

Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years	
Author	Garrett Davidson - MA in Arabic studies (American University in Cairo), MA (University of Chicago), PhD with honors (University of Chicago)
Defense of the continuation of hadith transmission	<p>While the original function of hadith transmission had become outdated after the establishment of a written hadith corpus, the chain of transmission is much more than a tool for citing orally transmitted material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The chain of transmission was a means to distinguish the Muslim community from the Jews and the Christians who did not preserve their chains of transmission and as a result had corrupted their revelation and gone astray
Post-canonical hadith transmission	Scholars reworked the protocols originally developed to govern hadith transmission and developed new criteria for evaluating chains of transmission
Origin	<p>Chains of transmission began to be employed in the context of civil war during which individuals involved in the conflict began to invent and falsely attribute statements to the Prophet in order to bolster their party's position</p> <p>By the late second century, in part due to the influence of the jurist al-Shāfi‘ī, who privileged hadith with full chains of transmission over all other sources of evidence besides the Quran, scholars began to insist on the citation of full chains of transmission</p>
Ṭalab al-ḥadīth	<p>Hadith scholars would travel to seek out the most authoritative transmitters and hear hadith through their personal chains</p> <p>By the latter half of the third century, these efforts to collect, preserve, and analyze hadith would create the body of hadith literature that became the canon</p>
Hadith scholars	<p>Hadith scholars held that a hadith text only became legally compelling when transmitted through an unbroken personal chain of transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The authority of a book could only be activated through reference to an unbroken chain of transmission back to its author or compiler
Jurists Ibn Barhān	<p>In the fifth century it was claimed that there was a consensus among jurists that it was permissible to cite a reliable copy without a personal chain of transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “If one holds a copy of, for example, the <i>Sahīḥayn</i>, then it is permitted for him to use it even if he has never heard it from an authority”

Ibn al-Salāh	<p>It is no longer necessary for a scholar to have a personal chain of transmission to be able to cite and act upon a hadith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the same time he posited that hadith must continue to be transmitted because the chain of transmission was a distinguishing feature of the Muslim community
Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH)	<p>No one today can transmit a hadith that has not already been preserved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If one did find a hadith that was not already preserved, it would be rejected, for it is not possible for all of the previous masters to have failed to collect it
Aim of hadith transmission post-canonicalization	<p>By continuing to engage in hadith transmission scholars performed the pious deed of maintaining their connection to the Prophet and preserving a distinguishing trait of the Muslim community</p>
Ibn al-Mubārak (181 AH)	<p>“The chain of transmission is a part of the religion” الإسناد من الدين</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hadith scholars continued to regularly cite this statement as a justification for continued hadith transmission despite the fact that the chain of transmission no longer served the same function it had at the time of Ibn al-Mubārak
Hadīth	<p>“May God brighten the face of the one who hears my words and preserves them until he transmits them to those who did not hear them” نَصَرَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا سَمِعَ مِنَ حَبِيبًا فَحَفِظَهُ حَتَّى يُبَلَّغَهُ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholars regularly cited their desire to be blessed through inclusion in the Prophet’s supplication as motivation for engaging in hadith transmission
Tabarrukan	<p>Hadith transmission was seen as a conduit for the spiritual aura (barakah) of the Prophet and the other great men of the chains of transmission</p>
Legitimacy	<p>The chain of transmission established one’s religious legitimacy, establishing one’s place in a chain of masters and the community of scholars and transmitters of sacred knowledge</p>
Upholding tradition	<p>The chain of transmission was a part of the tradition of the people of hadith and was established by numerous statements of the righteous founders of the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The righteous founders of the hadith tradition were to be emulated even if the utility of hadith transmission was no longer apparent
Social capital	<p>A scholar who possessed elevated chains of transmission was considered superior to and had an advantage over one who did not</p>
Standards of	<p>Because the aim of hadith transmission was no longer the</p>

