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ḤADĪTH, MIGRATION, AND PATRONAGE IN THE BAHMANI DECCAN: AN INDO-EGYPTIAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Muhammad Asif KR*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of ḥadīth scholarship in the southern Indian subcontinent, with particular attention to the Bahmani Deccan between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. It argues that Deccani ḥadīth learning developed within broader transregional intellectual networks rather than as an isolated regional tradition, maintaining strong scholarly ties with the major centers of Islamic learning in Egypt. The study explores patterns of scholarly mobility, teacher–student affiliations, and the transmission of authority through established ḥadīth lineages linking Egypt and India. The discussion focuses on the scholarly traditions associated with Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, al-Sakhāwī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī. While no verifiable connection exists between Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī’s students and the Bahmani Deccan, significant intellectual links are evident through the traditions of al-Sakhāwī and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī—scholars such as Ibn Fahd, Maḥmūd Gāwān, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭūsī, Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd Allāh Awliyā’ al-Kirmānī, and Mīr Murtaḍā Sharīf al-Shīrāzī played important roles in transmitting Egyptian ḥadīth scholarship to the Deccan. The study also highlights the role of Bahmani rulers and patrons, including Aḥmad Shāh al-Walī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh, and Maḥmūd Gāwān, whose institutional support integrated the Deccan into wider Indo-Egyptian networks of Islamic learning.

Keywords: *Deccan, Bahmani dynasty, Indo-Egyptian scholarly networks, scholarly migration, political patronage, Maḥmūd Gāwān, ḥadīth transmission*

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INTRODUCTION

Ḥadīth literature has occupied a foundational position within Islamic intellectual history, serving not only as a primary source of religious authority but also as a central discipline through which legal, theological, and ethical thought developed. From the earliest centuries of Islam, the preservation, transmission, and interpretation of prophetic reports relied upon expansive networks of scholars whose movements across regions facilitated the circulation of texts, methods, and scholarly lineages. These trans regional exchanges played a decisive role in shaping local traditions of ḥadīth learning across the Islamic world, including regions located beyond the traditional centers of the Hijaz, Iraq, and Egypt.

The Indian subcontinent formed an important, though often understudied, part of these scholarly networks. Early contacts between Arabia and India were facilitated through maritime trade routes across the Indian Ocean, which enabled the movement of merchants, Sufi figures, and religious scholars. By the medieval period, India had become a destination for scholars migrating from the central Islamic lands, drawn by political stability, economic patronage, and the growing institutionalization of Islamic learning under Muslim rule. While northern India, particularly under the Ghaznavids, the Delhi Sultanate, and later regional dynasties such as the Muẓaffar Shāhīs of Gujarat, has received considerable attention in studies of Islamic scholarship, the southern Indian subcontinent, especially the Deccan, remains comparatively understudied in the historiography of ḥadīth studies.

The establishment of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan during the fourteenth century marked a significant transformation in the region's intellectual landscape. The Bahmani rulers actively promoted Islamic learning as part of broader strategies of political legitimacy and cultural consolidation. Through the construction of madrasas, mosques, libraries, and the allocation of endowments and teaching posts, the Deccan emerged as a vibrant center of scholarly activity. The region attracted scholars from Persia, Central Asia, and the Arab world, creating a cosmopolitan milieu in which religious sciences, including ḥadīth, could flourish. Despite this development, the specific intellectual genealogies through which ḥadīth scholarship took root in the Bahmani Deccan have not been sufficiently explored.

The transmission of Egyptian ḥadīth traditions to the Deccan during the Bahmani period from Egypt, particularly Cairo, had emerged by the late medieval period as one of the foremost centers of ḥadīth scholarship, producing influential scholars whose works and

teaching lineages shaped Sunni ḥadīth studies across the Islamic world. The migration of scholars trained in these Egyptian traditions to India represents a crucial yet understudied dimension of Indo-Islamic intellectual history. By tracing scholarly affiliations and lines of transmission associated with figures such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, al-Sakhāwī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, the Deccan within broader Indo-Egyptian networks of ḥadīth learning.¹

Central to this inquiry is the role of political patronage in facilitating scholarly mobility and institutional continuity. Bahmani rulers, most notably Fīrūz Shāh Bahmani, Aḥmad Shāh al-Walī, and ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh, along with powerful ministers such as Maḥmūd Gāwān, actively supported religious scholars through material endowments and institutional foundations. These forms of patronage enabled the sustained presence of migrant scholars, the circulation of authoritative texts, and the formalization of ḥadīth instruction within madrasas. The decline of centralized patronage following the fragmentation of the Bahmani Sultanate, by contrast, led to a noticeable weakening of institutional support for ḥadīth studies in the Deccan, underscoring the dependence of scholarly production on political structures.

