THE TRANSMISSION OF IBN SAᶜD'S BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY *KITĀB AL-ṬABAQĀT AL-KABĪR*

Ahmad Nazir Atassi

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

This article develops the concepts and tools for the systematic study of the mechanics of survival for medieval Islamic books. These concepts and tools are then applied to studying the history of the earliest extant biographical dictionary of the Islamic tradition: Ibn Saᶜd's *Ṭabaqāt*. First, the book's transmitters and their historical contexts are investigated using a large number of transmission chains. Then, conclusions are extracted from this data concerning the book's authorship, the survival process of its many versions, and the trajectories of its geographical diffusion at different phases of its long life.

About the Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr

The *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* (literally, 'The Great Book of Strata', henceforth *KTK*) was compiled by the Baghdadi *ḥadīṯ* transmitter and historian Muḥammad Ibn Saᶜd (d. 230/845).[1] The book belongs to the Islamic genre of biographical dictionaries of *ḥadīṯ* transmitters (*tarāǧim*). Within that tradition, it belongs to a specific sub-genre made up of lists of biographies of *ḥadīṯ* transmitters (*muḥaddiṯīn*) organized by generation. Such works are usually called 'books of strata' or *kutub al-ṭabaqāt*. Ibn Saᶜd's *KTK* stands out among its contemporaries in this genre, and even among historically minded compositions of the late second and early third Islamic centuries because the latter are basically lists of names, short lineages, dates of birth and/or death,[2] whereas the *KTK* has full biographies organized according to a number of criteria.[3]

---

[1] This article arises from research undertaken for my unpublished doctoral dissertation *A History of Ibn Saᶜd's Biographical Dictionary* Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr (Santa Barbara: University of California at Santa Barbara, 2009). For the most up-to-date biography of Muḥammad Ibn Saᶜd, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 34–95.

[2] Surviving examples of such compositions in the *ṭabaqāt* of *muḥaddiṯīn* genre are: Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyaṭ al-ᶜUṣfurī's (d. 240/850) *Ṭabaqāt*, and Ibn Saᶜd's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣaġīr* (still in manuscript).

[3] For a good description of the *KTK* see J. W. Fück 'Ibn Saᶜd'. The first modern edition of the book was issued in eight volumes (plus a volume of indices) in Leiden by E. Sachau. The first two volumes constitute a biography of the

Being the earliest surviving biographical dictionary, and later a staple of the Sunnī tradition, it is surprising that Ibn Saᶜd's *KTK* has not received the attention it deserves, or at least as much attention as al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīḫ*, for example.[4] This paper will remedy some of this 'injustice' by tracing the history of survival and transmission of the *KTK*.[5] In the process, we will also explore what it means to study the history of a medieval Islamic book and how the notions of transmission and survival fit into that history.

Sources, *data*, *and methodology*

The aim here is to study the 'survival dynamics' of the *KTK* through an investigation of its communication circuit in each generation. The elements of the communication circuit (at least the ones that can be accessed from the available data) are the *KTK* author(s), its transmitters/teachers, its copyists/students, and its readers/users. Our first task then is to establish a pool of candidates for these roles, and assign one or more roles in the circuit to each person in that pool. For this we need to locate the *KTK*'s extant manuscripts and extract their different chains of transmission, and to locate the later compilations that contain Saᶜdī reports and extract the transmission chains of such reports.

There is no single complete manuscript of the *KTK*, only fragments of it, with some overlaps.[6] Therefore, for these manuscripts, it is important to determine whether they represent a single recension of the work, a number of overlapping recensions, or widely different ones that cannot

---

Prophet Muḥammad. The third and fourth volumes deal with three strata of Muḥammad's companions. The fifth volume basically contains biographies of *ḥadīṯ* transmitters from Medina, the sixth from Kufa, the seventh from Basra and Baghdad. The eighth is dedicated to women companions and transmitters of *ḥadīṯ*.

[4] The existing literature about the *KTK* amounts to four works written during a period of about one hundred thirty years: O. Loth, *Das Classebuch des Ibn Saᶜd*; E. Sachau's introduction to the third volume of the Leiden edition of the *KTK*, vol. 3, part I, v–xliii; ᶜIzz al-Dīn ᶜUmar Mūsā, *Ibn Saᶜd*; and M. Cooperson, 'Ibn Saᶜd'. To these four works one must add ᶜAlī Muḥammad ᶜUmar's insightful introduction to the Ḫānǧī edition of the *KTK*. For a detailed description of these and other works, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 18–29.

[5] O. Loth's short study briefly discussed different transmission routes of the *KTK* while studying the authenticity of the book's different available manuscripts. In addition to reconstructing the outlines of Ibn Saᶜd's life, Loth discussed the accuracy of the book's attribution to Ibn Saᶜd, the issue of Ibn Ḥayyuwayh's role in editing and popularizing it, and the issue of Ibn Fahm's 'mysterious' version of the book.

[6] For a list of these manuscripts, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–24.

be, or should not be, reconciled. Fortunately, this work was done for us by the successive editors of the printed editions of the *KTK*.[7] Next, several transmission trees of the *KTK*'s recensions represented by the extant manuscripts are drawn.[8] Studying the transmission chains of Saᶜdī reports within later compilations helps add more branches to these trees.[9] Using biographical information of the persons involved in the aforementioned transmission trees (manuscripts and other recensions), we can study the temporal and geographical diffusion of the *KTK*.

Moreover, comparing these reports to corresponding ones in the printed edition of the *KTK* helps to establish the existence and character of other recensions, compared to the one available to us, and to give an approximate date to their disappearance from circulation; thus describing the process of crystallization of the book.[10] Counting the frequency of Saᶜdī reports in different compilations helps draw a picture of the *KTK*'s

---

[7] Several editions appeared in the Arab world that were based on the Leiden edition; namely the editions of Dār Bayrūt, 1957; Dār Ṣādir 1960; Dār Bayrūt li-l-Ṭibāᶜah wa-l-Našr, 1978; Dār al-Taḥrīr, 1968. In 1983, Ziyād M. Manṣūr published the part missing from the Medinan *ṭabaqāt*. In 1998, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, with M. ᶜAbd al-Qādir ᶜAtā as editor, published the more complete, but a worst, version of the *KTK*. In 1994, Muḥammad Ṣāmil al-Salamī published the fifth stratum of the companions. The fourth stratum of companions appeared in 1995 in a volume edited by ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Sallūmī. Finally, in 2001 Maktabat al-Ḫānğī in Cairo published the most complete version of the *KTK* edited by ᶜAlī Muḥammad ᶜUmar. For a detailed investigation of the overlapping of the extant manuscripts, see the introductions to the different volumes of the Leiden edition. In fact, we show here that the manuscripts and the Saᶜdī reports in compilations written after the fifth/eleventh century come from the fusion of two recensions.

[8] Due to space restrictions, these trees are not included in this paper, only a list of the major transmitters organized in generations is given. Readers interested in diagrams of these trees are referred to in Atassi, *History*, Appendices I and II.

[9] How can we distinguish between a book-transmission chain and a report-transmission chain? I noticed that a good number of reports in later compilations share a portion of their transmission chains with those of the extant manuscripts; i.e. the portion covering the period from Ibn Saᶜd's time to the fifth/eleventh century. Therefore, when encountering a large number of such reports, I assumed that they were drawn from copies of the same recensions as those of the manuscripts. For example, we can confirm this assumption for Ibn Ḥağar al-ᶜAsqalānī's works because he tells us the sources of his copies of the *KTK* in his in *al-Muᶜğam al-mufahras*, 1: 168–70.

[10] Such analysis is detailed in Atassi, *History*, Ch. 4.

literary diffusion according to genre.[11] This diffusion is an indication of how different generations perceived and classified the *KTK*. This classification, combined with the transmitters' historical context, should orient later investigations concerning the reasons behind the *KTK*'s survival; and hence how and why its authority as a book of tradition was gradually established. Finally, comparing borrowings with extant manuscripts should give us an idea about the accuracy of book transmission within the medieval Islamic culture, which is, as we have mentioned, related to the rise of what we called the textbook.

