

## Ḥadīth, Language of

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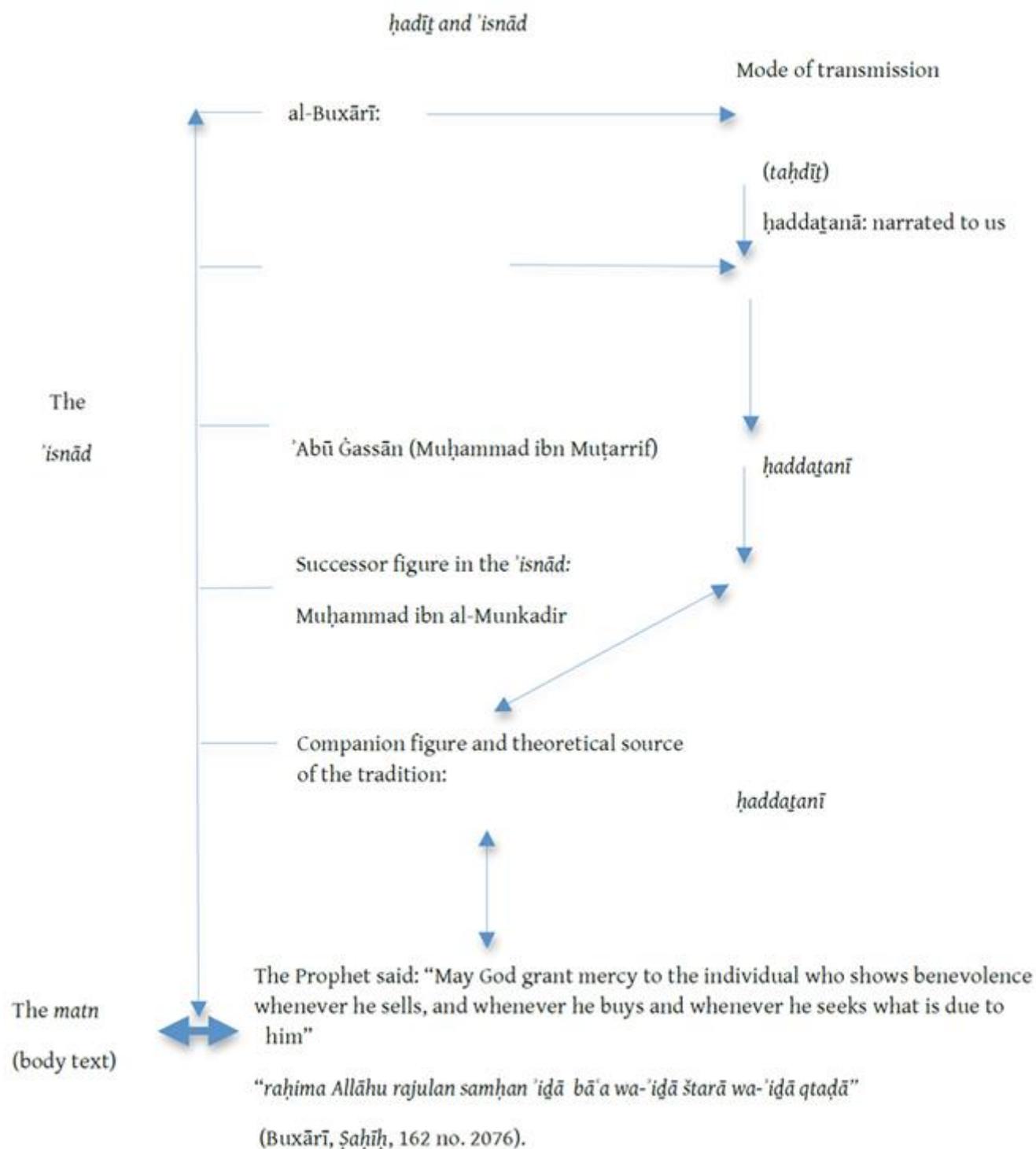
### Introduction

The *ḥadīths* constitute the vast corpus of individual reports which are traditionally believed to preserve details germane to all aspects of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions. Given the spiritual as well as the temporal realm assumed by the faith of Islam, the subject matter of traditions inevitably encompasses a vast panoply of topics and themes. Alongside the *Qur'ān*, the *ḥadīths* serve as the preeminent scriptural source of Islam, providing a bridge to the Prophetic *sunna*, which is defined as the normative custom or precedent established by the Prophet. Once it was contextualized, deference to the Prophetic *sunna* emerged as a key axiom within the early Islamic tradition; the fine points of belief, law, and ritual were all fleshed out through reference to the established *sunna*. Existing in the form of individual narratives, reports, and vignettes, Prophetic dicta vary enormously in terms of their length, type of content, and format. They preserve statements, opinions, and words of exhortation attributed to the Prophet; accounts of his sanctions and deeds; reports eulogizing his qualities and characteristics; and anecdotes recounting aspects of historical events in his lifetime. The corpus of *ḥadīth* also comprises a substantial number of reports pertaining to the lives of the Companions, whose own array of precedents, seemingly shaped by Prophetic guidance, was integral to the evolution of the concept of *sunna*. The influence of the *ḥadīths* extends to all aspects of classical Islamic thought, including areas such as theology, exegesis, popular piety, and even Arabic biography and history. The literature associated with the study of traditions is monumental, comprising voluminous collections and supplements of traditions; commentaries exploring their legal, theological, exegetical, and linguistic content; biographies of narrators; works on the principles of authenticating traditions; and even tracts together with treatises which inventively committed this last class of materials to poetic verse.

### Definition and Structure

A *ḥadīth* structurally consists of two entwined literary components: the *matn* (body text), which comprises the actual wording of the individual dictum in terms of the information it comprises; and its *'isnād* (namely, its support), which presents a continuous chain of authority listing, in chronological sequence, the persons who serve as the narrators of the *matn* of a given tradition. Certain *'isnāds* can diverge or converge at various stages into an intricate schema of authorities before ideally ending with a Companion figure, who serves as the primary source of the report being narrated. Theoretically, the Companion figure is the 'author' of the narrated report, as it is this figure's recollection and presentation of a statement or event which inform its contents. Each *matn* is preceded by its chain of authority, which, in turn, is prefaced by a prescribed phrase such as *ḥaddaṭānā* (narrated to us), *'axbaranā* (informed us), or *'anba'anā* (related to us); these formulae indicate the manner by which the tradition was acquired by the compiler of a collection from the first authority listed in the chain, although their use is predicated upon there being direct contact among transmitters. Interestingly, earlier traditionist scholarship tended to view these

formulae as being synonymously uniform, although later scholars argued that there existed slight nuances distinguishing the semantic import of each of these phrases, which were also employed to qualify the nature of transmission across different levels of the *'isnād* (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi'*, 465–472) (see fig. 1). Shorter *'isnāds* were especially coveted as they implied that fewer intermediaries separated the narrators from the actual *matn* of a *ḥadīth* ('Irāqī, *Fath*, 224–225; As-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb* II, 160f.). Accepted conventions applied in the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge (*taḥammul al-'ilm*) included *samā'*, which was associated with active audition, whereby a student would listen to a mentor, who was either reading from a book or reciting from memory; frequently, dictation was involved with both mentors and students relying upon the use of notes and annotated materials. A second convention, referred to as *qirā'a* or *'arḍ*, entailed a student reading either from memory or notes in the presence of a mentor, who would audit the session, offering corrections and revisions as appropriate. It is to these processes that the aforementioned formulae, *ḥaddaṭanā*, *'axbaranā*, and *'anba'anā*, are linked. Once evolved, the systems of *samā'* and *qirā'a* were the preeminent modes of transmission employed by scholars of traditions, and were adhered to within other areas of learning due to their emphasis on direct contact between mentor and student. However, further accepted methods of acquisition and dissemination were applied in the collection, collation, and transmission of *ḥadīth* materials, including conventions such as *'ijāza* (granting permission or license to transmit); *munāwala* (passing on a text for transmission); *mukātaba* (writing down traditions for someone); *'ilām* (informing a student about a particular tradition or text); *waṣīyya* (delegating someone to pass on a tradition or text); and *wijāda* (finding or coming across traditions in works) (Rāmḥurmuzī, *Muḥaddiṭ*, 472–517; 'Irāqī, *Fath*, 141–181; Ibn Jamā'a, *Manḥal*, 81–92; As-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2.8–61., cf. Buxārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 7).



