Hadith as *Adab*: Ibn Qutayba's Chapter on Hadith in His *ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār*

Geert Jan van Gelder

Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889)¹ was a versatile religious scholar (*ʿālim*) as well as a man of letters (*adīb*), who wrote seminal and voluminous works on religious and literary topics. His main books on Hadith,² *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* and *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, are standard works in the field. Here, however, I will deal with his main work in the field of *adab*, indeed a seminal work of *adab*: his *ʿUyūn al-akḥbār*. This is a kind of literary anthology, characterised by Gérard Lecomte as “a large compendium of *adab*, on a number of apparently secular subjects”. It is true that these subjects are mainly secular, but the word “apparently” suggests that the book also contains non-secular material. And indeed, religion is by no means absent and is in fact apparent enough to any casual glance; one can safely say that none of its ten main parts, or “books”, is devoid of religious topics. The fifth of these is entitled *Kitāb al-ʿilm wa-l-bayān*. *Bayān*, “clear exposition”, refers to eloquence and fine style; the section on *bayān* deals with poetry and speeches, many of the latter being religious sermons. The preceding section on *ʿilm* is about “knowledge”, with quotations from Plato, Hippocrates, Christ, Indian and Persian sages, and Muslim worthies such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644); there follow brief chapters on the Qurʾān, on Hadith, on speculative theology (*kalām*) and heresy, after which Book Five continues with matters of language and style. But as one can expect in *adab* anthologies there is no sustained discussion, merely a string of anecdotes and sayings, interspersed with poetry.

- 1 The cut-off date for the theme of the present volume is 250AH; Ibn Qutayba, who was born in 213/828, may have composed his *ʿUyūn al-akḥbār* some years after 250/864, but all the material he quotes predates this date. On him see e.g. Gérard Lecomte, “Ibn Qutayba,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3:844–847; Joseph E. Lowry, “Ibn Qutaybah,” in *Arabic Literary Culture, 500–925*, eds. Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005), 172–183.
- 2 I write “Hadith”, with capital, for the corpus of traditions as a whole, and “hadith” for an individual tradition.

It seems appropriate to honour the memory of Gautier (or Gual, as he was known to Dutch colleagues and friends) Juynboll with a few words on this brief chapter on Hadith, seven pages in the edition of Cairo 1925–1930.³ It contains a number of sayings on Hadith, almost all of them preceded by some form of *isnād*, and there are ten short poetic quotations, 26 lines in all. The quoted sayings are mostly about Hadith but do not themselves contain Hadith in the strict sense of sayings going back to the Prophet or talking about him. It is difficult to say what Ibn Qutayba's selection criteria were. Generally, he seems to have collected statements that were striking or amusing, but there are also some more puzzling ones. Here is a translation of the beginning of the section:⁴

حَدَّثَنِي إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ حَبِيبِ بْنِ الشَّهِيدِ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ فُضَيْلٍ عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ قَالَ:
كَانَ إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ رَجَاءٍ يَجْمَعُ صِبْيَانَ الْكُتَّابِ فَيُحَدِّثُهُمْ كَيْلًا يَنْسَى حَدِيثَهُ.

Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb b. al-Shahīd⁵ told me: Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl⁶ told us, on the authority of al-A'mash,⁷ who said: Ismā'īl b. Rajā'⁸ used to gather the young boys in the Qur'ān school (*kuttāb*) and teach them Hadith, so that he would not forget his Hadith (*fa-yuḥaddithuhum kaylā yansā ḥadīthahu*).

What is the point of quoting this saying? Normally the prime reason for teaching is to secure the transmission of knowledge to others, to a younger generation. One is almost tempted to change the vowels given in the edition and read *kaylā yunsā ḥadīthuhu*, "so that his Hadith would not be forgotten". Young children, after all, have great retentive powers and the young are helpful in Hadith in stretching *isnāds*, one would think. Religious education, however, began with

3 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1925–1930), 2:134–140 (the edition used in this article); see also the edition by Mundhir Muḥammad Sa'īd Abū Sha'r, 4 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 2008), 2:160–166.

4 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:134. Also in al-Basawī (= al-Fasawī), *al-Ma'rifa wa-l-tārikh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umārī, 4 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1410AH), 2:610, Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar, 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 8:435.

5 d. 257/871; see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001–2006), 7:395–396.

6 d. 195/810–811, see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukāsha (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ārif, 1981), 510.

7 d. c. 148/765; see also below, note 13.

8 Ismā'īl b. Rajā' b. Rabī'a al-Zubaydī al-Kūfī, no dates known; see al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārikh al-kabīr*, eds. Hāshim al-Nadwī et al., 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1941–1964), 1:353.

Qur'ān and elementary jurisprudence, not Hadith, for young children were not considered sufficiently reliable as transmitters.⁹ One must assume, then, that the received vowelling is correct and the point of the saying seems to be that Ismā'īl b. Rajā's behaviour is unusual, a case of teaching that benefits the teacher more than the taught. Ibn Qutayba, one supposes, found it odd, even amusing: a teacher who teaches primarily in order not to forget, even though his priority should be the transmission of knowledge.

It is immediately followed by another somewhat ambiguous passage:

وحدَّثني إِسْحَاقُ الشَّهِيدِيُّ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ عَيَّاشٍ عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ قَالَ: قَالَ لِي حَبِيبُ بْنُ أَبِي ثَابِتٍ: لَوْ أَنَّ رَجُلًا حَدَّثَنِي عَنْكَ بِحَدِيثٍ مَا بَالَيْتُ أَنْ أَرْوِيَهُ عَنْكَ.

Ishāq al-Shahīdī¹⁰ told me: Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh¹¹ told us on the authority of al-A'mash, who said: Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit said to me: If a man told me a hadith on your authority, I would not mind transmitting it on your authority.¹²

—or should we translate *mā bālaytu an arwiyahū 'anka* as “I would not care to transmit it on your authority”, which gives the opposite sense? There is some ambiguity in the verb *bālā*, “to care, mind, be concerned”. Ibn Qutayba does not comment on this rather odd statement. Al-A'mash is one of the famous Hadith scholars, one of the “readers” of the Qur'ān;¹³ his contemporary Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit (d. c. 119/737) was a more disputed authority and he is called a *mudallis*, “a forger”.¹⁴ Assuming that he meant: “I would not mind transmitting it on your authority”, he appears to be very casual in his approach to Hadith if with “a man”, *rajul*, he means “any man”. Surely this is not how a serious traditionist should proceed. This, however, is not the point here. I think the anecdote is supposed to be funny; it is a joke. For why would Ḥabīb need this intermediary person in the first place if he can have it directly from al-A'mash himself?

9 I am grateful to Professor Christopher Melchert for pointing this out to me.

10 He is Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Shahīd, see above, note 5.

11 d. 193/809, see Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, 509.

12 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:134.

13 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “al-A'mash,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*, accessed 21 September 2016, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2066/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_22677.

14 Ibrāhīm Sibṭ al-Ajamī, *al-Tabyīn li-asmā' al-mudallisīn*, ed. Yaḥyā Shafīq (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1986), 19–20 (where this saying is quoted). On Ḥabīb see also Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 8:437–438, al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 2:313–314.

Moving on to what follows we find:

حدثني أبو حاتم عن الأصمعي عن نافع عن ربيعة بن أبي عبد الرحمن قال: أَلَفَ عن ألفٍ خير
من واحدٍ عن واحدٍ إنَّ فلاناً عن فلانٍ يَنْزِعُ السُّنَّةَ من أيديكم.

