The Book is Two Books

Two Basic Categories of Ḥadīth Works

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In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Hanbali scholar Ibn al-Jawzi’s *Sayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the balāghah genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Hadith and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Walīullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Hanafi jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ʿAlī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.
Introduction

The plethora of ḥadīth books in the library of Islām has intimidated many a student. Among Islamic disciplines, the study of ḥadīth remains for many the most daunting and the most complex. In this monograph, Dr. Akram provides a basic, binary scheme to understand the works of ḥadīth, and provides insight into the two most authoritative, and at the same time, misunderstood works: the Ṣaḥīḥ collections of Bukhārī and Muslim.
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الكتاب كتابان

بَقِ لُمْ: محمد أكرم الندوي
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قالوا: قد كثر الجمع والتأليف في الحديث النبوي الشريف من القرن الأول إلى يومنا هذا من صحف الصحابة والتابعين، إلى جوامع معمر وسفيان الثوري والأوزاعي وابن عيينة ووكرع، والموطات، ومسانيد أبي داود الطيالسي ومسدد بن مسرد وأحمد بن حنبل وبقي بن مخلد وأبي يعلى، ومصنفي عبد الرزاق وابن أبي شيبة، وصحيحي البخاري ومسلم، وكتب السنن، فهل تتجانس هذه الكتب متوافقة مناهجها ومتماثلة أغراضها؟ أم تتباين تبايناً؟

قلت: هي أجناس مختلفة، أصنفها كام صنفين، غير مستغنيين عن تبيينها منعوتين بما يخص كل واحد منها وما يفصل أحدهما عن الآخر، فقد جر عدم التمييز بين الصنفين إلى غلط وتخليط وقع فيها الكبار، بل من دونهم، قالوا: ما هما الصنفين؟ قلت: استمعوا وعوا:

قَالَ: أَجَنَاسٌ مُخْتَلِفَةٌ، أَصْنِفْهَا كَامَ صَنْفٌ، عِيْرَ مِسْتَغْنِيْنَ عِنْ تَبِيْنِهَا، مِنْعُوتَيْنِ بِمَا يَخْصُصُ كَلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَفْسِلُ أَحْدَهُمَا عَنْ الأَخْرَ، فَقَدْ جَرَّ عَدْمُ التَّمِيْزِ بَيْنَ الصَّنْفِيَنِ إِلَى غَلْطٍ وَتَخْلِيَّةٍ وَقَعَ فِيهَا الْكَبَّارُ، بَلْ مَنْ دُونِهِمْ، قَالُوا: مَا هِيَ الصَّنْفَيْنِ؟ قَلَتْ: اسْتَمِعْوا وَعَوا:
الأول: المدونات أو الدواوين، وهي ما دون فيه العلماء أحاديثهم أو
أحاديث شيوخهم، ولا غرض لهم إلا تدوين تلك الأحاديث مجموعة أو
منتفقة، غير مرتبة، أو مرتبة ترتيبًا غير مقصود، مجردة من الفقه والدراية،
وغير معنية بدقت اصول التحديث والعمل، ولا متعارضة لتراجم مئذنة
الأدلة والشواهد. اعتمدوا للسماع والقراءة، قد تتخللها تفسيرات من
الشيوخ متضمنة استخراج مسائل أو استنباط معان أو بيان علل،
بقيونها إلى الآخرين عنهم محدثة أو إملاء، ولم تدون هذه الكتب إلا
لزمن خاص ولأناس معينين، لا ينتفع بها إلا من أخذها من الشيوخ
سماعا منهم أو قراءة عليهم.

والثاني: المصنفات، وهي ما صنفه العلماء من كتب مؤلفة تأليفًا، مسلطة
عن الزمان والمكان، وضمنها فقهها ودرايتها وبيان علل، ووضعوا لها تراجم
مئذنة بالأدلة والشواهد، متوخين فيها الترتيب والتفصيل، ومعنونين
باستنباط الأحكام واستخراج المسائل، رابطي الجزيئات بكليتها،
والفروع بأصولها، فليست دواوين للحديث محضة، بل مستوفية لأغراض
نواها أصحابها، ومطالب تعمدوها ومرام ابتغوا تحقيقها ابتداء.