criticism	<p>preservation of hadith, there was no longer a need for the rigorous conditions that early hadith scholars developed for transmitters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The conditions for transmitters was reduced to just four: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That he or she be a Muslim - Adult of sound mind - That he or she not be an open profligate - That a reliable audition notice establishes his or her having heard the text from a transmitter
Transmitters criticism	<p>Al-Suyūtī noted that transmitter criticism is a kind of backbiting that is unlawful without justification, and it was only made permissible by the dire need to use it as a tool to establish the reliability of hadith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In latter times scholars no longer rely on transmitters but on the written hadith corpus, therefore, it was no longer permissible for a scholar to engage in rigorous transmitter criticism
Assessing the quality of a chain	<p>Hadith collectors considered the short chain of transmission, referred to as an elevated ('ālī) chain, a mark of quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The fewer links in the chain were thought to allow for fewer possibilities for errors in transmission - The rarity of circumstances and luck that were involved in the creation of a short chain of transmission gave it an allure that could cause it to be preferred to a longer, stronger chain of transmission
Short versus long chains	<p>Once the hadith corpus was collected and preserved, the application of the rigorous methods developed to ensure accurate preservation was relaxed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This led to hadith collectors and transmitters increasingly giving in to their interest in short chains of transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This shift gradually led to the short chain of transmission becoming the primary measure of quality
Jinnī companion	<p>The jinn were believed to have life spans many times longer than those of humans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A number of hadith report that the Prophet met with his jinn followers and taught them their new faith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There could thus be jinnī companions who would still be alive long after all the human companions of the Prophet were dead
Tabarānī (d. 360AH)	<p>He is one of the first to cite a hadith transmitted through a jinnī companion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This allowed Tabarānī to cite a chain of transmission with only three links between him and the Prophet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jinnī was named Samhaj - He also cites this and other hadith through Samhaj
Dāraqutnī (d. 385/995)	

	Many scholars accepted hadith transmitted through jinn as long as they had no legal implications and were in agreement with established Islamic law and theology
Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Ḥajār	Compiled lists of the jinnī companions of the Prophet ﷺ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Uṣd al-ghābah fī ma'rīfat al-Šahābah</i> - <i>Al-Isābah fī tamyīz al-Šahābah</i>
Writing of hadīth	Writing was employed in the preservation and transmission of hadīth although its use was initially limited, gradually becoming more common over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbatim copying of books without a process of oral/aural verification, however, was viewed with extreme suspicion by most early hadith scholars and was generally not accepted
Modes of oral/aural transmission	Hearing a transmitter recite or read hadith aloud, reading a hadith text aloud to a transmitter, or listening while a text was read aloud to a transmitter
Auditions and the audition copy	Transmitting from a manuscript other than that used in the audition session one had attended was condemned as "transmitting without a source (min ghayr aṣl)" and was grounds for serious criticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is because the process of copying and transmitting, could and often did introduce significant divergence within the manuscripts of a particular hadith collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only the audition copy that one had, through the process of audition, could be further transmitted
Audition notice	Notices of audition, referred to as <i>samā'</i> and <i>ṭabaqah</i> , established that a manuscript had undergone a process of audition in that the auditor had heard that manuscript read aloud
Importance	Even if a scholar had thoroughly studied and mastered a copy of a text, they could not orally transmit another copy of the same text they had not audited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hadith scholars would eventually increasingly accept that an attendee of an audition was authorized to transmit from any copy that had, through the same process of audition, been verified to be in agreement with the source of his audition manuscript
Understanding and transmission	Only audition and a notice to prove it was required to later transmit a manuscript; comprehension or mastery of the text were not required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A layperson who had audited a manuscript and had his name recorded in the audition register could later transmit that manuscript although he had no knowledge of its contents
Format of the audition notice	Audition notices can vary somewhat in structure but are generally quite uniform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In most cases the verb <i>samī'a</i> is followed by the title of the

	<p>book, or more commonly “this book,” or “all of this book,” or “all of this juz’”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The name of the transmitter is then given, and in cases where the audition statement was composed by the transmitting authority, he would note that the auditors had heard the text, “from my mouth (min lafẓī),” then give his full name - Then the names of the auditors are listed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most notices then give the date of the audition and sometimes location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following the date, the scholar who composed the notice identifies himself, writing, “and this was written by (wa katabahu)”, or, “and the composer of this notice of audition is (wa kātib al-samā’)” - The composer of the notice would sometimes have the transmitting authority sign below the notice after writing “this is accurate (sahḥa dhālika)” - It was not uncommon for the person composing the audition notice to only record the names of the more prominent attendees and simply allude to the presence of other auditors with “and others (wa ākhirūn)”
Non-audition manuscripts Al-Dhababī	<p>Early hadith scholars considered it reprehensible to transmit from a non-source copy, but from the sixth century hijrī onwards, this position would slowly erode</p> <p>Most of the latter scholars of hadith have taken a dispensation in regards to the use of non-audition manuscripts in oral/aural transmission</p>
Child auditors	<p>As long as the material they received aurally was recorded by an individual who would fulfill the condition of accuracy for them, their auditions were valid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is why scholars took their children at a young age to hear hadith from those shaykh whose chains of transmission were elevated
Precedent	<p>The companion Abū Shāh from Yemen heard the Prophet pronounce a number of rulings, but due to his poor memory asked the Prophet to have this pronouncement written down for him, so that he might then convey it to his people on his return to Yemen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prophet agreed and ordered one of his scribes to write it down