By focusing on the Bahmani Deccan as a site of intellectual exchange, a more nuanced understanding of medieval Islamic intellectual history in India emerges, demonstrating that the Deccan was not merely a peripheral recipient of Islamic learning but an active participant in transregional scholarly networks linking India and Egypt. This perspective also highlights the importance of migration, patronage, and scholarly lineage in the development of ḥadīth literature in the southern Indian subcontinent.

THE DECCAN UNDER THE BAHMANI DYNASTY

The term *Deccan* has been employed in historical writing with varying degrees of precision. In its broadest usage, it denotes the extensive plateau occupying much of peninsular India. Some historians have further expanded the term to refer generally to the southern or peninsular regions of the subcontinent. As P. M. Joshi has noted, such usages often reflect geographical convenience rather than political or historical specificity. In the context of medieval Indian history, however, the Deccan must be understood as a historically constituted

¹ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) p81

region whose contours were shaped by dynastic rule, administrative control, and cultural integration. This study adopts a more restricted and historically grounded definition, focusing specifically on the territories governed by the Bahmani dynasty between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.²

The Bahmani Sultanate emerged as the first independent Muslim polity in the Deccan and ruled over a vast portion of the Deccan plateau. Its domain was largely defined by natural geographical features, including mountain ranges, river systems, and plateau formations. To the north, the Vindhya ranges served as a natural boundary separating the Deccan from northern India. Bahmani authority extended into Berar, a fertile region corresponding broadly to parts of present-day Maharashtra and adjoining areas south of the Vindhya spurs. Berar's agricultural productivity made it one of the most valuable provinces of the sultanate.

The southern frontier of the Bahmani state was comparatively unstable and fluctuated according to military fortunes and political strength. At its height, the kingdom extended as far south as the Tungabhadra River, while during periods of contraction it retreated to the Krishna River. This region remained a zone of continuous contestation with the Vijayanagara Empire, the Bahmanis' principal rival in the south. Despite periodic military successes, the Bahmani rulers were seldom able to establish lasting control beyond the Krishna River, particularly toward its eastern reaches, where their influence gradually diminished.

To the east, the expansion of the Bahmani Sultanate reached the Telangana plateau and extended toward Golconda. Once Golconda was brought under Bahmani control, access to the eastern coastal plains became relatively unobstructed. The flat terrain and fragmented political authority of the region enabled Bahmani forces to advance as far as Rajahmundry on the Godavari River. Control over this area facilitated movement along the eastern seaboard and enhanced the sultanate's strategic and commercial reach.³

The western boundary of the Bahmani realm was marked by the Western Ghats, a formidable natural barrier separating the Deccan plateau from the Arabian Sea. Beyond these mountains lay the Konkan coast, a region inhabited by powerful and often resistant local groups. Despite these challenges, the Bahmanis succeeded in securing

² Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*. (Hyderabad: Saood Manzil, Himayatnagar), 1953.p 35-47

³ richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761: Eight Indian Lives*.Cambridge: (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p 17–25

important maritime outlets through ports such as Chaul and Dabhol, which played a crucial role in overseas trade and communication. The port of Goa, a highly coveted commercial center, came under Bahmani control intermittently and was finally secured through the military campaigns of the eminent minister Maḥmūd Gāwān, who advanced from the Konkan ports, captured strategic hill forts, and consolidated Bahmani authority along the western coast.⁴

The Konkan littoral was of immense strategic and economic significance to the Bahmani state. It functioned both as a defensive frontier and as a vital conduit for maritime trade linking the Deccan with the wider Indian Ocean world. The eventual loss of the Konkan, however, proved disastrous, marking a decisive weakening of central authority and accelerating the disintegration of the sultanate.

By the late fifteenth century, the Bahmani Sultanate fragmented into several successor states, each occupying distinct regions of the former empire. Ahmadnagar emerged in the northwestern Deccan, controlling the fertile tract between the Godavari and Bhima rivers. Bijapur extended over the southern Deccan, from the Bhima River down to the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. Berar remained a significant agrarian province, while Golconda dominated the Telangana region, including the Godavari–Krishna Doab, benefiting from rich soils and seasonal rainfall. The former imperial core around Bidar became a small and short-lived polity known as the Kingdom of Bidar.⁵

THE BAHMANI DECCAN WITHIN INDO-EGYPTIAN ḤADĪTH NETWORKS

The development of ḥadīth studies in the southern Indian subcontinent during the Bahmani period (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) was within the wider intellectual geography of the medieval Islamic world, in which Egypt functioned as the principal center of post-classical ḥadīth scholarship. From the early ninth/fifteenth century onward, Egyptian scholarly traditions shaped norms of learning, transmission, and authority that extended far beyond the central Islamic lands.