The sample of compilations

Having combed a hundred or so medieval compilations looking for Saᶜdī material, I noticed the existence of two major time periods according to the number of compilations that contained Saᶜdī reports and the number of such reports within each compilation. Beyond the sixth/twelfth century, compilations containing Saᶜdī reports increased dramatically and so did the number of such reports in each compilation. Therefore, for this period I only included in my study the compilations that supplied the transmission chains of their Saᶜdī reports. I ignored the compilations that borrowed from Ibn Saᶜd's works without specifying which one or how it was obtained. Before this date, I included all the compilations containing Saᶜdī material that I could find, except when several of them belonged to the same compiler and featured similar numbers of Saᶜdī reports. In the latter case, I selected a representative compilation of the compiler's work which were then grouped into six genres: *tarāǧim* (biographies) books[12], *sīra* and *maġāzī* books[13], history (or historiography) books[14], *ḥadīṯ*

[11] The counting was done electronically with the help of digitized versions of the books consulted and the help of al-Maktaba al-Šāmila; see Atassi, *History*, 208–11.

[12] By *tarāǧim* books I understand books that contain a succession of indivisible parts (*tarǧama*, or biography) each containing information relating to one person. In this category I include books from the *ṭabaqāt* genre such as Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyāṭ's *Ṭabaqāt*, *ansāb* books such as Balāḏurī's *Ansāb al-ašrāf*, and biographical compilations such as al-Ḫaṭīb's *Tārīḫ Baġdād*.

[13] By *sīra* and *maġāzī* books I understand biographies of Muḥammad (*sīra*), monographs about his battles (*maġāzī*), and books glorifying his personality traits and his acts (*šamāʾil* and *faḍāʾil* books).

[14] By history books I understand books of reports organized in any format other than the *tarāǧim* format. Such books include Ḫayyāṭ's *Tārīḫ*, Ibn Ḥabīb's *al-Munammaq* and his *al-Muḥabbar*, al-Wāqidī's *Futūḥ al-Šām*, al-Yaᶜqūbī's *Tārīḫ* and his *Aḫbār al-zamān*, Ṭabarī's *al-Tārīḫ al-kabīr*, and al-Masᶜūdī's *Murūǧ al-ḏahab*. Other books containing the word *tārīḫ* in their titles, such as al-Ḫaṭīb's

books[15], *fahāris* (*maᶜāğim al-šuyūḫ* or *mašyaḫāt*) books[16], and books belonging to the Shīᶜa tradition. Table 1 features a list of the compilations in my sample organized chronologically according to their compilers' death dates.

According to Table 1 (below), *tarāğim* books are disproportionately represented in my sample than any other genre, followed by *ḥadīṯ* compilations, and then historiographies. Books of the Shīᶜa tradition, *sīra* and *mašyaḫāt* lists are almost equally thinly represented in the sample. This imbalance may seem a great obstacle facing any serious conclusion as to the frequency of Saᶜdī reports as a function of genre. However, the representation of different genres in my sample reflects their real representation in the entire Islamic tradition. Books of *tarāğim*, *ḥadīṯ* and historiography are the most common. *Sīra* books are few and well known given the obvious limitation on their multiplication (i.e. the limited number of reports about Muḥammad's life and person).

Table 1. Compilations containing Saᶜdī reports, the number of these reports in each compilation, its genre, and its compiler; the compilers' death dates, and main place of residence.

Death (AH)	Reports	Compilation title	Compiler	Genre	Residence
262	2	*Tārīḫ al-Madīna*	Ibn Šabba	history	Baghdad
272	1	*Sunan*	Abū Dāwūd	*ḥadīṯ*	Baghdad
279	>250	*Ansāb al-Ašrāf* *	Al-Balāḏurī	*tarāğim*	Baghdad
282	3	*al-Musnad*	Ibn Abī Uṣāma	*ḥadiṯ*	Baghdad
306	22	*Aḫbār al-Quḍāt**	Wakīᶜ	*tarāğim*	Baghdad
310	250	*Tārīḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk**	Al-Ṭabarī	history	Baghdad
317	20	*Muᶜğam al-ṣaḥāba**	al-Baġawī	*tarāğim*	Baghdad
327	2	*al-Ğarḥ wa-l-taᶜdīl*	Ibn Abī Hātim	*tarāğim*	Rayy
4th century	2	*Kifāyat al-Aṯar**	Abū al-Qāsim al-Qummī	Shīᶜa tradition	Rayy

Tārīḫ Baġdād and Ibn ᶜAsākir's *Tārīḫ Dimašq*, do not fall in this category because the bulk of them are organized according to the *tarāğim* format.

[15] By *ḥadīṯ* books I understand compilations of prophetic sayings and deeds organized in any way: thematically like *Buḫārī*'s *Ṣaḥīḥ* or the thematic monographs of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā; the *ḥadīṯ*s transmitted by one *rāwī* like the *masānīd*; or any book listing *ḥadīṯ*s without any other kind of reports. In this category I include *ḥadīṯ* criticism (*ğarḥ wa-taᶜdīl*) books such as Ibn Ḥanbal's *ᶜIlal*, Ibn Šāhīn's *Tārīḫ Asmāᵓ al-ṯiqāt*, Ibn Mākūlāh's *al-Ikmāl*, and Ibn Ḥibbān's *al-Ṯiqāt* and his *al-Ḍuᶜafāᵓ*, and al-Ḏahabī's *al-Muġnī fī al-ḍuᶜafāᵓ*.

[16] Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* was very useful. However, the *mašyaḫa* books, such as *Fahrasat Ibn Ḫayr al-Išbīlī* and Ibn Ḥağar al-ᶜAsqalānī's *al-Muᶜğam al-mufahras*, produced the most spectacular information.

360	>20	*al-Muᶜğam al-kabīr**	Ṭabarānī	*tarāğim*	Iṣfahān
356	3	*Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn**	Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī	Shīᶜa	Aleppo
365	2	*al-Kāmil fī ḍuᶜafāᵓ al-riǧāl**	Ibn ᶜAdī al-Ǧurǧānī	*tarāğim*	itinerant
374	2	*al-Maḫzūn fī ʻilm al-ḥadīṯ*	Abū al-Fatḥ al-Azdī	*ḥadiṯ*	Mosul
385	1	*Tārīḫ asmāᵓ al-ṯiqāt*	Ibn Šāhīn	*tarāğim*	Baghdad
385	1	*Sunan*	al-Dāraquṭnī	*ḥadiṯ*	Baghdad
405	6	*al-Mustadrak**	al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī	*ḥadiṯ*	Nīšāpūr
409	1	*Kitāb al-mutawārīn*	ᶜAbd al-Ġanī al-Azdī	history	Cairo
430	10	*Ḥilyat al-awliyāᵓ**	Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣfahānī	*tarāğim*	Iṣfahān
430	20	*Maᶜrifat al-ṣaḥāba*	Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣbahānī	*tarāğim*	Iṣbahān
450	1	*Riǧāl al-Naǧāšī*	al-Naǧāšī	Shīᶜa tradition	Baghdad
458	4	*Dalāᵓil al-nubuwwa**	al-Bayhaqī	*sīra*	Nīšāpūr
463	>250	*Tārīḫ Baǧdād*	al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baǧdādī	*tarāğim*	Baghdad
463	>250	*al-Istīᶜāb fī maᶜrifat al-aṣḥāb*	Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr	*tarāğim*	Andalusia
571	>250	*Tārīḫ Dimašq*	Ibn ᶜAsākir	*tarāğim*	Damascus
575		*Fahrasat Ibn Ḫayr*	Ibn al-Ḫayr al-Išbīlī	*mašyaḫāt*	Andalusia
734	>250	*ᶜUyūn al-aṯar*	Ibn Sayyid al-Nās	Sīra	Andalusia
748	>250	*Taḏkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*	Ḏahabī	*tarāğim*	Damascus
852		*al-Muᶜğam al-mufahras*	Ibn Ḥağar al-ᶜAsqalānī	*mašyaḫāt*	Cairo

* Compilations that use recensions different from those in the printed edition of the *KTK*.

Transmitters of the KTK

According to the chains of transmission of the *KTK*'s extant manuscripts,[17] the material contained in these manuscripts is the fusion of two recensions, the first transmitted by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥāriṯ b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Usāma al-Tamīmī (186/802–282/895),[18] and the

[17] For details about the transmitters of the *KTK* inferred from Saᶜdī reports that were included in later compilations see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–250 and references therein; see also Appendix II for transmitters of the extant manuscripts only.

[18] He resided in Baghdad and was probably a copyist and a tutor for hire. He has a *musnad* compilation (*ḥadīṯ*s organized according to selected transmitters, usually the first after Muḥammad) attributed to his name; but generally he was

second transmitted by Abū ᶜAlī al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Fahm (211/826–289/901) who is the more problematic of the two.[19] Both transmitters were second-tier *muḥaddiṯ*s and possibly teachers by vocation. In the second generation, Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Maᶜrūf al-Ḫaššāb (d. 321 or 322/933 or 934) transmitted on the authority of both Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm. He was an obscure *muḥaddiṯ* from Baghdad. It is difficult to ascertain his profession from the designation al-Ḫaššāb (literally, 'the carpenter' or 'wood handler/cutter'). However, it would not be far-fetched for the *muḥaddiṯ*s of the pre-*madrasa* era to teach *ḥadīṯ* and related material as an avocation.[20] Also in the second generation is Abū Ayyūb Isḥāq b. Sulaymān al-Ǧallāb (d. 334/945), another minor *muḥaddiṯ* from Baghdad, whose profession could have been a carrier given his designation al-Ǧallāb. He transmitted on the authority of Ibn Abī Usāma only.[21] Al-Ǧallāb's role as a transmitter of the *KTK* is inferred from transmission chains of Saᶜdī reports in later compilations; especially Ibn ᶜAsākir's *Tārīḫ madīnat Dimashq*.

The third generation is even more problematic than the first two for it contains one person only; namely Abū ᶜUmar Muḥammad b. Ḥayyuwayh al-Ḫazzāz (295/907–382/992). Both manuscripts and Saᶜdī reports give us this one transmitter. He lived in Baghdad and, according

---

not a major figure of the Baghdadi *ḥadīṯ* scene. It is noteworthy that the *sīra* part of the extant manuscripts is transmitted by Ibn Abī Usāma alone, the eldest of the two transmitters of the *KTK*. This lends credence to the claim that the *sīra* part of the Leiden edition of the *KTK* used to be circulated as a separate book.

[19] An *aḫbārī* (transmitter of historical reports), a minor *ḥadīṯ* transmitter, and a learned person, Ibn Fahm was nineteen years of age when Ibn Saᶜd died. This puts him at around age fifteen when he started studying under Ibn Saᶜd, a typical age for third/ninth century youngsters to start their advanced studies. Does that make the fate of the *KTK* dependent on one teenager? Not necessarily, because many students of different ages may have attended the dictation of the book (or parts of it), but only two persons decided to teach it and Ibn Fahm is one of them.

[20] We have a confirmation that Ibn Maᶜrūf had taught Ibn Saᶜd's *Sīra*: the *KTK*'s transmission chain in Ibn Sayyid al-Nās' *ᶜUyūn al-aṯar*, 2: 440–1, states that Ibn Saᶜd's *Sīra* was 'recited back to' Ibn Maᶜrūf in the month of *ša'bān* of the year 318/930.

[21] In both al-Ḫaṭīb's *Tārīḫ Baġdād* and Ibn ᶜAsākir's *Tārīḫ Dimašq*, al-Ǧallab transmits Saᶜdī reports exclusively from Ibn Abī Usāma. He also frequently transmits reports from Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī (d. 285/898), a famous compiler from Baghdad. Therefore, we can safely claim that al-Ǧallāb was a 'teacher' and not a compiler himself, which is something we will note about most transmitters of the *KTK*.

to his designation (*ḫazzāz*), he might have been a maker of silk yarn. We have no complete manuscript of the *KTK* with only Ibn Abī Usāma or Ibn Fahm in the chain of transmission. However, all available manuscripts include Ibn Ḥayyuwayh in their transmission-chains as the only transmitter at the third level after the author.[22] It is possible that Ibn Maᶜrūf had collected the entire *KTK* before Ibn Ḥayyuwayh; but it is the latter who seems to have propagated it. Al-Baġdādī mentions that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh 'heard plenty and wrote [i.e. copied] all his life and transmitted large compilations such as the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Saᶜd, the *Maġāzī* of al-Wāqidī, the compilations of Abī Bakr b. al-Anbārī, the *Maġāzī* of Saᶜīd al-Umawī, the *History* of Ibn Abī Ḫayṯama, and many others'.[23] One of the manuscripts' transmission-chains states that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh copied the corresponding section of the *KTK* while the text was being recited back to Ibn Maᶜrūf in the month of *Šaᶜbān* of the year 318/930. This means that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh was then twenty years old and that Ibn Maᶜrūf was at the end of his life. We notice here the same pattern we observed in the transmission of the *KTK* from Ibn Saᶜd to Ibn Fahm; i.e. a young student tries to get the teacher's book as early as possible in his career and as late as possible in the teacher's life. This was a common practice among *muḥaddiṯ*s because it lowered the number of transmitters between the last in a chain and the Prophet.[24] We must also remark that collecting and transmitting such large works possibly needed full time dedication. It is difficult however, given the dearth of information about these transmitters, to ascertain their professions, and whether or not they practiced teaching.

In the fourth generation we encounter three transmitters of the *KTK*, all of whom seem to have been teachers by vocation. The two transmitters supplied by the manuscripts are Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī al-Ǧawharī (363/973–454/1062), and Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUmar al-Barmakī (361/971–445/1053). The one transmitter supplied by Saᶜdī reports is Abū al-Qāsim ᶜUbayd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Azharī

[22] If it were not for earlier books that mentioned Ibn Saᶜd and his *KTK* with numerous borrowings that matched the *KTK* verbatim, I would have suggested considering Ibn Ḥayyuwayh as the 'real' compiler of the *KTK*. Nonetheless, it is possible that he had an impact on the *KTK* in terms of selection of recensions, organization of reports, and addition of some information. For a discussion of Ibn Ḥayyuwayh's partition of the *KTK* in twenty four parts (*aǧzāʾ*), as well as other known partitions, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 239–41.

[23] Al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḫ Baghdād*, 3: 121, no. 1139.

[24] Receb Şentürk, *Narrative Social Structure*, 1–28.

(355/965–435/1043). According to al-Ḫaṭīb's *Tārīḫ Baġdād*, al-Ǧawharī resided in Darb al-Zaᶜfarānī, where many *muḥaddiṯ*s used to live. Al-Ḏahabī's *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāᵓ* adds that 'he was steeped in transmission, he transmitted abundantly, and held many dictation sessions'.[25] Al-Barmakī resided in Baghdad and was a Ḥanbalī *muftī*, with a teaching circle (*ḥalqa*) at the al-Manṣūr mosque.[26] Al-Ḫaṭīb also alludes to the fact that al-Azharī taught large compilations, such as the *KTK*, when he says: 'we heard from him large compilations and long books'.[27]

In the fifth generation, we know of five transmitters of the *KTK*; three of them through the manuscripts and two through Saᶜdī reports. All of these transmitters were from Baghdad, and most of them seem to have been teachers. For example, Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Bāqī (442/1050–535/1140) was a scholar and a teacher.[28] Abū Naṣr Muḥmmad b. al-Ḥasan (434/1042–510/1116) had two teaching circles in Baghdad, which he took over after his father, one of them being at the famous al-Manṣūr's mosque.[29] To this generation belongs al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī (d. 463/1071), the compiler of the famous *Tārīḫ Baġdād*.[30] In the sixth generation, we know of five transmitters, all from Baghdad. The manuscripts give us only one, but the most renowned. He is Abū Muḥammad ᶜAbd Allāh b. Duhbul b. Kāra (d. 599/1202).[31] To this generation belongs Ibn ᶜAsākir (499/1105–571/1176), the compiler of the famous *Tārīḫ madīnat Dimašq*.[32] The sixth generation is practically the last of the known Baghdadi generations of *KTK* transmitters.[33]

---

[25] Al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāᵓ*, 18: 68.