Cited with slightly different *'isnāds* in:

at-Tirmidī's collection: “*ḡafara Allāhu li-rajulin kāna qablakum kāna saḥlan 'iḍā bā'a saḥlan 'iḍā štarā saḥlan 'iḍā qtaḍā*”

(at-Tirmidī, *Jāmi'*, 1784 no. 1320 ).

## Figure 1

Within the course of an *ʿisnād*, key terms such as *ʿanbaʿa*, *ʿaxbara*, *samʿitu*, *qāla*, and the preposition *ʿan* were employed to qualify the mode of contact among the individual narrators featured in the *ʿisnād*. The use of a term such as *ʿan* (*muʿanʿan*: exemplified by the use of *ʿan*) indicated that the precise form of dissemination among authorities listed in an *ʿisnād* is not specifically qualified, although there were other considerations to which scholars referred (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 679–680; ʿIrāqī, *Fath*, 64–65). Traditional sources do claim that the *ʿisnād* was introduced sometime towards the latter half of the first century of the Islamic tradition, following the political and social turmoil associated with the civil wars, even though the precise date of its inception, along with the developed nature of its early usage, is a subject of dispute (Schacht 1954: 37; cf. Juynboll 1973: 154–159; Robson 1954: 15–18). Traditions were fabricated for theological, political, sectarian, legal, and even pious purposes, and the traditional view is that the *ʿisnād* afforded a means of sourcing *ḥadīths* and gauging their authenticity (ʿIrāqī, *Fath*, 101–109; cf. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 673–680). A dramatic statement on the subject of the use of the *ʿisnād* is attributed to Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (ca. 34–110/654–728), in which he asserts, “They never used to ask about *ʿisnād*, but when the *fitna* (discord) broke out, it was said: ‘Name us your authorities’” (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 675–676; cf. Juynboll 1994: 154f.). Over successive historical periods, *ḥadīth* criticism principally focused on the scrutiny of the narrators who featured in the *ʿisnāds*, and complex rules were devised for this purpose, although subtle varieties of *matn* analysis were also implemented.

Initially, a tripartite division of traditions into the categories *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), *ḥasan* (sound), and *ḍaʿīf* (weak) was adopted (ʿIrāqī, *Fath*, 17–26; cf. Dickinson 2006: 5–24). An authentic tradition was defined as having a continuously connected *ʿisnād* through all levels of its transmission; the individuals who featured in the *ʿisnād* had to fulfill the conditions stipulated for trustworthiness (*ʿadāla*) and reliability (*ḍabt*). Generally, it was specified that such a tradition should not fall into the class of materials designated as being distinctively anomalous (*šādd*); namely, it should not conflict with traditions whose authenticity had already been established. Nor should it belong to the class of tradition defined as being defective (*muʿallal*), which could relate to some peculiar aspect of the content of a tradition or a part of its *ʿisnād* (Ḥākīm, *Maʿrifat*, 112–119; cf. Dickinson 2006: 67). Traditions failing to meet the criteria set for authentic materials, principally in terms of the condition set for reliability, were classed as being *ḥasan* (sound). In cases where a tradition met neither the criteria set out for authentic traditions nor those for sound ones, it was defined as being weak (*ḍaʿīf*). Debates persisted among scholars as to whether it was permissible to utilize materials classed as being weak for purely paraenetic purposes (*faḍāʿil al-ʿaʿmāl*).

As the process of authentication and its applied methodologies advanced, subcategories of all these three classes of traditions were gradually defined, leading to the evolution of a rich repertoire of terminology used to classify *ʿisnāds* and the traditions they supported. Strategies for the technical systematization of rules and conventions with regard to transmission and dissemination were formulated within the science of authentication (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*), which emerged *sui generis* as a distinct area of learning within *ḥadīth* scholarship. Traditions that were identified as being patent forgeries were classed as *mawḍūʿ* (literally, ‘planted’) and there developed a genre of works devoted to collating and identifying such materials. The significance of the system of classification rested on the fact that jurists took the view that *ḥadīths* which were classed as being either authentic or sound should furnish the materials for the formulation of dogma, law, and ritual. The focus on the scrutiny of narrators

contributed to the emergence of a rich constellation of biographical literature, including works that identified narrators who were recognized as being either trustworthy or weak; texts devoted to resolving ambiguities concerning the precise names of narrators, and those which detailed their dates of births and deaths; surveys of specific cities identifying luminaries who lived there; and even compilations which focused on recounting the details of the individual narrators who appeared in the *'isn āds* of esteemed collections of traditions.

## The Corpora

The nature of how and when the codification of the traditions took place forms a significant aspect of the academic debate concerning the authenticity of the literary materials associated with the classical Islamic tradition. Detailed archival sources are normally dated to the late second/eighth century and early third/ninth century, and while these sources refer to antecedents in the form of earlier compilations, which were used by later authors, recent scholarship remains divided as to the reliability of this ascription. Consequently, different views have been expressed concerning the historical genesis of the *ḥadīṭ* and its complementary literature (Shah 2010: 8–12). One associated view is that the materials do not emanate from the age of the Prophet and his Companions, but owe their provenance to impressionistic attempts to create authority for doctrinal and ritual constructs through references to an ideally conceived past (Berg 2003: 259–264). An opposing view is that through the analysis of both the *'isnāds* and *matns*, it is possible to arrive at much earlier dates for the origin of traditions, and these are technically nearer to the periods identified by Muslim scholarship for their emergence as a genre (Motzki 2003b: 212–219). Neither view would contest that the traditions provided the materials with which the subsequent articulation of doctrine and law was formulated.

The traditional perspective is that the conventions that defined the transmission of *ḥadīṭs* influenced the compilation of preclassical collections of traditions, and that the collation of *ḥadīṭs* was beginning to take shape in the second half of the second/eighth century. Individuals such as Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), al-'Awzā'ī (d. 157/773), Sufyān aṭ-Ṭawrī (97-161/715-778), and Ḥammād ibn Salama (d. 167/784) are all credited with having compiled *muṣannaḥ* works, which arranged traditions thematically, adopting the system of organization found in the manuals on jurisprudence. These typically included chapters on ablution, ritual washing, menstruation, prayer, alms payment, fasting, and pilgrimage, extending across the gamut of ritual, legal, and interrelated topics. Major works from the following periods include the *muṣannaḥs* of 'Abd ar-Razzāq aṣ-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/826), 'Abū Bakr ibn 'Abī Ṣayba (d. 235/849), and Mālik ibn 'Anas (112–179/714–795), who was the author of a legal manual in which *ḥadīṭs* were collated with legal edicts and formal statements sourced to Companion and Successor figures.