Within this framework, the Deccan emerged as a peripheral yet deeply connected region, integrated into Indo-Egyptian scholarly networks through the migration of scholars, the circulation of texts, and

⁴ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *Mahmud Gawan the great Bahmani wazir*. (Kitabistan Allahabad 1942) p 160-168

⁵ Cousens n.d. Henry. *Bijapur: The Old Capital of the Adil Shahi Kings*. (London: Royal Asiatic Society Central Archaeological Library). p 38

sustained institutional patronage⁶. Although the Ḥaramayn played a crucial mediating role in the movement of scholars, this study treats Makkah and Madinah not as autonomous intellectual centers, but as extensions of Egyptian scholarly culture, since the leading figures active there were trained within Cairene circles and derived their authority from Egyptian ḥadīth lineages.

The four major scholarly traditions associated with Egyptian authorities, namely Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, al-Sakhāwī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, together formed the intellectual infrastructure through which Egyptian ḥadīth methodologies reached India. While Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī remained a central figure within Egypt, no demonstrable link can be established between his students and the Bahmani Deccan.

Transregional connections emerge through the school of al-Sakhāwī, whose activity in Makkah attracted students from the Indian subcontinent. Scholars associated with this milieu, including Ibn Fahd al-Makkī and al-Sakhāwī's students such as 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭūsī and Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh Awliyā' al-Kirmānī, either migrated to or exerted direct influence upon the Deccan, facilitating the transmission of Egyptian approaches to isnād criticism, textual interpretation, and historical contextualization. The tradition of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, whose authority, though firmly rooted in Egyptian training and exercised primarily in Makkah, reached India more broadly, albeit with limited evidence for direct transmission to the Deccan during the Bahmani era itself.⁷

Central to this process of intellectual transfer was the role of political patronage under the Bahmani Sultanate, as rulers such as Fīrūz Shāh Bahmani, Aḥmad Shāh al-Walī, and 'Alā' al-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh, together with influential figures like the vizier Maḥmūd Gāwān, fostered Sunni religious scholarship through the establishment of madrasas, endowments, libraries, and teaching posts.⁸ Gāwān's madrasa in Bidar, closely aligned with the Asqalānī-Sakhāwī intellectual milieu, emerged as a major center of learning in which ḥadīth formed an integral component of the curriculum.⁹ By tracing

⁶ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) p.83

⁷ al-Ḥasanī, 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmi' wa Nawāzīr*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 287

⁸ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 92

⁹ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *Mahmud Gawan the great Bahmani wazir*. (Kitabistan Allahabad 1942) p 180

these scholarly and institutional connections, the article demonstrates that the development of ḥadīth studies in the Bahmani Deccan was not an isolated regional phenomenon but part of a wider Indo-Egyptian scholarly continuum, underscoring Egypt's enduring influence on medieval Islamic learning in India.

Yahyā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī al-Shāfiʿī (Ibn Fahd)

Yahyā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī al-Khayr al-Hāshimī al-Shāfiʿī, widely known by his family patronymic Ibn Fahd, emerged from a distinguished Makkan household long associated with the transmission and teaching of ḥadīth.¹⁰ The Ibn Fahd family occupied a prominent position within the scholarly milieu of the Ḥijāz, particularly in Makkah, where its members functioned as recognized transmitters, instructors, and custodians of prophetic traditions. This familial environment situated Ibn Fahd from an early stage within an established culture of ḥadīth scholarship and endowed him with a form of inherited scholarly authority that facilitated his later transregional engagements.¹¹

Ibn Fahd's formal education unfolded across the principal centers of Islamic learning, notably Makkah, Madinah, and Egypt, and reflects sustained interaction with leading figures of the late Mamluk scholarly world. His training firmly anchored him within Egyptian-centered ḥadīth networks that dominated post-classical Islamic scholarship. Among his most influential teachers was Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH / 1449 CE), whose methodological rigor and encyclopedic approach to ḥadīth criticism defined the scholarly standards of Cairo in the ninth/fifteenth century. In addition to direct instruction, Ibn Fahd received formal ijāzāt authorizing him to transmit and teach ḥadīth from eminent Egyptian authorities such as Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806 AH / 1404 CE) and Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807 AH / 1405 CE). These affiliations place Ibn Fahd squarely within the Asqalānī-ʿIrāqī scholarly lineage and demonstrate the permeability of intellectual boundaries between Egypt and the Ḥijāz during this period.¹²

In 830 AH / 1426–27 CE, Ibn Fahd undertook a significant eastward journey to the Indian subcontinent, arriving first at the port city of Cambay (Khambhat) in present-day Gujarat. His movement

¹⁰ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 82

¹¹ Ibid p 82

¹² al-Ḥasanī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa Nawāzīr*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 302

reflects a broader pattern of scholarly migration in the fifteenth century, whereby Ḥijāzī and Egyptian-trained scholars traveled along Indian Ocean routes in response to expanding political patronage and an increasing demand for religious expertise beyond the central Islamic lands. As a major commercial and intellectual hub, Cambay served as an initial point of entry into the subcontinent, providing Ibn Fahd with opportunities for teaching, scholarly exchange, and the cultivation of patronage networks.

