The poem *Tuḥfat al-ʿAṭfāl*, authored by the Egyptian scholar Sulaymān Ḥusayn al-Jamāzūrī [died circa 1198AH/1783-4CE], has been memorized, taught and kept alive by countless individuals since its authorship more than two centuries ago, making it the single most utilized resource for learning Tajweed to this day. Since that time, it has continued to be transmitted in the traditional manner, in the line of great classical works of Islamic learning, complete with formal authorization (*iḥāzah*) and chains of transmission (*isnād*) tracing the line of one’s teachers back to the author. These documents exist across the Muslim world in various shapes and forms, handwritten, transcribed and sometimes even oral; at times free-standing and sometimes as part of larger written works.

Despite its great popularity as a traditional text, however, the chain of transmission of *Tuḥfat al-ʿAṭfāl* to the author remains problematic for a variety of reasons. We simply don’t know a whole lot about the author. Although he left behind a small number of surviving works, it is not entirely clear when he passed away. Traditionally, the year of death has always provided a convenient method of identifying and classifying Muslim scholars. We do know from the record that he was born around 1160H, corresponding to the year 1747 of the Gregorian calendar, and from the *Tuḥfat al-ʿAṭfāl* text itself (verse 59) that it was written in 1198H/1783-4CE. Some early writings indicate that he was teaching as late as the year 1227H. Beyond that, there exists no clear documented record of students who transmitted from al-Jamāzūrī by way of iḥāzah—neither the Qurʾān nor any of his own texts including the *Tuḥfat*. As far as we know today, there is no surviving isnād of the Qurʾān that extends through him, nor an isnād of any other text—apart from the *Tuḥfat*—that reaches him. This is more perplexing keeping in mind that al-Jamāzūrī was a conventional scholar who spent his life teaching the Qurʾān and its related sciences in the traditional manner, which was always based upon chains of transmission.

Moreover, the current isnāds of the text contain some seemingly contradictory details which raise further concerns for discerning scholars of transmission. Many of these chains go back to al-Jamāzūrī through individuals about whom questions have been raised, while others simply go to an intermediary some generations below al-Jamāzūrī and close with the general expression “*and through his chain to the author.*”

For these reasons and others, most Qurʾānic scholars have considered the circulating chains of *Tuḥfat al-ʿAṭfāl* today to be disconnected (in ḥadīth terminology, *muqatīʿ*) and thus, not very strong from the perspective of transmission. Every teacher I personally received this text from, for instance, confirmed this same impression to me, including Shaykh Saʿd Ḥassānin and Shaykh Tawfīq ʿAlī Nuḥās. There have also been efforts on the part of various researchers to uncover the exact nature of this transmission and prove its continuity, but nothing has been produced to date that has been irrefutably convincing to everyone.

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1 In Arabic the term is usually as follows: [بسندته إلى الجمزوري].

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Nevertheless, most scholars have still allowed—and even participated in—the transmission of this text by way of isnād, for the purposes of maintaining the continuity of this living tradition and the dissemination of this vital knowledge. Since this is neither the Qurʾān nor a Prophetic ḥadīth, some degree of laxity has been allowed in the entire matter. An incomplete chain is better than no chain at all. And so the text had remained alive today.

It must be noted, also, that because of the decentralized nature of Islamic learning and transmission, isnād studies lend themselves to constant revision based upon historical research, ongoing discovery of Islamic manuscripts and examination of personal isnāds of individuals throughout the Muslim world. I have no doubt that we are bound to hear more on this matter from Qurʾānic scholars in the hopefully not so distant future.

To make sense of the state of current and future research on this issue, a brief historical survey is in order. There are a number of characters in the story of al-Jamzūrī who are key to understanding this entire matter.

The Teacher

The most important figure is the teacher of al-Jamzūrī himself: Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Mīhī (d. 1204H/1789CE). His full name was Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿUmar b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Nājī b. Funaysh al-ʿAwnī al-Manūfī al-Shāfiʿī al-Mīhī, although in some sources his name is incorrectly given as ʿAlī b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar. Also the name Funaysh (فنيش) incorrectly appears as Qays (قيس) in some documents, which upon examination is obviously an error of mistranscription of the Arabic script.