قالوا: فنَّباد لنا النوعين بأمل، قلت: فمن النوع الأول كتب الثوري
الأوزاعي وابن عيينة ووكيع، دونوا فيها أحاديثهم، سمعها الناس منهم أو
قرأوها عليهم، ونسخها أصحابهم لأنفسهم أو انتقوا منها، صارت هذه
الكتب أو منتقاها أبعضاً وأشطرًا للمصنفات في القرون المتأخرة.
وأفضل مثال للنوع الثاني صحيح البخاري ومسلم، فصحيح البخاري
كتاب مصنف مطلقا عن الزمان والمكان، جمع فيه صاحبه الأحاديث
الصحيحة على شرط خاص، مفسرا في ثنايا الكتاب، وترجم لها مستنبطا
منها مسائل وأحكاما استنباطا دقيقا يدهش ذوي الألباب والعقول،
ويبعث الفقهاء والحكماء على العجب والخيرة في ترتيب بديع، مقررا أن
صحيح الحديث يكفي لدينا، فكتابه يتضمن أمرين: 1- جمع للحديث
الصحيح متصديما لمالزم من بيان علل وقضايا في الأسائيد والمتون،
ومعزعزا مذهبه واختياره بالمتابعات والتعليقات، 2- وفقه للحديث وشرح
معانيه من خلال تبويبات وتراجم محتملا لها بالدلة والبراهين، وثبتنا قواعد
في أصول الدين وفروعه أرساها إرساءا، مع تكرار للأحاديث وتفرقع
للمتون على وجه تُستجد منه الفوائد.

وصحيح مسلم ألفه جامعا للحديث الصحيح، وهو عنده ما رواه رجال
الطبقة الأولى من ذوي العدالة والاستقامة والحفظ وإنقاذ كلاكم
وشعبه وسفيان الثوري وحيد بن زيد وأمثالهم، وقطع أحاديث هذه
الطبقة تخصصا، ثم أتباعها بأحاديث رجال الطبقة الثانية وهم دون الأولين في
الحفظ وإنقتان مشاركين لهم في الستر والعدالة، ولم يتقضوا، بل اختار
منها ما اعتمده في بيان المتابعات والشواهد، وإذا كان في حديث من
أحاديث الطبقة الأولى علة بينها في آخر الباب، وقد جود في ترتيب
الأحاديث وابتكر مناهج لم يسبق إليها، فهو أفضل كتاب طبقت فيه
الصناعات الحديثية وأوسعته بداع الفن على أفضل طريقة وأحسن أسلوب، فتفاقم من تقدمه من المصنفين وأخجه من تأخر عنه، وخلف كتاباً فريداً في بابه.

فينبغي لمن طالع الكتابين أن يعرف غرضهما ومزاياها وخصائصها، وأن لا يسلك بهما مسلك المدونات.

قالوا: فأين تضع الموطأ من النوعين؟ قلت: هو من النوع الأول.
قالوا: أليس طعناً في الموطأ أن أحللته محل المدونات؟ قلت: لا، وأي طعن في هذا؟ بل هو من محسن مالك وأمثاله، إذ لم يقيدوا الناس بكتبه ولم يفرضوها على الأمة، وهو منهج مضى عليه العلماء في الإسلام وغيره، فكتب أرسططاليس وكثير من الفلاسفة ليست إلا دروساً ومحاضرات قروها على تلاميذهم الذين قيدوها تقييداً.

قالوا: فما هي فائدة المدونات؟ قلت: هي جمع لمرويات صاحبها مخصاة مضبوطة، يسمعها عليه تلاميذه، غير متقيدين بفقهه ومنهجه في الاستخراج والاستنباط مع استفادتهم منه في الأمور جميعاً، ثم ينقلونها إلى من بعده مديريهم على الفقه والاستنباط، ومن ثم ذهب أرسططاليس المذهب نفسه، وتبعه أذكياء الناس.

قالوا: فما الغلط والتخليط اللذان وقع فيهما الناس من عدم الانتباه إلى الفرق بين النوعين?
قلت: عامل كثير من الناس المصنفات معاملة المدونات. يطالعونها ويشروحونها كجماعات حديثية محضة غير متتبينين لما فيها من المزايا والخصائص التي أودعها أصحابها، فمثلًا شروح الصحيحين ليست إلا شروحًا لأحاديثها، مثل شرح السنة للبغوي، ومعالم السنن للخطابي، ولا يحدث كبير فرق إذا جعلت شرح هذا الكتاب شرح كتاب آخر يتضمن الأحاديث نفسها.