The genre of works referred to as *musnads* adhered to an entirely different arrangement: these were organized according to the names of key narrators who featured in the *'isnāds*. 'Abū Dāwūd aṭ-Ṭayālīsī (d. 204/819), 'Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855), 'Ishāq ibn Rāhawayhī (d. 238/852), 'Uthmān ibn 'Abī Ṣayba (d. 239/853), and 'Abū Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī (201–307/816–919) were all authors of *musnad* works (Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb* II, 88–144). In contrast to the *musnads*, the thematic arrangement of the *muṣannaḥ* works facilitated the referencing and sourcing of traditions.

Medieval Sunni scholarship designated a number of the collections from the third/ninth century as representing the most authentic and sound traditions from the available corpora of materials; these were referred to as the Six Canonical Books (*al-Kutub as-sitta*), a designation that was largely honorific, implying a nominal ranking of the collections. Not all of the traditions that featured in these works were classified as being unquestionably authentic or sound in the technical sense; rather, they comprised reports of all sorts of grades and classes. Among *al-Kutub al-sitta*, the most authentic materials were preserved in the collection by Muḥammad ibn 'Ismā'īl al-Buxārī (194-256/810-870) entitled *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, and in a second text compiled by Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) entitled *al-Musnad aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*; this latter work included an important introduction in which its author disclosed his approach to the selection of traditions and the network of narrators upon whom he relied. *Al-Kutub as-sitta* included a number of compilations that were referred to as *sunan* compositions. Among them were the works of 'Abū Dāwūd as-Sijistānī (200-275/815-888), an-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), ibn Mājah (d. 272/886), and at-Tirmidī (d. 279/892), whose text was referred to as *al-Jāmi'*. *Sunan* works predominantly focused on collating traditions germane to legal, doctrinal, and ritual topics, whereas the *Ṣaḥīḥ* works aimed at encompassing the gamut of subjects covered by *ḥadīṭs*. Materials that were classed by scholarship as being technically weak (*ḍa'īf*) did feature in the *sunan* works. Sunni orthodoxy held the works of al-Buxārī and Muslim in great esteem, but this fact did not prevent *ḥadīṭ* critics from revisiting the modes of authentication applied by both authors. Numerous treatises, including revisions, supplements, and commentaries were devoted to these works, while separate collections were also compiled. With regard to the traditional literature of Shī'ism, it should be noted that it comprised both Prophetic reports and statements attributed to the authoritative *'imāms*. This was a reflection of the different axioms of hierarchical authority which were adhered to within Shī'ism (Buckley 1998: 165–169; Gleave 2001, 350f.). One important early collection was *al-Kāfi fī 'uṣūl ad-dīn*, authored by al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940).

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (773-852/1372-1449), the famed commentator on al-Buxārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, reports that taking into account repetitions, authentic traditions numbered about 4400, and that 800 of these actually covered the sum and substance of issues connected with the particulars of law and ritual (*al-ḥalāl* and *al-ḥarām*) (Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat*, 299–300; cf. Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi'*, 6). To put this into perspective, al-Buxārī's work comprises around 7500 *ḥadīṭs*, although large numbers of these are repetitions, thereby reducing the figure to around 4000 traditions. Al-Buxārī sought to flesh out the instructive import of traditions across different subject areas, and depending upon the *sunna* it was adumbrating, the same report could be adduced more than once in his text. Companion and Successor figures are also the main subjects of a number of these reports.

The *Ṣaḥīḥ* is divided into 97 main chapters and consists of a further 3450 subsections of extended headings, under which individual traditions were placed. Al-Buxārī's work commences with chapters entitled *Kitāb bad' al-waḥy* (the chapter on the beginnings of revelation), *Kitāb al-'īmān* (the chapter on faith), and *Kitāb al-'ilm* (the chapter on knowledge), before adhering to the overall thematic arrangement of the *muṣannaḥ* works. Taking into account the diversity of types of tradition presented in his work, in a chapter such as the *Kitāb al-'ilm*, which comprises over seventy *ḥadīṭs*, the actual portion of these materials that are exclusively Prophetic utterances (*sunan qawliyya*) is rather small and can often be confined to a line of text within the body of *amāt*.

## Authenticity and Origins

Classical Muslim scholarship took the view that once authenticated, the corpus of traditions preserved accurate historical records of the religious institutions and practices prevalent in the age of the Prophet and his Companions. As noted previously, Western academic treatments of the traditions have an entirely different view regarding the genesis of the *ḥadīth* and its authenticity. Although not the first scholar to bring the issue of authenticity to the fore, Ignaz Goldziher, in his nineteenth-century study entitled *Muhammedanische Studien*, added new impetus to the debates. He posited that the *ḥadīth* do not “serve as a document for the history of the infancy of Islam, but rather as a reflection of the tendencies which appeared in the community during the mature stages of its development” (Goldziher 1971: vol. II, 18). He contended that while an authentic core of *ḥadīth* materials did exist, it was not possible to identify these materials. In a work entitled *the Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, which focused on the analysis of legal traditions, Joseph Schacht spoke of his own work being “a not unworthy continuation of the studies he [Goldziher] inaugurated” (Schacht 1954:v). He went a stage further than Goldziher in terms of suggesting that the *ḥadīths* were neither historically linked with the Prophet nor his Companions. He took the position that they had their provenance in the late Umayyad period, claiming that “a great many of traditions in the classical and other collections were put into circulation” during the age of the jurist Muḥammad ibn ʿIḍrīs aṣ-Ṣāfiʿī (d. 204/820) (Schacht 1954: 4).

As for *ʿisnāds*, Goldziher posited that they were of little value as a tool of textual criticism, alleging that scholars engaged in disputes were able to cite traditions “equipped with imposing *ʿisnāds*” (Goldziher 1971: vol. II, 44). In Schacht’s estimation, *ʿisnāds* were arbitrary devices, insidiously used to provide traditions with historical depth. He accepted that they could assist in the dating of traditions, although it was the actual countenance of the *matn*, in terms of the doctrines and notions it promoted, which might intimate the origin of a particular tradition. Schacht also devised his theory of the common link, which is identified as the key narrator who appears in different *ʿisnāds* with similar *matns*, claiming that it could yield a *terminus a quo* for the promulgation of such traditions (Schacht 1954: 163–174; cf. Azami 1996: 197–205; Brown 2007: 3–8). Schacht’s view was that these common points of intersection not only indicated when *ḥadīths* were probably put into circulation, but they also provided insights into the process of dating the doctrines and teachings they comprised. The theoretical threads of the arguments on the common link introduced by Schacht were significantly developed by Gautier Juynboll, who concluded that the common link revealed the ‘originators’ who were reasonably believed to be responsible for the dissemination of Prophetic traditions (Juynboll 2007: i–ix; cf. Motzki 2010: 50–61). Promoting an investigation of the *ḥadīth* materials which scrutinized both *ʿisnāds* and *matns*, Harald Motzki, who is described as being Schacht’s principal critic, insists that it was important to eschew sweeping generalizations about the issue of fabrication. He maintained that while claims relating to the historical authenticity of the *ḥadīth* materials have to be treated cautiously, it is incorrect to assert that the *ḥadīths* are historically fictitious (Motzki 2002: xii). The debates about authenticity and origins remain significant, although they do tend to deflect attention away from the actual literary value and import of the corpora.