In the very opening passage of the text (verse 4), al-Jamzūrī praises his teacher and, as a gesture of humility, attributes to him the source of the material of his own text. The praise is immense to the extent of inviting criticism from commentators for being excessive, an indication of the great esteem and respect the student had for the teacher.

سَـمَّـيـتُهُ بِتُـحفَـةِ الأطْفَـالِ
عَنْ شَيـخِنَا المِيهِيِّ ذِى الكَََالِ

I have resolved to title it the Children’s Bequest, relating from our shaykh al-Meehī, masterful, adept.

Born in 1139H, Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Mīhī was a well-known Azhari scholar of his time who does feature prominently in Qurʾānic isnāds today. He happened to be blind and was known for his tremendous humility and piety in addition to his learning. The ascription al-Mīhī indicates his origin from the village of Almay (الماي) in the Manūfiyyah district of Egypt, not far from the hometown of al-Jamzūrī. A graduate of the renowned al-Azhar University, he spent his life teaching in various institutions across the region, eventually settling in the city of

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2 For this section, I have relied on the various texts, manuscripts and isnāds at my disposal, as well as the thorough research of Shaykh Muṣṭafā Shaʿban (available at http://www.ahlalhdeeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=284430), who was gracious enough to receive my correspondence and respond to some of my inquiries.
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Ṭanṭā until he passed away in 1204H. There are some isnāds, including that of the renowned reciter Maḥmūd Khalīl al-Ḥusārī, that indicate his date of death as 1229H, having lived a lifespan of ninety years.¹

Some Qurʾānic scholars are of the opinion that the chain of Tuhfat al-Atfāl is contiguous to the teacher of al-Jamzūrī, which is by no means problematic given the fact that the author himself attributes the material to the teacher, an indication that he invariably must have read or presented it to the teacher.

The Teacher’s Sons

What complicates matters further is the fact that the teacher had at least two sons who were associated with al-Jamzūrī and his text in some way. Much less is known about the first son, Muḥammad al-Mīhī al-Aḥmadi, than his father Nūr al-Dīn or his father’s student al-Jamzūrī. The son authored an extant commentary on the Tuhfāh entitled Fatḥ al-Malik al-Muṭa‘āl bi Sharḥ Tuhfah al-Atfāl, which clearly indicates that he was an associate of al-Jamzūrī. In this commentary, Muḥammad al-Mīhī lavishly praises the author by referring to him as “the righteous brother, the successful expert, one who was surrounded by divine help, our master Mawlānā Ṣamīḥ al-Dīn or his father’s student al-Jamzūrī.”² His use of the term brother (al-akh) suggests that their relationship was that of peers and colleagues rather than that of teacher-student.

Because they share the same last name/ascription (al-Mīhī), many sources tend to obscure the teacher and son. It is not clear when the son passed away, but his date of death is sometimes given as 1204H (the same as that of his father), which is an obvious error based upon this same confusion.

Shaykh al-Jamzūrī himself wrote a commentary on his own poem, which he entitled Fatḥ al-Aqfāl bi Sharḥ Tuhfah al-Atfāl, in which he admits that he borrowed mostly from a similar commentary written by this son of his teacher Muḥammad al-Mīhī.³ Both have abundant praise for each other in their respective works.

Although this son is relevant to our narrative, I have not personally come across any chains of the Tuhfah that mention him by name in any of their links.

Many isnāds, including some of my own, include the name of a second son to the teacher—named Muṣṭafā b. ‘Alī al-Mīhī—as receiving the text from al-Jamzūrī. He is generally described the son of Shaykh ‘Alī al-Mīhī and brother to the commentator on the Tuhfah (i.e. the first son Muḥammad al-Mīhī). Little else is known about him, including when he died. Since his brother was clearly a colleague and his father a teacher of al-Jamzūrī, his receiving the text from al-Jamzūrī is not at all implausible. His name also features prominently in some Qurʾānic isnāds.