[26] Al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḫ Baghdād*, 6: 139, no. 3180. The mosque of al-Manṣūr, which should be located close to al-Manṣūr's palace (Qaṣr al-Ḫuld), was the main mosque on the western side (i.e. the old city) of the Tigris. Important teachers of all disciplines had teaching circles in that mosque.

[27] Ibid, 10: 385, no. 5559.

[28] Al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar*, 20: 23. He mentions in page 28 that Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī taught 'Ibn Saᶜd's *Ṭabaqāt*;' see also ibid., 19: 386, no. 228.

[29] Ibn al-ᶜImād, *Šaḏarāt al-ḏahab*, 4: 27.

[30] See A.N. Atassi, *History*, 229, for a discussion of whether al-Ḫaṭīb taught the *KTK* or not, and his probable role in introducing it to Damascus.

[31] For Ibn Kāra's mention in the available manuscripts see ibid, 222, 244-245, 247. We also know from Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ᶜAsqalānī's transmission chain of the *KTK* that Ibn Kāra taught the book to a certain Ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ.

[32] See ibid, 232–3 for a discussion of Ibn ᶜAsākir's popularization of the *KTK* in Syria.

[33] In fact, Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ᶜAsqalānī, in *al-Muᶜǧam*, 1: 168–70. supplies us with

Beyond the sixth/twelfth century the book was taught mostly in Syria and Egypt.

The seventh generation would see the book appearing in Egypt-Syria through three persons who acquired it in Baghdad and then later passed it on in their cities of residence. Abū l-Faraǧ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1273) brought it to Cairo.[34] Ibn ᶜAbd al-Dāᵓim (575/1179–668/1269) brought it to Damascus.[35] But, most important among them is Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ b. Ḫalīl (555/1160–648/1250), who brought it to Aleppo.[36] Most transmitters in the eighth generation received the *KTK* in Aleppo from Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. The most notable teacher of the *KTK* in the eighth generation is Šaraf al-Dīn al-Dimyāṭī (613/1216–705/1305), who received it from Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ.[37] The transmitters of the eighth generation and beyond (up to the ninth/late sixteenth century) acquired the *KTK* and passed it on either in Aleppo, Damascus, or Cairo.[38]

Aspects of transmission

Whether in Baghdad, Aleppo, Damascus, or Cairo, transmitters of the *KTK* who spent time actually teaching it were second-tier *muḥaddiṯ*s and/or scholars. None of them had composed any compilation of their own. They were *muḥaddiṯ*s who specialized in transmitting large works, such as al-Ḫaššāb, Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī, al-Ǧawharī, Ibn Kāra, Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, and al-Dimyāṭī. It is also noteworthy that many Baghdadi transmitters of the *KTK*, such as al-Barmakī, Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī, and Abū Naṣr, were Ḥanbalīs. Moreover, both al-Barmakī and Abū

---

a name, Ibn al-Ḫayyir (563/1167–648/1250), who could be viewed as a seventh generation of Baghdadi transmitters; for a biography see al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 235, no. 155.

[34] This information is contained in the transmission chain supplied by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1333), who was a resident of Cairo, in his *ᶜUyūn al-aṯar*, 2: 440-1. It is possible that this al-Ḥarranī was not a 'true' teacher of the *KTK*, for Ibn Sayyid al-Nās mentions that the former supplied him with a part of the book through an *iǧāza*. For a biography of al-Ḥarrānī see Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Makkī, *Dhayl al-Taqyīd*, 2: 148, no. 1324.

[35] For a biography see ibid., 1: 326, no. 649.

[36] Al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar*, 23: 151, no. 104.

[37] Al-Ḏahabī mentions that al-Dimyāṭī has related to him Ibn Saᶜd's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* on the authority of Ibn Ḫalīl (Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ); see al-Ḏahabī, *Taḏkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2: 11, no. 431.

[38] Our information about these later generations comes from two very detailed transmission chains, one is supplied by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, ᶜ*Uyūn al-aṯar*, 2: 440–1, and the other is supplied by Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ᶜAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), *al-Muǧam al-Mufahras*, 1: 168–70.

Naṣr taught at al-Manṣūr's mosque.[39] Although al-Madrasa al-Niẓāmiyya was built in 459/1066, none of the aforementioned teachers taught there because the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, the founder of the school, prohibited non-Šāfiʿites from teaching at al-Niẓāmiyya.

In Syria and Egypt, we know that transmitters of the *KTK* were also full-time teachers, while famous compilers remained mostly users of the *KTK*. While many Baghdadi transmitters of Ibn Saʿd's work taught in the neighborhood of al-Karḫ (south of Baghdad where the aforementioned Darb al-Zaʿfarān was located) or in al-Manṣūr's mosque in the walled city, their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts taught in institutions sponsored by the ruling elite, such as the network of *madrasa*s patronized by the Mamlūk rulers and their *amīr*s. Moreover, while the Baghdadi transmitters were possibly religious scholars by avocation, their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts were professional scholars, judges, and members of the religious elite[40]

Islamic 'tradition' has a well-known fragmentary nature. The prevalent way of transmitting this tradition continued to be the individual report, which consisted of a transmission chain attached to the report's text. Instead of continuous narratives, what emerged are compilations of reports which preserved the fragmentary nature of the original reports, and made possible their own re-fragmentation. Medieval Muslim compilers tended to fragment the works of their predecessors into individual reports (the same report could even be fragmented into many smaller ones to suit the needs of the user), and then include these fragments into their own works. Compiling and fragmenting knowledge were two distinct and opposing processes always active in the production and transmission of medieval Islamic knowledge. It is puzzling, but it seems that students of medieval knowledge had an aversion toward teaching books that they collected in their travels. Instead, they fragmented what they learned and wrote their own compilations which they later taught. In the current study, I suggest that people who chose to teach others' compilations tended not to write any of their own.

---

[39] It is probable that this mosque and the neighboring district of Bāb Ḥarb, at whose cemetery some of these transmitters were buried, had strong ḥanbalī affiliations. It is possible that the ḥanbalites' strong attachment to tradition may explain their interest in the *KTK*, given that it was one of the earliest works to deal with early Islamic history. This intellectual, and maybe social, aspect of the *KTK*'s history still needs further investigation.

[40] Such information is included in the biographies of the different transmitters referenced in this paper when each of them is mentioned for the first time. See, for example, footnotes 40–4.

Attempting to explain this observation, I suggest that in medieval Muslim societies, intellectual prestige was built through the writing of compilations and legal texts, dictating them rather than teaching older compilations. Legal texts required competency, but compilations only required fragmenting older works and reassembling them. Seekers of intellectual capital (converted later into social and financial capitals) did just that. Otherwise, in the presence of Ibn Saᶜd's *KTK*, why would al-Baġawī (d. 317/929) produce his *Muᶜğam al-ṣaḥāba*, or al-Ṭabarānī his *al-Muᶜğam al-kabīr*, or Ibn Shāhīn's *Tārīḫ asmāʾ al-ṯiqāt*, or Abū Nuᶜaym's *Maᶜrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, or Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr's *al-Istīᶜāb fī maᶜrifat al-aṣḥāb*? These authors could not possibly have known more about any of Muḥammad's companions than did Ibn Saᶜd.

