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THE TRANSMISSION OF HADITH: CHANGES IN THE NINTH AND TENTH CENTURIES C.E.

Christopher MELCHERT
Oxford

My purpose is to sketch some changes in the practice of hadith transmission over the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. We now have some very good treatments of the earlier period. G. H. A. Juynboll renewed the study of how hadith originated while re-introducing the study of hadith criticism.[1] His positive results are summarized in his *Encyclopedia of canonical ḥadīth*, which identifies probable inventors of hadith reports in the Six Books.[2] Harald Motzki reinvigorated the authenticity debate in a book-length analysis of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, and a series of articles arguing for the reliability of hadith back at least to the beginning of the eighth century.[3] The earlier history of that debate is skillfully summarized by Motzki himself and Herbert Berg.[4] Berg proposes that it is deadlocked because of incompatible initial assumptions, and I will leave it alone.

As for the development of hadith science in the ninth century and after, Eerik Dickinson and Scott Lucas have contributed studies of classical Sunni hadith criticism, while Jonathan Brown has traced the rising prestige of Bukhārī and Muslim to the present and provided us with a textbook covering hadith science to the present.[5] Some interesting works on leading collectors of the ninth century have also appeared.[6] Of recent students of hadith, Juynboll and Librande have had significant things to say about the progress of hadith science after Bukhārī, Brown the most.[7]

[1] Juynboll, *Muslim tradition*; *idem*, *Studies*; *idem*, (Re)appraisal.

[2] Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*.

[3] Motzki, *Origins*. His most important articles of the 1990s are now available in Motzki, *Analysing*; *V.* also Motzki, Dating.

[4] Motzki, *Origins* ch. 1; Berg, *Development*, ch. 2.

[5] Dickinson, *Development*, esp. ch. 6; Lucas, *Constructive*; Brown, *Canonization*.

[6] Notably Abū Bakr, *al-Imām al-Nasāʾī*; Kāfī, *Manhaj al-imām Aḥmad*; ʿUmar, *Manhaj al-imām Aḥmad*; Abdul-Jabbar, *Bukhari*; Lucas, Where are the legal *ḥadīth*; and ʿAjīn, *Manhaj al-Ḥāfiẓ ʿAbd al-Razzāq*. *V.* also Melchert, *Musnad*; *idem*, Life and works of Abū Dāwūd; *idem*, Bukhārī; and *idem*, Life and works of al-Nasāʾī.

[7] *V.* esp. Librande, Supposed, and *idem*, Scholars. Besides the study cited in n. 5, *v.* Brown's textbook, *Hadith*. This plainly supersedes earlier surveys, notably Siddiqi, *Ḥadīth*, and Burton, *Introduction*.

Juynboll found that hadith critics became increasingly rigorous over the ninth century, piling up an ever higher standard of proof that a hadith report would have to surmount before they accepted it. Then the Muʿtazili Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931?) threatened to overthrow the whole enterprise by showing how the new standards would disqualify virtually the whole body of accepted hadith. At this point, Sunni traditionists sensibly declared all Companions trustworthy. Juynboll hardly explains al-Karābīsī (d. 248/862-3?), whose *Kitāb al-Mudallisīn* apparently underlies the *Kitāb Qabūl al-akhbār* of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī.[8] Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī's skepticism may be one expression of early Muʿtazili preference for inferring the law from the Quran and reason to the virtual exclusion of hadith. Al-Karābīsī adhered to the Shāfiʿi tendency in Baghdad, which was evidently more influenced by Muʿtazilism than the Shāfiʿi tendency in Egypt was.[9] However, al-Karābīsī does not seem to have been hostile to inferring the law from hadith. On the contrary, he is cited as a leading proponent of the single-stranded, non-recurrent report (*khabar al-wāḥid*), maintaining with al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857-8) that a non-recurrent report supported by upright transmitters necessitates both knowledge and action, against the Ḥanafiyya, (later) Shāfiʿiyya, and most of the Mālikiyya, along with all the Muʿtazila and Khawārij.[10] Perhaps al-Karābīsī thought there was enough useful hadith left even with the elimination of all that was transmitted by those traditionists aspersed in *al-Mudallisīn*. Certainly, my impression of the rigour of Sunni hadith science agrees with Juynboll's: that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw a decisive relaxation of standards concerning early figures alongside a considerable stiffening of standards concerning late figures. I do doubt whether polemics with the Muʿtazila were decisive. Rather, I should say, the sheer number of traditionists and ubiquity of notebooks made it much easier than ever before to be rigorous with transmitters of the tenth century while recognizing a body of accepted hadith not to be dismissed.

