CHAPTER 2

A New Hadith Culture? Arab Scholars and Ottoman Sunnitization in the Sixteenth Century

Helen Pfeifer

Ottoman Islam underwent a significant transformation over the course of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries. Whereas in the early period of Ottoman rule many inhabitants of Anatolia and the Balkans had taken a latitudinarian view of the Islamic faith, sampling freely from elements perceived today as Shi’ite or even Christian, as the empire matured, various actors began to place a greater emphasis on what they took to be proper Sunni Islamic belief and practice. This meant, among other things: decrees mandating that the Muslim population not neglect their five daily prayers (as discussed by Evren Sünnetçioğlu in this volume); the construction of congregational mosques in every town and masjids in every village of the empire (as highlighted by Çiğdem Kafescioğlu and Evren Sünnetçioğlu in their contributions); and energized efforts to define and stamp out “heresy” and unbelief (explored by Nir Shafir and Tijana Krstić in their essays). An earlier generation of historians usually referred to such developments as the rise of “fanaticism”; more recently, this has been described as a process of “confessionalization” or “Sunnitization.” 1 Whatever you call it, the fact remains that there was a considerable shift in the self-understanding and practices of Muslims in one of the most powerful Islamic empires of the early modern period.

The difficulty has been explaining why this shift occurred. Tijana Krstić has suggested we view the increased emphasis on Islamic orthodoxy in the context of a larger, Eurasian “age of confessionalization,” contemporaneous to the confessional polarization between Catholics and Protestants in Europe and spurred on by the rise of the Shi’ite Safavids in Persia. She and others have seen the Ottoman confessionalization of the tenth/sixteenth century as a result of interimperial rivalry and the growth of the central state, giving way to a more bottom-up process of confession building in the eleventh/seventeenth. 2

1 For “fanaticism,” see İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, ch. 18. For the terms confessionalization and sunnitization, see Krstić, Contested conversions; Terzioğlu, How to conceptualize, esp. 14; Burak, Faith, law and empire; Terzioğlu, Where ʿilm-i hâl.

2 Krstić, Contested conversions, esp. 14. See also Dressler, Inventing orthodoxy; Necipoğlu, The age of Sinan 47–58.
This analysis is enormously compelling and has many benefits. Most of all, it has allowed historians to normalize a process previously associated with Ottoman decline or with what has often been assumed to be the inherent Islamic propensity for extremism. Yet the perspective also has one key drawback: as Europeanists have observed, the confessionalization model, at least in its original guise, tended to privilege the actions of the state, overstating its power and overlooking the activities of other groups. This article draws attention to one such group, namely scholars based in Arab lands. After 922–923/1516–1517, these became part of a newly incorporated subject population and enjoyed little formal role in Ottoman governance. Still, as this article shows, they contributed measurably to shifts in both the discourse and the practice of Ottoman Islam in the tenth/sixteenth century.

In 922–923/1516–1517, Ottoman armies put an end to the Mamluk Empire, incorporating the predominantly Arab provinces of Syria, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula. This conquest was a watershed moment in many ways: it gave the Ottomans control over the lucrative East-West trade; afforded them access to new agricultural lands and the taxes they produced; and made them the protectors of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina. But perhaps one of the most significant—and, until recently, understudied—aspects of this conquest was the exposure it afforded the Ottoman elite to some of the greatest centers of Islamic scholarship, especially Cairo and Damascus. Though Ottoman scholars had been interacting with these centers in the centuries leading up to 922–923/1516–1517, the conquest made exchanges with them far more frequent and far more intense. These exchanges not only left a lasting mark on Ottoman notions of governance, as described by Derin Terzioğlu in this volume, they also spurred another key aspect of Sunnitization, namely new forms of engagement with the sunna.

The Arabic word sunna, which means “conduct” or “way of life,” refers to the normative example of the Prophet Muḥammad. Historically, the main way the sunna has been preserved and passed on by Muslims is through accounts of Muḥammad’s words and deeds, called hadīth (pl. aḥādīth). Although these accounts could never vie with the status of the Quran—believed by Muslims

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3 Laven, Encountering the Counter-Reformation, esp. 709–710.
4 For intellectual exchanges in the century after the conquest, see Lellouch, Les Ottomans en Égypte; Baş, Tarih yazıcılığı; Burak, The second formation; Kaplan, Polemicist; Özên, Ottoman ʿulamāʾ.
5 This was, however, subject to debate, especially in early centuries when many felt that the sunna was better preserved in the ongoing practices of Muslim communities, especially in Medina. See Hallaq, The origins, esp. ch. 5.
to be the literal word of God—they were (and still are) of crucial importance to believers, since Muḥammad instructed his followers in part through his living example. This example was especially important since it clarified many issues on which the Quran itself was tight-lipped or even silent, ranging from prayer to the annual pilgrimage to taxation. As such, hadith accounts came to form one of the key sources of Islamic law and ritual practice. At the same time, their function was not only legal or doctrinal: over the course of the medieval period, transmitting these accounts from one generation to the next became a cornerstone not only of scholarly authority, but of Islamic devotional practice. It is no small measure of the stature of the sunna that it is from this word that the designation “Sunni” (sunnī) in fact derives.

And yet, we know little about the sunna as it gained meaning in Ottoman lands. There is no full-length English study of Ottoman hadith scholarship, and much research on the topic has been in the form of scattered articles on individual authors or works. So little is known that it is uncertain whether Ottoman institutions of higher education called “hadith schools” (Tr. dârül-ḥadîs) were in fact devoted to the study of hadith at all. This lacuna seems especially regrettable when trying to study Sunnitization, since social movements to bring Muslim societies into closer conformity with Islamic principles have so often been formulated through the lens of the sunna. Was there a comparable development in the Ottoman Empire during the “age of confessionalization”?

This article argues that there was. The evidence I have been able to compile—preliminary and patchy as it is—suggests that although Ottoman scholars had always relied on hadiths for questions of jurisprudence, well into the ninth/fifteenth century, they were less active than their contemporaries in Mamluk lands in studying them for their own sake or in transmitting them to accrue God’s blessings. Starting gingerly in the late ninth/fifteenth century and then accelerating in the tenth/sixteenth, Ottoman scholars began to develop a more expansive “hadith culture,” often under the guidance of their Arab colleagues.

This paper takes as evidence of this process one academic license (ijāza) issued by the Arab scholar Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 984/1577) to the Ottoman chief judge of Damascus Çivizāde Meḥmed (d. 995/1587). The license, issued in

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6 Most of the literature has been in Turkish. For an overview of works on Ottoman hadith studies, see İmamoğlu, Cumhuriyet dönemi. The English-language literature that does exist has often focused on the twelfth/eighteenth century: Gran, The Islamic roots, chs. 2–3; Voll, Hadith scholars; Voll, Abdallah ibn Salim al-Basri.

7 Ayaz, Osmanlı dârülhadisleri.

8 Subtelny and Khalidov, The curriculum 212; Berkey, Tradition, innovation.
Damascus in 978/1570, permitted the judge to transmit a number of hadiths and hadith collections. In doing so, it afforded him access not only to new sources of knowledge and scholarly authority but also to new forms of Islamic devotional practice.

1 Prophetic Traditions in Mamluk Lands

Accounts of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad have been around for as long as the religion itself. However, as the Islamic community and its tradition of scholarship changed and matured, so did the role of hadiths, so that by the late medieval period, they were studied, transmitted, and discussed in new ways.

