

## **“The People of my Generation are Best”: Conceptualizing Testimony in Early Islam (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article is about the development of testimony in the early years of Islam within the Muslim theology. It argues that the tradition of isnad (chain of transmitters) forms the basis of testimony during this period. To know the accurate way of Muslim life, Muslim scholars engaged themselves in a very sophisticated way of judging testimony. To extract accurate knowledge, they evolved a concept of golden past and undermined the later method of testimony. That's why the tradition of testimony became somewhat more challenging for the latter scholars, who after the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries almost gave up the idea of knowing the sayings of Prophet Muhammad through testimony. This article also highlights the problems and controversies associated with the classification of Islamic testimony (with particular reference to hadith—the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam). It suggests that the high standards of testimony led various scholars to contest the principles of testimony.*

**Keywords:** *Testimony, Islam, Hadith, Isnad, Shia, Sunni.*

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## ■ Introduction

Testimony may be defined as “something that someone says especially in a court of law while formally promising to tell the truth” or “proof or evidence that something exists or is true”.<sup>1</sup> Axel Gelfert in his work, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony*, explains testimony as “one of the most exciting developments in recent epistemology is the increasing attention that is being paid to knowledge based on what others tell us: that is, on their testimony. Testimony stands alongside perception, memory, reason and inference as one of our main sources of knowledge: think of countless things that you have been told by others, or that you have read about, or that you have learned in school or from the media. Inquiring into the nature of such testimonial knowledge, and analysing when and how we can acquire knowledge from others by taking their word for it, lies at the heart of the epistemology of testimony”.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of testimony in Islam took roots with the efforts of several religious scholars interested in collecting the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. These sayings and deeds are called hadith and sometimes refer to sunnah (the acts and deeds of Muhammad). Thousands of hadith are collected and preserved by scholars to understand “true” meanings of religion and the Muslim way of living.<sup>3</sup> True testimony, for Islamic scholars, is dependent on the knowledge and awareness of exact words of the prophet Muhammad and the context of those words. This article is about the principles of testimony developed by the Muslim scholars in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The principles for testimony in Islam were a response to the political and social crisis faced by the religious elites, and

afterwards religious scholars perceived these testimonies according to their own context. Consequently, different controversies developed over these principles of testimony. It leads us to a larger issue of the relationship between testimony and its context. Different sects within Islam such as Shia and Sunni appropriated different sets of testimonies and disputed over the principles. The Sunni sect takes guidance from the collections of Imam Bukhari<sup>4</sup> and Imam Muslim<sup>5</sup> along with those written by Abu Dawud,<sup>6</sup> Tirmidhi,<sup>7</sup> al-Nasai,<sup>8</sup> and Ibn Maja.<sup>9</sup> While the Shia sect considers testimonies traced from the family of Ali, cousin of Muhammad and the fourth caliph of Muslims. This Shia collection of testimonies is formed by al-Kulini,<sup>10</sup> al-Babuya al-Qummi,<sup>11</sup> and al-Tusi<sup>12</sup>. Although Muslim scholars tried to devise a strategy to know the ideal way of Muslim life, yet situation and context made it impossible for them to understand or to act upon those testimonies.

Muslims scholars claim that the tradition of testimony (in case of Hadith) existed when Arabs conquered non-Arab lands and began to present Islam to the different ethnic and religious communities.<sup>13</sup> However, the present tradition of testimony can only be traced back to Abbasid period (750-1258 AD), nearly hundred years after the death of Muhammad. During this period, the third Caliphate of Muslim empire, which ended after Baghdad's invasion by Halagu Khan in 1258,<sup>14</sup> the Muslim scholars faced the dilemma of judging the accuracy of hadith. They had a wide range of testimonies, many of them were contradicting each other and many others were fabricated to meet certain political theological interests.<sup>15</sup> From the seventh century onwards, religious scholars began to question the sources (reporters) of testimony, and by the 9<sup>th</sup> century a large number of testimonies were collected by these scholars. We

find many treatises of this period which laid down the principles for examining the accuracy of testimonies. Some of them were *Al-Risalah* by al-Shafi`i (d. 204), the Introduction to the *Sahih* by Muslim (d. 261) and the *Jami`* of al-Tirmidhi

(d. 279). However, among Sunni Muslim scholars, al-Bukhari's criterion of judging testimonies was most popular.<sup>16</sup> This article is divided into two portions: first portion discusses the classification of testimony in Islam, and the second portion analyzes the controversies of perceiving these testimonies.