قالوا: هل تستثني منها شروحًا؟ قلت: أيتُ أن أستثني إلا فتح الباري، فإنه شرح صحيح البخاري بجميع مزاياه وخصائصه، قلنا: وهل لك عليه ماذا؟ قلت: أي كتاب يخلو من الخطأ والسهو؟ وإذا كان صحيح البخاري أصح الكتب بعد كتاب الله تعالى فإن فتح الباري أفضل الشرح وأعلاها درجة وأشرفها رتبة، ولقد صدق من قال: لا هجرة بعد الفتح.
The Book is Actually Two Books . . .

Two Basic Categories of Ḥadīth Works

By Dr Mohammed Akram Nadwi
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They asked: The compilations and works of the noble Prophetic ḥadīth from the first century to our day have become numerous, including the Ṣaḥīḥah collections of the Companions and Followers; the Jāmi’ collections of

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1 The literal phrase of the title: “The book is actually two books,” is used as an eloquent reference to the notion that ḥadīth works are actually two basic types. In that sense, it would mean, “The basic ḥadīth work is actually two types of works.” Its usage is taken from the commentary of the following verse:

يَمْحُو اللَّــهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثْبِتُ ۖ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

Allah eliminates what He wills or confirms what He wills, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.

[Qurʾān al-Ra’d 13:39]

Ṭabarī relates from ‘Ikrimah as well as from his teacher Ibn ‘Abbās that this verse means that the Book of God’s decree is actually two different Books (al-kitābu kitābān): one that He changes as He pleases and one “source” Book that is unchanging.

2 Many Companions and Successors were known to have kept written compilations known as Ṣaḥīḥah collections, which survived for many years but were mostly absorbed into later compilations. These early ad hoc collections, written on papyrus, parchment and early materials, followed no uniform pattern or methodology, and were primarily memory aids for their writers, containing skeletons of ḥadīth, often mixed with supplications and notes. The emphasis on this stage was mostly oral transmission. At least 50 Companions were known to have possessed such collections. —Dr. Jonathan AC Brown, Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World. Oneworld Publications. 2009.

3 The Jāmi’ is a comprehensive ḥadīth compilation inclusive of not only legal rulings, but also additional topics such as tafsīr, aqīdah and heart softeners.
Maʿmar⁴, Sufyān al-Thawrī⁵, Awzāʾī⁶, Ibn ʿUyaynah⁷ and Wakī⁸; the Muwaṭṭa’⁹ collections; the Musnad¹⁰ compilations of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī¹¹, Musaddad b. Musarhad¹², Ṭḥān al-Baqīyy b. Ḥanbal¹³, Baqīyy b. Rāshid (d. 153/770) was an early ḥadīth scholar from Baṣrah whose most famous student was Ḥabīb al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī.⁴

He was the renowned ḥadīth and fiqh scholar of Kūfah who died in 161/778.⁵

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Awzāʾī (d. 157/774) was a great jurist of the Levant (born in Syria, settled in present-day Lebanon) and founder of a legal school that did not ultimately survive.⁶

Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah (d. 198/815) was the great jurist and ḥadīth scholar of Makkah, and originator of the first ḥadīth tradition—which continues to this day—of narrating to students the ḥadīth of mercy before any other.⁷

Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/813) was a renowned scholar of Iraq known for his great piety, prodigal memory, and aloofness from the rulers, who was a student of Abū Ḥanīfah and Sufyān al-Thawrī, and, later, the teacher of Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal among others.⁸

The Muwaṭṭa’ was famously compiled by Imām Mālik of Madīnah (d. 179/795)—with others following him—and represented a subclass of the Muṣannaf genre of ḥadīth works, which were basically topically arranged fiqh-oriented ḥadīth works that represented the first organized works of Islamic scholarship.⁹

These ḥadīth works were organized by the isnād, usually grouped by Companions, and occurred in the backdrop of greater attention on the isnād in the 3rd century. These musnad works were storehouses and comprehensive collections of narrations, sometimes with little regard for authenticity. —Dr. Jonathan AC Brown, Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World. Oneworld Publications. 2009.¹⁰

Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (d. 203/819) was a Persian-origin ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah who authored a Musnad work, not to be confused with the more famous Abū Dāwūd, author of one of the Six Canonical Works.¹¹