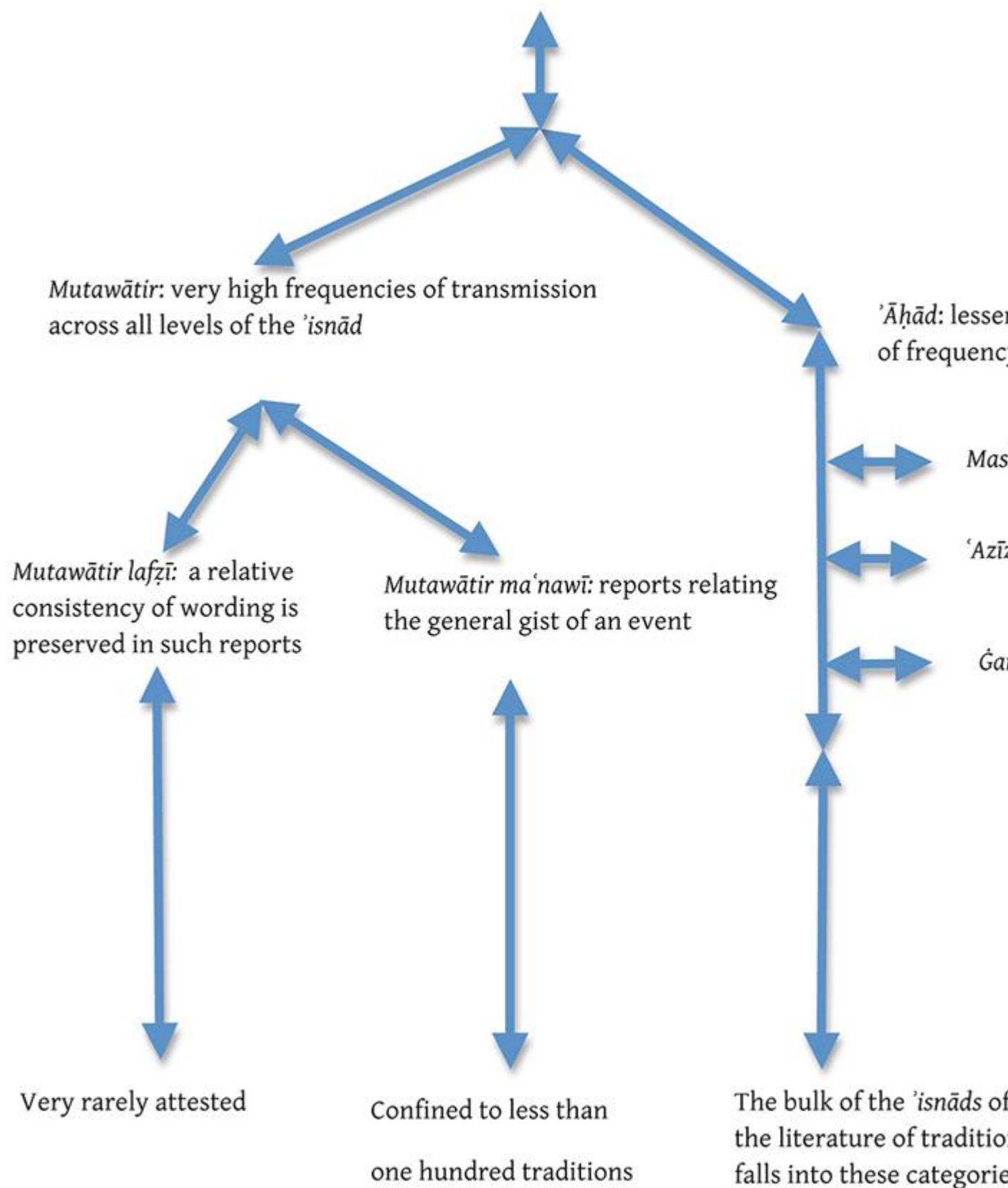
One aspect integrated into the debate about authenticity is the question of the opposition to writing down *ḥadīth* within early Islam. Prophetic traditions that prohibit the practice are found in the source materials, although there are traditions which reveal that the practice of writing them down was, in due course, granted the imprimatur of Prophetic sanction

(Xaṭīb, *Taqyīd*, 29–61, 64–86). Gregor Schoeler has argued that in the early years of Islam a combination of oral-aural and written media was employed for the transmission of materials such as Prophetic traditions and other forms of literature (Schoeler 2006: 29–30, 111–118; Schoeler 2009: 54–55). Schoeler makes a distinction between written records of these ‘oral’ sources, which had existed in the form of private notes or aides-mémoire used as mnemonic aids in lectures, and texts of a more fixed format. He introduced the terms “hypomnēma” and “syngramma” to highlight these distinctions, concluding that the idea of fixed texts (syngramma) crystallized much later in the Islamic tradition, with the *Kitāb* of the Basran grammarian Sībawayhi (d. c. 180/796) representing the first fixed text of its kind in the Arabo-Islamic tradition (Schoeler 2006: 162; cf. Shah 2008: 105). In a detailed study devoted to the subject of opposition to the writing of traditions, Michael Cook contended that Jewish origins and influences were at the heart of the Muslim tradition of orality (Cook 1997: 519–522). Thus, for Cook, the theoretical compass of opposition to writing was essentially rooted in early Islam. He also propounded the view that Islam and Judaism shared the same epistemological conception of an oral tradition, which existed together with written scripture. Cook’s position was that “although traditionist literature preserves substantially authentic materials from the second half of the second century; it can tell us a good bit about the first half of that century, but its use as evidence for a period anterior to that is less valuable” (Cook 1997: 489–490). Interestingly, the analysis of the language and literature of the *ḥadīth* using the tools of literary criticism has been pursued in a number of recent studies. The aim of such endeavors is to draw attention to some of the literature’s “thus far, unrecognized characteristics”, discussing aspects of its functional and aesthetic features (Günther 2000: 173; cf. Günther 1998:*passim*; Sperl 2007: 459).

## The Format and Structure of Traditions

Medieval scholarship subsequently defined two main categories of reports with reference to the modality of their transmission: *mutawātir* and *‘āḥād*. Reports which were transmitted with exceptionally high degrees of frequency in terms of the number of narrators who featured across all levels and junctures of the *‘isnād*, to the extent that precluded the possibility of these reports being the product of deliberate forgery, were defined as being *mutawātir* (broadly authenticated) (see fig. 2). It was stipulated that the knowledge conveyed in a *mutawātir* report had to be originally perceived by the senses in terms of what an individual had heard or was relating. Such reports were further divided into the categories *mutawātir lafḍī* and *mutawātir ma‘nawī* (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 16–17; Xaṭīb, *al-Faqīh*, 85–86; As-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb* II, 176–180). The former designation referred to the fact that a given report had been transmitted with a seemingly identical wording across all stages of the *‘isnād* by very large numbers of individuals; variations among these reports could exist, but these would be considered rather slight. Examples of traditions enjoying the coveted status of *mutawātir lafḍī* are very rare; some scholars even denied their existence (cf. Hansu 2009: 398-404). One tradition which is used to exemplify the phenomenon of *mutawātir lafḍī* is the report which states: *man kaḍaba ‘alayya muta‘ammidan fa-l-yatabawwa’ maq‘adahū min an-nār* (Whosoever deliberately lies about me, let him stake his abode in hell) (Buxārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 12. nos. 107, 108, 109, 110; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 674. nos. 2, 3, 4).