### **Part-I**

To know the truthfulness of testimony, Muslim scholars developed certain criteria in the early years of Islam. They believed that if one person transmits a testimony to another, he may have obtained a fraction of knowledge. Accurate knowledge from the testimony can only be drawn by hearing it from a number of other sources/transmitters (more than four) which would guarantee its authenticity.<sup>17</sup> Here authenticity means the exact words copied from the source (the prophet, Muhammad). To determine the authenticity of hadith, scholars defined the components of hadith: *isnad*, *matan* and *taraf*.

Isnad is the chain of reporters who transmit testimony from one person to another (it begins from the originator to the hearer). Muslim scholars laid special emphasis on *isnad* to determine the reliability of testimony. Many statements of the prophet, Muhammad, were rejected on the basis of weak links among the reporters. This practice aimed at strengthening the validity of hadith that reaches to us through *silsilah* (chain). According to William Graham, the authenticity of *isnad* depends upon: "(1) derivation of authority primarily or even, in extreme cases, solely from (2)

linkage to a sacred, but historical, time of origins of the tradition through (3) a chain of personal transmission, the individual human links of which represent all intervening generations between that of the original source (ideally the Prophet or one of his Companions) and that of the latest reporter. This paradigm is, in turn, the mechanism or overt vehicle for the realization of ittisaliyah, the personal connectedness described above which authenticates a report as valid tradition".<sup>18</sup> Ibn-Hazm, one of the noted hadith scholar, claims that the tradition of isnad is taken from the Jews and the Christians. However, it had a limited use in both religions. Among the Jews, there was a break of thirty generations between Moses and the reporter, while the Christians used isnad only to handle the issue of divorce.<sup>19</sup>

The second component of hadith is matan (text), which refers to the original text reported from the source/originator. Scholars paid particular attention to determine the exact words of the prophet. Similar to what, in the hermeneutic tradition of Western philosophy, would be called the 'intentio auctoris' (original meaning of the author). Taraf is the third component of hadith. It is the beginning of text indicating the expression and acts of the prophet, Muhammad, for instance the prophet, Muhammad, was angry when he said ....., or the prophet, Muhammad, was eating when he said so..., etc.

The significance of the oral character of testimony lies in "the ijazah system".<sup>20</sup> Students of hadith traveled far and wide in search of authentic and renowned teachers (*Shaykhs*), who were a generation closer to either the companions or the successors of the prophet, Muhammad. After getting the teachers' account of hadith, the students asked for their permission to use their names for transmitting the text. According to Graham, the credibility of testimony depends on

“the isnad of a long manuscript as well as that of a short hadith ideally should reflect the oral, face-to-face, teacher-to-student transmission of the text by the teacher's ijazah, which validates the written text. In a formal, written ijazah, the teacher granting the certificate typically includes an isnad containing his or her scholarly lineage of teachers back to the Prophet of Companions, a later venerable shaykh, or the author of a specific book”.<sup>21</sup> The recital basis of hadith and the personal engagement of the teacher and student relationship play a vital role in isnad.

Muslim theologians and jurists developed a discipline, *Mustalah al-Hadith* (Classification of hadith), to study the credibility of testimonies. They examined testimonies through various principles, which remained debatable among theologians, however, many of them agreed on the reference to a particular authority in the testimony; links of isnad (interrupted or uninterrupted); number of reporters involved in each stage of isnad; nature of the text and isnad; and reliability and memory of the reporters.

The authenticity of testimony relies heavily on the authority that quotes it. Two kinds of authorities, the spiritual leadership and the noble descent, lead to the two different strands of isnad in the Islamic tradition, i.e., the division of Sunni and Shia traditions. According to Graham, “the majority of Shi'i's look for fully authoritative guidance to the direct descendants of the Prophet through Ali and Fatimah; some Shi'i groups, however, have followed indirect descendants such as the line from Ali and a second wife, ‘the Hanafi woman’, through their son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah, or even collateral lines of ‘the people of the House [of the Prophet]’, *ahl al-bayt*. All of these traditions of emphasis on prophetic nasab are based upon a different form of the isnad paradigm, namely one forged by

genealogical ties rather than by teaching or spiritual initiation and transmission alone".<sup>22</sup>