Abū Ḥātim¹⁵ told me on the authority of al-Aṣmaʿī¹⁶ on the authority of Nāfi¹⁷ on the authority of Rabīʿa b. Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān,¹⁸ who said: One thousand on the authority of one thousand is better than one on the authority of one. “So-and-so on the authority of So-and-so” snatches the Sunna from your hands.¹⁹

This seems clear: the hadiths called *mutawātir* are better, in principle, than those termed *fard* or *āḥād*.²⁰ This is not particularly interesting and the reason for quoting this is perhaps the vivid expression “snatches the Sunna from your hands” (*yantaziʿu al-sunnata min aydikum*). An amusing bit is about Suhayl b. Abī Ṣāliḥ (d. 138/755),²¹ who transmitted a hadith about the Prophet Muḥammad to Rabīʿa b. Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 136/753). When, after some time, the latter reminds Suhayl of this, he has no recollection of it. And afterwards he happily continues to transmit the hadith on the authority of Rabīʿa, putting himself in the middle of the *isnād*, something like “A told me that I told him that B told him ...”.²² I do not know how such a peculiar up-and-down-and-up-again can be depicted in one of Juynboll’s spidery webs.

15 Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869), philologist.

16 ʿAbd al-Malik b. Qurayb al-Aṣmaʿī (d. c. 213/828), famous philologist.

17 Nāfiʿ (d. between 117/735 and 120/738), *mawla* of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; major transmitter of Hadith.

18 An early legal scholar (*faqīh*), known as Rabīʿah al-Raʿy; see e.g. Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*, 496, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-ʿayān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968–1972), 2:288–290.

19 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:134; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, eds. Aḥmad Amīn, Aḥmad al-Zayn and Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī, 7 vols. (Cairo, 1948–1953, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1983), 2:237; al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik*, eds. Muḥammad b. Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī et al., 8 vols. (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1983), 1:46.

20 It seems that judging the value of a hadith on the basis of its *isnād* became dominant only after the first two centuries; see Christopher Melchert’s contribution to the present volume.

21 On him see e.g. al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt / Das biographische Lexikon des Ṣalāḥ-ad-dīn Ḥalīl ibn Aibak aṣ-Ṣafādī*, 30 vols. (Beirut-Wiesbaden-Berlin: Franz Steiner—Klaus Schwarz, 1931–2005), 16:31–32.

22 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:134.

So far we have been able to discover at least some indications why Ibn Qutayba included a particular saying or anecdote. This short paper cannot discuss all the individual quotations and I should confess that there are some where I am unable to see the point. What to make, for instance, of the one that follows:

حدثني الرياشي قال: روي عن محمد بن إسماعيل عن معتمر قال: حدثني منقذ عن أيوب عن الحسن قال: ويح: رحمة.

Al-Riyāshī²³ told me: It is transmitted on the authority of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, on the authority of Muʿtamir:²⁴ Munqidh told me on the authority of Ayyūb, on the authority of al-Ḥasan, who said: *Wayḥ: raḥma*.²⁵

—meaning something like “‘Woe!’ means ‘Pity!’” This force of the interjection *wayḥ* is confirmed by the lexicographers. But it is not immediately clear why this should be mentioned here; it is not a saying of the prophet Muḥammad, the word *wayḥ* does not occur in the Qurʾān, and the quotation is not funny, apart perhaps from being one of the shortest statements introduced by a weighty *isnād*. It is apparently inspired by a hadith, not quoted here, in which the Prophet says “*Wayḥa ʿAmmār!*”, upon seeing ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir²⁶ exerting himself in building a mosque.²⁷ Obviously, he means “Poor ʿAmmār!” rather than “Woe to ʿAmmār!”

Some items are about the teaching of Hadith. When Qatāda²⁸ had taught a good hadith (*idhā ḥaddatha bi-l-ḥadīthi al-jayyid*) he would leave and tell another one the next day (*dhahaba yajīʿu bi-l-thānī ghudwatan*),²⁹ apparently

23 Presumably the philologist Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbbās b. al-Faraj al-Riyāshī (d. 257/871). Some of the following persons named in the *isnād* have not been identified with certainty.

24 Muʿtamir b. Sulaym b. Ṭarkhān, d. 187/803, see al-Dhahabī, *Ṣiyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, eds. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ et al., 25 vols. (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1981–1988), 8:477–479.