Musaddad b. Musarhad (d. 228/843) was a great ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah who compiled a Musnad collection. Apart from Muslim and Ibn Mājah, the rest of the six authors of the ḥadīth canon related from him.¹²

Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) is the author of the most famous Musnad collection.¹³
Makhlad\(^{14}\), and Abū Ya’lā\(^{15}\); the two Muṣannaf\(^{16}\) compilations of ʿAbd al-Razzāq\(^{17}\) and Ibn Abī Shaybah\(^{18}\); the Ṣaḥīḥ compilations of Bukhārī\(^{19}\) and Muslim\(^{20}\); and the Books of the Sunan\(^{21}\). Are all of these books related to one another, similar in their methodologies and alike in their aims, or do they differ plainly?

I replied: They actually represent many kinds of works, but I will divide them for you into two basic classifications. Recognizing their distinction, with

\(^{14}\) Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Baqīyy b. Makhlad (d. 276/889) was a hadith scholar of Cordoba, Spain, who famously traveled the width of the Muslim world to learn hadith from Imām Ahmad. He compiled a 24-volume Musnad work—now lost—which was thought to possibly be the largest book of ḥadīth ever compiled.

\(^{15}\) Abū Ya’lā al-Mauṣili (d. 307/919) was a hadith expert of Mauṣil, Iraq.

\(^{16}\) See footnote 8 above.

\(^{17}\) ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣaḥābī (d. 211/826) was an early hadith scholar of Yemen and author of many works, of which only the Muṣannaf survived.

\(^{18}\) Abū Bakr ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shaybah (d. 235/849) was great hadith scholar of Kūfah. He inherited the teaching position of ʿAbdullah b. Masʿūd in the masjid. After Ibn Masʿūd, it was occupied by ʿAlqamah, followed by Ibrāhīm, followed by Manṣūr, followed by Sufyān al-Thawrī, followed by Wakiʿ and then Ibn Abī Shaybah.

\(^{19}\) Compiled over 16 years through extensive research and travel and from over 1,000 teachers and from 600,000 narrations, the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) is the single-most authoritative hadith collection in Sunni Islam, containing 9,082 hadith (2,602 discounting repetitions) arranged in 106 books and 3,450 chapters. This collection stands out for the in-depth knowledge and insight it provides concerning hadith. One thousand students listened to the collection from the Imām and transmitted it to posterity, though some figures put the number at 90,000.

\(^{20}\) Containing 10,000 hadith (3,030 without repetitions) and having took 15 years to complete, the Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) is considered the second most authoritative work (or ranked first by some) and described as better consolidated, with superior thematic arrangement, and easier to use than Bukhārī’s work. However, it lacks al-Bukhārī’s legal commentary and insights, as well as his use of reports from Companions and early scholars to supplement the primary material.

\(^{21}\) Representing the pinnacle of hadith scholarship, these later works (Ṣaḥīḥ and Sunan) combined the two earlier genres (Muṣannaf and Musnad) to produce topically arranged works with full isnāds and greater regard for authenticity. Sunan compilations are topically arranged, legal hadith works. Unlike the Muṣannaf genre, they only contain Prophetic hadith, reflecting their aim to collate hadith rather than fiqh.
respect to what is unique to each type and distinguishes it from the other, is indispensable. Not doing so drags one into error and confusion, afflicting even great people, not to mention other than them.

They asked: What are these two types?

I replied: Listen and understand.

1. Ḥadīth Registers

These are compilations in which scholars simply recorded their Ḥadīth narrations and those of their teachers. Their only goal was to record these Ḥadīth, either in their entirety or by way of selection. These were compiled without any particular arrangement, or with an arrangement without any specific intent. They were devoid of practical application or comprehension, without any regard for the subtleties of the principles of Ḥadīth study or analysis, and without presenting any section introductions inclusive of proofs or supports.

The authors relied on these records for the purposes of audition and recital.22 These were often intermingled with the commentaries of their teachers, which included their deriving specific benefits, extracting specific meanings or clarifying potential defects in narrations. The teachers then presented these works to those taking Ḥadīth from them, through narration or dictation. These books were recorded for a specific time and for specified individuals. The only ones who were able to benefit from these works are those who took them from their teachers, hearing from them directly or reading the texts back to them.