Testimony of hadith has four types of authorities: Qudsi, the literally meaning "Divinity". In this type of hadith, the words of God are relayed by the prophet, Muhammad.<sup>23</sup> Marfu, which means elevated, here the words of the prophet are quoted without any reference to the intermediary party, e.g., I heard the prophet, Muhammad saying. For example, the very first hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* is as follows: "Al-Bukhari === Al-Humaidi `Abdullah b. al-Zubair === Sufyan === Yahya b. Sa`id al-Ansari === Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Taymi === 'Alqamah b. Waqqas al-Laithi, who said: I heard `Umar b. al-Khattab saying, while on the pulpit, I heard Allah's Messenger (may Allah bless him) saying: The reward of deeds depends on the intentions, and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended; so whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he migrated."<sup>24</sup> Mauquf means 'stopped'. Mauquf is a testimony quoting the companion of the prophet. Generally, Marfu and Mauquf are intersected on the point of authority, where the companion mentioned the saying of the prophet with the expressions like 'I heard him saying', 'it is from the Sunnah to' or 'we were commanded to' etc.<sup>25</sup> Maqtu (means 'served') is an evidence stated by a successor, for instance, a noted scholar of hadith, Muslim reports in the introduction to his *Sahih* that Ibn Sirin (d. 110) said, "This knowledge (i.e. hadith) is the Religion, so be careful from whom you take your religion."<sup>26</sup> Such classification of quoting authority is helpful to differentiate between the sayings of the prophet from those of his companions and successors, in order to know as what was more important in religion than the other.

An important feature in *isnad* is its chain of reporters through which information is communicated. The reliability of a report depends on a continuous and unbroken chain of transmitters in order to save the text from falsehood.<sup>27</sup> To do so, biographical accounts of the reporters are used to know about their closeness with the prophet or his companions and to determine characters of the sayers and the hearers. On the basis of the chain of transmitters, hadith is divided into six categories, *musnad*, *muttasil*, *mursal*, *munqati* and *mu'adal*.<sup>28</sup>

Keeping in view the number of reporters involved in each stage of *isnad*, hadith is classified into *mutawatir* and *ahad*. *Mutawatir* means continuous and consecutive. In transmitting such hadith numerous persons are involved. Scholars investigate the character of reporters. If narrators belong to different localities and times, hadith is believed to be authentic as many people in different times cannot speak false. Child or non-Muslim could also be a reporter of this hadith.<sup>29</sup> *Ahad* means "Isolated", it lacks the numbers of people up to the size of the *mutawatir*. It is further categorized into *mash'hur* (famous), *aziz* (rare) and *gharib* (strange) which are quoted by three or more, two, and one narrator(s), respectively. *Gharib* hadith is not considered in any judgment on religious matters.

An important aspect of Islamic testimony is its reliance on trustworthy reporters. Trustworthy reporters are expected to learn, recall and correctly transmit the words of the prophet Muhammad, his companions or successors to people. It suggests that Islamic testimony attaches more importance to the human authority rather than text itself. With this notion Graham traces a few forces behind *isnad* like information about reporter, transmission of information and the influence of saints on Islamic testimony. The compilation of biographical



details of every reporter (*ilm arrijal*) gives knowledge about how close the transmitter was to the prophet, Muhammad, and his companions or successors. The farther relation would create doubt about the particular account of the testifier.<sup>30</sup> If the reliable and trustworthy reporter is said to have added something in *isnad*, it is known as '*Ziadatu Thiqqah*' (addition by a reliable reporter). *Munkar* (denounced) is a hadith narrated by a weak reporter whose statement runs counter with more reliable one. An interruption or addition by any reporter of hadith is called '*Mudraj*' (interpolated). Muslim scholars studying testimony attach great significance to the reliability and memory of the reporters. On the basis of reliability and memory of the reporters, hadith are divided in *Sahih*,<sup>31</sup> *Hasan*,<sup>32</sup> *Da'if*,<sup>33</sup> *Maudu*,<sup>34</sup> *Taraf*,<sup>35</sup> *Masalsal*<sup>36</sup> and *Mudallas*.<sup>37</sup> Depending on the reliability, these hadith are used in *sharia* (Islamic legal law).