After residing in Cambay for approximately two years, Ibn Fahd proceeded to Gulbarga, the capital of the Bahmani Sultanate, a polity renowned for its active encouragement of Islamic learning and its openness to scholars trained in the wider Islamic world. His relocation to the Deccan appears to have been closely connected to the patronage of Sultan Aḥmad Shāh Bahmani I (r. 1422–1436 CE), whose reign was marked by sustained support for Sunni religious scholarship.¹³ Ibn Fahd's presence at the Bahmani court constitutes concrete evidence of the transmission of Egyptian-derived ḥadīth traditions into the Deccan and illustrates the role of Bahmani political authority in integrating the region into Indo-Egyptian scholarly networks. Through the settlement of scholars such as Ibn Fahd, the Deccan functioned not merely as a recipient of external intellectual influences but as an active node within transregional circuits of Islamic learning.

Yahyā b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān spent his final years in the Deccan and died in Mahur, in South Berar (present-day Maharashtra), during Jumādā al-Ākhira or Rajab 843 AH, corresponding to November or December 1439 CE. His death on Deccan soil underscores the permanence of his migration and highlights the Bahmani territories as enduring centers of scholarly life for Egyptian- and Ḥijāz-trained ḥadīth scholars. More broadly, Ibn Fahd's career exemplifies how the Bahmani dynasty facilitated the movement and settlement of transregional scholars, thereby forging tangible intellectual links between Egypt, the Ḥijāz, and India through patterns of scholarly migration and patronage.¹⁴

¹³ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 82

¹⁴ *Ibid* p 833

Maḥmūd Gāwān (813–886 AH / 1410–1481 CE)

Khawājā ‘Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Kīlānī,¹⁵ occupies a central position in the intellectual and political history of the Bahmani Deccan as a scholar, administrator, and major patron of ḥadīth learning. Born in 813 AH / 1410 CE in Gilan, a small province along the Caspian Sea, he hailed from a noble family and received his early education under the supervision of his brother Aḥmad, himself a student of the eminent Egyptian ḥadīth authority Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī.¹⁶ This early exposure situated Gāwān within scholarly networks closely linked to Cairene traditions and laid the foundation for his lifelong engagement with the religious sciences, particularly ḥadīth. Motivated by a strong desire for advanced learning, Maḥmūd Gāwān traveled to Cairo in 843 AH / 1439 CE, where he pursued formal studies in the ḥadīth sciences. There, he studied the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim under Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī and Zayn al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 845 AH), two of the most authoritative figures of the late Mamluk scholarly world.¹⁷

He further expanded his intellectual formation through study with leading ḥadīth scholars in Syria, thereby acquiring broad recognition and scholarly legitimacy. His receipt of an *ijāzah* by *munāwala* from Ibn Ḥajar represents a significant endorsement, firmly anchoring him within Egyptian-centered ḥadīth lineages. Although detailed accounts of his scholarly activity are relatively sparse, his collection of letters, *Riḡāḍ al-Inshā’*, contains frequent citations of prophetic traditions, offering clear evidence of his familiarity with and engagement in ḥadīth scholarship.¹⁸

Gāwān entered the Deccan during the reign of Sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Bahmani II (r. 1434–1458) and went on to serve the Bahmani Sultanate with distinction for nearly thirty-five years. Rising to the position of chief minister, he combined administrative reform with a sustained commitment to the promotion of education and intellectual life.¹⁹ His tenure coincided with a period in which the Bahmani court actively attracted scholars trained in the central Islamic lands, and

¹⁵ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *Mahmud Gawan the great Bahmani wazir*. (Kitabistan Allahabad 1942) p 12

¹⁶ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 84

¹⁷ Law, Narendra Nath. *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1916.) p 85

¹⁸ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *Mahmud Gawan the great Bahmani wazir*. (Kitabistan Allahabad 1942) p 189

¹⁹ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 84

Gāwān himself emerged as a key intermediary linking Egyptian and Indo-Islamic scholarly worlds. Known for his literary generosity, he extended patronage to scholars, jurists, poets, and intellectuals, particularly those of limited means but recognized merit, thereby facilitating the migration and settlement of learned figures in the Deccan.

Among his most enduring contributions was the establishment of a grand madrasa in Bidar, founded approximately two years before his death.²⁰ This institution was consciously modeled on Shāfiʿī-oriented ḥadīth and legal traditions, reflecting Gāwān's own scholarly affiliations and training within Egyptian networks. He endowed the madrasa with a substantial library, reported in the sources to have contained either 3,000 or as many as 35,000 volumes, underscoring his exceptional commitment to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge.²¹ It is highly probable that this collection included major works of ḥadīth literature, making the madrasa a significant center for advanced Islamic learning in southern India and reinforcing the role of the Bahmani Deccan as a node within wider Indo-Egyptian intellectual networks.

Maḥmūd Gāwān's career came to a tragic end when he was unjustly executed on 5 Ṣafar 886 AH / April 1481 CE by Sultan Muḥammad Shāh Bahmani II (r. 1463–1482). His execution provoked widespread shock and grief within scholarly and literary circles, with reports of mourning reaching as far as Makkah.²² Despite this abrupt end, Gāwān's legacy endured through the institutions he founded and the scholarly networks he helped cultivate. His life exemplifies the crucial role played by Bahmani political elites in fostering the migration of scholars trained in Egyptian traditions and in embedding the Deccan within transregional circuits of ḥadīth learning. Through figures such as Maḥmūd Gāwān, the Bahmani dynasty functioned not merely as a regional power but as an active participant in the intellectual geography of the late medieval Islamic world, facilitating enduring links between Egypt and India.

²⁰ George, Michell. *Architecture and art of Deccan Sultanates*. (Cambridge University, 1999.) p 110

²¹ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 84

²² Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *Mahmud Gawan the great Bahmani wazir*. (Kitabistan Allahabad 1942) p 197

Abd al-Azīz b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭūsī al-Shāfi'ī (836–ca. 910 AH / 1432–1504 CE)

Abd al-Azīz b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭūsī al-Shāfi'ī (836–ca. 910 AH / 1432–1504 CE) was a distinguished scholar of the Shāfi'ī school and a specialist in ḥadīth whose intellectual trajectory illustrates the transregional circulation of Egyptian-centered scholarly traditions into the Deccan under the Bahmani Sultanate.²³ Born in Ramaḍān 836 AH (March 1432 CE) in Ṭūs, in the historic region of Khurāsān, he received his early training in ḥadīth within scholarly networks that were closely connected to the Cairene tradition. Among his principal teachers was Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Abharī, himself a student of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, through whom 'Abd al-'Azīz was firmly embedded in the Asqalānī-centered lineage that dominated post-classical ḥadīth scholarship. He also studied with Mīr Aṣīl al-Dīn b. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 883 AH), further broadening his exposure to the scholarly currents of the eastern Islamic world.

In 870 AH (1465 CE), 'Abd al-'Azīz migrated to Makkah, where he continued his studies and participated in advanced circles of ḥadīth instruction. During his stay in the Ḥaramayn, he received the transmission of musalsal traditions from al-Sakhāwī, one of the foremost students of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī and a central figure in the dissemination of Egyptian ḥadīth methodologies beyond Cairo. Although Makkah offered him access to prestigious scholarly networks, financial constraints limited the duration of his residence there and compelled him to seek patronage elsewhere. It was within this context that 'Abd al-'Azīz proceeded to the Deccan region of the Indian subcontinent during the later phase of Maḥmūd Gāwān's administration, a period marked by the Bahmani Sultanate's active encouragement of learned migrants from across the Islamic world.²⁴

Recognizing his scholarly credentials and his training within Egyptian-derived traditions, Maḥmūd Gāwān extended patronage to 'Abd al-'Azīz by appointing him as the personal tutor to his son-in-law. In this capacity, 'Abd al-'Azīz engaged in the teaching of *al-Muḥarrar*, a foundational text of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence, thereby contributing directly to the institutionalization of Sunni legal and ḥadīth learning in the Deccan.²⁵

²³ al-Ḥasanī, 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmi' wa Nawāzīr*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 312

²⁴ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 86

²⁵ Ibid p 86

The career of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭūsī thus provides a concrete example of how scholars trained within Egyptian-centered intellectual lineages, mediated through the Ḥaramayn, were integrated into the Bahmani scholarly environment through political patronage. His migration and subsequent employment in the Deccan underscore the role of the Bahmani dynasty, and particularly figures such as Maḥmūd Gāwān, in forging durable intellectual links between Egypt, the wider Islamic world, and India by facilitating the movement and settlement of transregional scholars.

Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd Allāh Awliyā’ al-Kirmānī (d. ca. 930 AH / 1523 CE)

Ḥusayn b. Abd Allāh b. Awliyān al-Kirmānī, also known by the honorific Aṣīl al-Dīn, was a Makkan-born traditionist whose scholarly career exemplifies the role of the Ḥaramayn as a crucial conduit for the transmission of Egyptian-centered ḥadīth learning to the Indian subcontinent during the late medieval period.²⁶ Originating from a family background that appears to have valued religious learning, al-Kirmānī’s intellectual trajectory reflects a sustained commitment to the study, teaching, and dissemination of prophetic traditions within transregional scholarly networks.