Initially collected by people who had surrounded the Prophet, hadiths often circulated orally in the first generations after his death. However, as the Islamic community grew and fractured, such accounts became vulnerable to forgery, as various groups tried to channel the Prophet’s legacy in ways that would bolster their own theological or political positions. The result was not only an unmanageable large corpus of narrations—reported to have numbered over half a million by the middle of the third/ninth century—but one riddled with accounts that were of dubious authenticity.9 In an effort to stabilize the tradition and sort out the legitimate from the forged accounts, scholars increasingly began to compile collections focused on hadiths considered authentic (ṣaḥīḥ).10 The two most important of these works were written by Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and his student Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875); these came to be referred to collectively as “the two authentic ones” (al-Ṣaḥīḥayn). Though it took time for these collections to gain full acceptance, by the fifth/eleventh century they were at the heart of a widely agreed upon Sunni hadith canon (Shi’ite scholars instead privileged a different set of prophetic traditions). Together with four other hadith collections widely accepted as authoritative, many Sunni scholars came to speak of “the six books.”11

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9 This was the number of narrations (not necessarily discrete hadiths, but sometimes different narrations of the same account) said to have been considered by Bukhārī while he compiled his collection. Brown, Hadith 32.

10 For the Shi’ite tradition, see Brown, Hadith, ch. 4.

11 The exact composition of these six books could vary (and some spoke of “the five books”), but the hard core of this canon was undisputed, consisting of Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and Nasā’ī. Brown, Hadith 38–40.
At the same time, the study of hadith was developing into a key discipline in its own right. There were a variety of genres through which scholars examined the *sunna*, including, among other things: overviews of the basic principles for analyzing hadith (*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*); works clarifying hadith terminology or difficult words or names (*muṣṭalāh, sharh gharīb al-ḥadīth*); analyses of those who had transmitted hadith from one generation to the next (*rijāl, ṭabaqāt*); and what was seen as an ambitious hadith scholar’s capstone project, usually pursued at the end of his life, a full commentary on one of the six canonical collections.¹²

One of the most important centers for hadith scholarship in the late medieval Islamic world was the Mamluk Empire. From the seventh/thirteenth century onward, Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz were the leading hubs of hadith scholarship globally, such that by the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century, Damascus alone had 16 operational madrasas devoted to hadith study (*dār al-ḥadīth*).¹³ Students educated in Mamluk lands, regardless of their intellectual interests, could be expected to receive a thorough grounding in hadith studies. Ghazzī’s father Raḍī al-Dīn (d. 939/1529) (one of his most important teachers) had studied a number of different works outlining the basic principles of hadith as a young man.¹⁴ ʿAbdal-Raḥīm al-ʿAbbāsī (d. 963/1555), an Egyptian scholar and family friend, had completed a full reading of Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* by his eleventh birthday.¹⁵ Although Ghazzī himself never became a prolific writer in the field, he, too, enjoyed a rigorous education in it, since one of his contemporaries mentioned that in Ghazzī’s youth, “most of his work at that time was focused on jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and hadith.”¹⁶ The generations before Ghazzī had been especially scintillating in this arena, led by the two Cairo luminar—

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¹² “Commentaries attained an important station in the late 1300s, when writing one on al-Bukhārī’s or Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* became the principal means for scholars throughout the Sunni Muslim world to interact with the hadith tradition.” Brown, *Hadith* 53. See also Blecher, *Said the Prophet*, intro. Türcan sees the seventh/thirteenth century as the beginning of an age of hadith commentary. Türcan, Osmanlı döneni 145.

¹³ Blecher, *Said the Prophet* 7, 49; Gökçe, Hadis çalışmalar 45.

¹⁴ This included the *Alfiyya* by Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404) as well as Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nukḥbat al-fikar* and the scholar’s own commentary on it. Al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib* ii, 4.


ies, Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) and Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451). Although the later scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) preferred a more concise commentarial style compared to his predecessors, his output suggests that the interest in hadith had not lagged by the last decades of Mamluk rule: by the end of his life, Suyūṭī had written and compiled over 200 works on the subject.

Alongside the scholarly study of hadiths, Mamluk-era scholars were also committed to transmitting them from one generation to the next. In the early generations of the tradition, oral transmission had seemed like the best way to ensure that the legacy of Muḥammad would not be corrupted. Into the fourth/tenth century, most scholars believed that it was necessary to hear each individual hadith account orally in order to be able to make use of that hadith in one’s scholarly or judicial practice. Although this had always been tedious, with the broad acceptance of a written canon of “authentic” hadiths in the fifth/eleventh century, it gradually also became redundant. Increasingly, it came to suffice to ensure that your copy of Bukhārī or Muslim was correct.

And yet, as Garrett Davidson has shown, this did not mean that transmission ceased; rather, its meaning changed. On the one hand, hadith transmission came to act as a marker of status. By the fifth/eleventh century, emphasis was increasingly placed on being a link in a chain of transmission that was particularly short (ʿālī; literally, “elevated”), that is, having heard and been granted permission to transmit prophetic reports with the fewest possible intermediaries between oneself and Muḥammad. The same logic was applied to the six canonical hadith collections, so that scholars began to collect chains of authorities that connected them not to Muḥammad but to famous compilers like Bukhārī or Muslim. Since obtaining permission to transmit these narrations often required traveling to seek out those transmitters who could grant it, and since those scholars could grant or withhold those accounts at will, assembling short chains of transmission became a mark of considerable capital, actual and social.

17 “At the peak of intellectual activity in Mamluk Cairo in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, almost every hadith scholar of note wrote a commentary on Sahīh al-Bukhārī, and in India from the 1600s onward writing a commentary on one of the Sahihayn was de rigueur for accomplished Muslim scholars.” Brown, Hadith 53.
18 Saleh, Al-Suyūṭī and his works. For the transformation of commentary since the time of Ibn Ḥajar, see Blecher, Usefulness without toil.
19 Works listing the chains of transmission for books were called fihrist or thabat. Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 254–273 and ch. 5.
On the other hand, the transmission of hadiths played an important role in devotional practice. Transmitting prophetic traditions was increasingly cast as a pious act, the special prerogative of the Muslim community and a way of securing blessings from God.20 “The chain of transmission is a part of the religion” (al-īsnaʿād min al-dīn), an oft-quoted saying went; scholars warned that moving away from such a practice might cause the Muslim community to incur God’s wrath.21 Transmitting hadiths also became increasingly important as a means of establishing spiritual proximity to the Prophet Muḥammad, whose lifetime was seeming ever more remote with each passing generation; Ibn Ḥajar, the Cairene hadith specialist who had taught our Ghazzī’s teacher, was one of many to cite the adage that “proximity in chain of transmission is a proximity to God.”22

In Mamluk lands, hadith transmission reached a fevered pitch. Into the eighth/fourteenth century, transmitters staged public audition sessions (sa-māʿ) where not only scholars but women, merchants, and craftsmen could follow along as entire books of hadith were read aloud, thus becoming authorized to transmit them.23 Although this time-consuming practice subsequently fell into disuse, the ʿijāza jumped in to fill the breach: increasingly, authority to transmit hadith works could be granted without these drawn-out readings.24 Transmitters began issuing hadith licenses not only to individuals they had never met but also to infants and even, according to some, to unborn children. These sorts of practices allowed Ghazzī, who was six and living in Damascus when Suyūṭī died, to transmit hadith on the great scholar’s authority.25 Scholars like Ibn Ḥajar took to compiling entire catalogues of the names of individuals from whom they had been permitted to transmit hadith, with special subsections (or even free-standing works) devoted to those with the shortest chains or to those they had never personally met.26 Although many of these practices were especially important to hadith specialists, transmitting hadith was desirable to all scholars, including those who, like Ghazzi, were not particularly active in the field, or even, in the words of Suyūṭī, to “common people, rabble, women, and old men.”27

