

Book Review

***Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years* by Garrett A. Davidson**

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How did the transmission tradition diverse as a result of the ḥadīth canonization? What effects did the compilation of ḥadīth texts have on the ḥadīth discipline? These were the burning research issues that drove Garret Davidson to chronicle “*carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of ḥadīth Transmission across a Thousand Years*”. Studying the issue, the author looks at how the conceptions of transmission have changed since ḥadīth scripts were canonized, examining how its institutions, trends, discourses, and practices have differed from the tenth to the twentieth century.

The origin and authenticity issues have occupied academic research and ḥadīth discussions for over a century. Early Western studies of ḥadīth from Goldziher, Schacht, G. H. A. Juynboll, then the subsequent generation like Harald Motzki, Jonathan Brown, Scott Lucas, and others, have addressed only the fundamental issues of the discipline, namely the validity and historicity of the ḥadīth corpus. However, ḥadīth transmission studies have only looked at the first three centuries of the Islamic period, up to the canonization of the ḥadīth. So, this Garret Davidson’s book fills the gap, offering the first in-depth analysis of post-canonical ḥadīth transmission in the social and intellectual domains. This diachronic methodology is too effective to understand the discursive practices and dialectical debates of ḥadīth

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scholars for a millennium over a transnational geo-scope from West Africa to the Malay Archipelago.

The book under review is a novel historical addition to this body of prophetic studies in general and ḥadīth transmission in particular. It is an academic work that can be listed in the historiographic genre, Even though it dives toward literature, gender, education, and anthropology. In addition to archival materials gathered from the Near East, North Africa, India, Europe, and North America, Davidson uses a range of print sources, especially Islamic manuscripts, which weren't used widely in popular ḥadīth studies. He examines these sources to uncover the fundamental reimagining of ḥadīth transmission beliefs and practices that followed the creation of the ḥadīth canon. He analyses these sources to dig out the fundamental structural variations that happened in ḥadīth transmission both in theory and practice due to the establishment of the ḥadīth canon. Thus, the book examines how ḥadīth scholars reimagined the transmission of ḥadīth, not as a scholarship tool, as it had originally been, but instead as an act of pious emulation of the predecessors. Examining the rapid shift, he demonstrates the emergence of new genres and trends of ḥadīth literature as artifacts of the cultural, social, and intellectual history of Muslim religiosity from the tenth to twentieth centuries.

The work stands divided into six chapters and an introduction by the author. While the contents have been diverted into three sections. But due to an in-depth investigation traveling from history to the present, each chapter appears to be a separate research topic. Ḥadīth transmission is the core subject of this diachronic history work. After the Prophet's demise, the men and women who lived with him conveyed their memories to the next generation as a collective memory. This internal process of narrative transmission from person to person changed to an established form of the transmission chain. During civil wars and sectarian disputes among the Muslims, the ḥadīths fabricated on a scale. So, the chain of transmission started as a tool to find out the forged attributional comments to the prophet from the real. Most of ḥadīth was quoted through an incomplete or partial

chain of transmission until the jurist Shafī in the late second/eighth century elevated the fully chained ḥadīth over all other evidence after the Qur'ān. But after this change, travels to seek out the most authoritative transmitter to collect a personal chain of transmission become part of the ethos of ḥadīth scholarship.

The continuous chain of ḥadīth transmission, the distinctive aspect of Muslim society, has not ended long after the canonization. Even though there was a conflict between the oral tradition of ḥadīth transmission and the growing authority of the written ḥadīth canon, the tradition of ḥadīth transmission persisted because it was not only a useful scholarly tool but also a distinctive characteristic of the Muslim community that distinguished them from other groups. This chain served as a symbol of honor and a key factor distinguishing Muslims from Christians and Jews. The one who comes after the Prophet and transmits his ḥadīth is the Prophet's vicegerents (khulafā') according to a prophetic ḥadīth itself. So the great ḥadīth scholars were named as the commander of the faithful (amērul Mu'minēn) in later generations. The chain of transmission served as a vehicle for sacred knowledge passing through the Prophet and the various great personalities having a spiritual charisma throughout the chain.

The first chapter, "Reimagining ḥadīth Transmission in the Shadow of Canon," chronicles the arguments that arose in the late fourth to the tenth century regarding the collapse of ḥadīth transmission in the aftermath of ḥadīth Canonization. This section focuses on the significant changes held in the standards used to check the authenticity of the transmission, which would eventually alter all ḥadīth transmission stereotypes. Scholars affirmed very different criteria and demands rather than pre-canonical ḥadīth transmission rules. After the canonization, the previous theoretical protocols governing ḥadīth transmission and actual practice underwent a radical transformation. The devout preservation of the chain of transmission and the establishment and manifestation of proximity to the Prophet via elevation were the twin priorities of the post-canonical ḥadīth culture.

This introductory chapter also leaps toward ideology, sociology, elevation, decline, and supernatural elevation of ḥadīth transmission.

Before the development of canon paisley, most people were dubious about the abrupt shift in oral transmission because it was non-oral, as is discussed in the second chapter. As a result, this chapter contains severe worries and scholarly debates concerning the oral transmission network. The chapter dives into details like evolving culture, ritualization, age structure, shifting function, audition notices, fast reading, and subsequent reading of oral transmission.