In this atmosphere of enhancing one's reputation as a scholar by absorbing and building upon the works of predecessors, the survival of older books becomes quite difficult: for that to happen, a group of dedicated transmitters, whose task is to popularize a selected group of works, has to exist. What would then make transmitting rather than compiling attractive to these teachers? This is a hard question to answer, but the transmission of entire books transformed these books into authoritative sources of tradition by virtue of a process of selection, at the heart of which were those dedicated teachers. In fact, such dedicated transmitters defined and preserved the 'canonical' books of tradition. This exact process transformed the *KTK* into an authoritative source of the Islamic tradition.

Methods of transmission of the KTK

It is noteworthy that by and from the ninth/late fourteenth century, the transmission of the *KTK* happened mostly by *iğāza*. The clearest example is Ibn Ḥaǧar, who obtained five different permissions to use the *KTK*. It was also common for calculating parents to take their young boys (at age three or four) to hear a famous and old teacher for a while and then obtain a permission from this teacher for their son. This was the case, for example, of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (671/1272–763/1361) who, while a child, obtained a permission from Abū l-Faraǧ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1273).[41]

The use of *iğāza* in the transmission of the *KTK* was known since the third/tenth century, and, according to Ibn Ḥaǧar, even Ibn Ḥayyuwayh in the fourth/tenth century obtained parts of the *KTK* by an *iğāza* from Ibn Maᶜrūf al-Ḫaššāb. Tracking the use of *iğāza* in the transmission-

[41] Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Makkī, *Ḏayl al-Taqyīd*, 2: 148, no. 1324.

chains of Ibn Sayyid al-Nas and Ibn Ḥağar, we notice a steady increase in this usage as time progressed. By Ibn Ḥağar's time (the ninth/fifteenth century), it was possible to obtain an *iğāza* by mail and without even seeing the person granting it.[42] This is an indication that the *KTK* had acquired such stability in its form that one could acquire a copy of it and then authenticate that copy through one or multiple *iğāza*s from different teachers. It was not required for the grantor of the *iğāza* to have heard the entire book from a teacher either, only a status of scholarship and a reputation of trustworthiness sufficed for the chain of authentication to be valid and to carry the weight of *samāᶜ* (hearing), the ultimate source of authenticity.[43]

By the ninth century, the *KTK* had become fixed. No one could alter its content or form without attracting the attention of scholars and copyists both in Syria and in Egypt, who were capable of detecting such a change. The *KTK* had become a staple of the Islamic tradition, and possibly even textbook. Not many books attained a level at which survival was no longer an issue and did not depend on the efforts of a few dedicated transmitters. Beyond the seventh/fourteenth century, the survival of the *KTK* was assured by the increase in the number of students copying it, as well as by the multiplication of copies later authenticated by permissions from reputed scholars.

Authorship of the KTK

The bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/ 995 or 388/998) in his *Fihrist* claims that Ibn Saᶜd has only one book, which coincides with the *sīra* part of the printed edition of the *KTK*.[44] However, Ibn al-Nadīm also added that Ibn Saᶜd had 'compiled his books', thus insinuating that Ibn Saᶜd might have had more than one book.[45] Furthermore, Ibn al-Nadīm claims that Ibn Saᶜd was 'knowledgeable about the *ṣaḥāba* and the

---

[42] Ibn Ḥağar al-ᶜAsqalānī, *al-Muᶜğam al-mufahras*, 1: 169, mentions that 'Abū al-ᶜAbbās … informed us in his letter from Damascus that Abū ᶜAbd Allāh … informed us in his letter from Cairo…'

[43] Lists of the different methods of acquiring the *KTK* by later generations of transmitters (beyond the ninth/fifteenth century) are given in A.N. Atassi, *History*, 137–8, 250.

[44] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, *al-Fann al-awwal min al-maqāla al-ṯāliṯa*, biography of Muḥammad b. Saᶜd's *kātib*, al-Wāqidī.

[45] Idem. Ibn al-Nadīm also claims that these alleged works were a mere reworking of al-Wāqidī's compilations (Ibn Saᶜd's main teacher and source of reports).

tābiᶜūn'.[46] Since the bulk of the *KTK* is composed of biographical information about the two classes of persons identified by Ibn al-Nadīm as Ibn Saᶜd's area of expertise, it is then possible that the latter wrote something about that topic in order to establish his authority. Ibn al-Nadīm also attributes a book of *ṭabaqāt* to Ibn Saᶜd's teacher and main source, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823).[47] Given that he is the only bibliographer who has ever made such a claim, and since he considered that Ibn Saᶜd's works were mere plagiarism of al-Wāqidī's work, it is possible that he attributed the *ṭabaqāt* work (one of possible two) to the teacher rather than to the student. Finally, when listing the books of which he was aware and whose authors were not known to him, Ibn al-Nadīm names a certain *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt* and attributes it to a certain Muḥammad b. Saᶜd.[48] It seems to me that Ibn al-Nadīm either did not double check his sources or intentionally downplayed Ibn Saᶜd's importance.[49]

If Ibn al-Nadīm cannot always be trusted in ascribing books to their rightful authors, it is necessary to use other sources to confirm that our Ibn Saᶜd had written a work of *ṭabaqāt* that can be confidently identified with the *KTK*. This was indeed possible since the third/ninth century-genealogist al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) in his *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* mentions in passing that 'Muḥammad b. Saᶜd, the scribe of al-Wāqidī,' has to his name a book of '*ṭabaqāt* of *muḥaddiṯīn* and *fuqahāᵓ*,'[50] from which he has extensively borrowed. The borrowed material exists in the *KTK*, which proves that the third/ninth century compiler Muḥammad b. Saᶜd is indeed the author of the *KTK*. In fact, we have in our hand a recension of the *KTK* which is different from the recension used in al-Balāḏurī's book.[51]

---

[46] Idem.

[47] Ibid., 'Aḫbār al-Wāqidī'.

[48] Ibid, *al-Fann al-ṯānī min al-maqāla al-rābiᶜa*: *Ḏikr mā waǧadtu min al-kutub al-muṣannafa fī l-ādāb li-qawm lam yuᶜraf ḥāluhum ᶜalā l-iṣtiqṣāᵓ*.

[49] In comparing Ibn al-Nadīm's biography of al-Wāqidī and the latter's two biographies in the *KTK*, we are led to conclude that Ibn al-Nadīm's biography of al-Wāqidī is a type of summary of the two biographies given in the *KTK*. Ibn al-Nadīm also mentions that his source was none other than Ibn Saᶜd, al-Wāqidī's scribe; see ibid., *al-Fann al-awwal min al-maqāla al-ṯāliṯa*: *Aḫbār al-Wāqidī*.

[50] Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-ašrāf*, 2: 263. Another third/ninth century author, Wakīᶜ (d. 306/918), in his *Aḫbār al-quḍāt* mentions, also in passing, that 'Muḥammad b. Saᶜd, the scribe of al-Wāqidī,' has a book of *ṭabaqāt* attributed to his name. Wakīᶜ, *Aḫbār al-quḍāt*, 2: 397; 3: 269.

[51] In A.N. Atassi, *History*, 106–108 and 164–5, I suggest that Ibn Saᶜd started writing the *KTK* sometime after 207/823, finished the bulk of it

The Egyptian author Ibn Ḫallikān (d. 681/1282), in his *Wafayāt al-ᶜyān*,[52] mentions that Ibn Saᶜd's *Ṭabaqāt* was a large (*kabīr*) book of fifteen volumes. Moreover, we learn there that there existed another work of *ṭabaqāt* that is a shorter (*ṣuġra*) version of the first. Here *kabīr* and *suġrā* are used simply as adjectives to describe the works and not as parts of the works' titles. It is Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1333) in his *ᶜUyūn al-aṯar* who first calls Ibn Saᶜd's book *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*.[53] Al-Ḏahabī (d. 748/1348), in his *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāᵓ*, gives us a summary of the different biographies previously written about Ibn Saᶜd, interspersed with praise fit for the now famous author of [*Kitāb*] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* and [*Kitāb*] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣaġīr*.[54] Ibn Saᶜd's works are no longer 'large' and 'small' but are named *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* and *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣaġīr*. The earlier adjectives of these titleless works have become grandiose titles. Al-Ḏahabī, in his *Taḏkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, states that 'Ibn Saᶜd is the compiler of *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* and *al-Ṣaghīr* and the compiler of *al-Tārīḫ* ... our teacher Šaraf al-Dīn al-Dimyāṭī has dictated to us his [Ibn Saᶜd's] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*'.[55] Is this a play on adjectives, or is *al-kubrā* really different from the *KTK*? We have previously concluded, when discussing Ibn al-Nadīm's claims, that Ibn Saᶜd's *Tārīḫ* and *Sīra* (the first two volumes of the Leiden edition of the *KTK*) are most likely one and the same book. But it is curious that al-Ḏahabī mentions the *Tārīḫ* as if it were separate from the *Ṭabaqāt*. Cooperson thinks that the *Sīra* book 'may have been intended to stand as a separate text'.[56] We also know that the manuscripts upon which the

---

sometime around 213/828 (and started teaching it, which accounts of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension); and kept editing and adding new material to it until 228/842, or until shortly before he died (I dated the writing of Ibn Fahm's recension to around the interval 226/840–230/845).

[52] Ibn Ḫallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 4: 160, no. 645. In fact, al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī mentions that Ibn Saᶜd has compiled a 'large' (*kabīr*) book in the *ṭabaqāt* genre. Al-Ḫaṭīb, *Tārīḫ Baġdād*, 5: 321, no. 2844.

[53] Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ᶜUyūn al-aṯar*, 2: 440.

[54] al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalā'*, 10: 664, no. 242.

[55] al-Ḏahabī, *Taḏkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2: 431. Šaraf al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-Muᵓmin b. Ḫalaf al-Dimyāṭī is a famous Egyptian teacher who resided in Cairo.

[56] M. Cooperson, 'Ibn Saᶜd,' 201. This claim finds additional support in the fact that the manuscript of *Kitāb at-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣaġīr* (Süleymaniye Library, Özel 216) does not include the *Sīra* or any abridgement of it; which could mean that the original *Ṭabaqāt* project that materialized in the *KTK* did not include a *Sīra* part.

Leiden team depended for their edition were either transmitted or approved by al-Dimyāṭī,[57] al-Ḏahabī's teacher who taught him *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. It is then possible that when the *Sīra* was added to *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, the two together became known as *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. This lumping together of the *Sīra* and the *Ṭabaqāt* in one book may have been the work of al-Dimyāṭī. It is also possible that the two books, despite being separate entities, were transmitted together by the same teachers (al-Dimyāṭī, for example), and were thereafter treated as one book.

In al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī's *Tārīḫ Baġdād*, we encounter a report that matches verbatim the biography of Ibn Saᶜd that appears in the printed edition of the *KTK* at the end of the section dedicated to Baghdadi transmitters.[58] However, the *isnād* says explicitly that Ibn Fahm, a major transmitter of the *KTK* manuscripts, was the writer of the biography. It seems that Ibn Fahm has added it after the death of his teacher. It seems normal that the student pays homage to his teacher by informing the reader about him. However, there is more. The best example of a biography that Ibn Saᶜd could not have written is that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).[59] First of all, Ibn Ḥanbal died ten years after Ibn Saᶜd's death. Second, the biography mentions that 'Ibn Ḥanbal was summoned to appear before al-Mutawakkil and was later offered money which he refused to take'.[60] The ᶜAbbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil took office in 232/847, two years after Ibn Saᶜd's death. Therefore, Ibn Saᶜd could not have known this information. Moreover, the biography contains a description of Ibn Ḥanbal's funeral. There are also many biographical entries dedicated to persons who died after 230/845. Their author is possibly Ibn Fahm, but other transmitters of the book should not be dropped from consideration.[61]

Now, we must deal with the question of who put together the recension represented in the *KTK*'s printed edition from different available recensions. Although all the transmission trees converge to a focal point at Ibn Ḥayyuwayh (295/907–382/992), I think that Ibn

---

[57] See A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–4 for an extensive discussion of the eighth generation of transmitters.

[58] Al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḫ Baġdād*, 5: 370, no. 876;. Ibn Saᶜd, *KTK*, 7: 258.

[59] Ibn Saᶜd, *KTK*, 7: 253.

[60] Idem.

[61] For an extensive discussion of biographies contained in the printed edition of the *KTK*, but that were possibly added after Ibn Saᶜd's death, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 113–29.

Maᶜrūf al-Ḫaššāb started the process.[62] All reports coming from Ibn Fahm were related by Ibn Maᶜrūf only, without any exception. Moreover, we have not detected any Saᶜdī report transmitted by Ibn Fahm with a chain different from that of the extant manuscripts. Therefore, it seems that Ibn Fahm bequeathed his recension of the *KTK* only to an otherwise ordinary student, namely Ibn Maᶜrūf. Furthermore, Ibn Maᶜrūf also transmitted reports from Ibn Abī Usāma, who also passed on a large number of Saᶜdī reports, if not the entire *KTK*, to many students such as Wakīᶜ and al-Ṭabarī. These reports came, as we will show in the next section, from Ibn Abī Usāma's own recension of the *KTK*. Why then would Ibn Maᶜrūf be the only person interested in collecting two different recensions and passing them on to future generations? If Ibn Maᶜrūf was interested in teaching the *KTK*, why did he then bequeath his collection or recensions only to Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, who later took charge of its distribution on a large scale? Ibn Ḥayyuwayh also collected parts, or all, of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension from al-Ǧallāb. What impact did Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, or for that matter Ibn Maᶜrūf, have on the *KTK*, in addition to transmitting it?

The discovery of Ibn Ḥağar's detailed transmission chain of the *KTK* puts everything back into question.[63] It shows that Ibn Maᶜrūf transmitted the two recensions of the *KTK* (those of Ibn Fahm and Ibn Abī Usāma) with sizeable lacunae, even at the biography level. It also shows that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh used most of Ibn Maᶜrūf's material except for certain sections that he obtained from al-Ǧallāb. In fact, we can say the same thing about Ibn Maᶜrūf. That is, he had the complete recensions of Ibn Fahm and Ibn Abī Usāma but preferred to combine them, just as Ibn Ḥayyuwayh did. It seems that there is enough room for arguing that the *KTK* was actually put together by Ibn Maᶜrūf and later improved upon by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh. This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of individual Saᶜdī reports in compilations written before the fifth/eleventh century, as the next section will show. Ibn Abī Usāma's recension differs in many instances from the one available to us, because Ibn Fahm's recension was the one relied upon in our version of the *KTK* and not that

---

[62] In a report in al-Naǧāṣī's *Riǧāl* we encounter the first mention of the chain Ibn Abī Usāma and from Ibn Fahm to Ibn Maᶜrūf. This strengthens my claim that Ibn Maᶜrūf was the first to harmonize the recensions of Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm; a work that was completed by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh.

[63] For a detailed analysis of Ibn Ḥağar's transmission chain see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 238–50.

of Ibn Abī Usāma.[64] Therefore, we can say that the work of Ibn Maᶜrūf and Ibn Ḥayyuwayh was a process of selection and fusion of the two recensions of the *KTK* available to them. Finally, we have showed earlier that Ibn Fahm, and possibly Ibn Abī Usāma, had added to the *KTK*. It is possible then to say that all members of these three generations of transmitters had an impact on the form and content of the *KTK*.[65]

Towards the definitive text of the KTK

Since our first encounter with Saᶜdī reports, we notice that expecting a verbatim match between the reports found in a consulted compilation and the corresponding report in the printed *KTK* is unrealistic. The differences range from minor differences in word selection to major rewording of the report (while at the same time preserving certain core sentences). Other minor changes involve the order of a number of reports in a sequence, or changing the last transmitter (i.e. the source of the compiler). Major changes involve truncation of a long report, fragmentation of several reports and regrouping of selected fragments, grouping of several reports, and finally an extensive rewording of one or more reports. These changes can be consciously induced by the compilers or due to differences between the recensions used in the compilations consulted.[66]

We can distinguish three phases in the history of the *KTK*'s recensions. The first phase stretches from the book's compilation by Ibn Saᶜd early in the third/ninth century until the writing of *Tārīḫ Baġdād* by al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī in the first half of the fifth century. This is a period of relative obscurity and possible openness of the book. Any additions and/or modifications to the *KTK* must date to this phase. During this phase, we can talk about the possible existence of six recensions of the

---

[64] For the analysis of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension and how it differs from the Leiden edition of the *KTK* see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 160–5, 166, 168, 169–170.