25 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:134; Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Aṣfar (Beirut, 1999), 131 (as *wayḥ kalimat raḥma*); Ibn Ḥibban, *al-Thiqāt*, 9 vols. (Hyderabad, AH1393), 9:197 (I owe this reference to Professor Christopher Melchert).

26 ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (d. 37/657 at the Battle of Šiffin), a companion of the prophet Muḥammad and later a partisan of ʿAlī.

27 al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-Ṣalāh*, no. 64 (*bāb al-taʾāwūn fī bināʾ al-masjid*) and e.g. Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fāʾiq fī ḡharīb al-Ḥadīth*, eds. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm and ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), 4:85.

28 Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Qatāda b. Dīʿāma al-Sadūsī (d. c. 117/735), see Charles Pellat, “Qatāda b. Dīʿāma,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 4:748.

29 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:134.

to let the first one sink in properly. This is followed by a saying by Shu'ba³⁰ on the kinds of people whose Hadith should not be accepted (*yutaku ḥadīthuhu*) and another by Mālik³¹ on the four kinds of people whose knowledge (*ilm*) cannot be accepted. They are sensible sayings, as can be expected: the categories include unreliable, or stupid, or biased people.

There is a report about al-Ḥasan, i.e., al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), who would transmit a hadith one day, and repeat it the following day with some additions or omissions but the sense being the same (*yazīdu fīhi wa-yanquṣu illā anna al-ma'nā wāḥid*).³² This is followed, as if by way of justification, by a saying by Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān:³³ "We are Arabs, who may change the order (*nuqaddimu wa-nu'akkhiru*), add things to it or reduce it, without intending to tell lies".³⁴ Then we read:

أبو معاوية قال: قال أبو إسحاق الشامي: لو كان هذا الحديث من الخبز نقص.

Abū Mu'āwiya³⁵ said: Abū Ishāq al-Shāmī³⁶ said: "If this Hadith were bread it would be insufficient."

I am not sure what this means; is he speaking of a particular hadith or does *ḥādḥā al-ḥadīth* mean "this Hadith", meaning the whole corpus? Is there a connection, apart from the use of the verb *naqaṣa*, "to reduce" or "to be insufficient", with the sayings of al-Ḥasan and Ḥudhayfa? Perhaps one should translate "... it would diminish", meaning that if Hadith were edible it would be depleted, whereas in fact it is not and cannot—or should not—be reduced or diminished. Without any commentary on the part of Ibn Qutayba a saying follows that condemns, if not Hadith, then all its transmitters:

30 Shu'ba b. al-Hajjāj (d. 160/776), scholar and collector of Hadith; see Juynboll's entry on him in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 9:491–492.

31 Presumably Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), the famous jurist who gave his name to the Mālikī school of jurisprudence.

32 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:136.

33 Abū 'Abd Allāh Ḥudayfa b. al-Yamān al-'Absī (d. 36/656), a companion of the prophet Muḥammad.

34 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:136.

35 Not identified.

36 I have not found this name in the standard Arabic sources and it is clearly an error. The edition by Abū Sha'r has, probably more correctly, Abū Ishāq al-Shaybānī. In Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, 451, Abū Ishāq al-Shaybānī Sulaymān b. Abī Sulaymān, said to have died in 129/746–747, is credited with the same saying but with *al-khayr* ("the good") instead of *al-khubz*. This is clearly based on a misreading (the two words differ only in their diacritic dots); it does not make more sense and is less interesting than the version of *Uyūn*.

أَبُو أُسَامَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ مِسْعَرٌ: مَنْ أَبْغَضَنِي فَجَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مُحَدِّثًا.

Abū Usāma³⁷ said: Mis'ar said: May God make everyone who hates me a *muḥaddith*!³⁸

The point is, of course, that this Mis'ar b. Kidām (d. 155/771–772)³⁹ was himself a transmitter of Hadith. Perhaps Mis'ar hints at the poverty of the average Hadith scholar,⁴⁰ and the preceding quotation also suggests that being a transmitter of Hadith does not pay for one's daily bread. The theme of Hadith as bread is then taken up again in a saying by al-A'mash:⁴¹

وَاللَّهِ لَأَنْ أَتَصَدَّقَ بِكِسْرَةٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أَتَحَدَّثَ بِسِتِّينَ حَدِيثًا.

By God, if I gave a bite of bread (*kisra*) as alms that would be better than transmitting sixty hadiths.

And the famous traditionist Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna⁴² is quoted as saying:⁴³

قَالَ ابْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ: مَا أُحِبُّ لِمَنْ أُحِبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَحْفَظَ النَّاسِ لِلْحَدِيثِ.

I would not like someone I like to be the one who has memorised most hadiths of all people.

Again, famous *muḥaddithūn* belittle the value of their own field of expertise. Such paradoxes are typical of *adab*. One is free to take them at face value or not, and to make of them what one likes. Our compiler, Ibn Qutayba, remains silent in the background.

Hadith experts are not above joking. Once, al-A'mash was asked about the *isnād* of a certain hadith by the much younger Ḥaṣḥ b. Ghiyāth (d. c. 194/809).⁴⁴

37 Identification uncertain.

38 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:136; also Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, 481.

39 Thus al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 25:493; cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, 481 where he is said to have died in 152/769 and his father's name is vowelised as Kudām.

40 A suggestion made at the conference by Professor Houari Touati.

41 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:136.

42 On Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (107–196/725–81) see Susan A. Spector, "Sufyān b. 'Uyayna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 9:772.

43 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:137.

44 On him, see Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, 510, al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 13:98–99.

Thereupon al-A'mash took Ḥaḥṣ by the throat, pushed him (*asnadahū*) against a wall and said, "This is its *isnād*!"⁴⁵ A similar punning with technical terms is displayed by Ibn al-Sammāk,⁴⁶ who was asked the same question about an *isnād* and replied, "It is one of *al-mursalāt 'urfā* (the loosed ones in succession)!"⁴⁷ He is quoting the beginning of the 77th sura, entitled *al-Mursalāt* (translated as *The Loosed Ones* by Arberry), which is about winds, but he alludes, of course, to the kind of hadith called *mursal*, i.e., with an *isnād* that does not go back all the way to a companion of the prophet Muḥammad but only to the next generation.

These slightly irreverent sayings and anecdotes are offset by others that stress the status and importance of Hadith. Al-A'mash again: "When I see an old man who does not seek *fiqh* [which here I take to mean 'religious knowledge'] I would like to box his ears (*aḥbibtu an aṣḥa'ahu*)";⁴⁸ he also said, "But for learning all those hadiths I would be like any Kufan greengrocer."

Several times the prose gives way to short poems. The great philologist al-Aṣma'ī laments the death of Sufyān b. 'Uyayna in eight lines, beginning:⁴⁹

وَمُسْتَبِينَ ⁵⁰ أَثَارَاتٍ وَأَثَارِ	فَلَيْكَ سُفْيَانُ بَاغِي سُنَّةٍ دَرَسْتَ
وَوَاقِفِيُونَ مِنْ طَارٍ وَمِنْ سَارِ ⁵¹	وَمُبْتَغِي قُرْبِ إِسْنَادٍ وَمَوْعِظَةٍ
مِنْ قَاطِنِينَ وَجُجَّاجٍ وَعُمَّارِ	أَمْسَتْ مَجَالِسُهُ وَحَشًا مُعْطَلَةٌ
أَوَّلَ الْأَحَادِيثِ عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ دِينَارِ	مَنْ لِلْحَدِيثِ عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ حِينَ ثَوَى
زُّهْرِيٍّ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَدْوٍ أَوْ بِأَحْضَارِ	لَنْ يَسْمَعُوا بَعْدَهُ مَنْ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا
مِنْ مَارْقِينَ وَمِنْ جُحَادِ أَقْدَارِ	لَا يَهْنَأُ الشَّامِتُ الْمَسْرُورَ مَضْرَعُهُ
قَوْدًا إِلَى غَضَبِ الرَّحْمَنِ وَالنَّارِ	وَمَنْ زَنَادَقَهُ جَهَنَّمُ يَقُودَهُمْ
بِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ أَهْتَارًا بِأَهْتَارِ	وَمُلْحِدِينَ وَمُرْتَابِينَ قَدْ خَلَطُوا

45 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:137.