### The Classification of 'Axbār (Prophetic dicta): the



## Figure 2

The *mutawātir maʿnawī* is a form of tradition transmitted by very large numbers of narrators across all levels of the *ʿisnād* in which the general gist and sense of the information it comprises have been transmitted in parallel reports with equivalent levels of high transmission; differences among the versions of the tradition are more pronounced, but the core idea predicated by such materials remains uniform. Indeed, it may well be the case that traditions which are *mutawātir maʿnawī* relate different information concerning separate events and situations, although one central theme or idea is discernible within these reports. For example, the traditions which refer to the Prophet's permitting the "wiping over the *xuff* (leather footwear)"; the "beatific vision"; and the "raising of his hands" during the performance of prayer and acts of supplication are all classed as being *mutawātir maʿnawī* (Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb* II, 176–183; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ* XVIII, 16). As a general rule, *mutawātir* materials require no further authentication in terms of requisite *ʿisnād* analysis; it was also stated that the knowledge yielded by them is deemed necessary (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*).

Reports which did not attain the levels of frequency in transmission associated with *tawātur* were defined as being *ʿāḥād* (dicta having reduced frequency of transmission across all stages of the *ʿisnāds*). These reports were divided into the categories *mašhūr*, *ʿazīz*, and *ġarīb*, which respectively reflected a descending order of frequency across the levels of the *ʿisnād* (ʿIrāqī, *Fath*, 230–234). Those traditions enjoying the coveted status of *mutawātir maʿnawī* numbered less than one hundred and the Egyptian scholar Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, (d. 911/1505) collated them in a work entitled *al-ʿAzhār al-mutanāṭira fī l-ʿaxbār al-mutawātir* (cf. Hansu 2009: 404). However, the vast bulk of the corpus of traditions falls into the category of *ʿāḥād* materials.

## The Issue of “Ar-Riwāya bi-l-Maʿnā”

One key topic in medieval *ḥadīth* scholarship relates to the question of permitting the narration of traditions in the general spirit and sense of their meaning with the phrase “*ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā*” being employed to connote this distinction. Discussions in the medieval sources were initially constellated around permitting the transient resort to *ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā* for pedagogical and didactic purposes. The general consensus was that only scholars acquainted with the profundities of the import of these traditions could exercise this license; untrained individuals should adhere to the “wording of mentors” (ʿIrāqī, *Fath*, 195). The various debates were inevitably conceptualized through reference to the views on this subject that were held by early scholarship, and these earlier views had been formulated at a time when the wholesale shifts to codification (*tadwīn*) were yet to crystallize. The issue of *ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā* is historically important in the context of the Arabic linguistic tradition, not only for the simple reason that a number of medieval grammarians argued that concerns regarding this very feature of their transmission meant that traditions had to be shunned as a source for grammatical citation, but also because early Arabic linguists' contributions to the discussions appear significant. Intricate summaries and explanations of the various views expressed by earlier and classical scholars on the technicalities of narration and their importance to the preservation of the corpus of traditions are covered in the seminal work on the procedures of *ḥadīth* transmission entitled *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm ar-riwāya* composed by al-Xaṭīb al-Baġdādī (d. 463/1071) (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 169–210). Approaches to specific aspects of the transmission of traditions are discussed in the section of the work which deals with “*ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā*”.

These include *muxālafat al- 'alfāq*, which would relate to nuanced changes in the linguistic form of a tradition; *taqdīm*, which covers reconstituting its word order and structure, even when such changes do not appear to impinge upon a *ḥadīth*'s general tenor and meaning; *ziyāda* (interpolation); *nuqṣān* (deletion); *ixtiṣār* (abbreviating traditions); and *iqtiṣār* (selecting specific parts of the *matn*), together with various kinds of lexical paraphrasing and glossing, which are discussed in subsequent parts of the text. There were differences as to whether such activity could be extended to explicit Prophetic utterances (*sunan qawliyya*) in addition to other types of *ḥadīths* (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 170–171; cf. Rāmḥurmuzī, *Muḥaddit*, 529–532). In terms of references to earlier authorities, scholars such as Mālīk ibn 'Anas are reported to have disliked the practice of rephrasing the Prophet's wording in traditions, but permitted it for other forms of *ḥadīth*, adding that they should be narrated in the form they were heard, although al-Xaṭīb confirms that there were scholars who considered such practices to be acceptable even when dealing with traditions which were made up of Prophetic utterances (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 188–189).

Some indication of the early linguists' contribution to the related discussions on *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma 'nā* can be gauged from the specific sections in al-Xaṭīb's work. Philologists such as al-Xalīl ibn 'Aḥmad (d. 175/791), al-'Aṣma'ī (122–213/740–828), and an-Naḍr ibn Ṣumayl (d. 203/819) are reported to have adopted stringent approaches to *riwāya*. Similarly, in a section of *al-Kifāya* which deals with “adhering to the wording provided by a traditionist even if it contravenes the elevated diction (*al-luḡa al-faṣīḥa*)”—a statement attributed to the Kufan philologist 'Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim (157–224/774–838)—declares that the scholars of traditions employed their own idiosyncratic form of the language, while the scholars of *'arabiyya* had their own, adding that the language employed by the grammarians is more standard (*'aqyas*). However, he concedes that in accordance with the conventions of *samā'*, one has to adhere to the very language used by the traditionists (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 182; cf. 'Irāqī, *Fath*, 195–196). The implication is that provincial influences could be retained if they featured in the narration of a tradition, since it was essential—according to the school of thought which argued for strictness in the adherence to wording—that the textual integrity of the version, with all its idiosyncrasies, be transmitted in the form it was received. In the same section, in order to illustrate his point, al-Xaṭīb adduces a segment of a *ḥadīth* which states, “*laysa min am-birri m-ṣiyāmu fī m-safar*” (it is unrighteous to fast when traveling) in which the definite article /al/ is replaced by /am/, a form of usage typically associated with southern regions of the Arabian Peninsula and described as being the “dialect of the *'Aṣ'ariyyūn*”. The Companion figure featured in the *'isnād* is Ka'b ibn 'Aṣim al-'Aṣ'arī, who is listed in a chain that also includes, among others, 'Abd ar-Razzāq aṣ-Ṣan'ānī, Ma'mar ibn Rāṣid (d. 150/767) and az-Zuhrī (d. 124/741). This particular tradition is found in the collections of al-Buxārī and Muslim with the respective wordings: “*laysa min al-birri ṣ-ṣawmu fī s-safar*” and “*laysa min al-birri 'an taṣūmū fī s-safar*” (Buxārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 152 no. 1946; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 856–857 no. 2612). In an-Nasā'ī's *Sunan* the wording is “*laysa min al-birri ṣ-ṣiyāmu fī s-safar*” (Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 2234 nos. 2257, 2258); the tradition also features in the works of aṣ-Ṣan'ānī, Ibn Ḥanbal, and aṭ-Ṭabarānī (260–360/873–970); and as-Suyūṭī even includes it in his collection of *mutawātir* reports (Suyūṭī, *'Azhār*, 132). The Companion figure in the narration of Buxārī and Muslim is Jābir ibn 'Abdallāh (d. 74/693), while in an-Nasā'ī's citation it is Ka'b ibn 'Aṣim. Critically, discussions among classical scholars about the phrasing of this tradition were detailed with all sorts of hypotheses pored over in the quest to explain its original wording. Despite the differences among the narrations, the legal import of this tradition remained undiminished. Such materials provide some glimpses of the characteristics of *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma 'nā* which surface in the context of transmission.