## Part-II

Islam is not a single entity.<sup>38</sup> It began to divide like Christianity as soon as Arab forces began to conquer non-Arab territories. People from different religions accepted Islam for their own reasons, e.g., economic interests, spiritual inspiration, and for survival or power, etc.<sup>39</sup> William Graham argues that Islam is an amalgamation of individuality as well as collectivity. It has individuality because people perceive and conceptualize Islam according to their own historical contexts, and Islam is collective as it has some shared values, which Graham calls *isnad* paradigm, in the sense that different sects are nonetheless connected by a chain of testifiers, that defines traditionalist sphere in the religion.<sup>40</sup>

This is not to suggest that in the eighth and ninth century whole Islamic scholarship agreed on the knowledge inferred

from testimony. Christopher Melchert identifies some salient features of hadith as testimony in the nineteenth century, like "Hadith reports from the Prophet eclipsed reports from Companions and later authorities (but reports from imams remained important for Shi'i jurisprudence); Experts shifted hadith reports primarily by comparison of their *asanid* (*isnad*), secondarily by examination of *rijal*, the personal qualities of their transmitters; Personal schools eclipsed regional, such that jurists came to be identified primarily with one or another teacher of the past rather than one or another region; Texts stabilized and some became the literary basis of personal schools (because of the collection of Hadith)".<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Joseph Schacht identifies two schools of thought within the early Islamic jurisprudence: one, *ashabul ra'y* (rationalist jurists); second, *ashabul hadith* (traditionalists).<sup>42</sup> The former did not depend on testimonial sources, in fact gave passing reference to judge anything. They laid emphasis on contemporary circumstances rather than historical past to conclude anything. They also did not lay emphasis on *isnad*. Sometimes they quote opinions without the chain of transmitters. Abi Yusuf, Al-Khassaf (d. 261/874), and Hilal al-Ra'y (d. 245/859-60) can be mentioned as examples of rationalist jurists. On the other hand, the traditionalists refused to accept anything without hadith and strong chain of trustworthy transmitters. For them, the study of hadith/testimony and study of jurisprudence were inseparable.<sup>43</sup> 'Abd al-Razzaq (d. 211/827) and Ibn Abi Shayba (d. 235/849) were traditionalist jurists. John Burton<sup>44</sup> also identifies many controversies related to the accuracy of knowledge inferred from testimony of Islam. He mentions polemic between *Risala* of Shafi (767- 820 AD), one of the leading Muslim jurists, and *Ta'wil mukhtalif al-hadith* of Ibn

Qutayba (828 - 889 AD), a renowned early Muslim scholar. Shafi contends that Quran and hadith are equally acceptable, while Qutayba argues that hadith is more acceptable even if it contradicts Quran. Rationalist such as Al-Khassaf argues hadith can be rejected if it contradicts the Quran. In short, the tradition of isnad in determining the accuracy and authentic knowledge in Islam remained controversial from the early years of Islam.<sup>45</sup>

Attempts of Muslim scholars to determine the accuracy and authenticity of hadith through human testimony reflects the religious mentality which assumes latter time inferior than the time of Prophet Muhammad. This mentality is based on a hadith stating that "the best people are my generation, then those who follow them and then those who follow them". From the eighth century onwards, Muslim scholars such as Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728), Ibn Hib-ban al-Busti (884-965), repeatedly complained about the lack of interest and degeneration in the discipline of hadith.<sup>46</sup> The "elevation turned hadith into a special kind of relic. It allowed the believer to come into closer contact with the spiritual power of the Prophet. Whereas the believer was stuck at his own historically (inferior) station in terms of years (ta'rikh), by a different view of time, shorter isnads allowed him to be closer to the Prophet in terms of generations (tabaqat)".<sup>47</sup> Precisely because of changing historical context, Ibn al-Şalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (1181-1245) argued that it is not possible for any scholar to ascertain the truth in hadith on his own by relying on isnad: "[This is] because in every isnad of that [kind of hadith] you can find among its transmitters someone who relied [exclusively] in its transmission upon what was in his book and lacked the retention, accuracy, and exactitude that are stipulated for sound hadith. So, for the recognition of sound and fair hadith, the matter reverts to relying on what the authorities in hadith designated [as such] in their well- known and well-respected

