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COUNTING SHAYKHS IN HADITH COLLECTIONS

by Christopher Melchert

In the High Middle Ages, the most prominent divisions among Sunni men of religion were the four schools of law. They were named for jurists of the eighth and ninth centuries CE. Before their formation, however, geographic divisions seem to have been more prominent, so that our earliest books of law refer continually to the Kufans, the Medinese, the Syrians, and so on. The different regional schools are often identified by their peculiar authorities. Al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) says,

There is no city of the Muslims in which there is religious knowledge (*`ilm*) but that its people follow the position of some man among them in most of their positions. Do you see that the people of Mecca have proof if they follow `Aṭā'? When there is hadith that agrees with him, they agree with it. What disagrees with him, they usually disagree with it. Do you see that the people of Basra have proof if they similarly follow al-Ḥasan or Ibn Sīrīn? Or the people of Kufa concerning al-Sha'bī and Ibrāhīm? Or the people of Syria concerning Makḥūl?¹

Geography is pervasive in the literature of early hadith transmission, as well. Most of the early biographical dictionaries are arranged geographically, such as those of Ibn Sa'd, Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt, and al-Fallās.² Dictionaries arranged alphabetically, such as those of al-Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, still pay much attention to geography, continually reporting

¹ Al-Shāfi'ī, *Ikhtilāf Mālik wa-al-Shāfi'ī*, in *K. al-Umm*, ed. Rif'at Fawzī `Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 11 vols (al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafā', 1422/2001; 2nd printing 1425/2004), 8:513-778, at 763. Al-Shāfi'ī's immediate point is that the Medinese themselves do not recognize the leading authorities of other centres, suggesting then that everyone abandon local Follower opinion in favour of the *sunnah* of the Prophet. But his characterization of the current situation confirms that local traditions were still paramount in his time.

² Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), *K. al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. Eduard Sachau, et al., 9 vols in 15 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904-40) = *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 9 vols (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957-68); Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854-5?), *K. al-Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1967); `Amr ibn `Alī al-Fallās (d. 249/863-4), *K. al-Tārīkh*, recension of Muḥammad ibn `Abd al-Salām al-Khushanī (d. 286/899-900), ed. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarānī, *Silsilat taḥqīq al-turāth* 25 (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal lil-Buḥūth wa-al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah, 1441/2020).

where someone was from or where his hadith circulated.³ In his review of all the men in the Six Books, Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) provides some indication of date, even so general as the caliphal reign in which someone died, for about 40 percent of them, an indication of geographical provenance for 70 percent.⁴ We may not be able to study, say, the marriage patterns among traditionists, but we have a good body of data to work from if we wish to study the movement of hadith. The following article reviews various attempts to characterize the geography of hadith transmission in the early centuries. Two major patterns recur. First, hadith and associated teaching (such as legal opinions and the sayings of renunciants) spread very unevenly. Among other things, hadith transmission on a significant scale reached North Africa, Mesopotamia (*al-Jazīrah*), and Khurasan only in the ninth century, while Medina seems to have produced few significant transmitters after Mālik (d. 179/795). Secondly, biographical dictionaries are of significant but limited usefulness when it comes to telling us about the movement of knowledge from region to region.

In studies of early Islamic law, the question often arises of where someone got his ideas. For example, to what extent did al-Shāfiʿī adhere to a specifically Meccan legal tradition? One of the ways Mohyiddin Yahia addressed the question was to count the shaykhs from whom al-Shāfiʿī directly related hadith in the *Umm*.⁵ Yahia observes that he most often cites Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah (Kufan but transferred to Mecca) and Mālik (Medinese), then Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Yaḥyá (Meccan), then Saʿīd ibn Sālim and Muslim ibn Khālid al-Zanjī (both Meccan). This predominance of Meccans confirms evidence from elsewhere; for example, al-

³ Al-Bukhārī (d. Khartank, 256/870), *K. al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 4 vols in 8 (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-Nizāmīyah, 1941-5, repr. with added index volume, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, n.d.); Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938), *K. al-Jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl*, 9 vols (Hyderabad: Jamʿiyat Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-ʿUthmānīyah, 1360-71, repr. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.).

⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, 2 vols (Medina: Muḥammad Sulṭān al-N*ṁ*n*kānī, 1961).

⁵ Mohyiddin Yahia, *Šāfiʿī et les deux sources de la loi islamique*, Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études, Sciences religieuses, 139 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009).

Nasā'ī's listing al-Shāfi'ī among the Meccans.⁶ Iraqis are cited very little, casting doubt on the biographical tradition by which al-Shāfi'ī spent significant amounts of time in Iraq, although less so on the tradition by which his jurisprudence was deeply informed by Iraqi as well as Hijazi learning. Yahia's figures, derived from an index of names in the *Umm*, are exactly confirmed by my own derived from random samples of the *Umm* and Abū al-'Abbās al-Aṣamm, *Musnad al-Shāfi'ī*. Of hadith from Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah in *Musnad al-Shāfi'ī*, I find that 27 percent is related from Meccan shaykhs, 30 percent from Iraqi, and 38 percent from Medinese. Through Sufyān, then, al-Shāfi'ī does seem to have drawn significantly on the tradition of Iraq, although loyal mainly to the Hijazi tradition.

I have just begun a study of *Kitāb Ikhtilāf 'Alī wa-Ibn Mas'ūd*, one of the short works appended to the *Umm*.⁷ It comprises quotations of 'Alī and Ibn Mas'ūd (about 60 percent of all items with full *isnād*), advocating rules that the Kufans themselves reject, and counter-hadith supporting the rules that al-Shāfi'ī prefers (about 40 percent of all items). Since 'Alī and Ibn Mas'ūd are the Companions most often quoted in support of Kufan positions, al-Shāfi'ī necessarily relies heavily on Kufan traditionists for what they say. The shaykhs he directly cites most often in this book are, in ascending order, Abū Mu'āwiyah (Wasiti), Ismā'īl ibn 'Ulayyah (Basran), 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī (Basran), and Hushaym ibn Bashīr (Wasiti). For the learning of Kufa, al-Shāfi'ī thus relied heavily on traditionists of the generation before who collected hadith from more than one centre. Ismā'īl ibn 'Ulayyah was originally Kufan, married a Basran, and supervised the *maẓālim* court in Baghdad at the end of his life, illustrating the kind of trans-regional movement that became common in the

⁶ Al-Nasā'ī, *Tasmiyat fuqahā' al-amṣār*, in *Majmū'at rasā'il fī 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Samarṛā'ī (Medina: Muḥammad 'Abd al-Muḥsin, 1389/1969), 7-10, *Majmū'at rasā'il fī 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Naṣr Abū 'Aṭāyā and Muṣṭafā Abū Sulaymān al-Nadwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1413/1993), 19-44; al-Bukhārī, *K. al-Ḍu'aḥ*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Wa'y, 1396), 126-30.