One aspect of *riwāya* related to whether scholars should retain solecisms (*lahn*) which featured in the *matns* of traditions on the basis that these were transmitted *per se* by the narrator from whom they were received. Al-Xaṭīb's review of this issue reveals an antithesis of attitudes among early scholars; a number of individuals such as Ibn Sīrīn insisted on retaining the wording of a tradition even if it comprised solecisms, while others, including al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), preferred to focus upon providing a grammatically consistent rendition of a tradition based on its meaning. It is reported that whenever Ibn Ḥanbal came across a tradition which comprised solecisms, he would emend it, unless the error was slight, remarking that "this (namely the wording) is what the mentor actually stated" (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 187–188; cf. Qāsimī, *Qawā'id*, 208–209; Rāmhumuzī, *Muḥaddiṭ*, 524–532). Al-Xaṭīb makes his own view on the subject clear when he comments that if such occurrences of *lahn* alter the tradition's intended import, then they should be emended, especially if the tradition was well known in its accurate form. The range of views expressed on the subject shows that there were many advocates of emendation and correction and the practices also had equal numbers of opponents. Works devoted to identifying inadvertent errors in the transmission of traditions often show that some of the mistakes in narration were the result of issues relating to the use of diacritics, together with confusion regarding orthography; other so-called errors betrayed developments in the use of language and intricate substrate influences (Xaṭṭābī, *ʿIṣlāḥ*, *passim*; al-ʿAskarī, *Taṣḥīfāt*, *passim*).

In the introduction to his work entitled *ʿIṣlāḥ al-ḥadīṭ an-nabawī*, which seeks to explicate intricate syntactic features of the language of traditions, the grammarian and exegete al-ʿUkbarī (538–616/1143–1219) remarks that certain narrators erred with regards to these features, insisting that the Prophet and his Companions were flawless in terms of their use of language (ʿUkbarī, *ʿIṣlāḥ*, 1; cf. al-Ḥākim, *Maʿrifat*, 146–149). The same sentiment is echoed by the Kufan reader al-ʿAmaš (60–148/680–765), who, upon being informed that Ibn Sīrīn used to hear traditions which comprised solecisms and retain them when transmitting them, countered that "Ibn Sīrīn may be prone to grammatical errors, but the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, commits no such errors", adding "put it right!" (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 194; cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ*, 110–114). This sort of attitude resonates in later grammatical literature: in his *Kitāb al-ʿinṣāf*, Ibn al-ʿAnbārī (513–77/1118–81) refers to a statement attributed to the Prophet which declares "*kāda l-faqrū ʿan yakūna kufran*" (Poverty seemingly engenders ingratitude [or despair]), making it plain that the concomitant use of the verb /kāda/ (one of the *ʿafʿāl al-muqāraba*) and the particle /ʿan/, within the same speech segment was ineloquent and permitted only in instances of poetic license. Fascinatingly, Ibn al-ʿAnbārī remarks that if it (the statement) is verified, then the additional /ʿan/ must have been inserted by the narrator; he muses that it could not possibly have featured in the speech of the Prophet (Ibn al-ʿAnbārī, *ʿInṣāf*, 453). Coincidentally, traditionist scholars ruled that this particular report was spurious (ʿAjlawnī, *Kaṣf al-xafāʾ* I, 159). One needs to bear in mind that certain grammarians were renowned for adopting a critical attitude towards specific linguistic aspects of readings that featured in the corpus of *qirāʾāt* if and when they conflicted with grammatical norms. Thus, the criticism of syntactic anomalies that featured in the language of traditions as a result of the processes of transmission would have been pursued with equal vigor in early and later periods.

A powerful analogue for advocates of *ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā* was provided by prevailing attitudes among specialists to the recitation of the *Qurʾān*; there was no book more sacred and noble in the eyes of classical scholars, yet it was argued that leeway with respect to the synthesis and configuration of readings had been permitted by the Almighty on the basis that

the *Qur'ān* had been revealed in “seven modes” (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 210; cf. as-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb* II, 101; Schoeler 2009: 33, 47). If readers were allowed to avail themselves of such dispensations when reciting the sacred word of God, then it followed, *a fortiori*, that greater latitude should be granted in the adoption of the principle of *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma'nā* with regard to *ḥadīths*. Besides, it could also be argued that there were discrete differences among versions of the same event recorded by Companions (‘Irāqī, *Fath*, 195). Moreover, there were statements linked to individuals from the early periods which sanctioned the practice: Ibn Sīrīn is reported to have commented that “I used to hear *ḥadīths* from ten (people); the meaning was one, but their words varied”, and it is also claimed that on occasions Sufyān ibn ‘Uyyāna (107–198/725–814) would utilize different wordings when citing the same tradition, although the integrity and unity of its meaning remained unaffected (Xaṭīb, *al-Kifāya*, 206, 210; cf. Qāsimī, *Qawā'id*, 208–209).

Certainly, it is important to bear in mind the separate context in which the earlier discussions regarding *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma'nā* were formulated. The treatment of this issue in the later *ḥadīth* literature was primarily concerned with its didactic function, which was being placed within the vector of thoughts on the issue distilled from earlier scholarship. In spite of this, what is striking about the aforementioned discussions is that, with respect to these earlier periods, they presuppose the existence of a firm “body” of materials around which such activity was configured. The topic of *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma'nā*, together with its selected role in the synthesis and transmission of traditions, was to become a fecund area of debate in medieval grammatical thought.

## Grammatical Citation and the Linguistic Value of Ḥadīth

In the synthesis of grammatical principles and their associated constructs, grammarians adduced a hierarchy of linguistic sources for the purposes of citation (*istiṣhād*) and argumentation (*iḥtijāj*). These sources included the language of the *Qur'ān* and its *qirā'āt* (*variae lectiones*), which represented subtle morpho-syntactic and morpho-phonological variations in the configuration of readings linked to the consonantal outline found in selected Qur'ānic codices; the diction and usage of selected Bedouin Arabs; *loci probantes* sourced to ancient poetry; forms of prose and proverbs; and, in the absence of adequate data, the resort to analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). The *Qur'ān* and its language had always enjoyed pride of place in the thought of early and classical grammarians, and, despite the fact that some aspects of the linguistic justification and verification of *variae lectiones* pursued by grammarians were deemed contentious, scholars theoretically accepted that the language of the *Qur'ān* was, in the words of the Kufan grammarian al-Farrā' (144–207/761–822), much “finer in terms of its *i'rāb* and a stronger proof for citation than poetry” (Farrā', *Ma'ānī* I, 14). Certainly, in the *Kitāb* of Sībawayhi (the first systematic and comprehensive treatment of the Arabic language informed by a general theory of language), the *Qur'ān*, together with its corpus of *qirā'āt*, serves as an important source of linguistic data and is used to flesh out and exemplify grammatical rules and theories. It has been suggested that Sībawayhi appears to balance delicately his use of the *Qur'ān*, poetry, speech patterns, and idiomatic expressions for the purposes of citation, but that he mainly avoided using linguistic data from the Prophetic traditions (Baalbaki 2008: 37–38). Thus, although the traditions furnished a rich stock of linguistic data and were an incontrovertibly revered source within the religious tradition, seemingly, the common perception is that early and classical grammarians neither relied upon nor fully utilized the *ḥadīths* as a source of citation in the forging of grammatical principles and constructs.