compositions".<sup>48</sup> Salah argued that if a hadith was not authenticated by the earlier authorities through isnad, how could that be accepted in a latter period. In fact, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we do not see any significant attempt at compiling hadith through isnad. It primarily reflects the conscious and unconscious understanding of Muslim scholars that human testimonies (of the early period of Islam) are not reliable in the latter period. It also points out that the justification for the transmission of hadith "rested on the principle that one must accept information from trustworthy intermediaries, and this was a point that the early adherents of the hadith struggled to establish".<sup>49</sup> In other words, Muslim scholars were aware of the limitation of the reliance of hadith on the transmission. For instance, a person can use the name of an authority of hadith fraudulently in order to tarnish the authority's reputation or to legitimize his own actions. Tsafir in his article<sup>50</sup> mentions one opponent of Imam Abu Hanifa (a renowned authority on hadith), Sufyan-al-Thawri who misused the name of Abu Hanifa for transmitting his own accounts of hadith.<sup>51</sup>

## ■ Conclusion

During the early years of Islam, Muslim scholars' interest in testimony developed because of two reasons: First, the saying of the prophet Muhammad that "the best people are of my generation then those who follow them and then those who follow them" which motivated the scholars to rely on the isnad to get the authentic knowledge of Islam. Some collections of testimonies like *Sahihi Bukhari* and *Sahihi Muslim* generated a discourse of golden past among Muslim theologians. They tried to derive everything from the past to

comprehend contemporary issues and problems. Second, over time, sayings of the prophet were moulded, altered and manipulated to serve various personal and political interests. All these challenges led Muslim theologians to engage in a very sophisticated study of testimony, depending on the reliability of reporters and content. Biographies of thousand of companions and successors of the prophet were compiled to authenticate the testimonies. They also considered status, character, genealogy, memory of reporters, number of reports, circumstances under which knowledge was transmitted. Such high standards, which were set especially with the publication of *Sahi Bukhari* and *Sahi Muslim* became difficult to follow for the latter scholars. There were many scholars (popularly known as rationalists) who did not attach much importance to isnad and other principles of testimony. In fact, for most of the time, they referred back to Quran than any other source. Shia sect also questioned the whole chain of isnad in Sunni version of Islam. They chose genealogical association with the prophet as the prime criterion for transmitting testimony. Whatever the case may be, Isnad or chain of reporters remained an important point of discussion among Muslim scholars on hadith and reflected their reliance on human testimony rather than text itself for understanding the early period of Islam.

## ■ Notes and References

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- 1 *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, website: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/testimony>.
- 2 Axel Gelfert, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony* (London & New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 1. Also see CAJ Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

- 3 See for discussion, Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature, Its Origin, Development, Special Features and Criticism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1961).
- 4 Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, often known as Al-Bukhari (810-870 AD) is one of the most accepted collector of testimonies on Hadith. He lived in Bukhara (Central Asia). His book of collection of testimonies is known as *Sahihi Bukhari* which is respected by many Sunni scholars as most authentic book after *The Quran*. He wrote it after a hard work of sixteen years, and prepared its three drafts. His other books include: *Tareekh al-Kabeer, Khalq A'faal Ebaad, Kitaab al-Wahidaan, Kitaab Adaab al-Mufrad, Kitaab Adh-Dhua'fa, Juz Raf-Al-Yadain, Juz Al-Quraa Khalf al-Imaam, Jami'a Al-Kabeer, Tafseer Al-Kabeer, Kitaab Al-Ilal, Kitaab Al-Manaaqib, Asamee As-Sahabah*. For the life and works of Bukhari, see S Abdul-Maujood, *The Biography of Imam Bukhaaree* (Lahore: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2005).
- 5 Complete name of Imam Muslim is Abul Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj Qushayri al Nisapuri (821-875 AD). He wrote *Sahihi Muslim* which is considered the most authentic book by Sunni scholars after Bukhari's collection.
- 6 Abu Dawud (817-892) lived in Afghanistan and collected testimonies of the prophet in a book, *Sunan Abi Da'ud*, which consists of 4,800 testimonies scrutinized from 50,000.
- 7 Also known as Tirmizi (824-892 AD). He was a Persian scholar of hadith.
- 8 Al-Nasai (829-915 AD) was from Khorasan and travelled to Egypt, Damascus and other parts of the Middle East to collect testimonies of hadith. His most popular book on testimony is *Sunan al-Sughra*. He had also written fifteen books, out of

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which six dealt with the principles of judging testimonies of hadith.