The third chapter discusses the development of the *ijāza* over a lengthy period when after the canonization, the ideal oral transmission was no longer possible in ḥadīth. Scholars believed the *ijāza* was a negative tool promoting non-oral transmission in the fifth century of Islam. But after a long process of mutual debates and dialogues, they accepted it merely as a way of maintaining the chain. Then the *ijāza* grew as a form of veneration and devotion itself. It served as a social and theological hub that linked scholars to the entirety of Islamic tradition and through the Prophet towards God. Because of the significant spiritual and social functions by the sixth/ twelfth centuries, *ijāza* had become an essential part of the scholastic culture. They obtained these *ijāzas* in several different ways. It was typical to receive *ijāza* by correspondence, as Salafi did. When a scholar sets out on a journey to further his studies or go on a pilgrimage, his friends and colleagues in his hometown will frequently send an *ijāza* request for themselves and their families. In face-to-face communication, asking for direct *ijāza* was a common custom of Muslim students. To maintain connections, some scholars might also request *ijāza* from the same authority more than once. From the sixth century, scholars provided a copy of a ḥadīth to eliminate *ijāza* writing by each student, which was a time-consuming assignment. *Ijāza* was a textual documentation of ḥadīth transmission and the community of transmitters. So, it was often preserved carefully and valued as solid evidence of the historicity of ḥadīth. The later Ulema also sought it out and used it as a source. An

Egyptian ḥadīth scholar Sakhawī used the ijāza as a major reference to the site in the book on the transmitter's biography.

The fourth chapter discusses gender, the elevated ḥadīth, and its societal implications with a focus on the role of women in ḥadīth transmission. This chapter examines these developments manifested themselves in the societal realm, especially the role of female ḥadīth transmitters in the elevated transmission chain. The students eagerly anticipated the senior transmitters, both men and women, in their desire to establish the shortest link to the Prophet. To audit the ḥadīth from elder transmitters and provide their children with ijāzas, each parent wanted to do so in the hope that one day their children would have elevated chains of transmission as well as distinctive social and religious capital.

Part two of the book consists of two chapters that study some selective history of the most popular and significant subgenres of ḥadīth. Chapter five is a preliminary study of a massive and complex body of literature developed over centuries. Although it covers a basic chronologic history and lists the major books of each genre, an in-depth study is essential in the forty elevated ḥadīth and other genres. Most of these subgenres likewise declined after the tenth century, along with the primitive oral transmission culture. The next chapter studies the development of the forty-ḥadīth genre. Scholars' constellation of genres is referred to as awāli. These genres focused on the presentation of an author's most elevated chain among popular literary expressions.

The sixth and final chapter examines how a scholar could preserve his/her network of human sources of authority that he had developed throughout his career and pass it on to the next generation by creating a catalogue of his network of transmission. This was achieved in various genres like the Mašyaḥa, ṭābāt, and fiḥrist. According to the author's Mašyaḥa catalogue, each ḥadīth served as a torch that was passed from one generation to the next, symbolizing the continuity of the community, as opposed to the fiḥrist, which are primarily books of tradition that served the same purpose. In a single subheading, the author also dive through the fate of ḥadīth transmission

in the nineteenth and twentieth century in engagement with Islamic reformation and radical movement

Research on the transmission of the ḥadīth and its sophisticated methods of using various genres is not new in ḥadīth studies, nor is it new in the late period. In these studies, almost no attention was paid to how the corpus of ḥadīth was preserved and how it was passed orally throughout Islamic history. In ḥadīth studies, the research on the transmission and its sophisticated means of multiple genres is not a new one either in the early and late period, but the author has presented a variety of discourses in each using primary and secondary sources. Some academicians, including among others, George Makdisi, Richard Bulliet, Michael Chamberlain, Dale Eickelman, Chase Robinson, and Khaled El-Rouayheb, have made an effort to address these issues. These studies have addressed slightly how the ḥadīth corpus was carried on and transmitted and what tools were used in Islamic history to preserve the texts. Even though there are few studies by Jonathan Berkey, Konrad Hirschler, Asma Sayeed, Gregor Schoeler, Mohammad Akram Nadwi, and others have attempted to answer these questions directly. Garrett, an assistant professor of Arabic and Muslim World studies at the College of Charleston, filled this void.

After canonization, a liberal idea was dominant that permitted the ḥadīth to be transmitted to unborn, unnamed children, laypeople, and even through dream and supernatural modes especially following the creation of a reliable written ḥadīth corpus. Some legal experts would even insist that ḥadīth scholars created a sophisticated and multifaceted ideology that justified and provided context for the preservation of this absolute technology. Full-fledged Arabic Islamic classical texts serve as the study's key methodology reference. This book's distinctive feature is its rich Islamic manuscript reference. Further, he criticizes Muhammad Akram Nadwi's volume work *Al Muhadhithat* for asserting the women transmitters as ḥadīth scholars. The author corrects that transmission and learning aren't the same in sense, in contrast to what Akram Nadwi proposed. Even the well-known female ḥadīth expert Zainab bint Kamal was only

acknowledged as sheikha due to her elderly because she was venerated as a senior narrator rather than with her scholarship or credibility in the field.

In short, the transmission of prophetic words did not simply persist as an antiquated tradition in a small portion of the Sunni scholarly culture for more than a thousand years, from Spain to central Asia. According to Muhammad Qasim Zaman, it continues to be important even today. In the Muslim world, one can watch clerics recite their chains of transmission dating back to the prophet by tuning in to satellite television channels. One can follow a variety of blogs, message boards, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages that are dedicated to serving ḥadīth collection and transmission online.