⁴ Pg. 16, Muḥammad al-Meehī al-Aḥmadi, Fatḥ al-Malik al-Muṭa‘āl bi Sharḥ Tuhfah al-Atfāl. Maktabah Awwād al-Shaykh al-Turāth, Egypt. 1418. The Arabic text is as follows: [fatīḥah wa taḥdīth, majid jumīl].
⁵ pg. 18, Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī, Fatḥ al-Aqfāl bi Sharḥ Tuhfah al-Atfāl. The College of Qurʾānic Studies, Babylon University, Iraq. 2010. The Arabic text is as follows: [fatīḥah wa taḥdīth, majid jumīl].
A Third al-Mīhī?

Other chains go back to an individual listed as Aḥmad al-Mīhī from al-Jamzūrī, but there is no clear record of any such family member. Is he a mistaken reference to the teacher or one of his sons? Most probably it’s a reference to the teacher since his full name does include Aḥmad at some point (ʿAlī b. ʿUmar b. Aḥmad), although that could plausibly apply to either son as well.

al-Hūrīnī: The Only True Student?

The most intriguing person for many researchers is Naṣr al-Hūrīnī (d. 1291H/1874CE), another Egyptian Azhari scholar whose full name was Abuʾl-Wafāʾ Naṣr b. al-Shaykh Naṣr ʿUyun al-Wafāʾī al-Hūrīnī. A specialist in linguistics and Arabic grammar, he was sent by the Egyptian government to France to serve as an imam for a period of time, where he learned French and served the Muslim community. He authored a number of works, including al-Maṭāliʿ al-Naṣriyyah (المطالع النصرية) on the principles of Arabic writing and a critical edition as well as commentary of al-Fayrūzābādī’s renowned dictionary.

In his al-Maṭāliʿ al-Naṣriyyah, he refers to al-Jamzūrī as “our shaykh” and references a fine grammatical point to what he saw in al-Jamzūrī’s notes to his own commentary and poem during al-Hūrīnī’s visit to the Aḥmadi Mosque around 1227H, a point which was personally confirmed by al-Jamzūrī in his lessons. This establishes that al-Jamzūrī was teaching as late as 1227H, some thirty years after he authored Ṭuhfah al-ʾAṭfāl, and that al-Hūrīnī was attending his teaching circles on Ṭuhfah al-ʾAṭfāl. It is thus fairly certain that al-Hūrīnī studied this text from the author, if not in its entirety, then at least partially. There are some chains of the Ṭuhfah today that extend to al-Jamzūrī through al-Hūrīnī, and for this reason many scholars consider these chains to be stronger and more connected.

An Intermediary

Many chains, perhaps the majority of them, stop at an individual named Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mutawallī and end with the words “and with his well-known chain to al-Jamzūrī.”

Born in 1248H/1832CE in Cairo, his full name was Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. Sulaymān. After memorizing the Qurʾān, he completed his studies at al-Azhar and specialized in the Qurʾānic readings, quickly surpassing his peers and colleagues and earning the titles Ibn al-Jazarī al-Ṣaghīr (“the smaller Ibn al-Jazarī”) and the “Seal of the Experts.”

He left behind almost fifty works on the Qurʾānic readings and other fields, many of them considered references. He is considered a node in the transmission of the Qurʾān such that most of the Qurʾānic chains of the region go

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through him. There are only 25 links between him and the Prophet. He died in 1313H/1895CE at the age of 65. He was blind and known for his tremendous humility and refined character.

Because Muḥammad al-Mutawallī was a prominent and towering figure in the Qurʾānic sciences and the Readings, his Qurʾānic chains are widespread and well-known. However, his link to al-Jamzūrī is less clear. Having been born some twenty years after al-Jamzūrī was last known to be alive, he obviously could not have been a direct student. Who, and how many, were the intermediaries between him and al-Jamzūrī? We simply do not know at present, but as more manuscripts, isnāds and historical research comes to light, we may perhaps one day come to know.