- 9 Ibn Maja (824-887 AD) was an Iranian scholar on hadith. He wrote *Sunan Ibn Majah* in which 4, 314 testimonies were collected, out of which 3,002 were already recorded by other collectors while 1339 were added by him.
- 10 Al-Kulyani (d.941 AD) is considered as the most authentic collector of testimonies of hadith in the Shia sect. He lived in Iranian village of Kulin and wrote a book *Usul al-Kafi*. His other works include *Kitabul Rijal* (assessment of persons as authorities on traditions) and *Al-Radd ala l-Karamata* (Refutations of Karamatians).
- 11 One of the most notable scholar of Hadith in Shia tradition. His famous book is *Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih* (For him not in the Presence of a Jurisprudent).
- 12 Tusi's complete name is Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn Hassan Tusi. He was born in Tus, Iran.
- 13 G. H. A. Jutnboll, *Muslim Tradition. Studies in chronology, provenance and authorship of early hadith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 14 For a discussion on Abbasid's period, see Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and MA Shaban, *the `Abbasid Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), Also see F Omar, *The `Abbasid Caliphate 132/750-170/786* (Baghdad, 1969).
- 15 See Maya Yazigi, "Ḥadīth al-'ashara or the Political Uses of a Tradition". *Studia Islamica*, No. 86 (1997), pp. 159-167. Also see Andrew J. Newman, *The formative period of Twelver Shi'ism: Hadith as Discourse between Qum and Baghdad* (Culture and

Civilization in the Middle East Series.) (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000).

- 16 See for a discussion on the influence of *Sahih Bukhari*, William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Religion and History (Winter, 1993), pp. 495-522. Also see Vardit Tokatly, "The A 'lām al-ḥadīth of al-Khaṭṭābī: A Commentary on al-Bukhārī's Saḥīḥ or a Polemical Treatise?" *Studia Islamica*, No. 92 (2001), pp. 53-91.
- 17 Wael B. Hallaq, "The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem". *Studia Islamica*, No. 89 (1999), p. 79. Also see R. Marston Speight, "Narrative Structures in the Hadīth". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp. 265-271.
- 18 Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", p. 502.
- 19 See Camilla Adang, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Ibn Hazm of Cordoba: The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker* (London & Boston: Brill, 2013).
- 20 Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", p. 511.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., p. 518.
- 23 Ibrahim Izzuddin and Denis Johnson-Davies, *Forty Hadith Qudsi* (Beirut, Damascus, 1980). For technical terms see G. H. A. Juynboll, "(Re)Appraisal of Some Technical Terms in Ḥadīth Science". *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Hadith and Fiqh (2001), pp. 303-349; Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith* (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2009).



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- 24 Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Sahī Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996), p. 79.
- 25 Suhaib Hasan, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith* (Riyadh: Darussalam, n.d.), p. 19.
- 26 Ibid., p. 20.
- 27 Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation", p.510.
- 28 Musnad means 'supported'. In this chain, reporters are connected from the beginning with the prophet, Muhammad, till the last reporter. Muttasil means 'continuous' and it refers to an unbroken continuous chain of reporters that can only be traced up till a companion or immediate successor. Mursal means 'hurried', in this type of hadith a connection is missing between the prophet, Muhammad, and his successor. This happens when a successor directly reports prophet's saying without mentioning any link with the companion. Scholars are divided on the acceptability of Mursal hadith two names omitted (i.e. the name of a companion and a successor). For Sa'id b. al-Musayyab (d. 94), Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 204), Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 462), Al-Hakim (d. 405), Abu Dawud (d. 275), Ibn al-Salah (d. 643) and `Ata' b. Abi Rabah (d. 114) the hadith is acceptable if it comes from the senior successor, otherwise it should be confirmed through other sources. On the other hand, the traditionists of Kufi school and Imam Abu Hanifah insist on the acceptance of such testimony without giving any further thought. Munqati means 'broken', the link of such hadith is traced only up to the successor. Mu'adal means 'perplexing', in it the reports remove two or more reporters in quoting the isnad. Mu'allaq means 'hanging', in this the whole chain of isnad is missing and reports come directly from the prophet Muhammad.