20 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition, ch. 1.
21 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak quoted in Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 14.
22 Ibn Ḥajar quoted in Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 31; Brown, Hadith 46–49.
23 Hirschler, Written word, esp. ch. 2.
24 Hirschler, Monument, esp. 74–89; Davidson, Carrying on the tradition, chs. 2–3.
25 Al-Ghazzī, ʿIjāza 232b. For these practices, see Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 138–149.
26 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 146, 149–150.
27 Suyūṭī cited in Blecher, Usefulness without toil 185. See also Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 153.
This general interest in and respect for prophetic hadith left a mark, not just on textual traditions but on the sociability that underpinned scholarly and elite practice. As Joel Blecher has shown, prophetic traditions were inseparable from a learned culture of performance and debate. In ninth/fifteenth-century Mamluk lands, Bukhārī’s Sahīḥ was read aloud and commented on publicly in times of celebration or distress.28 So, too, was hadith commentary an energetic and interactive activity: teachers often delivered their commentaries in live sessions, stopping for questions from students, and Mamluk sultans staged live debates over the interpretation of the tradition.29 These debates demanded an incredibly high-level engagement with the prophetic tradition: scholars were often expected to recite hadiths with their appendant isnāds and to show familiarity with, and weigh in on, the variety of ways hadiths had been read in the commentarial tradition.30 Some scholars even memorized entire hadith commentaries, the better to defend themselves when debating with other scholars.31 But hadiths were also part and parcel of a broader culture of polite conversation. Some scholars made herculean efforts to commit prophetic traditions to memory, with Suyūṭī claiming to have memorized 200,000 of them.32 Not only did this provide such scholars with an instantaneous, searchable hadith database useful in scholarly debates, it also made for virtuosic shows of memory during garden parties.33 Ghazzī’s father and many of his ninth/fifteenth-century contemporaries often set hadiths to a rhyme, the better to recite them in polite company.34 Hadiths were so widespread that some scholars worried about story-tellers relaying hadiths to commoners in ways that were misleading or downright incorrect.35

This emphasis on hadith permeated all corners of Mamluk scholarly culture, regardless of the school of law. Traditionally, the four legal schools had been divided into those more and less amenable to hadith study. Together with the Hanbalis, Shafi’i jurists counted themselves as part of the ahl al-ḥadīth, or partisans of the hadith tradition. Indeed, most of the men mentioned thus far—the Ghazzis, Ibn Ḥajar, Suyūṭī—were Shafi’is. Things were a bit different within the Hanafi (as well as Maliki) legal school, which had been heavily influenced by

29 Ibid., esp. chs. 3–5.
30 Ibid., ch. 5, esp. 87.
31 Ibid. 82.
32 Saleh, Al-Suyūṭī 75.
33 Ghazzī recited this to a friend when they met. *Al-Ghazzī, Al-maṭāliʿ al-Badrīyya* 187. This had been common practice earlier as well. Blecher, *Hadith* commentary 276.
34 Berkey, *The tradition* 60–62.
the Mu'tazilite rationalist tradition and applied different standards in determining which hadiths were sound enough to be used in deriving law. Given the vehement disagreement between the Hanafi school's founder Abū Ḥanīfa and the compiler Bukhārī, it should come as no surprise that Hanafis were slow to accept the collections otherwise considered canonical. Throughout much of the late medieval period, Hanafis helped to transmit Bukhārī's and Muslim's works, but rarely subjected them to close study.

However, in the context of the widespread veneration for the hadith tradition, even Hanafi scholars from Mamluk lands began to engage avidly with it. Gradually, they began to subject it to more serious scholarship. In the seventh/thirteenth century, the first Hanafi digests of Bukhārī and Muslim began to appear, the most famous of which was the South Asian scholar Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī’s (d. 650/1252) *Mashāriq al-anwār* (Dawning of the light). By the eighth/forteenth century, Hanafis in Cairo and Damascus had begun using Bukhārī and Muslim to validate the hadiths used in foundational Hanafi texts. Jonathan Brown has argued that this occurred in large part in response to debates with members of other legal schools, for whom the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* acted as the sources for authoritative hadiths: how could Hanafis win debates with members of other legal schools if they could not prove that the hadiths on which their rulings relied were widely accepted as authentic? In response to such pressures, Hanafis began to devote more serious attention to the canonical collections, especially to Bukhārī and Muslim. By the ninth/fifteenth century, the Hanafi scholar ‘Aynī could be the key rival to the Shafi‘i Ibn Ḥajar in aiming to write the authoritative commentary on Bukhārī.

Hanafis living in Mamluk lands also joined in the general effort to gather chains of transmission that were particularly short or prestigious. Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546), a Hanafi scholar from Damascus, recounted hearing “the threes”

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36 Brown, *The canonization*; Brown, *Hadith*. As Joseph Schacht points out, the term *ahl al-ra‘y*, or “the partisans of legal reasoning,” was a term of depreciation used by the *ahl al-hadith* against the Hanafis in particular (but also the Malikis), and never used by Hanafis themselves. Schacht, *Aṣḥābi al-ra‘y*.
38 Ibid. 140–41.
39 Ibid. 226. The full title of Ṣaghānī’s work, which combined the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim, was *Mashāriq al-anwār al-nabawīyya ‘alā Ṣīḥāh al-akhbār al-muṣṭafawīyya*. Baalbaki, Ṣaghānī.
41 Ibid. 209–240, esp. 235–236.
42 Ibid. 235–239.
(al-thulāthiyāt)—that is, all of the hadiths that Bukhārī had transmitted with only three links to the Prophet Muḥammad—from the four chief judges of Mamluk Egypt during their visit to Damascus in 922/1516. Ibn Ṭūlūn also compiled a work in the genre of “geographical 40 hadith” (arbaʿūn buldāniyya), which presented 40 hadiths he had received from 40 transmitters in 40 different places. In addition, he wrote a small-, medium-, and large-sized catalogue (fihrist) of everything he had been given permission to transmit (mar-wiyāt).

To be sure, the Mamluk hadith tradition was itself in flux. Audition sessions, as we have seen, gradually petered out, as did the sessions for dictating hadith commentary that had garnered so much attention in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century. Still, other forms of engagement with the sunna gained in popularity, such as the more concise commentaries of Suyūṭī or the “40 hadith” collections (arbaʿūn ḥadīth) that had their heyday during the last century of Mamluk rule. On the whole, for Shafi’is, Hanbalis, and Hanafis educated in Syria and Egypt before the Ottoman conquest, prophetic hadiths remained an important field of scholarly interest, a prized sphere for seeking blessings and proximity to the Prophet, and a vibrant arena for social interaction.

2 Prophetic Traditions in Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Lands

Though the research is still preliminary, it seems that the enthusiasm of scholars in Syria and Egypt for hadith scholarship did not have a counterpart in late medieval Anatolia. Of course, Anatolian madrasa students had been studying the traditions of the Prophet for many generations for the purposes of Islamic jurisprudence. However, they appear to have been less interested than scholars from Mamluk domains in studying prophetic traditions in their own right or transmitting them for the sake of accruing blessings. This was likely due to the

44 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 225–226. For another Hanafi scholar based in Mamluk lands who was considered a muḥaddith and was energetic in transmitting hadith, see ʿUlaymī, al-Uns 346–347.
45 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 217. He also seems to have compiled another work in the forty hadith genre. Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 123.
46 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 274; Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 125.
47 Blecher, Usefulness without toil 184–185.
48 For the former, see Blecher, Usefulness without toil; for the latter, see Karahan, Kirk hadis 70; Davidson, Carrying on the tradition ch. 5, esp. 211. For the genre more broadly, see Lucas, Forty traditions; Karahan, Arbaʿūn ḥadīthan.
fact that scholars hailing from Anatolia were, for the most part, of a Hanafi disposition, as were many of the Persian and Central Asian scholars from whom they took much of their intellectual inspiration. In the majority Hanafi context of late medieval Anatolia, scholars in the growing Ottoman polity did not come under the same pressure as scholars in Mamluk centers of learning did to study prophetic hadith as an independent scholarly discipline. Although this did begin to change in the ninth/fifteenth century, in the areas of scholarship, transmission, and conversation culture, Ottoman interest in hadith remained more muted and reliant on expertise from abroad.