I wish to identify changes in the practice of hadith science that made it possible for traditionists to raise their standards to the point where they

[8] Juynboll, *Muslim tradition* 168.

[9] The outstanding example is Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shāfiʿī (d. after 230/844), who was prominent among Muʿtazila at the courts of al-Maʾmūn and al-Muʿtaṣim but also promoted the Baghdadi teaching of al-Shāfiʿī, on whom *v*. Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xvii (231-240 H.), 428, and *idem*, *Siyar* x, 555, with further references. Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī (d. 270/884) probably learnt his Shāfiʿism from Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. For the Muʿtazili influence on his jurisprudence, *v*. Vishanoff, *Formation* 78-82.

[10] Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām* i, 106, 115.

threatened to disallow almost all hadith reports. The first control on fabrication had to be the sheer number of traditionists, greatly increased from the end of the eighth century. A second control I address is the notebook, which regularly served as documentary evidence of someone's having heard what he said he had. Payment for hadith was never generally accepted but it did begin to appear in this period and probably become a little more usual. As fear of fabrication declined, the average age of traditionists at first hearing hadith seems to have gradually declined.

THE NUMBER OF TRADITIONISTS

There are some indications that the number of traditionists (collectors of hadith) increased from the early ninth century. The number of transmitters mentioned in the *asānīd* (sing. *isnād*; chains of authorities attached to hadith reports) in the Six Books goes up at that time.[11] Individual traditionists become associated with much more prodigious numbers of hadith. Hence, for example, whereas Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814) is said to have related about 7,000 hadith reports (he used no notebook),[12] while ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) is said to have memorized 17,000,[13] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) is said to have selected the hadith in his *Musnad* from 750,000,[14] al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) the hadith in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from 600,000,[15] Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889) the hadith in his *Sunan* from 500,000.[16] Juynboll has described such numbers as "grotesque exaggerations if not downright fictitious", and I myself have suggested that Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī probably knew no more than 50,000 prophetic hadith reports.[17] Still, if estimates for ninth-century traditionists are significantly higher than for eighth-century, they must have felt themselves considerably more capable than their predecessors. Huge numbers came to be reported at funerals: 100,000 at that of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Naysābūrī

[11] Melchert, Sectaries 293.
[12] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ix, 179; *x, 250*.
[13] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* vi, 314.
[14] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt* i, 143.
[15] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ii, 8-9, 14; *ii, 327, 333*.
[16] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ix, 57; *x, 78*.
[17] Juynboll, Some 375; Melchert, Bukhārī 443-4.

(d. 226/840?),[18] 600,000 or more at that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,[19] 300,000 at the funeral of Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd (d. 316/929).[20] If traditionists were so much more prominent, there had to be more men training as traditionists. Moreover, there should have been a larger audience for hadith as hadith became crucial to the determination of Islamic law.

Still, the evidence itself is not strong. What is most clear is the apparent effect of larger numbers on the development of hadith: that, because witnesses were by now so many, one's chances of passing off new, counterfeit hadith reports were much slighter than before; conversely, there was less risk than before that anything important might be irretrievably lost. Early in the ninth century, it became possible to exclude heretics entirely from the pool of reliable transmitters.[21] By the eleventh century, on the other hand, it seemed safe to send six-year-olds to hear hadith, where earlier generations had feared that their incomprehension of what they were hearing might lead to the their inadvertently omitting some parts of the hadith they had heard.

The shape of a career in hadith

A religious education began with the Quran and continued with elementary jurisprudence, not hadith. When Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767-8?) went to the Meccan Follower ʿAṭāʾ (d. 114/732?) seeking hadith, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUbayd (d. 113/731-2), who was with him, advised him to learn the Quran first. When he returned, some time later, ʿAbdallāh advised him to learn the calculation of inheritance shares (*farīḍa*) first. Only after mastering these two did he commence his studies of hadith.[22] The identical order, with the addition of Arabic after inheritance shares, re-appears in a story from the next century, when Abū l-ʿAynāʾ (d. 283/896) went to the Basran traditionist al-Khuraybī (d. 213/828) seeking hadith.[23] The risk of learning hadith before one knew law was that, not understanding the significance of details, one would forget or confuse them. Sufyān

[18] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* xi, 299.
[19] Al-Dhahabī relates estimates from 660,000 to 2,500,000, *Tārīkh* xviii (241-250 H.), 141-2.
[20] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ix, 468; *xi, 140*.
[21] Melchert, Sectaries.
[22] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* x, 401-2; *xii, 145*.
[23] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xv (211-220 H.), 207-8.