2. Ḥadīth Works Proper

These were written by scholars as fully authored books, independent from time and space, and inclusive of practical application, comprehension and clarification of potential defects. They placed therein prefaces and headings containing proofs and supporting evidences, aimed to have clear order, and

22 The traditional method of Ḥadīth transmission was primarily two-fold: though audition (samāʿ), which consisted of passively hearing Ḥadīth directly from the mouths of the teachers; or recital (qirāʿah), in which the Ḥadīth are actively read by the students to the teacher.
elaborated on many matters. They observed due consideration for deriving rulings and extracting benefits, and linked subsidiary matters with their foundational principles. These are not merely records of ḥadīth but rather, designed to fulfill the goals and pursue the aims and objectives intended by their authors.

They asked: Elaborate for us what these two types are, with examples.

I replied:

The first type includes the books of al-Thawrī, Awzāʾī, Ibn ʿUyaynah and Wakīʿ, in which they recorded their ḥadīth narrations, which their students in turn heard from them or read back to them. Their companions in turn recorded personal copies for themselves or made selections therefrom, and over time, these books eventually became parts of subsequent works in later generations.

The best examples of the second type are the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī is a work separated from time and space, whose author gathered within it ḥadīth narrations upon specific conditions, which are explained within the book. He divided the book with division headings that included the extrapolation of benefits and rulings, extracted in such intricate ways that astonished scholars and thinkers alike. Its astounding arrangement leaves jurists and scholars in wonder and amazement, reinforcing the notion that sound ḥadīth are sufficient for our religion.

His book encompasses two aims:

1. Collecting sound ḥadīth and clarifying what is necessary regarding their [potential] defects or other issues relating to their chain or text, as well as reinforcing his own views and choices with supporting narrations.²³

²³ Mutābaʿāt are those secondary narrations that represent a lower degree of authenticity and are used only as supporting evidences for the primary, more authentic ḥadīth material. Similarly, muʿallaqāt are those narrations, also of lesser authenticity, which Bukhārī quotes—often without isnād—in his chapter headings to achieve the same purpose. Lack of awareness of this secondary, lesser-tier material in Bukhārī has led to much confusion among critics.
2. Demonstrating the applications of ḥadīth and elaborating on their meanings through their arrangement, division and chapter headings, relying on proofs and evidences, as well as affirming and laying out basic principles in the fundamentals and peripherals of religion, along with repeating ḥadīth and distinguishing various textual wordings in order to bring new benefits.  

The author of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim compiled it to gather sound ḥadīth, which, according to him, are those that were narrated by the transmitters of the first rank who possessed moral uprightness, steadfastness, strong memories and expertise of the likes of Imām Mālik, Shu‘bah, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ḥammād b. Zayd and others. The hadith of this generation are exhausted comprehensively. The author then follows up these ḥadīth with those of the second rank, who are lesser than the first in memory and expertise while being similar in moral uprightness. This material was not exhausted entirely, but he chose from them what he needed for supporting evidences. And if there were some potential defects in the primary-tier ḥadīth, he would

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24 The well-known saying about Bukhārī is quite apt here: 

قهه البخاري في تراجمه

“The real genius of Bukhārī is found in his arrangement and chapter headings.”

The real contributions of Bukhārī are therefore manifold: providing evidences of the highest-tier of authenticity possible, providing ample secondary evidences to bolster the primary proofs, demonstrating applications of ḥadīth through their arrangements in various chapters, spelling out his views in the chapter headings, quoting other non-ḥadīth material therein, repeating the same ḥadīth throughout the work in various chapters to support multiple applications of the same texts, and bringing out multiple textual variations of ḥadīth to support more nuanced applications.

25 Shu‘bah b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/777) was a prominent ḥadīth scholar of Iraq who was one of the first to earn the title the “King of Ḥadīth” (amīr al-muʿminin fil ḥadīth). When he died, Sufyān al-Thawrī remarked that ḥadīth itself died.

26 Ḥammād b. Zayd (d. 179/795) was a Persian-origin ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah, Iraq.

27 i.e. All of this primary-tier ḥadīth material is produced in the Ṣaḥīḥ in a comprehensive and all-inclusive manner.

28 A deeper and more nuanced study of ḥadīth shows that is quite possible, and even common, for the bulk of a hadith narration to be authentic, while the narration still suffers from some hidden defect in a smaller portion that does not affect the overall authenticity. Scholars like Bukhārī and Muslim fulfilled their responsibility diligently to point these out in their works. Muslim does this at the ends of the chapters whereas Bukhārī often utilizes the chapter headings for this purpose.
clarify that at the ends of the chapters. Muslim highly excelled in the arrangement of ḥadīth and originated methodologies not used previously, making it the single best work of ḥadīth craftsmanship. He demonstrated the wonders of this discipline in the best way and manner possible. He surpassed those who preceded him and frustrated those who came after him, leaving behind a singular, unique book in its field.