His scholarly formation was shaped most decisively through his close association with al-Sakhāwī, one of the foremost representatives of the Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī school of ḥadīth scholarship in the ninth/fifteenth century. Under al-Sakhāwī’s tutelage, al-Kirmānī studied major canonical and instructional works, including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Musnad* of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, and *Mashāriq al-Anwār*, texts that occupied a central place in legal, devotional, and pedagogical contexts.²⁷ His scholarly credentials were formally consolidated through the receipt of an ijāzah from al-Sakhāwī, authorizing him to transmit and teach these works and situating him firmly within Egyptian-derived ḥadīth lineages mediated through the Makkan scholarly milieu.

In 896 AH / 1490 CE, al-Kirmānī undertook a journey to the Indian subcontinent, arriving at Dābul, near Bijāpūr, a prominent urban and commercial center in the Deccan during the late fifteenth century. His migration coincided with a period in which the Deccan, under the

²⁶ al-Ḥasanī, ‘Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmi‘ wa Nawāẓir*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 345

²⁷ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 87

broad political and cultural legacy of the Bahmani Sultanate, continued to attract scholars trained in the central Islamic lands. Although he resided in Dābul for only about four years before returning to Makkah around 901 AH / 1495 CE, his presence there constitutes further evidence of the sustained movement of Makkan and Egyptian-trained scholars into the Deccan region.²⁸ While the sources remain largely silent regarding the precise nature of his activities during this period, it is reasonable to infer that, as a recognized traditionist, al-Kirmānī was engaged in the instruction and transmission of ḥadīth to local students and aspirants, thereby contributing to the diffusion of Egyptian-influenced ḥadīth learning in Bijāpūr and its surrounding areas.²⁹

Despite the relative paucity of detailed biographical data and the absence of extant works directly attributable to his Indian sojourn, al-Kirmānī's brief residence in the Deccan is emblematic of a broader pattern of scholarly mobility that linked Egypt, the Ḥaramayn, and South Asia.³⁰ His career underscores the role of Makkan scholars, trained within Egyptian methodological frameworks, in extending ḥadīth scholarship to newly emerging Muslim centers in the Indian subcontinent. In this sense, al-Kirmānī's migration, though modest in scale, reinforces the argument that the Deccan under and after Bahmani rule functioned as an active node within transregional networks of Islamic learning, sustained through the movement of scholars and the enduring influence of Egyptian scholarly traditions.

Mīr Murtaḍā Sharīf al-Shīrāzī

Mīr Murtaḍā Sharīf al-Shīrāzī was a prominent transregional scholar whose career illustrates the continued movement of scholars trained within Egyptian- and Hijāz-centered intellectual networks into the Indian subcontinent, building upon pathways earlier established during the Bahmani period in the Deccan. He was the grandson of the distinguished polymath al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, a lineage that situated him within an elite scholarly tradition combining rational and transmitted sciences. His early intellectual formation included advanced study in the Ḥaramayn, where he attended the lectures of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī

²⁸ al-Ḥasanī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa Nawāẓir*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 346

²⁹ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 87

³⁰ al-Ḥasanī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa Nawāẓir*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p 376

in Makkah and received from him an ijāzah authorizing teaching and transmission. This affiliation firmly anchored Mīr Murtaḍā within Egyptian-centered ḥadīth lineages that continued to shape scholarly authority across the Islamic world in the post-classical period.³¹

Following his studies in the Ḥijāz, Mīr Murtaḍā traveled to the Deccan region of India, thereby entering the same Indo-Islamic scholarly corridor that had earlier connected Egypt and the Ḥaramayn with the Bahmani domains through figures such as Ibn Fahd, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ṭūsī, and Ḥusayn al-Kirmānī. Although his subsequent career unfolded under Mughal rather than Bahmani patronage, his movement into the Deccan reflects the persistence of scholarly routes first institutionalized under the Bahmani Sultanate, where migrant scholars trained in Egyptian traditions had already established India as a viable center for advanced learning. In 1562 CE, he proceeded northward to Akbarabad (present-day Agra), where he entered the Mughal court of Emperor Akbar and secured a position of considerable prestige.

At Akbar’s court, Mīr Murtaḍā became actively involved in the empire’s intellectual life, devoting himself to the teaching of both the rational sciences (‘ulūm al-‘aqlīya) and the transmitted Islamic disciplines (‘ulūm al-naqlīya). His erudition and pedagogical authority earned him recognition among scholars and courtiers alike, and his activities contributed to the broader dissemination of scholarly traditions rooted in Egyptian and Ḥijāzī learning within the Indo-Islamic context.³² Notwithstanding his engagement within a predominantly Sunni court environment, he is known to have held clear Shi‘ite inclinations, a feature that underscores the complex sectarian and intellectual pluralism of sixteenth-century India. He remained active in Agra until his death in 1566 CE.³³

Although Mīr Murtaḍā Sharīf al-Shīrāzī belongs chronologically to a later Mughal milieu, his scholarly trajectory reinforces the argument that the Deccan functioned as a critical intermediary zone in the transmission of Egyptian-derived intellectual traditions to India. His career demonstrates the durability of scholarly migration patterns initiated under Bahmani rule and highlights the long-term impact of Indo-Egyptian networks in shaping Islamic learning in the subcontinent well into the sixteenth century.