[65] This agrees with Schoeler's conclusion, *The Oral and the Written*, 45, that the sources of these compilations (for example of Malik's *Muwaṭṭā*, of Ṭabarī's *Tārīḫ* and Quranic commentary, and of Abū l-Farağ al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġānī*) are in most cases lessons given by the *šayḫ*s on the basis of written notes (jottings), that they read or recited and which the pupils heard and wrote down (or took notes of). Most of them were not written works in book form, which authors definitively composed and published. Most of them were not purely oral transmission, meaning that the *šayḫ* and his audience did not keep the transmitted material exclusively in their memories.

[66] A lengthy and detailed discussion of the different recensions of the *KTK* that may have been used by later compilers is given in A.N. Atassi, *History*, 146–93.

KTK that exhibit differences from the printed edition.[67] The two most important recensions of which we have numerous quotes are those of al-Balāḏurī and Ibn Abī Usāma as we have seen this recension was not fully incorporated in the available manuscripts.[68] There are also two possible recensions of unknown provenance: one used by Abū l-Qāsim al-Baġawī,[69] and the other used by al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).[70] The remaining two possible recensions can be attributed to the Baghdadi transmitters (1) ᶜUbayd b. Muḥammad al-Yazīdī (d. 284/815), used by al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/970);[71] and (2) al-Ḥusayn b. al-Farağ (d. third/ninth century), used by al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014).[72]

This period was covered in the manuscripts by the following transmitters: Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm; Ibn Maᶜrūf and al-Ǧallāb; Ibn Ḥayyuwayh; and finally al-Ǧawharī. The book has crystallized during this period with only one recension surviving, i.e. the one compiled by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh based on Ibn Abī Usāma's and Ibn Fahm's recensions. This recension of the *KTK* was actually the only one to have survived. Although many persons acquired the *KTK* from Ibn Saᶜd or from Ibn Abī Usāma, very few of them decided to teach it to future generations. Most Saᶜdī reports encountered between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries were transmitted individually, not as part of a wholesale transmission of the *KTK*. It is remarkable and worthy of investigating that Ibn Maᶜrūf al-Ḫaššāb learned the *KTK* from Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm then taught it to Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, who collected the material and divided it into systematic sections and then taught it to al-Ǧawharī, al-Azharī and few others. Beyond al-Ǧawharī's generation, many persons will be involved in teaching the *KTK*. In summary, we can say that the *KTK* crystallized by the process of dying out of all other recensions and the fusion together of Ibn Abī Usāma's and Ibn Fahm's recensions in a book that found generations of dedicated teachers.

The second phase stretches from the fifth century to the seventh century, ending with al-Dimyāṭī. During this phase the definitive text of

---

[67] For a description of these differences see Atassi, *History*, 159–60, 165.

[68] Ibid., 152–60 for al-Balāḏurī's recension; and 160–5, 166, 168, 169–71, 172–3, 174–7 for Ibn Abī Usāma's recension. The later recension was used by Wakīᶜ, al-Ṭabarī, al-Qummī, Abū al-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī, Abū l-Fatḥ al-Azdī and al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī.

[69] Ibid., 167, 171–2, 172–3, 179–81. The recension used by al-Baġawī was also used by al-Ǧurğānī, Abū l-Fatḥ al-Azdī, and Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣfahānī.

[70] Ibid., 182–6.

[71] Ibid., 169.

[72] Ibid., 174–7.

the book spread outside Baghdad to Syria and Egypt, the two main centers of its later teaching. This phase saw an accurate and precise transmission of the *KTK* through the dictation-writing procedure. All our extant manuscripts go back to the end of this period. The third phase stretches from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. During this phase the *KTK* continued being transmitted with the old dictation-writing procedure, but also saw the transformation of manuscripts into commodities bought, sold and inherited. This is how the extant manuscripts reached us.

Geographical diffusion of the KTK

We have seen that the *KTK* remained in Baghdad, and was kept alive by the efforts of generations of valiant transmitters until the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century. It then moved to Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo, the new centers of its diffusion. It was not the Mongol invasion that pushed the book west to Syria and Egypt, but it was certainly the reason that made Syria and Egypt the only centers of its diffusion. We have also seen that the appearance of the *KTK* in Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo was almost simultaneous: Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ (555/1160–648/1250) in Aleppo; Ibn ᶜAbd al-Dāᵓim (575/1179–668/1269) in Damascus; and Abū l-Faraǧ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1283) in Cairo. Although all of these transmitters have passed the *KTK* to local and traveling students, Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ is the most frequently mentioned for the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century. For example, all extant manuscripts were transmitted via Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. Many Cairene and Damascan scholars came to Aleppo to learn the *KTK* under this teacher. Notable among them is al-Dimyāṭī, a resident of Cairo, who became the main source of authentication of the *KTK* in the seventh/thirteenth century.[73]

We have evidence (from Ibn Sayyid al-Nās and Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ᶜAsqalānī) that both Ibn ᶜAbd al-Dāᵓim and Abū l-Faraǧ al-Ḥarrānī taught the *KTK* during the seventh/thirteenth century in Damascus and Cairo, respectively. These two cities became centers for the diffusion of the *KTK*. However, the trend for the seventh/thirteenth, eighth/fourteenth, and ninth/fourteenth centuries is the increased influx of Syrian scholars into Cairo. For example, al-ᶜUqaylī (632/1234–704/1304) acquired the *KTK* from Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and then moved to Cairo because of a judgeship appointment. Al-Daštī (634/123–713/1313), also a student of Abū l-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, also ended up as a teacher in

[73] Atassi, *History*, 236–8, 244–5, 247–8.

Cairo after a long stay in Damascus; al-Ḏahabī actually went to Cairo to learn the *KTK* under al-Dimyāṭī; Ibn Abī al-Maǧd (707/1307–800/1397), a famous preacher and teacher in Damascus, was invited to teach in Cairo by an official of the Mamlūk establishment, Ibn Ḥagar al-ᶜAsqalānī, who acquired the *KTK* through multiple channels (mostly from Damascus), later settled and taught in Cairo. This is not a surprise since power shifted from Baghdad to Cairo during the reigns of the Ayyūbids (564/1168–659/1260) and the Baḥrī Mamlūks (648/1250–784/1382).[74]

Literary diffusion of Saᶜdī reports

Although we differentiated between the *KTK* and individual Saᶜdī reports, the diffusion of Saᶜdī reports is an accurate measure of the diffusion of the *KTK* since most Saᶜdī reports came from the *KTK*, and after the fifth/eleventh century most of them came from one recension of the *KTK*. The most fruitful in terms of producing Saᶜdī reports are *tarāǧim* books. *Sīra* and *maġāzī* books and historiography books produced less Saᶜdī reports than I originally expected. *Ḥadīṯ* compilations produced the least amount of information about the *KTK* or about Ibn Saᶜd (books of *ḥadīṯ* criticism only produced short quotes and some clarifications). In fact, very few *ḥadīṯ*s were transmitted on Ibn Saᶜd's authority. Most of them come from one source, i.e. one of Ibn Saᶜd's students, namely al-Ḥāriṯ b. Abī Usāma who was also a transmitter of the *KTK*.[75] The majority of Saᶜdī reports were biographical in nature. It came as a surprise to me that Saᶜdī reports were less represented in historiography and *ḥadīṯ* books than in biographical dictionaries. It is a common practice in our field, when having general, collegial discussions of topics related to early Islamic periods, to talk in equal terms about historiographies and about biographical dictionaries; the latter usually being valuable sources of historical information. Moreover, given the lengthy biographies of the *KTK*, it is always considered a book of historiography. The previous results constitute a strong reminder that the two genres, namely historiography and biography, are not to be confused. They are actually very different in nature and often serve very distinct purposes. It seems that traditionalists

---

[74] Atassi, *History*, 236, 245–8.