The relative indifference of Ottoman scholars to in-depth hadith studies in the ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries is reflected in educational patterns. Some scholars have pointed to the estimable number of Ottoman hadith schools (dârü'l-ḥadīs) to suggest how vibrant an intellectual field it was.49 Yet, as Kadir Ayaz has recently argued, the libraries of some of these institutions suggest that they may have been more like normal madrasas than places specializing in hadith.50 According to the foundation document (waqfiyya) of the Edirne dârü'l-ḥadīs, which was built in 838/1435, the only books of hadith contained in the school’s library were nine compilations (including Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ṣaghānī, among others) and three commentaries; there is no mention of any works laying out the principles of hadith (uṣūl al-ḥadīth) of the sort that Ghazzī and his father had studied in Damascus and Cairo.51 A similar tendency is suggested by the education of the influential Ottoman scholar Ahmed Taşköprüzâde (d. 968/1561) in the first two decades of the tenth/sixteenth century: to judge from his own autobiographical account, Taşköprüzâde only started studying hadith seriously toward the end of his education, when he read parts of Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ with the Tunisian-born scholar Muhammad al-Maghūshi (d. 947/1540).52 Although Taşköprüzâde did teach

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49 The first dârü'l-ḥadīs madrasas were founded in Anatolia in the Seljuk period around the same time as they became widespread in Damascus and Cairo. The first Ottoman dârü'l-ḥadīs was founded in the reign of Murād I (763–791/1362–1389) in İznik. Yardum, Darülhadis 529–530. For a general overview of hadith education in Ottoman lands, see Karacabey, Hadis öğretmeni.
50 Ayaz, Osmanlı dârulhadislər. Molla Gürənî founded a dârü'l-ḥadīs in Istanbul as well, and it would be interesting to see whether teaching there was more focused on hadith. Yardum, Darülhadis 530.
51 Ayaz, Osmanlı dârulhadislər 56–63. See also Ayaz, Zâhid el-Kevserî 65. However, as Ayaz himself notes, more research on early library collections still need to be done. For uṣūl al-ḥadīth, see Dickinson, Uṣūl al-ḥadīth.
52 Taşköprüzâde, Al-Shaqāʾiq 269–270 (where it is Ghūthi), 326–327; Mecdî, Tercüme-i Şa-
quite a bit of hadith at the madrasa appointments he received from the early 930s/mid-1520s onward, much of his focus (especially at the lower madrasas) was on works written for the jurist rather than for the hadith specialist, like Șaghâni’s *Mashâriq al-anwâr* and al-Ḥusayn al-Baghawi’s (d. 516/1122) *Maṣâbîḥ al-sunna* (The lamps of the sunna). Although Taşköprüzâde did teach Bukhări at the more advanced madrasas, he made no mention of having ever studied, or taught, any hadith commentaries or any *uṣūl al-ḥadîth* works. This evidence has led Ayaz to argue that hadith training in ninth/fifteenth-century Ottoman lands seems to have been a function of the study of jurisprudence.

The output of Ottoman scholars in the ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries indicates a similarly limited interest in hadith scholarship. Of the important works Taşköprüzâde highlighted in his 965/1558 biographical dictionary of Ottoman scholars, a little over a quarter were in the field of jurisprudence (̈fiqh) and another quarter treated theological matters (kalâm, ′aqāʾid). Hadith studies instead constituted a meager two percent. Similar patterns emerge from analyses of the scholarly output of professors teaching at the Edirne dârül-ḥadîs from its founding until the mid-tenth/sixteenth century, of which under five percent focused on hadith.

Early Ottoman scholars rarely drafted the sort of *uṣūl al-ḥadîth* works on which students relied while training in the subject. Preliminary censes of such works have thus far identified only two written by Ottoman authors before the middle of the tenth/sixteenth century, a work completed in 856/1452 by

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53 Ṣaghâni’s work, in the words of Qasim Zaman, would have “done little to satisfy those who saw the study of ḥadîth as more than a crucial milestone on the path to juristic training, and who sought, rather, to anchor their scholarly endeavors, their piety and their authority in ḥadîth itself.” Zaman, Transmitters of authority 585. Taşköprüzâde’s focus accords with that of the palace library under Bayezid II, which placed special emphasis on Bukhâri (28 copies), Baghawi (23 copies), Muslim (8 copies), and Șaghâni (7–8 copies), at the expense of other canonical works such as Tirmidhi’s *al-jâmiʿ*, of which there was not a single exemplar. Göktaş, Hadith collection 311, 314.


56 Ayaz, Osmanlı dârulhâdisleri 41.

57 Ibid. 58.
Şihâbe'd-dîn Sîvâsî (d. 860/1456) and a two-page treatise written by Kemâl-paşazâde (d. 940/1534).58 Nor did Taşköprüzâde mention a single such book as a key oeuvre of the hundreds of Ottoman scholars he profiled.59 This seems to be reflective of a broader lack of interest in the subject, if the palace library of Bâyezîd II is any indication: it contained only a handful of usûl al-hadîth works—not one of which had been written by an Ottoman author—and was equally sparsely equipped with works of rijāl.560

Although hadith commentaries were comparatively more common, these appeared toward the later ninth/fifteenth century and were rarely devoted to the sorts of technical questions that occupied specialists in the field. Before the conquest of 922–923/1516–1517, there were only a few commentaries written on Bukhârî’s Şâhih in Ottoman lands; it is telling that the first person known to have done so, in 874/1469, was Molla Gürânî (d. 983/1488), who had studied hadith in Cairo under Ibn Ḥajar.61 The Ottoman-educated scholar Molla Luṭfî (d. 930/1495) followed suit with a commentary on a few sections of Bukhârî.62 The final known Bukhârî commentary written in the Ottoman lands before the conquest of 922–923/1516–1517 was again written by Kemâl-paşazâde, though this did not circulate widely.63 In the same period, a comparable number of commentaries were written on the digests of Şaghânî and Baghâwî.64 Though I have not had the chance to review these commentaries, the fact that many of them were written on compilations perceived as jurisprudential tools reinforces the belief that the Ottoman interest in hadith derived largely from a legal perspective; indeed, a recent study of one of Kemâl-paşazâde’s hadith commentaries found that the sources on which it relied most heavily were not other such commentaries but rather works of Hanafi jurisprudence (fiqh).65 Reviewing the hadith commentaries in the palace collection in the time of Bâyezîd II, Recep Gürkan Göktas concludes that, on the whole, Ottoman scholars pre-
ferred shorter handbooks focused mainly on hadith content—the sort of thing common in Persianate lands—over the more exacting, specialist works of their neighbors to the south. “In general,” he observes, “Ottoman scholars of Anatolia and Rumelia seem to have had an aversion to technical aspects of hadith scholarship.”

In the arena of hadith transmission, it also seems that Ottoman scholars were less keen than their Mamluk-based counterparts. Ottoman scholars did grant and receive *ijāza* for hadith long before the tenth/sixteenth century. However, most of these appear to have had less the character of licenses given specifically to transmit hadith (*ijāzāt al-riwāya*) than licenses to teach it (*ijāzāt al-tadrīs*). Take, for example, an *ijāza* issued to the Ottoman scholar Mü‘eyyedzāde ‘Abdur-rahmān (d. 922/1516) in 888/1483 after he had spent several years in Shiraz studying with the Persian scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502). Although the *ijāza* stated at the outset that it would license Mü‘eyyedzāde in both the rational sciences (*‘aqlī*), like philosophy, and the transmitted sciences (*naqlī*), of which hadith was a part, its emphasis was clearly on the former. In the discussion of rational sciences, the *ijāza* traced Dawānī’s intellectual genealogy scholar by scholar back several centuries to “the source,” namely, the philosopher and polymath Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037). In contrast, the *ijāza* traced the genealogy for Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* back only two generations, that is, to Dawānī’s teacher and his teacher’s teacher, information so limited as to be useless for a student wishing to link himself to Bukhārī through a concrete, and if possible short, series of intermediaries. It is not that Dawānī did not recognize short *isnāds*—he mentions that one of his teachers (from Egypt) possessed them—but he did not mention having them himself, nor did he pass them on to Mü‘eyyedzāde.

Indeed, few of the Ottoman scholars Taşköprüzāde mentioned in his biographical dictionary were described as having short chains of transmission, and the exception proves the rule: the Cairo-educated scholar and Ghazzī family friend ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-‘Abbāsi (mentioned above), who had visited Istanbul briefly around the turn of the tenth/sixteenth century and settled there after the conquest. Another early scholar who could boast elevated chains

66 Göktaş, Hadith collection 312–313.
67 On this distinction, see Davidson, *Carrying on the tradition* 109–111.
68 The text of the *ijāza* has been published in Pfeiffer, *Teaching the learned* 321–322. For the influence of Dawānī and the Persianate tradition more broadly on Ottoman scholarship, see Nabil Al-Tikriti’s contribution in this volume.
69 Ibid. 321. The teacher in question was the Cairo-trained scholar Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429).
70 Taşköprüzāde, *Al-Shaqāʾiq* 246.
of transmission was Sa'di Çelebi (d. 945/1539), mufti (jurist) and chief judge of Constantinople, who recited on the authority of three men who had studied or worked in Arab lands. ⁷¹

Finally, it seems that, in preconquest Ottoman lands, hadiths did not serve the same role in elite or public debate. Taşköprüzade, unlike his contemporary Arab biographers, offered few anecdotes on which Ottoman scholars discussed hadith, though he frequently mentioned other topics of scholarly debate. ⁷²

As late as the eleventh/seventeenth century, Evliyâ Çelebi noted that scholars from Arab lands placed a greater emphasis on prophetic traditions than those who were centrally trained, astounding that some of them had memorized 20,000 or 30,000 hadiths. ⁷³

Given all of this, it comes at little surprise that through the early tenth/sixteenth century much of the interest in hadith scholarship came from scholars educated in Arab lands. Right up until the conquest, Ottoman scholars with a particular interest in prophetic traditions often went to the Mamluk lands for their studies, and scholars educated there often became leaders in the field back home. ⁷⁴ We have already seen that the first Ottoman commentary on Bukhârî was written by the Cairo-trained scholar Gürâni, who was considered one of the foremost hadith experts in Anatolia. ⁷⁵ That such expertise contin-

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⁷¹ The three scholars were: the Egyptian-born scholar Zakariyyâ al-Ansârî (d. 926/1520); Yusuf al-Ḥusaynî, who was probably the Shirazi born scholar who served as judge in Baghdad and died in 921/1516; and a scholar likely from Egypt. It is not clear when Sa'di came into contact with these men, and since two out of three of them are thought to have died between 1515–1520, it is clear that he received at least some of these before the Ottoman conquest. Sa'dî explained in the ījâza that he had been licensed to transmit the thulâthiyyât of Bukhârî, that is, those hadiths that Bukhârî had transmitted with only three links to the Prophet. Atâî, Hadaîka't-hâkaik 140–141; Repp, The müfti of Istanbul 241 and n137. Sa'dî is also known to have been influenced intellectually by the Aleppo scholar Ibârim al-Ḥalabî (d. 956/1549), who had enjoyed extensive hadith training in Mamluk lands before settling in Istanbul around the turn of the tenth/sixteenth century. Has, Ibârim al-Ḥalabî 2–6; Kaplan, Polemicist, esp. ch. 3.

⁷² He did mention that Molla Luṭfî recited Bukhârî's Šaḥîh every afternoon. Taşköprüzade, Al-Ṣaḥâqî'iq 171.

⁷³ Ayaz, Osmanlı dürûlhadisleri 63.

⁷⁴ Türcan, Osmanlı dönemi 143–144. According to the Arab historian and hadith specialist Muhammad al-Sakhâwî (d. 902/1497), writing at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, Ibn al-Jazârî (d. 833/1429), a Damascus-based scholar who came to the court of Bâyezîd 1 in the last years of the eighth/fourteenth century, was active in spreading the study of prophetic traditions in Anatolia (although Taşköprüzade does not highlight this). Al-Sakhâwî, Al-Dawâ' al-Lâmi' ix, 256–257; Taşköprüzade, Al-Shaqaqî'iq 25–29.

⁷⁵ For Gürâni's influence, see Taşköprüzade, Al-Shaqaqî'iq 53.
ued to be valued into the early tenth/sixteenth century is suggested by the experience of the aforementioned ʿAbbāsī when he visited Istanbul from his native Syria in 906/1501. During an audience with Bāyezīd II, ʿAbbāsī presented the sultan his newly finished commentary on Bukhārī’s Ṣahīḥ. The commentary focused on defining uncommon words (gharīb al-ḥadīth), that is, rare or obscure terms that appeared in the accounts Bukhārī had included. The sultan, apparently pleased with this offering, invited ʿAbbāsī to accept an appointment to teach hadith at his newly built madrasa. ‘Abbāsī declined and soon returned to the Mamluk lands, where he was hearing hadith from Suyūṭī in 908/1502–1503.

It thus seems safe to say that on the eve of the conquest, Ottoman scholars had narrower interests as far as hadith scholarship was concerned than their counterparts from Mamluk lands. Although attention to the field had begun to pick up in the later ninth/fifteenth century, often inspired by interactions with colleagues from Mamluk Syria and Egypt, Ottoman scholars were less committed on the whole to hadith scholarship, transmission, and conversation. This certainly does not mean that the Ottoman intellectual tradition was somehow defective or lacking. In fact, it appears that this was the norm in much of the Sunni Islamic world: in South Asia (also predominantly Hanafi) as well as in Persia and Central Asia, hadith studies also generated less excitement than the rational sciences and Islamic law. Still, faced with scholars from Mamluk lands, Hanafi and Shafiʾi alike, who viewed hadith commentary

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76 It is unclear when ʿAbbāsī arrived in Constantinople, but he was there when he finished the manuscript on 24 Shaʿbān 906/15 March 1501. ʿAbdal-Raḥīm al-ʿAbbāsī, Fayd al-bārī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi MS Atıf Efendi 529, 315a. For more on ʿAbbāsī and Fayd al-bārī, see Heinrichs ʿAbdal-Raḥīm al-ʿAbbāsī 12–21.

77 This was a popular genre of commentary in Mamluk lands, though it had earlier origins. Blecher, *Said the Prophet* 5; Bonebakker, Gharīb.

78 This stands in great contrast to the mistrust with which Mamluk-era Arab scholars treated Persian chains of authority. Blecher, *Said the Prophet* ch. 5.


80 Blecher points out that both in terms of the output of the teachers and the studies of students, hadith scholarship in Khorasan was comparatively less well developed than in the contemporary Mamluk lands. The renowned Timurid scholar Saʿd al-Din al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390), venerated in Ottoman lands, was not known for original hadith scholarship, and when Ibn al-Jazarī was taken to Persia by Timūr, local scholars were eager to study with him. On the comparative strength of hadith scholarship in Arab lands vis-à-vis contemporary Persian lands, see Blecher, *In the shade* 64–67; Subtleny and Khalidov, *Curriculum* 219; Gökçe, *Hadis çalışmalar* 42. For South Asia, see Zaman, *Transmitters* 587–588.
as an academic capstone and hadith transmission as an act of religious devotion, Ottoman scholars took note.