Intricate details about the debate concerning the citation of traditions are preserved in the voluminous *Xizānat al-ʿadab wa-lubb lubāb lisān al-ʿarab* composed by ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn ʿUmar al-Baġdādī (d. 1093/1682). Introducing the sources of speech used for the purposes of citation, he comments that the Andalusian-born grammarian Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1273) permitted the use of the language of *ḥadīṭ* as a source of grammatical citation, but that two Andalusian scholars, Ibn aḍ-Ḍāʿi (d. 680/1281) and ʿAbū Ḥayyān al-Ġarnāṭī (654–786/1256–1384) both rejected his stance (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 5–15). The significance of *ar-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā* features in these two figures' arguments: initially, they protested that the *ḥadīṭs* had not been transmitted as they were originally heard from the Prophet, but rather they were disseminated only in the general sense and spirit of their meaning. It was then alleged that there was no proof that luminaries of both the Basran and Kufan traditions set the precedent of using traditions for citation with respect to the formulation of grammatical rules. In support of Ibn Mālik, al-Baġdādī makes the point that the former objection was unwarranted for the transmission *bi-l-maʿnā* was effectively restricted to the first century of the Islamic tradition before the *ḥadīṭs* were codified, and this was a time when the diction of Arabic was 'uncorrupted'; he implies that differences were mostly confined to the selection of lexemes. The inference is that while later Arabic linguists ideally spoke of grammar and philology being critically referenced only to the speech and poetry of certain classes of Arabs as opposed to the *muwalladūn* (figures considered non-native), those who initially transmitted these traditions were individuals whose usage of the language of Arabic was reliable and consistent with accepted norms. While, in terms of the precedent of citation not being set by Kufan and Basran scholars, it was explained that "their not citing the *ḥadīṭ*, does not predicate that the practice of citation was invalid" (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 9).

However, it is reported that Ibn aḍ-Ḍāʿi explained that the reason why the traditions were discarded as a source of *istiṣhād* in matters of language relates simply to concerns regarding the mode in which they were transmitted. He adds that if the convention of transmitting *ḥadīṭs* in the general sense of their meaning had not been sanctioned, the Prophet's speech would have been a more fitting source and criterion for defining the boundaries of eloquent speech given that he was "the most articulate of Arabs" (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 9). It is in Ibn Mālik's *Tashīl al-fawā'id wa-tashīl al-maqāṣid* that the use of Prophetic traditions as a source of citation for the rules of grammar is pursued by its author (Ibn Mālik, *Tashīl* 44, 68, 100, 140; cf. As-Suyūṭī, *Iqtirāḥ*, 89–99). Those individuals who advocated the use of traditions in grammatical citation included distinguished luminaries such as al-Suhaylī (d. 581/1185), Ibn Xarūf (d. 610/1213), and Ibn Hišām (708-761/1308-1360), while ʿAbū ʿIshāq aš-Šāṭibī (d. 790/1388) supported the use of certain forms of *sunan qawliyya* in grammatical citation.

ʿAbū Ḥayyān composed a commentary on the *Tashīl* in which he aired his views on the subject of citation, explaining that scholars discarded the *ḥadīṭ* as a source due to their being unsure as to whether it comprises the exact "*lafḍ*" (wording) of the Prophet; he muses that had they been certain of the precise nature of its wording, the *ḥadīṭ* would have enjoyed the same status as the *Qurʾān* as a source of citation (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 11). To illustrate his point he refers to a putative tradition in which an impoverished Companion, who had sought the hand of a woman but was unable to pay her dowry, is told by the Prophet that he can marry her in reciprocation for that which he had memorized of the *Qurʾān*. ʿAbū Ḥayyān states that several versions of this dictum exist in which different '*alfāḍ*' are used to connote the act of marriage such as "*zawwajtukumā*", "*mallaktukumā*" and "*xuḍḥā*", with the complement being "*bi-mā maʿaka min al-Qurʾān*". He moves on to state that it is categorical

that the Prophet never used all of these terms; nor can one be certain that even an element of the preserved wording is originally his, for he may well have used an alternative term in place of which later narrators supplied a synonym. 'Abū Ḥayyān explains that this is because such individuals were conveying the general semantic gist of the original dictum (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 11). The issue of the reliability of the narrators is then brought into the discussions as 'Abū Ḥayyān objects that many narrators were non-Arabs who acquired Arabic in a synthetic way. He adds that they were oblivious to the fact that they committed solecisms and that many of their narrations are replete with faltering expressions of Arabic. 'Abū Ḥayyān comments that an unversed individual may well ask, "What is wrong with the grammarians? They adduce the speech of the Arabs among whom are believers and non-believers, yet refrain from citing materials which were transmitted on the authority of trustworthy individuals such as al-Buxārī, Muslim, and those of a similar stature!" He adds that by virtue of his disquisition on the topic, the reader will know why this was so (Baġdādī, *Xizānat* I, 12). The entrenched position taken by 'Abū Ḥayyān appears redolent of a polarization of attitudes among medieval scholars regarding the use of the language of the *ḥadīths*. 'Abū Ḥayyān sought to trace the trajectory of his position to the scholarship developed by early Basran and Kufan scholars, yet there exist no definitive statements in which luminaries from the two conventional schools make their views known regarding the utility of the traditions in the synthesis and defense of grammatical and philological concepts.

A small number of Prophetic traditions is alluded to in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, without its author explicitly identifying such material as Prophetic utterances, even though only short speech segments of the reports are actually cited. However, it is also the case that the poetry in the *Kitāb* was originally anonymously quoted. One example is the tradition which states "Kullu mawlūdīn yūladu 'alā l-ḥittā yakūna abawāhu humā llaḍānī yuhawwidānihi wa-yunaṣṣirānihi" (each person is born innately predisposed to natural monotheism until that individual's parents raise him as either a Jew or a Christian) (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* II, 393–394). The tradition appears in a number of the classical *muṣannaḥ* works, including the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Buxārī and Muslim, as well as the *sunans* of 'Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidī, and Mālik's *Muwatta'*, although in these texts the version of this tradition is not only extended, but also its sentence structure differs (see for example Buxārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 106. nos.1358, 1385, 4775, 6599). Making no mention of the fact that he is quoting an excerpt from a tradition, Sībawayhi refers to this segment to illustrate the syntactic structure of analogous forms of expressions. In a second, unconnected example, he refers to a shorter section of a report which includes the phrase "wa-naxla 'u wa-natruku man yaḥjuruka" (we renounce and abandon whoever denies you) (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* I, 73–74). In this instance Sībawayhi is discussing the syntactic effect of concomitant subjects upon objects as exemplified in the maxim "ḍarabtu wa-ḍarabanī Zaydun". The report is cited alongside a Qur'ānic verse to underline his analysis of this phenomenon; again, no mention is made of the source of this utterance, which is part of a supplication actually linked with several Companions of the Prophet (Ibn 'Abī Ṣayba, *Muṣannaḥ* III, 219 no. 6966). A number of other documented instances exist in which Sībawayhi adduces parts of speech derived from traditions with respect to both citation and exemplification (Ḥadīṭī 1974:161–176; Fajjāl 2009: *passim* for further analysis). For that reason, it would seem that the total rejection of Prophetic traditions as a form of *istiṣhād* in early grammatical thought cannot be categorically substantiated with reference to the *Kitāb*. Furthermore, the inference made by 'Abū Ḥayyān and others that the early grammarians discarded the traditions as a source of citation on the basis of the mode of their transmission is not ultimately borne out by the early grammatical sources.