⁷ Al-Shāfi'ī, *Ikhtilāf 'Alī wa-'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd*, in *K. al-Umm*, ed. Rif'at Fawzī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 11 vols (al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafā', 1422/2001; 2nd printing 1425/2004), 8:391-512.

`Abbāsīd period as it had not been in the Umayyad.⁸ Ibn Maḥdī was most important, as here, for relating the ḥadīth of Sufyān al-Thawrī. Hushaym related ḥadīth of a wide range of shaykhs.

Sufyān al-Thawrī

Steven C. Judd says of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777?) that although three-quarters of this Sufyān's ḥadīth reports are from Kufan shaykhs, 'the sources include more anecdotal information about his time in Basra, Mecca, and Yemen. The relative silence of the sources suggests that Sufyān spent little time in Kufa after he reached adulthood, as Raddatz implied.'⁹ Three-quarters is the proportion of ḥadīth from Kufan shaykhs in the *Farā'id* text attributed to Sufyān that Hans-Peter Raddatz published in 1971.¹⁰ It roughly matches my own survey of ḥadīth from Sufyān in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Not three-quarters but still over half of Sufyān's ḥadīth in the *Musnad* was transmitted from him also by Kufans, with much smaller proportions transmitted by Basrans and one Yemeni. To my mind, this confirms his location in Kufa and tends to discredit Judd's use of the biographical record, especially the method of counting anecdotes, inasmuch as they imply that Sufyān left Kufa and its tradition behind. Sufyān al-Thawrī commonly advocated a minority position within the Kufan school of his time, but both his formation in the early eighth century and his legacy in the later seem to have been overwhelmingly Kufan.

Let me elaborate on my method. For my survey of ḥadīth from Sufyān in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, I did not actually go over every one, rather worked from a random selection of 265, approximately a quarter of the total. Of these, 68 percent came to Sufyān from Kufan

⁸ For the larger pattern, see Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive critics, ḥadīth literature, and the articulation of Sunnī Islam*, Islamic history and civilization, studies and texts, 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), chap. 8.

⁹ Steven C. Judd, *Religious scholars and the Umayyads: piety-minded supporters of the Marwānīd caliphate*, Culture and civilization in the Middle East 40 (London: Routledge, 2014), 81.

¹⁰ Hans-Peter Raddatz, 'Frühislamisches Erbrecht nach dem Kitāb al-Farā'id des Sufyān al-Thawrī, Edition und Kommentar', *Die Welt des Islams* 13 (1971): 26-78. The *K. al-Farā'id* comprises ḥadīth related by Sufyān al-Thawrī on the topic of inheritance shares. It seems to have been collected by Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Bāghandī (d. 283/897). I thank Mansur Koçinkağ for pointing this out to me.

shaykhs, 16 percent from Medinese, 7 percent from Basrans, 5 percent from Meccans, the rest from shaykhs of miscellaneous other centres. Of the same 265, 55 percent were related from Sufyān by Kufan shaykhs, 21 percent from Basrans, 16 percent from one Yemeni (ʿAbd al-Razzāq), 4 percent from Meccans, none at all from Medinese. It may be that if I examined every last one in the *Musnad*, I should discover something related from Sufyān by a shaykh from Medina, but no more than a very few. I also counted all of Sufyān’s hadith in the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah. Out of 214, 64 percent came to Sufyān from Kufan shaykhs, 19 percent from Medinese, 7 percent from Meccans, 4 percent from Basrans. These are very similar to the proportions of hadith in the *Musnad*. As for hadith related from Sufyān, 68 percent were related by Kufans, 16 percent by Basrans, 7 percent by one Yemeni (ʿAbd al-Razzāq again), 2 percent by Meccans, none by Medinese. Ibn Mājah’s selection thus suggests significantly more interest in Sufyān’s hadith in Basra than is suggested by Aḥmad’s *Musnad*. But the two sources agree that hadith from Sufyān was mainly transmitted in Kufa and that whatever knowledge he brought to Iraq from Medina, the Medinese were indifferent to what he might teach them.

Saʿīd ibn Jubayr

In the course of preparing an article on yet another Kufan, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714), I found that the Kufans of his generation who appear most often in Aḥmad’s *Musnad* were Abū Wāʿil Shaqīq ibn Salamah (308 times), Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (336), al-Shaʿbī (370), and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (382); in al-Nasāʾī’s *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, al-Shaʿbī (122), Shaqīq ibn Salamah (126), Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (294), and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (383).¹¹ Ibrāhīm and al-Shaʿbī (d. 104/722-3?) are usually characterized as the leading Kufan jurists of their generation,

¹¹ Based on the indexes to *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ, et al., 50 vols (Beirut, Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1413-21/1993-2001), and al-Nasāʾī, *K. al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Munʿim Shalabī with Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ, 12 vols (Beirut, Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1421/2001). The article is ‘Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (Kufan, d. 96/714)’, *Arabica* 67 (2020): 60-81.

as by al-Shāfi'ī.¹² It is surprising that al-Sha'bī should appear so much more often in the *Musnad* than in *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (I shall say more on this below). Sa'īd ibn Jubayr (d. 95/714?) is the Kufan Follower most quoted in both collections, which suggests some separation between reputation for transmitting hadith and for juridical acumen, at which Ibrāhīm excelled. One reason why he is quoted more often than Ibrāhīm in both collections is presumably that Ibrāhīm is said never to have met any Companions. Were Sa'īd's sources more valued in other ways as well?

Sa'īd ibn Jubayr died in Wasit (put to death by al-Ḥajjāj for supporting Ibn al-Ash'ath), but he is ambiguously Kufan. Ibn Sa'd, for example, treats him in the volume on Kufans but Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt counts him a Meccan.¹³ Aḥmad counts him one of six *aṣḥāb Ibn 'Abbās*.¹⁴ This interest in Sa'īd as a transmitter from Meccans is confirmed by a count of hadith through Sa'īd in the *Musnad*: 82 percent of the hadith there through Sa'īd are from Ibn 'Abbās, whereas none are from the most famous Companions to spend time in Kufa, 'Alī and Ibn Mas'ūd. On the other hand, 65 percent of Sa'īd's hadith in the *Musnad* is related from him by Kufans, 11 percent by Basrans, 11 percent also by Meccans, and just 3 percent by Medinese (the remaining 10 percent by persons from various other regions or unidentified). This means that his primary significance to the later tradition was to carry knowledge from Medina to Iraq, especially Kufa. Similarly to Sufyān al-Thawrī, the Medinese seem to have been indifferent to what he might teach them.

al-Awzā'ī

Steven C. Judd questioned some time ago whether Joseph Schacht was right to speak of the eighth century as dominated by regional schools of law: Kufan, Basran, Medinese, Meccan,

¹² Al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Umm* 8:763.