46 Abū al-Abbās Muḥammad b. Ṣaḥīḥ b. al-Sammāk (d. 183/799), see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, 3:347–354.

47 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:137.

48 Ibn Qutayba, 2:137.

49 Ibn Qutayba, 2:135; also al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 8:474–475.

50 Thus in al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, rather than *mustabītu* as in *Uyūn*.

51 Thus in al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, rather than *wa-afaḥyaynā min ṭārīn wa-min ṭārī* as in *Uyūn* (both editions), which is obviously corrupt.

fa-l-yabki Sufyāna bāghī sunnatin darasat
wa-mustabīnu athārātīn wa-āthārī
wa-mubtaghī qurba isnādīn wa-maw'izatin
wa-wāqifiyyūna min ṭarīn wa-min sārī
amsat majālisuhū waḥshan mu'aṭṭalatan
min qāṭinīna wa-ḥujjājīn wa-'ummārī
man li-l-ḥadīthi 'anī l-Zuhriyyi ḥīna thawā
aw li-l-aḥādīthi 'an 'Amri bni Dīnārī
lan yasma'ū ba'dahū man qāla ḥaddathanā l-
-Zuhriyyu min ahli badwin aw bi-iḥḍārī
lā yahna'i l-shāmitu l-masrūru maṣra'ahū
min māriqīna wa-min juḥḥādi aqdārī
wa-min zanādiqatin Jahmun yaqūduhumū
qawdan ilā ghaḍabi l-Raḥmāni wa-l-nārī
wa-mulḥidīna wa-murtābīna qad khalaṭū
bi-sunnati llāhi ahtāran bi-ahtārī

Let Sufyān be lamented by those who desire (to know) a sunna that has
 fallen into abeyance
 or who seek the explanation of what remains of past reports,
 By those desiring a close *isnād* and an admonition
 and those of the clan of Wāqif,⁵² those who come and go.
 The places where he sat teaching are now desolate, deserted
 of dwellers, of those who come for the hajj or the lesser pilgrimage.
 Who will transmit Hadith from al-Zuhri⁵³ now that he rests in the earth,
 or the hadiths from 'Amr ibn Dīnār?⁵⁴
 Now that he is gone people, whether Bedouin or town dweller, will no
 longer
 hear anyone saying "Al-Zuhri told us ..."
 May his death not gladden any happy gloater
 from among the rebels and those who deny the divine ordainments,

52 The Banū Wāqif were a clan of the tribe of Aws; Sufyān's grandfather was a *mawlā* of a woman of the Banū Hilāl b. Umayya b. Wāqif.

53 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124/742), "one of the founders of Islamic tradition" (Michael Lecker, "al-Zuhri, Ibn Shihāb," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 1:565).

54 'Amr b. Dīnār (d. 126/744), religious scholar and traditionist, teacher of Sufyān b. 'Uyayna; see Harald Motzki, "'Amr b. Dīnār," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*, accessed 21 September 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_22955.

Or from the heretics led by Jahm⁵⁵
 to the Merciful's wrath and to hellfire,
 Or from unbelievers and those who doubt, who mix
 God's Sunna with falsehood upon falsehood.