**Conclusions**

The isnād is a distinctive and laudable trait of Muslim scholarship, as observed by Muḥammad b. Ḥātim: “Allah did indeed honor this nation and gave it preeminence with the isnād, which was not part of any other nation in human history.” It serves to provide a medium of connection to our great authors and teachers, and promotes a spirit of continuity and balance in our scholarship across diverse regions and time periods. For some, it is a key part of the divine plan to assure the preservation of this religion. Because of this, the isnād was always a part of our scholarly heritage, affirmed by the broad consensus of Muslim scholars from our earliest times. At the same time, the isnād has also always been subjected to historical scrutiny and verification by a portion of scholars—usually the ḥadīth specialists—who adopted this task in order to ensure the integrity of the Islamic tradition.

And so it is not at all surprising that *Tuḥfat al-ʾAṭfāl* has been transmitted in this traditional fashion, and it is also not unusual that many have raised very specific objections to the nature of that transmission. In the final analysis, the chains of *Tuḥfat al-ʾAṭfāl* appear to connect to the author through a number of individuals:

1. Naṣr al-Hūrīnī from al-Jamzūrī
2. Muṣṭafā al-Miḥī from al-Jamzūrī
3. Muṣṭafā al-Miḥī from his father ʿAlī al-Miḥī from al-Jamzūrī
4. Aḥmad al-Miḥī from al-Jamzūrī
5. Muḥammad al-Mutawallī through his chain to al-Jamzūrī (an intermediary, thus making the chain broken)

Some scholars have considered Naṣr al-Hūrīnī to be the only confirmed student of al-Jamzūrī based upon historical evidence, while others have maintained that the connection through al-Jamzūrī’s teacher or his sons to be equally plausible as well.

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7 Pg. 84, ḥadīth no.71, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Sharaf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*. Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah. Cairo, Egypt. 1996. The chain of the narration to Muḥammad b. Ḥātim is authenticated by ʿAmrʿAbd al-Munʿim Salīm, and its Arabic text is as follows: [إِنِ الْهُدَى لَا نَدْرَكَ مِنْهُ وَمِنْهُ وَقَالُوهُبِنَاكُمْ ۚ وَلِيَّةُ مَنْ أَهْدَىٰ إِلَيْهِ]
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In the end, it should be noted that the isnād is primarily a spiritual-academic connection to a text, author or discipline. The comprehension and application of the text is independent of the isnād, although it may certainly be enhanced by it. Indeed most Islamic books and subjects continue to be learned, understood and taught without recourse to the isnād. So why the isnād then? It essentially enhances the learning experience by providing an organic connection to the sources of knowledge and fostering a sense of connectedness to tradition.

For this purpose, in my humble view, all of the chains above are both plausible and acceptable. The foundational era of Islamic scholarship is long gone, as is the task of compiling the Qurʾān and documenting the Prophetic Sunnah. Though the general task of scrutinizing narrations and evidences in order to authenticate them will always continue, Tuḥfat al-ʿAtfāl and similar texts deserve a level of laxity above that accorded to the primary sources of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. A majority of our great Imāms even allowed the limited use of Prophetic narrations whose links were found to be weak, so what about texts such as Tuḥfat al-ʿAtfāl? The traditional transmission of this particular text has continued to inspire and inform generations of individuals for over two hundred years in their sacred task of reciting Allah’s Book in the proper manner, and there is no reason that should stop today.
APPENDIX: My Isnad in Tuḥfat al-Aṭfāl (ARABIC)

الحمد لله رب العالمين و الصلاة و السلام على أشراف الأنبياء و المرسلين سيدنا محمد و على آل وصحبه أجمعين، أما بعد
فيقولون من هم منزلة الخادم
للقرآن و السنة النبي الفاضل
و يا ليتي أن آركن عبد الله طالب علمه
أغلست إلا عبد الله طويلا الإسلام