¹³ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* (Leiden) 6:169-87 = *Ṭabaqāt* (Beirut) 6:256-67; Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt, *Ṭabaqāt*, 491.

¹⁴ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *K. al-'Ilal wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl*, recension of 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, ed. Waṣī Allāh ibn Muḥammad 'Abbās, 4 vols (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988), 1:226, 294, 2:500 = *K. al-Jāmi' fi al-'ilal wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl*, recensions of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Tamīmī and 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusām Baydūn, 2 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyah, 1410/1990), 1:100, 122, 2:35.

Syrian, and Egyptian. As an alternative, Judd observed that al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/773-4?) and Sufyān al-Thawrī are cited together by their common disciple al-Fazārī (d. 188/803-4), had numerous disciples in common, and seem to have shared juridical preferences, particularly reliance on the examples of early caliphs. Altogether, this suggested to him that they constituted a trans-regional school.¹⁵ There is an old tradition by which a specifically Awzā'ī school of law for a time rivalled the Māliki and Shāfi'ī schools in Syria and Andalusia. According to the geographer al-Maqdisī, on the other hand, it failed because Damascus was not on the route of pilgrims and so the school failed to spread from there.¹⁶ It was attacked by Gerhard Conrad, who held that al-Awzā'ī was not recognized as the leading Syrian jurisprudent of his time before Abū Zur'ah al-Dimashqī (d. 280/893-4), *al-Tārīkh*.¹⁷

One approach, it has occurred to me, is to see where al-Awzā'ī collected hadith and where his hadith circulated after him. I went through the index to Aḥmad, *al-Musnad*, and tallied all those from whom and to whom al-Awzā'ī was there recorded as relating hadith. Sufyān al-Thawrī was a major transmitter of hadith, al-Awzā'ī much less important. `Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī (d. 198/814) is quoted as saying that Sufyān al-Thawrī was an *imām* in hadith but not *sunnah*, al-Awzā'ī an *imām* in *sunnah* but not hadith, Mālik an *imām* in both.¹⁸ Still, al-Awzā'ī appears in over 180 hadith reports in the *Musnad*. He related 39 percent of them from Medinese (overwhelmingly al-Zuhrī), 28 percent from Basrans (even more

¹⁵ Steven C. Judd, 'Al-Awzā'ī and Sufyān al-Thawrī: the Umayyad madhhab?', *The Islamic school of law*, ed. Peri Bearman, Rudolph Peters, and Frank E. Vogel, Harvard series in Islamic law 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2005), 10-25. Judd has now published a book on al-Awzā'ī, *`Abd al-Raḥman b. `Amr al-Awza'ī* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2020), which reviews the biographical literature at length but is extremely reticent as to the sort of law that al-Awzā'ī advocated. Therefore, it may be that Judd himself no longer holds to the idea of an Umayyad school represented by al-Awzā'ī and Sufyān al-Thawrī.

¹⁶ Al-Maqdisī, *Descriptio imperii moslemici*, ed. M. J. De Goeje, Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum 3, 2nd edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906), 144.

¹⁷ Gerhard Conrad, *Die Qudāt Dimašq und der madhhab al-Awzā'ī*, Beirut Texts and Studies 46 (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1994), esp. 576-8.

¹⁸ Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 10 vols (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1352-7/1932-8), 6:321-2. Also quoted by Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim studies*, ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, 2 vols (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1968-71), 2:25, and Yasin Dutton, *The origins of Islamic law: the Qur'an, the Muwaṭṭa' and Madinan 'amal*, Culture and civilization in the Middle East (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 18-19. Admittedly against both Goldziher and Dutton, I consider *sunnah* here to mean straightforwardly theological orthodoxy, Sufyān al-Thawrī being suspected of undue solicitude for `Alī and his descendants.

overwhelmingly Yaḥyá ibn Abī Kathīr [d. 132/749-50?]), 23 percent from Syrians, the rest from miscellaneous others. The figure for Syrians would jump to 52 percent if we transferred the hadith of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī to that category, he having gone back and forth between Medina and Damascus for 45 years, continually serving the Umayyads in one or another position.¹⁹ None of them are from Mesopotamians, indicating that al-Jazīrah, as the Arabs knew it, was not a significant centre of hadith in the early eighth century. None are from Kufan shaykhs, either, a major contrast with the record of Sufyān al-Thawrī's hadith.

As for where al-Awzā'ī's hadith circulated after him, 52 percent in Aḥmad's *Musnad* were related from him by Syrians (overwhelmingly just two, Abū al-Mughīrah [d. 212/827-8] and al-Walīd ibn Muslim [d. 195/810-11]), 24 percent by one Baghdadi (Muḥammad ibn Muṣ'ab [d. 208/823-4]), 9 percent by Basrans, 8 percent by one Khurasani (Ibn al-Mubārak [d. 181/797]), just 2 percent by Kufans. This suggests two things. First, it seems more useful to count hadith than shaykhs, for 12 percent of the shaykhs mentioned by al-Mizzī as relating hadith from al-Awzā'ī were Kufan, which would suggest much more interest in him among Kufans than figures from the *Musnad* indicate. (Conversely, as mentioned above, counting hadith instead of shaykhs increases our perception of how much al-Shāfi'ī knew of Iraqi hadith.) Secondly, al-Awzā'ī's lack of interest in Kufan learning and later Kufans' lack of interest in his learning tends to disconfirm Judd's proposal to consider him and Sufyān al-Thawrī as fellow adherents of an Umayyad school.

I have checked the evidence of Aḥmad's *Musnad* against that of al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*. Of some 200 hadith reports there, al-Awzā'ī related 48 percent from Basrans (nearly all from Yaḥyá ibn Abī Kathīr), 38 percent from Medinese (overwhelmingly al-Zuhrī), just 12 percent from Syrians (but this figure would be 41 percent if we classified

¹⁹ The figure of 45 years is from al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, et al., 25 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1401-9/1981-8), 5:335.

hadith from al-Zuhrī as Syrian), the rest from miscellaneous others. These numbers at least confirm that al-Awzā'ī was remembered as an authority on the knowledge of Medina and Basra and had little to do with the Kufan tradition. As for where al-Awzā'ī's hadith circulated after him, 77 percent of the hadith in *al-Sunan al-kubrā* were related him by Syrians, 9 percent by Mesopotamians, 8 percent by one Khurasani (Ibn al-Mubārak again), 5 percent by miscellaneous others. Al-Nasā'ī confirms, then, that Mesopotamia became an important area for hadith transmission only in the later eighth century, and that al-Awzā'ī had no following in Kufa. Examination of *al-Sunan al-kubrā* tends to confirm both my chief conclusions from examination of the *Musnad*: that it seems more useful to count hadith than shaykhs and that al-Awzā'ī's lack of interest in Kufan learning and later Kufans' lack of interest in his learning tends to disconfirm Judd's association of him with Sufyān al-Thawrī.