3 Learning from the Conquered

If the seeds for the Ottoman engagement with the hadith tradition were sown in the late ninth/fifteenth century, they flowered in the tenth/sixteenth. After the conquest of 922–923/1516–1517, travel across the newly expanded empire increased, and scholars, both Arab and Turcophone, were some of the most mobile populations of all. With this, interactions between Ottoman- and Mamluk-educated scholars increased, making hadith more present in the lives of Ottoman scholars.

After 922–923/1516–1517, Istanbul-trained Turcophone scholars quickly established their supremacy within the expanded learned and judicial hierarchy. They continued to occupy the overwhelming majority of professorships in the imperial center, as well as key judgeships in the newly added provinces. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, this should not blind us to other arenas of knowledge exchange, especially informal learned gatherings (majālis al-ʿilm). With the growing presence of scholars from former Mamluk domains in such gatherings, there were increasing conversations on the subject of the sunna, with the result that prophetic traditions became ever more visible in the Ottoman scholarly world.

Scholars based in Arab lands continued to venerate and discuss hadith after their incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. One of Ghazzī’s students in Damascus held an annual feast in honor of Bukhārī’s Šaḥīḥ. Ghazzī, like his father before him, continued to pepper his speech with hadiths that he had set to a rhyme. On his way to Istanbul in 936/1530, he stopped in Aleppo for a discussion with a local mufti. The mufti asked about the authenticity of a hadith about hope and fear. Ghazzī answered by citing several different scholarly opinions: although the Cairene scholar Muḥammad al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) had considered it as a tradition that was widespread but without proper textual foundation, in fact ‘Abdallah b. Aḥmad (d. 290/903) had included it in his compendium Zawāʾid al-Zuhd (Supplemental material on pious excellence) on the

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81 Pfeifer, Encounter after the conquest.
82 Ibn Ayyūb, al-Rawḍ 45b.
83 Al-Būrīnī, Tarājim ii, 131; al-Ghazzī, Al-Maṭāliʿ 187 (mentioned above).
authority of the Iraqi ascetic Thābit al-Bunānī (d. 120s/738–748), as Suyūṭī had laid out in one of his books.84

Ottoman scholars trained in Istanbul were often present during such discussions. In one conversation between an Ottoman chief judge and a local Arab scholar in Damascus around the mid-960s/late 1550s, the discussion turned to whether fasting suppressed hunger. The judge asked the local scholar, who was famous for his knowledge of hadith, whether there were any hadiths that touched upon the question, which the scholar duly cited.85 In the early 980s/mid-1570s, the Ottoman mufti Meḥmed Muʿīdzāde (d. 983/1576) was present during one of Ghazzī’s learned gatherings at which debate centered on a hadith about the permissibility of buying and selling concubines.86 Increasingly, Ottoman scholars were confronted with colleagues who placed great importance on prophetic traditions.

To finally turn our attention to Çivizāde’s ijāza, this, too, emerged out of the context of a scholarly gathering. Çivizāde, who was from a prominent learned family, had been appointed chief judge of Damascus at the beginning of 976/in the summer of 1568.87 He had met with Ghazzī frequently during his time in office.88 Now, toward the end of his tenure in Damascus and after a festive gathering celebrating the end of one of Ghazzī’s courses (majlis khatm), Çivizāde lingered a bit to speak privately with Ghazzī.89 He wanted to know: would Ghazzī be willing to grant him an ijāza? At first, Ghazzī thought his colleague was joking, since Çivizāde, nearly 40 years of age, was a seasoned scholar in his own right and himself issued such licenses to others. But, having ascertained the seriousness of the request, Ghazzī obliged.90 The transfer of knowledge and authority that resulted was immense: a copy of the license held in the Kastamonu Public Library spans more than 18 pages.91 The vast majority of these pages listed the genealogies by which Ghazzī, and henceforth Çivizāde, could transmit hadith.

84 Al-Ghazzī, Al-Maṭāliʿ 67–68.
85 The judge in question was Ebū’s-suʿūd Efendi’s son. Ibn Ayyūb, Das Kitāb 44.
86 Al-Būrīnī, Tarājim, ii, 95–96. For Muʿīdzāde, see al-Murādī, ʿArf al-Bashām 34–35; al-Ghazzī, Al-Kawākib 3:85.
87 There are conflicting dates as to his appointment. The local scholar Ibn Ayyūb says he arrived at the beginning of 976/late summer 1568. Ibn Ayyūb, Dhayl Quḍāt Dimashq 330.
88 Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 232a.
89 The final session was held in one of the side rooms of the Umayyad Mosque on 6 Jumādā 1 978/6 October 1570, shortly before Çivizāde left to take up his appointment as chief judge in Cairo. Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 232b.
90 Ibid.
91 It ends abruptly on fol. 240b, but very likely the ijāza was nearing its end.
The license did permit Çivizāde to relate Ghazzī’s larger corpus of writings, thus functioning in part as what was known as a license for nonspecified material (ijāza muṭlaqa). As Ghazzī stated at the beginning of the license, he permitted Çivizāde to “recite on my authority all of my writings, all that was licensed to me, and all my [hadith] narrations [muṣannafātī wa mustajāzātī wa marwīyatī].”92 Ghazzī listed his most important works in a number of different scholarly fields, as well as his most important teachers, including Suyūṭī and Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī.93 This followed the standard practice by which scholars had come to grant licenses permitting students to transmit increasingly large bodies of information.94

However, the great bulk of the ijāza was devoted to hadith. Of special interest were the six canonical hadith collections. Much of the document—about five pages—laid out the chains of transmission by which Ghazzī had been licensed to transmit Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī, and Ibn Māja (in that order).95 In the case of Bukhārī, Ghazzī noted that he transmitted the author’s work on the authority of a variety of different teachers, the most important of which went through Ibn Ḥajar (see figure 2.1).96 But he also mentioned a second, particularly short, route by which he was connected to Bukhārī, namely through the stone mason and star transmitter Abū ‘Abbās al-Hajjār (d. 730/1329).97 This left a mere eight links between Ghazzī and Bukhārī (nine for Çivizāde), which meant in the case of some hadiths as few as eleven links between Ghazzī and the Prophet (twelve for Çivizāde). Ghazzī also licensed Çivizāde in two chains of transmission for Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ collection, one of which went through Ghazzī’s father, and the other of which went through the chief judge Burhān al-Dīn Ibrahim Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Maqdisi (d. 923/1517).98 Çivizāde did not actually read all of these books with Ghazzī before receiving the ijāza; rather, as Ghazzī explained in his text, he simply asked Çivizāde to read the first few passages of each work (as was standard protocol in this period).99

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid. 239a–240a.
94 Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 129–135.
95 Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 232b–239a.
96 This was a famous isnād, and a similar one is given in an ijāza reproduced in Aḥmad, al-Ijāzāt 83–43. Blecher, Said the Prophet 85–86, 99.
97 Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 234a. He stops recounting the isnād at al-Hajjār, presumably because it was so well known that it did not need specifying. See Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 163–166.
98 Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 234a.
99 This is to be distinguished from more rigorous forms of hadith education in which he read and discussed these hadith collections, as he did with other students (e.g., al-Ghazzī, al-Kawākib ii, 105).
In addition to offering access to chains of transmission for major hadith collections, Ghazzī also isolated a few free-standing hadiths to transmit to Çivizāde. Some of these helped to incorporate Çivizāde into illustrious chains of scholarly authority. One of these was the “hadith of mercy,” which was, by tradition, the first hadith a teacher transmitted when he took on a new student (al-ḥadīth al-musalsal bi-l-awwaliyya). The account quoted Muḥammad as having said, “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.”¹⁰⁰ Ghazzī had heard this hadith from all of his teachers but copied down the genealogy that he owed to the most esteemed of them, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, who had in turn heard it from Ibn Ḥajar.¹⁰¹ Similarly distinguished in its lineage was a second free-standing hadith Ghazzī transmitted to Çivizāde, this one transmitted from beginning to end by the most elevated scholars (al-ʿulāʾ al-aʿlām).¹⁰² This again included Anṣārī and Ibn Ḥajar, as well as several chief judges of Cairo, a mufti,