فإذا تلقيت هذه المنظومة عن ثلاثة شيوخ:

فأما الأول تلقتهما عن قضيلة الشيخ وليد إبراهيم اليومي حفظه الله تعالى و هو الشيخ محمد زهير القاوشين عن الشيخ بدر الدين بن يوسف الحسن عن الشيخ إبراهيم بن علي بن حسن السقا عن الشيخ في الوقاية العروج عن نظر الوكائي
الهوراني عن تأثريه الشيخ سليمان بن حسين الجوزي، فقد عبد الله الجمع برحمته و أسخهم في سهيه جعلته.
و قد تلقتهما أيضًا الشيخ وليد عن الحسن بن محمد الصدقي الشهابي عن أخوته الشيخين محمد وعبد الله ابن محمد الصدقي القاوشين عن محمد دوديار الكفراوي عن الهوراني عن الجوزي.
و قد تلقتهما أيضًا الشيخ وليد عن الشيخة سهيدة بنت محمد باك البياني، و هي من إبراهيم بن مرسى محمد بكر البانيي عن حسن بن محمد بن محمد بن أحمد البرمطي الكبير عن محمد بن أحمد البكري، وهو يشتهى إلى الجوزي، فلم يكلف إلى الآن على إصلائه.
و قد أقرأها الشيخ وليد عن الشيخة سهيدة بنت محمد باك البياني عن مصطفى بن محمد العمراني عن واديه محمد العمراني عن يوسف جعفر عن علي صقر الجوزي المروحى عن مصطفى المحيي عن سليمان الجوزي.

و أما الثاني فثارتهما عن الشيخ أسعد الدين رزيقه حسن بن الذي قرأها عل الشيخ محمد عبد الباسط حامد مصطفى (المشير يعيد الباطن هاشم)، و هو تلقتهما عن أحمد عبد الفتى الأسود عن محمد بن عثمان فراج عن حسن محمد بومي (الشهير بالكرك) عن محمد سابق عن محمد خليل المطيوعي عن علي الطوفان السمنودي عن أحمد بن أحمد البكري (المعرف) بالسماوة عن سليمان بن مصطفى البياني عن أحمد بن علي البياني، وهو عن ناظمهم الجوزي.
و قد تلقتهما الشيخ وليد الباطن هاشم أيضًا عن محمد بن محمد خيطو عن عبد الماجد الأسودي عن حسن محمد بومي الكروي السديد بكر الجوزي.

و أما الثالث فثارتهما عن الشيخ أسعد الدين رزيقه حسن بن الذي قرأها على الشيخ محمد عبد العزيز حامد محمد خطيب عن محمد محمد خليل المطيوعي عن علي الطوفان السمنودي عن سليمان الشهيداوي عن مصطفى البياني عن سليمان الجوزي.
و قد أقرأها الشيخ أسعد الدين رزيقه حسن بن الذي قرأها على الشيخ سهيدة بنت محمد باك البياني، يشتهدها المذكور.

و أما الشيخي الثالث، فقد تلقتهما و سمعتها على الشيخ الأقرئي على بن محمد توفيق الحكاي و هو عن وادية محمد توقيق النحاش عن بخيت الطبيبي على عبد الرحمن الشهري و حسن الطويل و محمد البسيمي، و هو علىه الثالثة عن إبراهيم السقا عن نصر الهوراني عن سليمان الجوزي.
و تلقى المنظومة أيضًا بخيت الطبيبي مباشرة عن إبراهيم السقا عن نصر الهوراني عن الجوزي.