Other evidence also tends to distance al-Awzā'ī from Iraqi legal traditions. The main extant record of his juridical opinions is the book *Siyar al-Awzā'ī* contained within *Kitāb al-Umm* of al-Shāfi'ī. What al-Shāfi'ī presents is apparently his commentary on a polemical work by the Kufan Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) against al-Awzā'ī concerning the law of war. Abū Yūsuf's positions are evidently better supported by analogy and hadith than al-Awzā'ī's, but al-Shāfi'ī interpolates stronger arguments yet in favour of al-Awzā'ī's position.²⁰ It apparently confirms al-Awzā'ī's scant dependence on hadith, again in sharp contrast to Sufyān al-Thawrī.

Ibn al-Mubārak

I have devoted two articles to Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) the major Marwazi hadith collector, both of which involved some counting of shaykhs.²¹ I summarize my results here.

²⁰ See al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Umm* 9:171-277.

²¹ 'Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* and early renunciant literature', *Violence in Islamic thought from the Qur'ān to the Mongols*, ed. Robert Gleave and István Kristó-Nagy, Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Islamic thought 1 (Edinburgh: University Press, 2015), 49-69; 'Ibn al-Mubārak, traditionist', *Modern hadith studies*, ed. Belal Alabbas, Michael Dann, and Christopher Melchert, forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press.

In the earlier, I compared his sources for three extant collections attributed to him, *al-Zuhd*, *al-Jihād*, and *al-Musnad*, also the 343 hadith reports related through him in Aḥmad's *Musnad*. (A fourth collection sometimes attributed to him, *al-Birr wa-al-ṣilah*, comprises only 40 percent items from him, 60 percent from other shaykhs.²²) They seem to have fairly little in common. In the *Musnad*, the most hadith reports are related by Ibn al-Mubārak from Syrians and Egyptians. By contrast, the most items in the *Zuhd* are related by him from Kufans, then Basrans, then Syrians; in the *Jihād*, from Basrans, then Syrians, then Kufans. I also compared two collections attributed to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, actually assembled by his son `Abd Allāh: the *Musnad* and the *Zuhd*. The top three sources for items in both of them are Basra, then Baghdad, then Kufa. The comparison tends to discredit the method of reconstructing the activity of a major hadith collector of the eighth century by what a collector of the ninth century reports of his work. What shows up in a ninth-century collection like Aḥmad's *Musnad* is unlikely to be a random sample of what circulated in the century before.

The same point is evident from a comparison between hadith related from Ibn al-Mubārak as they show up in the *Musnad* and in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. Of 227 hadith reports in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* transmitted through Ibn al-Mubārak, the most are from Syria, then Yemen, then Medina—a very different distribution from that in Aḥmad's *Musnad*. Collectors such as Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī, separated from each other by about one generation, chose which of Ibn al-Mubārak's hadith to transmit according to their peculiar needs (including short chains between themselves and Ibn al-Mubārak's shaykhs) and the accident of what shaykhs they had met. I can think of no other explanation of why Aḥmad's

²² Muḥammad Sa`īd ibn Muḥammad Ḥasan Aḥmad Bukhārī, *al-Imām `Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1424/2003), 71. To my mind, this book combines many useful figures with excessive timidity when it comes to interpreting them; for example, as to how far we should consider the different recensions of *al-Zuhd* to represent Ibn al-Mubārak's own work as opposed to the work of redactors, or how we should classify Ibn al-Mubārak's jurisprudence from the record of his agreements and disagreements with other jurists.

Musnad mentions al-Sha`bī so much more often than al-Nasā'ī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*. Sufyān al-Thawrī is the jurist with whom Ibn al-Mubārak most often agrees in the sample of opinions quoted by al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892?) in the course of *al-Jāmi` al-ṣaḥīḥ*, besides being by far the most cited in Ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd*. Nevertheless, Ibn al-Mubārak relates hadith from him only six times in each of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and the *Musnad*—an example of how Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī bypass Ibn al-Mubārak at need.

Some ninth-century collectors and where they travelled

I have also tried to estimate where certain hadith collectors of the ninth century spent the most time by the provenance of the hadith in their major collections. In a random sample of hadith in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, 34 percent of the reports (omitting additions from `Abd Allāh) came from Baghdadi shaykhs, 28 percent from Basran, 15 percent from Kufan. Altogether, the *Musnad* is about 86 percent Iraqi. Significant numbers of hadith reports in the *Musnad* also came from Syrian, Meccan, and Yemeni shaykhs. (Compare the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim: about 62 percent of its hadith reports came from Iraqi shaykhs, 20 percent Khurasani and Transoxanian, 10 percent Egyptian, 5 percent Meccan.) However, there are scarcely two dozen hadith reports in the whole *Musnad* from Medinese shaykhs (not one in a thousand). It seems a good guess that Aḥmad heard them in Mecca or Basra, not Medina, in spite of reports in the biographical literature that his travels in search of hadith included time in Medina. Judging by entries in biographical dictionaries, Scott C. Lucas has found that the significance of Medina in hadith dwindled rapidly after the death of al-Zuhrī.²³ The incidence of Medinese shaykhs in Aḥmad's *Musnad* (and the Six Books) confirms the insignificance of Medina. Meccan prominence was also somewhat artificial: of the four Meccans from whom

²³ Lucas, *Constructive critics*, 354.