It is not great poetry but it fits in the chapter well. The poet Ibn Munādhir,⁵⁶ who also dabbled in Hadith, saw fit to give advice in verse on whom to trust in matters of Hadith:⁵⁷

وَمَنْ يَبْغِ الْوَصَاةَ فَإِنَّ عِنْدِي وَصَاةً لِلْكُفُولِ وَلِلشَّابِ
 خُذُوا عَنِ مَالِكٍ وَعَنِ ابْنِ عَوْنٍ وَلَا تَرَوْوْا أَحَادِيثَ ابْنِ دَابٍ

wa-man yabghi l-waṣāta fa-inna 'indī
waṣātan li-l-kuḥūli wa-li-l-shabābī
khudhū 'an Mālikin wa-'ani bni 'Awnin
wa-lā tarwū aḥādītha bni Dābī

Whoever wants good advice: I've got it,
 for mature men and for youths.
 Take from Mālik and from Ibn 'Awn,⁵⁸
 but do not transmit the hadiths of Ibn Da'b.

Ibn Da'b is Abū al-Walīd 'Īsā b. Yazīd b. Da'b (d. 171/787), of whom Charles Pellat writes that "In the field of the transmission of *ḥadīths* (...) Ibn Da'b was not very highly thought of"; some accused him of inventing them.⁵⁹ Ibn Qutayba does not quote the verses that follow in a longer version,⁶⁰ which mentions "false hadiths", *aḥādīth kidhāb*, that are "followed by those who go astray", a phrase

55 Jahm b. Ṣafwān (executed 128/764), alleged founder of a sect that held "an extreme form of the doctrine of *djabr*", i.e., predestination (William Montgomery Watt, "Djahmiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 2:389).

56 Muḥammad b. Munādhir (d. 198/814), see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums. Band 11: Poesie bis ca. 430 H.* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 505–506. Pious when young, he became dissolute in later life; see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1966–1967), 869 and many anecdotes in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 24 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub—al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma, 1927–1974), 18:169–210.

57 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:138–139; cf. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, 2:237–238.

58 Mālik is probably Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), Ibn 'Awn is 'Abd Allāh b. 'Awn (d. 151/768), see e.g. al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 17:389–390.

59 Charles Pellat, "Ibn Da'b," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill 1971), 3:742.

60 al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 18:198; Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas, al-mukhtaṣar min al-Muqtabas fi akhbār al-nuḥāh wa-l-udabā' wa-l-shu'arā' wa-l-'ulamā'*, *ikhtisār Abī*

that is taken from the famous Qur'ānic verse about poets (al-Shu'arā' 26:224). In *Kitāb al-Aghānī* it is said that Ibn Munādhir composed the lines having heard that Ibn Da'b had said bad things about him. The point of quoting these lines is perhaps the fact that Muḥammad b. al-Munādhir was himself considered unreliable: "Yaḥyā b. Ma'in rejected his transmission, saying, 'He knows about poetry, not about Hadith'".⁶¹ It is not unlikely that Ibn Qutayba was aware of this and expected his readers to know.

Since poetry can accommodate anything, why cannot Hadith be versified? Ibn Qutayba quotes two lines by Abū Nuwās, who was, after all, well-versed in Hadith and even seems to have taught it:⁶²

حَدَّثَنِي الْأَزْرَقُ⁶³ الْمَحْدَثُ عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ شَيْمِرٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ
لَا يُخْلِفُ الْوَعْدَ غَيْرُ كَافِرَةٍ⁶⁴ وَكَافِرٍ فِي الْجَحِيمِ مَصْفُودٍ

ḥaddathanī l-Azraqul-muḥaddithu 'an
'Amri bni Shimrin 'ani bni Mas'ūdī
lā yukhlifu l-wa'da ghayru kāfiratin
wa-kāfirin fī l-jahīmi maṣfūdī

Al-Azraq, the *muḥaddith*, told me, on the authority of
'Amr ibn Shimr,⁶⁵ on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd:⁶⁶

l-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf ibn Maḥmūd al-Yaghmurī / Die Gelehrtenbiographien des Abū 'Ubaidallāh al-Marzubānī in der Rezension des Ḥāfiẓ al-Yaḡmurī, Teil 1, ed. Rudolf Sellheim (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1964), 311.

61 al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 5:64; cf. al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 18:208–209.