b. ʿUyayna said he did not understand hadith very well at 15.[24] The prominent Nishapuran al-Sarrāj (d. 312/924) said, "I attended the session of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā when he was being read to. However, I did not grasp it (*lam aḍbiṭ*) on account of my youth, and therefore I have not related (what I heard)."[25] Several persons are said to have related unreliably from persons they heard very early in their careers. For example, Qabīṣa b. Muḥammad (d. 215/830-1) heard from Sufyān al-Thawrī for three years starting at age 16. Aḥmad said, "He was young, not grasping (*lam yaḍbiṭ*)." Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn said, "Qabīṣa was trustworthy as to everything save the hadith of Sufyān, for he heard from him when he was little."[26] Others are recalled as voluntarily refusing to relate from persons they heard very early in life. Al-Sarrāj has been mentioned already. Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh (d. 238/853?) heard from Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) when he was young but left off relating from him on account of his youth: Isḥāq was born 161/777-8 or 166/782-3, so Isḥāq was at least 14 when he heard from Ibn al-Mubārak.[27] I have not determined whether there is evidence to confirm what is quoted of the Kufan Mūsā b. Hārūn (d. Old Cairo, 224/859): "The people of Basra write at ten, the people of Kufa at twenty, and the people of Syria at thirty."[28]

If it was normal to learn the Quran and the calculation of inheritance shares before learning hadith, the normal age to begin hadith must have been in the early teens. Richard Bulliet has stressed the very young ages of beginning traditionists, four to ten, but his data are all from Nishapur in the eleventh century.[29] Hearers less than ten years old seem to have been rare before that. For the eighth century, al-Shāfiʿī (d. Old Cairo, 204/820) was said to have memorized the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik at ten.[30] In contrast to al-Shāfiʿī, most traditionists whose ages at first hearing are known seem to have begun in their late teens. For example, Ibn Wahb (d. 197/813) sought *ʿilm* at 17.[31] Sufyān b. ʿUyayna met al-Zuhrī at 16.

[24] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal* i, 192; *i, 90*.
[25] Khalīlī, *Irshād* 310 = ed. Idrīs, iii, 828.
[26] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* viii, 348.
[27] Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* i, 277. Similarly, Miswar b. Qaṭan (d. 300/912-13) heard from Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā but would not relate from him on account of his age: Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxii (291-300 H.), 310. Abū Ṭāhir al-Dhuhlī (d. 367/978?) refused to relate from his earliest sources on account of his youth: Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxvi (351-380 H.), 380.
[28] Rāmahurmuzī, *Muḥaddith* 187.
[29] Bulliet, Age structure.
[30] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xiv (201-210 H.), 308; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* ix, 27.
[31] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* vi, 73.

Al-Zuhrī is quoted as saying he knew no one seeking this matter younger than he and at first refused to answer him.[32]

As for traditionists active mainly in the ninth century, al-Bukhārī and Muslim (d. 261/875) seem to have been fairly typical: the first began at 11,[33] the second at 14.[34] For every report of a ninth-century traditionist who began before ten, I have come across another of a traditionist who heard hadith very young but prudentially refused to relate from those sessions on account of his age.

Over the tenth century, it probably did become more common to hear hadith before ten. The Baghdadi ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Sukkarī (d. 386/996) first heard hadith at seven in 303/915-16.[35] The Nishapuran Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980) first heard hadith at nine in 305/917-18.[36] The famous Isfahani traditionist Ibn Manda (d. 395/1005) began at seven or eight in 318/930-1, his rival Abū Nuʿaym (d. 430/1038) at eight in 344/955-6.[37] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī himself (d. 405/1014) first heard at nine in 330/941-2.[38] Still, the overwhelming majority of traditionists for whom any information is available began their careers at ten or more; for example, the Baghdadis Ibn Shāhīn (d. 385/996) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1067), both of whom first heard hadith at 11.[39]

Interestingly, both al-Rāmahurmuzī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's handbooks on the practice of hadith include an encouraging chapter on the minimum age for hearing hadith. Al-Rāmahurmuzī defends early hearing on the practical ground that 'If hearing were not sound except after twenty, much relation from the people of knowledge would be lost, apart from those among the Companions.'[40] Al-Khaṭīb likewise defends hearing at an early age. He first asserts that most commentators favour it. After presenting more evidence and arguments against early hearing, he presents as evidence in favour the youth of numerous Companions. If one ruled very strongly against child traditionists, a great deal of Prophet hadith would have to be discarded.[41] In this case, paradoxically, it appears that laxity concerning the Companions (among traditionists of the early