Aḥmad related the most hadith in the *Musnad*, three had moved there from Baṣra, one from Kūfa.²⁴

Turning to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), this is what I inferred of his travels from his *Sunan*. Except for Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Ṣaghīr of Rayy (d. 220s/835-45), Abū Dāwūd's shaykhs to the East, mainly the Jibal, Khurasan, and Transoxania, all died 238/852-3 and later. Therefore, although he may have made a trip to Rayy in the 220s, the more likely alternative is that he listened to dictation from Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā when they were both in Baghdad or Mecca and that Abū Dāwūd made his major trip to the East in the later 230s. Death dates for Abū Dāwūd's Iraqi shaykhs run from the early 220s to the early 270s/mid-830s to the mid-880s, so he presumably frequented the area more or less throughout this period. His Egyptian shaykhs died in 248/862-3 and later, so he presumably travelled to Egypt only then or a little before. Only two hadith reports in the *Sunan* come from Medinese shaykhs, and one of these shaykhs turns out to have lived most of the year in Rabadhah, on the road between Kufa and Mecca, spending mainly the two festivals in Medina.²⁵ Therefore, it seems doubtful whether Abū Dāwūd ever actually travelled to Medina. It is striking that he apparently quotes nothing in his major books of shaykhs whom he heard in Khurasan in his youth, before travelling to Iraq in 220/835. Admittedly, there are also helpful quotations from Abū Dāwūd himself to indicate that he was here or there at some particular time; for example, that he was in Tarsus by 242/857, for there and then he missed the funeral of Ḥāmid ibn Yaḥyā al-Balkhī because of rain.²⁶

²⁴ Compare Christopher Melchert, 'The *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: how it was composed and what distinguishes it from the Six Books', *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 32-51, at 44.

²⁵ Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥamzah al-Zubayrī (d. 230/844-5), on whom see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 5 (Leiden): 324 = 5 (Beirut): 441-2. The other Medinese is Abū Muṣ'ab al-Zuhrī (d. 242/857), on whom see al-Dhahabī, *al-Siyar* 11:436-40, with further references.

²⁶ Al-Ājurri, *Su'ālāt Abī 'Ubayd al-Ājurri Abā Dāwūd*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alīm 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Bastawī, 2 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Rayyān and Mecca: Maktabat Dār al-Istiḳāmah, 1418/1997), 1:23, 2:255. Abū Dāwūd names the year 242, but Ibn Yūnus, *Tārīkh al-ghurabā'*, is quoted as specifying that Ḥāmid died in Ramadan (January 857): Ibn Ḥajar, *K. Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 12 vols (Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmīyah, 1325-7), 2:170.

To my surprise, it was more difficult to tell when al-Bukhārī had collected hadith in various places. For example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī states near the beginning of his biography that al-Bukhārī ‘wrote in Khurasan, the Jibal, all the cities of Iraq, the Hijaz, Syria, and Egypt.’²⁷ This list is only partly confirmed by the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Here are the percentages of hadith mentioned there collected by al-Bukhārī in each of these regions: Khurasan and Transoxania 20 percent, the Jibal 1 percent, all the cities of Iraq (excluding Mesopotamia) 54 percent, Mecca and Medina 7 percent, Syria 8 percent, and Egypt 10 percent.²⁸ Bukhārī relates 79 hadith reports in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from shaykhs of the Jibal, 78 of them (like Abū Dāwūd) from Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Ṣaghīr of Rayy, the other from Marrār ibn Ḥammūyah (d. 254/868) of Hamadhan, who at that is ambiguously identified.²⁹ There are also a few hadith reports from additional Jibalis in the *Adab* and other smaller works. But this does not look like the record of a major trip to collect hadith in the region. We also have the negative evidence of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s report that al-Bukhārī came to Rayy in 250/864-5.³⁰ Had he visited earlier as well, Ibn Abī Ḥātim ought to have mentioned it. I am inclined to guess, then, that al-Bukhārī (like Abū Dāwūd) recorded hadith from Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Ṣaghīr in Baghdad or Mecca and never actually visited the Jibal until much later.

Al-Bukhārī is quoted from near the end of his life as recalling that he had collected hadith in Syria and Egypt, entered Mesopotamia twice and Basra four times, stayed in the Hijaz six years, and entered Kufa and Baghdad innumerable times.³¹ Mesopotamia is the odd name on this list: if he went there twice in the course of collecting hadith, why does the *Ṣaḥīḥ* report hadith from just one Mesopotamian shaykh, Aḥmad ibn `Abd al-Malik of Harran (d.

²⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1349/1931), 2:4 = *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, ed. Bashshār `Awwād Ma`rūf, 17 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1422/2001), 2:322.

²⁸ Working from the list of shaykhs in M. Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī`nin kaynakları*, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi yayınlarından 13 (İstanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basımevi, 1956), 205-303.

²⁹ Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb* 10:80-1.

³⁰ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *K. al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta`dīl*, 9 vols (Hyderabad: Jam`iyat Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif al-`Uthmānīyah, 1360-71), 7:191.

³¹ Ibn `Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Sa`īd `Umar ibn Gharāmāh al-`Amrawī, 80 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1415-21/1995-2000), 52:58.

221/835-6)? It is possible that he wrote down hadith from many other shaykhs in Mesopotamia, visitors like himself from the other places with which they are associated in the biographical literature. At least as likely, it seems to me, is that he visited Mesopotamia for the pious purpose of *jihād*, manning an outpost on the frontier, possibly helping raiders in their staging area. It is also possible, of course, and I should guess the most likely, that this is another example of contradiction between the biographical record and al-Bukhārī's own works, the latter forcing us to discard the former. This seems to be the position of al-Dhahabī, who says simply, 'He did not enter Mesopotamia.'³² His method was presumably the same as mine, observing the same paucity of hadith in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Mesopotamians.

When I set out to write an article on al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915?), I similarly counted percentages from different shaykhs in *al-Mujtabā* in order to roughly infer how much time he spent in different regions.³³ From 46 Khurasani shaykhs, he collected 1,895 hadith reports, 33 percent of the total. From 60 Basran shaykhs, he collected 1,479 hadith reports, 26 percent of the total; from 44 Baghdadi, 767 hadith reports, 13 percent; from twenty Kufan 146 hadith reports, 3 percent; from five Wasiti, seven hadith reports, for a total of 129 shaykhs and 2,398 hadith reports from Iraq, 42 percent of the total. From twenty Egyptian shaykhs, he collected 660 hadith reports, 11 percent of the total. From 48 Mesopotamian (*jazarī*) shaykhs, he collected 530 hadith reports, 9 percent of the total. From 46 Syrian shaykhs, he collected 474 hadith reports, 8 percent of the total. From five Meccan shaykhs, he collected 82 hadith reports, somewhat more than 1 percent of the total. Additionally, he collected a very few hadith reports from Medinese and Jibali shaykhs, probably not in actual trips to Medina or the Jibal but in other places where he came across these shaykhs.

³² Al-Dhahabī, *al-Siyar* 12:396.

³³ Christopher Melchert, 'The life and works of al-Nasā'ī', *Journal of Semitic studies* 59 (2014): 377-407, at 389-90, 393.

It is more difficult to tell exactly when al-Nasā'ī visited most of these places. He recalled going to hear from Qutaybah ibn Sa'īd (d. 240/854) of Baghlān, Khurasan, in 230/844-5, and staying with him for a year and two months.³⁴ His study in Khurasan was relatively concentrated. Qutaybah ibn Sa'īd himself was the source of over a third of his hadith from Khurasanis. In second and third place, respectively, are Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh (Marwazi but lived in Nishapur, d. 238/853?) and Suwayd ibn Naṣr (Marwazi, d. 240/854-5?), al-Nasā'ī's source especially for hadith from Ibn al-Mubārak. His top three Khurasani shaykhs were together the source of almost two-thirds of his hadith from Khurasanis.³⁵ The Meccan shaykhs from whom he related hadith died between 248/862-3 and 256/869-70, inclusive, so it seems certain that he visited Mecca to collect hadith before the earlier date, probably just once. He is said to have been constant in pilgrimage, which suggests that he normally did not combine hadith collection with making the pilgrimage (else there should be hadith in *al-Mujtabá* from shaykhs who died later than 256).³⁶ He must have come to Iraq before 239/853-4, for that is the earliest death date of any of his Iraqi shaykhs. On similar evidence, his earliest visits to Mesopotamia and Syria must have been within less than five years after this. We have his express statement that he entered Egypt when Ḥarmalah ibn Yaḥyá was ill, and did not write from him, implying that he entered Egypt for the first time not long before Ḥarmalah's death at the end of Shawwāl 243/mid-February 858.³⁷

Mālik and al-Shaybānī

I have recently counted shaykhs in connection with an unpublished survey of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/804-5), *Kitāb al-Ḥujjah `alá ahl al-Madīnah*. I started with the indexes to the helpful Ma`rūf edition of the *Muwaṭṭa`* of Mālik in the recension of Yaḥyá ibn

³⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq*, ed. Rawḥīyah al-Naḥḥās, et al., 29 vols (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1404-9/1984-9), 3:100.

³⁵ Principal shaykhs with numbers of hadith reports in *al-Mujtabá* are listed by `Umar Īmān Abū Bakr, *al-Imām al-Nasā'ī wa-kitābuhu al-Mujtabá* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma`ārif, 1424/2003), 13-14.

³⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq* 3:102.

³⁷ Nasā'ī, *Tasmiyat al-shuyūkh*, ed. Qāsim `Alī Sa`d (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmīyah, 1424/2003), 95.

Yahyá.³⁸ In the index to ‘Muftis of the Followers and those after them; their pronouncements and their actions’ (2:675-91), I found some things I expected, others I thought surprising. Unsurprising was the near-total concentration on Medinese: of 406 pronouncements and actions from the generation of the Followers, four came from Meccans, one from a single Basran; that is, 1 percent of the total, the rest all Medinese. As for Followers cited in another index for their relation of hadith from Companions or directly from the Prophet, just 2 percent were from outside Medina. Of items related by Mālik directly from his shaykhs, 95 percent came from Medina.

What surprised me, on the other hand, was that so many juridical positions were related of some of the famous Seven Jurisprudents of Medina, so few of some others: 92 from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, 53 from ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, 38 from al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, 29 from Sulaymān ibn Yasār, but just one each from Khārijah ibn Zayd and Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, none at all from ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh.³⁹ This seems to confirm that the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, although certainly presenting Medinese views, is chiefly concerned to support Mālik and his opinions. It is not a comprehensive survey of the whole Medinese tradition.⁴⁰

As for whom al-Shaybānī cites in the *Hujjah*, Followers (including four *mukhaḍrams*) can be classified regionally: Kufans turn out to be the final authority in 60 percent of them, which is to say that al-Shaybānī mainly argues against Medinese positions on the basis of Kufan, when it comes to Follower opinion, but with substantial representation of opinion from other centres, in descending order Medina, Mecca, and Basra, then Syria far away in

³⁸ Mālik, *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ*, rec. Yahyá ibn Yahyá, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1417/1997).

³⁹ From a list of seven quoted by al-Qarāfī, *al-Dhakhīrah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥajjī, et al., 14 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994), 13:343. Some lists of the seven include Sālim ibn ʿAbd Allāh and ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, each quoted once in the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*.

⁴⁰ This is part of the justification for al-Shāfiʿī’s complaint, ‘What you call *al-amr al-mujtamaʾ* is mostly subject to disagreement’ (al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm* 8:771). ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Muḥammad al-Darāwardī (d. 187/802-3?) is quoted as saying, ‘When Mālik says *ʿalayhi adraktu ahl baladinā* and *al-mujtamaʾ ʿalayhi ʿindanā*, he means Rabīʿah ibn Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Ibn Hurmuz’, referring to his teachers Rabīʿat al-Raʿy (d. 136/753-4?) and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yazīd (d. 148/765-6; Ibn Abī Khaythamah, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, ed. Ṣalāḥ ibn Fathī Halal, 4 vols [Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīthah, 1424/2004], 2:284).

last place. Similarly, 62 percent of al-Shaybānī's immediate shaykhs are Kufan, with authorities from other centres in the same rank order: Medina, Mecca, Basra, and Syria.

For comparison, Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, cites Medinese and Kufan hadith about equally at the Follower level, followed by Meccan, then Basran. Abū Yūsuf's immediate authorities are 63 percent Kufan, about the same as al-Shaybānī's.⁴¹ When al-Shaybānī inserts something not from Mālik in his recension of the *Muwaṭṭa'*, his immediate authority is Kufan 73 percent of the time, Medinese 12 percent of the time; at the Follower level, of those I have been able to identify, his insertions are 60 percent Kufan, 17 percent each Medinese and Meccan.⁴² Thus, the *Hujjah* is like other early Ḥanafī literature in its leaning most heavily on the Kufan tradition but also ranging beyond it, in evident contrast to early Mālikī literature, which leans almost exclusively on the Medinese tradition. The *Hujjah* reviews a series of juridical problems, presenting first the position of Abū Ḥanīfah, then of the people of Medina. His first argument against the people of Medina is usually an appeal to analogy; that is, he argues that their position on this problem is inconsistent with their position on some other. His second argument is usually an appeal to hadith, though, going back sometimes to the Prophet but more often to Companions or Followers. When it comes to authorities of the past, al-Shaybānī's argument, befitting someone close to the caliph, seems to be that whereas the Medinese position is parochial, Abū Ḥanīfah's position is supported by the best thought of all the centres.

Renunciants, Sufis, and traditionists

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's chief literary monument is of course his *Musnad*, comprising more than 27,600 hadith reports. His next largest is *Kitāb al-Zuhd*.⁴³ The extant version includes around

⁴¹ Abū Yūsuf, *K. al-Kharāj* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyah, 1346).