The occasional citation of Prophetic traditions to illustrate an established grammatical feature or consolidate a point of syntax being elaborated can be found in the treatises of individuals such as al-Farrā', al-Mubarrad (d. 285–286/898), az-Zajjājī (d. 337/949), 'Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987), Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002), and other leading figures. However, it is evident that these instances of citation are hardly commensurate with the sheer range and linguistic variety of the materials available in the classical corpora. It has been recently mooted that the reason why traditions were spurned as a linguistic source of grammatical citation in the early tradition emanated from there not being a “reliable written text of the *ḥadīth*, since the systematic collecting process did not begin until some decades after his [Sībawayhi's] death” (Baalbaki 2008: 8–9, 36; Carter 2004: 46–47; Marogy 2010: 33–4). This view appears to overlook the nature of the transmission of knowledge within the early Islamic tradition and the interplay which defined oral and written modes of dissemination that were already in vogue in the era when the *Kitāb* was composed. To a certain degree, it predicates that scholarship in the field of *ḥadīth* was in state of flux during these periods, which is clearly not the case. A second explanation claims that the marginalization of traditions in the synthesis of grammatical rules and constructs was because Sībawayhi already had a profusion of sources from which he could draw for the purposes of citation (Ḥadīthī 1974: 173–174). Incidentally, the biographical sources relate that Sībawayhi was a student of Ḥammād ibn Salama, the author of a *muṣannaḥ*, and it was while studying with him that he committed an error when dictating a tradition for which he was rebuked, leading to his taking up the study of Arabic (Sīrāfī, 'Axbār, 59). One needs to bear in mind that Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* presupposes an acute awareness of linguistic ideas and concepts among his peers and predecessors; it is these ideas that he proceeds to expound upon, develop, and systematize. The compass of sources used by grammarians and philologists had been largely circumscribed by his predecessors and he was mostly adhering to their established sources. Later scholarship of grammar likewise followed the precedent set by Sībawayhi, infrequently citing the traditions in instances of grammatical citation.

While the use of the language of *ḥadīth* in grammatical argumentation and citation appears to have been marginalized in the early and classical tradition, with later figures such as 'Abū Ḥayyān taking an unswervingly critical view of its linguistic authority, the philological study and explication of the lexical content of traditions by successive generations of linguists were pursued with remarkable vigor in the genre of works entitled *ḡarīb al-ḥadīth* (lexical paraphrase of the *ḥadīth*). Cynosures of Basran and Kufan persuasions were the authors of texts on the subject. Ibn an-Nadīm (d. 393/1003) credits 'Abū 'Amr aš-Šaybānī (d. 213/828), al-'Axfāš al-'Awsaṭ (d. 215/830), an-Naḍr ibn Šumayl, Quṭrub (d. 206/821), 'Abū 'Ubayda (d. 215/830), al-Farrā', al-'Ašma'ī, 'Abū Zayd al-'Anṣārī (d. 215/830), and Salama ibn 'Ašim (d. 270/883) as being authors of *ḡarīb al-ḥadīth* works (Ibn an-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 58–68, 74); other notable luminaries such as Ṭa'lab (200–291/815–904), 'Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī (198–285/813–898), and Ibn Kaysān (d. 299/912) also produced texts in this genre. Moreover, these compilations and the seminal *ḡarīb* works of luminaries such as 'Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim and Ibn Qutayba (213–276/829–889) were to become influential sources for later scholarship on the subject, including the definitive work by Ibn al-'Aṭīr (544–637/1149–1239) entitled *an-Nihāya fī ḡarīb al-ḥadīth wa-l-'aṭar*. Despite the specialized role that the procedural formalities of *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma'nā* played in the formation of the materials of *ḥadīths*, there was never any doubt among classical scholars that traditions preserved proof of the preeminent eloquence of the Prophetic expression. Interestingly, there was a report in circulation which referred to the Prophet being the most eloquent among those who “articulated the *ḍād*”, a maxim which was frequently adduced by linguists; however, traditionist scholarship identified this *ḥadīth* as

having no requisite *'isnād* support, although they accepted that its meaning was entirely valid ('Ajlawnī, *Kašf al-xafā'* I, 232; cf. Ibn al-'Anbārī, *Inṣāf*, 451). Furthermore, materials classed as being authentic contained statements confirming that the Prophet had been endowed with the gift of "*jawāmi' al-kalim*", a phrase that came to be interpreted as the ability to express himself with brevity, pithiness, and fluency (Buxārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 585 no.7013; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 759 no. 523). Indeed, having commended the rhetorical skills of the Prophet in the introduction to his own work on *ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ*, az-Zamaxšarī (467–538/1075–1144) cites this very phrase (Zamaxšarī, *Fā'iqa* I, 2). Elsewhere, in the field of rhetoric, the aesthetic dimensions of the Prophetic expressions were painstakingly fleshed out in works such as the *Majāzāt an-nabawiyya* authored by aš-Šarīf ar-Raḍī (d. 406/1016) and used to conceptualize a whole range of stylistic and literary devices. It is important therefore to distinguish between the grammarians' tentative marginalization of the traditions as a source for grammatical citation, which remains a point of contention, and their use in other related forms of linguistic thought and analysis; the citation of *ḥadīṭ* materials for their lexical value was prolific in areas such as lexicography, philology, and even works on proverbs. It is unsurprising that the grammarian al-Mubarrad should choose to begin his celebrated work *al-Kāmil* with a selection of Prophetic traditions and statements attributed to Companions. Likewise, the regard in which the Prophetic utterances were held among linguists is perhaps reflected in a statement by Mubarrad's Kufan adversary, Ṭa'lab, who, when faced with a delicate question regarding the semantic import of a tradition, remarked that "*sunna* overrules language; language does not overrule *sunna*" (Ṭa'lab, *Majālis* I, 178–179).

## Conclusions

The marginalization of the language of the *ḥadīṭ* in the realm of grammatical citation has tended to obscure both the attention the corpora received in the works of early and medieval grammarians, as well as its use for the purposes of exemplification in other areas of early and medieval linguistic thought. It was among medieval Andalusian grammarians that the validity of the citation of traditions decisively developed as a key point of contention; however, it is also apparent that the concept of *ar-riwāya bi-l-ma'nā*, together with the anomalies which its application sometimes yielded, inadvertently added weight to the arguments presented by figures such as 'Abū Ḥayyān. Nonetheless, there is no definitive evidence to suggest that idiosyncrasies concerning the formalities of narration were responsible for the marginalization of traditions as a source of citation. Indeed, the traditions' actual value as a linguistic source is confirmed by the importance attached to the genre of *ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ*, which continued to attract the interest of both grammarians and exegetes in the early and medieval periods. Moreover, in all probability, the constellation of sources primarily relied upon—in terms of poetry, the speech of the Arabs, and proverbs—were remnants of an earlier hierarchical arrangement, originally developed to engage with the language of the *Qur'ān* and its *variae lectiones*; intriguingly, this very fact would appear to intimate the historical depth of the tradition of Arabic linguistic thought.

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