[32] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ix, 176; *x*, *247*; Aḥmad., *ʿIlal* iii, 150-1; *ii, 138*.
[33] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ii, 7; *ii, 325*.
[34] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xx (261-280 H.), 183.
[35] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xii, 41; *xiii*, *495*.
[36] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *apud* Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxvi, 423.
[37] Dhahabī, *Siyar* xvii, 29, 454.
[38] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* v, 473; *iii*, *510*.
[39] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xi, 265; *xiii*, *134* (Ibn Shāhīn); 266 *135* (al-Khaṭīb).
[40] Rāmahurmuzī, *Muḥaddith* 189.
[41] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya* 54-6; *73-5*.

tenth century) was being used to justify laxity in the present. It had to be the very rigour of hadith science by that time, based on the large number of traditionists and limited number of accepted hadith, that allowed reliance on children. Unlike those of the eighth and ninth centuries, tenth- and eleventh-century traditionists no longer feared distortion or the insinuation of invented hadith.

The declining age of beginning traditionists notwithstanding, it was still a sign of insignificance that only boys should come hear one teach. When Muḥammad b. Ghālib al-Tamtām (d. 283/896), on being asked to relate some hadith, refused to dictate anything rare, his auditors insulted him by bringing out only cheap paper for their notes. It added to the joke that they were merely boys (*ṣibyān*).[42]

Payment for hadith

It is fairly common to read of a young man's spending a great fortune on collecting hadith. The famous hadith critic Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (d. 233/848) inherited 1,500,000 dirhams and spent it all on hadith.[43] The Nishapuran Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā l-Dhuhlī (d. 258/872?) made three trips, spending 150,000 dirhams on hadith (*ʿilm*).[44] Ibn Rumays (d. 326/937-8) sold some property in Baghdad for 3,000 dinars, then spent it all on hadith.[45] It was to the credit of patrons that they should bestow alms on traditionists, and the stories of young men who spent great sums on hadith are commendatory. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḍabbī (d. 339/950-1) spent over 100,000 on scholars and renunciants (*ʿulamāʾ*, *zuhhād*) in Nishapur.[46] The Nishapuran traditionist Muḥammad b. al-Muʾammal al-Māsarjisī (d. 350/961) built a house for *ahl al-ḥadīth* where they were paid stipends.[47] Daʿlaj (d. 351/962), another rich Nishapuran and traditionist, had standing alms (*ṣadaqāt jāriya*; presumably a pious foundation) for *ahl al-ḥadīth* in Mecca, Iraq, and Sijistan.[48] He sent a copy of his own *Musnad* to Ibn ʿUqda (d. 332/944) with a dinar between every two pages.[49]

[42] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* iii, 146; *iv, 245-6*.
[43] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xiv, 178; *xvi, 265*.
[44] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xix, 343.
[45] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ii, 139; *ii*, *515*.
[46] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxv, 476.
[47] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxv, 452.
[48] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, *apud* Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxvi, 54.
[49] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* viii, 388; *ix*, *367*.

There are also stories of largesse towards the people of the mosque before the ninth century. The outstanding change here is probably the increasing occurrence of permanent foundations (*awqāf*) to support traditionists.

A few traditionists refused even free gifts. For example, there are many stories of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's refusing gifts. But these mention that fellow traditionists accepted.[50] Ideally, of course, a traditionist held forth regardless of who gave him or what was given. For example, it was said of the Kufan Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812?), "Wakīʿ would be brought his food and clothing. He would not ask for or seek anything."[51] But even when a traditionist refused to dictate unless his auditors paid him, as in the stories just related, the terms he used would suggest charitable giving; for example, *birr*, *hadiyya*.