[75] *Muᶜǧam al-šuyūḫ*/*mašyaḫāt* books only contain chains of transmission and not reports; therefore, this category will be dropped from the analysis of the *KTK*'s literary diffusion.

have always regarded the *KTK* as a source for biographical information that is best suited for writing other biographical dictionaries.

Even as a biographical dictionary, the *KTK* is different from the ones dedicated to *ḥadīṯ* transmitters such as Ḫalīfa's *Ṭabaqāt*, Buḫārī's *al-Tārīḫ al-kabīr*, or al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Muᶜğam al-kabīr*. The latter books are terse and usually focus on the trustworthiness of transmitters. Biographies written by Ibn Saᶜd are longer, contain more biographical and historical information, and follow a general model. At least for the biographies of Muḥammad's companions and the Medinan *ḥadīṯ* transmitters, the model seems to be Ibn Saᶜd's biography of Muḥammad, since it is organized thematically rather than chronologically. These biographies are best described as hagiographies; the epic life-stories of the founders of the *ḥadīṯ* movement. After all, most of the book is dedicated to the companions and the Medinan transmitters; only two shorter sections are dedicated to Kufan and Basran transmitters; and even shorter sections relate to all other transmitters from the rest of the ᶜAbbasid empire. It is no surprise then that most borrowings from the *KTK* come from the sections dedicated to Muḥammad's companions.

Conclusions

For the *KTK*, the paper has showed Ibn Saᶜd was indeed its original compiler, but it also showed that three successive generations of transmitters had contributed to, or modified, it. Many recensions of the book circulated until the fourth/tenth century when a well known Baghdādī teacher called Ibn Ḥayyuwayh produced an authoritative recension. Beyond the fifth/eleventh century, only this recension dominated the market until modern times. Studying the geographic and temporal diffusion of the *KTK*, it became clear that its real popularity was ushered in by al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī's (fourth/tenth century) intensive borrowing from it in his *Tārīḫ Baġdād*. It was the Damascene scholar Ibn ᶜAsākir (sixth/twelfth century) who brought the book from Baghdad to Damascus and extensively borrowed from it in his *Tārīḫ Dimašq*, thus popularizing it in the Muslim west. It is possible that he found in it a great help for his quest to implement the *ğihād* agenda of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī against the crusaders. The *KTK* was taught exclusively in Baghdad until the early seventh/thirteenth century when almost simultaneously it started being taught in Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo where it reached the zenith of its popularity. Studying the *KTK*'s transmission methods showed that, by the ninth/fifteenth century, it was mostly transmitted by *iğāza* (authentication, permission to teach). Starting from the third/ninth century, this usage increased as time progressed. By the ninth/fifteenth

century, it was possible to obtain an *iğāza* by mail. This is an indication that the *KTK* had acquired a stable form and had possibly become a textbook. Finally, the paper observed that *tarāğim* books (biographical dictionaries) showed the most frequency of occurrence of Saᶜdī reports. *Sīra* books and historiography books produced less Saᶜdī reports. *Ḥadīṯ* compilations produced the least number of such reports. It seems that traditionalists have always regarded the *KTK* as a source for biographical information that is best suited for writing other biographical dictionaries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Makkī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Ḏayl al-Taqyīd fī ruwāt al-sunan wa-l-masānīd*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1990).

Al-ᶜAsqalānī, Ibn Ḥağar, *al-Muᶜğam al-mufahras*, ed. Muḥammad Šakkūr al-Mayādīnī, (Beirut: Muᵓassasat al-risāla, 1998).

Al-Balāḏurī, Aḥmad b. Yahyā, *Ansāb al-ašrāf*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī, 13 vols. (Beirut: Muᵓassasat al-aᶜlamī, 1974).

Al-Ḏahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *Taḏkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, ed. Zakariyā ᶜUmayrāt, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1998).

——, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāᵓ*, ed. Baššār ᶜAwwād Maᶜruf, 23 vols. (Beirut: Muᵓassasat al-risāla, 2001).

Al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī, *Tārīḫ Baġdād aw Madīnat al-salām*, ed. Muṣṭafā ᶜAbd al-Qādir ᶜAṭā, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1985–97).

Ibn Ḫallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Wafayāt al-aᶜyān wa anbāᵓ abnāᵓ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ᶜAbbās, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār ṣadir, 1994).

Ibn al-ᶜImād, ᶜAbd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad, *Šaḏarāt al-ḏahab fī aḫbār man ḏahab*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1994).

Ibn al-Nadīm, Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, *al-Fihrist*, (Beirut: Dār al-maᶜrifa, 1978).

Ibn Saᶜd, Muḥammad, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. and pref. M. ᶜAbd al-Qādir ᶜAṭā, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1998).

——, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ᶜAlī Muhammad ᶜUmar 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Ḫānğī, 2001).

——, *Biographien Muhammeds*, *seiner Gefährten und der späteren Träger des Islams*, *bis zum Jahre 230 der Flucht*, ed. Eduard Sachau, 8 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1905–17).

Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh, *ᶜUyūn al-aṯar fī funūn al-maġāzī wa-l-šamāʾil wa-l-siyar* (Beirut: Muʾassasat ᶜIzz al-Dīn, 1986).

Wakīᶜ, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḫalaf. *Aḫbār al-quḍāt*, ed. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Muṣṭafā al-Marāġī, 3 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-tiğāriyya al-kubrā, 1366/1947).

Secondary Studies

Atassi, Ahmad Nazir, *A History of Ibn Saᶜd's Biographical Dictionary* Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 2009.

Atiyeh, George N. (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

Bauden, Frédéric, *Les Méthodes de Travail des Historiens en Islam*, themed issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 4 (2009).

Berkey, Jonathan., *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Chamberlain, Michael, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Cooperson, Michael, 'Ibn Saᶜd', in *Arabic Literary Culture*, *500–925*, Michael Cooperson and Shawkat Toorawa (eds.) (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005).

Darnton, Robert. 'What Is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111 (1982), 65–83.

Déroche, François *et al*., *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script* (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2006).

Febvre, Lucien Paul Victor and Martin, Henri-Jean, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800* (London: Verso, 1984) (or. ed. *L'Apparition du livre*, Paris: A. Michel, 1971).

Finkelstein, David and McCleery, Alistair, *An Introduction to Book History* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

——, *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

Fück, Johan W., 'Ibn Saᶜd', *EI*^{2}, iii, 922–3.

Gacek, Adam, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

ᶜIzz al-Dīn ᶜUmar Mūsā, *Ibn Saᶜd wa-Ṭabaqātuhu*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1987)

Kilpatrick, Hilary, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abū 'l-Faraj Al-Iṣbahānī's Kitāb Al-Aghānī* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Loth, Otto, *Das Classebuch des Ibn Saᶜd: einleitende Untersuchungen über Authentie und Inhalt nach den Handschriftlichen überresten*, (Leipzig: Druck von G. Kreysing, 1869).

Ong, Walter J., *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).

Pedersen, Johannes, *The Arabic Book*, tr. Geoffrey French (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Schoeler, Gregor, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, ed. Uwe Vagelpohl, trans. James E. Montgomery (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

——, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, transl. and rev. Shawkat M. Toorawa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Şentürk, Receb, *Narrative Social Structure: Anatomy of the Hadith Transmission Network, 610–1505* (Stanford: Stanford University Press; 2005).

Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).