Those who examine these two works should really understand their aims, features and distinctions, and not treat them like the ḥadīth registers.

They asked: Which of the two types does the Muwaṭṭaʾ fall into?

I replied: Into the first type.

They asked: Is this not an insult to the Muwaṭṭaʾ that it be placed among the ḥadīth registers?

I replied: Of course not. What kind of insult would this be? Rather, it is from the merits of Mālik—and those who were like him—that he did not restrict people to his book nor compel the ummah to it. This was the way of the scholars of Islām as well as those of other traditions. Even the books of Aristotle and other philosophers were nothing but lessons and lectures delivered to their pupils, who in turn restricted them [to specific works].

They asked: So what then is the benefit of the ḥadīth registers?

I replied: They are compilations of the narrations of their authors, clear and precise, which the students heard and read upon their teachers. They did so without necessarily confining themselves to their teachers’ understandings and manners of extrapolation and derivation, but at the same time benefiting from them in the two matters (simple narration as well as comprehension). Later, the students compiled for those after them the lessons of their teachers in the application and extrapolation of ḥadīth.

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29 To reiterate, these “register-works” were basic, skeletal compilations of ḥadīth texts, used by students to learn from their teachers face-to-face, in live instruction. They were never intended to provide the principles or methodologies of these teachers. Those principles and methodologies (i.e. comprehension) was taught in the live instruction sessions, utilizing the raw material, if you will, of these skeletal texts.
texts.\textsuperscript{30} And it was from this same starting point that even Aristotle began his own philosophical school, and some of the most intelligent people followed him.\textsuperscript{31}

They asked: What is the confusion and error that results from not being aware of the difference between these two types?

I replied: Many people treated ḥadīth works like the ḥadīth registers, studying them and commenting upon them as mere collections of ḥadīth, without pointing to the special features and characteristics that were placed therein by their authors. For example, the commentaries of the two Ṣaḥīḥ collections are merely explanations of their individual ḥadīth narrations, as are texts like Baghawi’s Sharḥ al-Sunnah\textsuperscript{32} and Khaṭṭābī’s Maʿālim al-Sunan\textsuperscript{33}. There would be no real difference if one were to replace the commentary in these works with commentaries from other works concerning the same ḥadīth.

They asked: Is there any commentary that is an exception to this?

I replied: I refuse to accept any exception to this other than Fatḥ al-Bārī,\textsuperscript{34} for it is a commentary of the entirety of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, inclusive of all of its features and characteristics.

\textsuperscript{30} It was later on that students added to these works, or compiled separate ones, in which they added the principles, approaches and methodologies of these great teachers.

\textsuperscript{31} Dr. Akram is pointing out that even the Hellenistic tradition had a similar origin, in that the Aristotelian school was born from initial correspondences and instructions between Aristotle and his students, and later evolving into a more coherent and systematic school.

\textsuperscript{32} Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd al-Baghawi (d. 510/1117) was a prolific scholar from the village of Bagh near Herāt who authored a number of famous works, including a tafsīr work and the above work, which is a commentary of the most widely accepted ḥadīth narrations from the various works of ḥadīth.

\textsuperscript{33} Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/988) was a great Shāfiʿī scholar hailing from the Halmand province of present-day Afghanistan who wrote, among other works, Maʿālim al-Sunan as a commentary of the Sunan of Abū Dāwūd.

\textsuperscript{34} The monumental commentary to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī authored by the renowned ḥadīth expert Ibn Ḥajar of Aschelon (d. 852/1449).
They asked: Do you find in it any faults at all?

I replied: Which single book is free of errors and mistakes? If the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī is the soundest book after the Book of Allah, then Fatḥ al-Bārī is the best commentary, with the highest and noblest rank. Truthful was the one who said, “There is no migration after the Fatḥ.”

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This is a well-known ḥadīth of the Prophet referring to the “Opening” (Fath) of Makkah, whose words were borrowed to describe this commentary, also aptly named the “Opening” (Fath):

لا هجرة بعد الفتح

There is no migration after the Opening.