It was still better to relate hadith for nothing. The Basran Abū l-ʿĀliya (d. 90/709) was against taking wages for teaching religious knowledge (*ʿilm*), paraphrasing the Quran, "Do not sell God's signs for a small price."[52] The Basran al-Rabīʿ b. Anas (settled in Khurasan, d. 140/757-8?) called for teaching for free as one has learnt for free.[53] Sufyān b. ʿUyayna was given two dirhams to relate hadith, whereupon he wept and said, "Do as I say, even if my practice falls short. What I say will benefit you, while my falling short will not harm you."[54] It was still disreputable for a traditionist to ask outright for payment. Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777?) was quoted as saying, "The scholar is the physician of religion, the dirham the plague of religion, so what if the physician draw the plague to himself as he treats another?"[55] Ibn al-Mubārak was quoted as saying the lowest of the people were those who ate by their faith.[56] Aḥmad forbade his followers to write down the hadith of anyone who demanded money for it, "even as a courtesy".[57]

Obviously, such comments were quoted only because some did sell hadith. The Basran Yūnus b. ʿUbayd (d. 139/756-7) dismissed some youths who had come to hear Sufyān al-Thawrī on the ground that they had all sat with him in order to gain their living.[58] Ḥabīb b. Abī Ḥabīb

[50] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* ix, 174-9, 181, 186.
[51] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* xi, 129.
[52] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* ii, 220, drawing on Q 2:41, 5:33, and 16.95, which use the first person, "my signs".
[53] Aḥmad, *ʿIlal* i, 215; *i, 96*.
[54] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* vii, 276.
[55] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* vi, 361.
[56] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* vii, 192; *viii*, *89*.
[57] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt* i, 169; similar at i, 74, 152.
[58] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* vi, 382.

of Egypt (d. 218/833-4) took 1,000 dirhams from the Andalusian Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā for 1,000 hadith reports from Mālik.[59] Critics generally condemned him as unreliable.[60] The Syrian traditionist and Quranic reader Hishām b. ʿAmmār (d. 245/859?) would not relate hadith unless paid. An eyewitness described the scene.

> The *mustamlī* (person taking dictation) asked him, "Whom did you mention?" He said, "One of our shaykhs related to us." Then he dozed off. The *mustamlī* said, "You will derive no good from him." They then collected something for him and gave it to him. After that, he dictated to them.[61]

The traditionist al-Nasāʾī refused to relate hadith of the Meccan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Baghawī (d. 286/899-900?) for requiring payment.

> A group had met to recite their hadith before him (*yaqraʾū ʿalayh*; for him to acknowledge or reject). They had given him some small donation (*barrūhu bi-mā sahula*). Among them was a stranger who had not made a donation. He refused to recite to them while he was present until he should be expelled or pay as they had. The stranger said he possessed nothing but a small pot. He ordered him to bring it, and when he had brought it, he related hadith to them.[62]

I have other examples of tenth-century traditionists disparaged for requiring payment. Yet al-Nasāʾī says that the Baghdadi Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī (d. 252/866-7) would not relate a particular hadith report except for a dinar.[63] He does not say expressly that he paid Yaʿqūb what he demanded, but it seems implied. A century later, the Baghdadi critic al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) also required payment.

> I went to al-Dāraquṭnī. There came Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Bayḍāwī, who had left his home to hear from him. He refused and made some excuse. Someone said, "This man is a stranger." He asked him to dictate hadith to him. So Abū l-Ḥasan (al-Dāraquṭnī) dictated to him by memory a session exceeding ten (reports). The texts (*mutūn*) were all, "How good is a present in time of need." Then the man left. He came to him later on and gave him something. He (al-Dāraquṭnī) brought him near and dictated to him by memory seventeen hadith reports, "When a generous man comes to you, honour him."[64]

[59] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb* i, 379; *iii*, *168*.
[60] *V*. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* ii, 181-2.
[61] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* xi, 53.
[62] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya* 156;*188*; Yāqūt, *al-Irshād*, ed. Margoliouth, v, 248 = ed. ʿAbbās, iv, 1795.
[63] Al-Nasāʾī, *al-Mujtabā*, *k. al-ṭahāra* 46, *bāb al-māʾ al-dāʾim*, no 58.
[64] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xii, 39; *xiii*, *493*.

If a traditionist of al-Dāraquṭnī's stature might demand payment, it must have been increasingly acceptable.

One common element to these various stories of payment for hadith is that the form was preserved of free giving. That is, traditionists in mosques were always the object of charitable largess. For example, al-Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803) lived on a stipend from Ibn al-Mubārak and other pious persons, sparing him from dependence on the ruler.[65] Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī would send money to Yazīd b. Hārūn for distribution among the *fuqarā'*.[66] The qadi al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥafṣ (d. 212/827-8) gave stipends to, among others, Abū Masʿūd al-Rāzī, ʿAmr b. ʿAlī al-Fallās, and Sufyān al-Thawrī.[67] Al-Maʾmūn gave 50,000 dirhams to Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Muthannā (d. 215/830?) to distribute among jurisprudents.[68]

Even those traditionists condemned for taking payment maintained the form that money should change hands before any hadith report was dictated. Otherwise, it might appear that the traditionist was under pressure to produce some particular hadith report, more pleasing than others to the patron, or that the traditionist had deliberately produced something flattering. Thus the renunciant Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir (d. 234/848-9) refused 500 dinars sent by a trader who had heard him preach. Some disciples urged him to accept the money, as it was from trade, untainted by official corruption; however, he refused, saying, "He thought well of my talk. Will you have me take a price for my prayer to God and my exhortation? If I had not done this and he had (offered the money) first, then I would have accepted."[69] So too for all the stories mentioned.