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although Abū Shāh himself did not meet the condition of accuracy due to his poor memory, he was still able to transmit the pronouncement he heard from the Prophet, because the scribe who recorded the proclamation was accurate and reliable <p>Noteworthy child auditors</p> <p>The primary transmitter of al-Bukhārī's <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i>, Karīmah al-Marwaziyah, was very young when she had her audition of the text</p> <p>Al-Ḥāshimī was the primary transmitter of <i>Sunan Abī Dāwūd</i> from al-Lu'lu'ī, who is the primary transmitter from Abū Dāwūd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Al-Ḥāshimī was five at the time of the final audition
<p>Speed reading</p> <p>Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī</p> <p>Undesirability of speed reading</p> <p>Proof</p>	<p>Sard refers to the mode of reading at a brisk pace to facilitate the transmission of a text in as short a time as possible</p> <p>Read the entirety of Bukhārī's <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> in just three sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He read the text from sunset to dawn for two nights, then on the third day from noon until sunset and then from sunset until just before dawn - Paradoxically, he was also one of the first to criticize the practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In his book he includes a short section under the title, "On the dislike for the reading of hadith without pause (sard) and the recommendation to read slowly" كراهه سرعة الحديث واستحباب التمهل فيه - He cites a report from the 'Ā'ishah RA stating, "The Prophet did not run his words together the way you do, rather he separated his words, so that those who heard them could remember them" <p>كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا يَسْرُدُ الْكَلَامَ كَسْرَدِكُمْ، وَلَكُنْ كَانَ إِذَا تَكَلَّمَ بِكَلَامٍ فَصْلٍ يَحْفَظُهُ مَنْ سَمِعَهُ</p>
<p>Locations of hadith transmission</p>	<p>What emerges from the audition notices is that hadith transmission took place in various settings ranging from religious institutions, including mosques, Sufi lodges and madrasas to domestic and even commercial locations</p>
<p>Musalsal</p> <p>Hadith of "the two black ones"</p>	<p>Refers to a hadith with a chain of transmission in which a quality or action is repeated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quality shared by each successive generation of transmitters could be being a descendant of the Prophet or sharing the name Muhammad or sharing residence in the same city - In another type of musalsal hadith an action, either attributed to the Prophet or a later transmitter, is serially reenacted in each subsequent act of transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prophet is said to have hosted a visitor by offering him dates and water and then said: "Whoever hosts a

	<p>believer as a guest, it is as if he has hosted Adam as a guest; whoever hosts two believers, it is as if he has hosted Adam and Eve ...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This companion hosted some of his own companions with dates and water and transmitted the hadith on the merits of hosting guests; these guests in turn recited the hadith to their guests, and so on, generation after generation <p>In most cases the chains of transmission for these hadith were quite weak or even deemed to be outright fabrications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although they could often be found elsewhere with non-musalsal reliable chains of transmission - It is acceptable to transmit this hadith, in spite of its weakness, because as a principle the scholars of hadith held that it was acceptable to transmit and use a weak hadith for the purposes of virtuous deeds <p>Musalsal bi-l-awwaliyyah - this was often the first hadith an authority would transmit to a student coming to hear hadith from him</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This action does not trace all the way back to the Prophet’s companions, but to Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah who chose the hadith “Those who are merciful are shown mercy by God, show mercy to those on earth and He who is in the heavens will show mercy to you” as the first hadith to transmit to his student Bishr b. al-Hakam
<p>Ijāzah</p> <p>al-Ishbīlī</p>	<p>Permission granted by a transmitter allowing the recipient to cite and further transmit a text or groups of texts through the granting transmitter’s personal chain of transmission</p> <p>It was infeasible for the vast literature of hadith to continue be to be transmitted orally from generation-to-generation; time would simply not allow this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ijāzah was a means to preserve the chain of transmission that is one of the distinct traits of the Muslim community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is important because of the opinion that without a chain of transmission a work of hadith was rendered unusable - By the consensus of the scholarly community it is impermissible for a scholar to reference a hadith without first obtaining a chain of transmission for it <p>وقد اتفق العلماء رجهم الله على أنه لا يصح لمسلم أن يقول قال رسول الله عليه وسلم كذا حتى يكون عند ذلك القول مرويا</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through the ijāzah a scholar could easily obtain multiple chains of transmission for all the collections and thus be able to cite any hadith without fear of contravening this supposed scholarly consensus

