PREFACE

This book is a slightly revised version of my doctoral dissertation “The Arts of Hadith Compilation and Criticism: A study of the emergence of Sunnî Islam in the third/ninth century” that I wrote at the University of Chicago under the guidance of Professor Wadad al-Qadi. Professor Qadi first introduced me to Ibn Sa‘d, whose Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr is largely responsible for my understanding of the development of early Islam, many years ago and she has remained most supportive of my research ever since. I am particularly grateful for her decision to include Constructive Critics in the Islamic History and Civilization series at Brill. I also received useful comments from Professors Fred Donner and Robert Dankoff of the University of Chicago during the dissertation phase of this book. Finally, I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer whose erudite seven-page report on this manuscript saved me from several potentially embarrassing overgeneralizations and provided references to additional secondary literature that I had neglected to cite.

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My parents, Hank and Ellen Lucas, have been champions of education my whole life and, in many ways, have inspired me to follow in their footsteps as a professor and teacher. I am particularly thankful for their love, support, and an introductory lesson in database construction. My brother Jon has provided much appreciated encouragement. This book is dedicated to my wife Maha Nassar, who, more than anyone else, has encouraged me to think seriously about Sunnî Islam and to undertake research that is intended to be of value to academics and inquisitive Muslims alike.