- 29 Hussein Abdul-Raof, *School of Qur'anic Exegesis and Development* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 49-50.
- 30 "The rijal genre reached its maturity in the fifth/eleventh century, although it had begun much earlier, as witnessed in one of the major comprehensive rijal works, the Great Book of Classes of Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/844). This compilation provides biographical data on well over 4,000 Muslims down to the author's lifetime, arranged by "classes" of Companions and Followers, and within these by other subcategories (such as Medinans or "wives of the Prophet)." Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", p. 508.
- 31 Sahih means 'sound'. According to Imam Shafi, "each reporter should be trustworthy in his religion; he should be known to be truthful in his narrating, to understand what he narrates, to know how a different expression can alter the meaning, and to report the wording of the hadith verbatim, not only its meaning...". Hasan, *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith*, pp. 44-5.
- 32 Hasan means 'good'. These are hadith which fulfill all the conditions of Sahih except the reliability of its one or a few narrators could not be confirmed. But these narrators are identified and praised in *rijal* literature. Ali Nasiri, *An Introduction to Hadith: History and Sources* (London: MIU Press, 2013), p. 31.
- 33 Da'if means 'weak', a hadith that is lesser than Hasan. The reliability of this type is marred by the broken chain of sources and controversial character of narrators. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *The Quran and Hadith* (Tanzania: Bilal Muslim Mission, 1994, 4th ed.), p. 81.
- 34 Maudu means 'fabricated'. This hadith is highly unreliable because the reporters may tell a lie and the external sources are not quoted properly with dispute the date, authority or

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- time. See a list of fabricated works in Abd al-Hadi al-Fadli, *Introduction to Hadith*, 2nd (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Publications, 2011), p. 183.
- 35 Taraf is a way in which the report is quoted by the narrator. In case of direct transmission of hadith from the authentic teacher, phrases like 'I heard him saying', 'he stated to us' or 'he informed us' etc. are used. If the hadith is not directly communicated to the reporter, the authority is quoted as such.
- 36 A Musalsal hadith quotes all authentic authorities with a proper mention of date and place and is reported in same way as it has been said.
- 37 A Mudallas (means 'concealed') hadith is considered a weak tradition where the authority is not less known or does not have a direct link with the reporter. The former is known as Tadlis al Shuyukh and the latter is referred to as Tadlis al-Isnad. The third type of tadlis (concealing) is included by Al-Iraqi (d. 806) i.e., Tadlis al-Taswiyyah where an intermediary weak authority is removed by the reliable authorities on hadith.
- 38 Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", p. 495.
- 39 See for a discussion how and why did locals accept Islam in South Asia, Satish Saberwal, "On the Making of Muslims in India Historically", *The Historian*, Vol. 03 (02), 2005. Also see Jane Hwang Degenhardt, *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
- 40 Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", pp.495-6. Also see Mark R. Woodward, "Textual Exegesis as Social Commentary: Religious, Social, and Political Meanings of Indonesian Translations of Arabic Hadith Texts". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Aug., 1993), pp. 565-583.

- 41 Christopher Melchert, "Traditionist-Jurisprudents and the Framing of Islamic Law", *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Hadith and Fiqh (2001), p. 399.
- 42 Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950).
- 43 See for detailed discussion on the significance of hadith in early years of Islam, Melchert, "Traditionist-Jurisprudents and the Framing of Islamic Law", pp. 383-406. Also see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Maghazi and the Muhaddithun: Reconsidering the Treatment of 'Historical' Materials in Early Collections of Hadith" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Feb., 1996), pp. 1-18.
- 44 John Burton discusses the testimony of Hadith with reference to Islamic jurisprudence. See John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1990). Also see John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith, Islamic Surveys* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).
- 45 David S. Powers, *Studies in Quran and Hadith: The Formation of the Islamic Law of In-heritance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Also see G. R. Hawting. "The Role of Qur'ān and "ḥadīth" in the Legal Controversy about the Rights of a Divorced Woman during Her 'Waiting Period' ("idda")". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (1989), pp. 430-445.
- 46 Eerik Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī and the Isnād". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 122, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 2002), p. 486.
- 47 Ibid., p. 481.
- 48 Ibid., pp. 487-88.
- 49 Ibid., p. 496.

- 50 Nurit Tsafir, "The Beginnings of the Ḥanafī School in Iṣfahān". *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1998), pp. 1–21.
- 51 See for example, the evaluation of Abu Hanifa and Zufar in Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, vol. 6, 348 and 361, respectively in *Ibid.*, p. 9. Also see G. R. Hawting. "The Role of Qur'ān and "ḥadīth" in the Legal Controversy about the Rights of a Divorced Woman during Her 'Waiting Period' ("idda")". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (1989), pp. 430-445.