Types of ijāzahs	<p>Ijāzat al-riwāyah - permission for the recipient to transmit an individual hadith or other text without having heard all or any of the material from the authority granting the ijāzah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often granted through correspondence or after a brief meeting - Scholars did not stipulate any qualifications for the recipient, nor did they consider the issuance of an ijāzah to any way attest to the qualifications of the recipient <p>Ijāzat al-dirāyah or ijāzat al-tadrīs - permission granted to qualified individuals to teach or issue fatwas (ijāzat al-iftā')</p>
<p>Ijāzah muṭlaqah (ijāzah for nonspecified material)</p> <p>Issue</p> <p>Process</p>	<p>A license to transmit everything that the recipient felt could be reliably attributed to the transmitter who issued it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This was an expansion of the initial conception of ijāzah as a means to transmit a specific text or texts, when time, space or other factors did not allow for its oral/aural transmission <p>The vastness of hadith and other literature meant that it was increasingly difficult for a scholar to obtain chains of transmission for all of the books he was expected to access or be able to cite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The culture of hadith scholarship expected that scholars would cite transmitted material through a personal chain of transmission <p>For scholars who had transmitted hundreds of works from as many authorities and composed dozens of works themselves, delineating all of these titles and chains of transmission would require a major investment of time and would have to be repeated for each ijāzah</p> <p>The student hands the transmitter a paper on which he has written, 'If the shaykh sees fit to grant me an ijāzah to transmit all the transmitted material that can be reliably attributed to him, then let him do so.' The transmitter responds, either orally or by writing below the petition, 'I permit you all that you have asked (ajaztu lak kulla mā sa'alta)'</p>
Munāwalah	<p>A mode of transmission in which a manuscript is physically passed to the student as he is given permission to transmit it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is also theoretically possible for a shaykh to transmit the entire contents of his library that he had taken from his shaykhs
<p>Who can receive ijāzah al-Tabrīzī</p>	<p>Al-Khaṭīb argued that not only could an adult without any qualifications receive an ijāzah, but also that it was permissible to issue ijāzahs to infants and young children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The condition that the recipient be a scholar is a hardship that is contradictory to the aims of the expansion and preservation of the chain of transmission for which the ijāzah was made permissible
al-Ijāzah	Issuing an ijāzah to all alive at the time, or to all the inhabitants of a

al-Āmmah	<p>particular city, or to other broad categories; also called <i>ijāzat al-‘umūm</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nawawī regularly issued <i>ijāzahs</i> to all living Muslims to transmit his works, as is witnessed by numerous global <i>ijāzahs</i> found on the colophons of his works - The global <i>ijāzah</i> was considered inferior to an <i>ijāzah</i> issued to a specific individual
Hadith transmission in the 20th century	<p>Al-Kattānī (d. 1962) composed a book in which he revived the sixth century <i>hijrī</i> position of Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, who argued that there is a scholarly consensus that it is impermissible for a scholar to reference or cite a hadith or any other work without having a personal chain of transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - However, the rise of rationalist reformist Islam, European-style universities, and modernization of traditional institutions of Islamic education contributed to a decline in the value of hadith transmission as a form of social and cultural capital <p>By the 1960s, hadith transmission had become the domain of a small number of scholars opposed to reform and committed to the late Sunni tradition of scholarship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ahmad Mashhūr b. Tāha al-Haddād (d. 1996), ‘Abd al-Fattāh Abū Ghudda (d. 1997), ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī, Muḥammad b. ‘Alawī al-Mālikī (d. 2004), and Yāsīn al-Fadānī (d. 1990) are a few of those individuals - This group of scholars worked to preserve the institution of hadith transmission, authoring catalogs of their chains of transmission, arguing for the importance of its continuation, and inculcating their students with a reverence for the tradition