

The Authentication of Ḥadīth: Ibn Ḥibbān's Introduction to His *Ṣaḥīḥ*

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ABSTRACT

Ibn Ḥibbān was a prominent scholar and critic of Ḥadīth. He seems to have collected Ḥadīth in his hometown of Bust in AH 270–300/881–911. He then travelled and made several journeys between Tashkent and Alexandria for about 40 years before returning to his native Sijistan in 340/951. By focusing on Ibn Ḥibbān's introduction to his *al-Taqāsīm wa-l-anwā'* ("Divisions and Categories"), better known as *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, the primary goal of this article is to examine Ibn Ḥibbān's theory of Ḥadīth authentication. Ibn Ḥibbān's theory of authenticity was established upon a set of formulas pertaining to transmission and knowledge that revolved almost entirely around the examination of *isnād* (chain of transmission). Since the aspiration of Ḥadīth studies is to distinguish between authentic and weak Ḥadīths, this article draws on evidence showing that *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* could be considered as a pioneering attempt to systemise the authentication of Ḥadīth in the first three centuries of *hijra*.

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Introduction

According to Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1175), Ibn Ḥibbān wrote his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ta'rikh*, and *al-Du'afā'* and his other books while he was teaching in Samarqand.¹ The name of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection is *al-Taqāsīm wa-l-anwā'*, and it is widely cited by Ibn 'Asākir, Ibn Balabān (d. 739/1339), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), al-Trāqī (d. 806/1404), al-Haythamī (d. 807/1404), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), and many others.² The name of the Ḥadīth collection is often abbreviated to *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*. Ibn Balabān, in his work deriving from *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, regularly cites it as *al-Taqāsīm wa-l-anwā'*.³ Ibn Balabān suggests that, following in the footsteps of Ibn Khuzayma (Ibn Ḥibbān's teacher), he named his book *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ 'alā l-taqāsīm wa-l-anwā' min ghayr wujūd qaf' fi sanadihā wa-lā thubūt jarḥ fi nāqilihā*. Aḥmad Shākir indicates that this is the title written in the

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¹Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh madīnat Dimashq*, volumes I–LXXX (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–2001), LI: 251.

²Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, volumes I–V (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), II: 921; *idem*, *Siyar al-'alām al-nubalā'*, volumes I–XXV (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981–1988), XVI: 94; Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāh*, ed. Nur al-Dīn 'Iṭr (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), p. 11.

³Al-Amīr 'Alī al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Balabān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Fārisī al-Miṣrī was born in 675/1276. At first glance, we know that he prefers to simplify books, among them *Mu'jam al-Tabarānī*, *Talkhīṣ al-Jāmi' al-kabīr fi l-furū'* of Muḥammad b. 'Ibād al-Khalaṭī al-Ḥanafī (d. 652), *al-Ilmām* of Ibn Daqīq al-'Id and many others. He died in Egypt on 9 Shawwāl 739/1338.

manuscript held at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya.⁴ It should be noted that Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ* has not survived in its original form, and its present arrangement by legal topic is the work of Ibn Balabān.

Brockelmann and Sezgin list the available manuscripts of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which are scattered in various places, including Istanbul, Cairo, Berlin and Madīna.⁵ Neither *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* nor *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* mentions whether these manuscripts are complete. Later, both add several more manuscripts of works deriving from *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*. Sezgin mentions that the first standard edition of *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* was printed in one volume in Egypt in 1952.⁶ This was Shākir's edition. He completed the first volume before his death. In his introduction, Shākir discusses at length the available manuscripts, including the name, the date of composition, the scribes or copyists, and the transmission of the book.⁷ Discussing one of the manuscripts, he indicates that, under the book title, the transmission is written as

From the composition of *Shaykh al-Islām*, Master and Custodian of Critics, Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān b. Aḥmad b. Ḥibbān al-Tamīmī, may Allah bestow His mercy on him,

riwāya (transmission) of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Zūzānī,⁸ from him [Ibn Ḥibbān],

riwāya of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī l-Baḥā'ī,⁹ from him,

riwāya of Abū l-Qāsim Zāhir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Shahḥāmī,¹⁰ from him,

riwāya of al-Ḥāfiz Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allāh b. 'Asākir, from him.¹¹

Shākir asserts that the scribe was obviously one of Ibn 'Asākir's students. He adds that this "book's *sanad*" belongs to Ibn 'Asākir, acknowledging that he read the material (Ibn 'Asākir used *qarā'tuhā 'alā*) in five volumes to his teacher, Abū l-Qāsim al-Shahḥāmī (d. 533/1138).¹² Shākir, an Azharī scholar, who died in 1377/1958, completed the first volume of Ibn Balabān's derivative work from *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* by comparing four manuscripts.¹³ As mentioned earlier, Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ* has not survived in its original form, and Ibn Balabān, the great scholar and editor of his time, rearranges the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in a way that he described as being easy for students to comprehend.¹⁴ At the end of each of the

⁴Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān bi-tarīb Ibn Balabān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1952), p. 9.

⁵Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, volumes I–II (Leiden: Brill, 1937–1942), I: 273; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums (GAS)*, volumes I–XVII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967–2000), I: 191.

⁶Fuat Sezgin, *GAS*, I: 191.

⁷Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Shākir, 22.

⁸Al-Dhahabī mentions Abū l-Ḥasan al-Zūzānī among the transmitters of Ibn Ḥibbān, and he died in 369/979. See al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, volumes I–LI (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1989), XXVI: 112; Zūzānī is a large town between Herat and Nishapur, and some people called it the "small Basra". See al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, volumes I–XIII (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1977), III: 175.

⁹In *al-Muntakhab*, the second *ṭabaqāt* under whose name is 'Alī. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Adīb Abū l-Ḥasan al-Baḥā'ī l-Zūzānī, he is among the experts on philology. He also had known as Abū l-Qāḍī Abī l-Qāsim al-Baḥā'ī. See al-Ṣayrafi, *Al-Muntakhab min al-siyāq li-ta'rikh Naysabūr li-l-Fārisī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1989), p. 382.

¹⁰Abū l-Qāsim Zāhir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Shahḥāmī al-Naysaburi, *musnid Khurasān*, was born in 446/1054. And he died in Rabi' al-Akhir 533/1138 at Nishapur. See Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fi akhbār man dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Arna'ūt and Mahmūd al-'Arna'ūt, volumes I–X (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993), IV: 102.

¹¹Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Shākir, 24.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, 48; For a short biography of Aḥmad Shākir, see G.H.A. Juynboll, "Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (1892–1958) and His Edition of Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*", in *idem*, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Hadith* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), II.

¹⁴Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Markāz al-Buḥūth wa-Taḥqīyāt al-Ma'ālim, IX, I: 232.