⁴² Mālik, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, recension of al-Shaybānī, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 3rd printing (Cairo: Wizārat al-Awqāf, al-Majlis al-A'lā lil-Shu'ūn al-Islāmīyah, Lajnat Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1407/1987).

⁴³ Available in two recensions: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Zuhd*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Mecca: Maṭba'at Umm al-Qurā, 1357, reprinted Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1396/1976), also reprinted with new pagination

2,800 reports going back to prophets, Companions, Followers, and a few subsequent figures, about half of them through Aḥmad, half through his son `Abd Allāh (d. 290/903). Ibn Ḥajar al-`Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) states that Aḥmad's *Musnad* is three times as long as *al-Zuhd*.⁴⁴ This implies that he knew a *Zuhd* of more than 9,000 items, over three times as long as either version of *al-Zuhd* in print today. Ibn Ḥajar's report is roughly confirmed by quotations in Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā`*. I have counted over 1,200 quotations there, of which only about 40 percent are in the extant *Zuhd*. This suggests that indeed the original collection was over twice as large as the extant *Zuhd*, although perhaps not comprising so many as 9,000. Unfortunately, we cannot know the principles on which it was abridged. The extant version gives an extraordinary amount of space to quotations of prophets before Muḥammad, about a fifth of the total. Did `Abd Allāh's recension have them in the same proportion, or was it a special interest of the abridger to preserve them? We cannot know.

We can know where Aḥmad collected his part of the *Zuhd*. The greatest part, well over a third, came to him from Basran shaykhs. He took just under a quarter from Baghdadi shaykhs, a fifth from Kufan, and small proportions from Wasiti, Meccan, and Yemeni shaykhs. These proportions are almost identical to the proportions in the *Musnad*, the only major difference being that Aḥmad collected more items in the *Musnad* from Baghdadi shaykhs, more in the *Zuhd* from Basran. Of Aḥmad's shaykhs in the *Zuhd*, 95 percent are also in the *Musnad*, 92 percent somewhere in Six Books. This means that stories of renunciation circulated among the same people as hadith from the Prophet.

The most important extant biographical dictionaries covering early Sufis are al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), *Ṭabaqāt al-sūfīyah*, and Abū Nu`aym (d. 430/1038), *Ḥilyat al-awliyā`*. They propose a spiritual lineage for Sufism going back to the Companions of the

(Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyah, 1403/1983), and ed. Muḥammad Jalāl Sharaf, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-`Arabīyah, 1401/1981).

⁴⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Ta`jīl al-manfa`ah*, ed. Ikrām Allāh Imdād al-Ḥaqq, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmīyah, 1416/1996), 1:243.

Prophet. The forebears of the Sufis they identify as eighth- and ninth-century renunciants known as *zuhhād*, *nussāk*, and *`ubbād*.⁴⁵ These persons underwent austerities, devoted extraordinary amounts of time to qur'anic recitation and prayer, and generally cultivated a solemn attitude toward life. Some spoke of thinking often and steadily of God, but ideas of mutual love and mystical union came only in the later ninth century with figures like Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/875?). I wondered whether their involvement in hadith transmission could be compared with that of their Sufi successors.⁴⁶ I first looked at al-Sulamī's subjects to see how many were active in transmitting hadith according to al-Sulamī himself, then at how many were rated in three comprehensive encyclopaedias of hadith criticism: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* and *Lisān al-Mizān*.

Table 1: Subjects of al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, as Hadith Transmitters

Generation	Active	Rated	Unrated
1 (d. 163-271 H.)	17 (85%)	7 (35%)	13 (65%)
2 (d. 280-319 H.)	14 (70%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)
3 (d. 291-330 H.)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)

The downward trend is clear: fewer and fewer of the named Sufis were active in hadith transmission from the ninth century into the tenth, while there is an even sharper drop in the proportion of those active whom the *rijāl* critics deemed necessary to evaluate. Furthermore, whereas a majority of those in the first generation who received ratings were considered trustworthy (four against three), none in the second generation was found trustworthy.

⁴⁵ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-sūfiyya*, ed. Johannes Pedersen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), and Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 10 vols (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1352-7/1932-8).

⁴⁶ A fuller treatment of my results was published as Christopher Melchert, 'Early renunciants as *ḥadīth* transmitters', *The Muslim world* 92 (2002): 407-18.

Next I looked at Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā`*.

Table 2:

Subjects of Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā`* 8-10, as Hadith Transmitters

Date of death	Active	Rated	Unrated
A.H. 151-200	29 (62%)	24 (51%)	23
A.H. 201-250	31 (32%)	19 (19%)	79
A.H. 251-300	24 (41%)	4 (7%)	54
After A.H. 301	18 (31%)	4 (8%)	55

(Abū Nu`aym reports no date of death for the majority of his subjects; therefore, most of these dates are my inferences from the length of the *isnād* up to Abū Nu`aym.) Plainly, many more renunciants were remembered for their renunciation than for their hadith transmission. More of Abū Nu`aym's subjects are identified as hadith transmitters than Sulamī's, no doubt because Abū Nu`aym was himself primarily a collector of hadith and filled his biographical dictionary with other collectors. Nevertheless, the trend is plainly downwards: a majority of the early renunciants were considered important enough as hadith transmitters to be rated by the great critics of the ninth century, but only a few of the ninth- and tenth-century renunciants were important enough as hadith transmitters to be rated. The actual ratings these early renunciant hadith transmitters receive likewise decline, on the whole: of those who died A.H. 250 or before and are rated, about three times as many are rated favorably as unfavorably. For those few who died after A.H. 250 and who are rated, acceptance and rejection are about equally common.

A few years later, I returned to Abū Nu`aym, this time to characterize his sources.⁴⁷ As published in the 20th century, the first volume of the *Hilyah* covers Companions, the last volume Sufis of the later ninth and tenth centuries. As a good traditionist, he names his source for every quotation. I wondered whether his sources for the sayings of Sufis in the last volume were the same as for their forbears in early volumes. I made two random samples of Abū Nu`aym's immediate authorities for items in the *Hilyah*, also for their immediate authorities: one of 122 items from volumes 2 to 6, all Followers, the other of 132 items from volume 10, where Sufis (expressly so called) predominate. Both samples exclude hadith from the Prophet (about a quarter of all items in the *Hilyah*).

It turns out that Abū Nu`aym indeed learnt about Followers and Sufis from separate experts. `Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ja`far ibn Ḥayyān, meaning Abū al-Shaykh (d. 369/979), is the most cited: 24 times as Abū Nu`aym's source for something about a Follower (about one item in five), four times about someone later. Of those four, two are items about Isfahanis, neither identifiable as a Sufi, but two are about a genuine Sufi, `Amr al-Makkī (d. Baghdad, 297/909-10?).

The next most items in the sample concerning Followers, 16 (about one in eight), come from the man alternately identified as Abū Bakr ibn Mālīk and Aḥmad ibn Ja`far ibn Ḥamdān, more usually known as al-Qaṭī`ī (d. 368/979). He is most famous for transmitting Aḥmad's *Musnad* from its compiler, `Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad (d. Baghdad, 290/903). He evidently appears in the *Hilyah* as a transmitter from `Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad of material from Aḥmad's *al-Zuhd*, likewise compiled by `Abd Allāh.⁴⁸ Finally, Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad is a

⁴⁷ Christopher Melchert, 'Abū Nu`aym's sources for *Hilyat al-awliyā`*, Sufi and traditionist', *Les maîtres soufis et leurs disciples*, ed. Geneviève Gobillot and Jean-Jacques Thibon, Études arabes, médiévales et modernes, PIFD 273 (Beirut: Presses de l'IFPO, 2012), 145-60

⁴⁸ E.g. Abū Nu`aym, *al-Hilyah* 2:144 = Aḥmad, *al-Zuhd* (Mecca), 259 = (Beirut), 317. Over a third of the items in the sample from Abū Bakr ibn Mālīk (all from `Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad in turn) cannot be found in *al-Zuhd*. However, it seems that the extant manuscript of *al-Zuhd* represents only about a third of the original text, for which see Melchert, 'The *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal', 47.

source for something about 12 Followers (about one item in ten): this is the Isfahani usually known as al-Ṭabarānī (d. 260/971). Apart from prophetic hadith he related, his only appearance in volume 10 concerns a saying not of any Sufi but of the Kufan traditionist Wakīʾ ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812?).⁴⁹ There are practically no other intersections between the samples for items concerning Followers and items concerning Sufis.

As for Sufis in volume 10, on the other hand, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Mūsā al-Naysābūrī is a source for 18 items (14 percent of the total), not one about Followers. This is the famous Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī. Abū Nuʿaym himself refers to *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīyah*, but examination of his quotations shows that his actual source must have been the longer *Tārīkh al-ṣūfīyah*, lost except for a section at the end treating women.⁵⁰ Moreover, al-Sulamī declares in the introduction to *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīyah* that this book covers the latter saints (*mutaʾakḫhirī al-awliyāʾ*), whereas an earlier book, apparently called *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, had covered Companions, Followers, and the Followers of the Followers.⁵¹ Therefore, al-Sulamī evidently knew stories of Followers, and Abū Nuʿaym knew he did, for an early section title in the *Ḥilyah* refers to al-Sulamī’s listing of *ahl al-ṣuffah*.⁵² Why, then, does Abū Nuʿaym fail to quote him concerning any? Plainly he preferred other sources. It was evidently the rule, by Abū Nuʿaym’s time, that information about Followers was the preserve of hadith experts, not Sufis. This complements my earlier finding that tenth-century hadith critics largely ignored Sufi interest in hadith, preferring to evaluate the work of specialists. Reports of the Prophet’s word and deed and of the early renunciants were conveyed by the same men, but there was a parting of the ways with the advent of Sufism from the late ninth century.

⁴⁹ Abū Nuʿaym, *al-Ḥilyah* 10:12 (s.n. Aḥmad ibn Abī al-Ḥawārī).

⁵⁰ Al-Sulamī, *Dhikr al-niswah al-mutaʾabbidāt al-ṣūfīyāt*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1413/1993).

⁵¹ Al-Sulamī, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, 5.

⁵² Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyah* 2:26.

Conclusions

Counting is a simple technique, involving drudgery but little intelligence. Intelligence is required to interpret data. Some conclusions seem firm. Scott Lucas observed that the generation of the first compilers, who died 120-50/738-67, still comprised mainly specialists in the hadith of some particular Companion or Follower.⁵³ Even more, necessarily, they limited their attention to one region. There seems to have been more circulation from one centre to another in the second half of the eighth century, more still in the ninth. However, my counts of men in *isnāds* has continually confirmed that the learning of various early traditionists and jurists (they were not sharply distinguished until the later ninth century) still circulated in some areas much more than others. Medina is particularly notable for its insularity. Iraqis, Syrians, and Egyptians came to Medina to hear hadith but the Medinese themselves transmitted very little hadith from their visitors. Hadith seems to have reached some areas, such as North Africa, Mesopotamia, and Khurasan, only in the ninth century.

Lucas used biographical dictionaries in combination with, especially, Ibn Ḥajar, *Itrāf al-musnid*, a rearrangement of Aḥmad's *Musnad*, to qualify Ibn Sa'd's suggestions about how much hadith various early figures actually transmitted.⁵⁴ In similar fashion, I have repeatedly found that lists of teachers and students in biographical dictionaries, although indispensable to identifying men in *isnāds*, are only approximate guides to where traditionists and jurists collected their material and where their teaching spread after them. Counting men in their hadith collections themselves is a more reliable procedure.

⁵³ Lucas, *Constructive critics*, 341.

⁵⁴ Lucas, *Constructive critics*, 331; Ibn Ḥajar, *Itrāf al-musnid al-mu'talī bi-aṭrāf al-musnad al-ḥanbalī*, ed. Zuhayr ibn Nāṣir al-Nāṣir, 10 vols (Damascus & Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr and Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, 1414/1993).

The chief danger to avoid (besides simple miscounting) is overinterpretation, either because data are too few for reliable statistical inferences or because the data are unreliable for the purpose at hand. A notorious example of relying on inappropriate data is Richard Bulliet's attempt to measure conversion to Islam by ancestors of traditionists and jurists called 'Abd Allāh'.⁵⁵ This required two massive assumptions: that this 'Abd Allāh was the last non-Muslim in someone's ancestry and that the men in biographical dictionaries are representative samples of the whole population. Actually, of course, 'Abd Allāh is a name commonly given to Muslims at birth and there is no reason to believe that the social élite from whom most scholars were recruited converted at the same rate as the population at large. Nobody was counting Muslims in the population until modern times, and no method of statistical manipulation will produce a census before any was carried out. Likewise, no doubt, the influence of Ḥanafī teaching on al-Shāfi'ī is not to be measured straightforwardly from how many Baghdadi authorities he cites. However, I hope it will support qualitative interpretations of other data, such as the way he argues.

⁵⁵ Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the medieval period* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).