To make it clear that they were not selling the hadith they had, some traditionists actually fed students of hadith who came to take dictation. So, for example, ʿAbd al-Razzāq offered money to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who refused.[70] When the Baghdadi traditionist Ibn al-Jaʿd (d. 230/845) left some students alone with his notebooks, they supposed that he had gone out to bring them some food.[71] Muḥammad b. Ṭarīf al-Bajalī offered dates to some traditionists and quoted Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth as saying, "Whoever has not eaten our food, we will not relate hadith to him."[72] When

[65] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xii (181-190 H.), 344; *Siyar* viii, 390.
[66] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xiii, 82; *xv*, *94*.
[67] Abū Nuʿaym, *Geschichte Iṣbahāns* i, 274-5; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xv (211-220 H.), 120-2.
[68] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* v, 409; *iii*, *406*.
[69] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl* 283.
[70] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* ix, 174-5.
[71] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xi, 361; *xiii*, *283*.
[72] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* viii, 194; *ix*, *75*.

the Basran Abū Muslim al-Kajjī (d. Baghdad, 292/904) had finished dictating his *sunan*, he provided his audience with a banquet that cost him 1,000 dinars.[73] Muḥammad b. Salām (Bukharan, d. 225/839) was probably referring to some such practice when he said he had spent 40,000 seeking *ʿilm*, then spent 40,000 spreading it, and wished that what he had spent seeking had been spent spreading.[74]

Payment was much more normal in other fields than hadith. The great Basran grammarian al-Mubarrad (d. Baghdad, 285/898-9?) would not teach gratis, although he took on one student, at the time a glass cutter, for a fee of one dirham a day to the end of his life.[75] Three gave a dinar each to hear *Kitāb al-Alfāẓ* of al-Farrāʾ from al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbdallāh (*fl.* 325/936-7), so they could each hear some of it.[76] Bakr b. Sahl (d. Damietta, 289/902?) refused to relate his *tafsīr* at al-Ramla for 500 dinars, but later did relate it in Jerusalem for 1,000, two years before his death.[77]

Notebooks

The usual words for notebooks are *kutub* and *uṣūl* (sing. *kitāb*, *aṣl*). The most common word in the secondary literature seems to be *ṣaḥīfa* (pl. *ṣuḥuf*); however, I have seen *kutub* and *uṣūl* much more often in the biographical (*rijāl*) literature. Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) refers to his own recopying from an original notebook: "Someone trustworthy related to me that al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrī) would insert between himself and ʿUbāda (b. al-Ṣāmit, named in a preceding hadith report) Ḥiṭṭān al-Raqāshī. I do not know whether ʿAbd al-Wahhāb inserted him between them and it disappeared from my notebook (*kitāb*) when I transferred it (*ḥawwaltuhū*) from the *aṣl*. On the day I have written this, it is unavailable to me."[78] Naturally, it was better to hear from someone dictating from his *aṣl*. Hence, for example, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī said the earlier Nishapuran Abū al-Azhar (d. 261/874?) was more reliable when he related from his original notebook (*min aṣl kitābih*).[79] Correction of inaccurate dictation had been a concern of traditionists for a long time. For example, the

[73] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xxii, 99.
[74] Dhahabī, *Siyar* x, 630; *Tārīkh* xvi (221-230 H.), 361.
[75] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* vi, 90; *vi*, *614-15*.
[76] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xii, 156; *xiv*, *48*.
[77] Dhahabī, *Siyar* xiii, 426; *Tārīkh* xxi (281-290 H.), 135.
[78] Shāfiʿī, *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, *Umm* vii, 252marg.; *x*, *205*.
[79] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *apud* Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* i, 11-12.

Basran Hammām b. Yaḥyā (d. 164/780-1?) told his disciples to correct any solecism in his transmission from Qatāda, since Qatāda had not made mistakes.[80] But correction of notebooks appears only in the ninth century and later; for example, when Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal hoped there was no harm in changing "Jurayj" to "Ibn Jurayj" if Abū Dāwūd found it so in his notebook.[81]

One must be careful inasmuch as *uṣūl* might alternatively refer to individual hadith reports. Abū Baḥr al-Barbahārī (d. 362/972-3) was said by others to have had good *uṣūl* and bad.[82] Ibn Abī l-Fawāris commented that the *Musnad* of Aḥmad as transmitted by Ibn Mālik al-Qaṭīʿī (d. 368/979) included questionable *uṣūl*–hadith, the meaning must be– that he had written from memory after a flood had destroyed his original notebooks.[83]

Nuskha (pl. *nusakh*) also appears as a written collection of hadith that someone might relate, distinct from the original (*aṣl*). Hence, for example, some Baghdadi traditionists hunted down a shaykh who was relating hadith from "the *nusakh* of the Kufans". They asked to see the originals, but he said he had no *aṣl*, only these *nusakh* he had received from Ibn ʿUqda (d. 332/944?).[84] The opposite of *aṣl* (root) is *farʿ* (branch). *Furūʿ* (the plural form) do indeed appear as, evidently, later copies of original notes. Al-Azharī complained of Ibn Shāhīn that he would not bring out his *uṣūl* for the traditionists, only his *furūʿ*.[85]

The first use of notebooks was as an aid to memorization. As for initial memorization, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn is remembered as writing hadith reports fifty times over.[86] Additionally, one memorized the hadith he had heard but continually consulted his notebooks to refresh the memory. I have elsewhere quoted Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī: "When I become ill for a month or two, it becomes apparent to me in the memorization of the Quran. As for hadith, if you leave it for (a few) days, it will become apparent to you."[87] Abū Zurʿa was credited with knowing a prodigious number of hadith reports; for example, a man told Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh, "I have heard Aḥmad say that there were 700,000-odd sound hadith reports. This youth

[80] Ibn Saʿd, *Biographien* vii/2, 2; *vii, 230*.
[81] Abū Dāwūd, *Masāʾil* 283.
[82] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ii, 210-11; *ii*, 614.
[83] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* iv, 74; *v*, *117*.
[84] Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil* i, 339.
[85] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* xi, 268; *xiii*, *137*.
[86] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* xi, 282. But this may refer alternatively to fifty corroborating *asānīd*.
[87] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, xiii, 79.

(meaning Abū Zurʿa) has memorized 600,000."[88] The way he kept them in his memory was continually returning to his notebooks to remind himself. Notebooks did not bring an end to prodigious feats of memory, rather supported them. For example, an Ibn al-Khuttulī (d. 330's/940's?) was separated from his books when he moved to Basra, yet related 50,000 by memory before they reached him.[89] However, it is also related that when someone asked Abū Zurʿa whether he could relate a thousand hadith reports to him from memory, he said no, but that he could recognize them if someone else read them to him.[90] Clearly, "memorization" meant close familiarity still thoroughly dependent on writing; or rather, perhaps, we should recognize that *ḥifẓ* included but did not strictly imply literal memorization.[91]

Anecdotes of how eighth- and ninth-century traditionists were caught cheating commonly have to do with asking their supposed authorities for confirmation. For example, Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī (d. 281/894?) was asked by a Khurasani about minutiae (*daqāʾiq*) that he had earlier dictated to al-Fasawī (d. Basra, 277/890?).[92] By the later tenth century, though, most such stories turn on written evidence. For example, the Baghdadi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith al-Ghanawī (d. 364/975) was found unreliable because his books were fresh.[93] In Khurasan, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī became suspicious when he saw Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kisāʾī (d. 385/996) relate hadith from his father from Muslim with a new notebook in his hand.[94] It was evidently usual for a notebook to have a signed list of all who had participated in that session. Hence, al-Dāraquṭnī states of Ibn al-Thallāj al-Baghdādī (d. 387/997), "I never saw a testimonial to his having heard (*samāʿ*) in anyone's book."[95] A *samāʿa* for Ibn al-Shamʿī (d. 429/1033)–that is, testimony to his presence at a particular dictation–was found added in fresh handwriting to someone else's old notebook.[96] Similarly, a *tasmīʿ* for Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Wāsiṭī (d. 431/1040) was found added in fresh handwriting, while parts of someone else's *tasmīʿ* had been cut out with a knife.[97]

[88] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* vii, 32-3.
[89] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* x, 290-1; *xi*, *588*.
[90] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh* xx, 127.
[91] *V*. Leonard T. Librande, Scholars, finding that the term *ḥāfiẓ* is associated with voluminous transmission but not with superior reliability.
[92] Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb* xi, 387.
[93] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* x, 297; *xi*, *602*.
[94] Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* v, 26-7.
[95] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* x, 136; *xi*, 364.
[96] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ii, 220; *ii*, *627*.
[97] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* iii, 96; *iv*, 163.

Isnād and *matn*

The two parts of a hadith report were the chain of authorities (*isnād*) by which it was transmitted, then the quotation supported by the chain of authorities, its text (*matn*, pl. *mutūn*). The only discussion I have seen of the difficulty of memorizing *asānīd* and *mutūn* suggests that texts were trickier, and more liable to be confused if the traditionist did not know jurisprudence.[98] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī devotes one chapter of his handbook of hadith science to the problem of garbled *asānīd*, another to the problem of garbled *mutūn*.[99] The examples cited in the chapter on *asānīd* are mainly from the eighth century, suggesting that the problem was recognized early, whereas the examples in the chapter on *mutūn* come from the ninth or early tenth.

I believe it was the spread of notebooks that made it possible for tenth-century traditionists to demand word-for-word accuracy in transmitting *mutūn*; that is, to disallow paraphrase (*al-riwāya bi-l-maʿnā*). Whereas al-Ḥākim's examples of distorted *asānīd* involve transpositions or outright substitutions, his examples of distorted *mutūn* are all about misinterpreting written notes; for example, reading *al-muqīt* (one who sets a time) instead of *al-mughīth* (one who gives aid), or *ʿanza* (goat) instead of *ʿanaza* (spear). Traditionists had been easygoing about word-for-word accuracy there in the days of purely oral transmission, partly perhaps just because, as Ibn Ḥibbān urged, it was so difficult to remember exactly the wording of the *matn*, hence few demanded it of themselves. Abū Ayyūb Sulaymān b. Ḥarb, sometime *qāḍī* for Mecca (d. Basra, 224/839), changed the exact words although not the meaning when he related hadith.[100] Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī said, "I never saw a book in his hand."[101] The Kufan Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714?) is quoted as saying that someone else's hadith was superior (*atamm*) "because he used to write."[102] Ibrāhīm often appears on lists of those who related hadith by paraphrase, so the quotation is dubious, but it shows how ninth-century traditionists expected writing to increase accuracy.[103]

[98] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn* i, 93-4; also quoted by Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ* i, 430. Ibn Rajab comments that no one before Ibn Ḥibbān had taken this position.

[99] Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Maʿrifa* 146-53.

[100] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh* ix, 36; *x*, *48*.

[101] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ* iv, 108.

[102] Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, *k. al-ʿilal*, vi, 241.

[103] On eighth-century opposition to writing hadith, *v*. Cook, Writing, discussing contradictory accounts of Ibrāhīm's own position at 483-4.

Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. Basra, 198/813) is said to have feared to overburden people by insisting on verbatim transmission of hadith, "for the Quran is more sacred (*aktharu ḥurmatan*), yet it is permissible to recite variants of it (*an yuqraʾa ʿalā wujūh*) so long as the meaning is the same": all the more, he implies, one must allow variation in hadith transmission.[104] Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd is exactly the main example offered by al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892?) of someone who refused to relate of anyone who sometimes related a hadith report one way, sometimes another, opposed by the example of various others who were less fastidious; but al-Tirmidhī mentions no one of the generation of his own teachers who accepted paraphrase.[105] The Basran mystic Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) mentions the same names and a few others in his defence of paraphrase.[106] He also argues for the acceptance of whatever hadith reports have circulated for some time without contradiction and without themselves contradicting the Quran and the Prophetic Sunna, regardless of whether their transmitters were famous as careful traditionists.[107] His argument is plainly a rearguard action to defend the doctrines of the developing mystical schools. The hadith critics of the tenth century allowed such laxity when it came to the transmitters of the first two Islamic centuries, as otherwise too much would have been lost.[108] By their own time, however, hadith science had advanced to the point where they might demand the strictest rigour. The textual form of accepted hadith was now fixed.

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[104] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya* viii, 380-1; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya* 210; *246*.

[105] Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, *k. al-ʿilal*, vi, 237. According to Ibn Rajab, he did mention Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī (d. 264/878?) as accepting paraphrase: Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ* i, 429.

[106] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, *bāb tafḍīl al-akhbār*, ii, 155.

[107] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, *bāb tafḍ.īl al-akhbār*, ii, 157.

[108] Juynboll, *Studies* 190-202; Melchert, Sectaries 294.

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