³¹ Ḥafīz Anwar, *Sufi Saints of Bijapur*, trans. from Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā* (Hyderabad, India, 2014), p. 86.

³² Abū al-Faḍl ‘Allāmī, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, trans. H. Blochmann, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), 525–27.

³³ al-Ḥasanī, ‘Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmi‘ wa Nawāzīr*. (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999.) p. 347.

PATRONAGE, PORT CITIES, AND SCHOLARLY MIGRATION UNDER THE BAHMANI SULTANATE

The consolidation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the fifteenth century created a political and cultural environment conducive to the reception of transregional Islamic scholarship, particularly from Egypt and the wider western Islamic world.³⁴ The reign of Aḥmad Shāh I Walī (r. 1422–1435/36 CE) marked a decisive phase in this process. His accession to the throne following a rebellion against Fīrūz Shāh and his subsequent relocation of the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar in 1432 CE reflected not merely a strategic recalibration of power but also a conscious reorientation of the sultanate's intellectual and spiritual geography.³⁵ Bidar's location along major inland and maritime trade routes enhanced its connectivity with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea world, thereby facilitating sustained interaction with key centers of Islamic learning, including Egypt and the Ḥijāz. This shift coincided with Aḥmad Shāh's deep engagement with Sufi networks, most notably his association with the Chishti saint Khwāja Bande Nawāz Gīsū Darāz, an affiliation that shaped the religious ethos of his court and contributed to his posthumous veneration as a walī.³⁶

While Sufi spirituality occupied a prominent place in Aḥmad Shāh's religious vision, his patronage extended well beyond mystical circles to encompass the formal Islamic sciences, including jurisprudence and ḥadīth studies.³⁷ The Bahmani court under his rule attracted scholars from Persia and other parts of the Islamic world, among them figures connected to the Ni'matullāhī tradition of Kirmān, whose presence illustrates the permeability of intellectual boundaries within the Persianate and Indian Ocean worlds.³⁸ This influx of learned migrants contributed to the integration of the Deccan into a wider transregional network of ḥadīth transmission. Scholars trained in the central lands of Islam brought with them authoritative texts, isnāds, and pedagogical methods, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and scholarly standing of religious learning in the Deccan. The presence of Egyptian-trained or Egypt-connected scholars during this period underscores the

³⁴ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 94

³⁵ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*. (Hyderabad: Saood Manzil, Himayatnagar), 1953.p 75

³⁶ Hafiz Anwar, *Sufi Saints of Bijapur*, trans. from Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* Hyderabad, India, 2014.p 35

³⁷ Atiya Praveen Qazi, "Mysticism and Sufi in the Deccan," (*Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal* 6, no. 5) (May 2019).

³⁸ Law, Narendra Nath. *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1916). p 277

role of the Bahmani Sultanate as a receptive node within the post-classical Islamic intellectual order.³⁹

This process intensified in the later fifteenth century under the influence of Khwāja Maḥmūd Gāwān (d. 1481 CE), whose career exemplifies the intersection of statecraft, scholarship, and intellectual patronage. Born in Gilan and educated in a broad range of disciplines, including ḥadīth, Gāwān arrived in the Deccan during the reign of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh II and rose to prominence under Muḥammad Shāh III. His administrative reforms strengthened the fiscal and military foundations of the Bahmani state, but his most enduring legacy lay in his promotion of learning.⁴⁰ The establishment of the Madrasa of Maḥmūd Gāwān in Bidar transformed the city into one of the foremost centers of Islamic education in the Deccan.⁴¹ The madrasa’s curriculum, which included Qur’ānic sciences, fiqh, and ḥadīth alongside rational sciences, reflected the integrated scholarly ideal of the post-classical period. By recruiting scholars from across the Islamic world, including those trained in the Arab lands, Gāwān ensured that ḥadīth instruction in the Deccan remained closely aligned with developments in major centers such as Cairo and the Ḥaramayn.⁴²

The role of maritime networks was central to these processes of intellectual transmission. In the aftermath of the Mongol invasions, which devastated long-established centers of learning in Central Asia and the Middle East, many scholars sought new patrons and secure environments for teaching and writing. The Indian subcontinent, particularly the western coastal regions and the Deccan, emerged as a zone of relative stability and opportunity. The ports of Gujarat, Goa, and Chaul functioned as critical gateways through which scholars, manuscripts, and religious texts entered India. These ports were embedded within the larger Indian Ocean system that connected Egypt, Yemen, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf to South Asia. Canonical ḥadīth collections and commentaries, including Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s *Fath al-Bārī*, circulated through these maritime routes, shaping scholarly discourse in the Deccan.