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APPENDIX: My Isnad in Tuḥfat al-Âtâfâl (ENGLISH)

All praise is for Allah the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings upon the noblest of the prophets and messengers, our master Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions.  
I am one who aspires to the station of service  
To the Qur‘ān and the way of the Noble Prophet  
How I wish to be a slave to Allah, to His knowledge a true disciple  
But all I am: to Him a meager servant, to Islam a lowly pupil

I testify that I received this text from three teachers:

As for the first, I received it from the noble Shaykh Dr. Waleed Edrees Meneese of Minnesota, who received it from Shaykh Zuhayr al-Shawish from Badr al-Dīn b. Yūsuf al-Ḥasanī from Ibrāhīm b. ‘Ali b. Ḥasan al-Sīqā from Abuʾl-Wafāʾ Naṣr b. Naṣr al-Wafāʾī al-Hūrīnī from the esteemed author of the text Sulaymān b. Ḥusayn al-Jamzūrī, may Allah cover all with His mercy and grant them dwelling in His expansive gardens.

Dr. Waleed Edrees Meneese also received the text from Shaykh al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣiddiq al-Ghumārī who in turn receive it from his two brothers Aḥmad and ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Ṣiddiq al-Ghumārī from Muhammad Duwīdār al-Kafrawī from al-Hūrīnī from al-Jamzūrī.

Dr. Waleed Edrees Meneese also received the text from Shaykha Samīʿah bint Muḥammad Bakr al-Bināsī who read it to Ibrāhīm b. Mursī Muhammad Bakr al-Bināsī who received it from Ghunaym b. Muḥammad Ghunaym from Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Budayr al-Jurayṣī al-Kabīr from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mutawallī with his chain to Sulaymān b. Ḥusayn al-Jamzūrī, and to date, I have not come across this full and complete chain.

Shaykha Samīʿah bint Muḥammad Bakr al-Bināsī also read the text to Muṣṭafā b. Maḥmūd al-ʿAnūsī who received it from his father Maḥmūd al-ʿAnūsī from Yūsuf ʿAjjūr from ʿAlī ʿṢaqr al-Jawhārī al-Marrīmī from Muṣṭafā al-Mīhī from Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī.

As for my second teacher, I received the text from Shaykh Saʿd al-Dīn Razaqaḥ Ḥasanayn, who read it to his teacher Shaykh ʿAbd al-Bāsīṭ Ḥāmid Muḥammad—more popularly known as ʿAbd al-Bāsīṭ Ḥāshim, who received it from his teacher Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Asyūṭī from Maḥmūd b. Uthmān Farrāj from Ḥasan Muḥammad Bāshīṭ al-Kaffāk from Muḥammad Sābiq from Muḥammad Khalīl al-Maṭūḥībī from ʿAlī al-Samnūdī from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Salamūnāh from Sulaymān b. Muṣṭafā al-Baybānī from Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Mīhī from his student Sulaymān b. Ḥusayn al-Jamzūrī.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Bāsīṭ Ḥāshim also received the text from Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Khabbūṭ from ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Asyūṭī from Ḥasan Bayūmī al-Karrāk with his above chain to the author.

Shaykh Saʿd al-Dīn Razaqaḥ Ḥasanayn also read the text to Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid Khalīl from Shaykha Naṭṣaḥa bint Abīl-ʿUlā b. Aḥmad Muḥammad Daṭḍuḥlā from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAlī Kuḥīl from Muḥammad Sābiq from Muḥammad Khalīl al-Maṭūḥībī from ʿAlī al-Samnūdī from Sulaymān al-Ṣaḥādāwī from Muṣṭafā al-Mīhī from Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī.

Shaykh Saʿd al-Dīn Razaqaḥ Ḥasanayn also read the text to Shaykha Samīʿah bint Muḥammad Bakr al-Bināsī whose chain is already listed above.

As for my third teacher, I received the text from, and read it to Shaykh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Nuḥāṣ who received it from his father Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Nuḥāṣ from Bāḥḥit al-Muṭṭī from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sharībī and
Hasan al-Ṭawil and Muhammad al-Basyūnī, and the three of them from Ibrāhīm al-Sīqā from Naṣr al-Hūrīnī from Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī. Bakḥīt al-Muṭīʿī also received the text directly from Naṣr al-Hūrīnī who received it from Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī.