} A number of factors were held to have a bearing on the veracity of a dream, including the truthfulness of the dreamer and the time of night when it came, but there is no indication that the scholars of hadith, including Ibn Abi Ḥātim, took into account any of these considerations when they cited dreams in their works. In general, it would seem that they did not examine too closely those dreams that accorded with their prejudices and ignored those that did not. Ironically, we find this attitude satirized in an anecdote about Wakīb b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812). It is related that one day an anxious man told him that he had drunk wine (nabīdū) the previous day and that night someone had come to him in a dream and said, "You drank [the forbidden] khamr!" Wakīb, who was fond of wine, retorted, "That was Satan."\textsuperscript{18}

III. The Study of Hadith

The accounts of the exceptional scholarly merit of the critics form the largest category of reports in the Taqdimā. Although, some of these attributes were relevant to other branches of scholarship, in the main they were peculiar to the study of hadith. Thus, by invoking them Ibn Abi Ḥātim signalled to his audience that the eighteen scholars in his Taqdimā were critics of hadith. Reports such as these continued to occupy a place of prominence in the biographical tradition long after the time of Ibn Abi Ḥātim, serving both to glorify the past and to inculcate laudable academic habits in students.

Much is made of the precocity of the critics. Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776) said that he went to Medina and found Mālik teaching a circle of students there while Nāfi', the client of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, was still alive.\textsuperscript{19} The sources record that Nāfi' died in

\textsuperscript{17} Darāmī, Sunan, 2:125; Ibn Māja, Sunan, 2:1285; Tirmidhī, Sahīh, 9:124, 133, 150. See also Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Tālām, 131; Rāmahurmuzī, al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣīl, 391.

\textsuperscript{18} Al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādī, Ta'rīkh, 13:472; al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, Sahīh, 128; Dhamhūrī, Tadhkīra, 1:308.

\textsuperscript{19} Taqdimā, 26; Jarīr, 4(1):205. Another version of this story in Bukhārī's al-Ta'rīkh al-kabīr (4)[1]:310; see also Abū Zur'ā al-Diłamīqī, Ta'rīkh Abī Zur'ā al-Diłamīqī, ed. Shuhr Allāh b. Nī'am Allāh al-Qawqānī, 2 vols. [Damascus, n.d.], 1:438; Ibn
117/735 and Mālik was born, according to various datings, between 90/708 and 97/715. In addition to emphasizing Mālik’s youth, the passage suggests that his prestige was already so high that he could compete with the great transmitter Nāfi’ for students. Sufyān al-Thawrī’s views on questions of law were solicited even before there was a wrinkle to be seen on his face.\(^{20}\) Attainment of scholastic competence at an early age was esteemed not only because it held the promise of future greatness, but also because it meant that the young scholar had a chance to study with the oldest surviving teachers of the previous generation. We are told that Abū Ḥātim began frequenting the scholars of ḥadīth when he was only fourteen years old and that he attained the status of teaching assistant (mustamlī) at an early age.\(^{21}\) Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna claimed to have studied with Zuhrī when he was only sixteen years and three months old.\(^{22}\) Both Shu‘ba and Ḥammād b. Zayd recounted that they saw the youthful Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna studying with ‘Amr b. Dīnār al-Makki (d. 126/743). Shu‘ba remarked that Sufyān was still wearing a earring at the time and Ḥammād b. Zayd mentioned his dhu‘āba, or “forelock.”\(^{23}\) Both the earring and the forelock were signs of Sufyān’s youthfulness.

The hardships that a critic suffered in prosecuting his studies lent a certain glamor to his name. We have already discussed the risks Abū Zur‘a ran to teach ḥadīth in defiance of the Kūfans of al-Rayy. More commonly, the reports relate the hardships the scholars braved to collect ḥadīth. We are told, for instance, that Mālik sat listening to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz al-A‘raj al-Madīnī (d. 117/735) in the courtyard of the mosque of Medina for so long that he needed padded pants.\(^{24}\) Mālik’s discomfort appears a trifle when compared with the sufferings that the impoverished Abū Ḥātim bore on his ambitious journeys to collect ḥadīth. In the year 214/829 he was stranded in al-Βaṣra after his money ran out. To purchase necessi-

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\(^{20}\) Taqdimā, 56; Jarḥ, 2(1):224; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 4:115.

\(^{21}\) Taqdimā, 366–67.

\(^{22}\) Taqdimā, 34. Rāmāhurmuzī refers to this report several times in his discussion of the age at which boy may begin the study of ḥadīth; al-Muḥaddith al-fāsil, 185–200.

\(^{23}\) Taqdimā, 34; Jarḥ, 2(1):226.

\(^{24}\) Taqdimā, 27–28.
ties, he was forced to sell the clothes off his back piece by piece and two foodless days left him without the strength to continue his studies any further. He was rescued by one of his classmates who kindly shared his money with him. In another report we hear that while aboard a ship, circumstances obliged Abū Ḥātim to perform the major ablution. His comrades recommended that he dunk himself in the sea. Unable to swim, he was suspend over the side of the ship with a rope to keep from drowning. The jewel of this genre is the tale of Abū Ḥātim’s harrowing passage from Medina to Egypt which G.H.A. Juynboll has aptly likened the story to a tale out of the Arabian Nights.

When we left Dāwūd al-Ja‘fari in Medina, we went to al-Jār and took a ship. There were three of us, namely an old man called Abū Zuhayr al-Marwarūdhī, another man from Nishapur [and me]. We sailed for three months with the wind blowing in our face. We became frustrated and our provisions began to run out. While a little still remained, we landed and began to walk for several days, until our food and water were exhausted. Then we walked a day and a night without eating or drinking a thing. The second and the third day were the same. Each day we walked until nightfall. In the evening we did our prayers and threw ourselves down where we were. Our bodies had been weakened by hunger, thirst and fatigue. When we woke on the third day, we began to march as best we could. The old man collapsed unconscious. We shook him, but he did not come to. We left him and my friend from Nishapur and I marched a farsakh or two further until I could not go on and passed out. My friend went on and left me. He continued to walk until he spotted some people from afar. They had brought their ship close to land and had come ashore near Bīr Musā. When he spotted them, he signalled them with his clothes. They came to him with a skin of water. They let him drink and took him by the hand. He said to them, “Get my two friends who have collapsed unconscious!” The next thing I knew a man was pouring water on my face. I opened my eyes and said, “Give me some

25 Ṭağdīma, 363–64.
26 Ṭağdīma, 364.
27 Dāwūd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ja‘fari was a student of Mālik about whom very little seems to be known; Jarḥ, 1(2):417; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahālāh, 3:190.
28 Al-Jār was a city on the Red Sea coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Yāqūt locates it a day and a night’s journey from Medina and describes it as a port for ships from Egypt, Ethiopia, Aden, India and China; Buldān, 2:5–7.
29 Abū Zuhayr Muḥammad b. Ishaq al-Marwarūdhī (or al-Marwazi) is given little attention in the standard sources. Abū Ḥātim regarded him as a reliable transmitter; Bukhārī, al-Ta‘rīkh al-kabīr, 1(1):41; Jarḥ, 3(2):195; Ibn Ḥajar, Lisān, 6:68.
water.” He poured a small amount of water into a container and I drank it and felt better. That amount failed to quench my thirst and I said, “Give me water,” and he gave me a little more. He took me by the hand and I said, “Behind me is an old man who has collapsed!” He said that a group of them had already gone to him. He took me by the hand while I walked, dragging my legs, and he continued to allow me to drink a little at a time until I got to the ship and they brought my third friend, the old man. The crew of the ship were kind to us and we stayed [with them] a few days until we had recovered. Then they wrote a letter [of introduction] for us to the governor of a town called al-Rāya, provisioned us with biscuit, gruel and water [and put us ashore]. We continued to walk until our biscuit, gruel and water were exhausted. We began marching, hungry and thirsty, along the shore until we came upon a turtle as big as a shield which the sea had cast up. We took a large rock and beat its shell and the shell broke apart. It contained something like egg yolk, so we took some of the seashells cast up on the beach and began to scoop out the yellow stuff and drink it until our hunger and thirst were assuaged. Then we passed on and we were able to continue until we entered the city of al-Rāya. We delivered our letter to the governor. He settled us in the palace and treated us well. Every day he had a squash brought to us, saying to his servant, “Bring the propitious squash to them.” For days he had that squash sent to us with bread. Then one of us said in Persian, “Why do you not call for ill-omened meat?” The man—the steward—had been listening and said, “I know Persian. My grandmother was from Herat.” He brought us meat after that. Then we left there and he gave us enough provisions to last us until we reached Egypt. (*Taqdimā, 364–66*)

The eventual result of the scholar’s exertions would be a profound knowledge of ḥadīth. The biographies of ḥadīth scholars often contain remarks that in some way attempt to quantify the subject’s knowledge, and a number of such reports are to be found in the *Taqdimā*. Sufyān al-Thawrī’s books, we are told, formed nine piles, each chest high.\(^{51}\) Abū Ḥātim is said to have collected between thirteen thousand and fifteen thousand ḥadīth from Ibn Nufayl al-Ḥarrānī (d. 234/849) alone\(^{32}\) and Abū Zur’a guessed that he had received more than fifty thousand ḥadīth from Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Ṣaghūr (d. ca. 225/839) in his eight years of studying with him.\(^{33}\) It is not clear

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\(^{50}\) This city is apparently Rāyat al-Qulzum, or “al-Rāya on the Red Sea,” which Yaḥūd identifies as a village in southeastern Egypt; *Buldān*, 2:746.


\(^{32}\) *Taqdimā*, 363.

\(^{33}\) *Taqdimā*, 334–35.
how these figures were arrived at or how reliable they are, nevertheless there can be no doubt that the average critic was familiar with an immense number of ḥadīth.

However great the scholar’s thirst for ḥadīth was, he was never to allow himself to become careless. Ḥammād b. Zayd declared that he did not care who disagreed with him as long as he was in accord with Shu‘ba “because Shu‘ba was not satisfied to hear a ḥadīth a single time, he used to go back to its transmitter several times, while it was enough for the rest of us to hear it just once.”34 Shu‘ba said that he used to watch to the mouth of Qatāda b. Dī‘āma al-Sadūsī (d. 118/736) and when he said “I heard” (ṣamī‘tu) or “He transmitted to us” (ḥaddathanā), he preserved the ḥadīth and when he did not, he did not bother with it.35 These expressions ensured that Qatāda took the ḥadīth directly from the informants he named. Similarly, Sufyān al-Thawrī stopped Ṭkrima b. ‘Ammār al-Yamānī (d. 159/775) after each ḥadīth he recited in order to enquire whether he had heard it directly from the authority to whom he attributed it.36 We are told that whenever Mālik had any doubts about a ḥadīth, he rejected it.37

The care shown in collecting ḥadīth was also to be observed in teaching them. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī demanded an atmosphere free from distractions for his classes:

No one talked, nibbed his pen, smiled or stood up in his class. It was as if there were birds on their heads or they were engaged in prayer. If he saw one of them smile, talk, laugh or nib his pen, he put on his sandals and left. (Taqūma, 257)

When Sufyān al-Thawrī mentioned a ḥadīth which he knew only imperfectly, he advised his students not to write it down.38 Shu‘ba averred that he would commit adultery before doctoring the isnād of a ḥadīth.39

34 Taqūma, 168.
35 Taqūma, 161, 169–70.
36 Taqūma, 68, 117.
37 Taqūma, 14: Abū Nu‘aym, Ḥiṣba, 6:318.
38 Taqūma, 67.
39 Taqūma, 173.
IV. Ḥud and Warf

Throughout the Taqdimā there are references to certain aspects of the moral temperament of the critics. As with the other themes in the Taqdimā, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's treatment is unsystematic. Nevertheless, it is possible to distil a general impression of his moral ideals from these reports. He devotes a certain amount of attention to what may be called universal moral norms. In reference to the good manners (ṣaharat al-khalq) and generosity (sakḥā') of Shu'ba, we are told that whenever he took a boat ride, he used to pay the fare of all of his fellow passengers. Ahmad b. Ḥanbal's generosity is exemplified by his offering a guest a cup of barley gruel. An instance of Sufyān al-Thawrī's filial devotion (bin) is also noted. Humility (tawād'ī) was also highly esteemed. Shu'ba used to go barefoot to the market and was once seen carrying a large load of firewood on his shoulder.

An interest in ḥud and warf is characteristic of the critics of ḥadīth. As has been mentioned earlier, Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a monograph on the ḥud of eight of the Followers and works on ḥud are also ascribed to other prominent critics of ḥadīth. Quoting Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes: "Ḥud in this world is the best of deeds." The term "ẓuhd" is most commonly translated as "asceticism" or "abstinence" and Ibn Abī Ḥātim does on one occasion link ḥud with abstinence from this world (i.e. zulf nafsīh 'an al-dunyā). However, the examples given in the Taqdimā show that his conception of ḥud was more passive than the general understanding of the terms "asceticism" and "abstinence" in English and had little in common with the strenuous self-mortification and world-

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40 Taqdimā, 173.
41 Taqdimā, 303.
42 Taqdimā, 125.
43 Taqdimā, 278.
45 See above, p. 38.
46 Taqdimā, 96.
47 Taqdimā, 348.
rejection of the Sufis of later days. Rather it was a kind of bland insouciance in regard to worldly matters. Sufyān al-Thawrī gives the following definition of zuhd: "Zuhd in this world is the lessening of hope. It is not the eating of coarse foods nor the affectation of the woolen mantle [of the ascetics]." Poverty, in fact, does not appear to have been an indispensable element of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s conception of zuhd. What was required was not the active rejection of the world in the form of giving up one’s possessions, but rather indifference to them and the surrounding world and equanimity in the face of life’s trials. In some instances, zuhd appears to have amounted to little more than what is popularly called “stoicism.” Abū Zur’a says,

In the past, when I was healthy, many times I was gripped by fever and became weak, and from that I felt pain. Today, I sometimes have fevers and sometimes I do not. Either way I do not feel any pain. I feel in my heart that that is the way it should be.

In Abū Zur’a, zuhd also manifested itself as a queer ignorance of mundane matters. In one case, he poured himself a glass of what appeared to be barley beer and was on the point of drinking it when he was told that it was really sesame oil that he was about to consume. Mention has already been made of the time when he was asked to add salt to a stew and he put in so much that it became inedible. When reproached for this, Abū Zur’a replied that he had not been told how much to add and he did not know.

Zuhd was to be practiced without ostentation. Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts the words of Abū Zur’a on this point:

If I had enjoyed bodily health to the extent I would have liked, I would have given all of my money to charity, gone to Tarsūs or one of the frontier cities [to fight the unbelievers], eaten only permitted foods and enjoined them... I wear [nice] clothes so that when the people look at me, they do not say, “Abū Zur’a has renounced this world and has taken to wearing humble clothes.” I eat the delicious dishes and sweetmeats offered to me in order that the people not say that Abū Zur’a shuns delicious dishes out of zuhd. Indeed, I eat good

\[^{46}\textit{Taqdima, 101. Ahmad b. Hanbal (p. 305) also declares zuhd to be “qiṣar al-amal.”}\]

\[^{49}\textit{Ahmad b. Hanbal was asked whether a man with a hundred dinars could be a “zāhid” and answered, “Yes, on the condition that he does not rejoice when they increase or despair when they decrease;” ‘Ulāymī, \textit{Minhaj}, 2:6.}\]

\[^{50}\textit{Taqdima, 348.}\]

\[^{51}\textit{Taqdima, 348–49.}\]
things. Their effect on me and the effect of any other food are the same. Wearing nice clothes and wearing humble clothes are the same to me, because both kinds serve a single purpose. Whoever wants to be blameless in wearing clothes, should wear them only to cover his nakedness. If he intends this and nothing else, he is blameless.  

We are told that Ahmad b. Hanbal deliberately dressed in such a way as to avoid giving the impression of asceticism (nasak). Waki‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ feigned eating while he was actually fasting and ‘Abd Allah b. al-Mubārak would pretend to fall asleep with his companions and then get up to pray secretly throughout the night.

Warda, like zuhd, was also a topic which attracted the attention of the hadith scholars of this era. A book on this topic ascribed to Ahmad b. Hanbal has survived. Ibn Abī Hātim devotes considerable space to the discussion of the warā of the critics in the Taqdimā. From the standpoint of practice, warā was the antithesis of zuhd. Where zuhd represented a cultivated insouciance, warā was an almost obsessive concern for moral scrupulosity. ‘Abd Allah b. al-Mubārak related an interesting tale which seems to illustrate his own warā.

I was at a stopping point [on the pilgrims’ road] between al-Kūfa and Mecca, when a man with a hemp rope came up and sat down in front of me. He said, “Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān, there is no other store in this village but mine and a traveller passes by me. If I refuse to sell this rope for less than one hundred dirhams, he will not find any way to avoid buying it from me. Should I sell it [at that price]?” I looked at my companions and said, “Pack your belongings.” I left and did not reply. When we reached the next stopping point, I said to my companions, “Do you know why I did not say anything to the man with the rope?” They said no. I said, “I hated to tell him not to sell it, and thus forbid him something which God has made licit. I also hated to tell him to sell it, and thus do harm to the people with my words. So I left and did not say anything.”

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52 Taqdimā, 348.
53 Taqdimā, 306.
55 Taqdimā, 266–67.
56 Kitāb al-Wara‘ (Cairo, 1340); partial trans. G.-H. Bousquet and Paul Charles-Dominique, “Le Kitāb al-Wara‘ ou Livre du Scrupule Religieux selon l’Imām Ibn Ḥanbal,” Hesperis 39 (1952):97–119. A Kitāb al-Wara‘ is also ascribed to Ahmad b. Ḥanbal’s disciple Abū Bakr al-Marwāzī (d. 292/905; Sezgin, G46, 1:162). As the work ascribed to Ahmad b. Ḥanbal is, itself, described as a “tusnīf” of Abū Bakr al-Marwāzī, it would be interesting to know whether these two works are identical.
57 Taqdimā, 279.
The merchant’s cupidity placed Ibn al-Mubarak in an awkward position. Selling the rope for such an exorbitant sum was unfair to the travellers, but was nevertheless permitted by Islamic law. Ibn al-Mubarak’s conscience would not allow him to forbid what the law permitted or to appear to condone the merchant’s rapacity. He resolved his dilemma by not saying anything at all. This scrupulosity was not confined to matters of religion, not even in the very broad Islamic conception of the term. The example we are given of Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn’s waraʿ concerns his refusal to answer the questions of Abū Ḥātim once he discovered that he had prepared them in writing in advance.\textsuperscript{58}

Although zuhd and waraʿ in some senses occupied opposite ends of the spectrum of moral behavior, the early scholars of ḥadīth in no way regarded them as incompatible. Indeed, they seem to have considered them a natural pair and Ibn Abī Ḥātim often discusses them together. As stated above, it is not clear why these concepts were so important to the scholars of ḥadīth. Yet they never entirely lost their importance in Islamic moral thought. They continue to figure prominently in later works, particularly those composed by students of ḥadīth, like Abū Nuʿaym’s Ḥilyat al-aḍwār wa-ṭabaqāt al-ṣafīya and Ibn al-Jawzi’s Ṣifat al-ṣafīra. However, in later times zuhd and waraʿ tended to be overshadowed by mysticism and in Sufi circles they often came to be regarded as mere stages on the mystic’s journey, rather than ends in themselves. Although mysticism had already attained a certain prominence by the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, it seems to have played no role in the thinking of the mainstream scholars of ḥadīth of his day.

V. The Critics and Political Authorities

The fourth motif to be dealt with here concerns the critics’ relationship to the caliphs and their subordinates. The common characteristic of these reports is that they depict some form of friction between the individual religious scholars and the political authorities. Most often we find the critic either bringing unwelcome truths to the attention of the rulers or rejecting their entreaties. A typical example of this motif is the report of Aważār’s interrogatory before

\textsuperscript{58} Taqūsim, 317.
‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī, the uncle of the first two caliphs of the ‘Abbāsid dynasty, Abu ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Ṣaffāḥ (r. 132/749–136/754) and al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754–158/775). During the ‘Abbāsid revolution, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī led the conquest of Syria and later served as its governor. He is best known to history for his implacable hatred towards the Umayyads and his ruthless attempts to hunt down and exterminate them. Awzā’ī related his experience with him:

I was brought before ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī with the executioners standing in attendance. I was made to sit on a chair and he said to me, “What do you say about the blood of the Umayyads?” I began to talk about something else. He said, “Woe to you! Get back [to the point]! What do you say about the blood of the Umayyads?” I said, “It is not legal for you [to shed it].” He said, “Woe to you! Why [not]?” I said, “Because the Messenger of God sent out Muḥammad b. Maslama [as an envoy] and ordered him to fight the people until they said, ‘There is no God but God.’ When they said that, they rendered their blood and property inviolable, except by the right and account of God against them.” He said, “Woe to you! Is not the caliphate a legacy to us from the Messenger of God for the sake of which ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib fought at Šīffīn?” I said, “If the caliphate had been from the Messenger of God, then ‘Alī would not have agreed to [the appointment of] the two arbiters.” He said, “Woe to you! Get out!” I did not think that I would be brought out, except as a dead man.59

Awzā’ī has the distinction of being the only critic described in the Taqdimā as holding a governmental position. Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports that the governor of Damascus Ibn Surāqa brought him from Beirut to Damascus to serve as a legal expert, apparently in the capacity of faqīh al-jund.60 Despite the rather inauspicious start of relations between Awzā’ī and the ‘Abbāsid conquerors, the critic seems to have enjoyed the sunshine of official favor, for we find him writing letters to the caliphs al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785) and other officials asking for their help in improving the situation of people in unfortunate circumstances. Nine such letters are included in the Taqdimā to demonstrate Awzā’ī’s anxiety for the welfare of

59 Taqdimā, 212–13 (for other versions, see pp. 211–14); Abū Nuʿaym, Hilya, 6:141; Dhahabi, Tadhkira, 1:180–81.
60 Taqdimā, 187. It would seem that Awzā’ī’s appointment occurred when Ibn Surāqa served as the governor of Damascus under the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd II (r. 125/743–126/744). Ibn Surāqa would later hold the same position under the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785), but by this time Awzā’ī had died.
his fellow men and his lack of fear in bringing the true state of affairs to the attention of the authorities.\footnote{\textit{Taqdim\textsuperscript{a}}, 187–202. Schacht briefly discusses Awzā\textsuperscript{a}’s relations with rulers in \textit{EI\textsuperscript{2}}, 1:773, s.v. al-Awzā\textsuperscript{a}.}

The same solicitude for the welfare of his fellows and courage to give voice to his convictions are ascribed to Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna in the report of his interview with Ma‘n b. Zā‘ida, the governor of the Yemen from 142/759–151/768.

Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna went to Ma‘n b. Zā‘ida while he was in the Yemen. Hitherto Sufyān had not yet been sullied in any way by contact with the political authorities. He began to admonish Ma‘n b. Zā‘ida and tell him the condition of the Muslims. Ma‘n started saying to him, “Are you their father? Are you their brother?” (\textit{Taqdim\textsuperscript{a}}, 53)

The governor’s indignant exclamations indicated that he was astonished that Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna would run the risk of speaking to him in this fashion for the sake of people having no connection to him.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim attempts to make the case that Mālik also performed a similar role of fearless advocate within the Muslim community, but here he had to work with less satisfactory material. Under the title of “Mālik’s speaking the truth to political power,” Ibn Abī Ḥātim cites a report in which the caliph al-Mańṣūr charged Mālik with the task of composing a book of laws to be imposed upon the entire Muslim empire.

Abū Ja‘far—that is ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās [i.e. the caliph al-Mańṣūr]—one day said to me, “Is there anyone on the face of the earth more knowledgeable than you?” I said yes. He said, “Name them for me.” I said, “I do not remember their names.” He said, “I looked into this matter during the time of the Umayyads and became acquainted with it. The people of Iraq are people of lying, falsehood and forgery. The people of Syria are the people of holy war and there is not too much knowledge among them. The people of the Hejaz possess the rest of the knowledge and you are the scholar of the Hejaz, so do not gainsay the Prince of the Believers.” Then he said to me, “I have conceived the desire to make this knowledge one knowledge and to send it then to the army commanders and judges so that they can learn it. I will cut off the head of anyone who disagrees.” I said, “Prince of the Believers,”—or something like that—“the Prophet was in this community and he used to send out armies and collect taxes. He did not conquer many lands
before he died. Then Abū Bakr came after him and he did not conquer many lands. Then `Umar came after them and he conquered many lands and was forced to dispatch the Companions of Muḥammad as teachers. One great figure learned from one another until today. If you try to turn the people from what they know to what they do not know, they will regard that as unbelief. Rather, for the people of every land, establish the laws in accordance with their knowledge and take this knowledge for yourself.” He said to me, “You have spoken well, write this knowledge down for Muḥammad [i.e. his son, the future caliph al-Mahdī].”

Al-Manṣūr desired to make the entire Islamic empire conform to Medinese law and Mālik pointed out that this would be imprudent, thus contradicting the caliph. The “knowledge” that Mālik was ordered to write down seems to have been his famous legal work, al-Mawaqīf.’

Another time, al-Manṣūr called Mālik before him to explain his great reliance on the legal opinions of the Companion Ibn `Umar. Mālik argued that Ibn `Umar was the last living Companion of the Prophet among the Medinese and the people naturally turned to him with their questions. Here again, al-Manṣūr displayed the same admirable streak of open-mindedness he had already manifested in the previous report, for he ordered Mālik to hold fast to his practice. Another report records that when the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786–193/809) had completed the rites of the pilgrimage in Mecca, he sent Mālik a purse of money and requested his company for the trip to Medina. Mālik returned the purse unopened to the caliph’s messenger, citing the ḥadīth, “Had they known, Medina would have been better for them.” Lest it nevertheless be feared that Mālik showed himself to be too friendly toward the caliphs, Ibn Abī Ḥātim includes a report in which Mālik declared himself to be the only one who refused to kiss the caliph’s hand.

63 See Taqdimī, 12. There is a similar story in Ta’rikh Bagdādī (1:220–21) concerning the caliph al-Mahdī (sic) commissioning Muḥammad b. Ishāq to write his famous Sīra.
64 Taqdimī, 30. See G.H.A. Juynboll, Muslim Tradition, 63–64.
65 Taqdimī, 30.
66 Taqdimī, 25; Ibn Hibbān, Majrūhīn, 1:43–44.
Of all the critics, Sufyān al-Thawrī appears as the one most chary of contact with the political authorities. His uncompromising stand is testified to in his letter to ‘Abbād b. ‘Abbād al-Urṣūfī, where he warns against their corrupting influence. Sufyān al-Thawrī inspired the greatest number of stories in this vein and Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes an generous selection of them in the Taqdima. One of these accounts depicts Sufyān’s interview with the caliph al-Mahdī and his vizier Ibn Yasār (d. 170/786).

Sufyān al-Thawrī was captured in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and brought to Abū Harun [i.e. the caliph al-Mahdī] in a loincloth and cloak with two sandals in his hand. Sufyān said, “When I entered, I greeted him and sat down. Abū ‘Ubayd Allāh [i.e. Ibn Yasār] said, ‘I think that he has an evil doctrine’—meaning the doctrine of the Khārijites. I said to Abū Hārūn, ‘Who is this?’ He said, ‘This is Mu‘āwiya b. ‘Ubayd Allāh [b. Yasār].’ I said to him, ‘Beware of him and his colleagues.’ Then I said to him, ‘How much have you spent on this pilgrimage of yours?’ He said, ‘Abū ‘Abd Allāh, do we keep track of how much we spent? I said, ‘But ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb spent only seventeen dinars in his journey there and back.’ Then I stood up. He said to me, ‘Where are you going? We want to ask you about some things.’ I said, ‘I must use the privy.’ He said, ‘Where will we find you?’ I said, ‘The mosque.’” He hid from them and they looked for him. He left with the pilgrim caravan to al- Başra. It was proclaimed, “Whoever brings him in gets his bloodprice [as a reward] and whosesoever house he is found in is no longer under legal protection.” (Taqdima, 108)

That Sufyān al-Thawrī went into hiding at some point in his career is attested to in several of the reports in the Taqdima. A story told by ‘Īsām b. Yazīd, the servant of Sufyān, showed al-Mahdī trying to coax him into the open.

Sufyān said to me, “Carry this letter of mine to al-Mahdī.” I said, “Abū ‘Abd Allāh, if you could see clear to excuse me…” and I began to decline. He said to me, “Take this letter of mine and carry it to him. All around me is a group and if I had asked them, they would

58 Taqdima, 86–89.
have rush to carry it to Abū 'Ubayd Allah [i.e. Ibn Yasār\textsuperscript{70}].” So I took the letter and went to Abū 'Ubayd Allah. I said, “I am the messenger of Sufyān.” He let me pass and I was made to dismount. He asked about me in secret and said, “Come see the Prince of the Believers early tomorrow morning.” I tried to beg off, but he said, “There is no help for it.” Then I awoke early the next day and went to the caliph. A council of the palace had convened. I handed the caliph the letter and he began to look in it. It said, “I declare that there be amnesty for me and those who were sought out because of me and that I be free to go wherever I wish in the lands of God. I hope that God will show His favor to me before that.” The caliph gave me some money to take to him and I refused to accept it. He said, “There is amnesty for him and those who were sought because of him and he is free to go wherever he wants in the lands of God. But he must appear before me in the Pilgrimage season and he is obliged to place his hand in mine in order that he command the good and forbid the bad.” I returned to Sufyān and said, “God has fulfilled your desire! The Prince of the Believers said such and such and such and such.” He said, “Be quiet. Tell him to put into practice what he already knows. When he puts into practice what he already knows, I will come and teach him what he does not know.” God showed favor to Sufyān and he died before that could happen.\textsuperscript{71}

Clearly Ibn Abī Ḥātim regards the defiance or avoidance of the political authorities as a characteristic of the critics of hadīth, but why this is so is difficult to determine. The reports are vague about what it is the critics were supposed to dislike about the political authorities. In the writings of the scholars of hadīth we find little interest in contemporary political affairs and certainly nothing resembling a political manifesto. We are told that someone accused Mālik of attending the political authorities “while they oppress and tyrannize.”\textsuperscript{72} However, we find in the report quoted above that when Sufyān al-Thawrī was finally brought before the caliph—a tableau that by all rights should have been a climactic showdown between good and evil—he denounced the caliph for nothing more than extravagance in the performance of the pilgrimage. Although such extravagance was no doubt in poor taste, particularly when people were starving as some versions of the story maintain;\textsuperscript{73} even if wholly

\textsuperscript{70} In another version of this story (\textit{Taqdimā}, 108–9), Ibn Yasār is replaced by Ya‘qūb b. Dāwūd (d. 187/803), who succeeded him as vīzar to al-Mahdi in 163/779.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Taqdimā}, 30.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Taqdimā}, 106.
true, it does not seem to be a terribly serious charge. In a couple of reports in Adāb al-Shāfi‘ī, the outspoken Ibn Abī Dhi‘b
\(^{74}\) accused the caliph of unlawful collection and dispersal of funds.\(^{75}\) The reports do not specify what was meant here and in the Taqdima even this vague accusation is moderated. There Sufyān al-Thawrī, after laying a similar charge against al-Mahdī, asked, “Who is able to give everyone his due?”\(^{76}\)

What is odd is that the portrayals of the caliphs in these reports tend to be favorable rather than otherwise (although this is not equally true of the other political authorities). The caliphs usually end up acknowledging the justice of the critic’s words and when they put requests to the critics, they never seem aimed at compromising the critic’s moral integrity. They do not, for instance, demand that the critics forgo hadith in favor of their regime. Furthermore, it is clear that the approbation of the political authorities was valued. Ibn Abī Hātim advertises Awzā‘ī’s connection with the political authorities and, as we have seen, he also cites material showing al-Manṣūr’s esteem for Mālik. If Yāqūt’s report can be accepted, Ibn Abī Hātim himself did not scruple to attend the ruler of al-Rayy Aḥmad b. al-Hasan al-Madharā‘i.\(^ {77}\) The generally positive picture of the caliphs and the apparent necessity that the critic defy them sometimes result in rather odd situations. For instance, al-Manṣūr’s desire to impose Medinese law over the entire Islamic empire at worst can be construed as a case of overenthusiasm for doing good. In the face of the caliph’s noble intention, we may be excused for viewing the pragmatic advice of Mālik, shrewd though it may be, as slightly machiavellian. The perversity of Sufyān al-Thawrī’s reluctance to help al-Mahdī rule justly seems inexplicable.

We can readily dismiss as absurd any notion that it was Ibn Abī Hātim’s intention to portray Mālik as cynical and Sufyān al-Thawrī as churlish and surly. What this means is that the reports do not make terribly much sense in moral terms unless we accept that the non-cooperation with the political authorities itself was the primary

\(^{74}\) The sources depict Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Dhi‘b (d. 159/775) as the most vociferous and fanatical opponent of the political authorities, e.g. Adāb al-Shāfi‘ī, 46–49; Taqdima, 216.

\(^{75}\) Adāb al-Shāfi‘ī, 46–48.

\(^{76}\) Taqdima, 111.

\(^{77}\) See above, pp. 26, 34.
principle at stake. Then we can see that the attractive offers proffered by the authorities put this principle into relief, whereas the demand that the scholar do anything inherently repugnant, such as forging ḥadīth, would serve the opposite end. The question remains though, why would this be an primary principle? In his discussion of the stories concerning Abū Ḥanīfa’s refusal to serve as a judge, Joseph Schacht has suggested that they account for “the fact, surprising to later generations, that the master should not have been a qādi.”78 What we can say is that Ḥijāzian scholars had conspicuously little success in gaining positions within the government. These reports place this failure in the best possible light by making it appear that these scholars rejected the rulers, rather than the other way around, and perhaps this accounts for their inclusion in the Taqdima.

VI. Conclusion

After the examination of these major motifs of the Taqdima, the question of the historical value of the individual reports remains. Their importance as testimony for the preoccupations of the scholars of hadith is incontestable; less certain is their usefulness for writing the biographies of the critics. Of the types of reports dealt with here, modern scholars have hitherto given the most attention to those treating the meetings of the critics with political authorities. This is natural since these reports link the critics to well-known and important figures and can be dated within certain limits. It is, however, characteristic of these stories that while the main point is fairly immutable in the various versions, the circumstantial details are distressingly unstable. The reports speak with one voice that Sufyān al-Thawrī was brought before the caliph and defied him. This reassuring unanimity dissolves over the question of the identity of the caliph. This conundrum apparently exercised Ibn Abī Ḥātim, for he

78 EP, 1:123, s.v. Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu’mān. The stories of the critics and the political authorities find parallels in the stories in which scholars struggle to avoid appointment to the office of qādi. Noel J. Coulson examines some of the latter in “Doctrine and Practice in Islamic Law: One Aspect of the Problem,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 18 (1956):211-26. It will be noticed there that the sources actually have very little to say about the reason for the scholars’ dislike of this office, leaving modern researchers to offer various suggestions. For a different interpretation of these reports, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Religion and Politics under the early ‘Abbāsid: The Emergence of the proto-Salji Elite, (Leiden, 1997), 78-81.
digresses, citing several accounts of the incident in which the caliph is variously identified as al-Manṣūr or his son al-Mahdī. To account for this discrepancy, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes the explanation offered by Abū Nuʿaym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn (d. 219/834) that Sufyān al-Thawrī was brought before al-Mahdī during the reign of al-Manṣūr.79 One can readily appreciate the ingenuity behind this solution which aims at reconciling the contradictory indications. It immediately brings to mind the report about Mālik, quoted above, in which al-Manṣūr seeks to have Medinese law imposed as the law of the land and is dissuaded from this by the great scholar. The caliph settles in the end for commissioning a digest of the laws of Medina for his son al-Mahdī. In light of this, we should not be surprised to learn that in other works al-Mahdī himself is identified as the caliph who seeks to promulgate the Muwaṭṭa‘ as the law of the land.80 In fact, this story is also told of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (who, it is said, additionally sought to have the Muwaṭṭa‘ suspended from the walls of the Kaaba in the fashion of the Mu‘allaqāt poems)81 and, surprisingly, even of al-Ma’mūn (r. 198/813–218/833), who did not ascend to the throne until nineteen years after Mālik’s death.82 All of this does not necessarily mean that Sufyān al-Thawrī and Mālik did not meet one of the caliphs, however it points up that the usefulness of these stories for historical writing is severely limited.

79 Taqdimā, 113. Elsewhere, Abū Nuʿaym asserts that Muhammad b. Yūsuf al-Firayhī (d. 212/827; Sezgin, Gāš, 1:40), who transmits the report and was a student of both Sufyān and Awzā‘ī, confounded Sufyān, who was brought before al-Mahdī, with Awzā‘ī, who went before al-Manṣūr; Taqdimā, 213–14. It should be noted that the version of the story translated above has Awzā‘ī meeting ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Alī and not al-Manṣūr, while another maintains that he deliberately avoided meeting al-Manṣūr and met with the crown prince al-Mahdī instead (Taqdimā, 214–16).

80 Tabarī, al-Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Dhayl al-mudhāyyal in Dhuyūl Ta’rīkh al-Tabarī, ed. Muhammad Abu ‘l-Faḍl Ibrahim (Cairo, 1977), 659. Tabarī notes that the same story is also told in connection with al-Manṣūr.

81 Abū Nuʿaym, Ḥiyya, 6:332.

82 Abū Nuʿaym, Ḥiyya, 6:331. For a brief discussion of this matter, see J. Schacht, EJ2, 6:263, s.v. Mālik b. Anas. Similar confusion exists over al-Mahdī’s alleged commissioning of Muhammad b. Ishāq’s Sīra, since Ibn Ishāq had been dead for eight years by the time al-Mahdī came to the throne. Recognizing that, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī suggests that the caliph in question was probably al-Manṣūr (Ta’rīkh, 1:221).
CHAPTER SIX

THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

I. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Use of the Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence is the third kind of material that Ibn Abī Ḥātim marshals as proof that the scholars treated in the Taqdimā were critics of ḥadīth. This evidence most commonly takes the form of technical statements ascribed to his critics about the reliability of transmitters and the authenticity of ḥadīth. The number of critical pronouncements varies, with more being cited for the earlier critics and fewer for the later. For the scholars of the first generation, Ibn Abī Ḥātim seems to be supplying all of the technical pronouncements he knows. He drops this approach in his treatment of the later generations, stating (p. 219) that he cites only enough to make his point.

In addition to the difference in the quantity of the technical pronouncements between the first generation and the later ones, there is also a palpable variation in quality. Many of those Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes for the scholars of the first generation are rather scrappy, often deviating from the conventional forms of such pronouncements and occasionally having no obvious connection with ḥadīth criticism. As an example of the criticism of Mālik b. Anas, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes a discussion his father had with Mālik’s nephew, Ismā’īl b. Abī Uways (d. 226/840):


Ibn Abī Ḥātim interprets this as Mālik’s declaration that Makhrama b. Bukayr was reliable and cites it as an instance of Mālik practicing ḥadīth criticism.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim displays little concern for the correctness of the critical judgements he cites, and we sometimes find him recording contradictory judgements and judgements he considers to be wrong.
The differing critical evaluations of the historian Muḥammad b. Ishāq (85/704–150/767) are the best examples of this. Mālik displays a most violent dislike for Ibn Ishāq. In one report he calls him an “antichrist,” and in another he says that Ibn Ishāq was banished from his native city of Medina. On the other hand, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna is quoted as saying, “I studied with Ibn Ishāq for over seventy years and not a single one of the Medinest accused him [of anything] or criticized him;” and Shu‘ba later in the work calls Ibn Ishāq “the prince of ḥadīth transmitters.” Taken at face value, there seems to be no way to reconcile these judgements.

On occasion Ibn Abī Ḥātim does feel compelled to comment on the judgements which seem incorrect to him. As proof of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna’s status as a critic, he cites his assertion that al-Aḥwāṣ b. Ḥakīm was reliable and superior to Thawr. Ibn Abī Ḥātim then contradicts this judgement, writing that his father felt that it was certain that al-Aḥwāṣ was unreliable and that Thawr was “truthful.” He also is at pains to explain how Awwāʿī could have declared Qurra b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān (d. 147/764) to be the scholar most knowledgeable in the ḥadīth of Zuhrī. Ibn Ḥajār would later note that Qurra had taken only about sixty ḥadīth from Zuhrī, which was far fewer than several other students. From these examples, it becomes clear that Ibn Abī Ḥātim was not so much concerned whether the judgements were right or wrong but rather with their mere existence. The nature of the technical judgements is discussed in more detail below.

2 Taqdim, 19; Jārḥ, 3(2):192–93.
3 Taqdim, 38; Jārḥ, 3(2):192.
4 Taqdim, 152.
6 This would appear to be a reference to the Syrian transmitter Thawr b. Yazīd al-Ḥimṣī, who died around 150/767; Ibn Ḥajār, Taḥdīḥib, 2:33–35.
7 Taqdim, 41–42; Jārḥ, 1(1):328.
8 Taqdim, 204–5; Jārḥ, 3(2):132.
9 Ibn Ḥajār, Taḥdīḥib, 8:372–74.
II. The General Principles of Ḥadīth Criticism

Ḥadīth criticism resembles textual criticism in its principal lineaments, although it is more ramified and presents many unique features. As a comprehensive study of third/ninth and fourth/tenth century Ḥadīth criticism is still lacking, it has been found necessary to devote the balance of the present chapter to giving an overview of the subject based on the works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his contemporaries. Special attention will be devoted to Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s two main technical contributions, namely the hierarchical arrangement of the terminology of personality criticism and the earliest articulation of the dogma decreeing the collective reliability of the first generations of Muslims. With these refinements, Ḥadīth criticism came to assume its technically mature form and we see that Goldziher was wholly justified in his assessment in Muhammedanische Studien (2:144) that the evaluation of Ḥadīth transmitters reached its full height with Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

The main tool the critic had for determining the authenticity of a given Ḥadīth was the collation of all of the versions of the Ḥadīth at his disposal. This gave him a birdseye view of the history of the transmission of the text and enabled him to trace the passage of the Ḥadīth through time, from the teachers of one generation to the students of the next. By comparing the isnāds, the critic found one of three circumstances at each register of the transmission of the Ḥadīth:

1) The Ḥadīth was taught by more than one transmitter.
2) The Ḥadīth was taught by a single transmitter.
3) There was no recorded transmitter of the Ḥadīth.

It was on the basis of these three circumstances that Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues passed judgement on the authenticity of Ḥadīth and the reliability of transmitters.10 If a Ḥadīth had several transmitters at every register below the level of the Companions—that is if the lines of transmission did not converge below that register—it was generally considered authentic. If, however, at some level below

10 For a modern examination of these phenomena, see G.H.A. Juynboll, “Some isnād-analytical Methods illustrated on the basis of several woman-demeaning Sayings from Ḥadīth Literature,” Qantara 10 (1989):343–84.
the Companions, a ḥadīth had only a single transmitter—that is if its lines of transmission did converge—its authenticity was cast into doubt. The question that occupied the mind of the critic in such cases was: How could it be that this transmitter was the only one of his alleged teacher’s students to transmit the ḥadīth from him? There was a strong suspicion that he had made it up himself and falsely ascribed it to his teacher. Thus, when a transmitter’s ḥadīth closely matched those of his peers, he was considered reliable and when he transmitted ḥadīth unknown to his fellow students, it was feared that he was a forger. However, if a student transmitted a ḥadīth unparalleled in the transmissions of his peers, it might be accepted on the basis of his previously established good reputation. Such cases were evaluated individually. When there was a gap in the transmission of a ḥadīth—that is when its lines of transmission converged on a gap—it was treated as a special case of the convergence on a single transmitter, the difference being that the identity of the transmitter was unknown. Being unknown, there was no way of taking into consideration his reputation and, as a consequence, these ḥadīth were normally rejected out of hand.

III. The Lines of Transmission Do Not Converge

A. The Collation of Ḥadīth

Ḥadīth that were transmitted by more than one scholar in each generation were usually considered authentic. If there were two contradictory ḥadīth on the same legal question, the normal practice was to accept the one represented in the most lines of transmission. Muslim’s Kitāb al-Tamyīz treats instances in which two differing versions of a ḥadīth are ascribed to a single transmitter. According to Muslim the problem

is that a group of scholars of ḥadīth narrate a ḥadīth from someone like Zuhri—or some other prominent scholar—with a single isnād and a single text (matn), agreeing on the narration of it in isnād and text and not differing over it at all; while someone else relates it from the very same person that the group which we described transmitted from and he contradicts them in regard to the isnād or alters the text (yaqılıbu 'l-matn), and so makes it disagree with what the scholars of ḥadīth whom we described transmitted. According to this procedure by means of which we saw the scholars of ḥadīth like Shu‘ba, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna,
Yahyā b. Saʿīd, ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī and other prominent scholars judging hadīth, it is known then that the correct relation is the one the group of the scholars of hadīth transmitted and not [that of] the isolated individual, even if he was careful.\footnote{11}\\nIn accordance with his belief that the lines of transmission of a defective hadīth will converge at some register on a single transmitter (or on a small number of transmitters), Muslim does little more than show that the hadīth to be favored is represented in more lines of transmission.\\nMuslim’s procedure is clearly shown in his analysis of the authenticity of a hadīth of Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād (d. 136/753) from Kurayb b. Abī Muslim (d. 98/716), a client of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās, on the question of whether a lone individual is to stand to the right or to the left of the prayer leader. He first cites the defective version:\n
\[
\text{Ḥasan al-Ḥulwānī and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Dārimī—}
\text{ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Majīd—Kathīr b. Zayd—Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād—}
\text{Kurayb—Ibn Ṭabbās: He said, “I spent the night with my aunt Maymūna. The Messenger of God lay along the length of the mattress and I lay across it. He got up and performed an ablution while we were sleeping. Then he stood and prayed. I stood on his right and he took me and put me on his left. When he prayed, I said, ‘O’ Messenger of God, etc.’”}
\]

Muslim comments,\\n
This report is wrong and poorly documented, for the correct versions narrated by the reliable transmitters are in agreement on the opposite of that, [namely,] that Ibn Ṭabbās [originally] stood to the left of the Messenger of God and he shifted him around until he stood him to his right. Likewise, the sunna of the Messenger of God in the rest of the reports from Ibn Ṭabbās is that the lone prayer with the prayer leader stands to the right of the prayer leader, not to his left. We will mention—God willing—the relation of the [other] students of Kurayb from Kurayb from Ibn Ṭabbās . . . [gap in the text]. After that we will then mention the relation of all of the other students of Ibn Ṭabbās from Ibn Ṭabbās in agreement with [the more common form of the report from] Kurayb, [e.g.] Ibn Abī ʿUmar—Suḥyān—ʿAmr b. Dānār—Kurayb—Ibn Ṭabbās, that he spent a night with Maymūna. The Messenger of God got up at night and performed an ablution. Ibn Ṭabbās said, “I got up and did the same thing as the Messenger of God. Then I went and stood on his left and he moved me to his right.”\footnote{11 Muslim, Ḫitāb al-Tamyīz, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Aʿzamī (Riyadh, n.d.), 126.}
Muslim now lists the twelve other lines of transmission of the version given by ‘Amr b. Dīnār (from Kurayb) in which the Prophet put the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās on his right, four through Kurayb and eight others through other students of Ibn ‘Abbās. He then says,

It is established by the authentic reports from Kurayb and the rest of the students of Ibn ‘Abbās which we cited that it is an indubitable error and mistake that the Prophet stood [Ibn ‘Abbās] on his left. The relation of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh from the Prophet is similar to that which is established from Ibn ‘Abbās, [namely,] that the Prophet stood him to his right. In the story of Ibn Jazara from ‘Ubdāda b. al-Sāmit b. ‘Ubdāda [are the words], “We went to Jābir and he said, ‘The Messenger of God stood up and prayed. Then I went on his left. He took my hand and moved me around until he had stood me on his right. Then Jabbār b. Ṣakhr came and stood to the left of the Messenger of God. He then took both of us by the hand and pushed us back until he had stood us behind him.’” Muhammad b. al-Munkadīr related the same thing from Jābir.12

Thus, the spuriousness of the first version, that of Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād from Kurayb, was shown by its contradiction by the version transmitted by the other students of Kurayb and the version transmitted by the other students of Kurayb’s teacher, Ibn ‘Abbās. Muslim then cites as further reinforcement the report from the Companion Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 78/697) expressing the same doctrine.

B. The Evaluation of the Transmitters

1. Intrinsic Considerations

For the critics, the authenticity of a ḥadīth depended on the reliability of its transmitters. If a ḥadīth was authentic, it was because it had been carefully preserved and handed down by scholars from the time of the Prophet. Conversely, if a ḥadīth was unauthentic, it was because someone had either distorted or forged it. Therefore, if a ḥadīth was to be rejected, one of its transmitters had to be labelled as unreliable.

How, then, did the critics know whether a transmitter—who by their time may have already been dead a century or more—was reliable or not? The critics’ appraisal of a transmitter was based almost entirely on their opinion of the material he taught. The occurrence of a transmitter’s name in the isnads of a ḥadīth deemed to

12 Muslim, Tamqiz, 136–38.
be unauthentic was very detrimental to his reputation. Muslim in the introduction to his Ṣaḥīḥ says,

The sign of the unauthentic ḥadīth (munkar) of a transmitter is that, if his narration of a ḥadīth is compared ('uridat) to that of other worthy scholars, his relation contradicts their relation or barely agrees with it. If the majority of his ḥadīth are like that, he is renounced, unacceptable, and unusable in ḥadīth.¹³

In his Kītāb al-Tamyīz (p. 162), Muslim writes:

Sound [transmissions] are distinguished from the unsound ones and transmitters of weak reports are distinguished from their opposites among scholars of ḥadīth by the collection of these relations and the comparison (muqābala) of one with another. For that reason, the scholars with expertise in ḥadīth regard as weak (reading: ḍa'afā) ‘Umar b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Khath‘am and transmitters like him (reading: wa-ashbāhātā) because of their transmission of some rejected ḥadīth which do not conform to the narrations of the well-known reliable scholars of ḥadīth.

It is because the scholar’s transmissions differ from those of his colleagues that he is considered unreliable. When asked whose transmissions should be rejected, part of Shu‘ba’s answer was, “Whoever transmits from well-known transmitters what the [other] well-known transmitters are not familiar with.”¹⁴

To assign the blame for an unauthentic ḥadīth, the critic would collect all of the versions of it at his disposal and then compare them to see who transmitted it first.¹⁵ This was determined by the convergence of the lines of transmission. Ibn Ḥibbān’s interest in the transmitter Baqīya b. al-Walīd al-Ḥimṣi (110/728–197/812) was piqued after he came across Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s admission that he had erred in thinking that Baqīya related unauthentic ḥadīth only from unknown transmitters, and that he now believed that Baqīya also transmitted them from famous ones. Ibn Ḥibbān says,

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¹³ Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, 1:5; cf. G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 269.

¹⁴ Ibn ʿAdī, Kāmil, 1:163; Ibn Ḥibbān, Majrūḥīn, 1:74; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāya, 142.

Abū 'Abd Allāh [i.e. Ahmad b. Hanbal] did not [deliberately] slander him, but he only looked at some forged ḥadīth related from him from reliable people and rejected them. On my life, he is hasty in rejection! For something even worse than this there is no reason to impugn the reliability of a person in ḥadīth. I entered Homs and my greatest concern was Baqīya. I tracked down his ḥadīth and I copied the notes [of his students] in their entirety. I tracked down the relation of his early students which I did not find [at first] with short isnāds. I saw that he was reliable, but he was someone who doctored isnāds (mudallīs). He heard ḥadīth in a correct manner from 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umar, Shu'ba and Mālik. Then he heard [some ḥadīth] ascribed to 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umar, Shu'ba and Mālik from rejected and weak liars, like al-Mujāshi b. 'Amr, al-Sarī b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, 'Umar b. Mūsā al-Mithami, others of their ilk and some people known only by their kunyās. [Baqīya] related [the material] he heard from these weak transmitters as coming directly from those reliable scholars he had seen. He used to say, “'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umar from Nāfi’” and “Mālik from Nāfi’,” etc. [His students] transmitted [the material] (ja-ḥamāti) from Baqīya [directly] from 'Ubayd Allāh and from Baqīya [directly] from Mālik and the feeble transmitter was omitted from between [Baqīya and the sound transmitter]. As a consequence, the forged ḥadīth were attributed to Baqīya and the [real] forger escaped from in between. In reality, Baqīya was taxed with some students who used to omit [the names of] the weak transmitters from [the isnāds of] his ḥadīth and transmitted them without the weak transmitters (yusawwirinahū). So all of that [forging] was attributed to him.¹⁶

By close scrutiny of the transmissions of Baqīya’s students, Ibn Ḥībbān discovered that he had only passed on the forgeries of his own teachers and did not forge the ḥadīth himself. However, because he and his students often omitted the names of the weak transmitters from their isnāds, it appeared at first glance that he was personally responsible for the forging.

Yaḥyā b. Maṣ‘īn used the same basic technique to determine whether Ḥammād b. Salama al-‘Aṣrī (d. 167/783) was the author of certain defective ḥadīth.

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¹⁶ The somewhat uncommon term “tasawwur” refers to the practice of omitting transmitters from isnāds, either because they were weak or to shorten the isnād for the sake of elevation (‘ulūw). For a complete definition, see Ibn Hajar, Nukṣ, 2:260–61.

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥībbān, Majrūḥūn, 1:200–1 (see also 1:74, 94); Dhahabī, Mizān, 1:332–33; id., Siyār, 8:323–24; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdīh, 1:476–77.
Yahyā b. Maʿīn went to ‘Affān to hear the books of Hammād b. Salama from him. [‘Affān] said to him, “Have you not heard them from anyone else?” [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] said, “Yes, seventeen people have transmitted to me from Hammād b. Salama.” [‘Affān] said, “By God, I will not transmit to you.” [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] said, “This is a mistake. I will go to al- Başra and hear [them] from Tabūdhakī.”[19] [‘Affān] said, “[That is] your business.” Yahyā b. Maʿīn went to al- Başra and Tabūdhakī said to him, “Have you not heard these books from anyone?” Yahyā b. Maʿīn said, “I heard them in their entirety from seventeen people and you are the eighteenth.” [Tabūdhakī] said, “Why do you do this?” [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] replied, “Hammād b. Salama used to make mistakes and I want to distinguish the errors he made from those which others made. If I see that his students unanimously transmit something [from him], I know that the error originates from Hammād himself. If they unanimously transmit something from him and one of them says [something] in disagreement with them, I know that the error originates from [that student] and not from Hammād. Thus, I distinguish between his own errors and the errors attributed to him [by his students].”[20]

In another report, Yahyā b. Maʿīn recounts a conversation that he had with Ismāʿīl b. ‘Ulayya (d. 194/809) regarding the latter’s status as a transmitter.

Ismāʿīl b. ‘Ulayya said to me, “How are my ḥadīth?” I said, “You are accurate in ḥadīth (mustaqīm al-ḥadīth).” He said to me, “How did you learn that?” I said to him, “I compared [your ḥadīth] with some of the ḥadīth of the people (ṭaraḍnā biḥā ahādīth al-nāṣ). I saw that they were accurate (mustaqīma).” He said, “Praise be to God,” and kept saying it and praising his Lord until he entered the house of Bishr b. Maʿrūf with me—or he said, “the house of Abu ‘l-Bakhtārī.”[21]

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19 The Başra Musā b. Ismāʿīl al-Tabūdhakī (d. 223/838) was regarded as one of the best transmitters from Hammād b. Salama; Jawh, 4(1):136; Dhahabi, Mızān, 4:200; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīth, 10:333–35.
20 Ibn Hībān, Majrūḥān, 1:32; Dhahabi, Siyar, 7:456. (This passage is also translated in M.M. Azarni, Methodology and Literature, 52–53.) In the Taqīdām (p. 315), Ibn Abī Ḥātim records a report in which Yahyā b. Maʿīn is depicted as going to Tabūdhakī to hear the jāmiʿ of Hammād b. Salama after hearing it from seventeen other transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, however, gives as Yahyā b. Maʿīn’s motivation his desire to obtain the work in its most complete form. He says, “By [doing] that, he desired [to obtain] the additions in the possession of some of [his students], because Hammād b. Salama transmitted ḥadīth to them from memory (mīn bikfīh). One thing after another occurred to him and he related it. Few were those who studied with him who did not have something that the others did not.”
When Yahyā b. Ma‘īn compared the transmissions of Ibn ‘Ulayya with those of other scholars, he was able to see that they matched closely and, on this basis, drew the conclusion that he was a reliable transmitter.

Finally, we may cite the case which Ibn Ḥibbān makes the paradigm for all personality criticism. Concerned here is a ḥadīth which Ḥammād b. Salama was alone in transmitting from his teacher Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī (d. 131/748).

If we go to Ḥammād b. Salama, we see that he transmitted a report from Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] from [Muḥammad] b. Sīrīn from Abū Hurayra from the Prophet. We do not find that report with any other student of Ayyūb. [However,] we are obliged to refrain from impugning [Ḥammād b. Salama] and compare [it] with what his contemporaries transmitted (wa-‘l-‘ibār bi-mā rawā ghayruhū min aqrānīhi). It is necessary that we first examine this report: Did several of [Ḥammād’s] students transmit it from him or only one, all by himself? If it is found that several of his students transmitted it [from him], then it is known that Ḥammād indeed transmitted it. [But,] if it is found to be the transmission of a single weak [transmitter] from Ḥammād, then it is ascribed to that transmitter and not to him.

When it is established that [Ḥammād] did transmit from Ayyūb something which no one else did, then it is necessary to pause and weakness should not be ascribed to him [yet]. Rather, it should be ascertained: Has any reliable transmitter other than Ayyūb transmitted this report from Ibn Sīrīn? If that is found, then it is known that the report has a source from which it derives.

If what we described is not found, it is then ascertained: Did any reliable transmitter other than Ibn Sīrīn transmit this report from Abū Hurayra? If that is found, then it is known that the report has a source.

If what we said is not found, then it is ascertained: Does anyone relate this report from the Prophet other than Abū Hurayra? If that is found, it is established that the report has a source. When that is absent and the report is itself at variance with the three sources [i.e. Ibn Sīrīn, Abū Hurayra and the Prophet], then it is known that the report is undoubtedly a forgery and that the transmitter who was alone in transmitting it [at some point in the chain of transmission] is the one who forged it.²²

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Ibn Ḥibbān wanted to know whether Ḥammād b. Salama had forged a certain ḥadīth he claimed to have received from his teacher Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī. That Ḥammād was the only one of Ayyūb’s students to transmit the ḥadīth suggested that he may have made it up. Ibn Ḥibbān investigated the question in a very systematic manner. First, he sought to determine whether the ḥadīth was perhaps forged by one of Ḥammād’s students and falsely ascribed to him. If only one of Ḥammād’s students transmitted the ḥadīth from him, Ibn Ḥibbān was content to let the matter lie and regard that student as the forger. However, if several of Ḥammād’s students transmitted the ḥadīth, there could be no doubt that Ḥammād actually taught it. Ibn Ḥibbān then turned his attention to the history of the transmission of the ḥadīth prior to the time of Ḥammād. He wanted to know whether there were any alternate lines of transmission for the ḥadīth which did not pass through Ayyūb and Ḥammād. If one could have been found, it would have shown that it was impossible for Ḥammād to have forged the ḥadīth. Perhaps Ayyūb was not the only student of Ibn Sīrīn to transmit the ḥadīth; perhaps Ibn Sīrīn was not the only student of the Companion Abū Hurayra to transmit the ḥadīth; perhaps Abū Hurayra was not the only Companion to transmit the ḥadīth from the Prophet. If alternate lines of transmission could have been found, the lines of transmission of the ḥadīth would no longer converge on Ḥammād and he could not be considered the forger. If not, the conclusion was inescapable that Ḥammād had forged it.

2. Extrinsic Considerations
It is worth adding at this juncture that in general the critics paid little attention to anecdotal information concerning the reliability of transmitters. Ibn Ḥibbān says that the views of a scholar’s neighbors and fellow townsmen are immaterial in determining his reliability as a transmitter. That, he says, can only be determined by someone versed in the art of ḥadīth.\footnote{Ibn Ḥibbān, Sahīh, 1:112–13.} Considerations extrinsic to the transmitter’s performance as a transmitter had little or no influence on the formulation of the critic’s judgement. It is interesting to note, for instance, that we find no transmitter rejected solely for consuming alcohol, a practice which would seem to combine impiety and
the potential for faulty transmission in an unsurpassable fashion. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is known to history as a paragon of strictness. Yet we find him lightly dismissing the wine-drinking of some Kūfans as a lapse which did not harm their competence in the transmission of hadith.  

When the students of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal asked him about the imbibing of Khalaf b. Ḥishām al-Bazzār (150/767–229/844), he said, “I have heard that about him. But, by God, he is reliable and trustworthy in my opinion, whether he drank or not.” It was well known that the unimpeachable al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī was a drinker. He conducted his classes with wine jugs in view and on occasion became so intoxicated that he walked into walls. Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāh, upon whom Ibn ʿAbī Ḥātim bestows the rank of critic in the Taqdimā, taught hadith only as long as the supply of wine held out.

In general we find that a scholar’s failure to study with a transmitter is attributed to extrinsic considerations in those cases where the hadith of the transmitter in question were more or less sound. This failure was often interpreted as the scholar’s rejection of the transmitter and was therefore inexplicable in terms of technical criticism. In essence, the reports attempt to explain why someone did not study with a reliable transmitter one had every reason to expect him to transmit from. The sources give different reasons for Shuʿba not transmitting from Abu ʿl-Zubayr Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Tadrus al-Makkī (d. 128/745). In one report, Shuʿba is said to have rejected him because he had slandered a fellow Muslim and, in another, because he gave short weight when selling goods. According to yet another story, Shuʿba advised Suwad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz not to study

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24 Ḥarh, 1(1):26. The Kūfans regarded wine-drinking as permissible. Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāh said, “If you see a Basrī drinking wine (nabīd), suspect him [for it]. If you see a Kūfī drinking wine, do not suspect him [for it].” When asked the reason for this, he replied, “The Kūfī drinks it as an act of faith and the Basrī abstains from it as an act of faith.” Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 1:278. See also G.H.A. Juynboll, Muslim Tradition, 65. ʿAbd Allah b. Idrīs does say, “No attention is paid to the hadith of anyone who drinks any intoxicating beverage at all,” (Ibn Ḥibbān, Maqāmāt, 1:23) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also feels that drinking wrecks integrity (Kifāya, 105).

25 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Taʾrīkh, 8:326.

26 See above, p. 21.


28 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāya, 115; Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:381–82; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:441–42.
with him since he had seen him doing his prayers incorrectly.²⁹ The fact is that Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makki's ḥadīth were authentic according to the standards of the critics and he was rated as reliable by many of them. Tirmidhī, for instance, regards Shu’ba’s rejection of him as anomalous.³⁰ It is telling that a report recorded by Fasawī has the duped Suwayd express his regret for having followed the advice of Shu’ba: “Shu’ba tricked me. He said to me, ‘Do not transmit from him. I saw him doing his prayers incorrectly.’ I wish I had never seen Shu’ba!”³¹ Because Shu’ba’s failure to transmit from Abu ‘l-Zubayr al-Makki was inexplicable, a huge area for speculation over its cause was opened.

Analogous to this case is Mālik’s rejection of Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq. How was it that Mālik failed to transmit from his famous fellow townsman?³² His ḥadīth were acceptable, so that could not have been the reason. In various sources we find this puzzling circumstance attributed to a number of causes, all utterly unconnected with his competence as a transmitter. These mostly concern personal disputes between Mālik and him or peccadillos committed by him which could be expected to offend someone so unnecessarily moral as Mālik must have been, but which carried no weight with Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his fellows. Examples of this phenomenon could easily be multiplied.³³

Needless to say, the critics ignored such reports in the formulation of their judgements. In response to the charge that Abu ‘l-Zubayr al-Makki was dishonest in weighing goods, Ibn Hibbān stated that this did not constitute an adequate cause for rejecting a transmitter.³⁴ Elsewhere, he dismisses Shu’ba’s reasoning along such lines as a “personal habit” (da‘b).³⁵ When Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was asked why Mālik did not transmit from Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm (d. ca. 126/743), he said that there was a “story” (qīṣṣa) between them. He went on to say, “It does not matter to Sa’d that Mālik did not transmit from him.”³⁶

²⁹ Taqdimā, 151; Dhahabī, Sīyar, 5:382–83.
³⁰ Tirmidhī, Ṣaḥīh, 13:331–32.
³¹ Fasawī, Ma‘rifā, 2:780.
³² See above, p. 81.
³³ Another interesting instance from the Taqdimā (pp. 153, 172) is Shu’ba’s rejection of al-Minḥāl b. ʿAmr, which should be studied in conjunction with Jāfīr, 4(1):356–57 and Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 10:319–21.
³⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:442.
³⁵ Ibn Hibbān, Majrūḥān, 1:30.
³⁶ Fasawī, Ma‘rifā, 1:411, 3:31. One story has it that Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm admon-
C. Judgements on Transmitters

1. Absolute Appraisals
The investigations of the critics into the reliability of transmitters resolved themselves into three basic kinds of judgements, absolute, relative and conditional; and examples of all three are found in the Taqdimina. The most common kind of these was the absolute. Most often absolute appraisals consist of a few words evaluating the transmitter's entire activity, usually taking the form “X is reliable,” “Y is weak,” etc. The terminology varies greatly and different critics preferred different terms. Even when the critics did happen to use the same term there is nothing to suggest that they meant the same thing by it, except in a general sense. At the earliest stages it does not appear that the locutions used for indicating the general reliability of transmitters possessed technical meanings, although terms like “mudallis” (one who doctors isnāds) and “hadhadāb” (liar), which describe more or less specific behaviors, naturally did to some extent.

Some critics categorized transmitters by grades. The earliest of these efforts were abstract, not attempting to relate the grades of transmitters to the terminology employed by the critics. In the Taqdimina, Ibn Abī Hātim divides transmitters into five categories:

1) There is the trustworthy, careful, scrupulous, accurate, discerning and critical [transmitter] of hadīth. There is no difference of opinion about him. His personality criticism may be relied upon. Both his hadīth and his criticism of transmitters may be cited as proof texts.

2) The [transmitter] who is upright on his own, trustworthy in his relation, veracious in his transmitting, scrupulous in his religion and careful and accurate in his hadīth. He is the upright [transmitter]

ished Mālik once and Mālik took offense and another maintains that Sa'd cast doubt on Mālik's genealogy, thus earning his ire; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 3:465. The latter offense is also given as a reason for Mālik's rejection of Ibn Ishāq; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Inṣiqūţ, 11. These reasons appear to float fairly freely. Some of the unsavory characteristics of Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī are attributed to Muhammad b. al-Zubayr al-Tamīmī. In one report, Suwayd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz feels tricked by Shu'ba's cautioning him against Muhammad b. al-Zubayr because he performed his prayers incorrectly (Ibn Shāhīn, Ṭakhir asma' al-thiqāt minun marqila anhum al-‘ibn, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'tt Amin Qal'ajī, Beirut, 1406/1986, 278) and in another Shu'ba rejects him for slandering someone (Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:167).

whose ḥadīth are cited as proof texts and he is regarded as reliable on his own.

3) The veracious, scrupulous and trustworthy [transmitter] whom the discerning critics have accepted, [although] he sometimes makes mistakes. His ḥadīth may be cited as proof texts.

4) The veracious and scrupulous [but] neglectful [transmitter] in whom misapprehension, error, mistake and negligence predominate. His ḥadīth treating matters of an inspirational, ascetic or edifying character (al-taghlīb wa-l-tarhib wa-l-zuhd wa-l-ʿadāb) may be recorded. His ḥadīth in religious law (al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥaram) may not be used as proof texts.

5) A šīḥ [transmitter] who has attached himself to them [i.e. the previously mentioned grades of transmitters] and has insinuated himself into their number. He is not honest or veracious. He is someone whose falsehood has become apparent to the critics among them who have knowledge of transmitters and experience. His ḥadīth are abandoned and his transmission is rejected.38

Other critics formulated their own descriptive hierarchies which employed different terms and different numbers of levels.39

2. Relative Appraisals
Relative judgements on transmitters are extremely common in the Ṭaqdima and the books of personality criticism. These judgements nearly always deal with transmitters who shared a common teacher and the form that these comparisons most often take is: X is more reliable than Y in the ḥadīth of their teacher Z. Al-ʿAbbās al-Dūrī asked his teacher Yahyā b. Maʿīn about the students of ʿAmr b. Dinār:

I asked Yahyā b. Maʿīn about the ḥadīth of Shuʿba from ʿAmr b. Dinār, those of [Sufyān] al-Thawrī from ʿAmr b. Dinār and those of Sufyān b. ʿUyayna from ʿAmr b. Dinār. He said, “Sufyān b. ʿUyayna is the most knowledgeable in the ḥadīth of ʿAmr b. Dinār and he is [also] more knowledgeable in [the ḥadīth] of ʿAmr b. Dinār than Ḥammād b. Zayd.” (Ṭaqdima, 37)

38 Ṭaqdima, 10. Ibn Abī Ḥātim is concerned here with the transmitters in the generations after the Companions and Followers. He accepts all of the members of the first two generations of Muslims as reliable.

39 E.g. the three level arrangements ascribed to ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī and Muslim. For that of the former, see Muslim, Tamyīz, 132; Jāhīf, 1.1:38; ʿUqayli, Duʿafī, 1:13. For Muslim’s, see Muslim, Tamyīz, 132; id., Shuʾbīh, 1:3–6; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 266–70.
In discussing the students of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī stated:

“No one is more reliable in [the ḥadīth of] Ibn Sīrīn than Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] and Ibn ‘Awn.”⁴⁰ He was asked, “And if they disagree [on a particular ḥadīth from Ibn Sīrīn]?” He replied, “Ayyūb is more reliable.”⁴¹

The critics reached such judgements by comparing the ḥadīth transmitted by the scholars in question. Ahmad b. Ḥanbal records his use of this procedure to determine whether Ṣufyān b. ‘Uyayn or Mālik was the best student of Zuhrī:

I was with ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī and [the question of] who is the most trustworthy transmitter from Zuhrī came up. ‘Alī said, “Ṣufyān b. ‘Uyayn.” I said, “Mālik, he made fewer mistakes [in the ḥadīth he transmitted] from Zuhrī. Ibn ‘Uyayn made mistakes in about twenty ḥadīth [he transmitted] from Zuhrī, in this ḥadīth and that ḥadīth.” I mentioned eighteen of them and said, “Bring the ones Mālik made mistakes in.” He brought two or three hadīth. I went back and examined the hadīth Ibn ‘Uyayn made mistakes in and in fact there were more than twenty of them.”⁴²

Ahmad b. Ḥanbal noted that Mālik and Ibn ‘Uyayn each transmitted about three hundred hadīth from Zuhrī.

The critics achieved a synthesis of the absolute and relative judgements when they began to integrate the terminology employed in assessing transmitter reliability into their descriptive hierarchies of transmitter competence. This way each particular term of appraisal was related to all others on a rigorously hierarchical basis and thus each came to possess a technical meaning. The first critic to formulate such a hierarchy was Ibn Abī Ḥātim. In the introductory chapter to Jarḥ (1[1]:37), he presents an eight-level guide to the terminology employed in the work. This hierarchy may be represented as follows:

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⁴¹ ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, ‘Īlāh, 64.
⁴² Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Kītb al-‘Īl wa-maʿrifat al-rijaḥ, ed. Talāt Koççīt and İsmail Cerrahoğlu (Ankara, 1963), 370; Ḥāzimī, Shurūṭ, 39; Dḥahabi, Mīzān, 2:170; Ibn Rajab, Shahr, 166.
Reliable Transmitters

1) “Reliable” (ṣaḥiq) or “accurate and trustworthy” (mutqin thabat): His ḥadīth may be cited as proof texts.

2) “Veracious” (ṣadūq) or “his station is veracity” (mahalluhu ‘l-sīdq) or “not bad” (lā ba’ṣa bihi): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined.

3) “Teacher” (shaykh): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined but are inferior to those of the second level scholar.

4) “Good in ḥadīth” (sāliḥ al-ḥadīth): His hadith may be recorded for analysis (lī-‘l-iṭibār).

Unreliable Transmitters

1) “Soft in ḥadīth” (layyin al-ḥadīth): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined for the purpose of analysis.

2) “He is not strong” (laya bi-qawā): In regard to the recording of his ḥadīth he on the same level as the first [rank of unreliable transmitter], but is inferior to them.

3) “Weak in ḥadīth” (da’īf al-ḥadīth): He is inferior to the transmitter of the previous level. However, his ḥadīth are not rejected but are taken into consideration.

4) “Abandoned in ḥadīth” (matrūk al-ḥadīth), “Wasted in ḥadīth” (dhāḥib al-ḥadīth) or “liar” (kadhīdhāb): He is “fallen” (sāqīf) in ḥadīth and his ḥadīth are not to be recorded.

This scheme found favor with later writers and was regularly cited.44

3. Conditional Appraisals

Conditional appraisals are rarer than either absolute or relative ones, but are nevertheless quite common. There are a number of appraisals of this type in the Taqdimā and Ibn Numayr’s assessment of ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Utba al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 160/776) may be cited as an example.

Mas‘ūdī was reliable. At the end of his life, he became mixed-up (bi-akharatīn ikhtalaṭa). ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī and Yazīd b. Hārūn45 heard some mixed-up hadith from him. What the early students (al-shayūkh) heard from him is alright. (Taqdimā, 322; Jarḥ, 2[2]:251)

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43 For further explanation of this particular designation, see Jarḥ, 1(1):133.
45 Abū Khalīd Yazīd b. Hārūn al-Wāsiṭū (118/736–206/821); Sezgin, GAST, 1:40.
As is shown here, the conditional appraisal makes a distinction in the reliability of a scholar’s transmissions according to when they were made. In this case, the early transmissions of Mas‘ūdī were considered reliable, but those dating from after the time he became mixed-up were considered unreliable. The critics regarded a number of circumstances as possessing a potentially harmful effect on the reliability of an individual’s transmissions, including the loss of eyesight, senility and the destruction of the materials on which he had written his hadith. All of these came under the general heading of “ikhtilāf” (to become mixed-up).

Those transmitters who went blind or lost their books were forced to rely solely on their memories. The critics of this era had little confidence in the human memory and saw transmission from memory as the source of many errors. In particular, the critics feared that unscrupulous students would victimize those who transmitted without the benefit of written materials by means of a procedure called ṭalqīn or “prompting.” The unscrupulous students brought collections of hadith to their teacher, claiming that they were the teacher’s very own, copied by an earlier student. These they presented to him and asked his permission to transmit them under his name. Apparently lacking even the vaguest notion of what he used to teach, the transmitter happily obliged them. The students’ books were invariably filled with defective hadith.

The onset of senility or dotage, like the forced reliance on memory, was also believed to lead a transmitter into error.⁴⁶ Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūba (d. between 148/767 and 157/773) was probably the most famous dotard among the scholars of hadith. His transmissions dating from before his dotage were normally considered sound. Abū Ḥātim declares, “Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūba was reliable before he became senile” (qabla an yakhtalīta).⁴⁷ However, his transmissions made after the onset of his senility were to be rejected. According to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, one specific manifestation of Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūba’s senility was his confusing the names in isnāds.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ An exception to this pattern was Ḥammām b. Yahyā (d. 164/780), who, according to Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, became more reliable when a prolonged infirmity befell him because he began to rely more heavily on his notes; Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Ṭal‘, 111; Ibn Rajab, Ṣharḥ, 415.
⁴⁷ Faraḥ, 2(1):66; Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, 4:64.
⁴⁸ Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, 4:65.
Theoretically, it should have been possible to judge the reliability of a particular transmission on the basis of whether it preceded or followed the advent of the teacher’s disability. In discussing Muhammad b. al-Fāḍl al-Sadūsī (d. 214/829), known as “Arim,” Ibn Hibbān states that one may accept the transmissions of a reliable teacher who became senile if it can be determined that the transmissions were obtained before the onset of his senility; the rest have to be rejected:

[Muhammad b. al-Fāḍl al-Sadūsī] became senile at the end of his life and [his mind] went bad (ikhtalaṣa fi ʾākhir ʿumrihī wa-taghayyara) to such an extent that he no longer knew what he was transmitting, so many rejected hadīth occurred in his relation. What his early students relate from him before senility befell him—if it is known that their audition of him preceded [his mind] going bad—that is, if someone cites it as a proof text after ascertaining what I mentioned, then I hope he will not be impugned for doing that. As for the relation of his later students from him, it is necessary to avoid it under all circumstances. If the audition of his early students of him cannot be distinguished from that of his late ones, everything is to be rejected and none of it may be adduced as a proof text. This is the treatment for all of those whose [mind] went bad and who became senile at the end of their life, if they were veracious before becoming senile and were known for their recording ḥadīth in writing, extensive collecting and exactitude.\(^{49}\)

The critics on occasion tried to assign an exact date to the onset of a transmitter’s disability, but often this proved problematic. Six different dates between the years 132/749 and 150/767 were proposed for the onset of dotage in Saʿīd b. Abī Ṭarība.\(^{50}\) Ostensibly the critic should have been able to use the date, if one could be arrived at, to determine whether specific students transmitted from him before or after his reliability had become impaired. However, the truth is that the critics rarely knew the exact date a particular student studied with a teacher. So, from a practical standpoint, the date of the onset of a transmitter’s dotage or other disability was useless.

Nevertheless, the critics professed knowledge of which students studied with a transmitter before the onset of his disability and which studied after. It is in this that we find an insight into the nature of

\(^{49}\) Ibn Hibbān, Majrūḥīn, 2:294–95. See also id., Sahih, 1:121–22.
\(^{50}\) Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdīḥīb, 4:63–66.
the conditional appraisal. One may imagine that collation of ḥadīth had no place here. Unlike absolute or relative appraisals, which are more clearly derived from the examination of the transmitter’s ḥadīth, the conditional appraisal appears to be based on factual historical knowledge since it refers to a specific event in time, e.g. the onset of senility in the transmitter, the loss of his books. Close examination, however, shows that this is usually not the case and that the presence of a disability warranting a conditional judgement was often deduced from the scrutiny of the ḥadīth transmitted from the scholar in question. The evidence of these disabilities was the presence of large variations from student to student in the reliability of the scholar’s transmissions. Whether a given student studied with him before or after the onset of his disability was determined by an examination of the quality of that student’s transmissions. Those students whose transmissions were sound were assumed to have studied with him before and those whose transmissions were defective, after.

Because all of the possible disabilities manifest themselves in a similar fashion in the transmitter’s material, that is in a palpable variation in the quality of his transmissions, presumably from student to student, it is not surprising that there are instances where the critics do not agree on exactly which particular one a transmitter suffered from. Most critics felt that there was some variation in the reliability of the transmissions of the different students of the Egyptian judge ʿAbd Allāh b. Lahiʿa (ca. 97/715–ca. 174/790). The majority of these believed that he had lost his written materials in a fire in either 169/785 or 170/786. Those students who recorded sound ḥadīth

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51 For an explicit example of this kind of reasoning, see Ahmad b. Hanbal’s discussion of Abū Qatāda in Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ḥalāl, 230–31; Jarḥ, 2(2):191–92; Ibn Hajar, Taḥāth, 6:66.

52 Ishāq b. ʿIsā gives the date as 169/785; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ḥalāl, 237; Ibn ʿAdī, Kāmil, 4:1463; Dhaḥabī, ʿĪmar, 8:13; id., Mīzān, 2:477; id., Tadhkīra, 1:238 (where his name is given as “Ishāq b. Mūsā”); Ibn Hajar, Taḥāth, 5:376. The date of 170/786 is given by Yahyā b. Bukayr; Bukhārī, al-Taʿrīkh al-ṣaghīr, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zaydīd, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1406/1986), 2:189; id., al-Taʿrīkh al-kabīr, 3(1):183; Jarḥ, 2(2):146; Ibn Hibbān, Majrūḥīn, 2:11 (without reference to Yahyā b. Bukayr); Ibn ʿAdī, Kāmil, 4:1462; Dhaḥabī, ʿĪmar, 8:18; Ibn Hajar, Taḥāth, 5:376. There are many other references to the fire that do not give an exact date. A report from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak seems to place Ibn Lahiʿa’s downfall considerably earlier than 169/785 or 170/786. In 179/795, he stated that the transmissions of those who studied with Ibn Lahiʿa in the preceding twenty years were worthless, without specifically mentioning the fire; Fasāwī, Maʿrīfa, 2:185; Ibn Hibbān, Majrūḥīn, 1:76; 2:12.
had studied with him before the fire, at a time when he still had his notes to teach from. Those whose transmissions were defective studied with him after the fire, when he had only his memory to rely upon. ‘Amr b. ‘Ali al-Fallās (ca. 160/776–249/863) says,

The books of ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahi‘a were consumed in a fire. So, those who wrote from him before that, like [‘Abd Allāh] b. al-Mubārak and ‘Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Muqri‘, are more correct than those who wrote [from him] after the books were destroyed by fire, when he was weak in ḥadīth. (Jāh, 2[2]:147)

The mistakes entered his transmissions, according to al-Ḥākim al-Niṣābūrī (321/933–404/1014), when Ibn Lahi‘a continued teaching from memory after the destruction of his books.33 However, the famous historian and Qur’ān commentator Ṭabarī (224/839–310/923) maintained that it was ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahi‘a’s senility (i.e. ikhtalaṭa ‘aqlahū fī ākhiri ‘umrahi) which accounted for the variation in the reliability of his transmissions.34 ‘Uthmān b. Šāliḥ al-Sahmī (144/761–219/834), who styled himself “the person most knowledgeable of the cause of the disability of Ibn Lahi‘a,” said that not all of the books of Ibn Lahi‘a were consumed in the fire and that in fact his original notes escaped.35 According to him, Ibn Lahi‘a’s problem began later when he was riding an ass, suffered a stroke and fell off.36

Other scholars, while aware of the deficiencies of Ibn Lahi‘a’s transmissions, declined to introduce a strict chronological element into the discussion and their assessments differ primarily in the amount of culpability they assign to Ibn Lahi‘a. When Abū Zur‘a was asked about the transmissions of his early students, he said,

His late and early [transmissions] are equal. However, Ibn al-Mubārak and Ibn Wahb used to track down his original notes and then wrote from him. The rest used to write [directly] from the teacher, and Ibn Lahi‘a was not precise. (Jāh, 2[2]:147–48)

‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak and ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743–197/812) were among those whose ḥadīth from Ibn Lahi‘a were generally

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34 Ibn Ḥajar, Tuhdīh, 5:379.
35 Dhahabī, Mizān, 2:476; id., Siyar, 8:13; id., Tadhkira, 239; Ibn Ḥajar, Tuhdīh, 5:376.
36 Dhahabī, Mizān, 2:476; id., Siyar, 8:24–25.
considered reliable. Elsewhere, Abū Zur‘a explicitly rejects the notion that Ibn Lahī’a’s books were consumed by a fire and says that he was merely careless (radi al-hifz). Ahmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī—who was a student of Ibn Lahī’a’s secretary, Abu ‘l-Aswad al-Naḍr b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār (145/762–219/834)—also explicitly rejected the notion that there was any difference between the early and late transmissions of Ibn Lahī’a. He claimed that Ibn Lahī’a used to read to his students, some of whom took accurate notes, while others did not write the ḥadīth down on the spot, but instead waited until later and consequently spoiled them. At some date, Ibn Lahī’a stopped reading from his books. Those who sought his ḥadīth had to copy them from his earlier students and these they read back to him. The quality of the ḥadīth of these later students depended entirely on the accuracy of the notes they copied. The secretary Abu ‘l-Aswad, himself, accused his employer of allowing any hadīth brought to him to be transmitted under his name. Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam (144/761–224/839), Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd (168/784–230/845), Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān (144/761–208/823) and Ibn Khirāsh (d. 283/896) made the same charge. In one passage Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam remarks on the similarity of Ibn Lahī’a’s transmissions from before and after the alleged fire. Elsewhere, he asserts that none of Ibn Lahī’a’s books was consumed by fire. For his part, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, who not incidentally held all of Ibn Lahī’a’s transmissions to be equally unauthentic, explicitly rejected the story of the books being consumed in a fire. He says that he asked about the matter in Egypt and was told that there was no fire.

57 Bardha‘ī, Dā’if, 346.
58 Fasawi, Ma‘rifa, 2:184, 443; Dhabahib, Siyar, 8:18; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdhib, 5:376.
61 Johār, 2(2):146.
62 Dhabahib, Siyar, 8:16; id., Taḥdhib, 238; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdhib, 5:376.
4. Sectarian Designations
Before closing the discussion of the types of technical judgements, we must first examine the sectarian labels applied by the critics to certain transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues were, as a general rule, adherents of what is now called the Ḥanbalite creed. Viewing themselves as the true heirs to the legacy of Muḥammad, they were quick to reject those ḥadīth expressing theological tendencies in conflict with their own. The subjectivity inherent in this did not escape the notice of their rivals, although a profound sense of righteousness shielded the adherents of ḥadīth from any doubts.

According to the scholars of ḥadīth, both the sectarian (e.g. sāhib hawā, sāhib al-biḍa or muqtadī) and heretic (zindiq or kāfar) threatened to undermine the Muslim community with their baleful propensity for forging ḥadīth to support their baseless doctrines. On the subject of heretics, Ibn Ḥibbān writes:

They embraced heresy and unbelief and did not believe in God and the Day of Judgement. They went to cities and posed as scholars. They attributed forged ḥadīth to [other] scholars and [they pretended to] relate from them, in order to sow doubt and uncertainty in the hearts of [the people of the cities]. They were misguided and they misguided [others]. Reliable transmitters heard from them what they related and transmitted it to those who came after them. [The forged ḥadīth] fell into the hands of the people until they were circulating them among themselves.65

Hammād b. Zayd was of the opinion that heretics were responsible for the forgery of more than twelve thousand ḥadīth.66 Reports purporting to be the confessions of heretics and sectarians form an interesting genre in the literature aimed at impressing upon the student the importance of a critical outlook. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Abī Qays al-Urdunni, who was executed for heresy by the caliph al-Mansūr and was distinguished from all other Muḥammad b. Saʿīds by the epithet “the crucified,” unburdened himself, “When I hear a beautiful expression, I do not scruple from making an isnād for it.”67 One sectarian who had returned to the orthodox fold warned, “Be careful from whom you take these hadith. Whenever we came up with

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64 Ibn Qutayba, Taʿwīl, 86.
66 Uqaylī, Duʿāfā, 1:14; Ibn Shāhīn, Duʿāfā, 40; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, Kīfayat, 431.
67 Jarh, 3(2):263; Abū Zūr‘a al-Dimashqī, Taʾrikh, 1:454; Fasawi, Maṭīfā, 1:700; Bardhāʿī, Duʿāfā, 726; Ibn Shāhīn, Duʿāfā, 168; Abū Nuʿaym al-İṣbahānī, Kitāb al-Duʿāfā, ed. Fāruq Hammāda (Casablanca, 1403/1984), 137.
a baseless doctrine (ra‘ayn ra‘yan), we made a ḥadīth for it.”⁶⁸ Another pleaded, “I adjure you by God not to listen to the sectarians. We used, by God, to relate to you what was erroneous and regard your going astray a good thing.”⁶⁹ One reformed Qadarite confessed that he had converted four thousand people to his deviant views by means of forged ḥadīth. He had now taken it upon himself to restore these people to orthodoxy one by one.⁷⁰ There is little doubt that most of these reports are themselves forgeries created with the pious intention of warning students of the dangers posed by sectarian ḥadīth. Nevertheless, they accurately reflect the fears of the critics of ḥadīth.

The critics rejected all of the ḥadīth which at some register were only transmitted by heretics. The sectarians, however, were more troublesome and it does not appear that the critics’ treatment of them was consistent in all cases. Sectarians, in contrast to heretics, were often prominent figures in the transmission of ḥadīth. We find a number of important scholars of ḥadīth accused of harboring sectarian tendencies, including Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself.⁷¹ Most of the critics formally advocated the rejection of all of the ḥadīth of those sectarians who proselytized. A student asked Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,

“Why did you record [the ḥadīth] of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā⁷² and then renounce transmitting from him; [yet] you recorded [the ḥadīth] of ‘Abd al-Razzāq⁷³ and transmitted from him, while they are members of the same sect?” [Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] said, “As for ‘Abd al-Razzāq, we have not heard from him any of what is said about him, and we have not read that he was proselytizing for his sect. As for ‘Ubayd Allāh, he used to proselytize for his sect and was a spokesman for it. I renounced transmitting from him for that reason.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ See above, p. 26, n. 63.
⁷² Abū Muḥammad ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā al-Kūfī (d. 213/828) was named on Abu l-Faḍl al-Sulaymān’s list of those who esteemed ‘Alī above the first two caliphs (see above, p. 27, n. 63) and the charge is repeated elsewhere (e.g. Ibn Hājar, Tahdīḥ, 7:52–53). An extravagantly Shi‘īte ḥadīth he is alleged to have transmitted is recorded by Ibn Hibbān in Majrūḥin, 3:42–43.
⁷³ ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām b. Na‘īf al-Ḥimyarī (d. 211/827; Sezgin, GAS, 1:99) is also mentioned in Abu l-Faḍl al-Sulaymān’s list. Al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādī records a ḥadīth expressing this doctrine that ‘Abd al-Razzāq was alone in teaching in his generation (Taʾrīkh, 4:195–96).
⁷⁴ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, Tabaqāt, 1:182. This notion is expressed repeatedly, e.g. Yahyā b. Ma‘n, Taʾrīkh, 4:139; Ibn Hibbān, Majrūḥin, 1:82; id., Thiqāt, 6:140–41.
The idea was that if a scholar transmitted ḥadīth supporting sectarian beliefs, all of his ḥadīth were to be rejected. If he was rumored to be a sectarian, but there was no evidence that he transmitted sectarian ḥadīth, then his ḥadīth could be accepted. The problem with this approach was that in most cases the critics learned of the sectarian tendencies of transmitters only from the ḥadīth they taught advocating their obnoxious beliefs. That is to say that there were very few sectarian transmitters who could not be regarded as proselytizers.

It was recognized that this course, if strictly adhered to, would lead to the rejection of a large number of ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥībbān felt that only the ḥadīth of the leaders of the sectarian movements should be rejected. He said that if the ḥadīth of all sectarians were rejected, “that would be a pretext for abandoning all ḥadīth, to the extent that nothing but a very small number of ḥadīth would come into our hands.” The stance of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān appears to have been even more permissive. ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī reports a discussion he had with him:

I told Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [b. Mahdī] had said, “Reject whoever was a leader in innovation and a proselytizer.” Yaḥyā said, “What do you do with Qatāda?” What do you do with Abū Dāwūd and ‘Umar b. Dharr?” and he enumerated a large number of people. Then he said, “If [‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī] rejected this kind [of transmitter], he rejected many people.”

It appears that in practice the critics rejected only those ḥadīth of prominent sectarian transmitters which actually supported their sectarian views, rather than all of the ḥadīth ascribed to those transmitters.

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75 Josef van Ess points out that the propaganda activities of sectarian transmitters were often deduced from the ḥadīth they transmitted; “L'Autorité de la tradition prophétique,” 216.
76 Ibn Ḥībbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 1:121.
77 Qatāda b. Diʿāma is described as a Qadarite in Fasawi, Maʿrīfā, 2:277–83 and Abu ʿl-Qāsim al-Balkhī, Maqālaṭ al-Islāmīyyin in Fuʿād Sayyid, Fādil al-Ṭīzāl, 88.
78 Abū Ḥāṭim considered ‘Umar b. Dharr b. ‘Abd Allah (d. 156/772) a Murjīʿīte and recommended that his ḥadīth not be cited as proof texts; Jāhī, 3(1):107.
79 ‘Uqaylī, Duʿāfāʾ, 1:8. Dr. Christopher Melchert has pointed out to me that “Abū Dāwūd” is replaced by “Ibn ʿAbī Rawwād” in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāya, 128–29. This is certainly a plausible reading, since I know of no “Abū Dāwūd” who fits the context and Ibn ʿAbī Rawwād was a reasonably prominent transmitter who was considered to be a Murjīʿīte.
IV. The Lines of Transmission Converge on a Single Transmitter

The second possible circumstance that the critic could encounter in examining the isnāds of a particular ḥadīth was that in one generation a single teacher was alone responsible for the transmission of the text. As stated above, the critics found it difficult to understand how it could happen that the single transmitter came to possess a ḥadīth not found in the relations of his peers and, as a consequence, they were inclined to doubt its authenticity.

If the teacher who was alone in recording the ḥadīth was considered unreliable on the basis of his other transmissions, the ḥadīth was almost never accepted. Muslim in the introduction to his Sahih writes,

As for [the transmitter] whom you see betaking himself to someone the equal of Zuhri in regard to prestige and the numerosness of the exact and careful students who transmit his ḥadīth and the ḥadīth of others, or betaking himself to someone the equal of Hisham b. 'Urwa—and their ḥadīth are widespread and commonly possessed by the scholars of hadīth, their students having transmitted their hadīth from them with agreement on most of them—and [this transmitter] relates from [Zuhri and Hisham b. 'Urwa] or from one of them a number of hadīth which none of their [other] students knows and he does not have any of the sound hadīth which the other students have, then the acceptance of the hadīth of this kind of person is not permissible.

Tirmidhi says the same thing in fewer words: “It is not permissible to cite as a proof text a hadīth which is only known from the hadīth of someone who is accused or impugned on account of his carelessness and his propensity for making mistakes.”

If, on the other hand, that transmitter had established a good reputation, it was possible that a hadīth that he was alone in transmitting could be accepted. To quote Muslim again,

The verdict of the scholars of hadīth (ahl al-tībm) and what we know of their practice regarding the acceptance of hadīth which a single transmitter is alone in transmitting [requires] that [the single transmitter] conform to the reliable and careful scholars of hadīth in some of what they transmit and that he go to great lengths to agree with

80 This type of hadīth was referred to by a number of different names, see James Robson, “Traditions from Individuals,” Journal of Semitic Studies 9 (1964):327–40.
81 Muslim, Sahih, 1:5–6; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 269–70.
82 Tirmidhi, Sahih, 13:311.
them in that. If that is found and then afterward he adds something which his colleagues do not have, his addition should be accepted.\textsuperscript{83}

As an example of this, Tirmidhî discusses two versions of a ḥadîth concerning the almstax paid at the end of Ramaḍân (\textit{zakāt al-фиṭr}). The common version of the ḥadîth, transmitted by several reliable scholars, places the obligation of the payment of this tax on all men and women, free and slave (i.e. \textit{‘alā kullî ḥarrin aw ‘abdîn dhakarîn aw unthā}), without further qualification. However, there is a version of this ḥadîth which, by the addition of two words, restricts the obligation to Muslims (i.e. \textit{‘alā kullî ḥarrin aw ‘abdîn dhakarîn aw unthā min al-muslimîn}). Tirmidhî says that Mâlik was the sole reliable scholar to teach this version. However, due to the reputation of Mâlik and, one might venture, the cogency of the addition, Tirmidhî was persuaded to accept it as authentic.\textsuperscript{84}

V. The Lines of Transmission Converge on a Gap

A. The Ḥadîth with an interrupted Isnād

The third possible circumstance that the critic could observe in the history of the transmission of a ḥadîth was that there was no recorded transmitter for a particular generation. This kind of ḥadîth represents a special form of the unparalleled ḥadîth, the difference being that in the ordinary unparalleled ḥadîth the identity of the lone transmitter was known and here it was not. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādî says, “The omission of a transmitter from the isnād of a ḥadîth (\textit{’irsāl al-ḥadîth})\textsuperscript{85} leads to ignorance of the identity of its transmitter and it is impossible to know whether he was upright when his identity is unknown.”\textsuperscript{86} In the case of the ordinary unparalleled ḥadîth, the

\textsuperscript{83} Muslim, \textit{Sahîh}, 1:5; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 269.

\textsuperscript{84} Tirmidhî, \textit{Sahîh}, 13:335–36. Tirmidhî recognizes three different categories of unparalleled ḥadîth and cites Mâlik’s version as an example of a ḥadîth unparalleled because of an addition in its text. In a general study such as the present one, it is not necessary to examine the various technical distinctions he makes.

\textsuperscript{85} The participial form “\textit{’irsāl}” originally meant “a ḥadîth with an omission somewhere in its isnād,” although with the passage of time it came to be restricted to an omission at the register of the Companions, see L. Librande, “Supposed Homogeneity,” 38; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 296, n. 78. Ibn Ḥajar points out that the verbal form “\textit{’arsalā}” nevertheless retained the earlier, broader sense, i.e. “to transmit a ḥadîth with an interruption anywhere in its isnād;” \textit{Nuzhat al-nazar fi sawidh Nukhbat al-fikar} (Benares, 1394/1974), 30.

\textsuperscript{86} Kifāya, 387. See also Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, \textit{Tambîd}, 1:6.
prestige of that single transmitter could cause the critic to overlook the suspicious circumstance of its transmission. However, this was impossible when the name of the single transmitter was unknown. Thus, the ḥadīth known only with an interrupted isnād was rejected essentially because it was feared that the unnamed transmitter was unreliable. Tirmidhī says,

Whoever impugns the authenticity of a ḥadīth with an interrupted line of transmission (al-nurṣat) does so because those great scholars transmit ḥadīth from reliable and unreliable transmitters. If one of them transmits a ḥadīth and he does not mention all of its transmitters (arsalahu), [there exists the possibility that] he may have taken the ḥadīth from an unreliable transmitter.  

In describing the threat posed by those who omit transmitters from their isnāds, Ibn Ḥibbān warns, “Perhaps [the transmitter] heard it from an unreliable person whose mention would void [the authority of] the report, if [his identity] were known and the report ascribed to him.”

B. Types of Transmission

When confronted with an isnād indicating the transmission of a ḥadīth between two scholars, the question which the critic sought to answer was whether the transmission was direct. The critic’s decision was based on a comprehensive examination of the terminology describing the transmission between the two particular scholars in all of the isnāds where their names were juxtaposed. When speaking strictly, the critics made a distinction between relation (i.e. rauwā‘ an or ḥaddathā ‘an) and audition (i.e. samī‘a min) in describing the connection between two transmitters. Relation was simply the scholar teaching his students a ḥadīth which ultimately came from a certain transmitter. Audition was the scholar’s actually obtaining that ḥadīth from the transmitter he named. They were two entirely different acts.  

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89 It is the distinction between sama‘ and riyāya that accounts for the discrepancy between the small number of ḥadīth certain Companions, like Ibn ‘Abbās, heard from the Prophet and the large number of ḥadīth they transmitted from him. Although a Companion may have only received a small number of ḥadīth personally from the Prophet, this did not preclude his transmission of many more ḥadīth from the Prophet through intermediaries whom he did not choose to name.
A scholar could transmit from another, but, for the possibility of his having received the report through an intermediary to be eliminated, he would have to indicate that he heard him. In the books on personality criticism, statements to the effect that X related from Y but did not hear ḥadīth from him are quite common. Ibn Abī Ḥatīm asked his father whether Abū Sālim Mamṭūr al-Aswad studied with Thawbān and he replied, “He transmitted ḥadīth from him. I do not know whether or not he heard ḥadīth from him” (qad rawā ‘anhu wa-lā adīr samī’a minhu am lā).  

Ahmad b. Ḣanbal says of al-Qāsim b. Abī Ayyūb, “Hushaym transmitted from him, [but] he did not hear ḥadīth from him” (ḥaddatha ‘anhu Ḥushaym wa-lam yasma’ minhu).  

In his Ḥal, Ahmad b. Ḣanbal gives a list of those whom Saʿīd b. Abī ‘Arūba transmitted from, but did not hear. He says, “He transmitted from all of those and did not hear anything at all from them” (qad ḥaddatha ‘an hā’ulāʾi kullihim wa-lam yasma’ minhum shay’an).  

His contemporary Yahyā b. Maʿīn also wrote on this subject and, a generation later, the critic Nasāʾī took it upon himself to write a monograph on the matter entitled “Those whom [Saʿīd] b. Abī ‘Arūba transmitted ḥadīth from, but did not hear ḥadīth from” (Dhikr man hadatha ‘anhu Ibn Abī ‘Arūba wa-lam yasma’ minhu).  

When asked whether Qatāda related from Khilās b. ‘Amr, Yahyā b. Maʿīn said, “He related [from him]” (qad rawā); but it is said that Yahyā b. Maʿīn did not specify whether he actually studied with him (i.e. lam yadhkur Yahyā fihi samā’um am lā).  

Religion was shown by the mere juxtaposition of two names in an isnad, while audition had to be proved. A location indicating some form of personal contact—such as “akhabaranā” (he informed us), “haddathana” (he transmitted to us), “samā’ta” (I heard [him saying])—

This point is made clear in the following report from ‘Abd Allāh b. Ahmad b. Ḣanbal: “I counted the ḥadīth in which Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘I heard the Prophet’ (samī’ta ’l-Nabī), ‘I saw the Prophet’ (raʾaytu ’l-Nabī), and ‘I spent the night with the Prophet’ (biitu ṣinda ’l-Nabī). There were between seventy and eighty;” Ahmad b. Ḣanbal, Ḥal, 253. Thus, we cannot compare the numbers given in reports such as this one and the vast number of ḥadīth ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās in the major ḥadīth collections and see the difference as the product of the general increase in the number of ḥadīth in circulation.

50 Marāṣil, 131.
51 Ahmad b. Ḣanbal, Ḥal, 41.
52 Ahmad b. Ḣanbal, Ḥal, 359; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kāfya, 358.
53 Tārīkh, 4:93, 99.
54 Sezgin, GD, 1:91,169.
55 Yahyā b. Maʿīn, Min kalām Abī Zakariyyā’ Yahyā ibn Maʿīn, 32–33.
in the isnād of an authentic ḥadīth established that one transmitter heard ḥadīth from another.\textsuperscript{96} In a discussion recorded by his son ‘Abd Allāh, we find that it was in this manner that Ahmad b. Ḥanbal tackled the question of whether Ibn Abī Dhi'b studied with Zuhrī. ‘Abd Allāh asked his father,

“Did Ibn Abī Dhi'b hear ḥadīth from Zuhrī?” (samī‘a min al-Zuhrī)? [Ahmad b. Ḥanbal] said, “Yes, he heard him.” I said, “They say that he did not hear Zuhrī.” He said, “He heard Zuhrī. Yahyā b. Sa‘īd related to us from Ibn Abī Dhi'b that he said, ‘Zuhrī transmitted to me’ (haddathani 'l-Zuhrī).” He mentioned several [other] ḥadīth with “Zuhrī transmitted to me” and also “I asked Zuhrī” (sa‘altu 'l-Zuhrī) in them.\textsuperscript{97}

In describing Hammām b. al-Ḥārith’s relationship to Abu ‘l-Dardā’, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī assures us that, “indeed he met him, [but] did not say ‘I heard [him saying].’”\textsuperscript{98} This procedure was carried to extremes in some cases. This same critic suspected that Makhrama b. Bukayr al-Ashajj did not study with his own father because he nowhere says, “I heard my father.”\textsuperscript{99}

C. The Evaluation of the Cohesion of Isnāds

One form of evidence vitiating the possibility of two transmitters having studied together was the existence of isnāds containing certain terms interpreted as being indicative of indirect transmission.\textsuperscript{100} One of these terms was “balaghanī 'an” (literally: it reached me from [so and so]). Abū Ḥātim says,

Abū Zur'a and I and a group of our colleagues do not disagree that Zuhrī did not hear Abān b. ‘Uthmān at all. How can he have heard hadīth from Abān when he says, “Balaghanī 'an Abān”? (Marāṣīl, 118–19)

We are told that Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr said, “Everything for which I say to you “balaghanī” is from a written source (kitāb).\textsuperscript{101} ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī concluded from Muḥammad b. Sīrīn’s use of the passive

\textsuperscript{96} For two late lists of such terms, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, Kfāya, 288 and Ibn Rushayd, Sman, 17.

\textsuperscript{97} Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Ḥal, 193.

\textsuperscript{98} ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, Ḥal, 61.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibn Ḥajar, Tāḥṣīb, 10:71.

\textsuperscript{100} For a short list of such terms, see al-Ḥakim al-Nisābūrī, Ma‘rifat 'ulum al-hadīth, 19.

\textsuperscript{101} Yahyā b. Ma‘īn, Ta'rīkh, 4:351.
verb construction “nabhū‘ti” (I was communicated to) that he did not hear ḥadīth from Ibn ʿAbbās.

[In] the ḥadīth of Muḥammad b. Ṣirīn from Ibn ʿAbbās, he said, “I was communicated to.” Muḥammad heard them from Ikrima, whom he met during the time of al-Mukhtar. Ibn Ṣirīn did not hear anything [directly] from Ibn ʿAbbās. (Marāṣil, 116)

The critics also interpreted the term “kataba ilayya” (he wrote to me) as proof that two scholars did not study together. When asked whether Qatāda had studied with Saʿīd b. Jubayr, ʿAlīmd b. Ḥanbal said, “No, he says, ‘Saʿīd b. Jubayr wrote to me.’”102 Yahyā b. Maʿīn said, “Yazīd b. Abī ʿHabīb did not hear anything from Zuhrī. He said, ‘Ibn Shīhāb [al-Zuhrī] wrote to me.’ That which [Yazīd] transmits from him is some of what Zuhrī wrote to him.”103

When the term indicating study was found only in the isnād of a rejected ḥadīth, the critics concluded that the transmitters had not studied together. In discussing the transmission of Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī from the Prophet’s wife ʿĀʾisha, ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī said,

“Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī did not meet any of the Companions of the Prophet.” When asked, “What about ʿĀʾisha?” he replied, “No one relates [that ḥadīth] except Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba—from Abū Maʿshar from Ibrāhīm—and he is weak.”104

Since the ḥadīth containing the evidence that Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī heard ḥadīth from ʿĀʾisha was not authentic, it could not be cited as proof of their unmediated transmission.

Similarly, evidence of audition was also rejected when a comparison of the lines of transmission of a particular ḥadīth revealed that the term indicating audition was not present in the majority of them. The following is an account of ʿAlīmd b. Ḥanbal’s resolution of the question of whether ʿArrāk b. Mālik studied with ʿĀʾisha (this report is related by al-Athram):

[I was with ʿAlīmd b. Ḥanbal] and someone brought up the ḥadīth of Khālid b. Abī ʾl-Ṣalt from ʿArrāk from ʿĀʾisha from the Prophet: “He said, ‘Turn my seat towards the qibla, etc.’” ʿAlīmd b. Ḥanbal said, “[The isnād of this ḥadīth is] interrupted (mursal).” I said to him, “[ʿArrāk] said, ‘I heard ʿĀʾisha.’” He rejected that. He said, “ʿArrāk

102 Marāṣil, 109.
b. Mālik? In which isnād is there an indication that he studied with ʿĀʾishah (min aynā samīʿa ʿĀʾishah)? What has this to do with him and ʿĀʾishah? Rather, he relates from Urwa [from ʿĀʾishah]. This [attribution] is incorrect. Who related it?” I said, “Ḥammād b. Salama from Khālid al-Ḥadhhdāḥ.” He said, “More than one [transmitter] related it from Khālid al-Ḥadhhdāḥ without ‘I heard’ in it, and more than one also related it from Ḥammād b. Salama without ‘I heard’ in it.” (Marāṣil, 103–4)

Although in one version of the isnād of the ḥadīth the relation between ʿArrāk b. Mālik and ʿĀʾishah is indicated by the word “samīṭu,” which was universally acknowledged as indicating actual study, this word is absent from the other versions. From that Ḥāmad b. Ḥanbal concluded that it was a spurious addition, and consequently refused to accept it as proof of audition.

The most common sign that one scholar did not hear ḥadīth from another was the presence of intermediaries between them in another isnād. Abū Ḥātim says,

Muslim b. Abī Maryam from (ʿam) Ibn ʿUmar is not uninterrupted (layṣa bī-muttaṣil); rather ʿAlī b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qārī comes in between them. (Marāṣil, 130)

Ḥāmad b. Ḥanbal rejected the possibility of audition between Muṭarrif b. Ṭarīf and al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabārī for the same reason:

Muṭarrif did not hear anything from al-Ḥasan; rather he transmits from Ismāʿīl b. Muslim from him. (Marāṣil, 132)

Although, as a general rule, the critics were restrictive in acknowledging audition, there were cases where they did not consider the evidence of intervening transmitters decisive. When asked whether ʿAtīq studied with Yahyā b. Yaʿmar, Ḥāmad b. Ḥanbal confessed, “I do not know. He transmitted from him and he transmitted from [another] man from him.”

It is interesting to note that the critics sometimes determined the Companionship of a transmitter with the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣuḥba)

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105 The questions “min aynā samīṭa” and “min aynā samīʿa minhu” (literally: where did he hear [ḥadīth] from him?) solicit information about the isnād which contains the evidence that one of the transmitters heard the other (and not, for instance, about the city in which the audition was alleged to have taken place). A clear example of this usage is found in Abū Dāwūd al-Sījistānī, Kitāb Masāʾil al-imām Ḥāmad, 298.

106 Marāṣil, 107.
by the examination of isnāds. In discussing Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj, Abū Ḥātim says,

Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj was not a Companion of the Prophet. One of the things which indicates that is that he transmits from Abū Hurayra and from his father. (Marāṣīl, 36)

Abū Ḥātim does not consider Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj to be a Companion of the Prophet because he related from the Prophet through an intermediary. Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts the words of his father regarding Sa‘īd b. Yazīd’s status as a Companion:

“[As for] the Sa‘īd b. Yazīd from whom Abu ‘l-Khayr transmits that a man came to the Prophet and said, ‘Give me some advice.’ [The Prophet] said, ‘I adjure you to spare a life, as you would spare the life of a good man of your tribe.’ We did not know whether he was a Companion or not. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Ja‘far transmitted the very same ḥadīth from Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb from Abu ‘l-Khayr from Sa‘īd b. Yazīd from one of the Companions.” That is, he indicated to us that he was not a Companion. (Marāṣīl, 48)

Here again we see that it was concluded that a transmitter was not a Companion because a name intervened between his name and the Prophet’s in an isnād. Similar to these two examples is Abū Ḥātim’s interesting discussion of whether Siyāba b. ‘Āsim al-Sulami was a Companion of the Prophet. Although Siyāba transmitted ḥadīth directly from the Prophet, Abū Ḥātim did not regard him as a Companion because a transmitter who did not transmit from the Companions transmitted from him.\footnote{Marāṣīl, 48–49.}

D. The Role of Extrinsic Information

The critics sometimes found themselves confronted with extrinsic information referring to the relationship between two transmitters. For the most part, this information was anecdotal in nature and consisted of incidental references to their contemporaneousness or geographical proximity, and as such, rarely explicitly addressed the question of study between the two transmitters. In general the critics were very reluctant to credit anecdotal information which contradicted the indications in the isnāds. At the outset of this discussion, it should be said that it is difficult to generalize about the critics’
handling of extrinsic information, for they differed over the amount of reliance they were willing to place on such materials, and in any case their utilization of them was always desultory and unsystematic.

In a few instances we find that the critics appear to be employing supposed historical information to prove that it was impossible for one scholar to have heard another. When Abū Ḥātim was asked whether Muḥammad b. Sīrīn studied with Abu ʾl-Dardāʾ, he rejected the possibility on geographical grounds: “No, they were contemporaries, [but] I do not think that he heard ḥadīth from him. The one was in Syria and the other in al-بصرة.” 108 ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī adopted a similar approach when confronted by an isnād indicating transmission between al-Ḥasan al-بصرī and al-Ḍāḥīk b. Sūfīān. He said, “[It is] a Baṣrī ḥadīth. Its isnād is interrupted (munaqṣaʾ) because al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from al-Ḍāḥīk. Al-Ḍāḥīk used to be in the desert and al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from him.” 109

More often we find the critics in the awkward position of having to reconcile anecdotal information showing contact between two transmitters with indications derived from isnāds that the two transmitters did not study together. One can see that an isnād indicating transmission between two scholars, but not audition, combined with a report representing them as being in the same place at the same time, does constitute something of an argument for the scholars’ having studied together. The critics took pains to combat this kind of reasoning. In their view, the question of whether one transmitter heard ḥadīth from another could be determined only by the isnāds. When Abū Zurʿa was asked whether al-Ḥasan al-بصرī met (lagiya) any of the Muslim participants in the battle of Badr, he responded,

“He only saw [some of] them. He saw ʿUthmān b. Affān and ʿAlī.” I [i.e. Ibn Abī Ḥātim] said, “Did he hear any ḥadīth from either of them?” He said, “No, on the day that allegiance was sworn to ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan al-بصرī was fourteen years old. He saw ʿAlī in Medina. Then ʿAlī went to al-Kūfa and al-بصرī and al-Ḥasan did not meet him after that. [All that] al-Ḥasan said [was], ‘I saw al-Zubayr swearing allegiance to ʿAlī.’” (Marāṣīl, 26)

Further on, Abū Zurʿa says that the transmission of al-Ḥasan al-بصرī from ʿAlī (which had apparently prompted the question of whether

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108 Marāṣīl, 116.
109 ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, Ḥal, 55; Marāṣīl, 33.
al-Hasan had studied with ‘Alī) was in reality through the mediation of Samura b. Jundab (i.e. ṭawāfiṣ al-Ḥasan ‘an Samura ibn Jundab). Here we see that, in the determination of study, Abū Zur‘a gave precedence to the evidence of the isnād, namely that Samura b. Jundab acted as an intermediary between al-Ḥasan al-巴基 and ‘Alī in some of the lines of transmission, over the anecdote indicating that the two transmitters were in the same place at the same time.

One particularly sticky case was al-Ḥasan al-巴基’s alleged audition of the famous Companion Ibn ‘Abbās. The critics, who rejected the possibility of his having heard Ibn ‘Abbās, were obliged to explain the report in which he says, “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us in al-巴基.” ‘Alī b. al-Madini says,

[Al-Ḥasan al-巴基] was in Medina during the time Ibn ‘Abbās was over al-巴基, [i.e.] when ‘Alī made him governor and he went to Ṣuffān. As for the ḥadīth of al-Ḥasan, “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us in al-巴基,” it is like the statement of Thābit, “‘Imrān b. al-Huṣayn came to us,” that of Mujāhid, “‘Alī attacked us,” that of al-Ḥasan, “Surāqā b. Mālik b. Ju‘shum related ḥadīth to them,” and his statement, “Mujāshir b. Mas‘ūd campaigned with us.” Al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Abbās and never saw him.10

As it stands, this is all rather cryptic. In Marāṣil (pp. 27–28), Abū Ḥatūm explains that when al-Ḥasan al-巴基 said “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us,” he meant that Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to the people of al-巴基 and did not mean to imply that he was present at the time. Bukhārī in addressing the same problem points out the existence of a version of the report which read “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon,” without the “to us.” Tirmidhī, who records this remark, reasons that Bukhārī said that “because Ibn ‘Abbās was in al-巴基 during the reign of ‘Alī and al-Ḥasan al-巴基 was in Medina during the reigns of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī.”11

In one interesting instance, Abū ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Khwālānī (fl. 365/975) uses isnād-derived evidence to discredit a certain report ascribed to Abū Idrīs ‘A’idh Allah b. ‘Abd Allah al-Khwālānī (d. 80/699) describing an encounter with the Companion Mu‘ādh b. Jabal. After enumerating Abū Idrīs’s many merits, he says,

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10 ‘Alī b. al-Madini, Itil, 51; Marāṣil, 27. “Surāqā b. Mālik b. Ju‘shum related ḥadīth to them” does not seem to belong here and is omitted in Marāṣil.
[Despite all of this], Abū Idrīs does not say, "Mu‘ādh b. Jabal transmitted to me,"—and he did not transmit to him—or "I saw Mu‘ādh,"—and he did not see him—even with the celebrity of those scholars of hadīth who transmitted from him.¹¹²

‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Khawlānī argues that given the excellence of those who studied with Abū Idrīs, if he had taught a hadīth with terminology showing that he had heard Mu‘ādh, it surely would have been preserved. Since no isnād indicates that Abū Idrīs met Mu‘ādh b. Jabal, the report describing their encounter must be false.

E. The Use of Dates

It is appropriate here to address the critics’ use of dates, in particular deathdates (wafṣayāt). As was the case with the other forms of extrinsic information, the critics never used dates to establish the possibility of one scholar studying with another, but only to vitiate it: and this only in rare instances. Not all critics showed an interest in dates. There are, for example, almost no dates in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Jarh. Nor is this lack of interest in dates surprising. Because the critic believed that he could determine whether one transmitter actually heard another, which was his main concern, just by examining isnāds; he cannot have regarded dates as anything but secondary. At best the examination of deathdates could have told him whether two scholars were alive at the same time.

It is in the works of Bukhārī that we find the most pronounced interest in dates.¹¹³ His al-Tā’rīkh al-kabīr provides deathdates for some scholars while his al-Tā’rīkh al-saghīr is primarily a collection of dates, containing a large number of deathdates, some birthdates and many dated or datable reports which are given as proof that a transmitter was alive in a certain year. However, even in these two works Bukhārī rarely makes explicit reference to dates in addressing the question of whether one transmitter heard another. In one example in his al-Tā’rīkh al-saghīr (1:187), Bukhārī discusses the teachers of the transmitter Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥarīth:

¹¹³ ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī gives the deathdates of some transmitters in his Ḥal (pp. 36–40, 74–75), but we do not find him using them to determine the integrity of isnāds. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s Ḥal also contains some dates.

Bukhârî accepts that Yûsuf b. ‘Abd Allah b. al-Ḥārith met al-Âhnaﬁ b. Qays. Yûsuf transmitted from ‘Alî ‘ishâ and the famous Companion Abû Hurayra, but it is not clear that he actually heard ḥadîth from them. Bukhârî’s argument seems to be that Yûsuf’s meeting al-Âhnaﬁ is no proof that he could have studied with ‘Alî ‘ishâ and Abû Hurayra, because ‘Alî ‘ishâ (d. 58/677) had died years before al-Âhnaﬁ (d. 67/686 or 72/691), and Abû Hurayra died about the same time as ‘Alî ‘ishâ. In fact, Bukhârî is inclined to doubt that Yûsuf studied with ‘Alî ‘ishâ and Abû Hurayra, perhaps on the basis that Yûsuf’s being the grandson of a man who died in 110/729 (namely Ibn Sîrîn) meant that he must have been very young when he met al-Âhnaﬁ. Bukhârî’s efforts in this domain were limited by the dearth of dates at his disposal. In a survey of the first volume of his al-Ta’rîkh al-kabîr, Prof. Franz Rosenthal found that he gives deathdates in less than seven percent of the entries and birthdates in less than one-half of one percent. The paucity of deathdates in the early works on ḥadîth criticism and their proliferation in the later ones leads one to accept the suggestion put forward by Prof. Rosenthal that most of the deathdates given for early figures are later scholarly reconstructions.\textsuperscript{115}

References to dates are equally rare in the works of other critics. In what became one of the proverbial examples of the usefulness of of the study of History, Ibn Ḥibbân, who otherwise seems to have been largely unconcerned with dates, cites a report about an unnamed man who tells Ismâ’il b. ‘Ayyâsh (d. 182/798) that he took ḥadîth from Khâlid b. Ma’dîn in 113/731. Ismâ’il b. ‘Ayyâsh replies, “You claim that you heard ḥadîth from Khâlid seven years after his death.”

\textsuperscript{114} The 1986 Beirut edition quoted here is a corrected version of the 1977 Aleppo edition—also edited by Mahmûd Ibrahim Zâyid and published in two volumes—which has “lâ nunkîr” instead of “lâ nafakkir” in this passage (1:159), yielding the opposite sense.

\textsuperscript{115} F. Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography, 14, n. 2. Lawrence I. Conrad is also skeptical about accuracy of the birthdates given for early scholars; “Seven and the Tasbî,” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 31 (1988):62–73.
It is interesting to note that Ibn Hibbān regards this as an instance of someone inadvertently telling a lie because he knew nothing about the discipline of hadīth rather than as a case of outright fraud. In a passage in the Taqdimā (p. 250), Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān objects to a report that Ibn ʿAwn saw ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Abī Laylā in al-Kūfah in 91/709 on the grounds that Ibn Abī Laylā had died in 88/706. Rather than denying Ibn ʿAwn’s contact with him, Ibn Abī Ḥātim surprisingly rejects the date and not the audition: he concludes that the date given in the report was simply ten years too late! More frequently we come across reports where a vague disjunction in time between two transmitters, rather than actual dates, disallows the possibility that they met. Such discussions most often deal with the earliest Muslims, the Companions and Followers, perhaps because the extrinsic information about them was more copious. For instance, when Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān was asked whether Hilāl b. Yasāf heard ḥadīth from Abū Masʿūd, he denied the possibility on the grounds that Abū Masʿūd had died in the days of ʿAli.

Despite Bukhārī’s concern for dates, one must not imagine that he disregarded information derived from the study of isnāds, or that he even regarded it as inferior in value for ascertaining whether one scholar heard ḥadīth from another. As was the case with other types of extrinsic information, we find the critics gave isnāds precedence over dates. Bukhārī on more than one occasion evaluated the accuracy of death dates on the basis of isnāds. In one instance he questioned the accuracy of the deathdate of a transmitter given by one of his descendants because isnāds indicated that two comparatively late transmitters had studied with him:

One of the members of the family of AbūRawwād told me that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz [b. Abī Rawwād] died around the year [1]50. [However,] I think it was later than that because Abū Nuʿaym and Khallād heard him and they did not hear Ibn Jurayj.

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117 Taqdimā, 243.

118 Bukhārī, al-Taʾrīkh al-saghir, 2:105.
Bukhārī reasoned that Ibn Abī Rawwād could not have died in 150/767 because two of his students did not study with Ibn Jurayj, whose death in 151/768 was not disputed. He was assuming that the students, if given the chance, would have attended the classes of the more prominent Ibn Jurayj before studying with Ibn Abī Rawwād. For similar reasons Bukhārī doubted the deathdate given for Abū Bakr b. Shu‘ayb. Faced with the statement, “They say that Abū Bakr b. Shu‘ayb b. al-Ḥabḥāb b. Ṣāliḥ al-Mī‘walī al-Azdī al-Baṣrī died in 164,” he wrote, “There is some doubt about [the date of] his death because Qutayba b. Sa‘īd heard hadīth from him.” In the mind of Bukhārī, it was improbable that Qutayba b. Sa‘īd, who died in 240/854, could have attended the classes of a man who was alleged to have predeceased him by 76 years.

VI. Further Developments

A. The Controversy over the Term “From”

Instances of transmissions marked in isnāds by the term “from” (‘an) posed special problems for the critics. “From” by itself was ambiguous. The statement “X from Y” did not establish that X heard the hadīth from Y and it did not exclude that possibility. Rather, it only indicated that the hadīth which reached X ultimately came from Y, leaving open the possibility of intermediate transmitters between them. Ibn Khallād al-Rāmahurmuzī reports that one jurist said,

When [a teacher] says, “X transmitted to us”—or “X informed us”—“from Y,” rather than, “X transmitted to us that Y transmitted to him,” or some equivalent expression; there is a possibility that there was another man between X, who transmitted to him, and Y. This is because it is not unheard of for a person to say, “We were transmitted to from the Prophet such and such,” and “X transmitted to us from Mālik and Shafi‘i,” regardless of whether that is said in reference to someone whom the speaker is known not to have seen or regarding someone about whom that is not known, because the significance of his saying “from” is only that the hadīth [ultimately] goes back to him. This usage is common in everyday speech and current among the people.  

118 The printed text has “al-‘Umūlî” here. Ibn al-Athīr supplies the correct reading in Lubāb, 3:238.
119 Bukhārī, al-Ta‘rīkh al-saghir, 2:147.
120 Al-Muḥaddith al-fāsil, 450–51. See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāya, 291.
In the introduction to his *Sahîh* (1:22–28), Muslim argues that “from” should be taken as being indicative of audition in the cases where the two transmitters in question lived at the same time and there exists no proof that they did not meet. However, Muslim refers to a contemporary whom he does not name—probably Bukhârî or ‘Ali b. al-Madîmî—who insisted that “X from Y” could not be accepted as an unmediated transmission until evidence is found that X at some time heard hadîth from Y. In other words, at least one transmission of X from Y must be described by a term indicating that they met. Muslim rejects this critic’s view and claims that it is unprecedented, asserting that earlier critics subjected the transmissions marked by “from” to special scrutiny only in cases where the transmitter in question was notorious for doctoring isnâds (*tadlîs*).

Muslim argues that the proposed restriction is at once too lax and too strict. In the first place, it does not guarantee that any particular transmission is unmediated. Just because X heard one hadîth directly from Y does not mean that all of X’s transmissions from Y were unmediated. Although the critics, as we have seen, normally regarded the presence of intermediaries as excluding the possibility of audition, there were accepted instances of scholars hearing hadîth directly from a particular transmitter and from that transmitter’s students from him. Muslim analyzes a group of four hadîth with isnâds in which the transmission between two scholars is marked by “from.” All of the transmitters in question are either Companions or Followers and there is plenty of evidence in favor of their having met, e.g. Hîshâm b. ‘Urwa from his father ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr and ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr from ‘A’îsha. For the propagator of the new doctrine, the fact that these transmitters were known to have met would have been sufficient to eliminate the possibility that intervening names had been dropped from the isnâd. Then for each hadîth, Muslim supplies an alternate version of the isnâd in which one or two intermediaries come between the two transmitters. He thereby shows that names had in fact been dropped from the first isnâds and that the

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new criterion had failed to detect this. Muslim says that if this innovator wants to be absolutely sure that no names were omitted, he must have information substantiating audition at every link from that very isnad.

The second point that Muslim makes against the new stipulation is that it would lead to the rejection of some hadith universally reckoned authentic, if it were strictly applied. Muslim cites a number of Follower-Companion pairs whose transmission is marked by “from.” He says that these transmissions are universally accepted as valid; however, nowhere in the entire corpus of hadith is there explicit information that the two scholars studied together. The application of the new criterion to these transmissions would require that they be rejected and this Muslim clearly regards as absurd.123

B. The Collective Accreditation of the Earliest Muslims

The effort to introduce greater rigor into hadith criticism by insisting that there be evidence transmitters met before accepting transmissions marked by the term “from” was well received, for the critics were always anxious to project an image of exacting standards to outsiders. Muslim’s first objection, that the increased rigor was to a large extent illusory because the new restriction did not ensure that any particular transmission indicated by “from” was unmediated, fell on deaf ears. Nawawi (d. 676/1278) in his commentary on Muslim, *Sharh Sahih Muslim* (1:62), writes,

> When the meeting [of two transmitters] is established, cohesiveness [in regard to any particular transmission] is likely. The issue is based on likelihood. We are satisfied with that.124

However, Muslim’s second point was much more disturbing, for the term “from” was common in the transmissions of the Companions and the Followers. To provide a pretext for rejecting authentic hadith would be playing into the hands of the Kufans.

The adjustment necessary to rectify this difficulty took the form of the new dogma which decreed that all of the earliest Muslims

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were to be considered reliable for the purposes of hadith transmission. The objection to a hadith with an interrupted isnād was due to the possibility that the transmitter whose name was not mentioned was unreliable. Ibn Hibbān describes his treatment of the transmissions of the Companions:

We accepted the reports of the Companions from the Prophet so long as they related them from the Prophet, even if they did not show audition in all of what they related—and we know for certain that one of them sometimes heard a report from another Companion and related it from the Prophet without mentioning the person from whom he heard it—because they are all reliable, leading, and sovereign authorities. God declared the likes of the Companions to be above weakness attaching to them.\(^{123}\)

In the case of the Companions, it would not matter that they did not always name their intermediaries because these intermediaries would normally have been Companions themselves and therefore were bound to have been reliable.\(^{126}\)

It is difficult to trace the origin of this doctrine, which G.H.A. Juynboll has termed “the collective ta’dīl of the Companions.”\(^{127}\) The earliest explicit formulations seem to be those of Ibn Abī Ḥātim.\(^{128}\) In the *Taqāima* (p. 7), he declares,


\(^{128}\) In the introduction to his edition of Muslim’s *Kitāb al-Tanẓīm* (pp. 53–54), M.M. al-A‘zamī states that there can be no doubt that the doctrine of the collective accreditation of the Companions was held by Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Shāfi‘ī, Yahyā b. Ma‘īn, ‘Alī b. al-Madini, Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Zur‘a, Abū Dawūd, Abū Ḥātim, Tirmidhī and Nasā‘ī. He, however, supplies no documentation for this assertion and I have not found any myself. As far as Muslim is concerned, such a belief would hardly be compatible with the discussion “from” in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

On the basis of a passage in *Kitāb Iḥlīlāf al-hadith*, J. Schacht maintains that Shāfi‘ī subscribed to the doctrine of the collective ta’dīl of the Companions (*Origins*, 19). This may be a misapprehension. The passage in question concerns differing reports from two Companions, one an Anṣārī and one not, regarding the murder of one of the Anṣārīs. It reads, “The victim was one of the Anṣārīs. If each [of the Companions] is reliable (ḥiqā), and in our opinion each is reliable by the grace of God—the Anṣārīs are more deserving of attention in regard to the information about it than anyone else.” That is all other things being equal, reports from Anṣārīs are to be preferred in matters concerning the Anṣārīs. It is unclear whether this can be construed as an endorsement of the collective accreditation of all of the
[God] banished from [the Companions] any doubt, lying, error, suspicion and slander and He called them the upright ones of the Muslim community (ṭuddūl al-ummā).

Ibn Abī Ḥātim seems to place the next generation of Muslims, the Followers, on the same plane as the Companions. They, he asserts, also possess a status which precludes “any cause for slander attaching to them or any disgrace reaching them.” To Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s mind, there is no point in attempting to make any distinction between individual Followers for they are all trustworthy authorities. Others have attempted to insinuate themselves into their number by the suppression of the names of intermediaries. They were by no means Companions. In fact, Shāfi‘ī’s point is that the non-Anṣārī Companion did make a mistake, despite somehow being “reliable.”

There are, nevertheless, several passages that, at least with hindsight, appear to be references to the doctrine. It would seem that it is embodied in its essentials in a report ascribed to the Companion al-Barā’ b. ‘Azib: “We did not hear directly from the Prophet all that we transmitted from him to you. But [some] we heard directly and [some] our associates related to us. However, we do not lie.” This report is already found in Ahmad b. Ḥanbal’s Iltā (p. 408). That work is basically a collection of reports, often with no discernable connection existing between them and usually with no commentary. Without any context or commentary, it is impossible for us to determine exactly what Ahmad b. Ḥanbal thought this report meant.

The report from al-Barā’ is also quoted by Fasawi in Ma‘rifa (2:633–34) in the context of a discussion of the antiquity of the practice of doctoring iṣnāds. After mentioning several prominent scholars who were guilty of this, he cites a report apparently pertinent to our question in which the Companion Anas b. Mālik is asked whether he heard a particular hadith directly from the Prophet. Anas replies, “Yes, someone who does not lie narrated it to me. By God, we did not use to tell lies and we did not even know what lying was.” After a few remarks on hadīth by famous scholars, Fasawi quotes the report from al-Barā’ cited earlier by Ahmad b. Ḥanbal. Later scholars would cite the report from al-Barā’ and similar ones as evidence for the doctrine; e.g. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kitāba, 385–86; Ibn Rushayd, Sanan, 44, 117–18. Remarkably, al-Ḥākim al-Nīṣabūrī (Ma‘rifa, 14) cites a version of the report in a discussion of the way the Companions used to scrutinize the reports from their fellows before accepting them.

Fasawi’s work contains other hints. To Sa‘īd b. Ibrāhīm are ascribed the words (1:681; also Abū Zura’ al-Dimashqī, Ta‘rīkh, 1:546–47; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kitāba, 32): “Only reliable people (thiqāt) transmitted from the Prophet.” Presumably this is a reference to the Companions. In discussing a particular hadith, Fasawi writes (1:348): “Every one of those named in this hadith is a proof by himself (hujja ‘ala ‘l-insīfād). Yahyā [b. Sa‘īd] is an expert in hadith. Sa‘īd b. Yasar is a reliable (thiqāt) Medinese.” Then he continues: “ayhāb al-Nabi saḥābatum wa-khabīrūnum wa-dala‘āhum wa-adhāhum wa—. . . [gap in the text] alī‘ hujja.” This passage, as it stands, is problematic; nevertheless the import that all of the Companions are to be considered reliable seems to be present. It is noteworthy that Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Hibbān do not cite any of these passages.

126 Taqdimā, 9.
the equals of the true Followers and it is necessary that their pretensions be exposed.

Ibn Hibbān deals with the question of collective ta'dil in the introductions to both Majrūḥīn and his Sahih. In the former (1:33–34), he writes,

If someone asks, “How could you impugn (jarahta) someone who lived after the Companions and yet refuse to do that to the Companions, even though negligence and error (al-sahw wa-l-khat'a) were found among the Companions of the Prophet just as they were among the transmitters of ḥadīth who came after them?” he is answered, “God declared the Companions of His Prophet to be above the defamation of any slanderer. He protected them from the disparaging of any detractor and made them like guiding stars.”

The formulation of collective ta’dil arrived at by Ibn Hibbān differs in two ways from that of Ibn Abī Ḥatīm. In the first place, it extends only to the Companions. Presumably, in Ibn Hibbān’s mind, the ranks of the Followers included both reliable and unreliable transmitters. The second point of difference is that Ibn Hibbān’s interpretation was less comprehensive. In the Taqdima Ibn Abī Ḥatīm appears to regard the Companions and Followers as virtually impeccable. Ibn Hibbān does say, “God declared the Companions to be above weakness (wahan) adhering to them.” On the other hand, he explicitly acknowledges that they occasionally suppressed names of their intermediaries and made errors in transmission. After all he says, they, like later transmitters, “were not infallible.”

VII. Conclusion

Consistency in the authentication of ḥadīth was the goal of the critics. By the time of Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, technical criticism was already fully shaped in all of its practical aspects. Although the critics remained receptive to attempts to introduce greater rigor in the authentication process, they ran up against the fundamental problem that if standards were made too strict, few ḥadīth could meet them. Nowhere

130 Ibn Hibbān, Sahih, 1:123.
131 Ibn Hibbān, Sahih, 1:122.
132 Ibn Hibbān, Sahih, 1:115.
133 Ibn Hibbān, Sahih, 1:115.
is this better illustrated than in Ibn Ḥibbān’s discussion of Ḥammād b. Salama. Those who would reject his transmissions say that he made mistakes, doctored isnāds, paraphrased ḥadīth rather than transmitting them verbatim and transmitted reports unknown to his contemporaries. Ibn Ḥibbān concedes each point, but he counters that if one were to reject the transmissions of all those who did these things, there would be no ḥadīth left.\(^{134}\)

The introduction of the dogma of the collective reliability of the earliest Muslims, a technical innovation which seemingly must be ascribed to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, addressed this second point. It allowed the term “from” to be more strictly interpreted, but rendered the matter virtually meaningless by neutralizing its effect in sphere where it would have been the greatest, namely in the transmissions of the earliest Muslims. Thus, the critics could maintain the image of increased rigor without paying the price of rejecting more ḥadīth.

When Ibn Abī Ḥātim framed the terminology of personality criticism used in Ḵarḥ into a strict hierarchy, he too embellished the image of rigor that criticism projected. His immediate aim was to systematize the most ambitious work of personality criticism undertaken up to this time. (It will be remembered that Bukhārī’s al-Ta’īkh al-ḵabar, although executed on a similar scale, is much less concerned with evaluating the reliability of the transmitters.) Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s arrangement, like the strict interpretation of the term “from,” was met with favor by later generations of scholars. However, again, like the stricter interpretation of “from,” Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s innovation does not seem to have had any effect on the actual authentication of ḥadīth.

It is perhaps natural after examining the conspicuously divergent views concerning a transmitter like ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī’a to wonder how one can speak of consistency and criticism in the same breath. It is a matter of perspective. The critics (with a few exceptions) agreed that the transmissions of Ibn Lahī’a’s students varied greatly in their reliability. For the critics this variance in reliability was the salient fact and for this they had hard evidence in the form of the

\(^{134}\)  Ṣaḥīḥ, 1:114–18. This reasoning recalls ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī’s statement about the second of his three grades of transmitters, those who make mistakes but are for the most part reliable. He says, “If the ḥadīth of this [kind of transmitter] were rejected, the ḥadīth of the people would disappear;” Muslim, Tā REFER, 132; Ḵarḥ, 1(1):38; ‘Uqaylī, Duʿafā’, 1:13.
ḥadīth transmitted by the students. The biographical inferences the critics derived from the study of the Ibn Lahi‘a’s ḥadīth served to humanize the stark fact of the variable reliability of his transmissions in a fashion that would perhaps be pedagogically advantageous, but these inferences always occupied a decidedly secondarily position. This is not to say that the critics were not curious about the reason for the variations in the transmissions from ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahi‘a, for the abundance of explanations they proposed shows clearly that they were. But for the critics, who were above all concerned with authenticating ḥadīth, the actual reason for the variation was truly a matter of little importance. This, however, is naturally not the case for the modern scholar who comes to this material seeking to write history or biography, rather than with the aim of authenticating ḥadīth, and therefore it is important that this difference always be kept in mind.

In at least one respect the critics did stray precariously close to arbitrariness and this was in the treatment of the ḥadīth with converging lines of transmission. It has been shown here that the critics of ḥadīth were not blind to the implications of this circumstance and they judged these cases individually. Their efforts in this domain appear to have been subjective and it is not clear how it could have been otherwise. The legitimacy of the ḥadīth with converging lines of transmission was probably the technical issue of the greatest contentiousness between the adherents of ḥadīth and their opponents, the Kāfāns, who for the most part argued that the unparalleled ḥadīth should be rejected out of hand. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the significance of this issue, for it seems that the majority of ḥadīth were of this type: Ibn Ḥībbān went so far as to assert that there was no other kind.135

The attitude of the critics towards the authentication of the unparalleled ḥadīth reflects not only their recognition that the convergence of the lines of transmission was not an unambiguous indication—after all, one can easily conceive of the exceptional circumstances which would lead to a certain ḥadīth being preserved by only one of a teacher’s students—but also the critics’ belief that such things as authentic ḥadīth existed. In the end, I think, any estimation of the efficacy of ḥadīth criticism as a means for authenticating ḥadīth

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135 Sahih, 1:118; Ḥāzimī, Shurūf, 41; Ibn Hajar, Naẓḥa, 20.
must turn on the question of whether there were any authentic ḥadīth at all. If there were, it must be granted that the critics devised the best possible means for identifying them. Their basic method even resembles “Schacht’s Common-Link Theory”136 in respect to the attention both approaches focus on the convergence of isnāds on a single transmitter. If, however, there never were any authentic ḥadīth, the efforts of the critics were foredoomed to failure through no fault of their own.

CONCLUSION

In the Taqdimā we find a mirror of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s attitudes. Following in the footsteps of his father, he became a critic of ḥadīth and, like all of the critics, he was horrified by what he perceived as the transformation of the Muslim community from a single unity into a welter of competing sects. The critics of ḥadīth ascribed this pernicious absence of uniformity within the Muslim community to the inconsistent exploitation of the sources of religious doctrine. It was their view that, if Muslims were to confine themselves to drawing their religious doctrines in a systematic fashion from the two indisputable bases of Muslim thought, the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, the community’s internal doctrinal conflicts would disappear. Religious matters not addressed in the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, the critics argued, were to be left in abeyance, in the belief that there was no way to deal with them that would not precipitate further disagreement. The use of the ḥadīth as a source of doctrine was especially difficult because of the many contradictions they contained. The critics addressed this problem using ḥadīth criticism, which, by its reliance on what they considered to be objective criteria, appeared to offer a consistent way to authenticate ḥadīth.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote the Taqdimā to justify to a sympathetic Hijāzian audience the techniques of ḥadīth criticism. He invokes the precedence of certain well-respected Hijāzian forebears, whom he attempts to depict as critics of ḥadīth. To achieve this end, Ibn Abī Ḥātim gathers a great collection of transmitted reports, which although varied in character and form, all depict these early scholars as sharing the characteristics of the critics of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s time. Although we can find no record of a specific motivation for his undertaking such a defense of ḥadīth criticism; the competition between the critics and their rivals, the Kūfans, which split the Muslim world and raged with special ferocity in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s hometown of al-Rayy, is likely to have provided the necessary impetus.