¹⁰⁰ For this tradition see Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 91–96 (translation from 93); Ayaz, Zāhid el-Kevseri 69.
¹⁰¹ Al-Ghazzī, Ijāza 232b–233b.
¹⁰² Ibid. 237b–238a.
The other two free-standing hadiths Ghazzī transmitted to Çivizāde were valuable more for their devotional significance. The first was one of Ṣuyūṭī’s ‘ushāriyyāt, or “tens,” namely hadiths Ṣuyūṭī transmitted with only ten links between himself and the Prophet.103 Finally, there was the hadith account transmitted exclusively by people called Muḥammad—since both Ghazzī and Çivizāde were named such—leading back to the Prophet himself. This greater selectivity of the hadith chain and the connection of the transmitters to their namesake surely amplified the sense of connection both to previous generations of scholars and to the Prophet himself, as the repeated red lettering of the name “Muḥammad” in the Kastamonu text suggests (see figures 2.2 and 2.3). All in all, Ghazzī seems to have transmitted to Çivizāde some of his most coveted hadith chains, since they were the very ones highlighted by some of Ghazzī’s biographers.104 Together, they amounted to a considerable transmission of knowledge, authority, and baraka.

103 Ibid. 236b. For Ṣuyūṭī and the ‘ushāriyyāt, see Davidson, Carrying on the tradition 234–235.

104 Būrīnī mentioned some of Ghazzī’s prestigious isnāds, including those that were on the authority of Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Maqdisī (mentioned above) and his brother Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf, Qalqashandī, Mazzi, and Ṣuyūṭī. Al-Būrīnī, Tarājīm ii, 93–94.
Çivizâde was not alone among Turcophone scholars in seeking Ghazzî out for his hadiths. When Ghazzî traveled to the Ottoman center in 936–937/1530–1531, his host in İzmit heard hadiths from him. He also asked Ghazzî for an ḵāṭa to transmit everything that Ghazzî had been licensed to transmit—not only for himself, but for his three sons as well. Others, including many mature men at the height of their scholarly careers, heard hadiths from Ghazzî during their trips to Damascus. This included two other chief judges of the city, Ḵınalızâde ‘Ali (d. 979/1572) and Meḥmed Bostânzâde (d. 1006/1598), as well as two of its Hanafi muftis Fevri Efendi (d. 978/1571) and the aforementioned Muʿīdžâde. In at least one case, the transmission of hadith was also accompanied by more formal lessons: Ḵınalızâde also studied hadith as a discipline (‘ilm al-ḥadith) with Ghazzî.

Nor was Ghazzî alone in attracting Ottoman scholars interested in collecting hadith accounts. The Tunisian scholar Maghūshī issued a license in matters of hadith to Taşköprüzâde, as we have already seen. ‘Abbāsî was one of two Egyptian scholars known to have issued a hadith license to Çivizâde’s father, the well-known şeyhü’l-islām Çivizâde Muḥyī’d-dīn (d. 954/1547). This same ‘Abbāsî also transmitted hadith to the famous Ottoman poet and scholar ʿĂşıḳ Çelebi (d. 979/1572), as another extant ḵâṭa shows. The ḵâṭa comprised the first hadith that had been transmitted to ‘Abbāsî (al-ḥadith al-musalsal bi-l-awwaliyya), Bukhârî’s Ṣaḥīḥ, and everything else ‘Abbāsî had been licensed to transmit by his teachers. It seems then that what before the conquest had been a trickle became a veritable avalanche after it.

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106 Ibn Ayyūb, al-Rawḍ 203b, 204b, 204a; al-Ghazzî, Al-Kawâkib iii, 6, 187. Ḵınalızâde also received an ḵâṭa for hadith, tafsîr, Quran recitation, and maʿānî and bayān from another Damascene scholar, Ahmad b. al-Ṭībî. Ibn Ayyūb, al-Rawḍ 204b.
107 Al-Ghazzî, al-Kawâkib iii, 6. The printed edition states Fawzî Efendi, but this is likely instead Fevri, who acted as muftî in Damascus and knew Ghazzî well. It also lists Ibn al-ʿAbd, while mentioning that one manuscript refers to al-Muʿîd, which I take to be more likely since Muʿīdžâde is mentioned in another source as having attended one of Ghazzî’s classes (al-Bûrînî, Tarâjîm ii, 95–96). Taşköprüzâde also mentioned that Muʿīdžâde spent some time in Damascus in the 983/1572–1582. Taşköprüzâde, Al-Shaqqâiq iq 483. Najm al-Dîn’s later biography of Bostânzâde does not mention explicitly that he studied with Ghazzî, though he does say that he learned from him (ḥamala ᵃⁿḥu min fawâʾidîhî). Al-Ghazzî, Luṭf al-Samar 102–106.
109 Gel, xvi. yüzyılın, 182.
110 ʿĂşıḳ Çelebi, Dhayl 107–108. It has been speculated that it was this same ‘Abbāsî who introduced ʿĂşıḳ Çelebi to the work of Ibn Taymiyya, as discussed in chapter four of this volume. Gel, xvi. yüzyılın 182.
There is little doubt as to the outstanding value of these *ijāzas* to their recipients. Some copied them wholesale into other published works, as ‘Āşık Çelebi did in the case of the license he received from ‘Abbāsī. Others seem to have been copied and circulated as interesting documents in their own right, as Çivizade’s *ijāza* from Ghazzī was. But what is perhaps most striking in this pattern was its clear directionality: all of the men seeking the *ijāzas* were Ottoman-educated scholars, while all of the men granting them were educated in the Mamluk lands. I have not to date found an extant *ijāza* documenting a case in which an Ottoman scholar transmitted hadith to a Mamluk-educated one in the first 60 years after the conquest. Ghazzī’s *ijāza* for Çivizade, and the wider intellectual context of which it is a part, thus suggest the extent to which centrally trained Ottoman scholars were interested in the scholarly legacies of the places they conquered.

4 Hadith Culture and Confession Building

Placed within a wider context, Ghazzī’s *ijāza* strongly suggests a growing “hadith culture” in the Ottoman Empire in the tenth/sixteenth century, one comprising but not limited to the scholarly sphere. There is some evidence of this in a 973/1565 imperial rescript (*firmān*) outlining a list of books that students at the highest level of Ottoman madrasas were required to study. The list included an impressive number of works of hadith, many of which stemmed from the golden era of hadith studies in Mamluk lands. This included the commentary on Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* written by Ibn Ḥajar, who had taught Ghazzī’s teacher Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, on whose authority Ghazzī transmitted a number of hadith collections to Çivizade. It also included the commentary on Bukhārī written by Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, Ibn Ḥajar’s Hanafi competitor in Cairo. To be sure, there were also several commentaries on Baghawī’s *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*, a compendium, which, as we saw, had played an important role

111 Ibid.
112 Ghazzī did ask Mü‘eyyedzāde Ḥāccī Çelebi (d. 944/1537–1538), the brother of the afore-mentioned Mü‘eyyedzāde ‘Abdu’r-rahmān, for an *ijāza* for his son, though he did not specify for what. Al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāliʿ* 263. Likewise, in the ninth/fifteenth century, the Cairo-educated scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Fenārī granted Ibn Ḥajar an *ijāza* when the former returned to Cairo for a visit, though it is again unclear in what. Taşköprüzāde, *Al-Shaqāʾiq* 17. The parallels with the South Asian case are striking. Blecher, *Said the Prophet*, part iii.
113 Ahmed and Filipović, The sultan’s syllabus.
in ninth/fifteenth-century Ottoman hadith studies. Meanwhile, Ṣaghānī’s Mashāriq al-Anwār—the basic primer on which Kemālpaşazāde had written a commentary at the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century—disappeared from the list, making way instead for a Mamluk-era item, namely the commentary on another canonical hadith collection (the Sahīḥ of Muslim) written by Yahiyya al-Nawawi (d. 676/1277), a Shafi’i scholar from Damascus. At twelve items, in any case, hadith works made up a substantial part of the 39 titles on the list.