³⁹ Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 93

⁴⁰ Sherwani, Haroon Khan. *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*. (Hyderabad: Saood Manzil, Himayatnagar), 1953.p 93

⁴¹ George, Michell. *Architecture and art of Deccan Sultanates*. (Cambridge University, 1999.) p 110

⁴² Ishaq Muhammad. *Indias contribution to the study of hadith literature*, (East Pakistan University of dacca 1945) P 83

Bahmani rulers actively leveraged this maritime infrastructure to cultivate intellectual ties with the Islamic heartlands. Ships dispatched annually for the ḥajj from ports such as Goa and Chaul served not only religious purposes but also functioned as instruments of intellectual diplomacy.⁴³ Invitations, gifts, and promises of patronage were extended to distinguished scholars from Egypt, Khurāsān, Yemen, and Iraq, encouraging their migration to the Deccan. Sultan Fīrūz Shāh Bahmani is recorded to have institutionalized this practice, and it was continued and expanded under later rulers and ministers such as Maḥmūd Gāwān, who maintained correspondence and exchanges with scholars across the Persianate and Arab worlds. Upon arrival, these scholars were often granted stipends, land revenues, and institutional support in the form of madrasas and mosques, enabling them to teach, write, and transmit knowledge in a stable environment.

The careers of individual scholars illustrate the concrete outcomes of these transoceanic connections. The Egyptian ḥadīth scholar Badr al-Dīn al-Damāmīnī, who initially migrated to Gujarat, later moved to Gulbarga during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh I, where he contributed to the development of ḥadīth studies under Bahmani patronage.⁴⁴ Such movements highlight the Deccan's attractiveness as a destination for scholars who were already circulating within the Indian Ocean world. Similarly, the migration of Sayyid Gisū Darāz from Delhi to the Deccan and the establishment of his khānqāh in Gulbarga demonstrate the convergence of Sufi and scholarly networks under Bahmani rule.⁴⁵ These institutions functioned as hubs of learning and spiritual authority, reinforcing the integration of the Deccan into broader Islamic intellectual currents.

The strategic importance of ports was further underscored by Maḥmūd Gāwān's successful campaign in 1469 CE to capture Goa, thereby incorporating a major maritime center into the Bahmani domain.⁴⁶ Control over Goa strengthened the sultanate's participation in Indian Ocean exchanges and enhanced its capacity to attract scholars

⁴³ Law, Narendra Nath. *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1916. p. 277

⁴⁴ Blecher, Joel. *Said the Prophet of God*. California: University of California Press, 2018. p. 120

⁴⁵ Briggs, John, trans. *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India, Translated from the Original Persian of Mahomed Kasim Ferishta*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1989. Originally published in Persian. p. 176- 183

⁴⁶ Law, Narendra Nath. *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1916. p 85

and texts from Egypt and beyond. The designation of Gujarat as Bāb Makkah, the “Gate of Mecca,” reflects contemporary recognition of the region’s pivotal role in facilitating pilgrimage and scholarly exchange. Through these maritime and institutional networks, the Bahmani Sultanate positioned itself as a key intermediary between the Islamic heartlands and South Asia.

The migration of scholars from Egypt and related regions to the Deccan under Bahmani patronage was not an accidental phenomenon but the result of deliberate political, religious, and economic strategies. The convergence of stable rule, Sufi patronage, institutional support for ḥadīth studies, and access to maritime routes enabled the Deccan to emerge as a significant center of Islamic learning in the fifteenth century. This Indo–Egyptian intellectual linkage, mediated through port cities and sustained by royal and ministerial patronage, played a crucial role in shaping the character of Islamic scholarship in the Deccan and embedding it within the wider post-classical Islamic world.

CONCLUSION

The Bahmani Deccan occupied a significant position within the Indo–Egyptian intellectual networks of the late medieval Islamic world, functioning as an active site of ḥadīth transmission rather than a peripheral recipient of religious learning. Scholarly lineages connected to Egyptian authorities such as Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, al-Sakhāwī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī demonstrate the sustained influence of Egyptian methodologies in isnād criticism, interpretation, and pedagogy within the Deccan.

The migration of scholars trained in these traditions, facilitated by Indian Ocean and Ḥijāzī routes, embedded Egyptian-derived scholarly authority within local intellectual milieus. Political patronage under the Bahmani Sultanate, particularly through rulers and elites such as Maḥmūd Gāwān, provided the institutional framework necessary for the formalization of ḥadīth instruction through madrasas, endowments, and teaching posts. Maritime connectivity further enabled the circulation of scholars and texts, integrating the Deccan into wider transregional scholarly circuits.

Taken together, these dynamics challenge center-periphery models of Islamic intellectual history and highlight the Deccan’s role in sustaining and transmitting authoritative forms of ḥadīth scholarship. The Bahmani experience illustrates how migration, patronage, and scholarly lineage shaped Islamic learning in medieval India within a broader Indo–Egyptian continuum.

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