It would be of great interest to know the reaction of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s contemporaries to the Taqdimā. However, the sources tell us nothing. We may note, though, that the basic thesis of the work, which may be distilled down to the assertion that certain scholars
of the generation of Mālik and Sufyān al-Thawrī were critics of ḥadīth, was not called into question, either by the critics or by their opponents. Consultation of later biographies shows that figures like Mālik and Sufyān al-Thawrī bore easily the mantle of the critic. Both the critics and their rivals agreed on this point, but for entirely different reasons.

Although the association of ḥadīth criticism with certain famous figures increased its prestige, this association did carry a price since it undermined the integrity of ḥadīth criticism. In making early scholars like Mālik, Awzāʿī and Shuʿba critics, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues brought upon themselves the obligation of coming to terms with the alleged critical judgements ascribed to these scholars, many of which were wholly inconsistent with the findings of later critics. A modern scholar might never ask why Shuʿba failed to study with Abu ʿl-Zubayr al-Makkī, but those who regarded Shuʿba as a critic had to account for his blunder. Abu ʿl-Zubayr was reliable according to the standards of ḥadīth criticism, so there was no way that Shuʿba’s alleged rejection of him could be explained in those terms. The opponents of the critics avidly exploited the contradictions between the judgements of those early scholars alleged to be ḥadīth critics and those of later critics. They pointed to these discrepancies not as proof that the earlier scholars were not critics, but as proof of the fundamental arbitrariness which they suspected lurked at the heart of ḥadīth criticism. As has been shown, the reports ascribing Shuʿba’s alleged rejection of Abu ʿl-Zubayr al-Makkī to considerations extrinsic to the latter’s role as a transmitter of ḥadīth, namely Shuʿba’s disgust for the various manifestations of Abu ʿl-Zubayr’s moral delinquency, constituted a kind of explanation for Shuʿba’s rejection of Abu ʿl-Zubayr. Although these reports provided plausible explanations for Shuʿba’s behavior which were, no doubt, consonant with the current understanding of human psychology, they necessarily compromised any impression of methodological rigor on the part of Shuʿba by making him appear capricious. Not surprisingly, the critics did not usually make reference to such reports in situations where their aim was to defend ḥadīth criticism from the charge of arbitrariness. They, nevertheless, could not defend the validity of the discrepant judgements, which they knew well were

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1 See above, pp. 91-92.
erroneous. The critics resorted instead to somewhat tenuous arguments to the effect that these early scholars, although wrong, were at least not arbitrary. The modern student can cut through this Gordian knot by declaring these early scholars not to be critics at all. That neither Ibn Abī Ḥātim nor any of his fellows availed themselves of this expedient shows how valuable they regarded the prestige of these early scholars.

Despite the trouble the discrepant judgements caused for the critics of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s day, they do provide the disinterested observer with a vindication of ḥadīth criticism as a consistent technique for the authentication of ḥadīth. The great attention that was focused on the discrepant judgements, as evidenced by the proliferation of competing theories put forward to account for their existence, shows that they were exceptional, proving that the ḥadīth critics did attain a high degree of consistency. It is the rejection of these judgements by the majority of the critics—even when these judgements were ascribed to the most esteemed of their forebears—that demonstrates that this consistency was rooted in the methodical application of set rules and procedures, and not in the reliance on authorities.

Whatever the response was to the Taqūima, the program of the critics was highly influential. It is, nonetheless, unclear whether the critics as a movement even survived the end of the fourth/tenth century in a form which Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his contemporaries would have recognized. Further research is necessary to clarify this point, but it is not unlikely that the movement’s untimely demise was linked to its rejection of the use of human reason. The uncompromised position of the critics toward human reason possessed a certain intellectual appeal, but because of inherent practical limitations, it could never become very popular. In the legal sphere, the critics simply could not address questions not covered by the Qurʾān and ḥadīth and such questions were bound to arise daily. In the realm of theology, the exclusive reliance on scriptural authority (in the form of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth) meant that the critics’ theology was crippled in interconfessional polemic. Furthermore, with the passage of time even the critics’ central activity of authenticating ḥadīth became both unnecessary and largely impossible. This, rather ironically, was the result of the success enjoyed by the compilations of the early

2 See, for example, Tirmidhi’s Kitāb al-‘Iltā at the end of his Sahīh.
critics like Muslim and Bukhari. The criticism of hadith depended on the more or less free flow of hadith through many lines of transmission and these channels began to dry up as soon as scholars came to focus their attention on the great hadith collections. This was a gradual process, although its effects can already be detected by the middle of the fourth/tenth century.

The great collections of hadith remain the most enduring legacy of the critics and to this day these texts continue to be studied and consulted throughout the Muslim world. Although their role in the history of Muslim religious thought has not been fully assessed, it seems probable that the appearance of these collections had more to do with the hadith of the Prophet gaining an exalted status in Muslim religious thought than any theoretical argument. With these works the critics put in the hands of non-specialists the practical means for the exploitation of the hadith. It was also through these works that the critics defined what came to be largely accepted as the common core of the Muslim identity. Although the critics never realized their dream of banishing dissension from the Muslim world, they did provide a charge of ballast for the Community to steady it in its journey down through the ages.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


INDEX

Abban b. Ṭuhmān: 109
Abbād b. ʿAbbād al-Ursūfī: 75n
ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī: 21, 91, 94
Abbott, Nabiya: vii
ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: 20, 108n, 109
ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī al-ʿAbbāsī: 72
ʿAbd Allāh b. Bakr al-Muẓaffar: 116
ʿAbd Allāh b. Idrīs: 91n
ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak: 49, 51, 99n, 100
on mawāt: 70–71
ʿAbd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Muqri: 100
ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr: 48n
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rawwād: 117–118
ʿAbd al-Hamīd b. Jafar: 112
ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Khaṭābī: 114–115
ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qaḍī: 4n
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Maṣūdī: 96–97
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz al-Aʿrāj: 64
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī: 9, 10n, 49, 51, 67, 84, 94n, 96, 104, 124n
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Muʿallimī al-Yamānī: 31
ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām: 27n, 103
ʿAbī: 15n
Abraham (the prophet): 60
Abu ʿl-ʿAbbās al-Saffārī: 72
Abu ʿl-Aswād al-Nadr b. ʿAbd al-Jabbar: 101
ʿAbū Awāna: 50
ʿAbū Bakr (the Companion): 62, 74
ʿAbū Bakr al-Marwazi: 70n
ʿAbū Bakr b. Shuʿayb: 118
Abū ʿl-Dardāʾ: 109, 113
ʿAbū Dāwūd al-Siṣṭānī: 33, 44, 97
ʿAbū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīṣī: 24
Abū Dulaf: 16
Abu ʿl-Faḍl Ahmad b. ʿAlī al-Sulaymānī: 27n, 103n
Abū Ḥanīfa: 5, 27n, 35, 53–56, 59
Abu ʿl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī: 17
Abu ʿl-Ḥasan b. al-Qasṣār: 35
ʿAbū Hurayra: 89–90, 116
ʿAbū Idrīs al-Khawālīnī: 114–115
ʿAbū Iṣḥāq: 50
ʿAbū Iṣḥāq al-Fazārī: 49, 51–52, 60
ʿAbū Jaʿfar (the caliph): 73
ʿAbū Kārima al-Kūfī: 61
Abu ʿl-Khāyrb: 112
ʿAbū Maʿṣhar: 110
ʿAbū Maṣʿūd: 117
ʿAbū Mushir: 49, 51–52
ʿAbū Muslim al-Khawālīnī: 38
ʿAbū Nuʿaym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn: 79, 117
ʿAbū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī: 71
Abu ʿl-Qāsim al-Lālakāʾī: 33
ʿAbū Salām Māntūr al-Aswad: 108
ʿAbū Yaḥyā al-Khalīfī: 13, 24–25, 28
ʿAbū Yusuf: 53–56
ʿAbū Zuhayr al-Marwārūdī: 65
adhk: 94
ahd al-bidāʾa: 48
ahd al-ʾibn: 105
Ahmad b. Ḥanbal: 8, 18, 20–21, 24, 36, 40, 49, 51, 60–61, 62n, 86–70, 91–92, 97n, 108–111, 115n, 122n
on sectarians: 103
on zauḥ: 68–70
ʿAffān: 88
ʿAlī al-summa waʿl-tīqūd al-dīn (of Ibn Abī Haṭīm): 33
Ahmad b. Ḥasan b. al-Madhāraʾī: 77
Ahmad b. ʿAlī al-Muṣṭaḥ: 101
al-Ahnaf b. Qays: 116
ʿAḥwaṣ b. Ḥakim: 81
ʿAḥṣāa: 110–111, 116, 119
akhbāra: 108
ʿAlī (the Companion): 26n, 73, 113–114
ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qārī: 111
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm: 13, 16, 19n, 20, 23, 28
INDEX

'Āli b. 'Isā: 27
'Ali b. Muḥarram al-Miṣrī: 28
'ālim: 47n
alcohol: 63, 90-91
'Alqama b. Marthad: 38
Alwān al-ibīl (of Shāfi’ī): 39
al-`A’math: 27n
`Āmir b. 'Abd Allāh: 38
`Amr b. 'Alī al-Fallās: 100
`Amr b. Dīnār: 50, 64, 85, 94
`Amr wa‘-l-nāḥy (of Muzani): 6
'an: 111, 112-118, 124
Anas b. Mālik: 122n
'aqī: 55
'ard: 86
'Arrāk b. Mālik: 110-111
`asābiyya: 14-15
Asl al-sunna (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 38
al-Aswad b. Yazīd: 38
“The Authenticity of Prophetic Hadith: A Pseudo-problem” (of Wael
Hallaq): x
awwāb: ix
Awzāyī: 48-50, 57-58, 128
dreams: 61-62
with political authorities: 71-73, 77, 79n
Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī: 89-90, 95
Azami, M.M.: 48n, 86n
bāb: 35
badā: 25
Baghdad: 20, 26, 49, 51
balaghah: 109
Balkhī, Abu `l-Qāsim: 10
Baqiya b. al-Walid al-Ḥimṣī: 86-87
al-Barā‘ b. ‘Āzib: 122n
al-Baṣra: 49-51, 61
bāšīl: 9
Bayān al-khaṭa‘ (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 29
br’da: 102
bī-l-lā kaff: 8
Bī‘r Mūsā: 65
bīr: 68
birthdates: 57
Bishr b. al-Maṭrīṣī: 21
Bishr b. Bishr al-Tūnisi: 60
Bukhāri: 15, 29-32, 36, 44n, 114, 119, 124, 130
on dates: 115-118
Buwaytī: 21
caliph: 2
Companions: 12, 37, 46-47, 51, 55, 74, 94n, 107n
as authorities: 37
Conrad, Lawrence I.: 116n
da‘ī: 96
Damascus: 49-52
darb: 16
Dārimī, ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd: 36
dates: 115-118
Dāwūd al-Ja‘farī: 65
Dawūdī: 40
Dhababī: 32
dhū‘alib: 96
Dhikr man hadatha ‘anhu Ibn Abī ‘Arāba
(of Nāfi‘): 108
dhu‘aba: 64
Dhu‘ayb b. ‘Amr al-Sahmī: 44
Dreams: 26, 38, 59-63
Ess, Josef van: 104
faḍā’il: 26, 39
Faḍā’il ahl al-bayt (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 34
al-Faḍl b. Shadhān: 17, 38
fuqih al-jumā: 72
al-Fawā’id (of Abū Zū‘a): 34
al-Fawā’id al-kabīr (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 34
al-Fawā’id al-Rācqīyīn (of Abū Zū‘a): 34
al-Fawā’id al-Rājqīyīn (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 34
Fī sin‘āl al-kalām (of al-Ja‘fī): 4n
al-Fūrīṣ (of Ibn Nadīm): 17
fīqh: 15
fīrma: 48
Followers: 1, 47, 94n
al-Fustāṭ: 22
al-Futayn (of Ibn al-Muqaffā‘): 2
Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums: viii
Goldziher, Ignaz: viii, 82
Grunebaum, Gustave E. von: 62
hadditha: 67, 107-109
haddith: abrogation of: 6-7
contradictory: 5-7
Shī‘a: 7n
as source of law: 55, 58
Najjārites: 15
Nagī al-Sūrīnī (of Balkhī): 10
Nāqīd: 47n
Nasā’ī: 108
Nāsīk al-hadīth wa-mansūkhuḥū (of Ibn Shāhīn): 6
nask: 70
Nāsīk al-hadīth wa-mansūkhuḥū (of Ibn Shāhīn): 120
nisba: 16, 28n
nubū’ā: 91
Nur Sayf, A.H.: 86n

The Origins of Muhammad’s Jurisprudence
(of J. Schacht): vii

paidonymic: see kunya
pronōtition: 33

Qabūl al-akhbār (of Balkhī): 10
Qadārism: 103
qāb: 83
al-Qāsim b. Abī Ayyūb: 108
Qatādā: 50, 67, 104, 110–111
qa’ān: 14
qirāt: 17
qiyās: 55
Qur’ān: 1, 15–16, 58, 127
Quorra b. ‘Abd al-Rahlān: 81
Quṭayba b. Sa’d: 118
al-Rabī’ b. Khuthaymī: 38
al-Rabī’ b. Sulaymān al-Murādī: 18, 22–23
al-Radd ‘ala ʾl-Jāmiʿa (of Ibn Abī Ḥāṣim): 21, 36
al-Radd ‘ala ʾl-Jāmiʿa (of ʾUthmān b. Sa’d al-Dārinī): 36
al-Radd ‘ala ʾl-zanādīqa wa ʾl-jāmiʿa (of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal): 36
Rāmahuruzī: 48, 52, 118
rāwī: 107–109, 114, 116
rcy: 3, 58, 103
al-Rayy: 127
“A Revaluation of Islamic Tradition”
(of J. Schacht): vii
riḥla: 19n
al-Riṣāla (of Shāfī’ī): 6
al-Riṣāla fī ʾl-sahāba (Ibn al-Muqaffāʾ): 2
Robson, James: 48n, 120n
Rosenthal, Franz: 116
Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm: 92, 112n
sādūq: 96
sāḥib al-bīda’: 102
sāḥib al-hawā: 102
al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: 15
Ṣaḥīh (of Ibn Hībbān): 123
Ṣaḥīḥ (of Muslim): 19, 86, 105, 119–121
ṣahīḥ: 123
Sa’d b. Abī ʿArūba: 50, 97–98, 110
Sa’d b. Abī Maryam: 101
Sa’d b. Abī Yazīd: 112
Sa’d b. Jubaṣt: 110
Sa’d b. Yāsīr: 122n
Sa’d b. Yazīd: 112
sakāḥ: 68
Sakkāwī: 29, 39–40
ṣālīh: 96
Ṣāliḥ b. Ahmad b. Ḥanbal: 20, 24
Ṣāliḥ b. Nahbān: 44
Ṣāmīnī: 37
ṣamā’a: 67, 107–109, 111
Samura b. Jundab: 114
ṣāqī: 96
al-Sārī b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd: 87
Ṣātān: 63
Schacht, Joseph: vii–ix, 48n, 73n, 78–79, 121n, 126
Sectarianism: 102–104
Sezgin, Fuat: vii
Sha’bī: 48
Shāfiʿī: 6, 12, 16, 18, 22–23, 35, 39, 55–56, 121n
Sharḥ ‘Tal’ al-Tirmīdī (of Ibn Rajab): 40
Sharḥ Shaḥīḥ Muslim (of Nawawī): 120
Sharḥ usūl ʿīqād al-sunna (of Lālakāʾ): 33
Shaybānī: 15, 53–56
shaykh: 96
al-Shīrāzī (of Shāfī’ī): 39
Sifat al-suṣīʿa (of Ibn al-Jawāzī): 71
Ṣīnā (of Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq): 74n, 79n
Siyyāb b. ʿĀṣim al-Sulamī: 112
sunnah: 2–3, 28, 35, 46–48, 55, 84
al-Sunna (of Ibn Abī Ḥārim): 33
Sunna (of Abū Dawūd): 44
Studies in Arabic literary Papyri
(of N. Abbott): viii
Sufism: 26, 69, 71
Sufyān al-Thawrī: 45, 49–50, 54, 60–61, 64, 66–69, 74–79, 128
Sufyān b. ʿUyayn: 41, 44, 49, 57n, 64, 73, 81, 83, 94–95
INDEX

ṣuhba: 111–112
Sulaymān b. Mihrān: 50
Sulaymān al-Taymi: 61
Surāqā b. Mālik b. Ju‘sham: 144
Suwayd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz: 91–92

tabqa: 42, 48–49, 50–52
Ṭabarī: 5, 26n, 36, 79n, 100
Tabūdhakī: 88
Ta‘dīl: 120–123
talēs: 119, 122n
al-Tawfīq (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 36–37
ṭahārat al-khalq: 68
Ṭahāwī: 17
talqīn: 9
al-Tawṣīṣ (of Muslim): 83–86
Taqlīd: 4
Ta‘rīkh Bagdād (of al-Khaṭīb al-Bagdādi): 39
al-Ta‘rīkh al-kabīr (of Bukhārī): 30–32, 115, 124
al-Ta‘rīkh al-saghir (of Bukhārī): 29, 115
taswīya: 87
tawāfāt: 68

“A Tentative Chronology of the
Origins of Muslim Tradition”
(by G.H.A. Juynboll): viii
Thawbah al-a‘māl (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 37
Thawbān: 108
Thawr b. Yazīd: 81
thiqā: 80, 96, 121n
Tirmidhī: 30, 92, 105–106, 114

‘Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā: 27n, 103
‘Umar (the Companion): 27n, 62, 74–75
‘Umar b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Khayyām: 86
‘Umar b. Dharr: 104
Usayd b. ‘Āṣim: 24
‘Uthmān b. Affān: 26n, 48n, 113
‘Uthmān b. Mūsā: 87
‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dārimī: see Dārimī
Uways al-Qarāf: 38

wasfiyāt. 115
wuhān: 123
Wafi b. al-Jarrāh: 63, 70, 91
Wālid II: 48n, 72n
Wālid b. Muslim al-Dimashqī: 60
wagf: 28
wārid: 59, 68–71
al-‘Waqf (of Ahmad b. Hanbal): 70n
wagf: 57n

Yahya b. Abī Ḥabbāb: 110
Yahya b. Abī Kathīr: 50
Yahya b. Abī Zā‘ida: 51
Yahya b. Ādam: 51
Yahya b. Manda: 29, 32–35, 40
Yahya b. Sa‘īd: 27, 48–49, 51, 53, 84, 109, 122n
Yahya b. Ya‘mār: 111
Ya‘qūb b. Dāwūd: 76n
Ya‘qūb b. Abī Kathīr: 50
Yaqūt: 26, 34, 77
Ya‘zīd b. Abī Ḥabbāb: 112
Ya‘zīd b. Abī Yazīd: 84–85
Ya‘zīd b. Abī Ziyād: 84–85
Ya‘zīd b. Hārūn: 96
Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-‘Alā‘: 55
Yūnus b. ‘Abd Allāh: 27n
Yūnus b. Ḥabbāb al-Iṣbahānī: 24
Yūnus b. ‘Ubayd: 61

Zafarānites: 15
Zāhirites: 15, 37
zakāt al-fīr: 106
zindāy: 102
al-Zubayr (the Companion): 113
zuḥd: 38, 68–71, 94
al-Zuhd (of Abū Ḥātim): 38
al-Zuhd (of Abū Zuh‘a): 38
Zuḥd al-thamāniya (of Ibn Abī Ḥātim): 38
Zuhrī: 48, 50, 64, 81, 83, 95, 105, 109–110
ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

STUDIES AND TEXTS