62 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, 2:140; Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, eds. Ewald Wagner and Gregor Schoeler, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden-Cairo: Franz Steiner and Berlin-Beirut: Klaus Schwarz, 1958–2006), 5:238; with accompanying anecdote, al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 201–202, al-Sahmī al-Jurjānī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1987), 511–512, and Ibn Manẓūr, *Akhbār Abī Nuwās*, eds. 'Abbās al-Shirbīnī and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rasūl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1924), 1:151–152; attributed to an unnamed *muḥaddith* who was in love with a youth in Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Tha'libī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, n.d.), 70. On the poet's knowledge of Hadith see Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen Abbāsidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965), 33–38.

63 Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*: *al-A'mashu*.

64 Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn* (both editions) has *kāfirihī*; all other sources have *kāfiratin*; Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*: *lā yadkhulu l-nāra ghayru kāfiratin*.

65 Abū 'Abd Allāh 'Amr b. Shimr (or Shamir) al-Ju'fī (d. c. 160/776), see al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 23:241.

66 He is the famous companion of the prophet Muḥammad, 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652–653), see Jean-Claude Varet, "Ibn Mas'ūd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill,

Only an unbelieving woman breaks her promise,
or an unbelieving man, who will be fettered in Hellfire.

The longer, four- or five-line version found in the *Dīwān* and elsewhere shows that the lines are addressed to a youth who had apparently broken his promise to his lover. Al-Azraq is Ishāq b. Yūsuf al-Azraq al-Wāsiṭī (d. 195/810–811),⁶⁷ and in the anecdote that accompanies the lines in several sources he emphatically denies that he had told Abū Nuwās anything like it. Abū Nuwās actually composed a series of such poems, found in his *Dīwān* in a special subsection of his *mujūn* or “libertine” poetry and entitled his “*musnadāt*” or “*isnād* poems”.⁶⁸ They are all unserious and a few of them are obscene. Ibn Qutayba does not quote them. He was not a prude and in his preface to *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* he explains that quoting obscenities may be justified.⁶⁹ He did, however, not do so in sensitive contexts involving religious matters, something that he condemns in al-Jāhiz.

Ibn Qutayba then drifts away from Hadith, for the following anecdote, with an epigram by Musāwir al-Warrāq and its riposte by someone else, is more about *fiqh* and the use of *qiyās*.⁷⁰ The chapter ends with a joke.⁷¹ A man hears someone cry out: “Who can find for me an old man who has lost his way (*shaykh ḍalla*)?” He then takes the searcher to Bishr al-Marīsī⁷² and says, “Here is an erring old man (*shaykh ḍall*), take him!” This Bishr, as Ibn Qutayba adds, believed in the createdness of the Qurʾān, a hotly debated issue, which by Ibn Qutayba’s time had become an unorthodox position. Again, this concluding anecdote has nothing to do with the topic of Hadith, but it provides at least a seamless transition to the next chapter, on deviant theological opinions (*al-ahwāʾ wa-l-kalām fī al-dīn*).

As so often in *adab*, the section offers a medley of *hazl* and *jidd*, jesting and seriousness. It has little or no structure, the items being strung together at most associatively and virtually without commentary. Just as in Hadith itself, one

1971), 3:873–875. The *isnād* is not only fictitious but incomplete, in view of the time gap between the last two names.

67 al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 1:406.

68 Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, 5:237–247.

69 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 1: Preface, *lām-mīm*.

70 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:140; see Geert Jan van Gelder, “Musāwir al-Warrāq and the Beginnings of Arabic Gastronomic Poetry,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36 (1991): 309–327, esp. 315.

71 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2:140.

72 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī (d. 218/833), a prominent Murjiʿite theologian; see Carra de Vaux, A.N. Nader, and J. Schacht, “Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 1:1241–1242.

often has to read between the lines, hoping one guesses right. System and consistency are not to be expected and perhaps not even desirable in this genre. One could speak of the “molecularity” of *adab*, a term that used to be applied to classical Arabic poetry but is perhaps more suitable for the kind of *adab* of which Ibn Qutayba was a pioneer.

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