Traces of a growing hadith culture appear elsewhere as well. The tenth/sixteenth century saw a veritable explosion of Ottoman “40 hadith” works (ar-ba‘ūn ḥadīth/kırḳ hadīs), collections of narrations often assembled to accrue blessings or instruct people in the faith. But a greater concern with hadith also appears in less obvious arenas, including the emergent Ottoman tradition of biographical dictionaries of poets (tezkire-i şu’arā). Over the course of the tenth/sixteenth century, these dictionaries exhibited a growing concern with the question of whether poetry was permissible in an Islamic context. Sehī Bey (d. 955/1548), the first Ottoman poet to compose such a work (in 945/1538), was not terribly bothered by the issue, stating only that the Quran was sympathetic toward poets. While Laṭīfī (d. 990/1582), who wrote a first draft of his biographical dictionary in 953/1546, agreed with this basic premise, he did feel the need to shore up this claim with a handful of prophetic hadiths. Such rather perfunctory discussions turned into a full-blown scholarly defense by the time of ʿĀşık Çelebi, who, as we have seen, had been licensed by ʿAbbāsī to transmit Bukhārī’s Sahīḥ. The introduction to his 975–976/1568–1569 dictionary devoted over 20 manuscript pages to the question of the permissibility of poetry, referring to Quranic verses, to be sure, but much more so to a battery of prophetic sayings, complete with the sources from which they were derived, the companions on whose authority they had first been transmitted, and, in a few cases, variant readings of the hadiths’ meanings.

Although ʿĀşık Çelebi enlisted the sunna in the service of a more pleasure-loving cultural sensibility, it could of course be channeled toward more restrictive ends as well. The scholar and preacher Birgivī Meḥmed Efendi (d. 981/1573),

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114 This included his Maṣābiḥ as well as four commentaries on it. Ibid. 200–201.
115 Ibid. 201.
116 Zaman notes that it would be difficult to find an Indian madrasa with the same commitment to hadith in this period. Zaman, Transmitters 603.
118 Sehī Bey, Heşt bihişt 75.
120 ʿĀşık Çelebi, Meşʿārīʿi’s-şu’arā 1, 134–168.
one of the most passionate proponents of a stricter adherence to Islamic norms, was also more ardently interested in hadith than many of his Anatolian predecessors had been. He was one of the first Ottoman scholars to write a widely read work of *uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, one that continued to be commented on into the fourteenth/twentieth century. He used the *sunna* as his main guide as he went about instructing his fellow Muslims about how to live a more pious life. Nearly half of his magnum opus, *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* (The Muhammadan path), finished in 980/1572, was made up of hadith citations, culled not just from Bukhārī and Muslim but from many other canonical collections as well.

How the hadith tradition fared in subsequent centuries remains to be better understood. There is considerable evidence to suggest that devotion to the field stayed strong. In contrast to the modest hadith holdings in the libraries of earlier Ottoman madrasas, the collection founded by Köprülü Fāzıl Ahmed Pasha in 1089/1678 contained a number of different hadith works. Anatolian students in that same century seem to have enjoyed a much more rigorous training in the field, and many would go on to write works in the immensely popular *40* hadith genre. Finally, scholars across the empire seem to have engaged in hadith transmission, enthusiastically pursuing what Stefan Reichmuth has called “*insnād* piety.” And yet, there is some suggestion that such interest was more intermittent. An *ijāza* from the first half of the fourteenth/twentieth century has led Kadir Ayaz to argue that most of the chains of transmission circulating in central Ottoman lands in the later period had only entered the region in the later eleventh/seventeenth century (imported predominantly from the Arab provinces). When the Indian-born scholar Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) began dictating hadith in Cairo in the later part of his life, mentioning their different narrations and lines of transmission from memory, he was widely perceived to be reviving earlier practices. Was the interest of

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121 This was *Risāla fi uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, although it is less a work on the principles of hadith than on its key terms (*muṣtalḥah*). Ivanyi, Virtue, piety and the law 82–83; Cihan, Osmanlı devrinde Türk hadisçilerleri 130–131, 134–135.

122 Ivanyi, Virtue, piety and the law 82–92.

123 Ayaz, Zâhid el-Keversi 66.

124 For education, see the experience of Kâtib Çelebi, whose teacher in the subject had himself trained with the Egyptian scholar Ibrahim Laqānī (d. 1041/1631). Ayaz, Osmanlı dârul-hadisleri 49–50. For *40* hadith works, see Karahan, *Kırk hadis* esp. 292–294.

125 Reichmuth, Murtaḍā az-Zabîdî, 72; Ayaz, Zâhid el-Keversi.

126 Ayaz, Zâhid el-Keversi.

the generation of Çivizâde in hadith transmission just a flash in the pan, followed by a general diminution of the practice in both Arab and Turcophone lands? Until Ottoman hadith culture gets the attention it is due, it is difficult to know.

Either way, the ījāza Ghazzī issued to Çivizâde and the context of which it was a part does shed light on tenth/sixteenth-century histories of Ottoman Sunnitization. In the first instance, it seems, a growing hadith culture was less part of a top-down effort to Islamize society than a transformation within the Ottoman learned elite itself. Though the actors involved in this process were too privileged to qualify as constituting pressure “from below,” it is noteworthy that it was spurred on by many Arab colleagues beneath Ottoman officials in power and rank. The case of the sunna seems to support the idea that Sunnitization was, at least in part, an aspect of what Derin Terzioğlu has called a growth in “Islamic literacy,” that is, the ongoing process by which Ottoman scholars came to engage in different aspects of the Islamic scholarly tradition.\(^\text{128}\) This process seems to have preceded the efforts of men like Birgivī to impose this on a wider population.

However, what was being transferred was not just a purely intellectual concern. As Brown and Davidson have persuasively argued, the veneration, scholarly study, and transmission of hadith must be seen as part of a devotional and spiritual practice, one offering a link to previous generations of devout Muslims and above all to Muhammad himself. In this sense, it can be thought of as akin to the visitation of graves. In fact, after Çivizâde was transferred from Damascus to Cairo in 978/1571, he made a point to visit the tombs of the famous figures of the region. He visited not only that of one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and the saintly woman Sayyida Nafisa, but also that of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, the late Mamluk-era scholar on whose authority he could now transmit hadith.\(^\text{129}\) Thanks to Ghazzī, Çivizâde’s name would now permanently be connected to Anṣārī’s and to a long line of Muslims who had, link by link, painstakingly devoted themselves to preserving the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad.

\(^{128}\) Terzioğlu, How to conceptualize 309.

\(^{129}\) He also visited the grave of Muhammad al-Maghūshī, with whom Taşköprüzâde had studied. Al-Ḥamawī, Ḩādī al-Aẓʻān 62.
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